

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Elms, West End,
Cholsey, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle and Tim Dawson

Site Code: TEC13/150

(SU 5807 8609)

The Elms, West End, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr and Mrs Beddall

by Aiji Castle and Tim Dawson
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TEC 13/150

November 2013

Summary

Site name: The Elms, West End, Cholsey, Oxfordshire.

Grid reference: SU 5807 8609

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 24-25th September, 23rd October 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: TEC 13/150

Area of site: 174.6 sq m

Summary of results: A single undated ditch was recorded cut into the natural chalk geology within the main garage area.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 15.11.13

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Report 13/150

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Elms, West End, Cholsey, Oxfordshire, OX10 9LR (SU 5807 8609) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs M Beddall, The Elms, West End, Cholsey, Oxfordshire OX10 9LR.

Planning consent has been gained from South Oxford District Council (P13/S1409/HH) for construction of a detached garage building, driveway and associated services. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for 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 prepared in response to a brief by Mr Richard Oram (Oram 2013), Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological advisor to South Oxford District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson and Susan Porter on the 24-25th September and 23rd October 2013 and the site code is TEC 13/150. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the southeast of the house and outbuildings of The Elms, south of the West End area of the village of Cholsey, 3km south-south-west of Wallingford (Fig. 1). The area which was observed during the archaeological watching brief is currently an area of lawn south of the workshop. As the site is occupied by the house, its outbuildings and gardens, it has been heavily landscaped and the ground slopes markedly downhill towards the current gravel driveway (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is described as being first (floodplain) river gravel terrace deposits (BGS 1980) although chalk and not gravel was observed in the groundworks. The site is at a level of *c.* 48m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

As identified in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service (Oram 2013), the site lies in close proximity to the suggested site of a Benedictine Abbey that was probably founded *c.* AD 986 and (perhaps) ransacked by Danish incursions in 1006 (evidence for the latter is slender and circumstantial). Cholsey was an important Saxon centre, mentioned in the Burghal Hideage, and part of the King's domain at the time of Domesday Book (1086) and before. At the time of the Domesday survey, it was a wealthy manor, with three mills, and a relatively large population for the area. The Abbey of Mont-St-Michel also held land here, including a church (Williams and Martin 2002, 137; 155). In the medieval period, after the manor (at that time in Berkshire) had been granted to Reading Abbey by Henry I, an important grange and Abbot's residence were established. The proposal site itself lies within one of two incomplete and conjoining moated enclosures which are still visible in the grounds of The Elms (Figs. 1 and 2). A previous watching brief carried out during the building of an extension at the same address did not reveal any deposits of interest (Dawson 2009). Prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds are recorded from in and around Cholsey (e.g. Coles 2005; Taylor 2010; Bray 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the garage, driveway and associated services. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks and included observation of surface stripping, ground reduction and the excavation of a soakaway.

Archaeological deposits which were exposed by the groundworks were to be recorded but not further excavated unless threatened by the groundworks. Sufficient time was allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers' schedules.

The area of ground reduced for the proposed garage and driveway and the soakaway were excavated using a minidigger with ditching bucket. The spoil removed was monitored for finds and all potential archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned and recorded where necessary.

Results

The area of ground reduced for the garage measured 20.20m long by 6.25m wide (Fig. 3, Pl. 1) and was excavated to a depth of 0.38m at the north west end and 0.79m at the south east reflecting the rise in original ground level towards the south-eastern end of the site. The stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.24m of topsoil (50) overlying a layer of subsoil (51) with patches of modern made ground at the north-western end and a

cleaner subsoil 0.20m thick towards the south east. Due to the change in level the natural geology, which in this area consisted of a yellow-grey chalky silt, was only exposed in the south-eastern half of the ground reduction at a depth of 0.43m below ground level. A modern drain was noted cut into the made ground at the northern end of the area. It is possible that this area has been landscaped for the construction of the existing driveway and outbuildings, an event which may have caused the mixing of modern rubble with the subsoil in places.

