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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Chapter House, High Street,  
Hurley, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Aiji Castle and Andy Taylor**

**Site Code: CHH14/38**

**(SU 8253 8412)**

# **Chapter House, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr and Mrs P Burrowes**

by Aiji Castle and Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CHH 14/38

**September 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Chapter House, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 8253 8412

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 12th March to 30th June 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Aiji Castle, Andy Taylor, Tim Dawson

**Site code:** CHH 14/38

**Area of site:** 55 sq m

**Summary of results:** Three test pits were excavated in the garden of Chapter House to the east of the conservatory before it was removed to be replaced by a new extension. A brick foundation with chalk facing of a previous structure on the site was recorded within one of the test pits, with a possibly earlier chalk foundation in another. Another brick foundation was recorded in the section of the new eastern footing for the extension. The site is wholly contained within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hurley Priory and Tudor Manor, and the walls observed were probably associated within the latter but cannot be closely identified or dated on the current evidence.

**Monuments identified:** Brick and chalk structural remains within the Scheduled Monument (SAM 19020)

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept the archive.

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 22.09.14<br>Steve Preston ✓ 22.09.14 |
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# Chapter House, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle and Andy Taylor

Report 14/38

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Chapter House, High Street, Hurley, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6, 5NB (SU 8253 8412) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Kevin Brady, of Woodfield Brady Architects, Arlington House, Curridge, West Berkshire, RG18 9EF on behalf of Mr and Mrs P Burrowes, of the site address.

Planning consent (app no. 13/00307) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Scheduled Monument Consent (S00057397) has been gained from the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in accordance with the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, for the construction of a new extension. As a consequence of the possibility of exposure of archaeological deposits during groundworks, the Scheduled Monument Consent includes a condition (b) relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out, in accordance with the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) and planning policy as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by approved by Dr Chris Welch of English Heritage advising the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aiji Castle, Andy Taylor and Tim Dawson between 12th March and 30th June 2014 and the site code is CHH 14/38. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept the archive in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site lies to the north of the historic core of Hurley, within the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hurley Priory at the north end of the High Street (Figs 1 and 2). The site is bounded by a moat to the north and medieval cloisters to the south-east and lies within the landscaped grounds of the Chapter House (Fig. 2). Hurley is a small village on the Thames between Reading and Maidenhead and around 2km south-west of Marlow. The river Thames flows in several braids about 75m to the north of the site. The underlying geology is

mapped as flood plain terrace gravel (BGS 1990) and the site lies at an elevation of *c.*30m above Ordnance Datum.

### **Archaeological background**

The site lies within the site of a Benedictine Priory founded in or around AD 1086 (VCH 1907, 73) and suppressed in 1536. The remains of the Priory are a Scheduled Ancient monument (SAM 19020) which also includes the remains of a Tudor Manor, immediately to the south of the Priory (Fig. 2). A number of components of this complex are still extant such as the fishponds and moat. Part of the northern moat, between the current site and the river lies within Chapter House's garden. The Refectory and Cloisters of the Priory are still standing, next to the local Church. Early Norman remains of the Church's predecessor are known to exist immediately under its eastern end. Investigations at the Priory were undertaken by Colonel C N Rivers-Moore in the 1930s (Rivers Moore 1934, 1938), and indeed earlier by Rev F T Wethered, although records of the earlier excavations have been lost. Much of the projected layout of the Priory is that recorded at this time, with the Tudor Manor House also projected in plan from fragments of masonry identified during excavation.

Various fieldwork projects both within and beyond the Scheduled area have revealed further deposits of archaeological interest such as at Monks Garden (Pine 1999), and Tuckenhay (Ford 2004) where large features that were presumably pits were dated to the Medieval period. A small watching brief recorded a small part of the foundation at The Cloisters, previously identified in the 1930's excavation, but possibly damaged by 1970's terracing (Pitt 2012). From the projected layout of the 1930's excavation, it was most likely a joining wall between the Priory Chapter House, to the north of the Norman Church, and the parlour of the Dormitory.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks, involving examination of all areas of intrusive work for the new extension, in particular topsoil and overburden removal. All archaeological deposits exposed by groundworks were to be recorded but not excavated unless they are too fragile to withstand reburial. A list of all deposits identified in both phases of works are listed in Appendix 1.

