

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael,
Banbury, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Josh Hargreaves and Luis Esteves

Site Code: BSM18/60

(SP 4497 3282)

**Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley,
Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Armour Heritage Ltd

by Josh Hargreaves and Luis Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BSM 18/60

August 2018

Summary

Site name: Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 4497 3282

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 21st to 23rd August 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Luis Esteves

Site code: BSM 18/60

Area of site: 402 sq m

Summary of results: Archaeological observations were undertaken prior to the construction of a new barn. An area of made ground was found which relates to a previous garage building in the west of the site. Nothing of archaeological interest was observed in those parts of the site which exposed the natural geology.

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

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 04.09.18
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Report 18/60

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Blackingrove Farm, Summer Ley, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 0RX (SP 4497 3282 (Fig. 1)). The work was commissioned by Ms Sue Farr, of Armour Heritage Ltd, Foghamshire Timber Yard, Foghamshire Lane, Trudoxhill, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DP, on behalf of their client, Mr and Mrs Dawes.

Planning permission (app 15/01926/F) was gained from Cherwell District Council for the construction of a barn, on a concrete slab with associated hardstanding and minimal landscaping, to the east of the existing farm buildings. A variation (18/00638/F) on the application to increase the building's size and the area of hardstanding was also granted. Due to the potential of archaeological deposits being disturbed during construction, the consent for the variation is subject to conditions (4 and 5) which require archaeological observation during excavation for the slab base, which will be larger than the eventual footprint of the new structure.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification (Farr 2018) approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, on behalf of the Council as the County advisor on archaeology in the planning process. The fieldwork was supervised by Tim Dawson and Luis Esteves between 21st to 23rd August 2018. The site code is BSM 18/60.

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

Location, topography and geology

Barford St Michael lies 7.5km south of Banbury (Fig.1). The farm is sited east of the village, at the east end of a metalled track known as Summer Ley, on a sub-rectangular piece of land. The site for the new barn is located on the southern boundary of a field forming part of Blackingrove Farm (Fig. 2) to the south-east of the house and east of an already existing garage. The River Swere lies to the north of Blackingrove Farm. The site lies at a height of *c.*103m above Ordnance Datum (OD), though the valley floor is at *c.*90m aOD. The underlying

geology for the farm is Chipping Norton Limestone, surrounded by Dyrham Siltstone and Whitby Mudstone (Lower Lias Clay) (BGS Geindex; BGS 1968). The natural geology observed in these works was a yellow-grey chalk-flecked clay.

Archaeological background

Blackingrove Farm is a group of buildings which dates from the 19th century. Barford St Michael was in Wootton Hundred while nearby Barford St John was in Bloxham Hundred, with the River Swere creating the division. The majority of the existing buildings are 18th-19th century in the larger settlement to the south, with the only exceptions being of the Church of St Michael which has probable Norman origins (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974) (listed Grade I; 1284140). The Manor House (GII*; 1046247), with its moat, dates from the 16th century. These buildings are both on the west side of the village, well away from the site. Barford St John had its own manor and a chapel (St John's) also with Norman elements, but the oldest standing structure is the 13th century chancel (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 445). The south side of the village appears to be 'shrunken', with a fish pond, house-platforms and trackways present to the south and south-east of Manor Farm, sited north of the river floodplain (PRN4118).

Barford St Michael also lies in proximity to Ilbury Hillfort (SAM 1015167), 2km to the south west. The univallate earthwork is 'kidney'-shaped (Sutton 1966, 34) with Iron Age and early Roman pottery found in plough soil. A carved relief to Vulcan, was recovered from the base of the promontory (Henig and Booth 2000, 127). More specific to this location, the Oxfordshire Historic Environmental Record (HER) records a number of artefacts of pottery, metal and stone found immediately north of Blackingrove Farm itself. A reference is made in an Ashmolean Museum archive from 1917 of findings made between 1853 and 1863, suggesting a particular rich Roman site on the north slope near the river, with coins, pins, brooches, bronzes, 'Samian' pottery and even a stone sarcophagus recorded, all from 'black soil on the north slope of a hill rising from the River Swere on Blackgrove Farm, a mile east of the Barfords' (VCH 1939, 331–2). Other similar Roman finds were retrieved to the south of the village, some 1km away on Iron Down (Case and Sturdy 1959, 98). A likely prehistoric, curvilinear cropmark is known nearby (HER 27998), giving rise to the suggestion that all this evidence suggests a Roman village (VCH 1939, 330–45).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits of finds affected by the development. This was to comprise the monitoring of all groundworks undertaken beneath the existing ground surface during the barn's construction, any topsoil stripping and/or ground reduction, along with excavation for foundations, hardstanding and services.

