

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**New Moorings, Riverside Park,  
Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Tim Dawson**

**Site Code: RMW10/19**

**(SU 6109 8954)**

# **Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For South Oxfordshire District Council**

by Tim Dawson  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code RMW 10/19

**June 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 6109 8954

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 17th - 21st May 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Tim Dawson

**Site code:** RMW 10/19

**Area of site:** c.0.15ha

**Summary of results:** Several finds representing a variety of time periods were recovered from material dredged from the River Thames. These include an Anglo-Saxon spearhead and a sherd of medieval pottery.

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

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 25.06x.10
	Steve Preston ✓ 24.06.10

# Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson

**Report 10/19**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (SU 6109 8954) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Graham Hawkins, of Economy, Leisure and Property, South Oxfordshire District Council, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Oxfordshire OX10 8ED.

Planning consent (P09/W0947) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council to construct 136m of new river bank for mooring on the east bank of the River Thames immediately to the north of Wallingford Bridge. The consent is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during dredging work.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council. The specification was prepared in accordance with a design brief supplied by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2010). The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson between 17th and 21st May 2010 and the site code is RMW 10/19.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on east bank of the River Thames, starting c.10m north of Wallingford Bridge (the A4130) which links the town of Wallingford on the west bank with the village of Crowmarsh Gifford on the east. The site extends for 136m north from this. Adjoining the site to the east are, from south to north, Riverside Park, public open-air paddling and swimming pools and a Type FW3/28 pillbox (Figs 2 and 3). The land is currently part of Riverside Park's river frontage and is open to the public although not for the mooring of boats. The river bank at this point is retained by wall built of concrete-filled sandbags and contains two outlet pipes associated with the paddling and swimming pools. The remains of Wallingford Castle lie on the opposite bank of the

Thames, c.200m north-west of the site. The land to the east of the site is flat river floodplain with a gentle rise towards Crowmarsh Gifford. The floodplain continues north and south while on the west bank of the river the ground rises rapidly towards Wallingford. The underlying geology is recorded as alluvium (BGS 1980) although, due to the nature of the works, this was not observed on site. The site is at a height of c.45m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the area has been highlighted by a brief for the project (Oram 2010). In summary, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley (Briggs *et al.* 1986) immediately opposite the town of Wallingford and just to the north of the Wallingford Bridge (a Scheduled Monument). The bridge is of medieval date but is likely to have a Saxon origins and may well be on the site of a crossing point (bridge or ford) of much earlier date.

A number of finds of various periods have been recovered by dredging of the river south of the bridge including a Saxon sword and a Bronze Age bronze hoard. A Saxon spearhead and medieval finds have also been recorded north of the bridge from the section of the river adjacent to the proposed new bank. The presence of the Bronze Age metalwork raises the possibility of a rich riverside site, such as present at White Cross Farm, c.1km to the south (Cromarty *et al.* 2006).

The site lies opposite medieval Wallingford Castle and a stone structure thought to be part of a jetty or quay for the Castle has been recorded. It is possible that a corresponding feature is also present on the opposite bank near the site. During the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, a siege castle was built at Crowmarsh, the location of which is unknown but components of it may lie immediately adjacent to the river bank.

A well-preserved Type FW3/28 pillbox stands just outside the northern end of the site. This variant of pillbox was designed to contain a 2pdr anti-tank gun (Wills 1985) and was sited facing up-river (north) to defend the Thames crossing provided by Wallingford Bridge.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular the dredging of the riverbed.

The dredging was carried out using a mini-digger with ditching bucket mounted on a barge in the river (Pl. 1). The material taken from the riverbed was immediately placed in the void between the existing riverbank and

the piling without being spread out to dry beforehand. This was observed as closely as was possible given the conditions. Once the dredged material was dry it was, in some places, possible to walk on its surface and inspect it for artefacts (Pl. 2). On a few occasions a bucket-load of riverbed was placed on the bank before being dragged into the void. This enabled a more in-depth study to be made of the material. The approximate position of each find was recorded, where possible, as its distance from the southern-most point of the mooring.

