

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Fairlawn, Thames Street,
Sonning, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Joshua Hargreaves

Site Code: FLS18/101

(SU 7595 7550)

Land at Fairlawn, Thames Street, Sonning, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Patrick Doyle

by Joshua Hargreaves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code FLS 18/101

June 2019

Summary

Site name: Land at Fairlawn, Thames Street, Sonning, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7595 7550

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 23rd January - 7th February 2019

Project coordinator: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Joshua Hargreaves

Site code: FLS 18/101

Area of site: c. 490 sq m

Summary of results: The remains of an earlier glasshouse with associated water pipes was found at the eastern end of the site whilst at the northern end an earlier crushed chalk yard surface was present. Beneath this was an undated but earlier pit. All features are likely garden related and associated with the adjacent manor house. No archaeological finds were retrieved.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum prepared to accept the material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 17.06.19 Steve Preston✓ 17.06.19
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Land at Fairlawn, Thames Street, Sonning, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Joshua Hargreaves

Report 18/101

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land at Fairlawn, Thames Street, Sonning, Berkshire (SU 7595 7554) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Patrick Doyle of the above address.

Planning permission (162015) was obtained from Wokingham Council for the construction of a new house on the site of an existing garage. The consent is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation. This was to take the form of a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological adviser to the council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Maisie Foster and Joshua Hargreaves between 23rd January and 7th February 2019 and the site code is FLS 18/101. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited a local museum prepared to accept the material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on land adjacent to Fairlawn, on the north-east side of Thames Street (B478), to the west of its junction with Pearson Road (B4446), Sonning, Berkshire (SU 7595 7554) (Fig. 1). It is located on land formerly occupied by a garage (Fig. 2). The site lies on generally level land at approximately 49-50m above Ordnance Datum. Outside the site the ground rises gently to the south-east and falls towards the river Thames to the north-west. The underlying geology is recorded as head gravel consisting of variable clayey gravels and stony clays above upper chalk (BGS 2000). Orangey gravel was observed in the sides and base of the trenches where natural deposits were encountered.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames valley with important prehistoric and Roman remains visible from the air situated to the east of Sonning village (Ford 1987; Gates 1975; Slade 1964). These include a Neolithic ceremonial complex with a *cursus* monument, a mortuary enclosure and ring ditches. A Roman enclosure is also recorded with a variety of undated but probably Roman field boundaries. Sonning village was an important administrative and ecclesiastical centre in the Saxon and medieval eras (Hull and Hall 2007) and includes the site of the Bishop's Palace, which dates from the 13th century. These remains were partly excavated during the First World War and revealed a complex of medieval structures (Brakspear 1916). Several archaeological observations have also taken place within the village boundary.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve footing trenches, soakaways, services, etc, which in this case were all expected to be minimal.

Results

Foundation trenches dug by a JCB using a 0.6m wide toothless bucket were observed (Fig. 3). The trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.7m. The unstable nature of the sides of the trenches resulted in wider trenches than intended and meant that many were dug in small sections before being rapidly filled with concrete. Due to the instability of the trench sides all recording took place from above.

The opening of the building footings exposed a sequence of late post-medieval to early modern features. The entire site was covered by a crushed Tarmac surface up to 0.4m thick, most likely relating to the former garage that had stood on the site. Below the Tarmac in the south and south east was subsoil (dark grey silty clay with Tarmac inclusions). Replacing the subsoil below the Tarmac across the north and north-west area of site was a firm crushed chalk yard surface (55) that ranged between 0.1m and 0.35m thick (Pl. 1). Brick was observed underneath this layer in a couple of locations. Towards the north-west and western areas of the site a thick garden soil deposit (59) was observed below surface 55. This loose, dark grey brown, silty clay had no visible inclusions and sat between above the natural geology.

