

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**46 Newbury Street, Wantage,  
Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andy Muddin**

**Site Code: NSW11/90**

**(SU 3978 8752)**

**46 Newbury Street, Wantage,  
Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Bellway Homes**

by Andrew Munding

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code NSW 11/90b

**September 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** 46 Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 3978 8757

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 15th March - 25th July 2013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Natasha Bennett, Andrew Munding, Genni Elliott

**Site code:** NSW 11/90

**Area of site:** 1.172ha

**Summary of results:** In total, 23 new house plots were created on land previously occupied by this house and its extensive garden. No further features of archaeological interest were encountered during the groundworks. Medieval pottery, a possible post-medieval copper alloy earring and possible Roman glass fragments were recovered from exposed sections in southern parts of the site.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service with the accession code OXCMS:2012.26.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 17.09.13
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# 46 Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

**Report 11/90**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the former site of 46 Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 8DF (SU 3978 8757) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ben Adams, Land Manager of Bellway Homes Ltd (Northern Home Counties), Oak House, Woodlands Business Park, Linford Wood, Milton Keynes, MK14 6EY.

Planning permission has been gained from Vale of the White Horse District Council for the redevelopment of the site, creating 23 new house plots on the site of the house and garden of 46 Newbury Street. Prior to this planning permission being gained, an archaeological evaluation was carried out across the site (Ford 2011). It was thought that the potential of the site was low, in regards to surviving deposits being present, but datable pottery and deposits of Medieval date were identified, targeting the locations of the new development. As a consequence of further deposits being damaged, an archaeological watching brief has been requested and implemented during groundworks, to satisfy two conditions (19 and 20) attached to the permission.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Principal Archaeologist of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisor to the local District Council on matters pertaining to archaeology (Coddington 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Natasha Bennett, Andrew Muddin and Genni Elliott between 15th March and 25th July 2013. The site code is NSW 11/90, and is the second report to be created in regards to the site.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course, with the accession code OXCMS:2012.26.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on level ground to the rear of numbers 46 to 80 Newbury Street, with access from the northeast (Fig. 2). Most of the site was once the former gardens to the rear of Number 46, which included an area of lawn and car park to the rear of Brooklands and overgrown woodland/orchard with several sheds. The site lies

on level ground at a height of 95m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Greensand (BGS 1971) but with sand and grit immediately to the south. Both these geological outcrops were observed in the foundations along with a blue/grey sandy clay deposit above Greensand to the south.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2012). In summary, the site lies close to an extensive complex of archaeological deposits examined by excavation, evaluation and watching brief. These deposits were mostly of medieval and early post-medieval date but with some Roman and Saxon deposits present (Lewis 2010a and b; Dawson and Porter 2010). An area to the north-east of the proposal site contained a Middle Bronze Age urned cremation cemetery, though as yet contemporary occupation deposits have not been located. Further evaluation to the south of the proposal site has revealed additional medieval deposits and prehistoric flintwork. Although the site lies beyond what is thought to be the limit of the medieval and early post-medieval town (Foster 1975), it is possible that further Medieval occupation along Newbury Street are present. Limited Medieval deposits have been found to exist on the site (Ford 2011), so it is possible that backland usage of the site behind Newbury Street's western properties could have occurred.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits identified during groundworks. This involved monitoring all areas of ground reduction, new foundation trenching and main services runs that would be disturb the natural geology. Most works were carried out with a large toothed bucket mechanical excavator.

## **Results**

### *Former house foundations*

During the first visit, the removal of the foundation of the previous house was observed within the north eastern part of the site (Fig.3). The area of ground reduction, reached not greater depth than 0.75m and no natural geology was observed within the area covering 19m by 23m.

### *Foundation trenches*

The remaining visits viewed the digging of foundation trenches. The northern footing trenches, were to be simple ground beam trenches, but in the southern half of the site the ground beams contained piles, which meant a piling mat raised ground level by between 0.2-0.4m. It was also noted during the second visit, that prior to the piling mat being laid in this half of the site, the topsoil here was very wet. A temporary drainage culvert (Fig. 3) had been dug to try and drain the site of areas of standing water on the south eastern parts of the sites, to the drainage ditch on the western boundary. The construction of the new access road, was not part of the observation, due to the fact the maximum depth of excavation, did not reach the depth of natural geology. A small area of the exposed section of the main central sewer trench was observed through the central part of the site, which had been dug through to the natural horizon. No deposits were noted in this section. During topsoil stripping close to the beech tree to the rear of Brooklands, a Victorian well measuring 0.35m in diameter was located and infilled (Fig.3).