## Results

### *Test Pits*

Three initial test pits were proposed by the engineer to determine the required depth for the extension foundation trenches and the nature of the existing footings of the Chapter House. These were limited in size due to their presence within the Scheduled Ancient Monument, and were excavated under archaeological supervision, immediately to the east of the footprint of the proposed extension area, which would largely be on the footprint of the existing conservatory.

#### Test Pit 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.1)

This test pit was 1.50m long and 0.70m wide. It was dug to a maximum depth of 1.05m. A post-medieval wall (52) was observed running east-west at a depth of 0.10m, below the turf and topsoil. This was 0.55m deep and 0.60m wide and consisted of eight courses of unfrogged brick measuring 200 x 120 x 80mm, with a single row of large roughly hewn chalk blocks on the northern extent of the brickwork. These chalk blocks were faced to the north, suggesting this was the exterior face, but roughly hewn on the internal side, and both bricks and chalk were bonded by a light grey-yellow sandy mortar. The wall was set upon a foundation (60) of large roughly hewn, unfaced compacted chalk blocks set in mid brown-grey silty-clay. This was partially excavated to a depth of 0.15m. No cut for the foundation or the wall was observed. Three distinct deposits were observed, two of which butted wall 52. A light brown-grey sandy-silt layer (51) 0.30m thick containing fragments of brick, tile and chalk which resembled demolition rubble lay over 0.32m of loose mid-brown grey sandy-silt (58). Neither of these deposits were related to any visible cut features. Below layer (58) was a dark grey-brown sandy-silt deposit containing occasional burnt tile and chalk fragments. This deposit could possibly pre-date the construction of the wall (52), although whether it was cut by the foundation (60) or butted against it is uncertain. No dating evidence was recovered from this layer.

#### Test Pit 2 (Fig.3 and 4; Pl.2)

This test pit was positioned against the eastern wall of the existing Chapter House to determine the nature of the foundations. It was 1.00m long and varied in width from 0.35 to 0.60m due to the presence of a modern drainage pipe. The maximum depth reached was 1.00m. The brick wall foundations of the existing house were observed to a depth of 0.70m. Butting up against the wall was 0.30m of garden topsoil and under this, 0.40m of a dark brown-grey sandy-silt (56). This was cut by a possible pit or landscaping feature [1] with sharp concave sides

and a flat base, containing a light brown-grey sandy-silt (55) with no dating evidence. The fill was very similar to deposit (51). Under this lay 0.30m of homogeneous loose, light yellow-grey clay-silty-gravel (57) at a depth of 0.70m, most likely to be natural geology.

#### Test Pit 3 (Fig. 3)

This test pit was also positioned against the eastern wall of the residence. It measured 1.00m long, 0.45m wide and was dug to a depth of 0.44m. The existing north-south brick wall of the house was set upon a concrete footing 0.25m deep. This footing was itself positioned upon an earlier wall (54) aligned east-west, consisting of large roughly hewn unfaced flints, typically 150 x 120 x 80mm bonded by light yellow-brown lime mortar. The full dimensions and depth of the wall were not observed due to trench restrictions although at least two courses remain. No finds were associated with this feature.

#### *Foundation trenching*

All footing trenches for the new extension were observed (Fig. 3; Pl. 3), after the removal of the existing conservatory and its concrete base. The overall area of the footing was 4.3m by 11m with each trench 0.6m wide. Under 0.28m of a dark brown grey recent made ground (61), which contained tile fragments, and the broken out concrete layer, 0.22m deep, was a further made ground layer (62) containing tile, flint, chalk fragments and mortar from 0.5m to the base of the footing (1.50m deep under the conservatory).

North of the area previously occupied by the conservatory the footings were only 1.10m deep and were dug entirely through an homogeneous soil of gravel with chalk and silt patches (63). This layer contained the only finds from the site, (not retained): white china crockery fragments, painted stoneware and red earthenware probably of 19th century date. It also contained electrical hazard tape and plastic garden tags, animal bone and red tile and is clearly modern. No natural geology was encountered in the digging of these trenches, and layers 63 and 65 extended beyond the base of excavation up to a depth of 1.1m and greater than 1.5m deep. The instability of this trench made detailed recording at depth unsafe, so observations were made only from the ground surface.

