

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Old Fire Station, Berries Road,
Cookham, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: OFS13/194

(SU 8943 8542)

The Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Mike Bond Construction**

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OFS 13/194

January 2014

Summary

Site name: The Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8943 8542

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 7th January 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: OFS 13/194

Area of site: c.1159m sq

Summary of results: Undisturbed subsoil was observed at a depth of 0.49m below made ground with natural geology observed at a depth of 1.03m. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

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

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 08.12.14
	Steve Preston ✓ 07.12.14

The Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 13/194

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at The Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham, Berkshire SU 8943 8542 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mike Bond of Mike Bond Construction, Mulberry House, 20A Church Road, Reading, RG4 7AD.

Planning permission (app no 12/01721/FUL) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a new house following demolition of the old fire station building, on more or less the same footprint as the original structure. The proposal includes a separate area for a carport. This consent includes a condition relating to archaeology.

As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, a field evaluation has been requested by Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter and James McNicoll-Norbury on 7th January 2014 and the site code is OFS 13/194. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the west of the village of Cookham, on the western side of Berries Road immediately north of the B4447, with the River Thames located 400m north-west of the site (Fig. 1). The site lies in a residential area and was previously used as a fire station with tower to the rear (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is recorded as Shepperton Gravel (BGS 2005) and the site lies at a height of *c.* 25m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley, with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area (Ford 1987; Gates 1975). More specifically the site lies within the historic core of Cookham which is thought to have middle Saxon origins and to have had a minster church by the 8th century AD (Astill 1978). Cookham had borough status until eclipsed by Maidenhead after the building of the bridge across the Thames. The proposal site lies close to the medieval parish church, which is considered to be the historic focus of the settlement, though recent fieldwork at Spencers on the Pound to the west revealed Saxon deposits, which has complicated what was thought to be known about the early topography of the settlement (McNicoll-Norbury and MUNDIN 2013). That site also produced Neolithic Grooved ware pottery. A site at Bridge House on Ferry Lane exposed a ditch of probable late Saxon or early medieval date (11th century) on a north-south alignment, and some earlier Saxon pottery (McNicoll-Norbury and MUNDIN 2013). A second watching brief at Bridge House located an undated ditch (Dawson 2009).

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 were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological remains of any period were present; and
- to determine if any archaeologically significant deposits are present so as to inform the development of a mitigation strategy.

It was proposed to dig one trench, 10m long and 1.60m wide, located within the footprint of the proposed car port. A contingency of 5m of trench was included should it be required to clarify initial findings.

Overburden was removed by a 360°-type machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Results

The single trench was excavated as planned within the footprint of the new car port (Fig. 3). The details of the trench are given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4, Pls1 and 2)

Trench 1 was aligned east-west and was 10.50m long and 1.03m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.11m of grey hardcore and 0.12m mid orange brown silty gravel and chalk deposits, overlying 0.26m dark grey brown made ground with brick and stone, which in turn overlay 0.54m grey brown silty clay with gravel inclusions subsoil, overlying mid brown gravel natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered. The trench quickly flooded almost as soon as the natural geology had been exposed (Pl. 2).

Conclusion

The trench revealed no deposits of archaeological interest, however, below the level of the made ground forming the access for the old fire station 0.54m of undisturbed subsoil overlying natural geology had survived. The work was undertaken in very wet conditions and the trench flooded shortly after exposure of the natural geology. The result of the evaluation demonstrates that undisturbed subsoil and natural geology survives on the site, however, no deposits of archaeological interest were revealed and as such the archaeological potential of the specific area may be regarded as low.

