

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Perch, Binsey,
Oxford**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Will Attard

Site Code: PBO18/102

(SP 4929 0770)

The Perch, Binsey, Oxford

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Mr Jon Ellse

by Will Attard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PBO 18/102wb

February 2019

Summary

Site name: The Perch, Binsey, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 4929 0770

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project:

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Will Attard

Site code: PBO18/102wb

Area of site: 68.8 sq m

Summary of results: The foundation trenches for the new extension at the rear of the existing pub were monitored and a number of archaeological layers and deposits were revealed, certainly or probably of medieval date. An alluvial deposit suggests an episode of flooding in medieval times. The previous evaluation had also revealed medieval and early post-medieval deposits.

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.

Monuments identified: None

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.

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 All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.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 ✓ 15.02.19 Steve Preston ✓ 15.02.19

The Perch, Binsey, Oxford An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Will Attard

Report 18/102c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Perch, Binsey Lane, Binsey, Oxford, (SP 4929 0770) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Laura Donald of Laura Donald Architects, The Gables, Pleck Lane, Kingston Mount, Chinnor, OX39 4RU, on behalf on Mr Jon Ellse, c/o LDA, The Gables, Pleck Lane, Kingston Mount, Chinnor, OX39 4RU.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent (15/03669/FUL and 15/03670/LBC) have been granted by Oxford City Council for the demolition of the modern extension, renovation and remodelling of the interior, with construction of a new extension and the creation of a serving hatch through an existing boundary wall. The consent was subject to a condition (11) requiring a programme of archaeological works at the site, in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and Oxford City Council's policies on archaeology. An evaluation trench excavated within the footprint of the new extension (Attard and Munding 2019) had shown the presence of medieval and early post-medieval deposits. In the light of these results of the archaeological evaluation the City Archaeologist, Mr David Radford, requested a watching brief be undertaken during subsequent groundworks.

This phase of field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the City Archaeologist, Mr David Radford. The fieldwork was undertaken by Will Attard on the 15th - 16th January 2019 and the site code is PBO18/102. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the small hamlet of Binsey, adjacent to Manor Farm (Fig.1). The development directly impacts the east side of the structure within the extant pub garden. The gardens extend further to the east. The site lies on the floor of the Thames Valley. The underlying geology is sand and gravel of the River Thames (BGS 1982).

Archaeological background

The potential of the site has been evaluated in two building assessments (Yeates 2014; Milbank 2018) which identify a high probability of surviving Medieval archaeology, as well as the possibility of occupation prior to the erection of the existing 17th century building Listed Building (Preston 2017; Milbank 2018). To the east, on the opposite side of the River Thames, is the large Scheduled Monument of Port Meadow (SAM 1010717), a large open landscape of common land, unchanged since the 17th century with evidence of early prehistoric burial mounds and Iron Age enclosures (Atkinson, 1942).

Binsey is situated west of Oxford, on the floodplain of the River Thames. Thought to be a Medieval 'shrunk' hamlet, this was one of a few possible crossing points of the river, allowing movement to/from the west of Oxford, in the direction of Eynsham. The local church (St. Margaret of Antioch) was considered to be a pilgrimage site from the 12th century onwards for its Holy Well and the site of St. Frideswide's refuge. A sub-oval enclosure located to the south of the church has been dated with pottery to the Early Saxon period, but is considered to be a re-use of an existing Iron Age defensive feature (Blair 1988, 17). This enclosure lies some 500m to the north-west of the current site. The Perch has greater proximity to the Post-Medieval core of the hamlet of Binsey, and the site of Manor Farm, which lies immediately to the east. A stone shed for the farm is attached to the building in the north and the early 18th century farmhouse is immediately located to the west (Grade II; 1369326).

Evaluation trenching at the site revealed a range of deposits and cut features within the footprint of the proposed new extension dating to the late Medieval and early Post-Medieval periods (Attard and Muddin 2019).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological layers or deposits affected by invasive groundworks undertaken prior to the laying of concrete foundations for the proposed extension at the rear of The Perch.

Excavations were undertaken with a small (4 tonne) 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a bladed bucket, 0.6m wide. It was intended that three foundation trenches be dug to a depth of 1.0m below the extant ground surface. In 10 locations, these trenches were to be widened for concrete footings for the new build. A short service trench measuring 1.5m long, 1.0m deep and 0.60m wide was to be excavated, extending from the north-western corner of the proposed foundations to the corner of the extant pub building.