A metal detector was taken on site but due to the method of dredging and the presence of a large amount of modern metal, the piles in the river and mats held in place by metal pins on the bank, it was not possible to use it to any effect.

## **Results**

The dredging of the riverbed was observed along the entire length of the new moorings. The material dredged out varied from a coarse sandy silt at the southern end, through a sand and gravel mix in the centre to much larger stones and gravel in the north.

A wide range of artefacts of various ages were recovered from the digger bucket and the surface of the deposited material (Fig. 3). Metal finds included an iron spearhead (Pl. 3), bent at a 90° angle just above the socket, a large iron nail and three coins dating respectively from 1889, 1947 and 1959.

One sherd of pottery was recovered, dated to between the mid 11th to mid 13th century.

Other finds included several fragments of horse, cattle and sheep/goat bone.

These finds appear to be in a higher concentration within 50m of the bridge and with the majority of the more modern examples being recovered from the northern end of the area, by the landing stage. The density of modern finds in this area may reflect it previously being the site of public diving boards (information from local source).

No evidence of dressed stone which may have related to the castle was observed although a concentration of large, irregular, angular blocks of limestone was dredged from a stretch of river extending from c.40m north from the southern end all the way to the northern end of the dredging (Fig. 3). These blocks were all too large to lift so it was not possible to recover any examples for further study. It was possible to conduct a superficial survey of the limestone but only from a distance as, once they had been deposited behind the piling, they were inaccessible. All of the blocks varied a great deal in size but were a minimum of c.0.50m in length and c.0.30m in depth. Their surfaces all appeared relatively clean with virtually no river-associated growth on them and the angles in the shapes were still sharp. This suggests that the blocks had not been submerged for a long period of

time but are a relatively recent deposition, however, if they are recent it is unclear where their source was. Their size, shape and irregularity seems to imply that the limestone was not used structurally unless as a rubble core.

## **Finds**

### *Metalwork finds* by Steven Crabb

A small but varied assemblage of metal finds weighing 656g was recovered from this site, 618g of this is ferrous and the remainder (38g) is copper or copper alloy.

The three ferrous objects that make up the assemblage are a long socketed spearhead (Cat. No. 1), a long square nail (Cat. No. 3) and a truncated cone or nozzle (Cat. No. 4).

The spearhead (Pl. 3) has been bent through 90 degrees probably after deposition as the corrosion product has been shattered off at the point of the bend. The blade of this spear has been broken 160mm from the shaft. The damage to the spear appears to have happened in two separate events given the differential corrosion (Pl. 4). The corrosion at the bend of the spear is significantly lower than over the rest of the artefact. The point of the spear is missing but from the shape of the blade and the presence of loops for attaching to a shaft it is likely to be an Anglo-Saxon sword-headed spear (Swanton 1974, fig 6a). This type of weapon was likely to have been wielded in two hands and used sideways in a slashing fashion (Underwood 2001). X-radiography of this artefact would reveal the method of production and the extent to which the corrosion has penetrated, which would reveal whether it would be possible to remove a section of the artefact for metallographic analysis to further understand the production method and also the material(s) that it is made of.

The nail recovered is rectangular in cross-section narrowing to a wedge-shaped end, with a square head. It is 150mm in length and 15 x 7mm in cross section at the mid point.

The truncated cone or nozzle is made of a single piece of metal rolled around a form with a flange at either end. It is 125mm in length with 20mm diameter at the narrow end and 40mm at the wide end. The artefact has corroded differentially due to its location within the river bed, with one side having silt and gravel concreted onto the surface.

The four copper alloy objects recovered are three coins (Cat. Nos. 5–7) and a domed disc (Cat. No. 2). The disc has been pressed out leaving a square section flange around the outside edge, it is 50mm in diameter. The bright appearance of the disc suggests that it has been made of brass. The three coins were all recovered from the same area of the site, they are all small denomination coins from the last 125 years: two pennies dating to 1889 and 1947 and a 1959 halfpenny. The decoration of the pennies is relatively well worn suggesting a reasonably

long period of use before their deposition in the river. The halfpenny by contrast is still sharp and the features of the portrait are distinct.

