

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Bankside House, West Mills,  
Newbury, West Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Susan Porter**

**Site Code: BHW11/65**

**(SU 4706 6714)**

# **Bankside House, West Mills, Newbury**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief For Highfield Developments**

by Susan Porter  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code BHW 11/65

**January 2012**

## Summary

**Site name:** Bankside House, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 47066 67142

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 10th January 2012

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Susan Porter

**Site code:** BHW 11/65

**Area of site:** c.275 sq m

**Summary of results:** The foundation design comprised the use of piles, and ground beams which were set at a very shallow depth into the ground, with the finished floor level raised above the former. There were no other deeply invasive groundworks. Nothing of archaeological interest was observed on the site.

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

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:  
[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 13.01.12
	Steve Preston✓ 13.01.12

# **Bankside House, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Susan Porter

**Report 11/65**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Bankside House West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire SU 47066 67142 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Frances Candlin formerly of Highfield Developments, 17 Peppard Road, Sonning Common, Reading, RG4 9SS.

A former planning consent for the site (app. no. 04/03091/FULMA) had expired and a new consent (app. no. 10/022326/XXFULMA) has been granted by West Berkshire Council for the demolition of existing structures followed by the construction of new apartments. This consent includes a condition relating to archaeology requiring a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter on 10th January 2012 and the site code is BHW 11/65.

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

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on the north side of West Mills (road), Newbury (Fig. 1) opposite the church of St Nicholas and the war memorial which lies on the south side of the road with the Kennet and Avon canal merging with the Kennet River immediately north of the extent of the site. To the immediate east and west of the site are current retail units, with Bridge Street, the retail centre of Newbury and the bridge over the Kennet to the east of the site. (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 77m above Ordnance Datum and has an underlying geology of alluvium overlying gravel (BGS 1947). This was not observed on site as the natural geology was not exposed.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic (medieval) core of Newbury (Astill 1978; WBAS 2006). The site lies within Historic Character Area zone 16 but with adjacent zone 17 perhaps providing more historic and archaeological context (WBAS 2006). Zone 16 relates to the bridge over the Kennet which was in existence at least in medieval times with a wooden structure replaced in stone in 1772. However, the site lies away from the bridge and it is the zone 17 features which may be more applicable. To the south of the site stands the medieval church of St Nicholas which was rebuilt between 1523 and 1532. Somewhere nearby, probably to the south-west, were two mills of medieval origin although later mills give West Mills its name. In the location of the site, therefore, there is a possibility of both domestic occupation and industrial activity of medieval and early post-medieval date, and possibly deposits relating to the use of this part of the Kennet for the canal. A watching brief to the south-west only revealed deposits of modern made ground above alluvial deposits (Cooper 1997). Two watching briefs on Lock Island in 1995 and 2003 to the north-west of the site likewise revealed no archaeological deposits but the 2003 watching brief did note that below the northern plateau of the island there was a peat deposit at a depth *c.* 2m which could be a source for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction (Costello 1995; Mundin 2003).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. The foundations were to be piled with groundbeams. In general the watching brief was to involve examination of the digging of any groundbeam/ pile cap trenches, any other deeper areas of excavation such as lift pits and crane bases, and deep trenches for services as necessary.

The research objectives of the project were to provide further detail of the nature, date and extent of archaeological deposits of medieval and early post-medieval date in this core area of the historic town and its location alongside the Kennet and Avon canal, with the research questions presented in Appendix 2 of *Historic Newbury, Fit for the Future* (WBAS 2006).

Archaeological deposits which were threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded. Metal detectors would be used to enhance the recovery of metal finds. A programme of archaeological sampling was to take place should sufficient well stratified subsoil deposits be located.

## Results

The existing structure on the site had been demolished and piles inserted (Pl. 1 and Fig. 3). The previous structure was demolished and levelled to a depth of 0.70m across the site. This levelling was observed to have taken place entirely within made ground with further made ground, comprising dark brown silty clay with modern brick inclusions beneath. The trenches for the new ground beams had not penetrated this lower made ground. The archaeologically relevant horizon therefore was not exposed.

