

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land adjacent to 3 Church Lane, Drayton,
Abingdon, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Muddin

Site Code: CLD20/51

(SU 4800 9427)

**Land adjacent to 3 Church Lane,
Drayton, Abingdon, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr and Mrs Longford

by Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CLD 20/51

November 2020

Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to 3 Church Lane, Drayton, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4800 9427

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th to 26th October 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: CLD 20/51

Area of site: 358 sq m

Summary of results: Observations were made during groundworks for a new property, that required much of the site to be reduced to expose the top of the natural geology. This revealed several ditches/gullies and pits of Medieval and Post Medieval date. They presumably related to properties aligned on Church Lane but which had gone out of use in Post-medieval times.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service, under accession code OXCMS:2020.78.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 2.12.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 2.12.20

Land adjacent to 3 Church Lane, Drayton, Abingdon, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 20/51

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief at land adjacent 3 Church Lane, Drayton, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4JS (SU 4800 9427) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Christelle Tippett of Anderson Orr Architects, The Studio, 70 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1LZ, for their clients, Mr and Mrs Longford.

Planning permission (19/V3186/FUL) has been granted by Vale of White Horse District Council for a single three-bedroom detached dwelling with integrated garage, on a land parcel north of 3 Church Lane. The consent is subject to two conditions (3 and 4) which relate to archaeology. Due to the potential of archaeological deposits surviving on the site that would be threatened by the development, an archaeological watching brief was required during groundworks. A written scheme of investigation was approved by the local planning authority as advised by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service and based on a brief provided by him (Oram 2020).

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. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin between 7th and 26th October 2020. The site code is CLD 20/51. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course with accession code OXCMS:2020.78.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the west of Church Lane in Drayton, just south of Abingdon, Oxfordshire (Figs 1 and 2). Church Lane is considered an important historic lane, leading north from the High Street (B4016), with the Church of St Peter (Grade II*) 120m to the south. The site lies immediately to the north of 3 Church Lane, known as Oldeholme, which is Listed (Grade II) (1052272). The underlying geology is Coombe deposits, of silt, sand and clay with gravel, overlying 2nd Terrace gravel of the River Thames (BGS 1971). The ground level of the site is retained by the boundary wall to the east, approximately 1m higher than that of the adjacent road, at *c.* 59m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, which notes the site's position relative to cropmarks believed to be of field systems and close to archaeologically excavated areas to the north and west (Oram 2020). These excavations, on land formerly associated with Manor Farm (Hull 1999; Challinor *et al.* 2004; Strachan 2015; Esteves 2018), uncovered features primarily of the early medieval period onwards. Middle Bronze Age pits were also found along with ditches and gullies of Iron Age, Roman and Middle-Saxon dates. Stock enclosures and droeways have also been recorded further north, representing prehistoric and Roman activity, again mixed with evidence of 11th-14th century enclosure (Anthony and Taylor 2006, 108). To the south of High Street, Early to Middle Saxon pottery was found, in later features, interpreted as ditches edging a trackway on a N-S alignment (Brady *et al.* 2019, 246).

The village, as *Draitune*, existed before the Domesday Survey (Williams and Martin 2002). A nationally important area of cropmarks exists off the Milton Road (SAM1004852), with a Neolithic *cursus* monument visible and Bronze Age barrows as cropmarks (Benson and Miles 1974; Barclay *et al.* 2003, 67). Overlaying this, in part, was an extensive early Saxon 'royal' settlement with halls and sunken-featured buildings (Brennan and Hamerow 2015).

The site lies adjacent to a building with 16th-century origins, which was extended to the south by the 18th century (Keevil 2019). There is a remnant of a later brick structure in the north-west corner of this area (Pl. 1), which appears as a larger detached structure on historic maps, probably of late 18th-century date (Keevil 2019).

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 which, in this instance, involved the reduction of much of the overburden of the site (Fig. 3).

Prior to excavation, a portion of the NE stone boundary wall was demolished to allow new access to be made into the site from Church Lane (Pl. 2). The site had been extended into the western enclosed land parcel by the removal of part of the rear (west) stone boundary wall (Fig. 2). This western area is not due to be part of the structural development of the site, instead used temporarily for material storage.

Results

Entrance widening (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

The site is separated from Church Lane by a high stone-built boundary wall. A 6m length was dismantled to road level to allow site access to be created. Ground reduction started from this opening and was undertaken with a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a bladed, wide bucket. This access area was *c.* 12m x 2.4m. In total, a 0.98m depth of overburden was removed to expose the top of the natural geology and revealed a ditch (1), described below.

