

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street,
Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Site Code: BSD15/238

(SU 5792 9415)

The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr T F Feeney

by Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BSD 15/238

October 2015

Summary

Site name: The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5792 9415

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th–13th October 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding

Site code: BSD 15/238

Summary of results: A footing trench for a new revetment wall was observed which would create a flood defence for the listed building. No archaeological deposits were encountered but two gravestones, and other stone, were recorded from topsoil contexts.

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 ✓ 15.10.15 Steve Preston ✓ 15.10.15

The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 15/238

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire OX10 7JT (SU 5792 9415) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr T F Feeney, the homeowner.

Planning permission (P15/S1735/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a flood protection wall and bund. This is to protect the property, which is a Listed Building (248069) from overflow of the drain which lies at the southern edge of the garden and which leads off the River Thame and has flooded his garden over the last few years. Two conditions were attached to the planning consent which required a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for a watching brief to be submitted prior to groundworks commencing and an archaeologist to be present during 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 Service, adviser to the District Council on matters pertaining to archaeology within the planning process. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin on the 12th and 13th October 2015 and the site code is BSD 15/238.

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

The site is located in the centre of Dorchester-on-Thames which lies on the confluence of the Rivers Thames and Thame (Fig. 1). The site is bounded to the north by the graveyard of the Abbey Church of St Peter and Paul, with the house set back from the main road through the village (Fig.2). The garden where the works were to be carried out included a patio to the south of the extension off the Listed Building, and care was need not to disturb it or its footing while works were carried out. The underlying geology was not reached but is mapped as 1st (Flood Plain) sand and gravel deposit (BGS 1980).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within an area of high archaeological potential (Munby *et al* 1975). The site lies 100m to the south of The Abbey Church of St Peter and Paul, founded in 1140, and 120m east of the Scheduled Monument of Dorchester Roman Town (SAM OX116) and north-east of the Scheduled Monument of the Dyke Hills Iron Age *oppidum* (SAM OX17). The eastern outer earthworks of the Roman town are projected to pass within a few metres of the site. Extra-mural settlement is known to exist to the south and the west of the Roman town, areas which also included burial grounds (Burnham and Wachter 1990). The graveyard for the Church lies immediately adjacent to the site (Fig. 2). The cottage itself is a Listed Building (248069) of Grade II status of 16th and 17th century date with the extension of 18th century date. It is timber framed with colourwashed brick and plaster infill and a thatched roof (Pl. 1).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve the monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in this instance removal of topsoil deposits in the garden and observation of a new revetment wall for a soil bank in front of the existing patio wall. All trenching and ground reduction was initially dug with a mechanical excavator fitted with a grading bucket to level the soil behind the existing garden wall, then dug with a toothed ditching bucket. Sections and bases were hand dug and defined to level them up.

Results

Ground reduction

Observations were made of the reduction of topsoil behind the existing garden wall to the south of the dwelling (Fig. 3). This removed up to 0.4m of banked deposited against the wall and was c. 1.6m wide. This topsoil (50), a dark brown grey clayey silt contained a modest amount of Post-Medieval and Victorian pottery, ceramic building material (tile and brick) and clay tobacco pipe.

Foundation trench

A footing trench was then dug from this level to a depth of between 0.8m in the east and 0.88m in the south-west (Pl. 2). This trench was 0.7m wide and was dug through further topsoil and exposed subsoil only at its base in the east and south west, but did not dig through it (Fig. 4). No natural geology was exposed.

At the point where the foundations for the churchyard wall to the north west were exposed, four slabs of stone were encountered within the topsoil. Two of these were identified as gravestones (No. 1 and 2), probably from the nearby graveyard and reused in this instance in an area of banking probably creating a crude path across the topsoil.

Finds

Pottery

Three sherds of pottery were retained, weighing 11g, as a sample from a number of red earthenwares and white 'china' pottery present on the site. These sherds, two partially orange glazed red earthenware and a dark brown glazed body sherd are all Post-Medieval types (at the earliest 16th century), but are all mass produced and probably from a 19th century context.

Clay tobacco pipe

Eight pieces of clay pipe were recovered. Six, weighing 18g, are stem fragments probably of 18th century date. Two are broader stems 10mm in diameter and are probably an earlier 17th century variety. A fragment of a bowl survives which contains a leaf or laurel pattern up the upper part of the bowl from the top of the stem, and indication of a pattern on the side, possibly hair, suggesting this bowl had a face. The foot is stamped on one side with the letters 'H' and the other 'T'. There are several known makers with those initials, mostly in London (Oswald 1975). This is a later variety probably from the 1850s.