### *Plot 1 and 2 (Fig.3; Pl.1)*

These house plots had been piled, covering approximately 28m by 36m. A generally undisturbed stratigraphy at this location was noted (Fig.3). This trench lay in the vicinity of Trench 10 from the evaluation (Ford 2011). The stratigraphy consisted of a rubble filled overburden, 0.55m thick, presumably the remains of a piling matt and general building site waste above dark brown, silty clay subsoil containing ceramic building material, coal and china to a depth of 0.88m. Below this was 0.22m of weathered natural gault clay containing flecks of charcoal, red daub, animal bone and oyster shell. Within this layer was found a sherd of medieval pottery and a copper alloy object. No features were seen to cut this layer.

### *Plot 3 (Fig.3and 4)*

This house plot had been piled, covering approximately 12m by 9m. A concrete crush piling mat had been laid to allow access of the drill. A generally undisturbed stratigraphy at this location was noted (Fig. 3). This trench lay mostly between the locations of Trench 9 and 10 in the evaluation (Ford 2011). Under 0.4m of concrete crush, the remainder of an original topsoil deposit was exposed. This in turn overlay whitish grey chalky marl subsoil to a depth of 0.8m. The base of excavation was a 1.3m deep. No archaeological features were seen to cut the natural geology between 0.8m and 1.3m in section. A small portion of this footing north western corner was not observed.

#### Plot 4 (Fig.3; Pl.1)

This plot lay in the south west part of the site and had been piled. The western half of Trench 9 covered part of this footing. A similar stratigraphy was noted here as in Plot 3. No archaeological features were encountered during excavation.

#### Plots 5 and 6

This pair of footings were both located where the drainage culvert had been dug. Trench 6 had sampled the natural close to the location of Plot 6 and exposed no archaeological features (Ford 2011). The area that had been piled for both locations covered approximately 29m by 19m. Though a limited amount of the footings sections remained undisturbed, especially to the north, no features were encountered in these sections which were dug to 0.9m deep.

#### Plots 7 and 8

Plot 7 was located roughly where the excavation of Trench 7 had occurred. The area piled covered a 25m by 10m area. The ground was saturated with water in this location, and many of the footings contained water at their bases. Marl subsoil was observed in the exposed sections of many of these footings, with a maximum depth dug of 0.9m.

#### Plot 9 (Fig.3 and 4; Pl.2)

This footing was dug in the location of Trenches 12 and 13. The topsoil of the natural horizon was noted a 0.75m, rising slightly to 0.7m in the northern faces of the sections. The maximum depth of footings was 0.85m. No archaeological deposits were noted to cut the natural. This footing covered an area of 17.2m by 8m.

#### Plot 10

This footing covered an area of 16m by 8.5m. A linear feature had been identified in Trench 4 just to the north of this location, which contained three sherds of Medieval pottery. No continuation of this feature was noted in this footing, though it was noted that natural geology was only noted in the southern footing trench, reaching a depth

of 0.85m. The northern footing only reached a depth of 0.65m. Most of the trench contained a dark brown clayey silt, somewhat darker soil than the subsoil seen elsewhere.

#### Plot 11 and 12

No observations of these footings occurred.

#### Plot 13 (Fig.3 and 4)

Partial observation of the footing trenches for this plot occurred. Most observations were targeted on the location of the feature seen in Trench 2 of the evaluation which uncovered a re-cut Medieval linear feature. No extension of this feature was seen, though deep topsoil stripping at this location, had intruded into the subsoil at this location, to a depth of 0.6m. The remainder of subsoil in this location was a further 0.45m deep and the natural greensand was reached seen at the base of excavation to a maximum depth of 0.6m. No other deposits were noted in this footing trench, which covered an L-shaped area roughly 12m by 14m.

#### Plot 14; Flats 15 to 23

Minimal observations occurred in these areas in the north east part of the site. Plots 15 to 19 were associated with the ground reduction area concerned with removal of the former house footing. Plot 14 to the east of Plot 13 was not observed.

#### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised a single sherd weighing 5g. It is a fragment of a Surrey Whiteware glazed jug, fabric OXBG in the Oxfordshire County type-series, and dated to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> – mid 15<sup>th</sup> century (Mellor 1994). Such pottery is a fairly common find in the area. The sherd is small and slightly abraded, and likely to be the product of secondary deposition.

