

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**7 Moorside Close, Furze Platt,
Maidenhead, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Daniel Bray, Jacqueline Pitt and David Platt

Site Code: MCM11/128

(SU 8861 8250)

**7 Moorside Close, Furze Platt,
Maidenhead, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Hicks Developments Ltd

by Daniel Bray, Jacqueline Pitt and David Platt

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCode: MCM11/128

June 2012

Summary

Site name: 7 Moorside Close, Furze Platt, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8861 8250

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: January-June 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Daniel Bray, Jacqueline Pitt and David Platt

Site code: MCM 11/128

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed natural geology truncated by modern disturbance. No archaeological features were observed. However, three sherds of early/middle Saxon pottery from the same vessel were recovered from the subsoil.

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

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Report 11/128

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 7 Moorside Close, Furze Platt, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8861 8250) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Walton of Hicks Development Ltd, 15 Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JB.

Planning consent (07/02935) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of six semi-detached houses with associated access and parking following the demolition of an existing bungalow. The consent is subject to a condition (10) relating to archaeology. 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 Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the Royal Borough, as advised by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist at Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray, Jacqueline Pitt, David Platt and Susan Porter between January and June 2012. The site code is MCM 11/128.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site comprises an L-shaped parcel of land covering c.1860 sq m to the north of Moorside Close, Furze Platt, Maidenhead, Berkshire (Fig. 2). The site is bounded by Moorside Close to the south, Garretts Lane to the north and residential development to east and west, and was previously occupied by a bungalow with garage and several outbuildings which had all been demolished prior to archaeological work. The underlying geology is Taplow Gravel river terrace (BGS 2005). Although this was observed it was seen under a thick alluvial silt deposit. The site is at an elevation of 28m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project, prepared by Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary the site's potential stems from its location within the

archaeologically rich Thames Valley which has a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded (Gates 1975; Ford 1987). Bronze Age occupation has been recorded in the environs of Furze Platt, as revealed by quarry operations to the north (Lobb 1980). Furze Platt is also a notable location for Palaeolithic finds from within and beneath the gravel (Wymer 1968). However, other investigated sites nearby have failed to produce any archaeological features (Hull and Ford 1997; Saunders 1999; Ford 2004; Ford 2005; Muddin 2007).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved the examination of foundation trenches, geotechnical pits, ground reduction, service trenches and soakaways which would otherwise damage or destroy any archaeological deposits (Fig. 3).

Results

Geotechnical test pits

Five geotechnical pits were dug and archaeologically monitored (Fig. 3; TP1–5).

Geotechnical pit 1

This pit measured 0.70m wide and was 2.90m long and dug to a depth of 3.05m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.15m of made ground on top of 1.05m of mid reddish brown alluvial silt which overlay the natural gravel. In the east end of the trench a modern pit was encountered, filled with building rubble.

Geotechnical pit 2

This pit measured 0.70m wide and was 3.90m long and dug to a depth of 2.00m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.38m of dark brown sandy silt (demolition layer) which overlay the mid reddish brown alluvial silt. No gravel natural geology nor archaeological deposits were observed.

Geotechnical pit 3

This pit measured 0.70m wide and was 4.00m long and dug to a depth of 1.40m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.28m of dark grey sandy silt demolition layer over 0.45m of reddish brown alluvial silt which overlay the natural gravel deposits. No archaeology was observed.

Geotechnical pit 4

This pit measured 0.70m wide and was 3.00m long and dug to a depth of 2.50m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of dark grey sandy silt demolition layer which was on top of 0.72m of reddish brown alluvial silt which overlay the natural gravel geology. No archaeology was observed.

Geotechnical pit 5

This pit measured 0.70m wide and was 3.40m long and dug to a depth of *c.* 2m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.07m of dark brown sandy silt demolition layer on top of 0.93m of reddish brown alluvial silt which overlay the natural gravel geology. No archaeology was observed.

Ground reduction: access road and car park

Ground reduction was observed for the access road and car park area. A depth of 0.38–0.40m of made ground was removed to reveal reddish brown alluvial silt. Much of the area was disturbed by modern services. No archaeological deposits were observed and the underlying gravel was not reached.

