

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Peartree Cottage, 15 Wharf Road,  
Shillingford, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Maisie Foster and Elspeth St. John-Brooks**

**Site Code: PCS20/145**

**(SU 5945 9267)**

**New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage, 15 Wharf Road,  
Shillingford, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**for Ms F Cook**

by Elspeth St. John-Brooks and Maisie Foster

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PCS 20/145

**January 2021**

## Summary

**Site name:** Peartree Cottage, 15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 5945 9267

**Site activity:** Archaeological Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 8th December 2020

**Project coordinator:** Tim Dawson

**Site supervisor:** Elspeth St. John-Brooks

**Site code:** PCS 20/145

**Area of site:** c.50 sq m

**Summary of results:** Monitoring of the area stripped for the footprint of the new pool revealed two features, a pit and ditch, the former certainly of Medieval date, cutting the natural geology. A collection of charred plant remains was recovered from the medieval pit suggesting the processing of arable produce nearby. Much modern dumping across the area was also revealed. The ditch is more probably post-medieval but only tentatively dated.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service under the accession code OXCMS:2020.90.

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# **New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage, 15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Recording Action**

by Maisie Foster and Elspeth St. John-Brooks

**Report 20/145**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Peartree Cottage, 15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire (SU 59469 92663). The work was commissioned by Ms. Nicky Brock of Carter Jonas Estate Agents (Oxford), Mayfield House, 256 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DE on behalf of their client, Ms. Fenella Cook.

Planning permission (P20/S2095/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new swimming pool at Peartree Cottage. 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 archaeology. These conditions require the approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological watching brief by the Local Planning Authority and the implementation of the watching brief during groundworks and its subsequent reporting.

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 field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Clare King, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Elspeth St. John-Brooks on 8th December 2020 and the site code is PCS 20/145.

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:2020.90.

## **Location, topography and geology**

Shillingford is a small village adjacent to a junction of the A4074 and A329. Wharf Lane is towards the south end of the village, ending at the River Thames, to the west of Shillingford Bridge. The site is at a property east of Wharf Road, a residential cul-de-sac linking with the riverfront in the south (Figs 1 and 2). The underlying geology is First Terrace gravel deposit of the River Thames (Northmoor Formation) (BGS 1980). The site lies at a height of c.48m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site had been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Clare King of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (King 2020). In summary this potential stems from the site's location in general within the archaeologically rich Upper Thames Valley where numerous sites have been recorded from the air, gravel extraction and other fieldwork in the area (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick *et al.* 2009; Benson and Miles 1974). For example, the site lies within the hinterland of the Iron Age and Roman town of Dorchester, 2km to the north-west. Recent fieldwork to the south-east, just to the north of Benson, and to the north-east at Warborough has revealed a Middle Bronze Age field system (Taylor in prep; Sanchez and Foster 2019) with further Late Iron Age enclosure and a rich burial also at Benson (Taylor 2018). More specific interest in the site comes from the presence of an undated enclosure complex to the east, probably of Roman or Iron Age date. A number of listed buildings nearby are of earlier post-medieval date but might indicate the presence of early (medieval) occupation in the vicinity.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of this recording action was to monitor all invasive groundworks at Peartree Cottage during the construction of a new swimming pool. All archaeological features were to be excavated and recorded, with samples taken where appropriate. All stripping of overburden was undertaken with a 360°-type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine work was conducted under continuous archaeological supervision.

## **Results**

The area of the new swimming pool measured 9.7m by 5.3m and was monitored to a depth of 0.75m (Fig. 3) where the natural geology was identified, which was yellow brown sandy gravel. The stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.3m of topsoil overlying 0.25m of brick rubble made ground overlying 0.2m of redeposited natural gravel. This overlay the natural gravel geology proper. In this area two features of archaeological interest were identified below the made ground (Appendix 1).

