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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Manor Farm, Henton,
Chinnor, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Site Code: MFH19/178

(SP 7636 0268)

Manor Farm, Henton, Chinnor, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Signia Properties Ltd**

By Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFH 19/178

August 2020

Summary

Site name: Manor Farm, Henton, Chinnor, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 7636 0268

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 31st July – 6th August 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding, Will Attard

Site code: MFH 19/178

Area of site: 0.22ha

Summary of results: Observations were undertaken during the groundworks for a new dwelling. A layer of overburden in the south western area of the site covered the natural geology. Tile and pottery recovered suggested it was no earlier than 18th century date. A reduced area inside the footprint of the new development found a truncated chalk layer and compacted tile areas, possible abandonment deposits of the same date. Two postholes were exposed, one of which may be medieval based on a single sherd of pottery, but the other was post-medieval and it seems likely that the two features belonged together.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service.

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Manor Farm, Henton, Chinnor, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Munding

Report 19/178b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Manor Farm, Henton, near Chinnor, Oxfordshire, OX39 4AE (SP 7636 0268) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Neil Boddington of Boddington Planning, Westfield House, 31 Shirburn Street, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5BU on behalf of Signia Properties Ltd.

Planning permission (19/S4183/FUL) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of two-unit dwelling and associated access to the north, on a reduced footprint revised from the outline planning consent (17/S2001/O). The consent is subject to a condition (5) related to archaeology, requiring an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks, in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. An archaeological evaluation had shown some potential for medieval deposits on the site (Sanchez 2020) and so a watching brief was required in order to satisfy the condition.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological advisers to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Munding and Will Attard, between 31st July and 6th August 2020. The site code is MFH 19/178.

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

Location, topography and geology

Henton is a hamlet north-east of Chinnor, close to Oxfordshire's border with Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The main access into the village links to the Icknield Way (B4009), which follows the bottom of the Chiltern Scarp on a SW-NE axis. The site is considered to lie on the edge of the historic settlement and is at the northern edge of the Manor Farm complex. Buildings, such as Manor Farm Barns to the south-west, recently renovated, hint at

the late 17th century to 19th century core of the farm complex (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as Gault Clay and Upper Greensand, a siltstone and sandstone (BGS 1994). A natural greenish grey clay silt was recorded in the trenches from a depth of 0.49m. The site lies at a height of between 94-95m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief supplied by Mr Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Oram 2020). In summary, Henton has late Saxon origins and is documented in Domesday Book of 1086. It was a manor of Miles Crispin and previously held by Leofnoth of Mercia (Williams and Martin 2002, 438). Henton was a lesser manor of Chinnor (VCH 1964), with earthworks documented north and east of Manor Farm, interpreted as a single enclosed site (VCH 1907). Henry de Malyns is documented in ownership of the manor as early as 1303, though a moated manor site was more likely associated with Edmund de Malyns, Sheriff of Oxfordshire from 1341 (VCH 1964), as moated 'homestead' enclosure was more common after the 13th century (Platt 1978).

Sunken earthwork remains, north of Manor Farm and east of the current site (Fig. 2), were thought to represent the location of a northern moat arm (VCH 1907). During archaeological investigation, deposits were found in southern, and separately, eastern areas to the site suggesting some preservation and continuation of a large infilled ditch dated from the 11th to 14th century (Dodd and Watson 2019). Further archaeological monitoring identified other parts of a southern arm, though seen here to be backfilled with recent debris (Leech 2015). The earthworks, and the late 19th-century Manor Farm, are shown on historic maps, situated south of the current site. Only a single dated feature was recorded, in the preliminary archaeological investigation, though an area of deep truncation was identified in the north (Sanchez 2020).

An Iron Age ditch and Roman gully were found in evaluation to the south-west of Henton.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project are to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This involved monitoring of all areas affected by intrusive groundworks and observation of surface stripping and the excavation of services trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive works as necessary.

