

**Stuart Turner Limited,  
Market Place, Henley**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for Benfield & Loxley (Oxford) Ltd**

by Jo Pine  
Thames Valley Archaeological  
Services

Site Code MPH98/20

**June 1999**

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**Report 98/20**

**Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Stuart Turner Limited, Market Place, Henley (SU 7590 8245) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Mr N Worthington on behalf of Benfield & Loxley (Oxford) Limited, Old Bank House, 166 Oxford Road, Cowley, OX4 2LA.

The watching brief was undertaken as a condition on the granting of planning permission for demolition of pre-war industrial buildings and the construction of new office space. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990).

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr P Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Service. The field work was undertaken by Jo Pine on the 11th and 13th of March and the 8th of June 1999. The site code is MPH 98/20.

**Location, Topography and Geology**

The site lies at approximately 110m above Ordnance Datum on the western limits of the town, between Greys Road and Market Place (Figs 1 and 2). The development lies on the boundary between Coombe deposits and Upper Chalk (BGS 1980).

## **Archaeological Background**

The site lies to the west of the historic core of the town, which was established by AD 1500 (Airs et al 1974). Little is known about the early history of Henley as archaeological excavations have been few and documentary evidence is ambiguous. The Hundred Rolls (1278) describes Henley as a hamlet of Benson, although an earlier document (1269) refers to Henley as a town (ibid).

Excavations in Bell Street at the site of the present Waitrose supermarket uncovered Roman, Medieval and post-Medieval deposits (Moloney 1997). The Roman features comprised a metalled surface dating from the 1st century AD and a possible building. Medieval features included stone buildings, property boundaries, and refuse pits. On the opposite side of the street, at 42c Bell Street, excavation revealed 13th–15th century pits and postholes, a possible burgage wall, 15th–17th century pits and postholes, and post-Medieval walls and a trackway (Pine forthcoming). Smaller archaeological field investigations in and around the town centre have revealed 13th–17th century features, remains of buildings, pits, and ditches.

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality, and date of any archaeological deposits encountered during the development. This involved the examination of both the area stripped of overburden and any service trenches. The foundations of the new buildings were to be piled, mostly on existing footings, and could not therefore be examined.

## **Results**

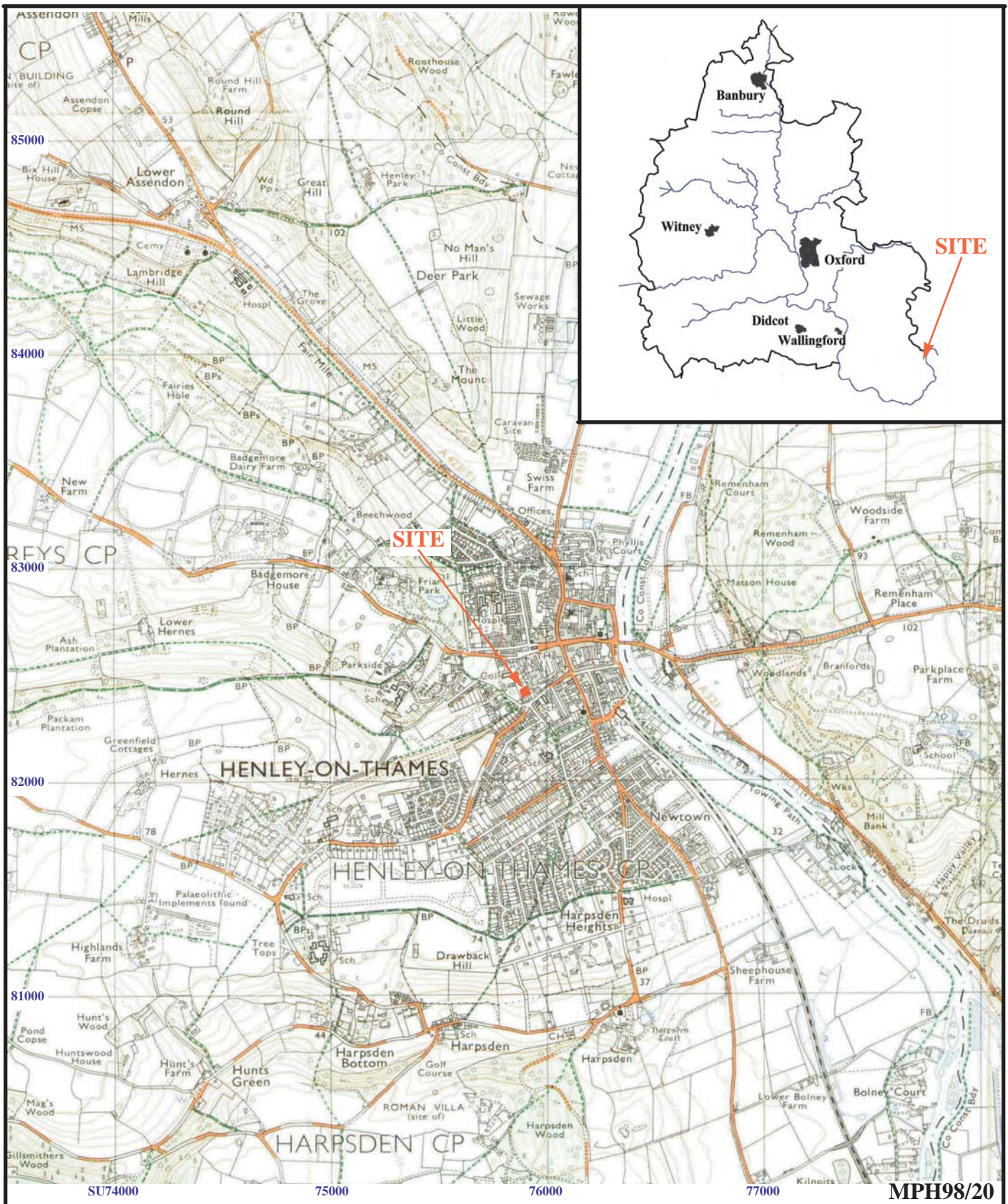
After demolition of the pre-existing buildings, the floor levels of the new buildings were established; these were to be the same as those of the pre-existing buildings. The groundwork therefore consisted of the removal of existing concrete slabs and the excavation of overburden to a depth of 0.30m. At this depth no natural or archaeological features were exposed. A 28m long service trench was dug to a depth of 1.20m (max), the sections of which showed 0.90m of overburden and subsoil onto natural. No archaeological features were observed or artefacts recovered from the resultant spoil heaps.

