

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**2 St. Peters Road, Wolvercote,
Oxford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Site Code: PRW20/212

(SP 4967 0978)

**2 St Peter's Road, Wolvercote,
Oxford, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr N Kotak

by Aidan Colyer

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PRW 20/212

January 2022

Summary

Site name: 2 St Peter's Road, Wolvercote, Oxford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 4967 0978

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 20th and 21st January 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Aidan Colyer

Site code: PRW 20/212

Area of site: c. 400 sq. m.

Summary of results: The evaluation was successfully carried out and revealed a number of deposits of Early-Middle Iron Age date representing part of an occupation site. The site is considered to have high archaeological potential.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 31.01.22
	Steve Preston ✓ 31.01.22

2 St Peter's Road, Wolvercote, Oxford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Report 20/212

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 2 St Peter's Road, Wolvercote, Oxford, Oxfordshire (SP 4967 0978) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr N Kotak of 2 Ryder Close, Yarnton, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 1UW.

Planning permission (app 20/01118/FUL) has been gained from Oxford City Council for new development on a c. 400 sq m of land at 2 St Peter's Road, Wolvercote, Oxford (SP4967 0978). The consent is subject to a conditions (4 and 5) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of investigation to include trial trenching followed, if required, by appropriate mitigation. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the Council's policies on archaeology.

This report documents the results of the trenching investigation. The fieldwork was carried out according to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeologist for Oxford City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aidan Colyer and Sophie Peng on 20th and 21st January 2022 and the site code is PRW 20/212.

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 a rectangular parcel of land located in Wolvercote at the north eastern edge of Oxford (Fig 1). To the west and south west lies the River Thames and in the same direction, but closer to the site, is the Oxford Canal. The immediate vicinity is residential, with the site once representing the only commercial property locally. The site is situated west of the junction of First Turn and St Peter's Road.

The geology of the site is recorded as 2nd Terrace Gravel deposits river gravel (BGS 1982) and the natural geology observed during the evaluation was a brownish yellow gravel. The site is c.67m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and was level.

Archaeological background

The potential of the site stems from its location in the historic centre of Wolvercote, in close proximity to St Peter's Church, c.60m to the north-east. The church was recorded in 1236 as a chapel-of-ease to St Peter's-in-the-East Church, but is now largely a 19th-century building apart from the 15th-century tower (VCH 1990). Wolvercote was recorded as *Ulfarcote* in Domesday Book of 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002, 436). In general, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with many prehistoric and Roman sites recorded (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick *et al.* 2009). Earlier deposits are known within the village, for early prehistoric deposits of Palaeolithic and Bronze Age date, but with the highest potential for Iron Age features, such as that recorded on the north and south edges of the settlement. This has been supported recently by features found at the Wolvercote Mill site, with poorly-defined evidence based on Iron Age pottery found during different phases of work. An early Medieval ditch, signifying an enclosure or boundary found at the Mill Road frontage (Mundin 2018).

An open landscape to the south, on Port Meadow has a number of features of prehistoric origin with at least thirteen Bronze Age barrows/ring ditches and remains of Iron Age enclosure (Dodd 2003, fig 2.1). It has remained common land since the 17th century. The floodplains and gravel terraces on the east side of the River Thames have also identified other likely settlement sites with Iron Age enclosures and Roman finds in the vicinity (King 2008; Beckley and Radford 2012, 4).

Objectives and methodology

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

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if there is any evidence of any period on the site;
- to determine if there is any evidence of Late Saxon or Medieval deposits present on the site; and
- to provide information to support a mitigation strategy.

Two trenches, 8m and 10m long, and 1.4-1.6m wide, were to be dug using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed to expose the archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features were certainly or

probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any feature that might warrant preservation *in situ* or be better investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Both trenches were opened with only minor alterations due to the space available. The trenches were both 1.8m wide, 9m and 10m in length, and both 0.50m in depth. A complete list of trenches giving length, breadth, depth and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 and 3; Pls 1-3, 5)

Trench 1 was aligned SW - NE and was 9m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of demolition rubble and 0.20m of topsoil overlying natural geology. Two archaeological features were observed in this trench. Initial observations showed a single ditch at the north end of the trench. The excavated slot in the feature revealed that it was two ditches (3 and 4).