The driveway area (Fig. 3, Pl. 1) was excavated to a depth of 0.35m and the stratigraphy exposed reflected that already recorded. A soakaway measuring 1.60m × 1.60m and 0.60m deep was dug into the reduced level of the driveway. This cut through 0.30m of the subsoil-made ground mix and 0.30m down into the natural yellow-grey chalky silt.

The only feature of archaeological origin recorded during the watching brief was a linear cut, probably a ditch that extended 2.62m southwards from the north-eastern section (Fig. 3, Pl. 2) [1]. Its width in section was c.1.20m with an exposed depth of 0.30m (Fig. 4). The cross-section showed a shallow V-shaped shape with the very lowest part of the feature mostly left unexcavated as it was below the level of ground reduction. It was filled with a firm light brown-grey chalky clay containing infrequent small angular fragments of flint and chalk (52). The only finds recovered from the feature were seven fragments of animal bone.

Finds

Animal Bone by Danielle Milbank

Animal bone was recovered from a single context, deposit 52, encountered in the watching brief. The overall condition was moderate, with little erosion and moderate fragmentation, however no species could be identified. Of the 7 fragments (48g), two comprise part of a large animal (cattle or horse) vertebra, with possible evidence of butchery represented by a chop mark to one end. No further information could be derived from the animal remains.

