

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Church Farm, Church Street, West Hanney,  
Wantage, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andrew Muddin**

**Site Code: CFWH15/297**

**(SU 4068 9289)**

**Church Farm, Church Street, West Hanney,  
Wantage, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Sweetcroft Homes Ltd**

by Andrew Munding

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CFWH 15/297

**June 2016**

## Summary

**Site name:** Church Farm, Church Street, West Hanney, Wantage, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4068 9289

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 26th October–19th November 2015

**Project Coordinator:** Danielle Milbank

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Munding, David Sanchez, Luis Esteves

**Site code:** CFWH 15/297

**Area of site:** c.0.55ha

**Summary of results:** A small cluster of potentially archaeological features was recorded in the north-east corner of the site. Pottery was recovered from two pits of 13th century date; the remaining features were undated or possibly modern.

**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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# Church Farm, Church Street, West Hanney, Wantage, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 15/297

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Church Farm, Church Street, West Hanney, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU 4068 9289) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Neil Perry, of Anderson Orr, The Studio, 70 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1LZ, on behalf of Sweetcroft Homes Ltd, 78 Cumnor Road, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5JP.

Planning permission (15/V0657/FUL) has been gained from the Vale of the White Horse District Council for the conversion of the Grade II listed stone barn and creation of a residential unit, and the demolition of other structures in the farmyard, to make way for an additional five residential units, with associated access and car parking. Due to the potential for disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits, conditions (16 and 17) have been attached, requiring the submission and approval of a written scheme of investigation (WSI) and subsequent fieldwork, in this instance a watching brief during groundworks. The potential presence of deposits has been informed by a trial trenching exercise (WA 2012), which identified 17th- and 18th-century pottery and deposits that could seal older deposits, especially in the south-west corner of the site.

This requirement 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 of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, archaeological advisers to the District Council. The specification was based on a brief prepared by him (Coddington 2015). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin, David Sanchez, and Luis Esteves between 26th October and 19th November 2015. The site code is CFWH 15/297.

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 eastern side of the village centre, just to the south of the main junction of Church Street, School Road and Winter Lane at The Green (Fig. 21). The site has until recently been part of the farmyard of Church Farm, with a Grade II listed barn and Farmhouse on the southern side of the farm. The remainder of the

yard has had various 20th century metal and timber sheds demolished to clear the site for redevelopment (Fig. 2). The site is relatively flat at approximately 63m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The underlying geology is mapped as Kimmeridge Clay and Amptill Clay overlain by river terrace sand and gravel: what was observed on the site was sandy gravel of the Corallian beds which generally underlies the Kimmeridge Clay (BGS 1971).

## **Archaeological background**

The potential of the site has been highlighted by desk-based assessment and subsequent trial trench evaluation (WA 2012). In summary, the site is located in the historic core of the Saxon and Medieval village, adjacent to The Green, immediately to the north and within c. 60m of St James' Church which is to the south-west (Fig.2). Though no Saxon nor Medieval deposits were identified in the field evaluation, post-medieval yard surfaces were identified in the south-western part of the site and not removed, so there is a potential for earlier deposits underlying these. Map regression identified that an earlier barn existed in the farmyard and was probably demolished in the late 19th century (WA 2012).

The extant Grade II listed Farmhouse and Barn are to be renovated (referred to as Plot 5) during this redevelopment of the site (Pl. 1). The farmhouse is of 17th century date and the barn is of 18th century date.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve monitoring of areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of ground reduction, footing excavation and other large areas of ground disturbance.

## **Results**

The excavation of the footings for the new residential units were observed during groundworks (Fig. 3). In total, four of the five new units were observed.