Ditch 3 cut ditch 4. Ditch 3 was 0.6m in width and 0.5m in depth, and contained a single deposit of dark brown grey silty sand (55). The full depth was not observed as it extended beyond the width of the trench. Animal bone and 10 sherds of Early-Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from the fill.

Ditch 4 is the lower of the two ditches. It was 0.85m in width and 0.71m in depth, with a V-shaped profile with its northern edge cut by ditch 3. Two deposits were observed within the feature, the upper of the two (56) was a mid grey brown silty sand with rare fine gravel inclusions. It had a depth of 0.4m and a width of 0.72m. Animal bone and six sherds of Early-Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from this deposit. The lower deposit (57), was a mid grey brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions. It had a depth of 0.43m and a width of 0.60m. Animal bone, a struck flint, and a single sherd of Early-Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from this deposit.

An extra slot (5) was partly dug across the same linear feature as ditch 4. It contained 17 sherds of Iron Age pottery along with animal bone.

An area adjacent to trench 1 was to be remediated at the time of the evaluation and an area strip was observed (Fig. 3 Pls 5 and 6). No additional features were recorded.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2; Pl. 4)

Trench 2 was aligned SSW - NNE and was 10m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.40m of demolition rubble and 0.10m of topsoil overlying natural geology. Two archaeological features and a modern pit or well were observed in this trench.

Gully 1 lay at the south western end of the trench on an NE - SW alignment. It contained a single deposit of dark grey brown silty sand (52) with frequent stone inclusions. The gully was 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep. A small fragment of burnt bone and 3 sherds of Early-Middle Iron Age pottery were recovered from this deposit.

Posthole 2 had a diameter of 0.5m and a depth of 0.28m. It contained two deposits (53 and 54) forming a post pipe and post packing. Deposit (53) was the post pipe which represented a post 0.2m in diameter and was a dark brownish grey silty sand. The packing deposit (54) was a mid greyish brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions. No artefacts were recovered from this feature.

The modern feature was at the north-eastern end of the trench. It was circular and contained late Victorian or later finds which were retained on site only.

Finds

Pottery by Richard Tabor

The prehistoric pottery assemblage comprised a total of 36 sherds weighing 276.5g giving a moderately low mean weight of 7.7g (Appendix 3). The few morphologically informative sherds are likely to date to the Early to Early Middle Iron Age and although there is a considerable range of fabrics the high quality of the finishing and firing of the pottery gives a consistent appearance so all the material might readily be of similar date. All sherds were allocated to fabric groups based on the material, size and sorting of the principal inclusions. The weights, fabrics and vessel parts of all sherds were recorded. Vessel forms were grouped also by characteristic profiles, where reconstruction was possible, or by rim or other diagnostic features, including surface treatments, in accordance with guidelines for the recording and analysis of prehistoric pottery (PCRG 2010).

Despite the small number of sherds a wide variety of fabrics have been identified, with inclusions including quartz/sand, crushed and plate shelly limestone, grog and dark brown, possibly glauconitic, grits. The locally available geological resources include siliclastic sediments associated with the Oxford Clay Formation on which the site is set and shelly limestones of the Corallian Group which form a west, through south to east arc around it, coming within 2km to the south-west (BGS 1982). The nearest sources of clay including glauconitic grits are at least 6km to the south.

Shell

Sh1 (Medium) Moderately hard, dark grey fabric with buff reddish brown exterior and dark grey interior surfaces including abundant crushed fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm) to sparse medium/coarse platy (<4mm) shelly limestone and rare fine (<1mm) to medium/coarse (<4mm) calcite.

Sh2 (Medium) Moderately hard, grey, slightly micaceous fabric with buff red exterior and dark grey interior surfaces including abundant crushed fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm) to sparse medium/coarse (<4mm) and rarely plate (<12mm) shelly limestone and rare fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) iron oxides.

