THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Land to the rear of 88-96 Lower Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: LHC12/90

(SU 7280 7510)

Land to the rear of 88-96 Lower Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for TA Fisher & Sons Ltd

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Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LHC 12/90

June 2013

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of 88-96 Lower Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7280 7505

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 24th–25th September 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: LHC 12/90

Area of site: 0.3ha

Summary of results: Ten trenches were excavated, no deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

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.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 12.06.13
	Steve Preston✓ 12.06.13

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An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 12/90

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land to the rear of 88-96 Lower Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire SU 7280 7505 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Simon Haskett, for TA Fisher & Sons Ltd, Windmill House, Victoria Road, Mortimer, Berkshire, RG12 3DF.

A planning consent (09/01411/REM) has been granted by Reading Borough Council to construct housing on a *c*.0.3ha parcel of land to the rear of Lower Henley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire. The consent gained is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires a field evaluation to be carried out prior to groundworks.

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. It is acknowledged that both PPG16 and *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010) have been superseded by *the National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary Neale, Archaeological Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology, and monitored by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Senior Archaeologist with Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter and Aidan Colyer on 24th–25th September 2012 and the site code is LHC 12/90. 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 is located in the district of Caversham to the north-east of central Reading and north of the River Thames (Fig. 1). The site lies towards the base of steeply sloping ground to the south of Lower Henley Road (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is recorded as Valley Gravel bordering Loam to the north and Alluvium to the south (BGS 1947), and Valley Gravel was observed in all of the trenches with more silt present to the south of the southernmost trenches. The height above Ordnance Datum varies from 38.5m at the northern end of the site and 36.4m at the southern extent. The site is currently formed from parts of several rear gardens and an area of

concreted land possibly used as for car maintenance all of which are heavily overgrown. Boundary fences remain in place and two sheds are present in the centre of the site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the margins of the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide variety of finds recorded in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record of prehistoric, Roman and medieval dates. For example, to the north-west fieldwork recorded a medieval ditch along with prehistoric struck flints, and to the north-east a large volume of Roman pottery was recorded, probably indicative of an occupation site nearby. Fieldwork at a site on Lower Henley Road located a pit with late medieval pottery, several flint flakes, and sherds of later Bronze Age and Iron Age/ Roman pottery.

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. 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 have survived on this site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

to determine if there are prehistoric or Roman deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig twelve trenches, each 1.6m wide and 10m long targeting the areas of the new buildings and access road. A contingency of 20m of trench was included within the proposal should it be required to clarify initial findings.

Topsoil and overburden was to be removed by a JCB-type machine equipped with a ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels under archaeological supervision. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds. Where deposits of possible archaeological interest were encountered they were to be cleaned up and excavated by hand.

Results

Ten trenches were eventually excavated. A reduction in the extent of the development area led to the reduction in the need for one trench located in that zone. A second trench would have been located in an area of thick concrete. However, other trenches were lengthened to compensate for the loss of the latter trench. The trenches ranged in length from 9.50m to 16m and in depth from 0.40m–0.74m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1-4 and 10 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1)

Trenches 1-4 and 10 were aligned NW–SE and ranged between 10.20m and 11.60m in length and 0.40–0.65m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of between 0.15–0.20m of topsoil and 0.17–0.40m heavily rooted mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil overlying mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology. In Trenches 2 and 4 the natural geology was more silty to the south. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trenches 5 and 7

Trenches 5 and 7 were aligned roughly east–west and were respectively 9.50m and 10.60m in length and 0.55m and 0.74m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m disturbed topsoil and 0.20–0.34m mixed clayey gravel sand made ground, overlying 0.10–0.15m dark grey mixed sandy clay which in turn overlay 0.05–0.11m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil, above mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned NW–SE and measured 10m in length and 0.66m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m disturbed topsoil and 0.26m mixed clay gravel sand made ground, overlying 0.09m pale yellowish sandy gravel made ground which in turn overlay 0.15m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil, above mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology. Modern truncation was observed at 6.80–8.20m. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 8 (Pl. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned roughly north–south and measured 10.40m in length and 0.70m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m disturbed topsoil and 0.15m light yellow red sandy made ground, overlying 0.30m disturbed

mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil, above mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was aligned approximately east–west and measured 16m in length and 0.50m in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m disturbed topsoil and 0.25m dark sandy clay rubble mix, overlying 0.13m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil above mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology. A modern drain capped with concrete was observed between 0.80–3.20m and cables were observed between 5.40–9m with a soakaway from 9–11.20m. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Conclusion

