

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**13 St Helen's Crescent, Benson,
Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Lizzi Lewins

**Site Code: HBO16/17
(SU 6205 9145)**

**13 St Helen's Crescent, Benson,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr and Mrs Ringsell

by Lizzi Lewins

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HBO 16/17

March 2016

Summary

Site name: 13 St Helen's Crescent, Benson, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6205 9145

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 15th March 2016

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Luis Esteves

Site code: HBO 16/17

Summary of results: Despite the site's close proximity to archaeologically rich sites no archaeological features or finds were encountered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course, with accession code OXCMS:2016.54.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 24.03.16 Steve Preston ✓ 24.03.16

13 St Helen's Crescent, Benson, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Lizzi Lewins

Report 16/17

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 13 St Helen's Crescent, Benson, Oxfordshire (SU 6205 9145) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Keith Halson, Chartered Architect of 27 Ancastle Green, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1TR on behalf of Mr and Mrs Ringsell.

Planning permission (P15/S4056/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new extension. The work is subject to conditions (4 and 5) which requires an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during the groundworks as a result of the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits.

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 with Oxfordshire County Council, the archaeological adviser to the district. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luis Esteves on 15th March 2016 and the site code is HBO 16/17.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course, with accession code OXCMS:2016.54.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the north of the A4074, west of the airfield on the southern edge of Benson (Fig. 2). The site comprises a flat parcel of land occupied by the house and garden. The underlying geology is mapped as first flood plain terrace deposits (BGS 1980). The site lies at a height of *c.*53m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site is due to its location within the archaeologically rich upper Thames Valley. Previously recorded sites and monuments abound around Benson and the village itself is of historical importance in Saxon times (Blair 1994). To the north-east are three Scheduled Monuments comprising a Roman settlement and two Neolithic long barrows. To the south of Benson is a Neolithic ceremonial complex

comprising a *cursus* monument and several ring ditches (levelled round barrows) of Bronze Age date. Closer to the site, just to the north west is a Roman settlement (Pine 2006). Several previous archaeological investigations have been carried out in the immediate area of Benson. Seven of the previous sites revealed no archaeological features or finds (Challis 2002; Hammond 2002; Hull 1999; Saunders 1999; Jenkins and Taylor 2002; Oram 2005; Milbank 2007). Two further sites, although no archaeological features were found, yielded unstratified pottery (one sherd each of Roman, Saxon and Medieval) (Lowe 2003) and one piece of worked flint (Pine 1997). A recording action to the north-east revealed the presence of a late Roman ditch (Lewins and Munding 2015). More significantly, two sites to the west and north-west of St Helen's Crescent revealed extensive archaeological deposits representing multi-period sites ranging from the Mesolithic to Roman periods and into the Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval periods (Beaverstock 2016; Ford and Pine 2004; Weale 2010); both of which demonstrate elements of continuity.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved the monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks and included the observation of surface stripping, excavation of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive work as necessary. Archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks were to be recorded but not further excavated unless threatened by the groundworks. The excavation was carried out by a Kubota type machine and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results (Figs 3 and 4)

A concrete slab (0.15m deep) which covered the footprint of the extension had been removed before arrival, this overlaid the subsoil as no topsoil survived beneath the slab. The simultaneous stripping and excavation of the footings was observed. A depth of 0.1m of subsoil was stripped before the footings were excavated to a depth of 1m through the natural geology (grey sandy gravel) (Pls 1 and 2). The subsoil consisted of a light brown grey silty clay with infrequent gravel inclusions. Services were observed but no archaeological features or finds were encountered.

