

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street,
Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Luis Esteves

Site Code: BCD17/32

(SU 5744 9465)

**Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street,
Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Vision Residences (two) LLP**

by Luís Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BCD17/32

February 2017

Summary

Site name: Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5744 9465

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 23rd and 24th February 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Luís Esteves

Site code: BCD 17/32

Area of site: c.0.32ha

Summary of results: Three trenches were dug and which revealed two possible pits and a large ditch. Brick/tile of probable Post-medieval date was the only dating evidence recovered from the ditch. One of the possible pits is considered to be a tree hole and the other is thought to be modern though no dating evidence was recovered.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 28.02.17

Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Luís Esteves

Report 17/32

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (SU 5744 9465) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Luke Winham of Vision Residences (two) LLP, Moss House 15-16 Brooks Mews, London, W1K 4DS.

Planning permission (P16/S4080/FUL) has been sought from South Oxfordshire District Council to demolish a number of existing agricultural buildings and erect a new house with detached garage and block. As a possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the groundworks, a field evaluation has been required as detailed in the *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, Archaeology Officer with Oxfordshire County, archaeological advisers to the Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luís Esteves and Jesse Coxe on 23-24th February 2017 and the site code is BCD17/32. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north western side of Dorchester-on-Thames, west of the High Street and south of Abingdon Road (SU 5744 9465) (Fig. 1). The development area is in the northwest of the Farm with some agricultural buildings and a farmyard (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as Younger River Gravels (BGS 1980) and it was observed in the trenches. The site lies at approximately *c.*49m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service drawing on a desk-based assessment (AHC 2017). In summary the archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in the archaeologically rich Thames Valley just to north of the Roman town of Dorchester on Thames. The environs of Dorchester on Thames is exceptionally rich with site of many periods recorded by aerial photography and mineral extraction. For the site itself with Roman settlement and Roman and Saxon burials 160m and 60m to the south with another Roman burial 20m to the east. A number of cropmarks and low earthworks of uncertain date are recorded to the west. Bishop's Court is thought to be the location of the Medieval bishops palace and tithe barn.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in a manner that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warranted preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were;

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any deposits relating to the Roman period were present;
- to determine if any deposits relating to the Saxon period were present; and
- to determine if any deposits relating to the Medieval period were present, in particular the Bishops Palace.

It was proposed to dig three trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m-2m wide. The trenches were positioned to target the location of the new building (Fig. 3). Overburden was to be removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools, and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief.

Results

Three trenches were dug as close as possible to their intended locations (Fig. 3). These measured 15m in length, 1.8m wide, and between 0.58m and 1.05m in depth. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features, with dating evidence, are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3-5; Pls. 1 and 4)

Trench 1 was aligned W - E and was 15m long and 1.05m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of made ground and 0.7m of mid red/brown silty sand subsoil overlying a light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology. A ditch (4) was recorded which was 2.8m wide and 0.6m deep and filled with a mid red/brown sandy silt (55) and a dark brown/grey silty sand (57) in the bottom . No finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 3-5, 6; Pls. 2, 3)

Trench 2 was aligned S - N and was 15m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.3m of mid red/brown silty sand subsoil overlying a light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology. A ditch (3) was recorded on the same alignment as ditch 4 in trench 1, which was 3.6m wide and 0.53m deep and filled with a mid red/brown sandy silt (54). It produced 5 fragments of brick and tile of probable post-medieval date. A pit/treebole (2) and a circular/modern circular feature (1) were also observed. Cut (1) was 0.95m of diameter and 0.14m deep filled with a brown sandy silt (52), and cut (2) was a possible treebole, with irregular shape in plan, 0.6m wide and 0.45m deep. No finds were recovered from these two features.

