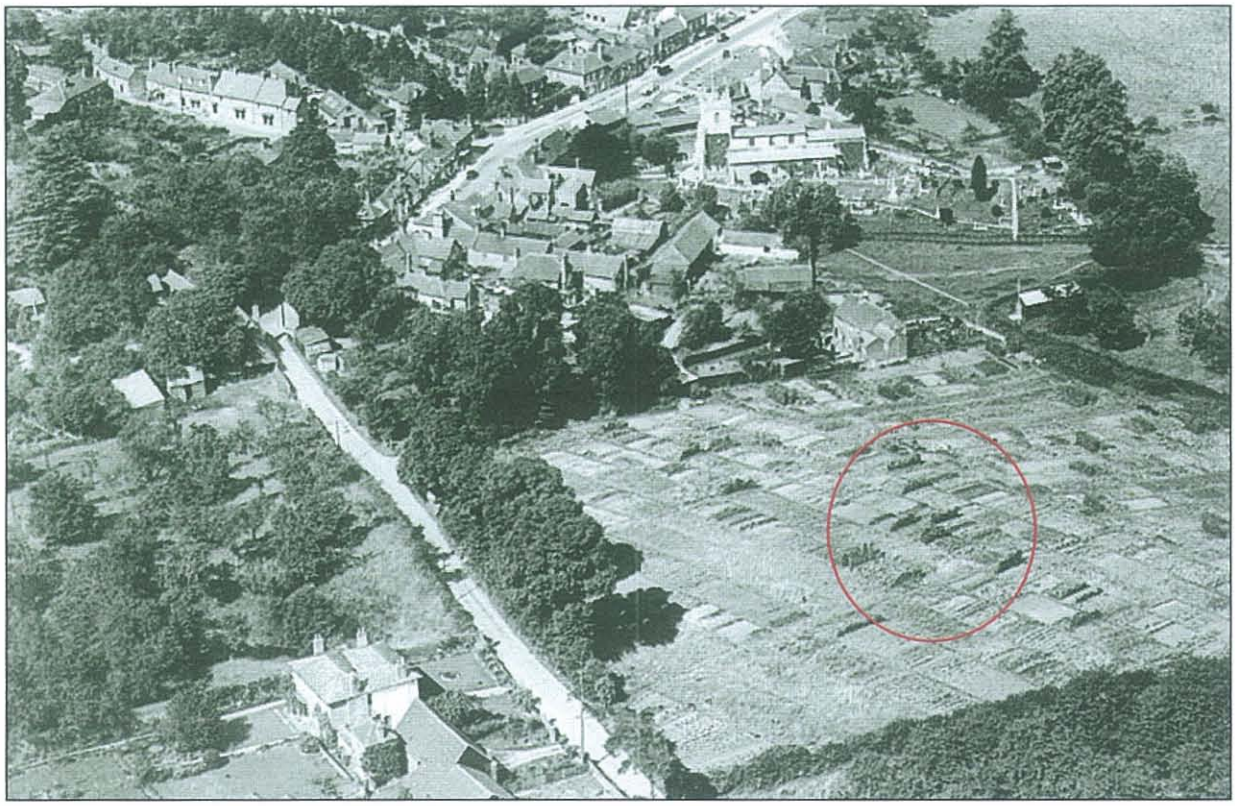

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land off Bowstridge Lane, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire

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Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

NGR: SU 9910 9335

Report for
RHT Developments

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Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment in Advance of Development at Land at Bowstridge Lane, Chalfont St Giles.

NGR: SU 9910 9335

1 SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) have been commissioned to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of a proposed development at land at Bowstridge Lane, Chalfont St Giles. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with a specification provided by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service in advance of a planning application for a new housing development.

The site is located within an area of high archaeological potential associated with the prehistoric and Romano-British periods, in particular potential Bronze Age settlements with strong economic, political and religious functions together with the potential focus for villa settlement near to the Roman road. This evidence is reviewed and it is recommended in this case that further archaeological assessment will be required and that an archaeological field evaluation comprising trial trenching should be carried out. This will provide an additional assessment of the nature, depth and level of survival of any archaeological deposits present within the extents of the site and used to inform further mitigation if necessary.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Planning Background

Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (2001) states:

'Positive planning and management can help to bring about sensible solutions to the treatment of sites with archaeological remains and reduce the areas of potential conflict between development and preservation. Both central government and English Heritage have important roles to play (see Annex 1). But the key to the future of the great majority of archaeological sites and historic landscapes lies with local authorities, acting within the framework set by central government, in their various capacities as planning, education and recreational authorities, as well as with the owners of sites themselves. Appropriate planning policies in development plans and their implementation through development control will be especially important'

(2001:14)

'The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled, and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their preliminary plans for development with the planning authority at an early stage. Once detailed designs have been prepared and finance lined up, flexibility becomes much more difficult and expensive to achieve. In their own interests, therefore, prospective developers should in all cases include as part of their research into the development potential of a site, which they undertake before making a planning application, an initial assessment of whether the site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains. The first step will be to contact the County Archaeological Officer or equivalent who holds the SMR, or English Heritage in London. The SMR provides information about the locations where archaeological remains are known or thought likely to exist. Where important remains

are known to exist or where the indications are that the remains are likely to prove important, English Heritage are also ready to join in early discussions and provide expert advice.