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

A single medieval sherd weighing 28g is the rim of a jar in Wallingford Ware, Oxfordshire fabric WA38, of mid 11th - mid 13th century date. It is a typical find in the medieval town. It is abraded, and somewhat water-worn. The rim is evenly sooted.

### *Animal Bone* by Ceri Falys

A total of 13 pieces of bone were recovered, weighing 1337g. The overall preservation of the remains was good, although all pieces showed some degree of fragmentation.

The most common fragments were non-descript mid-shaft fragments of long bones and rib shafts.

The minimum number of individuals/animals (MNI) present within the assemblage was determined to be three: one each of horse (right tibia), cattle (right radius-ulna) and sheep/goat (right humerus).

No evidence of butchery practices were present on the skeletal elements, further information could be derived from these remains.

## **Conclusion**

A range of artefacts was recovered from the River Thames north of Wallingford Bridge. These provide a snapshot of the history of the river at Wallingford ranging from an Anglo-Saxon weapon and medieval pottery to Victorian and later coins. It is unclear where the large concentration of limestone originated and it is possible that it is the remains of a riverside structure that was demolished into the river although there is no evidence for this remaining on the bank.

The positions recorded for each artefact suggest that there is a concentration, particularly of bone, nearer the bridge and another one of more modern items at the north end of the moorings. However, this may be entirely artificial due to the action of the river carrying objects downstream over time, the action of the digger bucket disturbing the riverbed as it removes the material and the narrowness of the void to be filled between riverbank and piling in the centre of the mooring. Perhaps the greatest factor that limited the discovery of artefacts was that the material dredged from the river was placed straight into the void rather than being laid out to dry on the bank which would have allowed detailed examination of all the material extracted rather than just that on the surface once the void had been filled.

