

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Library Entrance Works,
St Hilda's College, Oxford**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: HCO22/191ev

(SP 5219 0593)

Library Entrance Works, St Hilda's College, Oxford

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for St Hilda's College**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HCO 22/191

June 2023

Summary

Site name: Library Entrance Works, St Hilda's College, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5219 0593

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 19th-20th June 2023

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: HCO 22/191

Area of site: c.500 sq m

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were identified during the course of the evaluation.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service or the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 23.06.23
	Steve Preston ✓ 23.06.23

Library Entrance Works, St Hilda's College, Oxford An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 22/191b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the entrance to the library at St Hilda's College, Oxford (SP 5219 0593) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Emilia Zipis, of Ridge and Partners LLP, The Cowyards, Blenheim Park, Oxford Road, Bladon, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1QR on behalf of St Hilda's College.

Planning consent (22/02083/FUL) has been granted by Oxford City Council for minor redevelopment of the library entrance to St Hilda's College. The consent is subject to a condition (9) requiring a programme of archaeological works. In this instance this was determined to require an initial stage of archaeological fieldwork, namely field evaluation by means of trial trenching, in order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to inform the scope of a mitigation strategy which might entail further archaeological work.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021), and the City Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeologist with Oxford City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Emily Gibson between 19th and 20th June 2023 and the site code is HCO 22/191. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service or the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the grounds of St Hilda's College to the west of Cowley Place, off Iffley Road just east of central Oxford and south of Magdalen Bridge (Fig. 1). The actual site of the works comprises a rectangular parcel of land covering an area of 497 sq m (Fig. 2). The site is bounded by a red-brick wall to the north and the Grade II listed St Hilda's College Library to the east. There are no physical boundaries to the south and west, with a footpath and lawn bounding the site to the south and lawn to the west, leading down towards the river

Cherwell just above its confluence with the Thames further south and it currently comprises a section of a lawn bisected by a gravel footpath. The underlying geology is mapped as being on the boundary between alluvium on the floor of the valley and Oxford Clay (BGS 1982). The site lies at a height of approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been detailed in a desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2021). In summary, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley, but beyond the historic Saxon and medieval centre of Oxford City. Oxford generally has a rich archaeological and historical heritage, which has been intensively studied, while outlying areas to the south and east of the city are also relatively well-known (for Roman pottery production, for example). Recent archaeological investigations in Oxford (e.g., Wallis 2013; Spenbrooke 2020; Dodd *et al.* 2020) demonstrate that even in developed areas, significant archaeology survives.

The area north of the medieval core of Oxford is increasingly considered as a later Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual landscape, based primarily on the number of Bronze Age barrows found in the vicinity, which can now be seen to be closely clustered around a Neolithic monumental henge. Roman finds were recovered during work at Magdalen College, and several phases of work at Magdalen College revealed a range of Saxon finds and deposits. Further Saxon features were encountered during excavation at St Clement's Street car park. Evaluation and excavation at Magdalen College School recorded medieval gravel quarry pits, early medieval ditches and a pit, and pottery of 12th to 14th century date.

A programme of archaeological investigation comprising evaluation, excavation and watching brief at St. Hilda's College, to the east of the proposal site, recorded three medieval ditches. Parts of the current site appear to have been developed from at least the mid-19th century and may have been subject to ground disturbance during the construction of the library building, however the area in which the site lies is overall one of high archaeological potential, especially for later Saxon and medieval times.

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.

The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the 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 if required.

