

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street,
Eton, Windsor, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Weale and Susan Porter

Site Code: RBE10/23

(SU 9660 7725)

**Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street,
Eton, Windsor, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Bewley Homes Plc

by Andrew Weale and Susan Porter
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code RBE 10/23

February 2013

Summary

Site name: Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9660 7725

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 16th-21st January 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Andrew Weale and Susan Porter

Site code: RBE 10/23

Area of site: 0.2ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed the archaeological potential of the site. Late post-medieval make-up layers up to about 1m in depth were encountered across the site. These overlay a small number of cut features and a possible surface of certain and probable medieval date along with a peat filled palaeochannel. Reclamation deposits and waterfront structures were conspicuous by their absence. The site is therefore considered to have some archaeological potential but that this is deeply buried by relatively recent made ground.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 12.02.13
	Steve Preston ✓ 12.02.13

Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale and Susan Porter

Report 10/23b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire SU 9660 7725 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Parks, for Bewley Homes Plc. Inhurst House, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, Hampshire, RG26 5JJ.

Planning permission (app nos 11/02769/FUL and 12/02607/FUL) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of new apartments, houses and a new boathouse following demolition of the existing boathouse complex. The consent includes a condition (14) relating to archaeology, requiring a phased programme of archaeological investigation prior to development. This was to take the form initially, of evaluation by means of trial trenching, based on the results of which, further mitigation measures might be required.

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. It is acknowledged that the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) has since superseded PPS5. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, Susan Porter and David Platt, between 16th and 21st January 2013 and the site code is RBE 10/23. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north bank of the River Thames at Eton, overlooked by Windsor Castle and Windsor on the south bank, with Windsor Bridge a short distance to the east (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Brocas Street to the north and Brocas Meadow to the west (Fig. 2). The site previously comprised several boathouses belonging to Eton College (Pl. 1) most of which had been demolished by the time of the evaluation. The River House was still standing and is to be renovated rather than demolished. The site is located on Quaternary drift flood-plain gravel (BGS 1981), and lies at a height of approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been detailed in a desk-based assessment for the project (Hopkins 2010). In summary the site lies within an area of Eton that is considered to be of high archaeological potential. Eton has Saxon origins and developed alongside Windsor (Preston 2005). Eton is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002) but is better recorded from the 13th century. Extensive excavation to the east on the same side of the river at King Stable Street revealed occupation deposits and timber revetment of the river and reclamation from the 12th century (Blinkhorn and Pugh 2000).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if reclamation and river management deposits were present on the site and if so from when did they date? and
- to determine the depth at which any archaeologically significant deposits lie in order to inform the development of a foundation design that will enable preservation in-situ to be achieved if possible.

It was proposed to dig 4 trenches, each 8m long and 1.6–2m wide, following demolition of the existing structures. The trenches were to be targeted within the footprint of the new structures. Overburden was to be removed by a 360° type machine equipped with a ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were suspected the stripped areas were to be cleaned using hand tools and a metal detector was to be used to on the trench floors and spoil heaps.

Results

Three trenches were dug as intended, although moved slightly in order to avoid services (Fig. 3). A change to the planning application (app no 12/02607/FUL) for renovation rather than demolition of River House meant that no new foundations would be required for the latter and so, in consultation with Ms MacDonald, it was decided that the excavation of a fourth trench was not required. The excavated trenches ranged in length from 8.00–8.20m and in depth from 1.02m to 2.14m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of all excavated features forms Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4 and 5, Pls 2–4)

Trench 1 was aligned broadly north-east – south-west and was 8.10m long, 1.01m deep at the eastern end and 2.14m deep at the western end. The stratigraphy varied either side of a modern foundation slot (6) which was observed towards the eastern end. At the eastern end multiple thin layers were observed (50–54) as detailed in Appendix 1 and Figure 5 which were of late post-medieval (19th-century) date. These overlay a possible surface (55) comprising firm light yellow grey chalky clay 0.05m deep.

Because of the presence of surface 55 the lowest levels of this part of the trench were only explored by a sondage which was 0.5m across and 0.2m deep (Pl. 3, Fig. 5). Below the possible surface (55) lay 0.15m of brown grey silty clay (56) with infrequent rounded 10–15mm gravel inclusions, containing a single sherd of medieval pottery. This layer overlay light yellow brown silty sand which is considered to be the natural geology.

