THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

70-78 Whielden Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: WSA14/29

(SU 9564 9698)

70-78 Whielden Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for NJN Construction Ltd

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WRA 14/29

July 2014

Summary

Site name: 70-78 Whielden Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SU 9564 9698

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 24th July 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: WSA 14/29

Area of site: *c.*2450 sq m

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed and parts of the site had been previously truncated. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 29.07.14 Steve Preston✓ 28.07.14

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading RG1 5NR

Tel. (0118) 926 0552; Fax (0118) 926 0553; email tvas@tvas.co.uk; website: www.tvas.co.uk

70-78 Whielden Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 14/29

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 70-78 Whielden Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire (SU 9564 9698) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr James Agace, for NJN Construction Ltd, Harboury, Linchmere Ridge, Haslemere, Surrey, GU27 3PS.

Planning permission (CH/2013/1543/FA) has been granted by Chiltern District Council to demolish existing buildings on the site and construct eight new dwellings with associated landscaping. The consent was subject to a condition (8) requiring a programme of archaeological work in advance of development. It was determined that this should take the form, initially, of field evaluation by means of trial trenching, based on the results of which further work might be required to mitigate the effects of development.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning Officer with Buckinghamshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Steve Crabb on the 24th July 2014 and the site code is WSA 14/29. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the east side of Whielden Street, which is on the southern side of the historic core of the old town (Fig. 2). Old Amersham lies to the south west of Amersham, which itself lies *c.*20km north east of High Wycombe. The underlying geology is mapped as New Pit Chalk Formation (BGS 2005), which was observed in all trenches. The site lies at a height of between *c.*101m above Ordnance Datum on the eastern side of the site sloping westwards to *c.* 97m aOD (Pl. 1).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location close to the historic core of Old Amersham in an area of post-medieval expansion. The history and archaeology of the town have been documented in detail (Green and Beckley 2009). In summary, little prehistoric evidence has been recorded for the town although with some Roman activity known in the area including a villa to the north-west of the site at Mantles farm and further Roman activity to the east at Bury Farm and to the south during the construction of the Amersham bypass. It has been suggested that Whielden Street may follow the line of a Roman road which ran through Amersham to *Verulamium* (St Albans), although no evidence for this has been identified. Amersham has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002) as *Agmodesham* and was awarded a royal grant for a market and fair in 1200. The manor of Amersham had belonged to Queen Edith prior to the conquest and by 1086 was held by Geoffrey de Manville (VCH 1925, 141). In later years its principal owner was the Duke of Buckingham, then passing to the King who granted it to Lord Russell (Chandler 1993, 42). By medieval times it had become an urban centre. Evaluations on the High Street at the King's Arms public house (Coles 2000) and the rear of 80 High Street (Taylor 2014) identified pits of medieval and post-medieval date. A watching brief at Amersham Museum (Coles 2001), noted a flint wall with associated floor layers of post-medieval or earlier date. A watching brief at Chimney Cottage, The Platt (A Taylor 2001) and evaluation at Four Winds, The Platt (K Taylor 2001) did not identify any archaeological deposits.

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 project were;

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site.
To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
To determine whether archaeological deposits relating to prehistoric or Roman settlement are present.
To determine whether archaeological deposits relating to the early post-medieval expansion of Amersham are present.

Six trenches were to be dug measuring 1.60m wide and 10m in length. These were dug using a large 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

All six trenches were dug measuring 2.20m wide and between 8m and 11.60m in length and between 0.25m and 0.70m deep. They were dug as close as possible to their intended locations although some repositioning had to be done due to the presence of buried foundations and areas of high truncation (Fig. 3).

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

Trench 1 (Pl. 2)
This trench was aligned North-South and measured 9.50m in length and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.45m of topsoil overlying 0.20m of topsoil overlying chalk with peri-glacial stripes natural geology.

Trench 2
This was aligned North West-South East and measured 10m in length and 0.40m deep. Topsoil 0.15m deep overlay 0.20m of subsoil overlying chalk natural geology.

Trench 3 (Pl. 3)
This trench was aligned approximately East-West and measured 10m in length and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of topsoil overlying 0.15m of subsoil overlying chalk natural geology.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4; Pl. 4)
This trench was aligned North-South and measured 11.60m in length and 0.40m deep. It consisted of 0.15m of topsoil overlying 0.20m of subsoil overlying chalk and clayey silt natural geology.

Trench 5 (Pl. 5)
This trench was aligned approximately East-West and measured 10.20m in length and 0.25m deep. Topsoil to a depth of 0.15m of overlay 0.07m of subsoil overlying chalk natural geology.

Trench 6 (Pl. 6)
This trench was aligned North West-South East and measured 8m in length and 0.50m deep. It consisted of 0.10m of Tarmac overlying 0.40m of gravel made ground overlying chalk natural geology. A modern service trench was located at the north west end. The whole trench lay in a zone lower than surrounding areas and which is likely to have been previously truncated.

