THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Site Code: WHR12/02

(SU 7270 7244)

Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for CgMs Consulting

by DavidPlatt

ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices

Ltd

SiteCodeWHR12/02

February 2012

Summary

Site name: Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7270 7244

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 14th–15th February 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: WHR12/02

Area of trenching: c.300m

Summary of results: No finds or features of an archaeological nature were found 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 Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 17.02.12
	Steve Preston✓ 17.02.12

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading RG1 5NR

Tel. (0118) 926 0552; Fax (0118) 926 0553; email tvas@tvas.co.uk; website: www.tvas.co.uk

Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berkshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 12/02

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU7270 7244) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr William Bedford of CgMs Consulting, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 2ST.

Planning permission is to be sought from Reading Borough Council for the redevelopment of Wells Hall. It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings and to redevelop the site for residential use but no further details were available at the time of writing. Field evaluation was required to clarify the archaeological potential of the site and better inform the planning submission.

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 drawn up by CgMs Consulting (Bedford 2012) and approved by Ms Mary Neale, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Matthew Gittins on the 14th and 15th February 2012 and the site code is WHR12/02. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

A heritage assessment (Pugh 2011) prior to this evaluation found neither designated nor undesignated heritage assets were present within the site. The assessment identified prehistoric activity to the immediate north and isolated prehistoric artefacts in the surrounding area, suggesting there was potential for further prehistoric remains to survive below ground in the north part of the study site. Development during the 20th century is likely to have removed or truncated buried remains in the south and central parts of the study site (Pugh 2011).

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south-east of Reading town centre on a north-facing slope on the north side of Upper Redlands Road (Fig. 1) The site is bordered to the north and west by housing, to the south is Upper Redlands Road, and to the south east is a grassed area and Wells Hall itself (Fig. 2). The southern extent of the site lies at approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), this falls to around 55m AOD at the northern extent. The

underlying geology consists of mainly London Clay (BGS 1946), this was observed in the northern trenches as a pale yellowish brown clay and in Trench 6 as a mid reddish brown clay with frequent gravel inclusions. Some staining/reduction of the clay from overlying made ground to produce a blue grey colouration was also observed. The site is currently an old university halls of residence, and the areas examined in this evaluation consist of a mixture of a Tarmac car park and grassed areas.

Archaeological background

Lower Palaeolithic axes have been recorded at eight different locations near the site. The closest are 150m to the north-west and 170m to the south-west. Other axes of the same period have been recorded further to the south. A Mesolithic core and blade were found 350m to the west (Pugh 2011). Of most significance, however, was the results of evaluation followed by excavation of a site immediately north of the proposal site. This fieldwork revealed a pit of late Bronze Age (Fig. 3), a hoard of Iron Age currency bars, a gully of uncertain date and some stray finds including a sherd of prehistoric pottery and a late Neolithic arrowhead (Ford 2010).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project can be summarised as follows:

To determine if the prehistoric remains identified by previous investigations to the north continue and survive within the site

To further inform the nature of the Bronze Age activity in the area

To inform the design of suitable mitigation measures and the production of a written scheme of investigation for zoned excavation if archaeology is identified or the production of a mitigation strategy for preservation in situ where remains are found that are nationally important (Bedford 2012)

Six trenches were to be dug, one measuring 2m wide and 15m long and five measuring 4m wide and 15m long. These were to be dug using a JCB type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, and under constant archaeological supervision, either down to the natural geology or until archaeological features were encountered. All archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned, excavated and recorded, except where such remains might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions appertaining to full excavation.

All spoil heaps were to be monitored for artefacts and metal detected. Discovery of human remains were to be reported to the coroner but no further action taken as part of the evaluation exercise.

Results

Trenches 1-3 and 5 and 6 were dug as intended however Trench 4 was narrowed to 1.6m due to encountering a number of services. The trench could not be moved nor lengthened due to its proximity to the standing building and protected trees (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged in length from 15m to 16m and in depth from 0.46m to 0.74m. A metal detector was used to scan the spoil heaps for metal finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breaths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned NW-SE and was 16.0m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of Tarmac and 0.26m of rubble directly overlying the natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned SW-NE and was 15.0m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of Tarmac and 0.24m of rubble overlying the natural geology (Fig. 4). No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned E-W and was 15.0m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of Tarmac and 0.42m of rubble overlaying the natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned WS–NE and was 15.6m long and 0.74m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.11m of rubble overlying 0.33m of subsoil which in turn overlay the natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were present. Modern services occupied a substantial portion of this trench.