At the western end of the trench the stratigraphy again comprised multiple thin layers (57–68) with a variety of artefacts datable to the 19th century. Brick/tile was recovered from layer 57; four complete ink bottles and clinker came from layer 58 with another ink bottle from layer 60. Further brick/tile came from layer 62 and layer 65 was a deposit of mortar.

The lowest layer of this sequence (68) was notably chalky. It overlay a 0.84m thick layer of sticky dark blue grey silty clay (69) with infrequent rounded gravel which in turn overlay a peat-filled channel or large ditch (5) cut into an unexcavated layer of dark blue grey silty clay (88). Ditch or palaeochannel 5 was 3.2m wide but was not bottomed. Its upper fill was a firm, very dark brown peat (70) which contained several pieces of animal bone including a horse skull, wood fragments and a piece of tile.

The modern foundation slot (6) towards the eastern end of the trench had been robbed out. It was 0.85m wide and deeper than 2.00m and filled with loose light yellow grey clayey sand and concrete pieces (87). Two concrete pads were also observed to the immediate west of the cut (Fig. 3).

Trench 2 (Figs 3, 4 and 6)

Trench 2 was aligned roughly north–south and was 8.2m long and 1.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m loose dark brown grey silty clay made ground (71) with frequent brick and tile and moderate gravel inclusions, overlying 0.10m of loose yellow brown sandy gravel (72), which in turn overlay 0.30m brown yellow silty clay (73) with infrequent gravel inclusions, overlying 0.60m of dark blue grey silty clay (74), which in turn overlay blue grey sandy clay (89) at the base of the trench. An undated gully (4) was recorded which was 0.46m wide and 0.17m deep and filled with light blue grey silty clay (86). It was cut through layer 89 and sealed by 74.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 6, Pls 5 and 6)

Trench 3 was aligned broadly east–west and was 8.0m long and 1.02m deep. Multiple layers of post medieval date were again observed (75–82) as detailed in Appendix 1 and Figure 6. Layer 78 contained an 18th century coin. These layers overly firm dark yellow brown silty clay (90) likely to be natural geology at the base of the trench.

Three features were recorded on the base of the Trench 3. A shallow gully (1) was 0.50m wide and 0.10m deep and filled with firm mid-dark yellow brown silty clay (83) from which eleven sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Pit (2), truncated by gully (1) was 0.15m in diameter and 0.10m deep and filled with firm mid yellow brown silty clay (84) from which no finds were recovered. A possible posthole (3) was 0.25m in diameter and 0.10m deep and filled with similar firm mid yellow brown silty clay (85), from which two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 35 sherds with a total weight of 3,548g. It was all earlier medieval or 19th century in date. The following pottery types were noted:

EMW: Medieval Sandy ware, Late 11th–14th century? Dense sub-rounded white, grey and clear quartz up to 0.5 mm. 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). 6 sherds, 87g.

SS: Shelly-sandy ware, early/mid 12th – early 13th century (Blackmore and Pearce 2010). Moderate shell fragments and fine sand, some sherds contain sparse to moderate amounts of flint and iron. Full range of early medieval vessel types. 2 sherds, 22g.

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 (op. cit. Mellor 1994, 86). Known at numerous sites in south Oxfordshire and Berkshire. 2 sherds, 39g.

LOND: London ware c. 1150-1350 (Pearce *et al.*, 1985). 1 sherd, 5g. Sandy ware, common throughout the Home Counties, and in small quantities at more distant locations The jug was by far the most common form, and these were often highly decorated. 4 sherds, 193g.

GRE: Glazed Red Earthenware, 16th – 19th century. Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century. 1 sherd, 33g.

LES: Late English Stoneware. 1800 onwards. Hard, grey fabric, often with a brown, iron-rich exterior wash. Range of utilitarian vessels such as blacking-bottles, flagons, etc.. 7 sherds, 2,386g.

MOD: Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares. Mass-produced white earthenwares, flowerpots, etc. 13 sherds, 788g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. The medieval pottery is generally in good condition, and is fairly typical of assemblages from sites in Eton (e.g. Blinkhorn 2000). The range of fabric types present suggests that the medieval activity lasted from around the late 11th to the mid 13th century but no later. Certainly, common mid-13th and later pottery types, such as Surrey

Whiteware (Pearce and Vince 1988), are absent. The sherds of London Ware from context 83 include two strap handles with thickened edges from glazed jugs which are typical late-12th century products of the industry (Pearce *et al.* 1985, 26). The sherd from context 56 is from the body of a glazed jug with thin applied strips in a white-firing clay, and an all-over white slip. This 'North French' style of decoration dates to the first half of the 13th century (Pearce *et al.* 1985, . 131).

