

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Land at Noel Farm, Maidenhead  
Berkshire**

**NGR: 48864 17675 (centred)**

**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Planning Ref: 13/02169**

**ASE Project No: 6794  
Site Code: NFM14**

**ASE Report No: 2014240  
OASIS id: 184063**



**By John Hirst**

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**July 2014**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by White Horse Contractors Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks on land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire. The work comprised monitoring topsoil and subsoil stripping across site down to natural geology, prior to a cut and fill exercise to landscape a reservoir and surrounding area. A single gully of probable post-medieval date was observed.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), University College London (UCL), was commissioned by White Horse Contractors Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks on land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Berkshire (centred NGR 48864 17675; Figure 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2014) the bedrock geology over the majority of the site is clay, silt and sand of the London Clay Formation. The central/eastern part of the site contains an area of clay, silt and sand of the Lambeth Group. Most of the site contains no drift geology but head deposits of clay, sand, silt and gravel are present, mainly in the central/eastern of the site.

1.2.2 The site is bounded by Forest Green to the north and Long Lane to the west. Agricultural fields lie to the south and east.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3 Planning consent was granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a reservoir and pump house (within an existing building) and associated earthworks (Planning Ref: 13/02169). The following condition (3) was attached to the planning consent, following advice from Berkshire Archaeology:

*'No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The archaeological work shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.'*

*Reason: The site is within an area of archaeological potential. A programme of archaeological work is required to mitigate the impact of the development and ensure preservation by record or in situ of any surviving remains in a manner appropriate to their significance. Relevant Policies - Local Plan ARCH2, ARCH4.'*

1.3.2 Berkshire Archaeology, in a planning consultation response (8<sup>th</sup> August 2013), recommended that an archaeological watching brief should take place during the site strip for construction of the reservoir, allowing the extent of any potential archaeological remains to be established and the need for any further stages of work identified and quantified.

1.3.3 Accordingly a Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief was prepared (ASE 2014) in accordance with condition 3 of the planning consent and was approved by Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer at Berkshire

Archaeology. All work was undertaken in accordance with this document and with the relevant standard and guidance documents of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The following aims were identified in the WSI (ASE 2014).

1.4.2 In general, the aim of the watching brief was to record, interpret and report on any archaeological remains exposed during groundworks (including artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest) to appropriate archaeological standards and to establish whether any further archaeological work would be necessary.

1.4.3 Specific questions to be addressed by the watching brief were:

- Is there any further evidence of Iron Age and early Roman settlement like that identified at Mount Scipett to the east?
- Can the watching brief provide any evidence for medieval or early post-medieval agriculture or rural farmsteads?

#### **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief which was undertaken by John Hirst (assistant archaeologist) between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The project was managed by Paul Mason (project manager, fieldwork) and by Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift (project managers, post-excavation).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Overview**

2.1.1 The following information is paraphrased from the WSI (ASE 2014). The background was prepared following a search of entries on the Berkshire Historic Environment Record within a 1km radius of the site.

### **2.2 Crop-marks of unknown date**

2.2.1 Two oval crop mark enclosures of unknown date and function have been identified from aerial photographs of fields c. 400m to the south-east of the site (HER ref. MRM16386; SU 886 761). The largest measures 320m by 190m and has an internal bank. The smaller enclosure (measuring 35 by 30m) appears to connect to the Bourne Stream and possibly to later drainage.

### **2.3 Prehistoric and Roman**

2.3.1 Iron Age and Romano-British occupation has been recorded in an area c. 800m to the east of the site at Mount Scippett (HER Ref: 00461; SU 893 761). Earthworks have been identified on aerial photographs by the Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society. Iron Age and 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman pottery and a fibula brooch have also been recovered.

2.3.2 Another prehistoric and Roman findspot was reported in 1861 at Sturt Green c.1 km to the north-west of the site (HER ref: 00867; SU 883 777). It comprised 'a small Roman sepulchral vessel and half-baked clay' found near to 'several arrow-heads of bone and flint'.

### **2.5 Saxon**

2.5.1 No Saxon sites or findspots were noted within a 1km radius. The site likely formed part of the lands associated with the manor of Bray, which pre-dated the Norman Conquest.

### **2.6 Medieval and post-medieval**

2.6.1 A possible surviving assart (a medieval field cleared from woodland, often pre-dating the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century) has been identified c. 500m to the south-east of the site (HER ref: MRM15979; SU 878 759). The identification is based on an extant lynchet/boundary topped with sporadic coppice. Earthworks may suggest that an associated contemporary farmstead is present. A medieval buckle has also been found in this area (HER ref: MRM15975; SU 878 759).

