

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land adjacent to The Poplars, Blackbird Lane,
Milton, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Mundin

Site Code: BLM17/60

(SU 4890 9230)

Land adjacent to The Poplars, Blackbird Lane, Milton, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Rob Houseman

by Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BLM 17/60

July 2017

Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to The Poplars, Blackbird Lane, Milton, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4890 9230

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 18th May - 6th June 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding, Luis Esteves

Site code: BLM 17/60

Area of site: c. 500 sq m

Summary of results: Observations were undertaken during the topsoil stripping of the temporary access road, and ground reduction at the site of the new development. After this footing trench excavation was observed over the entirety of the footprint. No archaeological deposits nor finds of interest were encountered.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 05.07.17 Steve Preston ✓ 05.07.17

Land adjacent to The Poplars, Blackbird Lane, Milton, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 17/60

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at land adjacent to The Poplars, Blackbird Lane, Milton, Oxfordshire, OX14 4EF (SU 4890 9230; Fig.1). The work was commissioned by the landowner, Mr Rob Houseman of Mere Cottage, Lake Walk, Mongewell Park, Wallingford, OX10 8DA.

Planning permission (14/V2468/O), with revisions (16/V3131/RM) has been gained from the Vale of the White Horse District Council for the construction of a house with attached garage. Due to the potential of disturbance to below ground archaeological features, the initial consent was subject to conditions (4 and 5) requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained 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, Team Leader of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service who also monitored the work. The fieldwork was supervised by Andrew Muddin, with assistance from Luis Esteves and Benedikt Tebbit from the 18th May to 6th June 2017. The site code is BLM 17/60.

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

Milton lies just to the south-west of Didcot (Fig. 1). The site is located on the east side of the village, towards the end of a track that forms a bridleway known as Blackbird Lane (Fig.1). This track forms the south site boundary, with The Poplars property to the east (Fig. 2). A modern housing development is to the north. The underlying geology is mapped as 2nd Terrace gravel (Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member), overlying Gault clay (BGS 1971). The site is *c.* 60m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in a relatively archaeologically rich Upper Thames Valley with a wealth of sites and finds known (Booth *et al* 2007; Lambrick *et al* 2009). Milton has late Saxon and Medieval origins, with an established and present post-medieval core on the west side of the village.

Fieldwork in the area suggests growth from dispersed farmsteads developing during the medieval period, such as those found at Drayton (Challinor *et al.* 2004; Anthony and Taylor 2006). The surrounding area of Sutton Courtenay and Drayton, shows a wealth of features recorded by aerial photography (Benson and Miles 1974) which range from funerary features of prehistoric to Saxon date, to enclosures and structural features associated with a large Saxon post-built hall site (Brennan and Hamerow 2015). Fieldwork in the earlier 20th century, managed to record features under immediate threat of destruction, but quarrying has encroached on many of these features (Leeds 1923). Even so, with the pressures of modern development in these settlements, investigations are locating important material, such as Early-Middle Saxon Ipswich-ware from a ditch at a site in Sutton Courtenay (Mundin and McNicoll-Norbury 2009)

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve monitoring of ground reduction, including topsoil stripping and invasive excavation for footing and drainage features.

Results

Overburden removal

In the first instance, monitoring took place on the removal of the topsoil to a depth of 0.3m, to allow a temporary hard standing surface to be laid (Fig. 3) and allow access to the centre of the site. Only topsoil was removed, with no finds of any kind noted.

Test pit digging

In order to gain a profile of the soil depths on the site, two test pits (1 and 2) were dug in the north and south (Fig. 3). Particularly in TP2 the topsoil, a dark brown clayey silt, was extremely thick, 0.7m (Fig.4). The subsoil, a pale reddish brown silty sand, was a similar thickness in TP 1 (P1.3) and TP 2, 0.3m thick.

Foundation trenches

During observations of the foundation trenches (Pls 1–2), it was noted that all were dug to the same depth, 0.9m. All areas exposed natural gravel deposit at base, and the depth of section exposed was particularly uniform (Pl. 4; Fig. 4).

Septic tank

After the excavation of the footings, observations were made on a hole for a septic tank. This was placed to the south of the footings in an area not previously stripped of topsoil (Fig. 3). This showed 0.7m of turf and topsoil, overlay 0.6m of subsoil. This in turn overlay natural sandy gravel to the base of excavation at 3m.

No archaeological finds nor deposits were encountered.

