

**24-26 EAST STREET,
READING,
BERKSHIRE**

NGR: SU 7186 7310

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

August 2005

Report No. 433

Quality Assurance

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SUMMARY

On July 11th 2005 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at 24-26 East Street, Reading (NGR: SU 7186 7310). The project was commissioned by Zenith Builders Ltd.

The evaluation required the excavation and recording of 60m of linear trench within the proposed development area. In the event 66m of linear trench was excavated.

The three archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated onto natural sands and gravels beneath modern made ground. There was extensive disturbance of the natural ground as a result of modern and late post-medieval activity. A single ditch feature was present in each trench. The ditches in Trenches 1 and 2 were both undated, but the profile of each indicates that it was not machine excavated and is not, therefore, likely to be of modern origin. The ditch feature in Trench 3 was badly disturbed but yielded sherds of medieval pottery comparable with the Newbury C industry (13th-14th century).

The results of the evaluation work indicates that the study area contains archaeologically significant deposits, albeit in a badly disturbed condition.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period from 1066 to *circa* 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case sand and gravel.

Neolithic

Division of the prehistoric period dated approximately between 4500 BC and 2000 BC.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Prehistoric

For the purpose of this report Prehistoric is defined as being the period prior to the Roman invasion of AD43.

Romano-British

The period between AD 43 – *circa* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on July 11th 2005, on land at the 24-26 East Street, Reading (NGR: SU 7186 7310). The project was commissioned by Zenith Builders Ltd.
- 1.2 A programme of archaeological works was required by Reading Borough Council in advance of redevelopment, in accordance with the principals of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of the Reading Borough Council.
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Foundations 2005) which complied with the brief prepared by Berkshire Archaeology (2005). The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001). The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The planning application (02/01164) was for the demolition of the existing office and storage buildings and the construction of 35 flats with undercroft car parking and landscaping.
- 2.2 The study area lies on the west side of East Street, on the north side of South Street and close to the centre of Reading. The site lies within an area of medieval and post-medieval remains. The proposed development therefore has the potential to impact upon archaeological remains associated with earlier uses and buildings on the site, and with the origins and development of Reading.
- 2.3 The study area therefore contained the potential for significant archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Medieval period. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of finds or features associated with other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits, in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
- ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
- iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The archaeological specification required the excavation of three 20m trenches comprising a 10% sample of the study area. In the event it did not prove possible to excavate the three trenches of these dimensions. As a result Trench 1 measured 30.2m, Trench 2 measured 16.3m and Trench 3 measured 20m. Final trench locations are shown in Figure 2.
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever were encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB-type mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.
- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 **Trench 1** (30.2m by 1.8m) was aligned east-west and was excavated onto natural yellow sands and gravels at an average depth of 0.77m (43.71m OD) from the modern ground surface at the western end and 0.15m at the eastern end (43.55m OD). The natural deposits were sealed beneath a modern made ground comprised of demolition rubble (101). A single undated feature was present within this trench, along with numerous modern cut features.
- 5.2 Ditch [102] was aligned NNW-SSE with steep sides and a flat base. It measured 0.80m wide by 0.29m deep and contained a silty sand with occasional flint nodules (103). The feature did not appear in Trench 2.
- 5.3 **Trench 2** (16.3m by 1.8m) was aligned ESE-WNW and was excavated onto the natural orange and yellow sands and gravels at an average depth of 0.21m (43.45m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural sands and gravels were sealed beneath a deposit of compacted chalk (202), which was present for a length of 3.8m at the western end of the trench. Throughout the remaining length of the trench the natural was sealed by a modern made

ground comprised of demolition rubble (201). A single undated feature was present within this trench, along with numerous modern cut features.

