

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**54 High Street, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Mordin

Site Code: 54HSW20/88

(SU 6051 8951)

**54 High Street, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr R Pearce

by Andrew Munding

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code 54HSW 20/88

November 2020

Summary

Site name: 54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6051 8951

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 11th November 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andrew Muddin

Site code: 54HSW 20/88

Area of site: 5.1 sq m exposure

Summary of results: A new extension to the existing house frontage required archaeological observation during excavation for a raft foundation. Initially, a quarry tile floor and brick wall were observed which, according to historic maps, formed part of a malthouse, later warehouse, that was eventually replaced by No.54 and the other extant row of houses. After the floor was recorded, it was removed and the ground reduced further by 0.2m but only revealed further made ground, probably a pre-19th century levelling deposit, likely for construction of the malthouse. A small collection of Late medieval and early Post-medieval pottery (16th-17th century) was also recorded.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service with accession code OXCMS:2020.87.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 4.12.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 4.12.20

54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 20/88

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording was undertaken at 54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 0DB (SU 6051 8951) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ronald Pearce of the above address.

Planning permission (19/S2070/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council to create a small extension on the front or south, of the property. The consent is subject to two conditions (5 and 6) relating to archaeology, that required a watching brief to be undertaken during the groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. A specification was created and approved, satisfying Condition 5, based on a brief produced by Mr Richard Oram, Lead Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin on 11th November 2020 and the site code is 54HSW 20/88.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service with the accession code OXCMS:2020.87.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located north of the High Street frontage (Fig. 2). No.54 is part of a small row of 1980s development set back from the road. The property stands south of a large public park, the Bullcroft (Figs 1 and 2). This public parkland is a large green area within the town centre, identified as once within the circuit of the Town Rampart Defences (SAM1006293), with the north and west considered to hold a sequence of both Saxon and Medieval occupation, particularly the site of a monastic foundation (SAM1006329). The fronting property to the High Street is Grade II Listed, No.53 Flint Cottage (1059630), considered to stem from a 16th-century construction. The underlying geology is Northmoor Sand and Gravel, terrace gravel of the River Thames (BGS Geotitles; BGS 1980). It lies at a height of c.49m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological potential stems from its location in the historic centre of Wallingford, enclosed by the 9th-century 'Burh' defences (Airs *et al.* 1975). The Norman Castle is a later feature of the defensive circuit, on the north-east part of the burh (Dewey 2009, 18). Wallingford is recorded in the *Burghal Hidage*, a document of c.AD919 and lies adjacent to the River Thames west of an important crossing point of the river with increasing evidence of prehistoric occupation on its floodplains. The Bullcroft name arrived in that form in the 17th century, and stemmed from 'Bodecroft' of 15th-century date, indicating an area of temporary market stalls or 'booths' close to the 11th century Benedictine Priory and Church of Holy Trinity (Christie 2013, 258).

A number of archaeological observations have occurred in the NW quadrant of the historic town with others investigating its defensive circuit (e.g. Ford *et al.* 2012). The site of the Abbey once occupied a large part of this quadrant (Christie 2013, 273; fig. 7.13). Its church could be as little as 50m away as test pits, dug as part of the 'Burh to Borough' project, located remains of a 14th-century tiled floor of a medieval building (Courtney, in Christie 2013, 275). Others works have located structural foundations of flint and chalk nearby. There is also human burial evidence including a charnel pit (Ford 2004; Christie 2013, 263). The current site is to the rear of Flint House (Wallingford Museum) and Flint Cottage (No. 53) which are 16th-century in date. It is said these were constructed just after the Dissolution, which saw the land bought from the recently seized monastic institution, even reusing some of its building materials in its fabric and boundaries (Stokes 1947, 36; Gilbert 2010).

A watching brief for the rear extension (north) of the current site, did not uncover archaeological deposits, instead recording a deep layer a modern made ground (Beaverstock 2015).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project are to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved permanent monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in this instance the reduction of the 3.2m x 1.6m area for the steel frame of a raft foundation. Excavation was undertaken by hand, with spoil heaps checked for finds.

Results

The observations were confined to a small exposure, at the south of the property (Fig. 3). The width of the area was slightly wider than the extant extension to allow for an existing downpipe to the North East. The west edge

of the dig was parallel with the existing west wall, with the southern block-and-beam foundations exposed in the northern section. No natural geology was encountered in the works. A previous Test Pit (0.55m x 0.25m and 1.15m deep) (Fig. 4), was also open for inspection. It indicated a deep continuation of made ground below demolition rubble from 0.4-0.5m deep, and extending to the base of this excavation, at least 1m deep. One piece of roughly-shaped chalk, (c.200mm x 100m), was visible in section.

