

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Unit 24, Suttons Business Park, London Road,
Reading, Berkshire 2011**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Jamie Lewis

Site Code: SLR11/58

(SU 7390 7360)

**Unit 24 Suttons Business Park, London Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for

Standard Life Assurance Ltd

by James Lewis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code SLR 11/58

July 2011

Summary

Site name: Unit 24, Suttons Business Park, London Road, Reading, Berkshire.

Grid reference: SU 7390 7360

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 22nd-29th June

Project manager: James Lewis

Site supervisor: James Lewis

Site code: SLR 11/58

Area of site: 4.3ha

Summary of results: Despite obvious truncation of the archaeologically relevant horizon corresponding with the footprint of the former office building on the site, other areas were largely unaffected. A number of possible archaeological features were investigated, most of which produced dating evidence indicating that they were late post-medieval or modern in date. However, no deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest were recorded and the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 04.01.11

Unit 24, Suttons Business Park, London Road, Reading, Berkshire, 2011 An Archaeological Evaluation

by James Lewis

Report 11/58

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Unit 24, Suttons Business Park, London Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7390 7360) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Colin Hall, Development Manager, Standard Life Investments, 1 George Street, Edinburgh.

Planning permission (app F/2011/0542) has been sought from Wokingham Borough Council to redevelop the site as a distribution centre. Due to the location of the proposed site within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley and the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits, the draft consent included a condition (19) relating to archaeology. This allowed for a programme of archaeological works to be carried out to investigate the archaeological potential of the site and if necessary put in place appropriate mitigation one consent was gained.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and Wokingham Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary Neale, Archaeological Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Lewis, Andy Muddin and Martha Buczek from the 22nd to the 29th of June and the site code is SLR 11/58. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a museum able and willing to accept the archive.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within Suttons Business Park on the eastern side of Reading but within Wokingham Borough Councils administrative area (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by the A4 (London Road) to the south, A3290 to the west and Suttons Park Avenue to the north. The site lies on the floor of the Thames Valley at a height of 40m. The underlying geology is depicted as Valley Gravel (BGS 1946) but Wymer (1968, fig 47) suggests that the gravel is a dry valley erosion deposit of reworked Taplow terrace.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the archeologically rich area of the Thames Valley with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded in the area (Ford 1987; Gates 1975; Lobb and Rose 1996). In particular, excavations on the site of the former Earley Power Station to the northeast (now Thames Valley Park) examined a Late Iron Age/Roman enclosure complex and both Early Bronze Age (Beaker) burial and Mesolithic flint work were also recovered (Barnes et al 1997). Construction of the Great Western Railway in the 19th century and the digging of a nearby hole for ballast led to the discovery of an Early Saxon inhumation cemetery located approximately 150m to the north west. Other finds nearby include a Roman coin and Mesolithic flint tools dredged from the Thames.

The site was farmland up until the mid 19th century when parts of the site became the trial grounds for Suttons Seeds, as the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows. The eastern part of the site lies within parts of a large field whereas the western portion includes a plot subdivided by paths, with small buildings present. The current boundaries of the site are not defined (Fig. 7). This pattern continues with minor changes through the 20th century with the western parts of the site also becoming a sports complex by 1956 (Fig. 8). By 1974 the recently demolished office building had been constructed as had the main roundabout forming the south west side of the site, but with the other boundaries still not yet defined.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims were

- a) To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
- b) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- c) To determine if any deposits of Saxon date are present, perhaps reflecting the settlement component relating to the nearby Saxon cemetery.
- d) To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.

Twenty four trenches measuring 25m in length were to be excavated targeted at the footprints of the new development in those areas which have not been disturbed by previous development. A machine fitted with a toothless bucket was used to excavate down to the natural geology or until archaeological deposits were encountered. All archaeological deposits and features were to be hand cleaned, sectioned and recorded as a

minimum requirement. A contingency of 500m of trenching was available should this be required to clarify findings made in the initial evaluation.

Results

A total of 25 trenches were eventually excavated and these measured between 14.1m and 36m in length. All trenches were 1.8m wide. The presence of services, conserved trees and working space necessitated that the length of a number of the trenches was reduced. However, other trenches were extended in order to conserve the total trench length. Due to the presence of drains and electrical services, trench 12 was relocated and divided into two trenches (12 and 25). This was done with the agreement of the Ms Mary Neale, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trenches 2-5, 8-10, 12-14, 16, 17, 19, 20 , 22 and 25

These trenches were devoid of any deposits of archaeological interest or otherwise. The trenches are detailed in Appendix 1. The trenches described below are those containing features which were potentially of archaeological interest.

Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned SW - NE and measured 23.4m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of turf/topsoil, 0.2m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.15m thick. Below this was the gravel natural geology. Extending beyond the southern side of the trench was single pit or posthole (5). This measured at least 0.3m in diameter and 0.15m deep. It contained dark brown grey sandy silt (55) without inclusions. It produced no dating evidence.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned NW - SE and measured 24.4m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of a gravel surface, 0.45m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.23m thick. Below this was gravel natural geology. An area of modern disturbance was present towards the north western end of the trench. At the south eastern end of the site was a shallow gully (11) which was 0.7m wide and 0.08m deep. It contained loose brown silty clay (62) and a small amount of brick inclusions.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned E - W and measured 25.3m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.23m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.2m thick. Below this was gravel natural geology. A gully (10) which terminated in the trench was located towards the western end of the trench. It was 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep. It contained compact brown silty clay (61), red brick and a single pipe stem inclusions.