(2001:19)

'These consultations will help to provide prospective developers with advance warning of the archaeological sensitivity of a site. As a result they may wish to commission their own archaeological assessment by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant. This need not involve fieldwork. Assessment normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information: it can make effective use of records of previous discoveries, including any historic maps held by the County archive and local museums and record offices, or of geophysical survey techniques'

(2001:20)

The Desk-Based Assessment therefore forms the initial stage of the archaeological investigation and is intended to inform and assist and decisions regarding archaeological mitigation for proposed development and associated planning applications.

2.2 The Proposed Development

The proposed developed will comprise affordable housing. At the time of preparing this report the precise site layout was still in the design phase and therefore unknown.

2.3 Projects Constraints

There were no constraints associated with this project.

2.4 Geology and Topography

The British Geological Society (Sheet 255) shows that the local geology consists of Upper Chalk, a soft white chalk with many flints and outcrops of Pebbly Clay and Sand.

The site measures 4.82 hectares and was occupied until recently with market gardening. Twenty eight mature trees grow around the perimeter of the site (see Plates 5-6).

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Introduction

The Desk-Based Assessment was commissioned by the Rural Housing Trust (RHT Developments) from Dr Paul Wilkinson MIFA, FRSA of SWAT Archaeology in order to supplement a planning application for the construction of affordable domestic housing. This assessment has been prepared in accordance with a specification provided by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service and follows guidelines set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologist (see below) and English Heritage.

3.2 Desktop Study – Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999)

This desktop study has been produced in line with archaeological standards, as defined by the Institute of Filed Archaeologist (1999). A desktop, or desk-based assessment, is defined as being:

- *'...a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order*

to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate' (1999:2)

The purpose of the desk-based assessment is, therefore, an assessment that provides a contextual archaeological record, in order to determine:

- *the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource*
- *the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised*
- *the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological work within a programme of research.*

IFA (1999:2)

3.3 Objectives

- *The overall objectives of the archaeological desk based assessment and walkover survey are to identify and assess the archaeological potential of the site by collating and analysing known information along with recording archaeological remains and historic landscape features in the field. Importance is to be placed on producing an account of the historic development of the site and in assessing the archaeological impact of future developmen).*

- *The desk-based assessment itself will comprise a collection and analysis of known historical and archaeological information regarding the site and its environs.*

- *The comprehensive site walkover has the objective of mapping, photographing and describing visible archaeological and heritage features encountered across the site as well as informing the assessment of past and possible future development impacts.*

- *This information will be used to produce a gazetteer of archaeological and heritage features on site and to augment and inform the desk based study and later management decisions.*

- *The project is then to assess the results of the desktop study and the site inspection to provide information on the nature of archaeology and heritage on site. This assessment would also aim to identify any buried archaeological potential.*

- *The study will also provide an assessment of the likely impacts on heritage remains that would be caused by any future intensive development.*

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Desk-Based Assessment

4.1.1 Archaeological databases

Although it is recognised that national databases are an appropriate resource for this particular type of assessment, the local Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held at Buckinghamshire County Council contains sufficient data to provide an accurate insight into catalogued sites and finds within both the proposed development area and the surrounding landscape. The search was carried out within a 1km radius of the proposed development site (June 2007). A full listing of the relevant SMR data is included in Appendix 1.

4.1.2 Historical documents

A historical document, such as charters, registers, wills and deeds etc were not relevant to this specific study.

4.1.3 Cartographic and pictorial documents

A full map regression exercise has been incorporated within this assessment. Research was carried out using resources offered by Buckinghamshire County Council- Libraries & Heritage (June 2007). A full listing of cartographic and pictorial documents used in this study is provided in the Appendices.

4.1.4 Aerial photographs

Assessment of the collection of aerial photographs held by Libraries & Heritage, Buckinghamshire County Council was made and compared to the cropmarks plotted during the National Mapping Programme of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments. A full listing of aerial photographs used for this study is provided in the Appendices.

4.1.5 Geotechnical information

To date, no geotechnical investigations have been carried out at the site.

4.1.6 Secondary and statutory resources

Secondary and statutory sources, such as regional and periodic archaeological studies, landscape studies, dissertations and research frameworks are considered appropriate to this type of study and have been included within this assessment.

4.2 Walkover survey

The walkover survey was carried out on 15th June 2007 by David Britchfield, in respect of the Archaeological Specification (8/1/06). However, on initial inspection it was clear that the site had been used until recently as pasture and was in a pastoral state. As a result a complete photographic record was made of the site, a selection of which has been included in Appendix 7, (Plates 5-6).

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

Prehistoric	Palaeolithic	*c.* 500,000 BC – *c.*10,000 BC
	Mesolithic	*c.*10,000 BC – *c.* 4,300 BC
	Neolithic	*c.* 4.300 BC – *c.* 2,300 BC
	Bronze Age	*c.* 2,300 BC – *c.* 600 BC
	Iron Age	*c.* 600 BC – *c.* AD 43
Romano-British		*c.* AD 43 – *c.* AD 410
Anglo-Saxon		AD 410 – AD 1066
Medieval		AD 1066 – AD 1485
Post-medieval		AD 1485 – AD 1900
Modern		AD 1901 – present day

Table 1 Classification of Archaeological Periods

The Archaeological record, both in and around Chalfont St Giles is not extensive, but does include occupation evidence dating from the Prehistoric through to the industrial post-medieval period. Situated on the banks of the River Misbourne, the valley has likely been a focus for settlement activity since the prehistoric period. It is exactly this geographic and topographic location that will have formed the focus of trade, travel and communication for nearly 2000 years and therefore it comes as a surprise that the area has not been subject to detailed archaeological investigation.

