

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**34-50 Pitts Lane, Earley,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Daniel Bray**

**Site Code: PLE12/91**

**(SU 7498 7350)**

**34-50 Pitts Lane, Earley,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Hicks Development Ltd**

by Daniel Bray

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PLE 12/191

**May 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** 34-50 Pitts Lane, Earley, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7498 7350

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 14th - 15th May 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Daniel Bray

**Site code:** PLE 12/191

**Area of site:** 0.95ha

**Summary of results:** The evaluation revealed two modern ditches and three other possible linear features, all undated. Two treeboles were investigated one of which produced three sherds of abraded pottery possibly dating to the Bronze Age. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 23.05.14 Steve Preston ✓ 23.05.14
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# 34-50 Pitts Lane, Earley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Daniel Bray

Report 12/191

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the rear of 34-50 Pitts Lane, Earley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7498 7350) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Walton of Hicks Development Ltd, 15 Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JB.

Planning permission (app F/2010/2104) has been gained on appeal (APP/X0360/A/11/2148730) from Wokingham Borough Council to redevelop the site for ten new houses following the demolition of no. 34. The consent is subject to a condition (9) relating to archaeology. This archaeological evaluation has been requested in order to determine the archaeological potential of the site and if necessary, provide information on which to base a strategy for appropriate mitigation of the effects of development on any archaeological remains.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeologist at Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to Wokingham Borough Council on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray, Lizzi Lewins and Dan Strachan on the 14th and 15th May 2014 with the site code PLE 12/191. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site comprises of an irregular parcel of land located on the east side of Pitts Lane, Early, Reading, Berkshire. It comprises mainly of rear gardens, although the easternmost portion is occupied by mature trees, and a thin strip connecting to Pitts Lane at number 34 (at the south of the site). The underlying geology is mapped as Boyn Hill Gravel (Wymer 1968) and the site lies at a height of 62m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley which has a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded (eg Gates 1975). Excavations on the site of the former Earley Power Station to the north-east examined a Late Iron Age/Roman enclosure complex where both Early Bronze Age (Beaker) burial and Mesolithic flintwork were also recovered (Barnes *et al.* 1997). Construction of the Great Western Railway in the 19th century and the digging of a nearby hole for ballast led to the discovery of an Early Saxon inhumation cemetery to the north-west. However, evaluation of a large site just to the north-west revealed no deposits or finds of archaeological interest (Lewis 2011) and evaluation to the south revealed only a little medieval pottery (Ford 2007).

## **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. The specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present; and
- to provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.

It was proposed to dig 11 trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m wide targeting the footprints of the proposed access road and new buildings. The trenches were to be excavated using a 360° type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. Machine excavation was to be supervised at all times by an archaeologist, with the spoil removed being monitored for finds. All potential archaeological deposits were to be hand-cleaned and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the project.

## **Results**

All trenches were dug in their intended locations except for Trenches 4 and 5 which were moved slightly due to site constraints (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged in depth from 0.42m to 0.90m and in length from 14.00m to 16.60m. All trenches were 1.60m wide. A dark grey brown clay silt topsoil was present in all trenches overlying the mid grey brown clay silt subsoil above the natural gravel geology. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of features investigated forms Appendix 2.

### Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned E - W and was 14.00m long and 0.60m deep at the western end, increasing to 0.90m at the eastern end. At the shallower western end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.32m of subsoil overlying the natural gravel geology. At the eastern end the same depth of topsoil was present but a thicker layer of subsoil overlay the natural geology. A single rectangular modern truncation containing barbed wire was present at the eastern end

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned E - W and was 14.20m long and 0.53m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of topsoil and 0.39m of subsoil overlying natural gravel and clay geology. No features were present and no finds were recovered.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned NE - SW and was 16.20m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.22m of subsoil overlying natural gravel geology with silt patches. No features were present and no finds were recovered.

### Trench 4 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 4 was aligned SE - NW and was 13.70m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.30m of subsoil overlying natural gravel geology with silt patches. A single ditch (1) aligned NNW–SSE was recorded which was 1.10m wide and 0.27m deep with two fills. Deposit 52 was dark grey brown in colour and clay silt in composition and contained numerous roots. Deposit 53 was similar in composition but contained very frequent gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered. This ditch was also seen in trench 5.