In the north-eastern corner of the eastern section, a 1.54m length of a brick foundation (64) was uncovered (Pl.4), that survived to a depth of 0.64m. Four courses were present. The form was a garden bond, made up of headers and stretchers, a typical Post-Medieval bond for brickwork, with unfroged bricks. It was thought this wall, which projected N-S would create a 90° corner to wall 52 identified in Test Pit 1. It also projects to align on wall 54 in TP3, although this is a less likely connection as the construction materials differ. This overlay a layer

of chalk rubble (65), with no construction cut visible to the base of excavation. This was co-extensive with the overlying brickwork (64).

## **Finds**

Five fragments of white china, weighing 74g, one of porcelain were uncovered from layer 63. One sherd of blue-painted earthenware, weighing 64g, from a pudding bowl was also recovered from this context. Two large sherds of red earthenware were also recovered, weighing 331g, One piece of red tile was uncovered weighing 750g. It can be only be broadly dated between the 16th and 19th centuries. Four fragments of animal bone, one a complete horse radius, weighing 309g, one a probable horse lumbar vertebra (63g) were also recovered from this context. The other bone were two fragments of small mammal long bone.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief at Chapter House has been successful in uncovering the corner of a previously unplotted wall line within the Scheduled Monument, underlying the garden of the property. No pottery was present to date this wall line, in either deposits overlying or underlying the wall, but its chalk and brick construction could be construed as being Post-Medieval in date. The alignment of walls 52 and 64 also roughly matches the basic alignment of the Tudor remains further south rather than the (closer) priory buildings, though the two alignments are not far apart. Difficulty of observation within the narrow confines opened meant it was not possible to establish if the sequence of chalk footing (60 and 65) and brick above (52 and 64) indicates two phases or a single mixed method of construction, but the consistency of this along both walls might suggest the latter, and this is reinforced by the use of a chalk facing to the north face, bonded into the brickwork.

A further mortared flint foundation (54) to the south might match up with wall 65 but the difference in construction material suggests it represents a separate building.

The sequence of subsequent made ground layers identified in the excavation of the footings were clearly of relatively recent date up to a depth of 1m, but allows the possibility of earlier deposits surviving at a greater depth than was disturbed by the works here.

