Land adjacent to 60 Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Feltham Construction

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RRW 09/23

April 2009

Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to 60 Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5989 8954

Site activity: Field Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 27-28th April 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: RRW 09/23

Area of site: c. 320 sq m

Summary of results: Two gullies and a pit were recorded, along with a large feature which may be a large pit or ditch. A further possible feature, which may be geological in origin, was also noted. Roman pottery was recovered from all three features sampled, suggesting that the proposed development will impact upon an area of Roman settlement.

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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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 30.04.09
	Steve Preston✓ 30.04.09

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading RG1 5NR

Tel. (0118) 926 0552; Fax (0118) 926 0553; email tvas@tvas.co.uk; website : www.tvas.co.uk

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Report 09/23

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land adjacent to 60 Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (SU 5989 8954) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Simon Lampard of Feltham Construction, Feltham House, 42 London Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 1LA.

Planning permission (P08/W1075) has been sought from South Oxfordshire District Council to redevelop the site for two two-storey flats, following the demolition of existing garages. Due to the possibility of archaeological features surviving on the site, which may be destroyed or disturbed by the proposed groundworks, an archaeological field evaluation was requested. A design brief for the evaluation was prepared by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council (Oram 2008).

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved Mr Richard Oram, archaeological adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverstock and Sean Wallis on 27th and 28th April 2009, and the site code is RRW 09/23. 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 located about 500m west of the historic core of Wallingford, and about 1km west of the river Thames (Fig. 1). According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Second Terrace River Gravels (BGS 1980). However, the geology recorded during the evaluation generally consisted of orange brown silty clay, with occasional gravel inclusions. The site is relatively flat, and lies at a height of approximately 47.5m above Ordnance Datum. Immediately prior to the evaluation, the site had been occupied by a row of garages, and their associated access road, which had subsequently been demolished.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site had been highlighted in the County Archaeological Service's brief for the project (Oram 2008). In summary, the site lies beyond the western limits of the Saxon and medieval town, as defined by the *burh* defences, although extra-mural occupation of those dates is possible. However, it also lies approximately 500m east of a large area of cropmarks, which are thought to represent prehistoric or Roman settlement, whilst a number of finds and features dating from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval periods have been found to the east and south-east of the site (Oram 2008).

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. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which may warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

to determine if any Roman or Saxon deposits are present on the site; and

to determine if any medieval occupation deposits are present on the site.

It was proposed to excavate two trenches, each 10m long and 1.6m wide, in the area which will be most affected by the development, with a contingency for an additional 5m of trenching should it be required to clarify the nature of the initial findings. The trenches were to be excavated by a JCB type mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. The machine would be used to expose the natural geology or any archaeologically sensitive levels, whichever was higher. Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools, and sufficient of the features and deposits excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief.

Results

Two trenches were excavated on the site, in the locations shown on Figure 3, and a complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A summary of features recorded forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was orientated approximately N–S, and was 10.1m long. The stratigraphy noted in the trench consisted of up to 0.2m of made ground (50) which lay above a layer of buried soil (51), which was about 0.55m thick. This soil lay directly above the natural geology, which mainly consisted of orange/brown silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions, although slightly darker patches, with moderate gravel inclusions were noted.

Three archaeological features were recorded in the trench (Fig. 4). A gully (2) was recorded at the southern end of the trench, and the terminal of this was excavated (Fig. 5; Pl. 3). This revealed that the feature was about 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep. Roman pottery and animal bone was recovered from its single fill of brown/grey sandy silt (53). Further Roman pottery was found within the fill of a sub-circular pit (1). This feature was half sectioned (Pl. 2), and was shown to be approximately 0.75m in diameter and 0.09m deep, with a flattish base. It had a single fill of brown/grey sandy silt (52), a soil sample from which yielded further Roman pottery and an unidentifiable fragment of animal bone. Another possible gully (5) was recorded but was not excavated. No finds were recovered from the surface of its fill of brown/grey sandy silt (57).