Ground reduction (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Ground reduction comprised removal of *c.* 0.45m of topsoil (50) and *c.* 0.5m of made ground (51) containing 19th-century ceramic building material and 19th-century 'china' transfer printed pottery sherds with fragments of animal bone. This exposed the top of the natural geology (Pls 3 and 4).

Buried soil (55)

To the north-west a buried soil (55) was noted up to 0.4m deep beneath the made ground. Two rectangular pits (4 and 5) were cut through layer 55. Pit 4 was 0.95m wide and 3.3m long and 0.52m deep with a single fill of homogenous, dark brown clay with grey-brown silt mixed chalk and flint inclusions (57). It contained animal bone, charcoal, chalk, flint, fired clay, tile, all likely to be 19th-century

Pit 5 was 4.1m long and 1.3m wide and 0.6m deep. The fill (58) was a very dark grey clayey silt with very occasional charcoal fragment and machine-made peg tile.

Beneath the made ground/ buried soil and cutting the natural geology were seven linear features and two pits/postholes.

Linear features

A ditch aligned north-south along the street frontage was investigated by two slots (1, 12) which revealed it was c. 0.9m wide, and 0.27m deep (Fig. 4) with a fill of brown-yellow clay with grey silt and occasional flecks of chalk and charcoal (53). Two sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered from slot 1.

Ditch 2 was aligned North- South parallel to ditch 1 and 3.2m to its west. It terminated at its southern end. It was 0.5m wide and 1.05m deep (Pl. 5) and filled with a dark grey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal and chalk flecks (54). It contained two sherds of late Saxon pottery and one of early Medieval ware (11th-13th century).

Ditch 11 (Fig. 5; Pl. 5) was 1.1m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.28m deep. The fill of this ditch was a firm grey dark brown clayey silt (64), similar in composition to the gully past its northern break (54). This ditch contained no finds but aligned on ditch 2 to the north and may be contemporary with the latter.

In the south-west of the site were three converging ditches, branching from an eastern terminus. None of these ditches intersected with the N-S ditches.

Ditch 7 was 0.87m wide and 0.32m deep (Pl. 6). It was filled with a firm dark grey brown silty clay (60). It contained three sherds of Medieval pottery and some animals bone. Ditch 8 was a slight deviation north of the line of ditch 7.

Ditch 9/10 was 1.23m wide and 0.36m deep. It was filled with a firm dark grey brown clayey silt (62/63). Terminal slot 10, was filled with a dark brown grey clayey silt (63) which contained a fragment of bone and 2 sherds of pottery, one of Late Saxon and one of Medieval date.

Ditch (13), aligned North-South was cut obliquely by Ditch 1/2. This ditch was 0.8m wide and filled with a firm dark grey clay-silt (67) but no finds were recovered.

Pits/postholes

Two pits were found cutting the natural horizon

Pit 3 was 1.1m long and 0.75m across and 0.3m deep. It contained two fills. The upper fill (56), forming the east side of the pit, was a dark grey clay silt with occasional flecks of charcoal. The lower fill (61) comprised ash and charcoal. A piece of machine made peg tile and 9 sherds of post-medieval slipware date this feature.

Pit 6 was shallow, 0.33m in diameter and 0.08m deep, containing a single fill (59) of dark grey silty clay but no finds.

Footings for new dwelling

The footing trenches were dug down from the stripped surface and were observed but no new deposits were revealed.

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

Nineteen sherds of pottery weighing 194g were recovered from five contexts (Appendix 2). Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (EVE). Medieval fabric codes were assigned from the Oxfordshire fabric series (Mellor 1994), with post-medieval wares based on the author's fabric series. Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows other published works (MPRG 1998). The results were input digitally into a database which forms the archive catalogue.

Table 1: Pottery quantification by fabric

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date range</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>EVE</i>
OXB	Late Saxon Oxford ware	Late 8th-early 11th century	3	35	0.04
OXY	Late Saxon-Medieval Oxford ware	Mid-11th-13th century	1	1	
OXAG	Late Saxon-Medieval Abingdon ware	Mid-11th-early 15th century	2	12	
OXAQ	Medieval East Wiltshire ware	Mid-12th-Mid-15th century	4	15	0.05
PMSW	Post-medieval slipware	17th-18th century	9	131	0.20
<i>Totals</i>			<i>19</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>0.29</i>

Three sherds of Late Saxon Oxford 'shelly ware' were recovered from two contexts. Two of these were small, abraded body sherds from ditch 2 (deposit 54). The third was a large rim sherd from a wheel-turned dish, similar to examples illustrated in the Oxford regional synthesis (Mellor 1994, 40: fig. 7), found within ditch 9 (deposit 62). Wheeling-turning was a late development in this fabric, suggesting an early 11th-century date for the vessel.