- 5.4 Ditch [203] was aligned NNW-SSE with near vertical sides and a narrow rounded base. It measured 0.70m wide by 0.50m deep and contained a primary fill of dark brown silty sand (204) up to 0.33m thick. This fill was sealed beneath a layer of mid orange brown sand with rare flint nodules, (205).
- 5.5 **Trench 3** (20m by 1.8m) was aligned NNE-SSW and was excavated onto the natural sands and gravels at an average depth of 0.40m (43.34m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural sands were sealed beneath a layer of modern made ground (305) averaging 0.22m deep, beneath a layer of modern demolition rubble (301), between 0.05 and 0.3m thick. A single medieval ditch was present within this trench.
- 5.6 Ditch [302] was aligned NNW-SSE with a sloping western edge and a flat base. The remainder of the ditch had been cut away by modern disturbances. It measured at least 1.10m wide by 0.46m deep and contained a primary fill of mid brown silt sand (303) beneath a fill of dark brown sandy flint gravels (304) from which fragments of roof tile and sherds of medieval pottery were recovered.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The three archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated onto natural sands and gravels beneath modern made ground. There was extensive disturbance of the natural ground as a result of modern and late post-medieval activity. A single ditch feature was present in each trench. The ditches in Trenches 1 and 2 were both undated, but the profile of each indicates that it was not machine excavated and is not, therefore likely to be of modern origin. The ditch feature in Trench 3 was badly disturbed but yielded sherds of medieval pottery comparable with the Newbury C industry (13th-14th century).
- 6.2 The results of the evaluation work indicates that the study area contains archaeologically significant deposits, albeit in a badly disturbed condition.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

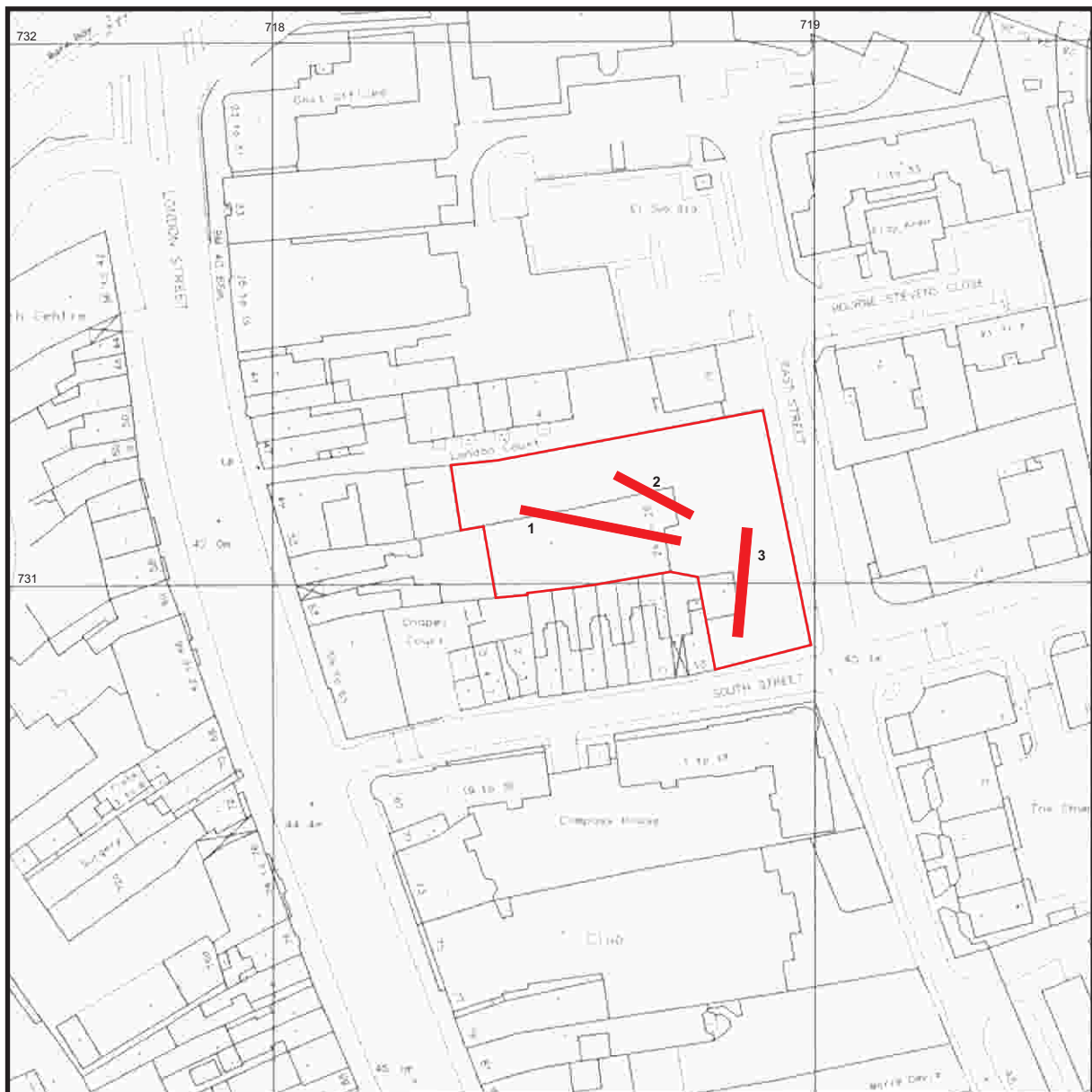
Berkshire Archaeology 2005 *24-26 East Street, Reading: Brief for an archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished.