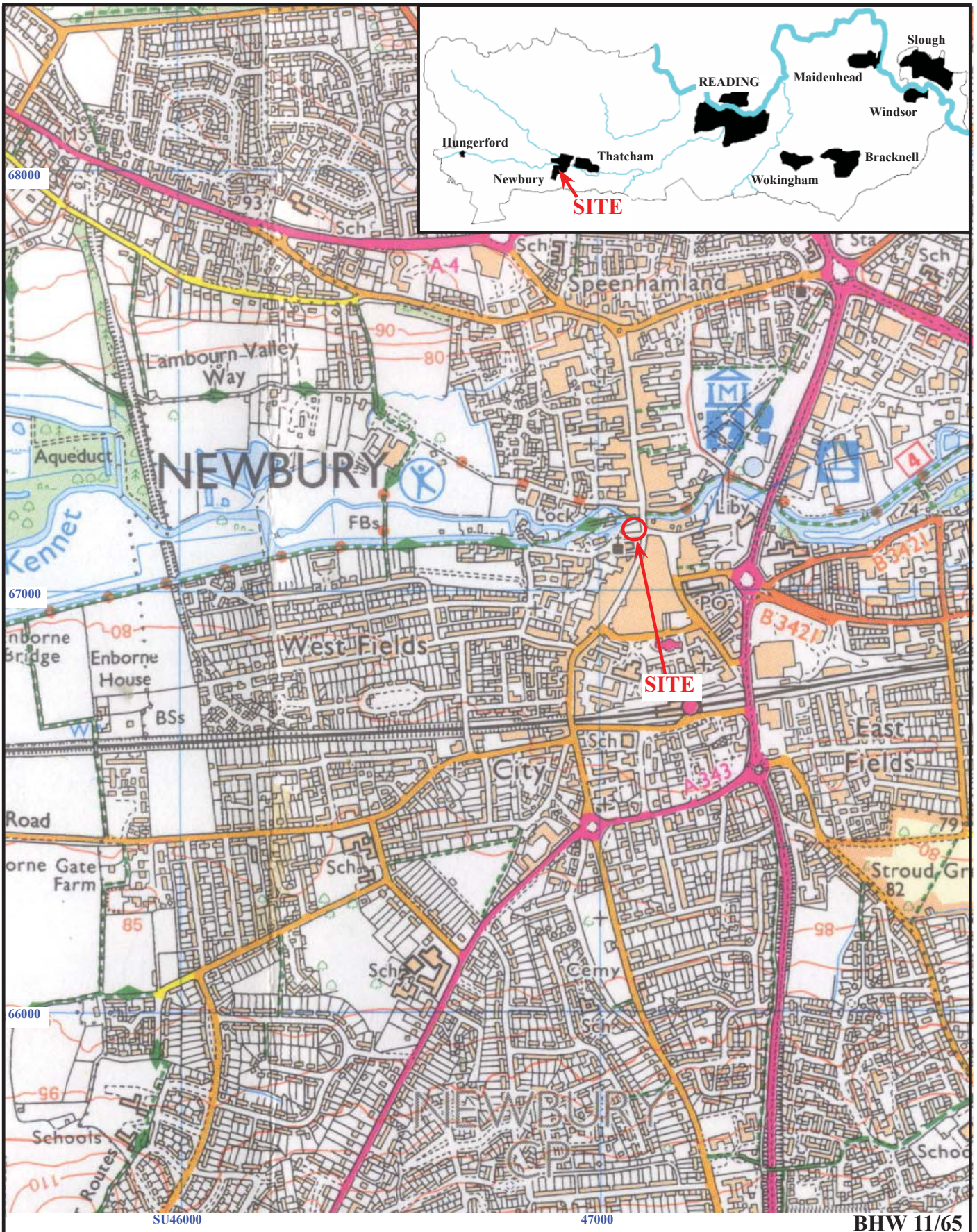
## Conclusion

The archaeologically relevant horizon was not observed on the site, however, this was due to the conditions on site rather than an observed absence of archaeological deposits. Apart from the piles, the new foundations were entirely within modern made ground and no archaeological deposits were disturbed.

## References

- Astill, G, G, 1978, *Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm publ 2 Reading
- BGS, 1947, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 267, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Cooper, K, 1997, 'Former Riverside Works, West Mills, Newbury, Berkshire; an archaeological watching brief' Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report **96/53** Reading
- Costello, M, 1995, 'Lock Island, Newbury, West Berkshire; an archaeological watching brief' Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report **95/15** Reading
- Mundin, A, 2003, 'Lock Island Water Sculpture, Newbury, West Berkshire; an archaeological watching brief' Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report **02/107** Reading
- PSS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich
- WBAS, 2006, *Historic Newbury, Fit for the Future*, West Berkshire Archaeology Service, Newbury.





