

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Merlebank, Wallingford Road,
Moulsford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Steve Crabb

Site Code: MBM14/103

(SU 5921 8333)

**Merlebank, Wallingford Road,
Moulsford, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mrs Stoker

by Steven Crabb

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MBM 14/103

August 2014

Summary

Site name: Merlebank, Wallingford Road, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5921 8333

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 16th–18th July 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Steven Crabb, Tim Dawson

Site code: MBM 14/103

Area of site: 165 sq m

Summary of results: Terracing had already occurred during construction of the previous house that stood on the site which had exposed/truncated the archaeologically relevant horizon with new footing trenches excavated through the natural chalk geology. No archaeological deposits nor artefacts were encountered.

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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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 29.08.14 Steve Preston✓ 29.08.14

Merlebank, Wallingford Road, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Steven Crabb

Report 14/103

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Merlebank, Wallingford Road, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire (SU 5921 8333) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Mandy Stoker of 1 Carnford Cottages, Moulsoford, Wallingford, OX10 9HR.

Planning permission (P14/S0879/FUL) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new house, directly replacing the previous and covering the same footprint. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits that could exist at the site which is on the edge of a village with known archaeological remains, two archaeological conditions (4 and 5) have been attached to the permission, requiring a archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the course of the groundworks.

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 Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, advisers to the District Council on matters pertaining to archaeology within the planning process. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Crabb and Tim Dawson 16th July to 18th July 2014. The site code is MBM 14/103.

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

Location, topography and geology

Moulsoford lies on the left (western) bank of the river Thames, south of Wallingford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The site is located at the southern end of the village on a roughly triangular piece of land off the main Wallingford Road (A329) (Fig. 2). The course of the River Thames lies c.100m further to the east. The underlying geology consists of Lower Chalk (BGS 1980) which was observed during the groundworks. The site is approximately 62m above Ordnance Datum at the foot of the valley side that rises steeply westwards from the river.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in the brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Oram 2014). In summary, the site lies in an area of some archaeological interest.

To the west, cropmarks visible from the air indicate the presence of a trackway and field system, perhaps of Iron Age or Roman date. An excavation in the 1960s, after a chance discovery of a Bronze Age torc while ploughing, uncovered Roman burials. A second gold torc was recovered with a metal detector some 550m west of the site. Elsewhere, Roman coins have been recovered 100m to the west of Cranford School and within the grounds of the Old Vicarage with Roman pottery recovered from the playing fields immediately to the south. Fieldwork in advance of a pipeline located an Iron Age and Roman settlement on Halfpenny Lane to the west with another Late Iron Age settlement to the south (Ford 1990). The projected course of the Roman road from Dorchester to Silchester lies somewhere in the village and may follow the main road forming the western boundary of the site (Margary 1955, 151).

Evaluation prior to establishing of artificial turf pitches at Cranford House School, to the north-west of the site, uncovered a human grave and a small number of linear features. These features were undated but the grave may represent a continuation of the Roman cemetery identified to the west (Platt 2012a). A recording action during the building of the new pitches uncovered an isolated group of intercutting pits, also of Roman date. One sherd of late Saxon pottery also recovered, a rare find in this part of Oxfordshire (Platt 2012b). The local Church, St John the Baptist, is usually seen as the historic core of such villages, lies to the north, with records of a chapel since the 13th century.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits threatened by the development. This would involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks including footing trenching and any ground reduction as necessary

Results

Observations at Merlebank occurred after the demolition of the existing property, with the associated outbuildings preserved (Fig. 3). The previous house had been built on a levelled terrace, and so after demolition rubble from the previous building had been removed, this exposed the natural chalk geology (Fig. 3; Pl. 1).The

digging of the new footing trenches at the north end of the site were monitored to confirm that the chalk exposed was indeed the natural geology (Pl. 2). No archaeological deposits were observed.

