

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

—ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Genni Elliott

Site Code: BMW12/32

(SU 8766 9238)

Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Crown House School**

by Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BMW12/32

April 2013

Summary

Site name: Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SU 8766 9238

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 9th – 10th April 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Genni Elliott

Site code: BMW 12/32

Summary of results: A number of cut features and a wall were recorded in the evaluation trenches. Almost all of the cut features contained tile or brick with some containing pottery and are dated, with varying degrees of confidence, to later post-medieval times. All of these features directly underlay later post-medieval made ground. Two sherd of medieval and later medieval pottery, some Roman tile (reused?) and a residual prehistoric struck flint was also recovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 29.04.13 Steve Preston✓ 29.04.13

Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Genni Elliott

Report 12/32b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (SU 8766 9238) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Buss on behalf of Crown House School, 19 London Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 1BJ. Planning permission (12/05819/FUL) has been gained from Wycombe District Council to re-develop a former tennis court as a new school facility with further refurbishment of the original building. The consent is subject to a condition (9) relating to archaeology and built heritage which requires a programme of archaeological fieldwork and building recording. The fieldwork initially was to involve an archaeological evaluation to assess the extent of archaeological remains, with further excavation to follow if required. This report deals with the first phase of this programme. The building recording element of the project forms a separate component of work and is to be reported elsewhere.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and Wycombe District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Sandy Kidd, (former) County Archaeologist for Buckinghamshire County Council, advising the District, and the work was monitored by Dr Bill Boismier. The fieldwork was undertaken by Genni Elliott and Aidan Colyer, between 9th and 10th April 2013 and the site code is BMW12/32. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

An archaeological desk-based assessment had previously concluded that the development site lies within the core of the post-medieval Bassetsbury Estate which is itself within an archaeologically rich landscape, dominated by a Roman villa to the west (Dawson 2012).

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south-east of High Wycombe town centre, to the west of Bassetsbury Lane and next to Bassetsbury Manor (Fig. 1). The site lies in an area of relatively flat land between the rivers Rye and Dyke at approximately 61m above Ordnance Datum. The land is currently used as a tennis court and croquet lawn with a

gravel footpath dividing the two (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as being on the border of an outcrop of Head, consisting of stony clay, silt and sand, and Alluvium, consisting mainly of silt and clay (BGS 2005). Head was observed in all trenches, consisting of stony clay; a patch of sand was observed in Trench 2.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Dawson 2012). In summary Bassetsbury Manor has medieval roots though the present building dates from the 17th/18th century. The site lies within the core of the post-medieval estate and may be located similarly with respect to the medieval manor. The location of the site is also noteworthy for the presence of a Roman villa nearby to the west, the outline of which is partly visible as parch marks in the grass.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any Roman occupation deposits are present; and
- to determine whether archaeological deposits relating to medieval or post-medieval manor complex of Bassetsbury are present.

A total of four trenches were to be excavated, each measuring 1.6m wide and 10m long using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were identified they were to be investigated by hand. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds.

Results

All four trenches were dug but with one trench (4) relocated further west than intended to avoid a croquet lawn in use (Fig. 3). This adjustment took place in consultation with Dr Boismier. The trenches ranged in length from 10m to 12.2m and in depth from 0.79m to 1.19m.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 gives a summary of all features excavated.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Trench 1 was aligned SSE–NNW and was 12.20m long and 0.82m deep. Below 0.14m of Tarmac and hardcore, the stratigraphy consisted of several layers of made ground overlying the natural gravel geology (details in Appendix 1). All the soil make-up layers contained ceramic building material dating to the post-medieval to modern periods. No features of archaeological interest were present.

Trench 2 (Figs 3-5; Pls 1, 3-5)

Trench 2 was aligned south–north and was 11.80m long and 0.82m deep. Below 0.18m of Tarmac and hardcore, the stratigraphy consisted layers of made ground overlying the gravel natural geology. All of these make-up layers contained ceramic building material dating to the post-medieval to early modern periods. Several features were identified cut into the natural gravel and consisted of one linear feature, five postholes and two large linear features or pits.

Feature 1 was a large pit or ditch aligned east–west with step sides and a flat base. It cut buried soil layer 64 and measured 1.68m wide by 0.85m deep. Its only fill, 50, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam with sandy cement mortar inclusions. Finds consisted of medieval or later peg tile and some animal bone.

Feature 2 was a sub-circular posthole with steep sides and a rounded base. It cut the backfill (63) of feature 13 and measured 0.46m by 0.36m by 0.28m deep. Its only fill, 51, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of two small fragments of tile and two sherds of later post medieval pottery. The feature is of late post-medieval date.

Feature 3 was a sub-circular posthole with steep sides and a rounded base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.54m by 0.48m by 0.09m deep. Its only fill, 52, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of two small fragments of tile and the feature is probably of later post-medieval date.

Feature 4 was a rectangular posthole with rounded corners, steep sides and a rounded base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.63m by 0.50m by 0.20m deep. Its only fill, 53, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of four small fragments of tile and the feature is probably of later post-medieval date.

