

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

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S E R V I C E S

**Land at The Old Vicarage,
The Street, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Jamie Williams

Site Code: OMV19/162

(SU 5892 8394)

Land at The Old Vicarage, The Street, Moulsford, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

For The Friends of the Elderly

by Jamie Williams

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OVM19/162

October 2020

Summary

Site name: Land at The Old Vicarage, The Street, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5892 8394

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 15th October 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Jamie Williams

Site code: OVM 19/162

Area of site: 0.19 ha

Summary of results: Three of the original five trenches were excavated with the presence of live services and previous dwelling foundations limiting the area of natural geology reached. However, of the area successfully excavated, three ditches of undetermined date were exposed. The site is considered to have some archaeological potential.

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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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 02.11.20 Steve Preston ✓ 02.11.20 |
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Land at The Old Vicarage, The Street, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Jamie Williams

Report 19/162

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Land at The Old Vicarage, The Street, Moulsoford, Oxfordshire (SU 5892 8394) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr. Chris Booth of G7CJB Limited, The Barn, Beech Hill, Headley Down, Hampshire GU35 8EQ on behalf of Mr. Peter Cottrell, Head of Property at The Friends of the Elderly 40-42 Ebury Street, London, SW1W 0LZ.

Planning permission (App 20/S1220/FUL) has been sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of extra care facilities and car parking. A field evaluation has been requested in order to inform the planning process with regard to any archaeological implications, and permit the formulation of a mitigation strategy if required.

This is 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. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Richard Oram Planning archaeologist for Oxfordshire county council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jamie Williams and Aidan Colyer on 15th October 2020 and the site code is OVM 19/162. 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 within the village of Moulsoford which lies just west of the river Thames, 3.4 miles South-South-West of the town of Wallingford (Fig 1). The area of site makes up a rectangular U-shape immediately south of the existing care home facilities, with the land use currently being that of gardens (Fig 2), lying at a height of approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is recorded as Head - clay, silt, sand and gravel superficial deposits overlying West Melbury Marly chalk formation bedrock (BGS 1980). Natural geology of a light yellow-brown clay chalk was observed in all trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service and a desk-based assessment (Ballkas 2019). In summary this potential stems from its location with a rich record of finds and sites in nearby areas recorded within the county historic environment record. Notably, the site is situated next to the discovery of the Moulsoford gold torc (Wymer 1961). The site is adjacent to the projected line of the Roman Road from Dorchester to Silchester, and cropmarks have shown the presence of a trackway and field system to the south west of the site. A number of Roman coffined burials, coins and pottery has been discovered nearby but despite Roman coins being found on the Care Home site itself, a watching brief revealed nothing of archaeological interest (Cook 2010).

To the north, an evaluation in advance of a new astro-turf pitch, revealed a number of ditches, pits, Saxon pottery and an undated burial (Platt 2012a and b). Recent fieldwork also to the north revealed a small cluster of Late Bronze Age pits and an Early Bronze Age pit containing remains of an Aurochs (wild cattle) (Ford submitted). The downland to the west has recorded Iron Age and Bronze Age occupations sites and a levelled round barrow (Ford 1990; Platt 2016) with various stray finds of neolithic flint axes and Roman coins also noted.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any prehistoric or Roman deposits are present on site; and
- to provide information to allow the preparation of a mitigation strategy if necessary.

Five trenches were proposed to be dug, each measuring 25m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were located to target the footprint of the proposed new structures. A sufficient sample of any identified deposits would be investigated to satisfy the aims outlined above. The trenches were to be dug by a small 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

There were several constraints on the site which caused an alteration to the number of trenches and their configuration. Trenches 2 and 3 were not excavated due to the existence of an extensive drainage system in the south of site, and also as a consequence of similar drains, trench 1 was reduced to a length of 16m. Trench 4 also had to be reduced in length to 21m due to the presence of a retained hedge and trees. Trench 5 was moved slightly as to avoid a live sewage pipe running throughout the majority of the trench.