#### *Copper Alloy Object by Genni Elliott*

A single copper alloy object was recovered from the weathered gault layer within plot 2. It measured 21mm by 17mm by 7mm wide and weighed 2g. It was made by joining two convex plates of equal cast form together (Pl. 3). The thickness of the object decreases towards the top where there is a circular aperture with an internal diameter of 7mm. The lower form of the object is palmate in shape. A similar plain item has been found in Buckinghamshire (item BH-18B614) and identified under the *Portable Antiquities Scheme* as a post-medieval earring.



### *Glass* by Danielle Milbank

Glass fragments were recovered from plot 2. Of these, one was a small (6g) piece of slightly blue-green glass 4mm thick, the fabric is smooth and even, with occasional tiny bubbles. It is abraded, particularly on one side. The form suggests it is part of the base of a rectangular bottle, and it is of likely Roman date.

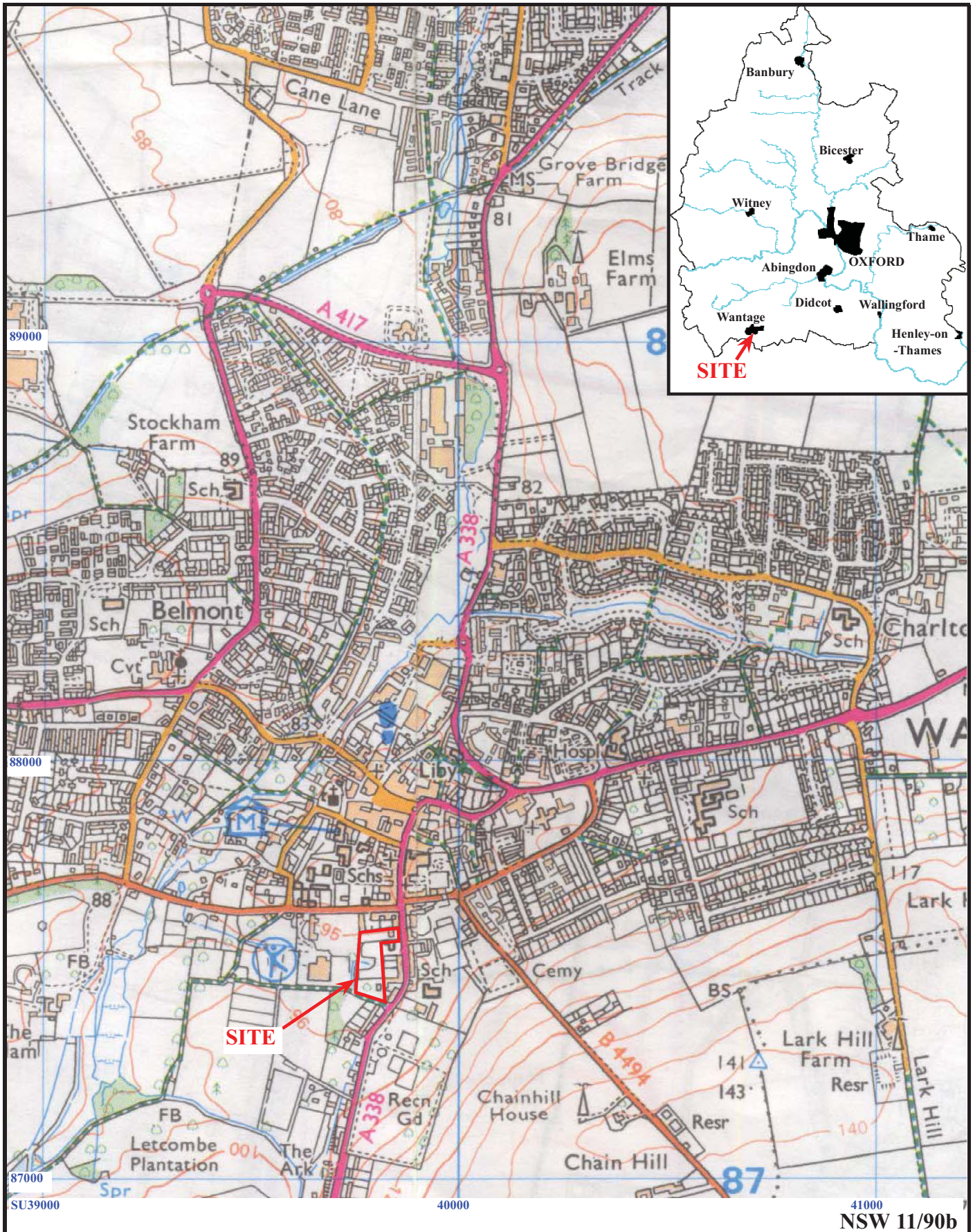
A second piece weighs 20g and is the circular base of a bottle. It appears to be mould-made rather than blown, as there is no pontil scar and the surfaces are particularly smooth. The colour is a pale slightly green blue, and there are small bubbles in the fabric. It is slightly abraded. The fragment is likely to be of Roman date, and perhaps represents the base of a small cylindrical bottle.