2.6.2 A new manor (known as Pokemere and later as Foxleys) developed when Sir John Foxley purchased lands in the parish of Bray during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The site of the moated manor house lies c. 600m to the north-west of the current site (Scheduled Ancient Monument 12026; HER ref: 00456; SU 879 770). The manor house burnt down around 1750 but earthworks associated with the moat survive.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The site was excavated and recorded in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2014) and in line with the standards and guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008a).
- 3.1.2 The area shown on Figure 2 was subject to an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the development. The principal contractor (Whitehorse Contractors Ltd) in the first instance stripped the topsoil in spits from across the site to a level where natural geology was exposed. This was followed by further mechanical ground reduction comprising a cut and fill exercise to landscape the reservoir and surrounding area. Both elements of work were monitored and the extent of the exposed archaeological remains defined and recorded.
- 3.1.3 The watching brief took place during clement weather. Topsoil and subsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. All mechanical excavation was carried out under constant supervision of the archaeologist in attendance.
- 3.1.4 All recording was undertaken according to standard ASE practice. Contexts were described on standard *pro-forma* recording sheets used by ASE, complimented by a hand drawn record to appropriate scales and a digital photographic record comprising context shots and more general site images.
- 3.1.5 The linear feature that was uncovered was hand-excavated in 3 sondages (a representative sample of 5-10%) and was recorded and levelled with respect to Ordnance Survey datum.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.2.1 No fieldwork constraints were encountered.

#### 3.3 The Site Archive

- 3.3.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	9
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	1 sheet
Photographs	82 (digital)
Registered finds	1

Table 1: Quantification of site archive



## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Open area monitored from 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014

- 4.1.1 The sequence of the monitored area consisted of natural clay [003] overlain by subsoil [002] and topsoil [001].
- 4.1.2 A single archaeological feature was identified and recorded in three 1m wide hand-excavated sondages: [004], [006] and [008]. Linear in plan it ran NW–SE across the central part of the monitored area and was approximately 61m in length and 0.35m in width.
- 4.1.3 Averaging a depth of 0.10m the linear had a square-shaped profile and was cut into the natural geology [003] with a diffuse interface. Occurring in an area with frequent field drains (running on W-E alignments) it was interpreted as a post-medieval gully. A single copper alloy button of probable 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century date was recovered from the gully fill [005] of the northernmost sondage.

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Topsoil	-	-	0.18m
002	Layer	Subsoil	-	-	0.16m
003	Layer	Natural clay	-	-	-
004	Cut	Cut of gully	61m (visible)	0.37m	-
005	Fill	Single fill of gully slot [004]	61m (visible)	0.37m	0.11m
006	Cut	Cut of gully	61m (visible)	0.32m	-
007	Fill	Single fill of gully slot [006]	61m (visible)	0.32m	0.10m
008	Cut	Cut of gully	61m (visible)	0.35m	-
009	Fill	Single fill of gully slot [008]	61m (visible)	0.35m	0.07m

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

## **5.0 THE FINDS**

### **5.1 Summary**

- 5.1.1 A single copper alloy composite button was recovered from context [005] weighing 4.2g. The button measures 23mm in diameter and is formed from two pieces with a separate embedded wire loop, now missing. The button is highly corroded on the surface, the reverse is white metal coated. A 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date is probable.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Archaeological features and consideration of research aims**

- 6.1.1 Only one archaeological feature; a gully of probable post-medieval date was recorded during the watching brief.
- 6.1.2 The basic aims of the watching brief were achieved in that the archaeological remains exposed during groundworks (including artefacts) were recorded and interpreted.
- 6.1.3 No evidence of Iron Age and/or early Roman settlement like that identified at Mount Scipett was found, nor could the watching brief provide any evidence for medieval or early post-medieval agriculture or rural farmsteads.
- 6.1.4 The watching brief took place during clement weather and adequate time was given by the contractor to the archaeologist to adequately monitor the groundworks and to excavate and record the single identified feature.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank White Horse Contractors Ltd for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project and Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer at Berkshire Archaeology, for his guidance and monitoring. The watching brief was directed by John Hirst with Simon Stevens providing secondary supervisory cover. The author would like to thank all archaeologists who worked on the excavations. Justin Russell produced the figures for this report; Paul Mason project managed the excavations and Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift project managed the post-excavation process.