The 19th century material is dominated by stoneware bottles, probably for boot-blackening, and fragments of Maling marmalade jars, along with a few pieces of white tableware, and flower-pots. It appears entirely of a domestic nature.

Coin by Susan Porter

A single copper coin 28mm in diameter and 1.5mm thick weighing 8g was recovered from deposit 78 in trench 3, the obverse is worn but the legend GEORGIVS III REX can be made out with a laureate cuirassed bust facing right. The reverse is very heavily worn however it depicts a seated Britannia facing left holding a spray and spear with ornamental shield by her side with the simple legend BRITANNIA. In the is exergue a date of 1774. Although minted relatively early in the reign of George III the heavy wear to both sides of the coin indicate an extended period of circulation prior to loss.

Bone by Ceri Falys

A small amount of animal bone was recovered from a single context, peat layer 70 in channel or ditch 5 (Trench 1). A total of 20 pieces of bone were present for analysis, weighing 2418g (Appendix 5). The overall preservation of the remains was excellent, with minimal amounts of fragmentation and cortical bone surface damage noted. Initial analysis roughly sorted elements into categories based on size, not by species, into one of three categories. Horse and cow are represented by the 'large' size category, sheep/goat and pigs are represented in the 'medium' size category; no bones were designated to the 'small' category.

A minimum of two individuals were present within the assemblage: one large and one medium sized animal. The large animal was identified as a horse, by the presence of a nearly complete cranium, first cervical vertebra (atlas), left innominate (hip blade), four left ribs, a right talus, and a phalanx. The medium animal was identified as a sheep/goat, through the presence of a single horn core, a portion of left scapula, two distal ends of metacarpals and a phalanx. No evidence of butchery practices were identified (i.e. cut marks), and no further information could be derived from this small assemblage of animal bone.

Conclusion

The evaluation has documented the stratigraphic development of this riverside site. Unsurprisingly, the uppermost levels in all three trenches comprised multiple layers of made ground, all of which were of 18th and 19th century date. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed in the uppermost 1m of the deposits on the site. Beneath this level, deposits of certain and probable archaeological interest were revealed, with medieval remains recorded in Trench 3 comprising a small gully and posthole of late 12th and 11th century date respectively. Trench 2 revealed a gully at approximately the same depth and with similar fill, but the latter did not contain any dating evidence. Cut features were absent from Trench 1 but possible floor or consolidation layers also tentatively ascribed a medieval date were present at the base of the post-medieval made ground deposits, along with a probable palaeochannel infilled with peat into which animal bone had been dumped.

It had been considered that in this location deposits and structures representing waterfront facilities or land reclamation deposits might have been encountered but, apart from the late post-medieval make-up layers, these distinctive features were absent.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at South or West end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	8.10	1.80	2.14	<p>Eastern End: 0–0.22m Dark grey brown made ground with brick and tile, (50) 0.22–0.37m mid yellow grey sandy gravel, (51) 0.37–0.52m mid yellow grey sandy clay, (52) 0.52–0.58m light grey brown sandy gravel with chalk, (53) 0.58–0.83m mid grey silty sand, (54) 0.83–0.88m light yellow grey chalk (55), 0.88–1.03m mid brown grey clay, (56) 1.01+m light yellow brown silty sand natural geology.</p> <p>Western End: 0–0.15m Dark grey brown made ground with brick and tile, (57) 0.15–0.30m dark yellow brown mixed cinder and gravel, (58) 0.30–0.52m mid grey brown clay made ground, (59) 0.52–0.57m mid yellow brown sandy gravel, (60) 0.57–0.61m mid yellow grey mixed gravel and cinder, (61) 0.61–0.65m mixed dark brown grey sandy clay with brick and tile, (62) 0.65–0.75m mid grey yellow sandy clay, (63) 0.75–0.80m mid yellow brown sandy gravel, (64) 0.80–0.84m light yellow grey mortar, (65) 0.84–0.93m dark red brown sandy clay, (66) 0.93–1.10m mid blue grey silty clay, (67) 1.10 – 1.20m light yellow grey chalk, (68) 1.20–2.04m sticky dark blue grey silty clay, (69) 2.04–2.14m (88) (55) possible surface, [5] possible ditch or Palaeochannel, [6] modern foundation slot. [Pls 2–4]</p>
2	8.20	1.80	1.20	<p>0–0.20m Dark brown grey silty clay made ground, (71) 0.20–0.30m mid yellow brown sandy gravel, (72) 0.30–0.60m mid brown yellow clay, (73) 0.60–1.20m dark blue grey silty clay, (74) 1.20+m mid blue grey sandy clay, (89)</p> <p>Features: Ditch [4]</p>
3	8.00	1.80	1.02	<p>0–0.08m mid yellow grey sandy clay made ground, (75) 0.08–0.16m dark brown sandy clay made ground, (76) 0.16–0.55m dark brown grey silty clay, (77) 0.55–0.63m mid yellow brown sandy clay, (78) 0.63–0.69m light yellow grey gravely sand, (79) 0.69–0.89m light-mid grey yellow sandy clay, (80) 0.89–0.98m light-mid grey yellow clay with chalk, (81) 0.98–1.02m light-mid grey yellow clay (82) 1.02+m dark yellow brown silty clay. (90)</p> <p>Features: Gully [1] pit [2] posthole [3] [Pls 5–6]</p>