### **Conclusion**

Though this is a relatively large development within Wantage with the considerable potential noted to the east of Newbury Street, no further archaeological features were encountered during the groundworks. Within plots 1 and 2 a layer of weathered natural geology was found which contained a sherd of medieval pottery and a post-medieval copper alloy earring. Two possible sherds of Roman glass were found unstratified within plots 1 and 2.

### **References**

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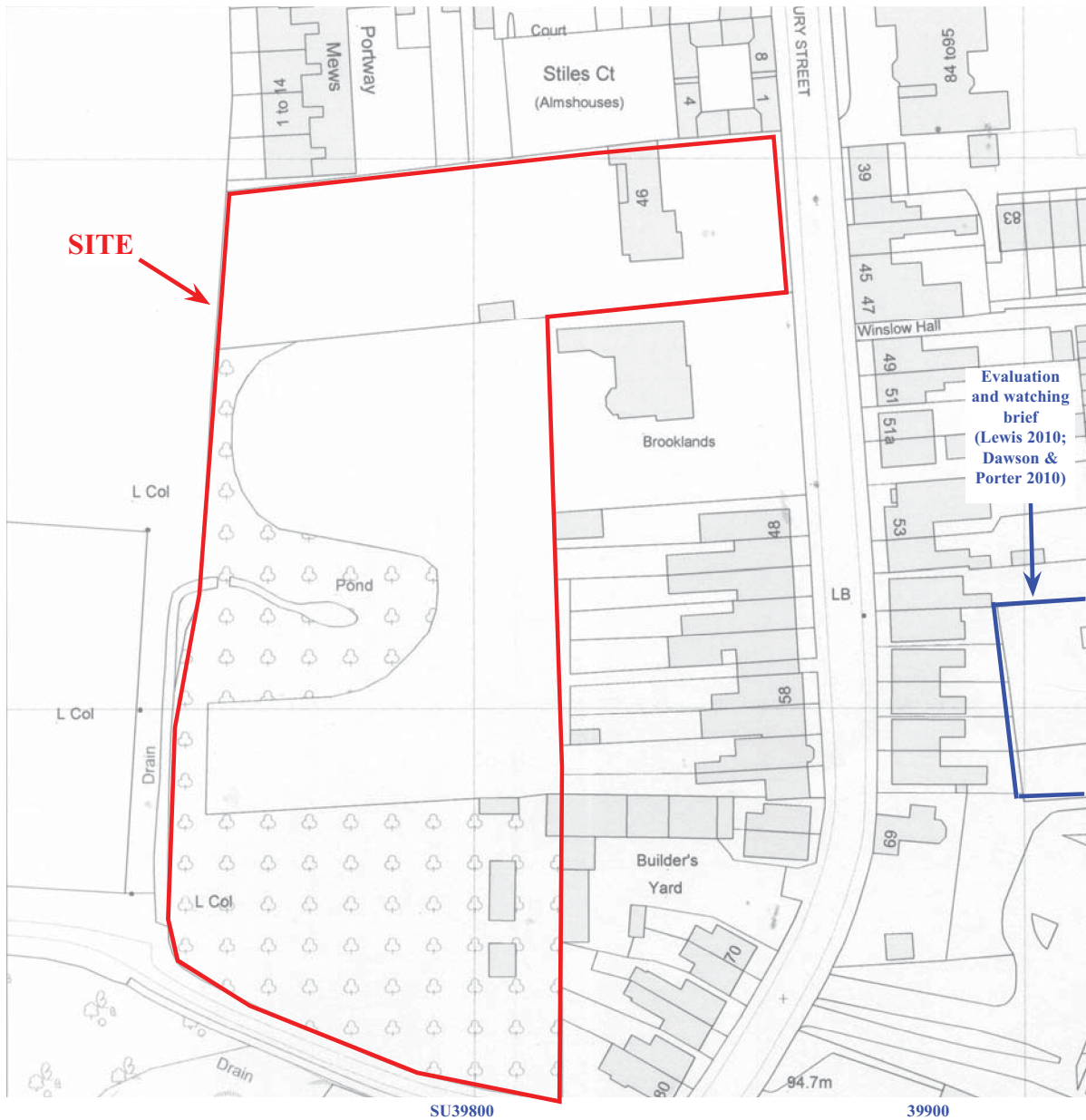


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Figure 1. Location of site within Wantage and Oxfordshire.