Results

Both trenches were dug as close as possible to their intended locations, although some slight repositioning due to the presence of services was necessary (Fig. 3). The trenches measured 7.80m and 10m long and both were 1.5m wide and 1.10m deep.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1, 2 and 4)

This trench was aligned approximately North-South and measured 10m long and 1.10m deep. A NE–SW aligned ceramic drainage pipe was observed at 6.20m from the trench's south end. At the northern end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.17m of a mid grey brown silty sand, which overlay 0.42m of a brick rubble and sand layer, overlying 0.33m of a dump of Victorian brick and pieces of limestone. At the southern end of the trench the stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.44m of a mid grey brown silty sand, above 0.23m of dark grey brown silty clay containing tile and flower pot fragments, overlying 0.25m of a mid grey brown sandy silt containing tile and clinker. This trench was stopped at a level below the impact layer for the proposed development at which point the natural geology had not been reached.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 3)

This trench was aligned approximately East-West and measured 7.80m long and 1.10m deep. A North-South aligned ceramic drainage pipe was observed at 6m from the west end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.22m of a light yellow brown sand, over 0.31m of a dark grey brown silty clay containing brick or tile, slate and clinker, overlying 0.16m of a mid grey brown with yellow sand patches. This overlay 0.25m of a mid brown grey with blue clay mixed in which contained Victorian brick, tile and pieces of flower pot. This trench was stopped at a level below the impact layer for the proposed development and the natural geology had not been reached.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological significance were recovered from the trenches.

Conclusion

The evaluation was successfully carried out with the trenches investigating the area of impact for the proposed development. However, despite the potential for archaeology to be present, no deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed at the depth at which the development foundations will reach. The trenches showed extensive evidence of Victorian make up deposits, which may still be covering potential, in-situ, archaeological features at a greater depth.

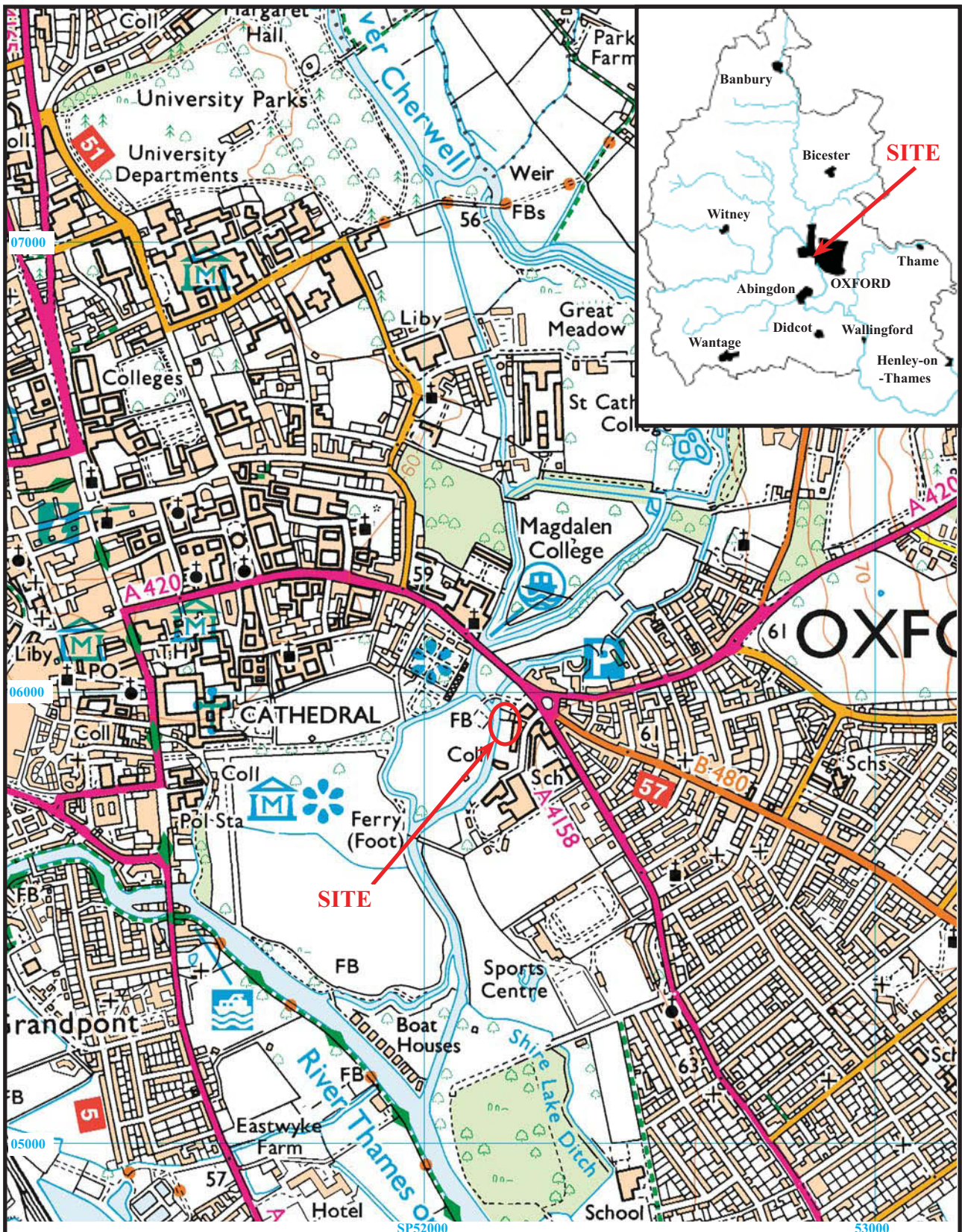
References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	10.00	1.50	1.10	N. End: 0-0.18m turf/topsoil; 0.18m-0.35m mid grey brown silty sand; 0.35m-0.77m brick rubble and sand; 0.77m-1.10m+ Victorian bricks and pieces of limestone. Natural geology not encountered S. End: 0-0.18m turf/topsoil; 0.18m-0.62m mid grey brown silty sand; 0.62m-0.85m dark grey brown silty clay; 0.85m--1.10m+ mid grey brown silty sand. [Pls 1, 2 and 4]
2	7.80	1.50	1.10	0-0.16m turf/topsoil; 0.16m-0.38m light yellow brown sand; 0.38m-0.69m dark grey brown silty clay; 0.69m-0.85m mid grey brown with yellow sand silty clay; 0.85m-1.10m+ mid brown grey silty clay with blue grey clay. [Pl. 3] . Natural geology not encountered