Feature 5 was a sub-circular posthole with steep sides and a rounded base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.72m by 0.70m by 0.16m deep. Its only fill, 54, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty

clay loam. Finds consisted of three fragments of post-medieval tile, a fragment of brick and a fragment of Roman *tegula*. The feature is probably of later post-medieval date.

Feature 6 was a sub-circular posthole with steep sides and a rounded base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.45m by 0.40m by 0.16m deep. Its only fill, 55, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of five fragments of tile and the feature is probably of later post-medieval date.

Feature 7 was a large pit or ditch aligned east–west with steep sides. The base was not revealed due to it being below the level of the water table. It cut natural gravel and measured 1.54m wide and more than 0.60m deep. It lay below a buried soil (64). Its only fill, 56, was a very stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of six fragments of tile, one of brick, one sherd of late post-medieval pottery and one sherd of medieval pottery. It also contained a single prehistoric struck flint. The feature is probably of later post-medieval date.

Feature 13 was a NE-SW aligned linear with steep sides and a fairly flat base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.36m wide by 0.30m deep. Its only fill, 63, was a moderately stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam. Finds consisted of four fragments of tile and the feature is probably of later post medieval date.

Trench 3 (Figs 3–5; Pl. 6)

Trench 3 was aligned SE–NW and was 10.0m long and 0.79m deep. Below 0.24m of Tarmac and hardcore, the stratigraphy consisted layers of made ground overlying the gravel natural geology. All the layers contained ceramic building material dating to the post-medieval to early modern periods. Features identified consisted of one ditch, two postholes, and a flint wall.

Feature 10 was a sub-circular posthole with moderately steep sides and a curved base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.5m in diameter by 0.16m deep. Its only fill, 59, was a mid-brownish grey, silty clay with frequent stones and large flints. Finds consisted of seven fragments of tile including a ridge tile. The feature is probably of later post medieval date.

Feature 11 was a sub-circular posthole with steep sides and a curved base. It cut the natural gravel and measured 0.6m in diameter by 0.27m deep. Its only fill, 60, was a mid-brownish grey, silty clay with frequent stones and flints. Finds consisted of a single lump of clinker and five fragments of tile, a fragment of Roman *tegula* and two fragments probably of Roman *tegulae*. The feature is probably of later post medieval date.

Feature 12 was a NE–SW aligned ditch with moderately steep sides and a curved base. It cut the natural gravel and was 2.10m wide by 0.43m deep. Its only fill, 61, was a moderately stony, dark brownish grey, silty clay. Finds consisted of a fragment of flower pot, a sherd of late medieval pottery, 23 fragments of tile including

two peg tiles, and a fragment of *tegula* and possibly an *imbrex* of Roman date. Two animal bones were also recovered. The feature is of later post-medieval date.

Flint wall 62 was aligned NE–SW. There was no clear foundation cut into the gravel for the wall and it appeared simply to be resting on the surface. The wall was composed of large flint nodules laid on edge in a matrix of yellowish brown, sandy cement, similar to that used on the Manor House. It measured 0.78m wide by 0.38m high.

Trench 4 (Figs 3-5; Pl. 2)

Trench 4 was aligned SW–NE and was 10.70m long and ranged between 0.46m deep at the south end and 0.80m deep at the north end. The stratigraphy consisted of up to 0.38m of topsoil above up to 0.42m of sandy gravel subsoil above the gravel natural geology. Both the topsoil and subsoil contained ceramic building material dating to the post-medieval to early modern periods. Two features were cut into the gravel and consisted of one gully and one shallow pit.

Feature 8 was a shallow rectangular pit with gently sloping sides and a flat base. It measured more than 0.70m by 1.20m by 0.15m deep. Its only fill, 57, was gravel in a matrix of dark greyish brown, sandy clay loam. There were no finds.

Feature 9 was an NE–SW aligned gully with moderately steep sides and a curved base. It was 0.65m wide by 0.25m deep. Its only fill, 58, was gravel in a matrix of dark greyish brown, sandy clay. Finds consisted of a fragment of tile and a fragment of Roman *tegula*. The feature is probably of later post medieval date.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 5 sherds with a total weight of 33g. It was all medieval or later, and was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat *et al.* 1994), as follows:

MS3: Medieval Grey Sandy Wares. Mid 11th–late 14th century. 1 sherd, 13g.

TLMS18: Late Medieval Oxidized ware. AD1450–1550. 2 sherds, 9g.

PM8: Red Earthenware 16th–19th century. 1 sherd, 6g.

PM23: Creamware, 1740–1880. 1 sherd, 5g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3.

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Milbank

Brick and tile fragment were recovered from twelve contexts encountered during the evaluation. In total, 77 fragments, weighing 3372g were present, the majority of which were tile fragments (Appendix 4).

The fabric types present comprised a hard, evenly fired clay, with small sandy and occasional larger rounded or subrounded quartz inclusions. Several examples have slightly larger inclusions, and one example of a reduced core was recovered. Typically, these fragments are red to dark orange red, and this group includes the peg tile fragments.