Trench 11 (Pl. 2)

Trench 11 was aligned E- W and measured 24.7m long and 0.75m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of a gravel surface 0.3m thick, overlying old topsoil, 0.15m thick, which in turn overlay subsoil, 0.25m thick. Below this was gravel natural geology. At the eastern end of the trench was a shallow gully (9). This was 0.9m wide and 0.23m deep. It contained compact brown silty clay (60) with a very small amount of post-medieval pottery. Three modern service trenches were also recorded.

Trench 15 (Pls 3 and 4)

Trench 15 was aligned NW - SE and measured 18.1m long and 0.31m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.31m thick which directly overlay gravel natural geology. Four gullies (3, 4, 7 and 8) parallel to each other were found in this trench. They all contained firm dark brown grey sandy silt (56-59). Gully 3 was 0.3m wide and 0.06m deep but contained no dating evidence. Gully 4 was 0.4m wide and 0.06m deep and terminated at its north end. It contained late post-medieval pottery. Gully 7 was 0.55m wide and 0.16m deep and contained late post-medieval pottery. Gully 8 was 0.5m wide and 0.11m deep and contained late post-medieval pottery.

Trench 18

Trench 18 was aligned NW - SE and measured 27.2m long and 0.29m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.29m thick which overlay the gravel natural geology. The trench contained a gully (12) which was 0.9m wide and 0.08m deep and contained firm, dark brown grey sandy silt (63) with brick inclusions.

Trench 21

Trench 21 was aligned NE- SW and measured 22.1m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.25m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.1m thick. Below this was gravel natural geology. The trench

contained a gully (2). This measured 1.1m wide and 0.22m deep. It contained compact brown silty clay (53) and brick inclusions. This gully is likely to be the same as that in nearby trench 23 (gully 1) and both appear to be the same as a field boundary depicted on the historic Ordnance Survey maps (Fig. 7).

Trench 23 (Pl. 5)

Trench 23 was aligned NE- SW and measured 18.3m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.25m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.1m thick. Below this was gravel natural geology. It contained a gully (1) which was 1m wide and 0.25m deep. It contained compact dark brown sandy silt (52) with occasional flint inclusions with a very small amount of post-medieval pottery. This gully is likely to be the same as that in nearby trench 21 (gully 2).

Trench 24

Trench 24 was aligned NW - SE and measured 24.5m long and 0.48m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil, 0.35m thick which overlay subsoil, 0.13m thick and below this was gravel natural geology. A single gully (6) was revealed at the south eastern end of the trench. It was 0.5m wide but only 0.03m deep. It contained loose brown sandy clay (54) with frequent brick and mortar inclusions.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered. Material of late 19th to 20th century date was retained on site.

Conclusion

All the excavated archaeological deposits were of later Post-medieval or modern date from the 19th or 20th centuries and two features are confidently identified as being a field boundary as mapped in the 19th century. No features nor artefacts were dated earlier than this. The post-medieval features found were all gullies and it is possible that they were mostly associated with the former use of the site as Suttons Seeds trial grounds. However, their presence suggests that the site as a whole has not been extensively truncated (except for the footprint of the recently demolished building) and that the complete lack of earlier archaeological deposits or artefacts suggests that this is a genuine absence rather than a product of later truncation. The results of the evaluation indicate that the archaeological potential of the site is very low.