### Plot 1 (Figs 3 and 4, Pls 2, 3 and 4)

This plot was in the northern part of the site, in the location where the northern part of a barn had stood. The plot measured c.17m by 14m and was L-shaped. Part of the location of this footing had previously been sampled by the evaluation with Trench 2. Prior to the visit, some of the topsoil had been removed to create a level for the ground crew to dig. The footing reached an excavated depth of no greater than 1.75m, which was the greatest depth in the north-west corner, where topsoil remained, but generally 1.3m deep over the remainder. Except

where topsoil remained, the footings were entirely dug through the natural sandy gravel geology. Modern drains and truncations were noted through the middle of this plot. At a depth of 0.42m deep, four features were encountered in the eastern half of the plot and initially noted in section, all cutting the natural gravel. Pit 1 was noted in the northern part of the footings and in a west facing section. Pits 3 and 4 were noted in the eastern end in the west facing section. Pit 2 was noted in the south-eastern part of the footing, with a larger modern truncation noted further to the west. Pit 1 contained a single fill of firm, finely grain sediment of dark brownish grey silt (50) with small, frequent pieces of flint fragment inclusion, very occasional fired clay fragments and rare flecks of ceramic building material (probably modern but too small to identify). Its recorded dimension was 0.67m wide and 0.59m deep.

Pit 2 (Pl. 2) contained a single fill of fine grained dark brown silt with occasional small flint gravel inclusions (52). The dimensions of this feature were noted to be 1.3m long, 1.2m wide and 0.78m deep. It contained no finds.

Pits 3 and 4, recorded in the eastern face of the footing section contained Medieval pottery of 13th century date. Pit 3 (pl. 3) contained a single fill of firm dark brownish grey silt with flint gravel inclusions (53). This feature was only partially exposed and was 1m in length and 1.03m wide and 0.6m deep. This pit had a flat base.

Pit 4 (Pl. 4) was filled with a single fill, of firm dark brownish black silt with occasional small sized gravel inclusions (54) and was relatively shallow. It was 2.9m wide and reached a depth of 0.5m.

All the features in plot 1 were generally seen at a height of 62.9m aOD. After the concrete was poured in the footings the interior overburden was removed but no further deposits of archaeological interest were uncovered, though the full extents of the previously observed features could be recorded.

#### Plot 2

This plot was not observed.

#### Plot 3 (Fig. 3)

This plot was in the eastern part of the site, partially over the footprint of the southern part of a demolished barn and partially covered by the south-eastern end of Trench 3. The dimensions of this unit were c.17m by 15m and it was L-shaped. Topsoil and made ground had previously been removed over this footing and minimal overburden remained. The footing was dug to a depth of 1.07m deep. The upper 0.2m of overburden was a homogenous mix of dark brown silt with Tarmac and brick fragment patches. The remainder of the depth seen in

section was light grey clayey silt with rounded gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were observed in the area of this plot.

#### Plot 4 (Figs 3 and 4)

This plot was in the south-western part of the site, mostly on the footprint of a previous barn (Fig.3). It was roughly rectangular c. 20m by 9m. It lay between evaluation trenches 5 and 8, and was expected to have contained yard surface material. Overburden had previously been removed over this plot. with the remaining stratigraphy consisted of 0.70m of light greenish-grey sandy gravel above 0.3m of orange grey-sandy gravel.

Pit 5 was observed in both faces of the southern section of the footing and also in a west-facing section. In total this feature was 1.3m long and 1.1m wide, and was 0.6m deep. It was filled with a firm but friable brown silty clay (55). It could have been modern due to plastic being present on the top of the fill but it was not clear if these were really securely stratified within it. No further deposits of interest were uncovered in this plot.

