

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Phyllis Court Grandstand, Phyllis Court Drive,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Muddin

Site Code: PCH 13/61

(SU 7634 8301)

**Phyllis Court Grandstand, Phyllis Court Drive,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Phyllis Court Members Club Ltd**

by Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PCH 13/61

June 2014

Summary

Site name: Phyllis Court Grandstand, Phyllis Court Drive, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 7634 8301

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 3rd October 2013 - 1st May 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding

Site code: PCH 13/61

Summary of results: Two areas of ground reduction were observed adjacent to the existing grandstand at Phyllis Court. That to the west was to a depth of c. 0.7m (for a piling mat) and that to the north west of a depth of 0.25m. No finds of archaeological interest were uncovered as the reduced levels did not reach the archaeologically relevant depth. The top of an arched brick culvert was uncovered, but had been in-filled with concrete.

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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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 02.06.14 Steve Preston ✓ 02.06.14

Phyllis Court Grandstand, Phyllis Court Drive, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 13/61

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the grandstand of Phyllis Court Club, Phyllis Court Drive, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (SU 7634 8301) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Cornelius Kavanagh, of Hive Architects, 46 Queens Road, Reading, RG1 4AU, on behalf of Phyllis Court Members Club Limited, Phyllis Court Club, Marlow Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 2HT.

Planning permission (P12/S2279/FUL) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the alteration of the existing grandstand, situated by the edge of the River Thames, in the grounds of Phyllis Court Club. The grandstand is a Listed Building. It originally dates from 1911. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features a planning condition (5) has been attached to the consent requiring that a programme of archaeological investigation be maintained during the period of ground works.

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 written scheme of investigation approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and based on a brief prepared by him. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin and Andy Taylor between 3rd October 2013 and 1st May 2014. The site code is PCH13/61. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the northern edge of Henley-on-Thames town centre (Fig. 1), off Phyllis Court Drive, which leads to the Marlow Road. The grandstand is in the south-eastern part of the grounds, on the western bank of the Thames (Fig. 2). Elements of the site to be affected, are stepped access to the north of the grandstand and an area for a new extension on its western side. The site lies at approximately 34m above Ordnance Datum and the geology is mapped as River Terrace gravels and alluvium (BGS 1980).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2013). In summary the grandstand is within the grounds of a large manorial estate, with the location of the historical manor close to or on the footprint of the existing Member Club, which itself was built in 1895 (Oram 2013). This manor was first mentioned in documentation from 1347. A boundary for the estate lies adjacent to the grandstand off its southern facade. The grandstand itself is a Grade II Listed Building (1291579). The ironwork frame dates from 1911–13 (HA 2011), but has been extensively altered and rebuilt from the 1990s, as by 1981 the structure had fallen in to disrepair and was deemed unsafe to use.

The manor was a Parliamentarian stronghold during the English Civil War, and was fortified from attack from the Royalist base at Fawley Court. It was possibly moated at this time and a pond to the north may be part of the moat or a fishpond (Airs *et al.* 1975). During the 18th and 19th centuries, land to the south of the manor was progressively sold off for encroaching development from the town, such as for the Wharf and residences off Bell Lane.

The site also lies close to one of the suggested routes of the Dorchester to Silchester Roman road, with geophysical survey suggesting a road surface existing in the grounds. This part of the river bank could be a historical bridging point of the Thames, and the riverbank may have been further altered during the Civil War.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve examination of areas of ground reductions for access for either for a piling mat or digging. These works would not involve structural elements of the extant grandstand. New foundations were to be piled with groundbeams.

Results

The initial visit observed the reduced dig for a piling mat to the west of the grandstand (Fig. 3). Due to the softness of the ground, a thick piling mat was needed and an excavation depth of 0.7m was required. This area was to be extended 2m further to the south, but at the time of the visit was noted to cover 7.7m by 5.3m. An homogenous fill of brown clayey silt and chalk marl, mixed with frequent modern red brick and tile, was noted to the base of excavation beneath 0.28m of topsoil. At the base of the excavation, the top of a red brick vaulted culvert (Fig. 3; Pl.2). was noted. The homogenous fill over this contained finds of clay tobacco pipe, glassware

and white china, suggesting that this fill was last disturbed during the early 20th century. This NNE-SSW aligned drain, 1.05m wide, was no longer in use and it was seen that its interior was already filled in with concrete. No pre-20th century material was recovered. Groundbeams for the new extension were 0.6m deep, would be contained within the backfill of this strip. The extension southwards would not penetrate any deeper and was not observed.

