

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Land off Huntercombe Lane South,  
Burnham, Slough, Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Aiji Castle**

**Site Code: WLS12/150**

**(SU 9335 8082)**

# **Land off Huntercombe Lane South, Burnham, Slough, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For CgMs Consulting**

by Aiji Castle

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WLS 12/150

**May 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land off Huntercombe Lane South, Burnham, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SU 9335 8082

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 24th March – 29th April 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Aiji Castle

**Site code:** WLS12/150

**Area of site:** two areas of 750sq m and 3150sq m

**Summary of results:** The fieldwork monitored the initial excavations of two infiltration ponds. The larger pond revealed a number of undated gullies and a single early post-medieval ditch.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in due course with Buckinghamshire Museum 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 ✓ 12.05.14 Steve Preston ✓ 12.05.14
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# Land off Huntercombe Lane South, Burnham, Slough, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle

**Report 12/150c**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land at the old Wyeth Pharmaceuticals site, Huntercombe Lane South, Burnham, Slough, Buckinghamshire (SU 9335 8082) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Suzanne Gailey, of CgMs Consulting, 140 London Wall, London, EC2Y 5DN on behalf of Taylor Wimpey West London, Stratfield House, Station Road, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9PQ.

Planning permission (12/01395/FUL) has been granted by South Buckinghamshire District Council for a drainage scheme to serve the separate residential development located in Berkshire to the north. The fieldwork has been guided by *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010) and the District's policies on archaeology. It is acknowledged that PPS5 has been superseded by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Eliza Alqassar, of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, archaeological adviser to South Buckinghamshire council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aiji Castle, Steven Crabb and Genni Elliott between the 24th March- 29th April 2014 and the site code is WLS12/150. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located approximately 1.5km south of Burnham with Cippenham directly to the east and Huntercombe Manor to the south (Fig. 1). The site is located within the grounds of the former Wyeth Lab complex, its buildings located immediately to the west (Fig. 2). Initially the site was heavily landscaped and decoratively wooded with multiple trees removed prior to development. The site is bounded by a new residential development to the north and the M4 Huntercombe spur to the east. The River Thames is approximately 1.25km to the south. The site lies at a height of 23m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is recorded as Shepperton gravel deposit (BGS 2005). This geology was observed during the watching brief.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site had been highlighted in a desk-based assessment for the project (Chadwick 2011). In summary the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wealth of sites and finds of all periods recorded. A large number of Palaeolithic artefacts have been found during gravel extractions at various sites in Taplow and Slough, and to the east, extensive excavations at Cippenham have revealed Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval occupation (Taylor 2012). Further extensive prehistoric and Roman occupation has been recorded to the south west (Allen *et al.* 2004). A previous evaluation on the site produced four flint flakes of possible Neolithic/Bronze Age date and several undated linear features, possibly prehistoric (OA 1993). The archaeological potential of the site has been further determined by the results of a field evaluation and recording action on the residential component of the site to the north (OA 1993; Bray 2012; 2013). The evaluation revealed the presence of a modest volume of deposits of archaeological interest on the site, several of which had been previously identified, and it is considered that these features represent field boundaries. The recording action confirmed the results of the evaluation and revealed a ring gully enclosure, the form of which suggests a likely Iron Age date. None of the features, however, produced dating evidence.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved examination of groundworks associated with the excavation of the proposed infiltration ponds.

The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present; and

to determine whether archaeological deposits relating to the Iron Age settlement were present.

The infiltration pond sites were initially stripped of topsoil by a 360° type excavator using a toothed bucket. A graded ditching bucket was then fitted to remove subsoil and reach the archaeologically relevant horizon, under constant archaeological supervision. A small dumper removed the spoil from site and was not allowed to track over the stripped surface. Initially a single bucket width strip following the limits of excavation took place to determine the placement of the pond banks. The internal areas of the ponds were then excavated to the archaeologically relevant levels.