References

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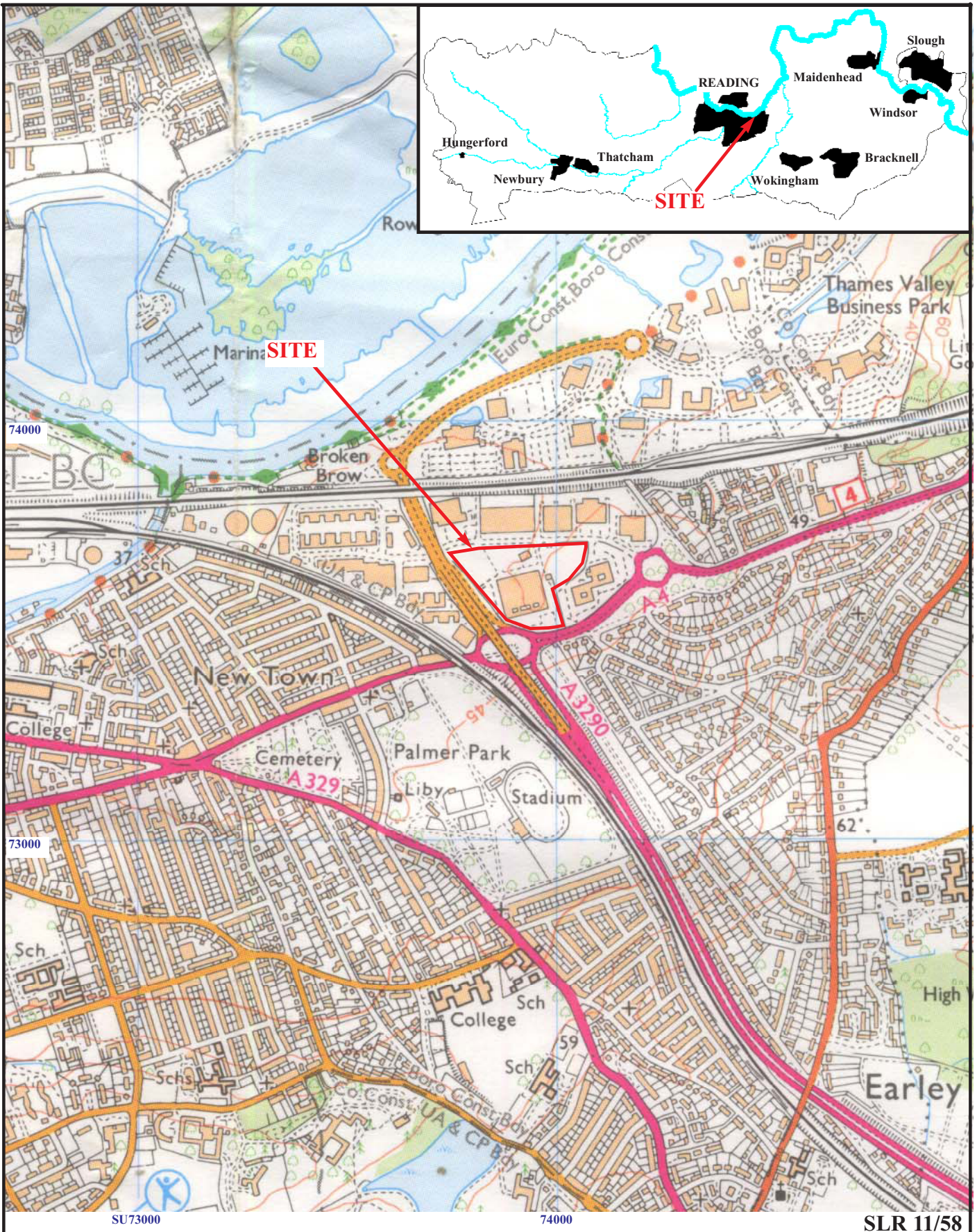
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at South or West end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	23.4	1.8	0.35	0-0.2m topsoil; 0.2-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology (gravel). Feature 5. [Plate 1]
2	24.0	1.8	0.4	0-0.2m topsoil; 0.2m+ natural geology (gravel).
3	23.3	1.8	0.5	0-0.4m topsoil; 0.4-0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services.
4	23.8	1.8	0.48	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern service
5	24.0	1.8	0.48	0-0.3m type one gravel, 0.3-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology (gravel).
6	24.4	1.8	0.68	0-0.45m type one gravel, 0.45-0.68m made ground; 0.68m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern disturbance at NW end. Feature 11.
7	25.3	1.8	0.43	0-0.23m type one gravel, 0.23-0.43m made ground, 0.43m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern service. Feature 10.
8	25.8	1.8	0.65	0-0.5m type one gravel, 0.5-0.65m made ground, 0.65m+ natural geology (gravel).
9	25.7	1.8	0.4	0-0.05m type one gravel, 0.05-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.40m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services.
10	25.6	1.8	0.7	0-0.1m type one gravel, 0.1-0.55m topsoil; 0.55-0.7m subsoil 0.7m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services/bedding trenches.
11	24.7	1.8	0.75	0-0.3m type one gravel, 0.3-0.45m topsoil; 0.45m-0.7m Subsoil; 0.7m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services. Feature 9. [Plate 2]
12	14.1	1.8	0.52	0-0.48m type one gravel, 0.48m+ natural geology (gravel).
13	26.8	1.8	0.59	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.56m subsoil; 0.56m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services.
14	36.5	1.8	0.26	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern services.
15	18.1	1.8	0.31	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31m+ natural geology (gravel). Features 3, 4, 7 and 8. [Plates 3 and 4]
16	33.0	1.8	0.39	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.39m subsoil; 0.39m+ natural geology (gravel). Modern service.
17	22.2	1.8	0.3	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3m+ natural geology (gravel).
18	27.2	1.8	0.29	0-0.29m topsoil; 0.29m+ natural geology (gravel). Feature 12.
19	32.0	1.8	0.39	0-0.33m topsoil; 0.33-0.39m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology (gravel).
20	24.0	1.8	0.35	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m+ natural geology (gravel).
21	22.1	1.8	0.35	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology (gravel). Feature 2.
22	23.4	1.8	0.4	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ natural geology (gravel).
23	18.3	1.8	0.35	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology (gravel). Feature 1. [Plate 5]
24	24.5	1.8	0.48	0-0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology (gravel). Feature 6.
25	15.0	1.8	0.53	0-0.27m type one gravel, 0.27-0.51m made ground, 0.51m+ natural geology (gravel).

