

**Oakley Court,  
Nuffield, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for Berkeley Homes**

by Clare A Challis  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OCN 99/69

July 2001

## Summary

**Site name:** Oakley Court, Nuffield, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 6470 8820

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 12th April–26th June 2001

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Clare A Challis

**Site code:** OCN 99/69

**Area of site:** Development area is 55 hectares

**Summary of results:** One cut feature, possible pit or previous footing trench.

**Monuments identified:** Undated cut feature

**Location and reference of archive:** The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR.

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# Oakley Court, Nuffield, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Clare A Challis

Report 99/69

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Oakley Court, Nuffield, Oxfordshire (SU 6470 8820) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Bland, Berkeley Homes (Oxford) Ltd, Berkeley House, 20 Marcham Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1AA. Planning permission (P99/SO323) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council subject to a condition (17) for the demolition of the former Turner's Court complex, conversion of an existing building for housing/studio, and the construction of 13 new houses. As part of this application and in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) a condition was attached to the planning permission for an archaeological watching brief to take place during groundworks. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Clare Challis, Steve Ford and John Saunders from April to June 2001. The site code is OCN99/69.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located off Nuffield Lane between Crowmarsh Gifford and Nuffield on the Chilterns Hills. According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1980) the underlying geology is gravel. The watching brief only revealed a clayey gravel deposit in the western part of the site; elsewhere the underlying geology was chalk overlain by orangey/brown silty clay subsoil and mid-dark brown silty clay topsoil. The site lies at a height of c.110m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## Archaeological background

The site lies in a region adjacent to the archaeologically rich Thames Valley. Much of the existing archaeological information on the area has been obtained from aerial photography, and as a result of investigations in advance of gravel extraction and urban development (Briggs *et al.* 1986). Similar opportunities for the discovery of sites on the chalklands of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been much fewer and correspondingly fewer finds are recorded.

The site lies approximately 600m north of Grim's Ditch (Scheduled Ancient Monument Oxon 32) which is a territorial boundary work of probable Iron Age date. A hoard of Roman silver coins was found by metal detectorists to the south, between the site and Grim's Ditch, and Palaeolithic flint tools are recorded from areas to the west.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the new houses at the southern end of the site. This involved examination of areas stripped of topsoil and trenches for foundations and service runs.

### **Results**

The watching brief involved the observation of house and garage footings across the site as indicated in Figure 2. The majority of footing trenches were 0.60m wide and between 1.0m and 1.90m deep, with the top of the natural chalk generally at a depth of c. 0.50m. Several of the house plots were terraced into the sloping ground. Each trench observed was inspected for finds and archaeological deposits. The stratigraphy typically consisted of brown silty clay topsoil to a depth of c. 0.30m or made ground overlying an orange/brown clay subsoil onto the natural chalk. One old soakaway was revealed in the foundation trench for the house on Plot 12 to a depth of 3.7m and contained a fill consisting of topsoil, with modern brick and tile.