All archaeological deposits encountered were hand-cleaned and excavated.

All spoil heaps were periodically monitored during excavation. All trenches and archaeological features were hand cleaned prior to being photographed and recorded.

Results

Three foundation trenches, one service trench, and 10 footing pads, were excavated and monitored (Fig. 3). All foundation trenches were dug to a depth of 1.0m. In all sections observed across the site, a fairly homogenous sequence of deposits was observed, along with a few cut features. The sequence of deposits is broadly consistent with that found during the archaeological evaluation (Attard and Munding 2019).

An upper deposit (64) of crushed concrete bedding for the previous paved patio area was observed from the surface to a depth of 0.10m - 0.15m. Underlying the patio bedding was a modern deposit of dark brown clay silt (61) with a maximum depth of 0.43m. This deposit contained plastic sacks, lumps of concrete, ceramic building material and occasional finds of clay pipe stem fragments. Beneath this was a thick layer of dark grey sandy silt (62), continuing to a maximum depth of 0.82m, although in general it was shallower than this (0.6-0.7m). This deposit contained clay tobacco pipe fragments, and animal bone, some of which showed evidence of butchery in the form of cut and chop marks (not retained). A very thin lens of yellow grey clay (65) lay below 62 in some places in the southern footing only, it is probably only a slight colour variation or puddling in the deposit below. Otherwise, below 62 everywhere was a sterile yellow-brown sandy clay (71 in the northern footing, the same layer was numbered 66 in the southern footing), which itself extended to a maximum depth of 0.94m, to the top of the natural gravel. The majority of cut features were observed immediately underlying this deposit.

Pit 13 was a large modern pit containing material such as plastic along with clay pipe fragments and the neck of a 16th/17th century Bartmann jug (Pl. 3); it was cut into modern make-up layer 71.

Although clay deposit 71/66 is considered to be natural in origin, two shallow, linear features, 10 and 11 (Pl.1), were discovered underlying the clay, both aligned north-east - /south-west. A very shallow pit (13) was also sealed by the clay. These features were cut into the natural gravel (approx. 0.93m+). Both gullies extended beyond the limits of excavation, and appear to run underneath the restaurant area of the current public house. Their position, underlying a sterile clay deposit, is suggested to relate to an early phase of activity, lapsed use, and a later influx of alluvial material, possibly the result of a flooding event or events. This widespread deposit had been misinterpreted as the (geological) natural in the evaluation (no gravel was reached), so all the evaluation features were above it and all the watching brief features (except 13) below it. Unless all of the

pottery from the evaluation was residual, that stratigraphy dates the flooding event fairly securely (if not very closely) within the late medieval period.

Where the trenches were only widened by 0.2m on each side to accommodate concrete foundation pads, no additional stratigraphic elements or significant differences were observed between the pads and the foundation trenches.

Three cut features were observed below the alluvial layer.

Gully 10 lay beneath alluvial deposit (71) and was c. 0.12m deep and at least 0.3m across. It was filled with brown-grey sandy clay (60). It contained a single sherd of Medieval pottery. A sieved soil sample produced a few flecks of charcoal only.

Gully 11 also lay beneath the alluvial deposit (here numbered 66) and was c. 0.13m deep and at least 2m across. It was filled with brown-grey sandy clay (67) but contained no dating evidence.

Pit 12 was 1m across but only c. 0.05m deep and filled with dark brown-grey silty clay (68). It only contained a fragment of animal bone.

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

A single sherd (29g) of medieval pottery (11th-13th century) in fabric OXY (Mellor 1994) was recovered from ditch 10 (60).

Clay Tobacco Pipe by Danielle Milbank

Clay pipe fragments were recovered from two contexts. A single bowl (9g) was recovered from deposit 64, which is very small and bulbous, with a flat pedestal base and a narrow rouletted rim. It is Oswald type 4, with an early 17th century date. A stem fragment from pit 12 fill 68 (8g) is not closely datable, however the bore diameter suggests a broadly late 17th to early 18th century date.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

