

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**The Close Care Home, Abingdon Road,  
Burcot, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief - Phase 3**

**by Andrew Mundin**

**Site Code: CBO 09/113**

**(SU 5630 9592)**

# **Replacement Wing, The Close Care Home, Abingdon Road, Burcot, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief - Phase 3**

**For Lawrence Baker Ltd**

by AndrewMundin  
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices  
Ltd

SiteCodeCBO09/113

**June 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** The Close Care Home, Burcot, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 5631 9592

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 27th April – 8th June 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Tim Dawson, Susan Colley, Andrew Muddin

**Site code:** CBO 09/113

**Area of site:** c.700 sq m affected within overall site of c.2500 sq m

**Summary of results:** Neither archaeological deposits nor finds were observed during the observed groundworks of the final phase of development.

**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 ✓ 18.06.10
	Steve Preston ✓ 17.06.10

# Replacement Wing, The Close Care Home, Burcot, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 09/113

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Close Care Home, Abingdon Road, Burcot, Oxfordshire (SU 5630 9592) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Hay of DWA Architects, 39 Blossom Street, York, YO24 1AQ, on behalf of Lawrence Baker Ltd, 1 Elm Place, Old Witney Road, Eynsham, Oxon, OX29 4BD.

Planning consent (P05/W0644) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council to demolish the existing wing, and to finish extending the nursing home. The consent is subject to a condition (9) relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief be carried out during the groundworks due to the possibility that operations may disturb or destroy archaeological deposits.

Two previous phases of work have already been reported on: Phase 1 works (Oram 2005) and Phase 2 works (Lowe and Pine 2005). This report covers the third and final phase of the development.

These works were carried out in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, archaeological advisors to the District Council. The field work was undertaken by Tim Dawson, Susan Colley and Andrew Muddin between 27th April and 8th June 2010. The site code is CBO 09/113.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, with the accession code OXCMS:2005.62.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is a nursing home located to the south of the A415 (Abingdon Road), which is at the mid-point of the elongated village of Burcot (Fig. 1). The River Thames runs along the southern boundary of the site, whose east and west sides are bounded by residential properties, with a public house to the north (Fig. 2). The previous building works added wings for the Care Home to the west and south-west of the demolished southern wing. This phase of work is replacing the whole southern wing, extending its prior footprint slightly to the east. The

site is slightly terraced, stepping downwards towards the river to the rear (south). The site is at an elevation of *c.*52m above Ordnance Datum at the northern end and 50m in the southern portion. The Abingdon Road to the north is at 53.2m AOD. The underlying geology is terrace gravel under alluvium (BGS 1980). On site yellow/brown silty clay was observed for much of the phase 3 site, but with some small deeper truncations revealing sand. Deeper truncations observed on the earlier phases of work did observe underlying gravel.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted by the project brief prepared prior to the Phase 1 works (Fluck 2003). In summary, the site is within the archaeologically rich Upper Thames Valley (Briggs *et al*, 1986), in the vicinity of the Roman town of Dorchester-on-Thames to the south, a north-south aligned Roman road (Dorchester to Alchester) running through Berinsfield to the east (Margary 1955, 119), and a substantial Neolithic/Bronze Age ceremonial complex to the south-east, partially destroyed by gravel extraction in the post-war period. Rescue excavations did, however, highlight the importance of the Neolithic remains identified here (Whittle *et al*, 1992)). Most of the archaeology surrounding the area is known from the aerial photography from the 1930s onwards (Fig. 3). On the southern side of the Thames, opposite to the site is a Mesolithic occupation site, along with a Scheduled Monument at Northfield Farm, noted as a complex Iron Age and Roman settlement, with associated landscape features.

No archaeology, as yet, has been identified within the village of Burcot. No archaeology has been identified during the previous two phases of work on this site, identifying only deep modern drainage truncation, though it was noted that the natural geology was only reached at a depth of lower than 1.3m below current ground level (Oram 2005; Lowe and Pine 2005). Ground disturbance, from modern construction or landscaping associated with the original build of the care home seems to have occurred. There is however a potential of Palaeolithic/Mesolithic flints existing within the site, due to the depth of alluvium possibly preserving old land surfaces, obviously depending of the depth of truncation from modern services and footings.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This involved examination of areas excavated to a reduced level, carried out with a 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with bladed bucket, and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs.