Results

All the footing trenches for the new development were observed, as was part of the interior reduction between the new footings in the SW corner (Fig. 3). A reduction for access to the north had no impact below topsoil.

Footing trenches (Fig. 5; Pl. 2)

Topsoil covered the site, a dark brown clayey silt (50), containing a moderate amount of flint and red brick fragments, scattered across the site, post-medieval pottery and a few glass fragments (noted but not retained). The topsoil was 0.27m thick, overlying a layer of chalk and flint debris (52), 0.22m thick but thinner to the north following the downslope of the site, overlying the natural geology, (Greensand) at a depth of between 0.47m and 0.5m. After demolition and the initial archaeological investigation, the site had been piled (Pl. 1)

The northernmost footing trench did not contain debris layer 52, instead either exposing modern rubble to a depth of 0.5m, or topsoil directly onto the natural geology (Pl. 2). In the footing trench excavation continued into the natural geology to between 0.97m and 1.1m deep (Fig.5).

Interior ground reduction (Fig. 4; Pl. 3)

After the footing trenches were excavated, an area was observed stripped to a further 0.4m depth in the south-western interior of the footprint (Fig. 4, Pl. 3). This exposed a truncated layer of chalk (56) and a patch of compacted tile (55), which the chalk overlay on its southern edge. Both of these layers had been truncated by a large modern truncation, partially or completely including the presence of a tree root. Much of the southern parts of the reduced area were stripped to expose natural geology. A sample of the fragmentary tile found in layer 55 and the overburden layer was retained for analysis, also with several post-medieval pottery fragments recovered from the exposed surface. The top of the reduced level was at 94.97m aOD in the south-west corner, and 94.86m aOD in the south-east.

On the east side of the reduction, two post-holes, were uncovered (cuts 2 and 3) (Fig. 4; Pl. 4). Post hole 2 was filled with a dark brown clayey silt with chalk and small pieces of angular flint (53). It was 0.23m in diameter and 0.12m deep. This contained a single sherd of 13th-to 14th-century pottery). Posthole 3 was only partially exposed, though this portion was fully excavated, with a brown grey chalk flecked clayey silt full (54). This pit was 0.22m in diameter and 0.09m deep. Two pieces of animal bone and a single sherd of post-medieval pottery were recovered from this fill.

Finds

Medieval Pottery by Sue Anderson

Three sherds of medieval pottery weighing 19g were collected from topsoil layer 50 and fill 53 of posthole 2.

Quantification was carried out using sherd count and weight. Form terminology follows MPRG (1998). Recording uses a system of letters for fabric codes.

The medieval pottery included a base sherd which fits the description of pottery made at nearby Great Missenden (Ashworth 1983, Fabric 1a) dating from the 13th or 14th century. The other two body sherds were in a grey medium sandy coarseware fabric of unknown provenance and could date from 12th century to the 15th.

Post-Medieval Pottery by Christina Mateos

Eleven post-medieval shreds were recovered. Four sherds were of mass-produced blue transfer-printed 'china', two from the topsoil and two from deposit 52. Five fragments of glazed red earthenware came from chalk deposit (56) and the site overburden (52) and topsoil. One fragment of green glazed white earthenware was recovered from deposit 54 (posthole 3). One other plain bodysherd found in the tile deposit (55), is shoulder/neck sherd of a jug or similar vessel with a light yellow/orange glaze, from a hard, light-buff coloured fabric with a smooth surface.

Ceramic Building Material by Cristina Mateos

A sample of the tile identified on site in layer 55 and within the overburden, which covered the south and western parts of the site was retained: 11 fragments weighing 377g. No complete tiles were recovered. The tile was uniformly sandy, with frequent small well-sorted quartz sand inclusions. The colour varied from slightly orange red to darker red, with occasional examples of a grey core. The fragments were generally fairly hard and well-fired, and all of the fragments had a rough underside, indicating that they were made using a sanded mould. Overall, the building material recovered is broadly datable to the post-medieval period, probably as part as the covering of a building of late 18th century to 19th century date.

