

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Majors Road,
Watchfield, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Aiji Castle

Site Code: MRW13/107

(SU 2480 9060)

Land at Majors Road, Watchfield Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Hills Homes Developments Ltd**

by Aiji Castle

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MRW13/107

May 2014

Summary

Site name: Land at Majors Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 2480 9060

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 14th- 15 May 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Aiji Castle

Site code: MRW13/107

Area of site: c. 0.5ha

Summary of results: A single undated gully was excavated and recorded. Two possible pits were investigated but were found to be the result of natural bioturbation. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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 ✓ 23.05.14 Steve Preston ✓ 23.05.14

Land at Majors Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Aiji Castle

Report 13/107

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Majors Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire (SU 2480 9060) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Nick King, Group Director, Hills Homes Developments Ltd, Ailesbury Court, High Street, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 1AA. Planning permission (P14/V0287/FUL) has been sought from Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of 16 new houses with associated access and parking on land off of Majors Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire. The results of a field evaluation have been requested by the county archaeological officer to determine if the site has archaeological potential and if so, produce information to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

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 approved by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service after the archaeological potential of the site was highlighted by a desk-based assessment (Tabor 2013). The fieldwork was undertaken by Aiji Castle and Nick Harper on the 14-16th May 2014 and the site code is MRW 13/107. 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

The site is located on a small rectangular parcel of land south of Majors Road, at the north of Watchfield village (Fig. 1, Pl. 4). It is bounded to the south, east and west by newly developed housing estates. Currently the land is unused and uncultivated, and various military buildings that previously existed on the site had been demolished although their foundations remain. A line of large felled tree stumps runs parallel to the western boundary. The site slopes very gently from northeast to southwest and lies approximately 102m above Ordnance Datum. The geology is described as a mix of sand, limestone and clay (BGS 1971) and this was observed within the excavated trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological background of the site has been presented in the desktop study (Tabor 2013). In summary the site lies in an area of archaeological potential with a number of sites found to the north during construction of the Shrivvenham bypass. Those finds included Iron Age and Roman occupation deposits. A Saxon inhumation cemetery lay 75m to the north east. Further fieldwork immediately to the east of the site revealed deposits of Iron Age and Roman date with the courses of several linear features projected to continue into the proposal area (Fig. 2).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of this project were;

- a) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present.
- b) To determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site.
- c) To determine if there were later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig 7 trenches, 30m long and 1.60m wide (Fig. 3). A contingency of 30m of trenching was included to clarify the results of the initial trenching if required. Topsoil and subsoil was to be removed by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. This was to be done under constant archaeological supervision. Any archaeological deposits observed were to be cleaned and excavated using hand tools.

Results

All trenches were dug as intended apart from trench 7 which was made shorter due to its position near the site entrance. Deep modern building foundations and services were left in place where encountered. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pls 1 and 3)

Trench 1 was aligned north-south and was 33.5m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.41m subsoil overlying natural light yellow-brown clay-sand with frequent limestone inclusions. A gully (1) was recorded which was 0.58m wide and 0.19m deep and filled with a mid red-brown sandy-clay (52).

It had been truncated by a field drain on its south eastern extent. No finds were recovered from the feature or the bulk sample of the fill.

Trench 2 and 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was 31.20m long and 0.79m deep. Trench 3 was 30.00m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy of both consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil. The natural geology consisted of a mix of light yellow-brown and light red-brown clay-sand and was consistent throughout both trenches. A single pit-like feature (2, 3) was excavated and recorded within each of the trenches. Both appeared irregular in plan and are the result of bioturbation from root action. No finds were recovered from the fills or bulk samples.

Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 (Pls 5 and 6)

The stratigraphy in trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil, overlying light yellow-brown clay-sand geology. Trench 7 was shortened to 23.30m due to its proximity to the site entrance. The remains of various building foundations and service pipes were encountered within all of these trenches and left in place. Two possible features were investigated in trench 7, however these turned out to be modern pipe trenches related to the demolished structures. No archaeological features were observed.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the excavated features and their associated spoilheaps.