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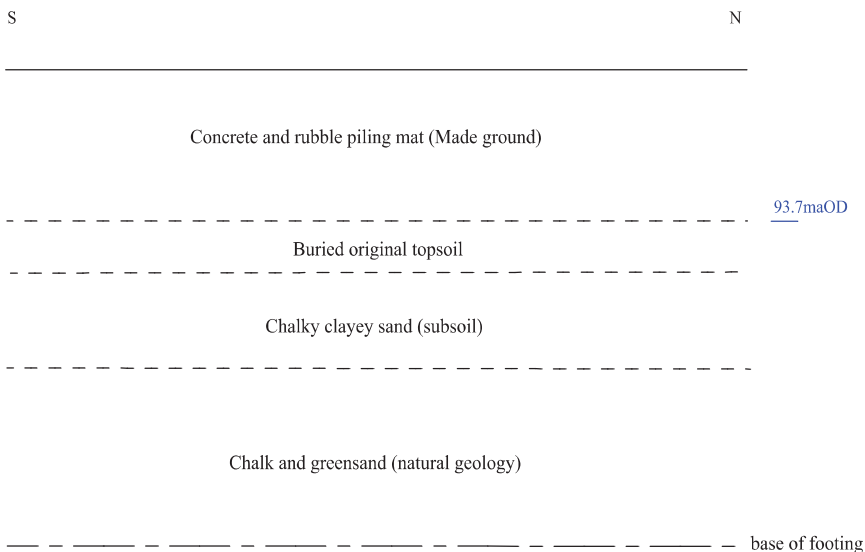
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Newbury Street.

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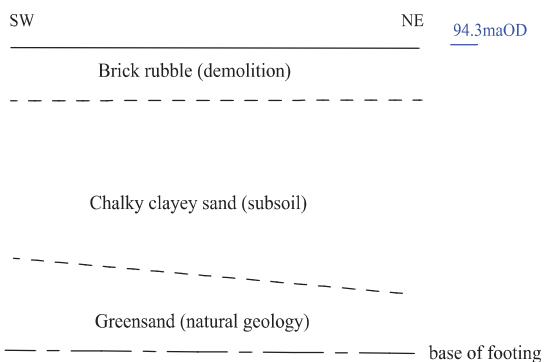
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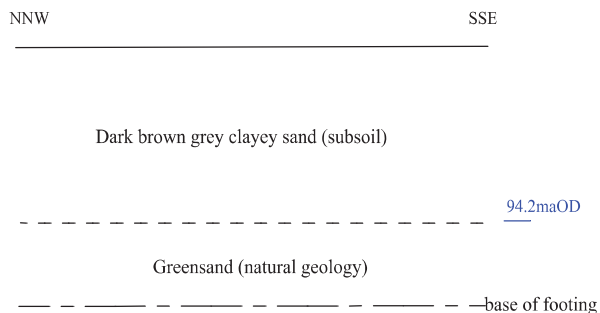
**Plot 3**



**Plot 9**



**Plot 13**



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Figure 4. Representative sections.





Plate 1. Plot 4 exposed sections, looking north north east, Scales: 0.5m.



Plate 2. Plot 9 exposed sections, looking north, Scales: 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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30mm

Plate 3. Copper alloy ear- ring,

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Plate 3.

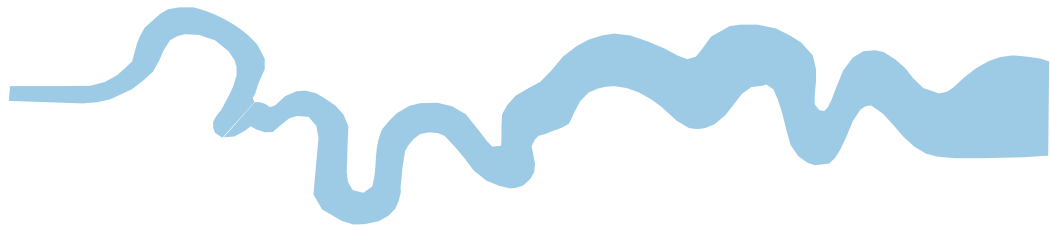
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## TIME CHART

	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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