Finds

No finds of an archaeological nature were recovered during the evaluation.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeology being present on the site no deposits or finds of archaeological interest were observed during the evaluation. Much of the site had been truncated by the previous structures on the site with the side nearest the road having been cut down to allow access from the road. However, where undisturbed ground was seen no features of archaeological interest were noted. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 2005, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

Chandler, J, 1993, *John Leland's Itinerary*, Stroud

Coles, S. 2000, 'The King's Arms, High Street, Old Amersham, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **00/60c**, Reading

Coles, S, 2001, 'Amersham Museum, 49 High Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire; an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **01/21**, Reading

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NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

Taylor, A, 2001, 'Chimney Cottage, The Platt, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames valley Archaeological Services Report **01/70**, Reading

Taylor, A, 2014, '80 High Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **14/122**, Reading

Taylor, K, 2001, 'Four Winds, The Platt, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **01/65**, Reading

VCH, 1925, *Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire,* **iii**, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	9.50	2.20	0.70	0.00m-0.45m topsoil; 0.45m-0.65m subsoil; 0.65m-0.70m+ chalk with peri-glacial stripes natural geology. **[Pl. 2]**
2	10.00	2.20	0.40	0.00m-0.15m topsoil; 0.15-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m-0.40m+ chalk natural geology.
3	10.00	2.20	0.30	0.00m-0.10m topsoil; 0.10m-0.25m subsoil; 0.25m-0.30m+ chalk natural geology. **[Pl. 3]**
4	11.60	2.20	0.40	0.00m-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m-0.40m+ clayey silt and chalk natural geology.**[Pl. 4]**
5	10.20	2.20	0.25	0.00m-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.22m subsoil; 0.22m-0.25m+ chalk natural geology. [**Pl. 5]**
6	8.00	2.20	0.50	0.00m-0.10m Tarmac; 0.10m-0.50m gravel made ground; 0.50m+ chalk natural geology. Service trench at NW end (Whole trench truncated). **[Pl. 6]**