A second fabric type was noted, which was a fine, slightly friable clay fabric with sparse sandy inclusions. Of these, the majority were identified as Roman forms (tegula, imbrex pieces).

The majority of the fragments were small and could not be identified. Three fragments have peg holes however some or all of the plain pieces are also likely to be peg tiles. The typical thickness is 12mm, with little variation either side of this. Several pieces of Roman tile (tegula, imbrex) were also recovered. Tegulae were identified as those fragments with a flange along one side. Each complete tegula would have a flange on each side, however no complete examples were recovered. Imbrex are identified as the curved tiles used on the ridges of roofs.

Pit/ditch 1(50) contained several flat pieces of tile which are of likely medieval or post-medieval date. These were of the harder fabric and were typically 12mm thick, and one fragment has a peg hole.

Feature 5(54) contained a piece of tegula which is of the rounded-flange type. The face is sheared off but would be c.20mm thick, which is a fairly typical thickness (Brodribb 1987). Also recovered from this context is a piece of brick of likely medieval or post-medieval date, which has large grog inclusions and a patch of sandy grey mortar on one face.

A single very abraded piece of tegula was recovered from ditch 7(56), which was of a fine-textured, flaky, laminated fabric, unevenly fired and with a reduced (grey) core. The flange part is incomplete so it could not be established which of the three general forms it represents, however the face is unusually thin (14mm). Also recovered from this context was a corner piece from a brick of very hard dark red fabric which is of modern date.

Gully 9(58) contained two fragments of hard, evenly fired tile of likely post-medieval date, and posthole 10 (59) contained 6 similar fragments and one piece of edge-thickened tile with an unusual cutaway shape, also of post-medieval date.

Posthole 11 (60) contained two pieces of Roman tile. One of these is of the squat, square-flanged tegula type. The thickness of the flange is 31mm and the tegula 25mm thick overall. The second piece is a possible imbrex piece and is 20mm thick.

Ditch 12 (61) contained 25 fragments of tile including a tegula, a possible imbrex and 2 fragments of peg tile.

Four small tile fragments were recovered from gully 13 (63) which are of medieval or post-medieval date, of which one has a reduced core.

The assemblage derived from the site indicates some Roman activity, represented by tegula and imbrex, however all the Roman fragments are abraded and are encountered within contexts containing medieval and post-medieval tile and brick fragments. Overall, the assemblage of Roman tile is modest. The material is durable, and not likely to be transported any great distance.

The peg tiles and flat tile fragments are of the broad type which was produced from the early medieval period onwards, and is not closely dateable, however the regular forms and sharp edges suggest the later (post-medieval) part of the range.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A single residual struck flint was recovered from pit/ditch 7(56). It was a narrow flake and was patinated a bluish white colour.

Conclusion

A number of cut features and a wall were recorded in three of the four evaluation trenches. Almost all of the cut features contained tile or brick with some containing pottery and are dated, with varying degrees of confidence, to later post-medieval times. All of these features directly underlay later post-medieval made ground. The wall is undated and its significance is unclear.

The finding of a prehistoric struck flint, and sherds of medieval pottery point to a very low level of activity of these periods in the immediate area, whereas the Roman tile recovered (all associated with clearly later finds) was probably re-used and had been recovered from the nearby Roman villa.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at south or west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	12.20	1.6	0.82	0–0.04m Tarmac; 0.04–0.14m hardcore; 0.14–0.30m greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.3–0.5m chalk mixed with greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.5–0.64m greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.64–0.76m rubble in a matrix of greyish brown, silty clay loam with common ceramic building material and yellowish brown sandy cement mortar; 0.76–0.82m greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.82m+ natural geology: gravel in a matrix of pale greyish brown, silty clay loam.
2	11.80	1.6	0.80m	0–0.04m Tarmac; 0.04–0.18m hardcore; 0.18–0.30m greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.3m–0.36m chalk mixed with greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.36–0.67m greyish brown, silty clay loam (buried soil layer 64); 0.67m+ natural geology. Ditches 1 and 7, post holes 2–6, ?gully 13. [Pls 1, 3-5]
3	10.0	1.6	0.79	0–0.04m Tarmac; 0.04–0.24m hardcore; 0.24–0.43m greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.43–0.58m chalk mixed with greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.58–0.68m gravel in a matrix of greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.68–0.79m dark greyish brown, silty clay loam; 0.79m+ natural geology. Postholes 10, 11, ditch 12, wall 62. [Pl. 6]
4	10.70	1.6	0.80	0–0.32m sloping to 0.38m at the north-east end; topsoil; 0.32–0.46m sloping to 0.80m at the north-east end; gravel in a matrix of dark greyish brown, sandy clay loam; 0.46m+ sloping to 0.80m+ at the north-east end; natural geology. Pit 8, gully 9. [Pl. 2]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