## **Conclusions**

No archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed during the watching brief.

## **References**

- Airs, M, Rodwell, K and Turner, H, 1974, 'Henley' in K Rodwell (ed) *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey No 3, Oxford, 125–133
- BGS, 1980, British Geological Survey, Solid and Drift Edition, Sheet 254, Keyworth
- Moloney, C, 1997, Excavations and Building Survey at Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, 1993–94, *Oxoniensia* LXII
- Pine, J, forthcoming, The excavation of Medieval and post-Medieval features at the rear of 42c Bell Street, Henley, Oxfordshire, (*Oxoniensia*)
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO



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Figure 1. Location of site within Henley and Oxfordshire.

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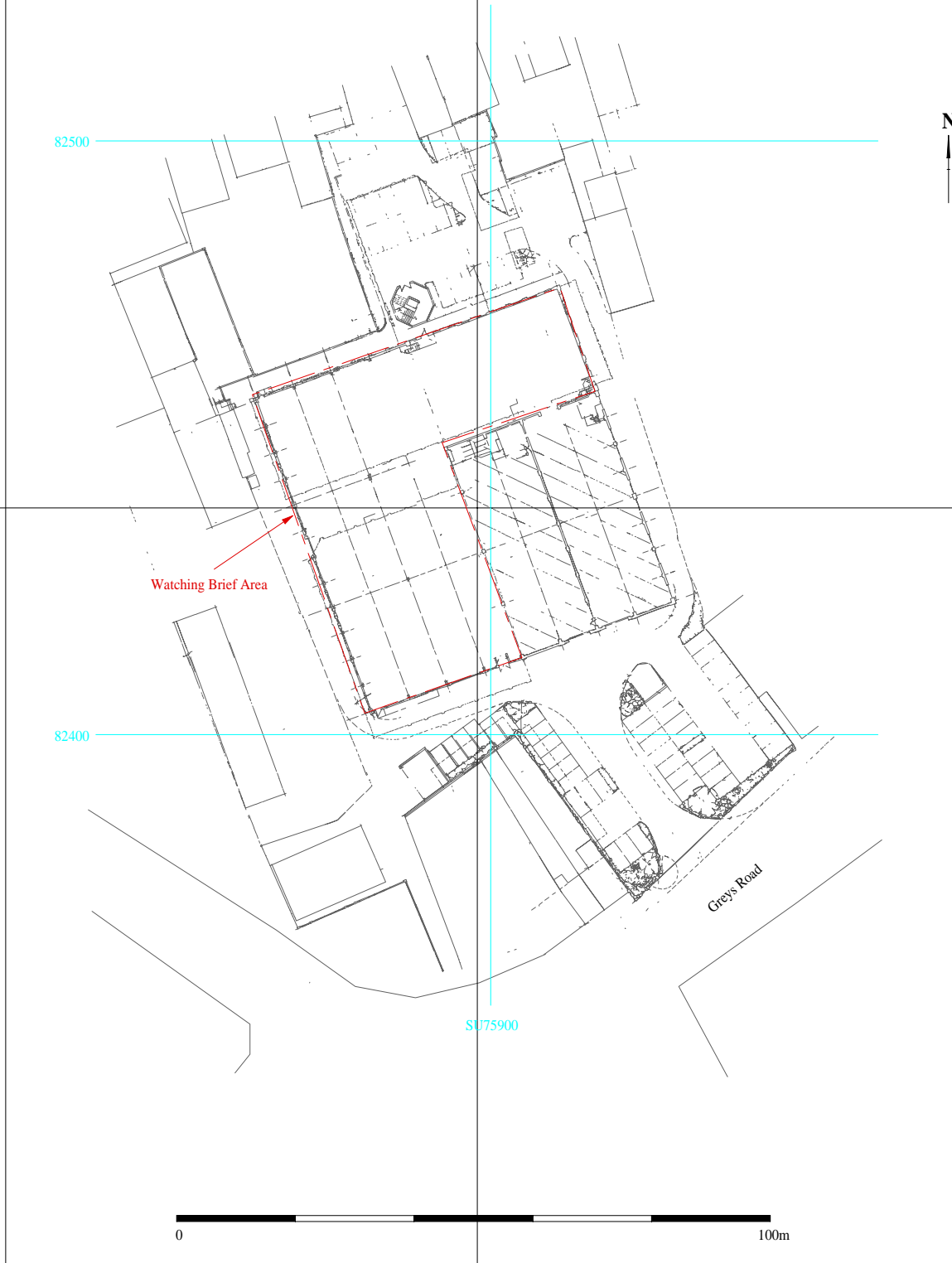


Figure 2. Location of watching brief.