## Results

### *Infiltration pond 1 (Fig. 2, Pl. 1)*

This pond was stripped to an area of approximately 750 sq m including the initial bank trenching. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m topsoil under which lay 0.48m of light brown-grey sandy-silt subsoil. The natural yellow-red gravel was reached at a depth of 0.62m. A metre wide feature was noted running east-west across site. Closer investigation revealed this to be a modern drainage trench leading to a soakaway filled with modern bricks, breeze blocks and plastic. No archaeological features were observed within this area.

### *Infiltration pond 2 (Figs 2 and 3, Pls 2-4)*

As with the first pond, the outer bank strip was undertaken first before the interior was excavated. It had a final area of 3150 sq m. The stratigraphy observed was very similar to that in pond 1, namely 0.15m of topsoil overlying 0.45m of light brown-grey sandy-silt subsoil. The natural gravel was reached at 0.60m. At the far south of the area a meandering gully (18) was observed aligned roughly east-west (Pl. 3). Hand excavation revealed it to be 0.80m wide and 0.26m deep, with straight sides and a slightly rounded concave base. It was filled with an orange mottled light brown-grey sandy-silt (78) that contained a small percentage of pebbles and gravel. No finds were recovered from this feature.

On the eastern edge of the area two more gullies were observed. The first was aligned north-west – south-east and was excavated in two places (19 and 20), revealing a shallow concave profile with a very shallow concave base. This had a maximum width of 0.57m and depth of 0.10m. Each slot contained a single fill (79 and 80) of light grey with orange mottling soft sandy-silt.

The other gully ran east-west and was again excavated in two places. Both slots 21 and 22 contained single fills (81, 82) of light brown grey sandy silt with occasional inclusions of pebbles and gravel. Gully slot 22 was 2m in length and was 0.77m wide and 0.20m deep. This had a slightly rounded base and medium concave sides. No finds were recovered from either of these features.

A 2m slot was excavated through ditch 23 (Pl. 4) which was aligned ENE-WSW across site, north of gully 19. It measured 1.60m wide and 0.50m deep with a straight sided profile and shallow rounded base, and was heavily affected by bioturbation on the southern edge. It contained a single fill (83) of dark grey-brown sandy-silt with frequent flint and gravel inclusions. A single sherd of post-medieval (16th/17th century) pottery, brick/tile and glass was recovered from the feature.

10 litre soil samples were taken from slots 19, 20, 22, 23 and were wet sieved and floated, but did not reveal any charred plant remains, nor small finds.

No other features were observed during the watching brief. The majority of the stripped surface to the north of ditch 23 had been disturbed with areas of modern building rubble, pipe trenches and landscaping features.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

A single sherd of pottery weighing 44g occurred in ditch slot 23 (83). It is from the rim of a bowl in Glazed Red Earthenware, and of mid 16th – 17th century date. It is a typical product of the tradition, is in very good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

### *Glass by Aiji Castle*

A single small sherd of yellow-green glass representing part of the neck and shoulder of a wine bottle was recovered from ditch 23. Mould marks are apparent on the outer edge. Due to the lack of diagnostic features only a broad date range of post-medieval can be attributed.

### *Brick/tile by Aiji Castle*

A 50x50mm fragment of brick or tile had a pale orange-red colouration and no diagnostic features. The thickness of the fragment was approximately 10mm. It is not closely datable in itself but assumed to be post-medieval like the associated artefacts

## **Conclusion**

Excavation of the smaller infiltration pond revealed no deposits or features of archaeological interest. The northern end of the larger pond similarly did not locate any deposits of archaeological interest but had been excessively truncated and disturbed. However, to the south, an early post-medieval ditch and three narrow gullies of unknown date were recorded. It is not known whether the latter are of similar date to the previously recorded deposits to the north or are in any way related.

