

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Willow Farm, Abingdon Road,  
Marcham, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Susan Porter**

**Site Code: WFM14/45**

**(SU 4588 9654)**

**Willow Farm, Abingdon Road,  
Marcham, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Pye Homes Group**

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WFM 14/45

**March 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Willow Farm, Abingdon Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4588 9654

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 19th–24th March 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Susan Porter

**Site code:** WFM 14/45

**Area of site:** 2.5ha

**Summary of results:** A single sherd of Roman pottery (samian) was recovered, but no deposits of archaeological interest were encountered. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 25.03.14
	Steve Preston ✓ 25.03.14

# Willow Farm, Abingdon Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 14/45

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Willow Farm, Abingdon Road, Marcham, Oxfordshire (SU4588 9654) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stuart Wight, of Pye Homes Group, Langford Locks, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 1HZ.

Planning permission (app no: P13/V2731/O) has been sought from Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of 54 new houses with access and associated parking on a 2.5ha parcel of land at Willow Farm. As part of the planning application, an archaeological evaluation was requested to determine if the site has archaeological potential and so inform the planning process with regards to the archaeological implications of the proposed development and if appropriate produce information to help devise a scheme to mitigate any such impact.

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 Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter, Tom Stewart and Lizzie Lewins between 19th and 24th March 2014 and the site code is WFM 14/45. 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 on the south side of Abingdon Road at the eastern extent of Marcham village c.20km west of Abingdon (Fig 1). The site is currently used as pasture with a number of animal enclosures and trees present and buildings in the south-eastern and north-eastern corners. (Fig 2). A substantial stream crosses the site to the south and continues up part of the western boundary. The site lies at a height of c.56m AOD and the underlying geology is described as Alluvium (BGS 1971), however greensand was observed in most of the trenches, with higher clay patches.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the area was highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2014). To summarize, Marcham, originally in Berkshire, has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002) and in an earlier charter of King Edgar (VCH 1924, 354–5); however the site lies at some distance to the south east of the historic core of the settlement, with the parish church around 700m to the north-west. To the north of the site (north of Packhorse Lane) archaeological evaluations have recorded a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery along with evidence for Iron Age and Roman settlement, the deposits of which may extend south into the area of the proposal site. The wider area of Marcham is archaeologically rich with a wealth of Iron age and Roman deposits at Garford and Frilford to the west including a temple and amphitheatre complex with Iron Age occupation and burials to the south west (Hart *et al* 2012). Recent archaeological work at Wantage Road, Garford revealed substantial ditches containing mixed assemblages of pre-historic pottery alongside a number of features which were of pre-historic, Roman and medieval date (Mundin 2011, Porter 2014). The Priory to the west is a 16th-century building.

## **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 under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were;

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any pre-historic occupation or landscape features were present on the site; and
- to determine if there were later pre-historic, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig 18 trenches, 20m long and 1.60m wide located across the site in a stratified random pattern. A contingency of 150m of trench was included should it have been required to clarify the results of initial findings.

Topsoil and overburden was excavated using a JCB type machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeologically relevant levels. This took place under constant archaeological supervision. Where

features and/ or deposits of archaeological interest were observed they were to be hand cleaned and sample excavated to satisfy the terms of the brief.

## **Results**

All 18 trenches were dug as intended, however due to various land divisions several had to be moved slightly from their intended positions, but every effort was made to stay as close to the intended location as possible. The trenches ranged in length from 15.30m to 26.20m and in depth from 0.29m to 0.65m.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

### Trench 1 (Fig. 3; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned north–south and was 17.80m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.13m of topsoil and 0.17m yellow grey sandy gravel made ground, overlying 0.30m light grey brown silty clay subsoil overlying light brown orange clay natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

### Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was aligned NW–SE and was 17.40m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.12m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.19m yellow grey clayey sand, overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

### Trenches 3 and 4 (Figs 3, and 4; Pls 2 and 4)

Trench 3 was aligned east–west and was 21.40m long and 0.46m deep. Trench 4 was aligned north west – south east and was 22.90m long and 0.34m deep. Both trenches had stratigraphy consisting of 0.17–18m of topsoil and respectively 0.29m and 0.16m light grey brown silty clay subsoil overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

### Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned SW–NE and was 23.80m long and 0.65m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.28m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.19m dark brown grey silty clay, which in turn overlay light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trenches 6 and 7 (Fig. 3, Pl. 3)

Trench 6 was aligned north–south and was 21.50m long and 0.51m deep. Trench 7 was aligned SW–NE and was 19.60m long and 0.45m deep. Both trenches had stratigraphy comprising 0.19–0.22m topsoil and 0.13–0.16m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.13m yellow grey clayey sand, overlying light yellow grey silty sand with limestone fragments natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trenches 8, 9 and 10 (Figs 3 and 4)

Trench 8 was aligned close to north–south and was 22.20m long and 0.60m deep. Trenches 9 and 10 were aligned east – west and were 22m and 17.50m long and 0.55m and 0.42m deep respectively. The three trenches had stratigraphy comprising 0.22m topsoil and between 0.20 – 0.38m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trench 11 (Fig. 3)

Trench 11 was aligned north–south and was 20.05m long and 0.62m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil and 0.15m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.08m mid orange brown silty clay, which in turn overlay 0.22m very dark grey brown silty clay, overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trench 12 (Fig. 3; PL. 3)

Trench 12 was aligned east–west and was 17.10m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.09m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.20m light grey silty clay, which in turn overlay light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered; however a single unstratified piece of Roman pottery was recovered from the subsoil.

#### Trench 13 (Fig. 3)

Trench 13 was aligned east–west and was 22.50m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.11m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying 0.17m light orange brown clay, which in turn overlay light orange brown clayey sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trench 14 (Fig. 3)

Trench 14 was aligned SW–NE and was 15.30m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of topsoil and 0.31m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trench 15 (Fig. 3)

Trench 15 was aligned SW–NE and was 26.20m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.21m, light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying light orange grey sandy clay natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

#### Trenches 16, 17 and 18 (Fig. 3; Pl. 4)

Trench 16 was aligned close to east–west and was 20.60m long and 0.29m deep. Trenches 17 and 18 were aligned north–south and were 21.71m and 26.20m long and 0.37m and 0.42m deep respectively. The three trenches had stratigraphy comprising between 0.20 – 0.30m topsoil and between 0.09 – 0.12m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, overlying light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Susan Porter*

A single shed of unstratified Roman pottery was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 12. The sherd weighs 16g and is a plain samian ware rim sherd most likely from a bowl, possibly a late 2nd-century Dr. 31 type. The fabric was pinkish in colour with a waxy slip, likely to be from one of the central Gaulish workshops. Although it is in good condition, as a single unstratified sherd this piece cannot be taken as indicative of Roman activity on the site.

## **Conclusion**

Although the wider area of Marcham is recorded as being archaeologically rich, with Iron Age and Roman deposits recorded in Garford and Frilford the evaluation revealed no deposits of archaeological interest. Observation of the nature of the natural geology however may give an indication as to the nature of the site in antiquity. The greensand natural geology observed in most of the trenches was very soft with dark patches, a number of which were investigated and found to be of natural origin, most likely a result of water activity within