Animal bone by Ceri Falys

Two fragments of non-human bone were recovered from posthole 3 (54). Weighing a total of 13g, the pieces of bone had excellent surface preservation, and although relatively small in size, they were able to be refit into a

single, midshaft portion of long bone shaft (likely the posterior surface of a tibia). Due to the small overall size, it was not possible to identify the species of origin for the skeletal element. No further information was able to be retrieved from the two fragments of non-human bone.

Conclusion

The watching brief has successfully recorded a modest quantity of archaeological deposits albeit much is dated to the late Post-Medieval period and add to the medieval gully recorded during the earlier evaluation (Sanchez 2020). A sparse amount of pottery of Medieval date was recovered, especially from Posthole 2 but it is uncertain if this necessarily dates it, since the other contained a post-medieval sherd and the two features were probably associated.

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APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
	50	Topsoil		
	51	Subsoil		
	52	Overburden	Post-medieval	Pottery
2	53	Posthole	Medieval or later	pottery
3	54	Posthole	Post-medieval	Pottery
	55	Chalk deposits	-	-
	56	Compacted tile patch	Late 18th century	pottery

APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue

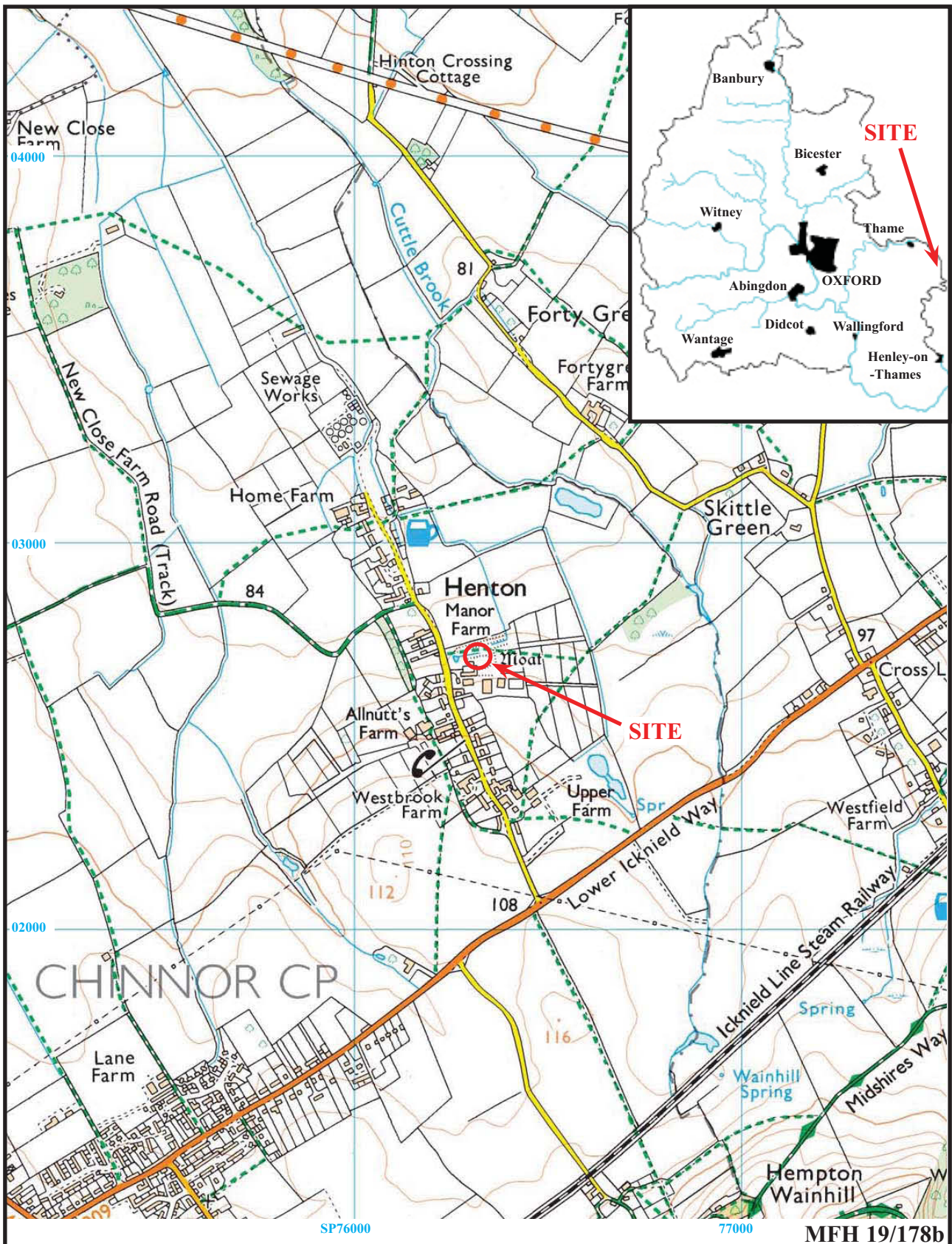
Key: MCW – unprovenanced medieval coarseware; GMCW – Great Missenden-type coarseware.

