

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Land at Shrivenham Road,  
Longcot, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Susan Porter**

**Site Code: SRL13/238**

**(SU 2724 9071)**

# **Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for BPH Harwood Architects**

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SRL 13/238

**January 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 2724 9071

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 15th-17th January 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Susan Porter

**Site code:** SRL 13/238

**Area of site:** 0.38 ha

**Summary of results:** Several features of archaeological interest were encountered of predominantly Roman date, including a substantial ditch and possible paved trackway or path alongside smaller gullies, isolated pits and postholes. Pottery of medieval date was recovered from a single feature, possibly a large pit or ditch terminus, and from the trench spoilheaps.

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

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 31.01.14
	Steve Preston✓ 31.01.14

# Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 13/238

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot, Oxfordshire SU 2724 9071 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stephen Johns for BHP Harwood Architects, 114 Boston House, Grove Technology Park, Wantage, OX12 9FF. Planning permission (P132/V2085/FUL) has been sought from Vale of White Horse District council for the construction of three houses with access and parking. The results of a field investigation were requested to determine the archaeological potential of the site and to produce information to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

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 for Oxfordshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology and based on a brief supplied by him (Coddington 2013). The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter, Tim Dawson and Lizzie Lewins between 15th and 17th January 2014 and the site code is SRL 13/238. 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 is located to the north-west of Shrivenham Road on the south-west side of Church Close in the village of Longcot, in the south-west of Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The site lies at a height of approximately 94m above Ordnance Datum and is approximately 0.38ha in area, the underlying geology is recorded as Kimmeridge Clay (BGS 1974). The site is currently a rough pasture to the rear of modern housing on Shrivenham Road (Fig. 2). At the time of the fieldwork the ground was waterlogged.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2013). In summary the site lies close to the historic (medieval) core of the village, though Longcot is not mentioned in Domesday Book. To the west of the site are a number of earthworks considered to be a part of the original medieval settlement when it was much larger. The parish church of 13th-century date stands to the south-east.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This 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 be better excavated in conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project were:

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present.

To determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site.

To determine if there were later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig six trenches, each 15m long and 1.60m wide to target the footprints of the proposed new houses and access road. Topsoil and overburden was to be removed by a JCB-type machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeological layers. Where archaeological features were detected they were to be hand cleaned and excavated.

## **Results**

All six trenches were dug as intended. They ranged in length from 13.10m to 16.40m and in depth from 0.55m to 0.80m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

### Trench 1 (Figs 3-5)

Trench 1 was aligned NE–SW and was 16.40m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil above 0.32m of mid yellow grey silty clay with small stone inclusions (subsoil) overlying mottled yellow orange with bluish patches clay natural geology. Two possible features were noted, a narrow slightly curved

linear feature at 2m and a possible narrow gully at 10.30m however these were thought from appearance to be natural features and the trench was flooded before it was possible to investigate further. No finds were recovered.

#### Trench 2 (Figs 3-5; Pls 1 and 3)

Trench 2 was aligned NW–SE and was 15.40m long and 0.65m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil above 0.30m of subsoil overlying the clay natural geology.

A gully (8) was recorded which was 1.10m wide and 0.15m deep with gently sloping side and a slightly concave base and filled with a single deposit (60) comprising firm mid yellow grey sandy clay and containing seven sherds of Roman pottery.

A possible pathway consisting of two flanking ditches (3 and 5) and paved surface (58) was recorded at the south-eastern end of the trench. Flanking ditch 3 on the southern side was 0.80m wide and 0.20m deep, while a concave-based flanking ditch (5) on the northern side was a little smaller 0.40m wide and 0.21m in depth with gently sloping side and a concave base. Both flanking ditches contained a single fill comprising firm mid yellow grey sandy clay with infrequent small stone inclusions; pottery of Roman date was recovered from ditch (5).