Trench 5 (Pl. 1)

Trench 5 was aligned E-W and was 15.0m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of topsoil and 0.41m of subsoil overlaying the natural geology (Fig. 4). No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Trench 6 (Pl. 2)

Trench 6 was aligned SSE-NNW and was 15.0m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.40m of subsoil overlaying the natural geology. Between 7.5m and 15m a lens of modern made ground 0.27m thick was found between the topsoil and subsoil. No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Conclusion

The evaluation trenching of the site was carried more or less as intended. However, neither archaeological deposits nor finds were revealed and on the basis of these results the site has no archaeological potential.

References

Bedford, W, 2012, 'Written Scheme of investigation for archaeological works; in respect of Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Road, Reading', CgMs Consulting, Cheltenham

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, Sheet 268, solid and drift edition, 1:63360, Keyworth

Ford, S, 2010 'A Late Bronze Age pit and hoard of Iron Age currency bars at Addington Road, Reading, Berkshire', in S Preston, (ed) *Archaeological investigations to the south of Reading, 2002-2008, Exploring Late Iron Age and Roman settlement south of Reading, Berkshire*, TVAS monograph **13**, Reading, 39–44

PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment,* The Stationery Office, Norwich

Pugh, G, 2011, 'Heritage Assessment; Wells Hall, Upper Redlands Rd, Reading', CgMs Consulting, Cheltenham

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at South or West end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	16.0	4.0	0.55	0–0.12m Tarmac; 0.12m-0.38m rubble consisting of bricks and cement; 0.38m+ mottled blue and yellowish brown natural clay geology.
2	15.0	4.0	0.46	0-0.05m Tarmac; 0.05-0.29m rubble; 0.29m+ natural geology
3	15.0	4.0	0.60	0-0.12m Tarmac; 0.12-0.54m rubble; 0.54m+ natural geology
4	15.60	1.6	0.74	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21-0.32m rubble; 0.32-0.65m subsoil; 0.65m+ natural geology, Services encountered in 80% of trench.
5	15.0	4.0	0.55	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-0.51m subsoil; 0.51m+ natural geology **[Pl.1]**
6	15.0	2.0	0.68	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.60m subsoil; 0.60m+ natural geology **[Pl. 2]**