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Cut	Fill (s)	Trench	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	52	23	Gully	Post-medieval	Pottery
2	53	21	Gully	Post-medieval	Brick and tile
3	56	15	Gully	Unknown	
4	57	15	Gully Terminus	Post-medieval	Pottery
5	55	1	Posthole/pit	Unknown	
6	54	24	Shallow ditch	Post-medieval	Pottery
7	58	15	Gully	Post-medieval	Pottery
8	59	15	Gully	Post-medieval	Pottery
9	60	11	Gully	Post-medieval	Pottery
10	61	7	Gully Terminus	Post-medieval	Clay pipe stem and brick
11	62	6	Gully	Post-medieval	Brick and tile
12	63	18	Gully	Post-medieval	Brick and tile

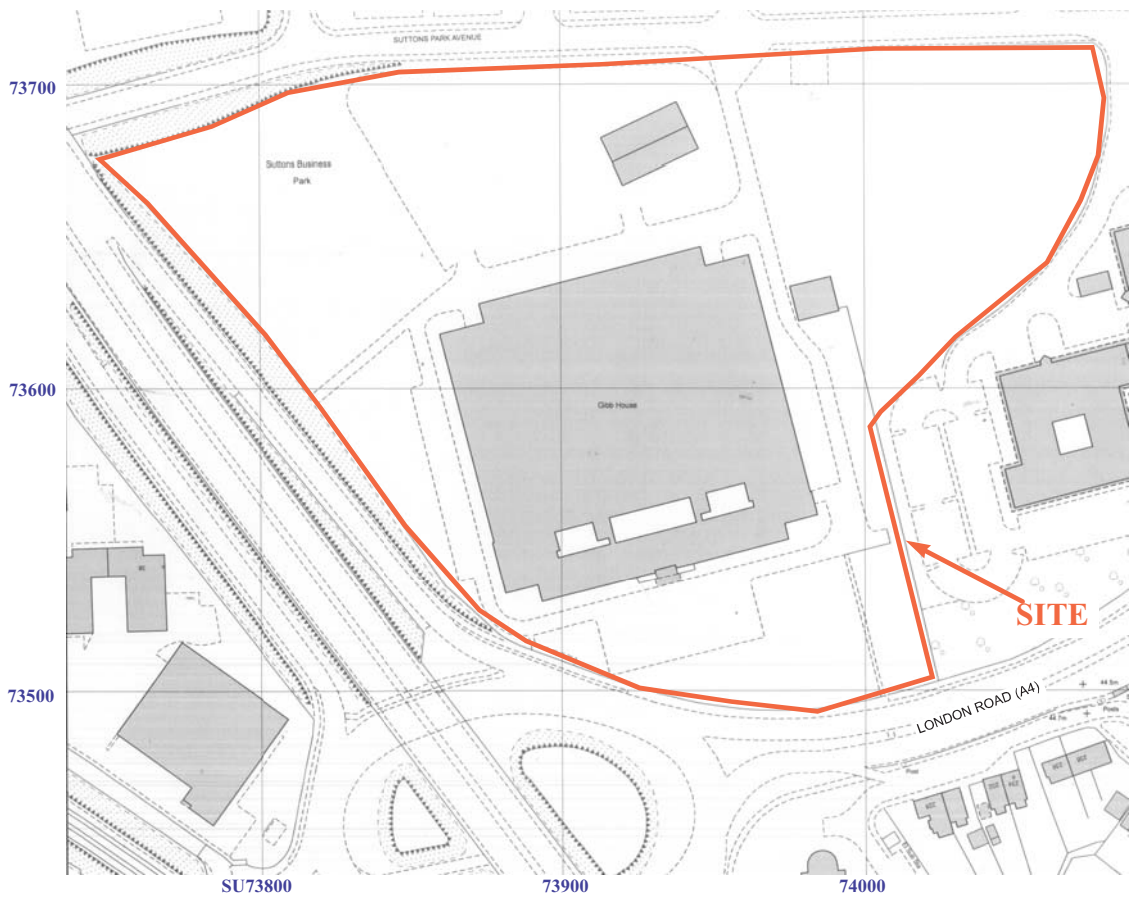