Trench 3 (Fig 3)

Trench 3 was aligned S - N and was 15m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of topsoil and 0.45m of mid red/brown silty sand subsoil overlying a light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Finds

Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank

Brick and tile was recovered from ditch 3 (54). These comprised 5 fragments weighing 123g. The fabric was examined under x10 magnification. Two fragments are brick, two are tile, and the remaining piece is of too small a size to enable identification. The brick fabric is a medium hard light coarse sandy fabric with an orange red colour and are not closely datable. The tile fragments are a hard sandy fabric with a pale red colour. The thickness (13mm) and neat, even form are suggestive of a post-medieval date.

Conclusion

Three trenches were dug as intended and a small amount of deposits of possible archaeological interest were identified. Two of these are thought to be of either natural (treebole), or modern (pit) origin and of no interest. However the substantial ditch observed in two of the trenches although suspected to be of post-medieval date is of more interest in terms of the later development of the site.

References

- AHC, 2017, Bishops Court Farm, 91 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames. an archaeological desk-based assessment, Asset Heritage Consulting report 9509, Oxford
BGS, 1980, British Geological Survey, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
NPPF, 2012, National Planning Policy Framework, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

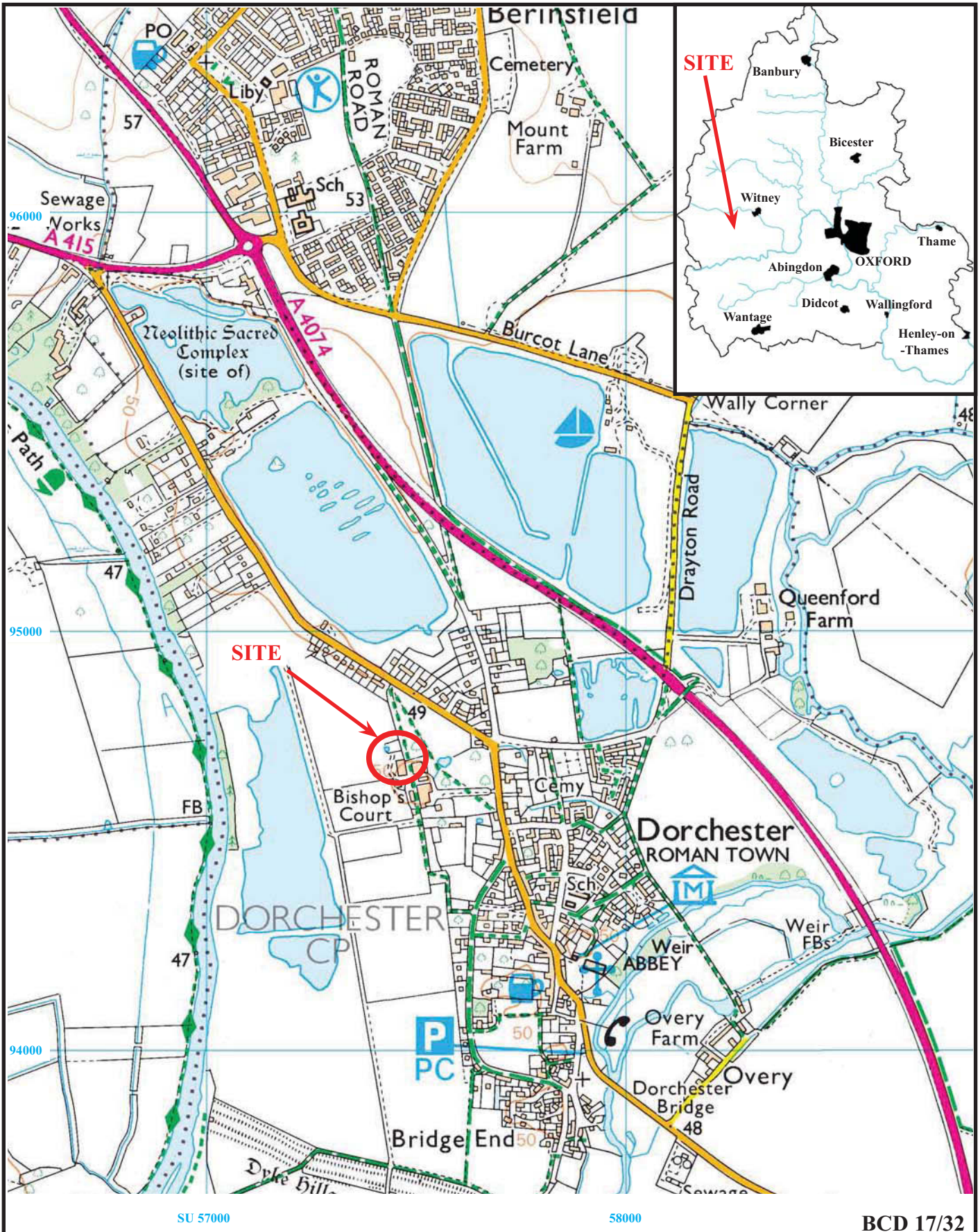
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west and south end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	15	1.8	1.05	0–0.25m made ground; 0.25m-0.95m mid red/brown silty sand; 0.95m+ light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology. Ditch 4, [Pls 1 and 4] .
2	15	1.8	0.58	0–0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.48m mid red/brown silty sand; 0.48m+ light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology. Ditch 3 and Cuts 1 and 2, [Pls 2 and 3] .
3	15	1.8	0.68	0–0.12m topsoil; 0.12m-0.57m mid red/brown silty sand; 0.57m+ light yellow/grey sandy gravel natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	4	55, 57	Ditch	Post-medieval	By association. Same as 3
2	1	52	Circular/modern (pit?)	-	-
2	2	53, 56	Pit/treebole	-	-
2	3	54	Ditch	Post-medieval	Brick/tile. Same as 4



