

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Red House, Packhorse Lane,
Marcham, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Daniel Bray and Andrew Muddin

Site Code: PLM15/114

(SU 4557 9672)

The Red House, Packhorse Lane, Marcham Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Sweetcroft Homes Ltd**

by Daniel Bray and Andrew Muddin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PLM 15/114

October 2015

Summary

Site name: The Red House, Packhorse Lane, Marcham, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4557 9672

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 3rd–23rd June 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Daniel Bray and Andrew Munding

Site code: PLM 15/114

Area of site: *c.* 1300 sq m

Summary of results: Ground reduction and excavation of footings and two soakaways revealed the presence of pits, postholes and a possible roundhouse structure dating to the early Iron Age (6th to 4th century BC). Two sherds of Roman pottery hint at a little later activity in the vicinity.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service with the accession code OXCMS:2015.124.

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

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Report edited/checked by: | Steve Ford ✓ 23.10.15 |
| | Steve Preston ✓ 20.10.15 |

The Red House, Packhorse Lane, Marcham, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Daniel Bray and Andrew Muddin

Report 15/114

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Red House, Packhorse Lane, Marcham Oxfordshire, OX13 6NT (SU 4557 9672) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Lee Chapman of Sweetcroft Homes Ltd, 78 Cumnor Road, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5JP.

Planning permission (P14/V2548/FUL) has been gained from the Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of two detached dwellings with garages on land to the rear of The Red House, Packhorse Lane, Marcham, Oxfordshire. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features, an archaeological watching brief has been requested during the period of 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 Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the adviser to the District on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Andrew Muddin between 3rd and 23rd June 2015 with the site code is PLM 15/114. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, with accession code OXCMS:2015.124.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in Marcham to the west of Abingdon and south-west of Oxford (Fig. 1). The site is located to the north of Packhorse Lane, roughly central to the village (Fig. 2). The new plots are situated to the rear north of the Red House, and private dwellings surround the development on the other sides. The site lies between 58-60m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as Limestone silts and clays (BGS 1971).

Archaeological background

In summary, the site lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential with extensive archaeological remains immediately east of the site. Excavation there has dated a ring ditch (levelled round barrow) of Bronze

Age and has also uncovered Iron Age and Roman settlement features and finds. Recent fieldwork at 23 Packhorse Lane immediately adjacent to the site found a large number of pits and some linear features. The majority of the features were of Early Iron Age date with others possibly of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date (Mundin *et al.* 2015). More generally, the Marcham/Frilford area is rich in archaeological remains of most periods.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works, which in this case involved the monitoring of two soakaways, foundation trenches for both house plots and garages and service trenches (Fig. 3). Where the ground reductions took place but did not impact the archaeological horizon, the deeper foundation trenches were also monitored.

Results

All groundworks were undertaken by a 360° type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Where features were not excavated by hand but seen in section the spoil removed was inspected for finds. Across all areas, topsoil (generally 0.40m deep) and subsoil (up to 0.30m) were stripped onto the natural silty clay.

Soakaway 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.1)

Located at the northern end of the site, soakaway 1 was 5.60m in length, 2.70m wide and 0.70m deep. In the centre of the area large pit 4 (Pl. 5) was observed which was 1.58m in diameter and 0.35m deep. A total of 25 sherds of early Iron Age pottery were recovered along with animal bone and four fragments of a possible quern stone from the dark brown grey sandy silt fill 55. Four pits/postholes (5-8) were located in the north-eastern corner of the soakaway. They were between 0.26m and 0.48m in diameter and between 0.09m and 0.23m in depth. Twenty-one sherds of early Iron Age pottery and four animal bones (1 of pig) were recovered from pit/posthole 7. Pit 9 was recorded in the south western corner but not fully exposed. It was 0.26m deep and produced a single sherd of early Iron Age pottery.

Soakaway 2 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

Located directly east of Soakaway 1 this soakaway was 4.00m in length, 2.70m wide and 0.70m deep. Large pit 1 was observed in the south-western corner but not fully revealed. It was 0.54m deep and produced 45 sherds of early Iron Age pottery and a single Roman sherd. In the northern part of the soakaway a small length of a possible ring gully was revealed. Two sections (2 and 3) (Pl. 4) were excavated which showed it to be between 0.19m and 0.41m wide and 0.08m deep. Both produced small quantities of early Iron Age pottery and animal bone. The ring gully would have had a diameter of *c.* 7m, representing a small roundhouse.

Foundation trenches (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 3)

Prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches, the ground was reduced between 0.30m and 0.35m to create a level area and comprised entirely of topsoil. A test pit revealed that a further 0.37m of topsoil was present above the natural geology and the reduction would not impact the archaeological relevant layer.