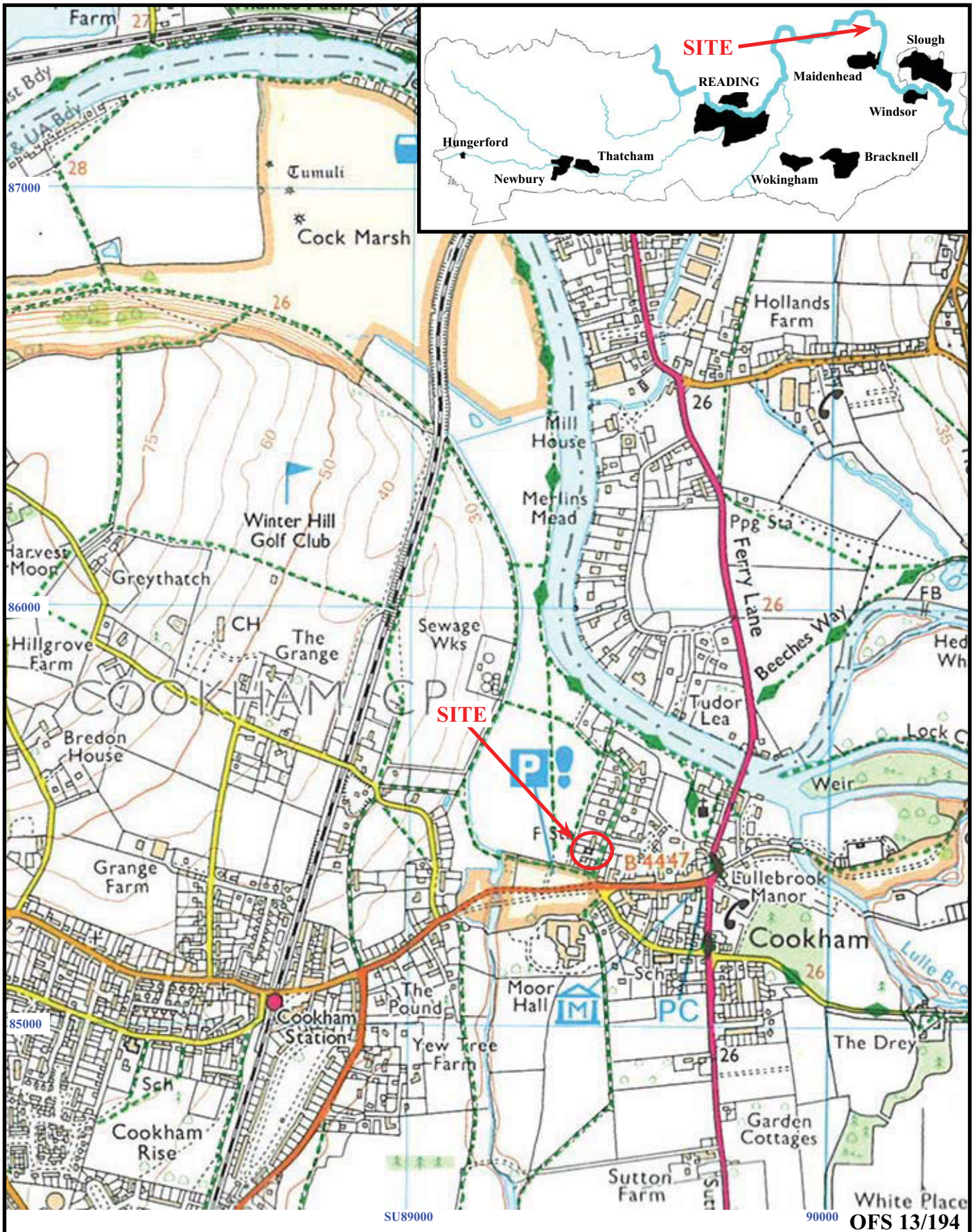
References

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- McNicol-Norbury, J and Mundin, A, 2013, 'Evidence for the Saxon Topography of Cookham, and some Late Neolithic Grooved Ware Pottery', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **81**, 1–6
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west end

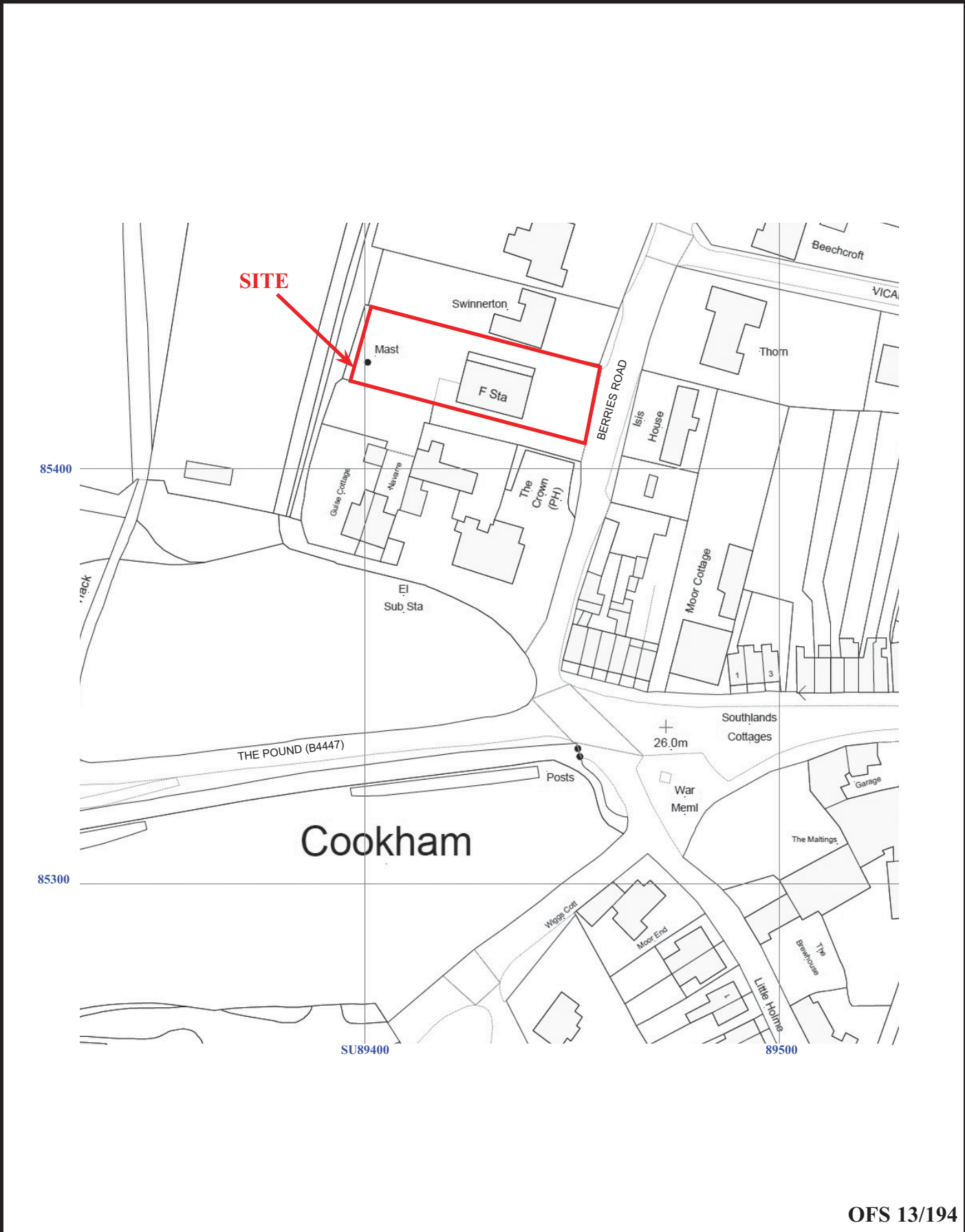
Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	10.50	1.80	1.03	0-0.11m grey hardcore; 0.11-0.23m orange brown silty clay with gravel and chalk; 0.23-0.49m mid grey brown made ground including brick and stone; 0.49-1.03m grey brown silty clay with gravel inclusions (subsoil), 1.03m+ mid brown gravel natural geology. [Pls 1 and 2]