### Ditch 1 (Pl. 1)

This ditch was 1.58m wide and orientated roughly north to south, though slightly irregular in line. The ditch had a sharp V-shaped profile up to 0.81m deep (Fig. 4) and was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy clay (53) overlain by a dark greyish brown sandy silt. A step in the profile on the west side (fill 53) might indicate an earlier version of the ditch. Four fragments of brick/tile suggest a post-medieval date for the feature. This ditch was overlain by brick rubble made ground.

### Pit 2 (Pls 3 and 4)

This large pit was 2.5m long by 1.12m wide in the south-east corner of the excavated area. It was 0.47m in depth and had a bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 4). It was filled by a dark greyish brown sandy silt (57) overlain by a mid-yellow brown sandy silt (56). Eight pieces of Medieval pottery were recovered from fill 57 along with a small fragment of brick/tile and charred plant remains. The pit was overlain by the brick rubble made ground most notably on its north-western edge, including a thin band of gravel (55) possibly laid as a bedding layer.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery and ceramic building material by Sue Anderson*

Eight sherds of pottery weighing 67g were collected from pit 2, context (57) (Appendix 2). Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (eve) and minimum number of vessels (MNV). Medieval fabric codes were assigned from the Oxfordshire fabric series (Mellor 1994). Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows MPRG (1998). An Access database forms the archive catalogue, summarized in Appendix 2.

Four sherds were grey sandy coarsewares with fine to medium sand tempering and occasional mica, ferrous oxide or chert inclusions. One of these was a jar rim (260mm diameter), comparable with a Wallingford ware example from Abingdon (Mellor 1994, fig. 16.2). The sherds fall into the South-East Oxfordshire ware tradition, although their exact source is uncertain.

Four sherds were part of an early Brill/Boarstall jug, decorated with roughly-executed incised horizontal lines and splashes of light green glaze, comparable with a complete jug from Oxford (Mellor 1994, pl. 5).

These sherds suggest a 13th-century date for the fill. However a small fragment of possibly later brick was also recovered from the context (see below).

### Summary and discussion

The small assemblage comprises local sandy greywares, comparable with examples found in Wallingford but possibly also within the range of Abingdon wares as described by Mellor. The glazed sherds recovered from the same context were part of a Brill/Boarstall jug of probable 13th-century date. Products of these kilns were ubiquitous across Oxfordshire from the 13th to the 15th centuries, but the early coarse fabric appears to have been used for glazed vessels in the 13th century, after which only coarsewares were made in this fabric.

### Ceramic building material (CBM)

Five small pieces (29g) of CBM were recovered from two contexts (Appendix 3). Four were from ditch 1, fill 54 and comprised a fragment of plain roof tile in a fine sandy fabric, and three abraded pieces of ?brick in fine sandy fabrics with some ferrous oxide inclusions – these are all likely to be of post-medieval date. A single flake of the struck surface of a ?brick was recovered from fill 57 of pit 2, in a slightly coarser hard dark purple fabric with ferrous and rounded ‘rock’ inclusions. This was found in association with 13th-century pottery and could be part of a medieval brick, but it seems more likely to be an intrusive fragment of late to post-medieval date.

### *Clay tobacco pipe by Cristina Mateos*

A single fragment of clay pipe was recovered from the made ground, weighing 6g. It consisted of a fragment of stem and the bottom of the bowl. The spur has a single symbol of a wheel or rosette incuse on both sides. The bore size of this piece is 3/64” which is likely to indicate a 19th century date, though bore size by itself is not always a reliable guide.

### *Charred Plant Remains By Elspeth St. John-Brooks*

Two bulk soil samples were taken, from ditch 1 and pit 2. These samples were floated and sieved using a 0.1mm mesh, air dried and the flot retained for analysis. The plant macrofossils were examined under magnifications ranging from a x8 hand lens and a x50 to x1000 lower powered microscope. Identification was carried out using published works (Jacomet 2006; Zohary and Hopf 2000), and online resources (<http://www.plantatlas.eu/za.php> and <http://www.woodanatomy.ch/>). Results can be seen in Appendix 4.