## **Results**

The existing wing had been demolished prior to the watching brief commencing. At the southern end of the site, it was noted that the foundations of the old wing had been grubbed out (Fig. 4). This area seems to have been landscaped, probably associated with the original construction of the care home, as a deep made ground here was excavated to a depth that exposed natural sand. From this observation it was judged that only the groundworks in previously undisturbed areas were to be viewed, due to the level of truncation noted from the previous footings.

An area (4.2m x 7m) to the south-east was levelled to a depth of 0.9m. This dug through a topsoil and a subsoil layer to a depth of 0.8m. Here alluvial clay was exposed, with occasional chalky flecking. A modern service run and a soakaway were observed along with tree roots. No archaeological material was noted within this strip, and only modern material was noted throughout this area of the groundworks.

At the north-eastern end of the site, drainage runs and footings were observed. These were dug to a depth of between 1.1m and 1.2m. A common stratigraphy was noted in these and the footings (Fig. 5). This noted under a rubble crush, two layers of imported made ground, to a depth of 1.05m, this overlay a possible subsoil, which was a light yellow-brown clay. This appeared to be archaeologically sterile. Underlying this was alluvium, which was noted to the base of excavation at 1.2m. Part of a modern drain and inspection chamber was uncovered within the central footing excavations. No finds or archaeological relevant layers were identified during these works.

## **Finds**

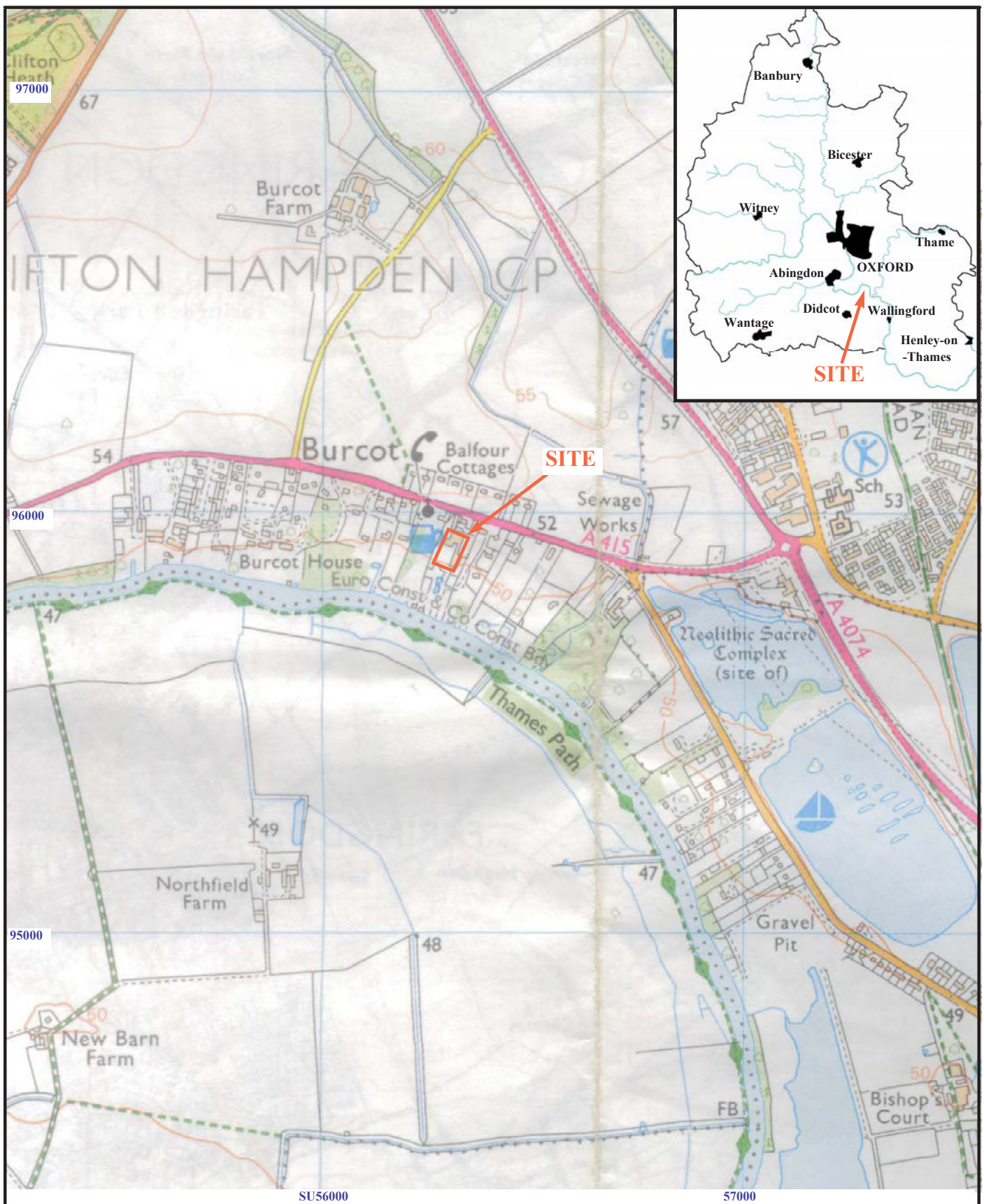
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the site. Modern building material was noted within most of the stratigraphy exposed.