### Trench 5 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 1)

Trench 5 was aligned NE - SW and was 16.60m long and 0.63m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.33m of subsoil overlying the natural gravel and silt geology. At the south-western end of the trench a large patch of clay was present which contained abundant roots and was interpreted as a treebole (2). The slot excavated in the darker area on the perimeter produced three very small abraded sherds of flint-tempered pottery which could potentially date from the Bronze Age, though this attribution is doubtful because of the sherds' condition. A ditch (3) (Pl. 3) which was also seen in trench 4 and aligned NNW–SSE was 1.50m wide and 0.30m deep. It single fill 55 produced one sherd of post-medieval pottery and three pieces of burnt flint were recovered from the sample. This ditch aligns directly on ditch 1 from Trench 4 and is presumably the same feature.

#### Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

Trench 6 was aligned ENE - WSW and was 15.30m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.16m of subsoil overlying natural gravel and silt geology. A single shallow ditch (4) was recorded which was 0.70m wide and 0.22m deep and filled with deposit 56. The ditch, aligned roughly north-south, had a gradual sloping eastern side and a steeper west edge. No finds were recovered.

#### Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned ESE - WNW and was 15.30m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil and 0.30m of subsoil overlying natural gravel and silt geology. No features or finds were present.

#### Trench 8 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 8 was aligned SE - NW and was 15.50m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.28m subsoil overlying natural gravel and silt geology. A north - south shallow ditch (5) was excavated and recorded which was 0.76m wide and 0.14m deep with a single fill (57). The ditch was gradual sided with a rounded base and produced no finds. At the north-eastern end a ditch was excavated but not recorded which contained modern finds such as a gate hinge and parts of a metal bucket.

#### Trench 9 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 9 was aligned E - W and was 15.20m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.30m of subsoil overlying natural gravel and silt geology. At the eastern end of the trench ditch (6) (Pl. 4), aligned northeast - southwest was recorded which was 1.02m wide and 0.27m deep and filled with deposit 58 from which no finds were recovered. Another possible feature was recorded which appeared linear in plan but after excavation was irregular and interpreted as a treebole (7).

#### Trench 10

Trench 10 was aligned SSW - NNE and was 15.00m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.19m of topsoil and 0.28m of subsoil overlying natural gravel and silt geology. No features were present and no finds were recovered.

#### Trench 11

Trench 11 was aligned N - S and was 14.30m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.34m of subsoil overlying natural geology. No features or finds were present.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 4 sherds with a total weight of 10g. The following fabric types were noted:

**?Bronze Age:** Sparse to moderate angular white flint up to 2mm. 3 sherds, 3g; Feature 2, fill 54.

**Glazed Red Earthenware,** 16th – 19th century (Brears 1969). 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, 7g. Ditch 3, fill 55.

### *Burnt Flint* by Daniel Bray

Three small angular pieces of burnt flint weighing a total of 44g were recovered from post-medieval ditch (3) deposit 55, sample <1>.

## **Conclusion**

The archaeological evaluation revealed two modern ditches one which produced a gate hinge and parts of a metal bucket while the other produced a single small sherd of post-medieval pottery. Three other linear features were excavated but produced no artefacts. Two treeboles were investigated one of which produced three small abraded sherds of possibly Bronze Age pottery. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