Gravestones

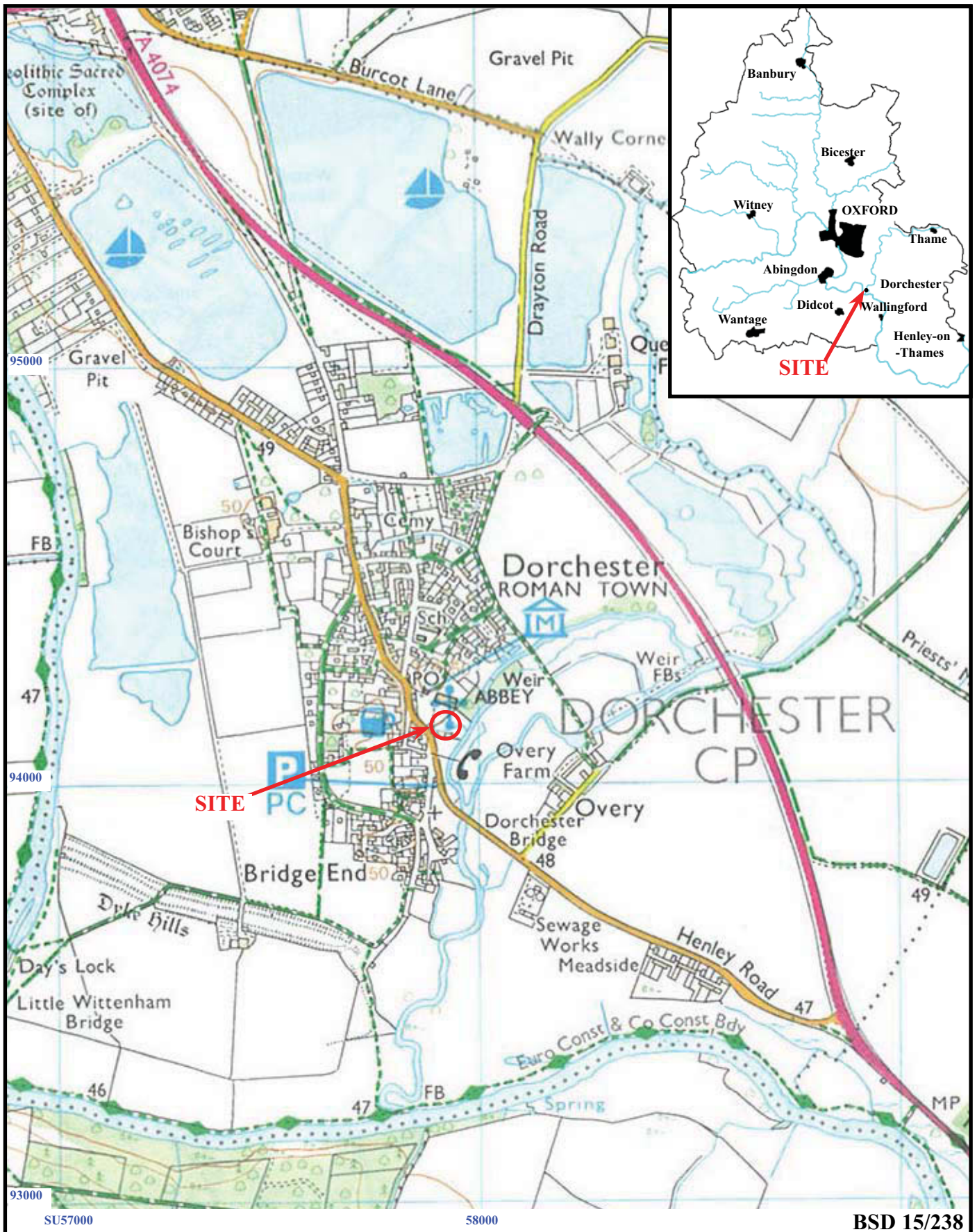
Two elements of gravestones were observed on site. Grave stone 1 (Pl. 3) was complete and was made of limestone with limited surviving script on the very worn surface. The base was covered with mortar and it is unclear whether this was derived from it being mortared in the ground, or from its current use. Gravestone 2 (Pl. 4) was the top of an ornately carved slab with leaf and floral motifs and is probably of 17th/18th century date.