The concrete pavers (50) over the area had been lifted. This exposed layer of very mixed demolition deposit, of a loosely bounded light, calcareous silt sand mixed with a dense quantity of red brick and red ceramic tile metal and plastic (51).

At 0.28m, plastic drainage piping was uncovered, that serviced the house. The cut for these drains, of which there were three in total, and a thin water pipe, was filled with the same overburden of calcareous fill and rubble, though with pea-shingles bedding these pipes at their base, from 0.33m deep.

At 0.4m, the remains of a quarry-tile floor were exposed and recorded (Fig. 4; Pl.1). Each tile was a 220mm², with eight by six rows visible in the west (53). Three grey tiles were on this west side, though the east side was wholly grey, with stretcher brick edging or a wall to the north (54). These bricks were within a mortar bedding and measured 0.9m long (W-E) x 0.25m (N-S). This flooring is considered only a fragment that extending west and east beyond the limits of excavation though confined to the south by the remains of a wall, with its lime washed face only visible in section (55). This flooring, and a possibly associated wall (55), survived in section from 0.2m deep and extended no deeper than 0.48m. The construction of No.54 had obviously truncated the floor to the north and there was no suggestion that any remains continued further to the north when the northern extension was dug in 2015 (Beaverstock 2015).

The stretcher bricks containing a shallow frog (54) and grey quarry-tile flooring were considered to be of 19th-century date. The section of brick wall (55) in the south-west corner (Fig.4; Pl. 3), also related to the tile floor. The bricks of this wall were, however, unfrogged and possibly of 18th-century date. Its interior dimensions were truncated to the east, with its remains 1.07m long x 0.32m deep, containing five courses. No concrete or sand bedding, nor foundation, were present on either the structural brickwork or red tile flooring.

Below the tiled flooring was further made ground, that extended deeper than the 0.67m that the overall excavation required. This lowest deposit in sequence is interpreted as a levelling deposit (56), that has been created after the demolition of a previous building at this location. From the pottery and tile encountered this may have been created after the 17th century but before the 19th. The fill was a firm, dark brown clayey silt with occasional inclusions of chalk, light buff coloured fired clay, probably derived from larger pieces of broken up

ceramic building materials and charcoal pieces. A small quantity of the soil, from a vessel found on its side recovered from the western section, was retained for environmental analysis. This was located at a depth of 0.6m deep. Three pieces of identifiable broken peg tile, others being possible roof and floor tile, were noted in the works. Some small pieces of animal bone and pottery were also retained from the lower made ground (56).

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

Pottery weighing 319g was collected from made ground (56) (Appendix 1). Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (eve) and minimum number of vessels (MNV). Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows MPRG (1998).

Two body sherds of late medieval Cheam-type Surrey whiteware (CHEA) were recovered, one unglazed and the other with spots of green glaze externally.

The remainder of the assemblage comprised ten sherds of pottery from a near-complete small unglazed 'bottle' (Pl. 4) which had been reconstructed prior to analysis. The vessel had a flat base with unfinished angle, and was sub-biconical in form, with the upper 'half' slightly greater in height than the lower. The rim was slightly everted. Overall, the vessel was 130mm tall, with a base diameter of 69mm and a slightly ovoid rim (43 x 47mm). The fabric was fine sandy and orange in colour. The shape is reminiscent of Brill late medieval bottles, though this example is shorter and squatter than most examples from Oxfordshire (Mellor 1994, fig. 55 no.22), and similar products were made in the Surrey industries of late medieval and early post-medieval date (e.g. Pearce 1992, fig. 44, nos 407-409 – although these are also smaller), but both industries tended to use glaze, even if only in small quantities, on vessels of this form. It seems most likely to be an early post-medieval redware, perhaps of 16th-17th-century date, but it is also similar to late post-medieval unglazed redware (plantpot) fabrics (PMRW).

Ceramic building materials

Large quantities of ceramic building material were encountered on the site. Demolition deposits were identified in both layers 51 and 56. *In situ* structural deposits were also encountered, in the form of a floor (53) and the facing of a brick wall (55).

Large quantities of plain, broken brick and ceramic tile were found in the most recent deposit on the site (51), laid under concrete pavers. The sections of red tile and grey tile had been truncated in the centre of the site

by modern services, breaking the relationship between the west and the east side of these areas. However, it is possible these are from different phases of development, with the eastern development recorded on the 1968 OS map.