Charred plant macrofossils were found in sample 2 from pit 2, deposit 57. The preservation of the charred seeds was moderate, the seeds were likely exposed to higher temperatures due to the grains’ broken surfaces and loss of structural characteristics (Charles *et al.* 2015). In total 86 seeds were identifiable. These consisted of 23 indeterminate cereal grains, 6 oat grains (*Avena sp.*), 39 wheat grains (*Triticum sp.*), 5 barley grains (*Hordeum vulgare*) and 3 grass family (POACEAE) seeds. Wheat was the most abundant seed present. Specific species identifications were not possible due to the affects of charring and moderate level of preservation.

Very limited charcoal was found, all <5mm in size and classified as micro-charcoal which makes the fragments too small to enable successful fracturing revealing identifying morphological characteristics. This assemblage of charcoal is too small to make valuable interpretations of wood usage at this site.

The plant macrofossil remains showed wheat, oats and barley, as well as indeterminate cereal grains, together with simple grass seeds, likely weeds, this assemblage suggests the population were utilizing cereals and undertaking cultivation in the area. The pit deposit from which this sample was taken is likely to represent the deposition or accumulation of domestic waste associated with fires and cooking. This provides evidence of cereal farming and cereal processing relating to local plant exploitation as a food source and therefore evidence of the local diet of the area during the Medieval period.

## Conclusion

This recording action has produced evidence of medieval and post-medieval activity on the site. The presence of pit 2 suggests nearby occupation of the area in the 11th to 13th centuries, pre-dating the listed buildings nearby. The recovery of a moderate collection of charred plant remains of wheat, barley and oats indicates the processing of arable produce (albeit processed badly as it was burnt) and this is likely to have taken place in the near vicinity.

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



**Appendix 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	53, 54	Ditch	Medieval/ Post-Medieval	Brick/tile
2	55-57	Pit	Medieval	Pottery

## Appendix 2: Catalogue of Pottery

<i>Context</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Sample</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>Spot date</i>
57	2	2	WA27	U	2	3	2				L11-E13
57	2	2	WA38	U	1	9	1				E11-L13
57	2		WA38	R	1	25	1	JR	UPFTBD	cf Mellor 1994, fig. 16.2	E11-L13
57	2		OXAW	D	4	30	1	JG		cf Mellor 1994, pl. 5	13