A small sherd of sand-tempered Oxford ware, wheel-turned, was found in gully 2 (deposit 54). This was not closely datable, but suggests an early Medieval date for this feature.

Fine, sandy Abingdon ware (OXAG, ABA) was present in two features, but both were body sherds, also not closely datable within the broad medieval date range of this fabric. They came from ditches 1 and 7.

The most frequent Medieval-type was East Wiltshire ware, which corresponds with the Newbury and Kennet Valley wares. The sherds contained more flint than limestone and may be of early date. However, one simple flaring jar rimsherd was wheel finished. The sherds came from ditches 1, 7 and 9.

Nine sherds of a post-Medieval small, slipware bowl recovered from pit 3 (deposit 56). This bowl was internally decorated with oval spots of white slip under the orange glaze and is likely to be 17th-18th-century. This post-Medieval slipware bowl is from an unknown provenance.

Small quantities of 'Late Saxon' pottery were recovered, although most were small and abraded, the main exception being a 'Late Saxon' shelly ware dish rim of probable 11th-century date. The early Medieval period was represented by only a single sherd of Oxford ware. Abingdon and Kennet Valley-type were more frequent, comparatively, with those expected in this part of the country. Collectively, as an assemblage it is varied, seen elsewhere in nearby excavations, (rear of 58-80 Abingdon Road Drayton) and similarly distributed to the nearby excavation at Dovecote Farm (Brady *et al.* 2019, 250), which displays earlier pottery in a later medieval feature, with residual 8th-century fabrics evident. Although most of the sherds are too small and scattered to provide confident and close dating, it appears that several ditches on the site were filled in during the medieval period and the presence of these sherds in largely unabraded condition suggests occupation in the near vicinity.

Ceramic building material

A single piece of ceramic building material (CBM), representing a sample of the later material identified on the site. Occasional fragmentary pieces of brick and tiles of 19th-century date were present in two of the upper site deposits (51 and 52) but not retained. An elongated pit (6), contained scraps of plain tiles, with this pit cutting layer 55. No ceramic building material was retained from the lower portion of this feature once formation level had been reached, assuming they are 19th-century.

One fragment of tile was recovered from pit 3 (56). It was a corner piece of a post-Medieval fragment of plain roof tile, with circular peg hole. The fabric was fine sandy with streaks and pellets of cream-coloured clay running through a mainly orange matrix.

Animal bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from four features, weighing a total of 634g. Twenty-five fragments of bone were present for analysis (Appendix 3). The majority of bone was well preserved; however, a significant amount of fragmentation was noted in most contexts, which limited the amount of element and species identification.

The assemblage contained a minimum of two animal individuals: one cow, and one sheep/goat. Evidence of at least one "large" sized animal was recovered from pit 4 (deposit 57) and ditch 7 (deposit 60). Of these "large" fragments, a cow was identified by the presence of a single loose tooth in ditch 7. Highly fragmented pieces of a proximal portion of a sheep/goat metatarsal were recovered from feature 12 (deposit 66).

Highly fragmented animal bone was also noted from late post-Medieval pit 4 but not retained.

Charred Plant Remains By Elspeth St. John-Brooks

Four samples of 8L were taken from ditch 1 (60), 3 (63) and 4(64) and pit 2 (61). The samples were floated and sieved using a 0.25mm mesh and air dried. Identification was carried out using published keys (Jacomet 2006, Biejerinkc 1976; Zohary and Hopf 2000), online resources (<http://www.woodanatomy.ch/> and <http://www.plantatlas.eu/za.php>). (Appendix 4).

Charred plant macrofossils were present in all four of the samples. The preservation of the charred seeds was relatively decent. In total 383 grains were identified in the four samples. These consisted of indeterminate cereal grains, Oat grains (Poaceae, *Avena*), wheat grains (Poaceae, *Triticum*) and barley grains (Poaceae *Hordeum*). In particular ditches 1(60) and 3(63) had the majority of all three types of cereal grains. Wheat was the most abundant grain in all samples.