## **References**

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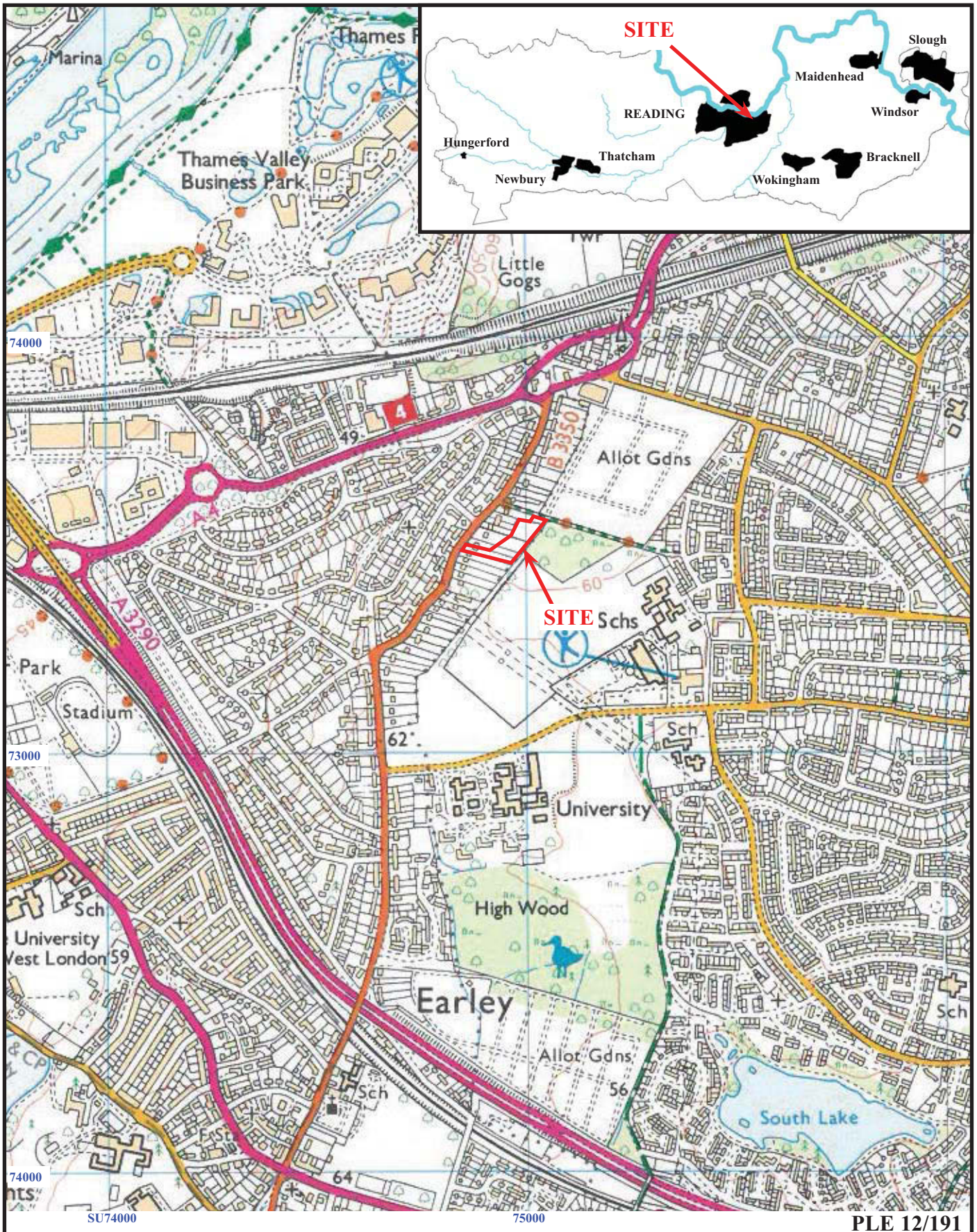


**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	14	1.60	0.60(W) 0.90(E)	West end: 0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.60m light grey brown silty sand subsoil; 0.60m+ light brown yellow gravel natural geology. East end: 0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.90m subsoil; 0.90m+ natural geology
2	14.20	1.60	0.53	0-0.14m topsoil; 0.14m-0.53m subsoil; 0.53m+ mid brown yellow gravel with large clay patches
3	16.20	1.60	0.42	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches
4	13.70	1.60	0.50	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches. Ditch 1
5	16.60	1.60	0.63	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.63m subsoil; 0.63m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches. Treebole 2, ditch 3 <b>[Pls 1 and 3]</b>
6	15.30	1.60	0.46	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.46m subsoil; 0.46m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches. Ditch 4 <b>[Pl. 2]</b>
7	15.40	1.60	0.47	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17m-0.47m subsoil; 0.47m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches
8	15.50	1.60	0.43	0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.43m subsoil; 0.43m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches. Ditch 5
9	15.20	1.60	0.52	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22-0.52m subsoil; 0.52m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches. Ditch 6, treebole 7 <b>[Pl. 4]</b>
10	15.00	1.60	0.47	0-0.19m topsoil; 0.19m-47m subsoil; 0.47m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches
11	14.30	1.60	0.50	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16-0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ natural gravel geology with silt patches