A second area of ground reduction was observed off the north-western corner of the Grandstand (Fig. 3; Pl. 1), with the northern stairs removed prior to the visit. Only 0.25m of deposit was removed here, comprising 0.15m of topsoil about 0.10m of scalpins and brick rubble which continued below the depth of works. No further buried brickwork was witnessed in the works, and no finds or archaeological interest were uncovered.

Finds

Finds

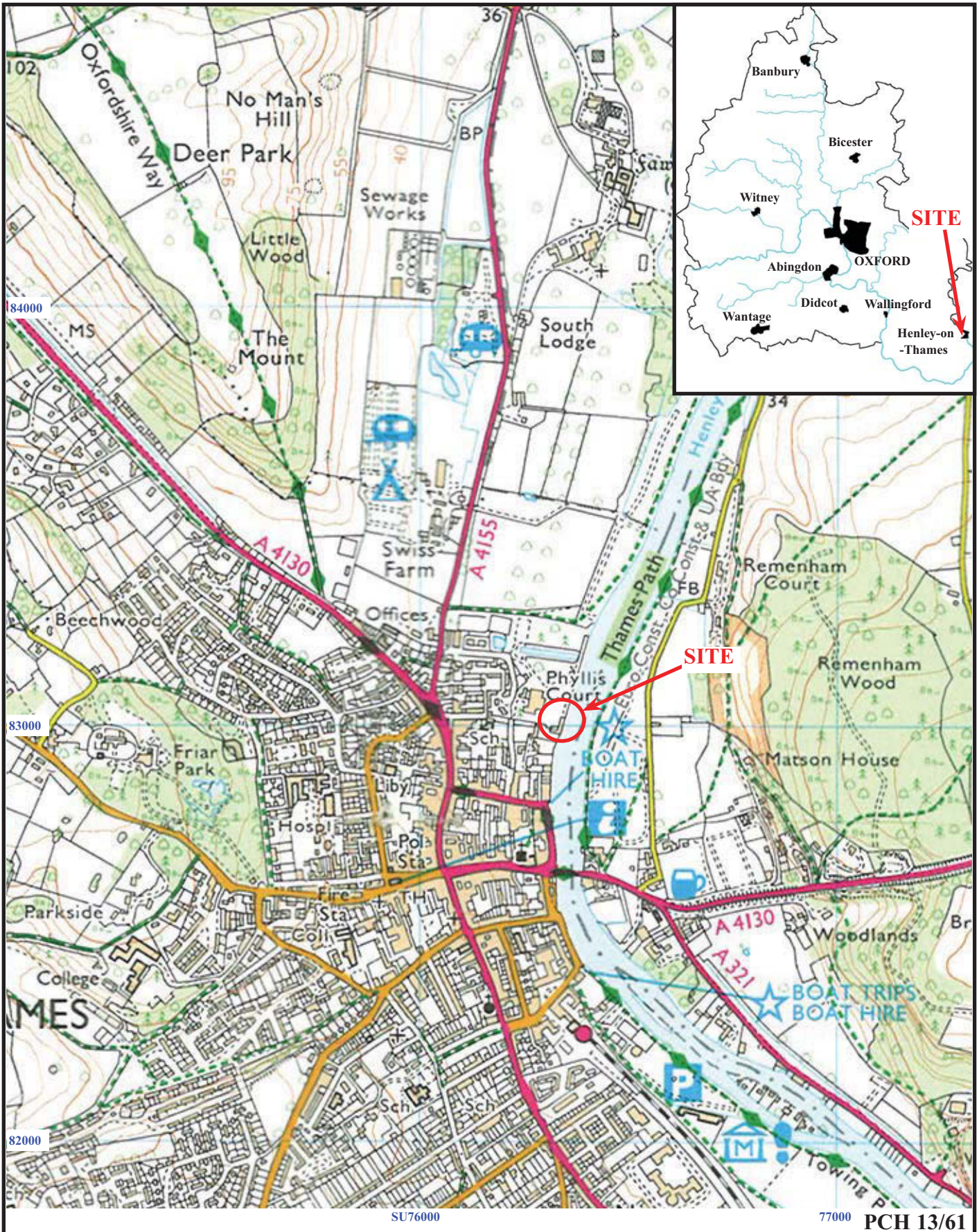
Ceramic building material and white china of 20th-century date were not retained, but were noted within the homogenous backfill recorded from the reduced areas. No pre-20th century material was recovered.

