

**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 Watching Brief**

**by Daniel Bray**

**Site Code: LOR12/25**

**(SU 7178 7307)**

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

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For JMP Estates Ltd**

by Daniel Bray

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LOR 12/25

**June 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7178 7303

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 2nd to 8th April 2013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Danielle Milbank and Susan Porter

**Site code:** LOR 12/25

**Area of site:** c.0.1ha (c. 160 sq m observed)

**Summary of results:** Two wells most likely modern and a wall probably relating to an existing building were revealed during the watching brief.

**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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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 11.06.13 Steve Preston✓ 11.06.13
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# Rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Daniel Bray

Report 12/25b

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the rear of 74-76 London Street, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7178 7303) (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, requiring a phased programme of works. A previous evaluation revealed that archaeological deposits existed on the site that could not be preserved *in situ* therefore an archaeological watching brief has been requested.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough Councils policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank and Susan Porter between 2nd and 8th April 2013 with the site code LOR 12/25. 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 (Figs 1 and 2). 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). The site is at an elevation of c. 44m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been documented 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 (e.g., 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 74-76 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.

Three certain or probable medieval pits were recorded during the archaeological evaluation prior to the watching brief and it was noted that part of the site had been deeply truncated more recently (Platt 2012).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and/or record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive ground works, in particular the digging of foundation and service trenches. All works were to be carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

## **Results**

Foundation trenches for the new building were excavated (Fig. 3) and measured 1m wide, except for an area in the middle which collapsed, and ranged in depth between 1–2m. In the area of collapse a test pit was dug to establish the base of the made ground. This revealed two distinct layers within the made ground, a dark grey sandy silt with a large quantity of bricks and tile to 1.10m which overlaid an orange gravel (possibly redeposited natural) to a depth of 3m. In other areas a dirty chalk layer was seen between these two deposits. All excavated material was removed from site.

The digging of the footings revealed two wells. Capped brick well 150 was seen at the easternmost part of the foundation trenches (Pl. 1). This was seen mainly in section and no cut was visible, but it was set within the

made ground. Another well (153) was located 8m south-west and was also only seen in section. This brick lined well measured roughly 0.80m in diameter and around 1m depth was visible. Neither well could be more closely examined due to the unsafe nature of the footing sides but the height within the made ground suggests a modern date.

A small section of brick wall 154 aligned NNW-SSE and seen in section in the middle of the foundations appears to relate to two parallel WSW-ENE walls (57, 58) seen during the evaluation. It is possible that this is part of the existing building seen on site.

