

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Telecommunication Mast, Redhatch Copse, Sibley Hall,  
Redhatch Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Aidan Colyer and Steve Ford**

**Site Code: SHR12/194**

**(SU 7420 7070)**

**Telecommunications Mast, Redhatch Copse, Sibley Hall,  
Redhatch Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For CgMs Consulting**

by Aidan Colyer and Steve Ford  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code SHR12/194

**January 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** Telecommunication Mast, Redhatch Copse, Sibley Hall, Redhatch Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 74225 70685

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 2nd - 31st January 2013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Aidan Colyer

**Site code:** SHR 12/194

**Summary of results:** No archaeological finds or deposits were uncovered during the groundworks for the new mast, spoil storage area nor cable trench.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate repository in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 08.02.13
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# **Telecommunication Mast, Sibley Hall, Redhatch Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Aidan Colyer and Steve Ford

**Report 12/194**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the groundworks for a new telecommunications mast on land at Redhatch Copse, Sibley Hall, University of Reading, Redhatch Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 74225 70685) (Fig. 1) The works were commissioned by Ms Hannah Smalley, of CgMs Consulting, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2SY on behalf of the University of Reading.

Planning consent (app. X0360/2159190) has been gained from Wokingham Borough Council with an archaeological condition which requires archaeological monitoring to be carried out during groundworks for the erection of a 30m lattice mast with associated equipment and service trenching leading to the main building. This also entailed observations during areas stripped for soil disposal and access through Redhatch Copse.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification prepared by CgMs (Smalley 2012) and approved by Ms Mary Neale, of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt, Aidan Colyer, Andy Mundin and Aiji Castle between 2nd and 31st January 2013. The site code is SHR 12/194. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate repository in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located within Redhatch Copse, 3.7ha of woodland to the west of Sibley Hall, to the southwest of the main university campus in Reading. This is a local wildlife conservation site, designated within the local planning policy. Residential development lies to the south of the woodland. The underlying geology is London Clay (BGS 1946), with a possibility of Terrace gravel deposits encroaching from the west and south. The latter were observed on site.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been documented in a desk-top assessment for the project (Smalley 2010). In summary this noted that there are no sites of archaeological or historical significance in close proximity to the site with only a moderate number of finds of prehistoric and Roman date from this part of Earley in general. A walkover survey prior to groundworks did not reveal any earthwork features.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any archaeological deposits that could be damaged or destroyed by construction of the mast and the ancillary works. This would include observations of areas of stripped of topsoil and subsoil and trenches dug for cables.

## **Results**

The fieldwork comprised monitoring of four components of the project of which only three involved exposure of the archaeologically relevant levels. The access road through the copse was laid on a raised causeway and involved no stripping of topsoil and subsoil (Fig. 4).

### *The cable trenches (Fig. 3)*

Two lengths of cable trench were observed, linking the power and communication supplies to those which connected the main buildings of Sibley Hall and the mast site. The main trench ran, for the most part, along the south eastern limit of the conservation area at the edge of the tree canopy space. The trench was 0.6m wide and 0.9m deep. Close to the mast site the stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.2m of brown sandy silt subsoil overlying yellow/brown sandy gravel. However, towards the building complex typically 0.2m of made ground had been dumped on top of subsoil with topsoil replaced on top.

A second cable trench connection to the north east revealed a similar stratigraphy with 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.2m of made ground above c. 0.2m of soil above natural geology.

No archaeological deposits were uncovered during the excavation of the trenches and no finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the spoil heaps.

### *The soil receptor site (Fig.4)*

Surplus spoil from the mast site was to be stored in a receptor site at the edge of the copse. This area (c. 200 sq m) was mostly stripped of topsoil in order to dump the surplus spoil prior to replacement of the topsoil. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil c. 0.35m thick overlying clayey sand with gravel subsoil 0.25m thick. This overlay the gravel natural geology.

Two linear features were observed. One was a narrow (<0.3m) straight and parallel sided feature considered to be an old field drain aligned SW–NE. The other was aligned NW–SE. It was irregular sided about 1m wide. It was investigated by a sondage which revealed it to be 0.15–0.25m deep with an irregular base and a single fill of loose grey/brown sandy silt with gravel. It is considered to be an old hedge line.

### *The mast site (Fig. 4)*

The mast site comprised a rectangular area of 100 sq m within the copse. The area was initially cleared of scrub after which the overburden was removed. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil c. 0.18m thick overlying clayey sand with gravel subsoil which varied between 0.15 and 0.54m thick. This overlay the natural geology which was mostly gravel but with a pale yellowy clay with gravel in the south-west corner. An area of disturbance (old treehole) lay towards the centre of the stripped area and had been infilled with modern debris such as metal, concrete etc. No archaeological deposits nor artefacts were observed.

## **Finds**

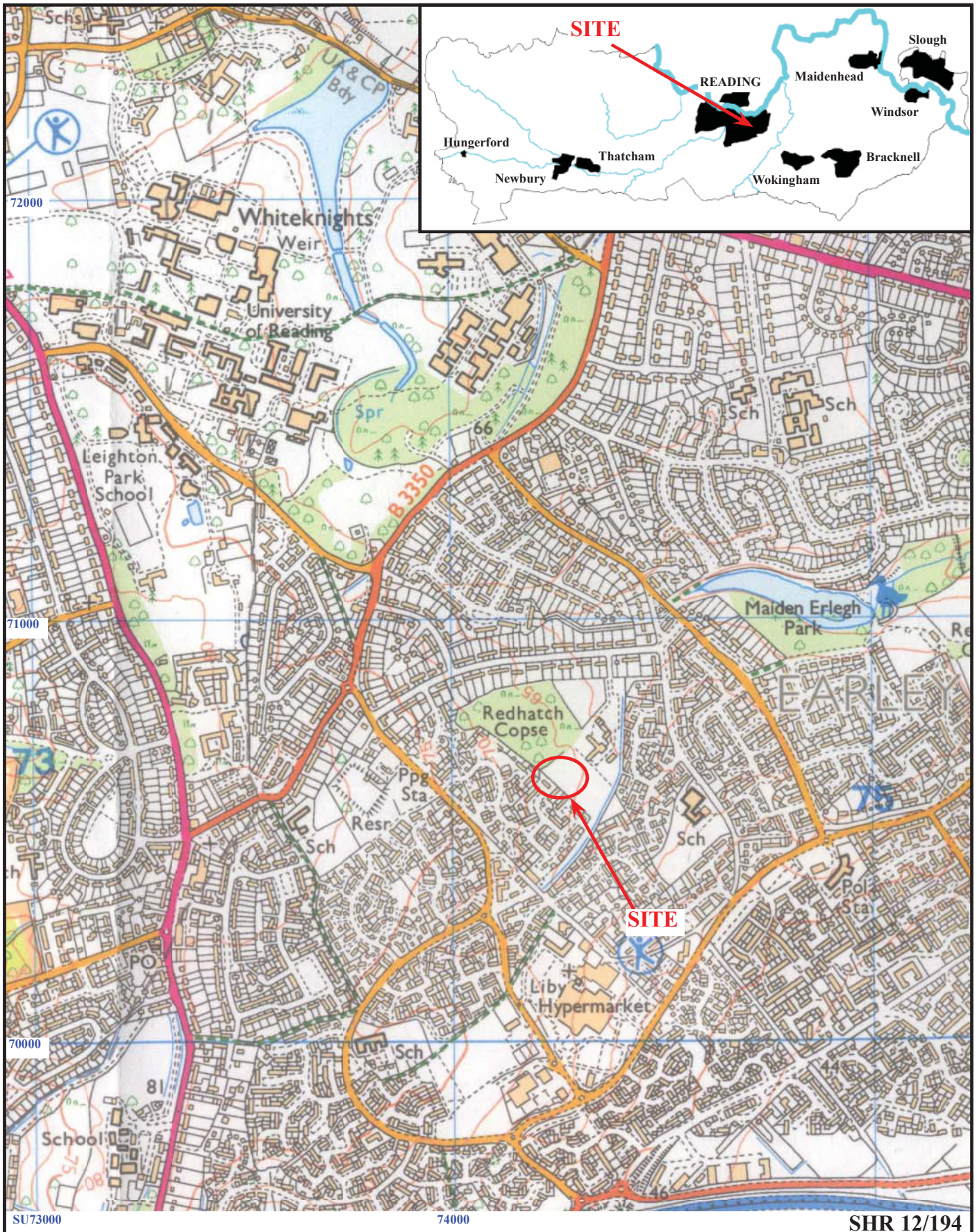
Only ceramic building material, in the form of tile in reasonably frequent quantity was noted, which was probably of 20th century origin and was retained on site.

## **Conclusion**

Though one subsoil feature was investigated from the works, no archaeologically significant deposits or finds were encountered during the works. This feature was thought to be of natural origin.

## **References**

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63,360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Smalley, H, 2010, 'Sibley Hall, Reading an archaeological desk-based assessment', CgMs Consulting, Cheltenham (updated 2011)
- Smalley, H, 2012, 'Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) in respect of Sibley Hall Telecommunications Mast, Reading', CgMs Consulting, Cheltenham

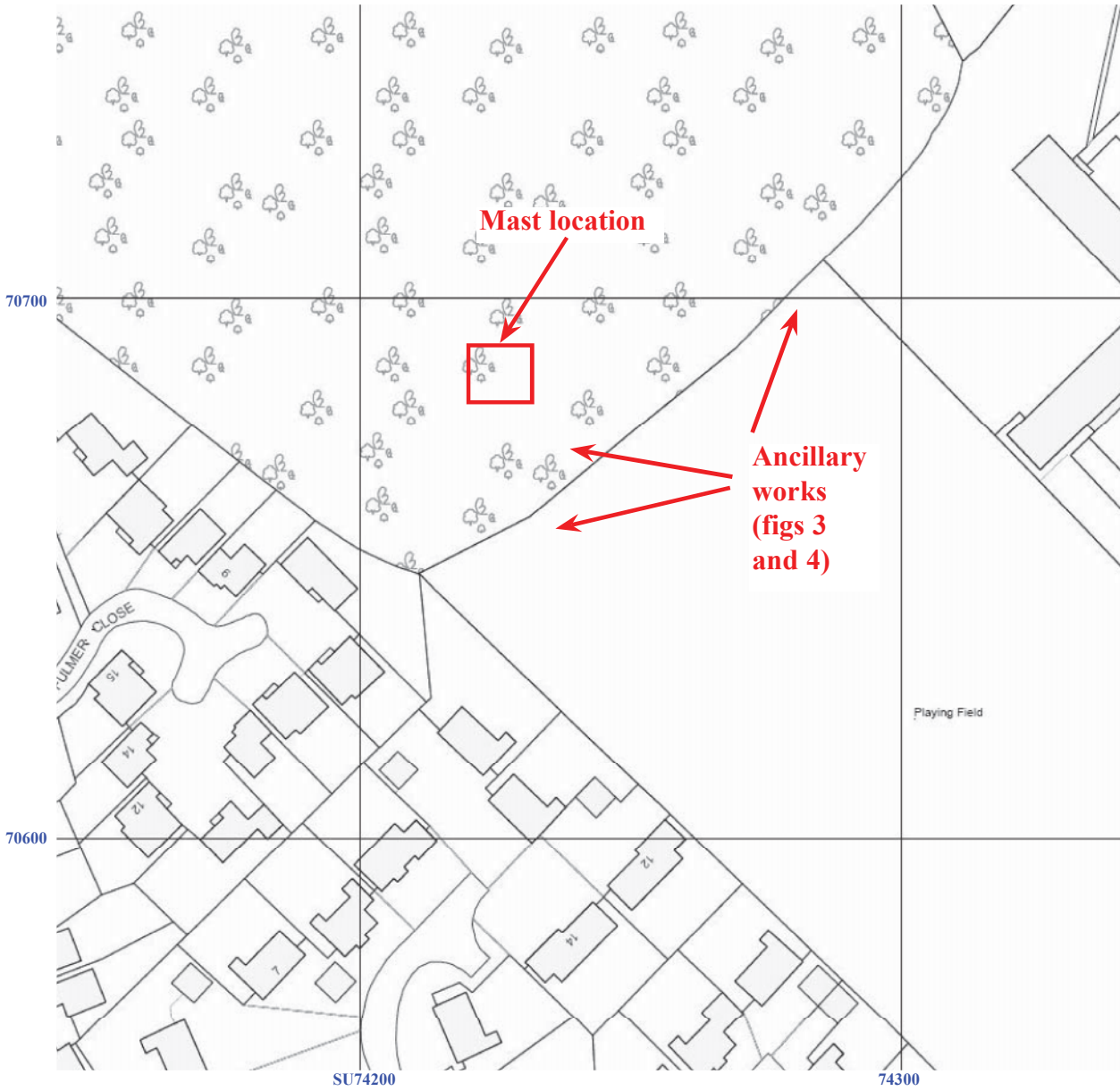


