

**Bucknell House, The Old Lane, Coley,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**For The Keen Partnership**

By Danielle Colls

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BHC 06/13

**April 2006**

## Summary

**Site name:** Bucknell House, The Old Lane, Coley, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7055 7210

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 20th April 2006

**Project manager:** Joanna Pine

**Site supervisor:** Danielle Colls

**Site code:** BHC 06/13

**Area of site:** c.500 sq m

**Summary of results:** No archaeological features or deposits were encountered, though a struck flint flake of prehistoric date was recovered from spoil.

**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 06/13**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Bucknell House, The Old Lane, Coley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7055 7210) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Chris Keen of The Keen Partnership, The Courtyard, Edinburgh Road, Reading RG30 2UA

Planning consent (05/01101/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council to demolish the existing building on site and replace it with new houses and associated car parking, subject to a condition relating to archaeology. This required that prior investigation of the site was undertaken with a view to characterising any archaeological remains present on site. This report documents the results of that investigation.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, who advises the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Colls and Natasha Bennett on the 20th April 2006 and the site code is BHC 06/13. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site comprises a triangular parcel of land on the east side of Old Lane, Coley, which lies in the south western outskirts of Reading, c.100m to the north of the Holy Brook, a tributary of the River Kennet (Fig. 2). The site was occupied by a large building (Bucknell House, now demolished) and associated car parking. The underlying geology consists of Reading Beds bordered by Plateau Gravel to the north and Upper Chalk to the south (BGS 1971). The site lies at a height of c.50m AOD, on an incline which continues toward the Holy Brook to the south.

## **Archaeological background**

In summary, the site is located on the margins of the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley, in an area where a wide variety of sites and finds have previously been located – particularly dating from the Roman period (Lobb

and Rose 1996). In addition to this a Saxon pottery sherd was found just to the south of the site during an investigation of the former course of the Holy Brook, as well as a wooden stake with a radiocarbon date centred on 700AD (Terry 1997).

## **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.

Specific aims of the evaluation were;

- a) To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
- b) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- c) To determine if any Roman or Saxon occupation is present on the site.

Three trenches were dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to remove topsoil/subsoil and any modern overburden present. They were dug under constant archaeological supervision and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

## **Results**

The three trenches were dug between 11m and 15m in length and 1.6m wide and were located to avoid the area of the cellar of Bucknell House and any associated modern truncations and services.

### **Trench 1** (Plate 1, Fig. 2)

This trench was 11.20m long and varied in depth from 1.5m to 1.20m deep, aligned N-S. The stratigraphy of this trench was 0.05m of Tarmac which overlay 0.30m of concrete and made ground (pale pink scalpings) at the north end. At the south end this layer measured 0.20m thick. This overlay a brown sandy silt subsoil 0.73m thick at the north and 0.60m thick at the south end. The underlying geology was a mottled red brown and yellow sand with occasional yellowish clay patches, with a higher proportion of clay at the south end. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in this trench. An irregular area of modern disturbance due to a storm drain truncated the trench for approximately half its width from 4m to 11.20m. Due to the presence of a foul water sewer to the south, Trench 1 was shorter than planned and Trench 2 was extended to compensate for this.

### Trench 2 (Plate 2, Figs. 2 and 3)

This trench was 18.00m long. It was 1.16m deep and was aligned SE-NW. It showed stratigraphy of 0.26m of topsoil which overlay a red/brown sandy clay loam subsoil 0.80m thick. This in turn overlay the geology, which was a mottled brown/red and yellow clayey sand with yellow/grey clay patches with very occasional flint pebbles. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in this trench.

### Trench 3 ( Fig. 2)

This trench was 15.00m long and 1m deep, and was aligned SE-NW. The stratigraphy of this trench was 0.30m of topsoil overlying a grey/brown sandy clay silt. This in turn overlay a mottled light/red yellow clayey sand geology, with bands of blue-green and grey clay and reddish sandy clay. One struck flint flake was recovered from the spoil from this trench.

## **Finds**

### *Struck flint* by Steve Ford

One struck flint flake was recovered from Trench 3. It is an extensively edge-damaged and broken flake It is not closely datable but is likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

