

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Glebe House, Reading Road,  
Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Genni Elliott**

**Site Code: GHW13/70**

**(SU 6068 8892)**

**Glebe House, Reading Road, Wallingford,  
Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Dr Sue Roberts**

by Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GHW 13/70

**August 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Glebe House, Reading Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 6068 8892

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 3rd April 2013 – 28th May 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Genni Elliott

**Site code:** GHW 13/70

**Summary of results:** The groundworks revealed and partially disturbed the tops of up to a dozen human burials in a location close to the site of St Lucian's church. Radiocarbon dating of one burial places it in the late Saxon period (mid 10th to mid 11th century).

**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](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

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# Glebe House, Reading Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

**Report 13/70**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Glebe House, Reading Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (SU 6068 8892) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Dr Sue Roberts of Glebe House, Reading Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 9DT.

Planning permission (P12/S1327/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for alterations to the house and a reconfigured parking area, access and a carport. This permission is subject to conditions (5 and 6) which require that an archaeological watching brief 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's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist, of Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services, and based on a brief supplied by him (Oram 2013).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Genni Elliott, between 3rd April 2013 and 28th May 2014 with the site code GHW 13/70. 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 at the southern end of Wallingford, just to the west of the Thames (Fig. 1) and on the eastern side of Reading Road (SU 6068 8892). The site is currently a house with associated gardens and parking within a residential area (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 47m above Ordnance Datum, slightly above the level of the road. The underlying geology is recorded as younger river gravels, specifically the first (flood plain) terrace deposits (BGS 1980).

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2013). In summary, the site lies beyond the southern boundary of the

Saxon defences of Wallingford but within an area of possible extra-mural medieval settlement (Preston 2010; Airs *et al.* 1975). There are also records of Roman and Iron Age finds from the vicinity. The 1881 Ordnance Survey map of the area show that human remains were found on or very close to the present site (Dewey 2009, fig 4.2).

Domesday Book's complex entry for Wallingford (then in Berkshire) mentions only one church, held by Roger the priest, however a further five priests are recorded, implying the existence of at least five more churches. Roffe (2009, 36) records that a total of seven churches can be identified from Domesday Book. A memorandum attached to a charter of AD945 suggests that there were three churches outside the borough of Wallingford for which Roffe suggests that the only three candidates are those dedicated to St Leonard, St Lucian and St Rumbold (Roffe, 2009, 38) making these all pre-Conquest in date.

Documentary evidence for St Lucian is limited, though it is possible to demonstrate that the church was present within Henry I's period to be given to the Priory of St Frideswide, Oxford in 1122 along with the nearby St Leonard's church, with further evidence suggesting that St Leonard's was a re-dedication and (more speculatively) may have been subordinate to St Lucian's (Roffe 2009, 37–38 and Dewey 2009, 20). By the early 14th century, however, St Lucian's had been incorporated into St Leonard's (Dewey, 2009, 21); only the latter now survives.

As to its location, the extent of its parish is known (VCH 1923, 529), and the site of the church itself is reasonably clear. Riley (1876) documents St Lucian's church as standing on the east side of the Cornmarket, outside the south gate, on glebe land, whilst Skermer (c. 1712) followed by Field (1893) described it as being 5 poles (25m) south of the Alms House (as discussed by Dewey 2009, 21 and Roffe 2009, 37). This would place the church some 70m north of the current site and it is possible that the burial(s) already found on the site belonged to St Lucian's graveyard, and indeed this was clearly believed by Field (1893, 96) who notes that human remains had been found 'often and quite recently' here. Dewey also mentions 19th century references to skulls being found in the area.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, including the excavation of foundation and service trenches. All archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks were to be cleaned and recorded but not excavated unless threatened by the groundworks. Human remains were to be left *in situ* if at all possible.

## Results

The trenches were dug using a 360° machine fitted with a toothless bucket. Trench 1 had been partially dug and Trench 2 completely dug prior to attendance on site, and human remains had been noted. Trenches 3 and 4 were dug under constant archaeological supervision. No graves were excavated and any disarticulated human bones were collected from the spoil to be reburied elsewhere within the garden/burial ground.

