



Garth House Drainage, Rushey Lock, Bampton, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Monitoring of drainage works at Garth House, Rushey Lock, revealed no archaeological remains. The reasonably deep sequence of strata observed during mechanical excavation for a new sewage treatment plant revealed alluvial deposits overlying gravel. These represent an earlier channel, predating canalization and construction of the lock. Deposits overlying the alluvium are likely to relate to building up of the bank subsequent to, or in association with, construction of the lock.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of the Environment Agency for commissioning this project.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Richard Brown MCIFA. The fieldwork was carried out by Bernadetta Rzadek and Ben Attfield.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of the Environment Agency to undertake a watching brief at the site of a drainage repairs and improvement project at Garth House, Rushey Lock, near Bampton, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The project was permitted utilities work not subject to planning approval, but the advice of Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist (Hugh Coddington) was sought in respect of best practice. The Planning Archaeologist advised (email 27/06/19) that with regard to the known archaeological remains in the locality (see below) an archaeological watching brief should be maintained on the works and that a written scheme of investigation (WSI) should be produced setting out the archaeological methodology for the works. This was submitted by OA (OA 2019) and approved.
- 1.1.3 This document outlines how OA implemented the methodology of the WSI and the results of the watching brief.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies immediately to the north of the Thames at Rushey Lock (grid reference SP32290009). The area of development consists of trench excavations (Fig. 1) for the repair and replacement of drainage and the insertion of a new packaged sewage treatment plant servicing Garth House.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as Holocene alluvium (clays and silts) overlying Pleistocene sands and gravels. However, previous archaeological work revealed no evidence for alluvium and the existing topsoil and subsoils directly overlay either sand or gravel.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site is located on the northern bank of the Thames at a location where a partially investigated complex of cropmarks is present to the south of the river. The cropmarks are protected in two areas by Scheduled Monument classification, though elements of the complex have been investigated between the scheduled locations in advance of Paddle and Rymer refurbishment (OA 2009) and the construction of a fish pass (OA 2013; Teague and Ford 2016).

Scheduled monuments

Causewayed enclosure (SM List UID: 1021368)

- 1.3.2 The western of the two Scheduled Monuments lies to the south-west of Garth House, south of the Thames. The monument comprises the buried remains of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure, as well as several features representative of other periods, including pits, ring ditches and a ditched trackway. The enclosure, which measures approximately 225m across at its widest point, forms a D-shape or rough semi-circle against the river bank. The area of the interior is dotted with pits which may be contemporary with the enclosure or possibly natural features. The cropmark also

masks a section of two small sub-circular single ditched features, one just outside the enclosure to the south, the other within the eastern sector of the interior. Both measure between 15m and 20m in diameter but the larger circle, attached to the southern edge of the enclosure, has the wider ditch, measuring about 3m to 4m across. Immediately to the west of this circle, two ditched trackways can be seen intersecting at right angles, one taking a north-south route, the other aligned east-west. This track junction is included in the scheduling. The southerly route can be seen crossing the next field, and its ditches appear again as a cropmark three fields, or about 400m, to the south; the form of these tracks suggests a Roman date. A further linear feature, which has the appearance of a bank and ditch, cuts across the north-east end of the enclosure, running parallel with the river bank before taking a sharp turn southward: this appears to be the continuation of a drain which survives as a slight bank in the pasture field to the west. The causewayed enclosure is one of six known in Oxfordshire, only one of which, at Abingdon, has been extensively excavated.

Long mortuary enclosure (SM List UID: 1021369)

- 1.3.3 South-east of the causewayed enclosure monument (and Garth House) the remains of a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure is identified as a long mortuary enclosure; also within the monument protection area is a circular feature at its south-east corner, considered to be a round barrow. The long mortuary enclosure is orientated east-west and takes an irregular rectangular form measuring approximately 90m by 34m, slightly narrower at the west than the east end, and with its maximum width towards the middle. The boundary ditch appears to be broken in several places, but the most consistently clear entrance lies 20m from the western end of the north side, facing the causewayed enclosure to the north-west; there may also have been an entrance at the east end. A rectangular feature measuring about 6m by 3m lies across the centre of the enclosure at its widest point, orientated north-south; there is also a scatter of small features, probably pits, across the interior. The barrow lies about 25m from the south-east corner, and measures about 12m in diameter. Long mortuary enclosures are oblong-shaped enclosures up to 150m in length, surrounded by narrow, fairly straight ditches with slightly rounded corners, containing an open space edged by a perimeter bank set within the ditch. Characteristically there are two or more major causeways across the ditch which served as entrances. Most long mortuary enclosures are orientated within 45 degrees of an east-west alignment. Long mortuary enclosures are generally associated with human burials dated to the early and middle Neolithic periods.