#### Plot 6 (Fig.3)

This plot was rectangular in plan and also on the footprint of a previous structure. Overburden (a dark brown rooty silty clay made ground) was 0.52m thick. A modern truncation was observed in the western section of the footing that was 2.3m in diameter. The base of this feature reached 0.88m. The final depth of the footing was 1.7m deep and the stratigraphy consisted only of the made ground above natural greenish-grey sandy gravel. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed in this footing. After the concrete was poured in the footings the interior was reduced to expose the top of the natural geology but no deposits of archaeological interest were uncovered.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 9 sherds with a total weight of 75g. It was all medieval, probably of 13th – 14th century date, and was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994), as follows:

**OXAG:** Abingdon Ware, late 11th – 14th century. 2 sherds, 34g

**OXAM:** Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200 – 1600. 7 sherds, 41g

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. All the sherds are fragments of glazed jugs, which is typical

of the two traditions. The sherds of OXAG were from the same vessel and joined, as did most of the sherds of OXAM from context 53. The sherds are in good condition, and appear reliably stratified.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief has identified a small number of deposits of Medieval date on the site. These were all pits and were located in the north east part of the site. It is not known where they lie relative to any house sites although they do add a little to an understanding of the topography of the medieval settlement.

## **References**

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- Mellor, M, 1994, 'A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 17–217
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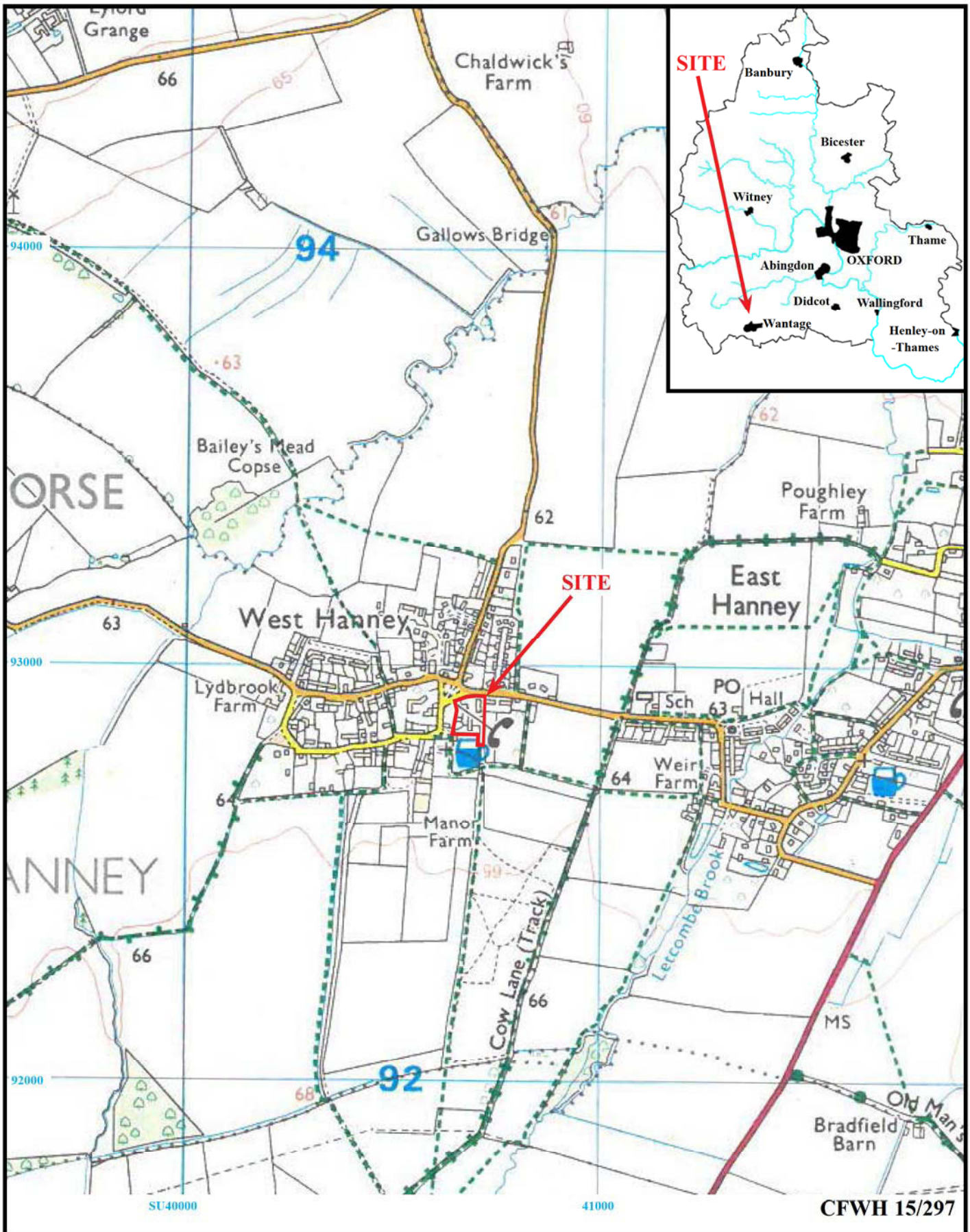