These three trenches measured between 16.3m and 26.4m in length and 0.7-1.1m deep. All were 1.6m wide with natural geology being observed in all trenches.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features, with dating evidence, are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1, 5)

Trench 1 was aligned NW-SE and measured 16.3m in length and 0.75m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.4m of topsoil and 0.35m subsoil overlying light yellow-brown clay patches and chalk natural geology. At 13.6m from the southern end of the trench, ditch [1] was recorded which was 1.17m in width and 0.28m in depth. The ditch consisted of gently sloping sides and a concave base and was filled with a mid red-brown sandy silt (53). No finds were recovered.

Trench 4 (Figs 3; Pl. 2)

Trench 4 was aligned NW-SE and was 21m in length and 0.9m in depth in the southern end of the trench and over 1m in the northern end. The northern end of the trench was occupied by the foundations of a previous building which had truncated the natural geology down to 1.1m+. The stratigraphy in the southern end of the trench consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.85m+ of modern made ground (52) overlying slightly disturbed light yellow-brown clay patches with some gravel and chalk natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed in this trench.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 3, 6, 7)

Trench 5 was aligned NW-SE and was 26.4m in length and 1m in depth at the northern end and 0.7 at the southern end. A plinth was left high between 6.1m and 12m from the southern end due to the presence of a active sewage pipe. The stratigraphy in the northern end consisted of 0.15m of topsoil, above 0.15m of modern made ground, above 0.35m of buried topsoil and 0.35m of buried subsoil overlying light yellow-brown clay

patches with some gravel and chalk natural geology. The stratigraphy in the southern end consisted of 0.4m of topsoil, above 0.3m subsoil overlying light yellow-brown clay patches with gravel and chalk natural geology (Pl. 4).

At 1.5m from the southern end of the trench, ditch [2] was recorded measuring 0.69m in width and 0.23m in depth. The profile consisted of steep sloping sides and a flat base, and it was filled with a mid red-brown silty clay (54). A single fragment of sheep bone was the only find recovered.

At 12m from the southern end of the trench, ditch [3] was recorded measuring 1.2m in width and 0.43m in depth. The profile consisted of steep sloping sides and a flat base, and it was filled with a mid red-brown sandy silt (55). No finds were recovered.

Finds

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A single piece of non-human bone was recovered from feature 2 (54). Weighing a total of 29g, the fragment was well preserved, although localized patches of root etching on the cortical bone surface were common. Identification of skeletal element and species of origin was made using reference to Hillson (1992). The piece of bone was identified as a nearly complete (the distal end was absent), right sheep/goat metatarsal. No further information could be retrieved from this single bone.

Plant Macro Remains by Elspeth St. John-Brooks

Two samples were taken from Ditches 2 and 3 in Trench 5, these samples were floated and wet sieved using a 0.25mm mesh then they air dried and the flots were retained. These flots produced no plant macro remains producing no interpretable data. Numerous land snails were recovered in the flots..

Conclusion

The three trenches that could be excavated provided information on the archaeological potential of the site on the west and east sides of the proposed development. The central area of the development could not be examined due to an excess of live services, but, arguably, the presence of these services has much reduced the archaeological potential in that location. Three linear features all aligned approximately NE-SW were revealed and may have some archaeological potential. However, none of the features contained dating evidence

despite their full extents within each trench being excavated,. The only guide to their age is that their fills are 'mature' and that they are likely to be at least a few centuries old. On the basis of these results, the site is thought to have some some archaeological potential.