Charcoal fragments were present in all samples, however mostly in the form of micro-charcoal, the only identifiable fragments came from ditch (160) and 3(63). In total 12 fragments of oak (*Quercus*) were identified. The preservation of the charcoal fragments was generally poor and the majority of the fragments were too small to enable successful fracturing that reveals identifying morphological characteristics. This assemblage of charcoal is too small to make valuable interpretations of wood usage at this site.

The composition of the grain remains from this pit and all three ditches are all similar, and it is probable therefore that these assemblages reflect the completion of the same activities resulting in the intentional deposition or accumulation of domestic waste. These grains also provide evidence of cereal farming and processing likely relating to local cereal utilisation associated with the local diet (Qin 2017).

Conclusion

Archaeological observations have been successfully completed during the groundworks. A surprising density of archaeological deposits was revealed as the plot was stripped of overburden to expose the top of the natural geology (the archaeologically relevant horizon). The deposits comprised several linear features certainly or probably of medieval date (11th-15th century) along with an undated pit. Three post-medieval pits were also revealed. The linear features are likely to be boundaries defining property and/ or fields and paddocks in use during the medieval period, presumably relating to properties on Church Lane, whose alignment they share. These boundaries seem to have gone out of in Post-medieval times with the land incorporated into larger properties.

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<http://www.plantatlas.eu/za.php> - Online Digital Plant Atlas

<http://www.woodanatomy.ch/> - Online Digital Wood Archive

APPENDIX 1: Deposit details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Dating</i>
	50	Layer	Topsoil/turf	
	51	Layer	Made ground	19th-century
	52	Layer	Infill behind east boundary and made ground	19th-century
	55	Layer	Buried soil/ subsoil	
1	53	Ditch	Continuation of ditch 12.	Medieval (12-15th C)
2	54	Ditch	Ditch terminus, possible relation to 11.	Medieval (11-13th C)
3	56, 61	Pit	-	
4	57	Pit	Cuts 55 and natural geology	post-16th-century
5	58	Pit	Cuts 55; possible 18th-century pit	post-18th-century
6	69	Pit	-	
7	60	Ditch	Respects ditch 11	Medieval (12-15th C)
8	65	ditch	Splits from ditch 7	
9	62	Ditch	Continuation of ditch 10.	Medieval (12-15th C)
10	63	Ditch	Continuation of ditch 9.	Medieval (12-15th C)
11	64	Ditch	possible relation to 2.	
12	66	Ditch	Continuation of 1.	Medieval (12-15th C)
13	67	ditch	Unexcavated, earlier than ditch 1/12.	

APPENDIX 2: Pottery quantification and distribution by fabric.

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>MNV</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Rim</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Dates</i>
1	53	OXAG	U	1	5	1				M.11-E.15
1	53	OXAQ	U	1	5	1				M.12-M.15
2	54	OXY	U	1	1	1				M.11-13
2	54	OXB	U	2	7	2				L.8-E.11
3	56	PMSW	FP	9	131	1	BL	BD		17-18
7	60	OXAQ	U	1	3	1			poss same vessel as rim	M.12-M.15
7	60	OXAQ	R	1	5	1	JR	FLAR	wheel-finished rim	M.12-M.15
7	60	OXAG	U	1	7	1				M.11-E.15
9	62	OXB	R	1	28	1	DS	FLAR	wheel-finished - late type, cf Mellor fig. 7	L.8-E.11
9	62	OXAQ	U	1	2	1				M.12-M.15

APPENDIX 3: Animal bone catalogue

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Cow</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Unident.</i>	<i>Comment</i>
4	57	2	170	-	2		-	“large” rib shaft and long bone shaft fragment
7	60	18	414	1	14		3	cow tooth, “large” fragmented mandible and humerus shaft
9	62	1	8	-	-		1	unidentified
12	66	4	42	-	-	4	-	sheep/goat proximal metatarsal