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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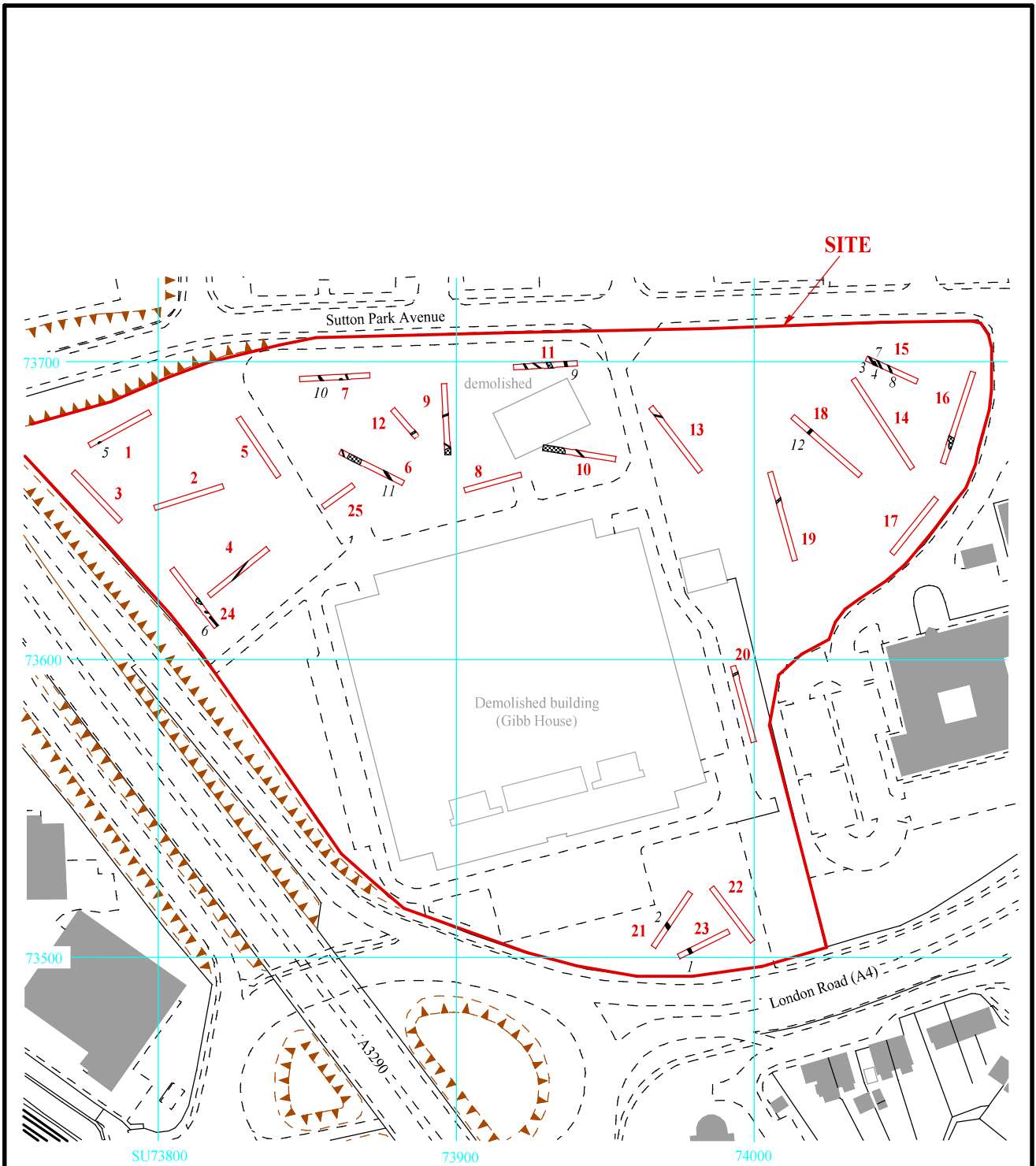


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off London Road,
(prior to demolition).

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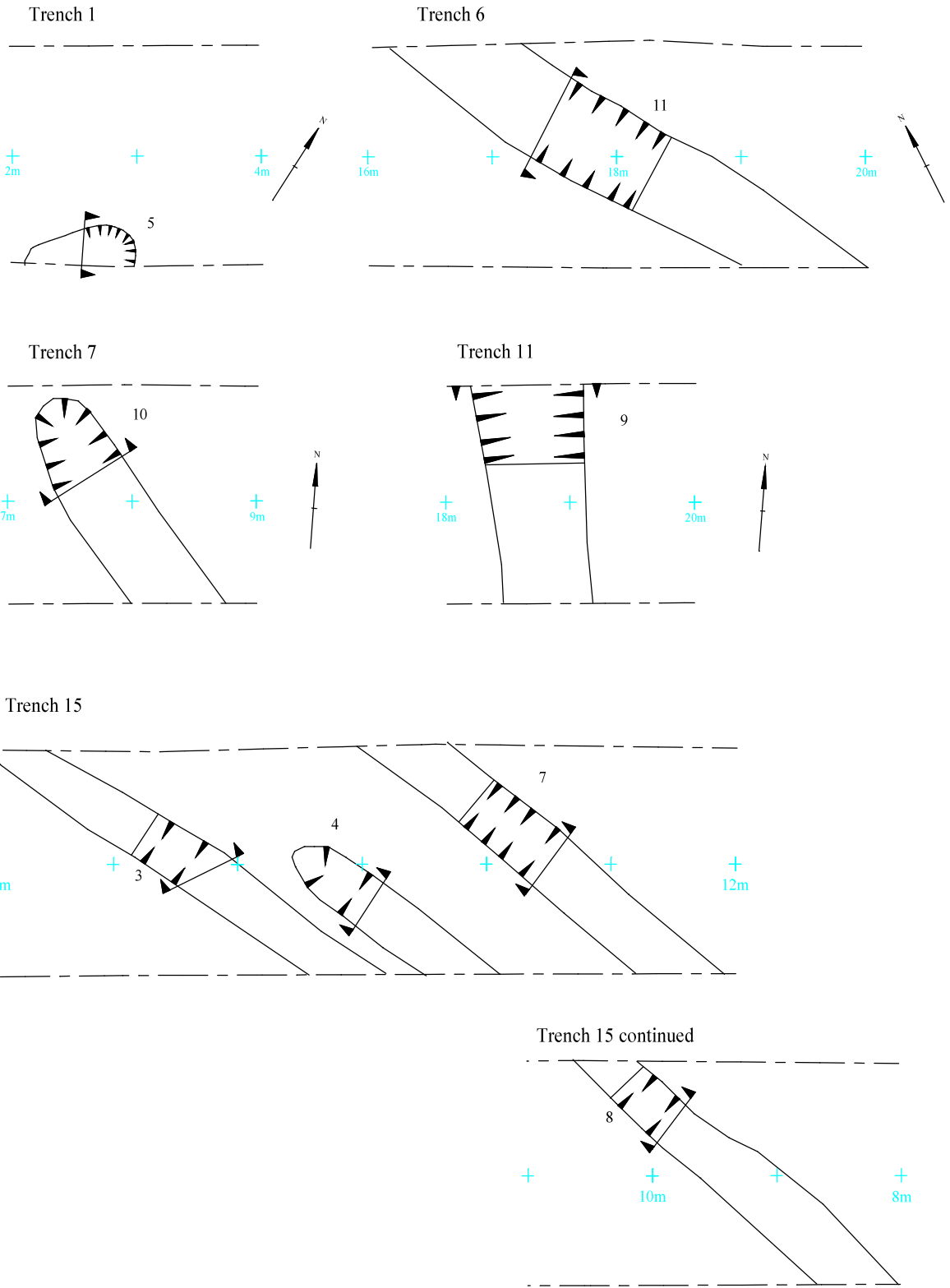
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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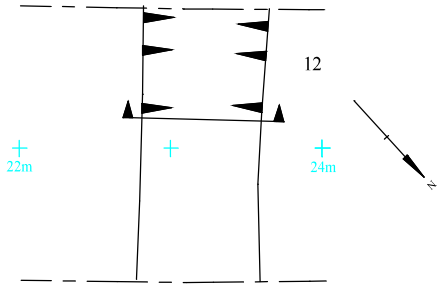
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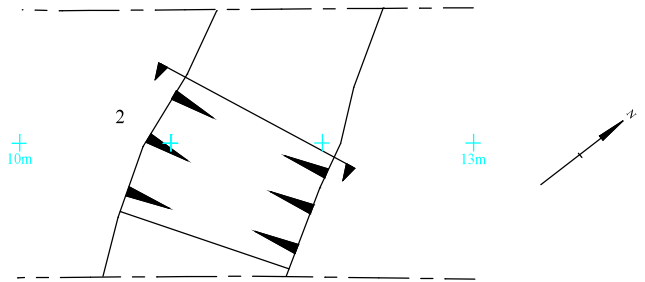
Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