## **Conclusion**

The ground in the vicinity of the previous wing shows signs of landscaping, probably contemporary with the original construction of the care home. Though alluvial levels were reached, very little of the intact natural geological horizons were exposed. No finds, other than modern building materials, were noted during the groundworks.

## References

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- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
- Lowe, J and Pine, J, 2005, 'The Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire: an archaeological watching brief, Phase 2', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 04/103b, Reading
- Oram, R, 2005, 'The Close, Burcot, Oxfordshire: an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 04/103, Reading
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Figure 1. Location of site within Burcot and Oxfordshire.

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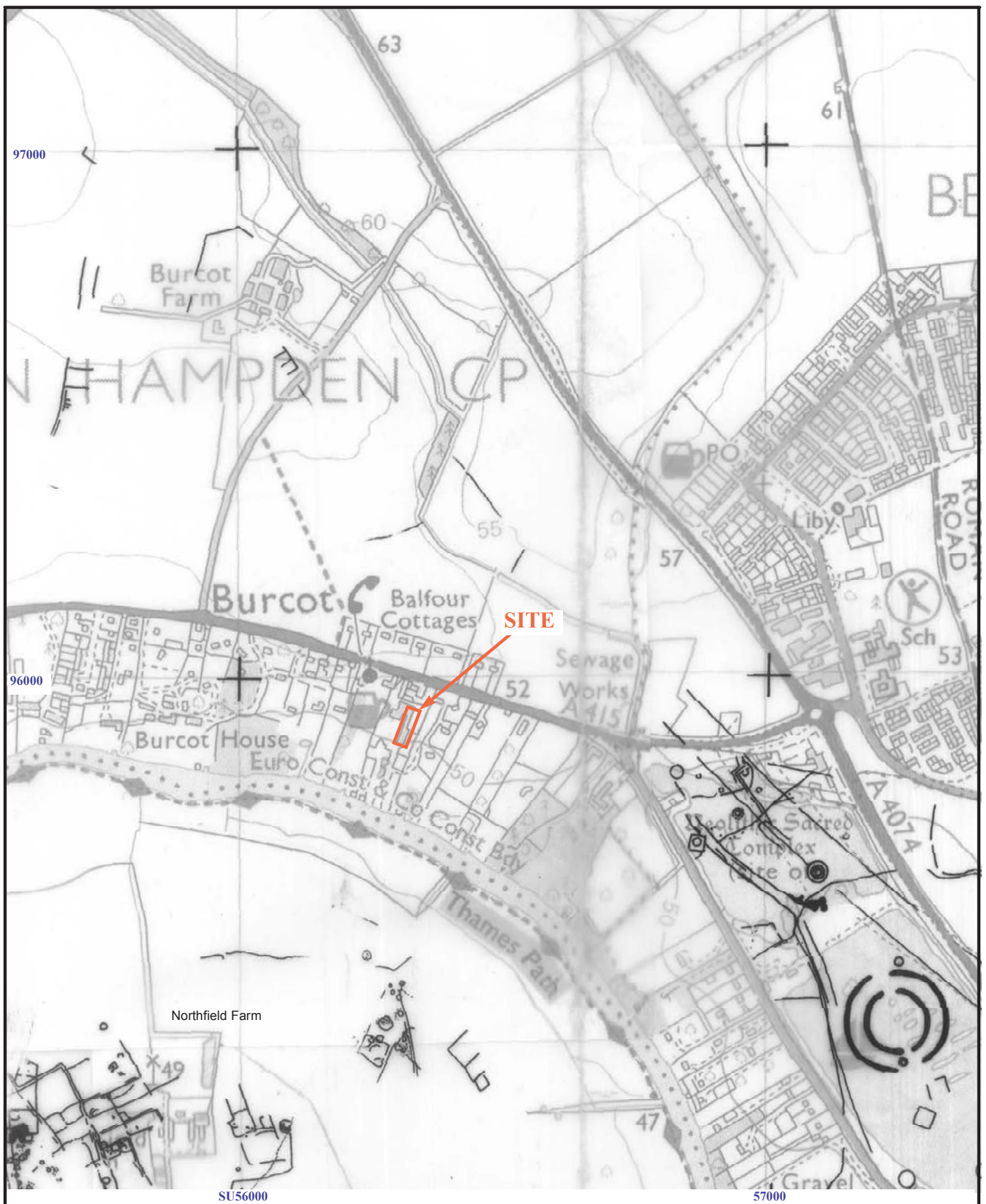


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Abingdon Road.