Finds

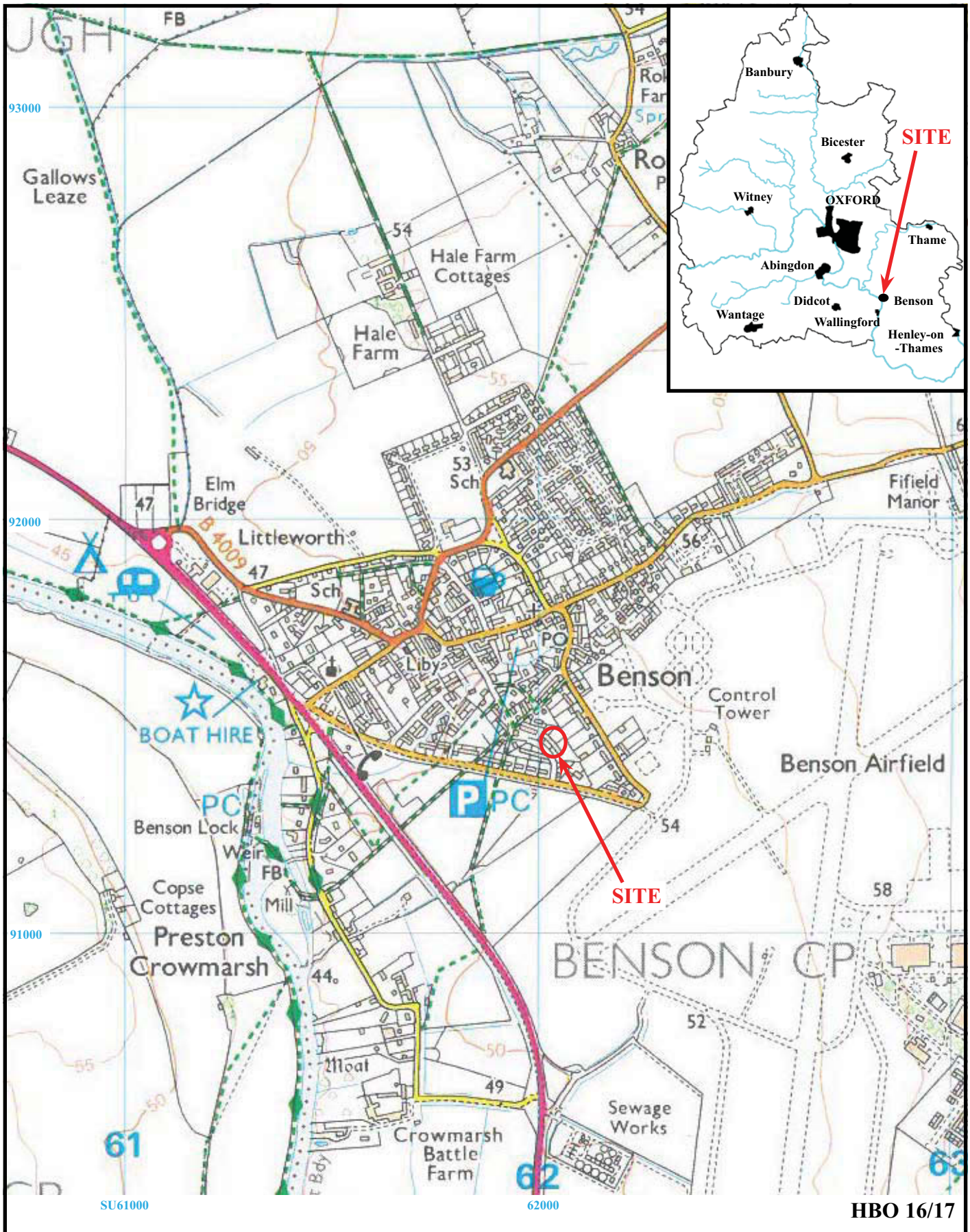
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

Despite the close proximity to archaeologically rich sites at Jubilee Villa (Pine 2006) and St Helen's Avenue (Ford and Pine 2004) no archaeological features or finds were encountered during the course of this small watching brief.

