

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**3 Bell Street Mews,  
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andy Taylor**

**Site Code: BSH19/79**

**(SU 7611 8278)**

**3 Bell Street Mews, Henley-on-Thames,  
Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr H Baylis**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BSH 19/79

**October 2019**

## Summary

**Site name:** 3 Bell Street Mews, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7611 8278

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 14th - 15th August 2019

**Project coordinator:** Danielle Milbank

**Site supervisor:** Will Attard, David Sanchez

**Site code:** BSH 19/79

**Area of site:** 29 sq m

**Summary of results:** No finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were encountered.

**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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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 05.10.19<br>Steve Preston ✓ 04.10.19 |
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# **3 Bell Street Mews, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Andy Taylor

**Report 19/79**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 3 Bell Street Mews, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 2BF (SU 7611 8278) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Hugh Baylis of the above address.

Planning permission (P18/S2439/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new rear extension. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological remains by these works, the consent is subject to two conditions (4 and 5) relating to securing and implementing an archaeological 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 District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Will Attard and David Sanchez on 14th and 15th August 2019 and the site code is BSH 19/79.

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 in the historic centre of Henley-on-Thames (Fig. 1). The centre is formed by Bell Street (western) and Hart Street (southern), with their junction in the south-west, and New Street (northern), adjoining Thameside at the river front in the east. The site is to the rear (east) of Bell Street and Bell Street Mews are within the 'back plots' of the historic frontages, a modern infilled development (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped on the edge of river gravel deposits over Upper Chalk (BGS 1980), comprising chalky silts and clay and the site lies at a height of c.35m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing note provided by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2019). In summary, its general potential stems from its location within the archaeologically rich upper Thames Valley with a wealth of sites and finds in the area (eg: Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick *et al.* 2009). The later medieval development of the town is better documented than its earlier origins, which derived from a foundation by King Henry II, who in 1179, acquired land here ‘for making buildings’ (Airs *et al.* 1975, 125). A number of timber-framed buildings, in other parts of the town centre, date to the 15th and 16th centuries. Much of the Bell Street frontage is now of 18th- and 19th-century construction, and backland areas have been developed, especially from the east. A Grade II Listed wall forming the south-east corner of the current site is 19th century, probably the exterior boundary of the former Brakspear brewery site.

An archaeological excavation at the original construction of Bell Street Mews, found evidence for light usage of backland area of Bell Street throughout the Medieval period (Fig. 3) and the features found indicated a formal arrangement of plots suggestive that these areas were fully developed by the 15th century (Pine 1999).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve the monitoring of areas of intrusive groundworks and the excavation of foundation and service trenches. Any other deeply invasive groundworks would be monitored as necessary.

## **Results**

Foundation trenches observed measured 0.50m wide and were dug to a depth of *c.*0.85m (Fig. 3, Pl. 2). The stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.25m of brick rubble made ground overlying 0.30m of a dark brown grey clayey silt containing modern rubbish (plastic, cans etc), and deemed modern back fill (Fig. 4). This overlay 0.30m of a mid grey brown silty clay. The upper layer was truncated by modern services in the south (Pl. 1). Natural geology was not reached in any of the monitored areas.

## **Finds**

All finds encountered were modern and of no non-archaeological interest.