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

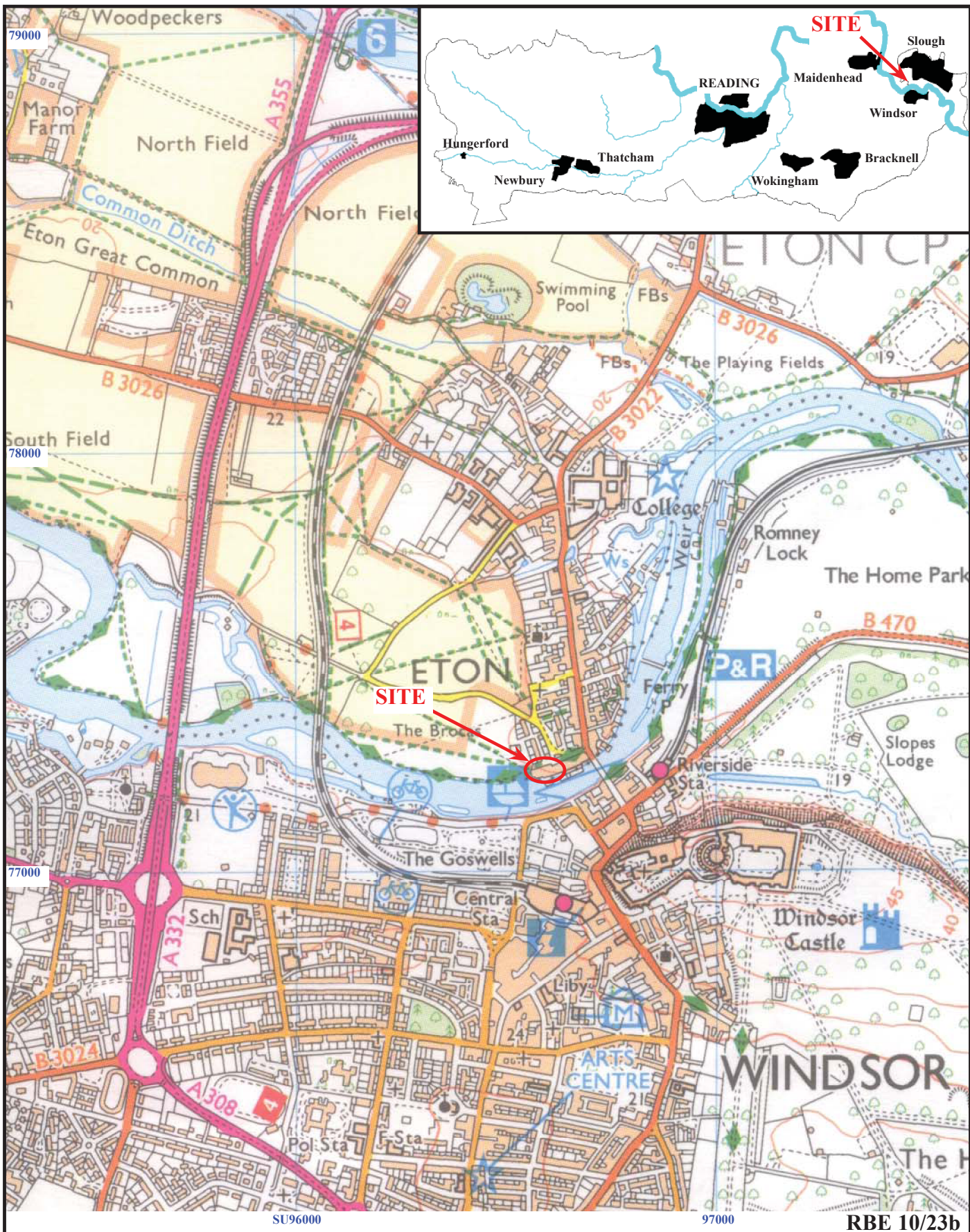
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1		55	Possible chalk surface		None
3	1	83	Gully	Late 12th Century	Pot
3	2	84	Pit		None
3	3	85	Posthole	Late 11th Century	Pot
2	4	86	Gully		None
1	5	70	Ditch/ Palaeochannel		None
1	6	87	Foundation	Modern	Concrete