### Summary quantification by fabric

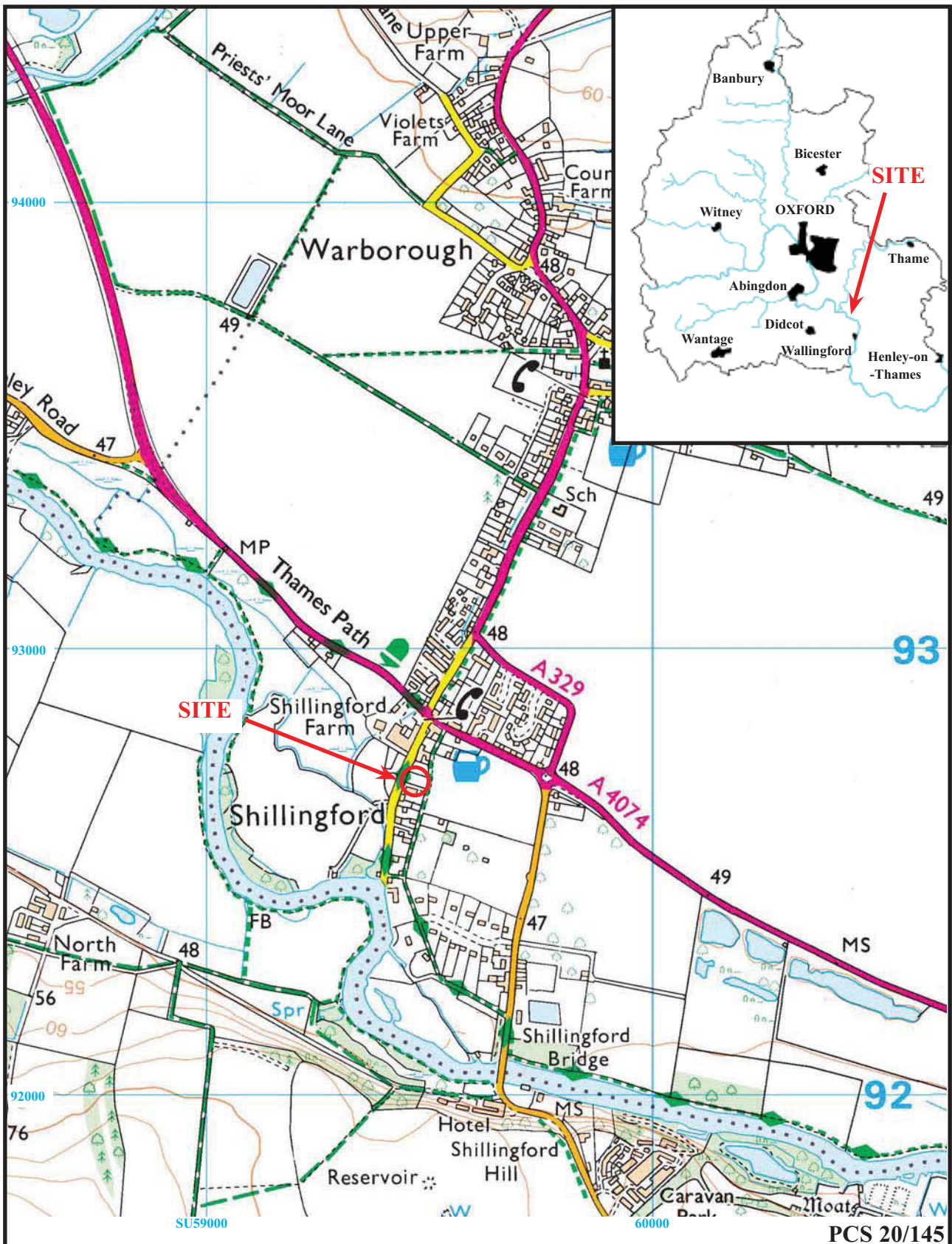
<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date range</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>EVE</i>	<i>MNV</i>
WA27	SE Oxfordshire Ware: Wallingford 27	Late 11th-early13th century	2	3		2
WA38	Wallingford Ware	Early 11th-Late13th century	2	34	0.08	2
OXAW	Brill/Boarstall Ware (early type)	13th century	4	30		1
<i>Totals</i>			8	67	0.08	5

## Appendix 3: Catalogue of brick and tile

<i>Fill</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>MinNo</i>	<i>Abr</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Date</i>
54	1	1	fs	RTP	1	6	1			pmed
54	1	1	fsfe	LB?	3	16	3	+	inner frags	pmed
57	2		fsfe	LB?	1	7	1		struck surface flake, contains sparse rounded rock, rare calc	pmed?

**Appendix 4:** Plant Macrofossil Remains - Charred seeds

<i>Sample</i>	2	
<i>Feature</i>	2	
<i>Context</i>	57	
<i>Feature Tpe</i>	Pit	
<i>Avena</i> sp.	6	Oat
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	39	Wheat
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	5	Barley
POACEAE	3	Grass Family
Indeterminate Cereal	23	Indeterminate Cereal