Finds

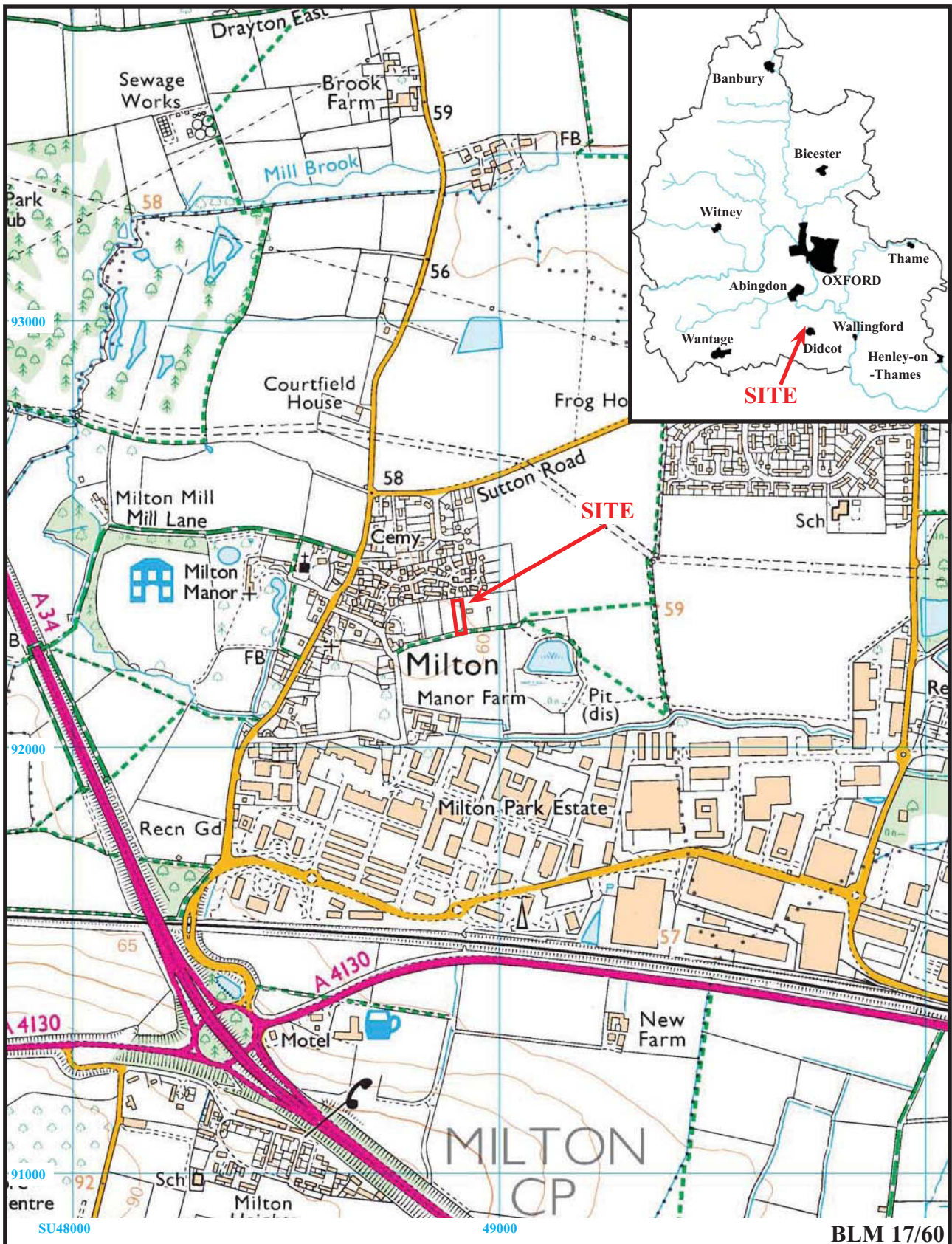
No finds were recovered from the site.

Conclusion

Observations were successfully undertaken during the groundworks for the new development. Though all the footing trench excavation was observed over the entirety of the footprint, no archaeological deposits nor finds of interest were encountered.