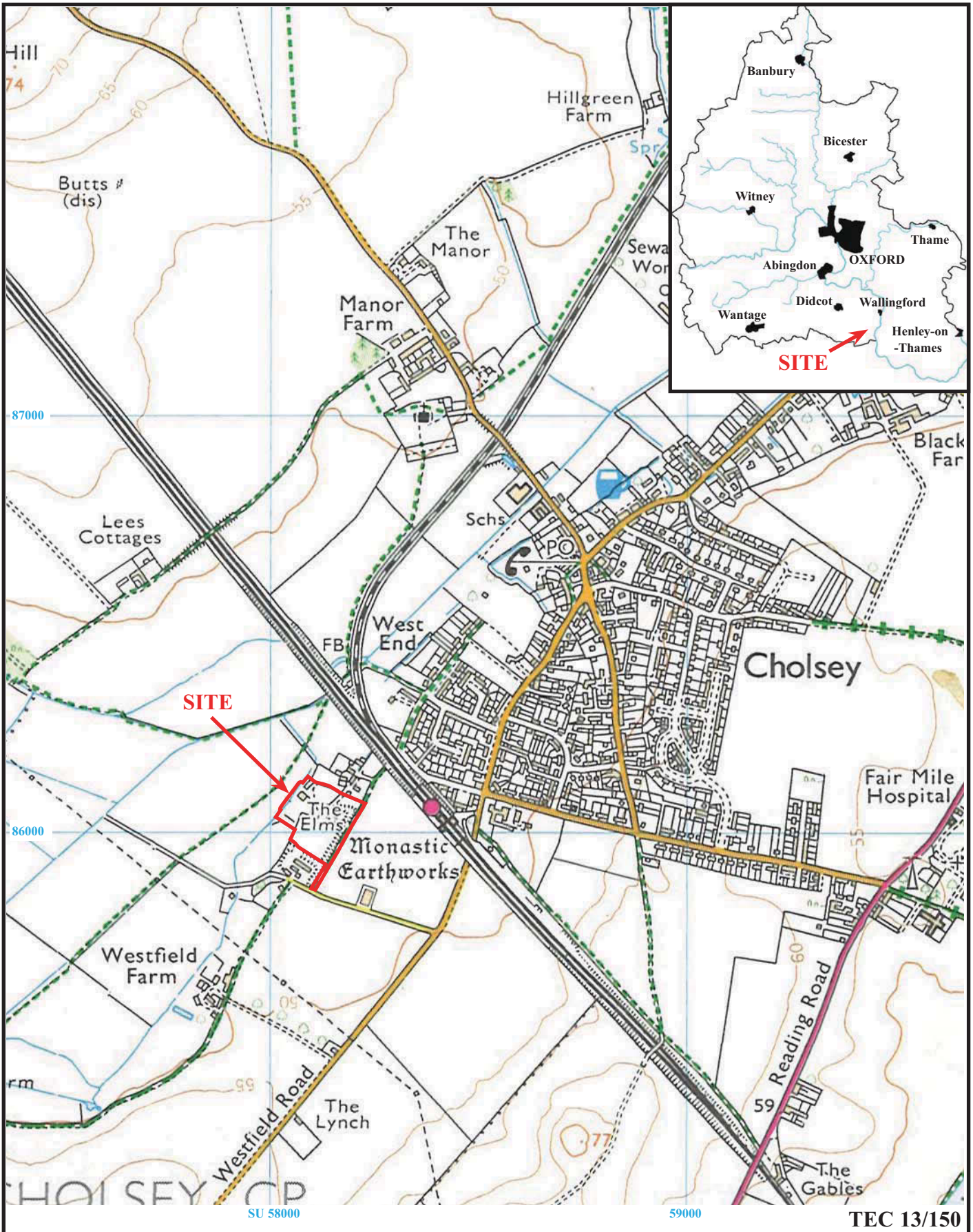
Conclusion

The ground reduction associated with the construction of a new garage and associated driveway and soakaway at The Elms uncovered a single linear feature of archaeological interest. This has been interpreted as a ditch of unknown date as the only finds recovered from its fill were small fragments of animal bone. The ground in the western half of the area of excavation was characterised by a subsoil with frequent patches of made ground

suggesting that the area might have been subject to landscaping, probably during the construction of the house, driveway and outbuildings.

References

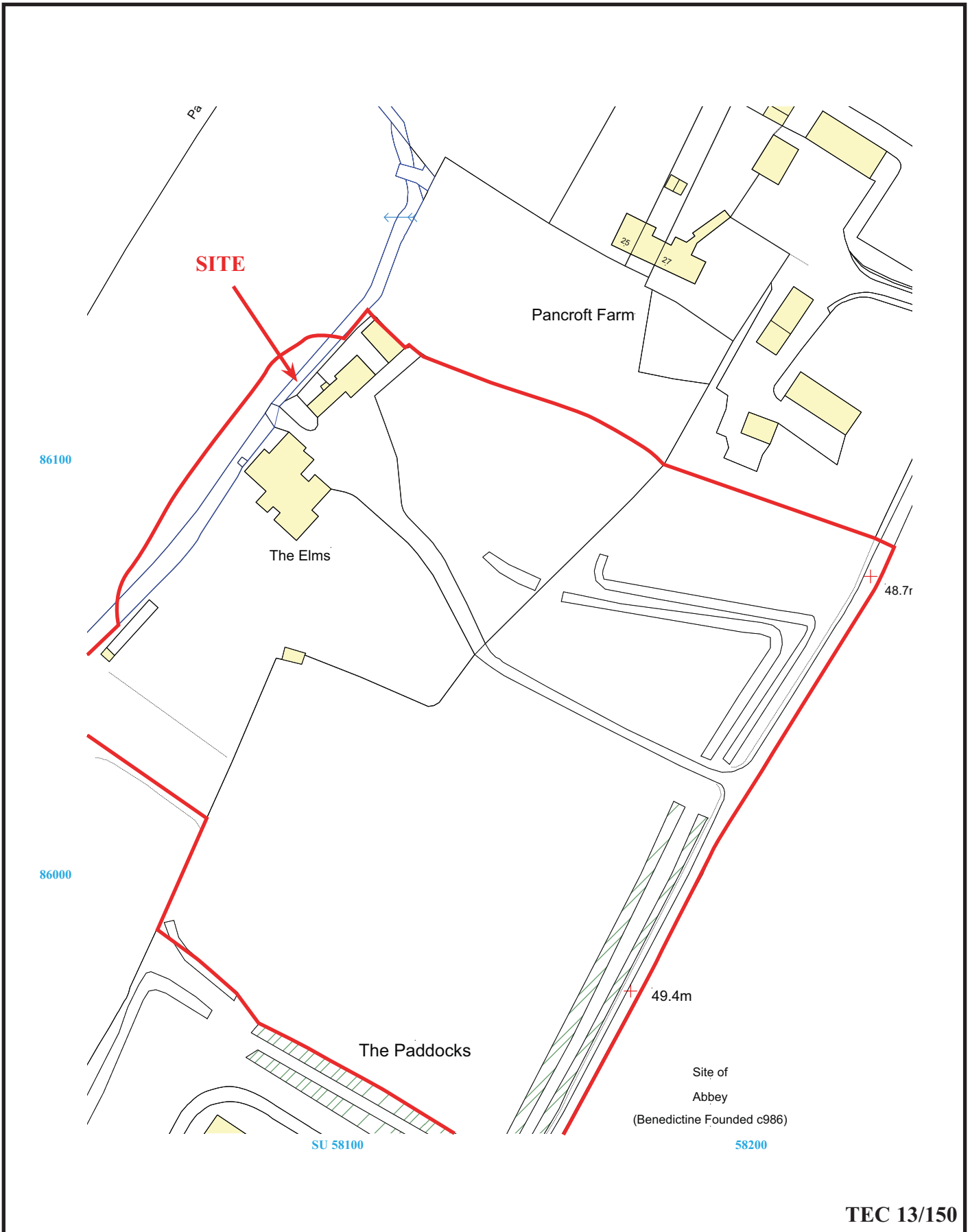
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Figure 1. Location of site within Cholsey and Oxfordshire

