

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Manor Farm, Launton,
Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle

Site Code: LBO13/220

(SP 6035 2285)

Manor Farm, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Will Deely

by Aiji Castle

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LBO13/220

November 2013

Summary

Site name: Manor Farm, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire.

Grid reference: SP 6035 2285

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th–8th November 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Andrew MUNDIN and Aiji Castle

Site code: LBO13/220

Area of site: c. 55 sq m

Summary of results: A single ditch of unknown date was observed and recorded

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 13.11.13 Steve Preston✓ 13.11.13

Manor Farm, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 13/220

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Tythe Barn, Manor Farm, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 4ST (SP 6035 2285) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Dr Isabel Lisboa, of Archaeologica Ltd, 7 Fosters Lane, Bradwell, Milton Keynes, KK13 9HD, on behalf her client, Mr Will Deely of the Tythe Barn, Charbridge Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 4SR.

Planning permission has been granted by Cherwell District Council (Appln no. 13/01040/F) for the construction of a wooden framed bridal room, subject to a condition (3) which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, which should take the form of a watching brief during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification (Lisboa 2012) approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological adviser to Cherwell District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew MUNDIN and Aiji Castle during the 7th and 8th November 2013 and the site code is LBO 13/220.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies to the east of Bicester ring road at the north-western edge of the village of Launton. The development area itself lies within the Manor Farm complex of buildings, notably just to the south of Manor Farm House and to the north-west of a barn, possibly a Tithe Barn (Fig. 2), both listed buildings. The area to the south of the site is delimited by the Grade I listed church of St Mary (1369735). The current landuse of the development site consists of a level concrete yard surface (Pl. 1) The village lies on a, low ridge between two small tributaries of the Ray. The underlying geology is Kellaways Sand and Clay member with no superficial deposits (BGS 2002) and this was encountered during the groundworks. The site lies at approximately 70m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

Launton has Saxon origins, documented in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002). The original medieval settlement was located both north-east and south-west of the church of St Mary. During the medieval period Launton grew into a prosperous village and remained large well into the 17th century, demonstrated by the 46 houses that appear in the hearth-tax list (Lobel 1959). The development site is situated in an area of high archaeological potential next to a 14th-century Grade II* listed Tithe Barn and the Grade II listed 17th-century Manor Farm House. During construction of the Bicester bypass Iron Age and Roman features were unearthed approximately 200-400m to the north. There is potential for deposits ranging from Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and Medieval date to be unearthed during the development; however the small scale of the site and the recent landuse as a levelled concrete farmyard may have truncated any potential deposits (Lisboa 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological deposits encountered during the groundworks. The foundation trenches for the bridal suite were to be dug by a 5-ton tracked excavator with a ditching bucket and significant archaeological deposits that were observed were to be excavated and recorded with sufficient time allowed within the groundwork schedules.

Results

The final excavated ground plan of the bridal suite was 11m long and 5m wide (Fig. 3). The foundation trenches were dug to a width of 0.65m and a depth of 1.15m across the site (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). The stratigraphy remained constant on all sides of the excavations, consisting of 0.10m of concrete yard surface overlying 0.30m of made ground (50) including modern brick, limestone blocks, gravel and ballast. Under this lay 0.20m of dark brown-grey silty-clay which included modern inclusions of asphalt and was likely a contaminated interface layer between the made ground and the natural clay. The natural grey-yellow clay geology was reached at a depth of between 0.55-0.60m.

A single ditch (1) was observed aligned WNW-ESE and was recorded in the longer parallel trenches, 2.60m and 2.70m respectively from the northern extent of the trench foundations. This measured 1.0–1.3m in width, 0.63m deep to the east and 0.4m deep in the western footing, and was cut in the natural clay from 0.50m within the section (below the made ground), and had shallow concave sides and base. The ditch contained a

single fill (51) of plastic mid grey clay with occasional limestone inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

Two modern truncations were observed during the trenching; a drainage trench containing a ceramic pipe in the far NE corner, and a service trench for two water pipes that ran roughly N-S across the development plot. Both of these trenches were filled with shingle and pea grit and neither truncated any archaeological features.