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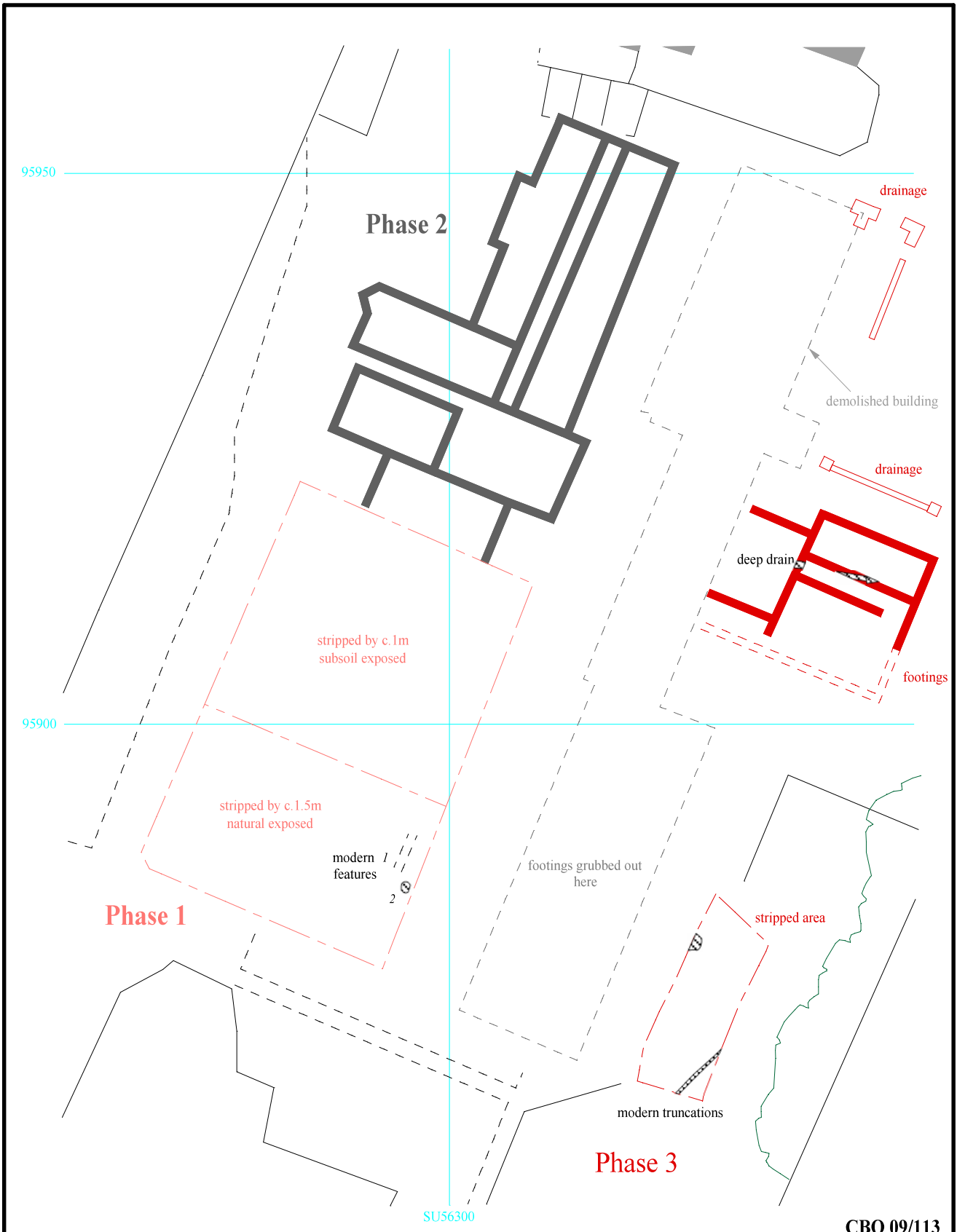
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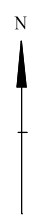
Figure 3. Cropmark interpretation.