All works were undertaken with a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat, bladed bucket. All spoilheaps were scanned with a metal detector for finds.

Results

Machine excavation of the site overburden was observed, to the level of the natural geology (a maximum depth of 0.6m) in the north-east but did not penetrate to this depth across the rest of the slab area (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 3). Typically less than 0.3m of topsoil and no subsoil was encountered above the grey/yellow clay (Pl.2). At the east end of site for the last 12m only topsoil (typically less than 0.20m) was removed as the building impact depth had been reached. The impact depth was deeper to the west due to a slope in the natural topography of the site.

Natural geology (grey clay with patches of orange clay and stones) was observed only to the north-west of the area and only topsoil was stripped off to the east (Fig. 4). Field drains were seen cutting through, with areas of natural geology. The south-west corner of site contained a large area of modern made ground, related to the construction of an already existing barn/garage (not mapped) directly to the west, that borders the excavation area (Pl. 3). This made ground was a dark brown clayey silt with large amounts of stone inclusions.

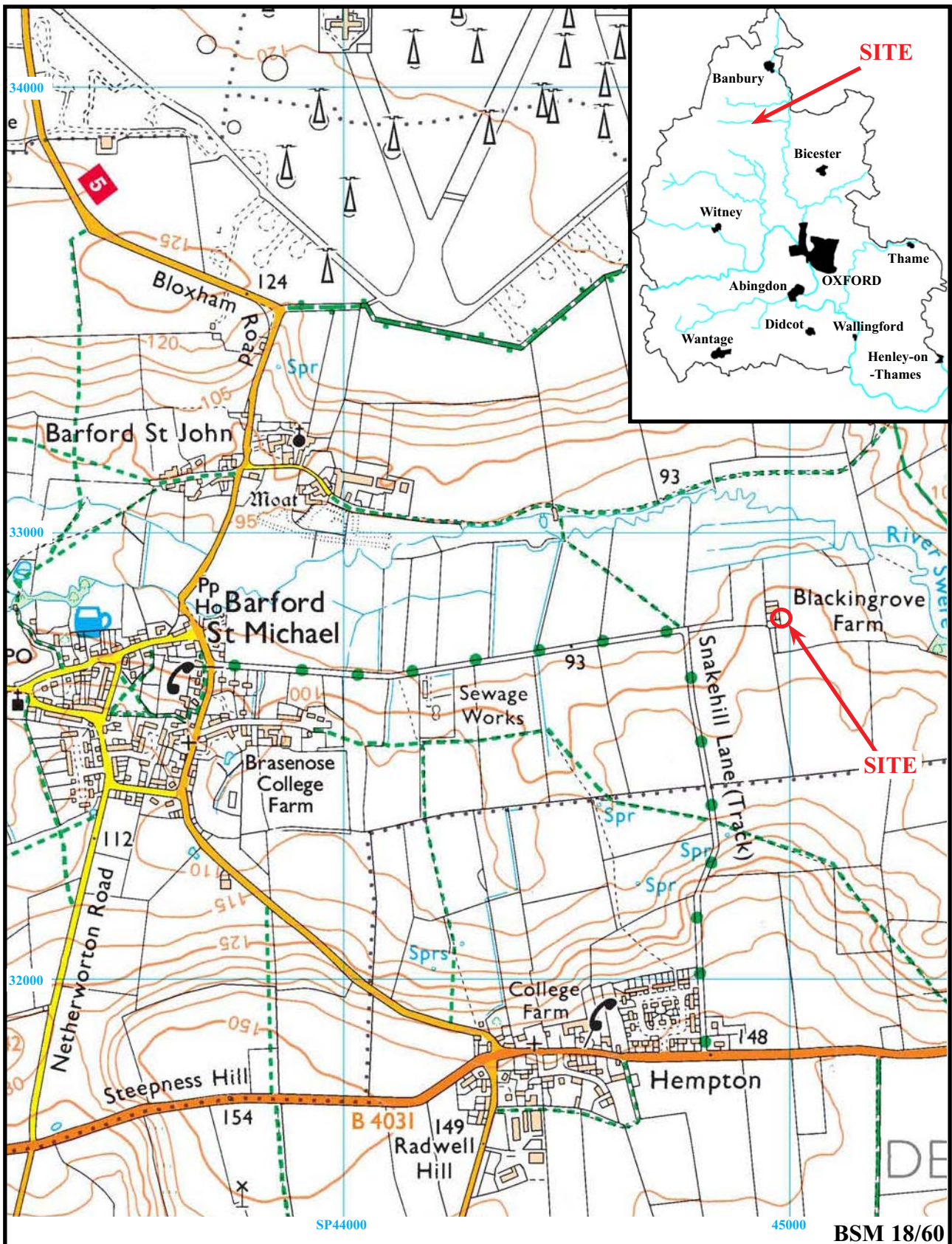
East of the strip for the slab, a soakaway was excavated, 0.7m by 2m in plan and 0.50m deep. This revealed 0.30m of topsoil directly above the natural grey clay (Pl. 4).