Medieval

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Spot date</i>
50	MCW	2	8	Dark grey, common rounded medium sand in silty matrix, sparse mica, hard	12th-15th century
53	GMCW	1	23	?handmade base fragment, oxidised surfaces, grey core, corresponds with GMCW Fabric 1a. Sooted.	13th-14th century

Post-medieval

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
		50 Topsoil		5	43 China, PMGRE
		52 overburden		4	160 China, PMGRE
3		54 Posthole		1	4 Green-glazed
		56 Chalk layer		2	65 PMGRE



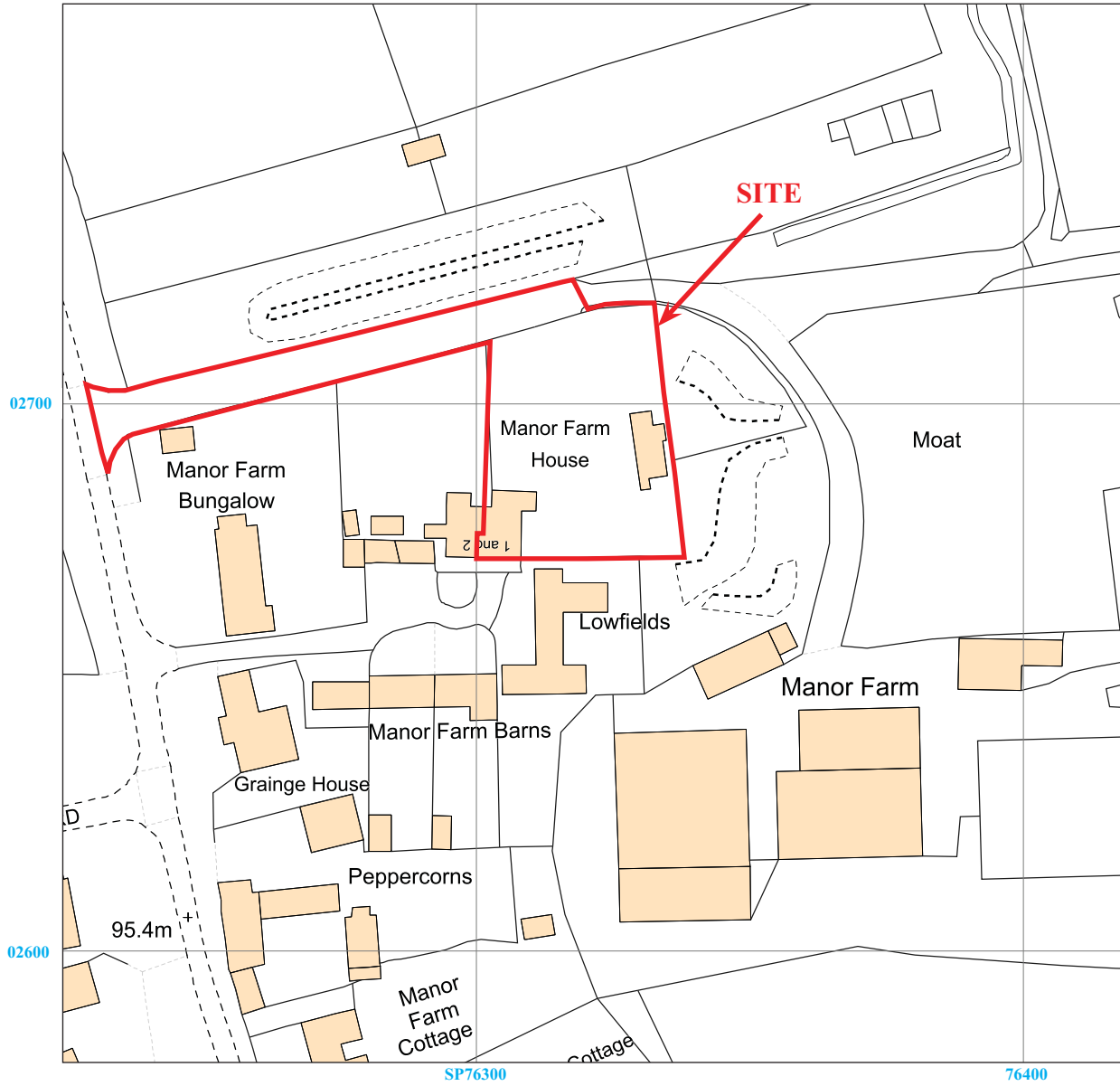
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Figure 1. Location of site within Henton and Oxfordshire.