Finds

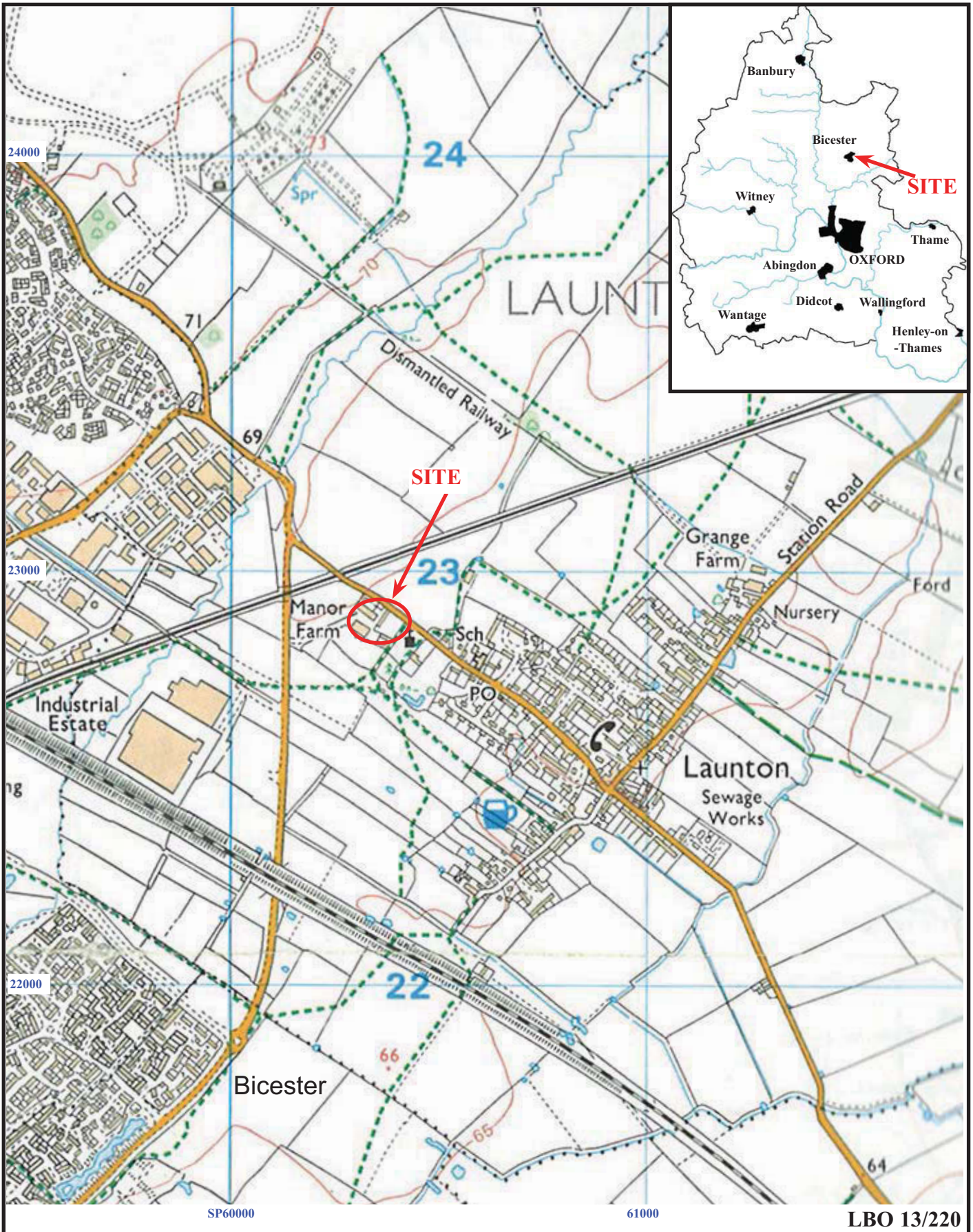
No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.

Conclusion

A single linear ditch aligned WNW-ESE was the only archaeological feature observed during digging of the foundations. Although this did not yield any dateable evidence, the alignment of the ditch matches that of the Tithe Barn to the south and it is possible that this is evidence of an earlier field or drainage boundary to that building complex.

References

- BGS 2002, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 219, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Lisboa 2012, 'Written Scheme of Investigation for a Watching Brief at The Tythe Barn, Manor Farm, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire', Archaeologica Ltd, Milton Keynes
- Lobel, M D, 1959, *A History of the County of Oxford* vol 6, London
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

