

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Medieval Occupation at The Vines, Shabbington,
Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Recording Action

by Luis Esteves

Site Code: VSB14/245

(SP6659 0711)

Land at The Vines, Shabbington, Buckinghamshire

**An Archaeological Excavation
for Nationcrest PLC**

by Luís Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code VSB 14/245

November 2017

Summary

Site name: Land at The Vines, Shabbington, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP6659 0711

Site activity: Archaeological Excavation

Date and duration of project: 25th May to 2nd June 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Luís Esteves

Site code: VSB 14/245

Area of site: c. 261 sq m

Summary of results: The excavation revealed a small volume of archaeological features: five ditches, two gullies, two pits and a shallow spread, all dating to the medieval period. Residual Roman pottery was also recovered.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 20.12.2017
	Steve Preston ✓ 19.12.2017

Land at The Vines, Shabbington, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Excavation

by Luís Esteves

with contributions by Paul Blinkhorn, Lizzi Lewins, Jo Pine and Danielle Milbank

Report 14/245c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out on land at The Vines, Shabbington, Buckinghamshire (SP66595 07113) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Holifield of Field Commercial Chartered Surveyors on behalf of Nationcrest PLC, International House, Ethorpe Crescent, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire SL9 8QR.

Planning permission (15/03677/APP) had been gained from Aylesbury Vale District Council to construct three new houses on land adjacent to the Vines, Shabbington, Buckinghamshire. The consent is subject to a condition (9) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development. 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. A field evaluation (Strachan 2015) had established the archaeological potential of the site, in consequence of which, archaeological excavation was required in order to record remains prior to destruction.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Phillip Markham, Senior Archaeology Officer at Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service, who advises the Local Planning Authority in archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luís Esteves and Cosmo Bacon between 25th May and 2nd of June 2017 and the site code is VSB 14/245.

The archive is currently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the historic core of the village of Shabbington in western Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1) on land on the northern side of The Vines (Fig. 2). The site lies at a height of *c.* 68m above Ordnance Datum and is relatively flat, overlooking a slight downward slope towards the north-west. The underlying geology is mapped as Kimmeridge Clay - mainly mudstone (BGS 1994). These clays were observed in the plots excavated.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site had been highlighted in a desk based assessment (Elliott 2014). In summary, the site lies within the historic core of the village, where various field investigations have documented occupation in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. Shabbington is first recorded in Domesday Book as *Sobintone* and has late Saxon origins (Williams and Martin 2002). Nineteen taxpayers and six slaves are registered; there was a mill, meadow and fishery and extensive woodland for pigs suggesting a prosperous medium-sized manor. The manor was controlled for some time by the Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. Overall, little is recorded archaeologically for the village but an excavation on Ickford Road, on the western margins of the current built zone, revealed medieval deposits of the 11th to 13th centuries (Coles and Preston 2008) and Roman pottery finds are occasionally reported from the village.

The archaeological potential of the site itself was established by field evaluation (Strachan 2015). Three trenches all revealed features (pits and ditches) of certain or probable archaeological interest with finds of early medieval pottery and animal bone.

Objectives and methodology

As a result of the evaluation, excavation was required over the three plots that correspond to the footprints of the three new houses (and driveway) to be developed. The purpose of the excavation was to excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the area threatened by the development.

The general research aims of this project were:

- to produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site;
- to establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc; and
- to produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Priority was to be given to establishing an overall plan of the site and determining the various phases and sub-phases of activity in order to address the specific research aims of this project, which were to gather data to answer the following questions:

- When was the site first utilised and when was it abandoned?
- Is there any late Saxon activity on the site? If so what is the nature and extent of this activity?
- What is the nature and extent of Medieval occupation on the site?
- What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

The full area intended for excavation covered three plots of land (and driveway) which correspond to the footprints of the new houses. (Fig. 2). The areas were stripped of topsoil and overburden using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Results

The three plots and driveway were mostly stripped as intended but with the eastern end of plot 3 monitored as a watching brief due to restrictions from a nearby tree line. Archaeological deposits were mainly concentrated in plots 1 and 2 (Fig. 2). Based on the modest amount of pottery recovered (29 sherds) the main activity of the site is in the Medieval period with residual Roman pottery in ditch 100 (3 sherds).