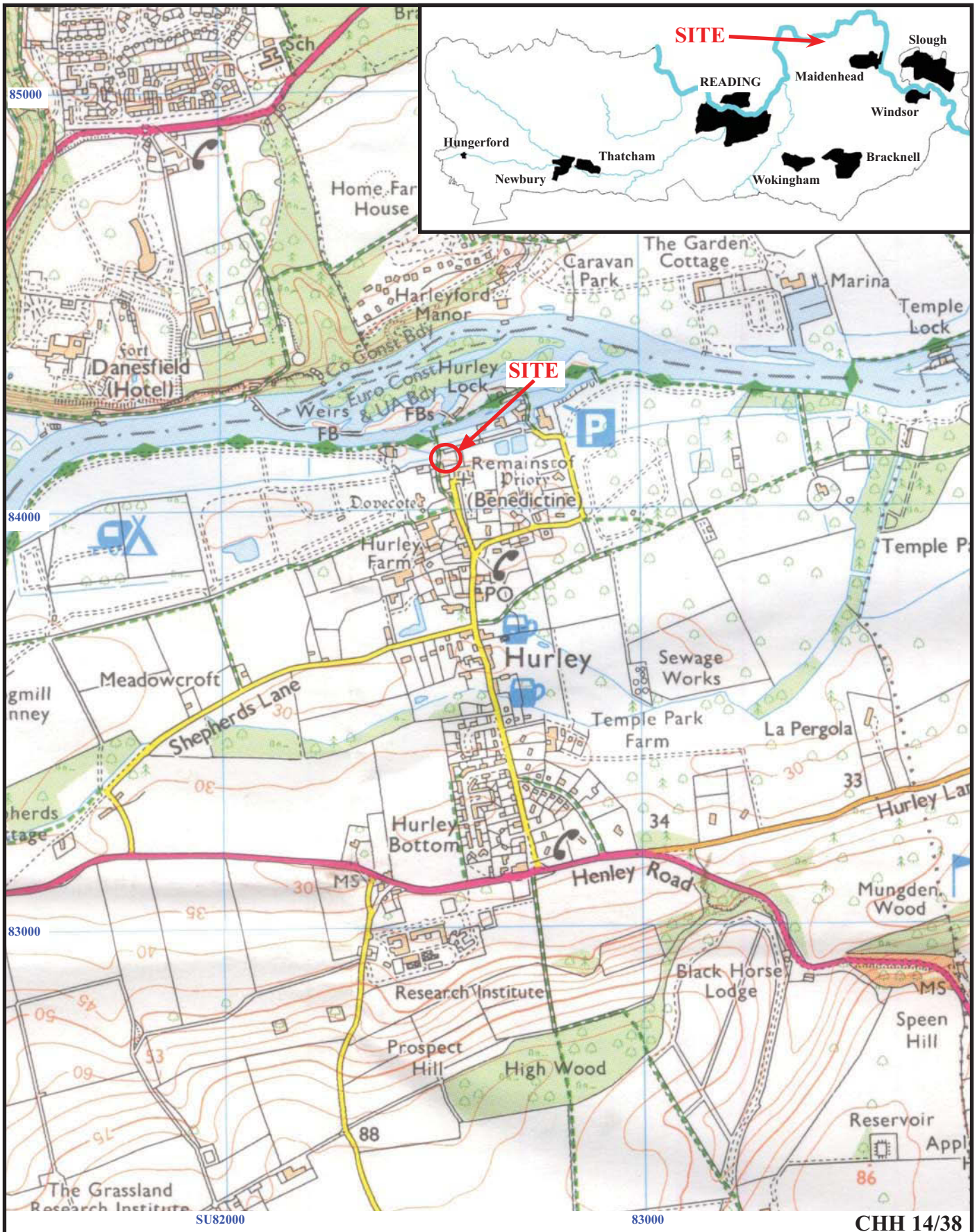


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**APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of features excavated**

| <i>Area</i> | <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i>                    | <i>Date</i>          | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| All TP      |            | 50              | Topsoil/turf                   |                      |                        |
| TP1         |            | 51              | Rubble                         |                      |                        |
| TP1         |            | 52              | Brick and chalk wall           | Post-Medieval        | Unfrogged brick        |
| TP1         |            | 53              | Mortared surface               |                      |                        |
| TP3         |            | 54              | Flint and mortar wall          |                      |                        |
| TP2         | 1          | 55              | Large truncation/landscaping?  |                      |                        |
| TP2         |            | 56              | Dark grey sandy silt           |                      |                        |
| TP2         |            | 57              | Possible natural               |                      |                        |
| TP1         |            | 58              | Brown grey silty layer         |                      |                        |
| TP1         |            | 59              | Dark grey brown silt layer     |                      |                        |
| TP1         |            | 60              | Lower foundation of wall 52    |                      |                        |
| footings    |            | 61              | Made ground (modern)           |                      |                        |
| footings    |            | 62              | Dark brown grey made ground    |                      |                        |
| footings    |            | 63              | Homogeneous soil (made ground) | Post Medieval-Modern | Pottery; tile          |
| footings    |            | 64              | Brick wall                     |                      |                        |
| footings    |            | 65              | Chalk rubble under wall 64     |                      |                        |