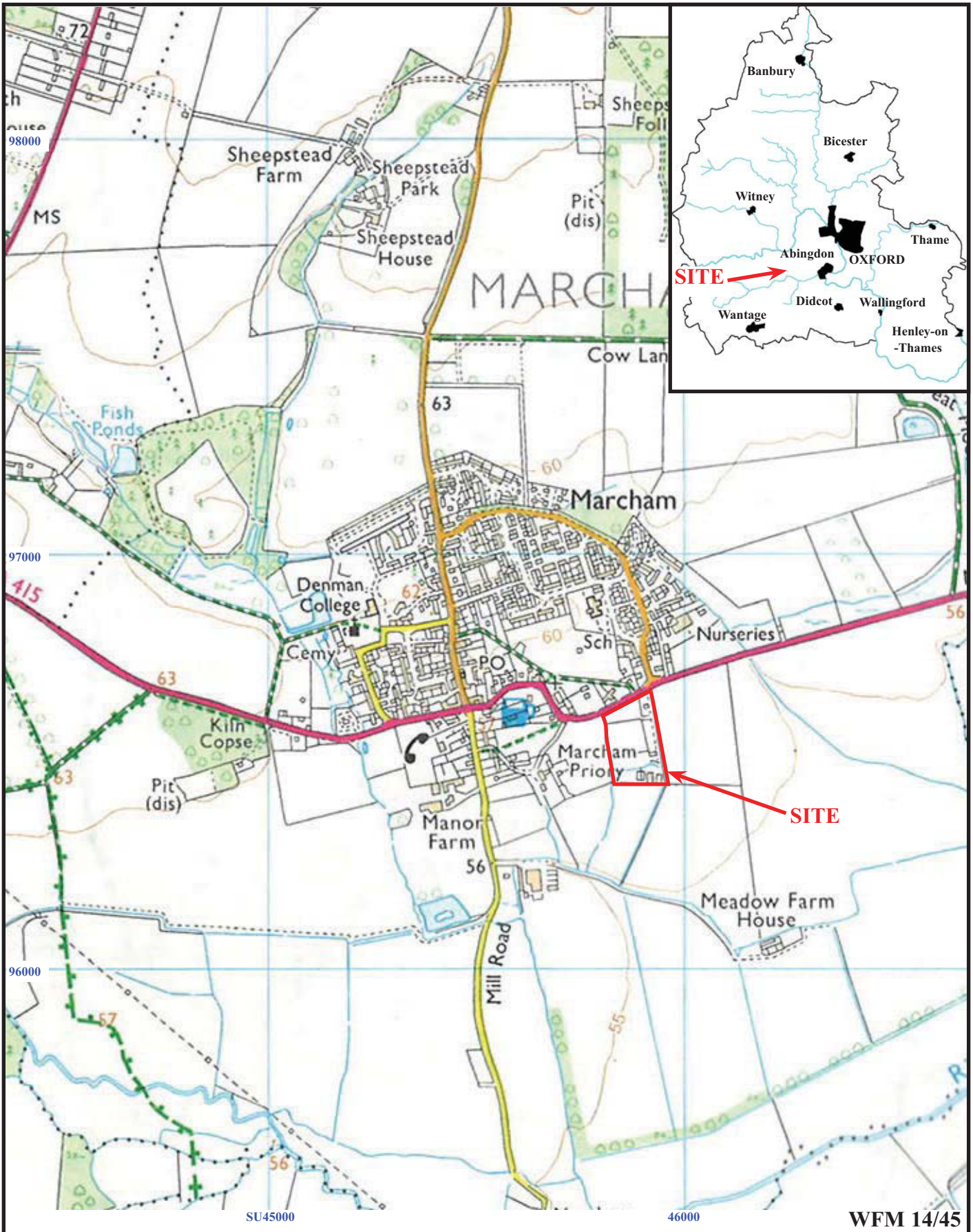
a region of marshy land. Some higher patches of natural geology were formed of much harder orange brown clay and it seems possible that the area has been a marshland since antiquity with the higher patches of natural geology perhaps acting as small islands, although no archaeological evidence was found to suggest use of these higher mounds of dry land within the marsh. The results of this archaeological evaluation found no deposits of archaeological interest, and whilst pottery was recovered this was redeposited and cannot be taken as indicative of activity. The site therefore appears to have very little archaeological potential.