The pathway itself (4) was 0.80m wide and 0.19m deep with a flat stone lined base (58). The paved surface (58) was formed using stones of varied size approx. 200m long, 200mm wide and 30mm thick. The surface was unfinished but the stone had clearly been laid to form as flat a surface as possible. As it survived, the stone surface was 0.28m long, 0.20m wide and 0.03m in depth although it seems likely that it would have covered the whole base of the slot (0.80m wide), unfortunately a number of paving stones were removed during excavation of the slot before their function was apparent. The stratigraphic relationships between the ditches and the surface were unclear. A single piece of undated (Roman or medieval) tile came from fill 57, above the stone surface.

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

Trench 3 was aligned SW–NE and was 14.40m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil above 0.30m of subsoil overlying clay natural geology. Three features were recorded, two roughly circular pits and a possible shallow ditch or pit.

Feature 2 was located along the side of the trench (Pl. 4) and as such its shape in plan could not be determined: it may either be a long pit or a shallow ditch. It was 0.76m wide and 0.28m deep and filled with mid grey silty clay with small angular fragments of limestone. It contained four Roman pottery sherds and five medieval sherds, along with animal bone fragments.

Pit 12 was 0.53m in width and 0.12m deep filled with medium-firm mid grey silty clay with red and yellow flecks, from which burnt flint was recovered.

Pit 14 was 0.85m wide and 0.10m deep filled with firm/ sticky dark orange grey sandy clay. No finds were recovered.

Several Roman and Medieval sherds were recovered from the spoil heaps from this trench.

#### Trench 4 (Figs 3-5)

Trench 4 was aligned NW–SE and was 15.00m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil above 0.40m of subsoil overlying clay natural geology. A gully (13) recorded at 4m from the south-east end of the trench, was 0.60m wide and 0.16m deep with sloping side and a slightly concave base and filled with firm mid yellow grey sandy clay. No finds were recovered.

#### Trench 5 (Figs 3-5)

Trench 5 was aligned WNW–ESE and was 15.70m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil above 0.29m of subsoil overlying clay natural geology. At the east end of the trench, a ditch (15) was recorded which was approximately 4m wide. A sondage 1.30m wide and 0.35m deep was dug into the northern side of the ditch. This recorded a single fill comprising light brown grey silty clay with infrequent small sub-rounded gravel and charcoal flecks. It contained five sherds of Roman pottery, and animal bone.

#### Trench 6 (Figs 3-5; Pl. 2)

Trench 6 was aligned NW–SE and was 13.10m long and 0.80m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil above 0.50m of subsoil overlying clay natural geology. Several features were recorded.

Posthole 6 was 0.36m across but only 0.05m deep with a single fill comprising firm light-mid brown grey clayey silt with charcoal flecks. No finds were recovered. Posthole 10 was 0.50m across and 0.05m deep also with a single fill of firm light-mid brown grey clayey silt with charcoal flecks. It contained a fragment of fired clay. Posthole 10 was cut by pit 9.

Pit 7 was 0.76m across and 0.15m deep. It contained a fill of mid brown grey clayey silt with charcoal flecks.

Pit 9 was 0.80m across and 0.15m deep also with a single fill comprising mid brown grey clayey silt with charcoal flecks. One sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from pit 9.

Gully 11, extending beyond the trench, was also investigated, it was 0.26m wide and 0.13m deep with a flat base and uneven sides filled with firm light brown grey silty clay, no finds were recovered.

Feature 1 was 0.74m wide and 0.07m deep and filled with friable mid brown grey clayey silt with charcoal, and a single sherd of Roman date.. However, this feature is considered to be a treebole.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 45 sherds with a total weight of 743g. It consisted of a mixture of Roman and medieval wares, and was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Booth unpub.; Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994), as follows:

#### Roman

**E13.** Late Iron Age/early Roman Organic and Grog-tempered Wares. 8 sherds, 270g.

**O20.** Miscellaneous Sandy Oxidized Ware. 3 sherds, 8g.

**R30:** Miscellaneous Medium/fine Sandy Grey Wares. 24 sherds, 357g.

#### Medieval

**OXBF:** North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 9 sherds, 91g.

**OXAM:** Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 17g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The sherds are all generally in good condition and appear reliably stratified.