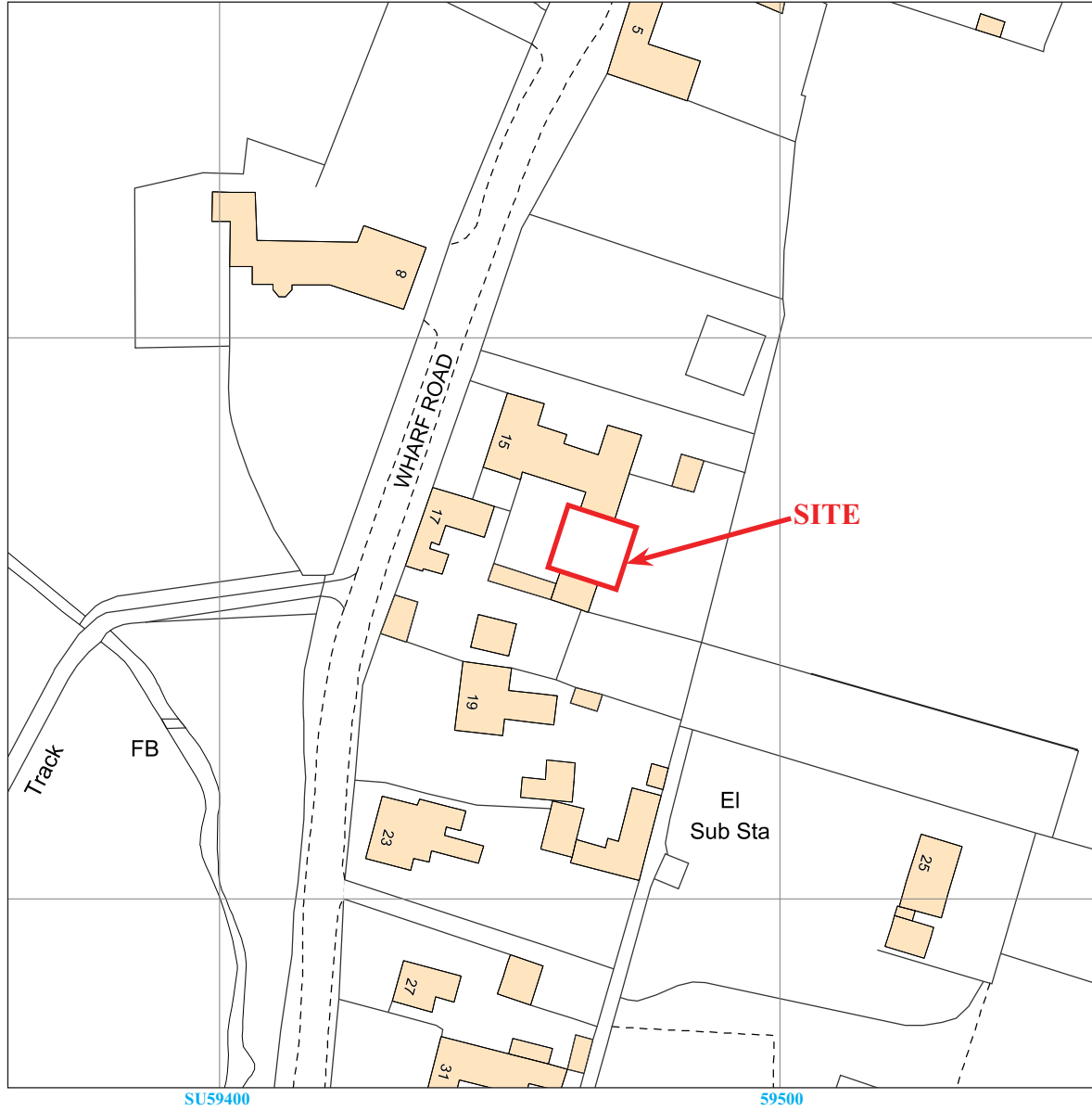


**New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage,  
15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire**  
**Archaeological Recording Action**  
 Figure 1. Location of site within Shillingford and  
 Oxfordshire.

