

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Munding

Site Code: DLB18/141

(SU 5542 7835)

De La Beche, Haw Lane, Aldworth, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Max Yeulat

by Danielle Milbank and Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DLB 18/141

November 2018

Summary

Site name: De La Beche, Haw Lane, Aldworth, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5542 7835

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 24th October to 5th November 2018

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: DLB 18/141

Area of site: c.80 sq m

Summary of results: Observations on the groundworks for a new west extension adjacent to the existing house were undertaken. A sequence of demolition deposits comprising made ground and levelling deposits, were observed. Evidence of a structure associated with previous occupation of the site was uncovered set within a sunken cut. It had been demolished to foundation level before the existing garden was established. It is of Post-medieval date and was probably an ancillary building of nearby Beche Farm, though there is no record of it on 19th century maps. Close to the SW corner of main house a second heavily robbed flint foundation was also visible at the base of section.

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

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:
www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 16.11.18
	Steve Preston✓ 16.11.18

De La Beche, Haw Lane, Aldworth, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Danielle Milbank and Andrew Munding

Report 18/141

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 'De La Beche', Haw Lane, Aldworth, West Berkshire, RG8 9SA (SU 5542 7835) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Max Yeulat, the homeowner.

Planning permission (app 18/01487/HOUSE) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new western extension to the main house. The consent is subject to a condition (4) relating to archaeology requiring a watching brief during groundworks. These works were undertaken in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2018) and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist at West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was carried out by Andrew Munding from 24th October to 5th November 2018. The site code is DLB 18/141.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the east side of Haw Lane, well to the south of Aldworth village. The underlying geology is clay-with-flints over Upper Chalk (BGS 2000). The site lies at height of c. 146m above Ordnance Datum (OD)

Archaeological background

'De La Beche' is a modestly-sized country house with grounds. The earthwork remains of 'Grim's Ditch' pass through the grounds immediately north of the property. A well-preserved portion remains a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 1006981) to the north-east (VCH 1924; Fig.1). The earthwork is thought to be prehistoric, but dating from well stratified deposits of its ditch fill recovered 1st-3rd century AD pottery (Ford 1982, 18).

The main house is of 19th century date and constructed of brick, with signs it had been previously rendered. It stands on a flattened platform at the top of a rise, the surrounding land falls gradually to the north and south. The Old Barn to the west is now a separate property. This collection of buildings once formed Beche Farm,

which incorporated some of the present buildings (Figs 2 and 3). It is thought that Beche Farm was the historical location of the Medieval residence of the De La Beche family (Hewett 1844; VCH 1924). The Medieval Church of St Mary is well known for housing a collection of stone effigies to the De La Beche family, of 14th century date (Tyack *et al* 2010, 125).

Fieldwork during construction of an eastern extension to the main house in 2009 (Fig. 2) revealed evidence of medieval occupation with a cobbled surface and flint-and-mortar walls (Stott and Williams 2009, 20).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits or finds affected by the new ground works. In general, the watching brief involved examination of ground reduction and the digging of new footings and service runs. Spoilheaps were checked for finds of archaeological interest.

Results

Ground reduction

The footprint of the new extension was 8m x 13.5m (Fig.3) and was reduced of overburden to a depth of 0.22m (Pl.1). Machine reduction undertaken by a small 360° excavator fitted with a bladed bucket. This removed mixed overburden to the top of made ground deposits. (Pl.1). This depth of excavation exposed existing, modern active drainage on the exposed surface.

Test Pits (Fig.3)

Three exploratory test pits were dug at the top of the exposed surface, but to only find the next soil horizon. Test Pits 1 and 2 were dug by machine in the centre of the northern half and one in the southern half of the area. They were 1.3m long, 0.45m wide and 0.38-0.42m deep. This excavated though a mixed deposit of brown silty clay and yellow brown chalky-silt (51). It did not contain pottery fragments, but did have demolition deposits of brick and tile. The exposed layers below were both homogenous, with high clay content, though generally consisted of light brown clayey made ground with brick, flint and chalk.

Test Pit 3 was excavated against the south-west corner of the existing house. It was 0.8m x 0.4m and 0.45m deep. Made ground was dug through, though with the overburden set against the foundations. No finds were recovered from the test pits.