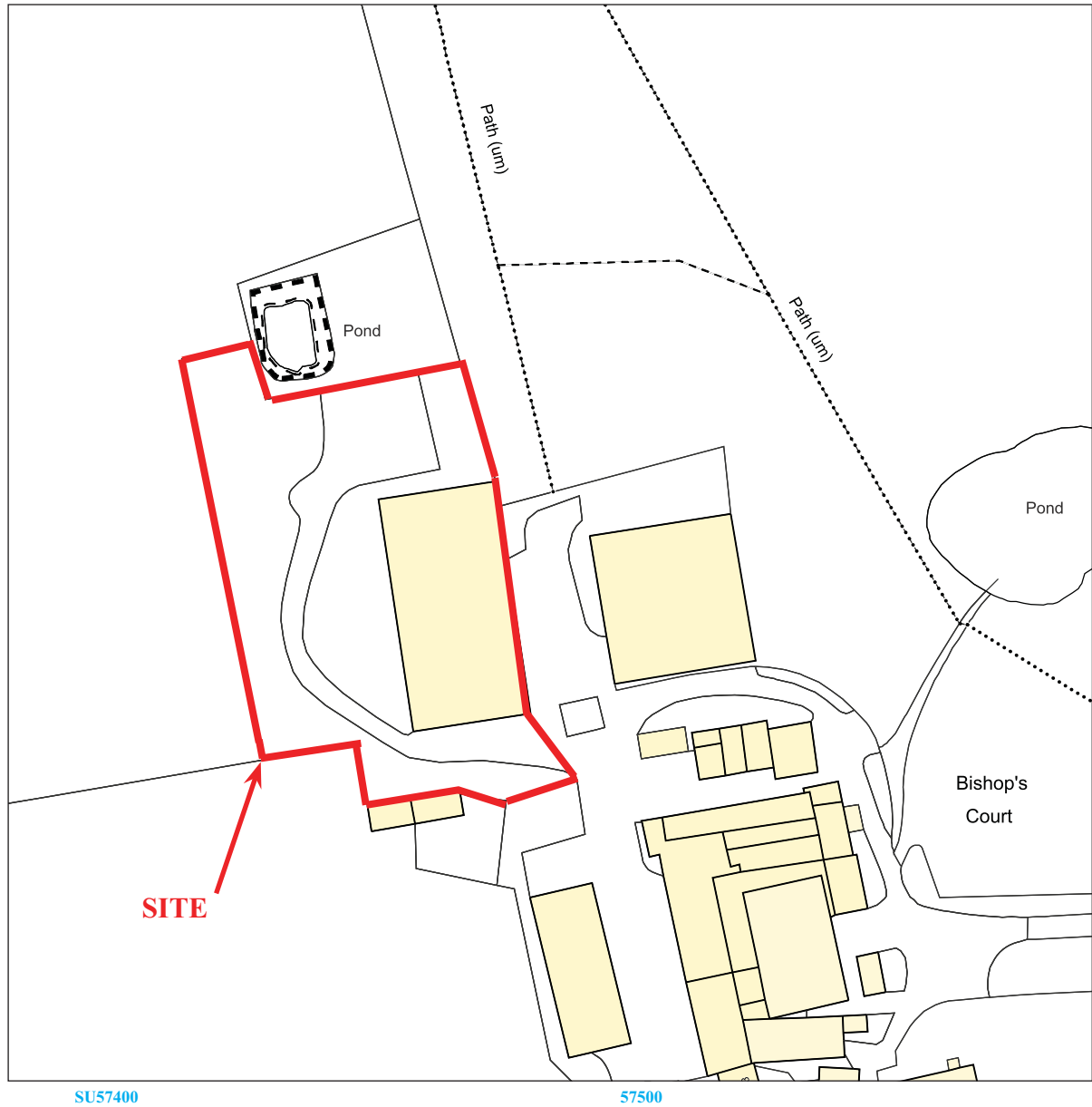
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Figure 1. Location of site Dorchester and Oxfordshire