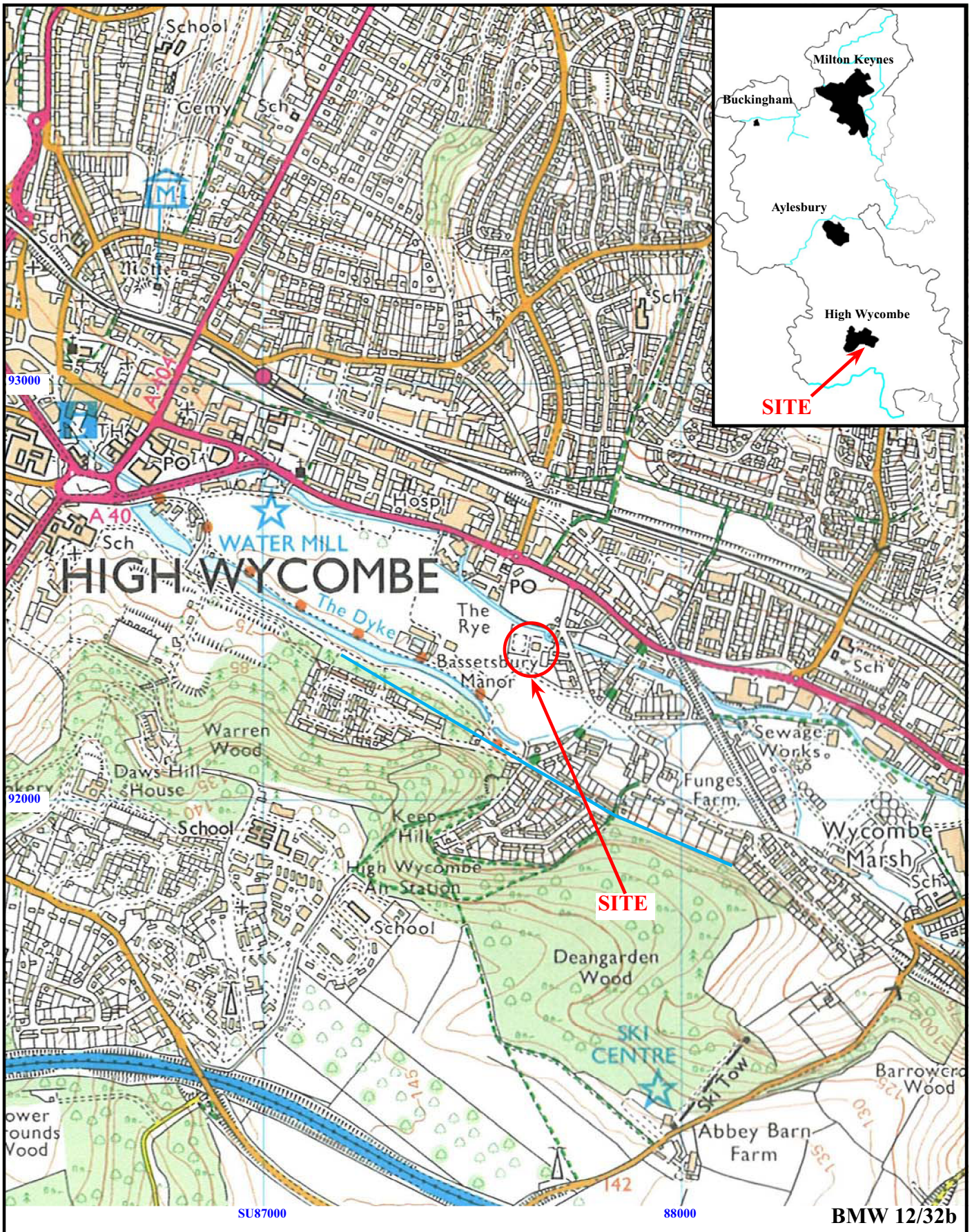
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	50	Pit / Ditch	Post Medieval	Peg tile
2	2	51	Posthole	Late Post Medieval	Tile , pottery
2	3	52	Posthole	Late Post Medieval?	Tile
2	4	53	Posthole	Post Medieval?	Tile
2	5	54	Posthole	Post Medieval	Tile and brick
2	6	55	Posthole	Post Medieval?	Tile
2	7	56	Pit / Ditch	Late Post Medieval	Tile and brick, pottery
4	8	57	Pit	Undated	
4	9	58	Gully	Post Medieval	Tile
3	10	59	Posthole	Post Medieval	Tile
3	11	60	Posthole	Post Medieval	Tile
3	12	61	Ditch	Post Medieval	Tile, pottery
2	13	63	Gully?	Post Medieval	Tile
3		62	Wall	Undated	
2		64	Buried soil		

APPENDIX 3: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type.

		<i>Fabric</i>	<i>MS3</i>		<i>TLMS18</i>		<i>PM8</i>		<i>PM23</i>	
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>
2	2	51			1	5	1	6		
2	7	56	1	13					1	5
3	12	61			1	4				
		Total	1	13	2	9	1	6	1	5

APPENDIX 4: Ceramic building material by number and weight (in g) per context.