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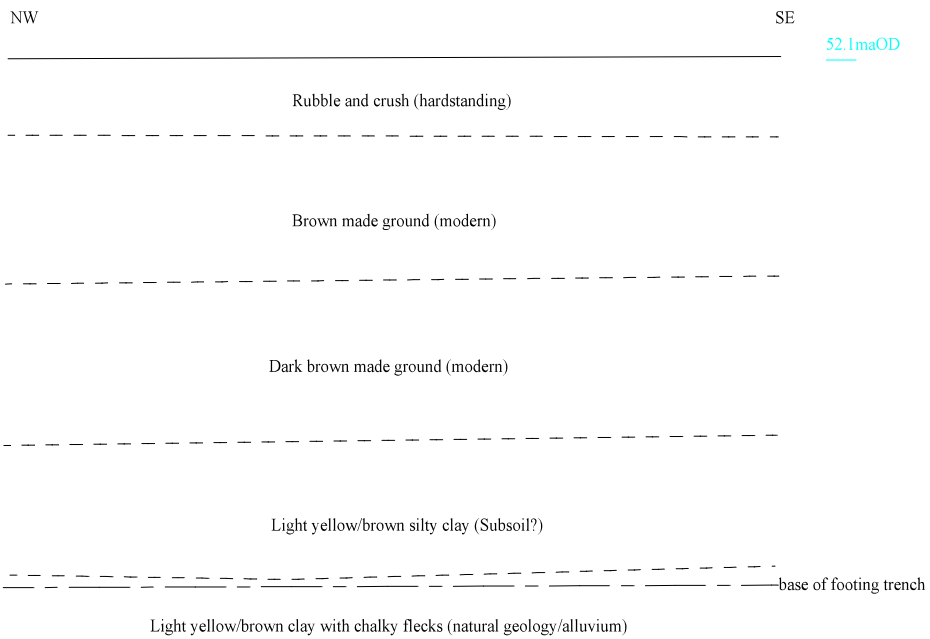
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Figure 4. Location of all phases of watching brief works.





