

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**74-76 London Street, Reading,  
Berkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by David Platt**

**Site Code: LOR12/25**

**(SU 7178 7307)**

**Rear of 74–76 London Street,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for JMP Estates Ltd**

by David Platt  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code LOR12/25

**December 2012**

## Summary

**Site name:** 74–76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7178 7307

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 18th December 2012

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Platt

**Site code:** LOR12/25

**Area of site:** c.0.1ha

**Summary of results:** Several pits were uncovered during the evaluation, three of which are certainly or probably of medieval date. Part of the evaluated area had been deeply truncated. Medieval pits 1 and 2 were only seen in the section of the truncated area.

**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 with accession number REDMG : 2013.1.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 24.12.12 Steve Preston ✓ 24.12.12
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# Rear of 74–76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Report 12/25

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the rear of 74–76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7178 7307) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Nigel Garrett of Hives Architects, 46 Queens Road, Reading, RG1 4AU on behalf of JMP Estates Ltd, Elm Cottage, Crays Pond, Goring Heath, OXON, RG8 7QD.

Planning permission (11/00600/FUL) has been gained on appeal (APP/E0345/A/11/2161270) from Reading Borough Council to construct three new flats in a 3-storey building on a parcel of land to the rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading. The consent is subject to a condition (13) relating to archaeology. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a single component of work is proposed at this stage, a field evaluation by means of machine trenching. Further fieldwork may be required if archaeological deposits are encountered which cannot be preserved *in situ*, as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 128) and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist of Berkshire Archaeology and monitored by her. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Chris Crabb on 18th December 2012 and the site code is LOR12/25. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course with accession number. REDMG : 2013.1.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the rear of 74-76 London Street close to the historic centre of Reading (SU 7178 7307) (Fig. 1). The parcel of land on which the evaluation took place on was relatively flat but London Street itself slopes downhill from south to north. Beyond the western boundary of the site there is also a noticeable drop perhaps suggesting that the area of the site has been infilled and terraced at some point. The underlying geology was Lynch Hill Terrace (BGs 1946; Wymer, 1999) and this was observed in the trenches as a reddish yellow sandy gravel. The site is at an elevation of *c.* 44m above Ordnance Datum.



## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been documented thoroughly in a briefing note prepared by Ms Mary Neale of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary, this potential stems from its location within the historic core of Reading on what is thought to be one of the original medieval streets (Astill 1978; Preston 2005). The town has late Saxon origins, with the original Saxon town located somewhere close to St Mary's Church, to the north-west of the site. The site here lies within the boundary of the medieval and later town. Several archaeological investigations have taken place on London Street (eg Hammond 2002) and these have variously recorded medieval and post-medieval remains, but have also indicated the presence of gravel extraction presumably for metalling of the street surface. Many of the properties fronting London Street have deep basements which have removed the archaeological deposits. Number 74-6 on the street frontage is listed (grade II) and is of 18th-century date. To the west of the site the Friends (Quaker) Meeting House and burial ground is indicated on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map.

## **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 work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which would warrant preservation in-situ, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if there are medieval or early post-medieval deposits present on the site.

Two trenches were to be dug by mechanical excavator under constant archaeological supervision and using a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were placed so as to target footing trenches and the access road for the proposed building and were to be 7m long and 2m wide. Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief, without

compromising features that might warrant preservation *in situ* or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to a full excavation.

## **Results**

Two trenches were dug, both were 5.50m in length and ranged in width from 2.20–2.50m and 1.20m–2.70m in depth (Fig. 3). The trenches were shorter than anticipated due to the presence of a large area of modern truncation and a large concrete beam either associated with this or the building which previously occupied the site. However, they were wider than planned. These alterations were agreed in consultation with the monitor.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

### Trench 1 (Fig. 5)

Trench 1 was aligned SW - NE and was 5.50m long and between 1.70 and 2.70m deep. Trench 1 was stepped due to the depth of the trench, however the stepping on the SE side collapsed and was cleaned out of the trench in order to see the two pits which were revealed in section. This meant that the trench ended up being 2.50m wide. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m demolition rubble overlying 0.40m of made ground, this in turn overlay the natural reddish yellow sandy gravel geology. Within the trench a large area of truncation was observed containing modern demolition rubble and a mid brownish silty sandy gravel, a test pit was dug at the SW end and it was found that this was 2.70m deep and had a concrete base.