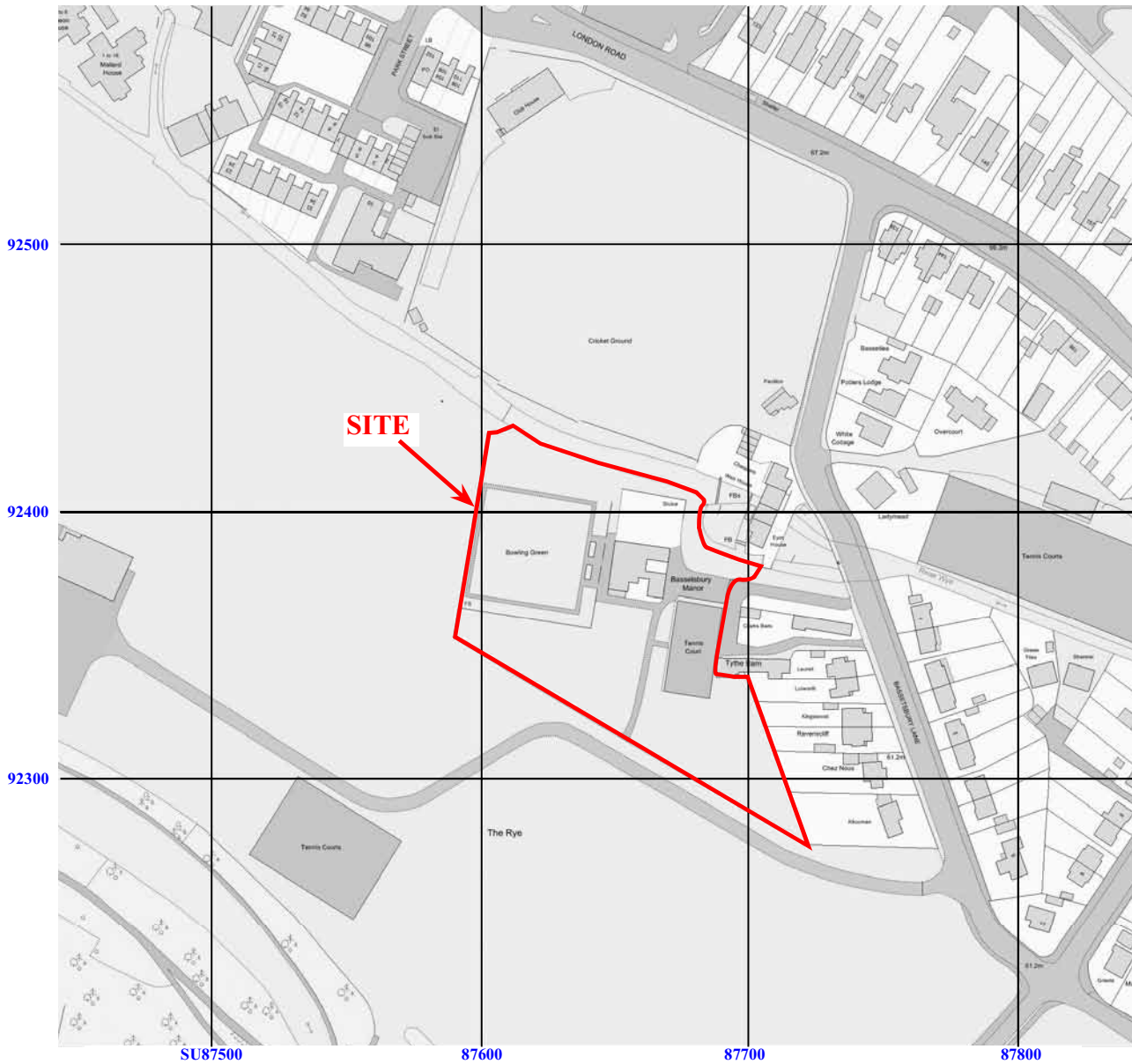
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>B-T</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2	1	50	Pit/ditch	B-T	4	347	Peg tile
2	2	51	Posthole	B-T	2	4	
2	3	52	Posthole	B-T	2	16	
2	4	53	Posthole	B-T	5	96	
2	5	54	Posthole	B-T	5	352	Tegula
2	6	55	Posthole	B-T	6	99	
2	7	56	Pit/ditch	B-T	7	200	Tegula
4	9	58	Gully	B-T	2	144	
3	10	59	Posthole	B-T	7	364	Ridge tile
3	11	60	Posthole	B-T	8	535	Tegula,, imbrex
3	12	61	Ditch	B-T	25	1156	Tegula,, imbrex?, peg tile
2	13	63	Gully	B-T	4	59	



**Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe,
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Figure 1. Location of site within High Wycombe and Buckinghamshire.