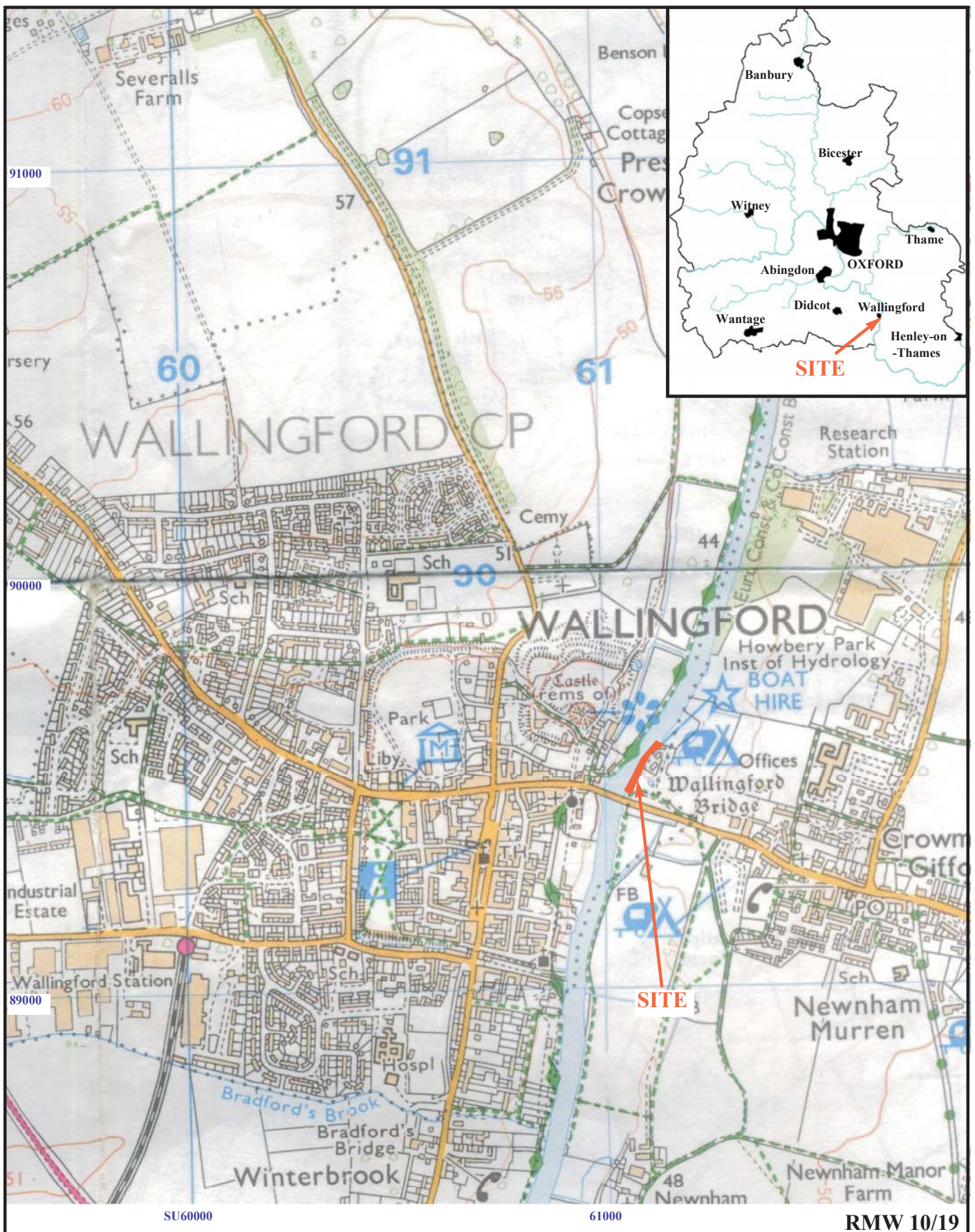


## References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Briggs, G, Cook, J, and Rowley, T (eds), 1986, *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region*, Oxford Univ Dept External Stud
- Cromarty, A M, Barclay, A, Lambrick, G and Robinson, M, 2006, *Late Bronze Age ritual and habitation on a Thames eyot at Whitecross Farm, Wallingford: the archaeology of the Wallingford bypass 1986–92*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monogr **22**, Oxford
- Mellor, M, 1994, Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region, *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217
- Oram, R, 2010, 'P09/W0947 – Riverside Park, Wallingford, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich
- Swanton, M J, 1974, *A Corpus Of Pagan Anglo-Saxon Spear Types*, BAR Brit Ser **7**, Oxford
- Underwood, R, 2001, *Anglo-Saxon Weapons and Warfare*, Stroud
- Wills, H, 1985, *Pillboxes, A Study of UK Defences 1940*, Trowbridge

## Appendix 1: Catalogue of all finds

<i>Location</i>	<i>Cat. no.</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
c. 24m N	1	Fe	spearhead	1	330	Bent through 90° just above socket
c. 38m N	2	Cu Alloy	unknown	1	9	Disc of unknown purpose
c. 50m N	3	Fe	nail	1	156	
North end	4	Fe	nozzle	1	132	Truncated cone of unknown purpose
North end	5	Cu Alloy	coin	1	11	1889 penny
North end	6	Cu Alloy	coin	1	11	1947 penny
North end	7	Cu Alloy	coin	1	7	1959 half penny
c.15m N		Pottery	Jug Rim	1	30	Wallingford ware c.1050-1250
c. 7m N		Bone		1	394	horse
c. 12m N		Bone		1	66	'large' mammal
c. 15m N		Bone		1	6	'medium' mammal
c. 18m N		Bone		1	78	'large' mammal
c. 22m N		Bone		1	18	'large' mammal
c. 28m N		Bone		2	449	1 cattle, 1 sheep/goat
c. 51m N		Bone		1	16	'medium' mammal
North end		Bone		5	310	1 'large', 3 'medium', 1 'small' mammal