In the SE section of the trench two pits (1 and 2) were observed, these had been truncated by a large cut and so were not visible in plan in the trench. Pit 1 was c.1.70m deep and contained a single fill (52) of loose mid greyish brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions and within it was found a single piece of bone, two sherds of pottery dating to the 12th to 14th centuries along with single fragments of tile, bone and a nail stem. This pit was truncated in places by two modern pits and was also cut by pit 2 suggesting it was stratigraphically the earliest in the sequence.

Pit (2) was 3.0m in width and 1.80m deep and contained a single fill (53) which consisted of a loose dark brownish grey silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions. Three sherds of 12th- to 13th-century pottery and pieces of tile were recovered from this single fill.

### Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 2 was aligned NW – SE and was 5.50m long and 1.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of demolition rubble overlying 0.55m of made ground, this in turn overlay the natural geology. Within the trench a single pit (3) was observed as well as two wall foundations, from the demolished building which previously stood on the site. The pit (3) appeared to be large in plan and only a small amount was observed within the SE end of the trench. The pit was 0.64m deep in the area excavated and contained three separate fills, the primary fill (54) 0.30m thick consisted of a loose mid yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions and was found to contain a single sherd of pottery dated between the 12th and 14th centuries, a single piece of animal bone and burnt flint. The secondary fill (55) was 0.15m thick and consisted of very loose yellowish brown gravel. It contained two sherds of pottery dated between the 12th and 14th centuries. The tertiary fill (56) was 0.45m thick and consisted of a friable mid greyish brown silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions; it contained a single sherd of pottery only broadly datable between the 11th and 14th century.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 9 sherds with a total weight of 70g. It all dated to the earlier medieval period.

The following fabric types were noted:

**MSW:** Medieval Sandy ware. Late 11th–14th century? Dense sub-rounded white, grey and clear quartz up to 0.5mm. Early medieval pottery types similar to this are found along a considerable length of the middle Thames Valley and its hinterland, and the problem of differentiating between the numerous different wares has been noted in the past (Mellor 1994, 84). 5 sherds, 27g.

**SSW:** Sandy-shelly ware. Early 12th–early 13th century. London fabric SSW (Blackmore and Pearce 2010). 1 sherd, 4g.

**M40:** ‘M40’ type ware. ?Late 11th–14th century (Hinton 1973). Hard, flint and limestone unglazed ware, with a possible kiln sources at Camley Gardens near Maidenhead (Pike, 1965) and Denham in Buckinghamshire (Mellor 1994, 86). Known at numerous sites in south Oxfordshire and Berkshire. 1 sherd, 17g

**ASH:** Ashampstead ware. 12th–14th century (Mephram and Heaton, 1995). Sandy wares produced at a manufactory *c.* 15km to the west of Reading, the main products being jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs. 2 sherds, 22g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. The sherds are all in good condition and appear to be reliably stratified. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region other than the sherd of SSW. This appears to be the first find of the material in Reading, although there have been finds of the ware elsewhere in Berkshire (Blackmore and Pearce 2010, 297). The two sherds of ASH are from glazed jugs, and the heavily-sooted rim of a jar in MSW was noted in context 52. The assemblage appears likely to be of an entirely domestic nature.

### *Animal Bone* by Ceri Falys

Just three fragments of bone were present for analysis, weighing 130g (Appendix 4). The overall preservation of the remains was excellent, however, a moderate amount of fragmentation was noted.

A minimum of two animals were present within the assemblage: one cow, and one medium (sheep/goat or pig) animal. The cow was represented by a portion of left mandible and proximal phalanx excavated from pit 3 (54). A single non-descript rib shaft fragment of a medium sized animal was recovered from pit 1 (52). No further information could be retrieved from these animal remains.

### *Metalwork*

A single nail stem came from pit 1 (52).

### *Tile*

Some 11 fragments of tile (766g) were recovered from pits 1 and 2. Pit 1 (52) produced just a single fragment (54g). Pit 2 (53) produced 10 fragments (712g). Several fabrics were noted with variations of the amount of sand inclusions present, and the extent of firing. One fragment had traces of a thin brown glaze and another had a imperfectly perforated peghole.