Pit 1 (Fig. 4; Pl. 1) was observed in a junction between footings, beneath surface 55 and cut through garden soil 59 into the natural gravel. The full extent of the pit was not exposed but it measured at least 1.3m wide with

a depth of 1.5m. The pit was filled by a mid orange red deposit of silty clay (54/56) that appeared to be mainly crushed, heat affected clay and natural geology in a matrix of dark grey-brown, silty clay. Its function is unknown but may be a garden feature.

Across the south and east side of site the remains of a brick built building were observed (Pl. 2). The building extended through the new footings for 10m to both the north-east and south-west. The visible walls (50, 52, 53 and 57) were brick built in Flemish bond, remaining to a height of some 0.90m, on a 0.15m thick concrete foundation (Pl. 3) overlying metal strengthening and metal water pipes. Mapping evidence from 1913 and 1932 shows a series of glasshouses in this location possibly located within a walled garden connected to the adjacent manor house. The glasshouse is later than yard surface 55 which was cut by construction trench 2 for wall 57.

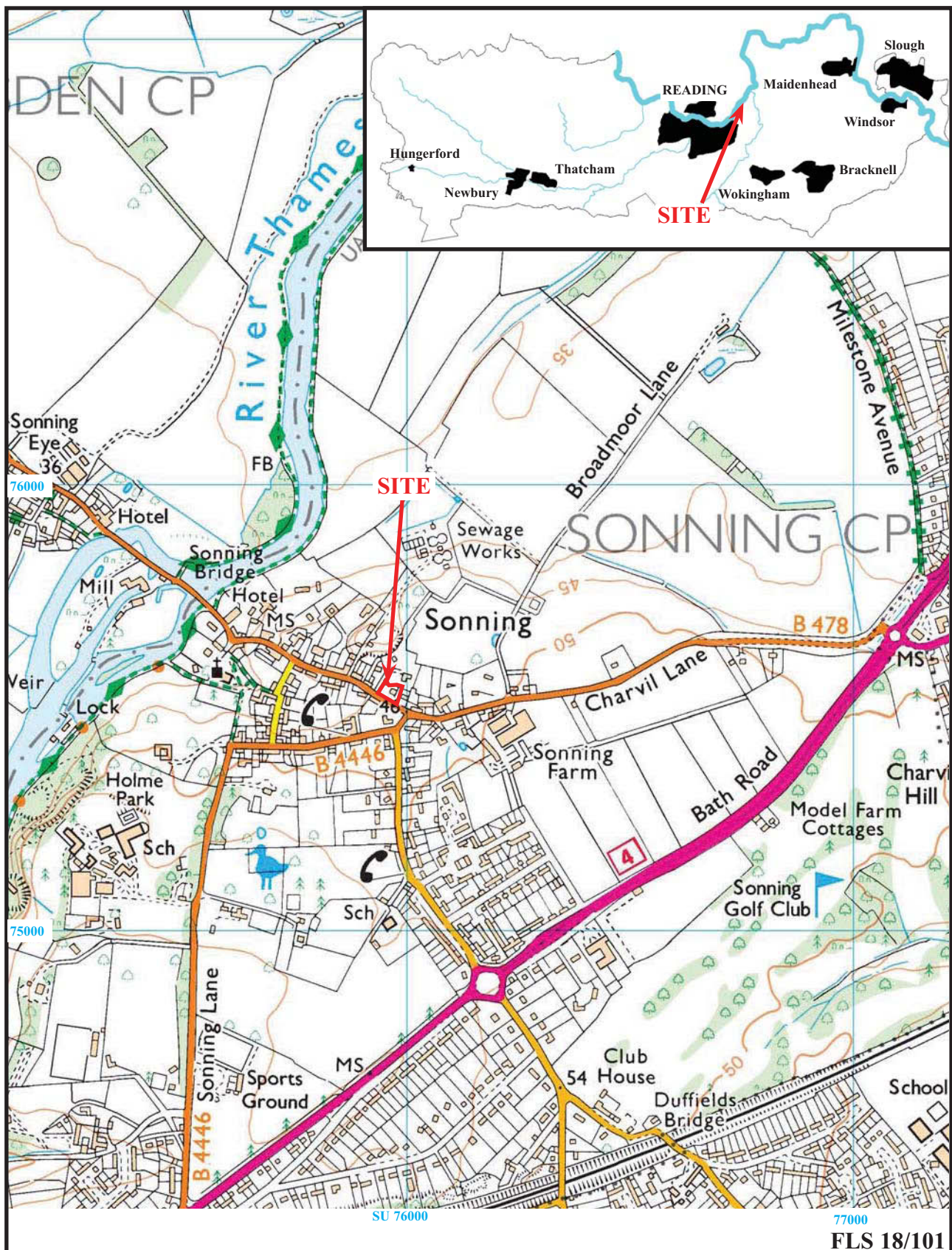
Located towards north-east end of the visible area of the building was structure 51 (Pl. 4); a 1.8m deep brick walled pit. The brick walls were coated in plaster so the bond was not visible but the bricks appeared to match those of the glasshouse walls, and the floor was of concrete. The backfill consisted of post-medieval ceramic building material as well as flower pot and metal debris.