### HER Summary

Site Code	NFM14				
Identification Name and Address	Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead				
County, District &/or Borough	Berkshire, Maidenhead				
OS Grid Refs.	NGR: 48864 17675 (centred)				
Geology	Clay, silt and sand of the London Clay Formation				
Arch. South-East Project Number	6794				
Type of Fieldwork			Watching Brief		
Type of Site	Green Field				
Dates of Fieldwork			WB. 18/6/14 to 25/6/14		
Sponsor/Client	White Horse Contractors Ltd				
Project Manager	Paul Mason				
Project Supervisor	John Hirst				
Period Summary					
			PM		
<p>Summary</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by White Horse Contractors Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks on land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire. The work comprised monitoring topsoil and subsoil stripping across site down to natural geology, prior to a cut and fill exercise to landscape a reservoir and surrounding area. A single gully of probable post-medieval date was observed.</i></p>					

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**OASIS ID: archaeol6-184063**

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**Project details**

Project name	Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by White Horse Contractors Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks on land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire. The work comprised monitoring topsoil and subsoil stripping across site down to natural geology, prior to a cut and fill exercise to landscape a reservoir and surrounding area. A single gully of probable post-medieval date was observed.
Project dates	Start: 18-06-2014 End: 25-06-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	GULLY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BUTTON Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

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**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead
Postcode	SL6 3LH
Study area	12.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	SU 8864 7675 51.4822615534 -0.723350081063 51 28 56 N 000 43 24 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 29.54m Max: 30.21m

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**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Berkshire Archaeology
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Paul Mason
Project supervisor	John Hirst
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	White Horse Contractors Ltd

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**Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient	Slough Museum
Physical Contents	"Metal"
Digital Archive recipient	Slough Museum
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Slough Museum
Paper Contents	"Metal"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Correspondence","Drawing","Map","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Unpublished Text"

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Title Archaeological Watching Brief Report, Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane,  
Maidenhead, Berkshire