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

Trench 2 was 11.1m long, and orientated approximately N–S. The stratigraphy recorded in this trench differed from that encountered in Trench 1, which may reflect the fact that whilst Trench 1 was situated in the area of the former garages, Trench 2 was in the area formerly beneath a Tarmac access road. Made ground and demolition rubble (50), up to 0.35m thick, was removed to reveal a layer of dark grey sandy silt which was topped with decaying turf in places (58). This layer was about 0.12m thick, and lay above approximately 0.13m of mid red/brown sandy silt (59). This layer contained no finds or inclusions, and lay directly above a deposit of dark brown/grey sandy silt (51), which was interpreted as buried topsoil. This layer was approximately 0.3m thick, and sat directly above the natural geology, which consisted of light orange/brown silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions.

The eastern edge of a large feature (3) was recorded at the southern end of the trench, between 0.9m and 5.8m (Fig. 4; Pl. 5). As this feature was not fully exposed, it was not possible to establish whether it was a large pit, or part of a ditch. A slot through the feature revealed that it had a primary fill of brown sandy silt (55), which produced no finds (Fig. 5). This was overlain by a similar, but darker, deposit (54) which contained six sherds of Roman pottery. Another possible feature (4) was noted at the northern end of the trench although, despite extending the trench slightly north, its northern end was not revealed. This feature was not excavated, and no

finds were recovered from its surface. The feature appeared to be filled by grey/brown sandy silt with occasional gravel (56), although the sterile nature of this deposit suggests that it could be natural in origin.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 806g. It was entirely Roman in date. The following fabrics were noted:

B11: Black-burnished ware (Dorset BB1). 2 sherds, 17g.

G1: Handmade, grog-tempered storage jars. 3 sherds, 664g.

G2: Wheel-thrown sparse grog-tempered ware. 2 sherds, 43g.

R1: Fine slightly micaceous greyware. 4 sherds, 41g.

R30: Medium sandy reduced coarsewares. 5 sherds, 41g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context is shown in Appendix 3. All the fabrics are long-lived, utilitarian wares, and the assemblage could date to any time in the Roman period. All the sherds are in good condition, with little evidence of abrasion, suggesting that they are the products of primary deposition, and that there are undisturbed Roman remains in the immediate vicinity.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A total of eight fragments of animal bone was recovered from two contexts, weighing 38g. Although the surface preservation of the remains was good, all pieces were highly fragmented. The remains from pit 1 (52), which were recovered from a soil sample, were notably very small in size, preventing any element identification. However, the majority of pieces of bone from gully 2 (53) re-fitted into a single portion of a shoulder blade. Due to the lack of diagnostic characteristics, it was not possible to identify the species beyond the fact it was from a large-sized animal (i.e. horse or cattle). There was no evidence for butchery, although one end of the re-fit fragment was charred. No further information could be retrieved from these animal remains.

Charred Plant Remains

Two bulk soil samples were taken during the evaluation, each of approximately 20 litres. These were floated and sieved across a 0.25mm mesh for the recovery of charred plant remains. The residues were wet sieved using a

5mm mesh for the recovery of artefacts. The sample from pit 1 (52) produced a small amount of charcoal where as that from gully 2 (53), included two unidentified cereal grains along with minute pieces of charcoal.

Conclusion

Despite the relatively small size of the area covered by the evaluation, a number of certain or possible archaeological features were recorded. The pottery recovered suggests that the features were all Roman in date. Although Roman material has been found in the past, to the east and south-east of the site, little in the way of Roman settlement evidence has been found in Wallingford. The features recorded in the evaluation seem to reinforce the suggestion that Roman settlement may have been to the west of the later Saxon town (Airs *et al*. 1975). As it is clear that the proposed development will impact upon the archaeological features present, it is likely that further work would be required to mitigate this impact.