Trenches 1 and 2 were located between the garage and existing house, on the same alignment as the existing front and rear walls of the house (Fig. 3); Trench 1 at the front (west) and Trench 2 at the rear (east). Trenches 1 and 2 measured 2.6m by 0.70m by 0.82m deep (Trench 1) and 0.97m deep (Trench 2). Trench 3 ran around the east, south and west sides of the house and measured 0.66m wide by 0.55m deep. Trench 4 was a pipe trench extending from the north-west corner of the house to a connection in the road to the west. It measured 19m by 0.32m by approximately 0.46m deep.

### Trench 1

The stratigraphy in Trench 1 consisted of 0.2m of concrete (context 50) above buried soil (51) which was dark greyish brown, silty clay loam, 0.17m thick, containing fragments of ceramic building material, coal, limestone and disarticulated human bone. It was cut through by the house foundations (1) and two service trenches (2 and 8) (Fig. 4). Below layer 51 was layer 52; dark brown, silty clay loam containing limestone fragments and flint pebbles, more than 0.45m thick. Layer 52 contained a single sherd of early Medieval Wallingford ware, in good condition, suggesting it was deposited in the 11th to 13th century, albeit a single sherd of pottery is rather uncertain dating evidence.

Truncated by both the house foundation 1 and service 8 was grave 9 (Pl. 1). Only a small part of the grave was exposed and no cut was seen (Pl. 2); it was not possible to establish any stratigraphic relationships for the grave due to the similarity of soils 52 and 68. Within the grave were the remains of a supine adult skeleton (67). The body was on a west–east orientation with only part of the left arm (humerus, radius and ulna) and rib cage exposed. The grave was backfilled with dark brown, silty clay loam (66) containing flecks of mortar.

## Trench 2

Trench 2 consisted of 0.18m of concrete (50) above buried soil (51) as above, 0.23m thick. It was cut through by the house foundations (1) and service trench (2) (Fig. 4). Below layer 51 was layer 52; dark brown, silty clay loam containing limestone fragments and flint pebbles, approximately 0.40m thick. Beneath layer 52 was layer 68, which was essentially the same as layer 52 but cut by grave 5 and probably cut by graves 3, 4 and 6. It was 0.22m thick. Context 64, a yellowish brown, silty clay loam was beneath layer 68, it was not excavated. Graves 3, 4 and 6 were all definitely cut through this layer (Pl. 2).

Grave 3 was aligned west–east and was truncated by house foundation 1. Only the skull of skeleton 56 was exposed, suggesting it to be an adult in a supine position. The grave was backfilled by context 55, dark brown, silty clay loam.

Presumed grave 4 was aligned west–east with a rounded end. Only 0.12m of the western end was exposed. It was backfilled by context 57, dark brown, silty clay loam. No skeletal remains were exposed.

Grave 5 was aligned west–east with a rounded end. Only 0.10m of the eastern end was exposed. The upper part of the cranium of an adult skeleton 59 was exposed in the section. The grave was backfilled by context 58, dark brown, silty clay loam.

Grave 6 was aligned west–east and was approximately 0.75m wide, neither end was exposed. Its relationships with graves 4 and 5 could not be determined. It was backfilled by context 60, dark brown, silty clay loam. No skeletal remains were exposed.

## Trench 3

Trench 3 consisted of 0.55m of mixed topsoil and backfill of house foundation 1. A single grave (7), aligned west–east was exposed on the south side of the existing house to the east of the chimney (Pl. 3). Only the skull of adult skeleton 62 was exposed (Pl. 1). The grave was backfilled by context 61, dark brown, sandy clay loam, containing lime mortar and charcoal.