Five ditches, two gullies, two pits and a big spread were investigated. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 1.

The main feature of the site was ditch 100 (Figs. 2 and 3; Pl. 1) identified in plots 1 and 2 (slots 11/24 (Pl. 3), 14 and 21, and slot 3 from the evaluation) measuring between 1.3m and 2m wide and 0.33m deep, filled with a light grey silty clay which contained animal bone and pottery sherds from the 12th or 13th century. Ditch 100 was at least 31m long on an approximate north-east to south-west alignment, continuing out of the site to the west, but was not completely observed in plot 3 to the east. Next to ditch 100 (cut 11) a second ditch was recorded (cut 24) but it was only observed in plot 2 (Pl. 3).

Plot 1 (Pl. 6) also had two undated shallow gullies (slots 16, 18 and 22) and an undated shallow pit (17). Gully 22 was earlier than (cut by) ditch 100 (Fig. 3; Pl. 7) but cannot be more closely dated.

From plot 2 (Pl. 4), next to ditch 100, a shallow undated pit (12) and a ditch (10) in the south-east corner of the plot were investigated. This ditch is the same as that observed (slot 1) in the evaluation, measuring 1.06m wide and 0.17m deep, filled with a dark grey silty clay contained animal bone and three sherds of 13th-century pottery. It appeared to simply peter out before the point where it would have reached ditch 100.

A large, irregular spread (101) was also investigated in this plot (slots 13, 20 and 23, along with slot 4 from the evaluation). It occupied the full width of the plot (13m) and was up to 6m wide (north-south), with a shallow depth (0.09 to 0.20m) and a fill of dark grey clay with only 4 sherds of 12th-century pottery (probably residual).

In the drive way area (Pl. 5) only two features were observed. Pit 5 had already been investigated in the previous evaluation trench. It was 2.6m across but only 0.15m deep with a flat base. It contained a single blue/grey sandy clay fill (57) which contained two medieval pottery sherds, some fired clay and a little animal bone. Ditch 19 was 1.83m wide and 0.17m deep filled with a mid grey clay containing a moderate number of animal bone and one sherd of late 11th century pottery. It did not extend into plot 2 to the north but was broadly parallel to ditch 1=10, just 2m apart.

Plot 3 (Pl. 2) revealed only a single ditch (9) from which two sherds of late post-medieval or, more probably, modern pottery were retrieved.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage from the excavation comprised 29 sherds with a total weight of 296g, to add to the 26 sherds (193g) from the evaluation. It consisted of a mixture of Roman, medieval and later material. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2.

Roman

The Roman material was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (Marney 1989), as follows:

F2: Soft Pink Grog-tempered Ware, mid 2nd – 4th century. 1 sherd, 16g.

F3: Grey Sandy Ware, late 1st – 4th century. 2 sherds, 8g.

Both fabrics are common finds in the region. All the sherds are clearly residual in ditch 100.

Medieval and Later

The medieval and later assemblage was recorded using the conventions of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat *et al.* 1994), as follows:

SNC1: St. Neots Ware, c. AD900-1100. 2 sherds, 6g. Both from evaluation

MS3: Medieval Grey Sandy Wares, mid 11th – late 14th century. 13 sherds, 71g, plus 5 sherds, 31g from evaluation.

MS9: Brill/Boarstall Ware, 1200-1600. 3 sherds, 124g, plus 2 sherds, 12g from evaluation.

MS29: Flint-gritted Ware, 12th – 13th century. 1 sherd, 6g.

MSC1: Sandy and Shelly Ware, late 11th – mid 13th century. 7 sherds, 67g, plus 2 sherds, 47g from evaluation.

PM25: White Earthenware, late 18th – 20th century. 2 sherds, 4g.

In addition, the following wares, not included in the Milton Keynes type-series, all from the evaluation, were recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1994),

OXY: Oxford Ware, late 11th – 14th century. 7 sherds, 60g.