References

Airs, M, Rodwell, K and Turner, H, 1975, 'Wallingford', in K Rodwell (ed), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire,* Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey 3, Oxford, 155–62

BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

Oram, R, 2008, 'Land adjacent to 60 Radnor Road, Wallingford, design brief for an archaeological field evaluation', Oxford County Archaeological Service, Oxford

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	10.10	1.60	0.85	0-0.2m made ground (50); 0.2-0.75m buried soil (51); 0.75m+ orange/brown silty clay natural geology . Pit 1 and Gullys 2 and 5. **[Pls 1, 3,4]**
2	11.10	1.60	0.90	0-0.35m made ground (50); 0.35-0.47m buried turf/soil (58); 0.47-0.6m reddish brown sandy silt (59); 0.6- 0.85m buried soil (51); 0.9m+ natural geology. Features 3 and 4. **[Pls 2, 5]**

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
1	1	52	Pit	Roman	Pottery
1	2	53	Gully	Roman	Pottery
1	5	57	Gully	Undated	-
2	3	54, 55	Pit or ditch	Roman	Pottery
2	4	56	Unknown	Undated	-

APPENDIX 3: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in grams) of sherds per context

			B11		*G1*		*G2*		*R1*		*R30*	
Trench	*Feature*	*Context*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*	*No*	*Wt*
2	-	spoilheap							1	13		
1	-	spoilheap									1	22
1	1	52	1	3			2	43				
1	2	53	1	14							3	12
2	3	54			3	664			3	28	1	7
	Total		**2**	**17**	**3**	**664**	**2**	**43**	**4**	**41**	**5**	**41**