## **Conclusion**

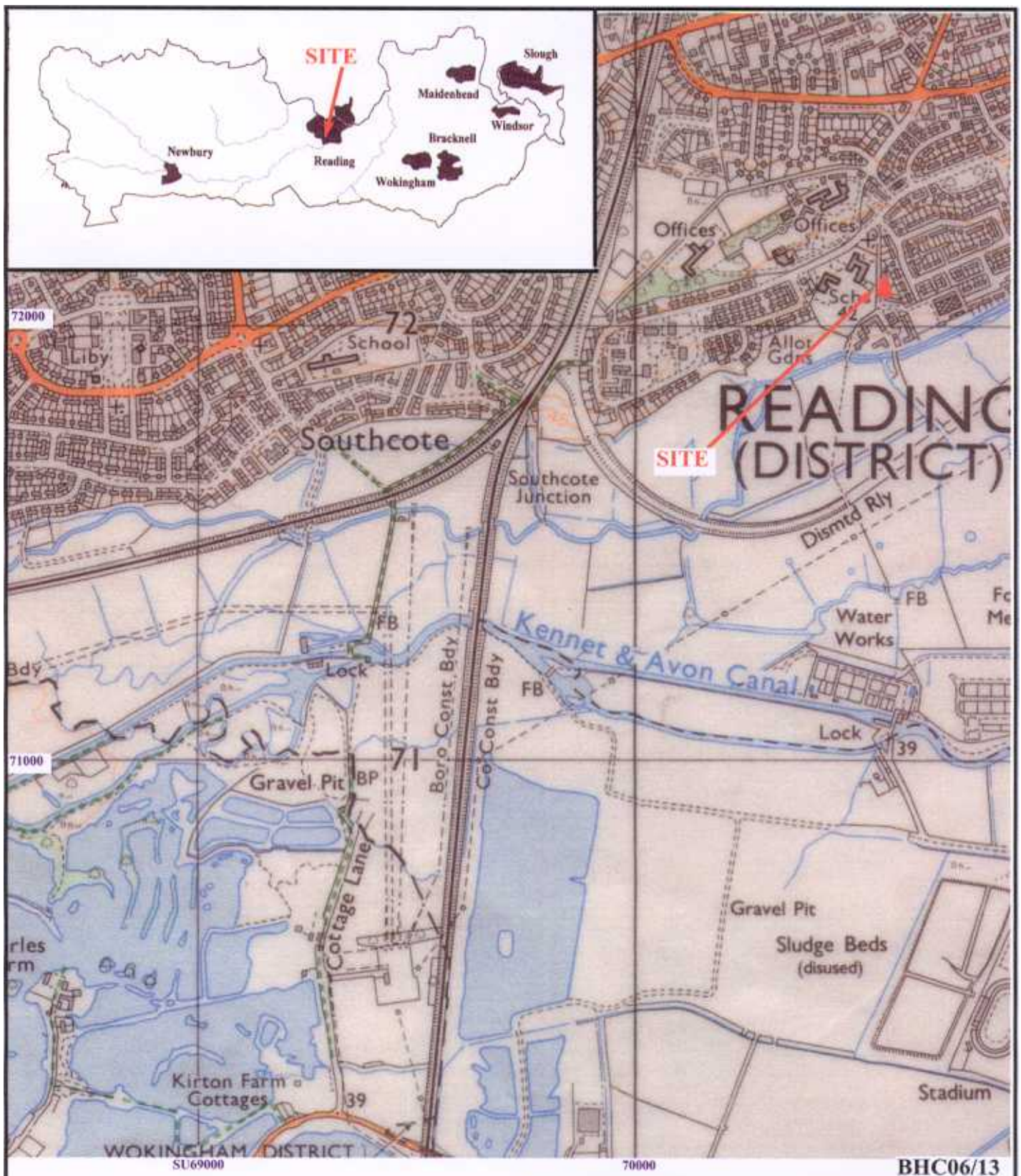
Despite the potential for archaeology in the area, no archaeological features or deposits were observed. The stratigraphy suggests the underlying geology of the area is relatively undisturbed. The presence of a flint flake suggests some prehistoric activity in the general area, but cannot be seen to prove that there was prehistoric activity on this specific site. The site does not appear to have any archaeological potential.

## **References**

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- Terry, J, 1997, 'Coley Park Farm', in J Hawkes and P J Fasham (eds), *Excavations on Readings Waterfront Sites, 1978-1988*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 5, Salisbury, 59–61
- English Heritage 1991, *Exploring our past*. English Heritage, London.
- English Heritage 1997, Research Agenda (Draft, 8th April), Archaeology Division, English Heritage, London.
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details****0m at S or SE end**

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	11.20	1.60	1.15 (S) 1.20(N)	South end: 0-0.05m Tarmac; 0.05m-0.20m concrete and made ground; 0.20m-0.70m brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.7m+ natural geology. North end: 0-0.05m Tarmac; 0.05m-0.35m concrete and made ground; 0.35m-1.08m brown sandy silt subsoil; 1.08m+ natural geology [ <b>Plate 1</b> ].
2	18.00	1.60	1.16	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26m-1.06m red brown sandy clay subsoil; 1.06m+ natural geology [ <b>Plate 2</b> ].
3	15.00	1.60	1.00	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.90m grey brown sandy clay silt subsoil; 0.9m+ natural geology



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An archaeological evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Coley and  
Berkshire.

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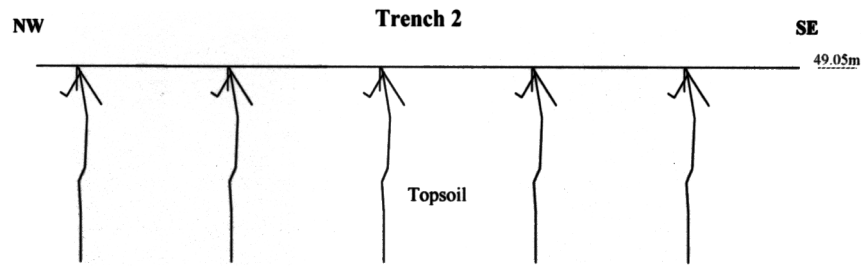
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## Bucknell House, The Old Lane, Coley, Berkshire, 2006



Figure 2. Location of trenches within the site.

# Bucknell House, The Old Lane, Coley, Berkshire, 2006



Sandy clay silt subsoil

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Natural clay sand  
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Figure 3. Representative Section



Plate 1. Trench looking north, horizontal scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking south-east, horizontal scales: 2m and 1m