Conclusion

The remains of a late post-medieval - early modern brick building was found at the eastern end of the site together with metal water pipes. Mapping evidence shows this was the location of a series of glasshouses located within a walled garden area, presumably related to the adjacent manor house. Prior to the glass house was a yard surface of crushed chalk spread across the northern end of the site. Beneath the crushed chalk was an earlier pit filled with burnt clay that may be a garden feature. No finds of archaeological interest were retrieved.

References

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- Hull, G and Hall, M, 2003, 'Excavation of medieval features at St. Andrews Church Vicarage, Sonning Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **76** (for 1998–2003), 73–93
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London
- Slade, C F, 1964, 'A late Neolithic site at Sonning, Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **61**, 4–19



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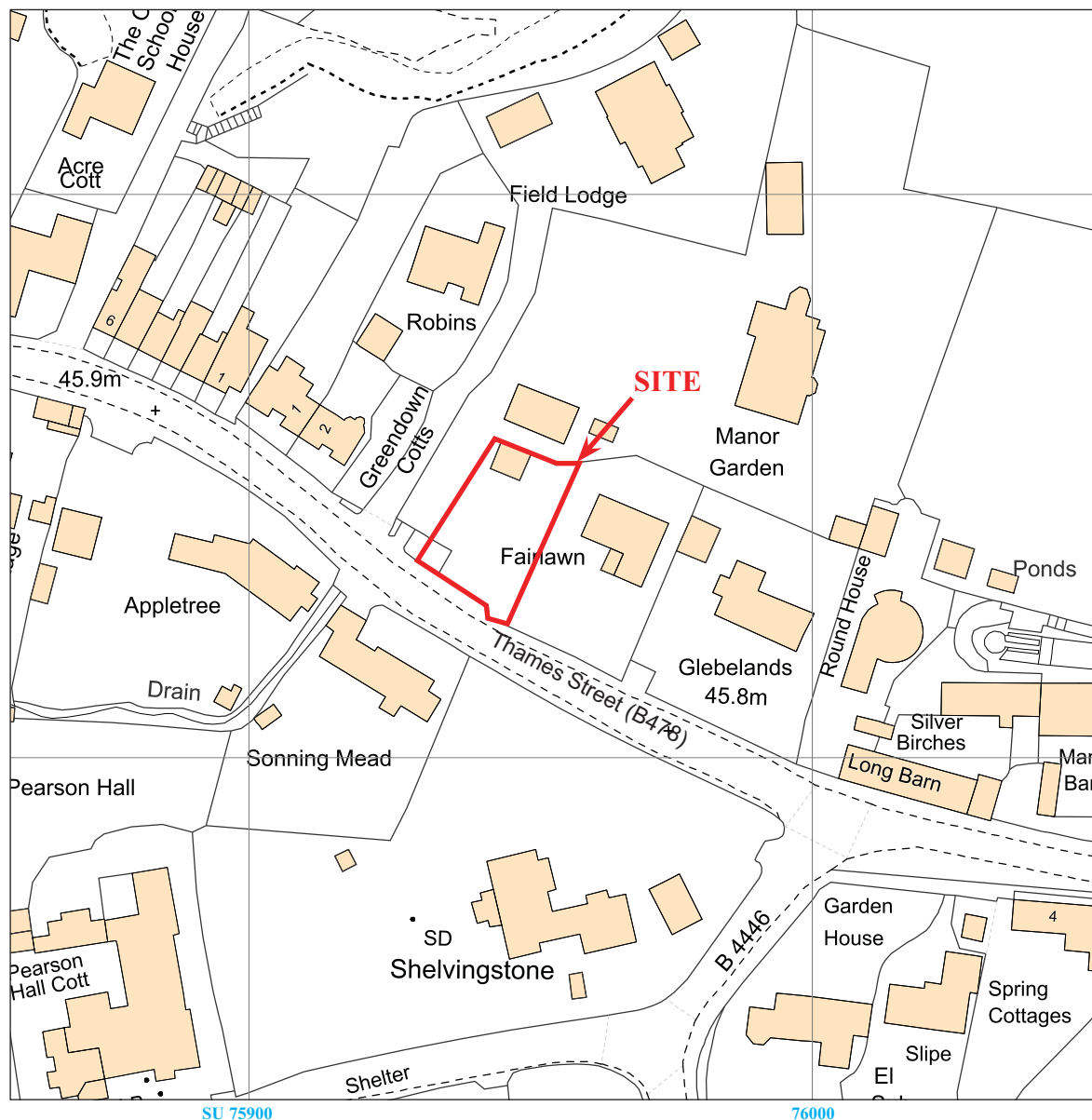
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Figure 1. Location of site within Sonning and Berkshire.