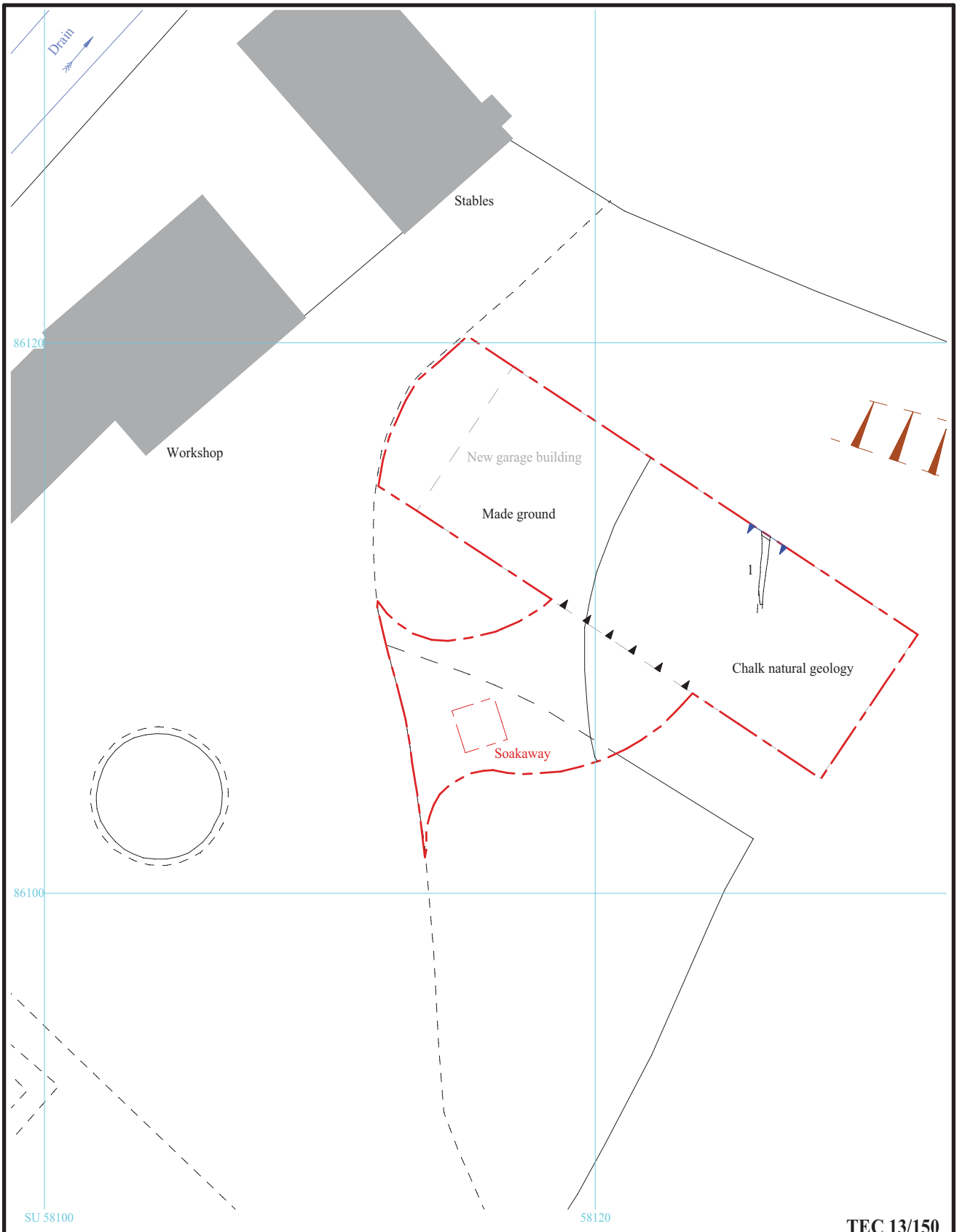
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in West End.