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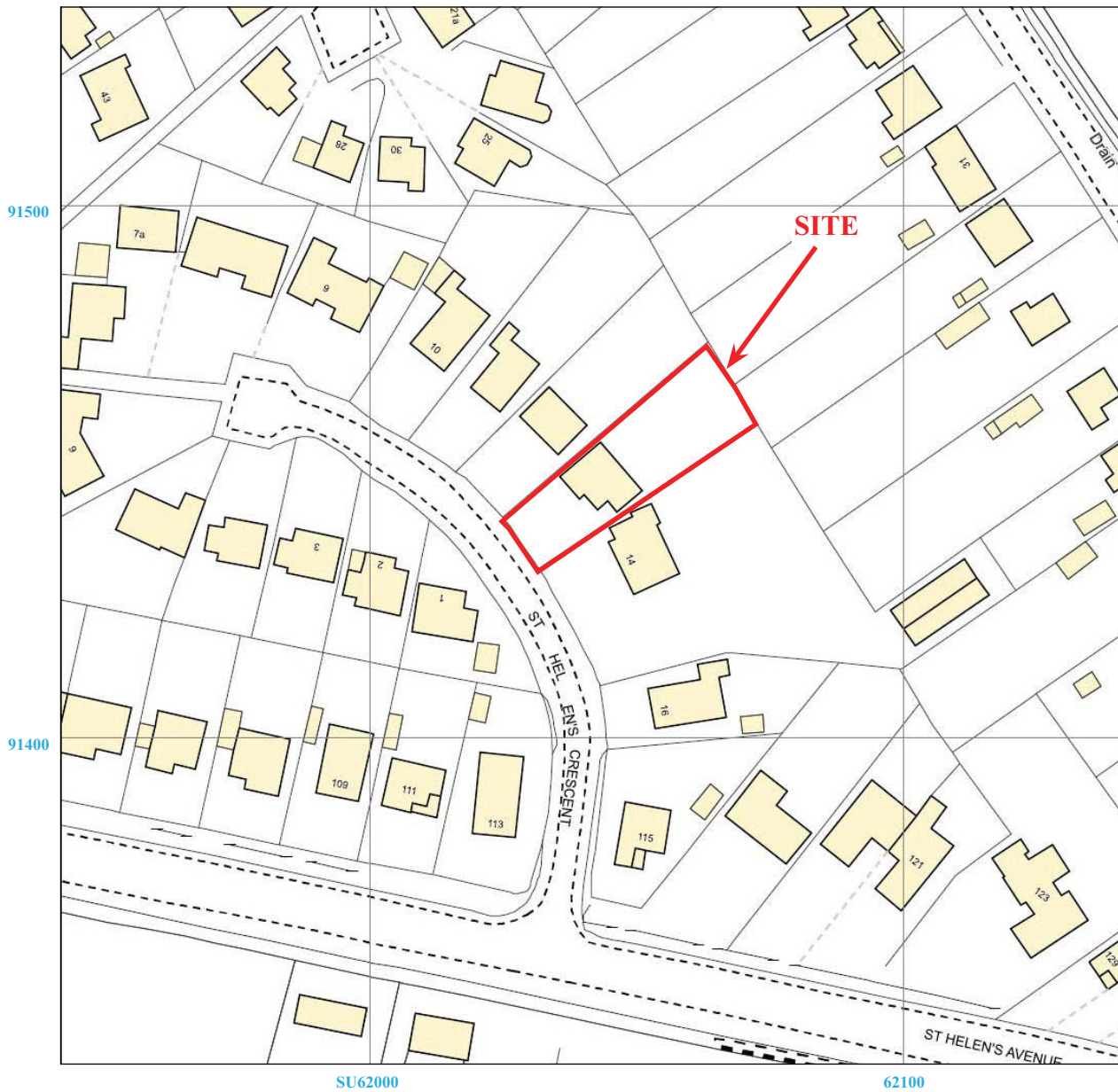


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Figure 1. Location of site within Benson and Oxfordshire

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at St Helen's Crescent.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Plate 1. Footings , northwest facing section, Scale: 0.5m.



Plate 2. Site shot, looking southeast.