**New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 2010  
Archaeological watching brief**

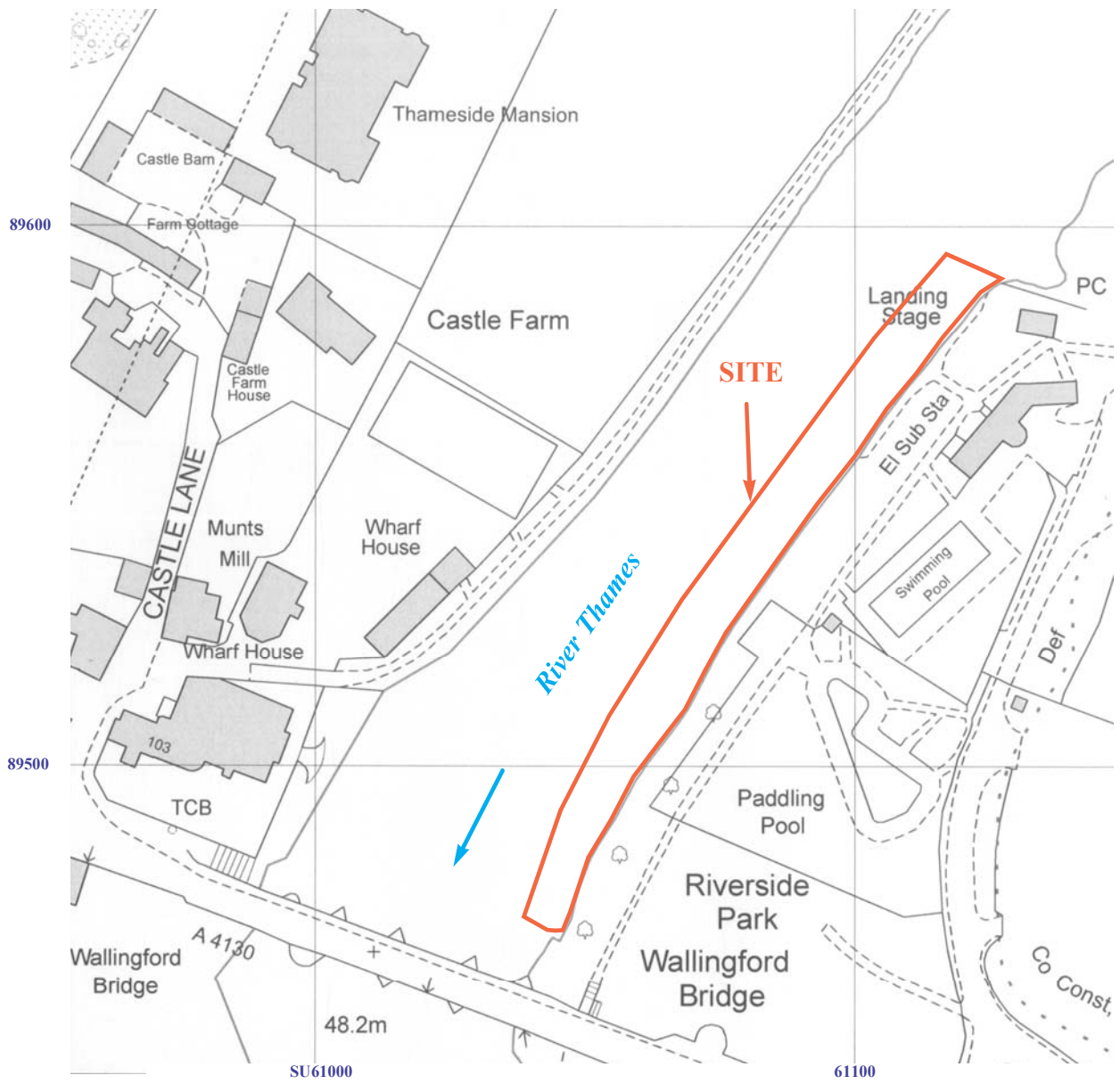
Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 170 at 1:12500  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