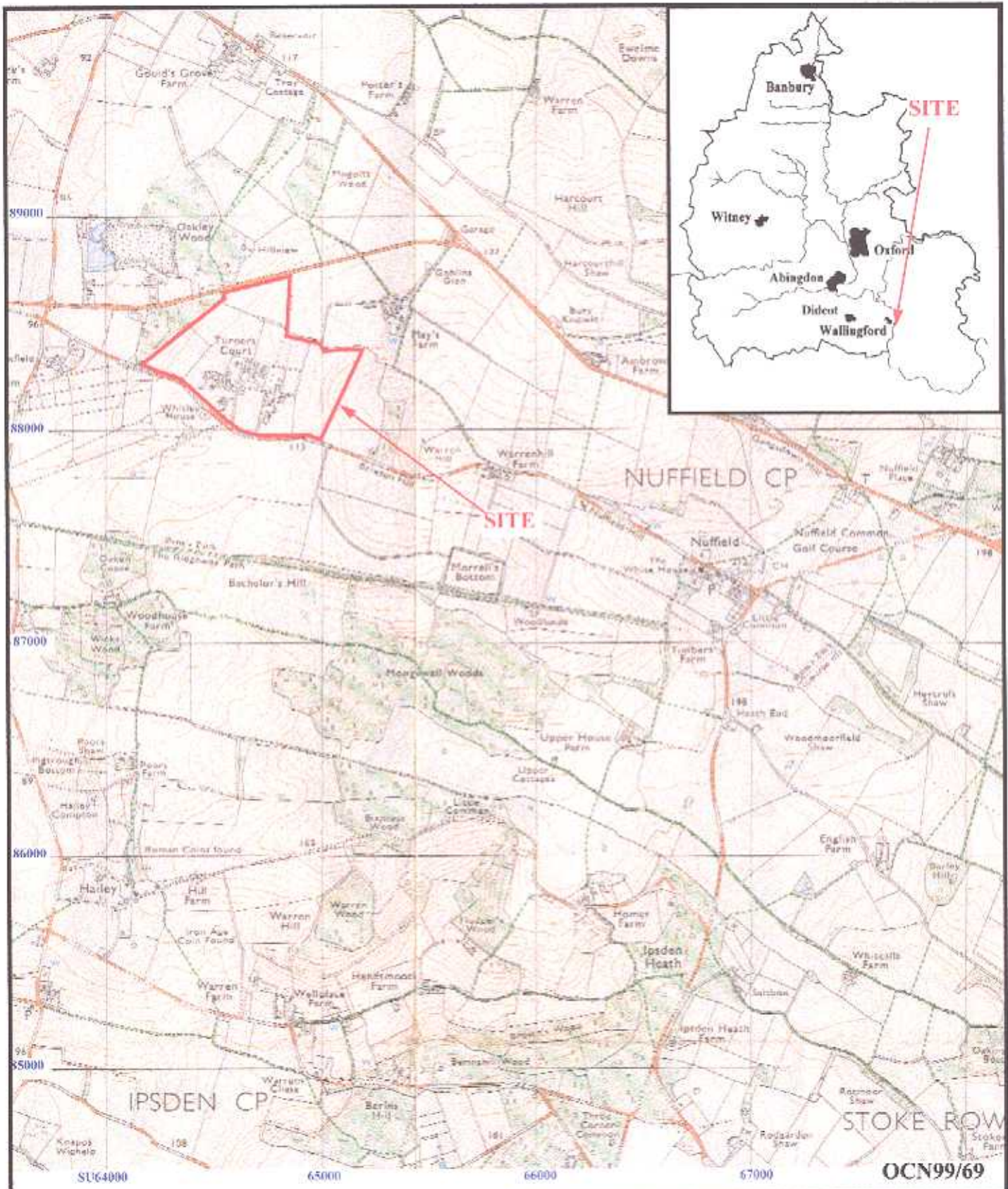
One cut feature, 100, was recorded in section in the house footings for Plot 1 (Fig. 3). This feature had near-vertical sides cutting the chalk natural. It was directly overlain by topsoil, and may be a pit, or the remains of older footing trenches. The feature was 1.20m wide and 0.95m deep and contained a single fill, 150, consisting of a mottled dark and pale brown silty clay with chalk inclusions. No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from this feature or from anywhere else on the site.

### **Conclusion**

One cut feature of unknown date was located during this watching brief on the groundworks but no artefactual evidence was recovered to resolve the chronology of this feature. For the remainder of the site no finds or deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

## References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, 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 of External Studies, Oxford
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

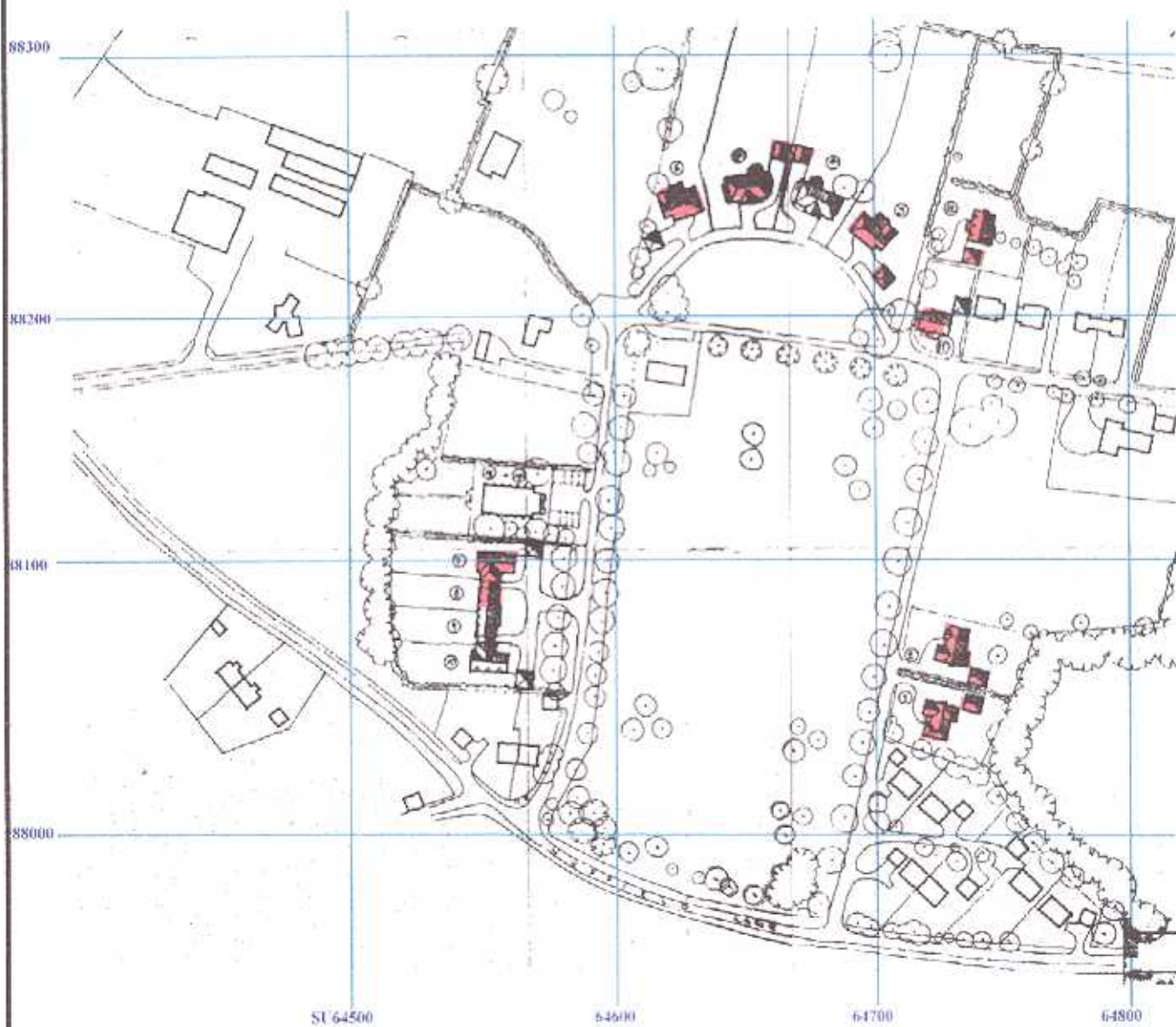


**Oakley Court, Nuffield, Oxfordshire 2001**

Figure 1. Location of site within Nuffield and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Footings examined during watching brief.

T H A M E S   V A L L E Y  
 A R C H A E O L O G I C A L  
 S E R V I C E S

Oakley Court, Nuffield, Oxfordshire, 2001

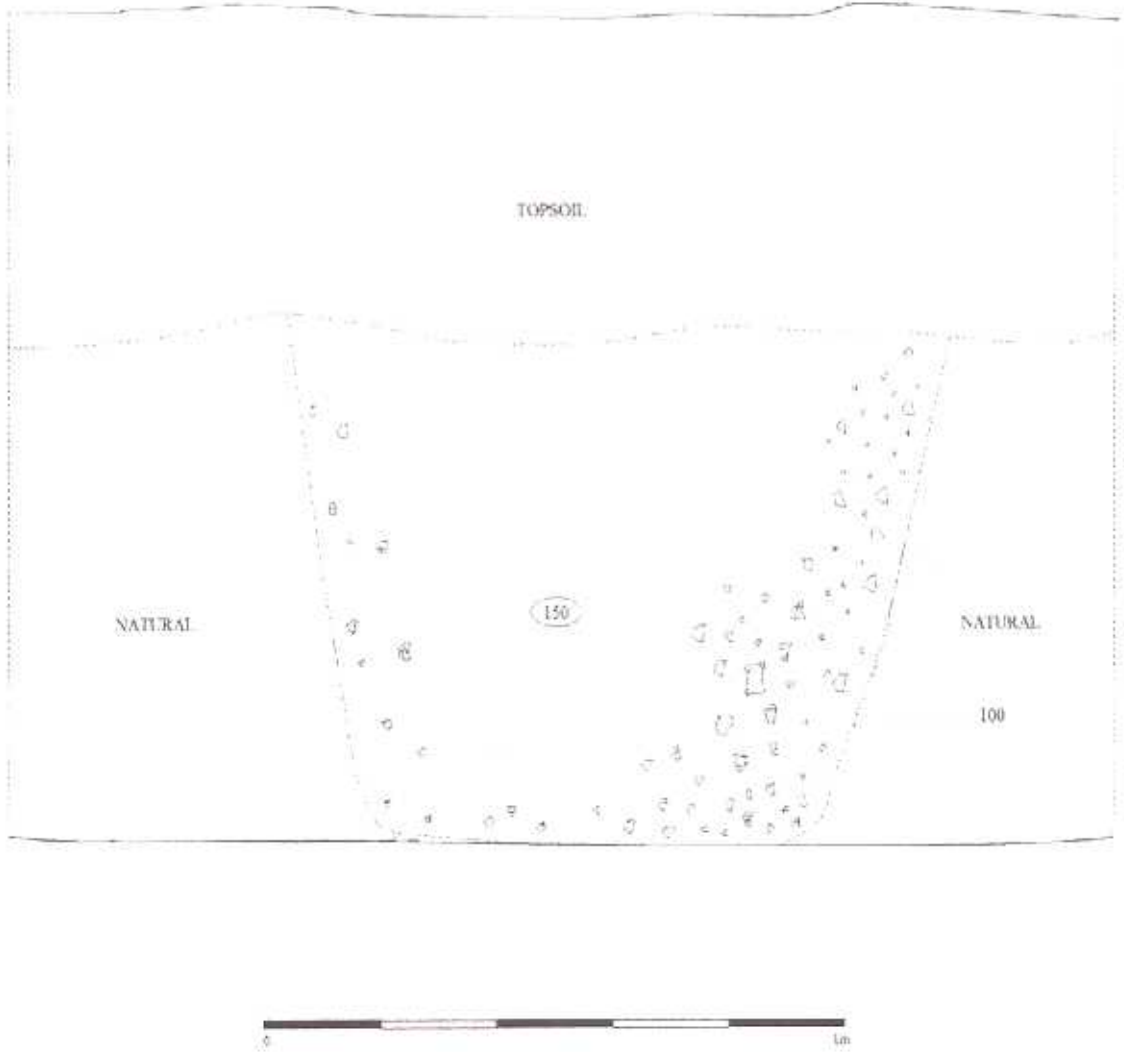


Figure 3. Section of Feature 100.