References

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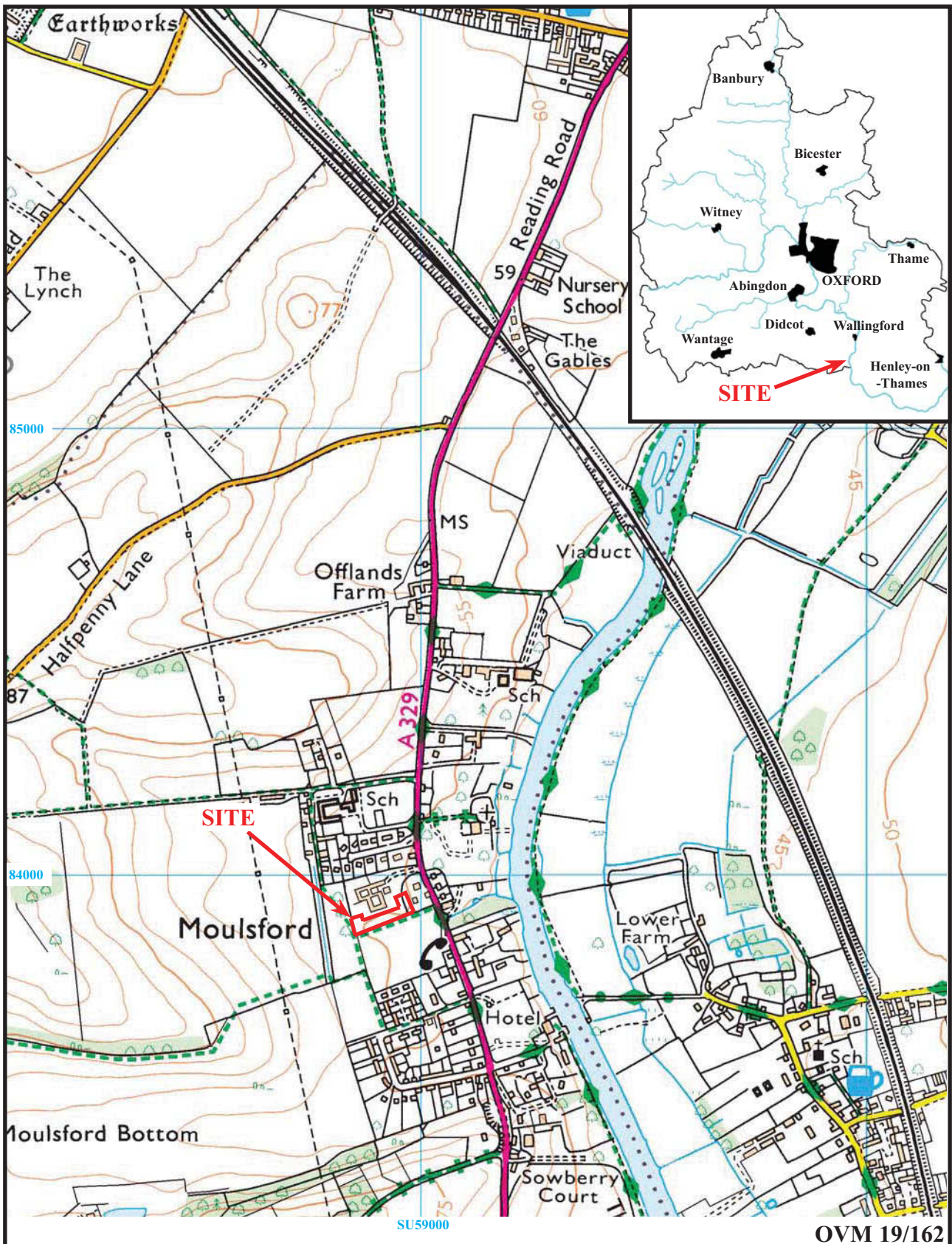
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at SE end

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Length (m)</i> | <i>Breadth (m)</i> | <i>Depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|---|
| 1 | 16.3 | 1.6 | 0.75 | 0–4m topsoil, 0.4-0.75m subsoil, 0.75m+ light yellow-brown clay chalk natural geology. Ditch [1] (53) [Pl. 1, 5] |
| 2 | 21 | 1.6 | 0.9-1.1 | In the southern end: 0-0.4m topsoil, 0.4-0.9m subsoil, 0.9m+ light yellow-brown clay chalk natural geology. In the northern end: 0-0.25m topsoil, 0.25-1.1m+ modern madeground (52). [Pl. 2] |
| 3 | 26.4 | 1.6 | 0.7-1 | Stratigraphy in the southern end: 0-0.4m topsoil, 0.4-0.7m subsoil, 0.7m+ light yellow-brown clay chalk natural geology. Stratigraphy in the northern end: 0-0.15m topsoil, 0.15-0.3m modern madeground (56), 0.3-0.65m buried topsoil, 0.65-1m buried subsoil, 1m+ light yellow-brown clay chalk natural geology. Ditches [2] (54) and [3] (55). [Pl. 3, 6, 7] |

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 53 | Ditch | - | |
| 5 | 2 | 54 | Ditch | - | |
| 5 | 3 | 55 | Ditch | - | |