The proposed development site is located approximately 200m to the south-east of the centre of Chalfont St Giles, beyond the periphery of the historical core of the village. This section of the assessment will focus on the archaeological and historical development of the environs of the village, placing it within it local and regional context. Each period classification will provide a brief introduction to the wider landscape, followed by a full record of archaeological sites, monuments and records within the site's immediate vicinity. Timescales for archaeological periods represented in the report are listed in Table 1 and locations of monuments and spot finds are presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings Historic Parks & Gardens and Conservation Areas

Some scheduled monuments and listed buildings are recorded within a 1km radius of the proposed development site. For instance, the Historic Cottage and Garden at Miltons Cottage is situated just under 300m to the north-west of the site. It is also the site of a museum dedicated to Milton, and is the only remaining house in which Milton lived.

5.3 Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age

The prehistoric period within the Misbourne valley will have followed traditional patterns observed elsewhere within the county until the Iron Age where evidence becomes a little

more complex. The Mesolithic period is represented by the presence of lithic scatters, (BM.0433802000) with tools such as blades and flakes providing an insight into the earliest phase of human activity within the Misbourne valley area.

By the Neolithic period, the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle based on agriculture and animal husbandry is illustrated by both 'ceremonial' and 'domestic' settlement patterns. Neolithic flints retrieved from the Parish of Chalfont St Giles include three scrapers, four flakes with secondary working, one chipped flint axe and a biconical core (Card No. 4338).

The Bronze Age is represented by larger migrations from the continent and more complex social developments on a domestic, industrial and ceremonial level. Occupation of Chalfont St Giles is believed to have continued throughout the Bronze Age with two 'Roman hearths' re-interpreted by Simon Smithson in 1985 as an Bronze Age area of food preparation, and of the making of hide sacks and trough linings ((BCM Ref. CAS 1597). Some 220 worked or struck flints were retrieved by field-walking in the vicinity of the burnt mounds. A Bronze Age barbed and tanged flint arrowhead was found in 1965 in the back garden of Hay House (BM.0159200000).

5.4 Iron Age

It is by the Iron Age that settlement patterns become more visible, both within the archaeological record and the physical landscape.
The Iron Age presence is also reflected within the archaeological record with the finding of an early British gold stater of Addedomaros (Type 5). The coin can be dated to about 15BC. (Card No. 1591 and BM.0159100000).

5.5 Romano-British

The term Romano-British describes the Romanised culture of Britain under the rule of the Roman Empire, following the Claudian 'invasion' in AD43. For nearly 400 years Britain formed part of the Roman Empire, the civilisation of Roman Britain being the synthesis of the Roman and native cultures, although it is evident that trade links and communication between Rome and Britain existed prior to the 'Roman' period. The Roman political system '*clientela*' served as the model between Rome and her allies and negotiations that took place meant that alliances were forged, trade started to expand and the spread of cultural ideals occurred. These ideals are no more evident than within the infrastructure that started to develop all over Britain and Europe during the Roman period.

The predominant feature of infrastructure within Buckinghamshire is arguably the extensive network of Roman roads. The Roman administration needed an established network of roads to connect administrative centres, towns and military posts too speed up the flow of trade, goods, communications and troops. Approximately 100m to the north of the proposed development area is the Roman road known as 'Viatores' route 163 that links Verulamium (St Albans) to Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) Locations for the route are recorded on the Buckinghamshire Monument List Report (Ref. 0431000000).

Further evidence of Roman activity is recorded by the finding of four pieces of tegula, two small pieces of possible tesserae, and fragments of Romano-British pottery at SU 9861 9487 to 9848 9462. (Ref. Card No. 1597).

5.6 Anglo-Saxon

The place name of Chalfont St Giles can be traced to the 7th century (Celfunte) and the 13th century (Chaufunt St Giles) The etymology for the name would appear to derive from funta a 'spring', a loan word from Latin fons, fontis. It is suggested by Margaret Gelling that the Latin word was borrowed by early Anglo-Saxon settlers or Germanic mercenaries in the last century of Roman Britain, to describe a spring which was characterised by Roman building work (Gelling 1984).

5.7 Medieval

Despite a rather extensive Medieval focus within Chalfont St Giles itself, the assessment area is relatively limited as far as this period concerned. The early village appears to have grown up on the existing Roman road adjacent to the River Misbourne. By the middle of the 11th century the village was recorded in 1086 as "Chalfont (St Giles) Mainou (the Breton) holds 4 hides and 3 virgates. Land for 15 ploughs; in lordship 1 hide; 3 ploughs there. 13 villagers and 8 smallholders have 12 ploughs, 4 slaves,; 3 mills; one of them pays 5 ora and the other two pay nothing; meadow for 1 plough; woodland, 600 pigs; in this woodland, a hawk's eyrie. Total value £6 10s" (Domesday Book).