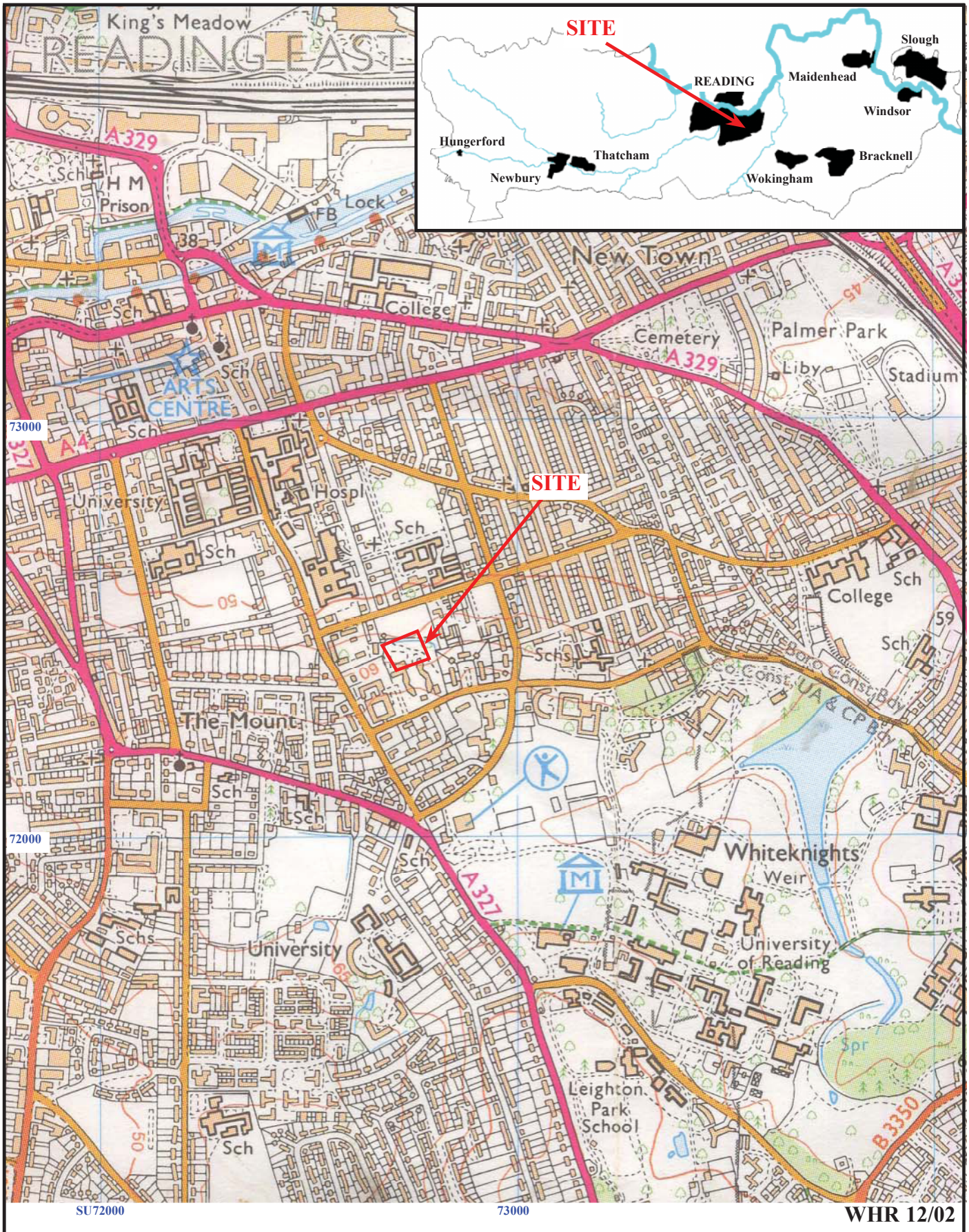

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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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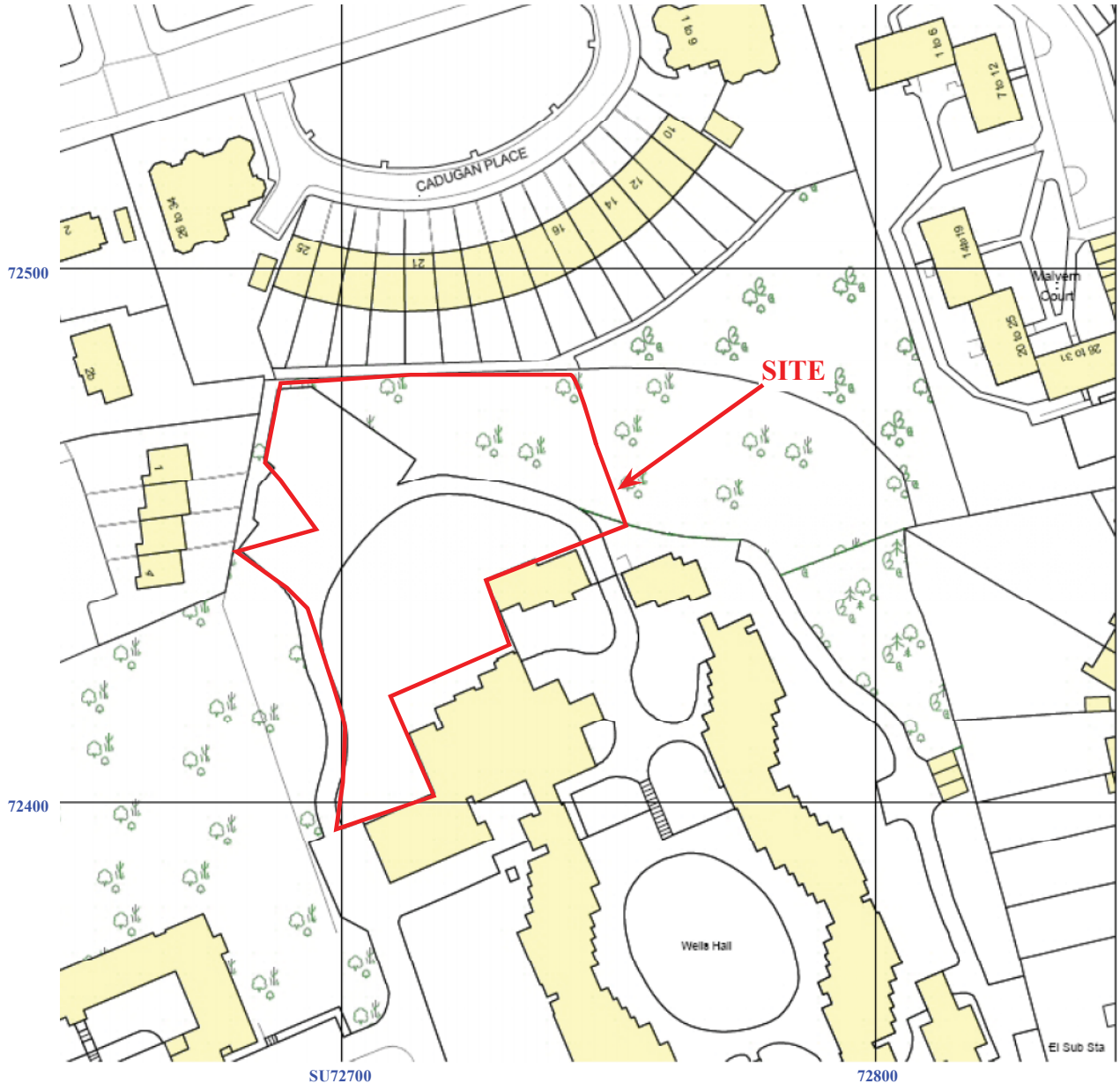

