

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Old Post Office, 10 Market Place,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin and Ellen McManus-Fry

Site Code: OPW16/177

(SU 6067 8935)

The Old Post Office, 10 Market Place, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Oakman Inns

by Andrew Munding and Ellen McManus-Fry
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OPW 16/177

January 2017

Summary

Site name: The Old Post Office, 10 Market Place, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6067 8935

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 29th September - 12th October 2016

Project Coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andrew Muddin

Site code: OPW 16/177

Area of site: 112.5 sq m

Summary of results: The watching brief was carried out in a yard to the north of the existing building which was the former Post Office within the historic centre of the town. The foundation trenches were relatively shallow and mostly did not reach levels containing archaeological deposits nor the natural geology. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were encountered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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The Old Post Office, 10 Market Place, Wallingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew MUNDIN and Ellen McManus-Fry

Report 16/177

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Old Post Office, 10 Market Place, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0AD (SU 6067 8935) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Schooling of Oakman Inns and Restaurants, 81 Akeman Street, Tring, Herts, HP23 6AF.

Planning permission (16/S0718/FUL) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new exterior terrace on the north of the existing property. Due to the potential for these works to damage or destroy below ground archaeological features, the consent was subject to two conditions (5 and 6) requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the period of groundworks. The work was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation approved Mr Richard Oram, planning archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, who also monitored the work on behalf of the District Council.

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 by Andrew MUNDIN and Ellen McManus-Fry between 29th September and 12th October 2016. The site code is OPW 16/177.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The building, which is now current in use as a restaurant, is sited within the urban and historic core of the town of Wallingford. It is situated on the west side of St Martin's Street, opposite the Town Hall in Market Place (Fig. 2). To the south east are the Church of St Mary-le-More and its graveyard. The site lies at a height of *c.* 49m above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology is recorded as First floodplain terrace gravel deposit (BGS 1980), although natural geology was only potentially visible in a small part of the footing trench, where a mid red brown clayey sandy silt was observed.

Archaeological background

The development of Wallingford, from a Saxon *burh*, Medieval castle and Medieval to Post-Medieval town has been intensively investigated archaeologically at various locations around the town. As new research via excavation comes to light, new theories, interpretations and development sequences are being formulated about the town's history (Airs *et al* 1975; Preston 2012; Christie *et al.* 2013).

Fieldwork took place adjacent to this site in 2003 associated with detached development behind the extant building. Evaluation and follow-up fieldwork uncovered homogenous modern and post-medieval made ground *c.* 1m deep, which overlay 11th- to 13th-century pits containing domestic refuse, indicative of 'backyard' deposits associated with contemporary development located on the frontage of St Martin's Street, most likely under the extant Post Office building (Pine and Hammond 2012).

The development of the site in later times is somewhat complex in regards to the existing building. Reference is made to the 'Mermaid Inn' being situated at the site from the 17th century until the death of the last landlord, Lovelock, in 1875. It was finally demolished in 1914 (VCH 1924). The origins of The Post Office building are from 1936, with the front doorway displaying the arms of Edward VIII prior to abdication.

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 all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observations of archaeologically sensitive surfaces exposed within foundation trenches and service trenches. All works were undertaken a toothed bucketed 360° mechanical excavator. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

The excavation of footing trenches on the northern side of the existing building was observed (Pl. 1; Fig. 3). The trenches were 0.6m wide and ranged in depth from 0.96m to 2.60m. The north eastern length of the terrace footing, where the new footings met the existing wall, was dug to the greatest depth in an attempt to locate the base of the existing building foundations. Layers of made ground deposits were observed along the length of the excavated footings (Pl. 2; Fig. 4) and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m modern concrete, over 0.18m of grey sandy silt containing modern rubble and brick, above 0.26m of dark brown made ground containing brick fragments, which overlay 0.15m of homogenous yellow grey sandy silt with gravel and brick, over up to 0.91m

grey clayey sandy silt, which (where the works penetrated deep enough) lay above 0.8m of dark red brown clayey sandy silt, over mid red brown clayey sandy silt, which appeared to be natural geology.

No archaeological features were observed nor finds recovered.