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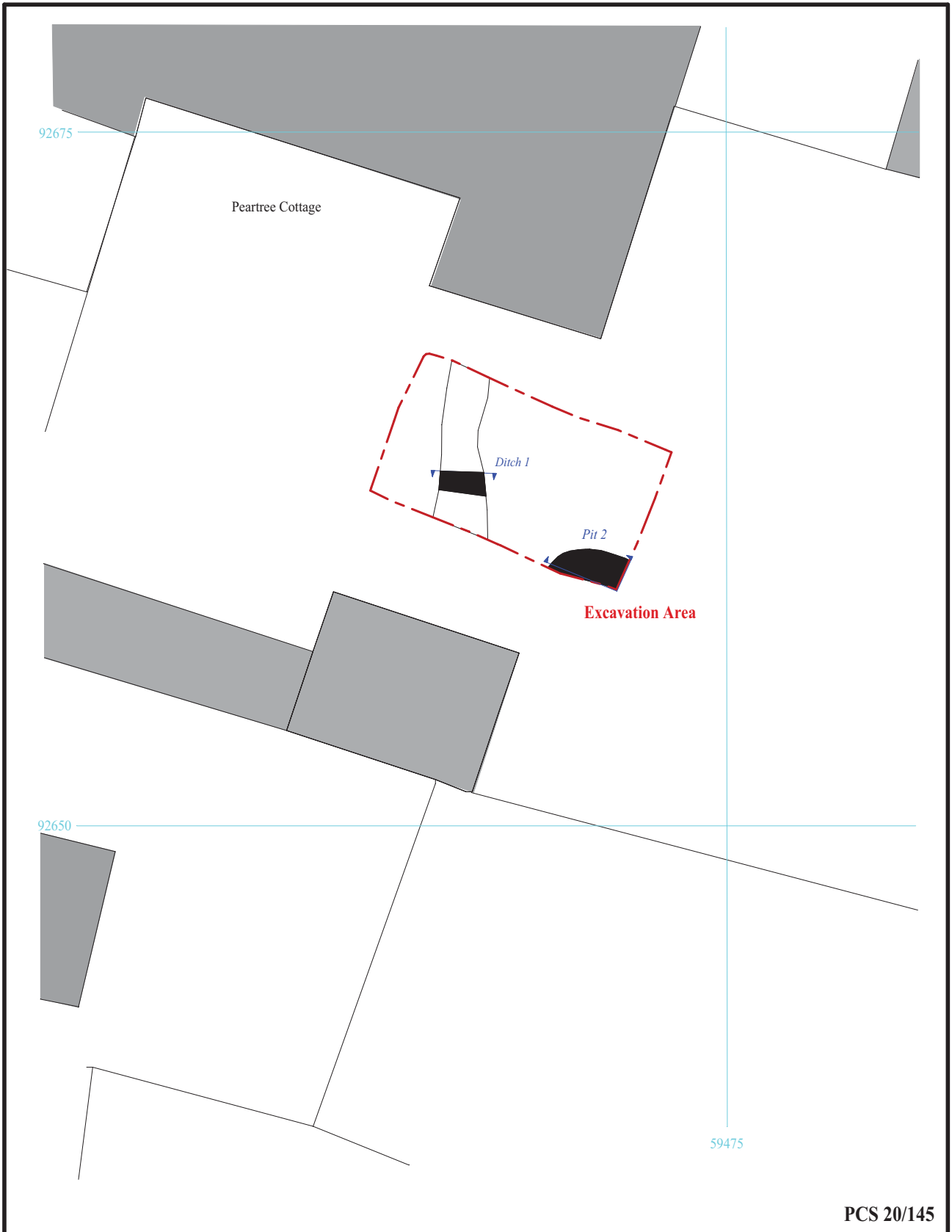
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**New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage,  
15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire**  
**Archaeological Recording Action**  
 Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Wharf Road.