Sh3 (Medium) Moderately hard, dark grey, slightly micaceous sandy fabric with buff reddish brown exterior and dark grey interior surfaces including abundant very fine (<0.2mm) dark brown (glauconite?) grits, poorly-sorted sparse to moderate crushed fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm) to rare to sparse medium/coarse platy (<4mm) shelly limestone and sparse to moderate fine (<1mm) iron oxides.

Sand

S1 (Medium) Moderately hard dark grey, slightly micaceous sand fabric with dark grey surfaces including sparse fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) calcareous grits and rare fine (<1mm) iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed or burnished.

S2 (Medium) Moderately hard dark grey, slightly micaceous sand fabric with dark grey surfaces including common to abundant fine (<0.5mm) sub-angular, frequently glauconitic, quartz. Surfaces may be smoothed or burnished.

S3 (fine) Hard dark grey, iron-rich micaceous sand fabric with dark grey surfaces including sparse fine (<1mm) to medium/coarse (<4mm) iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed or burnished.

Sand and shell

SSh1 (Medium) Moderately hard dark grey, slight micaceous sand fabric with dark grey to reddish brown surfaces including abundant fine (<0.5mm) dark brown (glauconite?) grits, poorly sorted sparse fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm), medium/coarse (<4mm) to plate (<8mm) shelly limestone and rare fine (<1mm) iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed.

Sand and grog

G1 (Medium) Hard dark grey slightly micaceous sandy fabric with dark grey surfaces including common to abundant medium/coarse (<3mm) to sparse coarse (<8mm) mainly sub-angular grog, sparse very fine (<0.2mm), fine (<0.5mm) to rare medium (<1mm) sub-rounded quartz, rare fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) calcareous grits and rare fine (<1mm) iron oxides.

G2 (Fine/medium) Hard grey to dark grey slightly micaceous sandy fabric with dark grey surfaces including common to abundant medium (<2mm) to medium/coarse (<3mm) mainly sub-angular grog, sparse fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) calcareous grits and rare fine (<1mm) iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed or burnished.

GSh1 (Fine/medium) Moderately hard, slightly soapy to touch grey silty fabric with dark grey surfaces including common to abundant fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) mainly sub-rounded grog, moderate to common fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm) to sparse medium/coarse (<3mm) shell, and rare fine (<1mm) iron oxides. Surfaces may be smoothed or burnished.

The absence of flint from the fabrics is a strong indicator that the pottery post-dates the Bronze Age. Relatively coarse shelly fabrics from the Oxford area have been associated with Early Middle Iron Age pottery and is also known to co-occur with sherds including crushed shell and with micaceous sandy fabrics (Brown 2003, 216). However, fabrics similar to the possibly glauconitic sandy fabric S2 from Blackbird Leys and Whitehouse Road, were judged to be Middle Iron Age, the latter represented by a characteristically globular vessel in an

assemblage typical of the period (Brown 2003, 214, A2; Timby 1993, 58, S3). Despite this the fresh condition of the sherds and the chain of association by co-occurrence for all the fabrics from St Peter's Road favours a narrow period of currency and such morphological evidence as there is would favour an Early to Early Middle Iron Age date. No extensive vessel profiles were recovered but ditch slot 5 produced a medium-lengthened straight, flaring simple rounded rim (Sh1), two angular shoulders, one from a jar (Sh3) and the other from a tripartite bowl (G2), and a convex upper wall sherd with two near parallel oblique incised lines (GSh1) which is probably from a bipartite bowl. The combination of bipartite and tripartite bowls favours a date no later than the early fourth century BC and would allow a date at least as early the early fifth century BC (Cunliffe 2010, 98 and fig. A:11).

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A single struck flint flake was recovered from ditch 4 (57) It is not closely datable but is likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of non-human bone was recovered from four ditch contexts within the investigated area (appendix 4). Weighing 371g, a total of 30 pieces of bone were present for analysis. The remains were generally well preserved, with little damage or erosion to the cortical bone surfaces observed. However, a moderate degree of fragmentation was present, which rendered many pieces non-descript in appearance.