## **Conclusion**

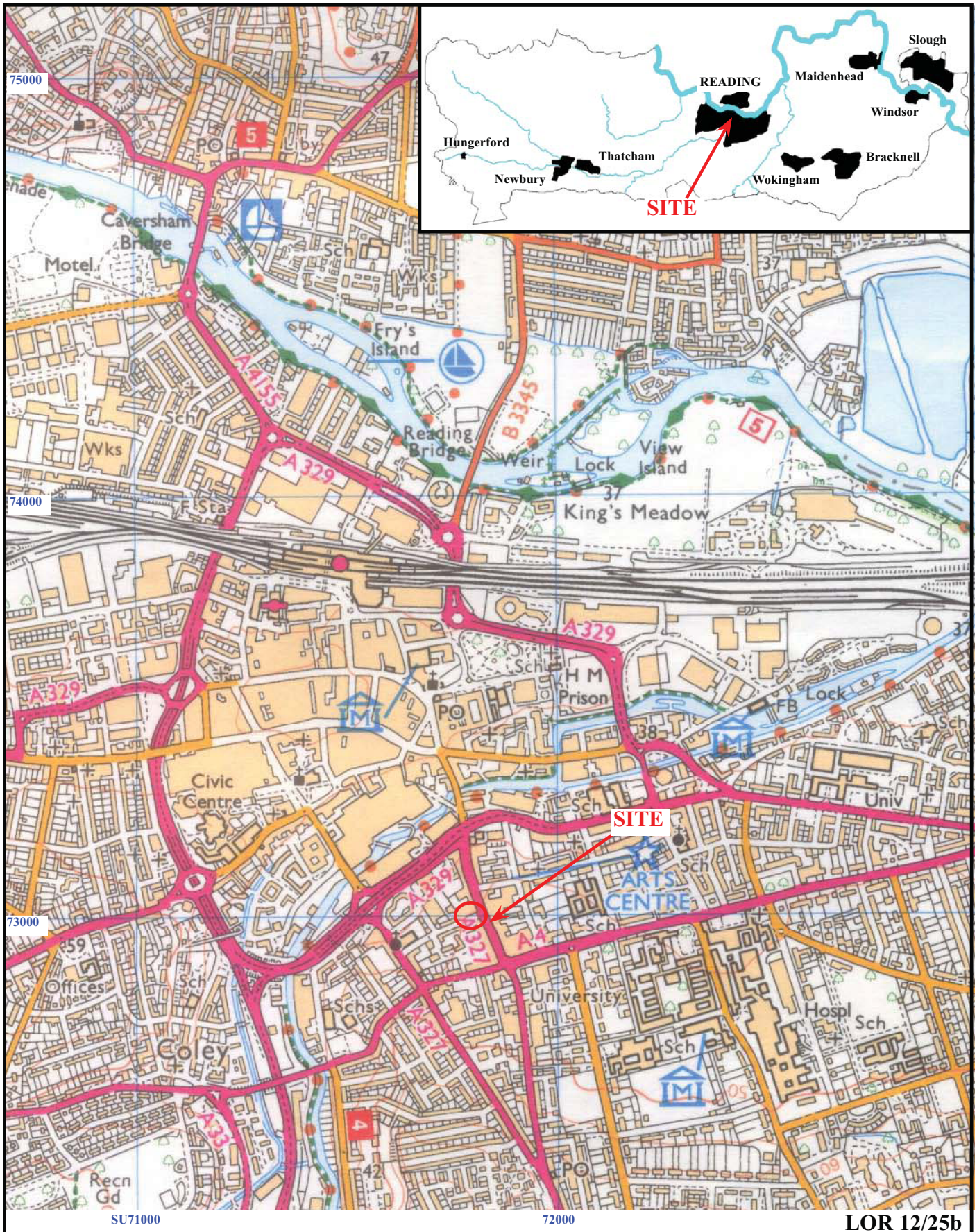
The site had been deemed to have archaeological potential due to its location within Reading's historic centre and from the results of the archaeological evaluation previously undertaken. However, the only features revealed were most likely of late post-medieval date as they were cut from close to the modern ground surface. No further deposits of medieval or earlier date were observed.

## **References**

- Astill, G G, 1978, *Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Publ 2 Reading
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- Hammond, S, 2002, '96-102 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, an Archaeological Evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services, report 01/97, Reading
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Platt, D, 2012, 'Rear of 96-102 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, an Archaeological Evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services, report 12/25, Reading,
- Preston, S (ed), 2005, *Reading and Windsor: Old and New. Excavations 1995–2002*, TVAS Monograph 7, Reading
- Wymer, J J, 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain*, Salisbury

**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
150	151	Well	Modern	Brickwork and stratigraphy
153	152	Well	Modern	Brickwork and stratigraphy
	154	Wall	Modern	Brickwork and stratigraphy