## Trench 4

Trench 4 consisted of 0.04m of Tarmac above 0.27m of hardcore and rubble. This was above buried soil layer 76; dark greyish brown, silty clay loam, approximately 0.15m thick. Below this was a similar layer, 75; dark brown, silty clay loam into which graves 10, 11 and 12 were cut. These probably equate to layers 52 and 68 seen in trenches 1 and 2 but the trenches did not meet and nor were they open at the same time.

Grave 10 was aligned west–east, no grave cut was seen. Adult skeleton 69 (Pl. 4) was in a supine position with its arms probably across the pelvis. A piece of the skull of this skeleton was radiocarbon dated to cal AD 940–1040 (UB26109).

Grave 11 was probably aligned west–east, though the cut was not seen. Of skeleton 70, only the right arm (humerus, radius and ulna) was seen, suggesting the skeleton was in a supine position with its arms across the pelvis. Above the humerus was a pelvic bone, which may be from an additional grave (feature 12) and skeleton (context 71).

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd of pottery weighing 12g occurred in context 52. It is medieval Wallingford ware, dated *c.* AD1050–1250, fabric WA38 in the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor and Oakley 1984). It is in very good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

### *Radiocarbon Dating*

A single piece of skull from grave 10 (Sk69) was submitted to the Chrono Centre at the Queen’s University, Belfast for AMS dating. The result is considered reliable and details are tabulated in Appendix 2. This individual most probably died between AD940 and 1040, with a very small chance of being slightly earlier.

## **Conclusion**

Up to 12 graves were identified, all on an west–east alignment. In seven of these human remains were certainly present and the other features are presumed to be further graves based on shape, orientation and association. Eleven of the twelve features were located at the north of the site, where the majority of the work took place. Where human remains were seen, all skeletons were adults and appeared to be laid supine with their hands placed across their pelvis. Skeleton 69 of grave 10 was radiocarbon dated to cal. AD 940–1040, making it Late Saxon in date. The other graves appear to be stratigraphically at the same level and may be of broadly the same period, although there is probably one instance of one grave cut into another. It would appear most likely that the graveyard should be associated with St Lucian's church (now lost) which is believed to be located approximately 70m to the north and was in use from at least the 10th to the 14th century.



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**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1, 2		50	Concrete	Modern	
1, 2		51	Buried soil		
1, 2		52	Buried soil	AD 1050–1250	pottery
2	1	53	Foundation	1960's	
2	2	54	Pipe	Modern	
2	3	55, 56 (sk)	Grave	?Pre AD 1250	Stratigraphy
2	4	57	Grave	?Pre AD 1250	Stratigraphy
2	5	58, 59 (sk)	Grave	?Pre AD 1250	Stratigraphy
2	6	60	Grave	?Pre AD 1250	Stratigraphy
3	7	61, 62 (sk)	Grave		
3		63	Topsoil	Modern	
2		64	Natural?		
1	8	65	Pipe	Modern	
1	9	66, 67 (sk)	Grave	?Pre AD 1050–1250	Stratigraphy
2		68	Buried soil	Pre AD1040	Stratigraphy
4	10	69 (sk), 72	Grave	cal AD 940–1040	Radiocarbon date
4	11	70 (sk), 73	Grave		
4	12	71 (sk), 74	Grave		
4		75	Buried soil	Pre AD 1040	Stratigraphy
4		76	Buried soil		