Finds

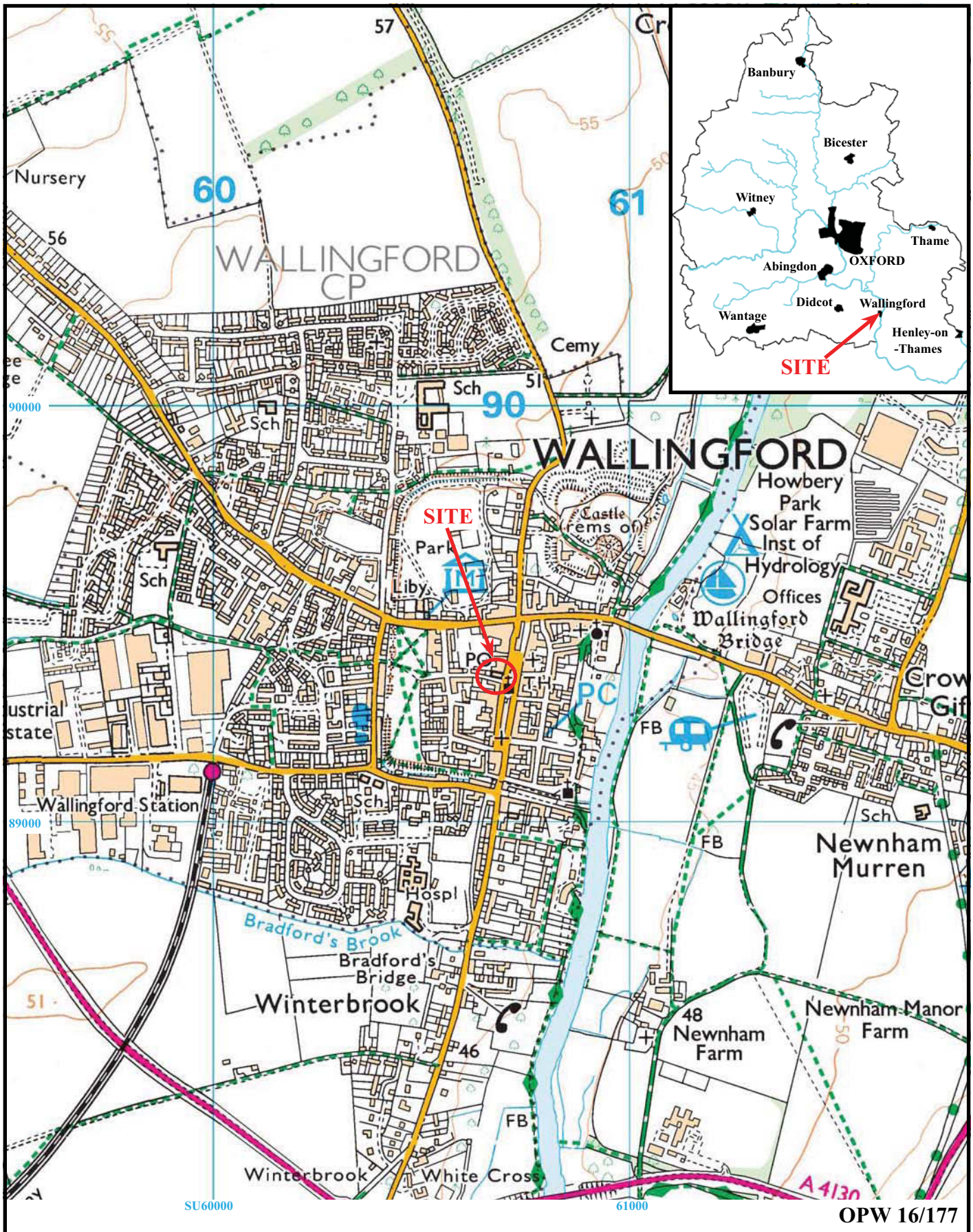
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

This watching brief was successful in observing the groundworks involved in the construction of a terrace area at the Old Post Office but no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed. The excavations uncovered deep deposits of later post-medieval made ground.