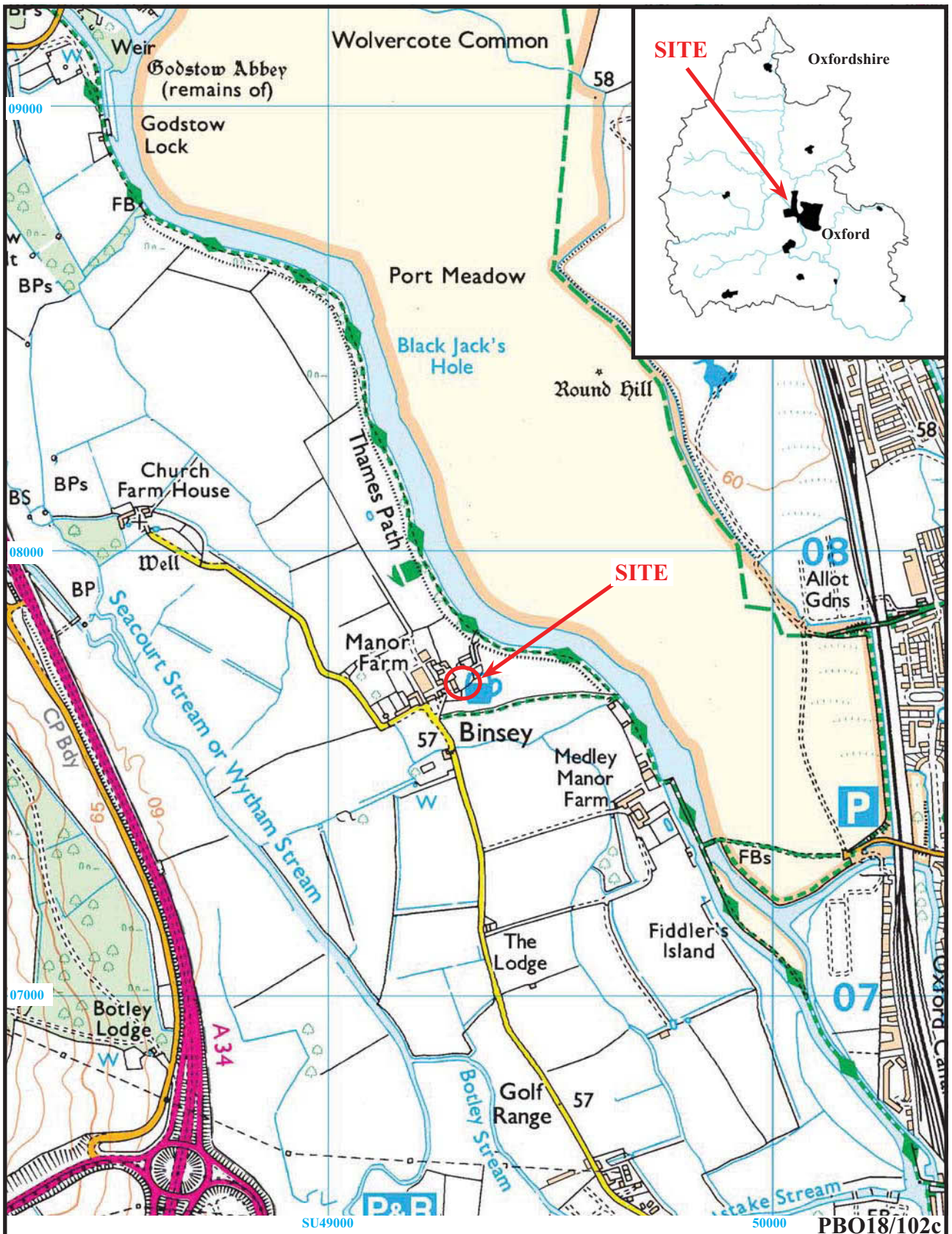
A single fragment of animal bone weighing 19g was recovered from feature 12 (68). It is the distal humerus shaft (excluding the distal joint surface) of a small-to-mid sized (unidentified) animal.

Conclusion

Monitoring of the foundation trenches revealed additional archaeological deposits comprising linear features and a pit. One of the gullies contained a sherd of medieval pottery. The other two contained no dating evidence but are likely to be of similar medieval date. The presence of what appears to be alluvium overlying some features suggests an episode of flooding at the site in late medieval times: medieval features were recorded both above (in the evaluation) and below (in the watching brief) this layer.