### *Sieved samples*

Four soil sub-samples of 20L each were taken from Features 1-3 to recover any charred plant remains or small artefacts. The samples were floated and sieved using a nest of sieves down to 0.25mm, and rapidly assessed. Sample 1 (1,52) contained a few small flecks of charcoal which were the only items of interest recorded. Sample 2 (2,53) contained a large volume of charcoal but no obvious seeds or other economically exploited species. Sample 3 (3,54) contained a few small flecks of charcoal and several weed seeds and probable cereal grains. Sample 4 (3,56) contained a few small flecks of charcoal only.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation has revealed that parts of the proposal site have archaeological potential, though this is tempered somewhat by the discovery of a deep modern truncation which will have removed all archaeological deposits in

its zone. The full extent of the zone of truncation across the site is not known. Three medieval pits were revealed, two of which had been truncated. However, it was observed that they were cut from a relatively high level, being buried by only c. 0.4m of overburden.

## References

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## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at SW or SE end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	5.50	2.50	1.70-2.70	0-0.10m demolition rubble, 0.10-0.50m made ground, 0.50m+ natural geology. Pits 1 and 2 <b>[PI. 1]</b>
2	5.50	2.20	1.20	0-0.35m demolition rubble, 0.35-0.90m made ground, 0.90m + natural geology. Pit 3 <b>[PI. 2]</b>

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Pit	12th–14th century	Pottery
1	2	53	Pit	12th–13th century	Pottery
2	3	54–6	Pit	12th–14th century	Pottery

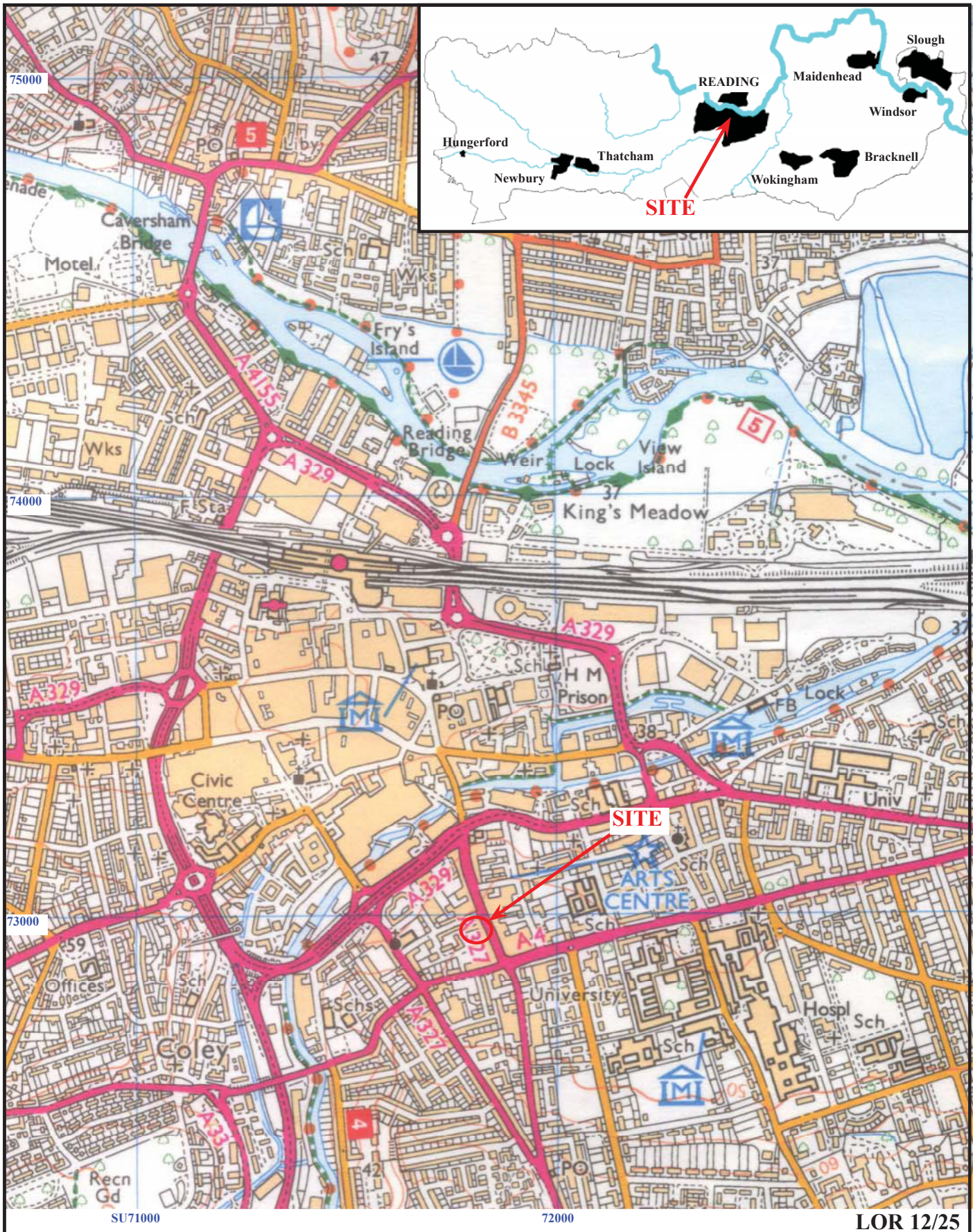
**APPENDIX 3:** Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>MSW</i>		<i>SSW</i>		<i>M40</i>		<i>ASH</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>
1	52	1	9	-	-	-	-	1	12
2	53	2	7	1	4	-	-	-	-
3	54	1	6	-	-	1	17	-	-
3	55	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10
3	56	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	5	27	1	4	1	17	2	22



