

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Water Pressure Manager, St Mary's Butts,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Tim Dawson**

**Site Code: SMB10/110**

**(SU 71398 73360)**

# **Water Pressure Manager, St Mary's Butts, Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Thames Water Utilities Ltd**

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code SMB 10/110

**April 2011**

## Summary

**Site name:** Water Pressure Manager, St Mary's Butts, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 71398 73360

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 2nd November - 8th December 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Susan Colley

**Site code:** SMB 10/110

**Area of site:** 16.25 sq m

**Summary of results:** No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 04.04.11
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# **Water Pressure Manager, St Mary's Butts, Reading, Berkshire**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Tim Dawson

**Report 10/110**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Mary's Butts, Reading, Berkshire (SU 71398 73360) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Claire Hallybone, Thames Water Utilities Ltd, Maple Lodge, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 9SQ.

A replacement sewer trench was proposed to be dug at the southern end of St Mary's Butts, Reading. Due to the archaeologically sensitive location of the proposed trench the project required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief as required by the Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation (Water Industry Act 1991). The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Colley and Alison Meakes, on 2nd November and 8th December 2010 and the site code is SMB 10/110.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

### **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located at the southern end of St Mary's Butts, north of the junction with Castle Street, Gun Street and Bridge Street. This is the centre of the historic core of Reading with St Mary's Church lying northeast of the site itself (Fig. 2). The area excavated is currently occupied by the road and a traffic island and slopes gently downhill to the south. The underlying geology is described as Valley Gravel (BGS 1946) though this was not seen on site. The site is at a height of c.41.9m above Ordnance Datum.

### **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic core of Reading where it lies on what is thought to be one of the original medieval streets (Astill 1978). The town has late Saxon origins with the original Saxon town located somewhere close to St Mary's Church, which lies just to the northeast of the site. However, few deposits of Saxon date have yet been revealed. The site lies within the boundary of the medieval and later town but with the southern portion of the site possibly extending into the former floodplain of the Holy Brook where water management and/or land reclamation deposits are present. Evaluation of sites just to



the south east revealed medieval and post-medieval occupation and reclamation deposits (Ford 2003; Pine 2010) with a medieval tile hearth found on the corner of Bridge Street and Gun Street (Moore 2004).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and/or record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular the digging of the new trench.

The trench was excavated using a mini-digger with toothed bucket to a depth of *c.*1.50m. These groundworks and the resulting spoil heaps were monitored for finds and features of archaeological interest.

## **Results**

The trench was dug initially with a width of 2.50m, a length of 2.00m and a depth of 1.30m though these were later extended to a length of 6.50m and depth of 1.50m. The stratigraphy exposed (Fig. 4) consisted of 0.26m of Tarmac overlying 0.51m of hardcore mixed with soil which, in turn, overlaid a 0.06m-thick band of fragmented Tarmac and another layer, 0.37m thick, of hardcore mixed with soil. Towards the base of the trench a 0.06m-thick layer of gravel was visible on top of a layer of clay which was excavated into by 0.04m and covered the base of the trench.

Many services, including water, electricity and gas, were exposed during the course of the excavations (Pl. 1), in addition to a modern brick culvert that was uncovered in the trench's lower extents at its northern end (Pl. 2). No archaeological features or finds were observed.

## **Finds**

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the site being located in the historic core of Reading and in the centre of what is possibly one of the original medieval streets, no finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered. The deposits observed only comprised modern service trenches and modern made ground.

## References

Astill, G G, 1978, *Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Publ 2  
Reading

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1 Inch Series, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth

Ford, S, 2003, Rear of 7-9 Gun Street, Reading, Berkshire an archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley  
Archaeological Services report 03/115, Reading

Moore, H 2004, Land to the rear of 1,2 and 3 Gun Street, Reading, Berkshire an archaeological evaluation,  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/95, Reading

Pine J, 2010, Rear of 10-11 Gun Street, Reading, Berkshire an archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley  
Archaeological Services report 09/72, Reading