Author(s)/Editor(s) Hirst, J

Other bibliographic details ASE Report No: 2014240

Date 2014

Issuer or publisher ASE

Place of issue or publication Portslade

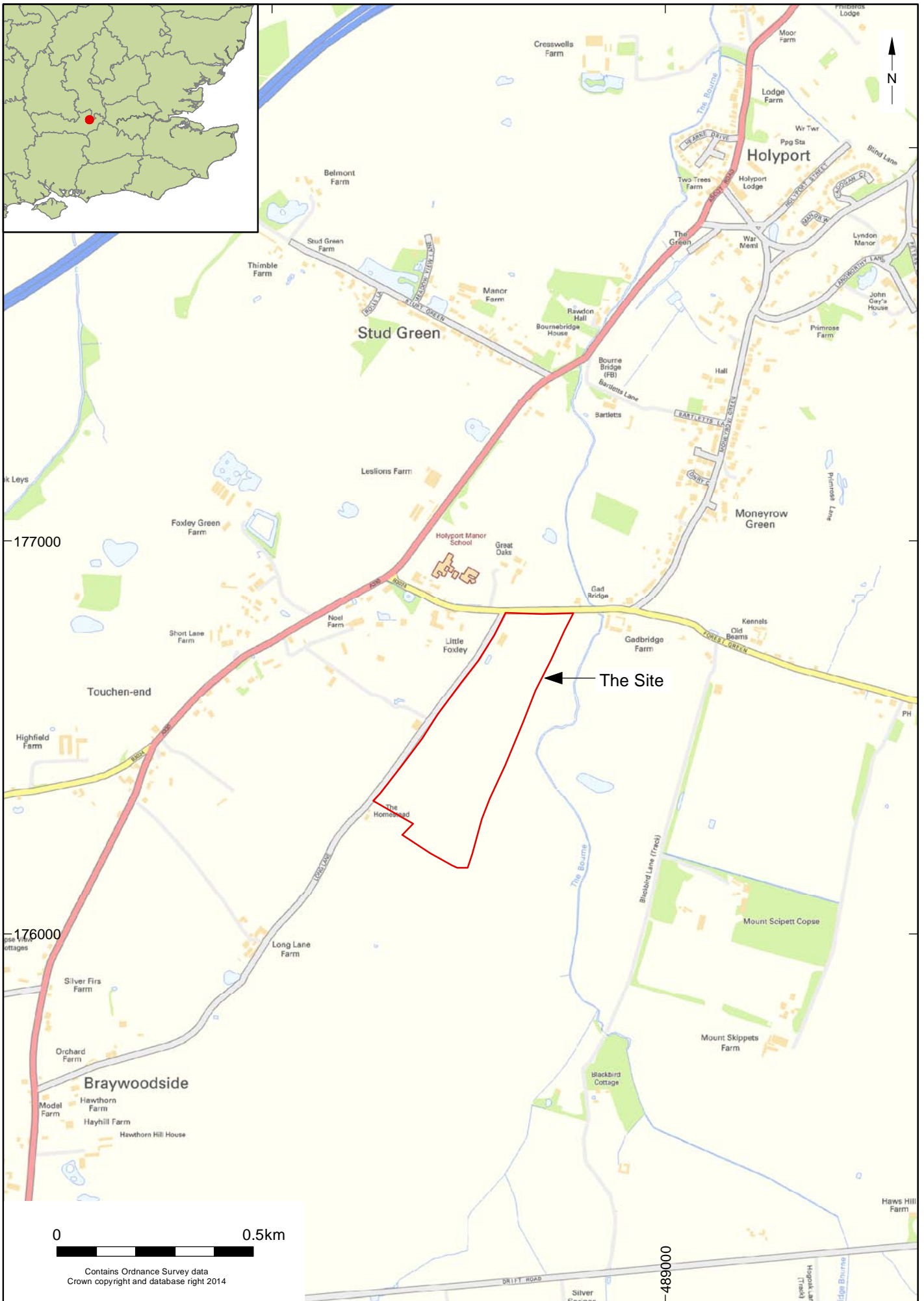
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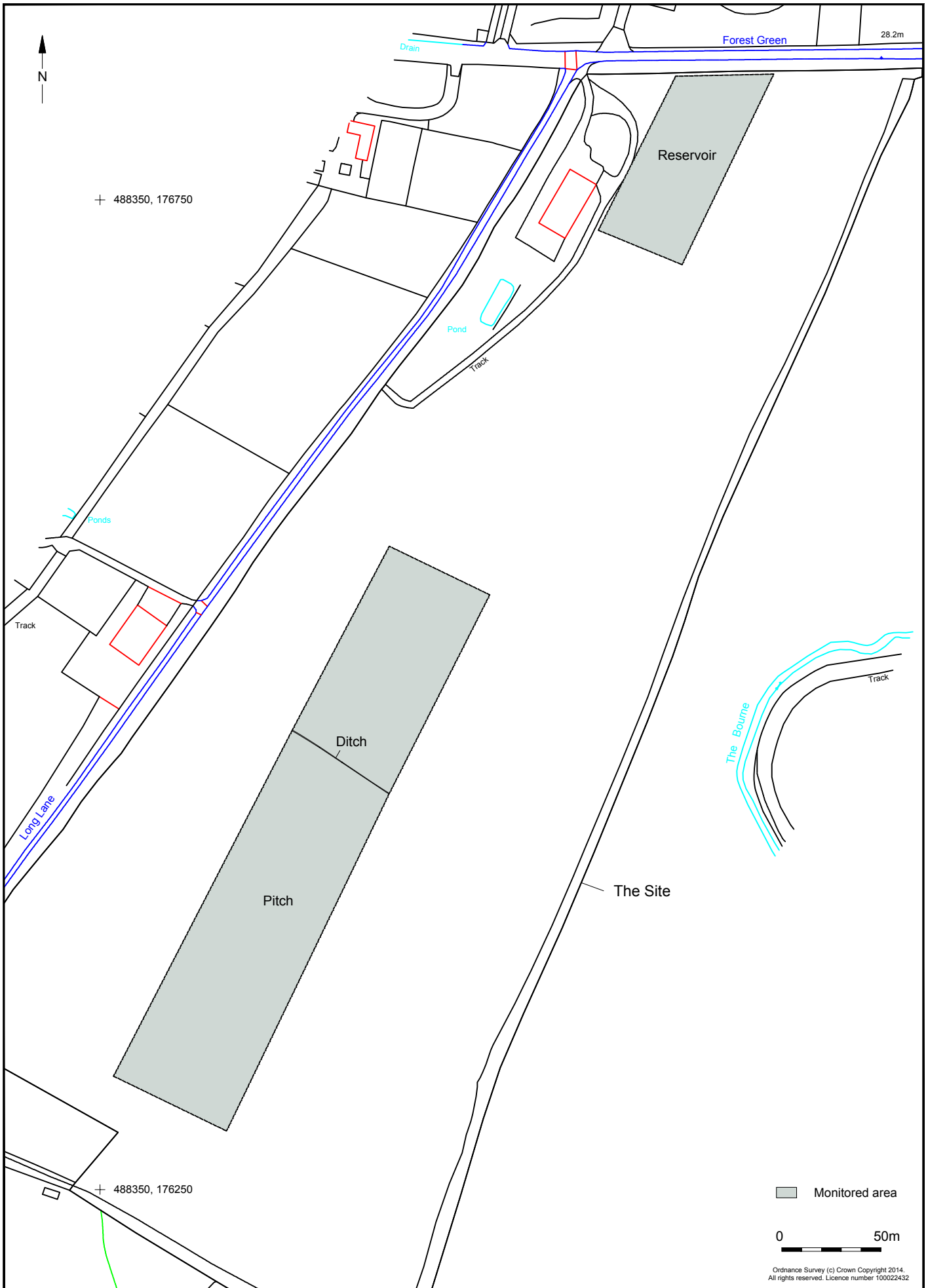
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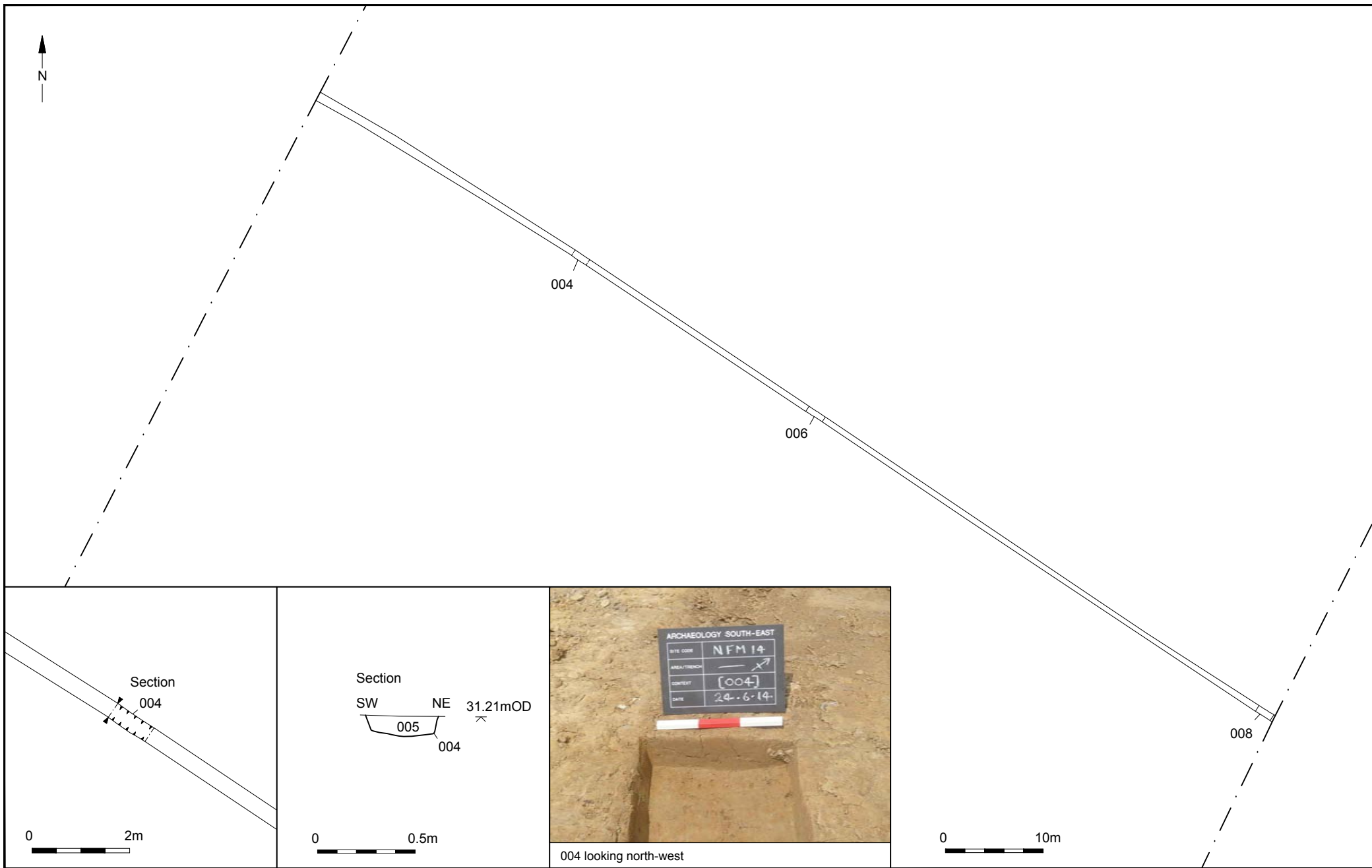


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© Archaeology South-East		Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 6794	July 2014	Site location	
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© Archaeology South-East		Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 6794	July 2014	Plan of monitored areas	
Report Ref: 2014240	Drawn by: JLR		



© Archaeology South-East		Land at Noel Farm, Long Lane, Maidenhead	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 6794	July 2014	Plan, section and photograph of ditch	
Report Ref: 2014240	Drawn by: JLR		

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