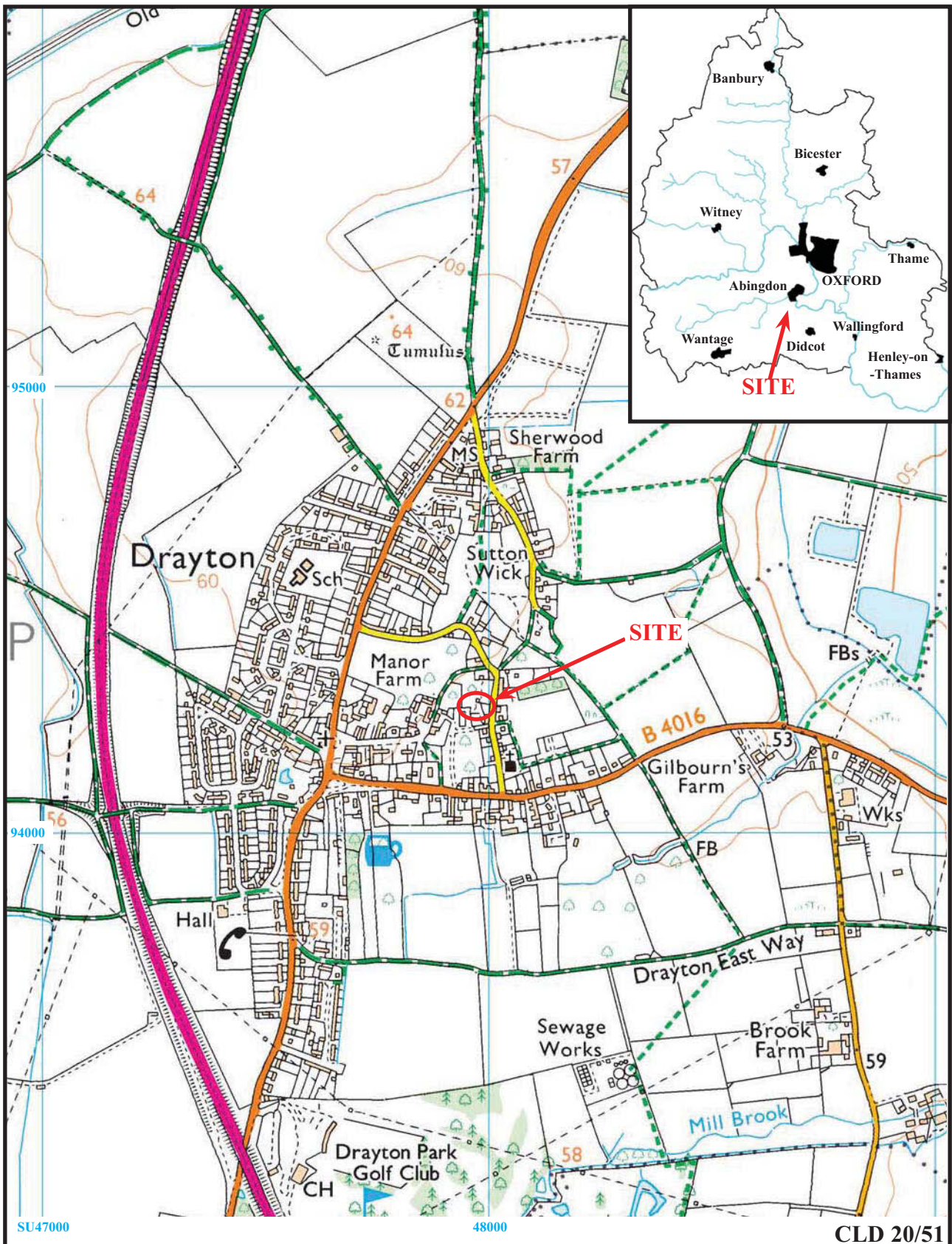
APPENDIX 4: Plant Macrofossils

Table 4A Plant remains *Taxonomy and Nomenclature follow Stace (1997).*

Sample Number	1	2	3	4	
Feature Number	60	61	63	64	
Context Number	7	9	10	11	
Feature Type	Ditch	Pit	Ditch	Ditch	
LATIN BINOMAL					COMMON NAME
POACEAE, <i>Avena</i>	26	1	18	2	Oat Grains
POACEAE, <i>Triticum</i>	28		8		Wheat
POACEAE, <i>Hordeum</i>	115	2	101	9	Barley
Indeterminate Cereal	23	1	22	27	Indeterminate Cereal

Table 4B Charcoal *Taxonomy and nomenclature follow Schweingruber (1978). Numbers are identified charcoal fragment for each sample.*

Sample Number		1	2	3	4
Feature Number		60	61	63	64
Context Number		7	9	10	11
Feature Type		Ditch	Pit	Ditch	Ditch
No. fgts.		24	2	6	1
Max. size (mm)		102	16	30	21
Latin	Vernacular				
<i>Quercus</i>	Oak	11		1	
Indeterminate	Indeterminate	13	2	5	1