Three fragments of peg tile, two 19th-century fragments from the overburden (51) and one seemingly earlier fragment, from the lower made ground (56), were taken as a sample of the highly fragmentary material in this lowest deposit. This fragment was a sanded base flake of tile (4g). It was in a fine sandy fabric with sparse large clay pellets. It is likely to be a piece of plain roof tile, but there is a possibility that it could be a fragment of floor tile. A late medieval or post-medieval date is likely.

Animal bone by Ceri Falys

Six fragments of animal bone were recovered from the lower part of excavation, within the made ground (56), weighing 30g (Appendix 3).

The cortical bone surfaces were well preserved, although a moderate degree of fragmentation was noted for all pieces, ultimately limiting the ability to identify the species of origin of the elements. A total of two animal individuals were identified within the assemblage: one “large” (horse or cow) and one “medium” sized animal (sheep/goat or pig). The “large” individual was represented by two pieces of rib shaft(s). The “medium” sized animal was identified by the presence of two portions of mandible. Due to the amount of element fragmentation present, it was not possible to identify the specific species of origin. No further information could be retrieved from this collection of animal bone.

Interior soil sample from vessel

A small quantity of soil was retained and processed for environmental evidence. This 0.2L sample was largely similar to the made ground soil, however, no macro-environmental material was recovered.

Conclusion

The observations have successfully been undertaken, recording an *in situ* quarry-tiled floor and brick wall that correspond with the position of a malthouse on the Ordnance Survey map of 1877 (Fig 5) and subsequently a warehouse up to at least 1968 after which demolition took place. The relationship of this structure to Flint Cottage, to the south, remains uncertain. Recent research has identified a maltster, Richard Skinner, leasing ‘Stone Hall’ in 1655 (Pedgley and Clark 2011, 282), providing documentary evidence that links use of the site to

the 17th-century, and adds to the Tithe map, First Edition and later historic mapping, suggesting the malthouse (or its predecessor) could have predated the maps. Its development to a warehouse, which was demolished before the present row of houses was built (R. Pearce, per comms), seems to have occurred late in the sequence of the building's history.

The basal deposit of the excavation was a levelling layer deposited earlier than the 19th century that also contained earlier demolition material and finds including pottery of a late medieval to early Post-Medieval date.

The natural geology was not exposed during the groundworks.

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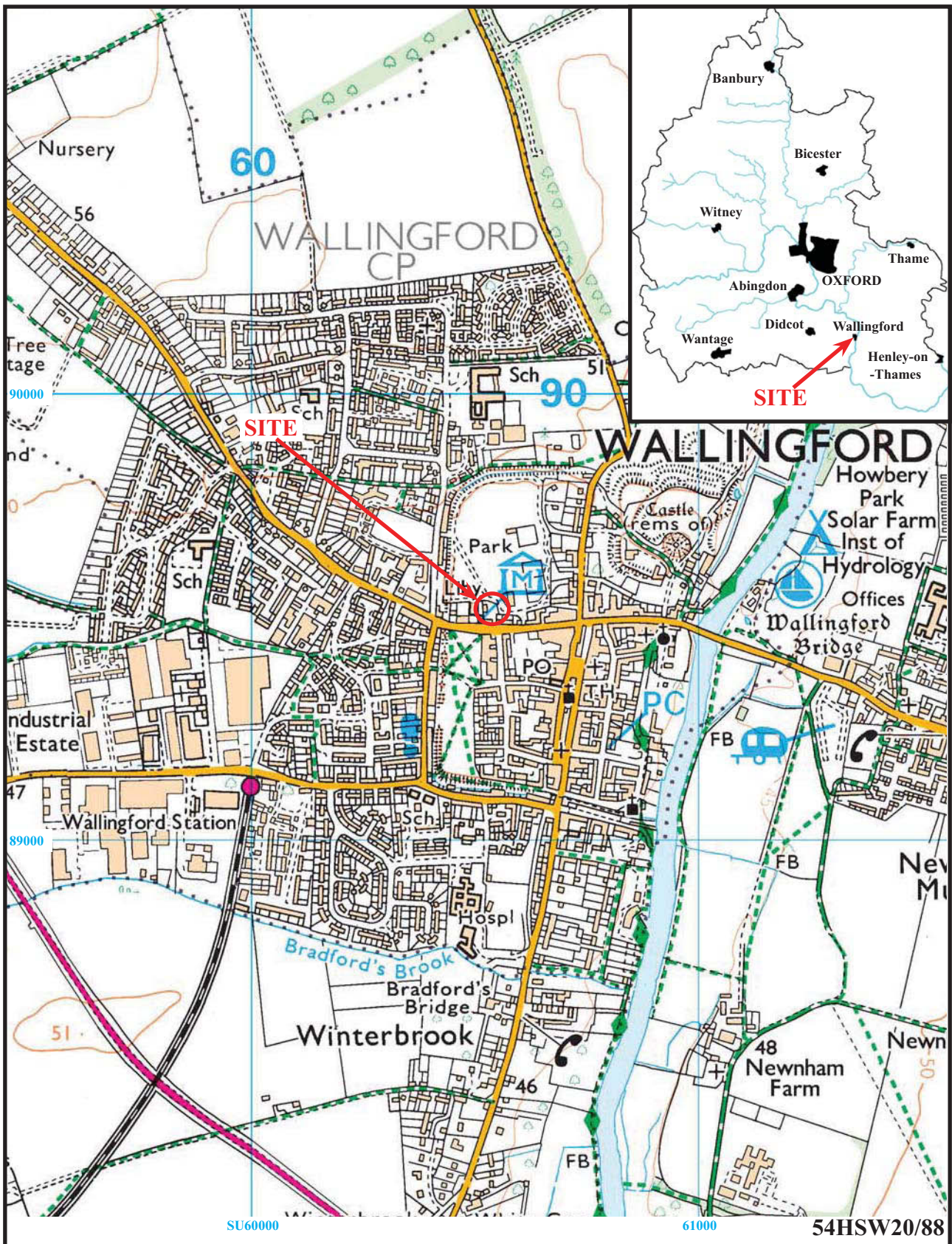
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APPENDIX 1: Deposit catalogue