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits were uncovered, as the works mostly disturbed only topsoil, though subsoil was uncovered at the base of the footing trench at a depth of 0.88m. This was not dug into and natural geology was not exposed. An umber of old gravestones possibly reused as a path were recorded.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Burnham and Wachter, 1990, *The small towns of Roman Britain*, London
- Munby, J and Rodwell, K, 1975, 'Dorchester', in K Rodwell (ed), *Historic Towns of Oxfordshire*, Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey **3**, Oxford, 101-8
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oswald, A, 1975, *Clay pipes for the Archaeologist*, BAR **14** (1975), London

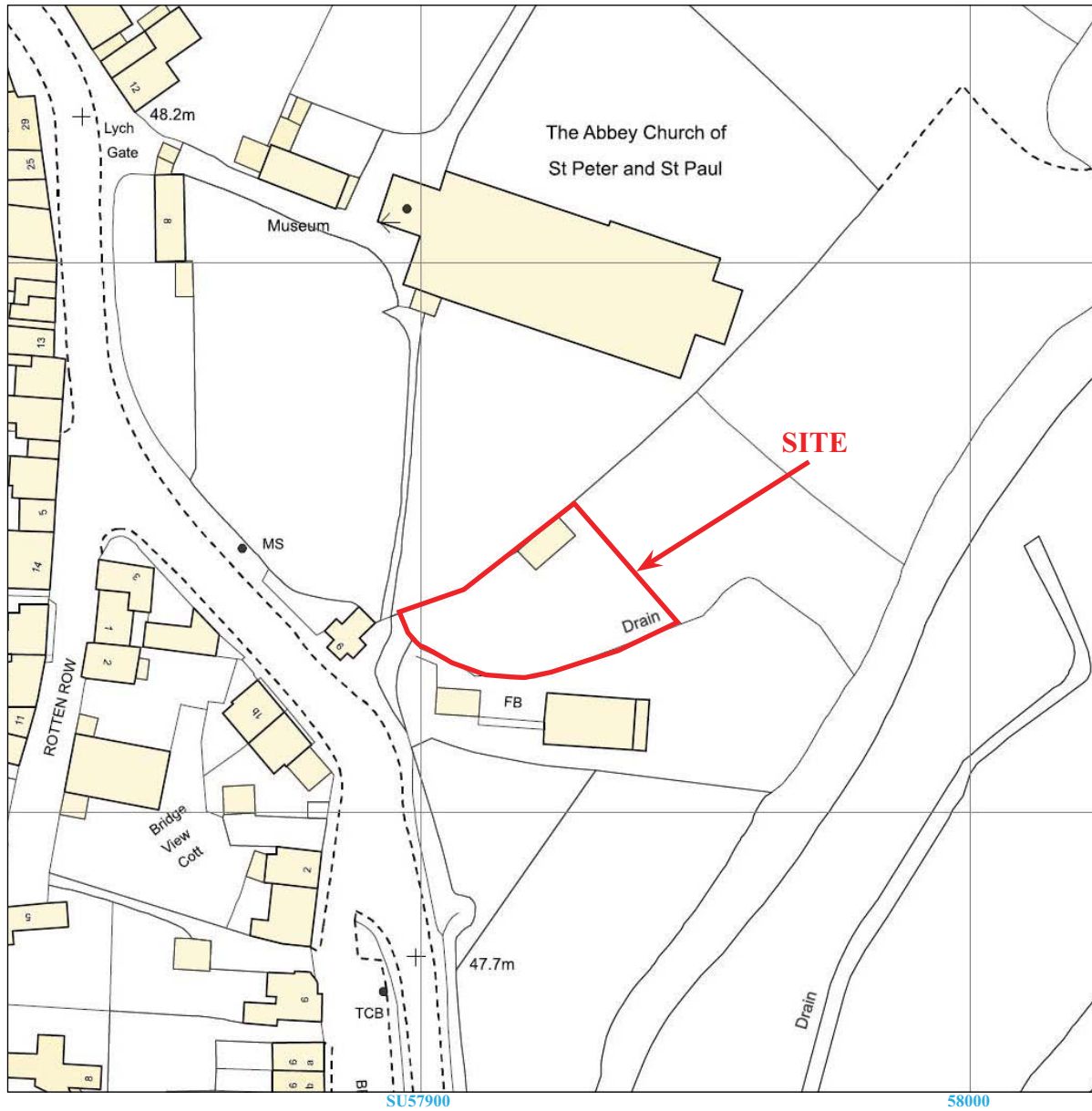


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Figure 1. Location of site within Dorchester-on-Thames and Oxfordshire.