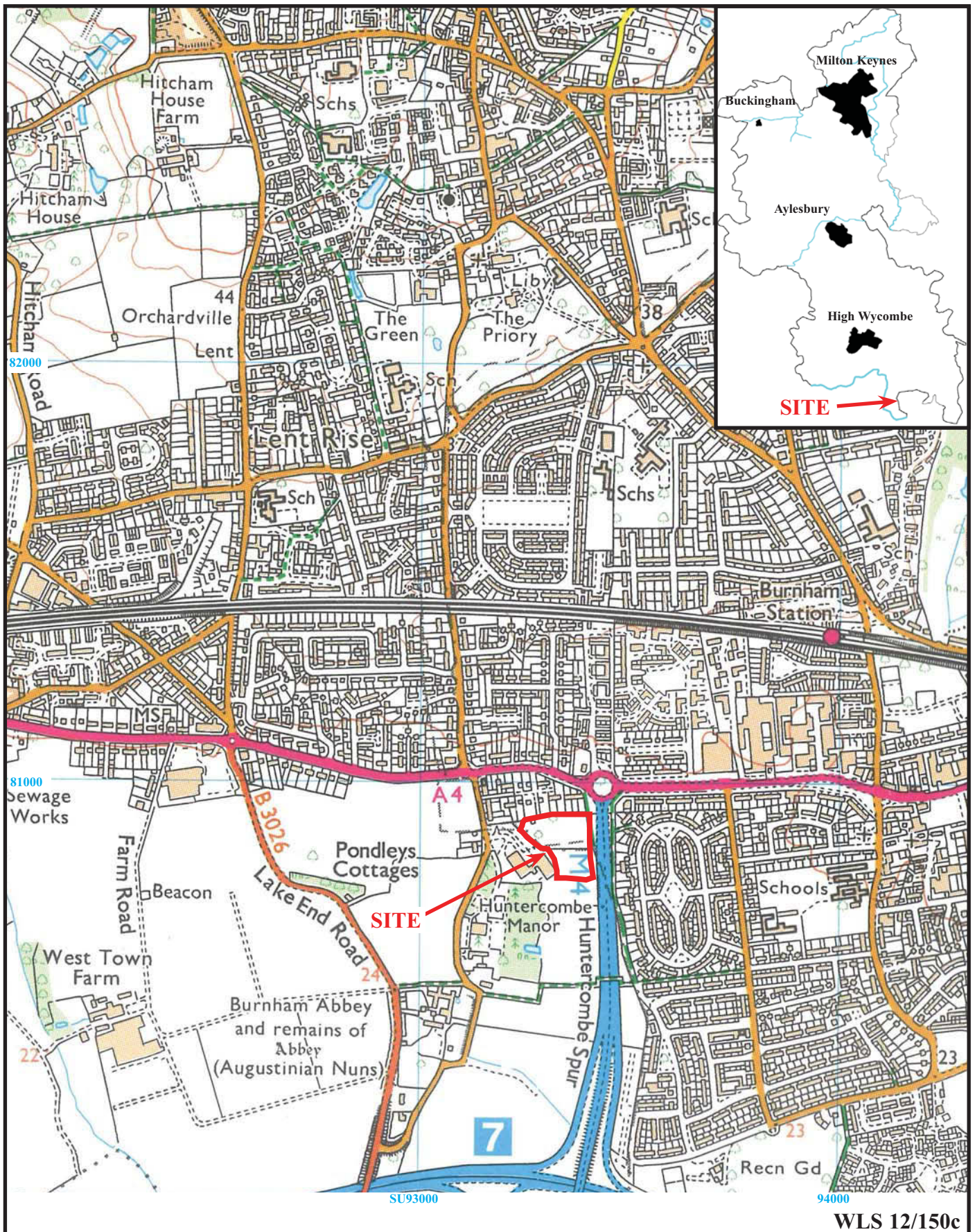
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**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
	78	Gully	N/A	N/A
	79	Gully	N/A	N/A
	80	Gully	N/A	N/A
	81	Gully	N/A	N/A
	82	Gully	N/A	N/A
	83	Ditch	Mid 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> century	Pottery