**APPENDIX 1: Summary of excavated features**

<i>Plot</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	50	Pit	? Modern	Brick or tile, flecks only
1		51	Modern truncation	Modern	
1	2	52	Pit	-	-
1	3	53	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
1	4	54	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
4	5	55	Pit	?Modern	Plastic

**APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<b>OXAG</b>		<b>OXAM</b>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
3	53			6	35
4	54	2	34	1	6
	Total	2	34	7	41

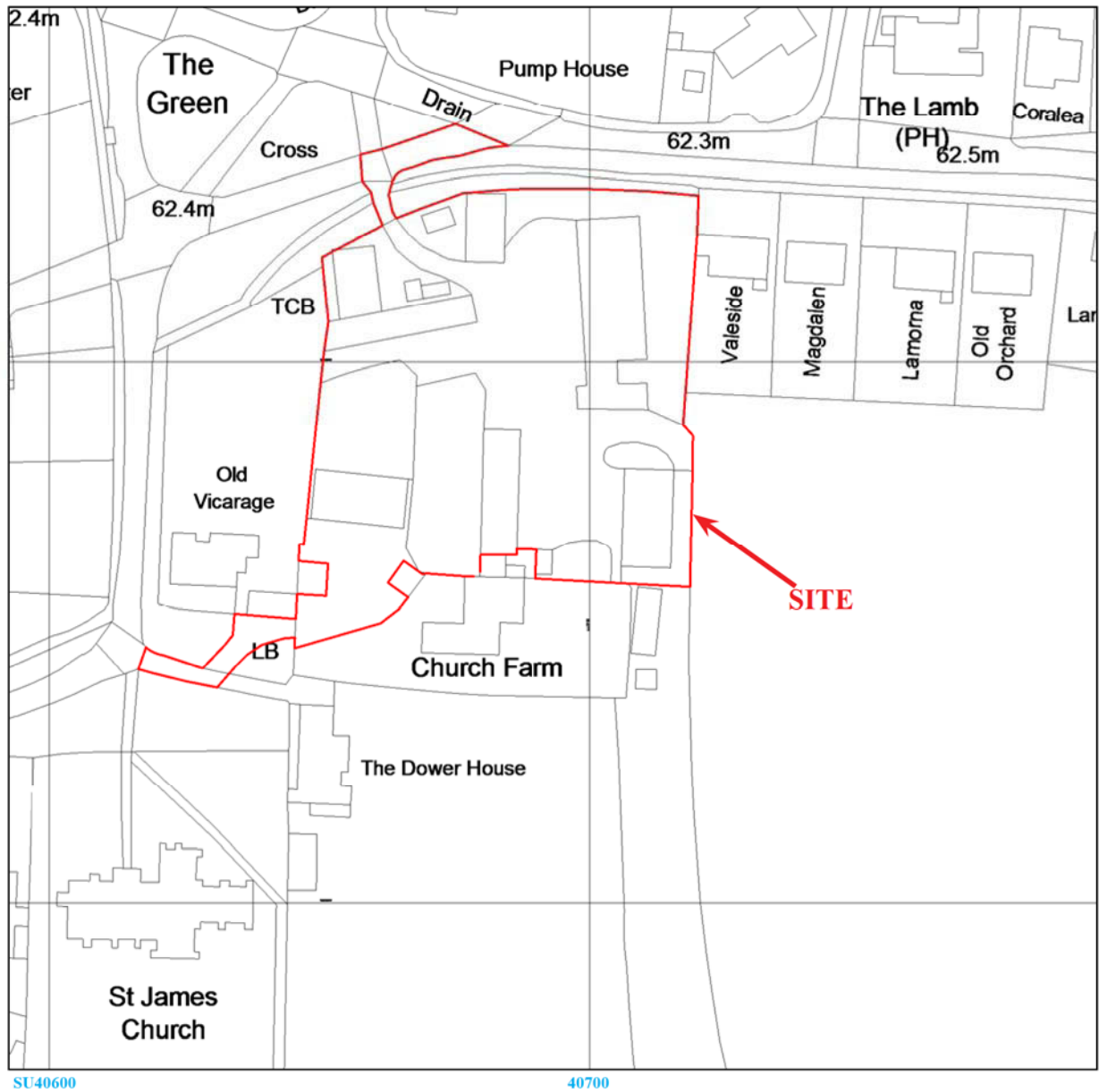


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Figure 1. Location of site within West Hanney and Oxfordshire.