## 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	17.80	1.60	0.66	0–0.13m topsoil; 0.13–0.30m yellow grey sandy gravel made ground; 0.30–0.60m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.60+m light brown orange sandy clay natural geology. <b>[Pl. 1]</b>
2	17.40	1.60	0.52	0–0.21m topsoil; 0.21–0.33m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.33–0.52m yellow grey clayey sand; 0.52+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. <b>[Pl. 4]</b>
3	21.40	1.60	0.46	0–0.17m topsoil; 0.17–0.46m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.46+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. <b>[Pl. 2]</b>
4	22.90	1.60	0.34	0–0.18m topsoil; 0.18–0.34m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.34+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
5	23.80	1.60	0.65	0–0.18m topsoil; 0.18–0.46m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.46–0.65m dark brown grey silty clay; 0.65+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
6	21.50	1.60	0.51	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.38m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.38–0.51m light yellow grey clay sand; 0.51+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
7	19.60	1.60	0.45	0–0.19m topsoil; 0.19–0.32m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.32+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
8	22.20	1.60	0.60	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.60m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.60+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
9	22.00	1.60	0.55	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.55m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.55+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
10	17.50	1.60	0.42	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.42m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.42+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
11	20.05	1.60	0.62	0–0.17m topsoil; 0.17–0.32m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.32–0.40m mid orange brown silty clay 0.40–0.62m very dark grey brown silty clay; 0.62+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. <b>[Pl. 3]</b>
12	17.10	1.60	0.52	0–0.23m topsoil; 0.23–0.32m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.32–0.52m light grey silty clay 0.52+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and a single piece of unstratified Roman pottery recovered from subsoil.
13	22.50	1.60	0.50	0–0.22m topsoil; 0.22–0.33m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.33–0.50m light orange brown clay 0.50+m light orange brown clayey sand natural geology.
14	15.30	1.60	0.45	0–0.14m topsoil; 0.14–0.45m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.45+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
15	26.20	1.60	0.43	0–0.22m topsoil, 0.22–0.43m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, 0.43+m light orange grey sandy clay natural geology.
16	20.60	1.60	0.29	0–0.20m topsoil, 0.20–0.29m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, 0.29+m light yellow grey silty sand natural geology.
17	21.70	1.60	0.37	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25–0.37m light grey brown silty clay subsoil, 0.37+m light orange grey sandy clay natural geology.
18	26.20	1.60	0.42	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30–0.42m light grey brown silty clay subsoil; 0.42+m light orange grey sandy clay natural geology.

