

Hermitage Lock Near Earith Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



March 2006

Client: Halcrow Group Ltd

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 3085
NGR:TL 393 746

Client Name: Halcrow Group Ltd

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Hermitage Lock, near Earith, Cambridgeshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: TL 393 746

Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3085

Site Code: EARHEL 06

Invoice Code: EARHELWB

Receiving Museum: Cambridgeshire

Museum Accession No: TBC

Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Project Supervisor
Date: 20th February 2006

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Small Works
Date: 1st March 2006

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 2nd March 2006

Signed.....*JR Miller* SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER
PP N. SHEPHERD

Document File Location H:\PROJECTS\Cambridgeshire CA\6671 Hermitage
Lock WB\wbREP.doc

Graphics File Location Servergo:/oapubs 1_a thru
h*EARHEL06*EARHELWB*Hermitage Lock, near
Earith, Cambridgeshire*HC*22.02.06

Illustrated by Helen Crossman

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2006

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Hermitage Lock, Near Earith, Cambridgeshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Scope of work	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results.....	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds.....	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains.....	3
4 Discussion And Conclusions	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references	5
Appendix 3 Summary of site details.....	5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan
Fig. 3 Test pits 1 and 2, sections

SUMMARY

On 16th February 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hermitage Lock, near Earith, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 393 746). The work was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd in advance of excavation of geotechnical test pits as part of the refurbishment works on the site. The watching brief revealed deep deposits of made ground associated with the 1967/8 relocation of the lock, the northern edge of the earlier lock chamber and made ground associated with its construction. No other archaeological deposits were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On 16th February 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hermitage Lock, near Earith, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 393 746). The work was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd in advance of the excavation of geotechnical test pits as part of the refurbishment program for the lock.

1.1.2 A project specification detailing the archaeological works was set by Simon Griffin, the Archaeologist representing Halcrow Group Ltd.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Hermitage Lock is situated on the River Great Ouse, to the east of the village of Earith in Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). The site lies on level ground abutting the flood bank of the Great Ouse at approximately 6 m above OD. The underlying geology is alluvium over glacial gravel and boulder clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 187). The site is approximately 800 m² in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the specification for the project and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The present lock structure and road bridge was constructed in 1968 to replace the previous smaller structure. This involved the construction of a new lock chamber, realignment of the B1050 and construction of a new road overbridge.

1.3.3 The site is located 200 m south of a Scheduled Monument known as "The Bulwark", a Civil War fortified earthwork (aka "Starfort").

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To provide such observations so as to inform any further archaeological work required.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The work was monitored as a continuous archaeological presence during the excavation of the geotechnical test pits. The pits were excavated by a mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 0.6 m wide toothed bucket.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location of the pits and the recorded sections was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Test Pit 1 (Fig. 3, Section 1)

- 3.1.1 This measured 4 m long by 0.7 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 4.1 m below ground level. It was located 3 m south of the lock keeper's cabin, within the area of hardstanding.
- 3.1.2 The underlying natural, a tenacious blue-grey clay with brown clay mottling (17) was encountered at a level of 2.34 m OD. This was overlaid by a 0.65 m thick layer of friable olive-grey silt clay (16). This contained bricks and concrete fragments suggesting a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.75 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay (15). This contained tree roots, concrete, brick and a screw top bottle, all indicating a layer of made ground. This was sealed by a 0.4 m thick layer of orange-brown sandy clay (14). This contained many large angular river flints and probably represents a layer of redeposited natural. Overlying this was a 0.95 m thick layer of light brown silt clay (13) another layer of made ground.
- 3.1.3 This was overlaid by a layer of brown silt clay (12), 0.55 m in depth. This contained pockets of orange-brown sandy clay and brick fragments and represents a layer of made ground. This was sealed by a geotextile membrane ("terram") over which a 0.22 m deep layer of crushed stone and tarmac planings had been laid as an area of hardstanding.