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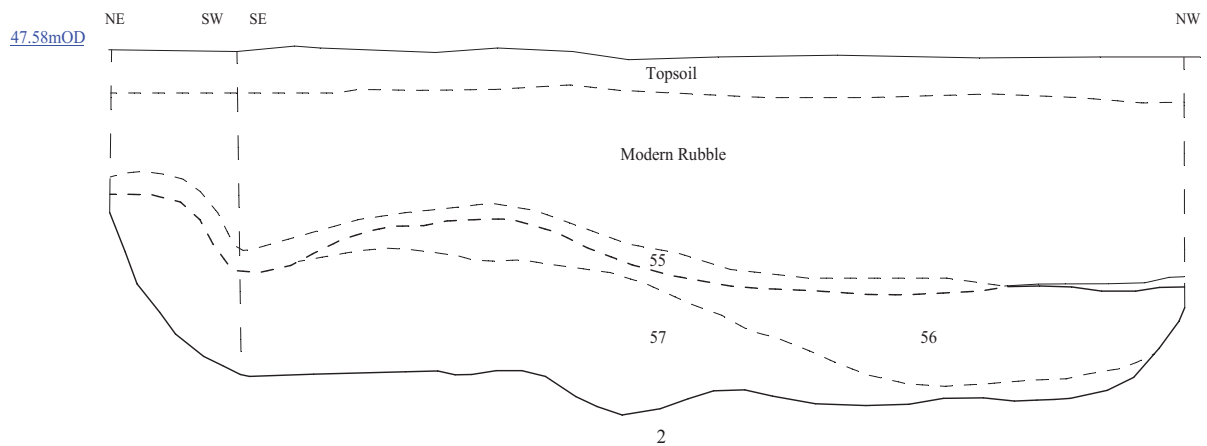
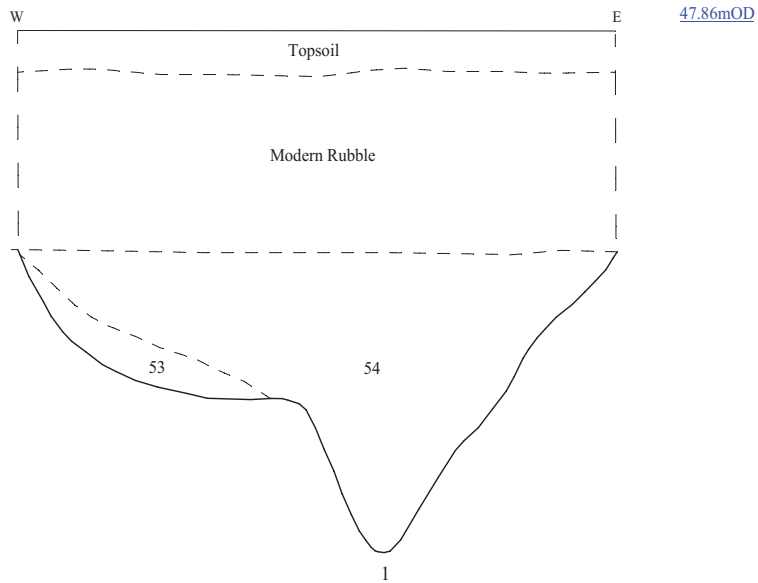
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**New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage,  
15 Wharf Road, Shillingford, Oxfordshire  
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Figure 3. Location of Recording Action.



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**New Swimming Pool, Peartree Cottage,  
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Figure 4. Sections.