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Wells Hall.

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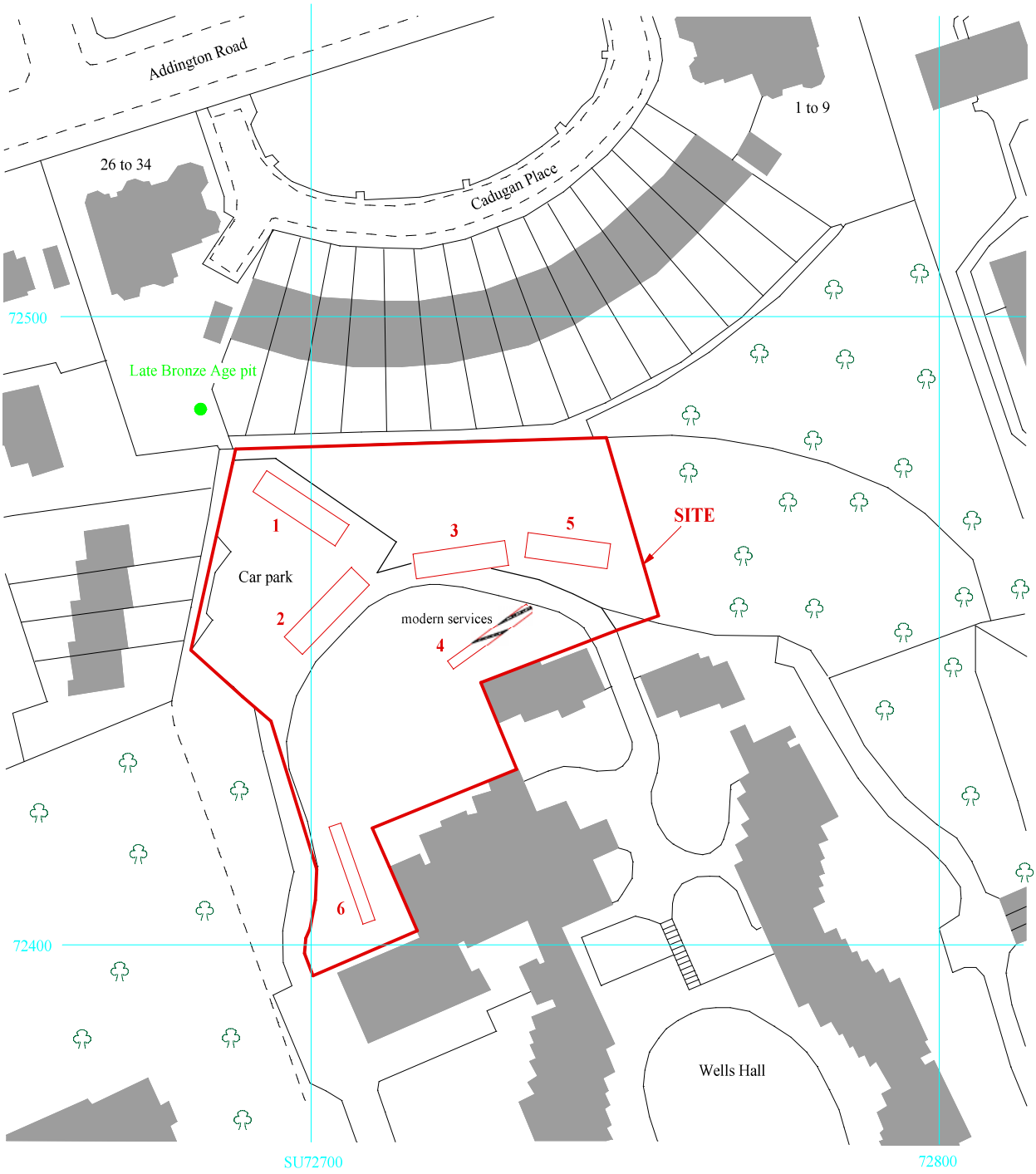