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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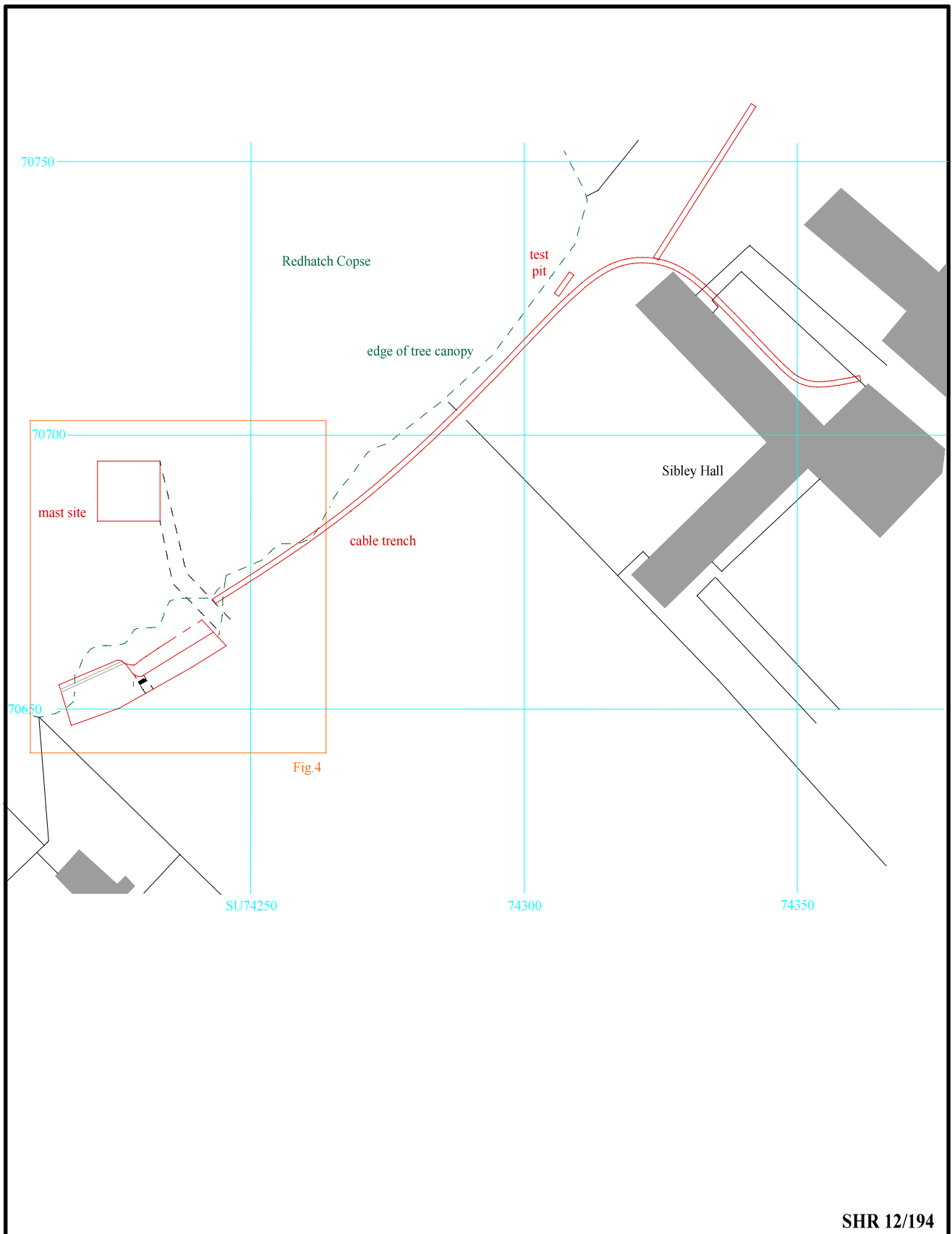
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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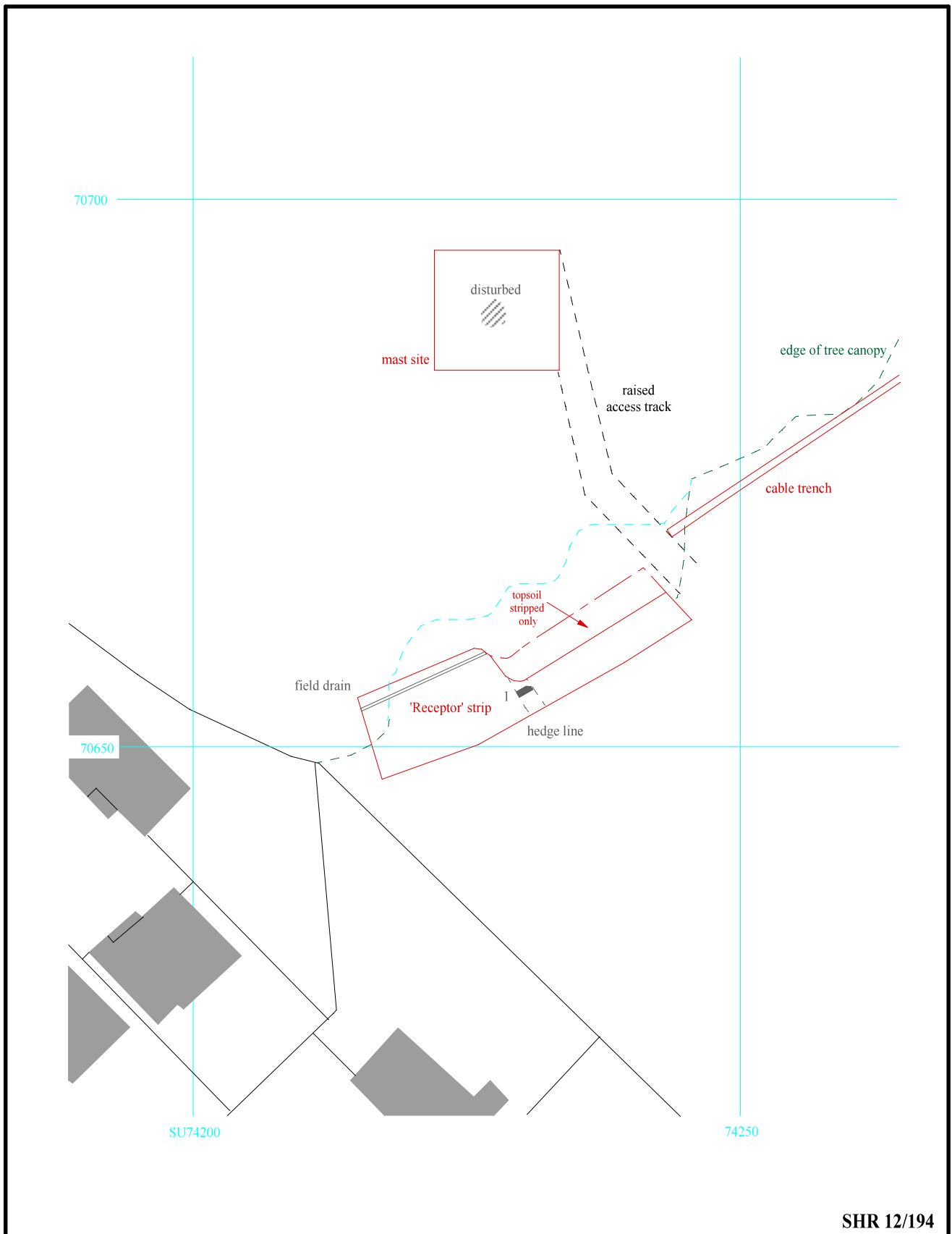


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Figure 3. Location of cable trench.