### *Animal Bone* by Danielle Milbank

A modest assemblage of animal bone was recovered from five contexts. Twelve fragments were present for analysis, weighing a total of 368g (Appendix 4). Overall the remains are moderately well preserved, with little surface erosion, and the bones are fragmented to varying degrees. Where possible, the remains are identified by species, otherwise the elements are categorised by size, with ‘medium-sized’ comprising sheep/goat, pig and deer-sized animals. No small animal species were recovered.

Cattle animals were represented by a right metatarsal from ditch 5 (59) and a further metapodial from pit/ditch 2 (52), though both proximal and distal ends were damaged so it could not be established which side of the animal it was derived from. Feature 2 (52) also contained a cattle right femur head.

The remaining fragments were too small to be identified to species, although a fragment of long bone from trackway 4 (57) is likely to represent a piece of long bone from a medium-sized animal.



## *Ceramic building material* by Danielle Milbank

A single fragment of tile was recovered from trackway 4 (57) which is red in colour, and of a fine sandy fabric with small occasional groggy inclusions. It is not closely dateable and may be of medieval or post-medieval date although a Roman date is possible.

## **Conclusion**

A total of 15 certain and possible features of archaeological interest were recorded from five of the six evaluation trenches dug. These comprise shallow pits and postholes, and linear features. One of the features (pit or ditch 2) contained medieval pottery and is therefore at least of medieval or later date. However, several of the other features contained only Roman pottery. Some of these contained only single sherds and these finds could easily be residual but others contained several sherds, suggesting that they may be of Roman date.

The paved surface with what appear to be flanking ditches in Trench 2 may be related to feature 2 in Trench 3, or may pass just south of this trench. The presence of Roman pottery in one of the flanking ditches and in the fill overlying the stone paving suggests a Roman date for the trackway but the tile from above the surface could be medieval and if ditch 2 is the continuation of ditch 5, then a medieval date is more likely at least for the ditch.

## **References**

- BGS, 1974, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 252, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Booth, P, unpub, 'Oxford Archaeology Roman pottery recording guidelines (revised 2006)', Oxford
- Coddington, H 2013, 'Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot; Design Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation', Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service, Oxford
- Mellor, M and Oakley, G, 1984, 'A summary of the key assemblages, a study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century', in T G Hassall, C E Halpin and M Mellor, 'Excavations in St Ebbe's, Oxford, 1967–1976: Part II: Post-medieval domestic tenements and the Post-Dissolution site of the Greyfriars', *Oxoniensia*, **49**, 181–211
- Mellor, M, 1994, 'Oxfordshire Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 17–217
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

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

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	16.40	1.80	0.60	0–0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.53m mid yellow grey silty clay with small stone inclusions subsoil; 0.53+m mottled yellow orange with bluish patches clay natural geology.
2	15.40	1.80	0.65	0–0.30m topsoil (with some brick inclusions); 0.30-0.60m subsoil; 0.60+m clay natural geology. Features (3, 4, 5 and 8). <b>[Pls 1 and 3]</b>
3	14.40	1.80	0.55	0–0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.50m subsoil; 0.50+m clay natural geology. Features (2, 12 and 14). <b>[Pl. 4]</b>
4	15.00	1.80	0.70	0–0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.60m subsoil; 0.60+m clay natural geology. Feature (13).
5	15.70	1.80	0.70	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.64m subsoil; 0.64+m clay natural geology. Feature (15).
6	13.10	1.80	0.80	0–0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.75m subsoil; 0.75+m clay natural geology. Features (6, 7,9,10 and 11), treebole (1) <b>[Pl. 2]</b>