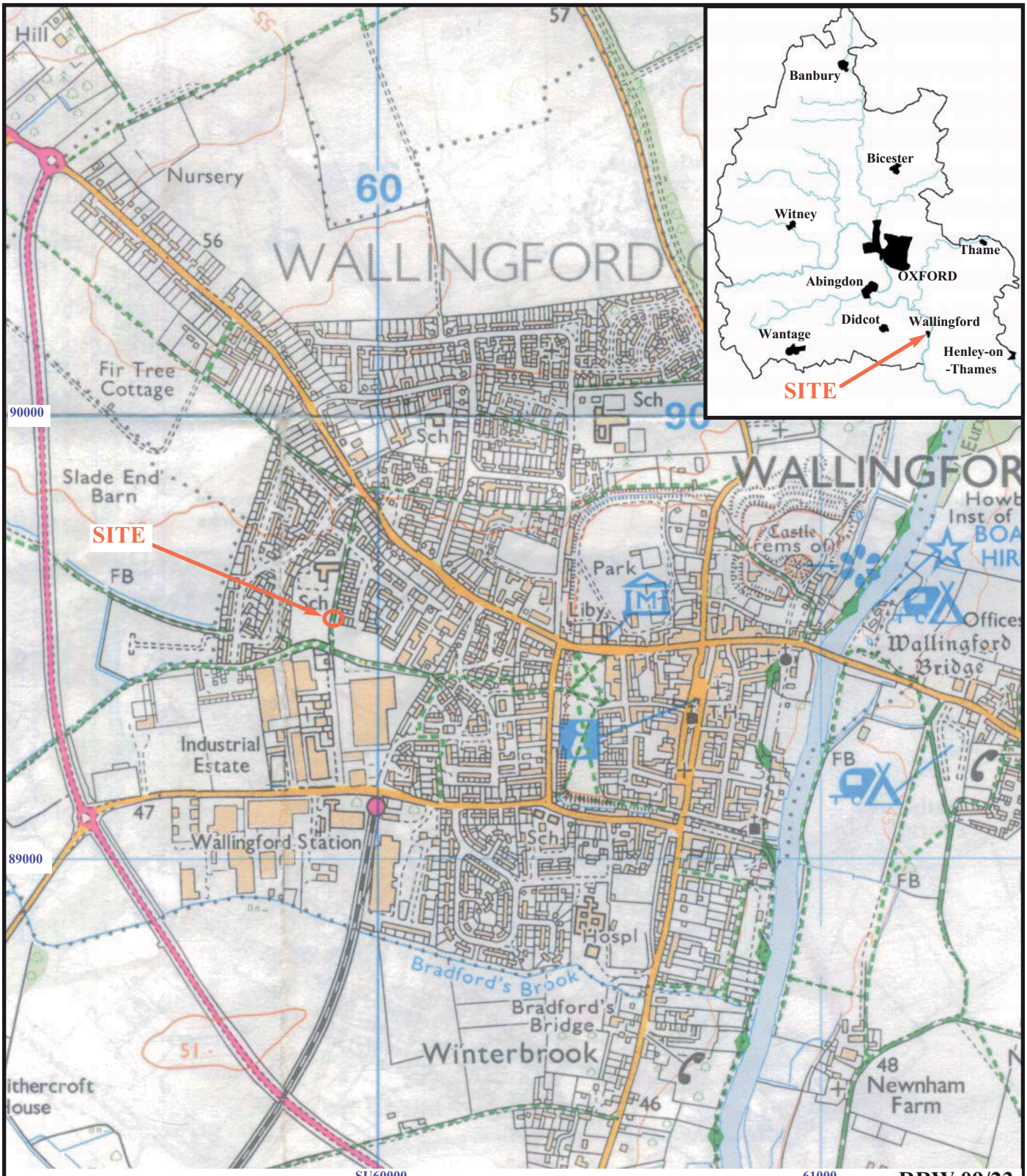

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Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Radnor Road.

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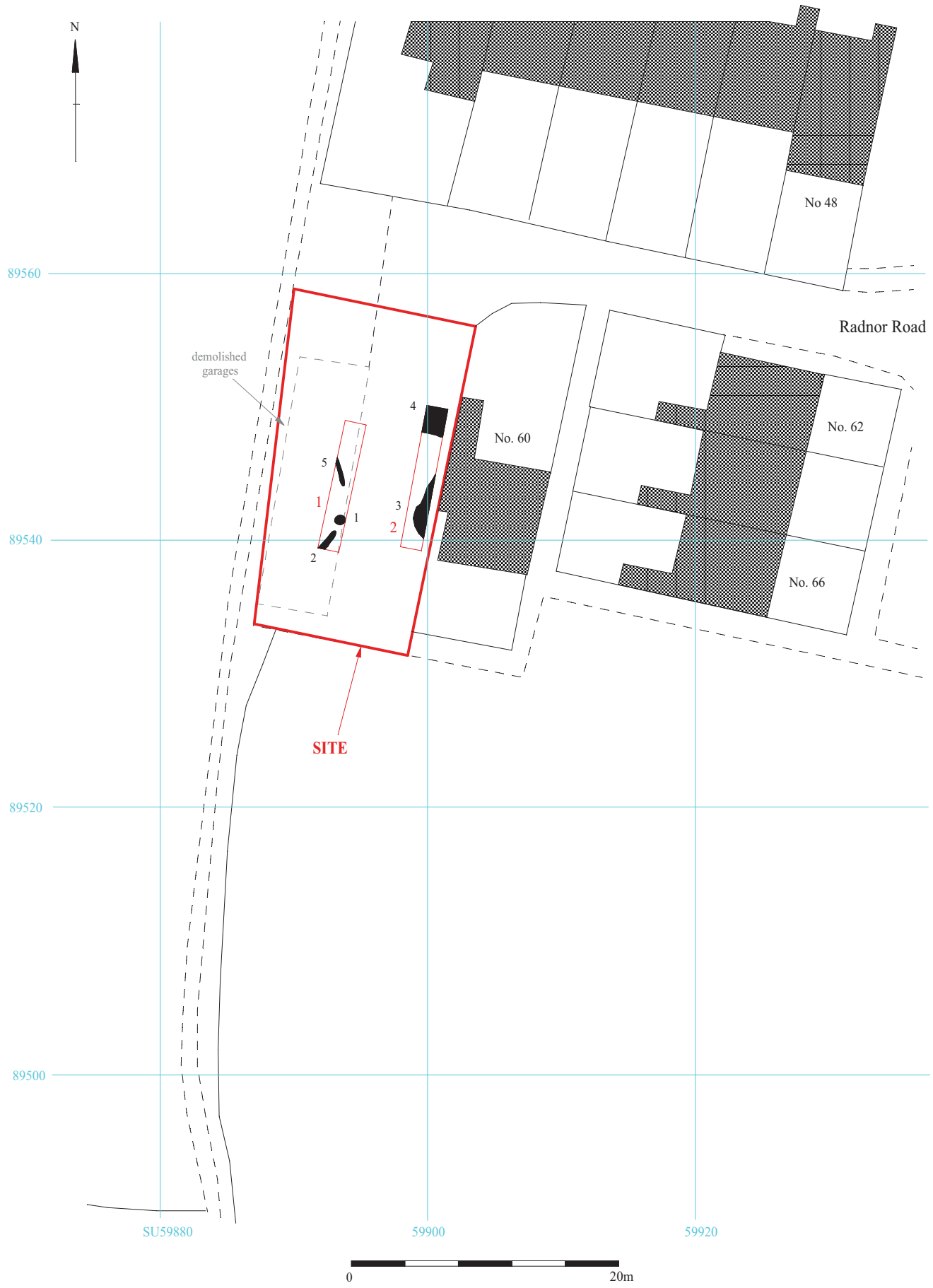

