

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New Double Garage at Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Luis Esteves

Site Code: HWH18/34

(SU 7568 8052)

New Garages at Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Craig Newman

by Luís Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HWH 18/34

February 2018

Summary

Site name: New Garages at Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 7572 8050

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 14th and 15th February 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Luís Esteves

Site code: HWH 18/34

Area of site: c. 70 sq m

Summary of results: No finds or deposits of any archaeological interest were encountered.

Monuments identified: None

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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New Garages at Harpsden Wood House, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Luís Esteves

Report 18/34

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (SU 7572 8050) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Craig Newman of Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, OX9 4AF.

Planning permission (P17/S3932/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new double garage and gate piers. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features, a watching brief was to be maintained during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luís Esteves between 14th and 15th February 2018 and the site code is HWH 18/34.

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 to the south-west of the small village of Harpsden, which itself lies *c.*3km south of Henley-on-Thames (Fig. 1). The area for the new garages consisted of a Tarmac car park associated with the property on the east side. The underlying geology is mapped as Clay with Flints and Loam overlying chalk (BGS 2000), which was observed on the site. The site lies at a height of *c.*80m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological potential stems from the finding of remains of a Roman building foundation to the west of the garden of the house. This was first excavated just after the house was built, and this investigation also found outbuildings including a bathhouse. The foundation was constructed of flint rubble set in mortar and sand. A range of buildings to the north was located in a 1951 excavation (Rivers-Moore 1951). An additional deposit

of a small group of Iron Age gold coins minted *c.* 60BC is also recorded nearby (VCH 2011). A modest collection of pottery, roof tile and metalwork has been recovered from this villa site. It is usual that villa buildings do not exist in isolation, most usually being situated within field systems and paddocks forming an estate covering, most likely, large parts of the landscape. It was therefore possible that evidence for this may be found within the site.

Recent fieldwork has attempted to clarify the nature of the villa, involving geophysical survey and test pitting. This has revealed that the site has been extensively disturbed but some *in-situ* walls were recorded and a large volume of artefacts recovered (Nicholls 2016).

Harpsden Wood House itself was initially built in 1908 in mock-Tudor style. Other buildings in the area to the east are Listed. These include Harpsden Court (Grade II*; 15th century origin) and St Margaret's Church (Grade II; 12th century origin though greatly altered in the 19th century) (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 634). A recent extension to the house itself was subject to archaeological monitoring of groundworks (Porter 2015). Monitoring was also carried out on the construction of a tennis court to the west of the house (Taylor 2017). Nothing of archaeological interest was recorded in the limited works on those occasions.

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 observation of surface stripping, the excavation of foundations and service trenches, landscaping and all other invasive works as necessary.

Results

The foundations of the new garage and wall piers comprised a series of mini-piles with pile caps and ground beams for the floor and a ground beam for the surrounding walls. Tarmac and other made ground was removed and a geotextile membrane laid followed by scalpins to form a piling mat.

The pile locations (Fig. 3) were dug to a depth of *c.* 1m from the top of the scalpins and were 1m square. Observations in the holes dug around these piles showed that the pile mat lay just above the top of the natural geology (Pl. 1 and Pl. 2).

The foundation trenches were dug by a small 360° type machine under constant archaeological supervision. They measured in general 0.50m or 0.70m wide and were dug to a depth of 1m. The stratigraphy observed

consisted of 0.15m of Tarmac overlying 0.7m of made ground overlying convoluted clay with flints natural geology. No archaeological features or deposits were observed. Spoilheaps were monitored for finds: none were noted.