Due to the amount of fragmentation present, it was not possible to identify most of the pieces of bone to specific skeletal element, animal size category or species of origin. The identifiable remains included a minimum of one "large" animal (a cow) and one "medium" animal, of an unidentified species. A total of nine pieces of bone were allocated to the "large" sized animal(s). A vertebral body was recovered from ditch 3 (55), which displayed an oblique cut mark across the lateral side of the body.

Three fragments allocated to the "medium" size category, were recovered from ditches 3 (55) and 4 (57). These fragments were portions of rib, which could not be identified to the specific species of origin.

No further information could be retrieved from the fragmented remains.

Burnt bone by Ceri Falys

A single piece of burnt bone (weighing just 1g) was recovered from gully 1 (52). The fragment measured a maximum of 24.4mm long and 9.6mm wide. The burnt bone was well preserved (i.e. had a dense texture), and

was uniformly white in colour, which suggests the fragments were exposed to temperatures in excess of c. 600°C during the heating process (Holden *et al.* 1995a; b). It was not possible to identify the origin of the bone beyond it was likely a piece of midshaft of animal long bone.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully revealed the high archaeological potential of the site with the discovery of occupation deposits of Early to Middle Age date. Surprisingly no deposits of medieval date were revealed despite the location of the site in the historic centre of Wolvercote.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	9	1.8	0.5	0–0.30m demolition rubble; 0.30-0.50m topsoil; 0.50m+ light brown-yellow silty sand with copious gravel (natural geology). [PLs 1-3, 5]
2	10	1.8	0.5	0–0.40m demolition rubble; 0.40-0.50m topsoil; 0.50m+ (natural geology). [PL.4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

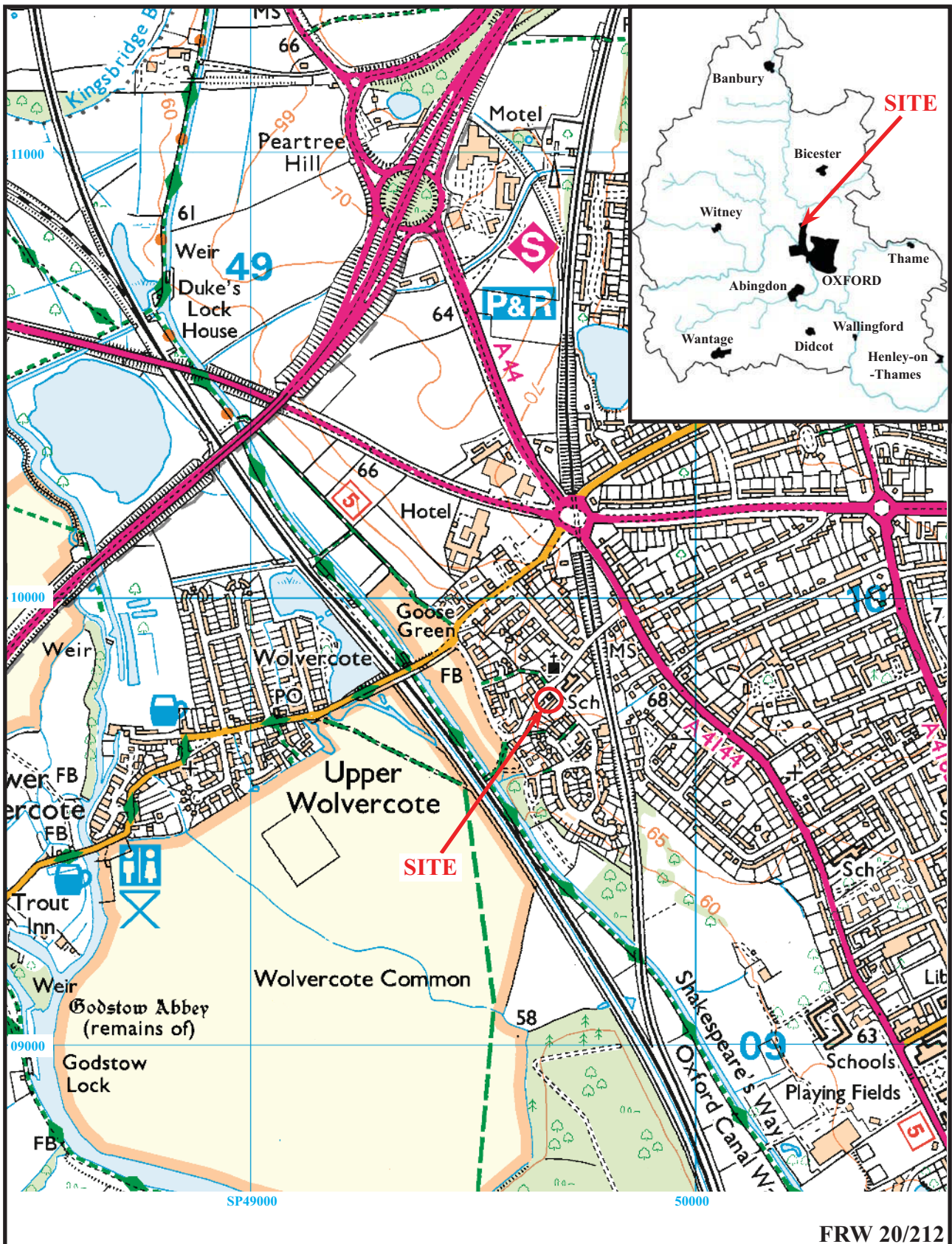
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Gully	Iron Age	Pottery
1	2	53-54	Posthole	-	
2	3	55	Ditch	Iron Age	Pottery
2	4	56-57	Ditch (same as 5)	Iron Age	Pottery
	5	58	Ditch (same as 4)	Iron Age	Pottery

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery fabrics by context(weight in g).

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	Sh1		Sh2		Sh3		S1		S2		S3		SSh1		G1		G2		GSh1		Total			
		<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wt</i>	<i>mean</i>	
1	52	1	6.0													2	32.0						3	38.0	12.7
3	55			3	31.0			1	19.0							1	7.0	5	42.0				10	99.0	9.9
4	56									1	8.0							5	6.0				6	14.0	2.3
4	57									1	98												1	98	9.9
5	58	1	8.0	1	9.0	1	17.0					1	7.0	8	61.0			4	20.5	1	3.0	17	125.5	7.4	
		2	14.0	4	40.0	1	17.0	1	19.0	2	98.0	1	7.0	8	61.0	3	39.0	14	68.5	1	3.0	37	374.5	7.7	

APPENDIX 4: Inventory of animal bone. Key: lbsf = long bone shaft fragment

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>No. frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>	<i>Comments</i>
3	55	14	96	4	1	9	<u>Large</u> : vertebral body, with oblique cutmark; <u>Medium</u> : rib shaft; <u>Unidentified</u> : Lbsf
4	56	4	159	3 (cow)	-	1	<u>Cow</u> : tooth, mandibular fragment, right metacarpal
4	57	10	95	2	2	6	rib shafts and lbsf
5	58	2	21	-	-	2	lbsf



**Land at 2 St Peters Road, Wolvercote,
Oxford, 2022**

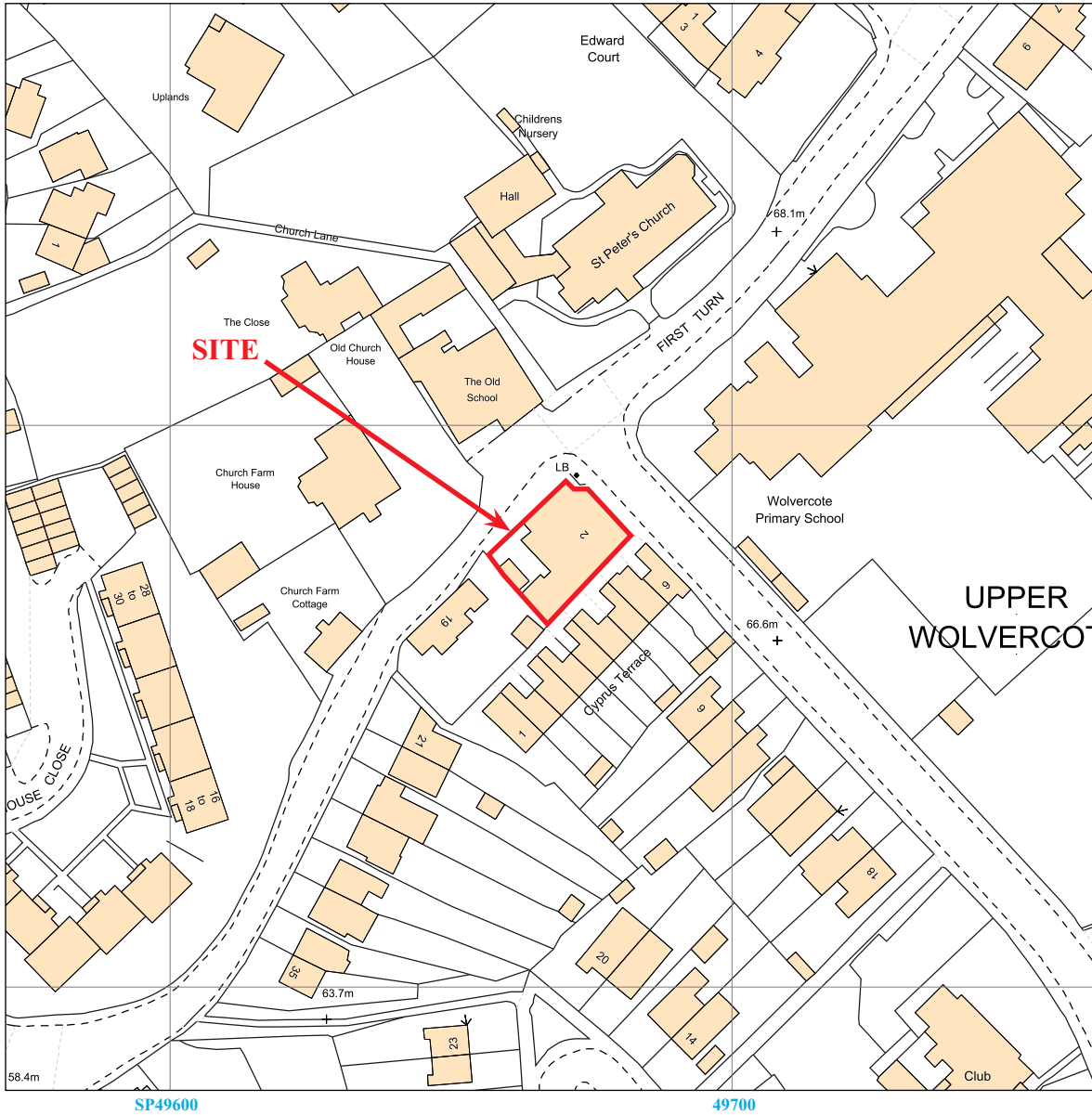
Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Wolvercote, Oxford and Oxfordshire.

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UPPER
WOLVERCOTE

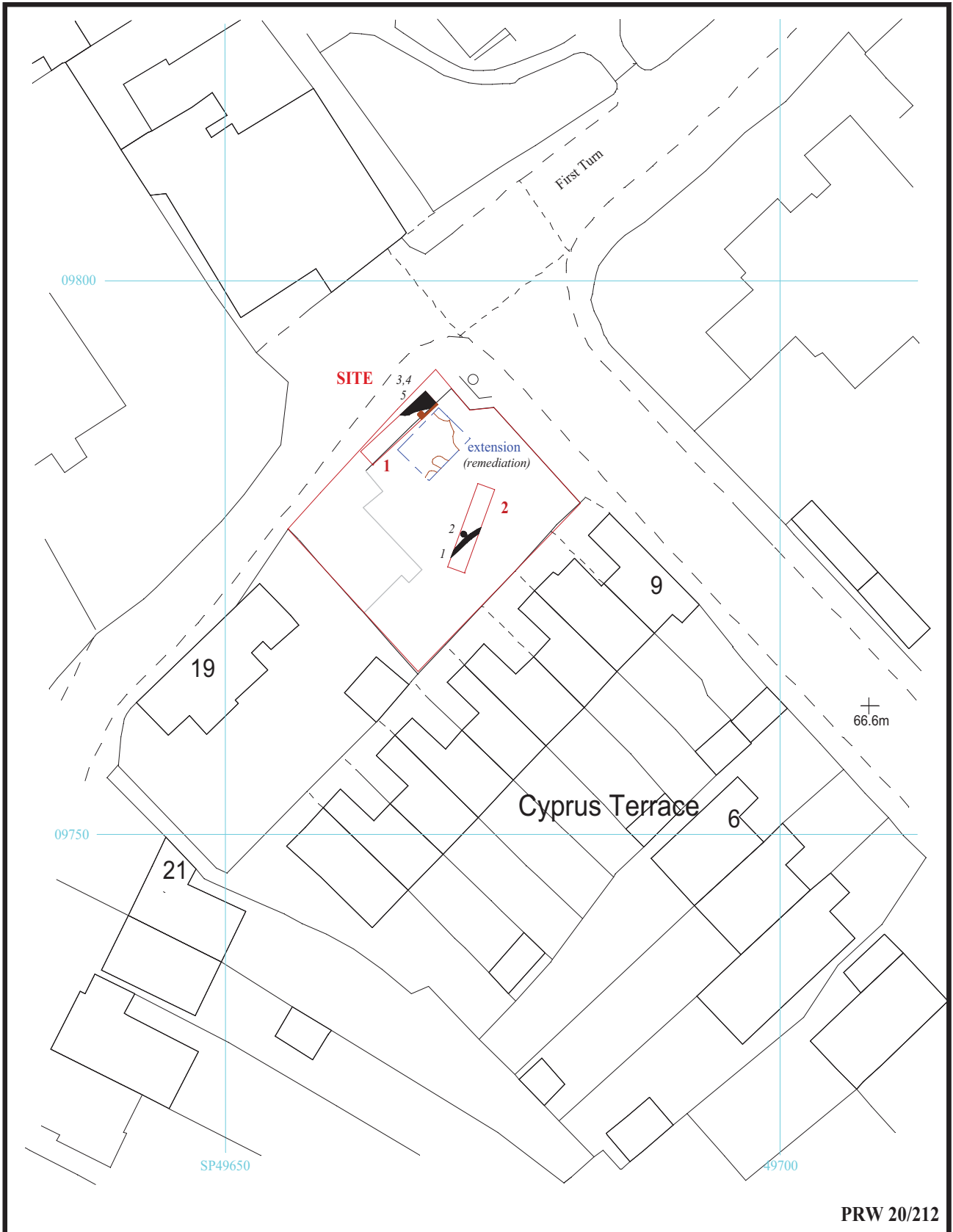
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Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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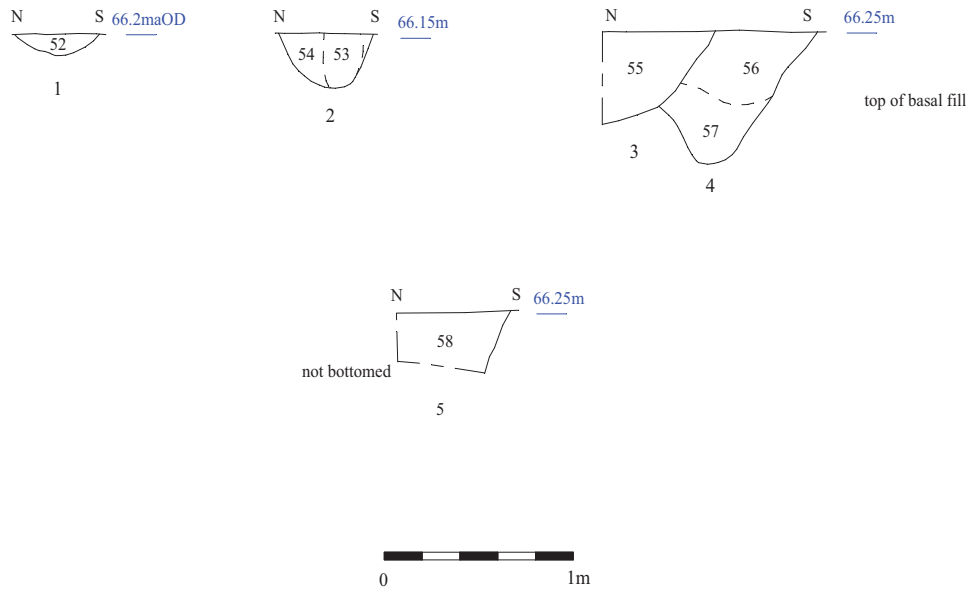
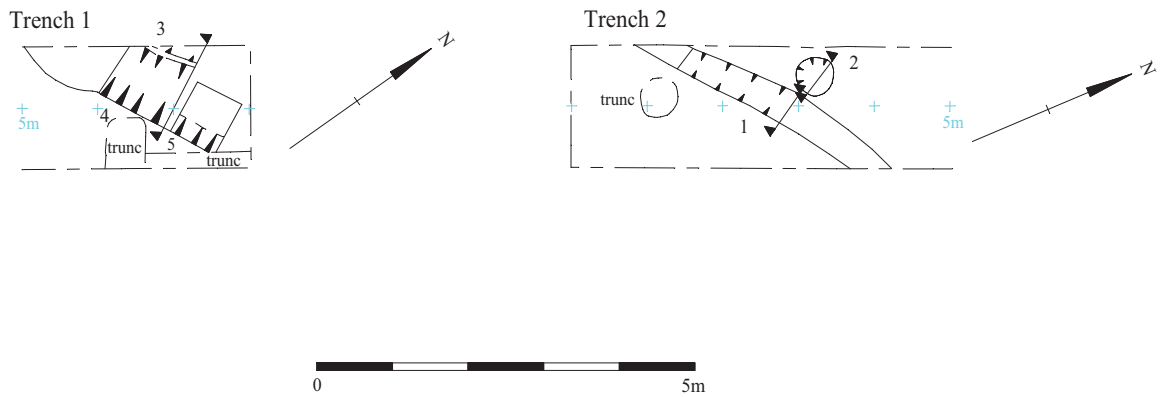
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking East,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.1m



Plate 1. Trench 2, looking North East,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 3. Trench 1, ditch 3 and 4, looking North East,
Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 2, pit 2, looking East,
Scales: 0.3m x2.

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Plates 1 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 1, additional slot (5) (background). Ditches 3 and 4 in foreground, looking South East. Scales: 0.1m and 0.3m.



Plate 6. Remediation adjacent to existing footing,, looking North, Scale: 0.3m .

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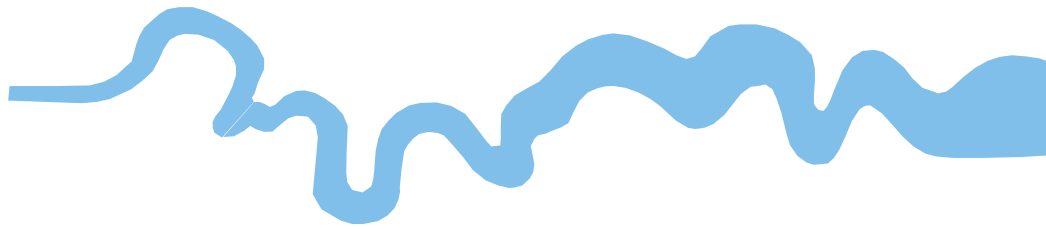
2 St Peters Road, Wolvercote,
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Plates 5 and 6.

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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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