Conclusion

The reduced digs adjacent to the existing Grandstand at Phyllis Court uncovered no material of archaeological interest. Archaeologically relevant levels were not reached by these works. The top of an arched brick culvert was uncovered, but had already been in filled with concrete.

References

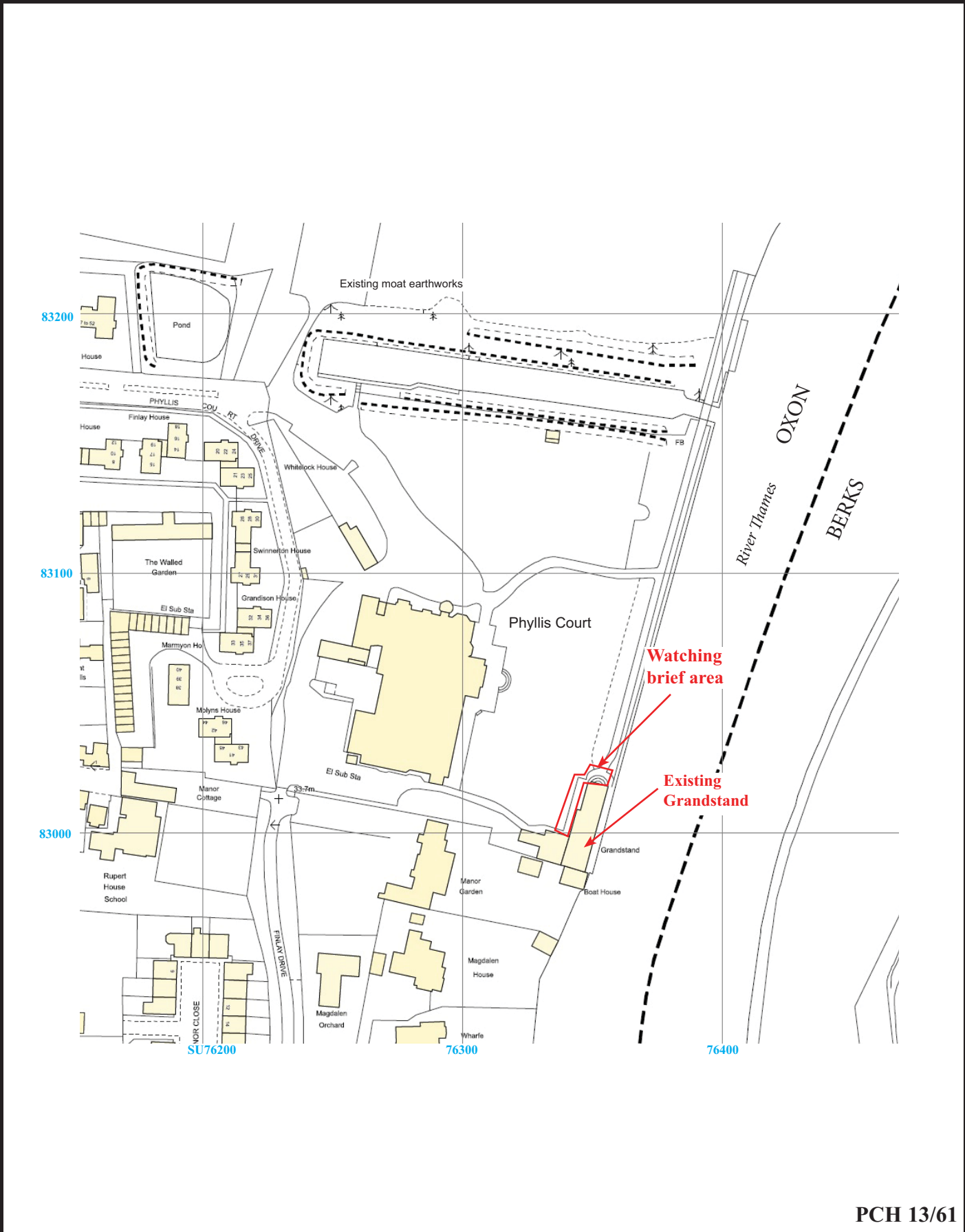
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- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R. 2013. Phyllis Court Club, Phyllis Court Drive, Henley on Thames, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services.