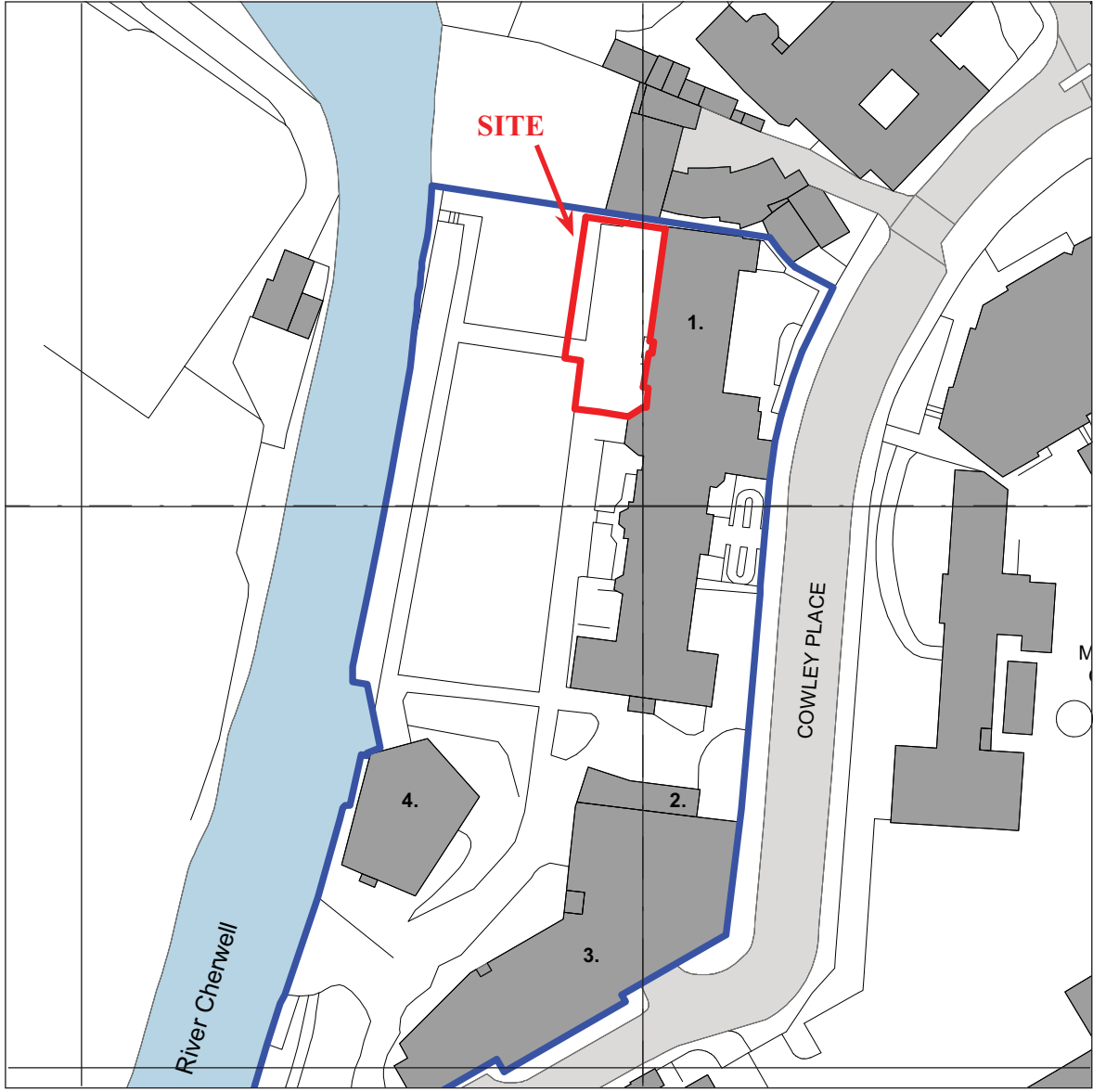


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Archaeological Evaluation**
Figure 1. Location of site within Oxford.