Test Pit 2 (Fig. 3, Section 2)

- 3.1.4 This measured 5m long by 0.7 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 3.75 m below ground level at its deepest point. It was located approximately 10 m south of the lock keeper's cabin, on the edge of the hardstanding.
- 3.1.5 The top of the northern wall of the earlier lock chamber (27), a 0.5 m thick east-west aligned construction of yellow brick, capped by a 0.5 m square concrete beam was encountered at a level of 4.50 m OD; the test pit was moved approximately 2 m further north in order to dig down the side of this feature.
- 3.1.6 A layer of friable grey-brown clay silt (26) was encountered at a level of 3.05 m OD. This contained lenses of lime mortar and brick fragments suggesting a layer of made ground. This layer was excavated to a depth of 1 m before water ingress forced the abandonment of the excavation. This was overlaid by a 0.6 m deep layer of pale grey-brown silt clay (25). This also contained bricks and lime mortar and represents a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.4 m thick layer of yellow-brown silt clay (24), another layer of made ground. These three layers all butted up to the north face of wall (27) suggesting they may have been deposited as the wall was constructed. The top of the wall, the 1968 backfill of the lock chamber and layer (24), were sealed by a 0.4 m deep layer of light reddish brown silt clay (23), a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.55 m deep layer of mixed grey-brown and orange-brown clay silt (22) which contained bricks and fragments of concrete indicating a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.25 m thick layer of dark brown clay loam (21), a landscaping layer of topsoil and turf.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of clay pipe stem were recovered from contexts (24), (25) and (26) giving a date range from late 18th century up to late 19th century and are probably contemporary with the original lock construction. Fragments of yellow brick similar to those used within the lock wall (27) were observed within contexts (24) and (26) and are again probably contemporary with the lock construction.
- 3.2.2 Fragments of more modern bricks and concrete were observed within contexts (12), (15), (16) and (22) suggesting that these were deposited during the 1967/8 works.
- 3.2.3 The clay pipe stems were retained but all other artefacts were evaluated on site, but were not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for paleo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief produced evidence for the construction of the original lock chamber (now buried within the flood bank) showing that the chamber was constructed as a free standing structure with the old retaining bank built up against it.
- 4.1.2 Evidence within Test Pit 1 suggests that the area around the new lock chamber had been reduced down to the level of the natural clay and then built up using brought in material.
- 4.1.3 No evidence for ground levels predating these two events were observed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
Test Pit 1					
11	Layer	0.22 m	Modern hardstanding	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.55 m	Made ground	Brick	C20th
13	Layer	0.95 m	Made ground	-	C20th
14	Layer	0.4 m	Made ground	-	C20th
15	Layer	0.75 m	Made ground	Brick, concrete	C20th
16	Layer	0.6 m	Made ground	Brick	C20th
17	Layer	> 0.5 m	Natural clay	-	-
Test pit 2					
21	Layer	0.25 m	Modern landscaping	-	C20th
22	Layer	0.55 m	Made ground	Bricks, concrete	C20th
23	Layer	0.4 m	Made ground	-	C20th
24	Layer	0.4 m	Made ground	Brick, clay pipe stem	C18th/ C19th
25	Layer	0.6 m	Made ground	Clay pipe stem	C18th/ C19th
26	Layer	> 1.0 m	Made ground	Brick, clay pipe stem	C18th/ C19th
27	Structure	> 2.6 m	North wall of original lock chamber	Brick	C18th/ C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Halcrow, 2006 *Specification for Archaeological Works, Hermitage Lock, Cambridgeshire*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2000 *Environmental Sampling Guidelines*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (ed D Wilkinson)*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Hermitage Lock, near Earith, Cambridgeshire

