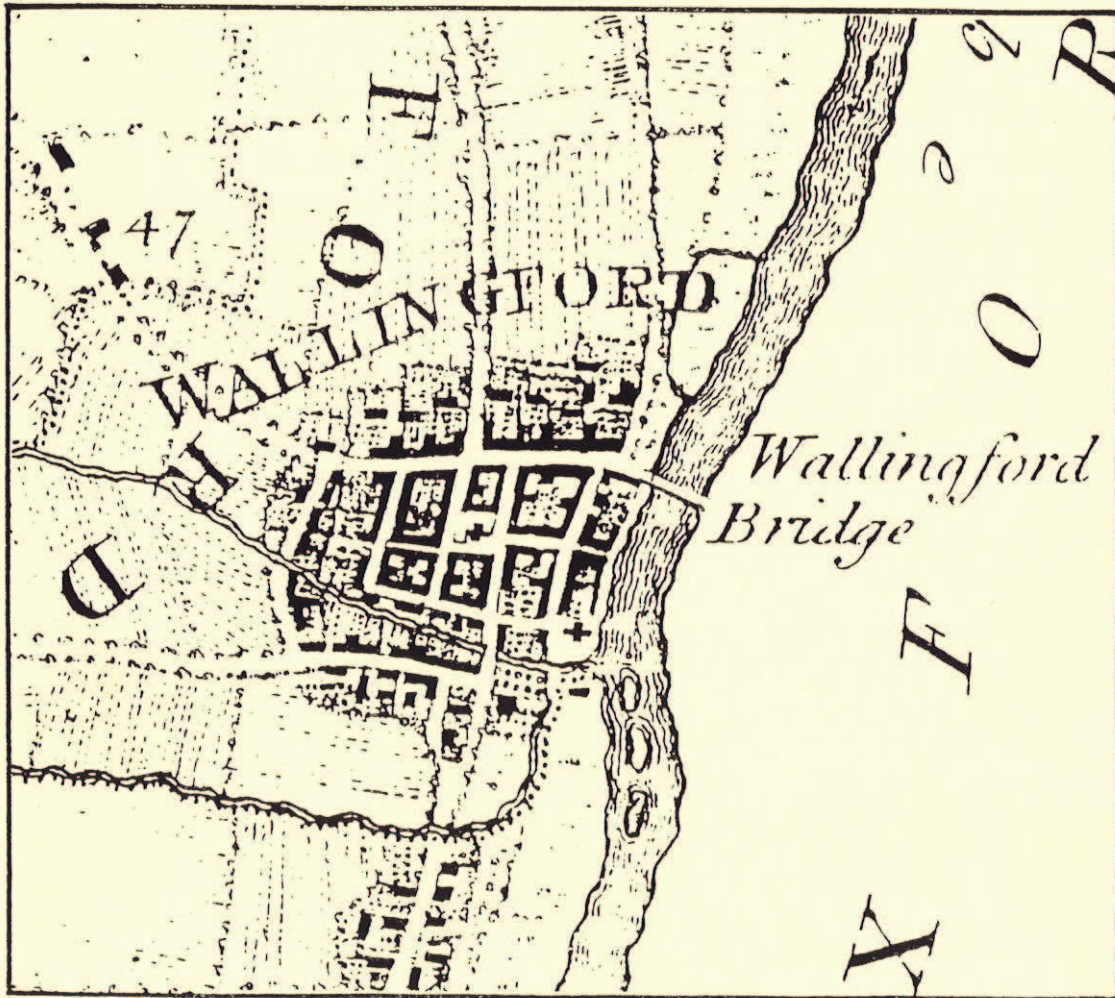


W S Atkins

WALLINGFORD LOWER SCHOOL, WALLINGFORD, OXON

**SERVICE TRENCH: REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
SU 6050 8990**



**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
JUNE 1996**

**WALLINGFORD LOWER SCHOOL
WALLINGFORD, OXON
NRG SU 6050 8990**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Summary

A watching brief was carried out during the excavation of a 35 m long service trench. The trench was located immediately outside part of the northern Saxon Burgh defences. Several deposits were encountered but were of no archaeological significance. .

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) conducted an archaeological watching brief at Wallingford Lower School, Wallingford, Oxon. The site is located immediately north of Scheduled Ancient Monument Oxon 284.

1.1.2 The contractors were W.S.Atkins of Oxford. The trench was excavated for a new storm drain which would run from the new car park into the existing drain system.

1.1.3. Greg Pugh visited the site on Friday 31 May 1996, and monitored the removal of several deposits.

1.2 Topography

1.2.1 The site is situated to the south of the school, gently sloping southwards until meeting a fenced public footpath that runs east west. The site was overgrown and surround by trees to the east and north.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical significance of the town of Wallingford is well documented. Immediately to the south of the site lies the northern earthwork defences of the Anglo-Saxon town which consists of a large bank and ditch. They survive in good condition. In 1994 excavations just to the east of the site at Cemetery Bends revealed a large medieval rubbish pit. A palaeochannel is also known to exist in the area of the school playing fields.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 The trench was excavated by machine and was 0.8 m wide, a maximum of

3.3 m deep and 35 m long. From the south the trench ran north for 27 m then turned west for 8 m before finally turning north until it met an access road. Two manholes were also excavated and were approximately 2 m square.

- 1.4.2 The trench was fully recorded. Sample sections were drawn and the deposits and features were fully described using OAU standard methods (Wilkinson 1992). Detailed and general photographs were taken. Contexts were numbered from 1 to 9. The project was assigned the code WALOSC 96.

2 RESULTS

2.1 *Limitations of the work*

- 2.1.1 Interpretation of the deposits recorded was necessarily limited because of the narrow width of the trench. The deposit descriptions and the general discussion below should be read with this in mind, but wherever possible an attempt has been made to interpret the sequence of features and deposits. Section 2.2 describes the stratigraphic sequence, which is summarised starting with the earliest contexts and working up to the latest ones.

2.2 *The pipe trench*

- 2.2.1 A layer (4) of friable mottled green and greenish white clay silt which contained some gravel was overlain by a stiff but friable mid orange brown clay silt which also contained gravel (8). Layer 8 was only visible in the north half of the trench. A layer (7) of loose light yellow brown slightly silty sand was overlying the southern end of layer 8.
- 2.2.2 An irregular shaped feature (6) cut layer 7 at the south end of the trench. It was only visible in section. The feature was filled by a stiff but friable mid orange brown clay silt (5).
- 2.2.3 A fence post-hole (3) packed with soil and brick fragments (2) was revealed at the south end of the trench. A loose dark grey sandy loam which contained burning and modern refuse overlay layer 8 at the north of the trench. The entire site was covered by a friable dark brownish grey sandy loam (1) which was greatly disturbed by tree roots and vegetation, particularly to the north.

3 *Discussion*

- 3.1 The results from the trench provided no additions to the archaeological record.
- 3.2 The exact nature of layer 4 is uncertain. It was visible through out the length of the trench and was at least 2.5 m thick though never fully

excavated. No finds were recovered. The layer was certainly not cess. A green sandy silt layer was encountered at Castle Lane House (Durham 1989) and was interpreted as decomposed "clunk" (the local limestone) from the castle wall. However it is more probable because of the width and thickness of layer 4 that it was an alluvial deposit from an old channel.

- 3.3 The irregular feature (6) may have been a tree hole and was filled by a very similar deposit to layer 8.
- 3.3 The post-hole formed part of the existing fence which runs down the side of the footpath. The deposit of rubbish was modern.

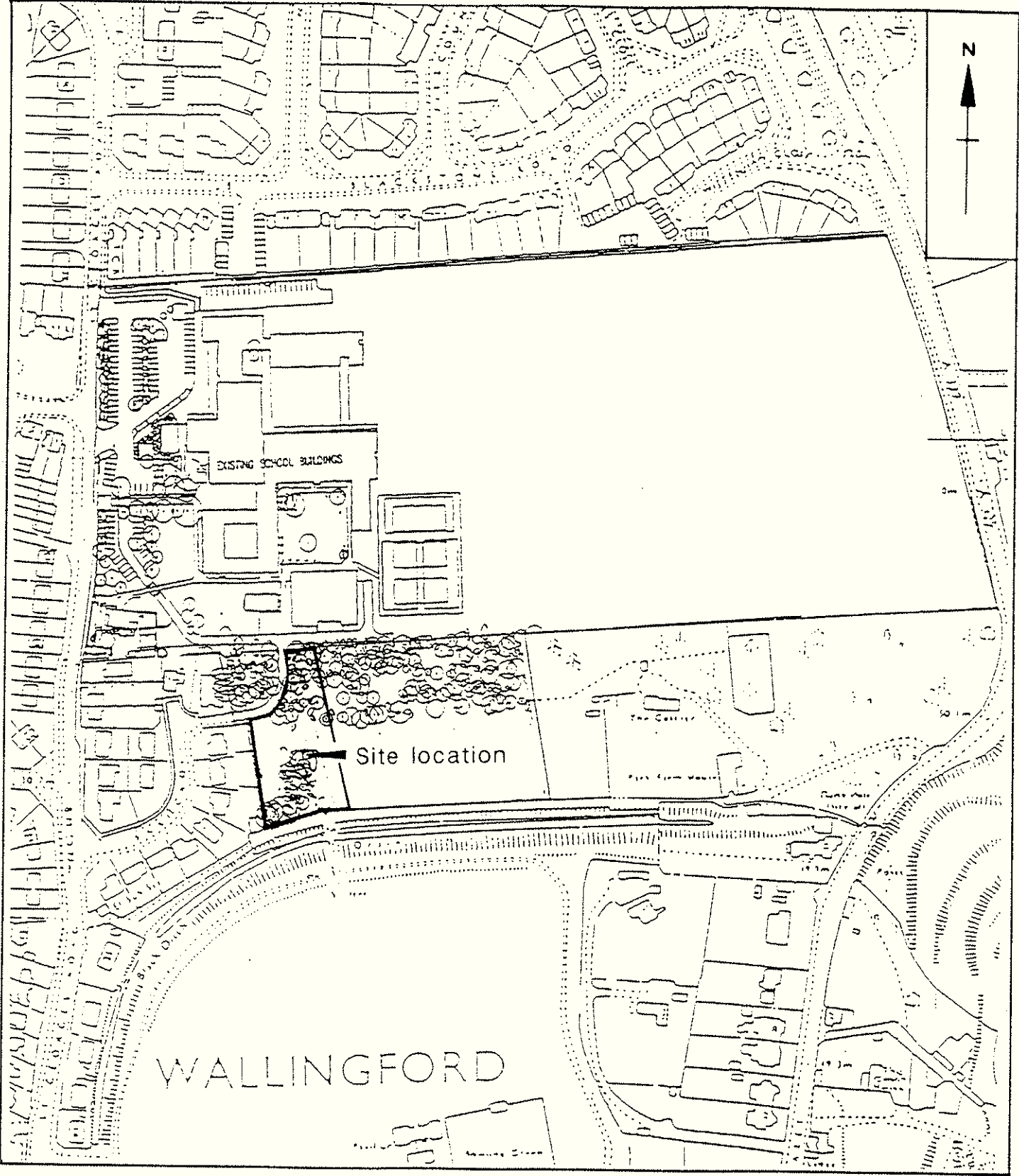
4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The trench provided only negative data. No finds were recovered.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Durham B 1989, *Wallingford, Castle Lane House*, OAU
- Wilkinson D (ed) 1992 *OAU Field Manual*, OAU

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Site location plan: not to scale

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