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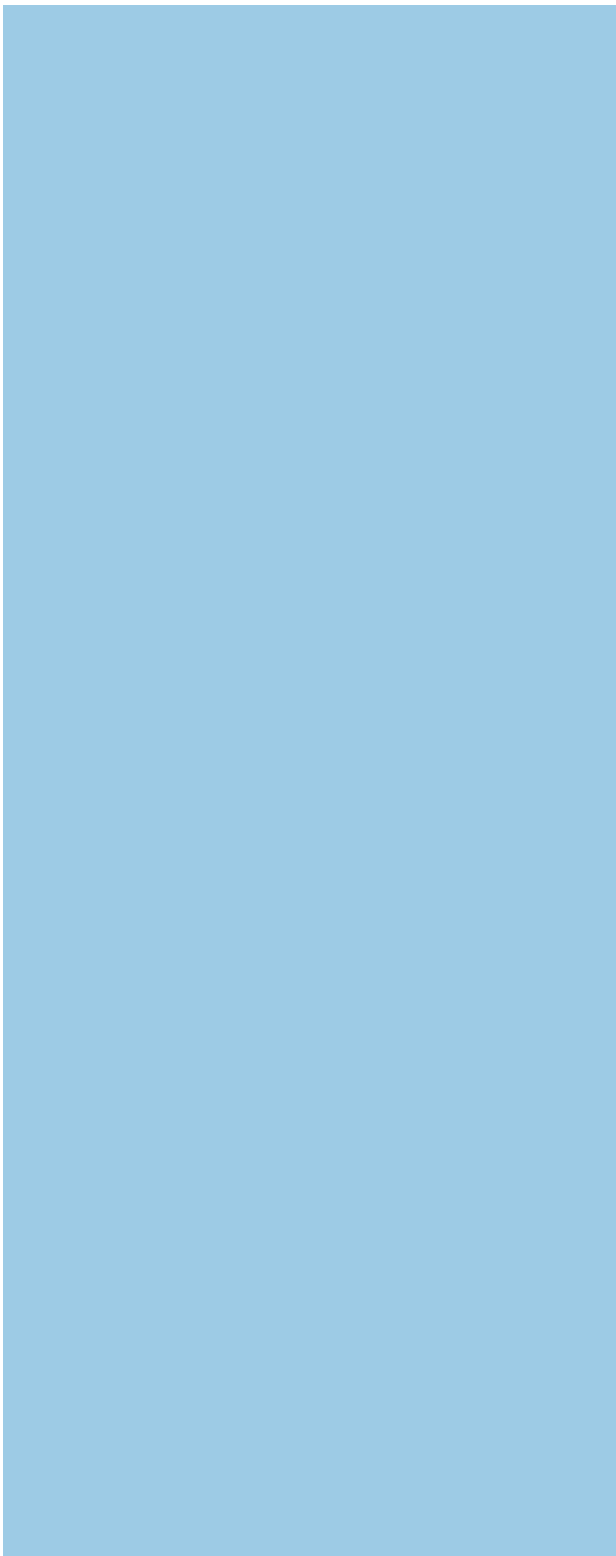
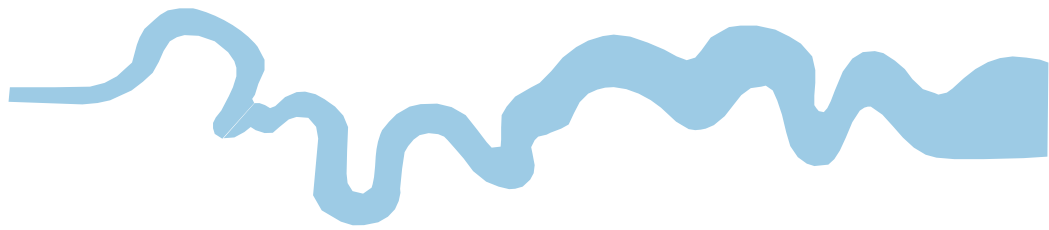
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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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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