The foundation trenches were excavated between 0.65m and 1.00m wide and between 1.10m and 1.25m deep from the previously reduced level. Topsoil was deeper in the eastern plot and was observed directly above the natural geology across this part of the site with minimal subsoil present in some sections of the footings. In the east plot pits 10 – 16 were recorded which were between 0.44m and 1.80m in diameter and 0.29m and 0.55m in depth. The primary fills of the pits were mid brown to reddish brown in colour and sandy silt in composition and contained frequent stone inclusions. Pits 14 and 15 contained a darker brown grey sandy silt deposit above the primary deposit. Early Iron Age pottery was recovered from pits 10, 11, 12 and 15.

Pits 17 – 22 were recorded in the western plot. These ranged in diameter from 0.40m to 1.57m and in depth from 0.24m to 0.94m. All pits contained a single deposit similar in colour to those recorded in the eastern plot but a clay silt composition was observed differing from the sandier fills recorded on the east plot. A total of 9 sherds of Iron Age pottery was recovered from pit 17 and a single sherd was recovered from pit 18. Pit 19 produced a single early Iron Age sherd and a fragment of Roman pottery also.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological watching brief resulted in the recovery of a small group of 134 sherds of pottery weighing 2037g dating to the later prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval periods. The assemblage was sorted into fabrics

based on the colour, texture and nature of the inclusions present in the clay. The prehistoric material was classified following the recommended nomenclature in PCRG (1997) where the letters denote the main inclusions present. Other wares were coded more generically according to firing colour and inclusions. The pottery was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 2. Sherds with fresh breaks were counted as single pieces.

In general the sherds were well-preserved with large sherds giving an overall average sherd weight of 15g. Surface preservation was also good and details of vessel finish such as burnishing could be detected where present. Pottery was recovered from 12 features, most of which were pits. Only four contexts yielded in excess of 10 sherds; the maximum being 46 sherds from pit 1. In two cases the pit groups appear to comprise sherds of different date suggesting some potential contamination of deposits.

Early Iron Age

Most of the sherds, 129 in total, appear to date to the early Iron Age. A variety of fabrics are present which form four main groups: sandy (SA); flint-tempered (FL), sandy with shell (SASH) and shell/limestone-tempered (SH; SHLI). The sandy wares can be divided into a coarser (SA1), a glauconitic (SA2) and a finer variant (SAF). The sandy wares collectively account for 43% by sherd count of the Iron Age assemblage closely followed by sandy with sparse, coarse, shell inclusions at 34%. Calcareous wares account for 18.6% with flint-tempered sherds being very much in the minority. Forms included jars with rounded, beaded rims; curved-wall jars with undifferentiated rims; jars with squared-off rims and carinated bowls with flared rims. The finer sandy ware vessels are generally burnished along with a few vessels in fabrics SASH and sandy fabrics SA1 and SA2.

At least three sherds have finger depressions on the body of the vessel (pits 1 (52); 15 (66) and 7 (58)). In the latter the depressions are placed on the carination. One carinated bowl in a fine sandy ware from pit 7 (58) is decorated with a zone of incised lines grouped vertically and diagonally (Pl. 6). Evidence of use can be seen on a sherd from pit 17 which has internal sooting.

This group of pottery seems to form a coherent Early Iron Age group (6th-4th centuries BC) and is typical of ceramic traditions seen in the Vale of the White Horse / Upper Thames Valley. The assemblage comprises a mixture of coarse wares and finer wares.

Roman

Two Roman grey ware sherds were noted; one from pit 1; the other from pit 19. As both pits also contained Iron Age pieces it is possible that the Roman sherds are intrusive.

Medieval-post-medieval

Two sherds of glazed Brill-Boarstall-type ware came from the topsoil. These could be of medieval or early post-medieval date. A sherd of post-medieval English stone ware was also recovered from the topsoil.

Summary

The present assemblage is quite modest in size but seems to show a focus of activity in the early Iron Age. This is perhaps not too surprising in view of the proximity of the site to the extensive Iron Age and Roman temple site at Frilford and various other early Iron Age sites in the Vale of the White Horse and along the Ridgeway.

Animal Bone by Lizzie Lewins

Animal bone (49 pieces, weighing a total of 389.5g), was recovered from 8 features, 1 of which was only represented through bulk environmental sampling. The bone was classified according to size (medium mammal – sheep/goat, pig; large mammal – cattle/horse) and where possible identified to species. The bone, although fragmented, was in good condition. Little surface abrasion or erosion was observed.

Pit 1 (52) contained eight identifiable fragments, two of which were recovered through environmental sampling (sample no. 1). The hand collected material consisted of three ribs from a medium-sized mammal and three long bones from a medium-sized mammal. Of the three long bones only one could be identified further and was found to be a right, distal humerus. Parallel cut marks were noted upon the shaft of one of the long bones. The two identifiable bones from sample no. 1 consisted of a rib and a right calcaneus both from a medium-sized mammal. One of the unidentifiable fragments found within the sample was noted to have been burnt.

Gully 2 (53) contained a single, identifiable cattle molar (m1/m2). Gully 3 (54) was represented by both hand collection and environmental sampling (sample no. 3). The only identifiable fragment from the hand collected material was a rib (side unknown) proximal articulation. The bone contained in sample no. 3 was a right mandible from a sheep/goat containing the p 3 and 4 and M 1-3 teeth.