OXAC: Cotswold-type Ware, AD975-1350. 1 sherd, 1g.

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050–1400. 5 sherds, 28g.

OXAW: Early Brill Coarseware, AD1180-1250. 2 sherds, 7g

The medieval assemblage consisted of plain bodysherds from unglazed jars and glazed jugs, other than a complete strap handle from a Brill jug in ditch 100 (14, 66), two sherds in the same fabric from glazed jugs (from the evaluation) and two jar rim fragments in MS3 from ditch 100 (11, 63). This is typical of the period.

The handle, and the other glazed jug fragments, are all earlier (13th – 14th century) products of the Brill industry. The bulk of the material is in good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

Fired clay by Danielle Milbank

Three small fragments were recovered from a sieved soil sample 4 from ditch 100, slot 11 (63), weighing a total of 4g. They were examined under x10 magnification. These comprised two fragments of a fine clay with no

inclusions, in a light red colour. A further small piece from this context is a similar fine fabric with a light grey colour, and a straw mark. The pieces have no characteristics which suggest their function but it is possible that they represent fragmented daub.

Animal Bone by Lizzie Lewins

A small assemblage of animal bone (54 fragments), weighing a total of 774g was recovered during the course of the excavation. A further 35 fragments (435g) came from the evaluation (hardly any of which was identifiable). The bone was in generally good condition although fragmentary. The bone was classified according size (large mammal - cattle, horse; medium-sized mammal - sheep/goat, pig, deer) and where possible to species level. A full inventory of the bone can be found in Appendix 3, only the identified bone will be discussed here.

Ditch 10 (62) contained a fragment of medium-sized mammal long bone which had been sliced. A single cattle molar was also recovered.

Ditch 100, slot (11) contained 3 fragments of unidentified horncore, 3 fragments of long bone shaft from a medium-sized mammal (1 sliced) and an unidentified sliced fragment. Those remains that were identified to species consisted of a fragment of cattle mandible (no teeth); and a partial long bone, partial mandible (m2-m3 teeth in situ) and a partial maxilla (partial p4-m3 teeth in situ) all of which were identified as pig. A single fragment of long bone from a medium sized mammal was identified from bulk sample no. 4.

Ditch 19 (71) contained 6 long bone fragments classified as large mammal; and 2 partial molars, 2 re-fitted fragments of left proximal radius, a fragment of radius shaft and a left proximal metatarsal all from cattle.

From the evaluation, ditch 3 (55) contained a medium animal rib, a right sheep/goat mandible and a sheep/goat horn core. A single butchery mark was also found on a fragment of medium-sized animal long bone recovered from context 4 (56), and a pig tooth was recovered from 5 (57).

Little useful information can be retrieved from this small assemblage. The main domesticates are present but there is scant evidence for butchery suggesting that carcasses were processed elsewhere.

Macrobotanical plant material and charcoal by Jo Pine

Five bulk soil samples were processed by standard water flotation methods. The samples were sieved to 0.25mm and air dried and the resultant flots examined under a low-power binocular microscope at a magnification of x10. Only one sample produced any palaeoenvironmental material. A modest assemblage of charred grains of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and oats (*Avena* sp.) were recovered from ditch 100 slot 11 (63) together with a small amount of charcoal which it was not possible to identify to species.

Conclusion

The excavation has examined a small part of the medieval village of Shabbington. It has revealed a number of archaeological features, mostly linear in nature, along with a few pits. The features are likely to have formed part of one or more crofts but with any house site located beyond the examined areas. A small collection of animal bone and samples of charred plant remains containing wheat and oat are typical of the period.

Apart from residual Roman pottery and a few sherds of modern pottery, all the features with dating information are from the Medieval period probably from quite a short span in the 12-13th centuries and probably all broadly contemporary.