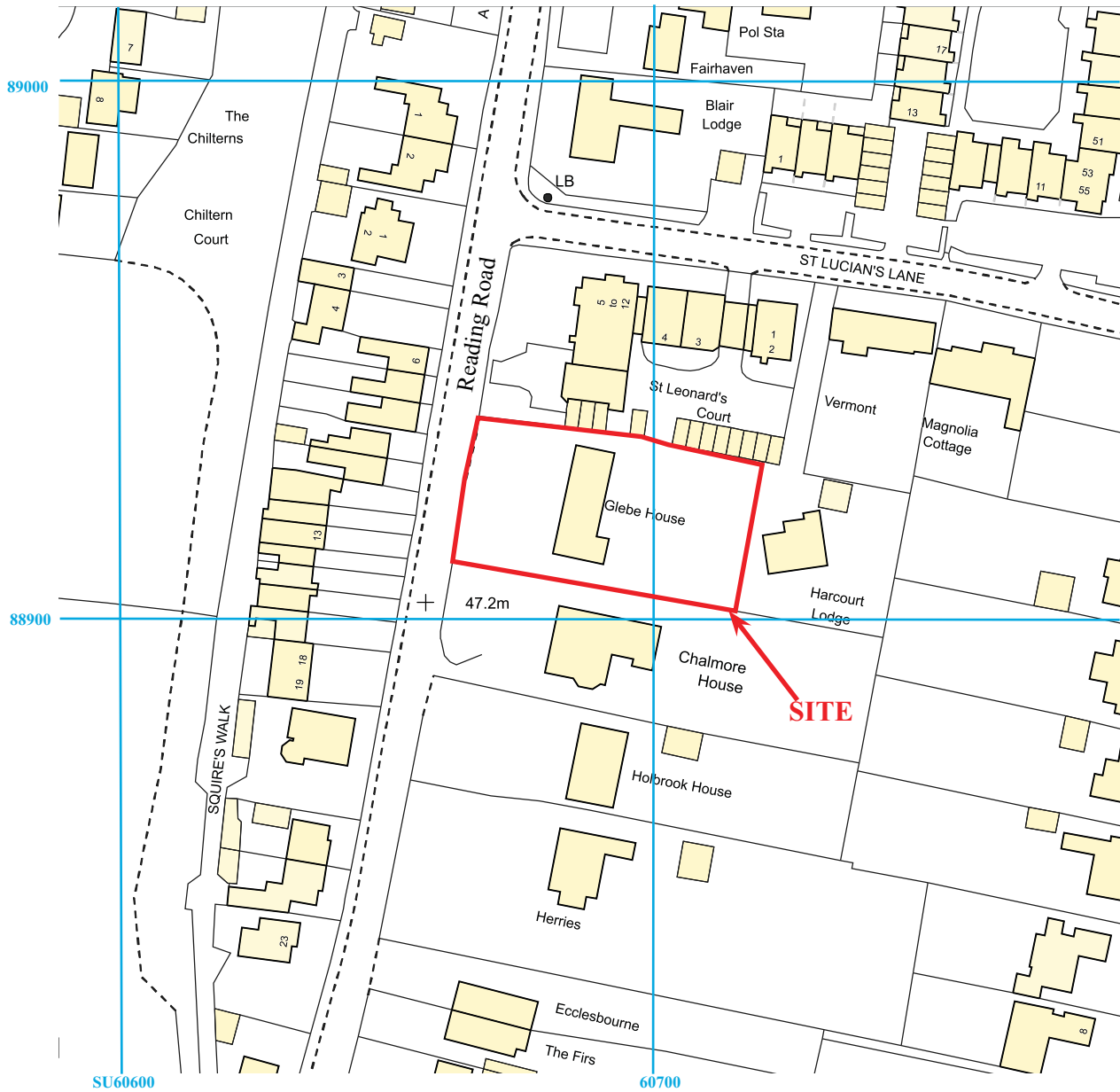
**APPENDIX 2: Radiocarbon date**

Lab ID	Context	Material	F13C	Radiocarbon Age	Calibrated Date	Probability
UBA-26109	SK69		0.8786±0.0039	BP 1040 +/- 36	cal AD 895- 928	9.7%
					cal AD 940- 1040	90.3%

Calibrated using Calib Rev 7.0.0 (Stuiver and Reimer 1993) with data from Reimer *et al.* 2013) and quoted as area under a curve at 95.4% probability