Pit 4 (55) contained five identifiable bones, one of which was found within sample no. 5. The hand collected material consisted of a left mandible from a sheep/goat containing the p3 and m1 teeth, a rib and fragmented long bone from a medium-sized mammal and a right ulna from a large mammal. The ulna displayed

an un-fused metaphyses and was noted to be slightly burnt. Of the material from sample no. 5 only a fragmented long bone from a medium-sized mammal was identifiable.

Of pit/posthole 7 (58), only the hand collected material yielded identifiable bone which consisted of a right mandible from a pig containing the m2 and m3 teeth. Pit 9 (60) contained a left mandible from a sheep/goat. The dp4 tooth is still present within the mandible.

Pit 17 (69) and (70) contained two identifiable fragments, one from each deposit. Deposit (69) a left proximal metatarsal which had parallel cut marks on the shaft. Deposit (70) contained a right mandible from a sheep/goat.

Within the assemblage there was found to be duplicated skeletal elements giving a MNI of 4: 2 sheep, 1 pig and 1 bovid. Overall the modest assemblage showed only a small amount of evidence for butchery in the form of cut marks. Similarly only a small amount of burning was noted and it is therefore likely that this represents domestic consumption.

Quernstone? by Aidan Colyer

Four fragments of sandstone were present from pit 7 (58) which are probably from a quern.

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Jo Pine

Six samples were processed from the site. The samples were wet sieved to 0.25mm and the flots air dried. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x40.

Charred plant macrofossils were present in low quantities in samples [1] 1 (52), [2] 2 (53) and [5] 4(55). These were poorly preserved and can only be identified as indeterminate cereal.

A low density of charcoal fragments were present in samples [1] 1 (52), [2] 2 (53), [3] 3 (54), [4] 7 (58) and [6] 6 (57). The majority of this material was too small for species identification but samples [3] and [6] contained one or two pieces of a size and structure that has potential for species identification.

Conclusion

The watching brief was successful in identifying a high density of archaeological deposits on the site similar to those encountered during previous work directly to the east. This earlier work had identified the presence of an occupation site (but with no structures) of early to mid Iron Age date. The deposits found here include pits,

postholes and a possible ring gully which all date to the early Iron Age (6th to 4th century BC) and reveal more of, although not necessarily the full extent of, the occupation site.

As noted in the archaeological background above, the area is rich in archaeological deposits and this site adds to information from works carried out in the vicinity with the addition of a possible structure recorded in the northern part of the site. Although not fully revealed the small length of gully is interpreted as the southern edge of a possible roundhouse structure. It is unclear if the two Roman sherds should date the contexts in which they were found, which would make these considerably later than the roundhouse. On balance the Roman pottery, single sherds in each case, is more likely to be intrusive and all of the features from this investigation would appear to be contemporary, in contrast to the mixed dates for features to the east.

Economic evidence (animal bone and plant remains) was very sparse, but indicates the exploitation of cereals and the main domesticated animals (pig, cattle and sheep/goat), adding little to the more detailed data from the adjacent site (Mundin *et al.* 2015).

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 259, Drift Edition, Keyworth
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Mundin, A, Porter, S and Dawson, T, 2015, '23 Packhorse Lane, Marcham, Oxfordshire; an archaeological watching brief', TVAS report **14/237**, Reading
PCRG, 1997 *The study of later prehistoric pottery: general policies and guidelines for publication*, Prehistoric Ceramics Research Gp, Occas papers nos **1** and **2** (revised)