**Phyllis Court Grandstand, Henley-on-Thames,
Oxfordshire, 2013**
Archaeological watching brief
 Figure 1. Location of site within Henley-on-Thames and
 Oxfordshire

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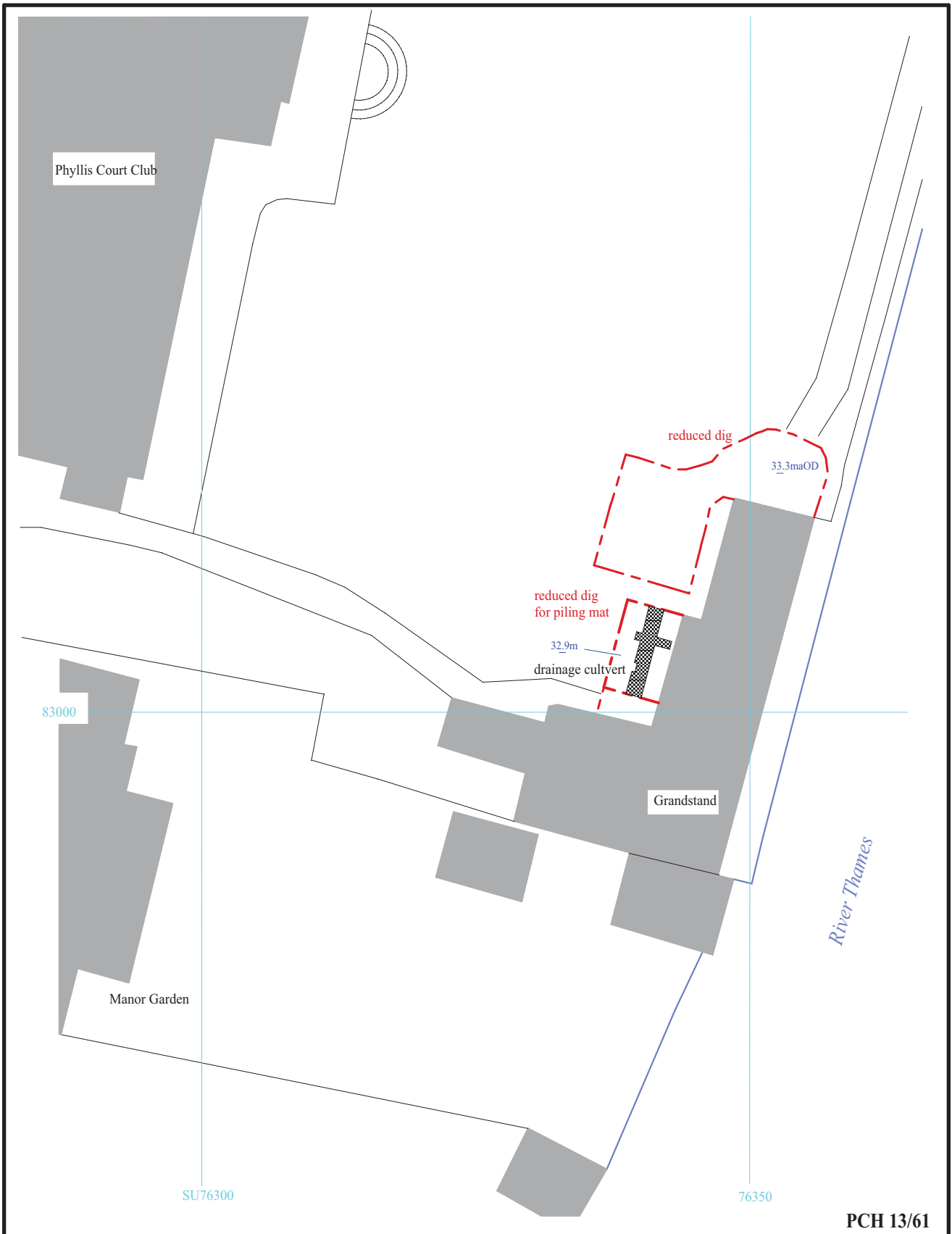
PCH 13/61



**Phyllis Court Grandstand, Henley-on-Thames,
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Archaeological watching brief
 Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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



Plate 2. Top of brick built culvert, looking north, Scale: 1m.