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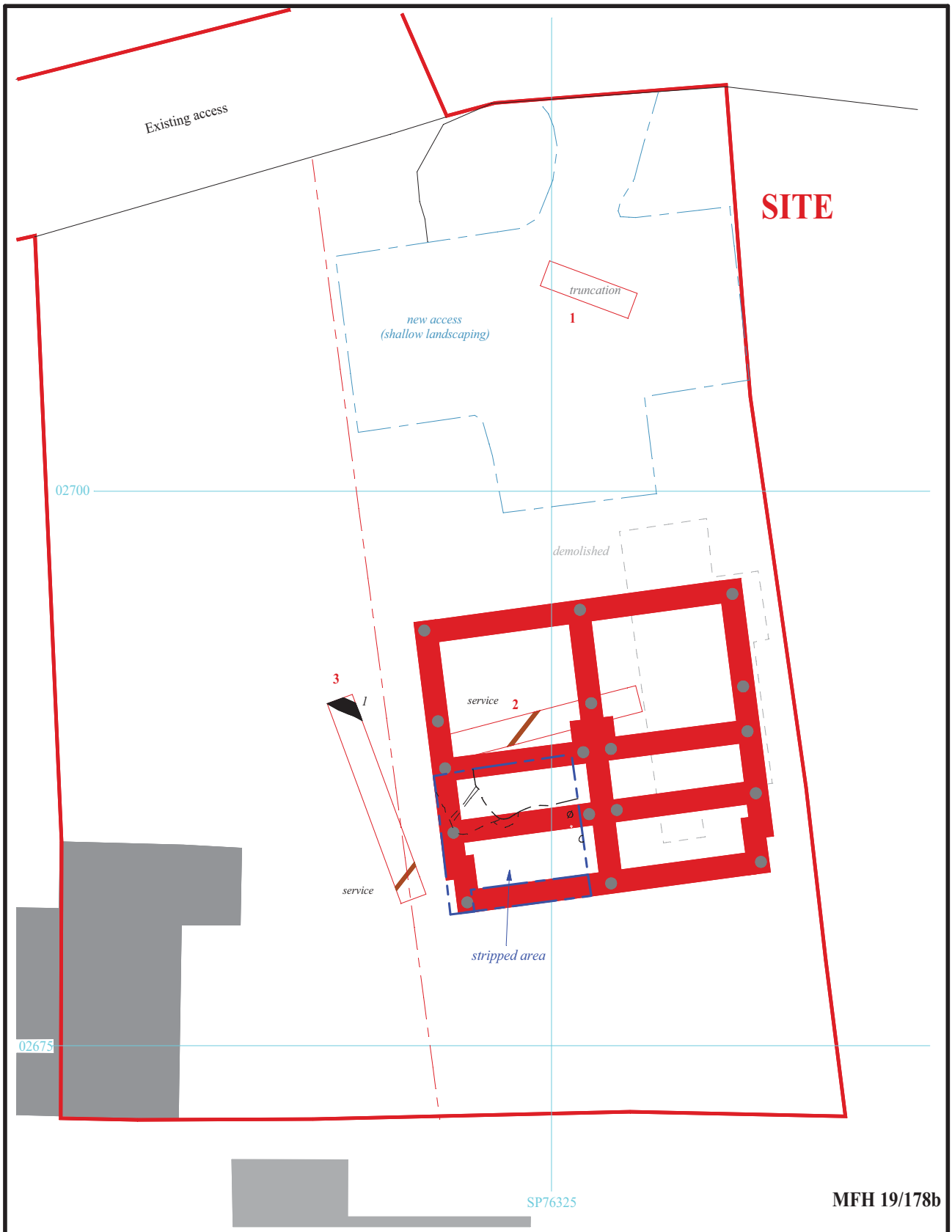
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 Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