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Figure 4. Location of mast and receptor stripped areas.



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Plate 1. General view of area stripped for mast location, looking south east.



Plate 2. General route of cable trench, looking north east towards Sibley Hall.

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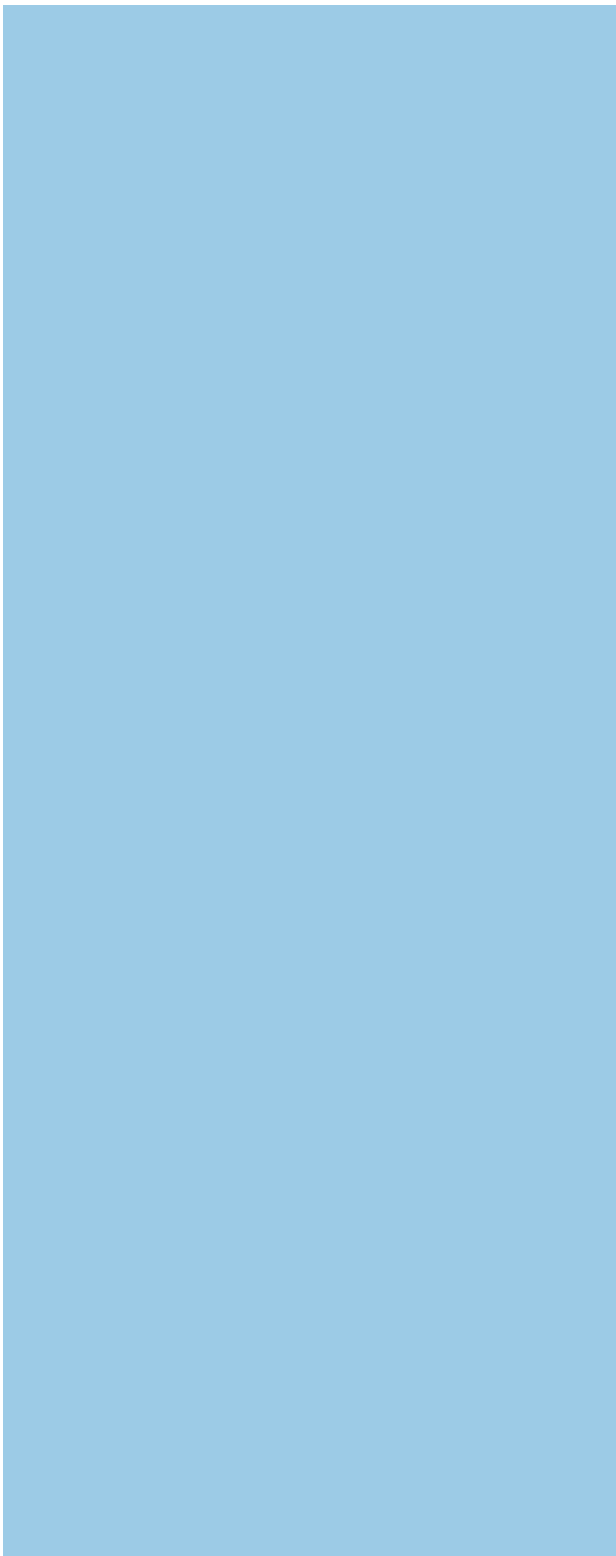
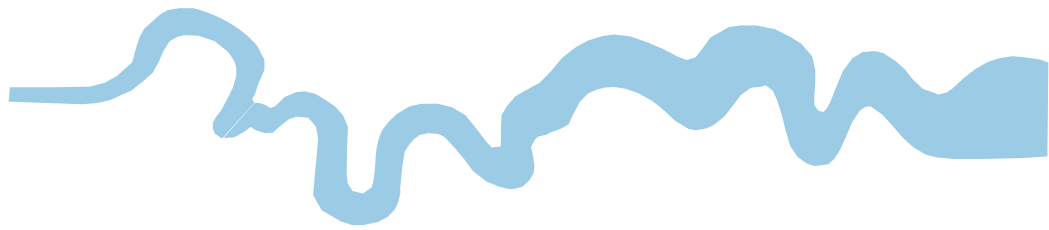
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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