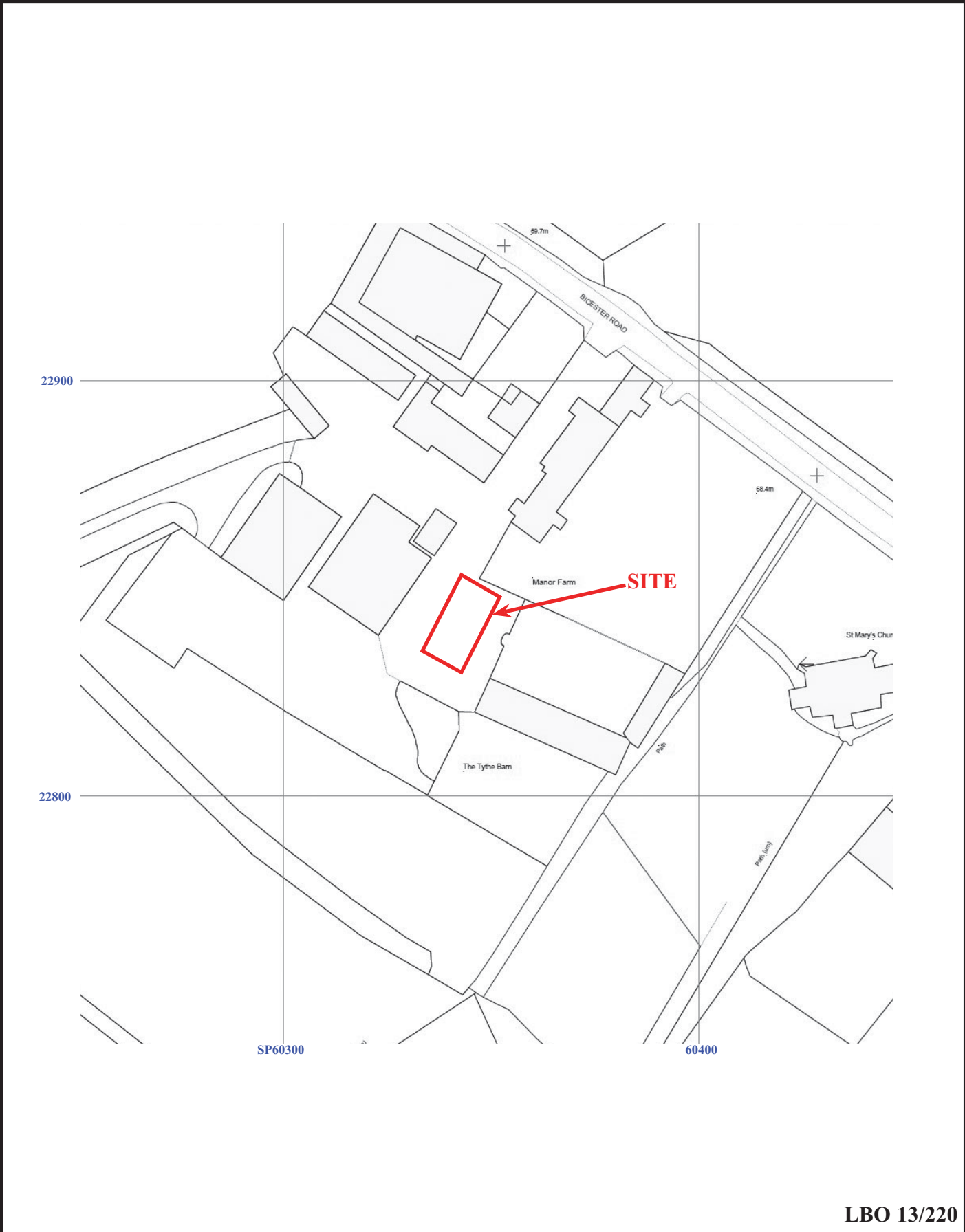


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Figure 1. Location of site within Launton and Oxfordshire