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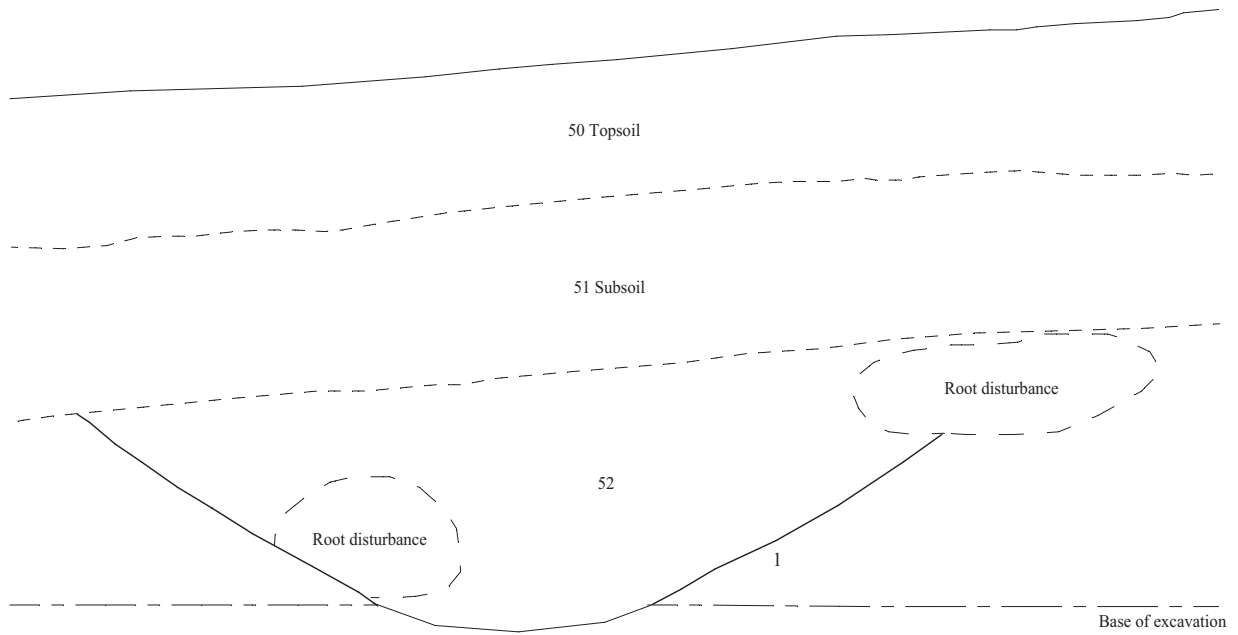
Figure 3. Plan of the garage area showing the positions of feature 1 and the soakaway.



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Figure 4. Section through ditch 1.