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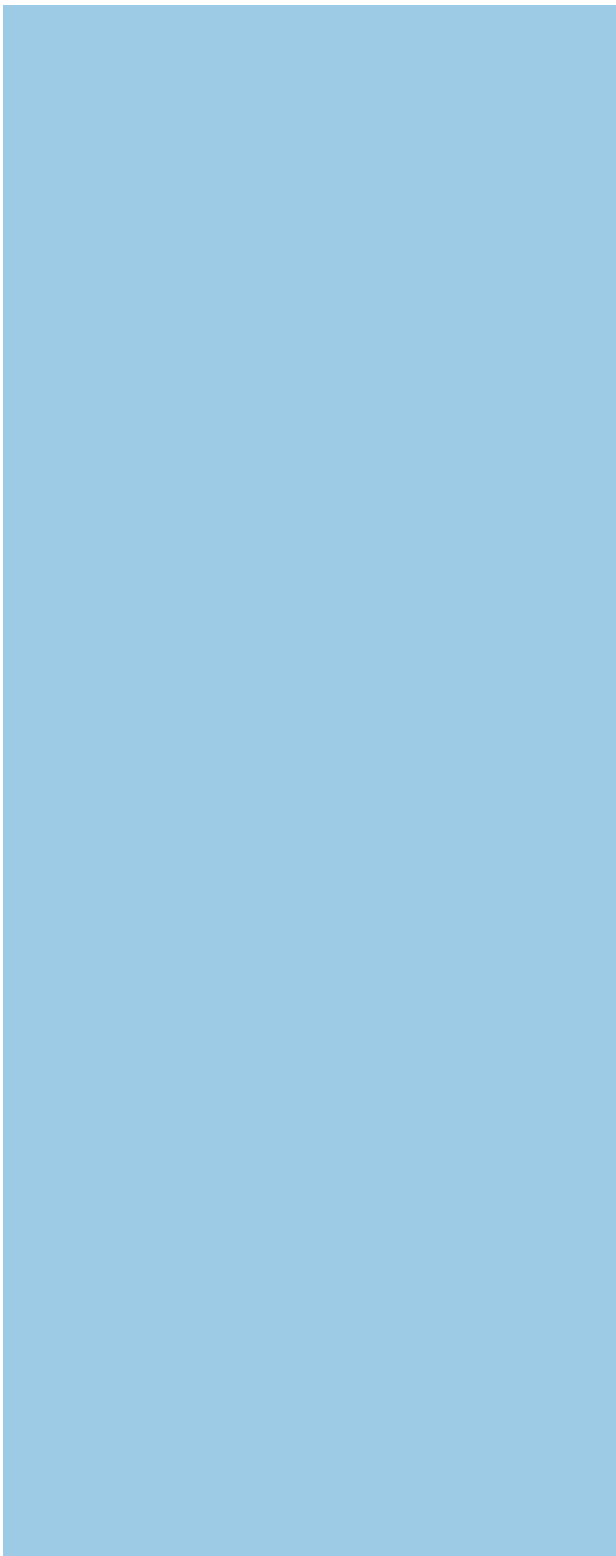
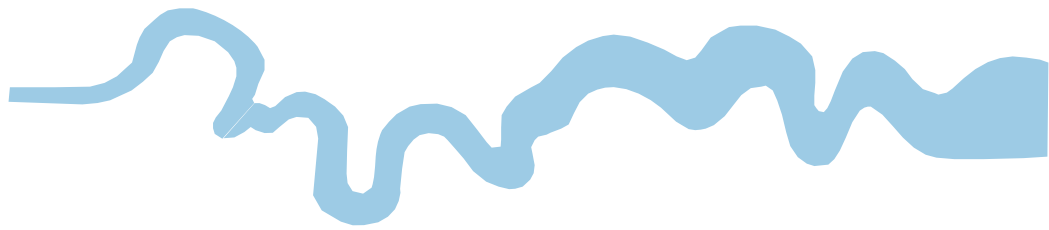
**Phyllis Court Grandstand, Henley-on-Thames,
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Archaeological Watching brief
Plates 1 - 2.**

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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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