The site lies at some distance from the parish church, the presumed centre of a historic village and on the margins of the currently built area of the settlement. In the case of Shabbington, the church lies within an area of earthworks, suggesting that the later village has shifted its focus northwards since its first inception. It seems likely that the modest volume of features and artefacts, and the limited chronology indicated by the pottery at The Vines reflects a relatively short-lived occupancy of this parcel of land. One other excavation in the village at Ickford Road, again currently marginal to the settlement area and thought to be marginal to the medieval village nevertheless had a much greater density of artefacts (for example, 650 sherds of pottery compared to just 50 here) and deposits and a longer span of occupation, though still going out of use at or about the same time as The Vines in the 14th century (Coles and Preston 2008). Perhaps therefore occupation at the Vines reflects another topographic location within the village marking the point of maximum expansion of the settlement northwards in Medieval times, that is until pestilence and economic collapse caused abandonment of marginal zones and a contraction in the surviving settled areas.

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Appendix 1: Catalogue of excavated features.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
	1	52-3	Ditch	Medieval	pottery
	2	54	Ditch	Medieval	pottery
100	3	55	Ditch	Medieval	By association
	4	56	Ditch	Medieval	pottery
	5	57	Pit	Medieval	pottery
	6	58	Ditch	Medieval	pottery
	7	59	Pit	-	
	8	60	Gully	-	
	9	61	Ditch	Post Medieval	Pottery
	10	62	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery
100	11	63	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery
	12	64	Pit		
101	13	65	Spread		
100	14	66	Ditch	Roman/Medieval	Pottery
	15	67	Spread		
	16	68	Gully terminus		
	17	69	Pit		
	18	70	Gully		
	19	71	Ditch	Medieval	Pottery
101	20	72	Spread		
100	21	73	Ditch	Roman/Medieval	Pottery
	22	74	Gully		
101	23	75	Spread		
	24	76	Ditch		

APPENDIX 2: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type.

A> Excavation

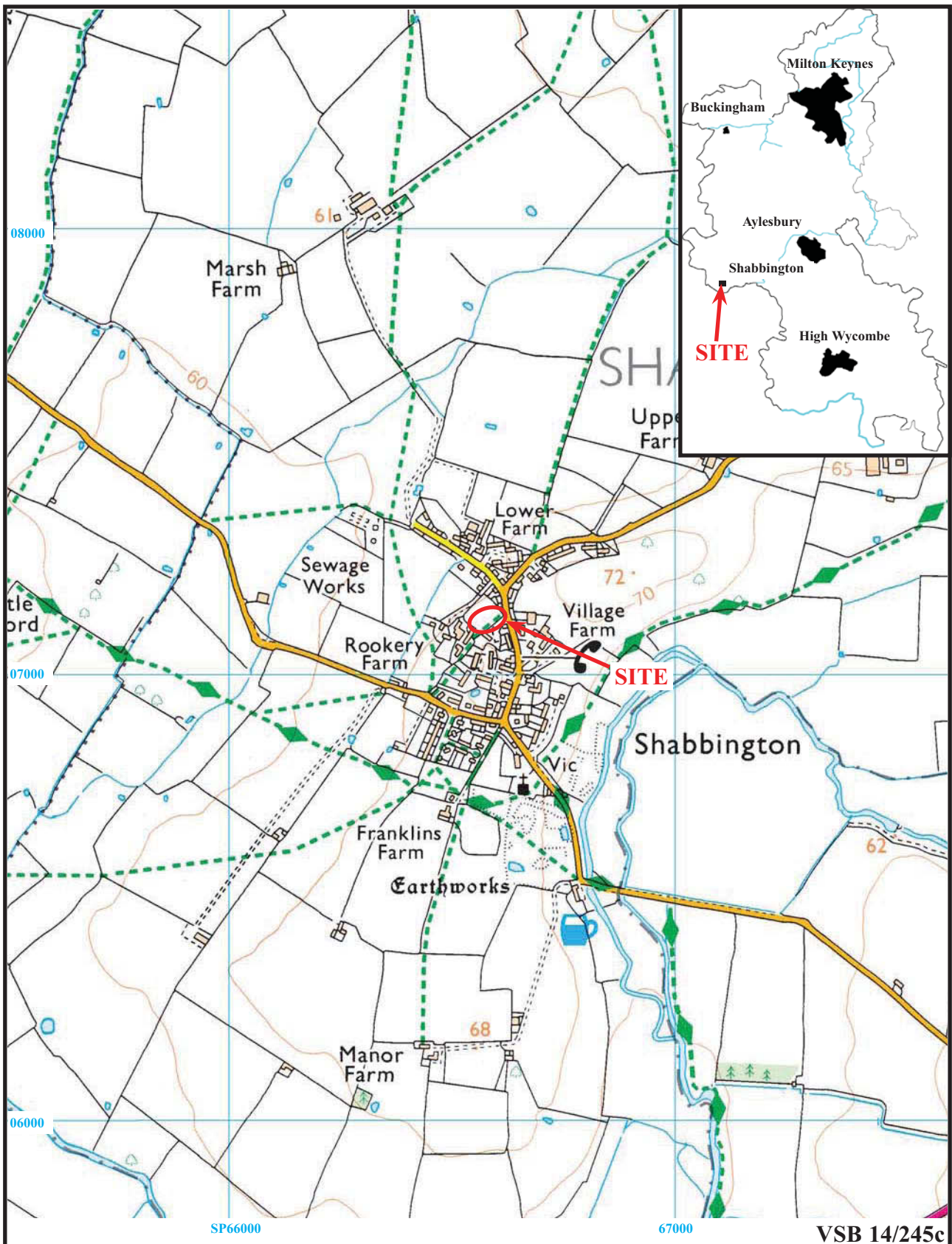
Cut	Deposit	Group	F2		F3		MS3		MSC1		MS9		MS29		PM25	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
9	61										1	10			2	4
10	62						2	12			1	5				
11	63	100					2	24	1	8						
13	65	101					3	7	1	3						
14	66		1	16	1	5	4	12	3	28	1	109				
19	71								1	26						
21	73				1	3	2	16	1	2			1	6		
	Total		1	16	2	8	13	71	7	67	3	124	1	6	2	4

