

Cassington Rising Main Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2007

Client: Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 3402
NGR: SP 461 119

Client Name: Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Cassington Rising Main, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 461 119

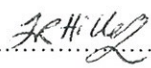
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3402
Site Code: CASRM 06
Invoice Code: CASRMWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum
Museum Accession No: OXCMS: 2006.122

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Document File Location x:\\Cassington Rising
Main_CASRMWB/Report/Cassington Rising Main
watching brief report
Graphics File Location servergo/a thru h/CASRMWB/Cassington Rising
Main/AH/17.11.06
Illustrated by Amy Tiffany Hemingway

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Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Cassington Rising Main, Cassington, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SP 461 119

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	1
1.2 Geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Watching Brief Aims.....	2
3 Watching Brief Methodology	2
3.1 Scope of fieldwork.....	2
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording	2
4 Results: General.....	2
4.1 Description of deposits	2
4.2 Finds	3
4.3 Palaeo-environmental remains.....	3
5 Discussion and Interpretation	3
5.1 Overall interpretation.....	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references.....	5
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Trench Location

SUMMARY

In October and November 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Cassington, Oxfordshire (SP 461 119) during the replacement of a 240 m length of mains sewer. The work was undertaken on behalf of Thames Water Utilities Ltd. The watching brief monitored the excavation of a 0.4 m wide trench for the new main, which was excavated through a series of clays of the Upper Cretaceous. No archaeological features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In October and November 2006, OA carried out a watching brief at Cassington during the replacement of a 240 m length of mains sewer. The work was undertaken on behalf of Thames Water Utilities Ltd and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on arable land to the south of Cassington Sewage Treatment Works (NGR: SP 461 121), and bounded to the north by a railway line and to the south by Yarnton Road. The site lies at approximately 69 m OD and is situated on Oxford Clay and Kellaways Beds of the Upper Cretaceous, between outcrops of the Second (Summertown-Radley) gravel terrace at Worton and the Fourth (Hanborough) gravel terrace south of Begbroke (BGS, Sheet 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Work on the Thames floodplain at Yarnton, within the Hanson Cassington Quarry, has revealed the presence of Neolithic and Bronze Age features representing a wide range of activities: domestic, funerary, ceremonial and mundane tasks undertaken away from settlement.
- 1.3.2 Recent excavation and strip-map-and-sample fieldwork of 12 ha has also been undertaken along the north-western edge of the Cassington Quarry in 1995 and 1996. The discoveries made as a result of this project have been numerous and significant. Although Mesolithic and Neolithic flintwork was recovered, the earliest features discovered in this area were early Bronze Age pits. Ring ditches of this date have been observed from the air near Jericho Farm. A timber-lined waterhole found to the south of Worton Rectory Farm in 1996 could also be earlier Bronze Age (a dendrochronological date is awaited).
- 1.3.3 In 1995, an important late Bronze Age settlement was excavated to the south-west of the Cassington Quarry, to the south of the Cassington Rising Main site, with numerous roundhouses, four-post structures and fencelines examined (Hey *et al.* 2006). Waterholes were also excavated and an important assemblage of artefacts was

recovered. Iron Age, Roman and early medieval settlement lies closer to the present development site, just to the west of Worton Rectory Farm and south of Jericho Farm, including Anglo-Saxon timber hall buildings (Hey 2004).

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS

- 2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation, were to determine the location, extent, date, character, and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving on the site.
- 2.1.2 To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present
- 2.1.3 To provide potential options for minimising or preventing damage to any remains.
- 2.1.4 To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- 2.1.5 To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- 2.1.6 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The replacement of the existing main required the excavation of a 240 m long trench approximately 0.4 - 0.5 m wide and up to 2 m deep. Following consultation with Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Council, it was agreed that intermittent monitoring of the trench would be sufficient to establish the presence, or otherwise, of archaeological remains within the confines of this narrow trench.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 All parts of the trench were observed in plan and in section. No archaeological deposits were encountered during the watching brief, although sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Description of deposits

- 4.1.1 The northern *c* 100 m of the trench to the north of the access road was excavated through a series of clay rich deposits reflecting the underlying geology. Although there were some localised variations within this sequence, it predominantly consisted of a mid to pale blue-grey clay (100), overlain by mid orange-brown clay (101). The

clay deposits were overlain by c 0.2 m of mid to pale reddish-grey subsoil (102) which was in turn overlain by a mid to pale brownish-grey topsoil (103), an average of 0.3 m thick. The remainder of the trench to the north of the access road appeared to be excavated through previously disturbed ground, comprising redeposited clays (104), probably originating from the backfill of the trench for the existing main.