Figure 3. Location of trench.

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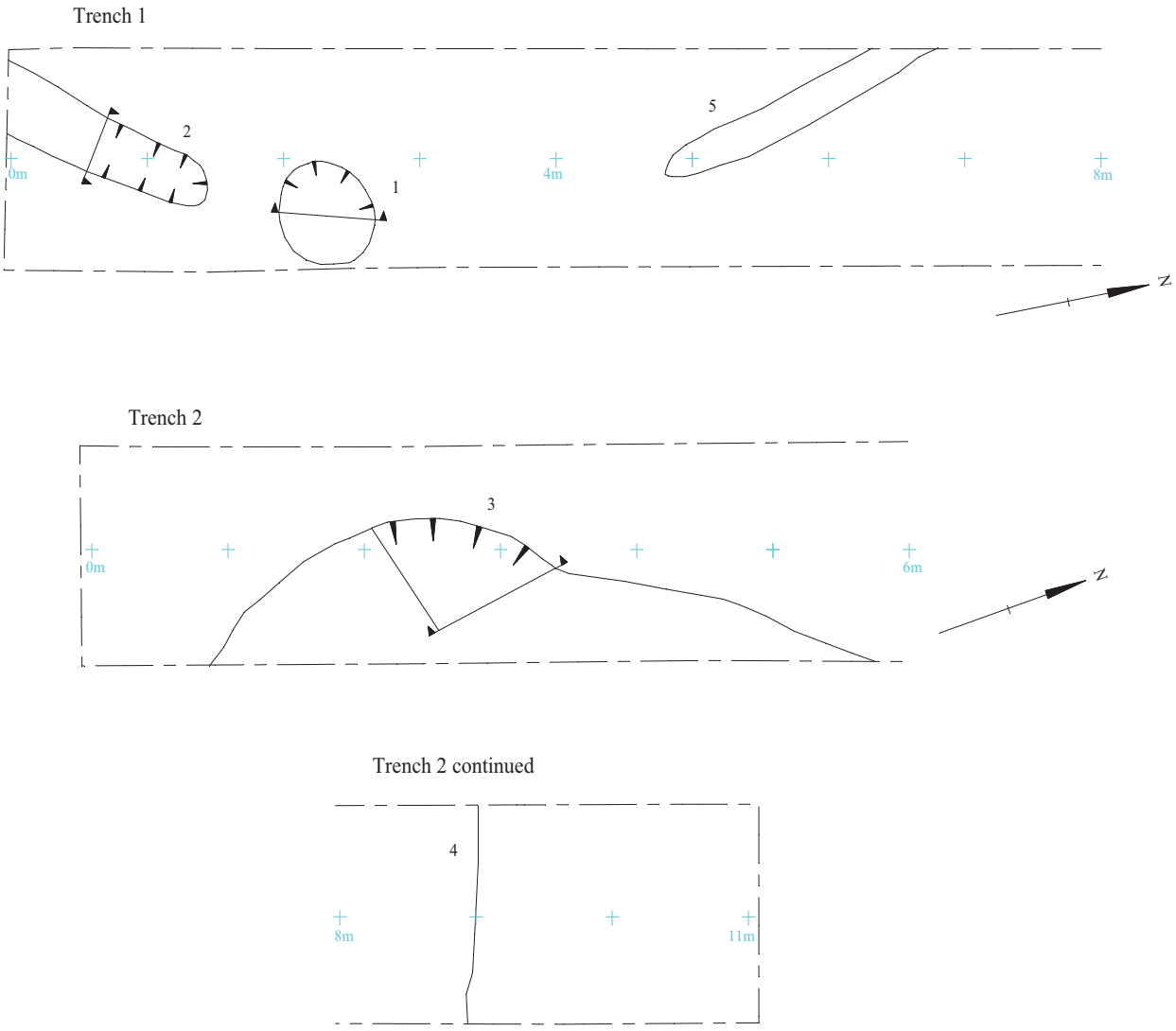