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Dating</i>
	50	-	Stone paver	Modern
	51	Made ground	Demolition deposit	Modern
1	52	Truncations	Modern service trench	Modern
	53	Floor	Quarry tiles (portion)	19th-century
	54	Wall	Brick stretchers to north of grey tie	19th-century
	55	Wall	Face of interior wall (in section)	Late 18th-century
	56	Made ground	Levelling, rear of Flint Cottage	17th- to 19th-century

APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue

<i>Context</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt/g</i>	<i>MNV</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Rim</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Spot date</i>
56	CHEA	1	3	1			unglazed	14th-15th
56	CHEA	1	14	1			spots of green glaze	14th-15th
56	PMRW	10	302	1	bottle	everted	lime int & partially ext. Flat base, sub-biconical, 130mm tall, rim 43-47mm diam (100%), base 69mm diam.	15th-17th?



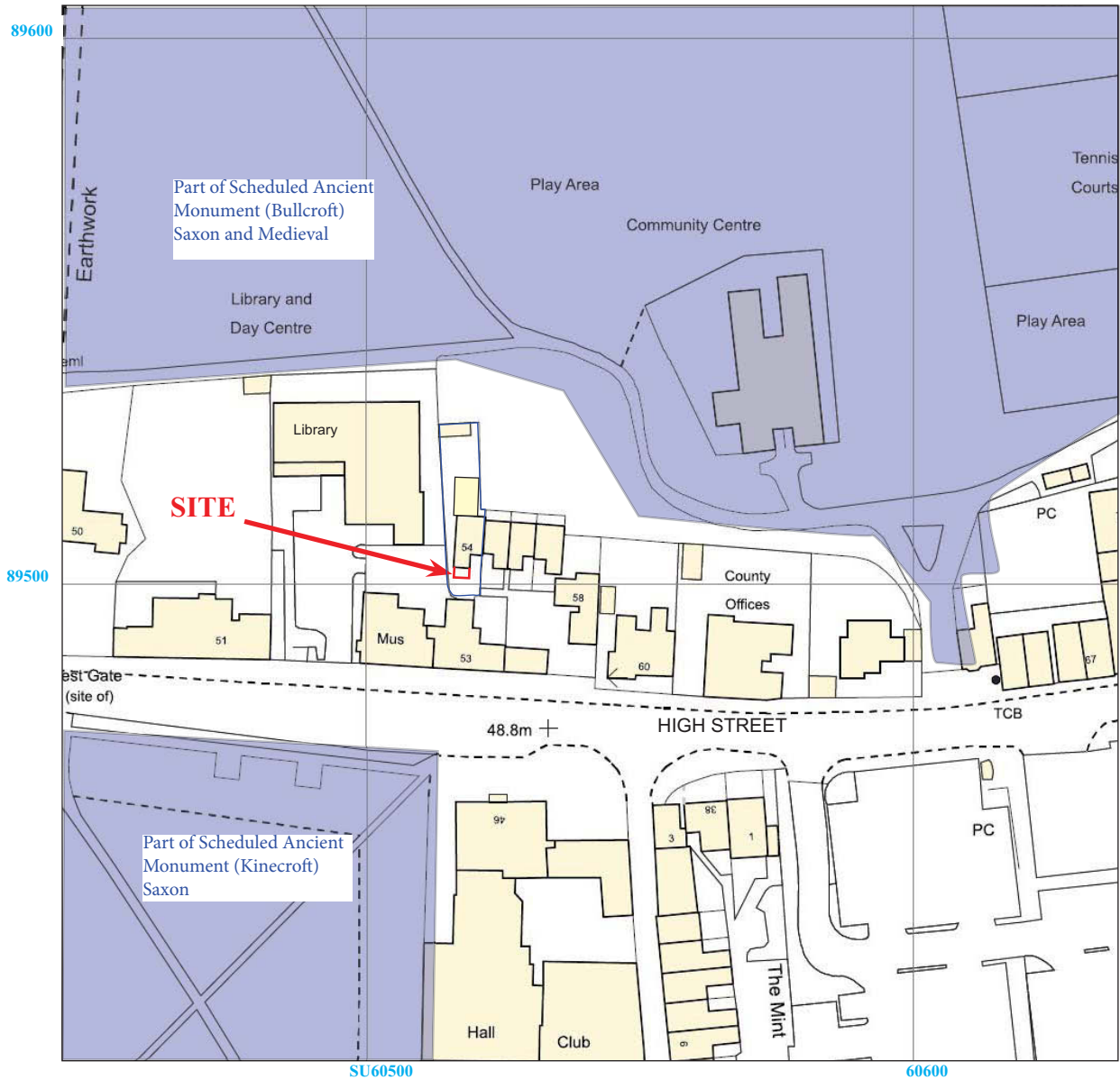
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Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire.