Finds

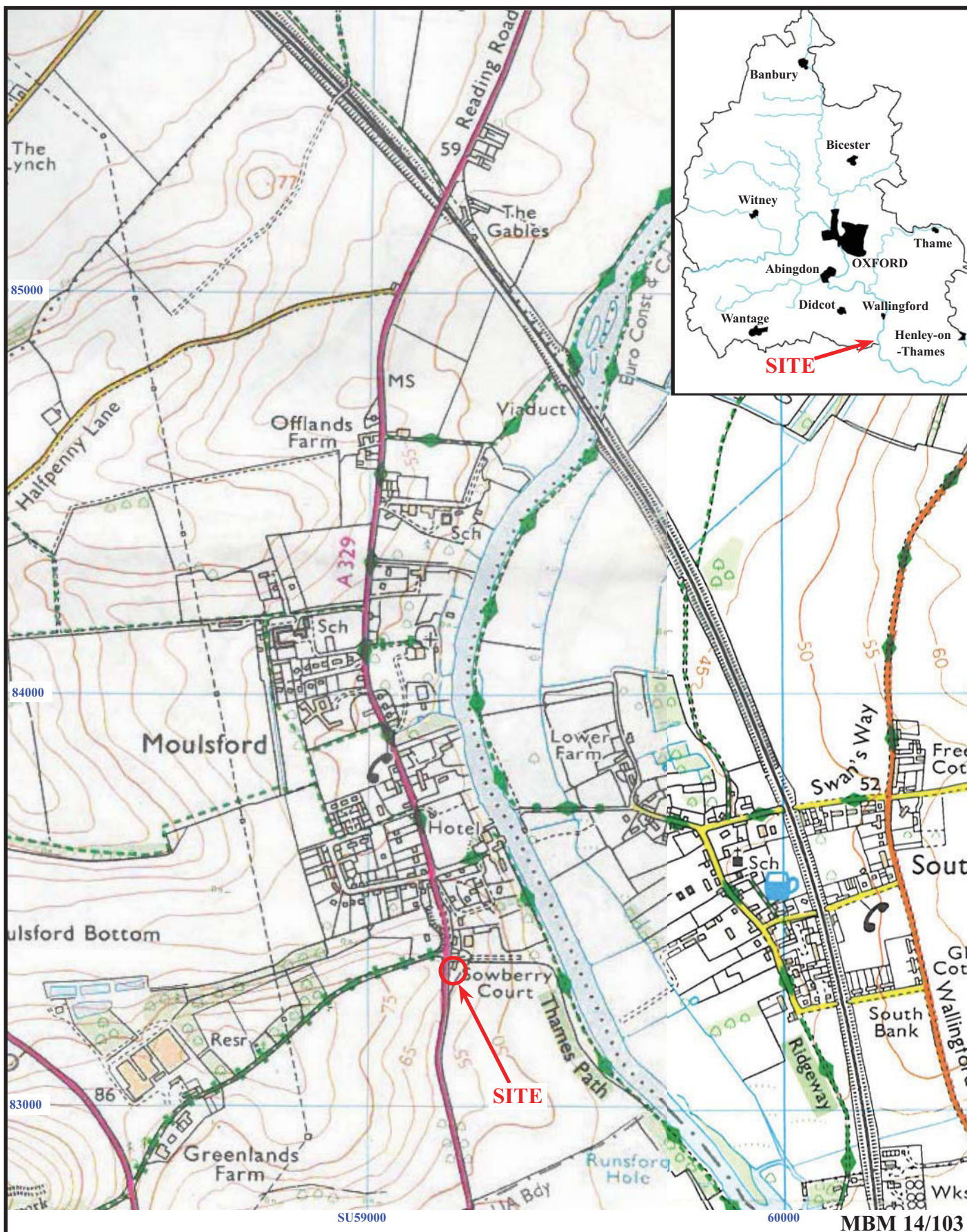
No finds of archaeological interest were uncovered in the works.