References

- Airs, M, Rodwell, K and Turner, H, 1975, 'Wallingford', in K Rodwell (ed), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey **3**, Oxford, 155–62
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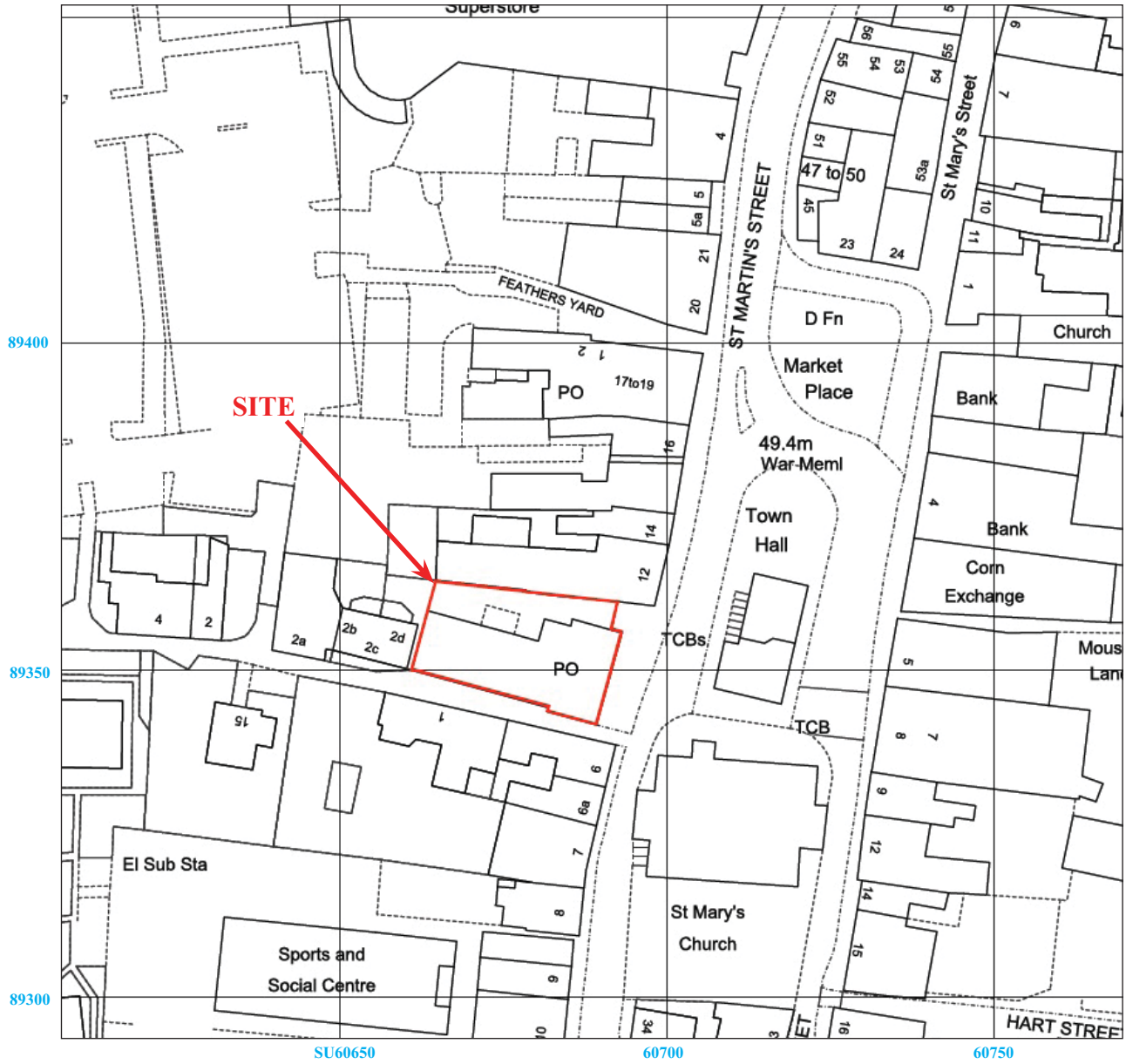
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Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire

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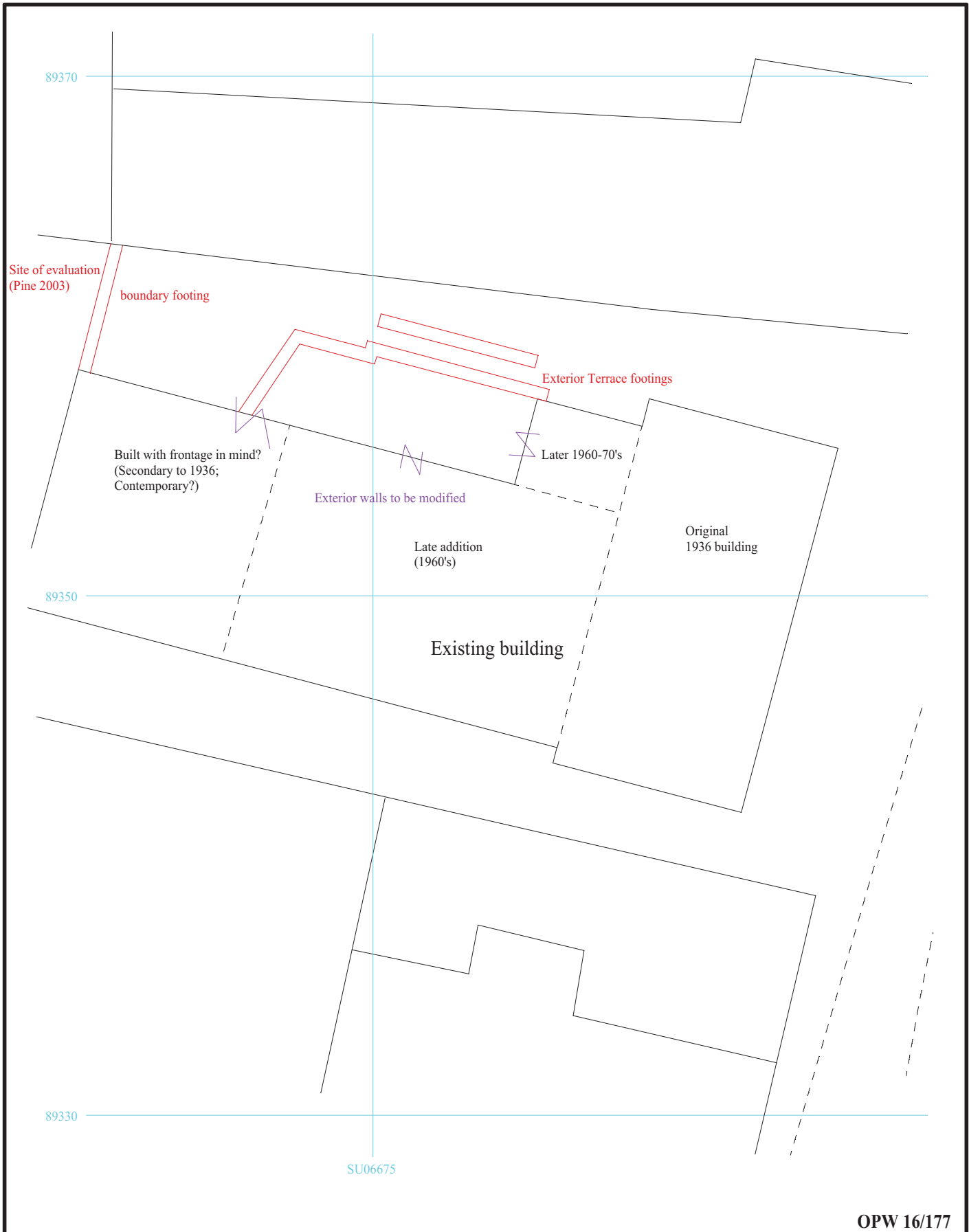


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off St Martins Street.

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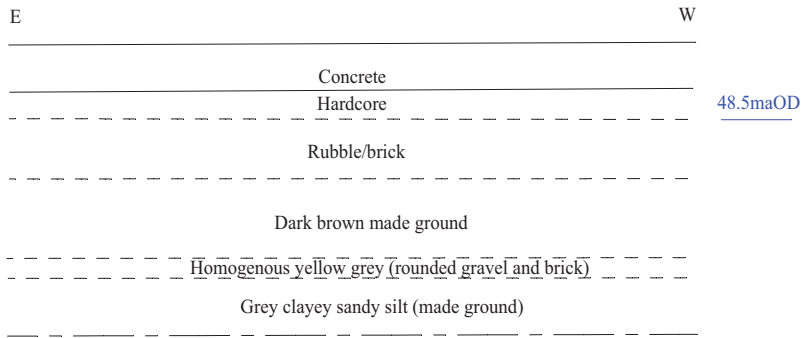
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 3. View of site during groundwork, looking west.