B> Evaluation

Cut	Fill	Group	SNC1		MSC1		MS3		OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAW		MS9	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
1	52										1	4	1	10	1	3		
1	53		2	6													1	6
2	54	100			1	44	1	15	1	1	1	1	6	50				
4	56	101					2	8			1	6			1	4		
5	57				1	4	1	3										
6	58						1	5									1	6
7	59										2	17						
	Total		2	6	1	48	4	31	1	1	5	28	7	60	2	7	2	12

Appendix 3: Animal Bone Inventory

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No. frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Sheep/ goat</i>	<i>Large Mammal</i>	<i>Medium Mammal</i>	<i>Unid.</i>	<i>Notes</i>
2	54			18	240						16	
3	55			5	158			2			3	
4	56			2	18						2	
5	57			1	6		1					
7	59	4		8	12						8	
8	60			1	1						9	
10	62	-	Ditch	35	435	1				1	1	Sliced
10	62	5	Ditch	1	1						1	
11	63	-	Ditch	13	331	1	3			3	6	Sliced
11	63	4	Ditch	1	3					1		
14	66	-	Ditch	4	13					2	2	
14	66	2	Ditch	3	2						3	Burnt
16	68	3	Gully	1	1						1	
19	71	-	Ditch	24	387	6			6		12	
21	73	-	Ditch	1	1						1	
21	73	1	Ditch	3	1						3	
Total				54	774							