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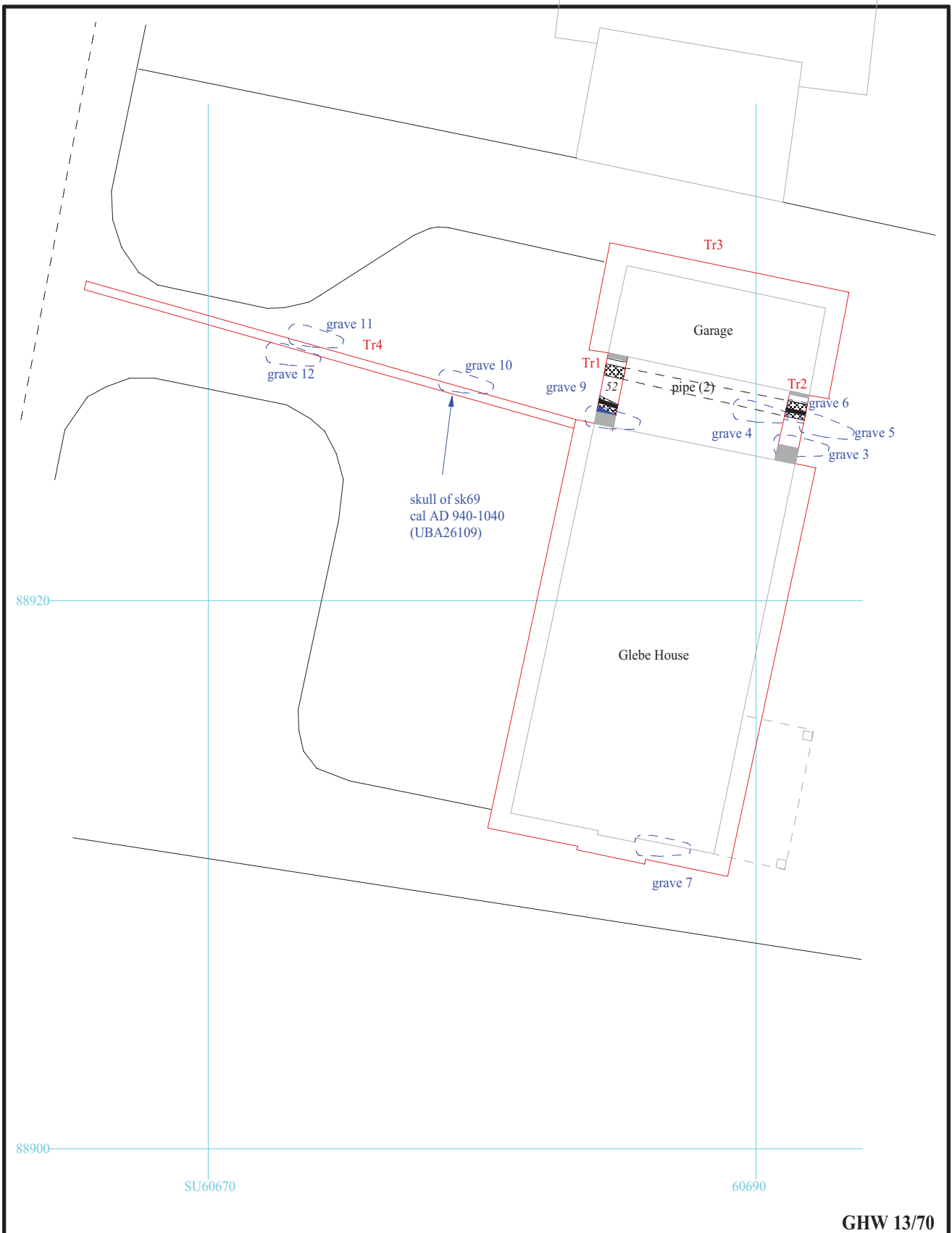
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Reading Road.