5.8 Post-Medieval

Continued expansion of Chalfont St Giles by the middle of the sixteenth century further reinforced the villages position as trading centre. As a result, the surrounding landscape which predominantly comprised a series of manorial estates was given over to agriculture and faming. Cartographic regression of the assessment area suggests that the assessment site were used as meadow until the change of use to allotment gardens.

5.9 Modern

Modern development on the site is limited to the establishment of allotment gardens.

5.10 Undated

Numerous undated earthworks are recorded approximately 600m to the south-east of the proposed development area. The earthworks are recorded on early Ordnance Survey maps.

5.11 Cartographic Sources and Map Regression

A map regression exercise carried out on the proposed development area has shown that the site was pasture up until the establishment of the allotment gardens.

5.12 Aerial Photographs

A search was made of aerial photographs held by Buckinghamshire County Council and the National Monuments Record. The earliest vertical photograph dating to 2nd June 1947 (Plate 1) shows the proposed development area as being pasture with some trees. The next series of photographs date to 1969 (Plate 2) and show again, pasture with trees, as do the 1979 and 1985 photographs (Plates 3, 4). An oblique photograph taken by Aerofilms on the 28th August 1931 show a close-up of the entire site developed as an allotment garden (Plate 7-8).

6 ARCHAOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

6.1 Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age

The potential for finding remains that date prior to the Iron Age is considered **high**. Recorded activity within the area immediately surrounding the proposed development site shows a good degree of preservation coupled with relatively good settlement activity patterns tested and recorded during the investigation of adjacent archaeological sites.

6.2 Iron Age

The potential for finding remains dating to the Iron Age is considered as **moderate**. As with the predating evidence the surrounding landscape offers the potential for surviving archaeological deposits dating to this period as is evident for investigations and finds within the surrounding area The potential for associated field systems and/or further settlement sites within the vicinity should be expected.

6.3 Romano-British

Extensive road activity directly adjacent to the assessment site and within the surrounding area would tend to suggest that further archaeological remains associated with this period would be extant within undeveloped parcels of the landscape. The presence of villas and funerary monuments along with the location of an established Roman road with the immediate vicinity of the site suggests that the potential for finding remains dating to the Romano-British period is considered as **moderate-high.**

6.4 Anglo-Saxon

Anglo-Saxon remains within the assessment area are limited. The potential for finding remains dating to the Anglo-Saxon period is considered as **low.**

6.5 Medieval

Medieval settlement within the assessment area is limited by the lack of archaeological investigation. The presence of manorial estates and associated agricultural activity and woodland management, including track ways, field boundaries etc should not be ruled out. The potential for finding remains dating to the medieval period is therefore considered as **low-moderate.**

6.6 Post-Medieval

Evidence for post-medieval occupation in the area is likely to be similar to the medieval evidence noted above, with the possible increase in activity. The potential for finding remains dating to the post-medieval period is therefore considered as **low-moderate**

7 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Existing Impacts

The search area has been largely pasture, up until the late 1930's and early 1950's at which time extensive urban development was carried out in the vicinity of the development site. Up until this point the impact on buried archaeological deposits would have been due to agricultural activities such as ploughing. That said, archaeological deposits on archaeological sites are known to survive at depths greater than 0.5m, and thus beyond the impact of deep ploughing techniques. The impact of landscaping associated with the allotment gardens is therefore considered as **low.**

7.2 Proposed Impacts

At the time of preparing this archaeological assessment, the full extent of the proposed development was not known. However, it has been made clear that any future planning application will most likely comprise the construction of affordable domestic units along with associated access, parking and utilities. Areas of open green space are also considered, although the location of these has not been confirmed.

8 MITIGATION

The purpose of this archaeological desk-based assessment was to provide an assessment of the contextual archaeological record, in order to determine the potential survival of archaeological deposits that maybe impacted upon during any proposed construction works.

The assessment site has generally been shown to be within an area of **medium-high** archaeological potential with **low-moderate** truncation (previous impact).

It is therefore recommended in this case that further archaeological assessment will be required and that an archaeological field evaluation comprising trial trenching should be carried out. This will provide an additional assessment of the nature, depth and level of survival of any archaeological deposits present within the extents of the site and can be used to inform further mitigation if necessary.

9 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 Archive

Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, two copies of this desk-based assessment will be submitted to Buckinghamshire County Council within 6 months of completion.

9.2 Reliability/limitations of sources

The sources that were used in this assessment were, in general, of high quality. The majority of the information provided herewith has been gained from either published texts are archaeological 'grey' literature held at Buckinghamshire County Council, and therefore considered as being extremely reliable.

9.3 Copyright

Swale & Thames Survey Company shall retain full copyright on the commissioned report, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides exclusive licence to RHT Developments (and representatives) for the use of this document in all matters directly relating to the project.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Chris Warder-Smith of RHT Developments for the commissioning of this report.