Site code: EARHEL06

Grid reference: TL 393 476

Type of watching brief: Monitoring of 2 geotechnical test pits

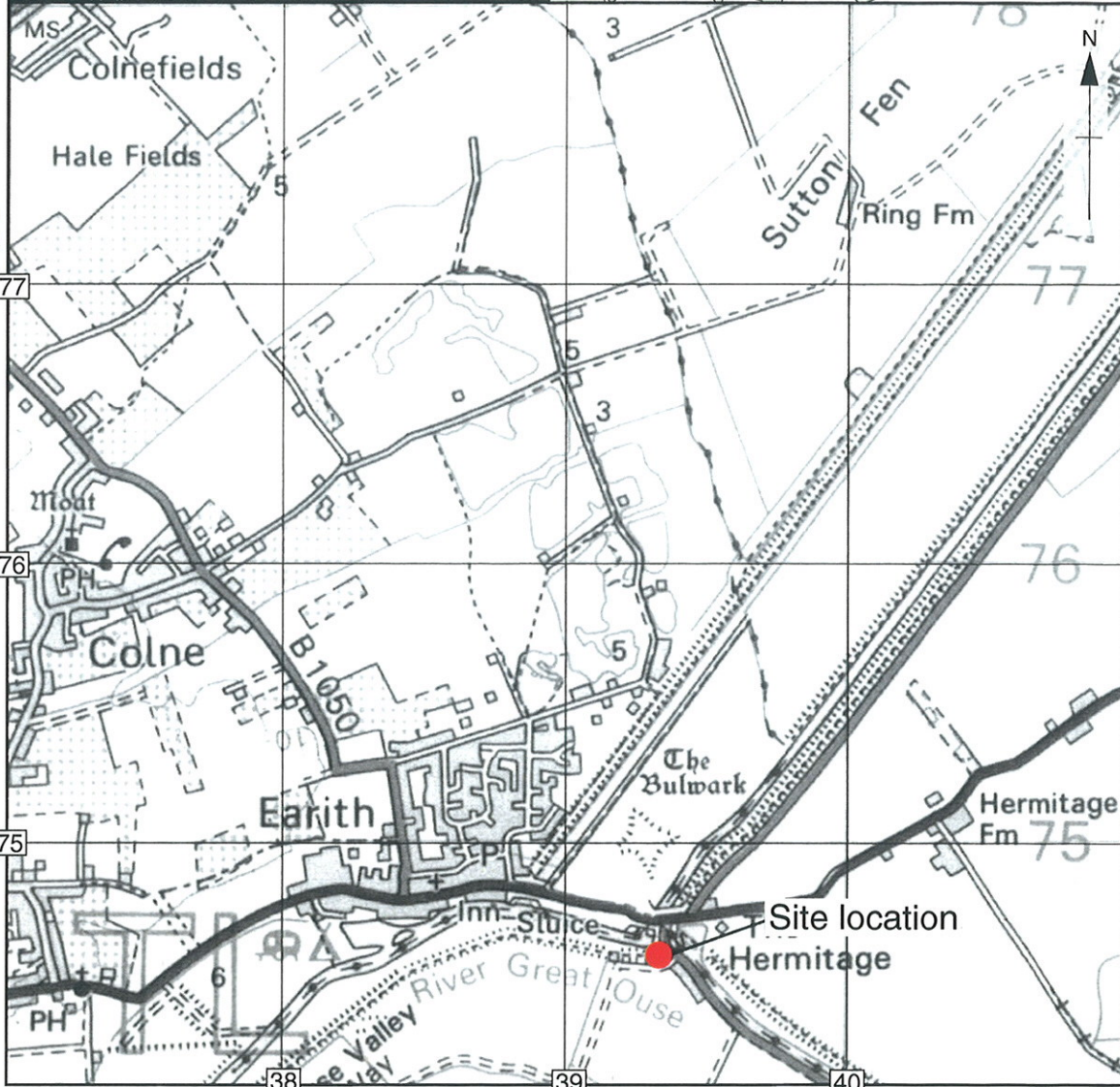
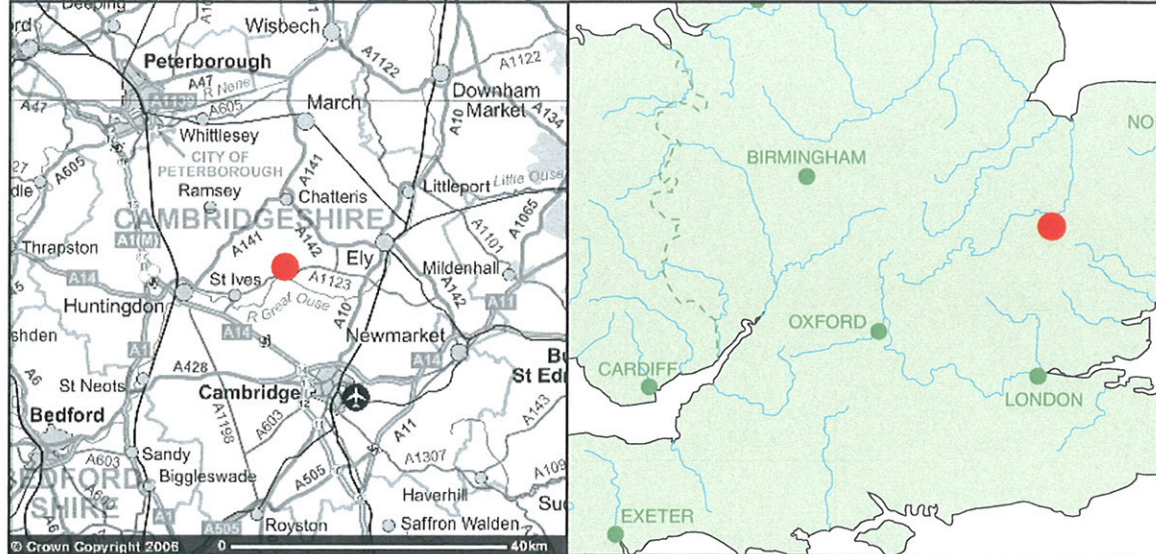
Date and duration of project: 16.02.06, 1 day