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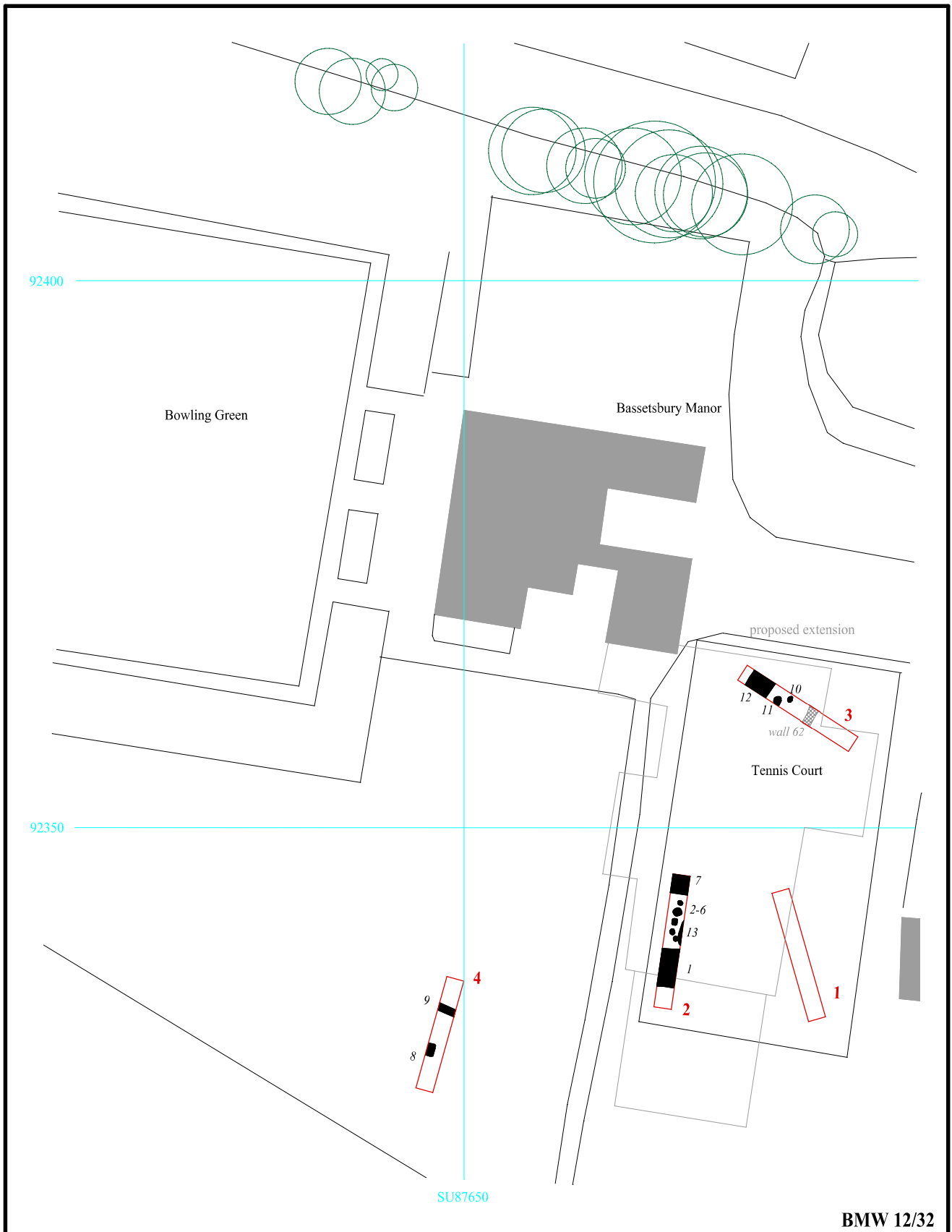


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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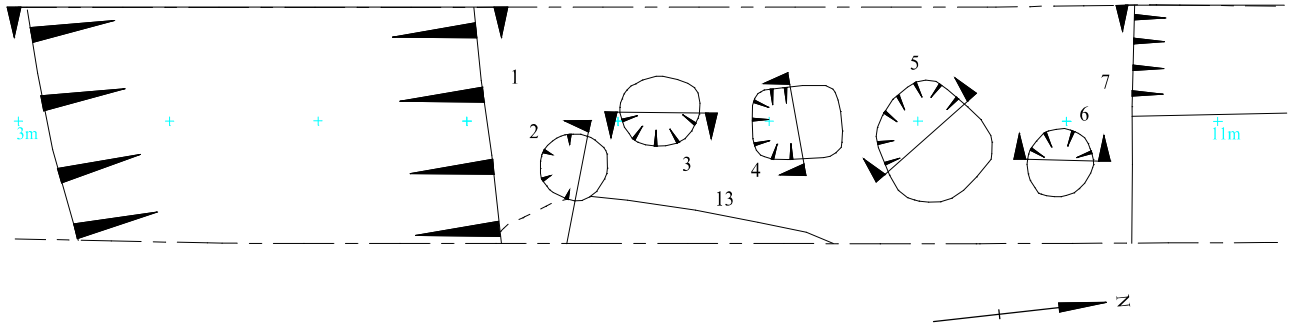
**Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe,
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