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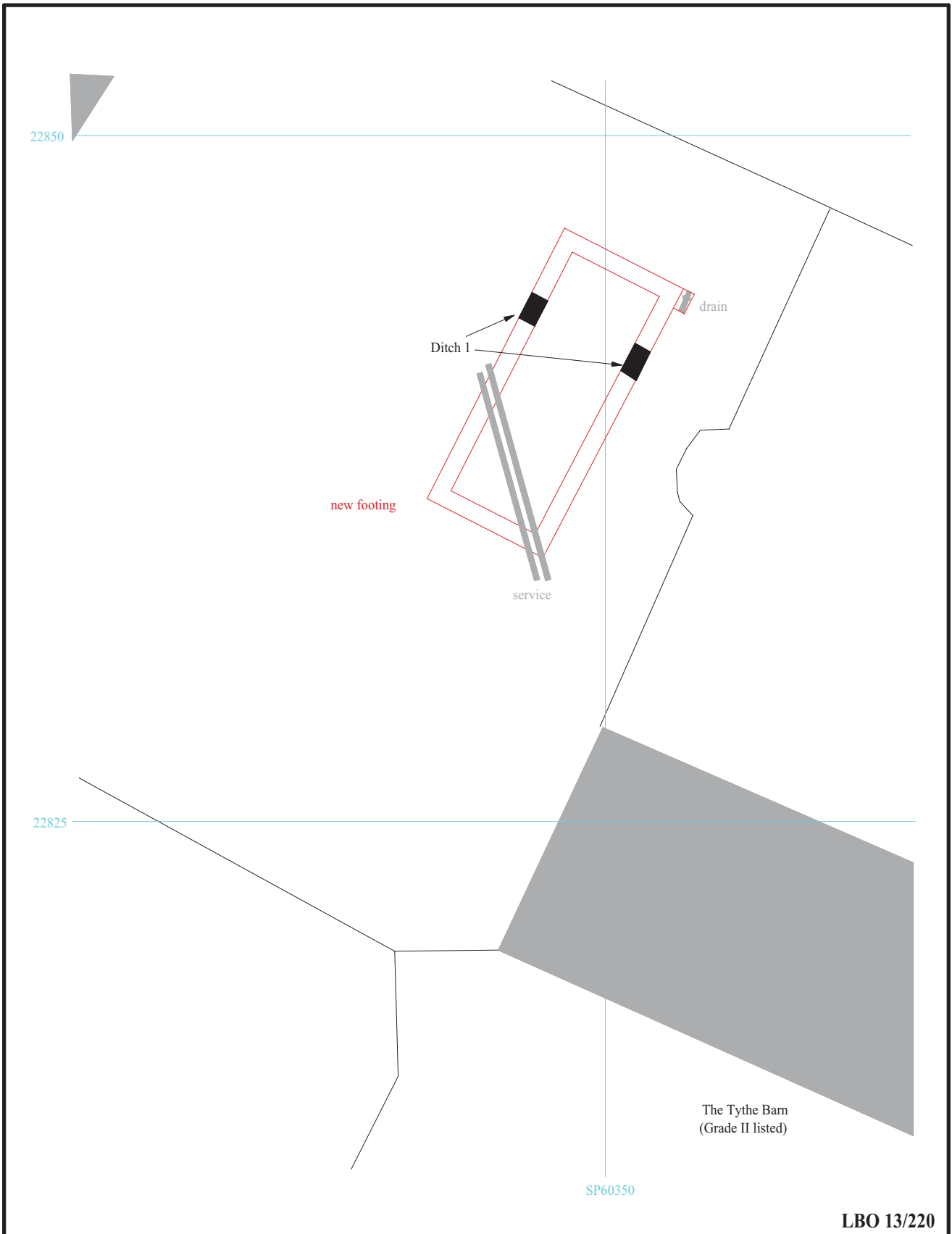
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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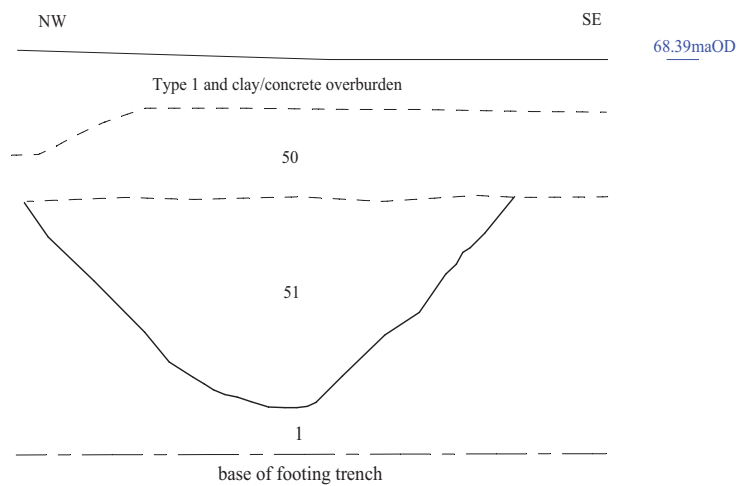
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Figure 3. Location of observed trenches.



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Figure 4. Section.



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Plate 1. Area of new footing, looking north.



Plate 2. Eastern trench, looking north east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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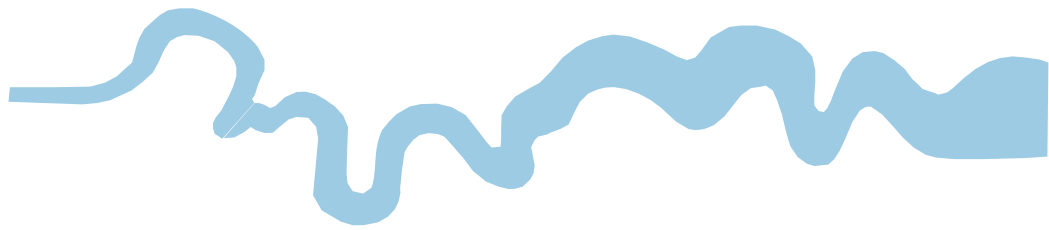
Plates 1 - 2.

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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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