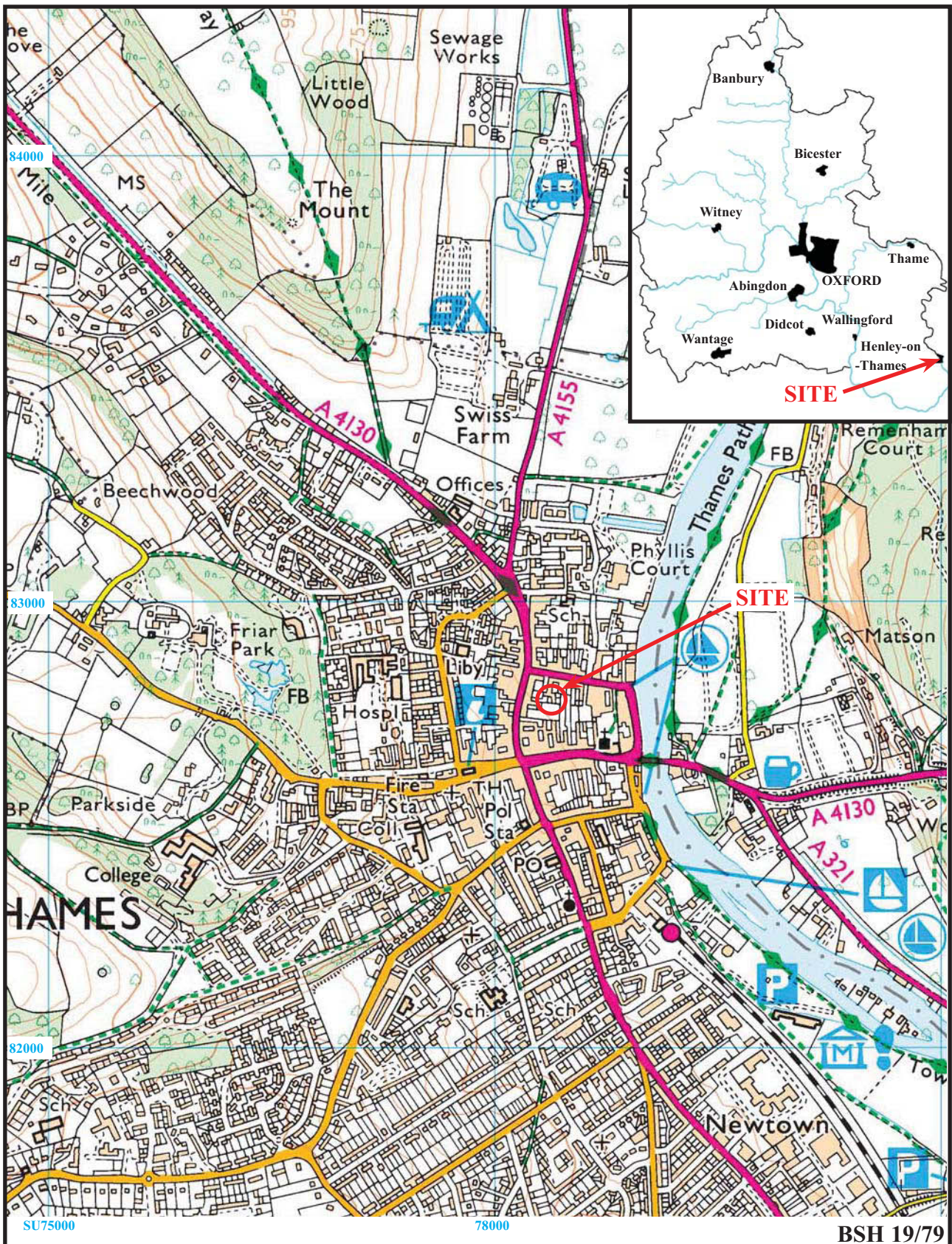
## Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeological remains to be present on this site, no deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed during the course of the watching brief.

## References

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- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
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- Pine, J, 1999, 'The excavation of medieval and post-medieval features at the rear of 42c Bell Street, Henley, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, **64**, 255–74





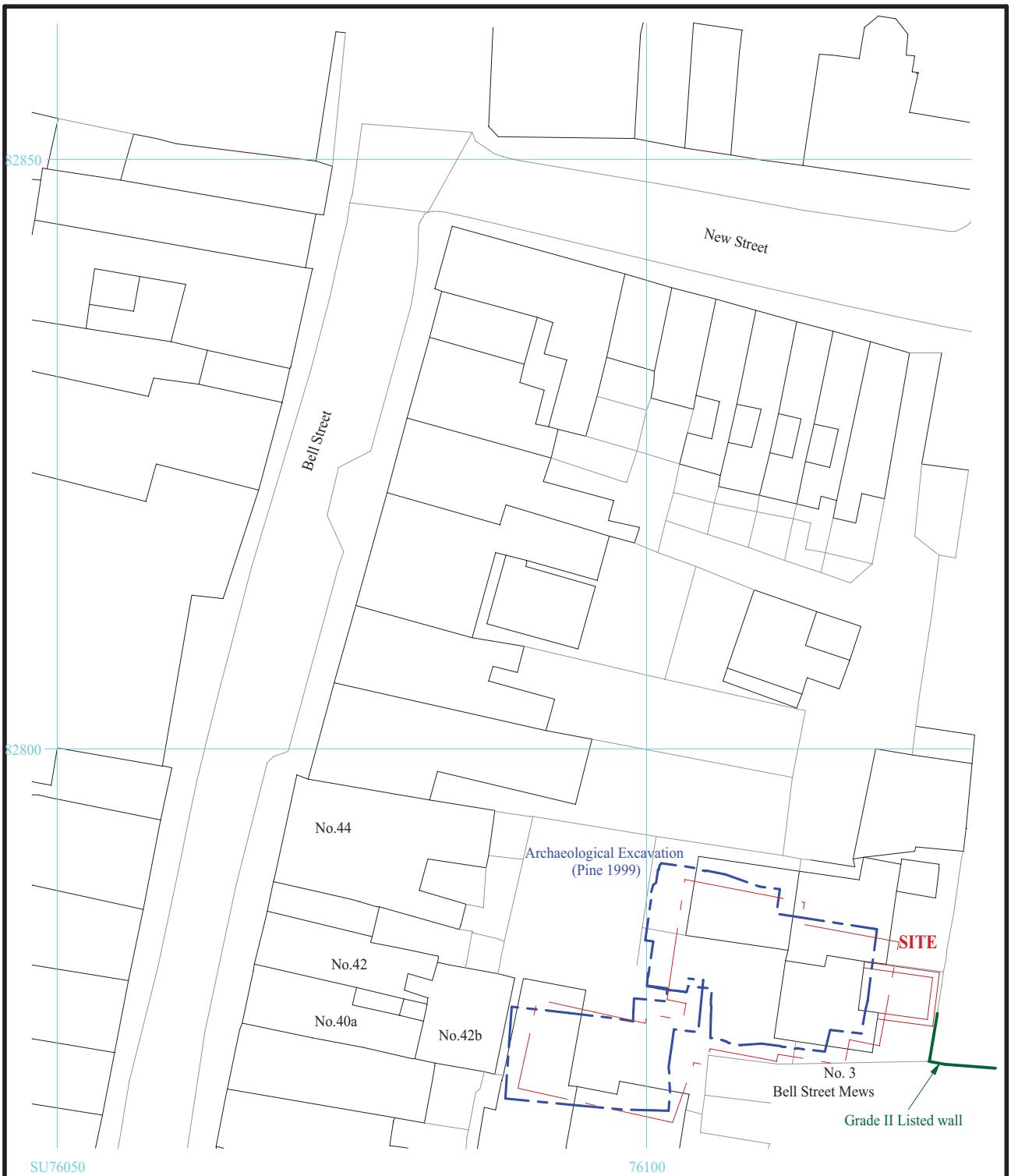
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**Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Henley-on-Thames and Oxfordshire.

