

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Princes Risborough School, Merton Road,
Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Site Code: PRS18/92

(SP 8093 2088)

**Princes Risborough School, Merton Road,
Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Buckinghamshire CC**

by Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PRS 18/92

August 2018

Summary

Site name: Princes Risborough School, Merton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 8093 2088

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th July - 2nd August 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Jon Tierney

Site code: PRS 18/92

Area of site: 996 sq m

Summary of results: Observations were made of the south-western extension of the staff car to create additional parking. Overburden was removed to expose the natural geological horizon (chalk). However, no deposits of any archaeological importance were observed.

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

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

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Princes Risborough School, Merton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 18/92

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Princes Risborough School, Merton Road, HP27 0DR (SP 8093 2088) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Rebecca Duncumb, of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Planning permission (CC/01/17) has been approved by Buckinghamshire County Council for the construction of new classrooms and a kitchen, and to add new parking. A condition (4) has been added to the consent requiring archaeological observations to be made during groundwork. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the County and District Councils' planning policies on archaeology. This report documents archaeological works on the area of new car parking west of an existing car park. Modification of the existing building and a kitchen will also be carried out at a later date.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Philip Markham, Senior Archaeological Officer for Buckinghamshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jon Tierney between 30th July and 2nd August 2018. The site code is PRS 18/92.

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

Location, topography and geology

Princes Risborough lies in a broad gap on the west side of the Chilterns in central Buckinghamshire. The school site is on the south-eastern fringe of the town (Fig. 1), bordered on the south by the Upper Icknield Way, which at that point is wide track. The school is approximately 135m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The underlying geology is West Melbury chalk marl Formation (Lower Chalk) which forms a SW-NE ridge (BGS Geindex; BGS 1994).

Archaeological background

The Historic Town Assessment of Princes Risborough has summarized the archaeological and historical potential of the town and its built heritage (Green and Beckley 2009). The two Medieval parishes of Princes and Monk Risborough were developed independently through time by the Crown and the Bishop of Canterbury respectively, but their origins are most likely similar. Domesday Book mentions a Late Saxon *vill* (settlement) held by Earl Harold Godwinson (King Harold II), prior to the Norman Conquest when it was given to William FitzAusculf. The Saxon settlement seems to have been particularly rich with 30 ploughs worth of arable land, and two mills, some meadow and woodland (Williams and Martin, 2002 395). The village of Monks Risborough is attached to the north of Princes Risborough, making a larger settlement.

Prior to Saxon times, there is limited information for older periods in the town. The areas east of Princes Risborough, are particularly rich in archaeological earthworks and finds (Head 1974; Wise 1991). A long barrow on Whiteleaf Hill *c.*1km to the northeast is now reconstructed after excavation. Further remains on this hill attest to other periodic use over time (Hey *et al.* 2007). A crouched burial of an individual of *c.*25 years old, found in a small excavation at No.35 Clifford Road, is probably of Early Bronze Age date and it contained small quantity of prehistoric pottery similar to the original Whiteleaf Hill excavations of the 1950s (Farley and Browne 1983). Further burials, this time of three infants of possibly Roman date, were found at the School itself, under a spread with an assortment of Roman pottery and animal bone (Appleton and Chelu 2004). A focus for local Roman activity could be Pyrtle Spring at Culverton Farm where Roman finds have been recorded from excavation in 1932 (HER344328).

Initial development of the town occurred to the north west at the bottom of the Chiltern scarp slope, with most of the 20th century development on the east side of the town and leading up the ridge, which includes the School site to the SE.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This would involve the examination of areas of intrusive groundworks, such as ground reduction and the digging of service trenches.

Specific research aims for the project were to:

- determine if archaeological relevant levels have survived on the site
- determine if archaeological deposits of any date were present; and to
- determine whether archaeological deposits relating to Roman settlement were present.

Excavation for this phase of work, to the south-west of the existing staff car park (Fig. 2), was undertaken with a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a bladed bucket under archaeological supervision, and much of the excavation reached the archaeologically relevant horizon. Topsoil was excavated, before the natural chalk geology was cleaned of overburden to expose the natural horizon (Pls 1 and 2) The spoilheaps were checked for finds.

Results

The site of the excavation was part of the level school playing field, on the south-west side (Fig. 3). All of this part of the playing field was contained by a raised bank evident in the north-west and the south-west. Excavation removed the topsoil to a depth of 0.27m. This was a chalky loam, of grey-white sandy silt with occasional chalk flecking. Removal of this exposed the natural chalk at a similar depth throughout the excavation, from the south-west corner to where it joined the existing car park (Pls 1 and 2).