Conclusion

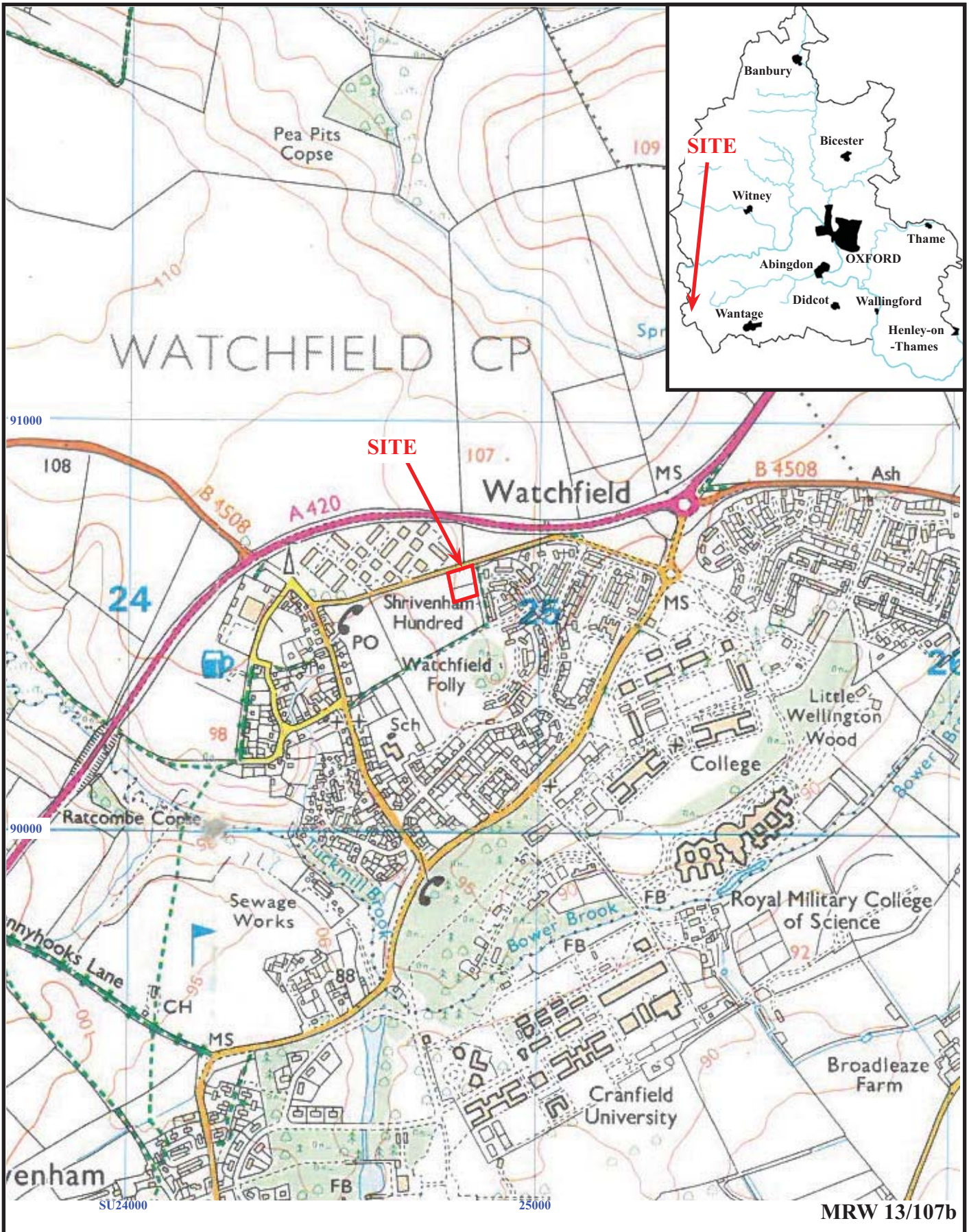
A single gully was excavated but did not contain any dating evidence. However it corresponds with the projected alignment of an early/middle Iron Age feature recorded during the previous archaeological excavations immediately to the east. The other features expected to continue into the survey area were not encountered. Two possible pits were investigated and were found to be either possible tree throws or the result of bioturbation. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 253, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Tabor, R, 2013 Land at Majors Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire, a desk-based heritage assessment, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 13/107, Reading