Plate 1. Ditch [1], looking North West, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Area of reduction exposing the natural geology on the site, looking North, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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**New Swimming Pool. Peartree Cottage,  
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**Archaeological Recording Action**  
Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Pit 2, looking South West, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Pit 2, looking South East, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

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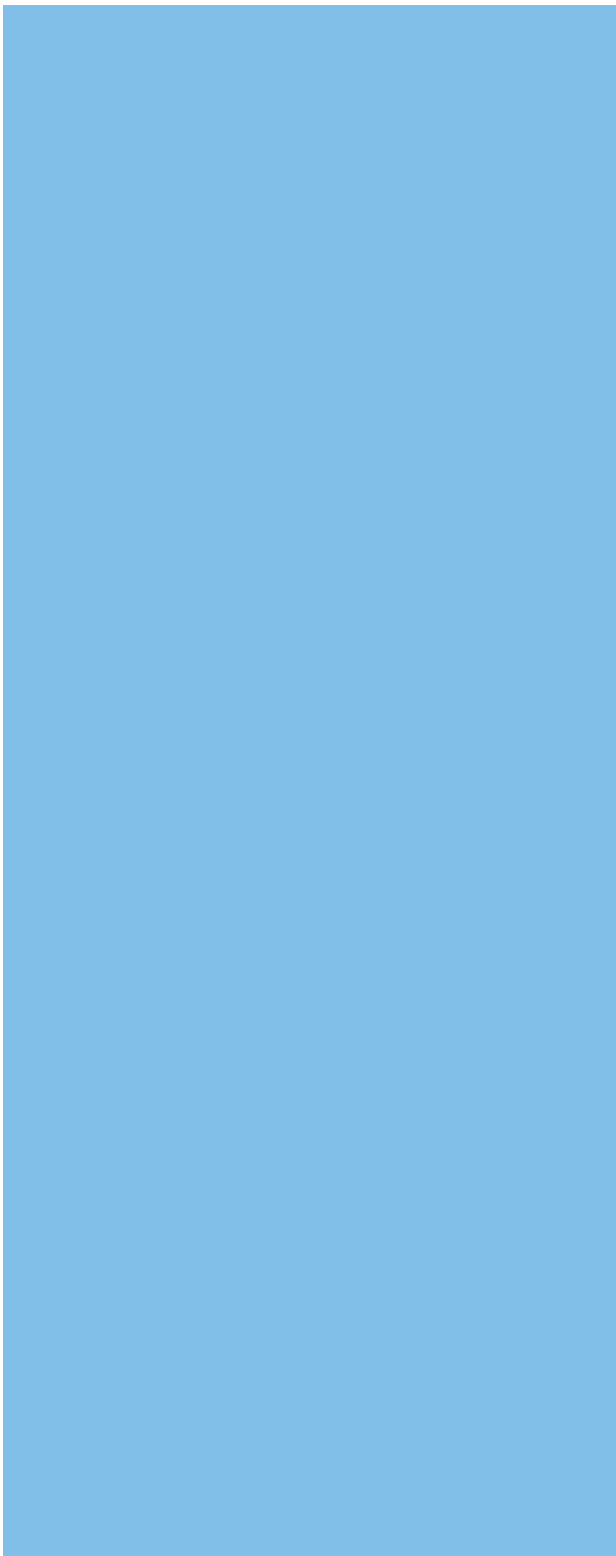
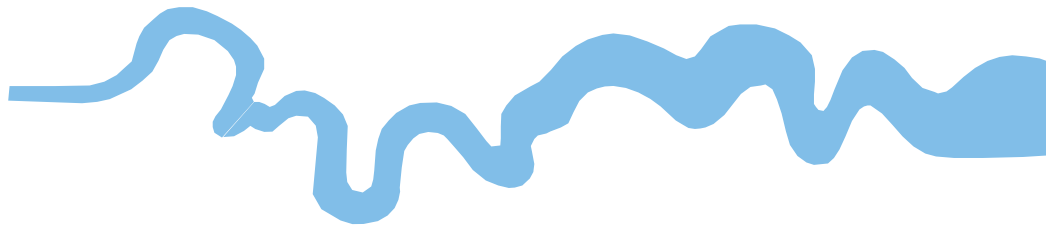
**New Swimming Pool. Peartree Cottage,  
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Plates 3 and 4.

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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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