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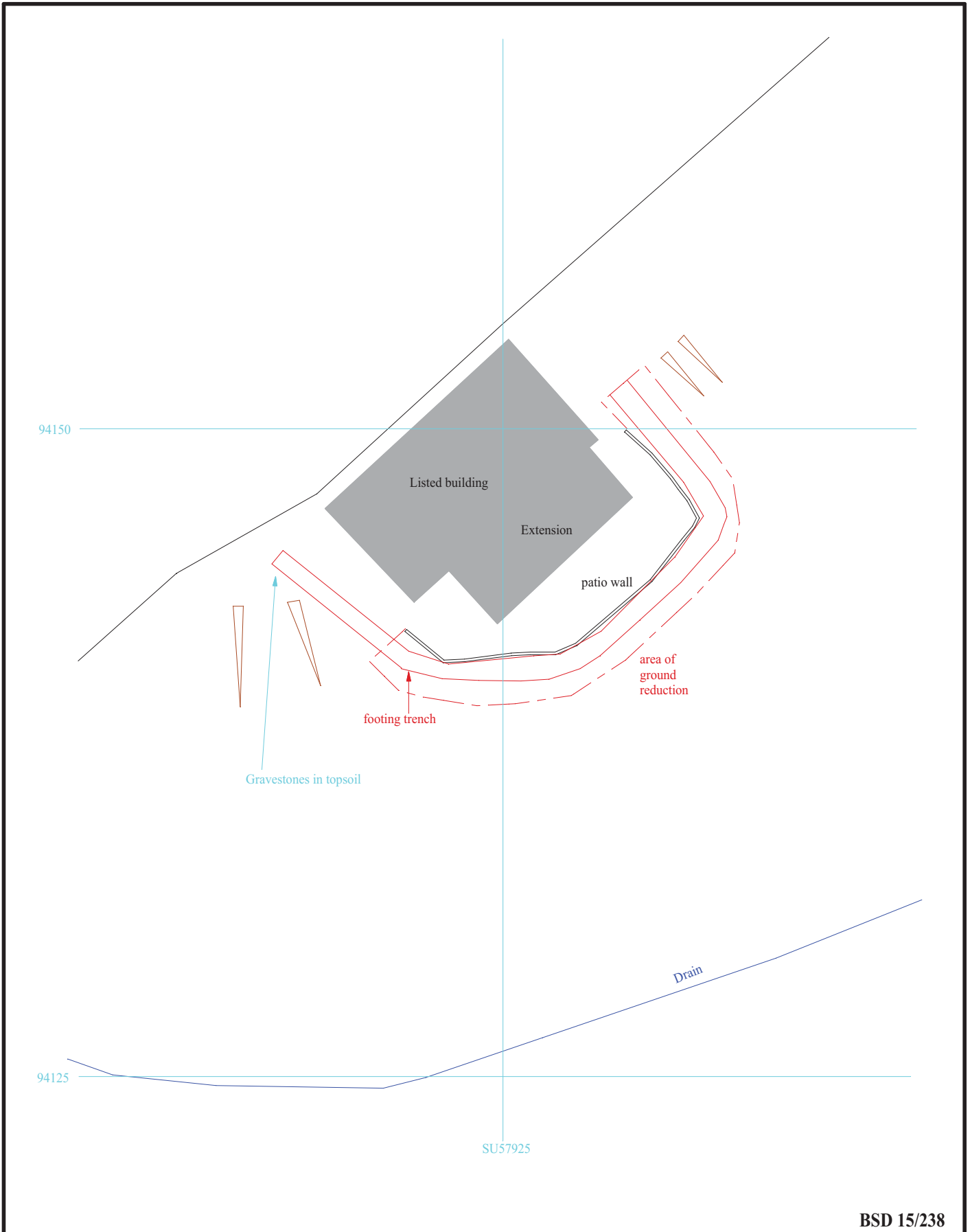
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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South west area



Topsoil



base of trench

Subsoil

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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. The listed building in relation to the abbey's graveyard looking north east.