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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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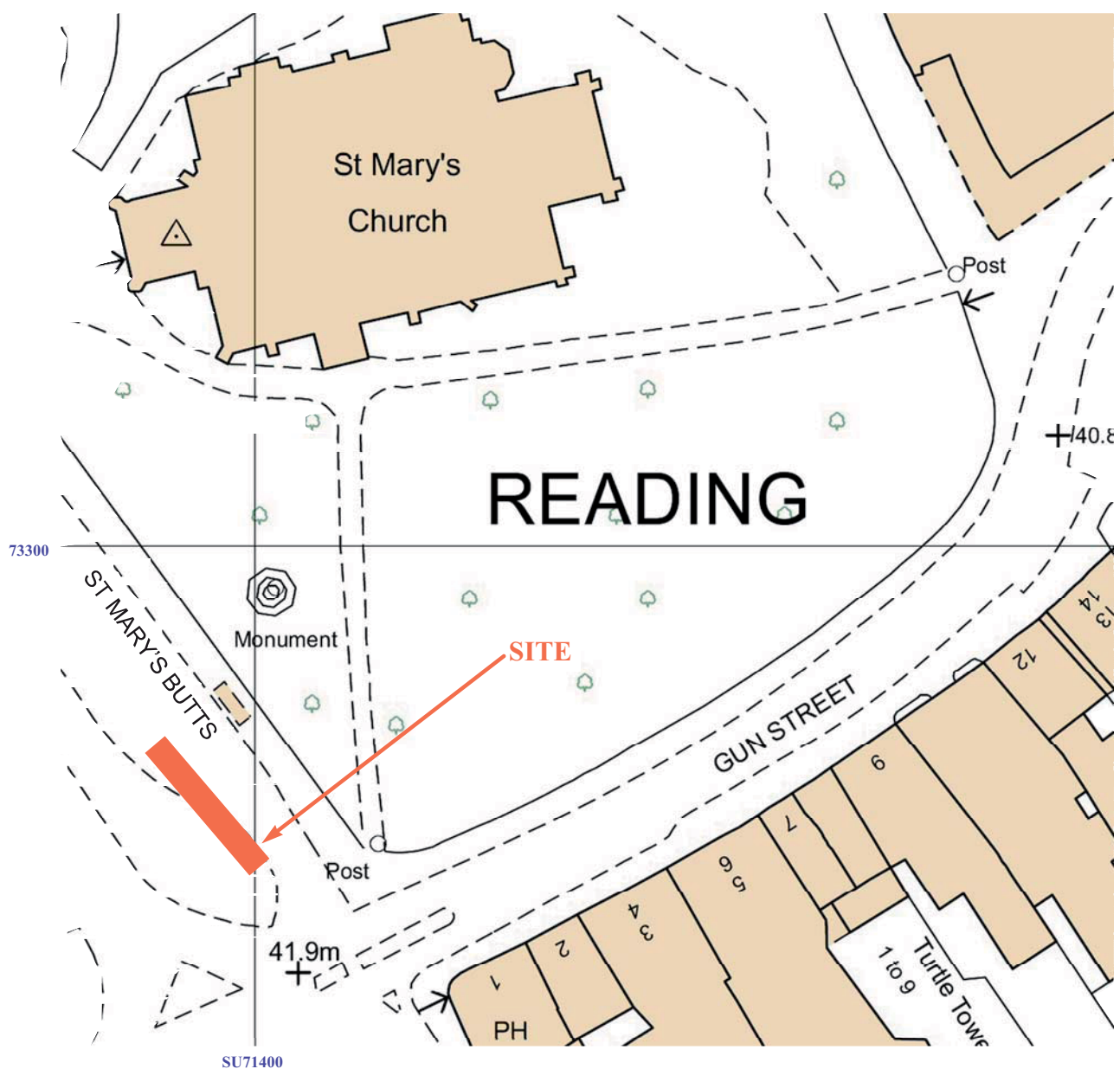
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Figure 2. Location of site within Reading.

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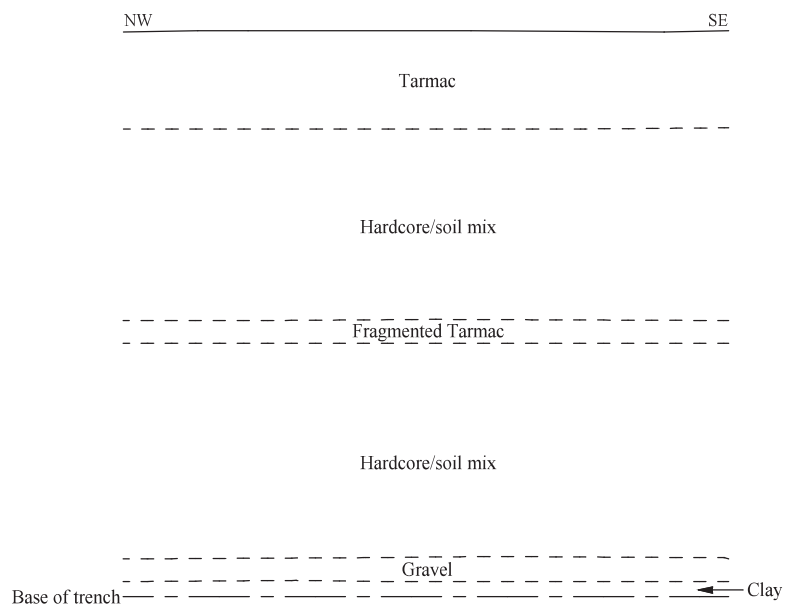
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Figure 3. Location of site on St Mary's Butts.

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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. General view of the stratigraphy with services, looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. The northern end of the trench, looking west, showing the brick culvert, Scale: 2m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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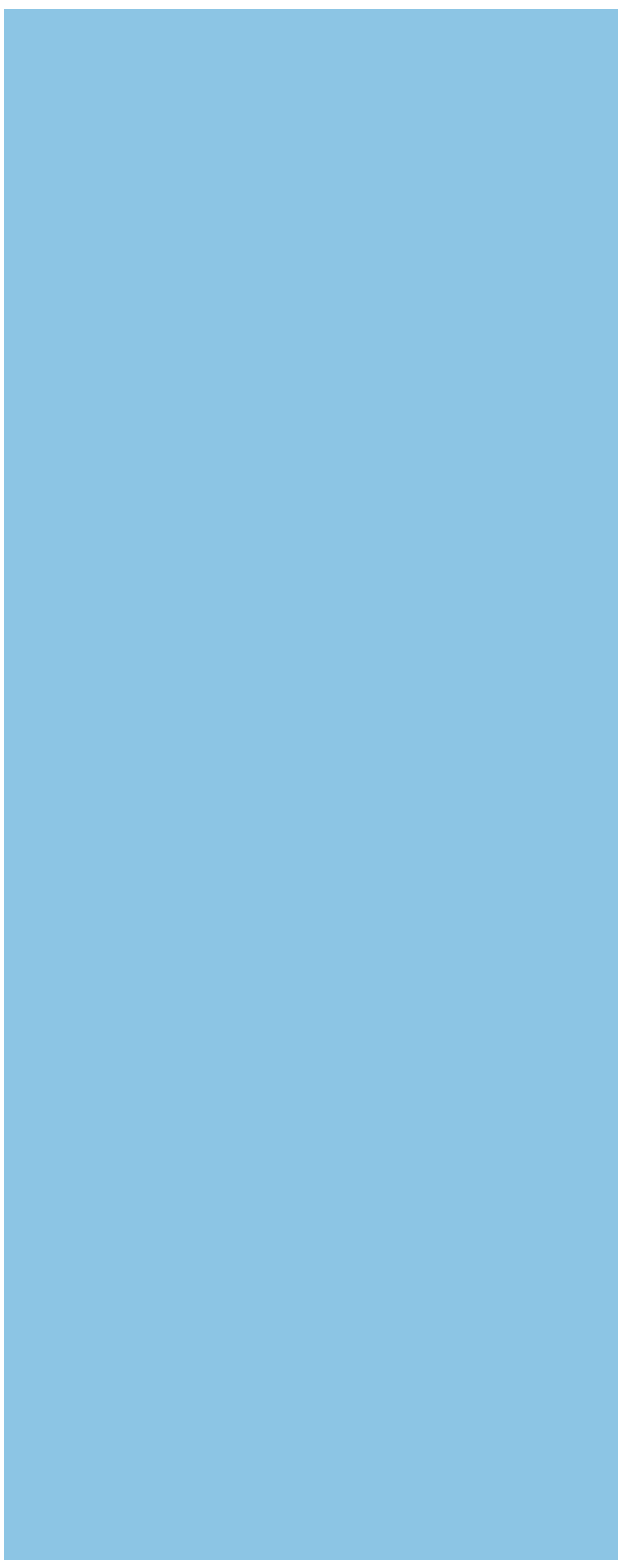
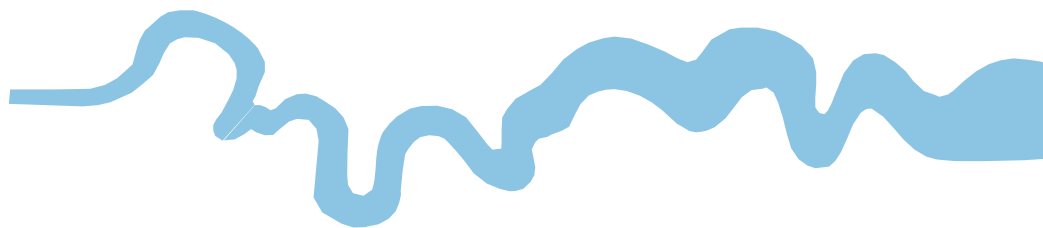
## TIME CHART

### Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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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