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

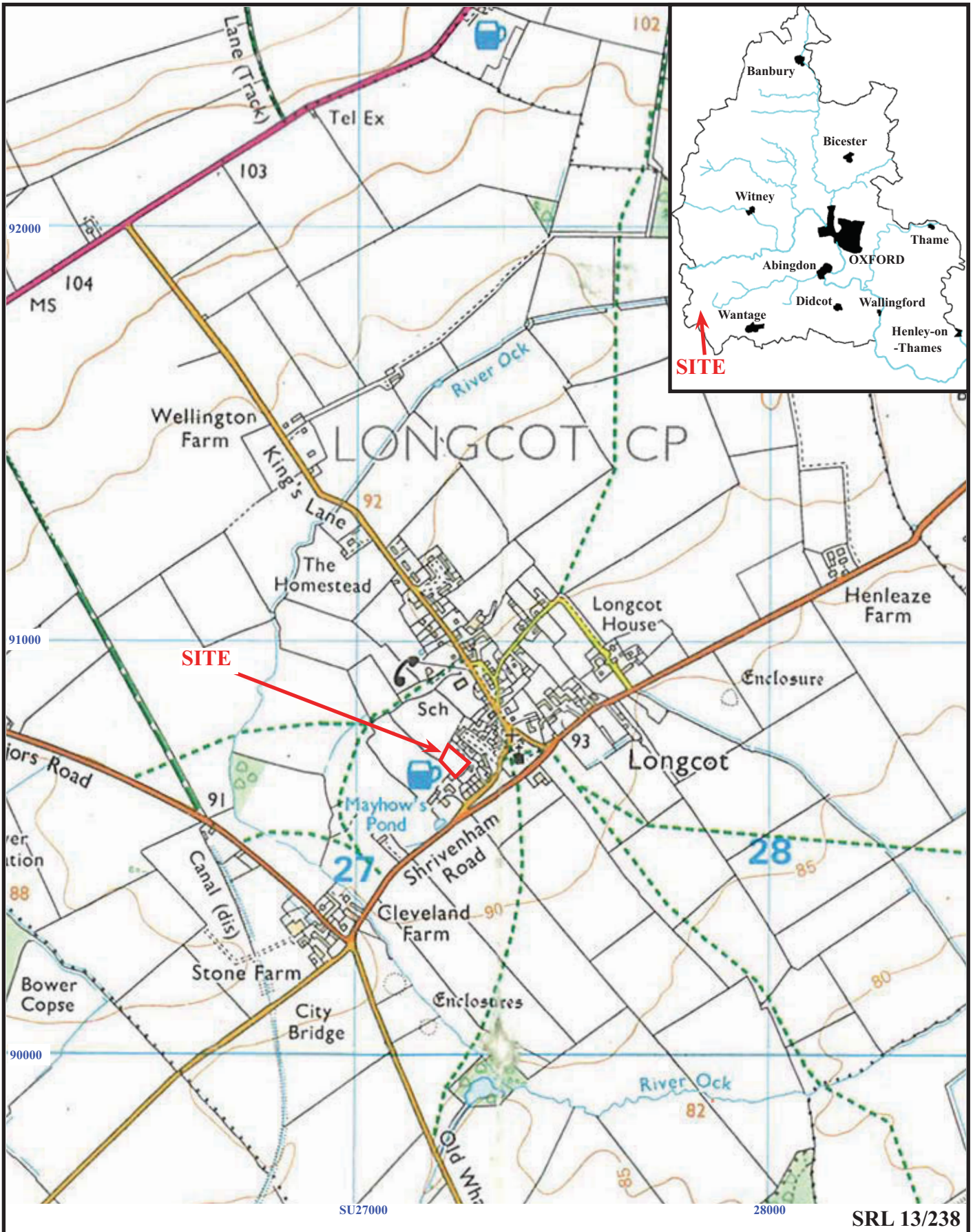
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
6	1	53	(Treebole)		Roman pottery
3	2	52	Shallow Ditch/ long pit	Medieval	Roman and Medieval pottery
2	3	56	Ditch		
2	4	57, 58	Trackway?	Roman?	Roman pottery
2	5	59	Ditch		
6	6	54	Posthole		
6	7	55	Pit		
2	8	60	Gully	Roman	Roman pottery
6	9	61	Pit	Roman?	Roman pottery
6	10	62	Posthole		
6	11	63	Gully		
3	12	64	Pit		
4	13	65	Gully		
3	14	66	Pit		
5	15	67	Ditch	Roman	Roman pottery