Plate 2. The footing trench, looking south east, Scale: 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Gravestone 1, Scale: 0.5m.



Plate 4. Gravestone 2, Scale: 0.5m.

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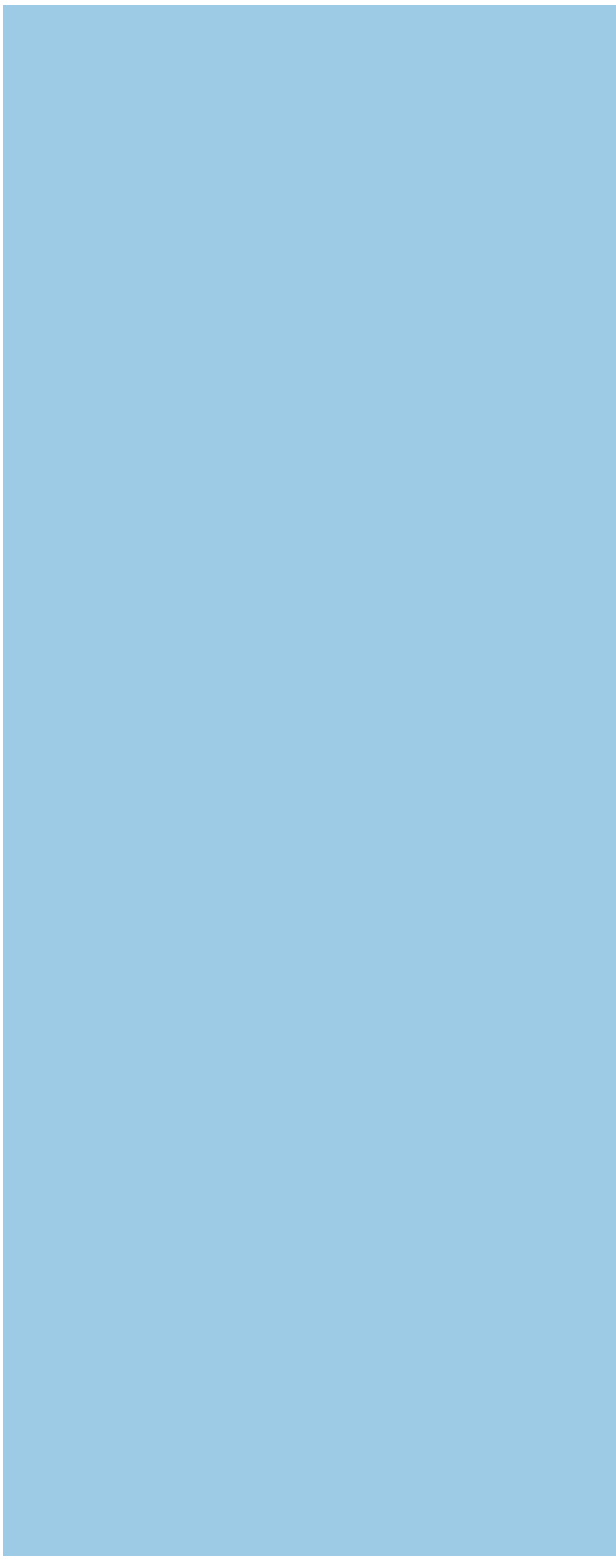
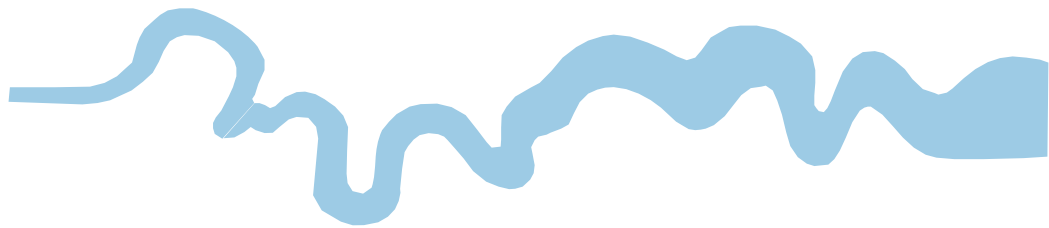
Plates 3 - 4.

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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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