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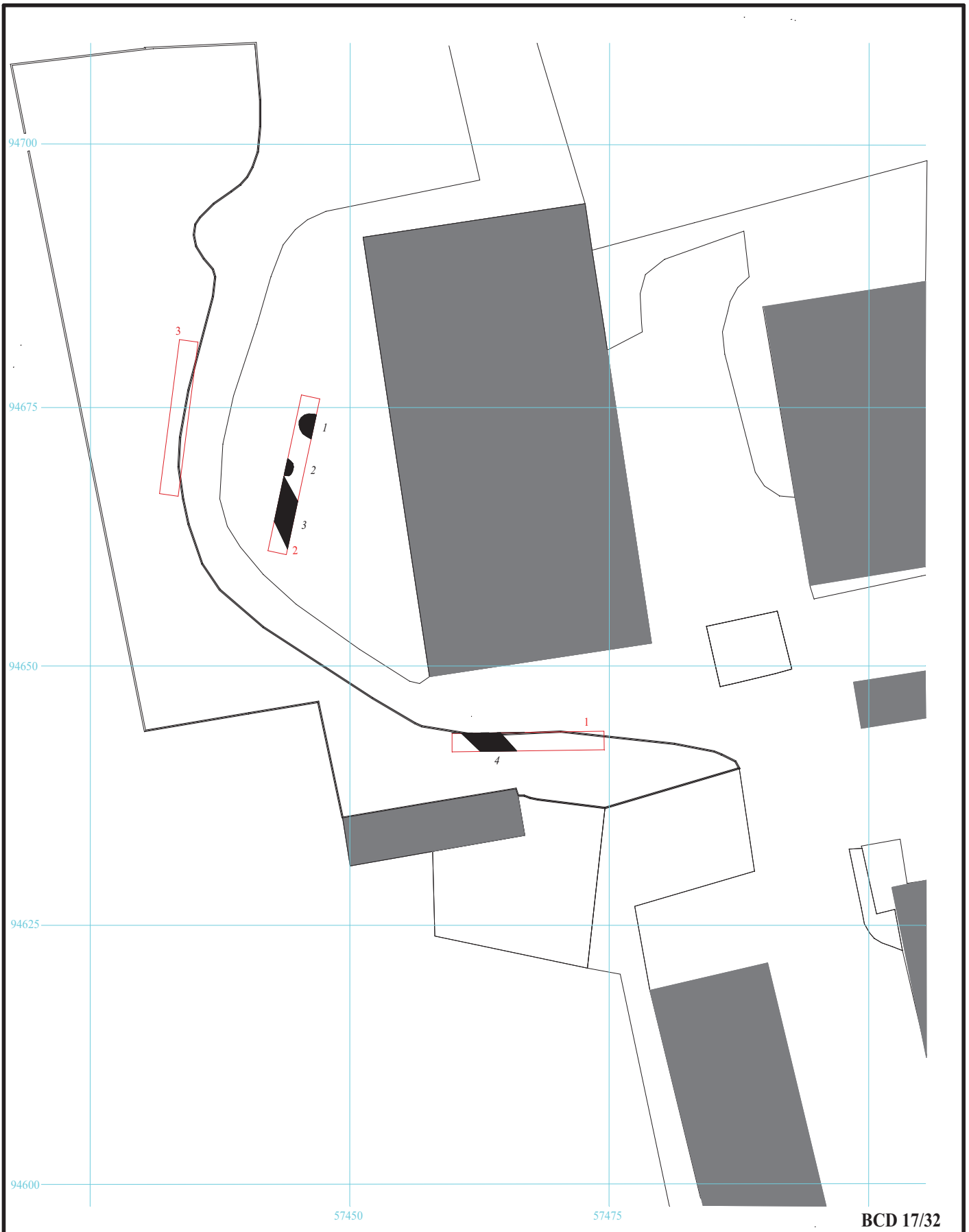