References

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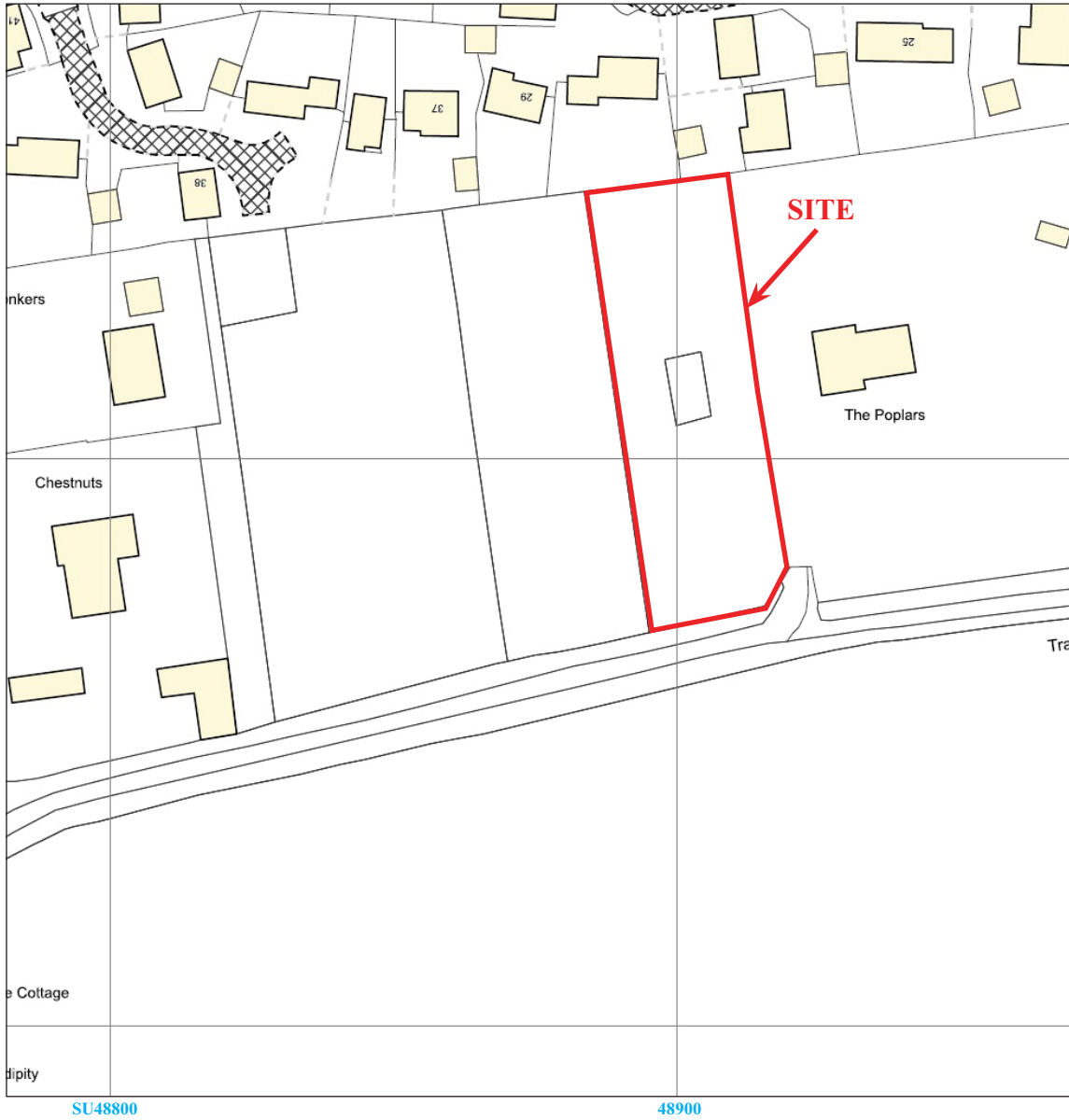


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Figure 1. Location of site within Milton and Oxfordshire.

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Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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W

E

59.78maOD

Dark brown clayey silt (Topsoil)

Reddish brown clayey silt

Gravel (Natural geology)

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Milton, Oxfordshire, 2017
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Excavated footing trench on garage, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.



Plate 2. Excavation of garage footing, looking north east, Scales: 1m x2.

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Milton, Oxfordshire, 2017**
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Test pit 1, looking south, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.



Plate 4. Section of footing, looking north, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.

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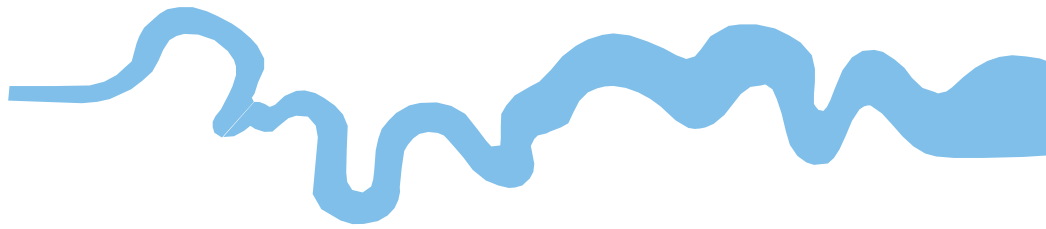
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Milton, Oxfordshire, 2017**
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Plates 3 and 4.

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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