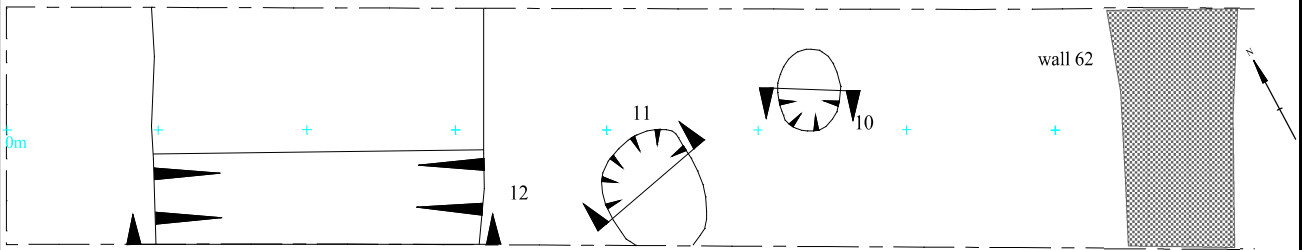


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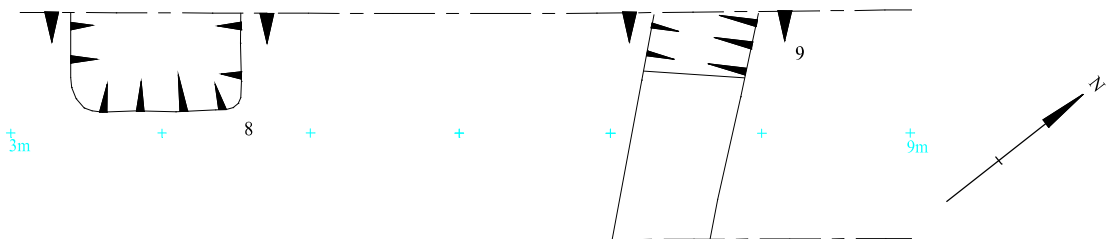
Trench 2



Trench 3



Trench 4



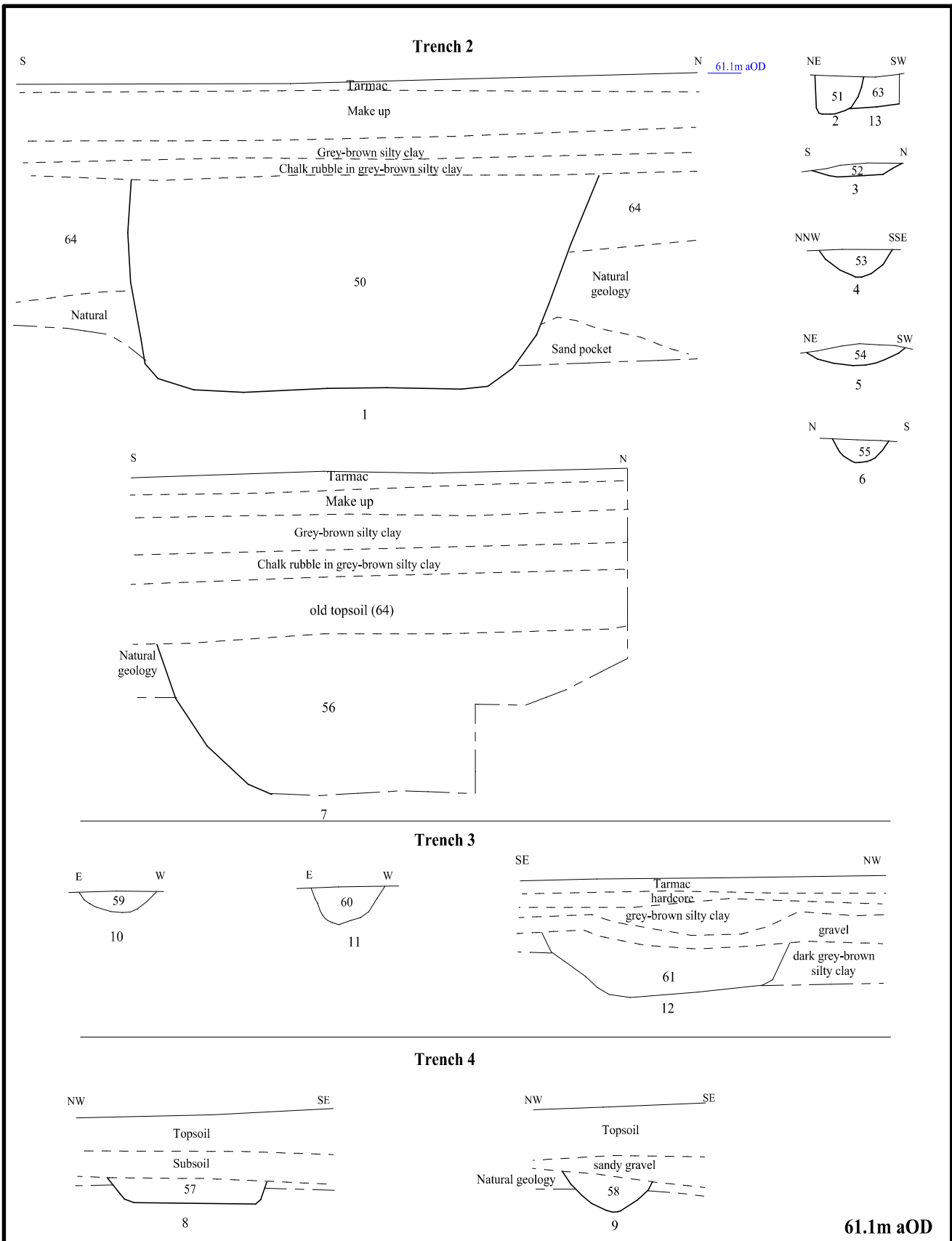
9m nch 4

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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



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Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. Trench 2, looking north; horizontal scales: 2m and 1m, vertical scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking north east; horizontal scales: 2m and 1m, vertical: scale 0.3m.