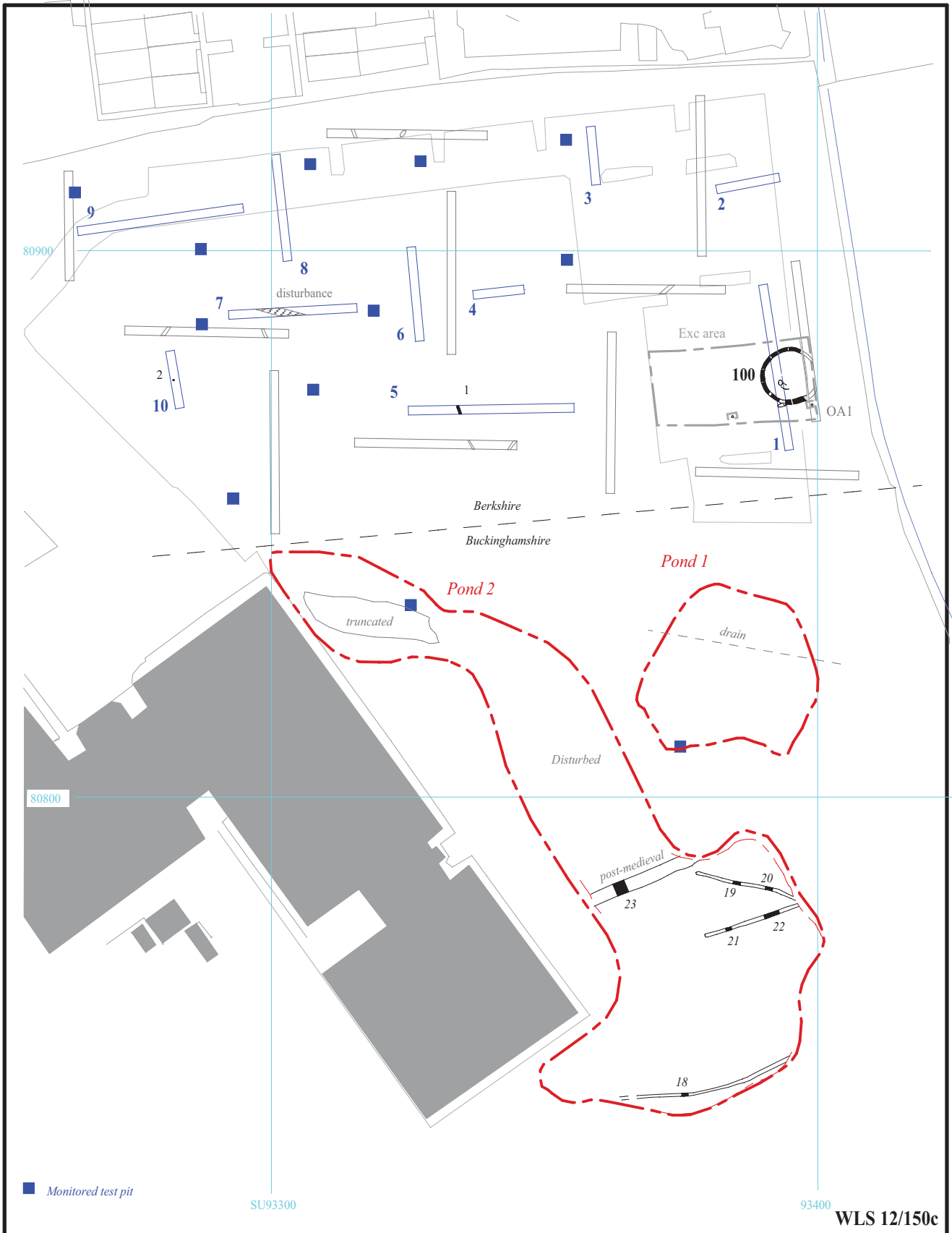


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Figure 1. Location of site within Burnham and Buckinghamshire.