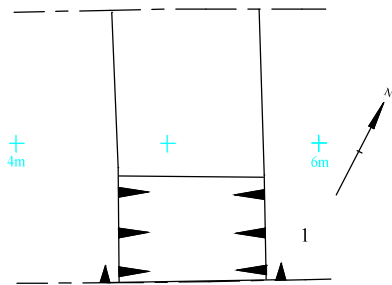
Trench 18



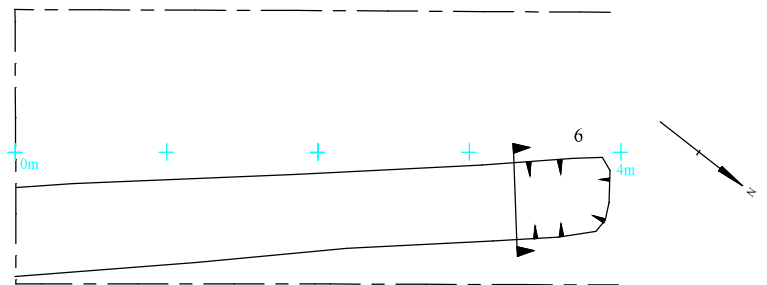
Trench 21



Trench 23



Trench 24

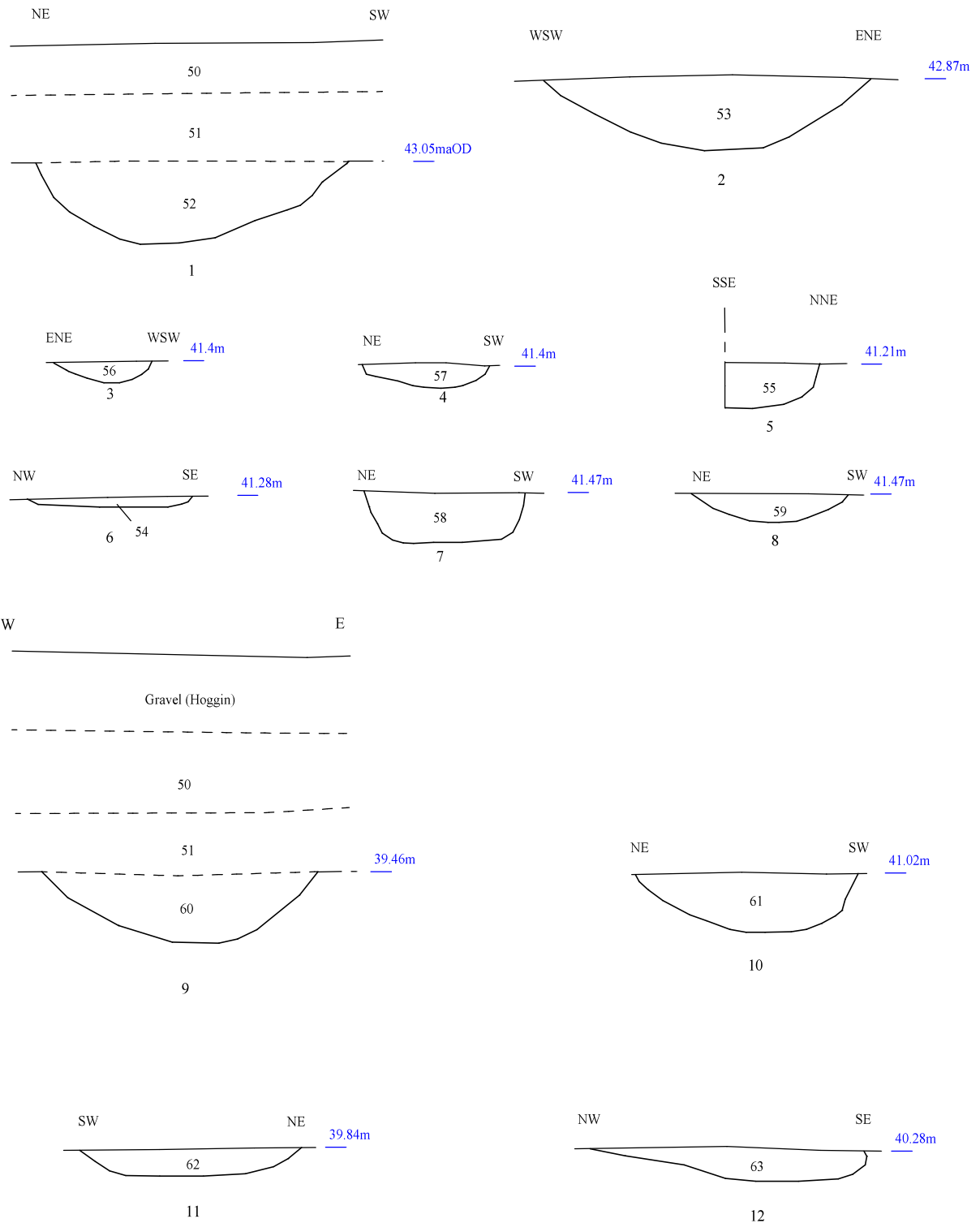


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Figure 5. Detail of trenches (continued).