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off High Street.

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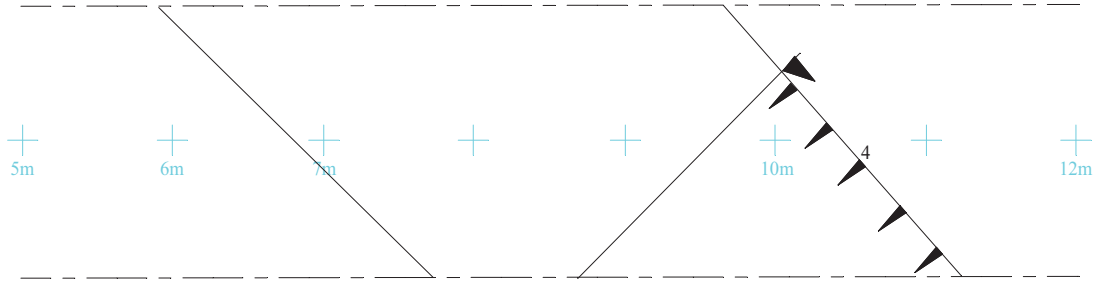
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Figure 3. Trench layout.

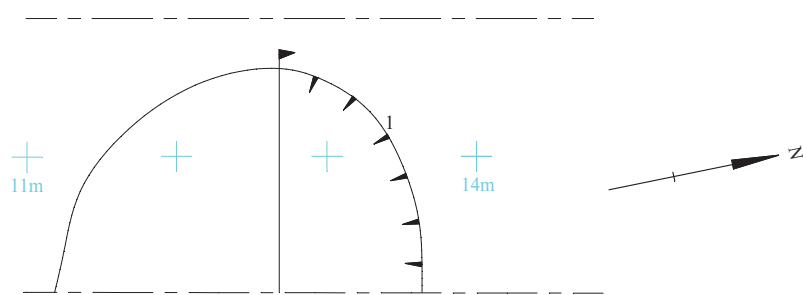


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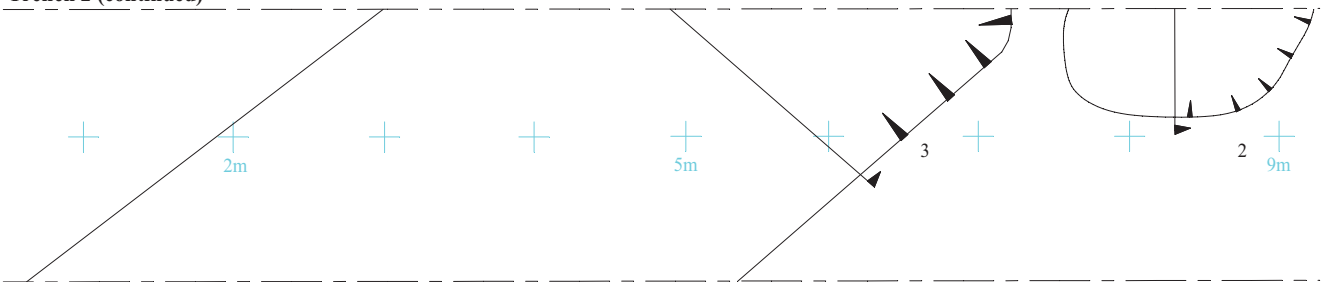
Trench 1



Trench 2



Trench 2 (continued)



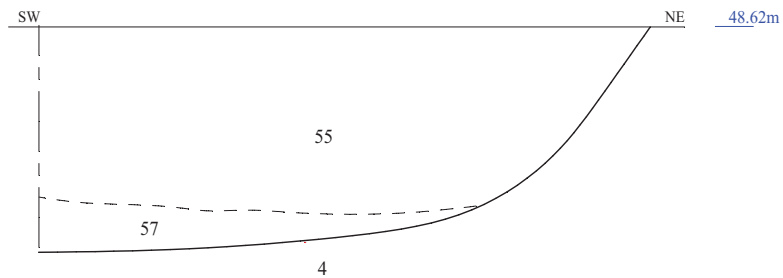
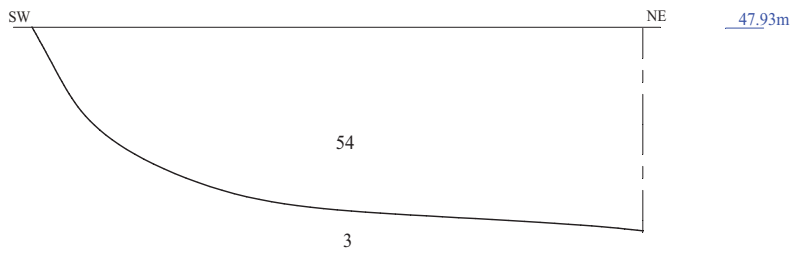