Dr Paul Wilkinson PhD. MIFA. FRSA. June 2007

Appendix 1 – Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

Period	SMR Reference	Type	National Grid Reference	Description
Romano-British	Card No. 1597	Find Spot	SU 9861 9487	S. Cauvain collected four pieces of tegula, two small tile fragments, one Romano-British rim and footring base- could indicate an extensive Roman site
Prehistoric	01592	Find Spot	SU 9872 9250	A **Bronze Age** barbed and tanged flint arrowhead
Iron Age	01591	Find Spot	SU 98620 93580	An early British **Iron Age** gold stater of Addedomaros (Type 5). Coin may be dated c.15BC. Addedomaros was a prince of the Trinovantes, an eastern counties tribe inhabiting Middlesex and Essex.
Medieval	01579	Find Spot	SU 99310 93760	In digging a new petrol pit for the garage some sherds of **Medieval** pottery were found.

Period	SMR Reference	Type	National Grid Reference	Description
Undated	0184002	Wall	Su 9909 9350	A flint wall was exposed during an Archaeological Watching Brief.
Prehistoric	0433802	Find Spot	SU 99000 94000	**Prehistoric** flint scatter including scrapers, chipped flint axe, flakes.
Roman	043610	Road	SU 9626 9126	The **Roman** road from Silchester to Verulamium (Viatores Route 163) passing through the village of Chalfont St Giles.
Bronze Age	Cass 1597	Find Spot	SU 9862 9469	An **Bronze Age** cooking and food preparation area excavated in 1985.