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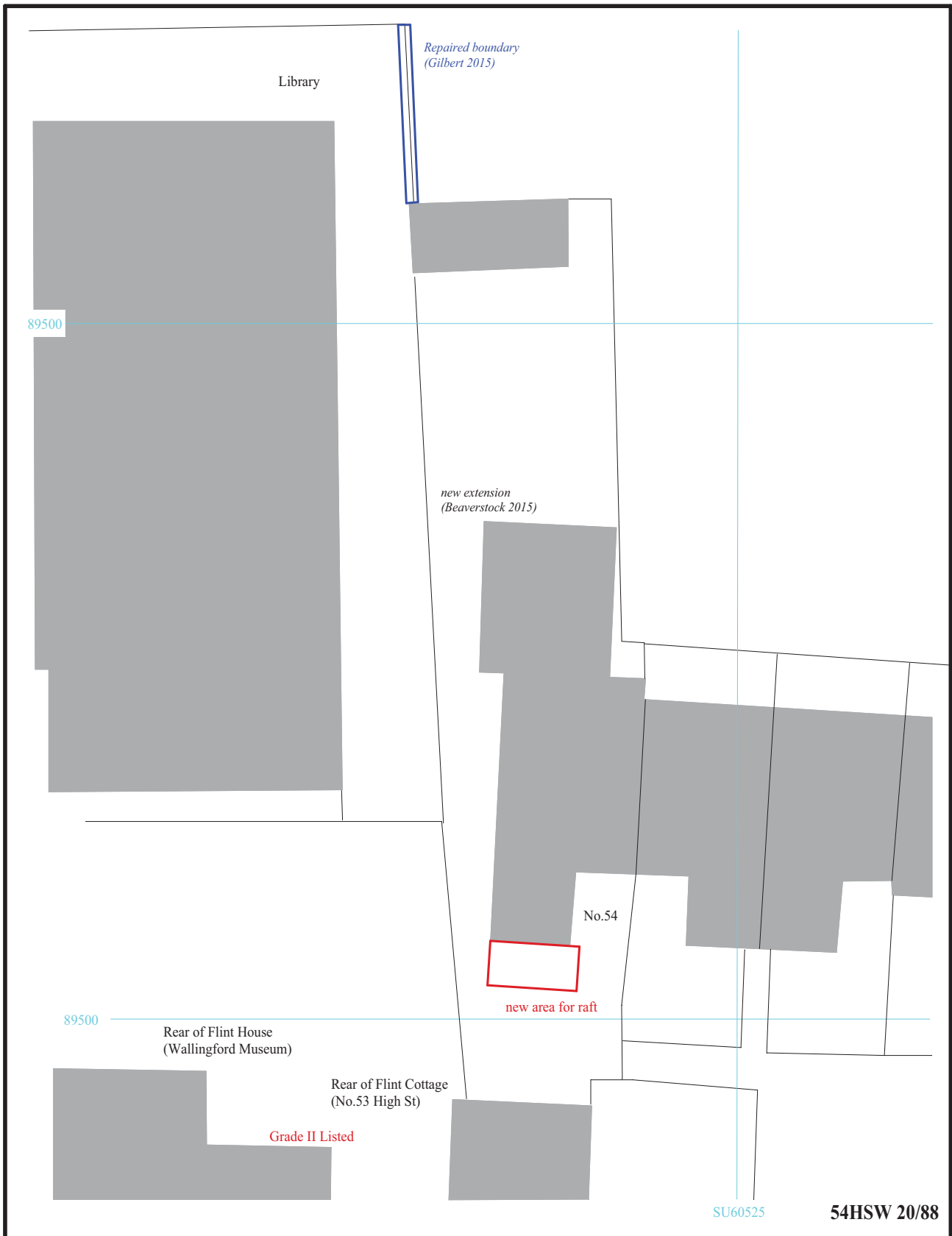
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off High Street, compared to Scheduling boundaries.