Previous investigations

- 1.3.4 In 2009 an archaeological watching brief was maintained on geotechnical works (OA 2009) during which early medieval pottery was recovered from south of the Rushey Weir outfall.
- 1.3.5 A trial trench evaluation (OA 2013) and small-scale excavations in advance of the construction of a fish pass in 2012 (Teague and Ford 2016) were focused on an area of cropmarks between the two protected areas, south of Garth House and on the opposing bank of the Thames (BURF13, Fig. 2). The excavations found a rare assemblage of probably late Mesolithic flint, and evidence for an enclosure of the late 10th or early 11th century that surrounded a post-built building. It is likely that the

enclosure and building were associated with control of the Thames crossing (see below).

The archaeological landscape

- 1.3.6 It has been suggested that the chief east-west route through Bampton formed part of an inferred minor Roman road which crossed the River Windrush at Gill Mill and entered Bampton from the north-east. This route possibly following the later Kingsway Lane and passing just south of the later market place. The name Kingsway implies that the lane, a minor track in the 19th century, was an important route to the Anglo-Saxon royal tun. Another inferred early road ran north-eastwards from Cowleaze Corner and skirted the northern perimeter of the Deanery. Both roads may have formed part of a more extensive Roman and early medieval network which was partly preserved in the later road and field pattern, and which influenced Bampton's early topography. The road from Brize Norton, and a pre-enclosure road from Witney and Lew which formerly intersected it north of the town, were probably also ancient and, like the inferred Roman road, seem to have been diverted to funnel into the market place, perhaps in the 13th century. Barcote Way, south of the town, a small lane in 1789, originated possibly as a southwards continuation of those roads, crossing the Thames at or near Rushey Weir and continuing to Barcote in Berkshire (Crossley and Currie 1996).
- 1.3.7 Early records from 1425 refer to the use of land near Rushey Weir for the grazing of 'horses or ploughbeasts', suggesting the land was used as part of grazing land associated with nearby Bampton. There had been a flash lock further upstream known as Old Nan's Weir, which was deemed unsuitable for a pound lock in 1790. Old Nan's Weir was removed in 1868.
- 1.3.8 In 1871 the weir was in a bad state of deterioration and was subsequently repaired. A new lock keepers' cottage was built in 1894 and the lock was later rebuilt in 1898 (Thacker 1920).

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the absence/presence of any archaeological remains present within and likely to be impacted by the works.
- ii. To inform the contractor, the client (Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of the Environment Agency) and the OCC Planning Archaeologist of the presence of archaeological remains.
- iii. To facilitate mitigation of any present archaeological remains, either through preservation *in situ* (ie by negotiating adaption of the works such as trench re-routing) or by preservation by record (excavation and recording of archaeological remains prior to impact by the works).
- iv. Excavation would seek to:
 - determine or confirm the character and approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - provide additional information on the nature of the known prehistoric and medieval resource in the locality or new information on currently unrepresented periods, including any potential evidence for historic river crossings and the formation, use and history of the Rushey Lock and weir.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 An archaeological watching brief supervisor monitored machine excavation west of Garth House for the placement of a new sewage treatment plant and new drainage run. The work was carried out on the 26th and 29th of July 2019.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the site strata. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. No finds were retrieved from the site.

3.2 Site strata

3.2.1 Excavation for new sewage treatment plant was carried out to a depth of c 2.1 m below existing ground level (Fig. 2; Plate 1). This revealed gravel at the base with alluvial deposits overlying (context 013). The alluvium was overlain by redeposited mixed clay derived from the natural geology (012). A horizontal mixed clay and organic topsoil (011) capping the redeposited clay probably represents a surface layer which has in turn been overlain by a second layer of mixed clay and soil (004) capped with subsoil and topsoil (002 and 001).

3.2.2 A cut containing an organic soil (006) and limestone and brick infill (005) was present in the north-west corner of the excavated pit.