Fig.1. Site Plan

Fig. 2. Roque c.1760

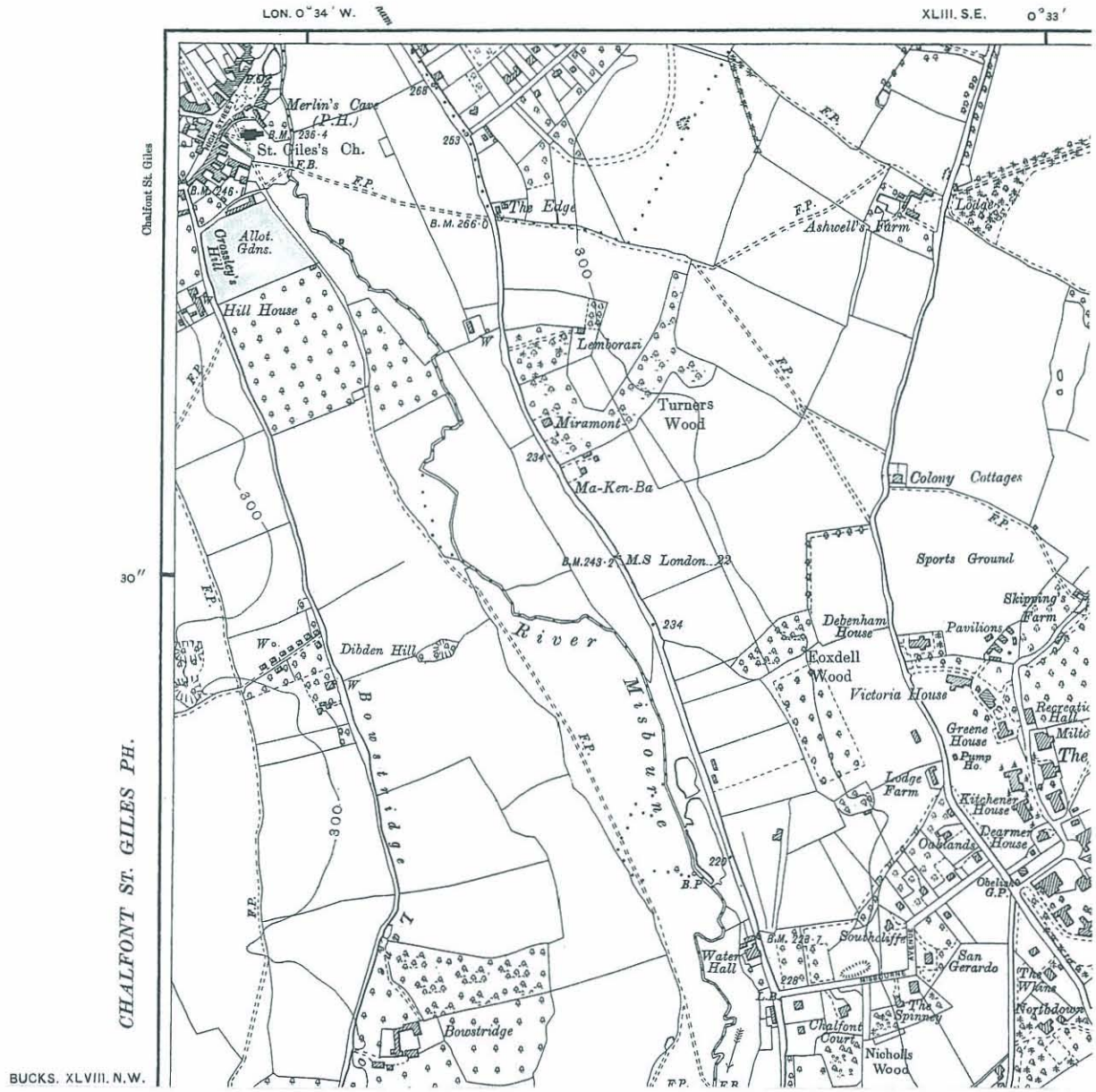

Fig. 3. 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1826

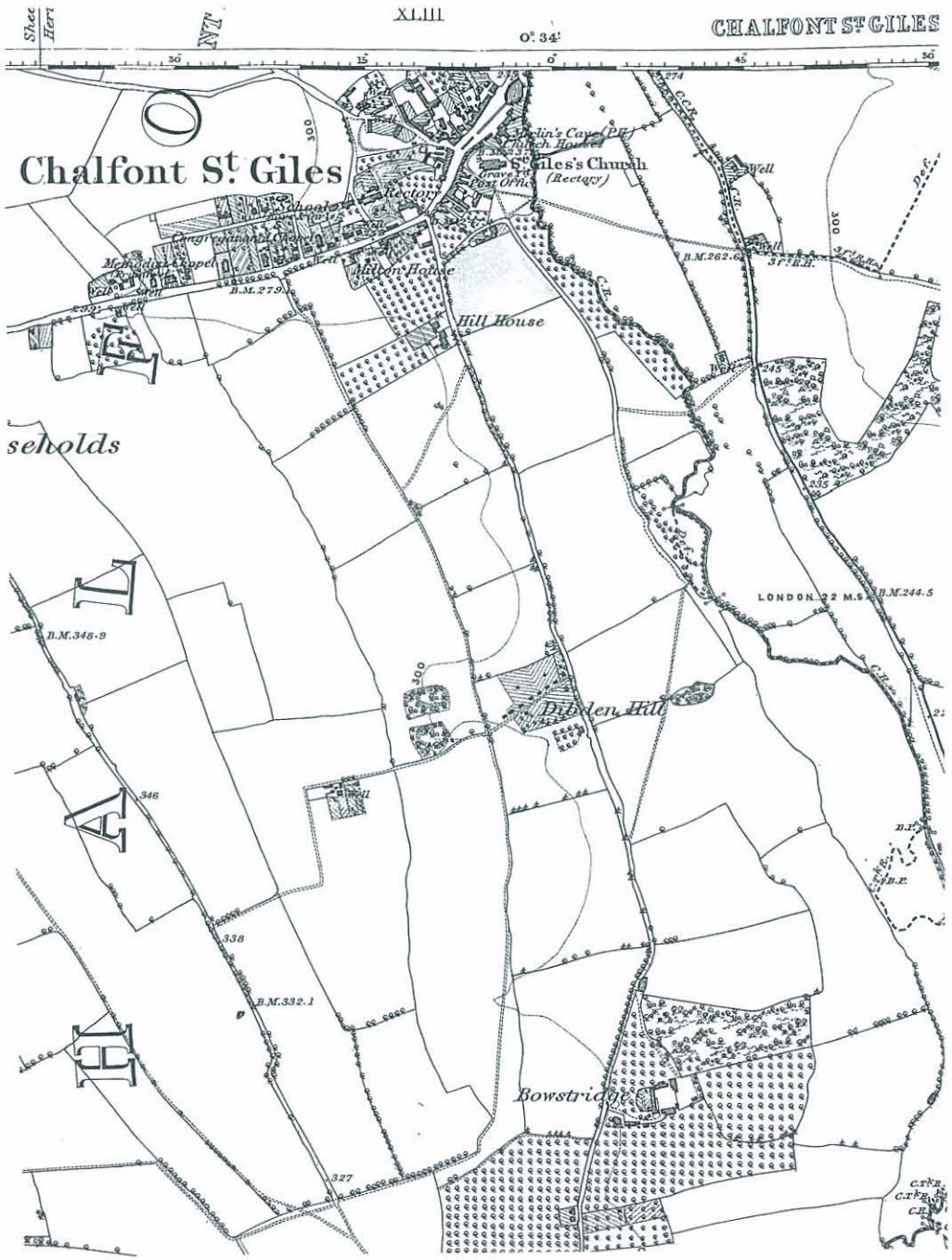

Fig. 4. 2ndEdition Ordnance Survey Map 1883

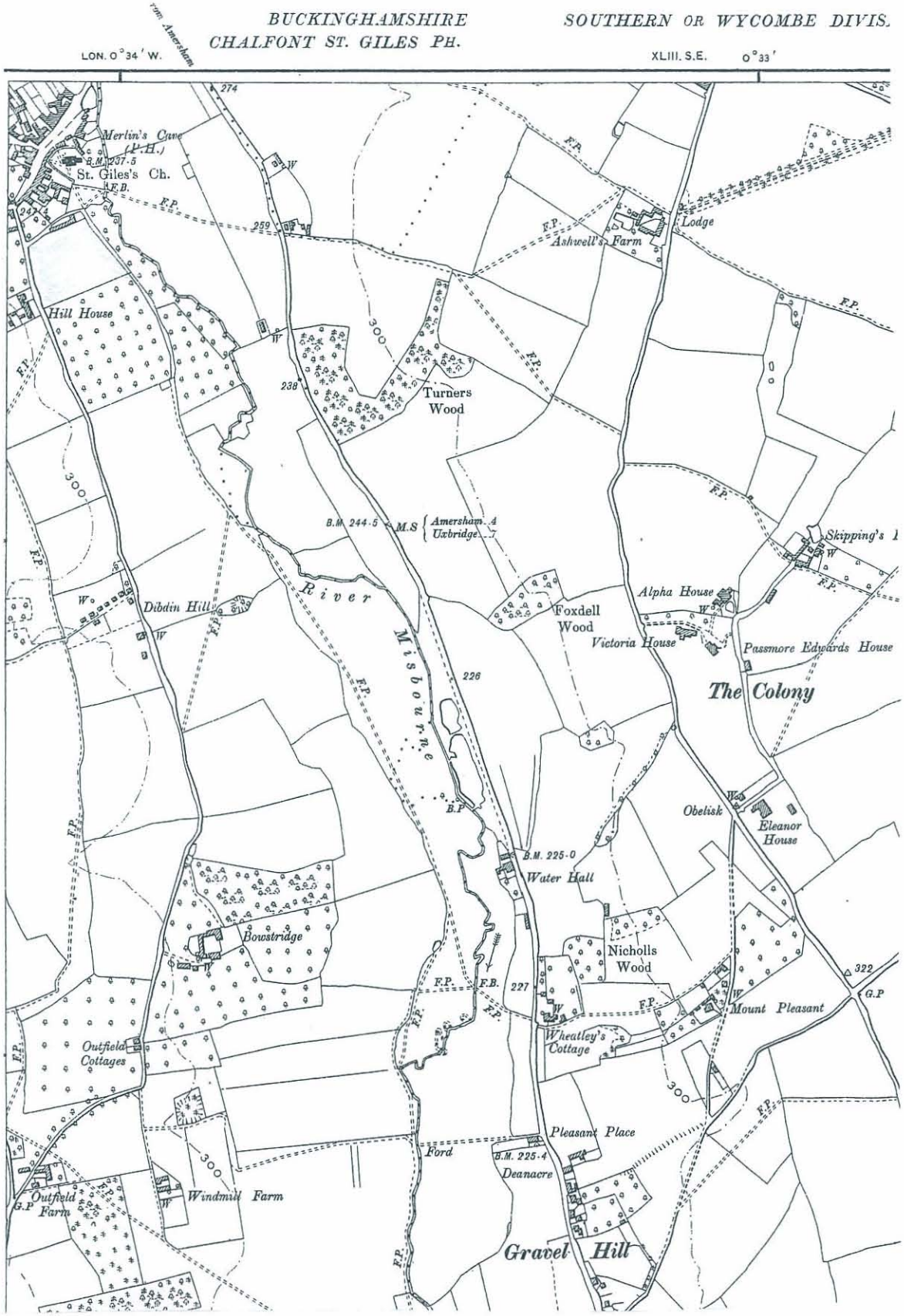

Fig. 5. 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1900

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N

20 0 20 40 60 80 100

Metres

Scale 1: 1250

Plate 5. Development Site in June 2007. (Facing north).

Plate 6. (Below) Development Site in June 2007 (Facing south-east).