Area of site: 800 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed deep deposits of made ground associated with the 1967/8 relocation of the lock, the northern edge of the earlier lock chamber and made ground associated with its construction. No other archaeological deposits were encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Cambridgeshire Museum in due course.

Servergo/oupubs_1_a thru h*EARHEL06*EARHELWB*Hermitage Lock, near Earith, Cambridgeshire*HC*22.02.06



Scale 1:25,000

Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
 © Crown Copyright 1998. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10000569

Figure 1: Site location

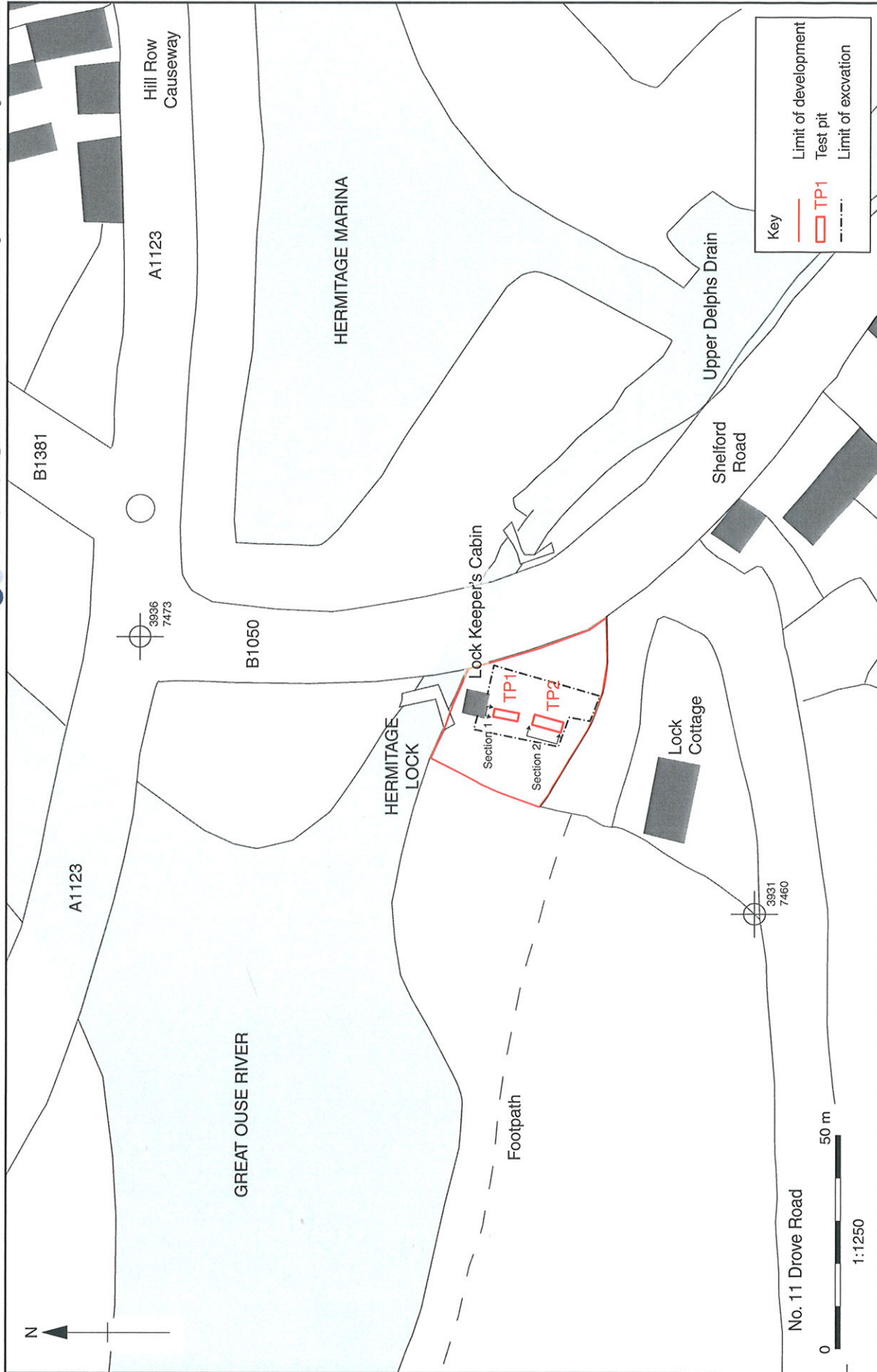
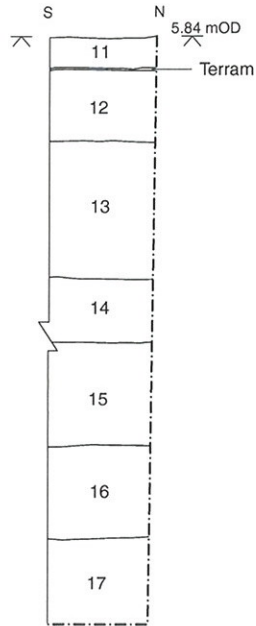