Conclusion

The watching brief at the site revealed no archaeological activity and no activity at all predating the construction of the existing garage structure to the west of the site. No finds of archaeological interest were uncovered.

References

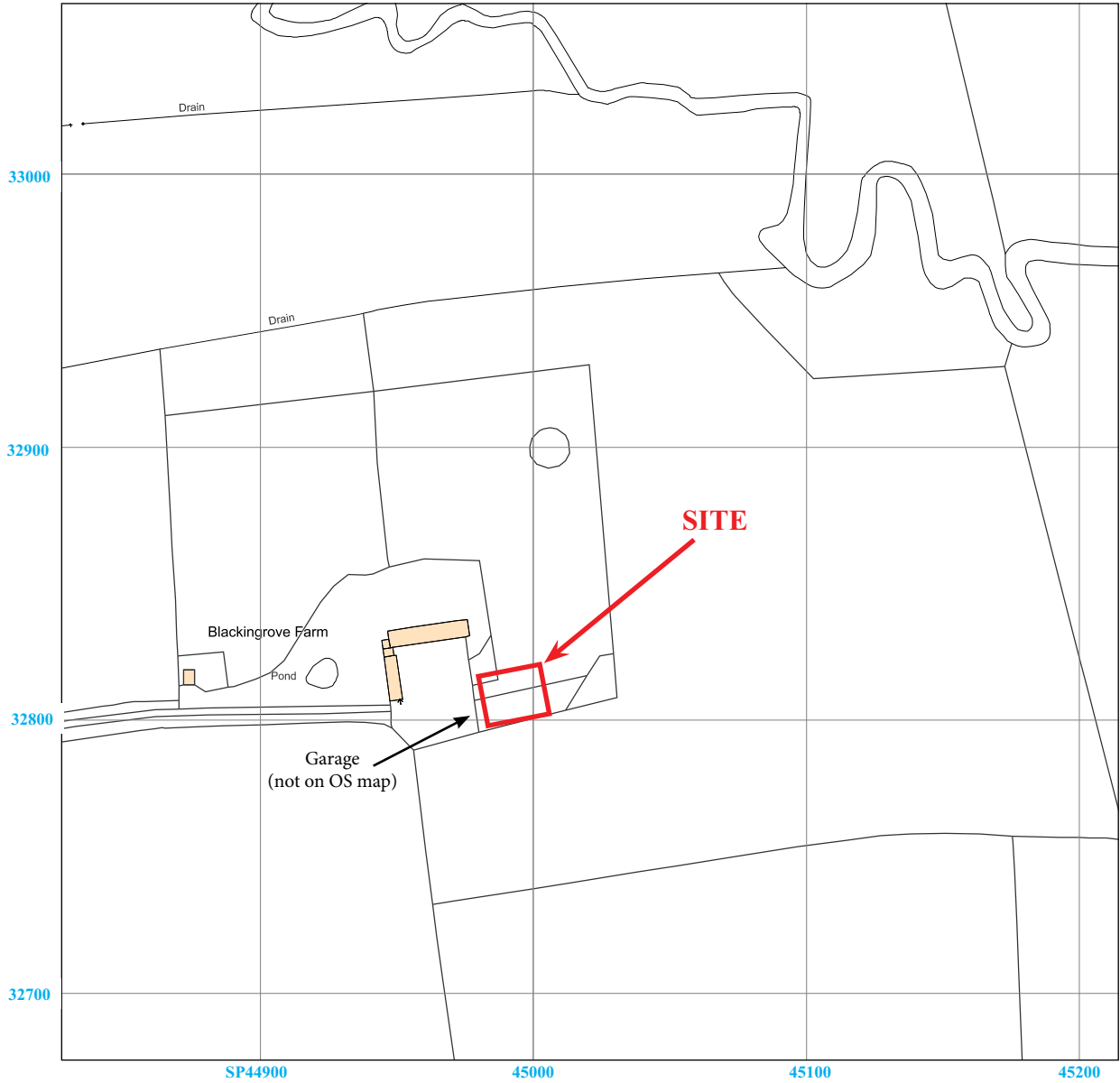
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Henig M, and Booth, P, 2000, 'Roman Oxfordshire', Stroud
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Sutton, J E G, 1966, 'Iron Age Earthworks and other earthworks in Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, **31**, 28-43
VCH, 1939, *A History of the County of Oxford*, **1**, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol1/pp330-345> [accessed 19th July 2018]



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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Barford St. Michael and Oxfordshire.