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Plate 1. The area of ground reduction in the garage and driveway, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Ditch 1, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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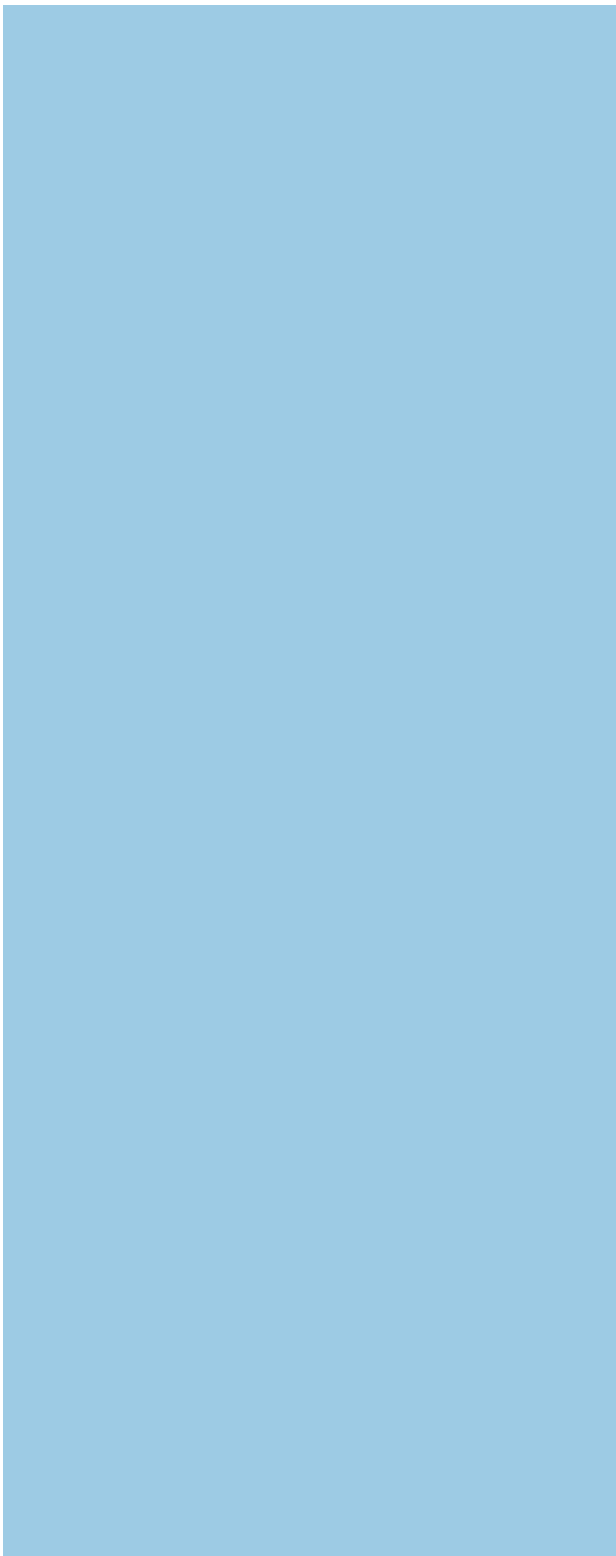
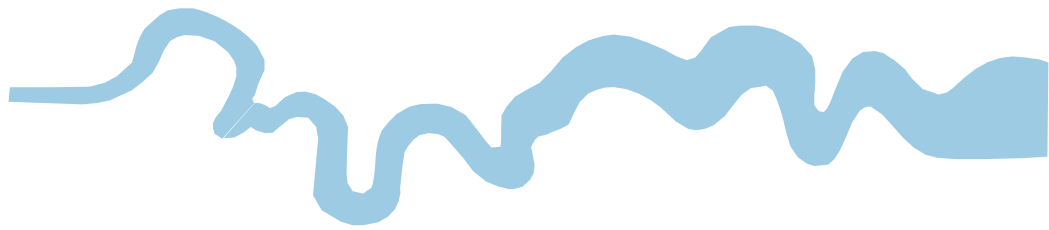
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Plates 1 - 2.

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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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