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits were present on the site, and the new house was contained within the footprint of the previous. It was evident that the previous construction had levelled the site to natural deposits.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey, 1:50000*, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1990, 'The archaeology of the Cleeve-Didcot pipeline, south Oxfordshire, 1989', *Oxoniensia*, **55**, 1–40
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R, 2014, 'Merlebank, Moulsoford: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, Oxford
- Platt, D, 2013a, 'New Artificial Turf Pitch, Cranford House School, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 12/05, Reading
- Platt, D, 2013b, 'New Artificial Turf Pitch, Cranford House School, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire: an archaeological recording action', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep 12/05b, Reading



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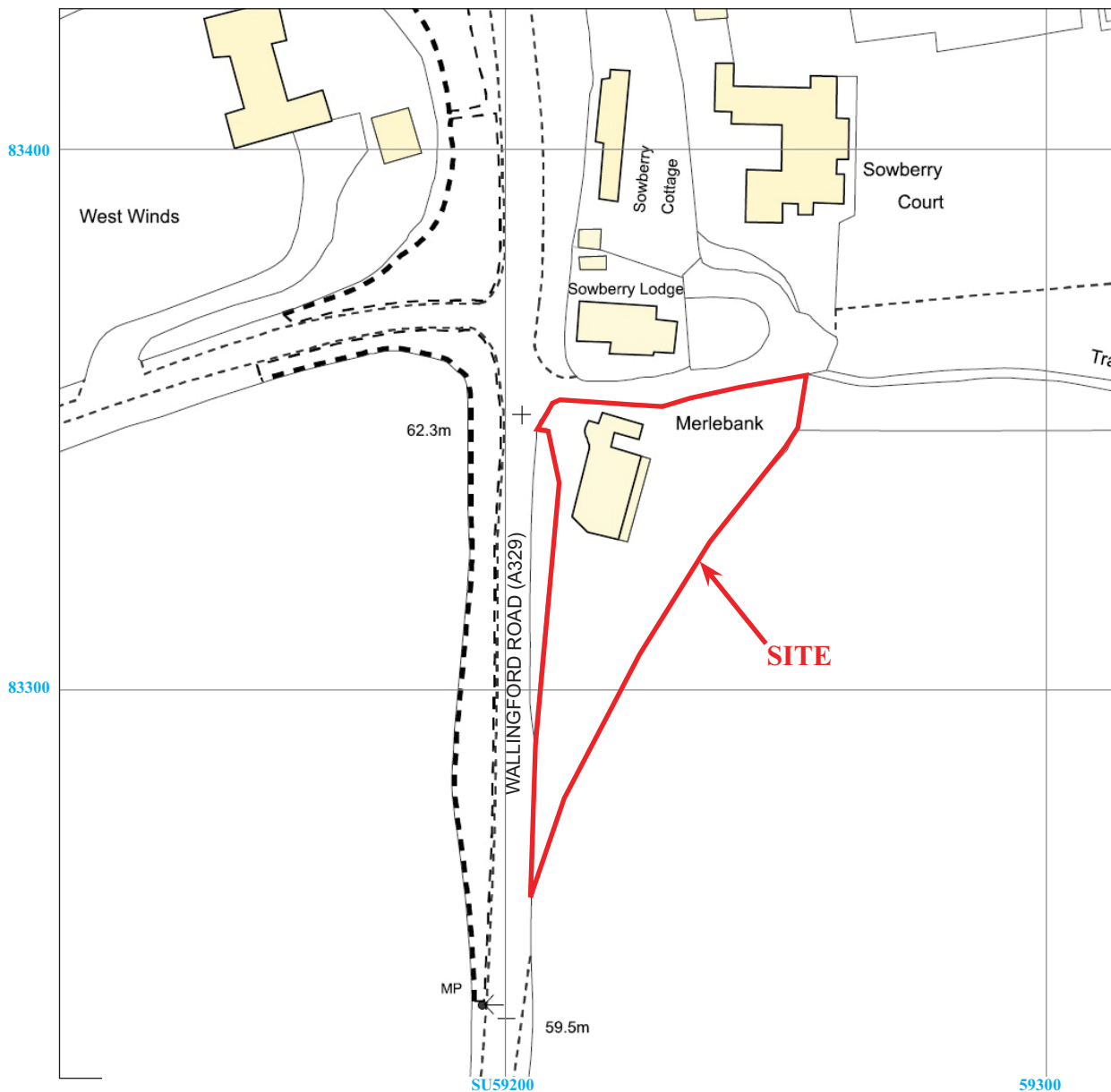
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Figure 1. Location of site within Mouldsford and Oxfordshire