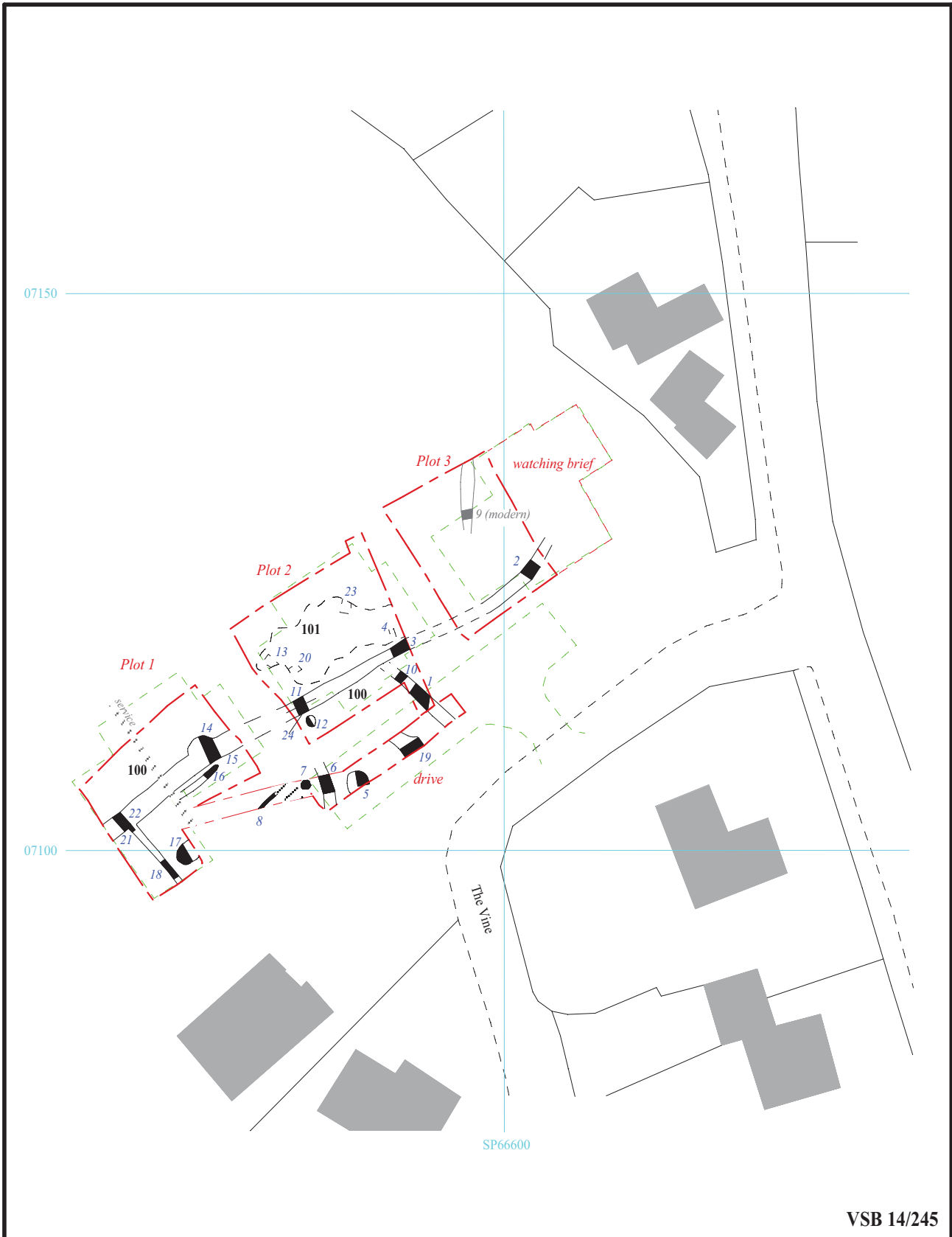
**Land at The Vine, Shabbington,
Buckinghamshire, 2017
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Shabbington and Buckinghamshire.