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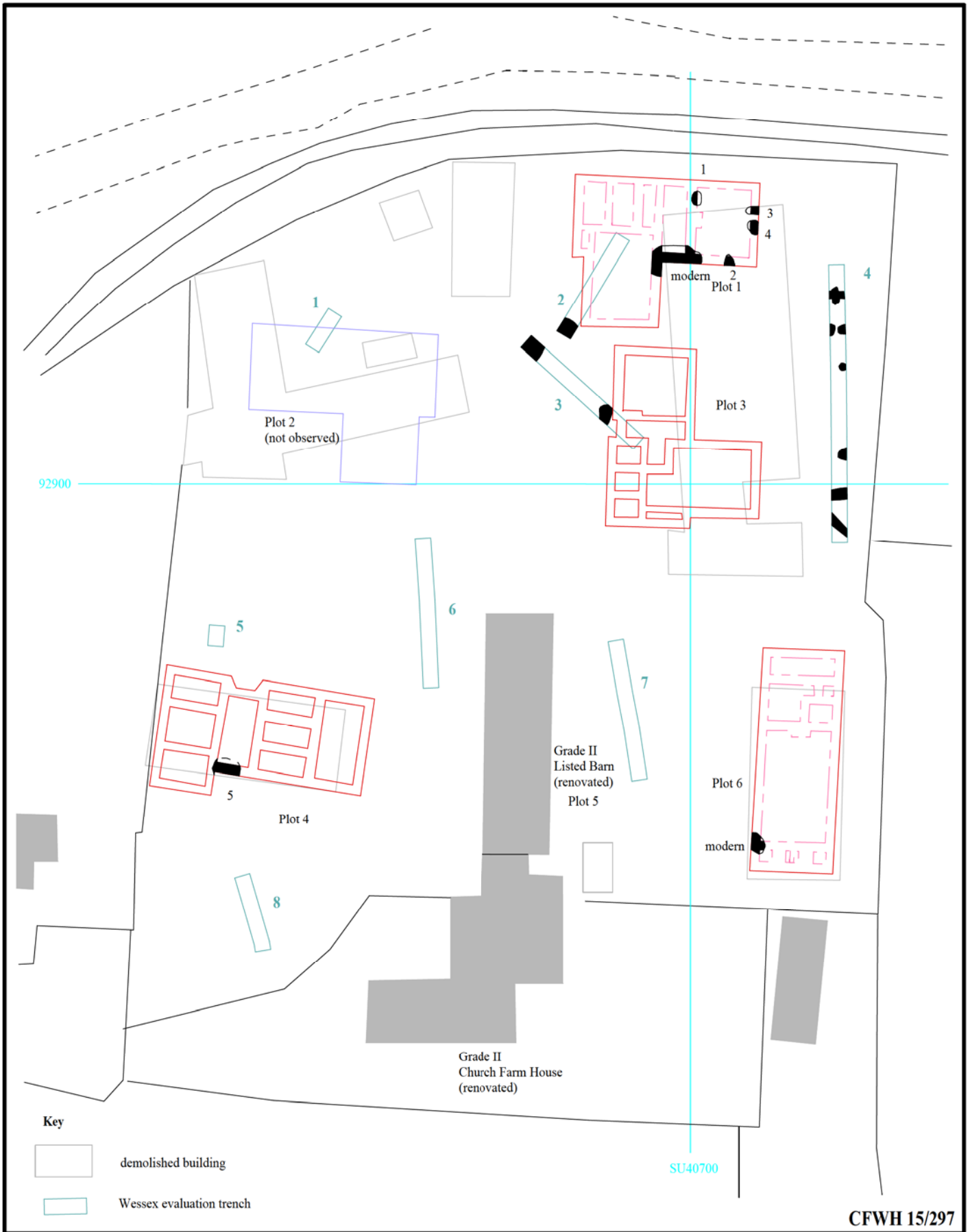
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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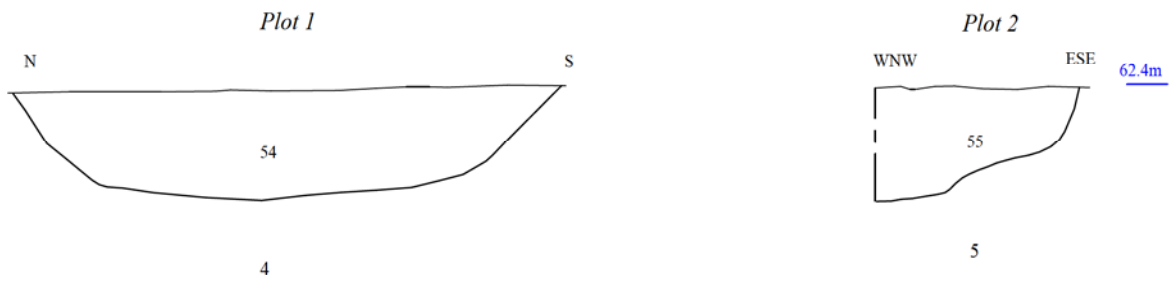
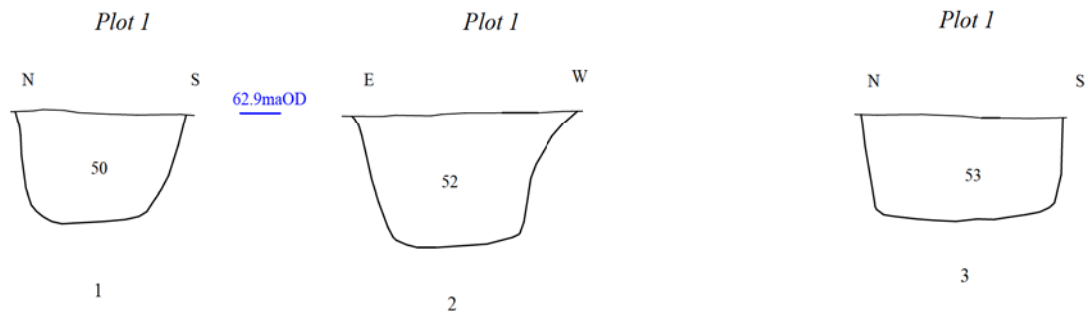
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Site, looking towards Listed Barn and Farmhouse, looking south west.



Plate 2. Plot 1, stripping after concreting of footing, looking south east.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Plot 1, Pit 3, looking west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Plot 1, Pit 4, looking east, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.