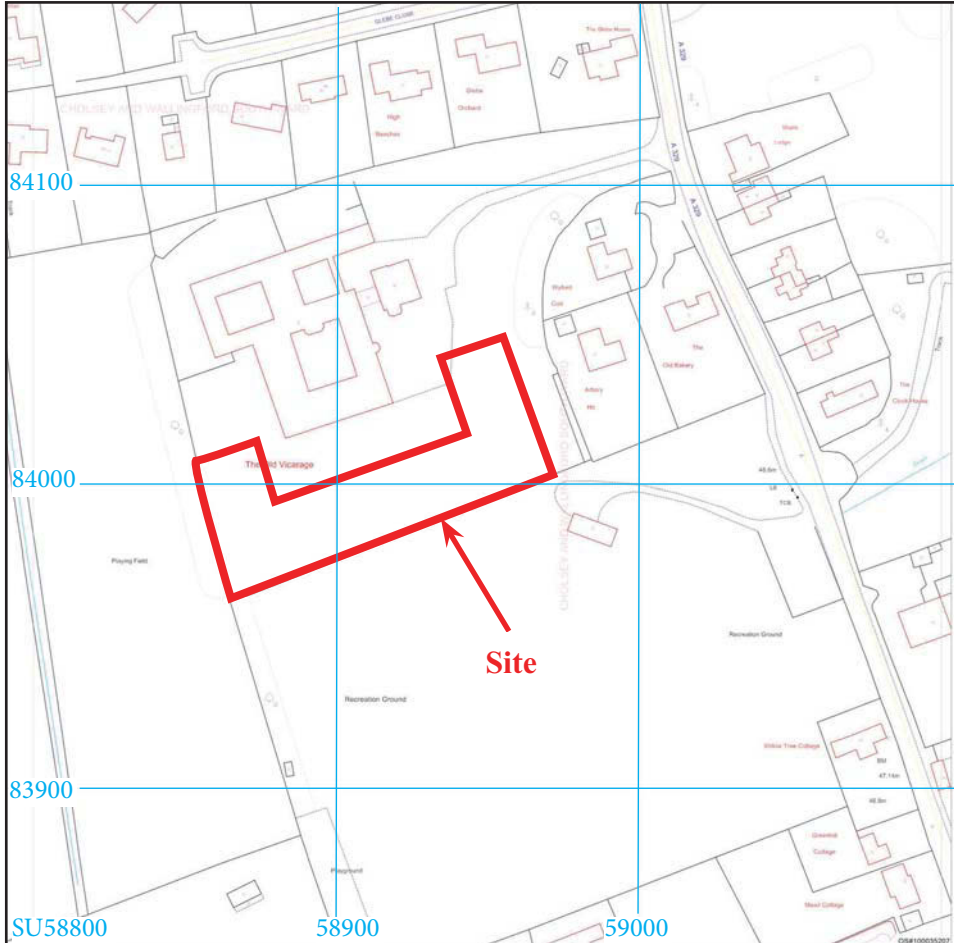
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Figure 1. Location of site within Moulsoford and Oxfordshire.