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
4	1	52, 53	Ditch		
5	2	54	Treebole	??Bronze Age	Pottery
5	3	55	Ditch	Post -medieval	Pottery
6	4	56	Ditch		
8	5	57	Ditch?		
9	6	58	Ditch		
9	7	59	Treebole		



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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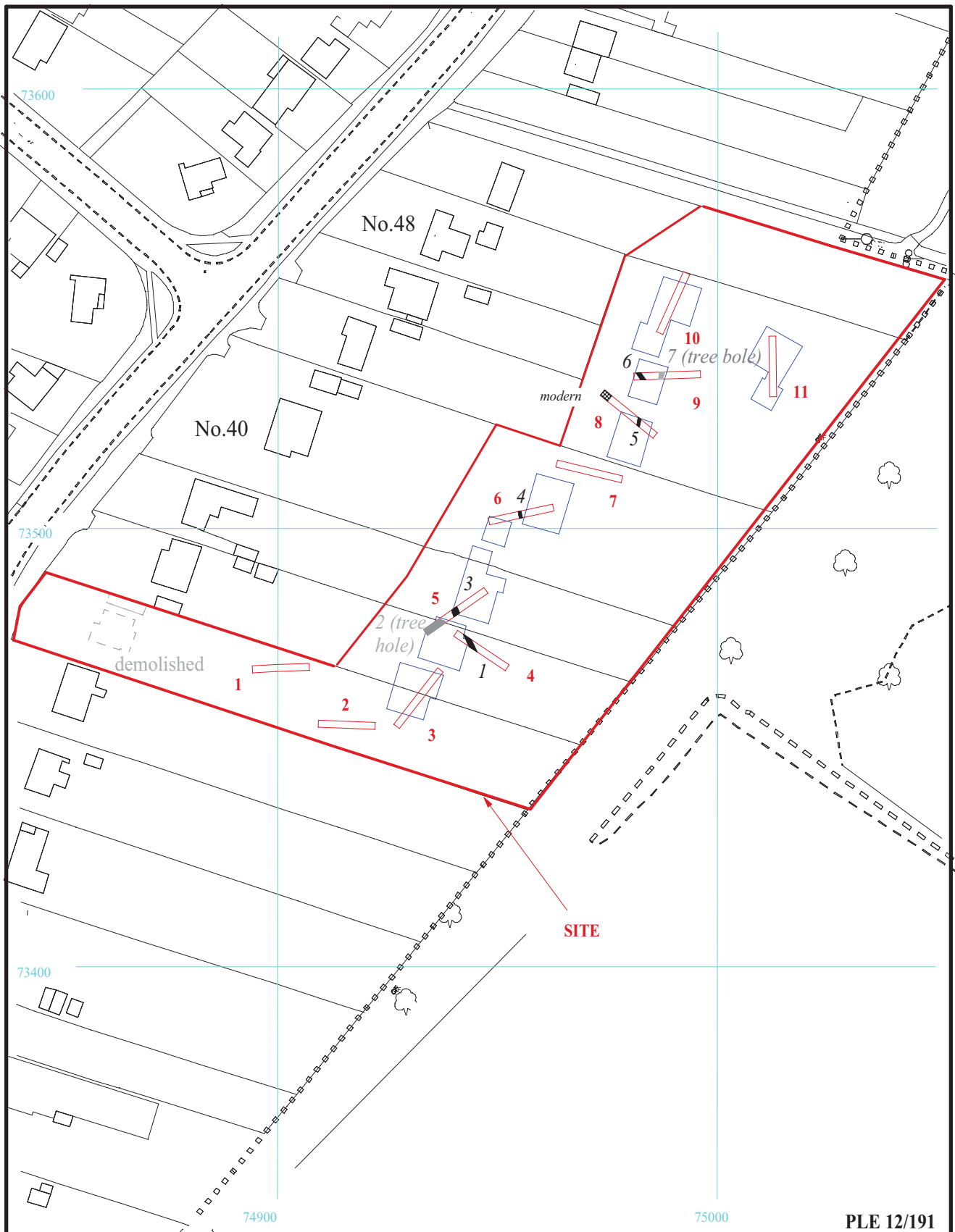
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Pitts Lane.