- 4.1.2 The mid to pale blue-grey clay (100) was not present in the trench to the south of the access road, which appeared to be excavated exclusively through a mid orange-brown sandy clay with concentrations of large gravel pebbles (105), overlain by top and subsoil similar in composition to that observed to the north (although considerably more mixed as this field is currently subject to ploughing). Deposit 105 was not dissimilar to deposit 101 to the north, although it was significantly sandier in composition and brighter orange in colour. The concentrations of gravel may imply the proximity of the second (Summertown-Radley) gravel terrace at Worton, although no braided gravel deposits were observed.

4.2 **Finds**

- 4.2.1 A small quantity of modern building material was observed within the top and subsoil but was not retained.

4.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 4.3.1 No deposits were encountered which were deemed suitable for environmental sampling.

5 **DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

5.1 **Overall interpretation**

- 5.1.1 It seems likely that the clay deposits through which the trench was excavated represent Oxford Clay (deposit 100) overlain by clays of the Kellaways Beds (deposits 101 and 105). No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief, and it is possible that the underlying geology has contributed to the lack of archaeological remains in this area, as compared to those recorded on the free-draining gravel terrace at Worton and Jericho Farm. However, it should be stressed that the impact of the new pipe trench was minimal and the lack of archaeological deposits within the trench does not necessarily imply a lack of potential for the preservation of archaeological remains in the vicinity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctxt No	Type	Length (m)	Thick. Depth (m)	Colour	Composition	Inclusions	Comment	Finds	Date
100	deposit		0.6 max	mid-pale blue grey	clay		natural clay		
101	deposit		avg. 0.5	mid orange brown	clay		natural clay		
102	deposit		0.2	mid-pale reddish grey	silty clay		subsoil		
103	deposit		0.3	mid-pale brownish grey	clay silt		topsoil		
104	fill		1.7 +	mixed	mixed		re-deposition of clays, possibly filling existing service trench		
105	deposit		1.5 +	mid brownish orange	sandy clay	concentrations of large gravel pebbles	natural clay		

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BGS 1972 *Sheet 236* (Witney)

Hey, G, 2004 *Yarnton Saxon and medieval settlement and landscape*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph **20**, Oxford

Hey, G, Laws, G, and Hayden, C, 2006 Cassington, Cassington West Extension, Cassington Pit, *South Midlands Archaeology* **36**, 45

IFA 2001 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA 1992 *Field Manual* (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Cassington, Rising Main

Site code: CASRM 06

Grid reference: SP 461 119

Type of evaluation: Watching Brief on replacement of mains sewerage

Date and duration of project: Intermittent visits over three weeks in October and November 2006