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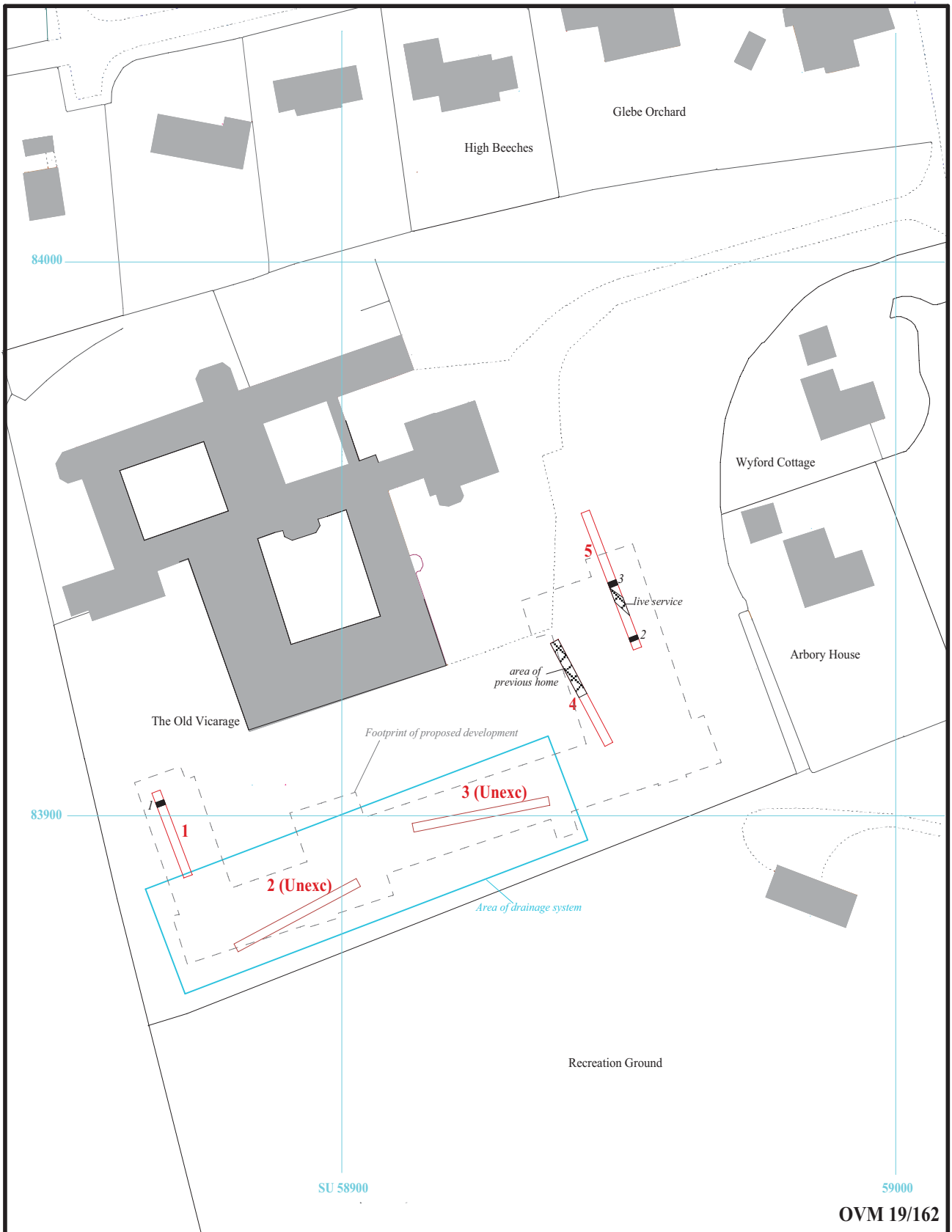


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 Figure 2. Detailed location of site

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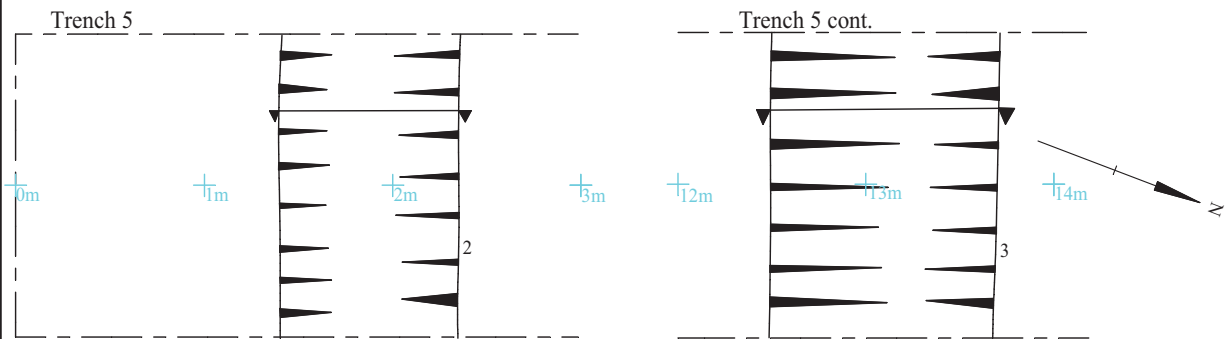
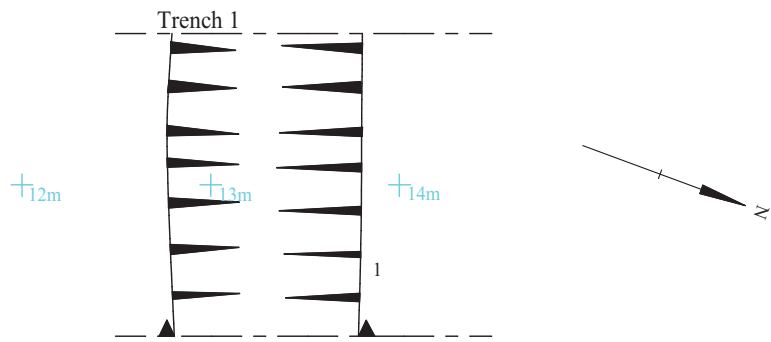
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Figure 3. Location of Trenches.