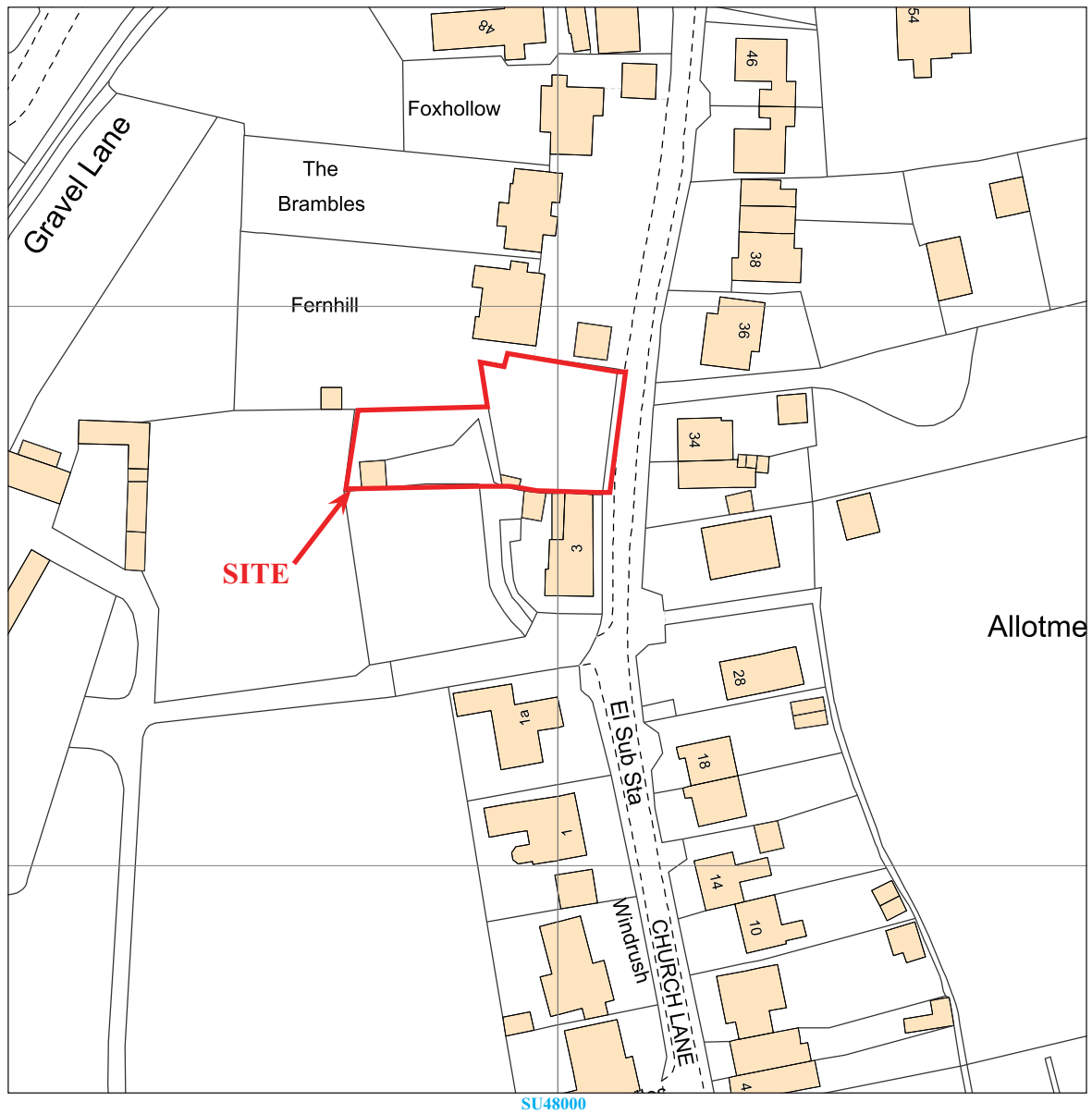


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Figure 1. Location of site within Drayton and Oxfordshire.