RMW 10/19





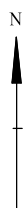
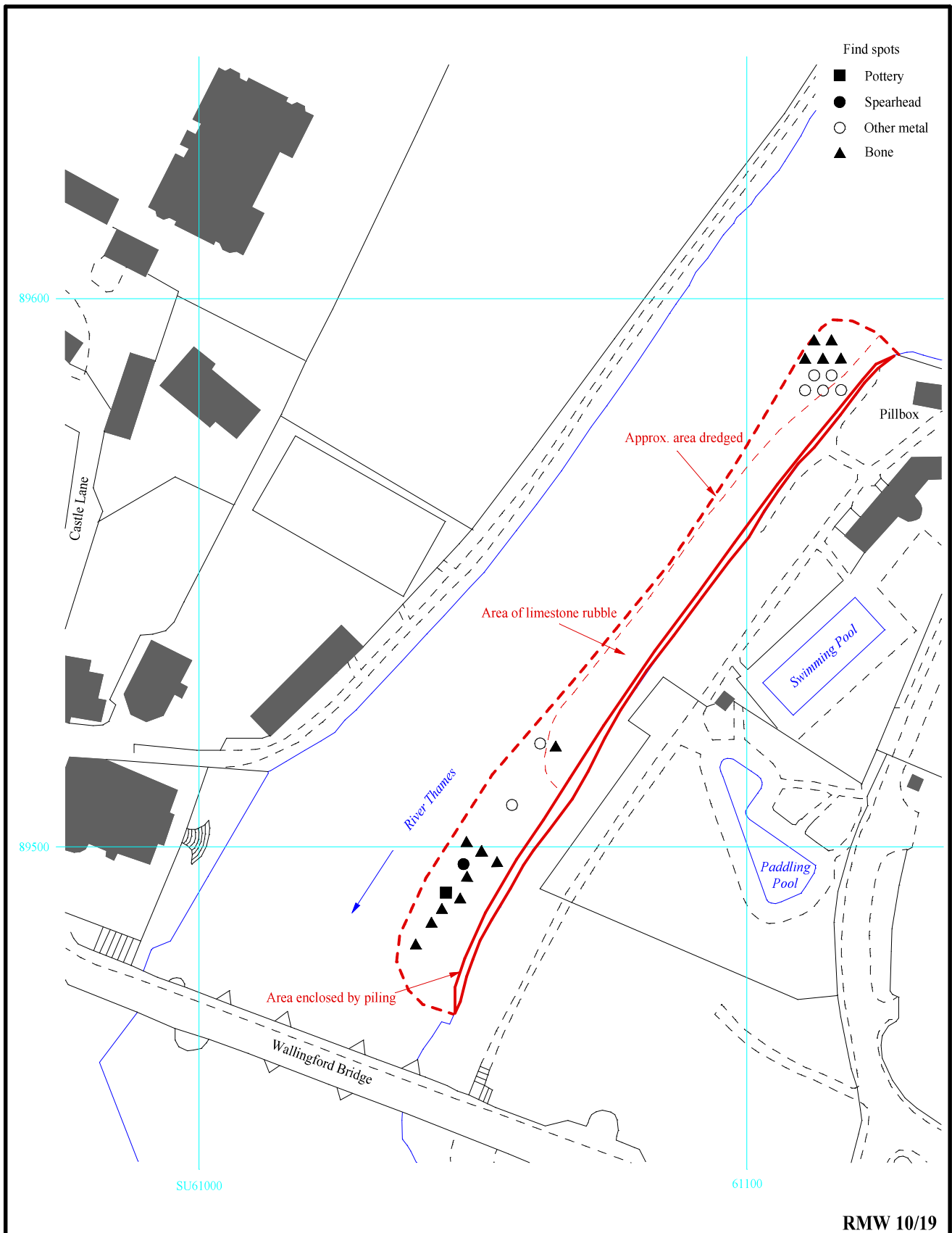
RMW 10/19

**New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 2010  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:1250





**New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford,  
Oxfordshire, 2010  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Plan of the site showing the approximate find locations.





Plate 1. General view, looking south towards Wallingford Bridge, showing dredging in progress.



Plate 2. Dredged material placed behind piling, looking west, scales 0.3m, 1.0m

RMW 10/19

**New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 2010**  
**Archaeological watching brief**

Plates 1 and 2

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





Plate 3. Anglo-Saxon side-looped 'sword' spearhead. Scale 10cm.



Plate 4. Detail of damage and differential corrosion on spearhead. Scale 10cm.