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at SW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	33.47	1.60	0.60	0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15-0.56m mid red-brown sandy-silt subsoil; 0.56m+ natural light yellow-brown clay-sand natural geology, freq. limestone. Gully [1] [Pls 1 and 3]
2	31.20	1.60	0.79	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.73m subsoil; 0.73m+ natural geology. Natural feature [2]
3	30.00	1.60	0.70	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-0.58m subsoil; 0.58m+ light red-brown clay-sand natural geology. Natural feature [3] [Pl. 2]
4	29.00	1.60	0.78	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22-0.67m subsoil; 0.67m+ light yellow-brown clay-sand natural geology. [Pl. 5]
5	30.00	1.60	0.70	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.62m subsoil; 0.62m+ natural geology. [Pl. 6]
6	30.30	1.60	0.70	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.60m subsoil; 0.60m+ natural geology.
7	23.20	1.60	0.60	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-0.55m subsoil; 0.55m+ natural geology.



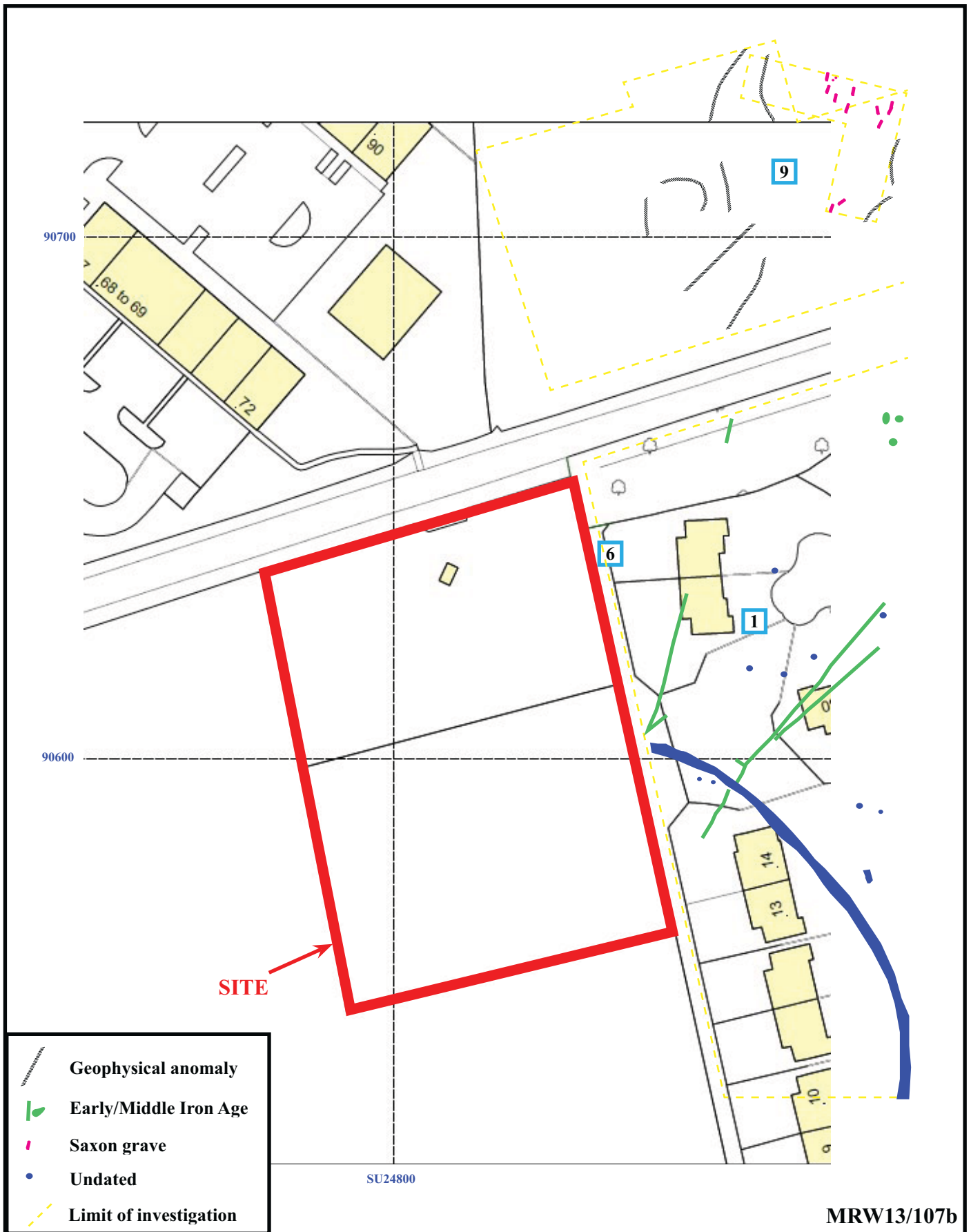
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Figure 1. Location of site within Watchfield and Oxfordshire