Soakaways

Four soakways (Fig. 3, A–D) were excavated and archaeologically monitored. Soakaways A, B and C (Figs 3 and 4) were located in the car park area. They measured 5.0m wide by 8.0m long and all except D went to a depth of 1.30m below the original ground level. The stratigraphy was similar to that noted in the geophysical pits. The natural gravel was observed in soakaways B (Fig. 4) and C but not in A. No archaeological deposits were revealed. Soakaway D was excavated at the southern end of the access road and measured 1.50m wide by 2.00m long and 2.50m deep. The stratigraphy comprised of 0.56m of made ground on top of 0.64m of reddish brown alluvial silt which overlay natural gravel. A modern pipe had disturbed the eastern side of the trench. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Service trenches

Five service trenches were excavated and monitored (Fig. 3; Pl. 1). A trench aligned NW–SE and measuring 0.7m wide by 0.6m deep, across the centre of the car park area revealed only modern disturbance. Four trenches were excavated through the access road at depths between 0.5m and 1.10m deep. All revealed modern disturbance. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Foundation Trenches

The foundation trenches for plots 1, 2, 3 and 4 were monitored (Fig. 3; Pl. 2). The trenches were *c.*0.6m wide and dug to a depth of 0.8–1.3m below original ground level. The stratigraphy indicated a slight slope running down to the east, and comprised 0.20–0.38m of made ground, on top of 0.34–0.52m of mid red brown alluvial silt, overlying natural gravel at 0.54–0.80m. The natural gravel was only observed in patches along the easternmost trench of Plot 4.

Three sherds of early/ middle Saxon pottery from the same vessel were found in the alluvial silt layer in the eastern footing of plot 1 (Fig. 3). Plots 3 and 4 revealed only a modern soakaway and inspection chamber and no archaeology.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised three sherds with a total weight of 103g. They are all from the same vessel, a thick-walled, hand-built jar of early/middle Saxon date (c. AD450–850), and all occurred in the subsoil.

The fabric is typical of the tradition in the region, with moderate sub-rounded quartz up to 1mm, sparse voids from burnt-out organic material up to 5mm, and rare calcareous fragments up to 0.5mm. The sherds are black with an orange-brown outer surface. Similar wares have been noted at other sites of similar date in the area (eg. Blinkhorn 2002).

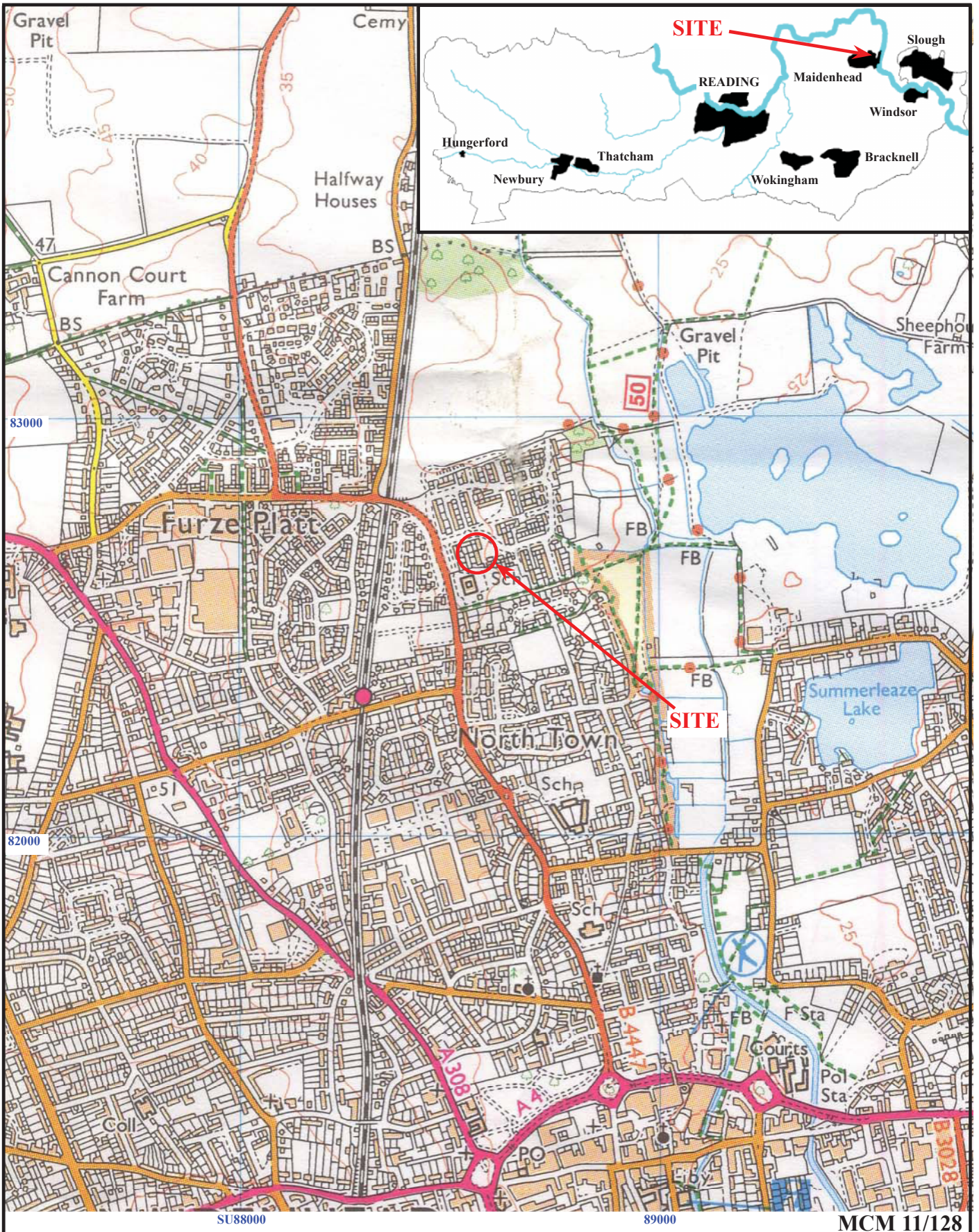
Conclusion

The watching brief successfully examined the areas to be disturbed by the new buildings, access roads and car park areas. No archaeological deposits or features were observed. Modern services had disturbed much of the potential for archaeology in the southern and central areas of the site, although natural geology was observed in the deeper trenches. Some modern disturbance was also present in the foundation trenches to the north, but the natural geology was relatively undisturbed and, had any been present, archaeological features could have survived. Three sherds of early/middle Saxon pottery were recovered from the subsoil, but were not associated with an archaeological feature. They add to a small corpus of Saxon finds and sites found elsewhere in this stretch of the Thames Valley, such as at two sites to the north-east at Cookham, Berkshire (McNicoll-Norbury 2009; Muddin 2008).

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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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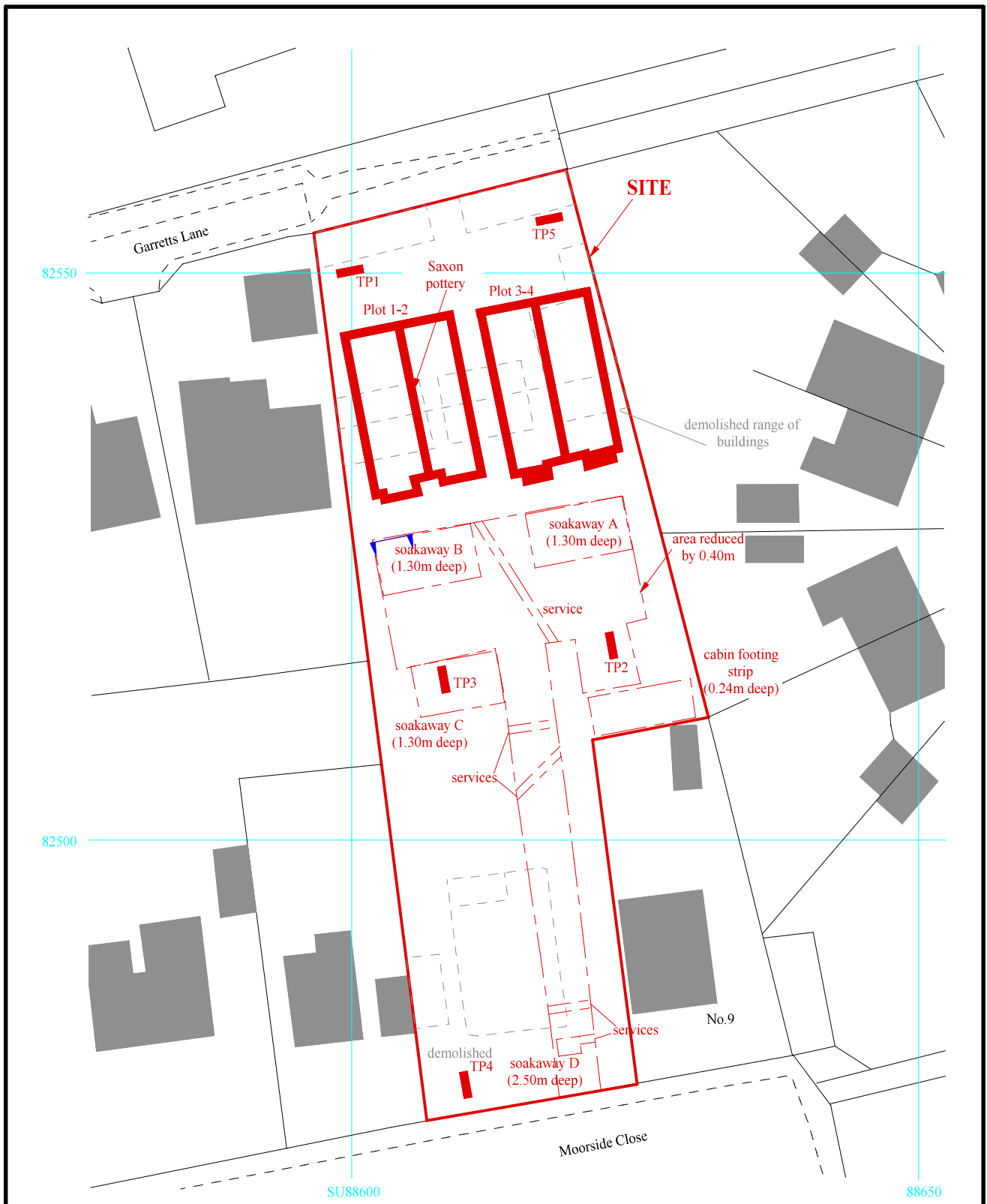