**APPENDIX 4: Inventory of animal bone**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No.Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Medium</i>
1	52	1	12	-	1
3	54	2	118	2	-
Total / MNI		3	130	1	1



**Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, 2012  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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LOR 12/25

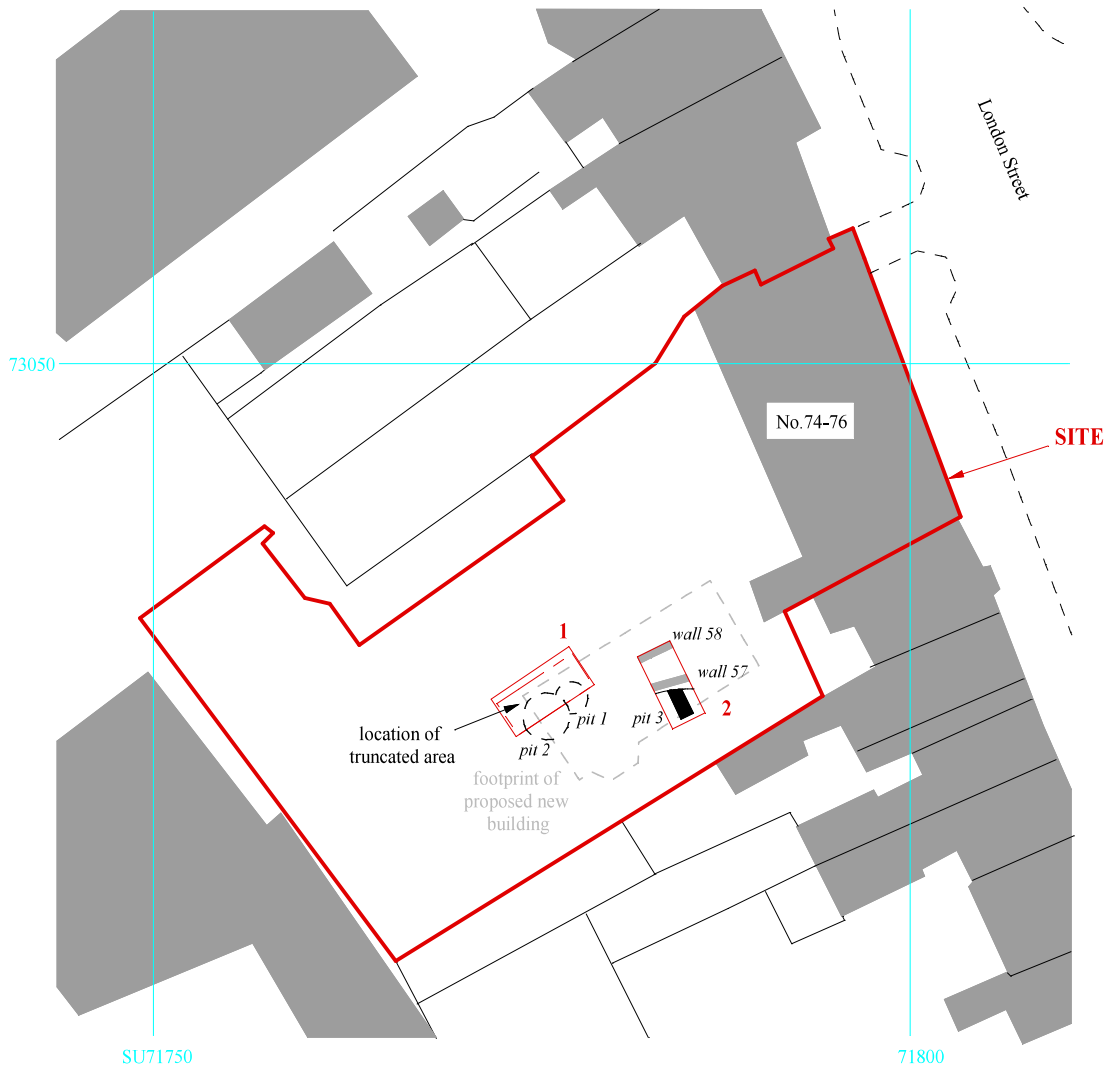


**Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, 2012  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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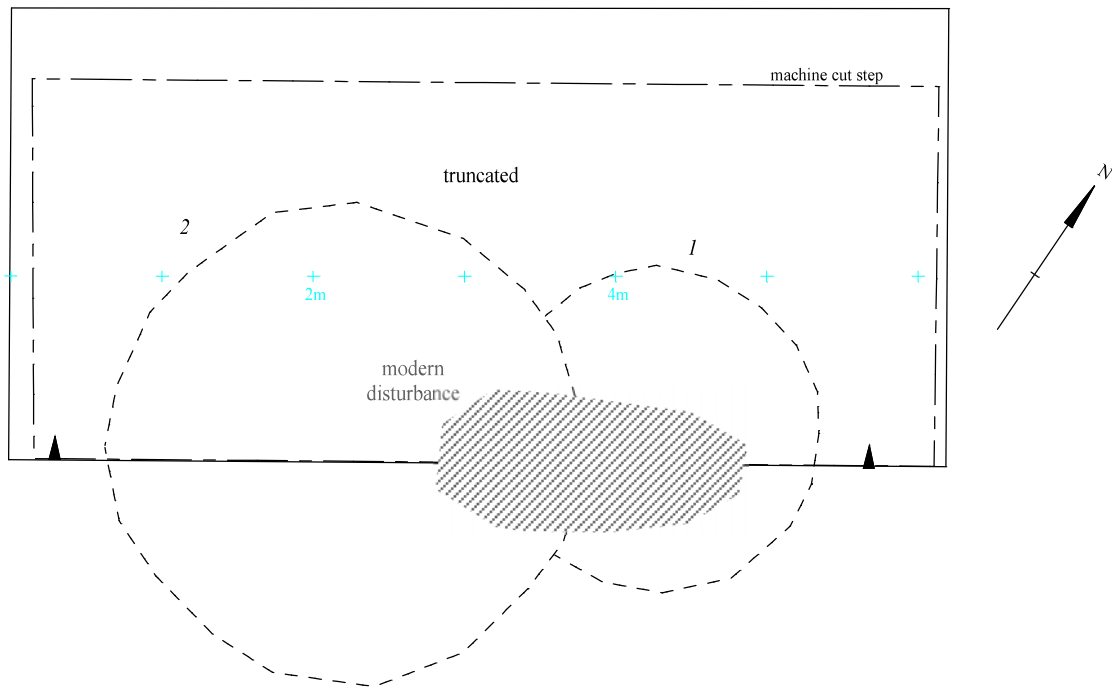
**Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading,  
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