Finds

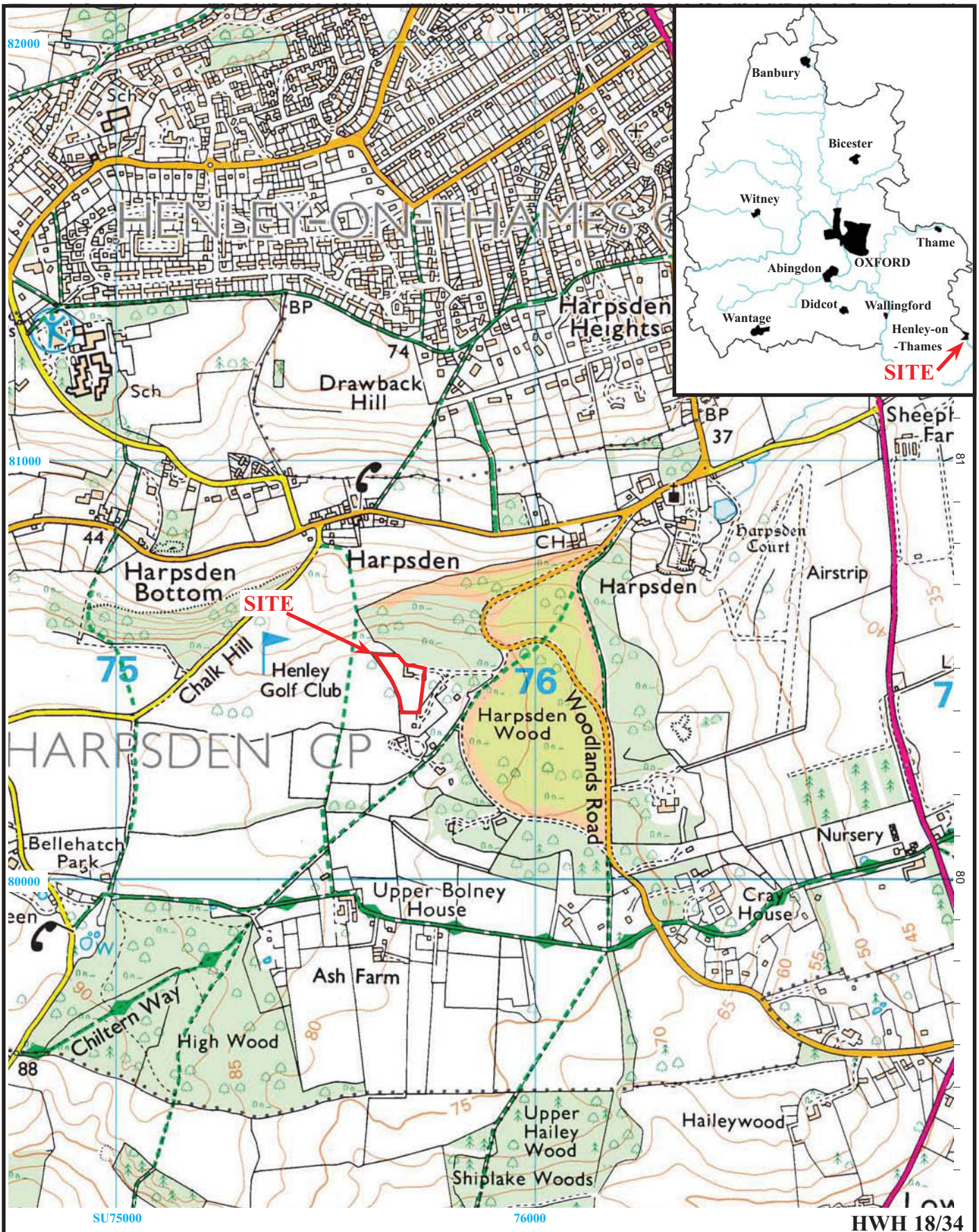
No archaeological finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

Conclusion

Despite the site's potential for the presence of archaeological features, no deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed during the course of the watching brief.