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**Bassetsbury Manor, High Wycombe,
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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 2, ditch 1, looking west, horizontal scale: 1m, vertical scale: 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 2, pit group, looking north, Scales: 1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 2, pit 5; looking north east, Scales: 0.5 and 0.1m.



Plate 6. Trench 3, wall 62, looking north east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Archaeological Evaluation**

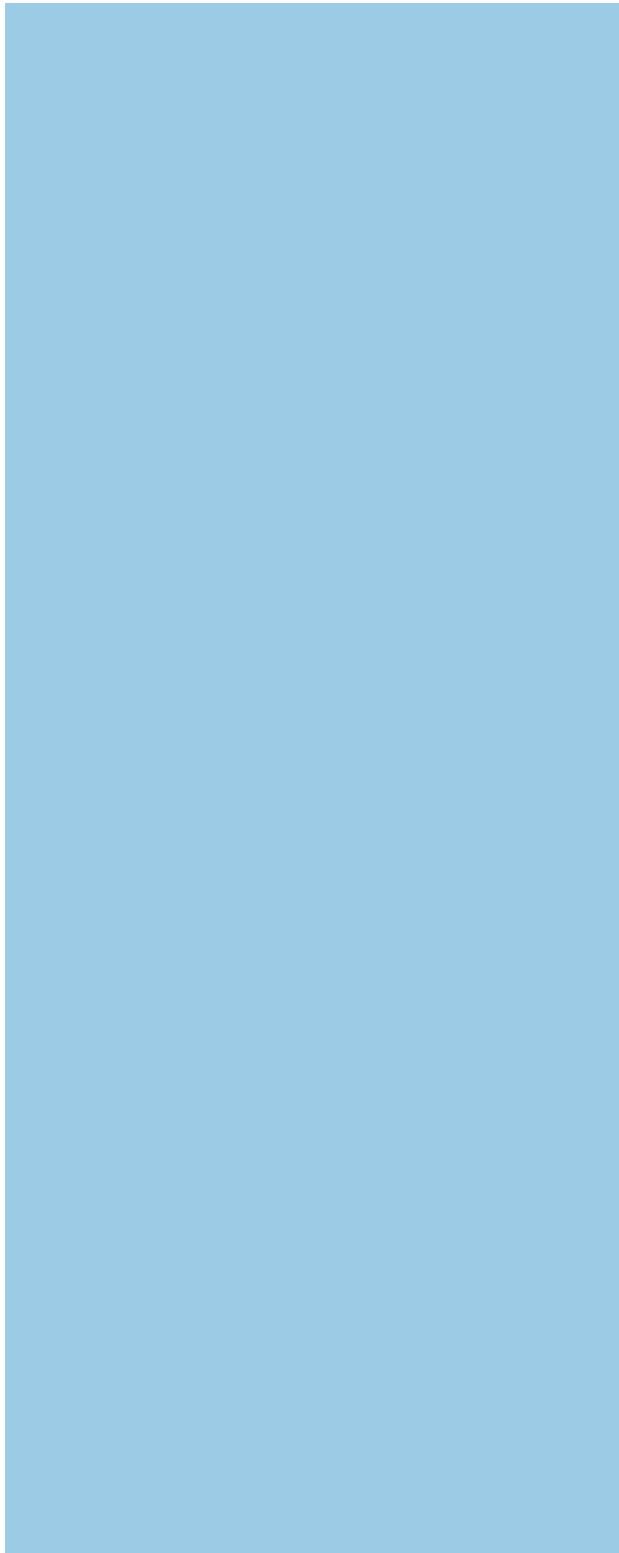
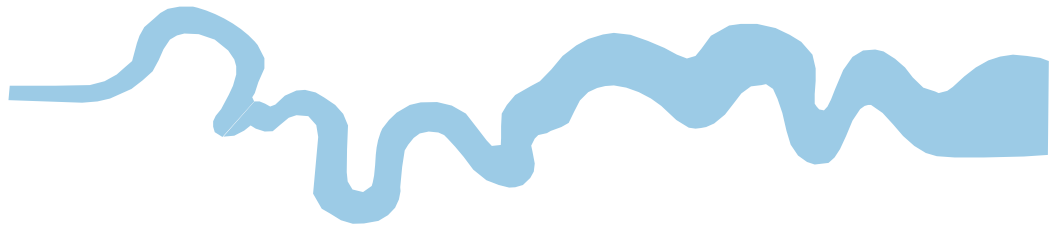
Plates 5 and 6.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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