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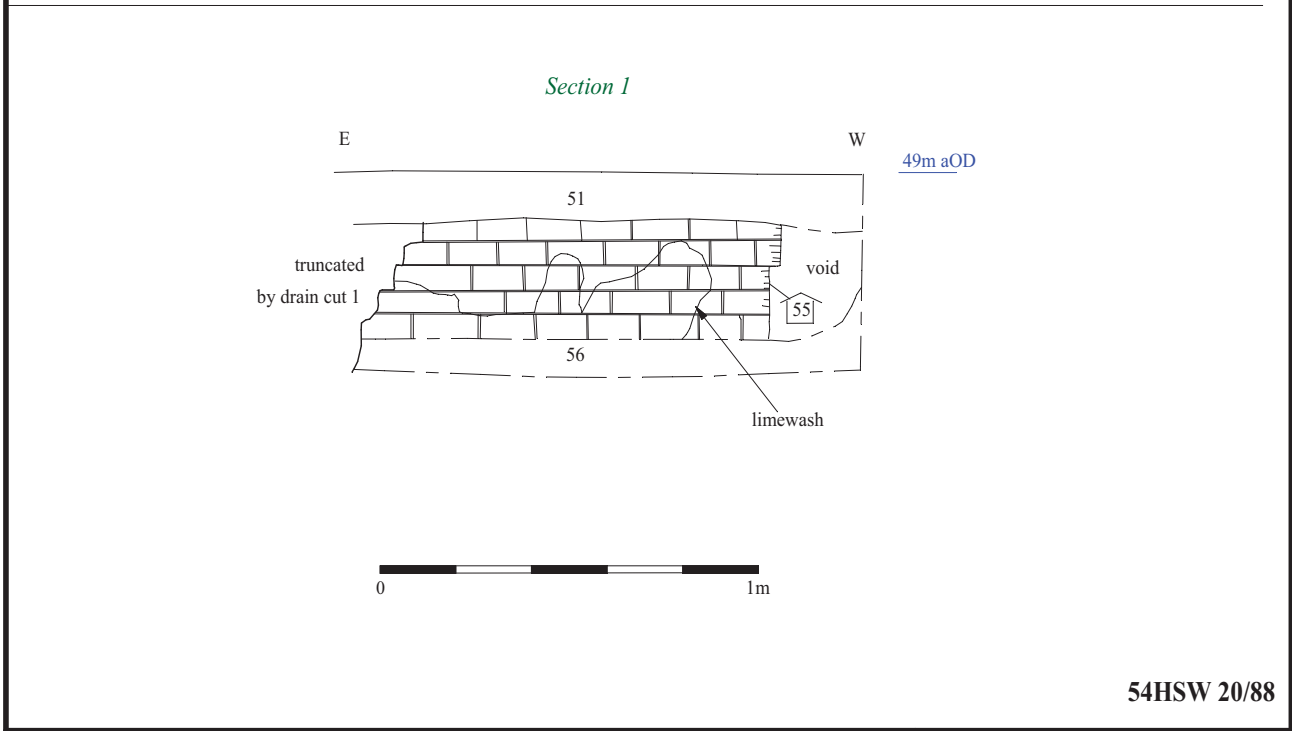
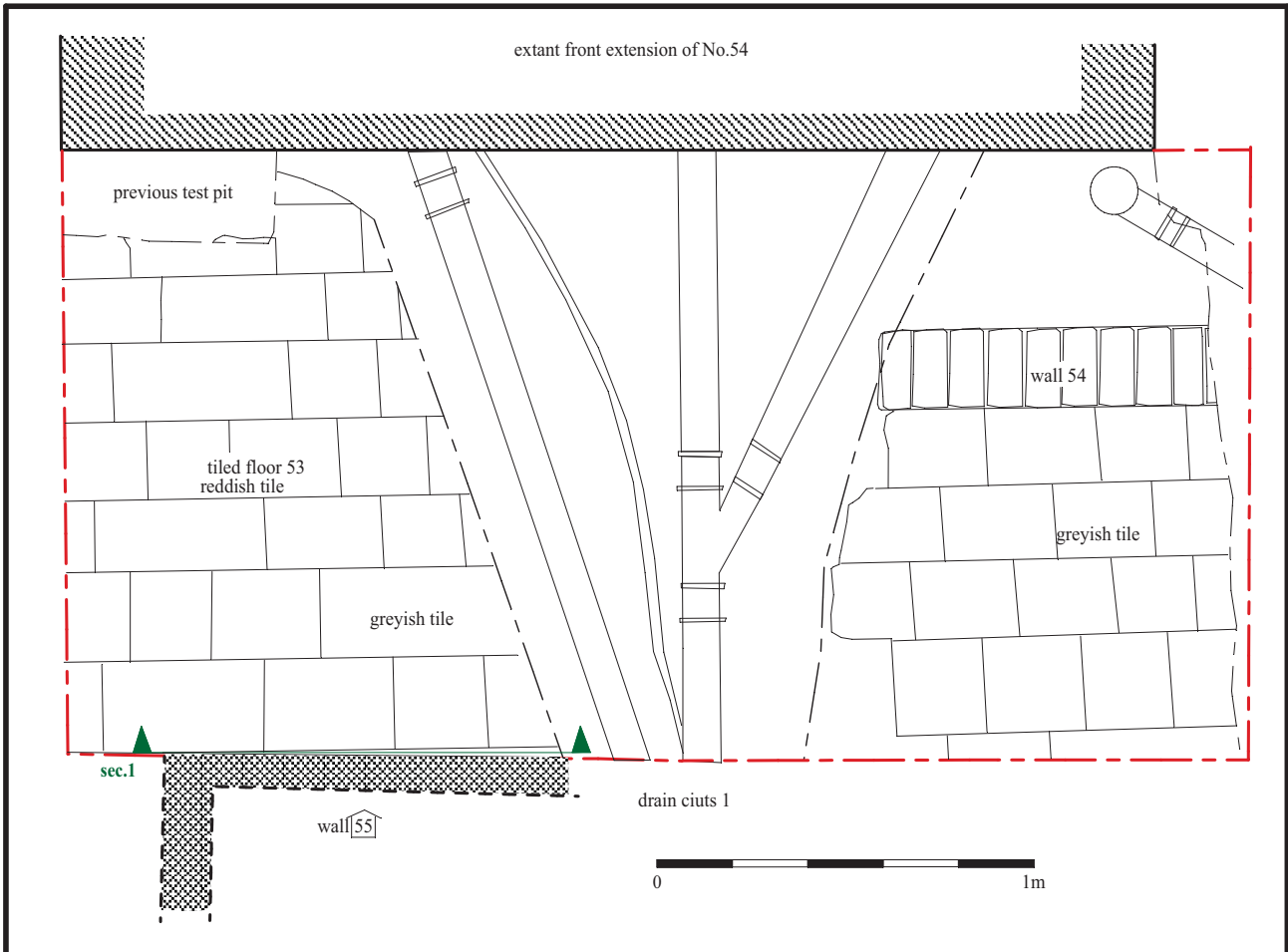