Foundations Archaeology 2005 *24-26 East Street, Reading: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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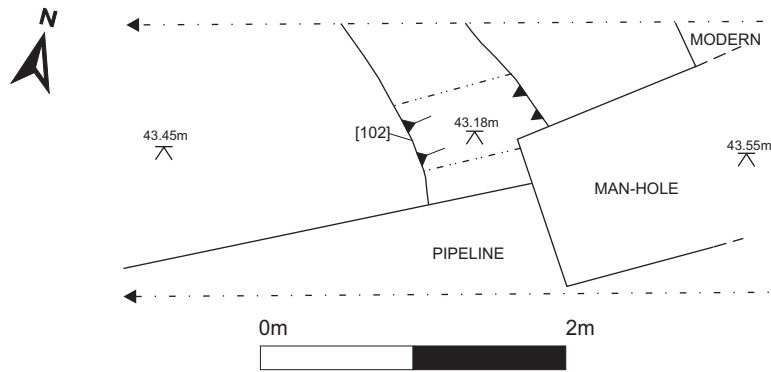


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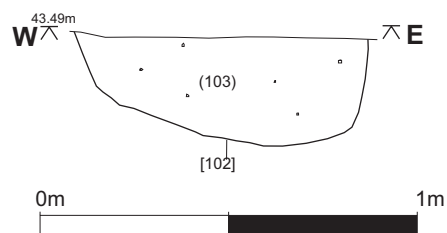
0m 50m

FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan

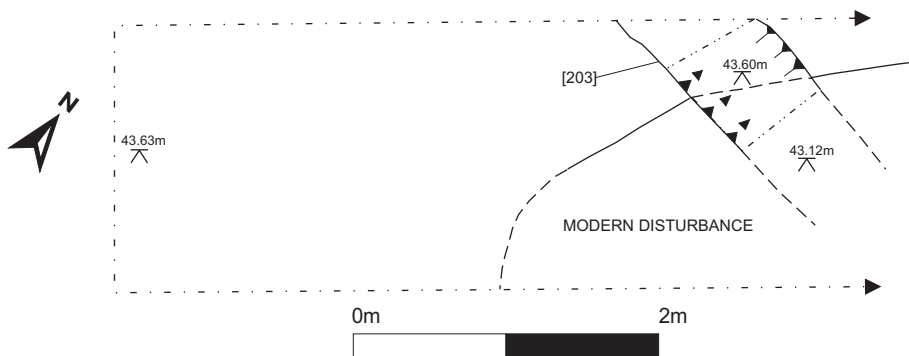
PLAN OF TRENCH 1



SOUTH FACING SECTION [102]