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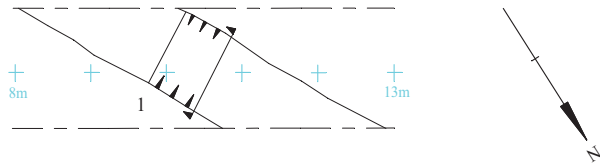
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Figure 3. Location of development and trenches.

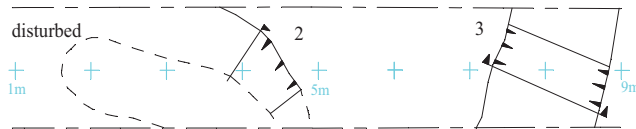


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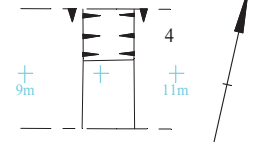
Trench 4



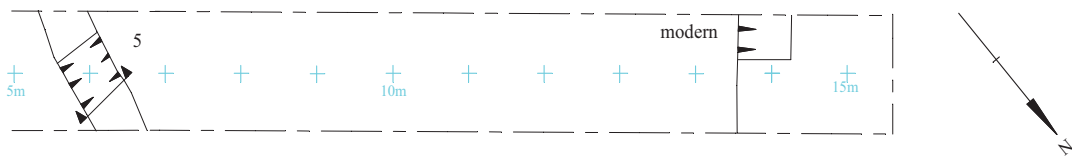
Trench 5



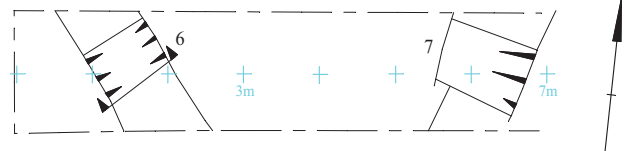
Trench 6



Trench 8



Trench 9

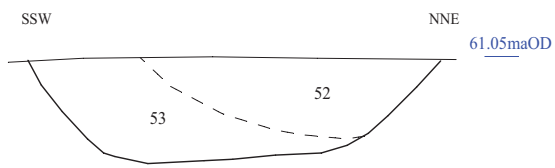


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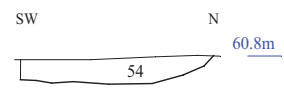
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

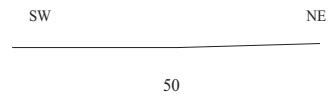




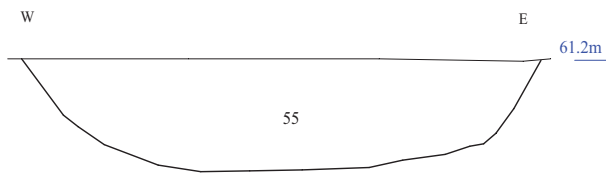
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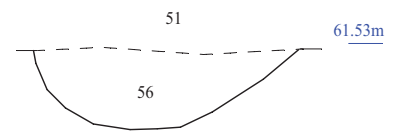
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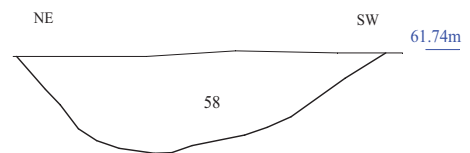
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4



5



6

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Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. Trench 5, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 6, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 5, ditch slot 3, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 9, ditch slot 6, looking south east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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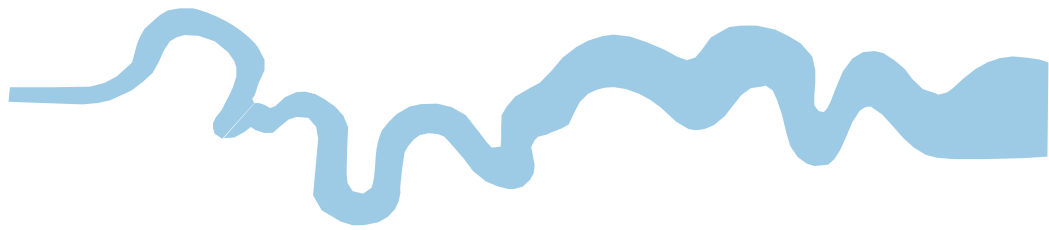
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Plates 3 - 4.

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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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