**The Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham,
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Figure 1. Location of site within Cookham and Berkshire.

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Archaeological Recording action**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Berries Road.

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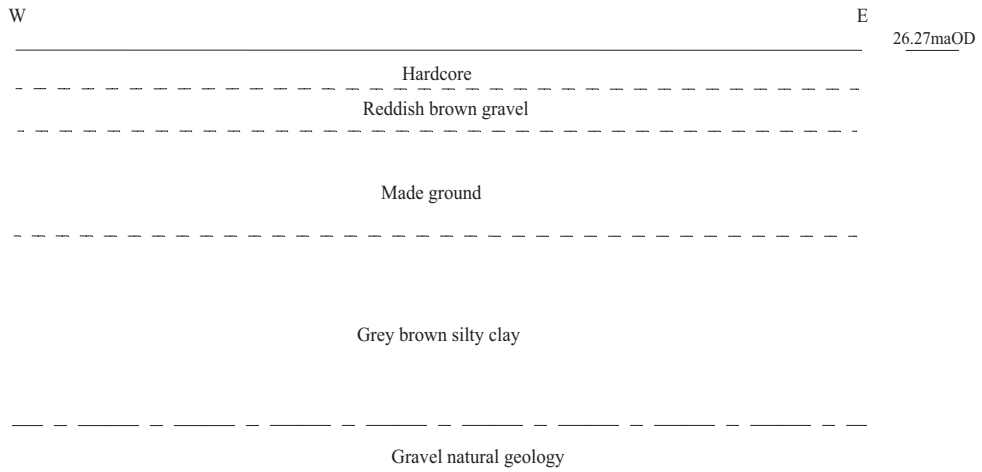


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Cookham, Berkshire, 2014
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 3. Location of trench.



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Cookham, Berkshire, 2014
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. General view of the site, looking west.



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking east. Scales 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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**Old Fire Station, Berries Road, Cookham
Berkshire 2014
Archaeological Evaluation**

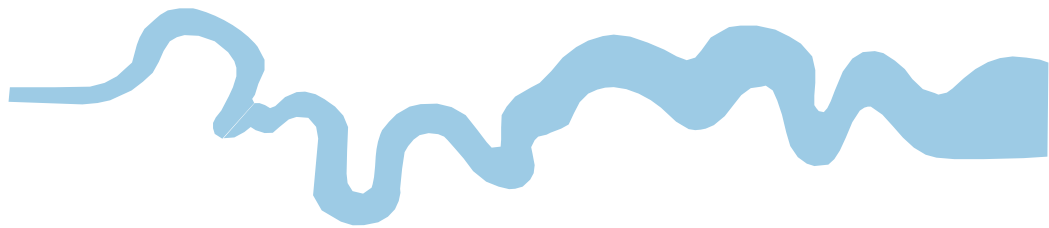
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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