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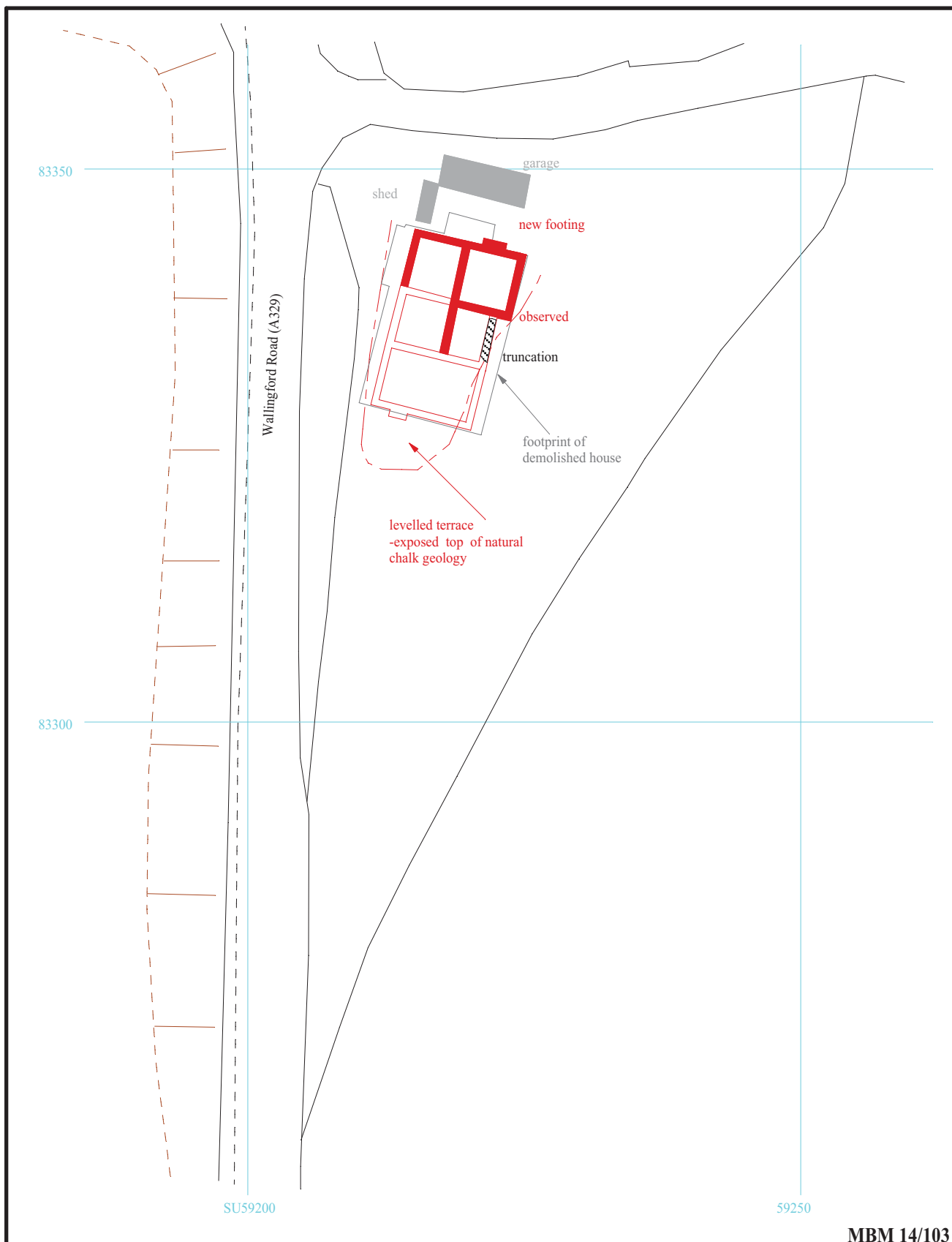
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Wallingford Road.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Plate 1. Area of ground reduction prior to new footings, looking south west.