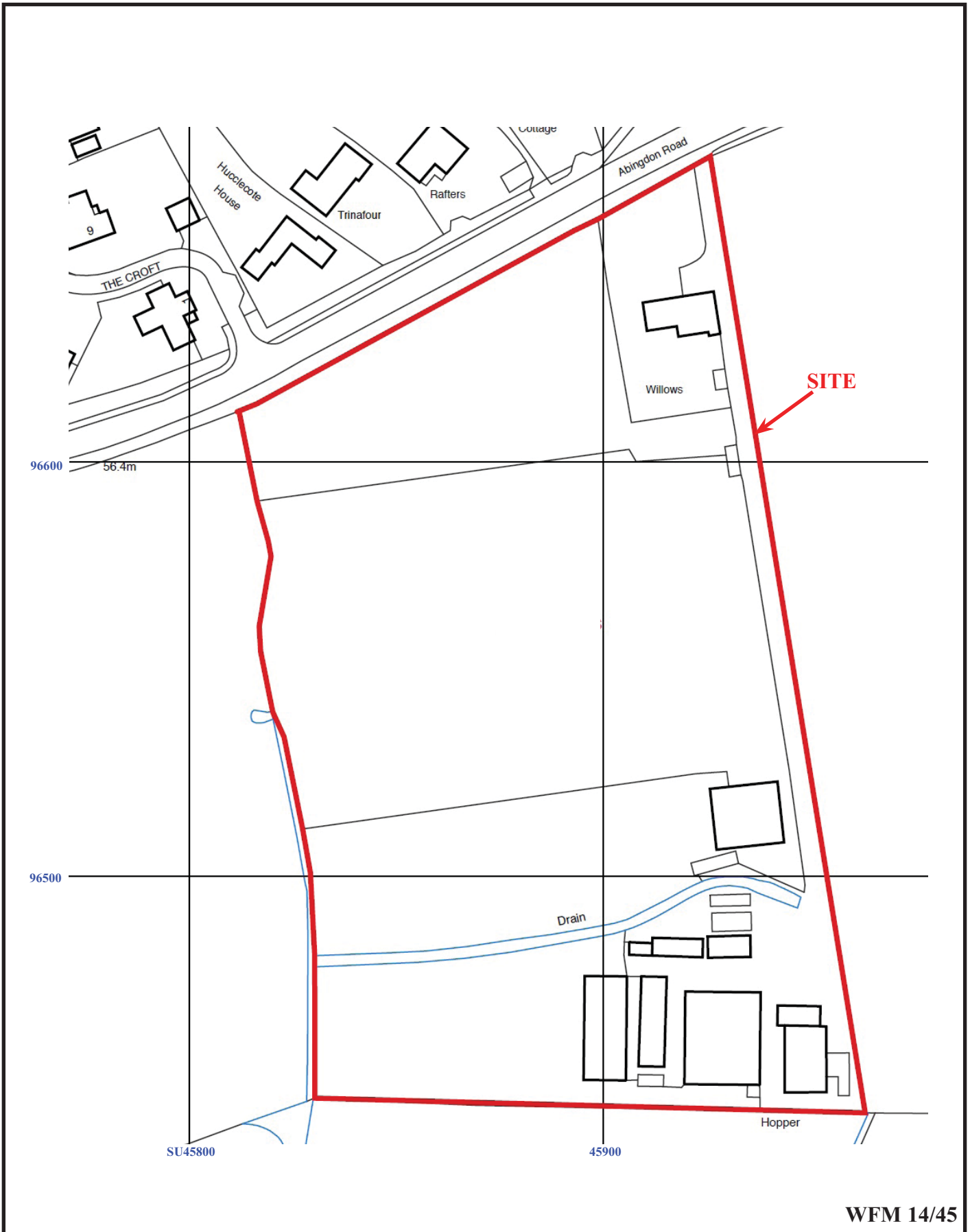


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Figure 1. Location of site within Marcham and Oxfordshire

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off the Abingdon Road (A415).

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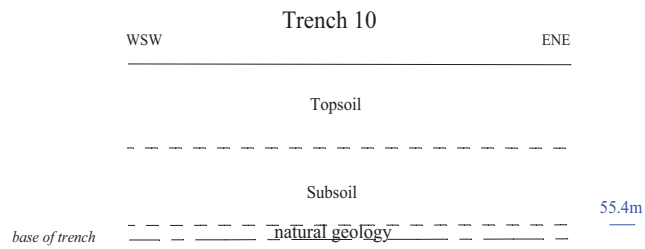
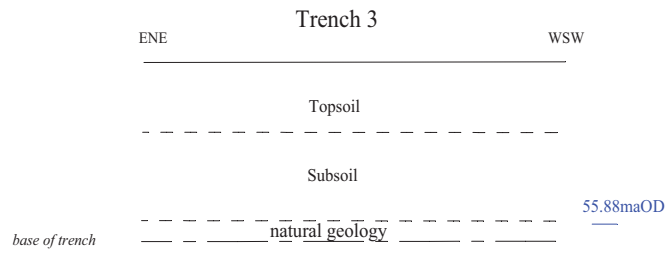
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



0 100m

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Figure 4. Representative sections.





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



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. General view of Trench 11 looking north



Plate 4. Trench 2, Section looking south west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 3 - 4.**

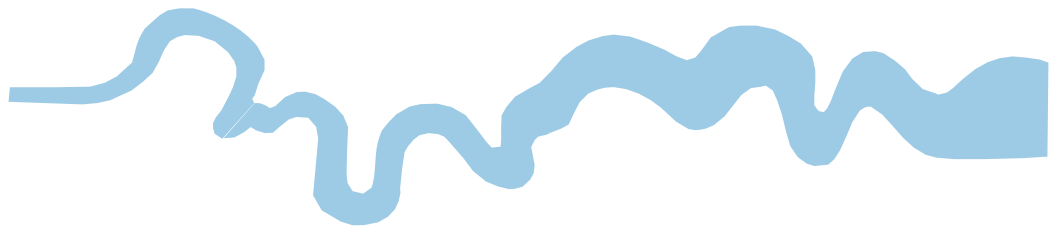
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## TIME CHART

	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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