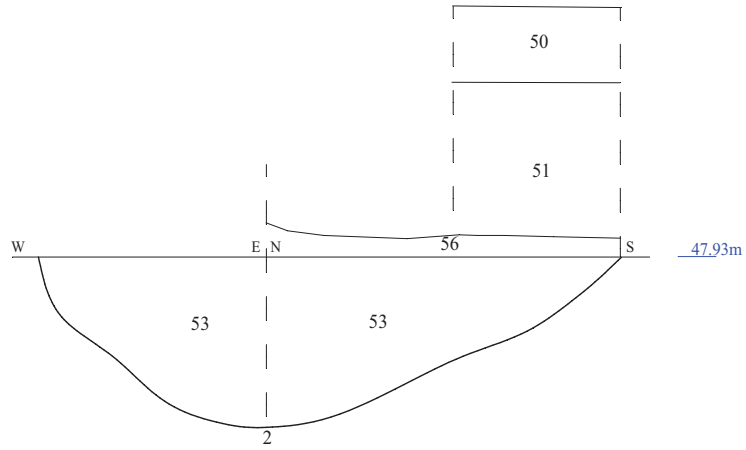
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Figure 4. Trench plans.



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Figure 5. Sections





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench, 2 looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 2, feature 3, looking north-west, Scales: horizontal 1m and vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 1, feature 4, looking north-west, Scales: horizontal 1m and vertical 0.5m.