References

- Atkinson, R J C, 1942, 'Archaeological Sites of Port Meadow, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 7, 24-35
- Attard, W and Mundin, A, 2019, 'The Perch, Binsey, Oxford, An Archaeological Evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **18/102b**, Reading
- Blair, J, 1988, 'Thornbury, Binsey: A Probable Defensive Enclosure associated with St. Frideswide', *Oxoniensia*, 53, 3-20
- BGS, 1982, '*British Geological Survey*', 1:50 000, Sheet 236, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Davis, G, 2015, 'Archaeological Watching Brief at The Perch, Binsey, Oxford', John Moore Heritage Services rep **3010**, Beckley
- Mellor, M, 1994, 'A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, 59, 17-217
- Milbank, D, 2018, 'The Perch, Binsey, Oxford, Building Recording', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **18/102**, Reading
- MPRG, 1998, *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms*, Medieval Pottery Res Grp Occas Pap **1**
- MPRG, 2001, *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*, Medieval Pottery Res Grp Occas Pap **2**
- Oswald, A, 1975, *Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist*, British Archaeological Reports, Brit Ser **14**, Oxford
- Preston, J, 2017, 'The Perch, Binsey, Oxfordshire: Heritage Appraisal', JP Heritage, Basingstoke
- Yeates, S, 2014, 'Building Assessment on The Perch, Binsey, Oxford,' John Moore Heritage Services rep **3010**, Beckley



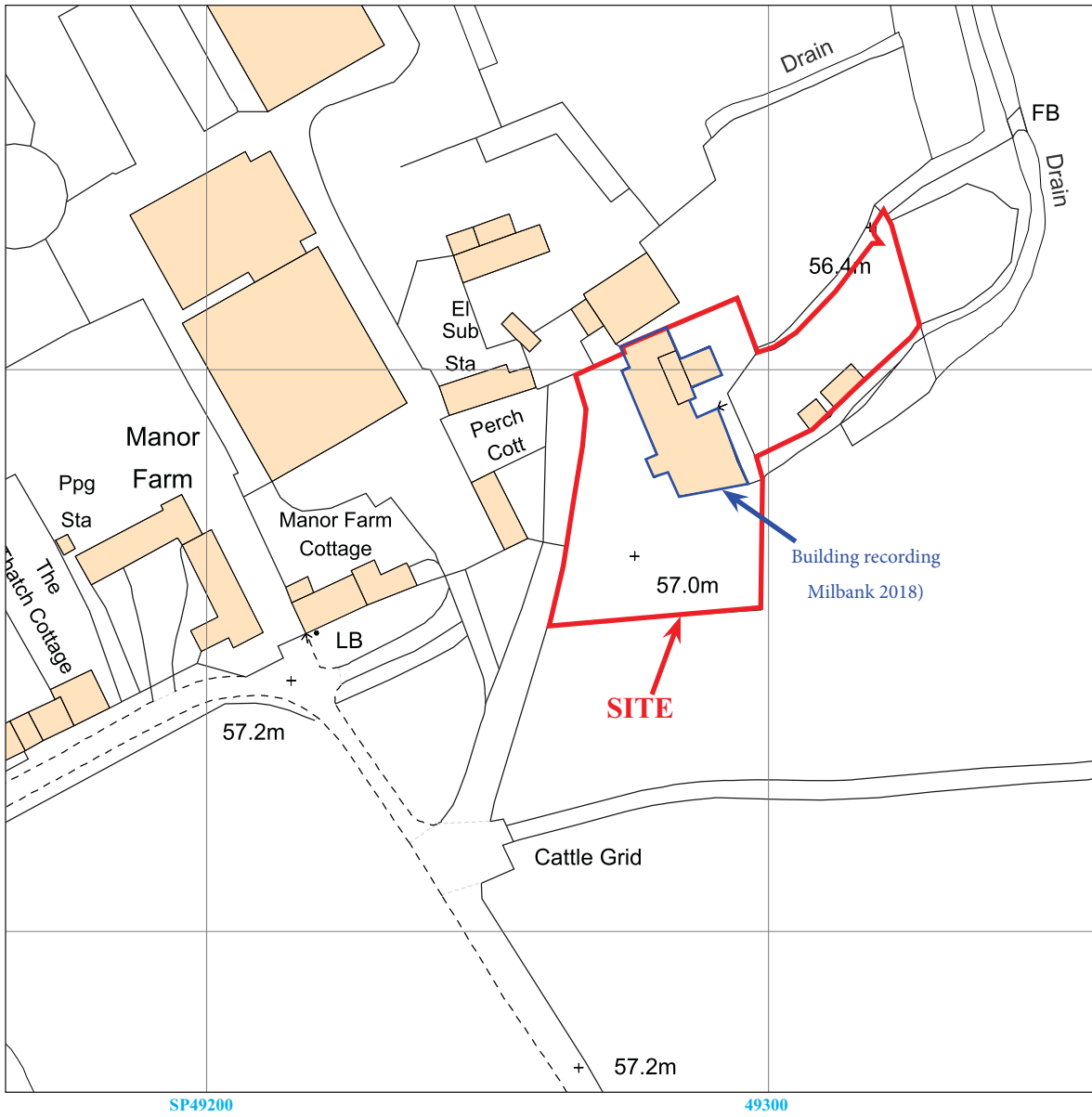
**The Perch, Binsey, Oxford, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Binsey and Oxfordshire.