Figure 2: Site plan



Test Pit 1



Test Pit 2

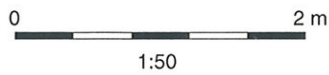
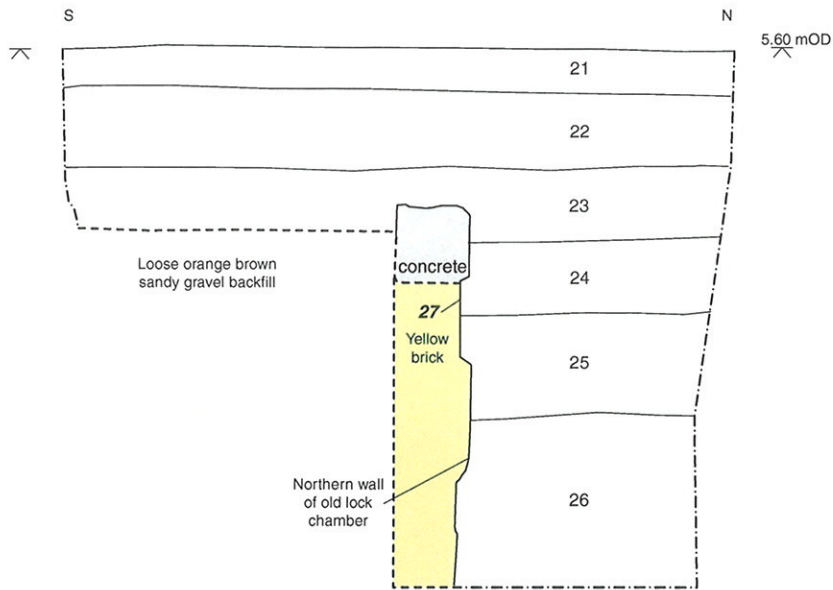


Figure 3: Test pits 1 and 2, sections



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES