

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**72 High Street, Maidenhead,
Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: 72HSM20/208

(SU 8880 8124)

**70-72 High Street,
Maidenhead, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Valore Capital Partners**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code 72HSM 20/208

April 2022

Summary

Site name: 72 High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8880 8124

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th January-11th April 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Kyle Beaverstock, David Sanchez, Andy Taylor

Site code: 72HSM 20/208

Area of site: c.770 sq m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed no additional deposits of archaeological interest to add to the two intercutting medieval pits identified during the previous evaluation. The last traces of the same medieval pits were observed.

Monuments identified: Medieval pits.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate local museum willing to accept archive material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 20.04.22
	Steve Preston ✓ 20.04.22

72 High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor

Report 20/208b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 72 High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8880 8124) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ben Nicholas, of Valore Capital Partners, 25 Eccleston Place, Belgravia, London, SW1W 9NF.

Planning permission (19/00942/FULL) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the extension to the rear of the existing retail units and conversion and extension of the upper floors for residential use. The consent is subject to a condition (10) relating to archaeology. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the Borough Councils policies on archaeology.

An evaluation having revealed the presence of two medieval features, this watching brief was required to satisfy the condition. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Matt Saywood, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverstock, David Sanchez and Andy Taylor between 7th January and 11th April 2022 and the site code is 72HSM 20/208.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate local museum willing to accept archive material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

Maidenhead is located on the south-western bank of the River Thames in eastern Berkshire (Fig. 1). The site itself is in the town centre, between High Street to the south and West Street to the north with retail units to the east and west (Fig. 2). The southern half of the site facing High Street comprises retail units with a yard area occupying roughly the northern half of the properties. The site lies at a height of *c.*28.50m above Ordnance Datum at West Street with plot 70 showing a gentle slope from the street towards the back of the retail units. Plot 72 shows a relatively flat concrete slab from West Street, following the demolition of an existing building in this area, with a lower patio 0.95m below the ground level of the rest of the yard. The underlying geology is mapped as sand and gravel (Taplow Gravel Member) (BGS 2005) which was observed on the site.

Archaeological background

The general archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area (Ford 1987; Gates 1975; Dils 2013). Recent discoveries of early Saxon structures at Braywick Leisure Centre to the south with additional Bronze Age ring ditches discovered during follow-up fieldwork indicated the potential of the environs of the proposal site (Colyer 2019).

More specific potential comes from the location of the site within the town centre. Maidenhead has late Saxon origins but developed further once a new crossing of the Thames was made (Astill 1978). The pre-modern topography of Maidenhead is complex as it lies on the lower terrace of the Thames with elements of a braided river system, now alluviated with several channels having areas of higher ground in between. These islands of higher, drier land were favoured for initial settlement with some land reclamation of the lower, wetter, land. The latter riparian locations can, if deposits become waterlogged, provide good preservation of organic remains.

Recent investigations 100m to the west at numbers 100-102 High Street recovered a single residual sherd of medieval pottery. However, the ground was found to have been heavily disturbed during the late post-medieval or modern periods with *in situ* natural geology being encountered at depths of over 2m below modern floor level (Beaverstock 2020).

An archaeological evaluation carried out on the site itself (Sanchez 2021) revealed a series of made ground and levelling deposits of modern date as evidence of previous developments of the site. The potential archaeological horizon within the site seems to have been truncated in large areas of plot 70 and especially plot 72 though one of the trenches revealed an area of relatively untouched natural geology where two intercutting features of medieval date were recorded. As a result, this watching brief was required to record any further such deposits that might be disturbed or destroyed by the works.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was expected to involve monitoring of foundation trench digging and other intrusive groundworks such as ground levelling or reduction, and the excavation of service trenches.

Results

Ground Reduction ((Figs 3 and 4; Pls. 1 and 2)

Areas of ground reduction were observed on the site once a concrete slab had been broken out and removed. This was dug down to approximately 1m below ground level and consisted of 0.20m of the concrete slab overlying 0.80m of made ground, comprising demolition rubble made up of sand and clay with brick and tile, 20th century pottery and plastics.

With most of the area truncated by earlier development, only one area of natural geology was exposed, where Trench 1b had been located. This trench had identified two intercutting pits and the ground reduction exposed the remainder of this feature. However, there was only a very small fraction of the bases of these features remaining and no further finds were recovered.

Finds

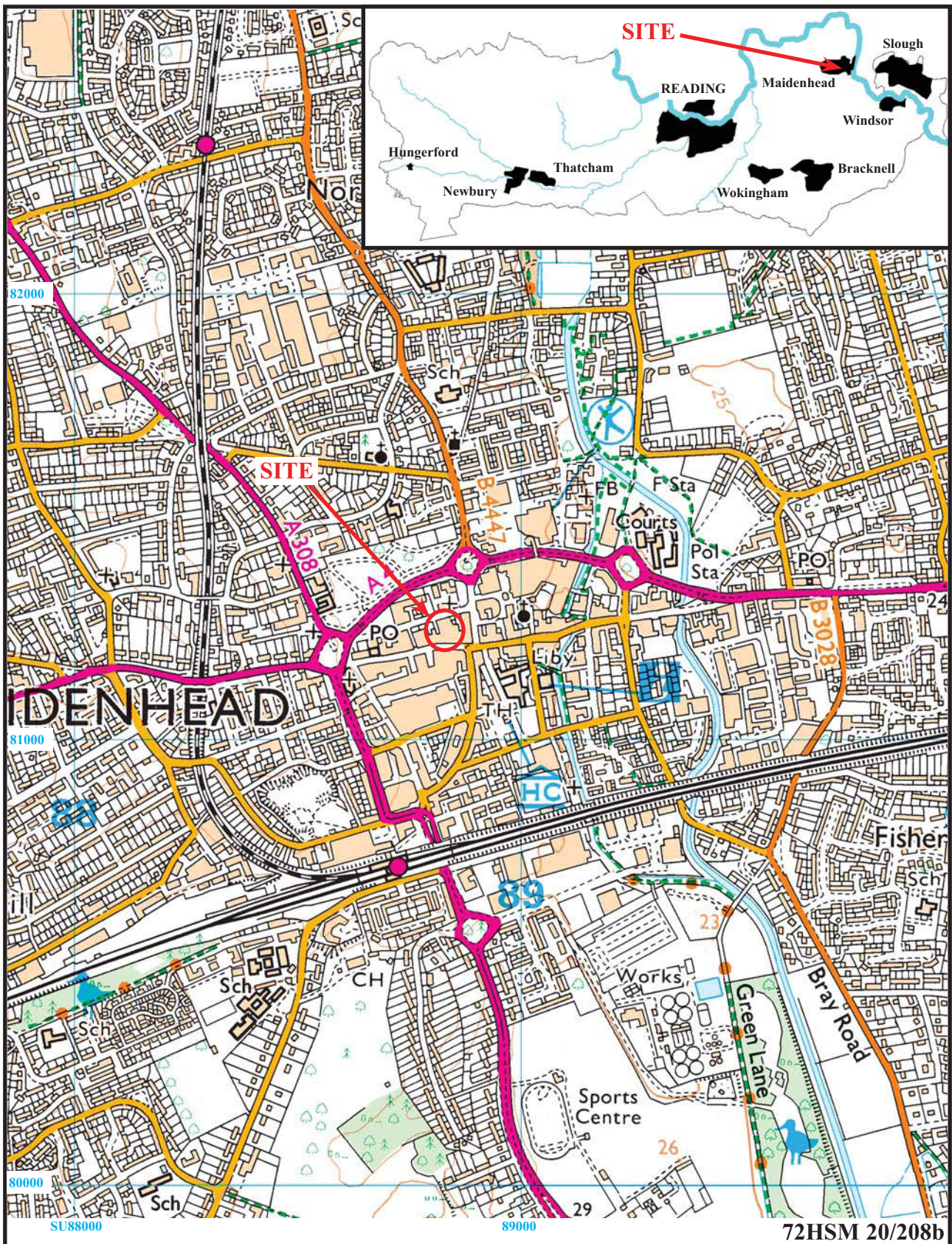
No further finds of archaeological interest were recovered; clearly modern finds were not retained.

Conclusion

The watching brief was carried out successfully and as intended. The earlier evaluation had identified two intercutting medieval pits and the full extent of this feature was revealed in the ground reduction, although no further archaeological deposits or finds were identified during the watching brief.

References

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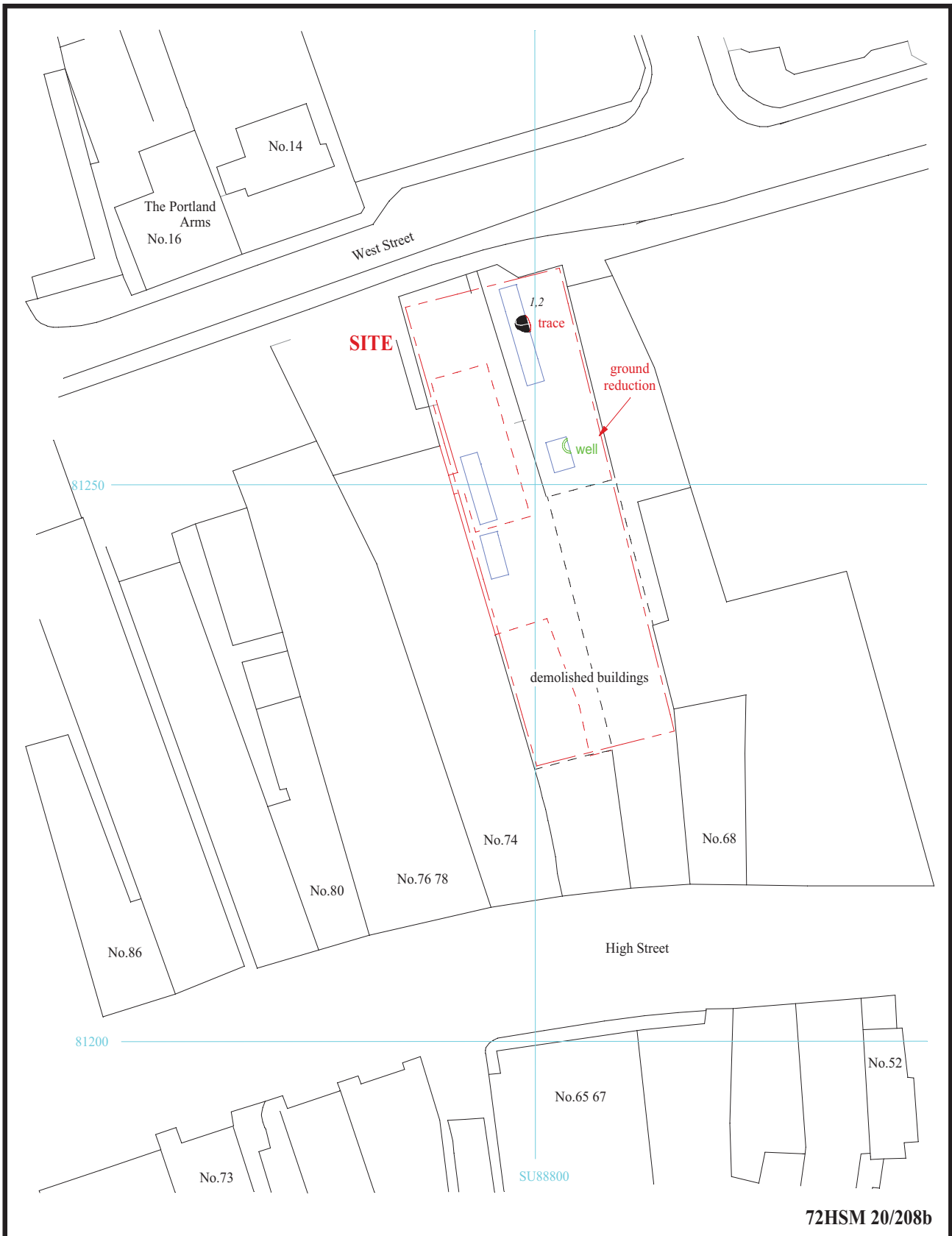
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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



S _____ S 28.50m aOD

Concrete

Made Ground

Gravel Natural Geology



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Figure 4. Representative Section

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Plate 1. Ground Reduction, looking North, Scale: 0.5m.



Plate 2. Ground Reduction, looking South, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

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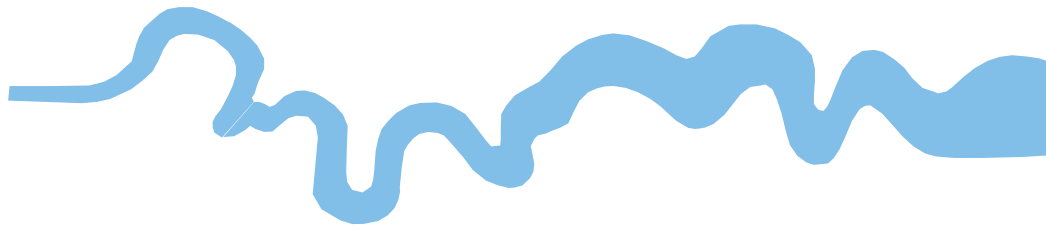
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Plates 1 and 2.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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