References

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- Nicholls, D, 2016, 'High Wood Roman Site, interim report 2015', South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group Bulletin, **70**, 26-40
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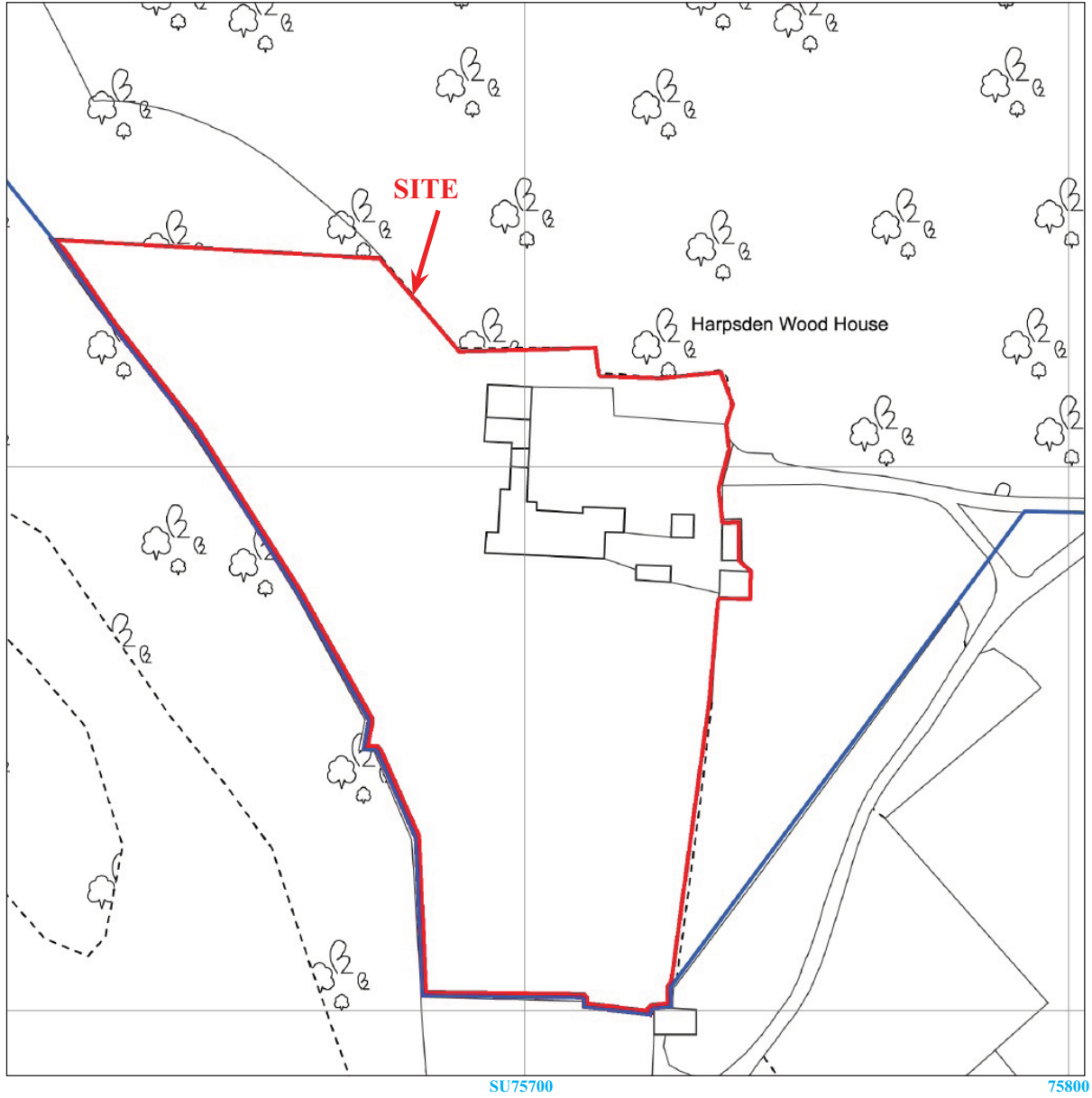


**New Garages and entrance, Harpsden Wood House,
Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, 2018
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Figure 1. Location of site within Harpsden and Oxfordshire.