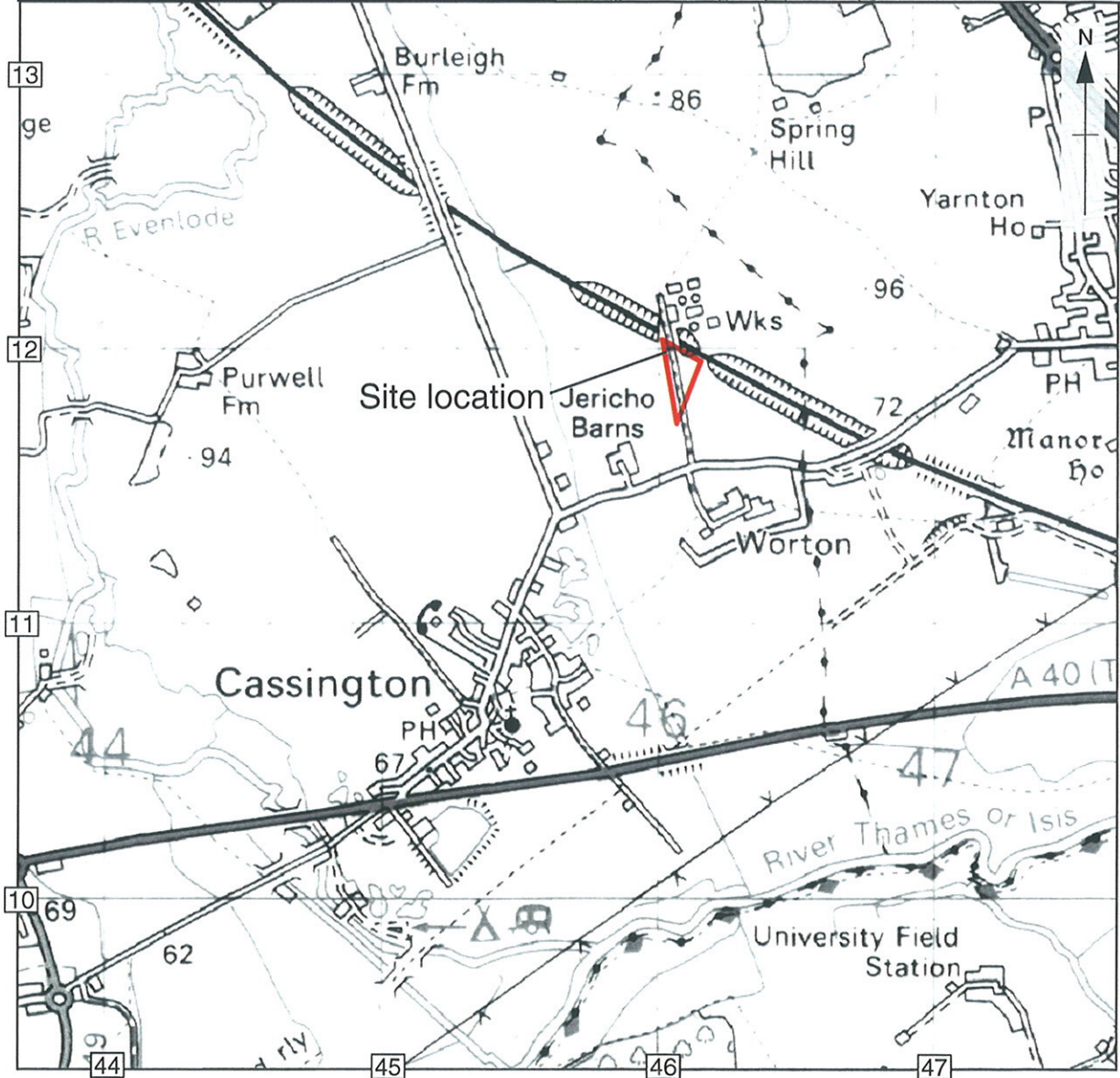
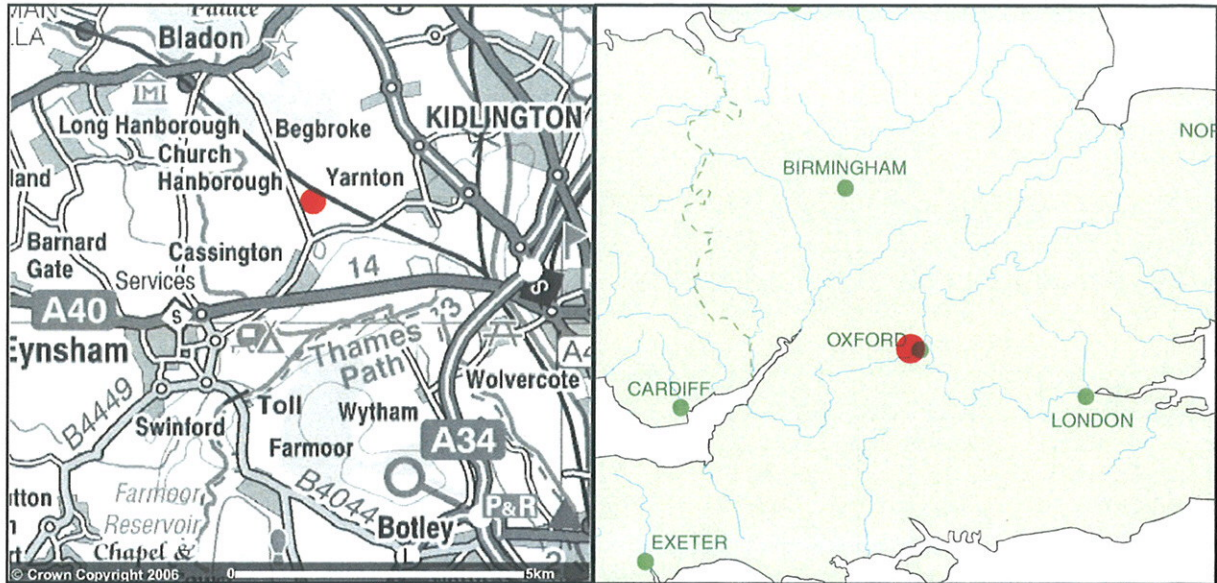
Summary of results: No archaeological features or deposits were encountered