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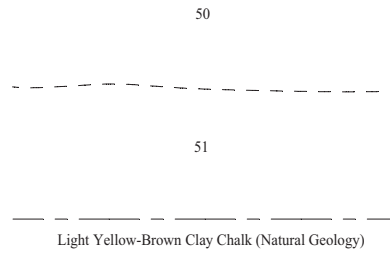
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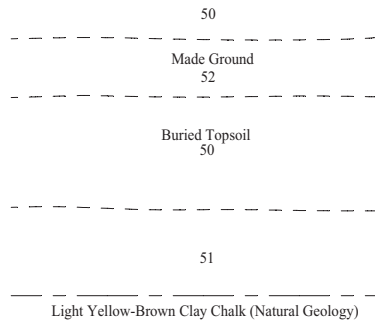
Figure 4. Trench Plans



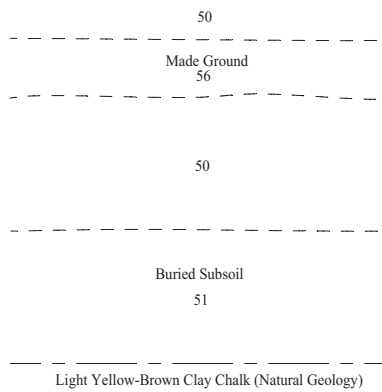
NNW Trench 1 SSE 50.03maOD



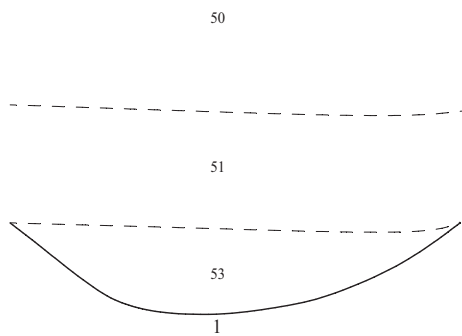
NNW Trench 4 SSE 48.7m



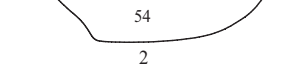
NNW Trench 5 SSE 48.68m



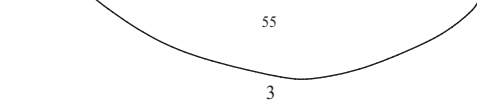
NNW Trench 1 SSE 50.05m



SSE NNW 48.02m



SSE NNW 48.02m



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Figure 5. Sections



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Plate 5. Trench 1, Ditch [1], looking East,
Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 5, Ditch [2], looking West,
Scales: 0.5m and 0.2m.



Plate 7. Trench 5 Ditch [3], looking West,
Scales: 0.5m and 0.2m.

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Plates 5 to 7.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking North-East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking North east,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 3. Trench 5, looking North east,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 5 section, looking East,
Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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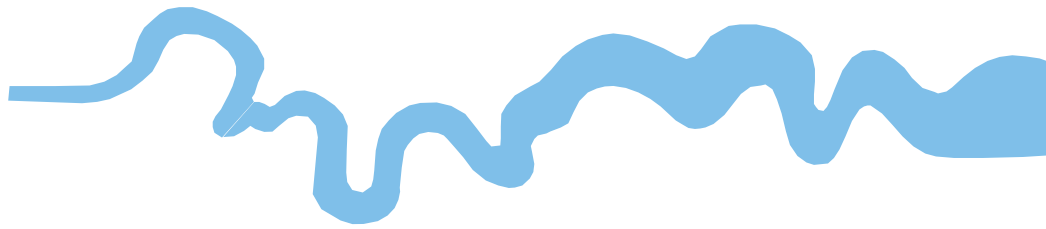
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Plates 1 to 4.**

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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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