RMW 10/19

New Moorings, Riverside Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 2010  
Archaeological watching brief

Plates 3 and 4.

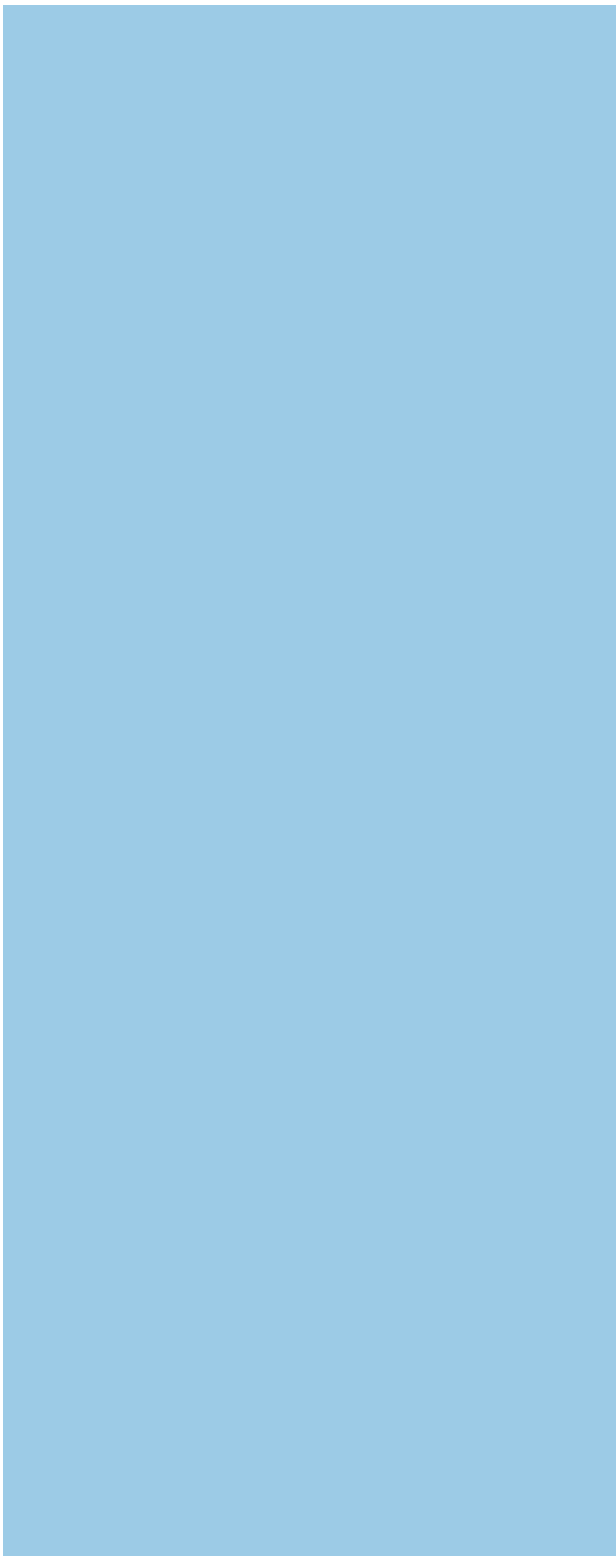
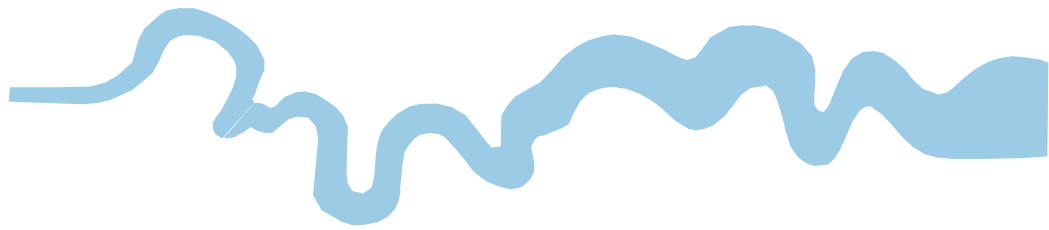
THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

## 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







**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**