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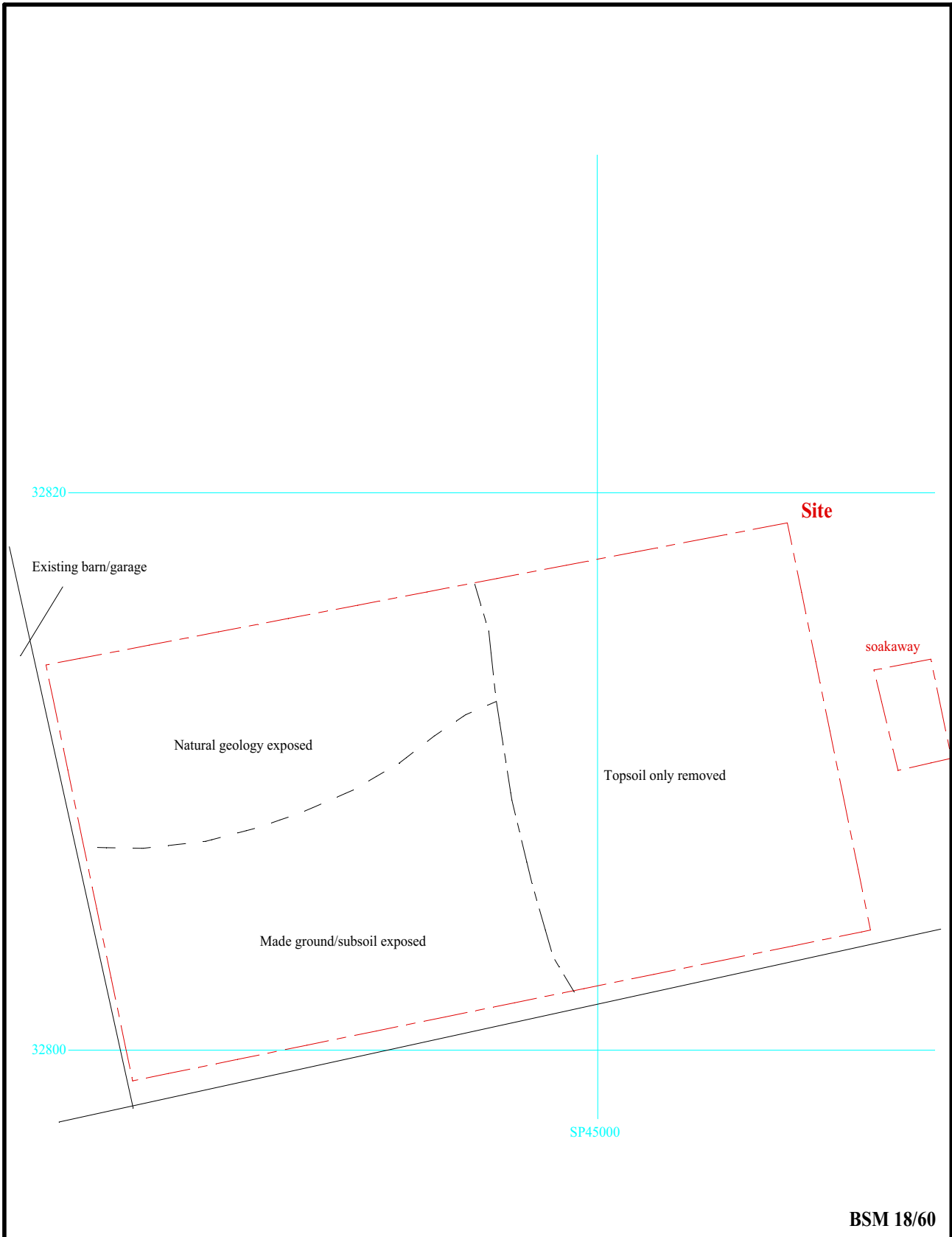
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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Figure 3. Location of observed area and layers exposed..