Plate 4. Deepest part of footings abutting existing wall, looking south-west, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 1. General view of site, looking east.



Plate 2. Representative footing, looking south, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 1m.

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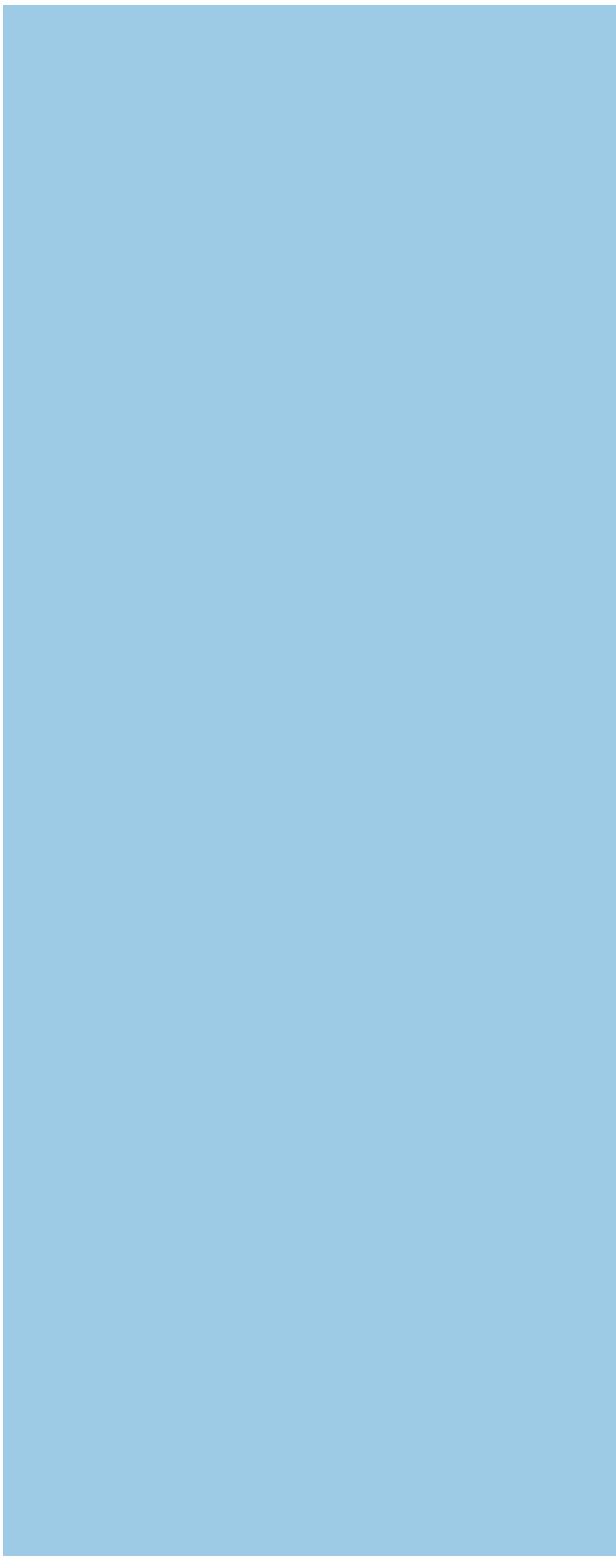
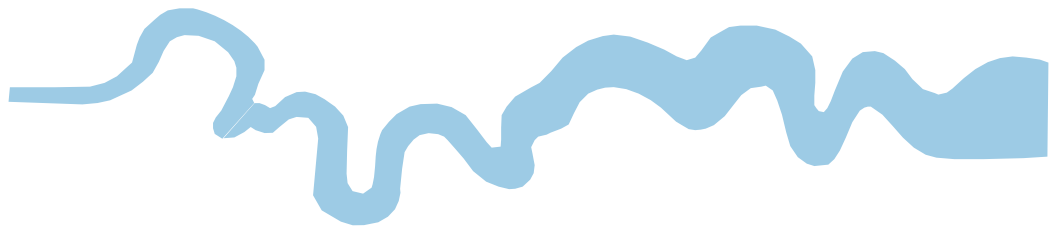
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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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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