APPENDIX 3: Pottery catalogue

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	EMW		SS		M40		LOND		GRE		LES		MOD	
		<i>Context</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>
		56	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
1		58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1674	2	46
1		59	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	33	2	712	11	742
3	1	83	4	79	2	22	2	39	3	186	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	3	85	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total	6	87	2	22	2	39	4	193	1	33	7	2386	13	788

APPENDIX 4: Inventory of animal bone

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No. of Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Unidentifiable</i>
1	70	20	2418	10	7	3
MNI		-	-	1 (horse)	1 (sheep/goat)	-



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Figure 1. Location of site within Eton and Berkshire.

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**Former Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton,
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Brocas Street.

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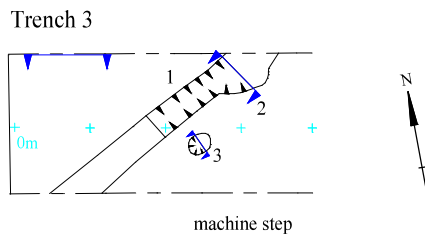
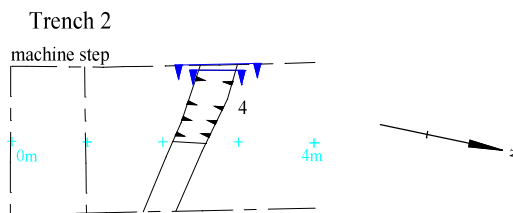
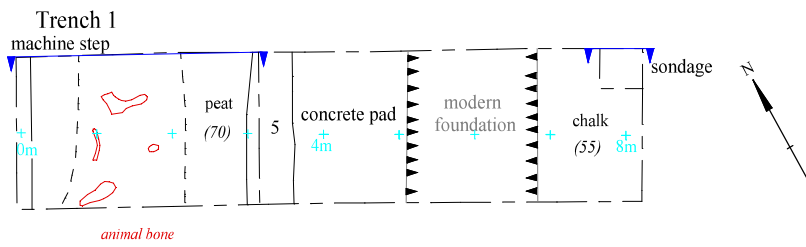


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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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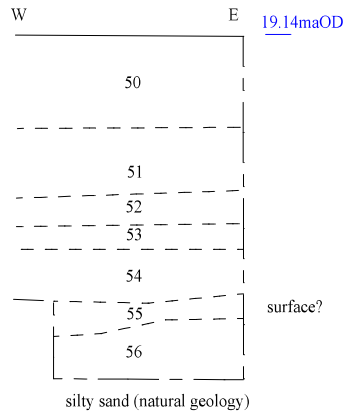
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

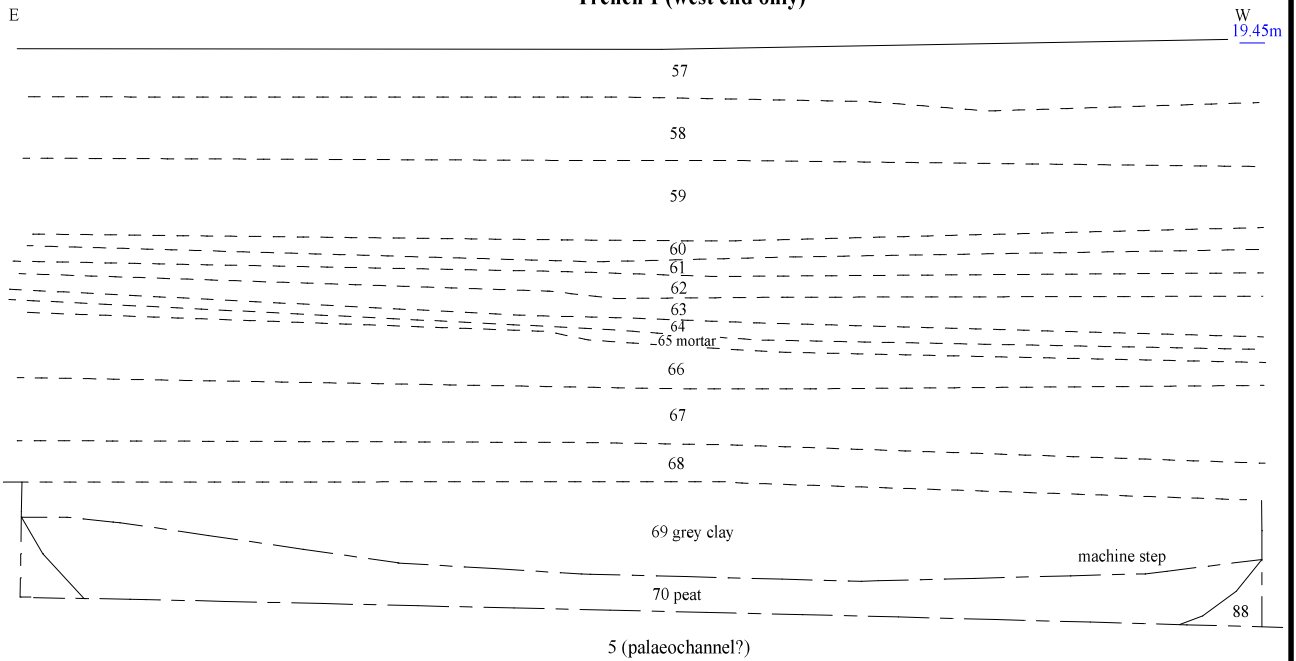


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Trench 1 Eastern end sondage



Trench 1 (west end only)



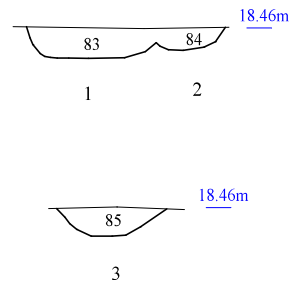
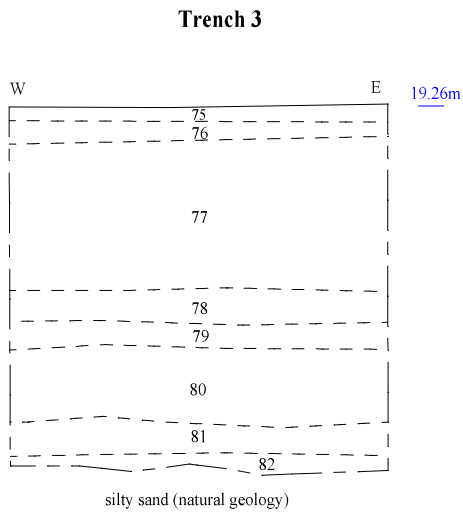
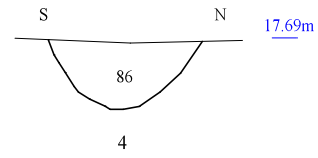
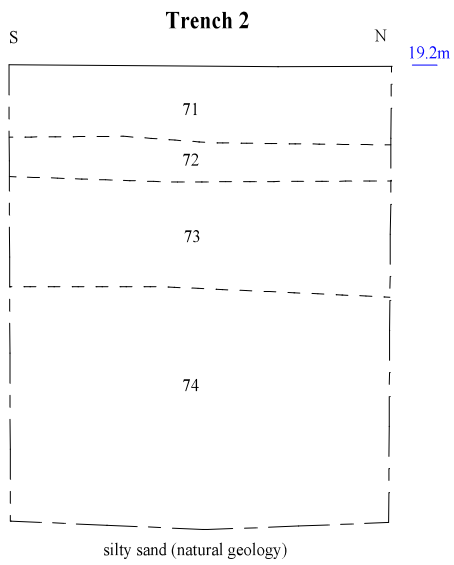
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Figure 5. Sections Trench 1.



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Figure 6. Sections, Trenches 2 and 3.