3.2.3 Monitoring of the new drainage cut to the north of the site revealed only topsoil subsoil and occasional rubble.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The monitoring revealed no archaeological remains. The reasonably deep sequence of strata observed during mechanical excavation for the new sewage treatment plant shows alluvial deposits which represent an earlier channel, predating canalization and construction of the lock. Deposits overlying the alluvium are likely to relate to building up of the bank subsequent to, or in association with, construction of the lock (which was built in the 18th century and rebuilt in the 19th century). A ground surface between two dumping episodes indicates a lower land level north of the lock existing at some point in the period between completion of the lock and construction of Garth House in the 1970s, with landscaping to even of the riverside.
- 4.1.2 The building material in context 005 is likely to relate to a structure seen on historic map regressions broadly contemporary with Garth House and demolished between 2004 and 2006.
- 4.1.3 As a whole the sequence shows significant modern build-up and levelling of what would have previously been sloping bankside. Any archaeological remains adjacent to the waterside are therefore likely to exist at some depth (c 2 m below existing ground level). No archaeological remains were observed in the only impact of this development at this depth.

APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context No.	Type	Description	Finds	Date
001	Layer	Topsoil	-	-
002	Layer	Subsoil	-	-
003	Layer	Gravel natural	-	-
004	Layer	Redeposited Clay	-	-
005	Structure	Concrete	-	-
006	Fill	Fill of construction cut for 005	-	-
007	Structure	Concrete floor	-	-
008	Layer	Ballast below concrete	-	-
009	Layer	Levelling layer	-	-
010	Layer	Levelling layer	-	-
011	Layer	Buried ground surface	-	-
012	Layer	Redeposited clay	-	-
013	Layer	Alluvial layers	-	-

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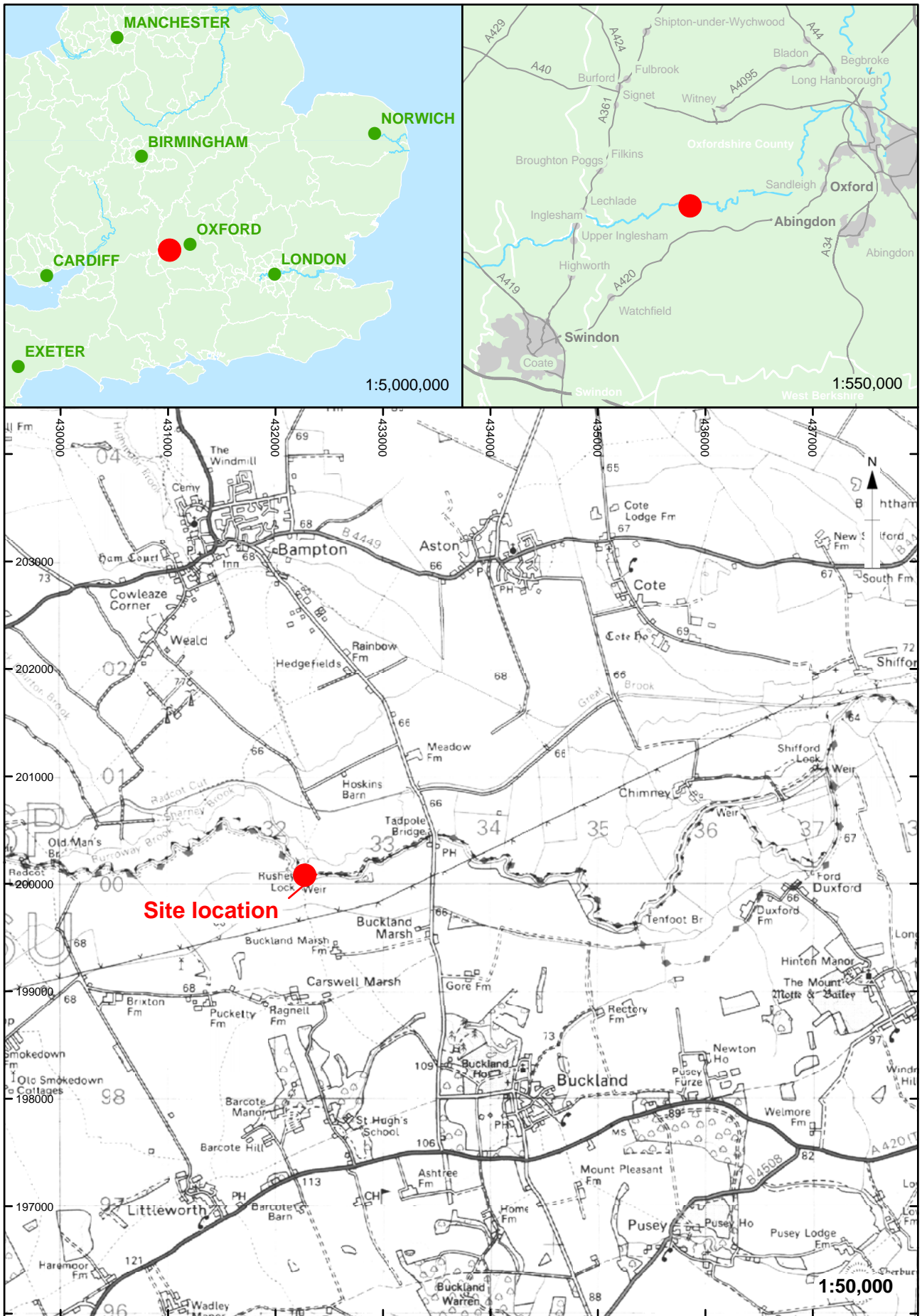
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Figure 1: Site location