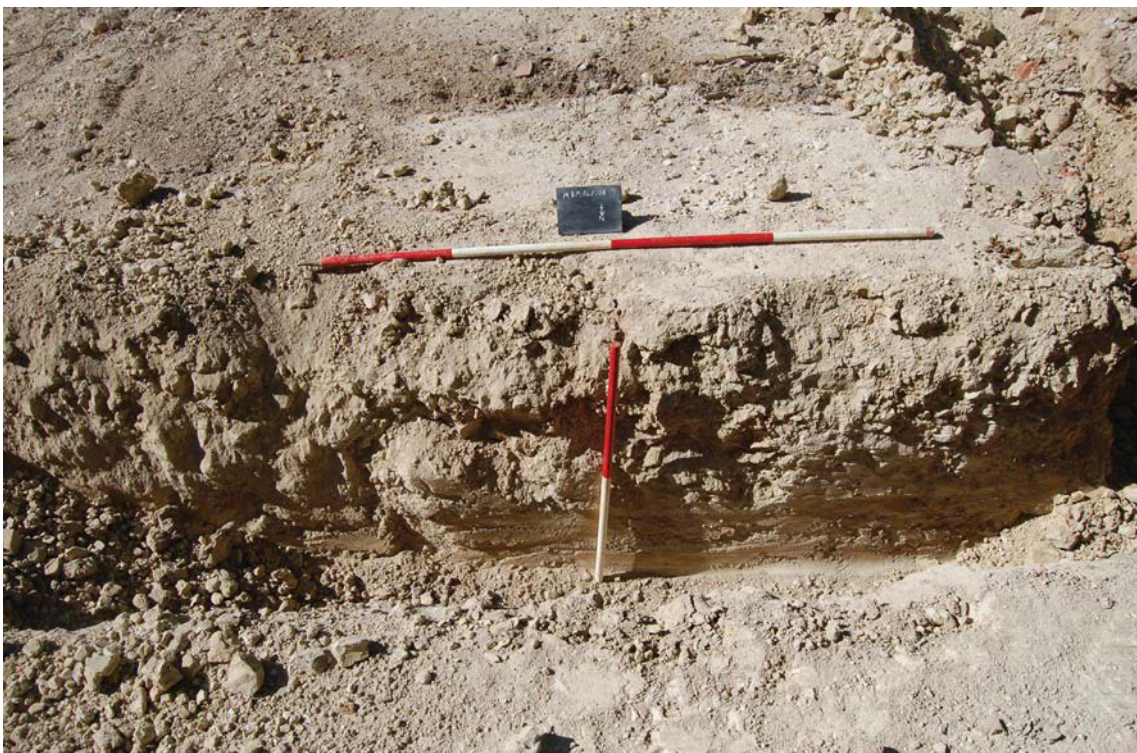


Plate 2. Footing trench through natural chalk, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.

MBM 14/103

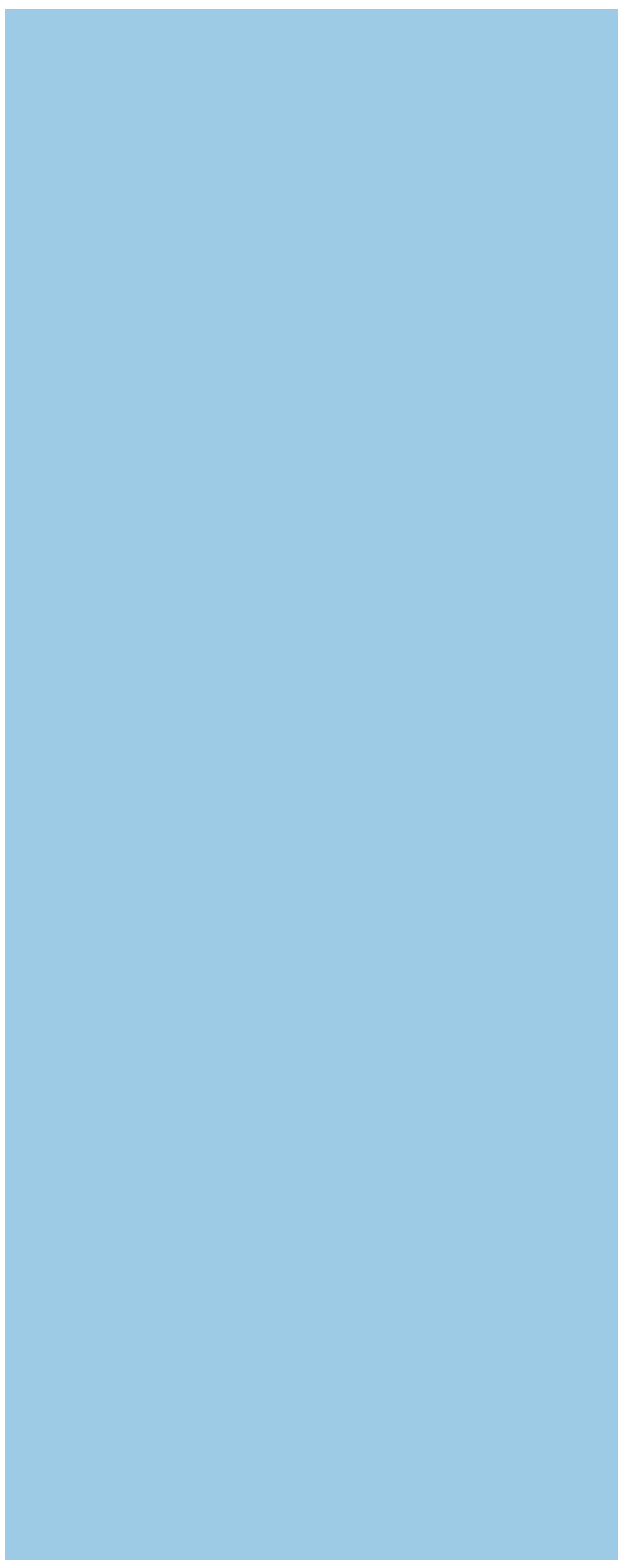
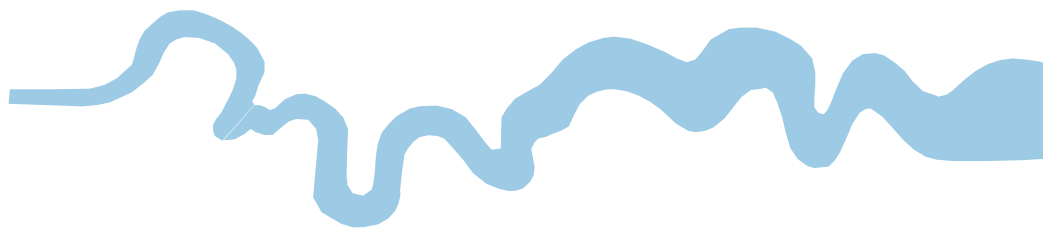
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Plates 1 - 2.

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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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