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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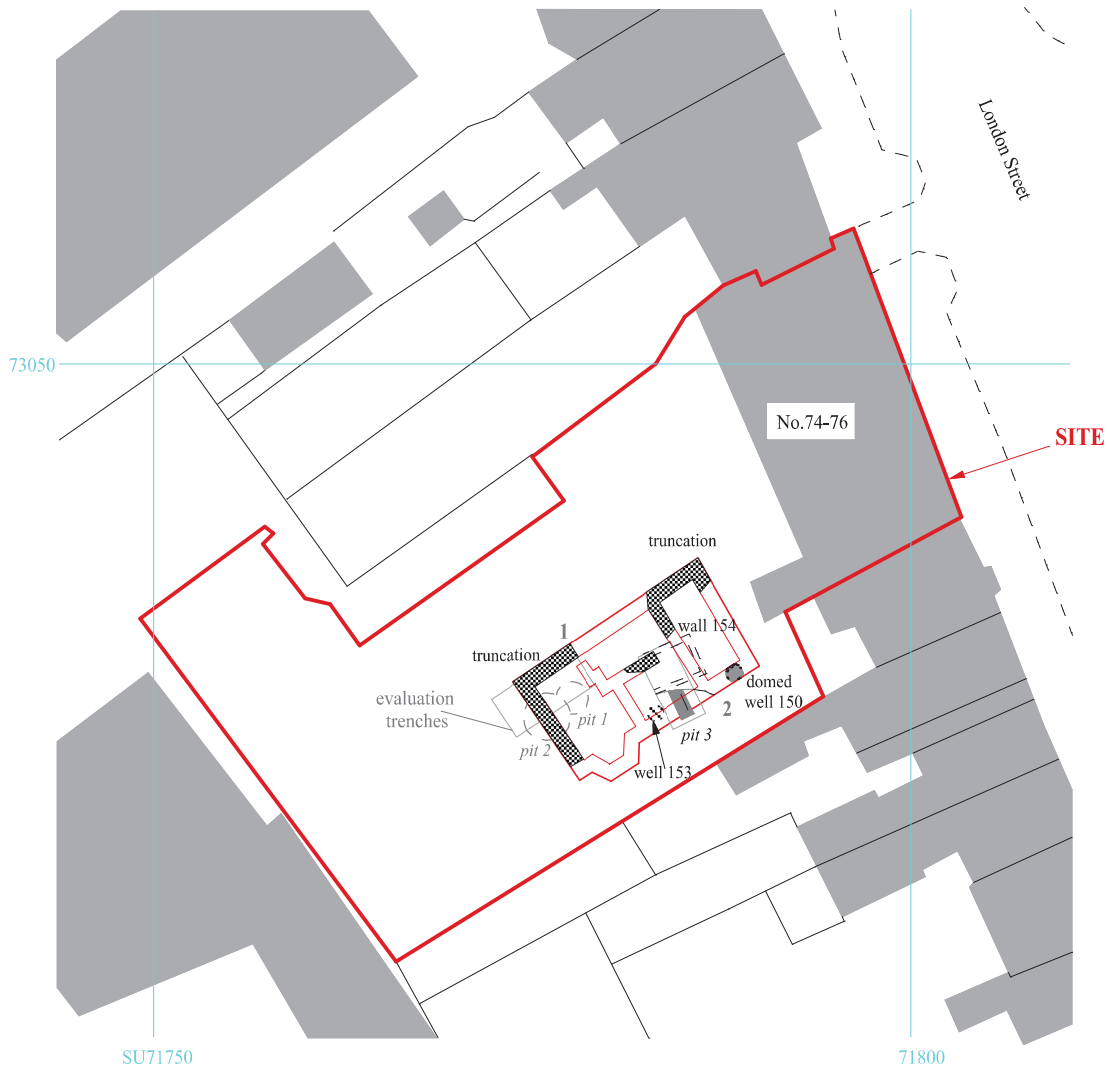


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Plate 1. Well 150, looking north west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Foundation wall in section, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Archaeological watching brief

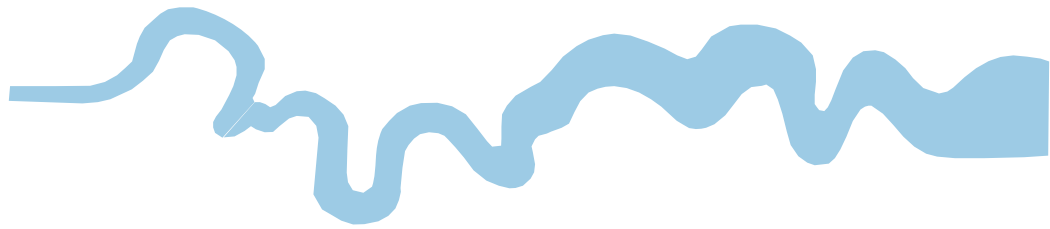
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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