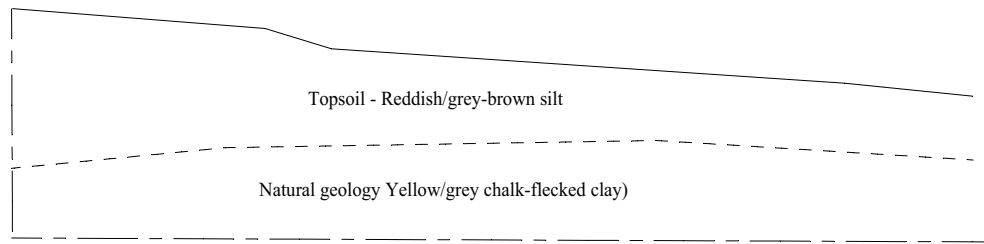


North-west corner of excavated area

103.2maOD

WSW

ENE



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Figure 4. Full section.



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Plate 1. Final reduction on area, looking north west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Final depth of reduction, looking north north west, Scales: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Final reduction on area, looking south east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Soakaway, looking south east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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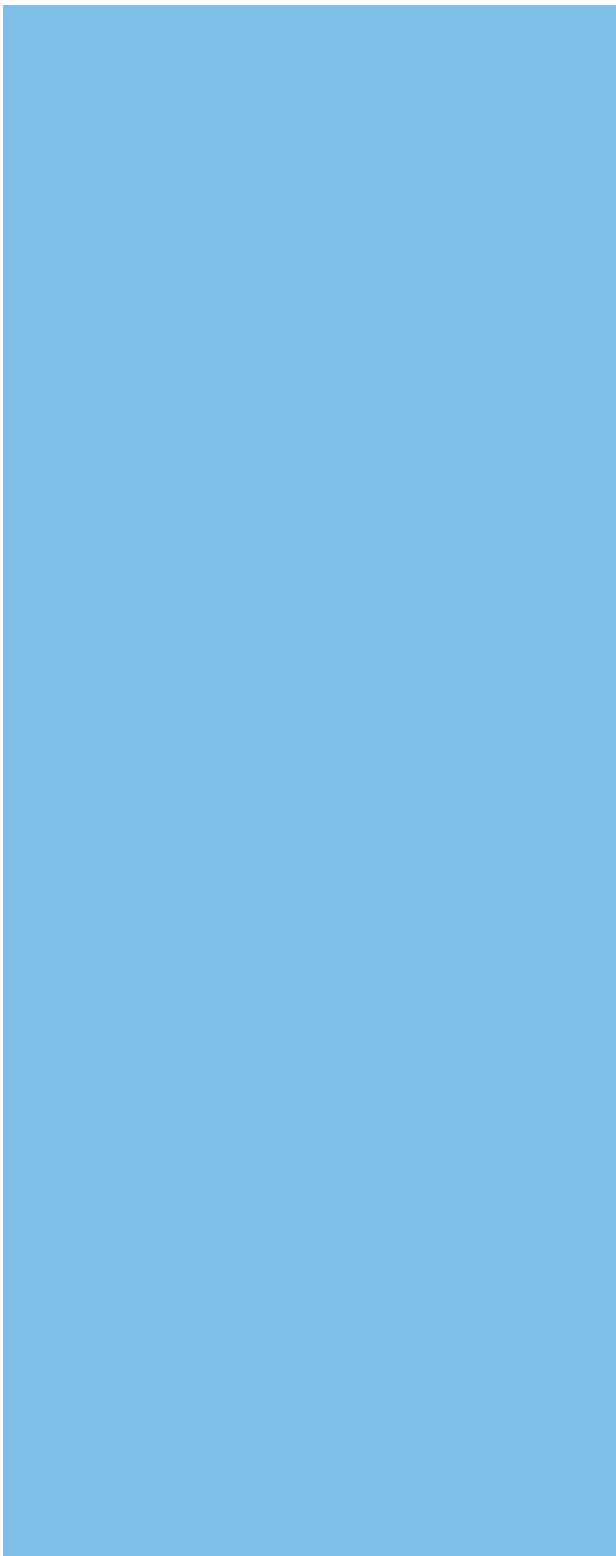
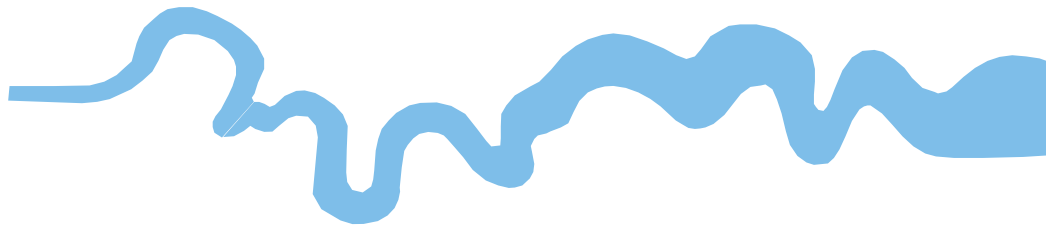
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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