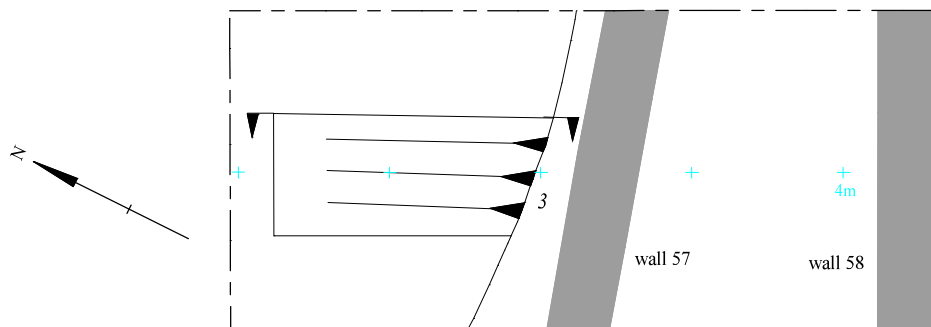


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**Trench 1**



**Trench 2**



LOR 12/25

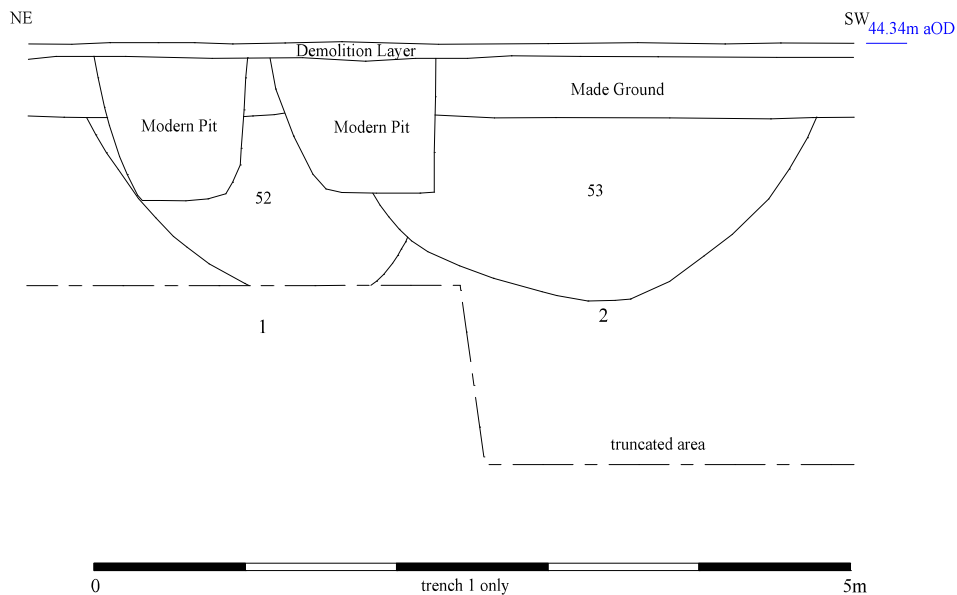
**Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading,  
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Figure 4. Detailed plan of trenches

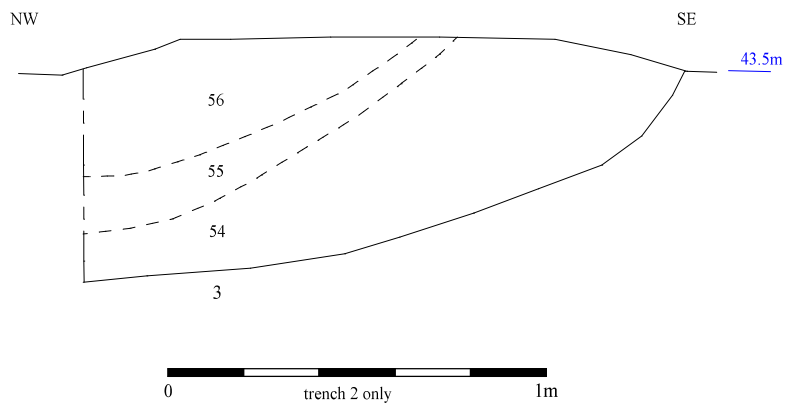
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### Trench 1



### Trench 2



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Land to the Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading,  
Berkshire 2012  
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Figure 5. Sections





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



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

LOR 12/28

Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading,  
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Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 1 and 2.