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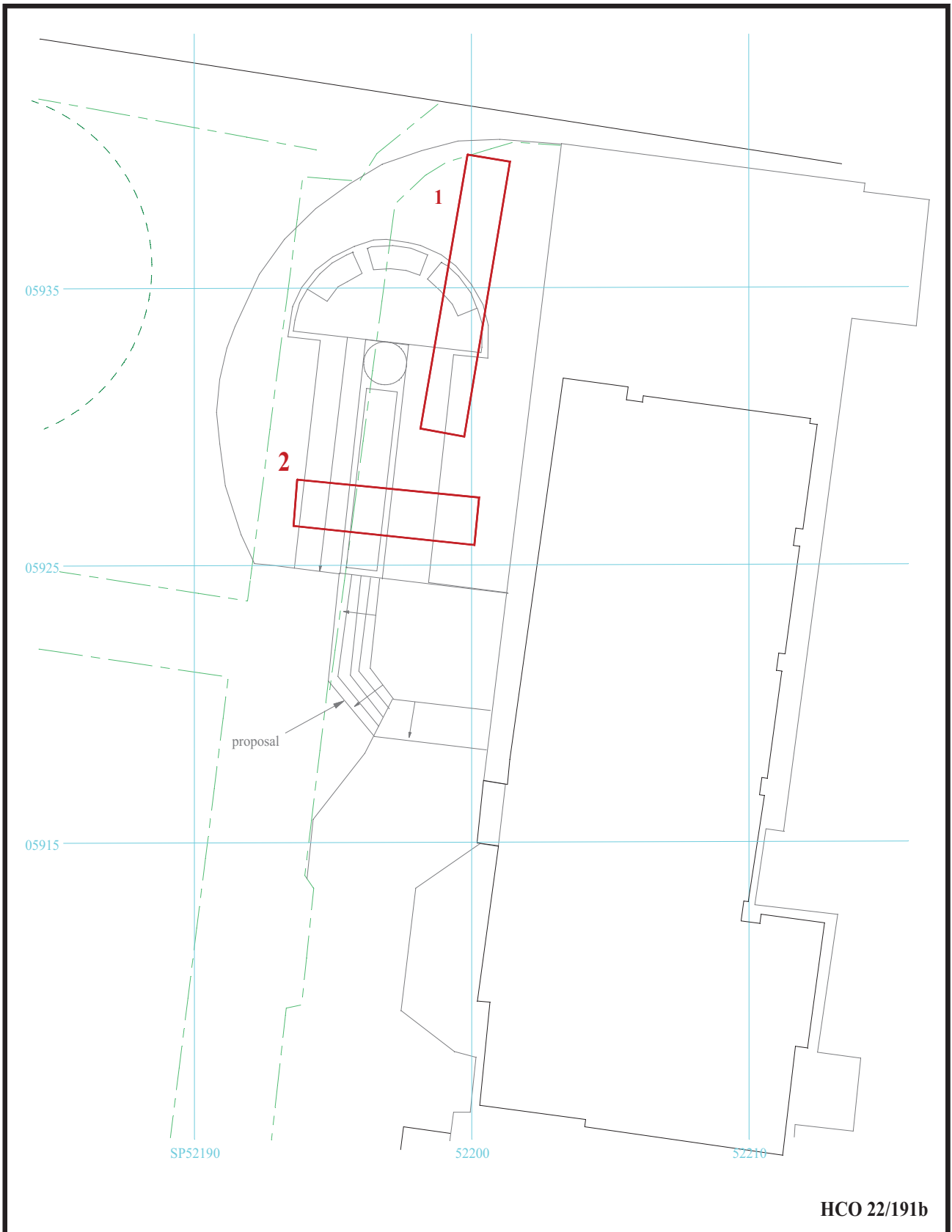
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches, overlaid on development.



N **Trench 1 (south)** S [57.41m aOD](#)

turf/topsoil

mid grey brown silty

dark grey brown silty clay

mid grey brown silty sand

W **Trench 2 (east)** E [58.23m](#)

turf/topsoil

light yellow brown sand

dark grey brown silty clay

mid grey brown silty clay/yellow sand mix

mid brown grey/blue clay mix

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Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 4. Trench Sections.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking South, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 1, West Facing Section, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

HCO 22/191

**Library Entrance Works,
St. Hilda's College, Oxford, 2023
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 2, looking West, Scales: 2mm 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 1: North End, East Facing Section, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

HCO 22/191

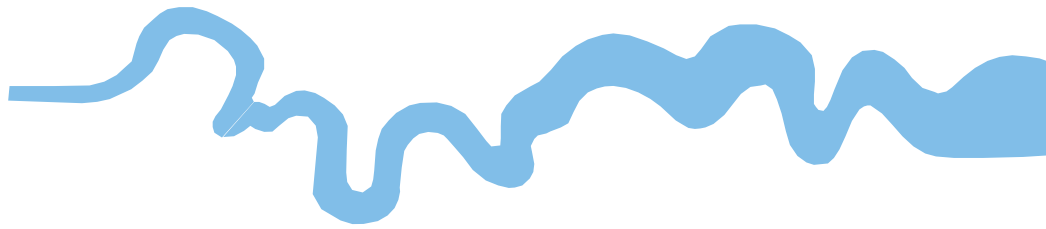
**Library Entrance Works,
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Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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