Footing excavation (Fig.4)

The footing trench was 0.85m wide and dug to a depth of 0.88m (Fig.4). This revealed clay-with-flint geology between a depth of *c.*0.4m and 1.5m deep with this greater depth formed by a truncation, recorded in section in the south-western and south trench (Fig.4).

The south trench of the new footing, below made ground, exposed a chalky silt (52). This layer was 0.67m deep. It seemed to bear relation to the a loosely-bound fill at this western edge of this area (50). One piece of clay pipe stem was recovered from the top of this feature. At the base of this fill, was a compacted area, roughly rectangular area of flint (61) though with disturbance from above of a cut (1). This represented a 'robber' cut, taking material from below. This could indicate an event which impacted a lower, more compact area of flint (61) (Fig.4, Pl.2). The excavation of the footing could not be completed by machine, so the base was completed by hand, exposing across its length the clay natural geology. A shallow step remained at the base of section, though the eventual section was no more than 1m in depth.

A larger area of truncation (2) was found through observation of the footing trench in its south-west corner. This excavation reached a maximum depth of 1.5m deep, but was gradually raised to 1.2m beyond the feature. The sunken fills recorded in section are considered to represent a foundation pit or access trench for the construction of a related foundation, of which remained in the southwest section (Fig.4). After construction of Structure 1, the outside edges of the cut were backfilled with two fills (53 and 54), covering the base of the structure and much of the parts exposed of structure 1 in section. There was a high density of flint in the eastern side of the lowest fill (53; Pl.3), compacted against the edge of the truncation. It is not clear if this the top of this feature is capped by a rough set tiled surface, with only a remnant remaining after disturbance from demolition. No finds were recovered from the bulk fill of these deposits, but the tile layer contained one late post-medieval sherd that was very weathered.. The demolition deposits over this feature in particular cut layers south of the demolished foundation (cut 3, 55) and the fill is mixed like most of the other demolition backfill at this location. This truncation extended no deeper through deposits than 0.77m deep. It was at least 1.4m in diameter, but exists to the west and south of the recorded extents.

Structure 1 (Pl.4)

This structure appears to have been located immediately west of the new extension. What is visible in section is the eastern face of a foundation, but square to it. The foundation comprises a yellow sandy silt base containing

large (c.0.25m) flint nodules (58) which was 0.2m thick. Above the furthest extent south of this deposit, to courses of stone quoins (57) have been placed, which represents the southeast corner of this structure.

Above the structural foundation were two layers (59 and 60), at the same height as the quoins. These were very compact layers and had a high proportion of crushed flint within the soil matrix. The upper bedding layer, was a grey, brown sandy silt with rounded and crushed coarsely flint-rubble, but also contained inclusions of chalk. It was level, and was no deeper than 0.73m in section. The lower deposit, also level, and reached no deeper than 0.77m. It was compact, yellow-grey clayey silt with small rounded flint inclusions, mixed with flecks of chalk. Apart from the corner stones, no wall material was recorded above all of these foundation bedding layers and the compact levels are likely to be bedding for a floor, rather than demolition backfilling.

The levelling layer over the structure represented the earliest demolition deposits and was reddish-brown, chalk flecked clayey silt with occasional crushed tile within its matrix (56). This was overlain by the made ground (51). None of these deposits contained finds.

Finds

Pottery by Danielle Milbank

A single sherd of Post-Medieval red ware, with interior dark brown, lead-glazed was recovered from the tile layer at the top of fill 54, and is dated from the 17-18th century.

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Millbank

A representative sample of ceramic building material was recovered from the top of a single deposit (54) during the watching brief. Its total weight of 1.424kg, comprising 29 fragments. The fabric was examined at x10 magnification.

The majority of the ceramic building material pieces were fragmentary, with the majority datable to the Early Post-Medieval period. These were typically a hard, coarse to medium sandy fabric, mid to dark red in colour. Several pieces were recovered that were dark red in colour with dark grey (reduced) banding in cross section, showing uneven firing. The typical thickness in 12mm to 16mm, with two of the thinner fragments showing a thickened edge which is more typical of a medieval date.

Animal bone by Danielle Millbank

Animal bone was recovered from pit 2 (54) which comprised three small pieces of fragmentary bone (12g). Of these, two could be identified as cranial fragments from a medium-sized animal (sheep/goat, deer, pig). No other notable characteristics (for example butchery marks) were present and no further information could be derived from this assemblage.