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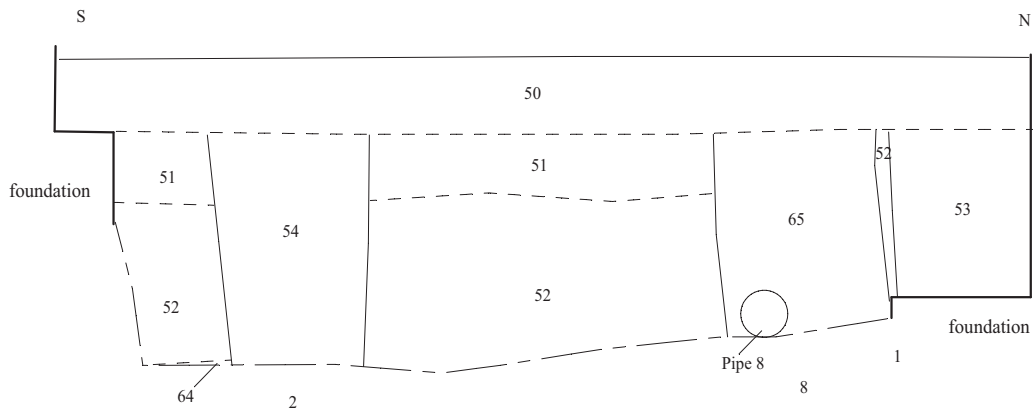
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.

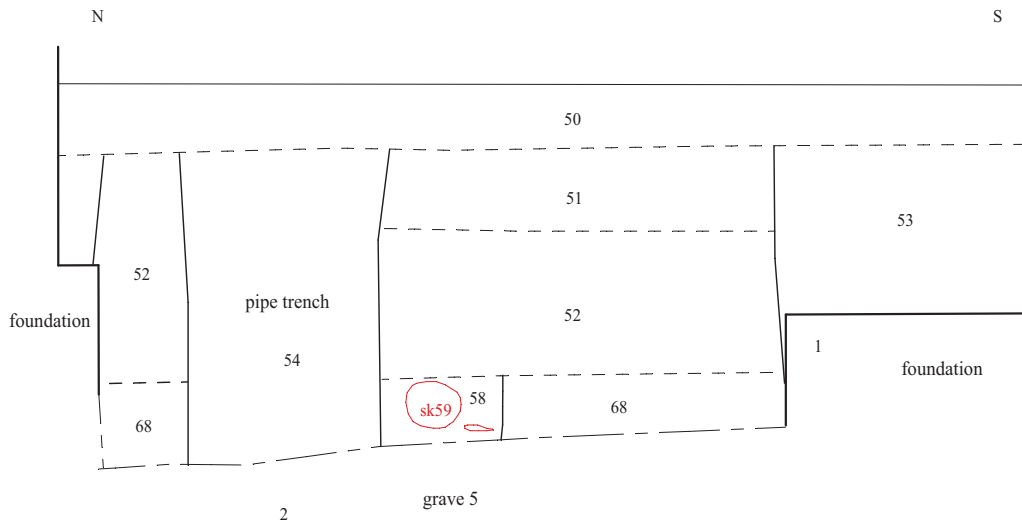


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**Trench 1  
(East facing footing trench)**



**Trench 2  
(West facing footing trench)**



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Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Arm of Grave 9, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 showing features 3-6, looking north, Scales 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Skull of Grave 7, looking west, Scale: 0.5m.



Plate 4. Skull of Grave 10, looking west, Scale: 0.5m.

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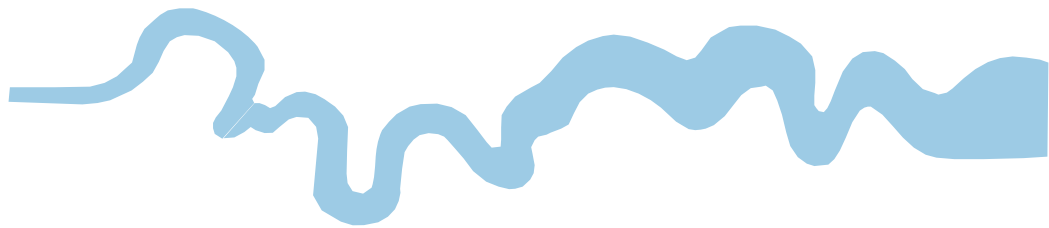
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Plates 3 - 4.

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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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