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

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<b>E13</b>		<b>O20</b>		<b>R30</b>		<b>OXBF</b>		<b>OXAM</b>	
			<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</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		spoil	-	-	-	-	3	59	-	-	-	-
2	4	57	1	166	1	3	7	126	-	-	-	-
2	8	60	-	-	-	-	7	115	-	-	-	-
3		spoil	4	92	-	-	1	9	5	53	-	-
3	2	52	1	6	-	-	3	14	4	38	1	17
5	15	67	2	6	2	5	1	1	-	-	-	-
6	1	53	-	-	-	-	1	32	-	-	-	-
6	9	61	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
		Total	8	270	3	8	24	357	9	91	1	17

**APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of bone**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>No Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Medium-sized</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>
3	2	52	Ditch / Pit		4	212	2	-	2
3	2	52	Ditch / Pit	1	2	2	-	-	2
2	4	57	Trackway		2	20	-	1	1
2	5	59	Ditch		1	132	1	-	
5	15	67	Ditch		3	2	-	-	3



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Figure 1. Location of site within Longcot and Oxfordshire

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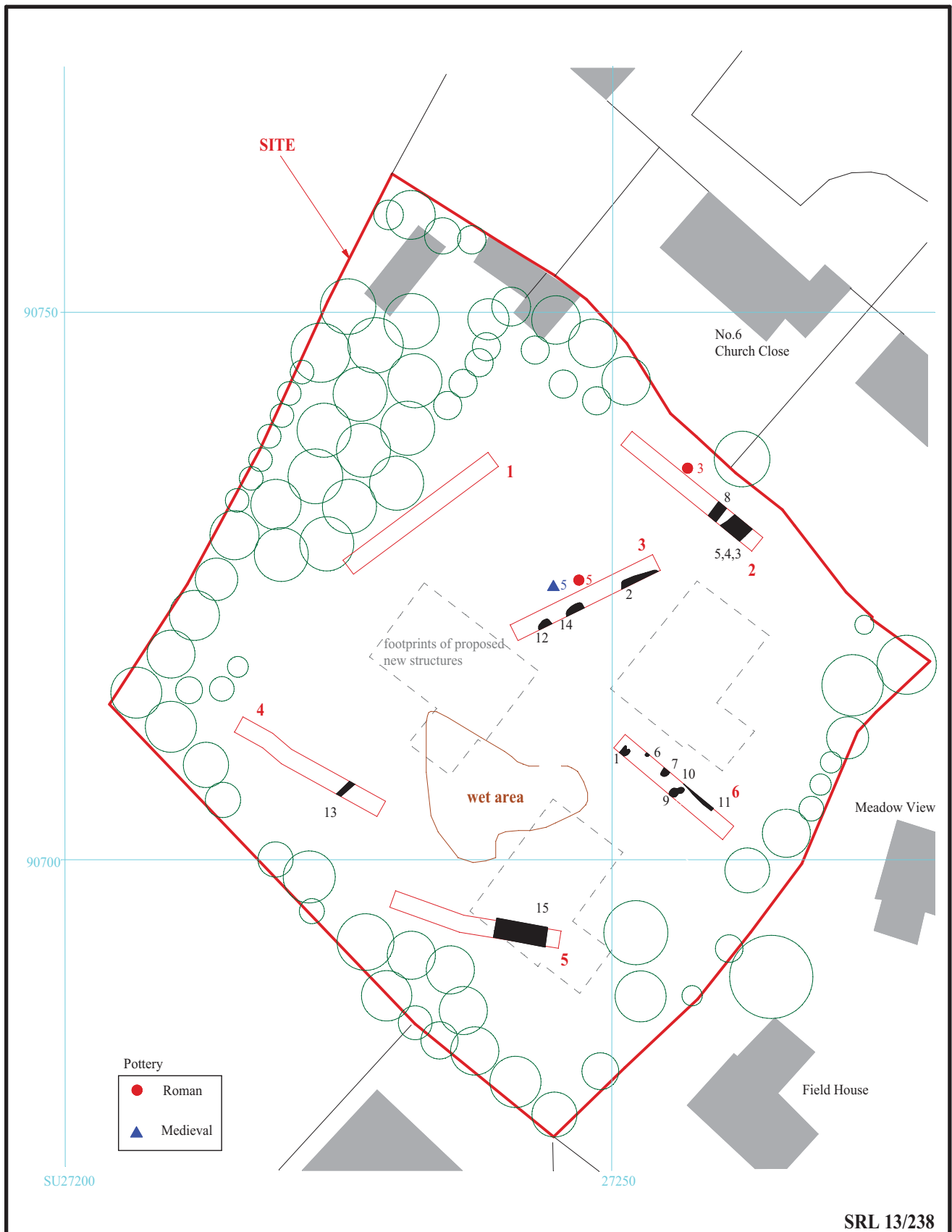