Although the site lies within an area considered to be of high archaeological potential, none of the trenches revealed any archaeological deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest. At least two of the trenches in the middle area of the site had been extensively disturbed in modern times. On the basis of these results, the site has no archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1947, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63600, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment,* The Stationery Office, Norwich

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	11.60	1.60	0.50	0 - 0.15m topsoil; 0.15 - 0.40m mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil; 0.40m+ mid red brown sandy clay subsoil with frequent stones, natural geology.
2	10.20	1.60	0.47	0 - 0.17m topsoil; 0.17 - 0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones, more silty towards the southern end, natural geology. A test pit was dug at the southern end.
3	11.60	1.60	0.40	0 - 0.15m topsoil; 0.15 - 0.32m subsoil; 0.32m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 1]**
4	10.50	1.60	0.42	0 - 0.16m topsoil; 0.16 - 0.34m subsoil; 0.34m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones, more silty towards the southern end, natural geology.
5	9.50	1.60	0.74	0 - 0.10m disturbed topsoil; 0.10 - 0.44m mixed clayey gravel; 0.45 - 0.50m dark grey (possible contamination) mixed clayey gravel; 0.50 - 0.61m mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil; 0.61m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones natural geology, with staining.
6	10.00	1.60	0.66	0 - 0.10m disturbed topsoil; 0.10 - 0.36m mixed clay gravel sand made ground; 0.30 - 0.45m pale sandy gravel made ground; 0.45 - 0.60m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil; 0.60m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones, natural geology. Modern truncation at 6.80 – 8.20m.
7	10.60	1.60	0.55	0 - 0.10m disturbed topsoil; 0.10 - 0.30m mixed clay gravel sand made ground; 0.36 - 0.45m dark mixed sandy clay gravel made ground with brick/tile; 0.45 - 0.50m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil; 0.50m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones, natural geology.
8	10.40	1.60	0.70	0 - 0.10m disturbed topsoil; 0.10 - 0.25m light yellow red sandy made ground; 0.25 - 0.55m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil; 0.55m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 2]**
9	16.00	1.60	0.50	0 - 0.12m disturbed topsoil; 0.12 - 0.37m dark sandy clay rubble subsoil mix; 0.37 - 0.50m disturbed mid greyish brown sandy clay with frequent medium stones subsoil with heavy truncation; 0.50m+ mid red brown sandy clay with frequent stones, natural geology with heavy truncation, modern drain and cabling.
10	10.20	1.60	0.65	0 - 0.20m topsoil; 0.20 - 0.60m subsoil; 0.60m+ natural geology.