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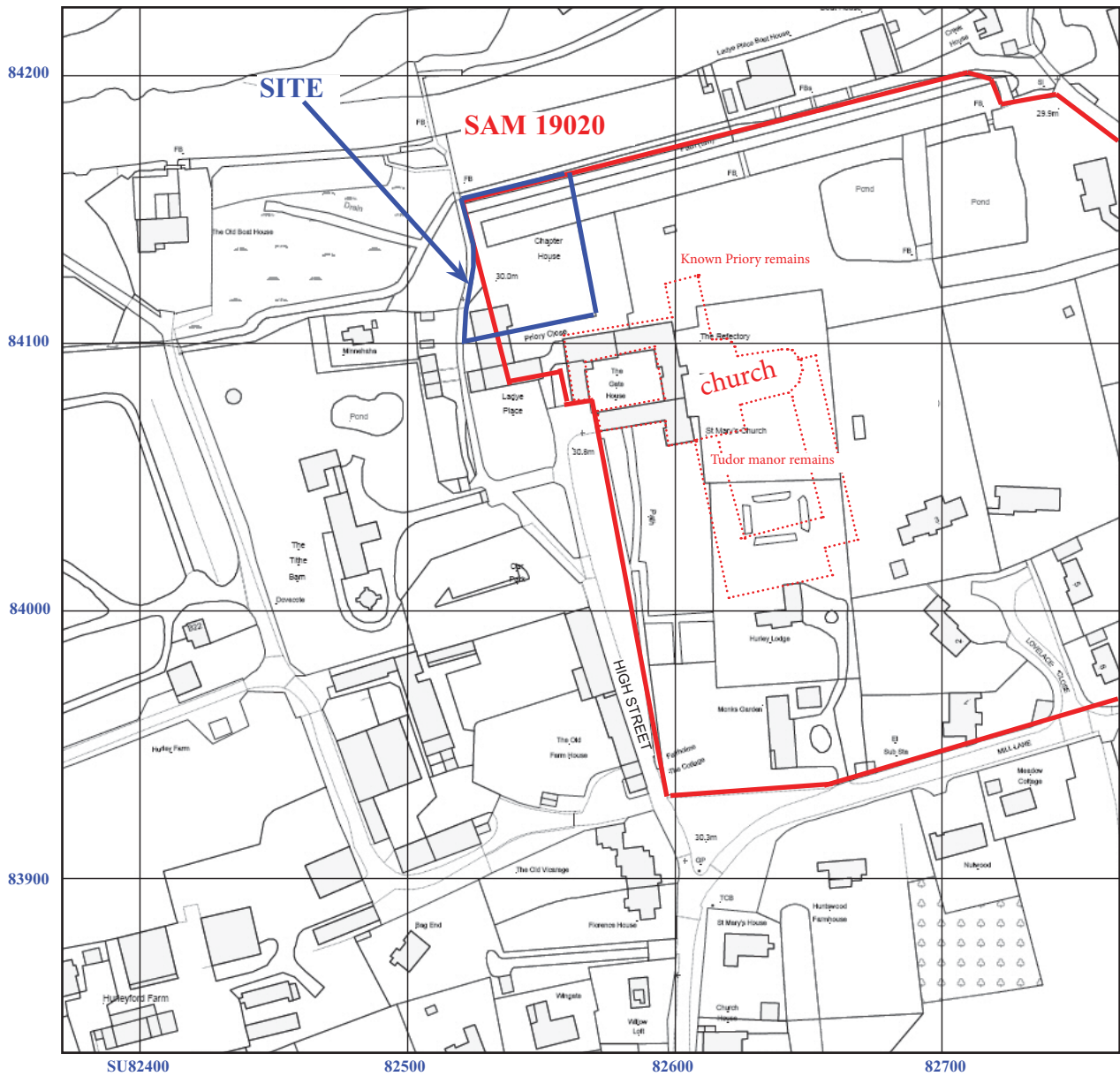
Figure 1. Location of site within Hurley and Berkshire.