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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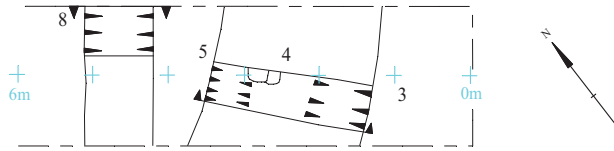
**Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot,  
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Figure 3. Location of trenches showing features and pottery stray finds.

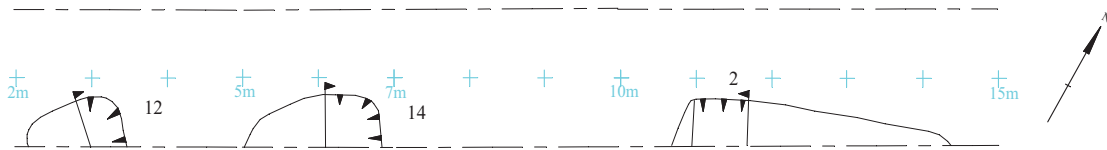




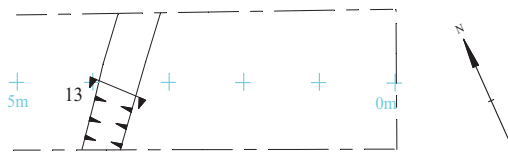
Trench 2



Trench 3



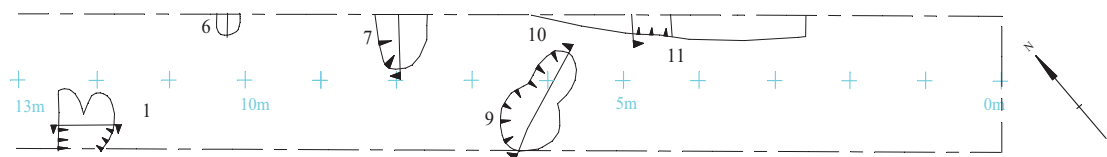
Trench 4



Trench 5



Trench 6



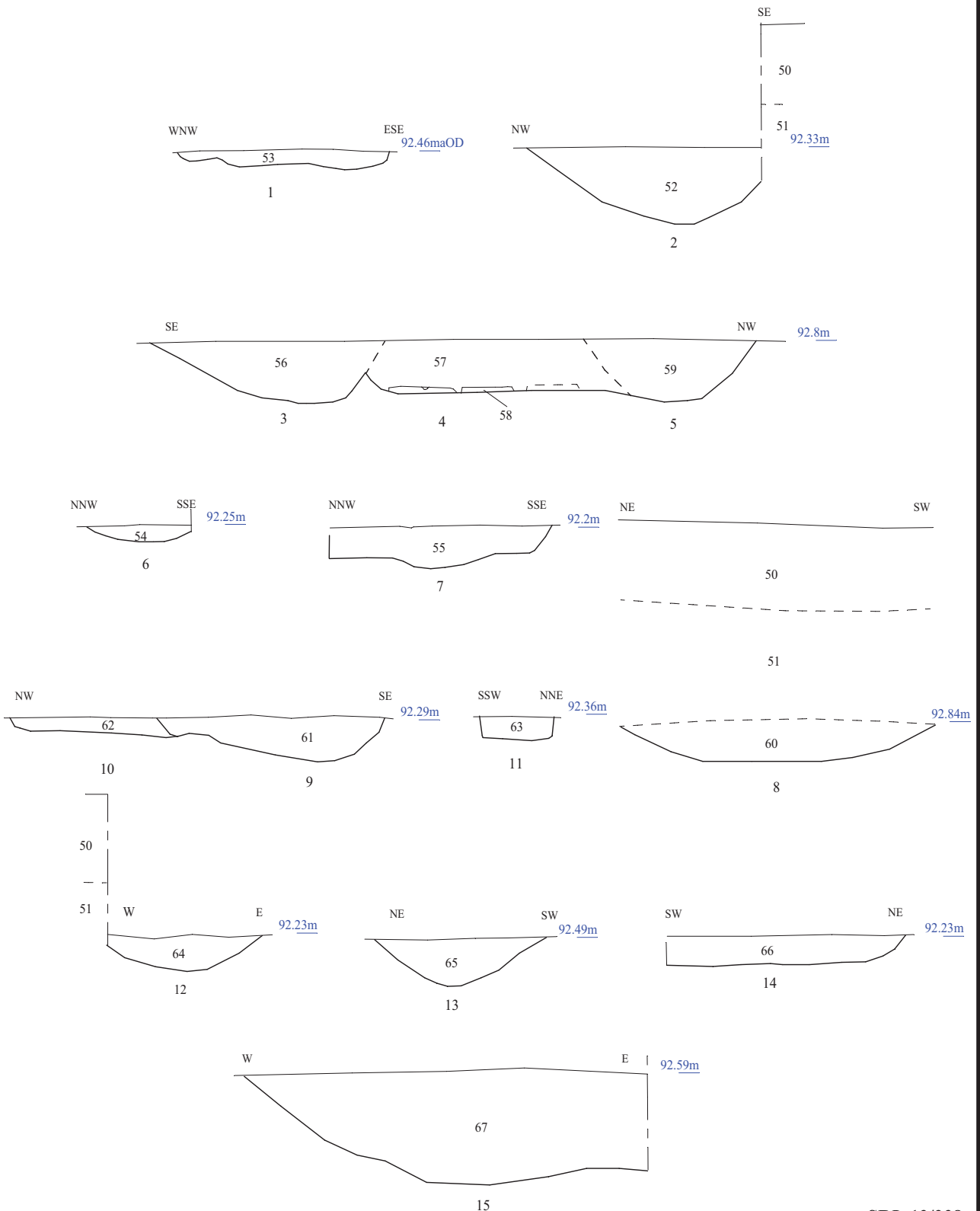
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Figure 4. Detail of features.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 2, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 6, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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**Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot,  
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 2, Features 3,4 and 5, looking south west, Scales: 2m, 0.3 and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Trench 3, Feature 2, looking north east, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