PLAN OF TRENCH 2



EAST FACING SECTION [203]

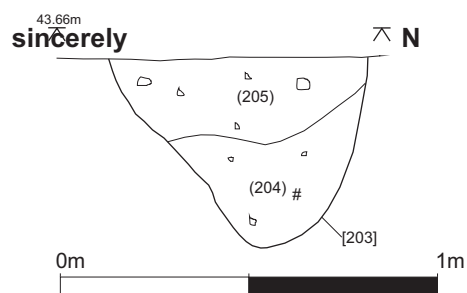
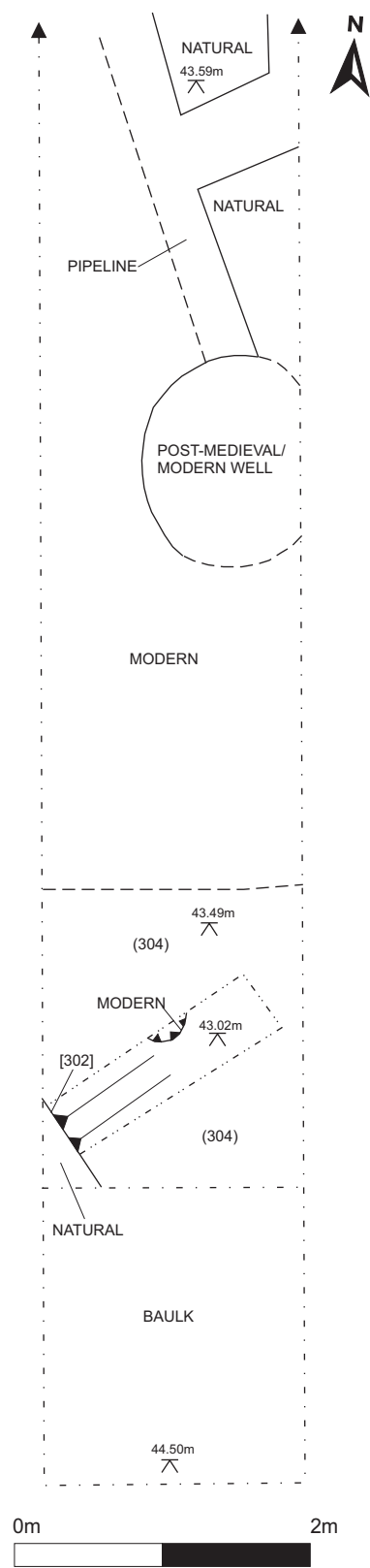


FIGURE 3: Trenches 1 and 2, Plans and Section

PLAN OF TRENCH 3



SOUTH EAST FACING SECTION [302]

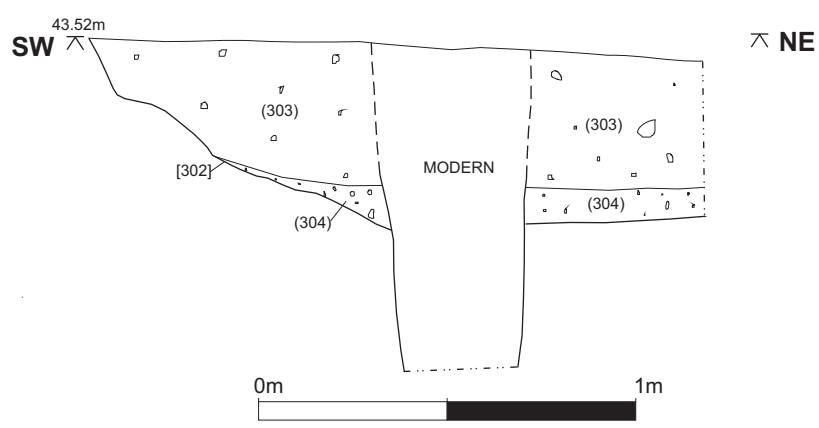


FIGURE 4: Trench 3, Plan and Section