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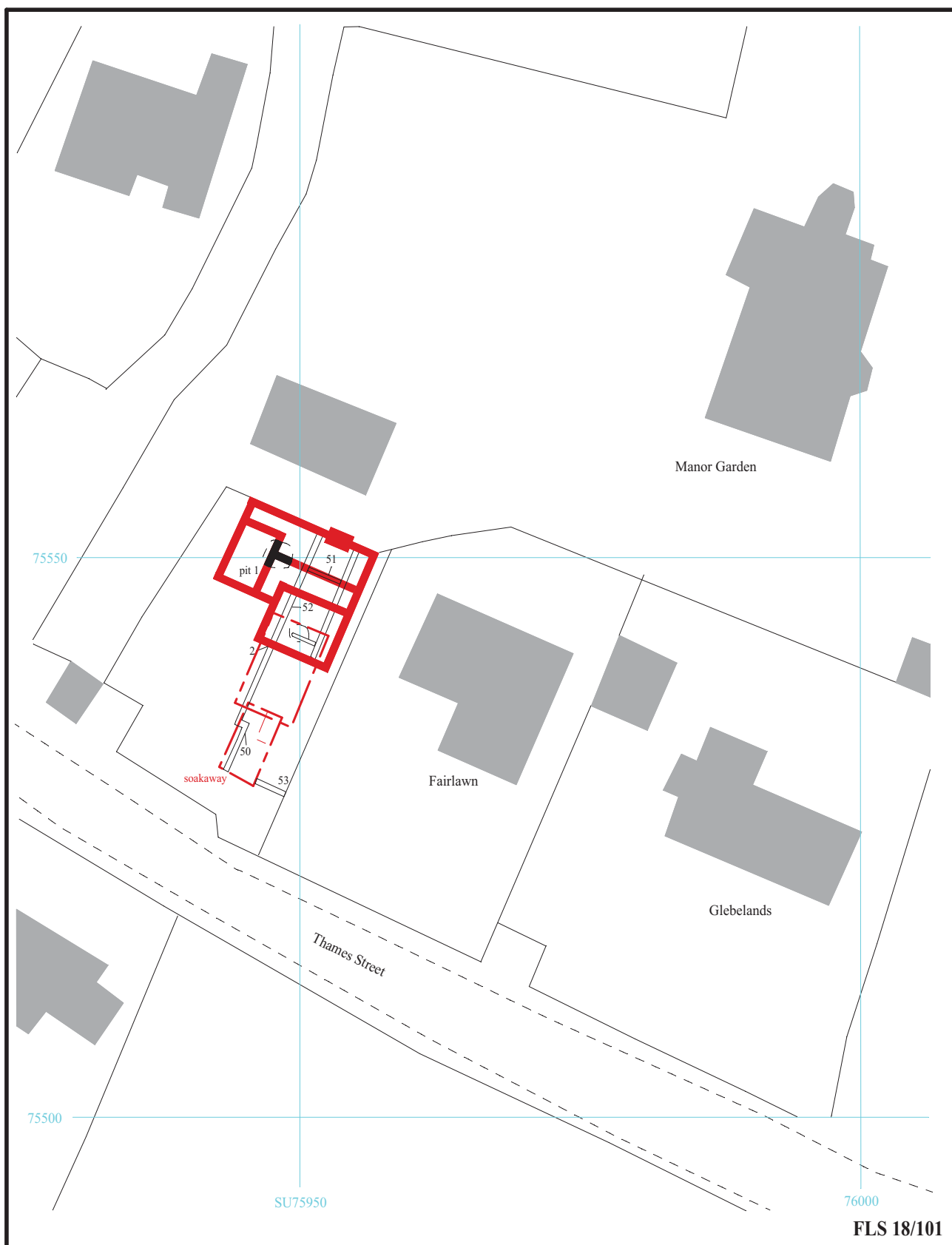
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Thames Street.

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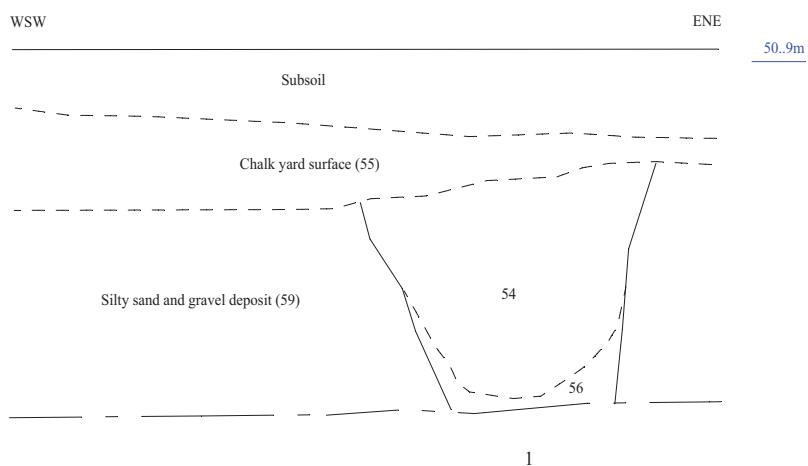


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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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Figure 4. Sections.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Pit 1, looking northwest, Scales: 2m.



Plate 2. Glasshouse foundation, looking northeast.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Glasshouse wall showing the concrete foundation, looking north.



Plate 4. Structure 51, looking northeast.

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Plates 3 and 4.