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Figure 5. Representative section of footing trench.

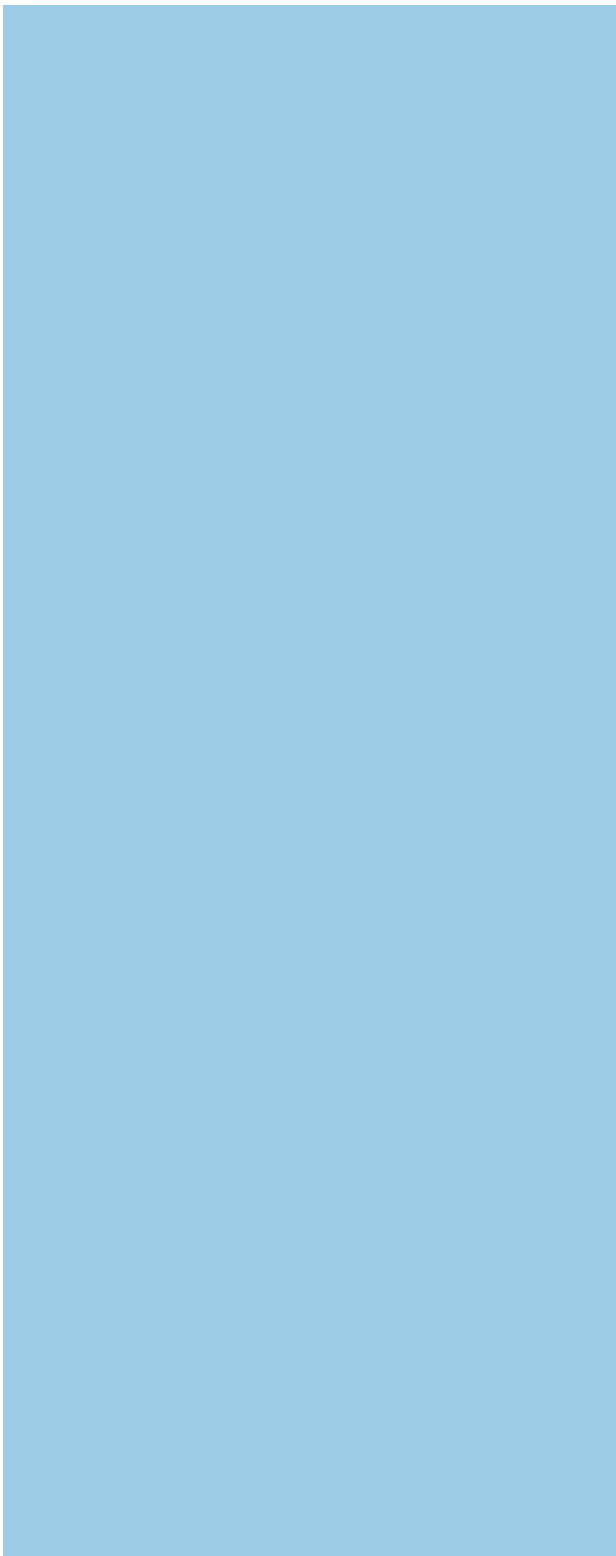
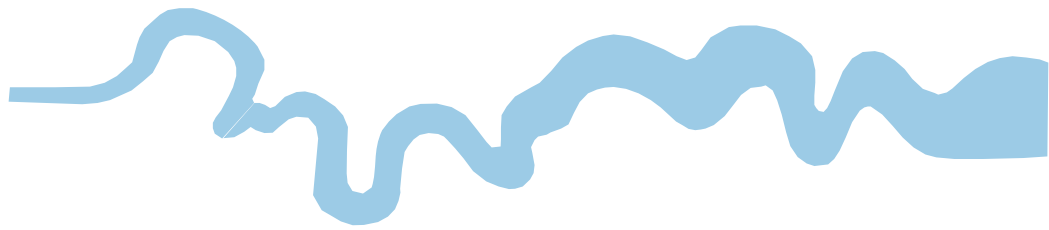


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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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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