APPENDIX 1: Feature details

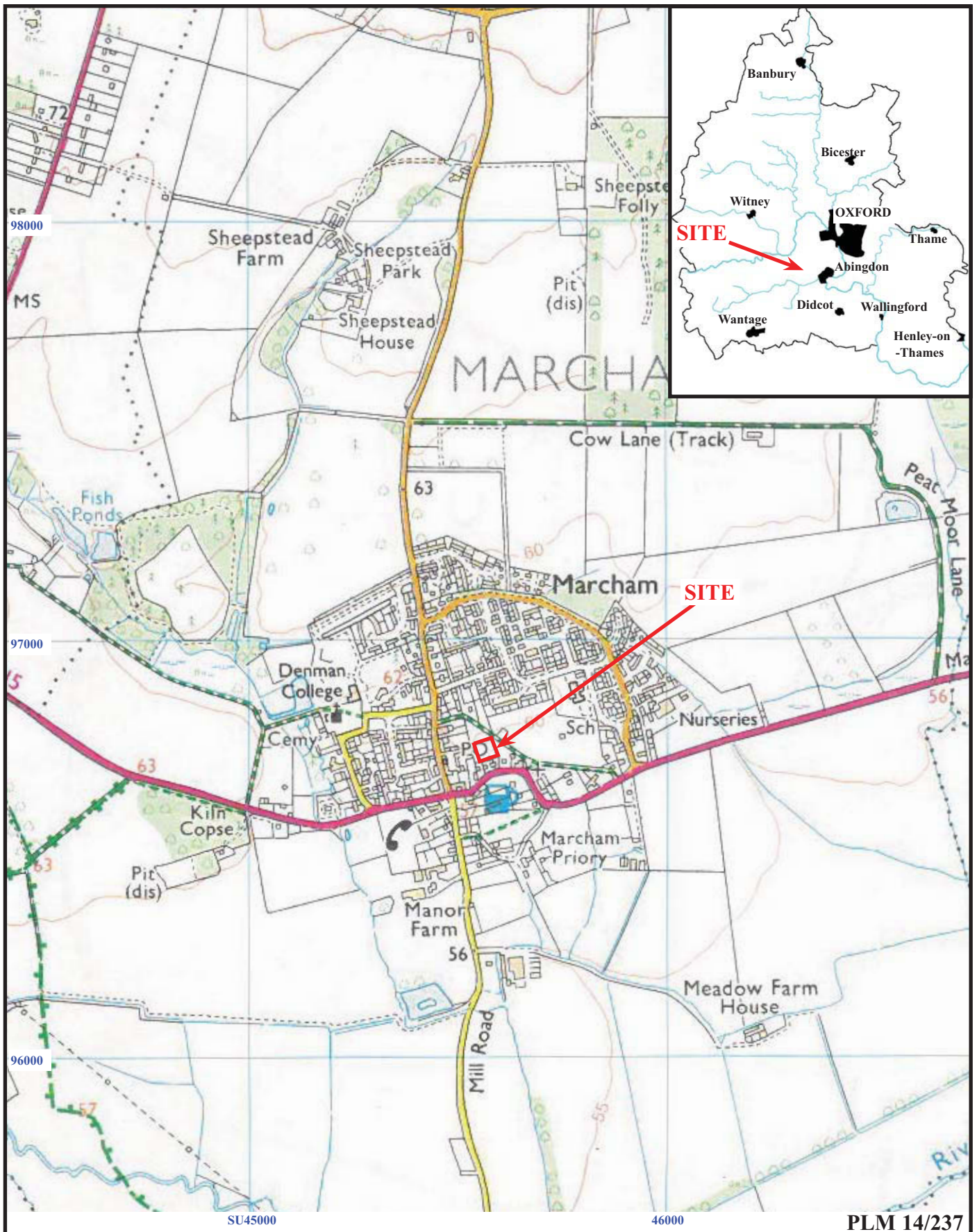
| <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 52 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 2 | 53 | Gully | EIA | Pot |
| 3 | 54 | Gully | EIA | Pot |
| 4 | 55 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 5 | 56 | Posthole | | |
| 6 | 57 | Posthole | | |
| 7 | 58 | Pit/Posthole | EIA | Pot |
| 8 | 59 | Posthole | | |
| 9 | 60 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 10 | 61 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 11 | 62 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 12 | 71 | Pit | | |
| 13 | 63 | Pit | | |
| 14 | 64, 65 | Pit | | |
| 15 | 66, 67 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 16 | 68 | Pit | | |
| 17 | 69 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 18 | 73 | Pit | EIA | Pot |
| 19 | 72 | Pit | EIA/Ro? | Pot |
| 20 | 74 | Pit | | |
| 21 | 75 | Pit | | |
| 22 | 76 | Pit | | |

APPENDIX 2: Pottery Catalogue

| <i>Cut</i> | <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>FL</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>SAF</i> | <i>SASH</i> | <i>SH</i> | <i>SHLI</i> | <i>Ro</i> | <i>Med/Pm</i> | <i>Tot No</i> | <i>Tot Wt (g)</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 0 | 0 | topsoil | - | 1 | 2 | 4 | - | 3 | - | 3 | 13 | 230 | EIA/Pmed |
| 1 | 52 | pit | - | 15 | 5 | 21 | 1 | 3 | 1 | - | 46 | 480 | EIA/Ro |
| 2 | 53 | gully | 3 | - | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 6 | 47 | EIA |
| 3 | 54 | gully | - | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 24 | EIA |
| 4 | 55 | pit | - | 17 | 2 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | 25 | 337 | EIA |
| 7 | 58 | pit/phole | 1 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 4 | - | - | - | 21 | 402 | EIA |
| 9 | 60 | pit | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 36 | EIA |
| 10 | 61 | pit | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | 10 | EIA |
| 11 | 62 | pit | - | - | - | - | 4 | - | - | - | 4 | 62 | EIA |
| 15 | 66 | pit | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 36 | EIA |
| 17 | 69 | pit | - | - | - | 2 | 5 | - | - | - | 7 | 276 | EIA |
| 17 | 70 | pit | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 35 | EIA |
| 18 | 73 | pit | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 16 | EIA |
| 19 | 72 | pit | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | 2 | 46 | EIA/Ro |
| TOTAL | | | 5 | 40 | 16 | 44 | 17 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 134 | 2037 | |