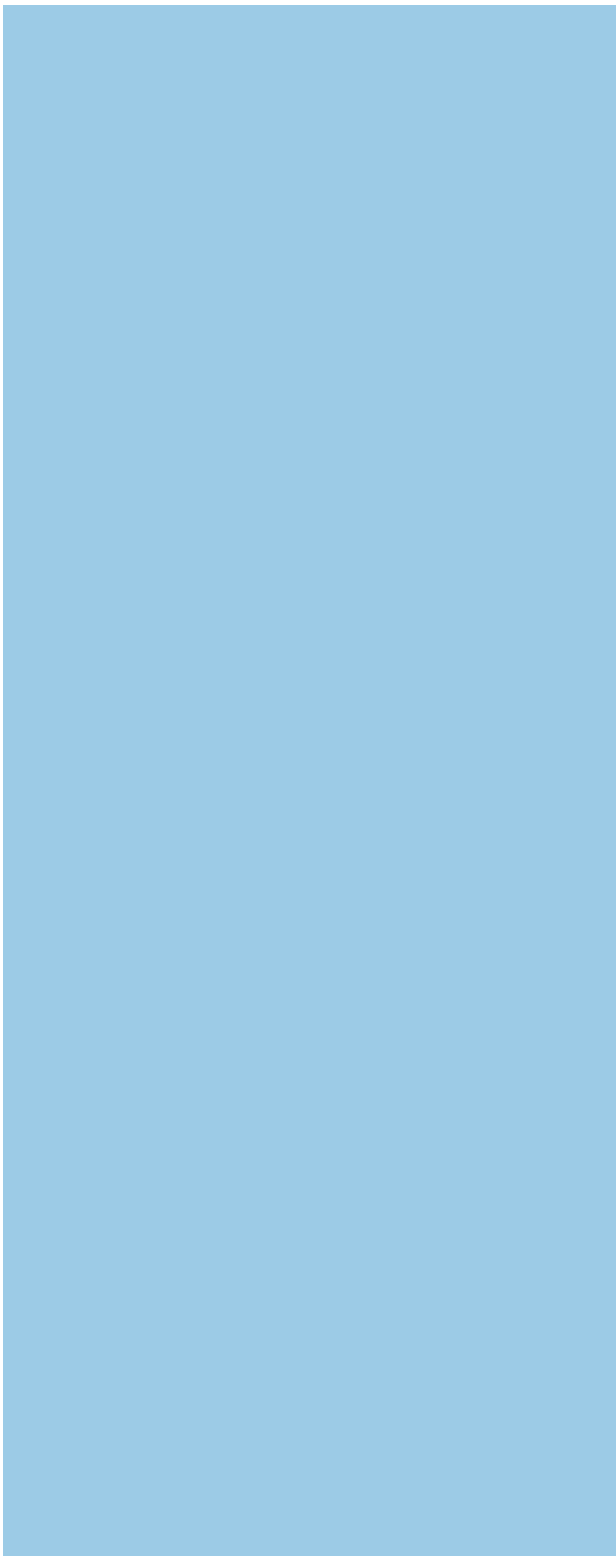
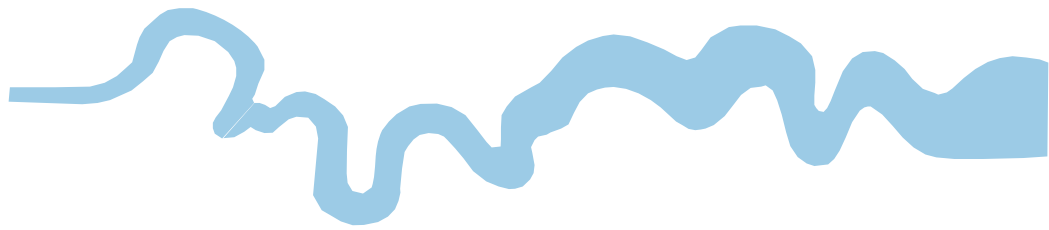
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## TIME CHART

	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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