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Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Location of observed area, in relation to previous archaeological excavation limits.



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Figure 3. Detailed location, compared to 1999 archaeological excavation limit.

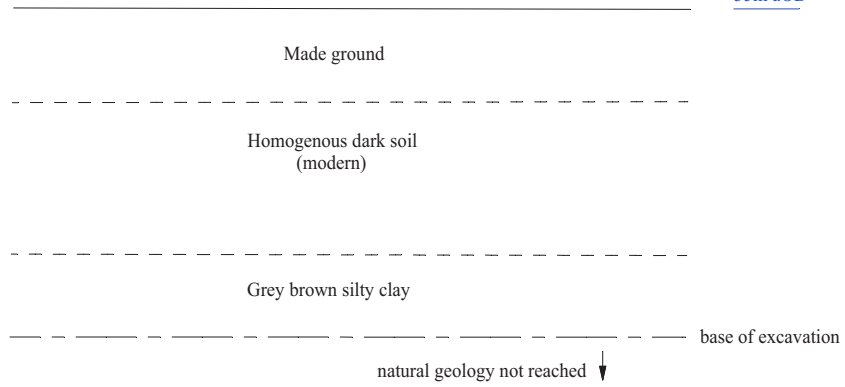


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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Excavation south footing, with modern services, looking north-west, Scales: 1m x2.



Plate 2. Eastern footing at base of 19th century wall, looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

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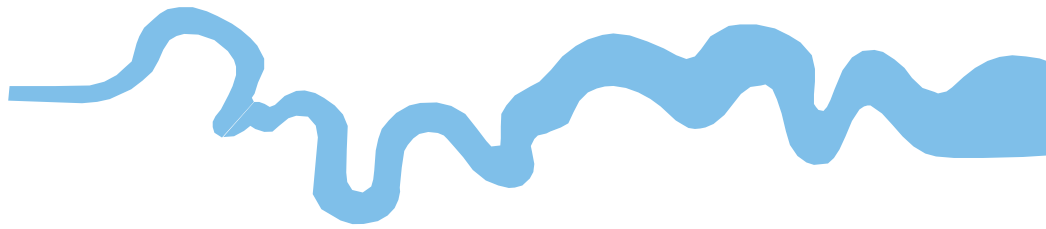
**3 Bell Street Mews, Henley-on-Thames,  
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Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 1 and 2.**

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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<br>AD 0 BC |
| Iron Age _____             | 750 BC           |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Bronze Age: Late _____     | 1300 BC          |
| Bronze Age: Middle _____   | 1700 BC          |
| Bronze Age: Early _____    | 2100 BC          |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Neolithic: Late .....      | 3300 BC          |
| Neolithic: Early .....     | 4300 BC          |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Mesolithic: Late .....     | 6000 BC          |
| Mesolithic: Early .....    | 10000 BC         |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Palaeolithic: Upper .....  | 30000 BC         |
| Palaeolithic: Middle ..... | 70000 BC         |
| Palaeolithic: Lower .....  | 2,000,000 BC     |





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