APPENDIX 3: Animal Bone Inventory

| <i>Cut</i> | <i>Deposit</i> | <i>Sample.</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>No. Frags</i> | <i>Wt (g)</i> | <i>Sheep/ Goat</i> | <i>Pig</i> | <i>Cattle</i> | <i>Medium Mammal</i> | <i>Large Mammal</i> | <i>Unid.</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---|
| 1 | 52 | - | Pit | 9 | 35.5 | | | | 6 | | 3 | Cut marks |
| 1 | 52 | 1 | Pit | 9 | 18 | | | | 2 | | 7 | Burnt bone (blackened) |
| 2 | 53 | - | Gully | 2 | 33.5 | | | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 3 | 54 | - | Gully | 3 | 7 | | | | 1 | | 2 | |
| 3 | 54 | 3 | Gully | 1 | 39 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 4 | 55 | - | Pit | 6 | 74 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 2 | Slightly burnt bone, unfused olecranon (metaphyses) |
| 4 | 55 | 5 | Pit | 8 | 23 | | | | 1 | | 7 | |
| 6 | 57 | 6 | Posthole | 2 | 4.5 | | | | | | 2 | |
| 7 | 58 | - | Pit/ Posthole | 4 | 103 | | 1 | | | | 3 | |
| 7 | 58 | 4 | Pit/ Posthole | 1 | 8 | | | | | | 1 | |
| 9 | 60 | - | Pit | 1 | 15 | 1 | | | | | | dp4 still present |
| 17 | 69 | - | Pit | 2 | 25 | | | | 1 | | 1 | Cut marks |
| 17 | 70 | - | Pit | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | 49 | 389.5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| MNI | | | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | |

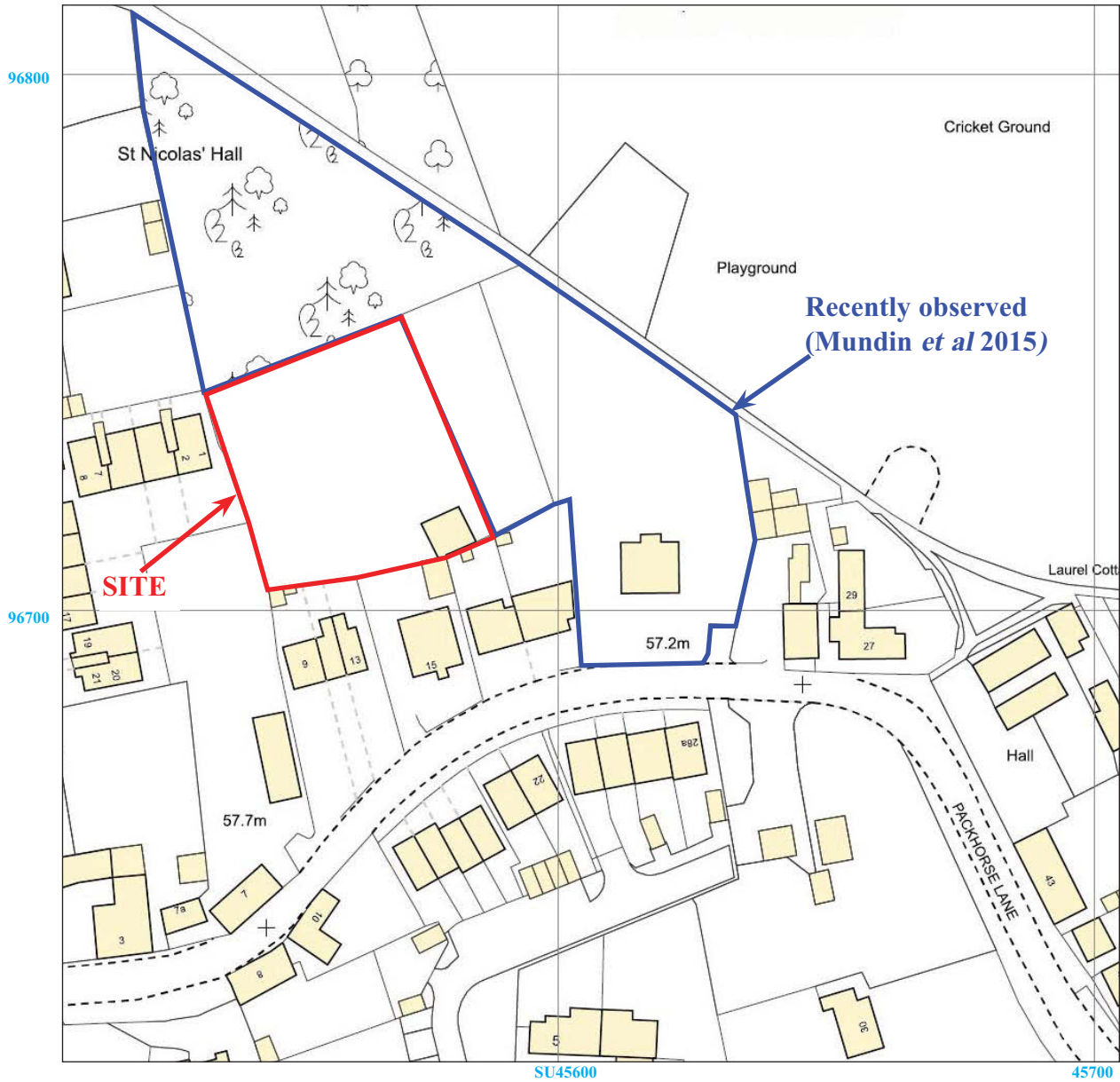


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Figure 1. Location of site within Marcham
and in Oxfordshire.

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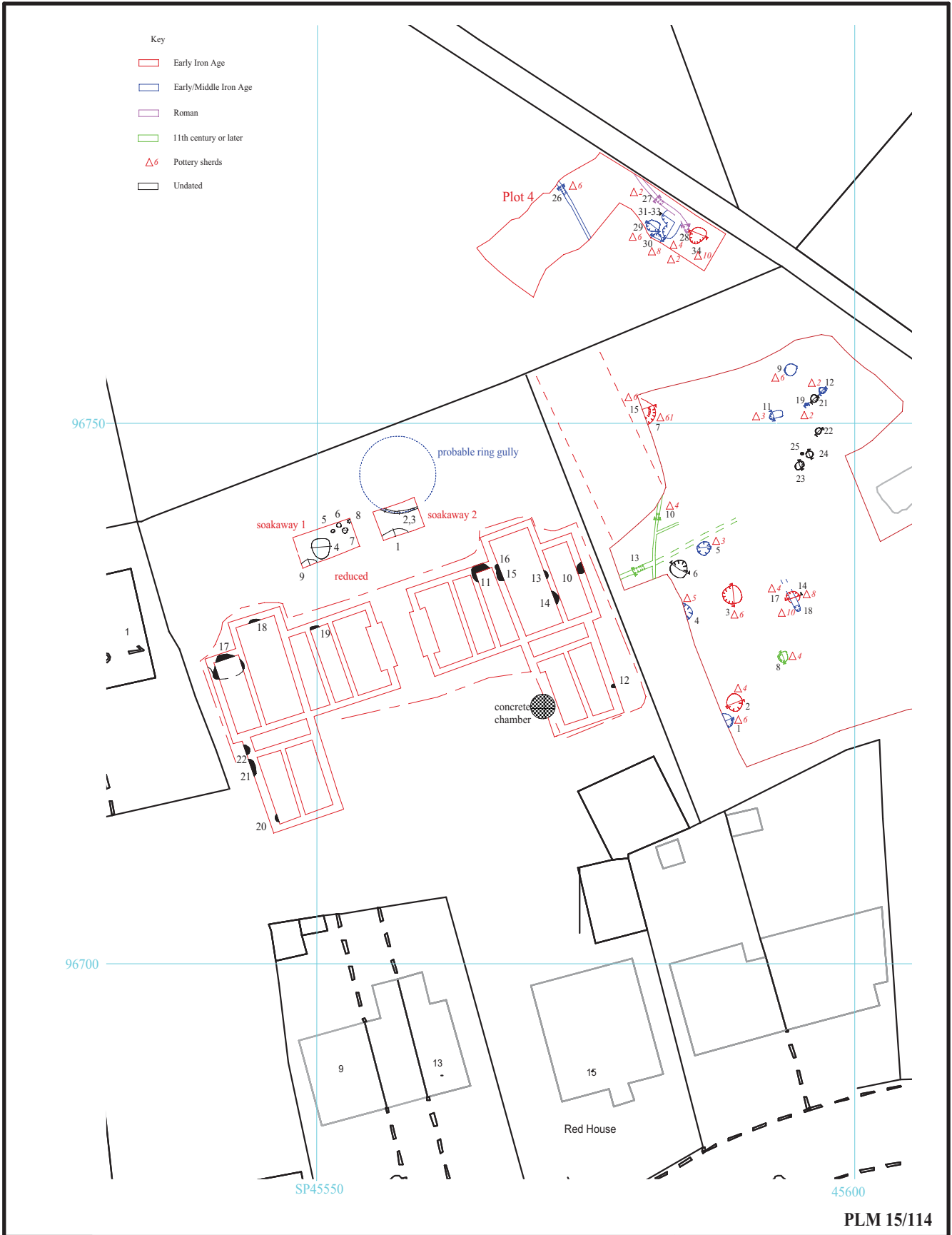
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Packhorse Lane.