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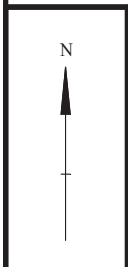
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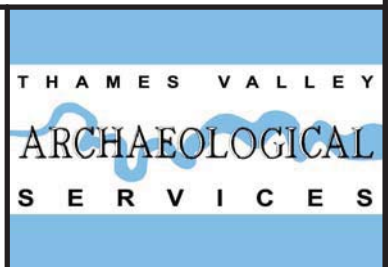
Figure 2. Location of site in relation to previous archaeological interventions and identified features

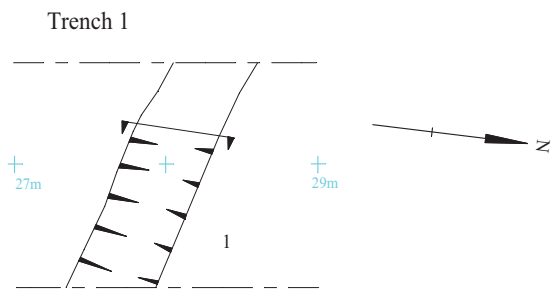
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.





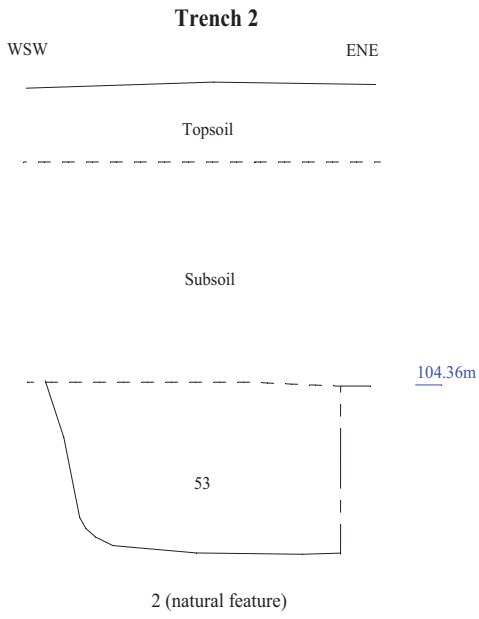
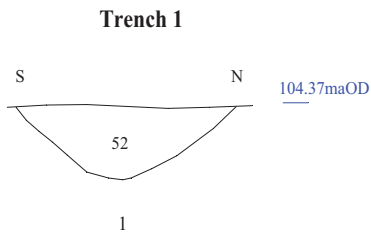
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.
(Modern disturbance in the foreground)

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 1, gully slot 1, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. General site shot looking south east.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 4, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.
Test pit in the foreground