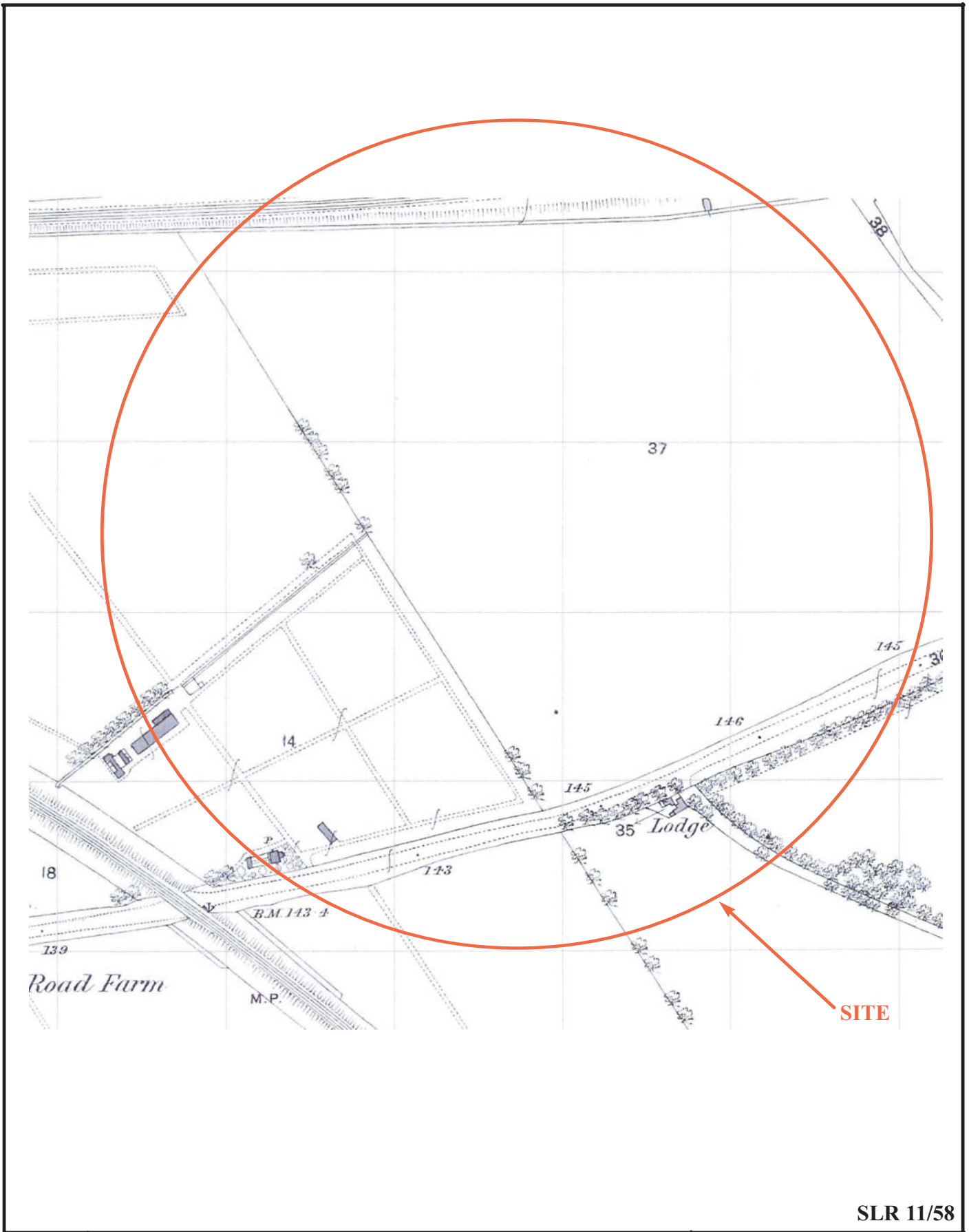


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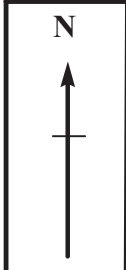
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Figure 6. Sections.