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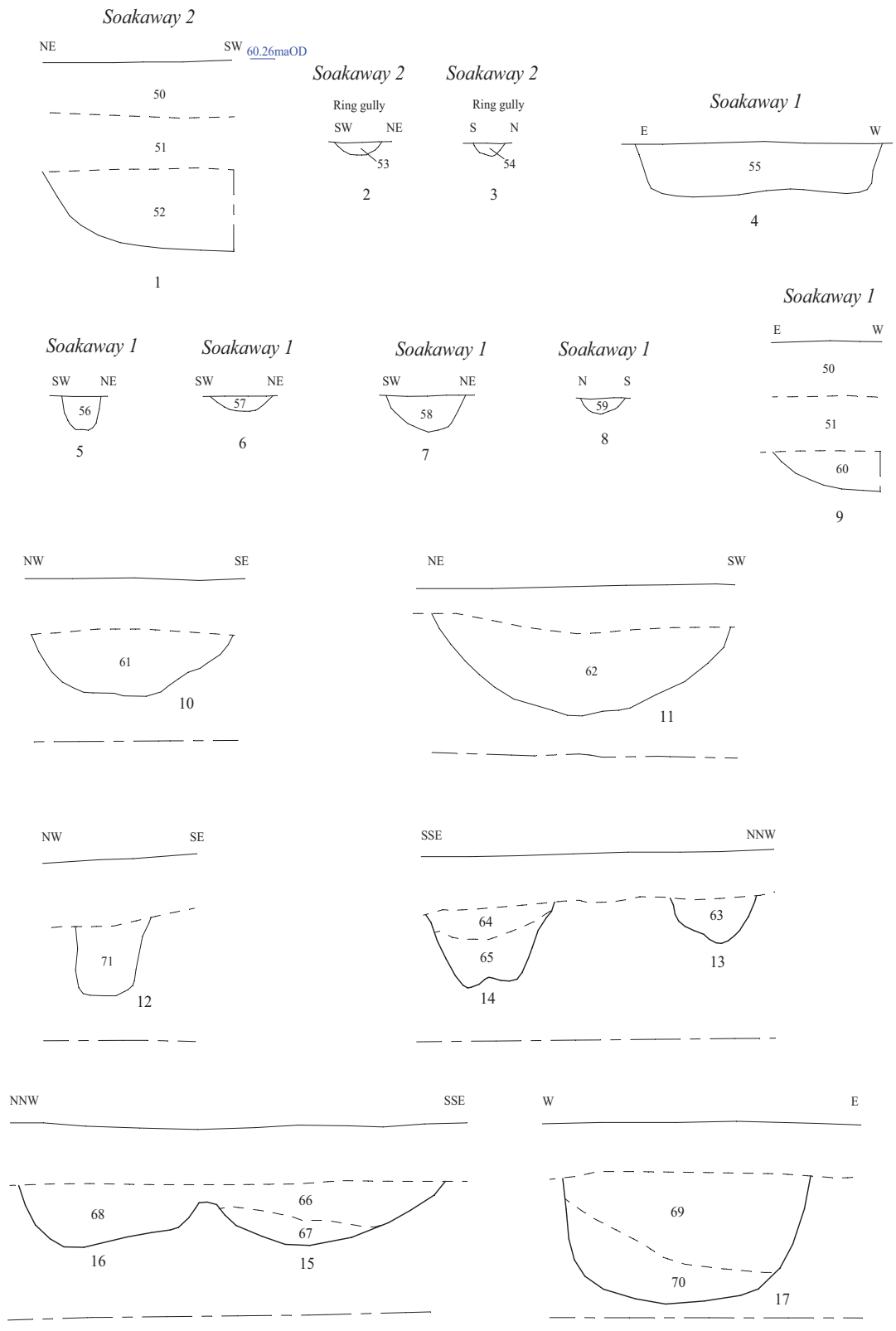
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Figure 3. Detail of site.





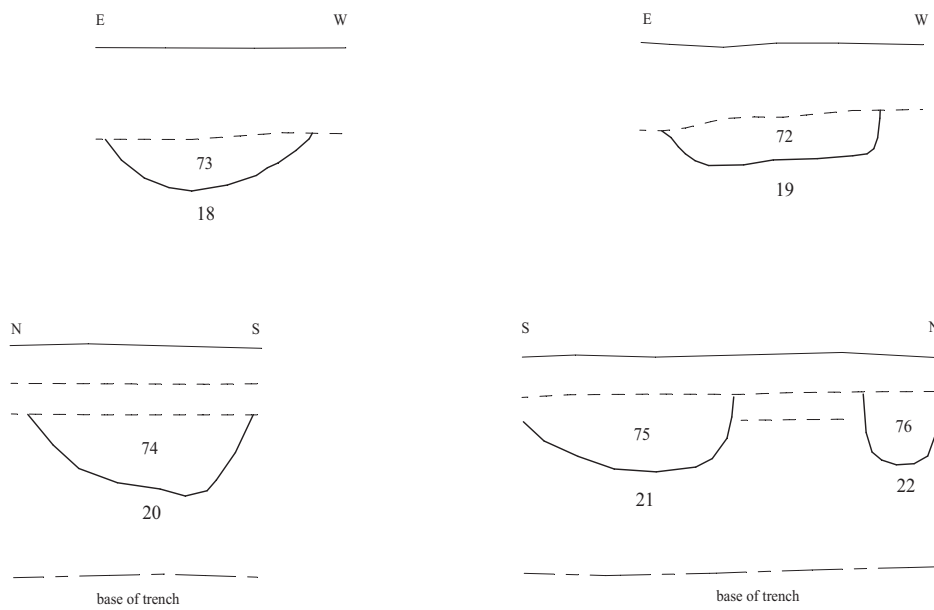
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Figure 4. Sections.