Plate 6. Trench 5, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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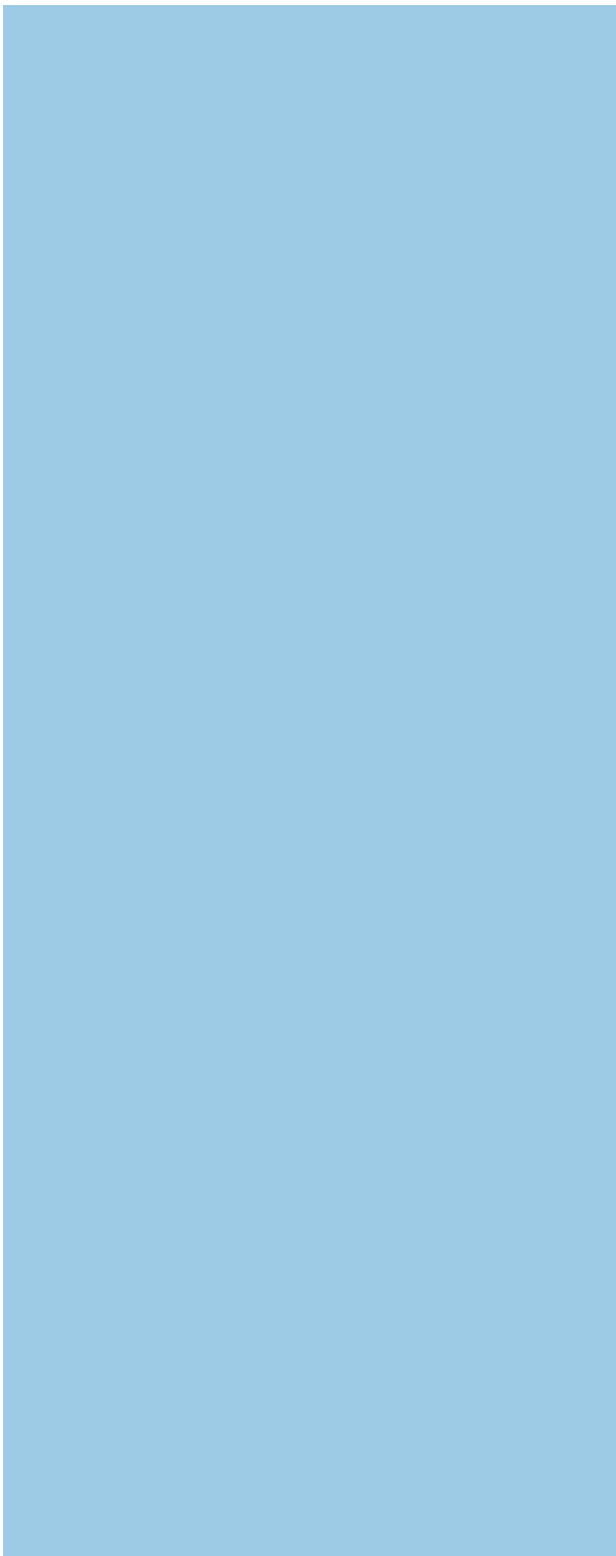
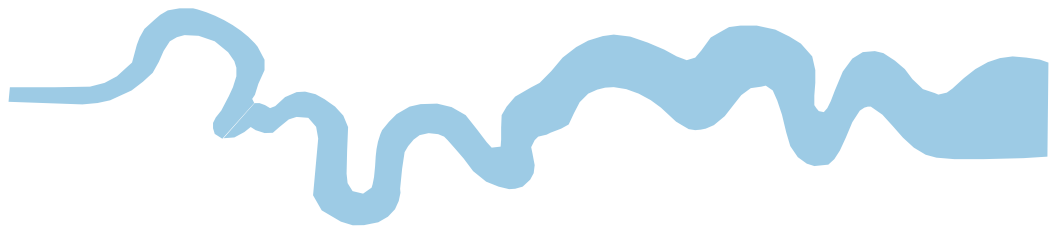
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Plates 5 - 6.**

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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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