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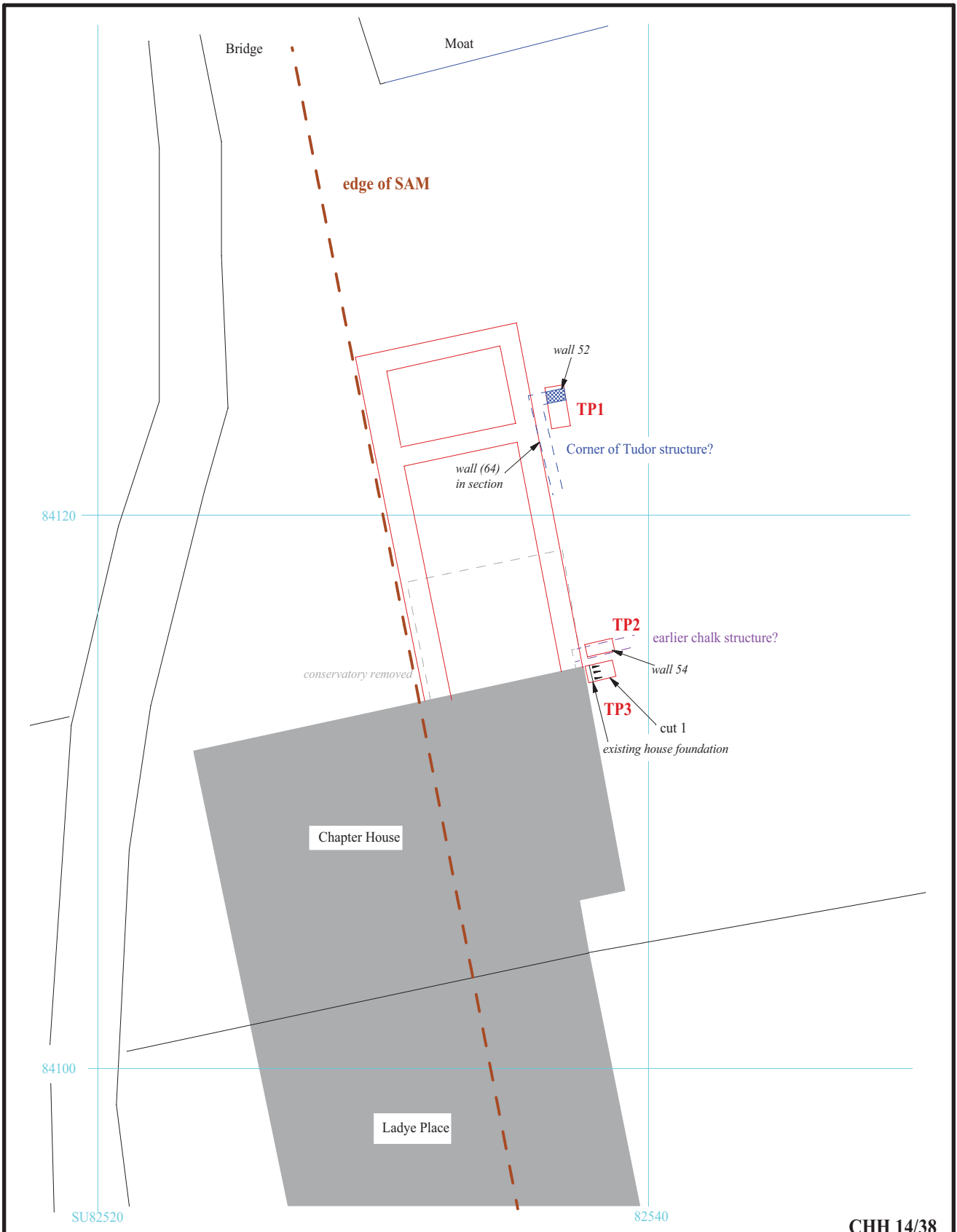


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site, showing a simplified extent of the projected structural elements of the SAM (after Rivers-Moore 1938).