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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Soakaway 1, looking southeast, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Soakaway 2, looking east south east, Scales: 2m, 1m. and 0.5m

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. footings, looking south.



Plate 4. Gully 3, looking west, Scales: 0.1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Pit 4, looking south, Scales: 2m and 0.1m.



Plate 6. decorated pot from pit 7, Scales: 0.1m.

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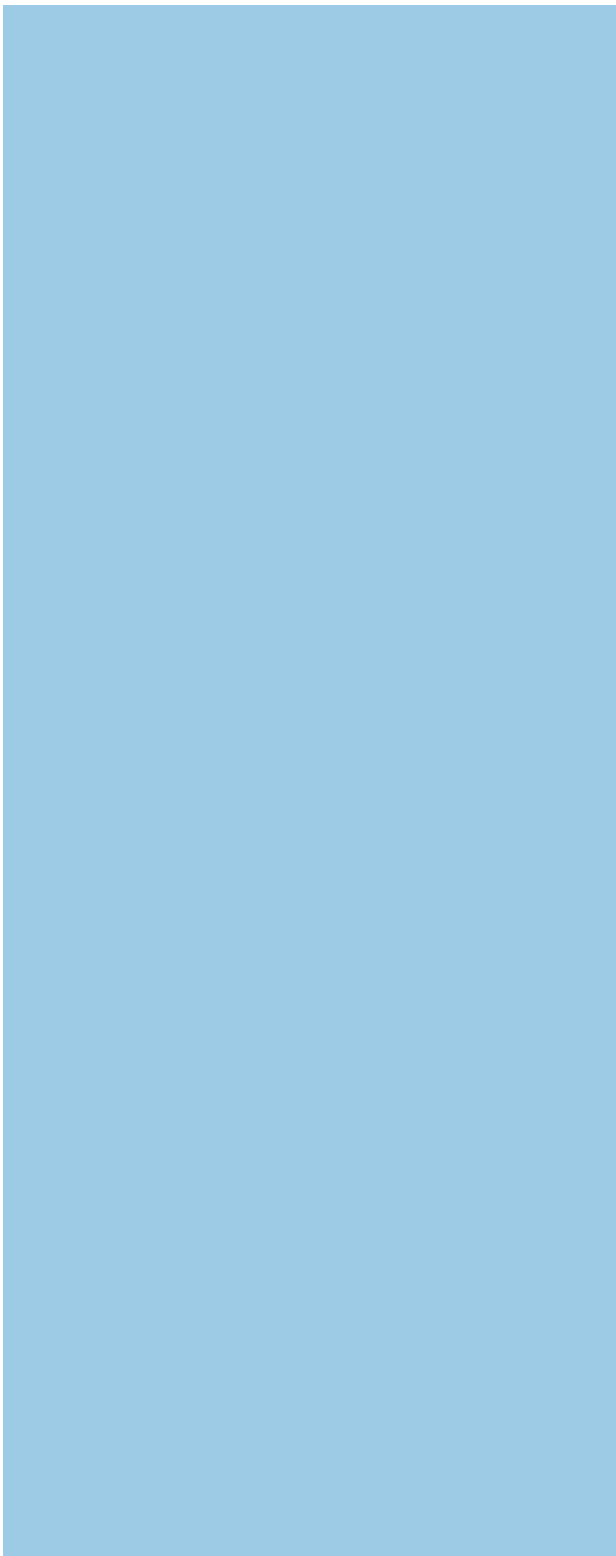
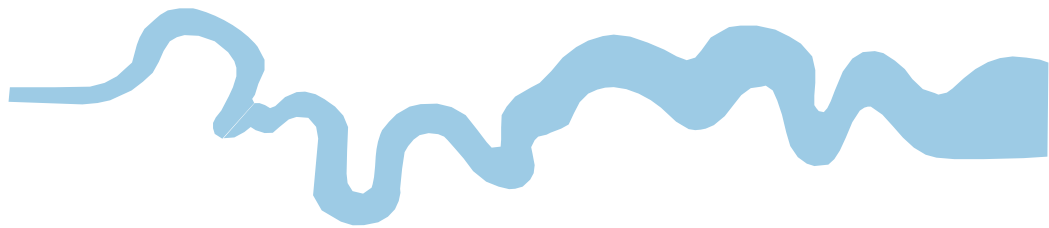
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Plates 5 - 6.

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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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