**Bankside, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2012  
Archaeological watching brief**

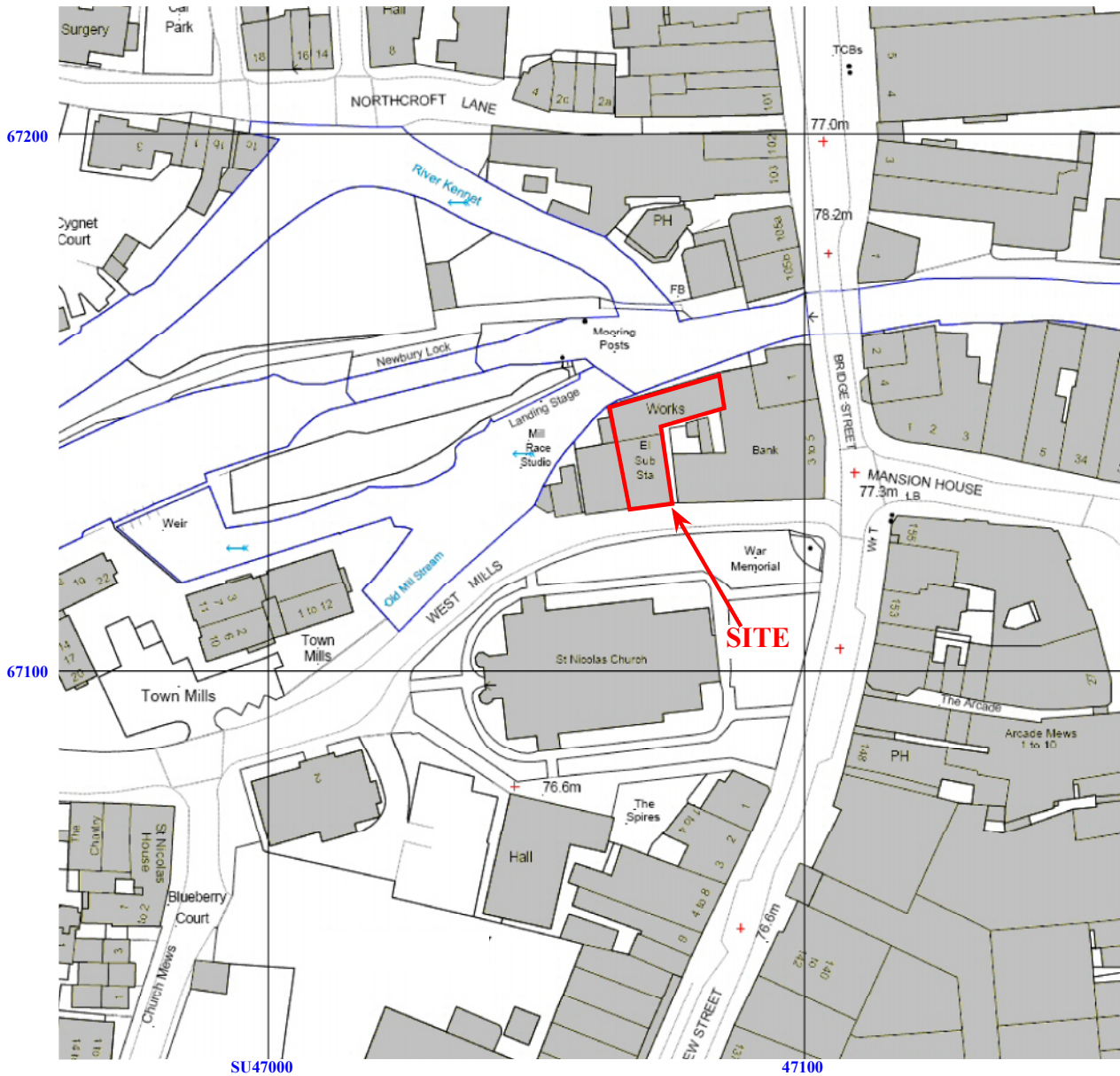
Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 158 at 1:12500  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