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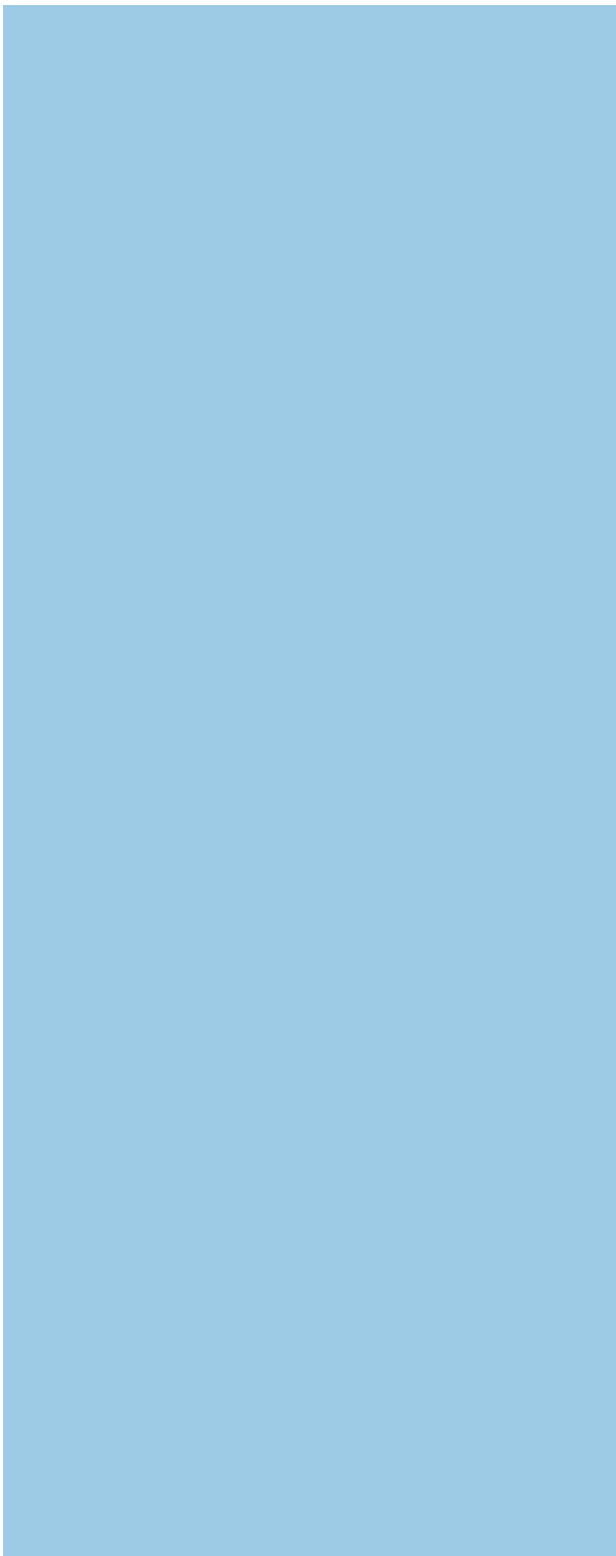
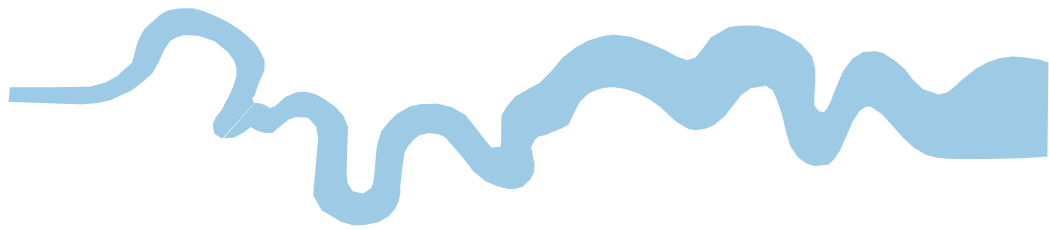
Plates 3 - 4.

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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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