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2006.122

Illustrations

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Trench Location



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

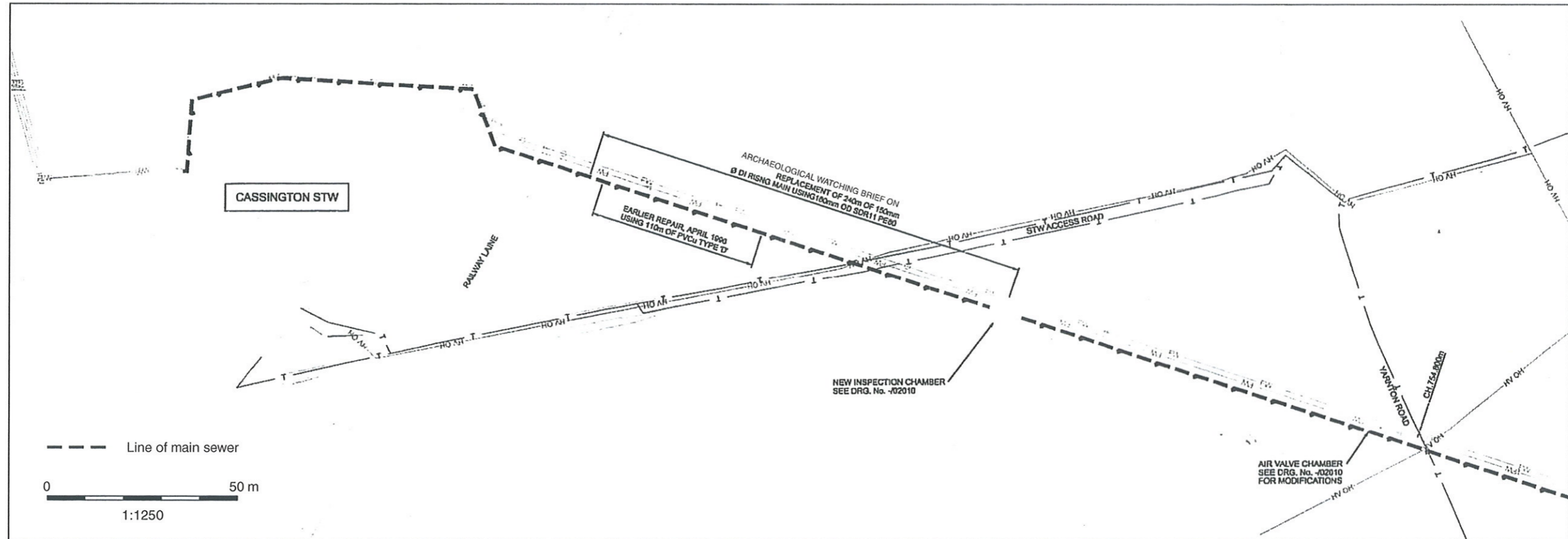


Figure 2 : Trench location



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