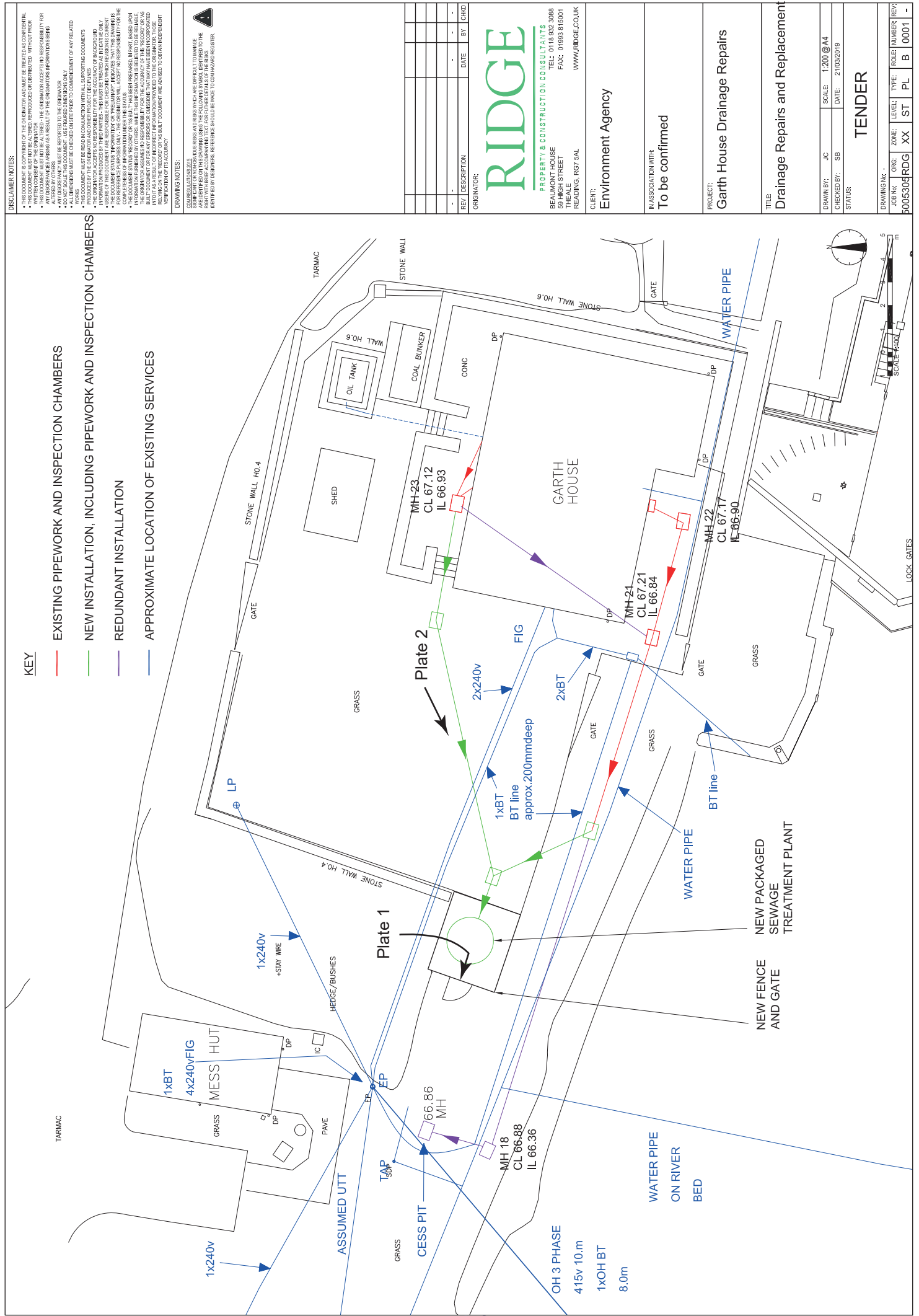


Figure 2: Works drawing with photo locations

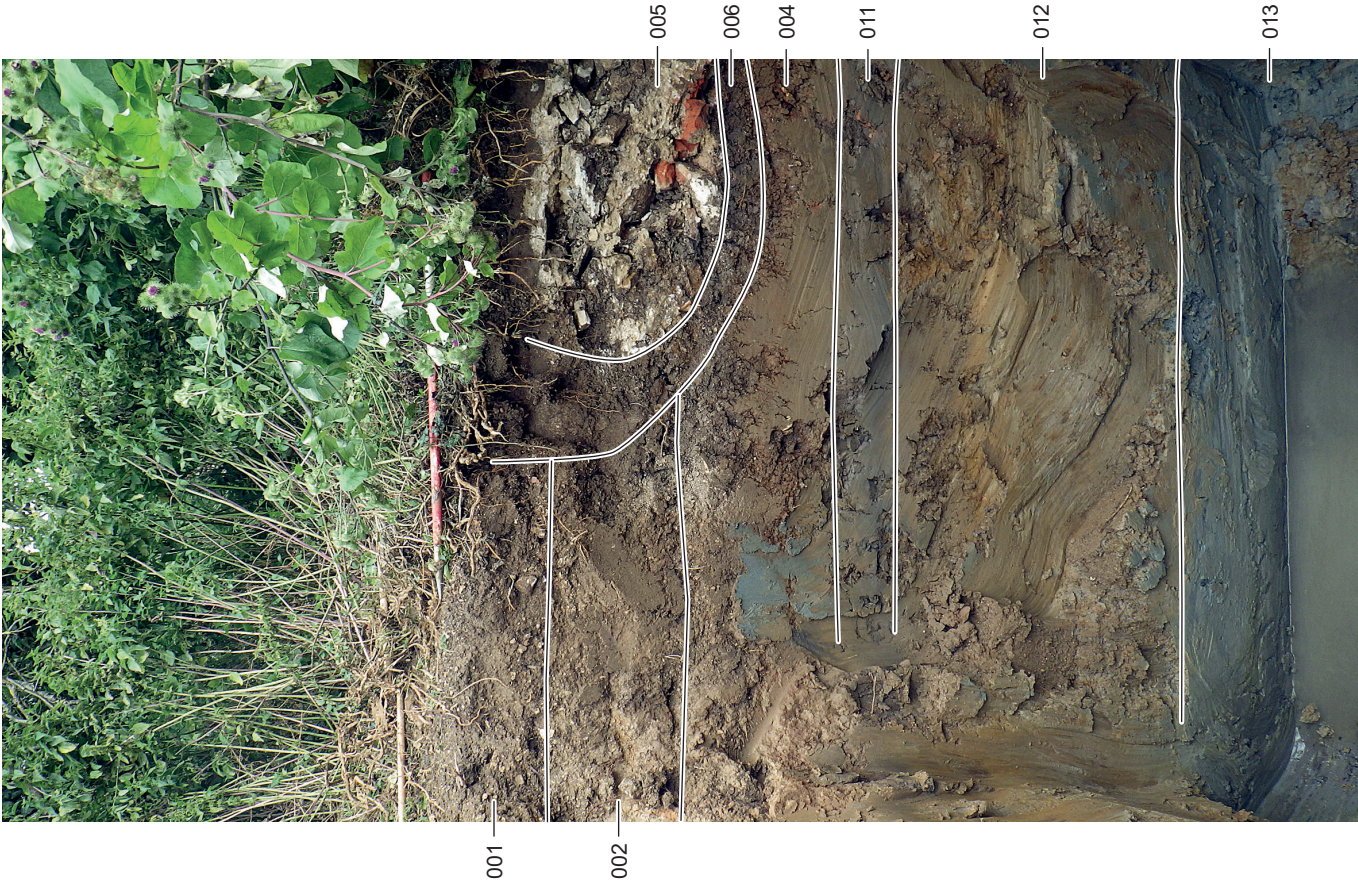


Plate 1: Excavation for sewage treatment plant



Plate 2: New drainage trench



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