Clay pipe by Andrew Muddin

A single piece of thin stemmed clay pipe, oval in cross section (6mm) was recovered from the upper part of the backfill in cut 1 (50).

Conclusion

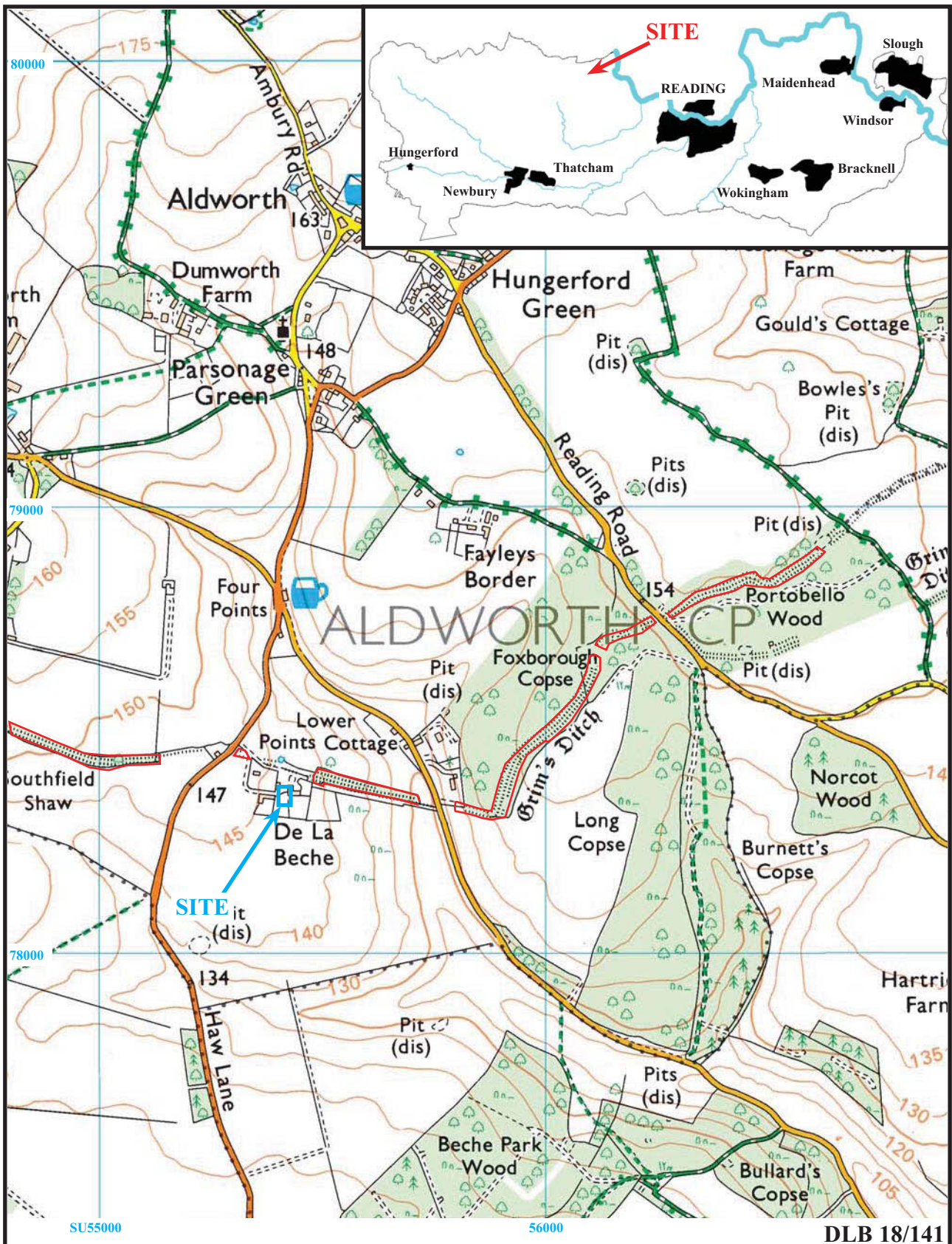
The observations were successfully undertaken on the excavation of the footing for the new extension. Stratified deposits showed evidence of demolition of former structures and levelling from two distinct events. Both however, are of late Post-Medieval date at the earliest, and no obviously Medieval remains were identified. Neither wall 61 nor structure 1 were displayed on historic Ordnance Survey maps of 1879 nor 1912.

References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 268 Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1982, 'Linear earthworks of the Berkshire Downs', *Berks Archaeol J* **71** (1981-81), 1-20
- Hewett, W, 1844, '*The History & Antiquities of the Hundred of Compton: Topographical, Statistical and Archaeological Description of the parishes of Aldworth, Compton, East Ilsley, West Ilsley, Chilton, Catmere and Farnborough*', John Snare, Reading
- Stott, C and Williams, G, 2009, '*An Archaeological Excavation at De La Beche, Aldworth, West Berkshire*', John Moore Heritage Service (JMHS) unpub client rep 1957 (**AWDLB 08**), Beckley, Oxford
- Tyack, Bradley, S and Pevsner, N, 2010, '*The Buildings of England: Berkshire*', Yale Univ Press, New Haven & London
- VCH, 1924, 'Parish: Aldworth'. In W Page and P H Ditchfield (eds), *A History of the County of Berkshire Vol 4*, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol4/pp3-8> [accessed 1st November 2018]

APPENDIX 1: Feature and layer details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	50	Backfill of robber cut	19th century	-
	51	Site overburden	19th/20th century	-
	52	Levelling deposit	19th century	Stratigraphy
2	54	Fill of pit/terrace	17th/18th century	Pot; tile fragments
	53			
3	55	Fill of pit	Late 19th century?	stratigraphy
	56	Demolition deposits	Late 19th century	stratigraphy
	57	Stone quoins of structure	pre-18th century	Earliest construction
	58	Foundation base	pre-18th century	Earliest construction
	59	Bedding for floor	pre-18th century	Earliest construction
	60			
	61	Flint foundation	Medieval; pre-19th century	Stratigraphy; pre-dates 19th century removal



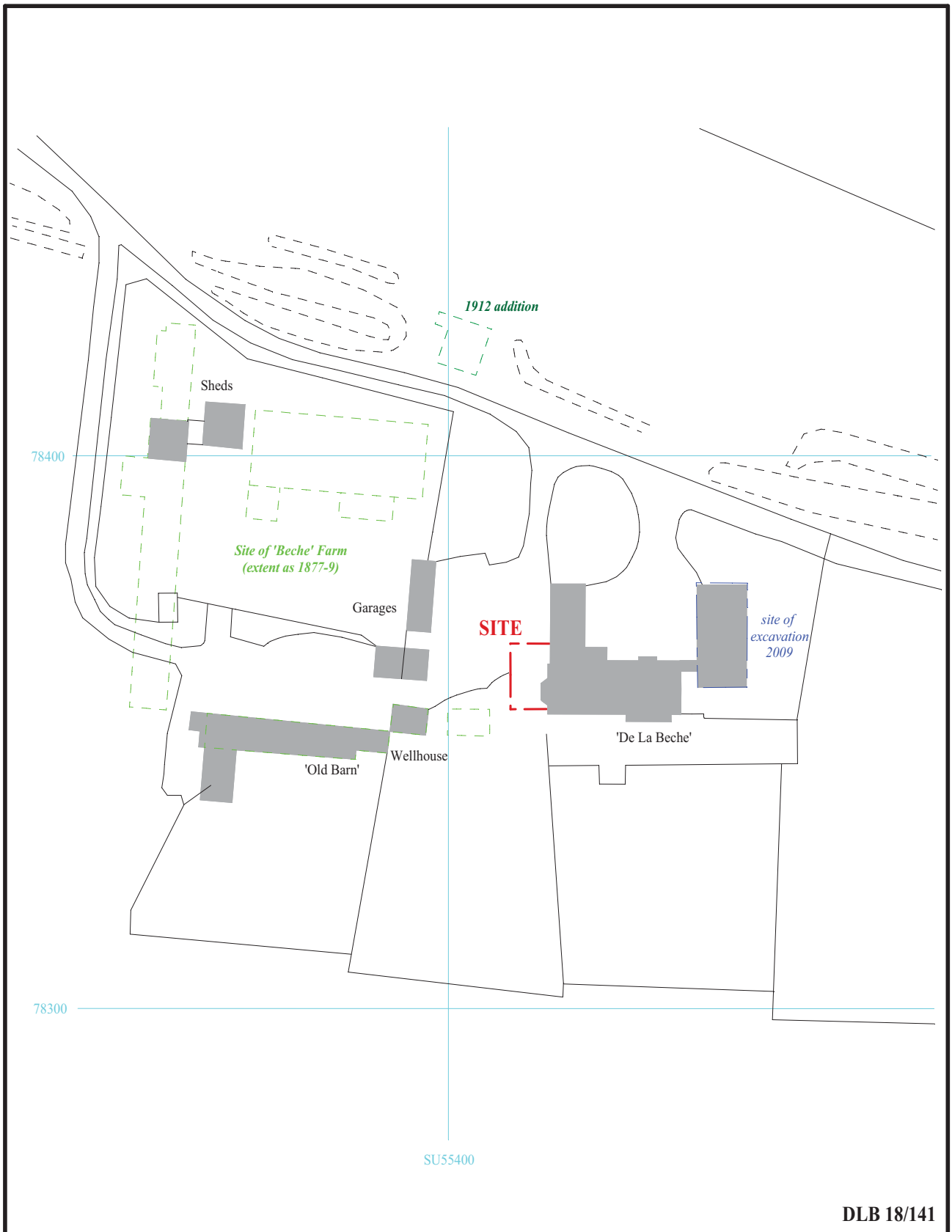
DLB 18/141

**De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Aldworth and with West Berkshire. Scheduled Monument outlined in red.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



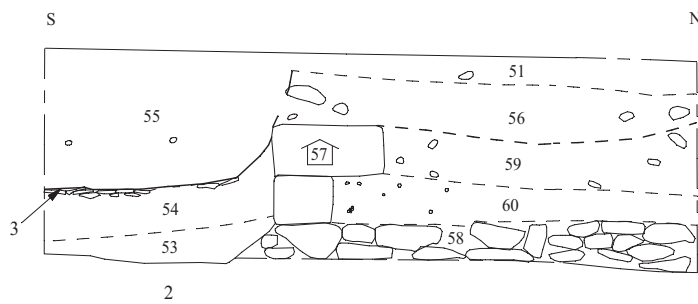
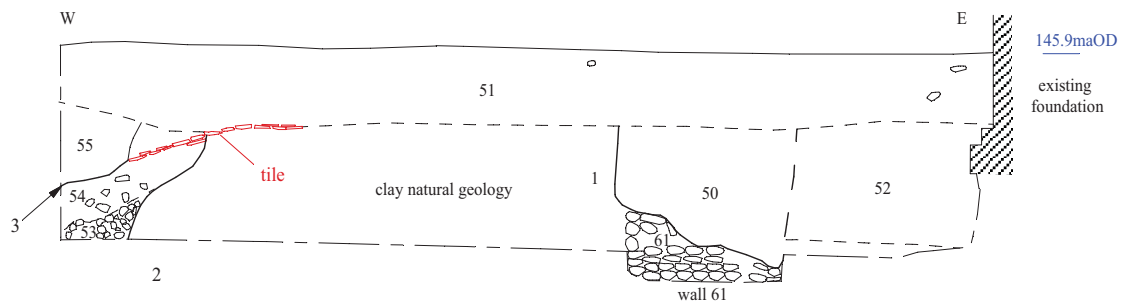
DLB 18/141

**De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Location of observed areas, and locations of archaeological interest.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



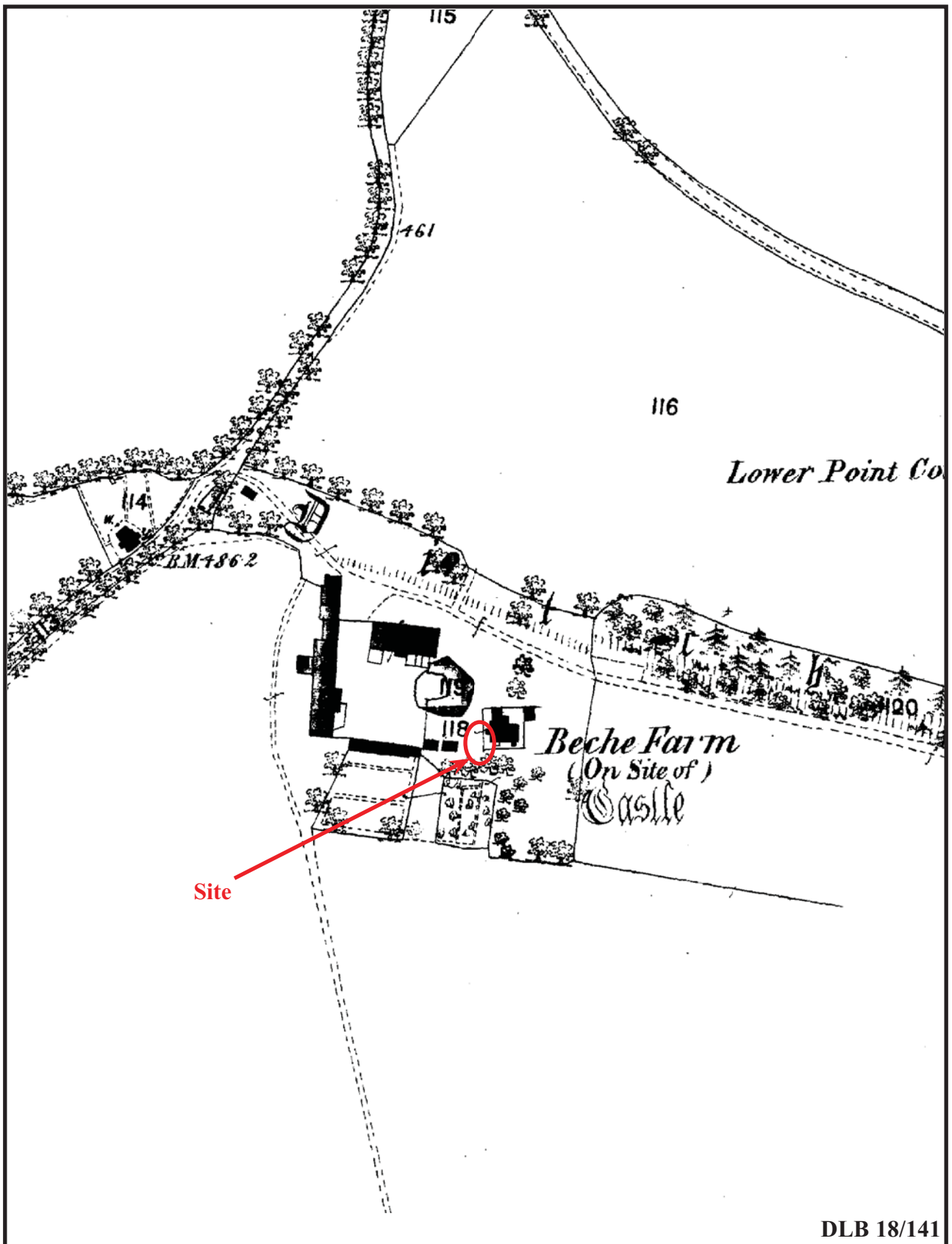
DLB 18/141

**De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Sections.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

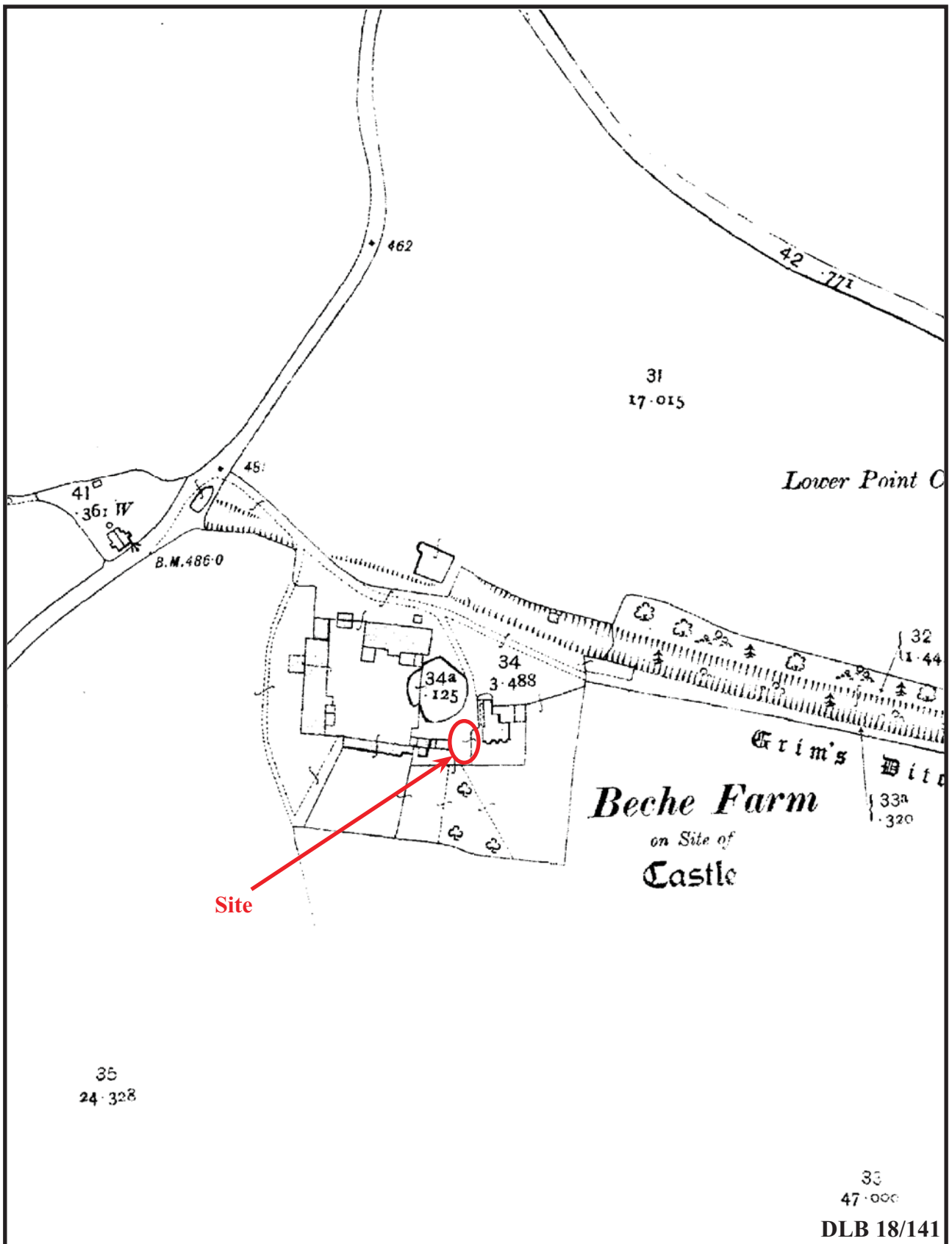


DLB 18/141



De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 5. First Edition Ordnance Survey, 1877-9.





De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 6. Ordnance Survey, 1912.



Plate 1. Extent of reduced for new extension, prior to footings, looking north east.



Plate 2. Rooty fill (50) of robber cut 1, looking north, Scales: 0.5m and 1m.

DLB 18/141

**De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 1 and 2.**

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 3. East side of demolition backfill (3) cutting tile at top of sunken construction (cut 2), looking north east, Scales 0.5m and 1m.



Plate 4. South western corner, quoins on SE corner (57) and flint base (58) in section, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 1m.

DLB 18/141

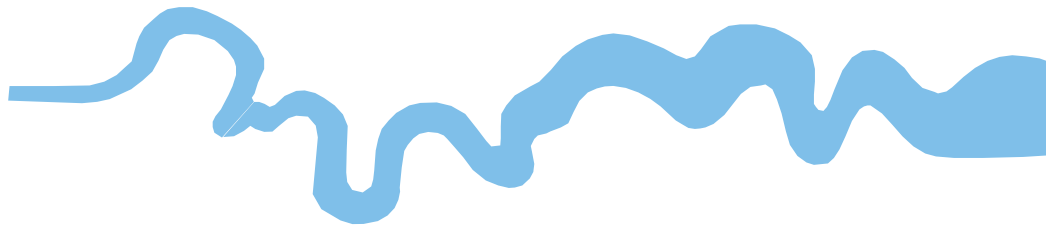
De La Beche, Haw Lane,
Aldworth, West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 3 and 4.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

***Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)***