Artefacts of late post-medieval and modern pottery, animal bone, ceramic building material, metal, glassware and clay pipe were observed in the topsoil but were not recovered.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Finds

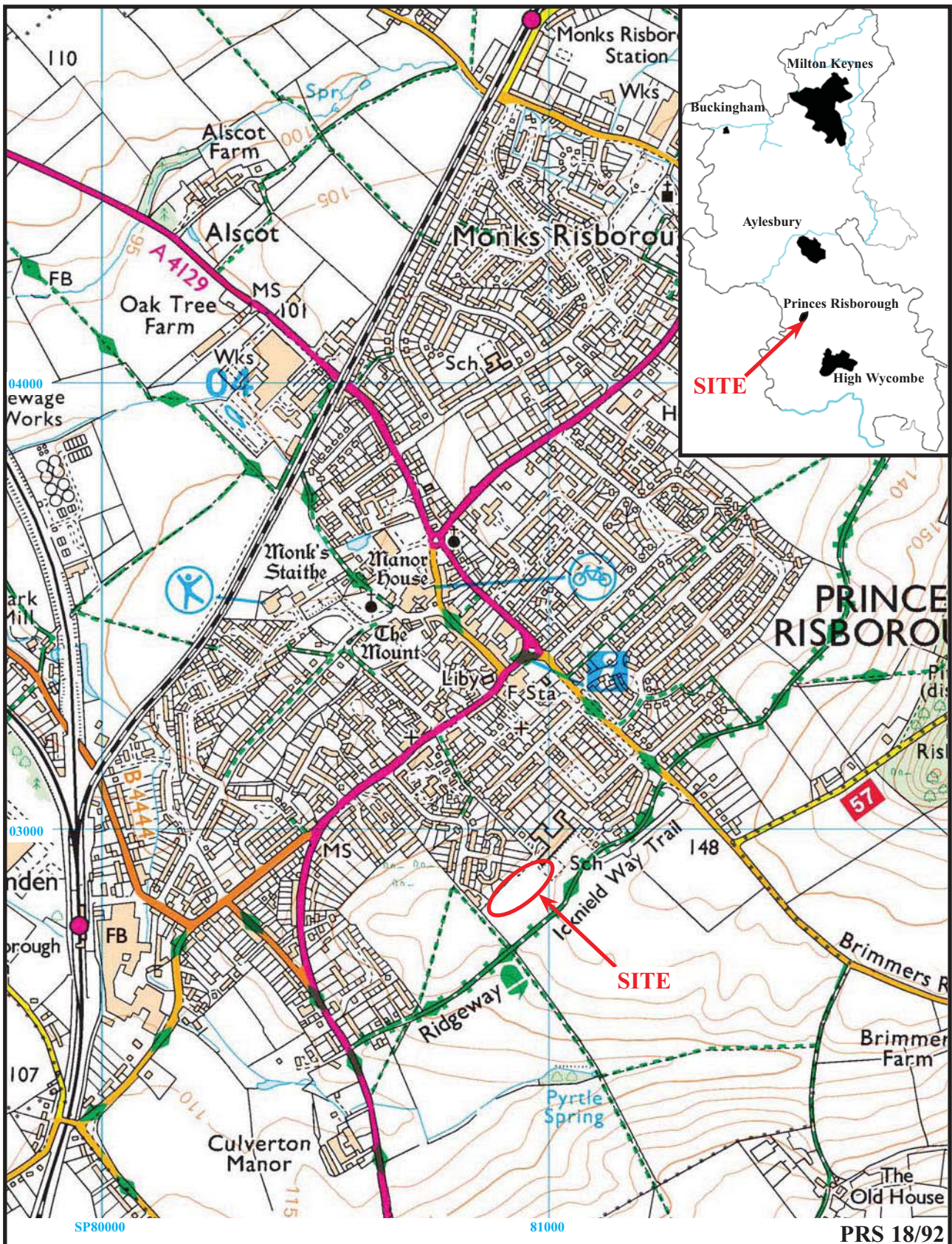
No material of archaeological interest was recovered.

Conclusion

The archaeological observations have been undertaken successfully for the ground reduction works for the car park extension, however no archaeological deposits were observed. T

References

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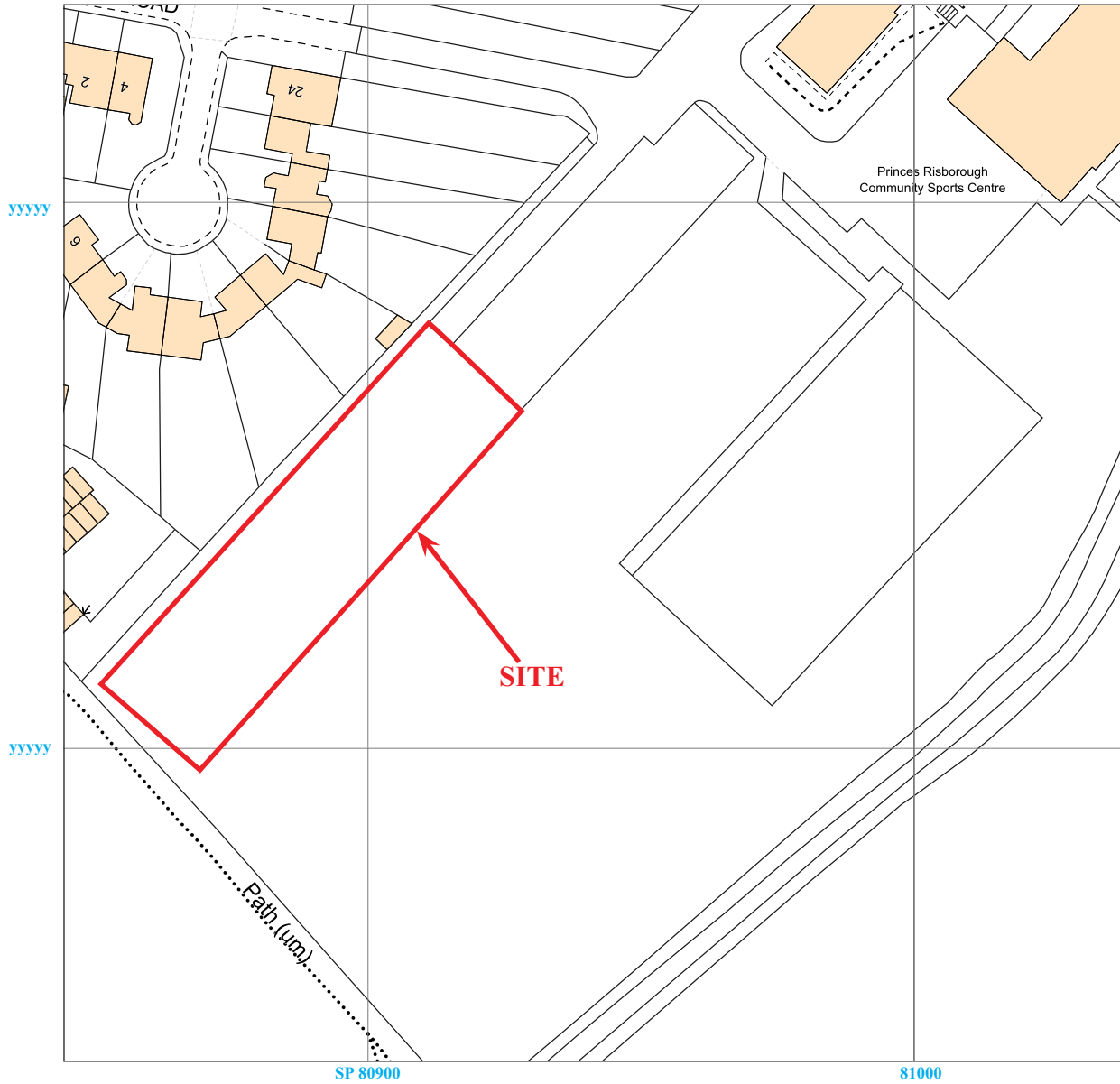
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Figure 1. Location of site within Princes Risborough and Buckinghamshire.

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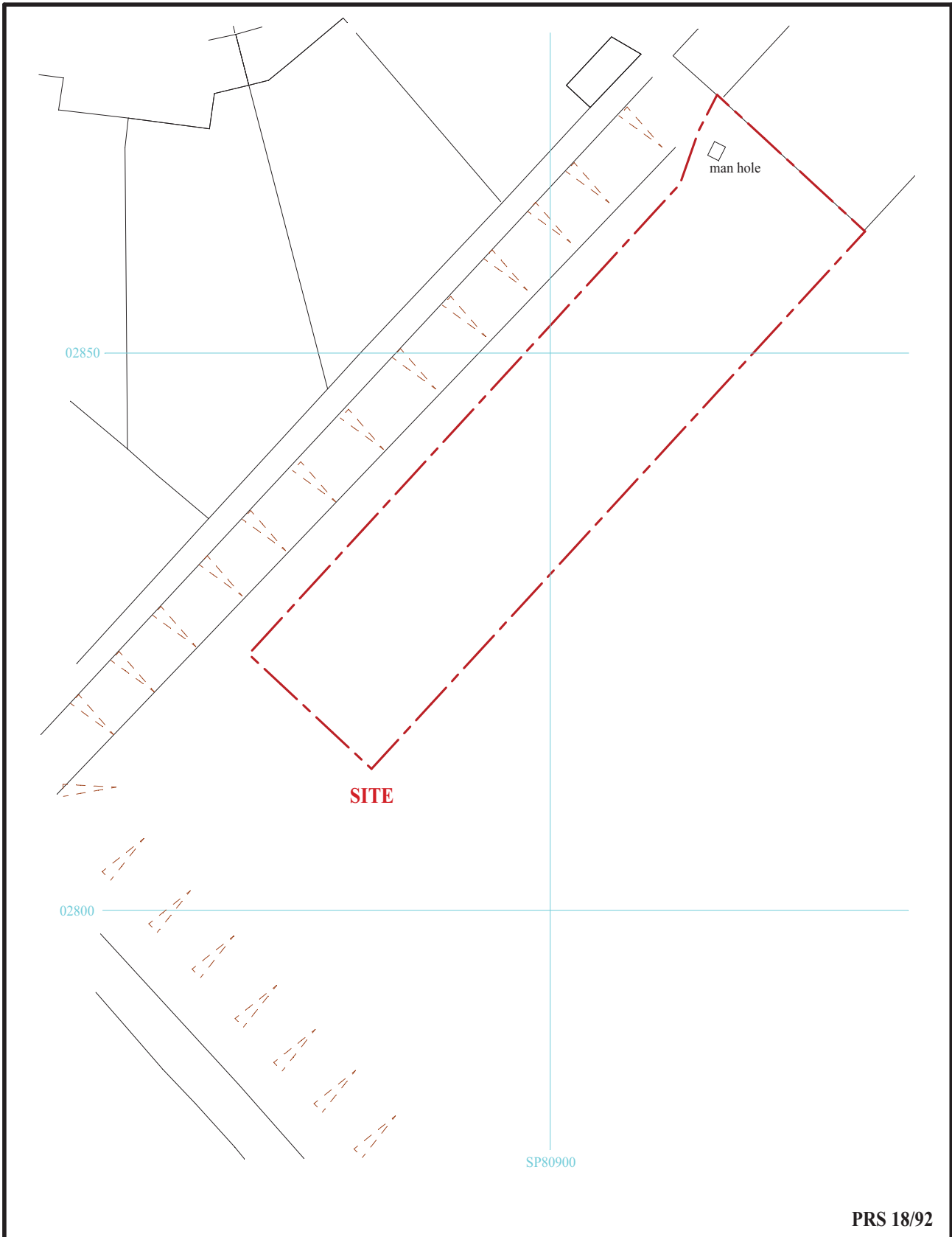
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area.



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Plate 1. Reduced area in north east, looking south east.



Plate 2. Reduced area, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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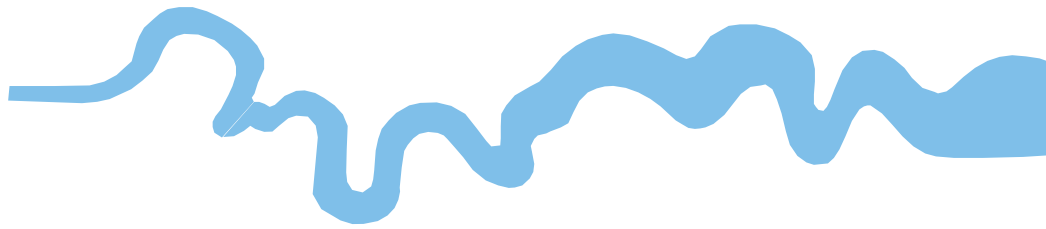
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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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