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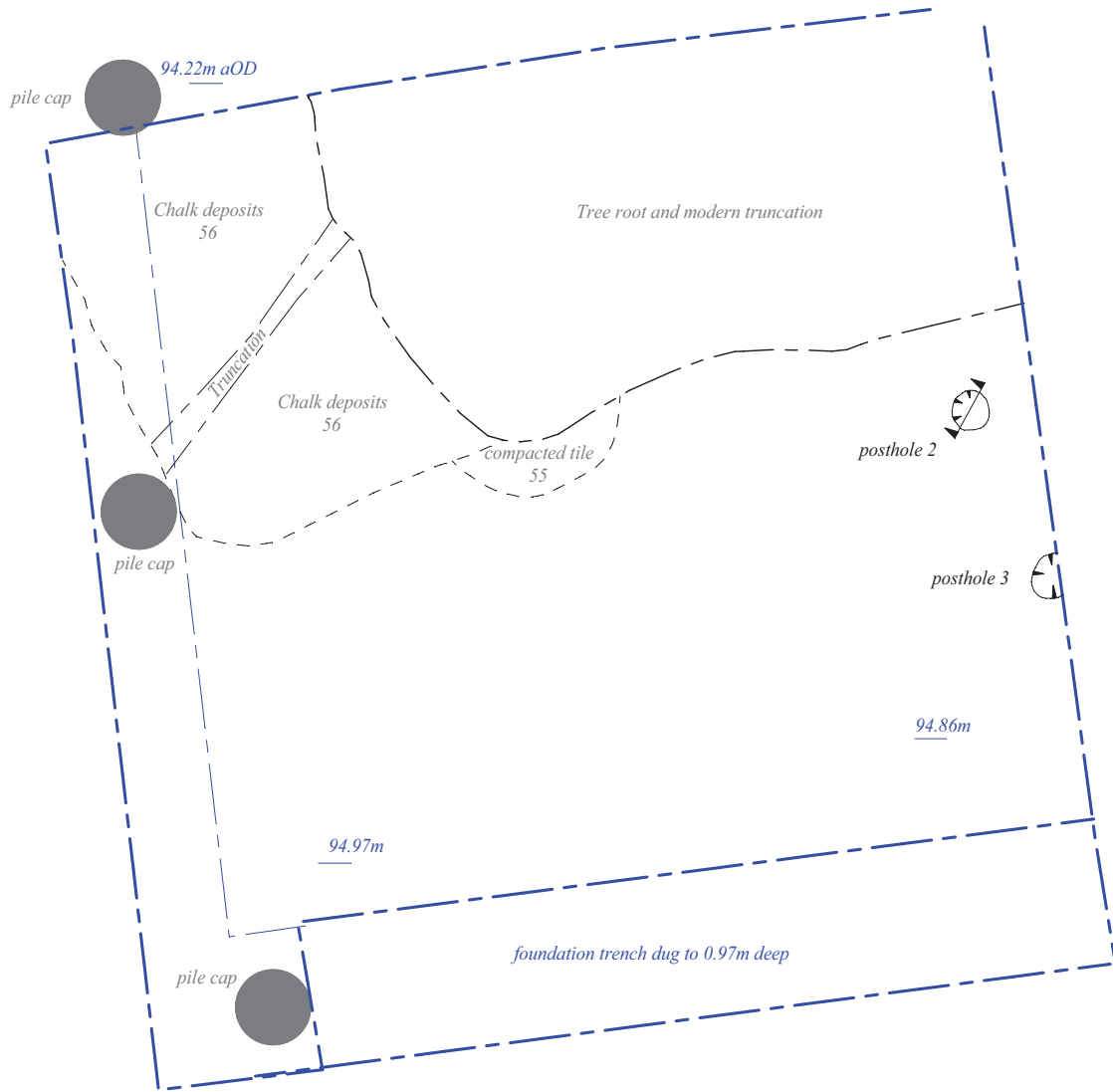
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.