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

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

PBO18/102c



PBO 18/102c

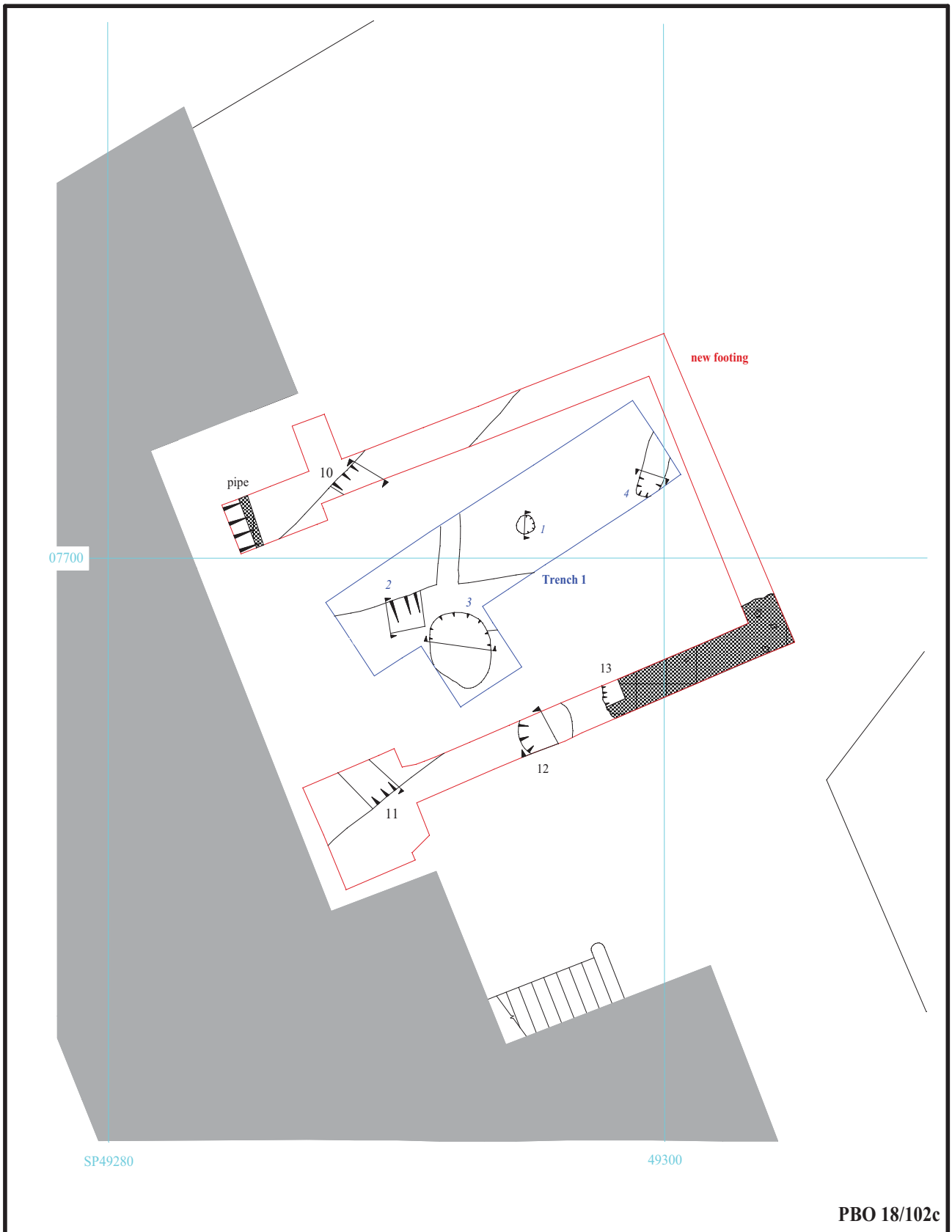


**The Perch, Binsey, Oxford, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



PBO 18/102c

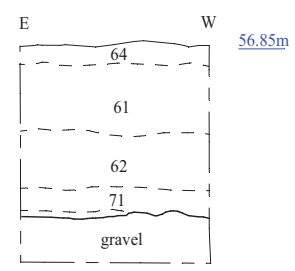
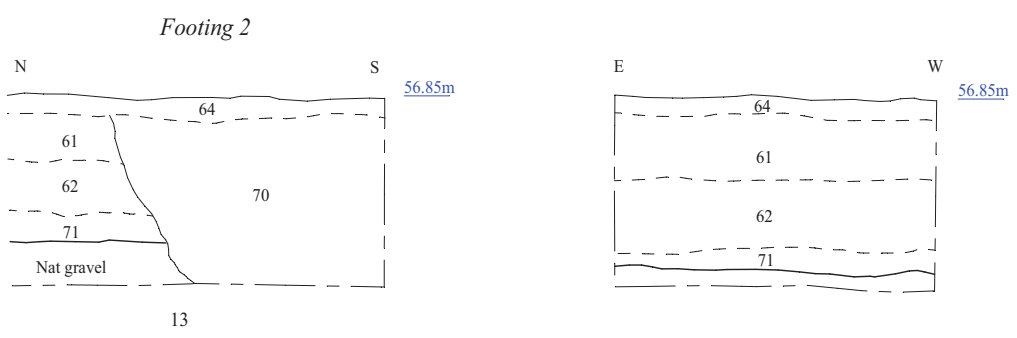
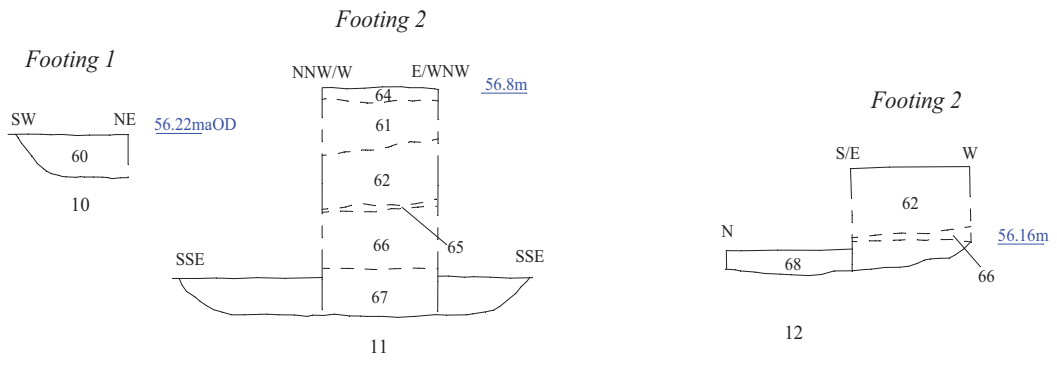
**The Perch, Binsey,
Oxford, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Detail of observed area and previous evaluation trench.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES





PBO 18/102c

The Perch, Binsey,
Oxford, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 4. Sections.

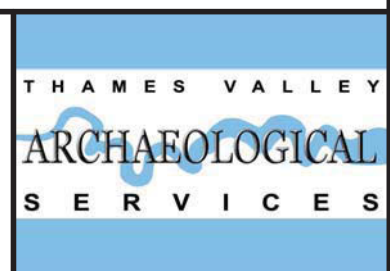




Plate 1. Ditch 11, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Pit 12, looking north east,
Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 3. Bartmann jug (bellarmine) 16th-17th
century, Scale: 50mm.

PBO 18/102c

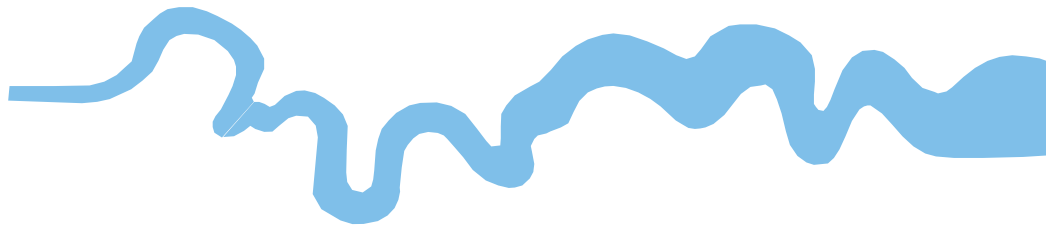
**The Perch, Binsey,
Oxford, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 1 - 3.**

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)***