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Plates 3 - 4.**

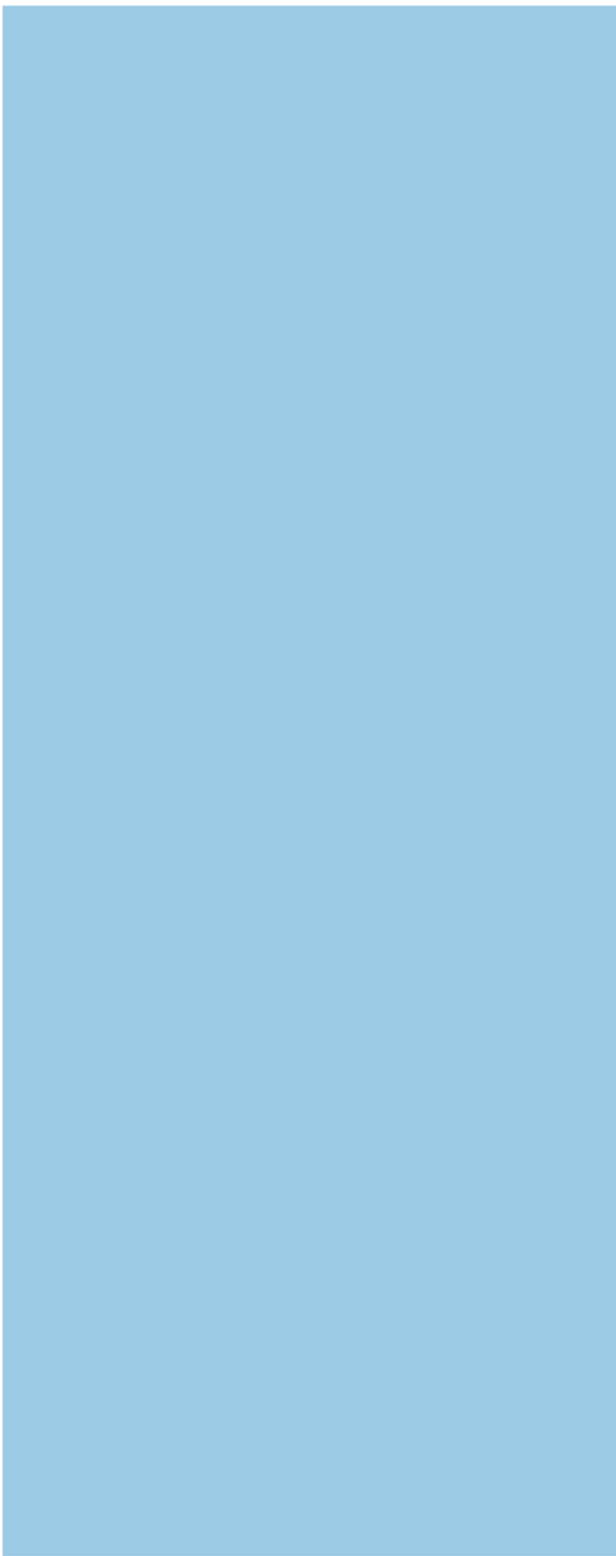
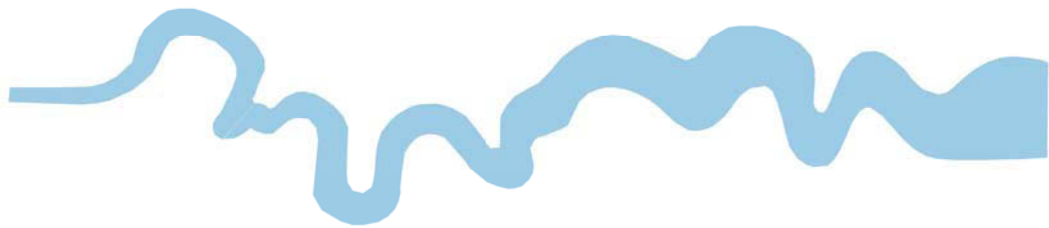
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## TIME CHART

	<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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**