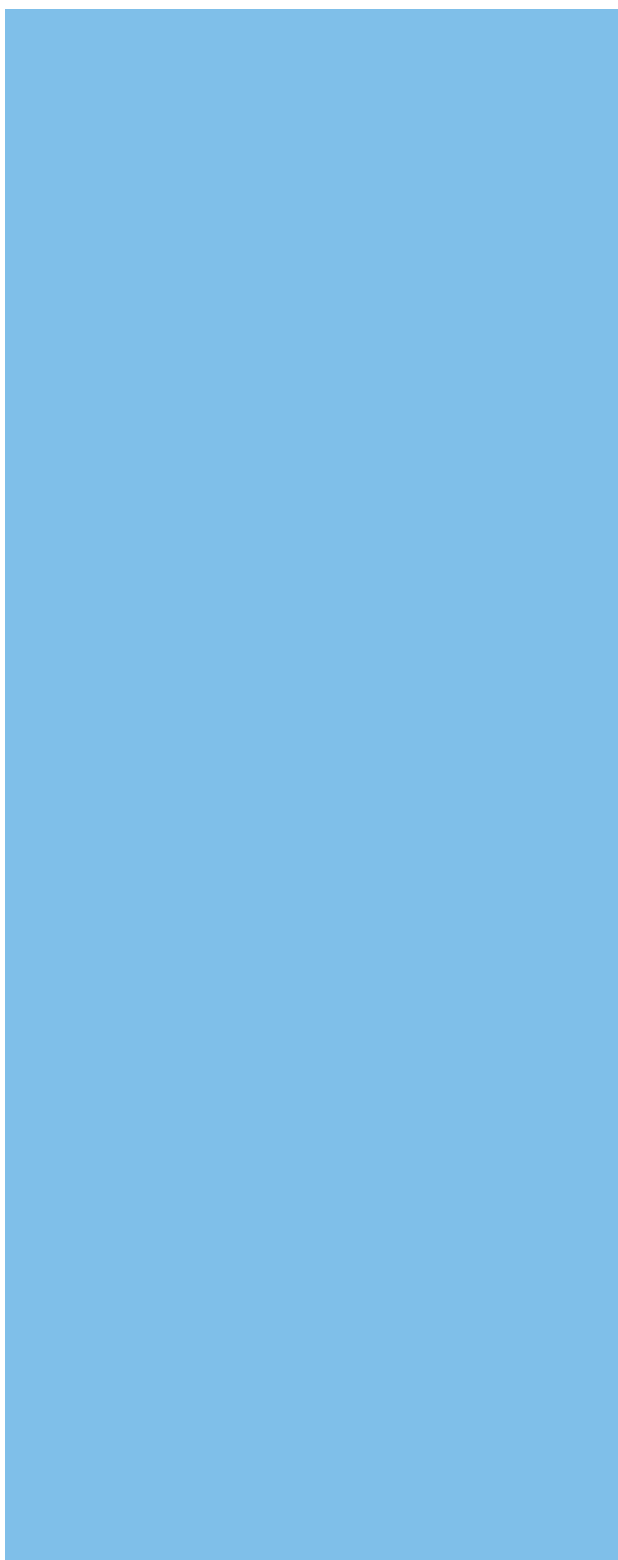
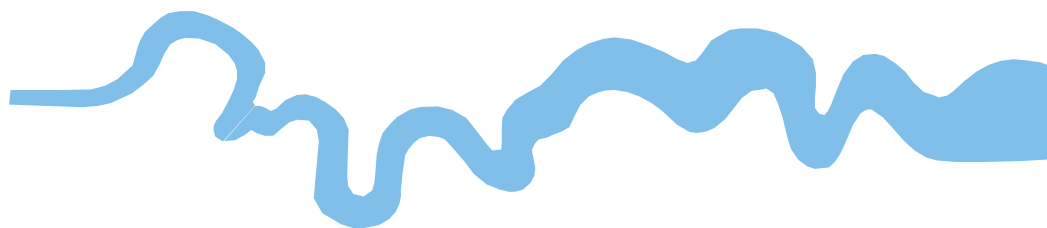
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TIME CHART

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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