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Moorside Close.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



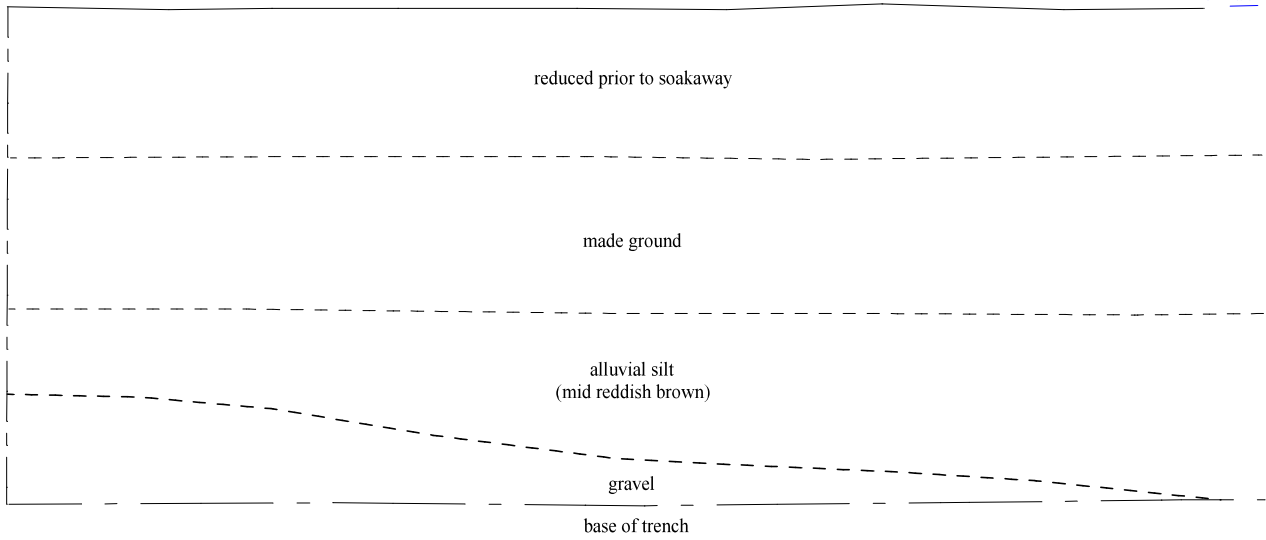
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Soakaway B

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Figure 4. Section through soakaway B



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Plate 1. Service Trench, representative section, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 2. North-west house plots, looking north, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.

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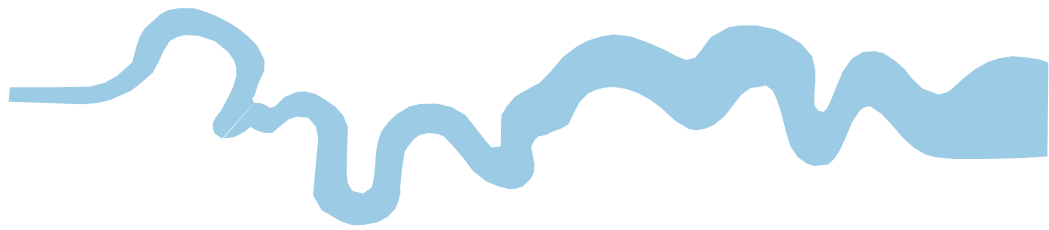
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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
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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