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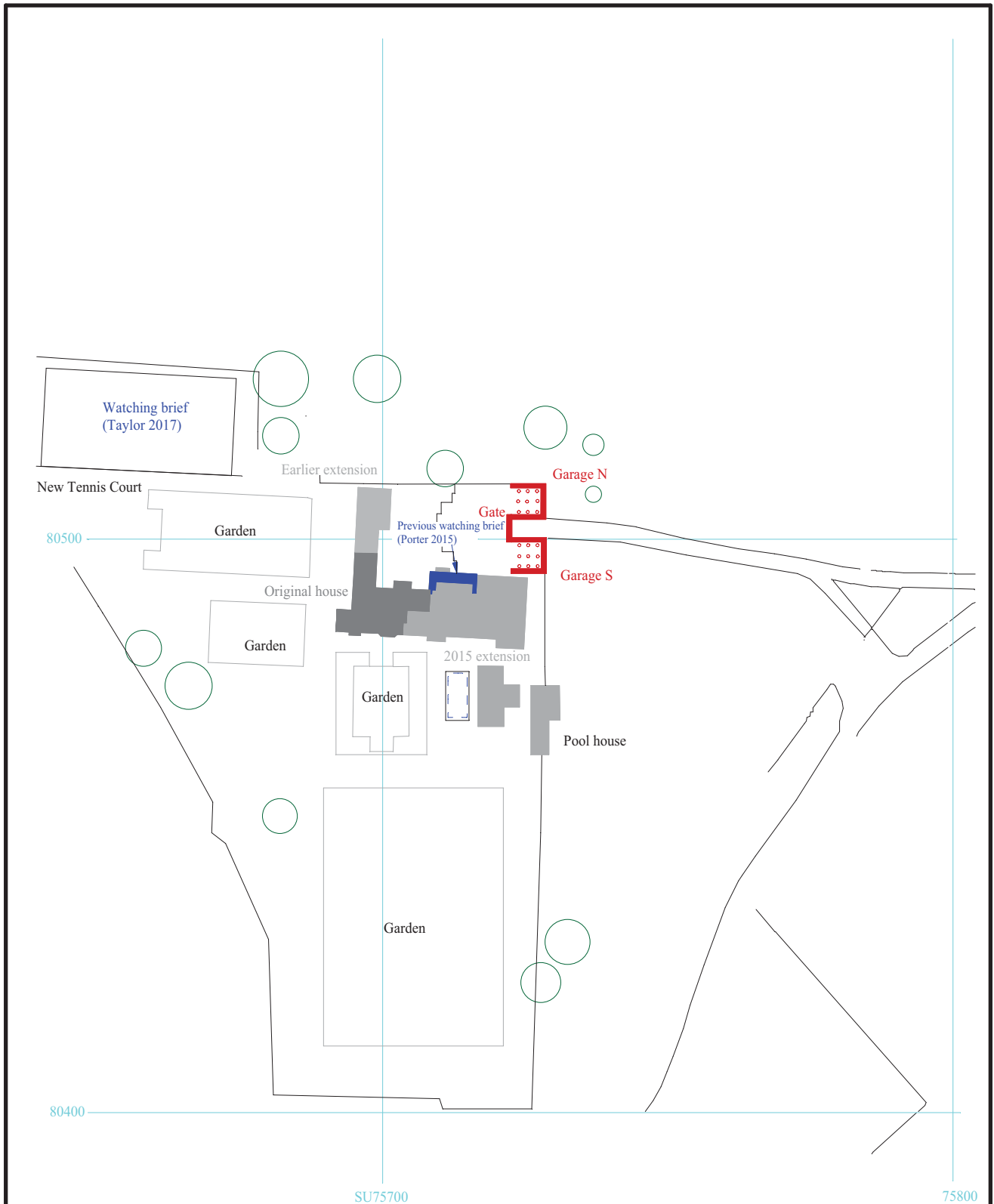


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area, and reference to 2015 and 2017 works.



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Garage south

-----Tarmac

Made ground

Convolutated clay with flints (natural geology)

Garage so

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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Garage (N), looking east, Scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Garage (S), looking north, Scale: 1m.

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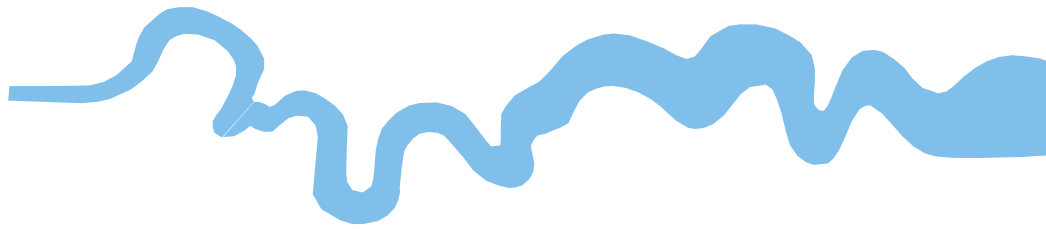
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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 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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