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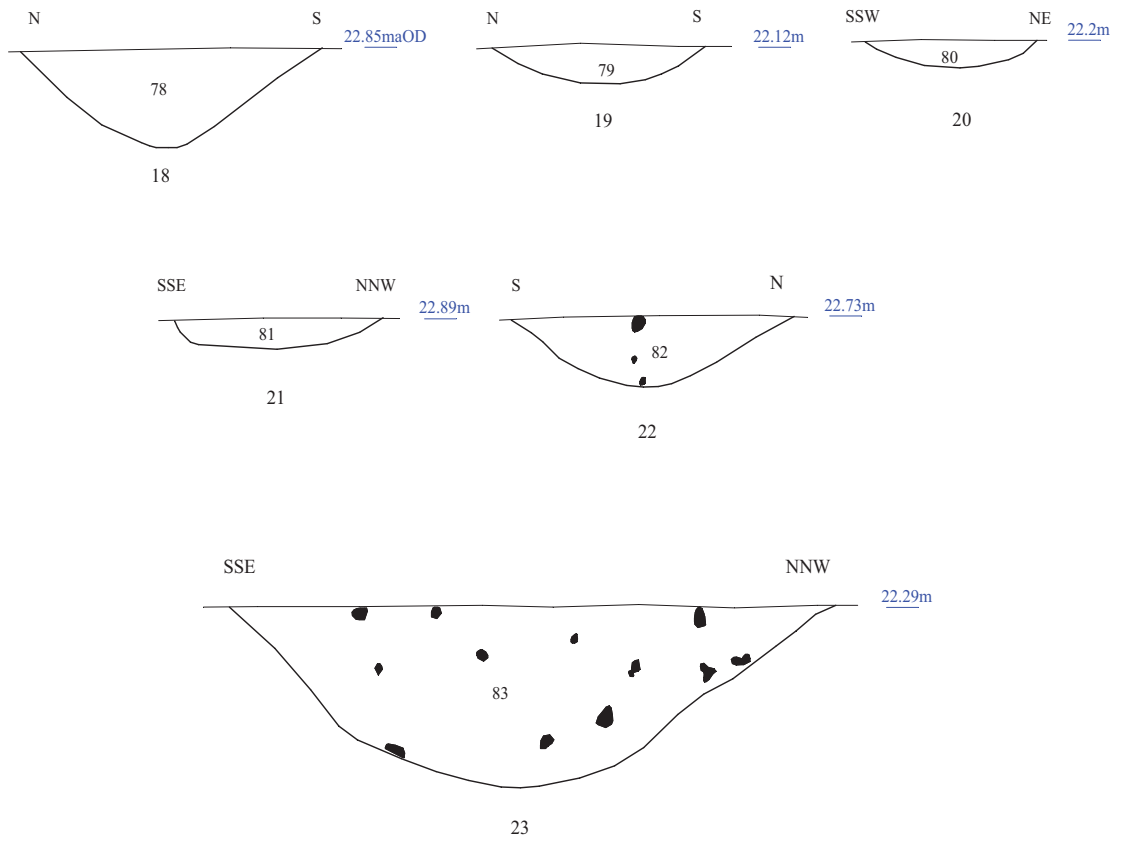




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Figure 2. Observed areas of watching brief, in relation to previous work to the north.



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Figure 3. Sections.



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Plate 1. Small filtration pond excavation , looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Large filtration pond, showing linear features, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. South edge strip of pond, exposing gully 18, looking east, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Ditch slot 23, looking west, Scales: 2m and 0.3m.

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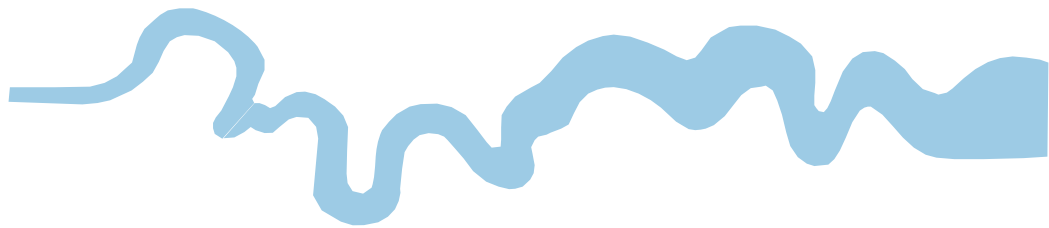
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Plates 3 - 4.

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## TIME CHART

	<b>Calendar Years</b>
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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