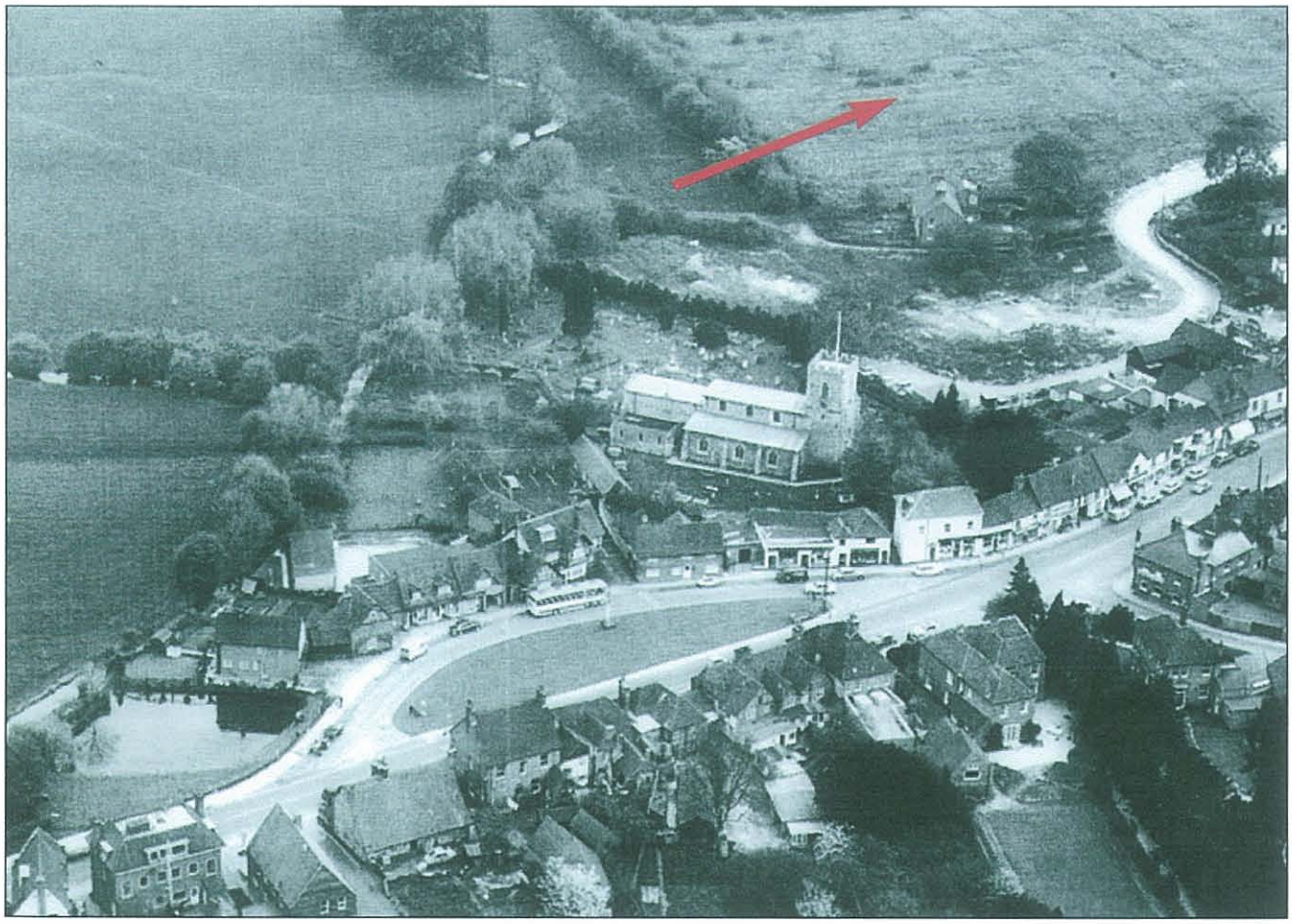

Plate 7. Development Site in 1931 (Facing south).
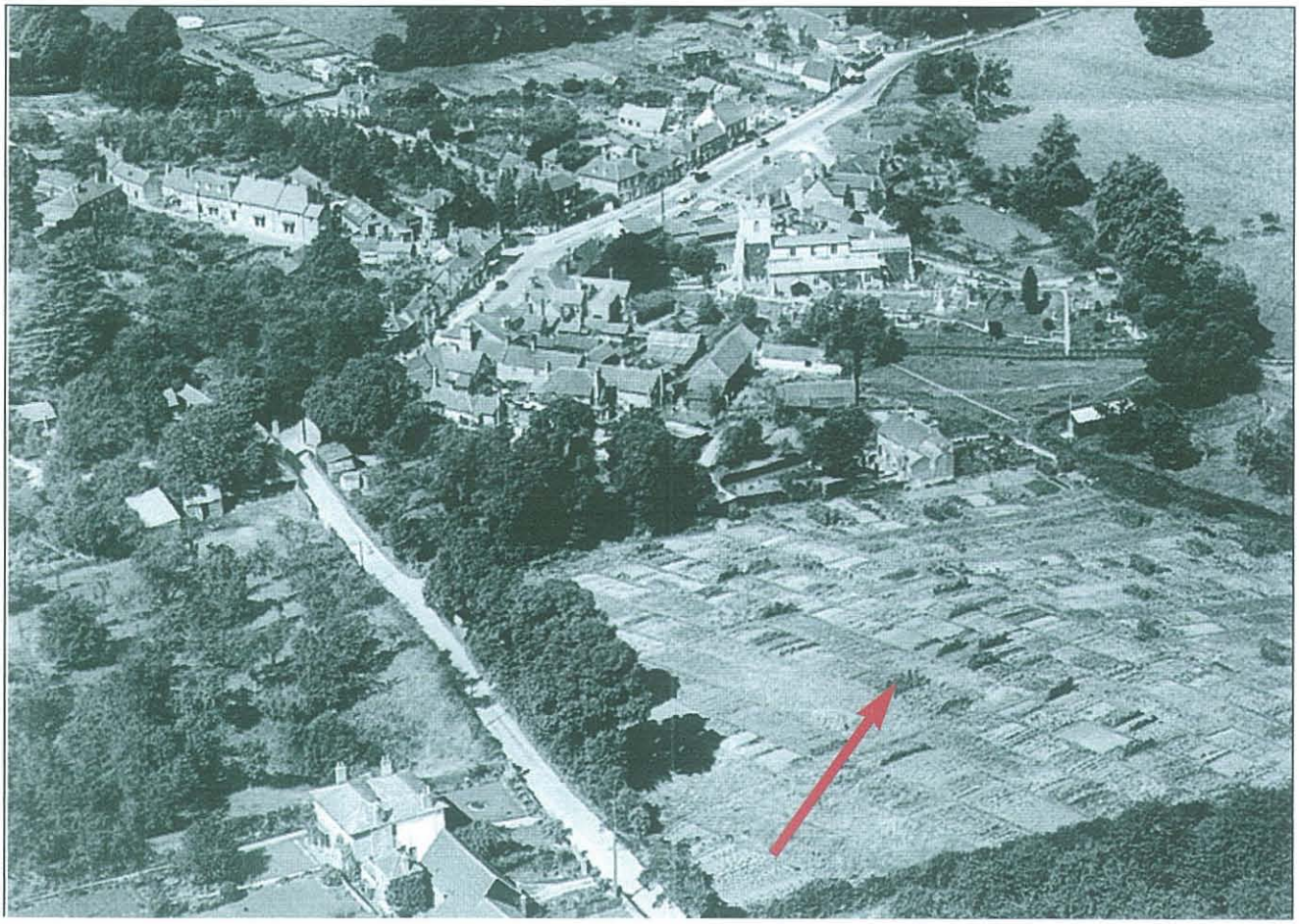
Plate 8. (Below) Development Site in 1931 (Facing north-east).