Figure 4. Plan of trenches.

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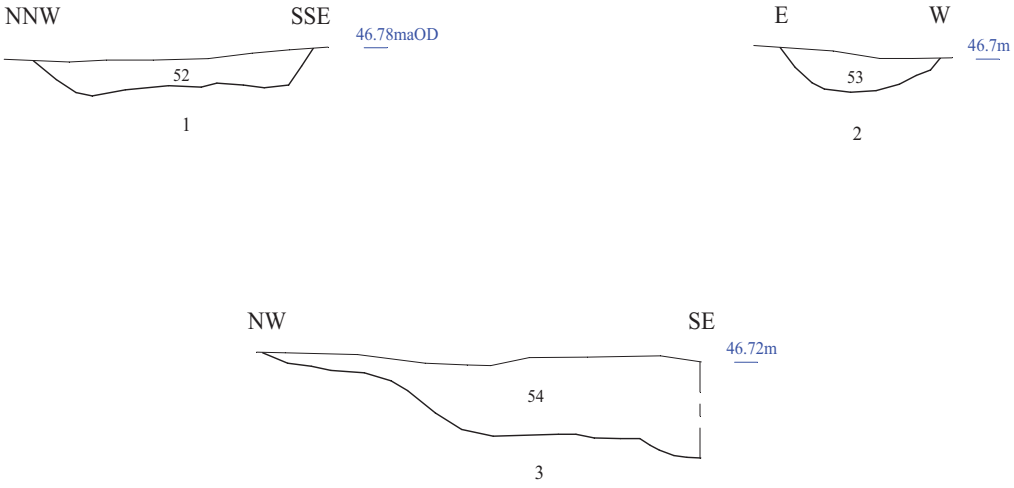

Figure 5. Secions.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north, horizontal scales: 1m and 2m, vertical scale 0.5m.

Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north, horizontal scales: 1m and 2m, vertical scale 0.5m.

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Plate 3. Trench 1, pit 1, looking east, scales, 0.5m and 0.1m.

Plate 4. Trench 1, linear terminal 2, looking south; scales 0.5m and 0.1m.

Plate 5. Trench 2, large pit 3, looking north-east; scales 0.5 and 0.1m.