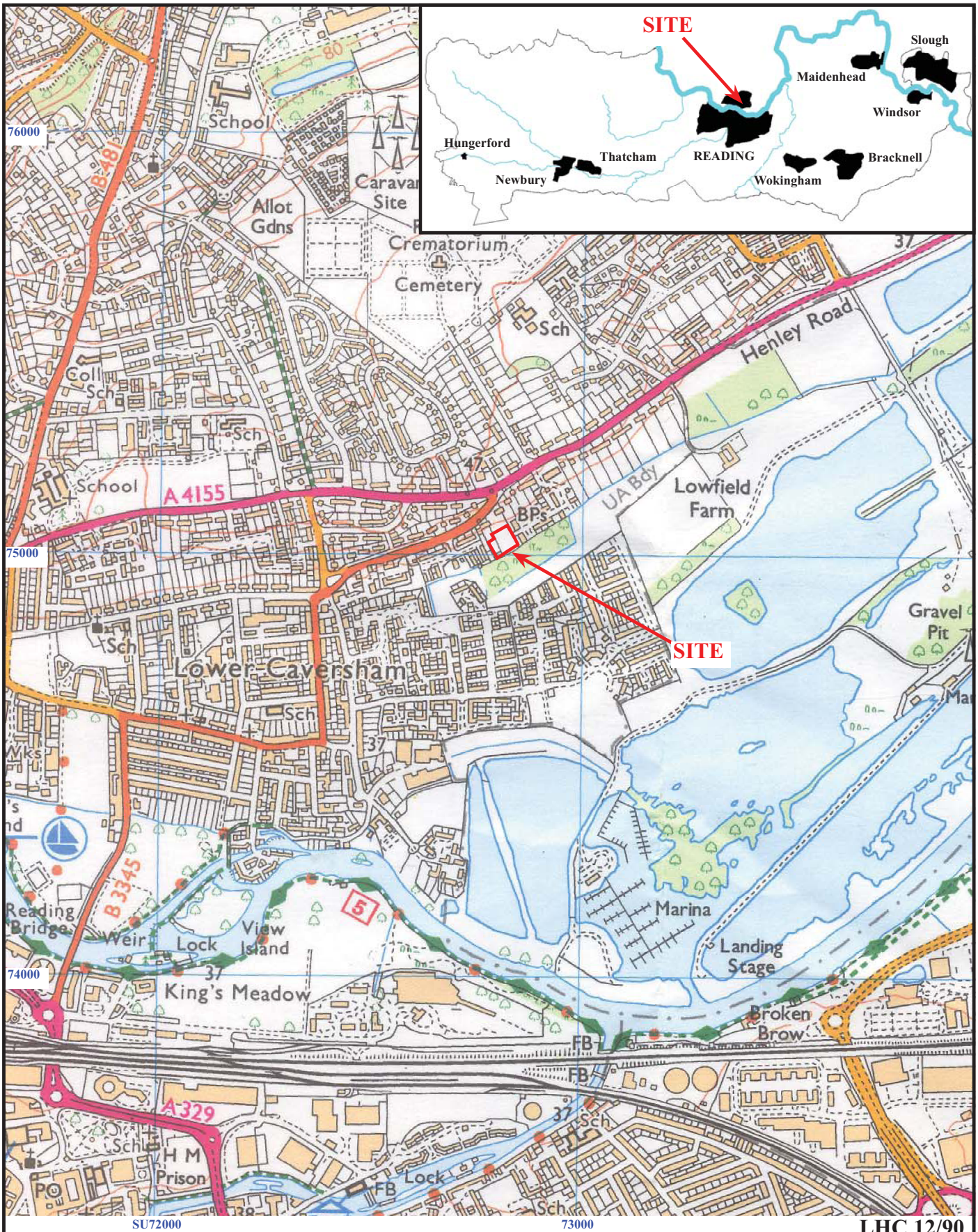

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Figure 1. Location of site within Caversham, Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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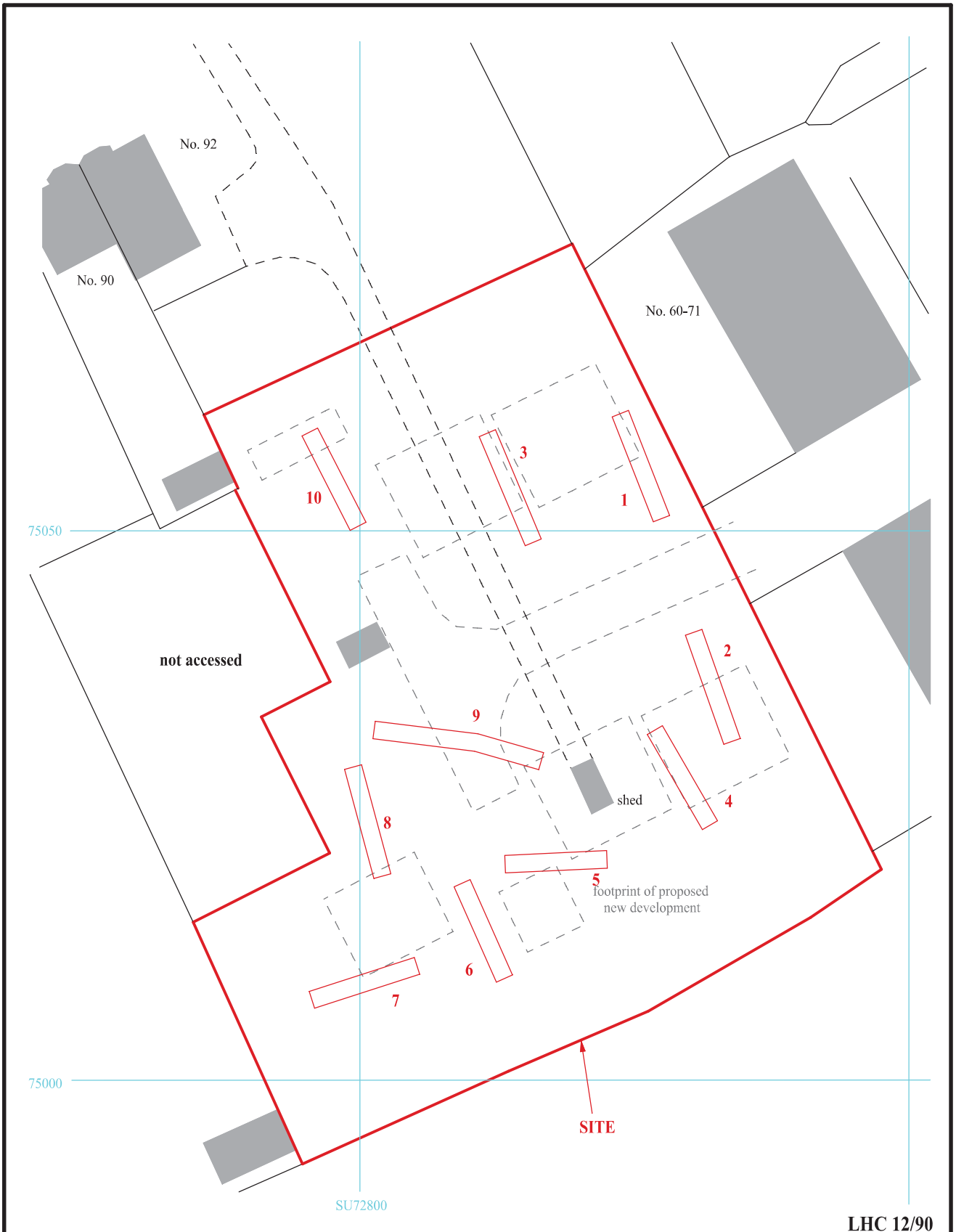

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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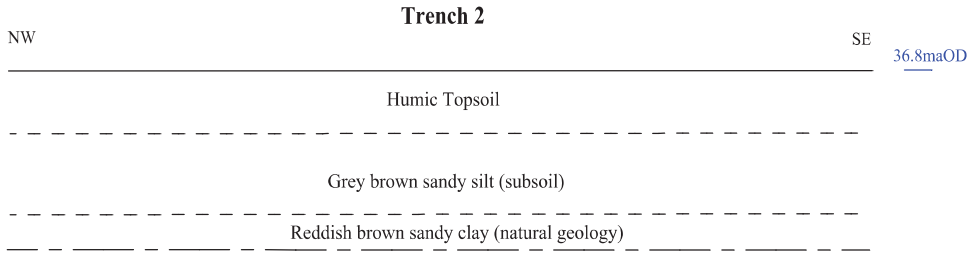

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 3, looking north, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

Plate 2. Trench 8, looking north, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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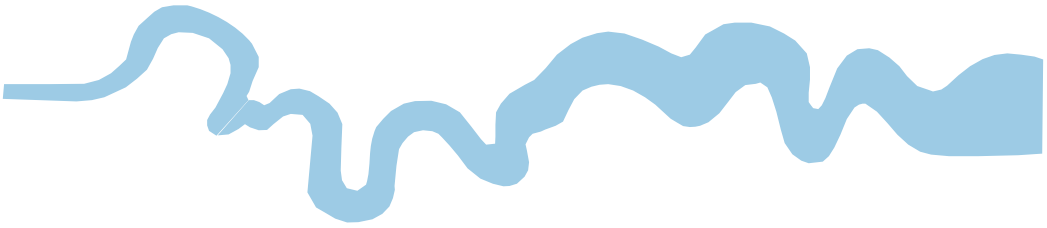
TIME CHART

	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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