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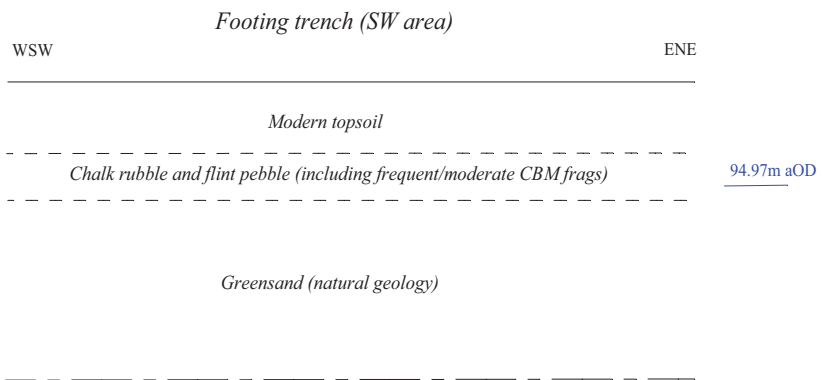


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Figure 4. Stripped area over SW interior.



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Figure 5. Representative section.





Plate 1. View through central excavation of new footings, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Remnant slab, looking SW, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Stripped area over SW interior, looking WNW, Scale: 1m.



Plate 4. Posthole 2, looking ENE, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.

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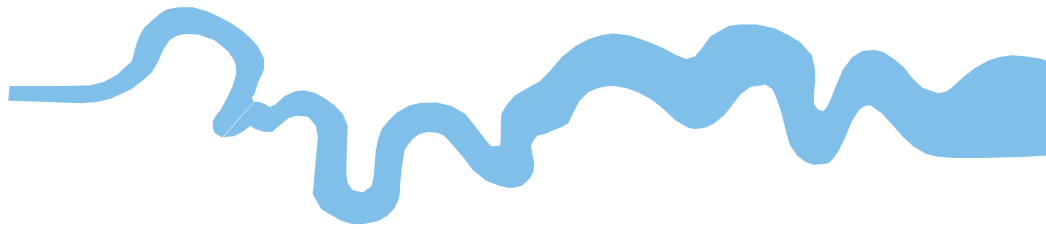
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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