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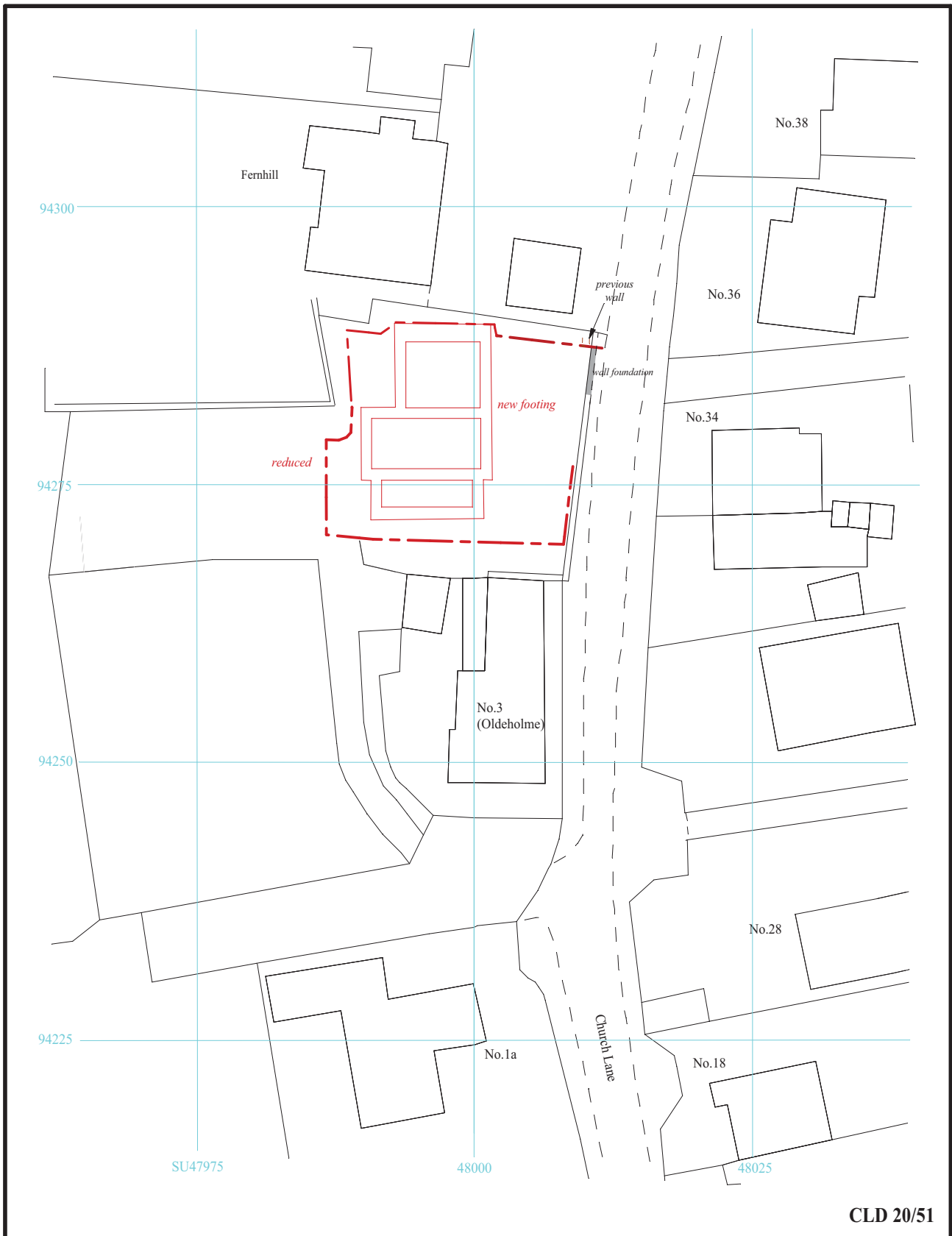
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Church Lane.

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Figure 3. Location of new footings in reduced area.