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Plate 1. Location of site on the riverside, looking north west.



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

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 1, section looking north, Scale: 2m.



Plate 4. Trench 1, detail of sondage looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 4. Trench 3, representative section looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 3, gully 1 and posthole 3 looking north east, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.

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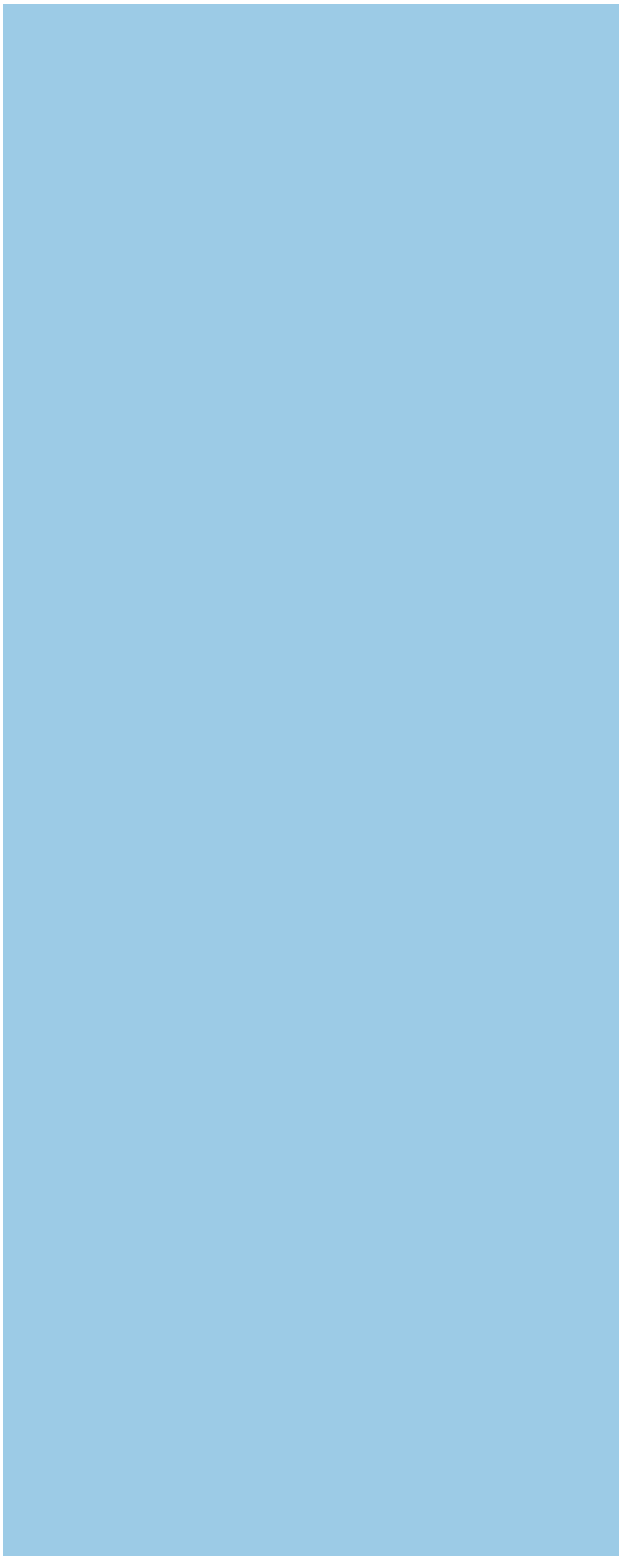
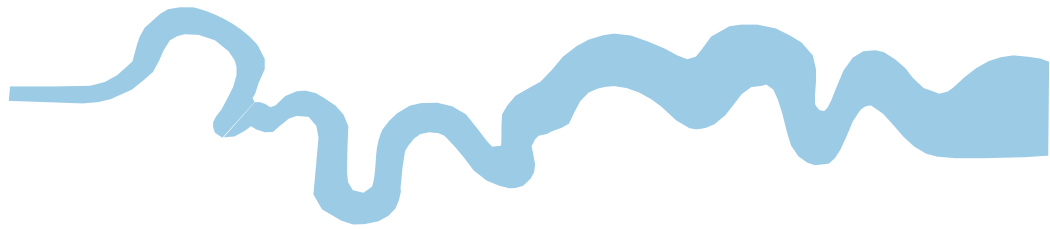
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Plates 5 and 6.

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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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