BHW 11/65





BHW 11/65

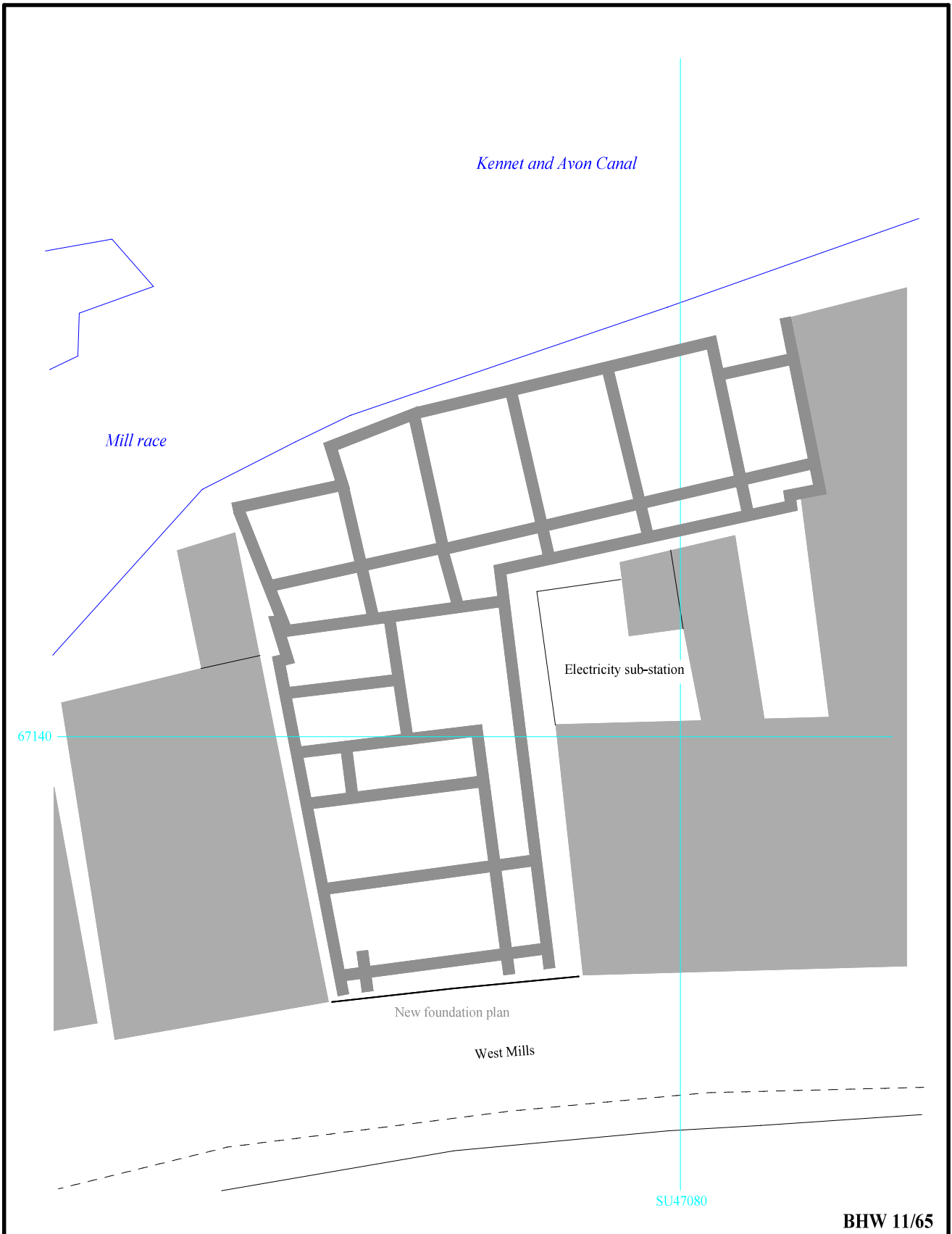


**Bankside, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2012  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site off West Mills, showing extent of previous structure.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:1250





**Bankside, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2012  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 3. Location of site, and new foundation plan.





Plate 1. General site condition, looking east



Plate 2. Imported modern rubble with new foundation, looking east.

BWH 11/65

**Bankside, West Mills, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2012**  
**Archaeological watching brief**

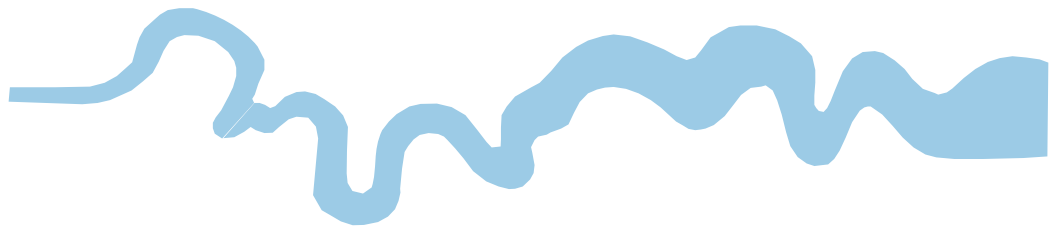
Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

## 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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**