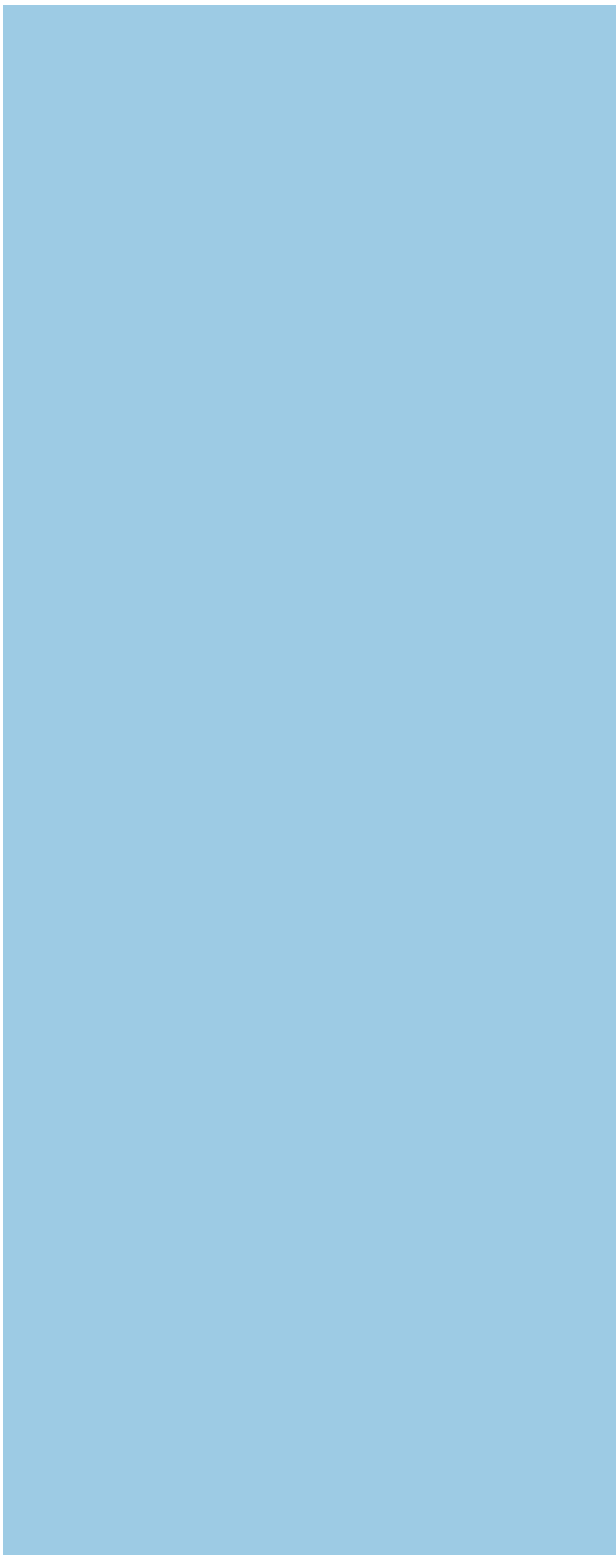
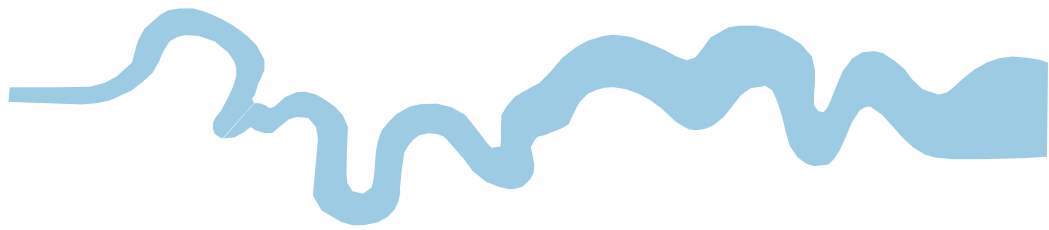
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Land at Shrivenham Road, Longcot,  
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Plates 3 - 4.

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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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