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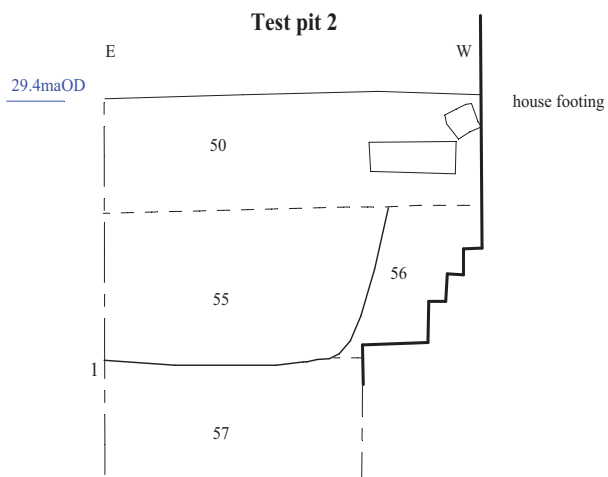
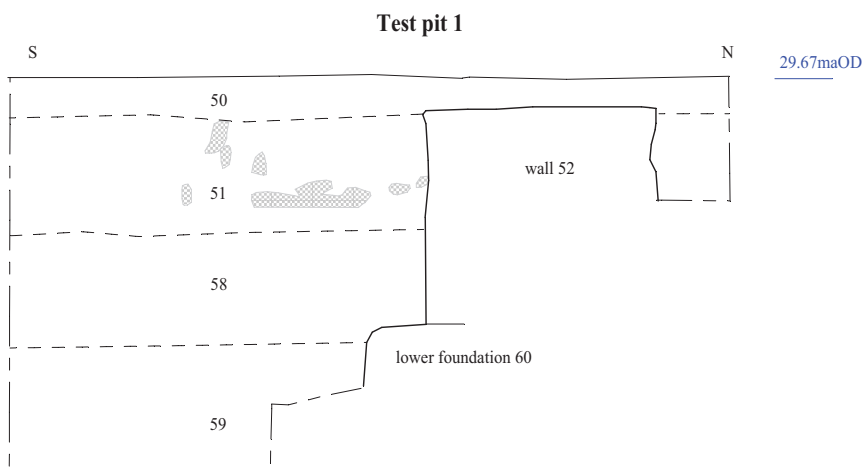
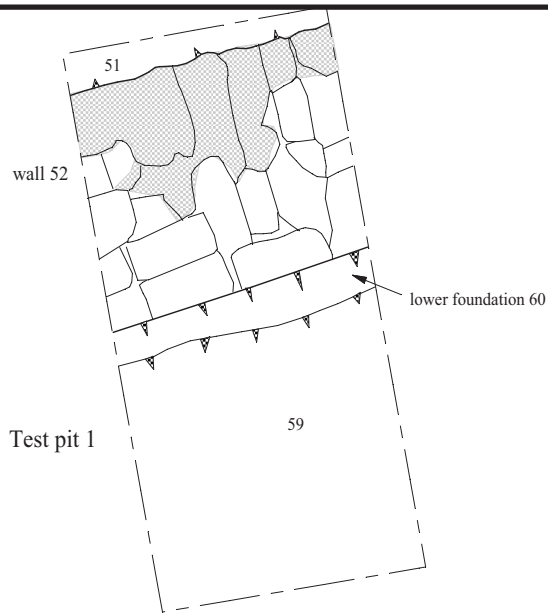


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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Figure 4. Detail of test pits.





Plate 1. Test pit 1, showing wall 52, looking west, Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 0.1m.



Plate 2. Test pit 2, looking west to top of wall 54, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

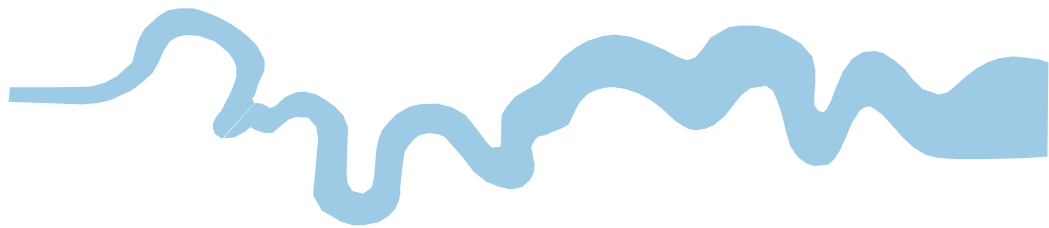
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## TIME CHART

|                            | <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<br>750 BC       |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Bronze Age: Late -----     | 1300 BC               |
| Bronze Age: Middle -----   | 1700 BC               |
| Bronze Age: Early -----    | 2100 BC               |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Neolithic: Late .....      | 3300 BC               |
| Neolithic: Early .....     | 4300 BC               |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Mesolithic: Late .....     | 6000 BC               |
| Mesolithic: Early .....    | 10000 BC              |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Palaeolithic: Upper .....  | 30000 BC              |
| Palaeolithic: Middle ..... | 70000 BC              |
| Palaeolithic: Lower .....  | 2,000,000 BC          |







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