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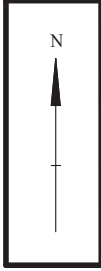
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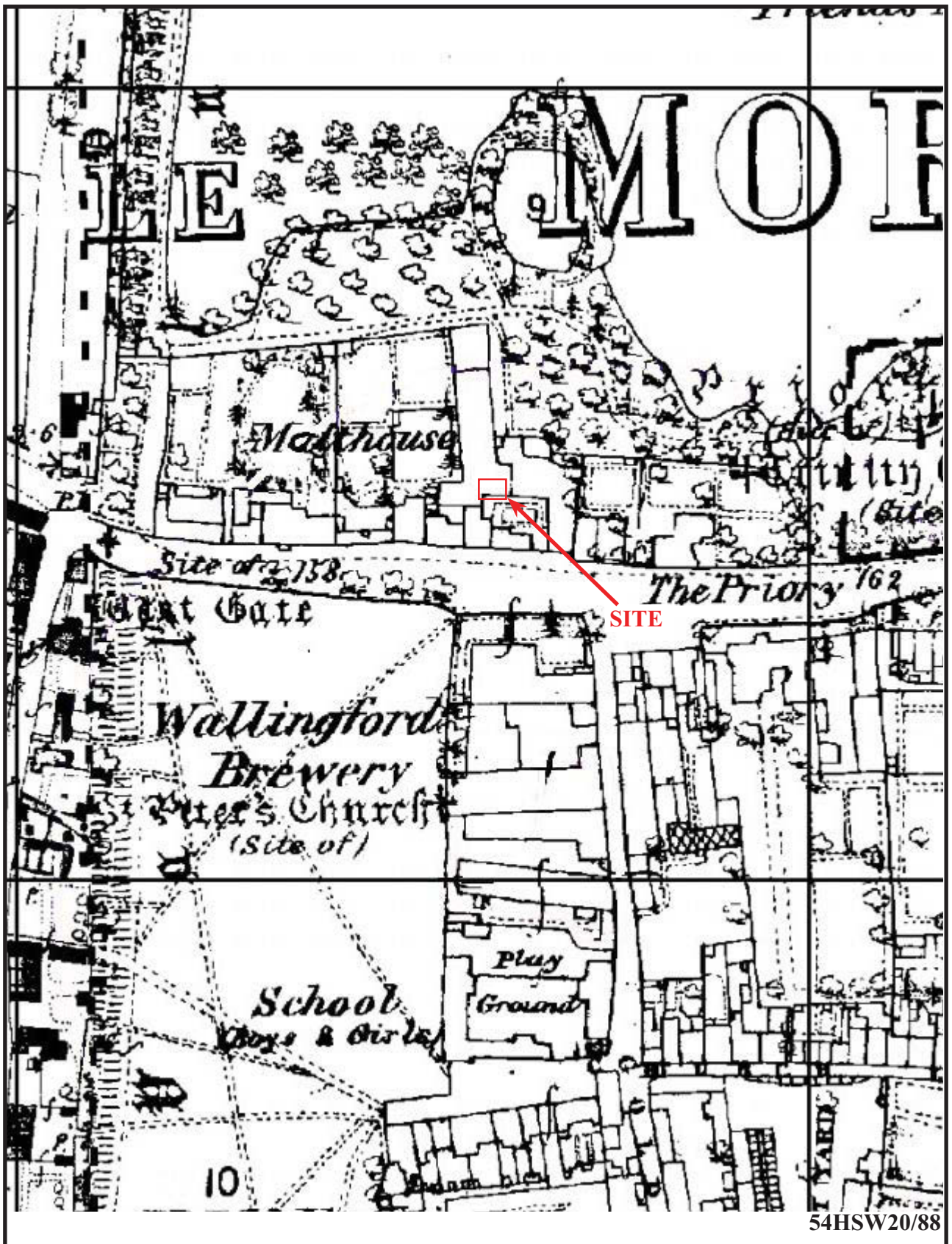
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Figure 4. Exposed floor surface (53) and wall (54) and wall in section (55).





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Figure 5. First Edition Ordnance Survey, 1877-8.



Plate 1. Truncated tiled floor (53), looking North, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 2. Finished excavation, exposing made ground (56).

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Truncated brick wall (55), in South West corner section. Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Near complete vessel, recovered from made ground (56). Scale: 5cm

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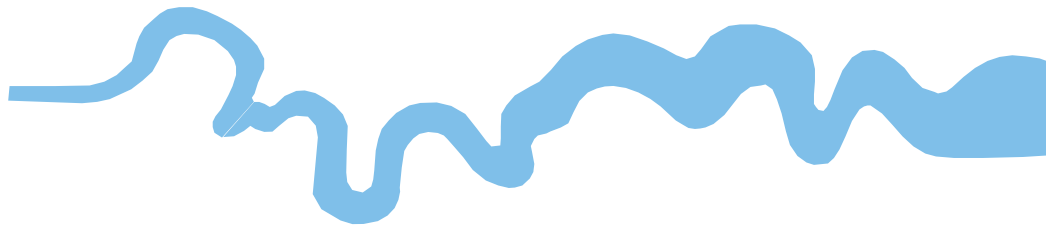
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Plates 3 and 4.

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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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