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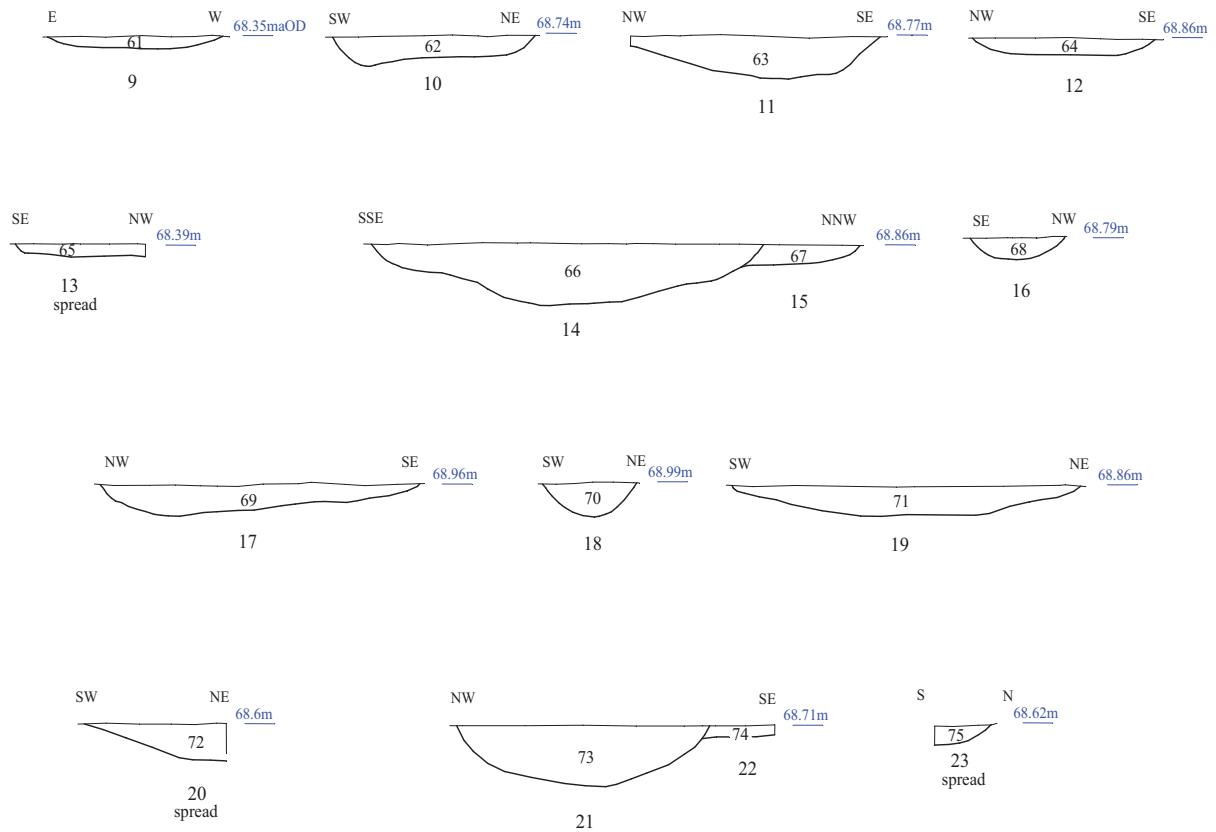
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Figure 2. Location of excavation areas.



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Figure 3. Sections.



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Plate 1. Plot 1, ditch 14 and pit 15, looking west south west, Scales: 2m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Plot 3, looking north west.

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**Land at The Vine, Shabbington,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Plot 2, ditches 11 and 24, looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Plot 2, looking north west.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Access strip, looking east.



Plate 6. Plot 1, looking south west.

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**Land at The Vine, Shabbington,
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Plates 5 and 6.**

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Plate 7. Plot 1, relationship section between ditch 21 and gully 22, looking north east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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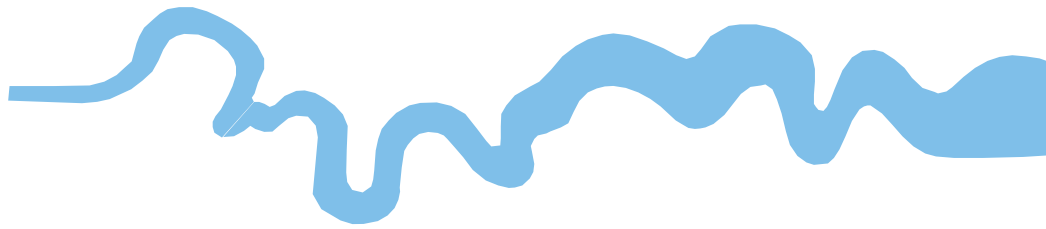
**Land at The Vine, Shabbington,
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Plate 7.

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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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