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 50m

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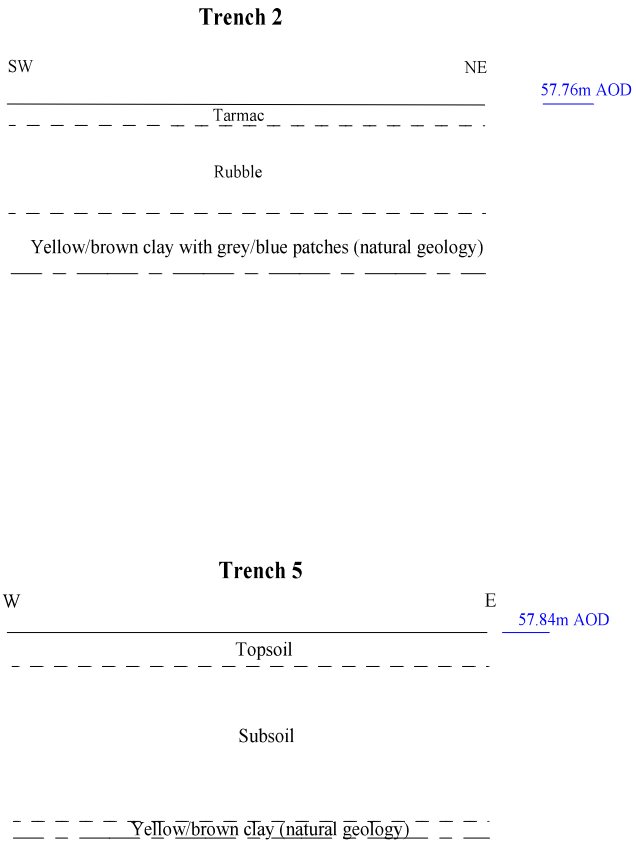

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 5, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 2. Trench 6, looking north north west, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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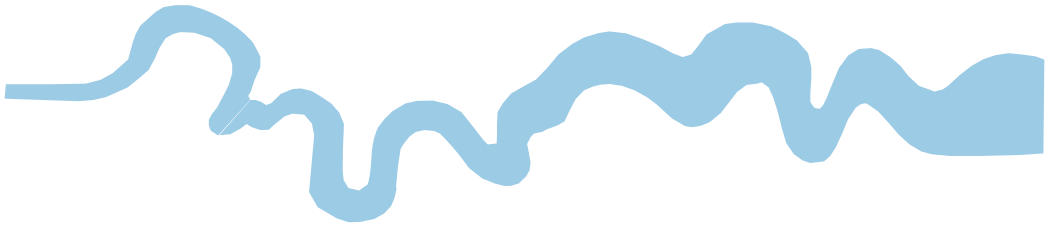
TIME CHART

	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



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
Web: www.tvas.co.uk