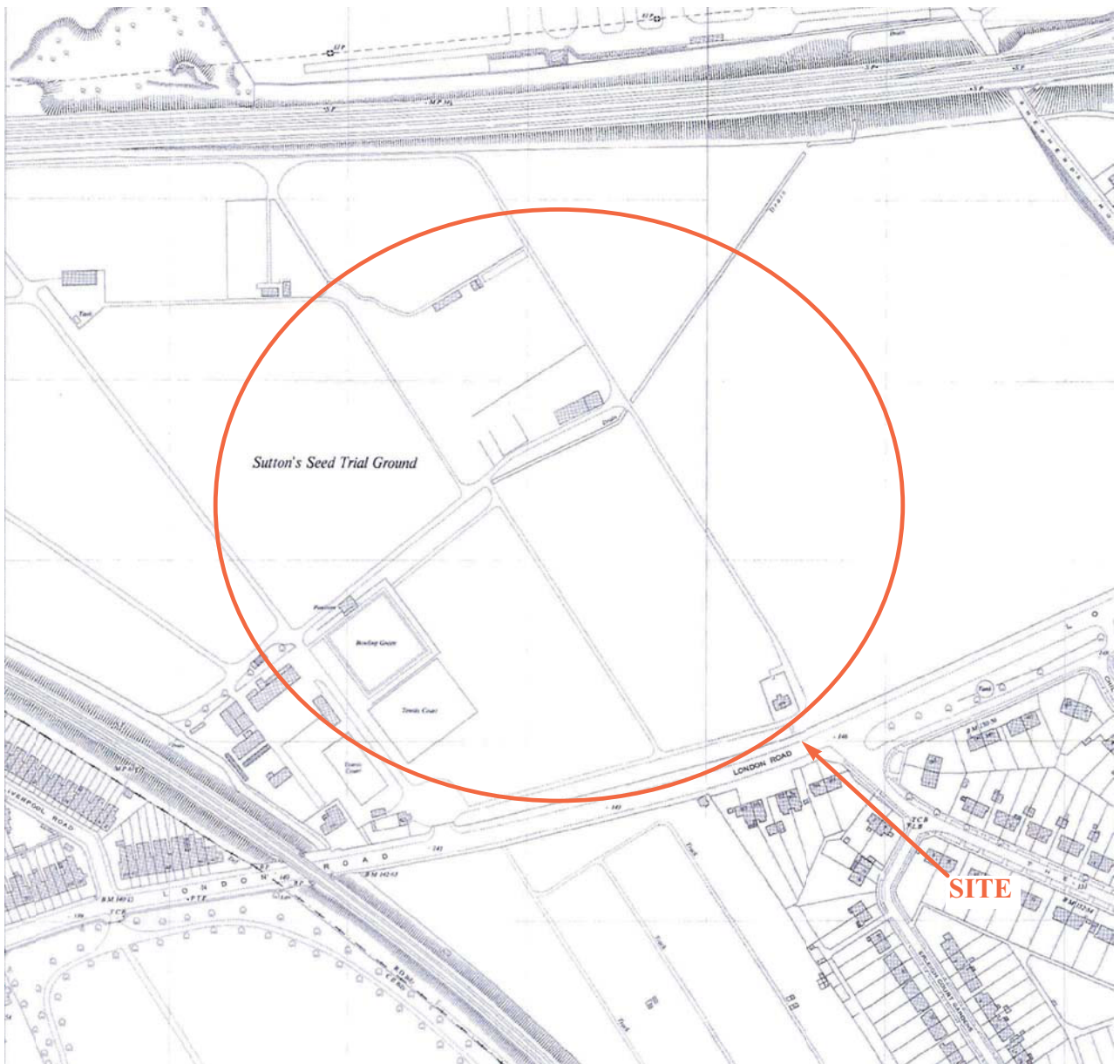


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 Figure 7. Ordnance Survey map, 1872





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Figure 8. Ordnance Survey map, 1956

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 11, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.



Plate 3. Trench 15, looking south east, Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 4. Trench 15, gully 7, looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 23, Gully 1, looking south , Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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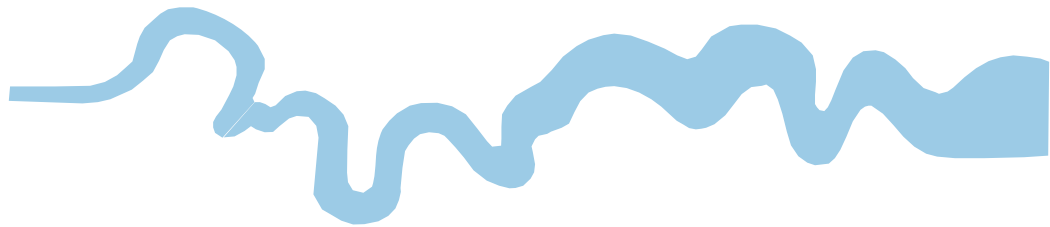
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Plate 5.

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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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