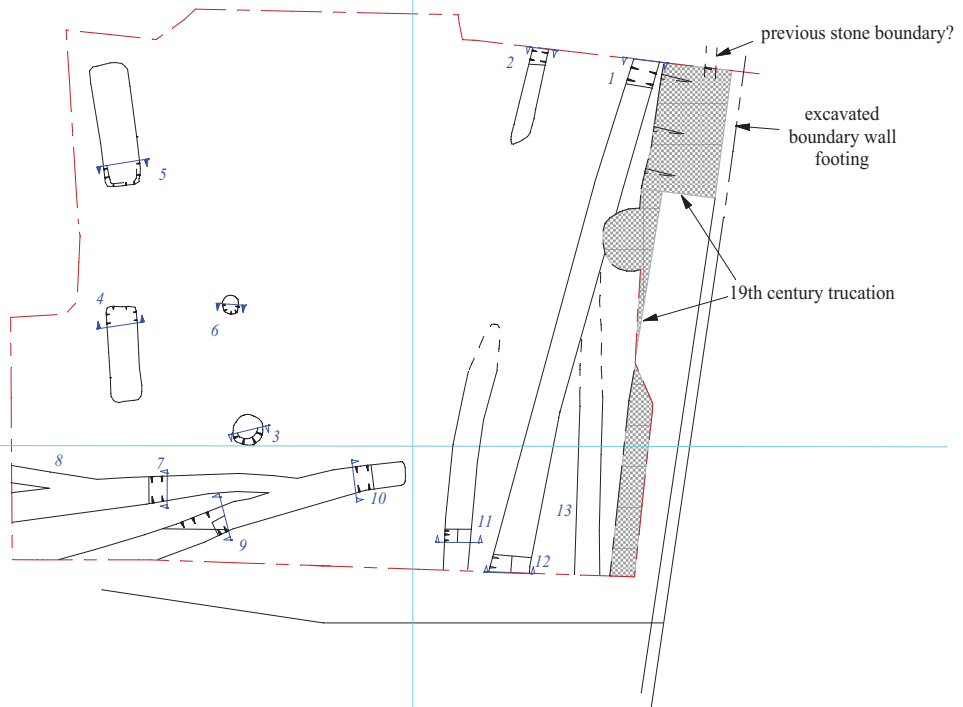


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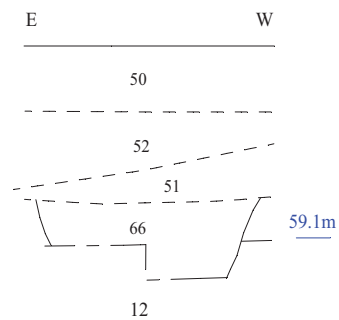
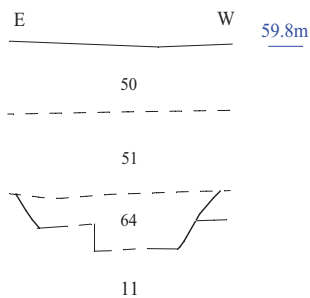
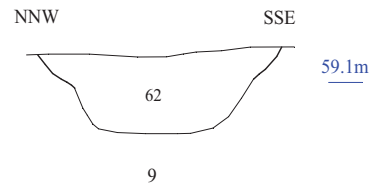
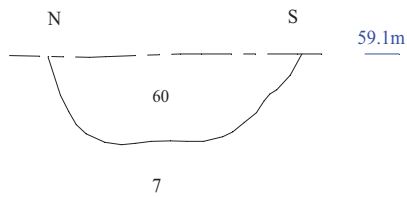
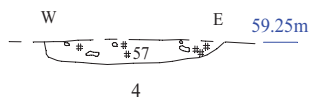
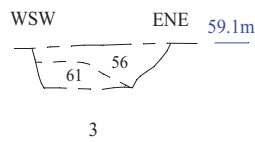
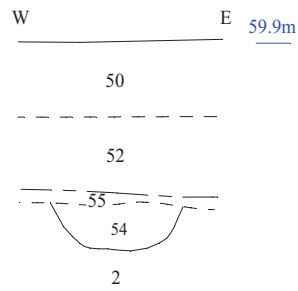
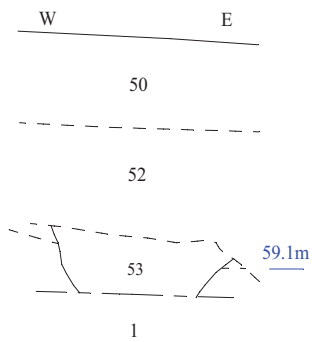
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Figure 4. Detail of features at formation level strip.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Remnant of structure in northwest corner of site, looking North East



Plate 2. Excavation of new access and ground reduction, looking South West, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Formation level stripped in south east, looking North West, Scales: 1m x2.



Plate 4. Formation level stripped in western and southern areas, looking North East.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Gully terminus (2), looking North, Scale: 1m.



Plate 6. Ditch (7) section, looking East, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.

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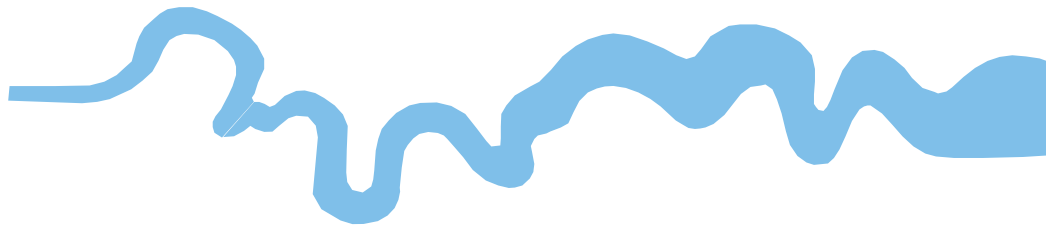
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Plates 5 and 6.

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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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