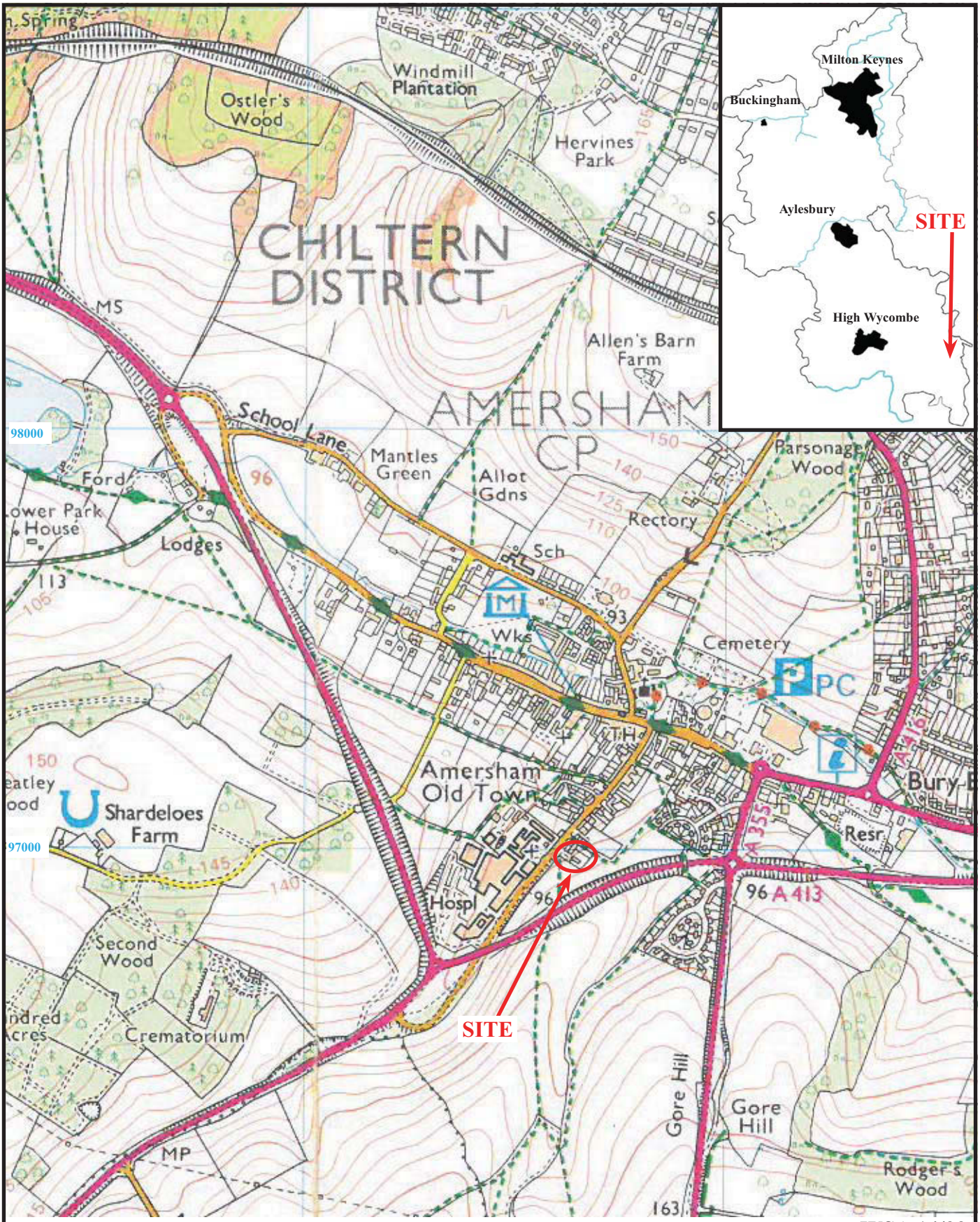

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Figure 1. Location of site within Amersham and Buckinghamshire.

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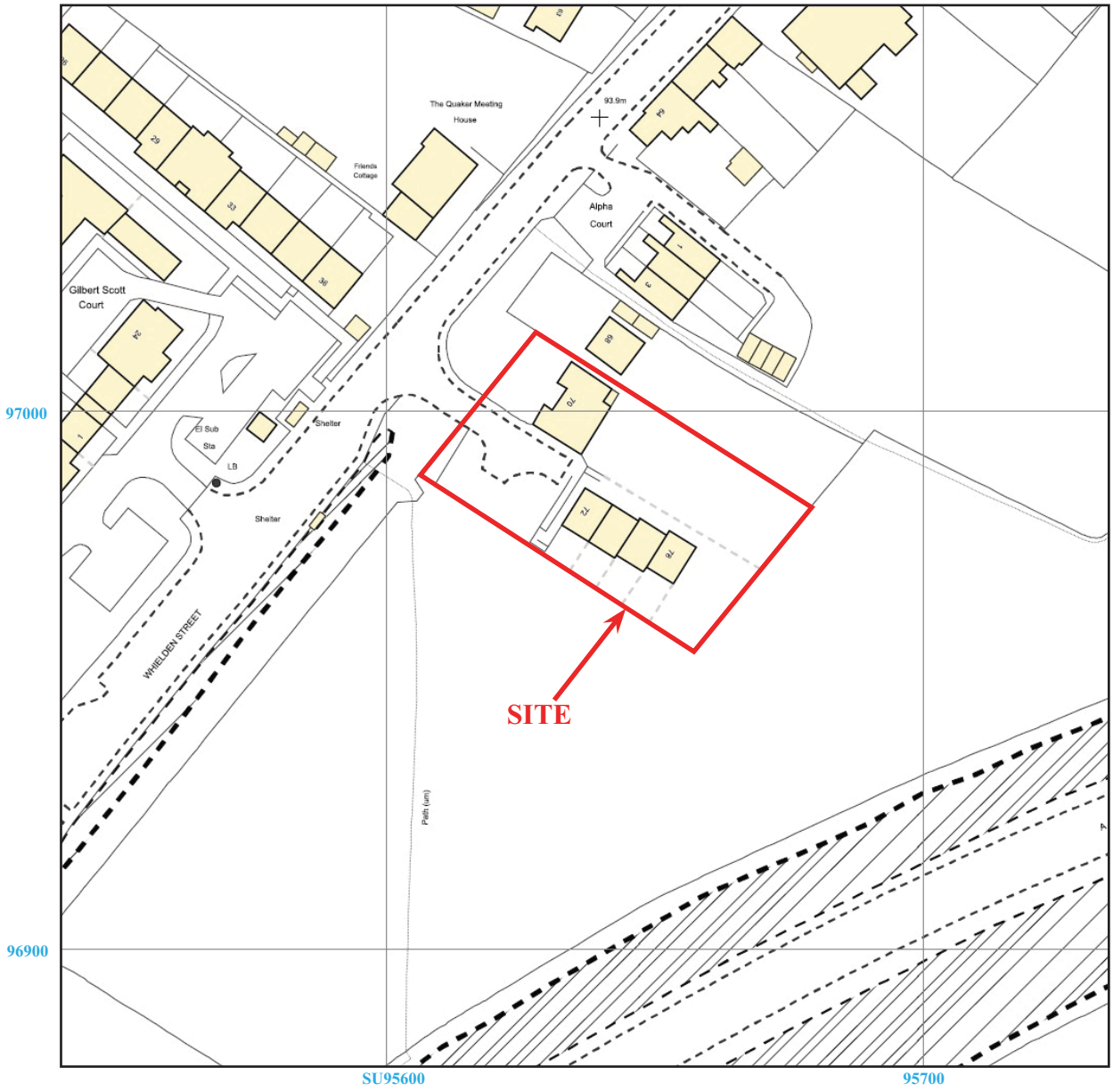

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Whielden Street.

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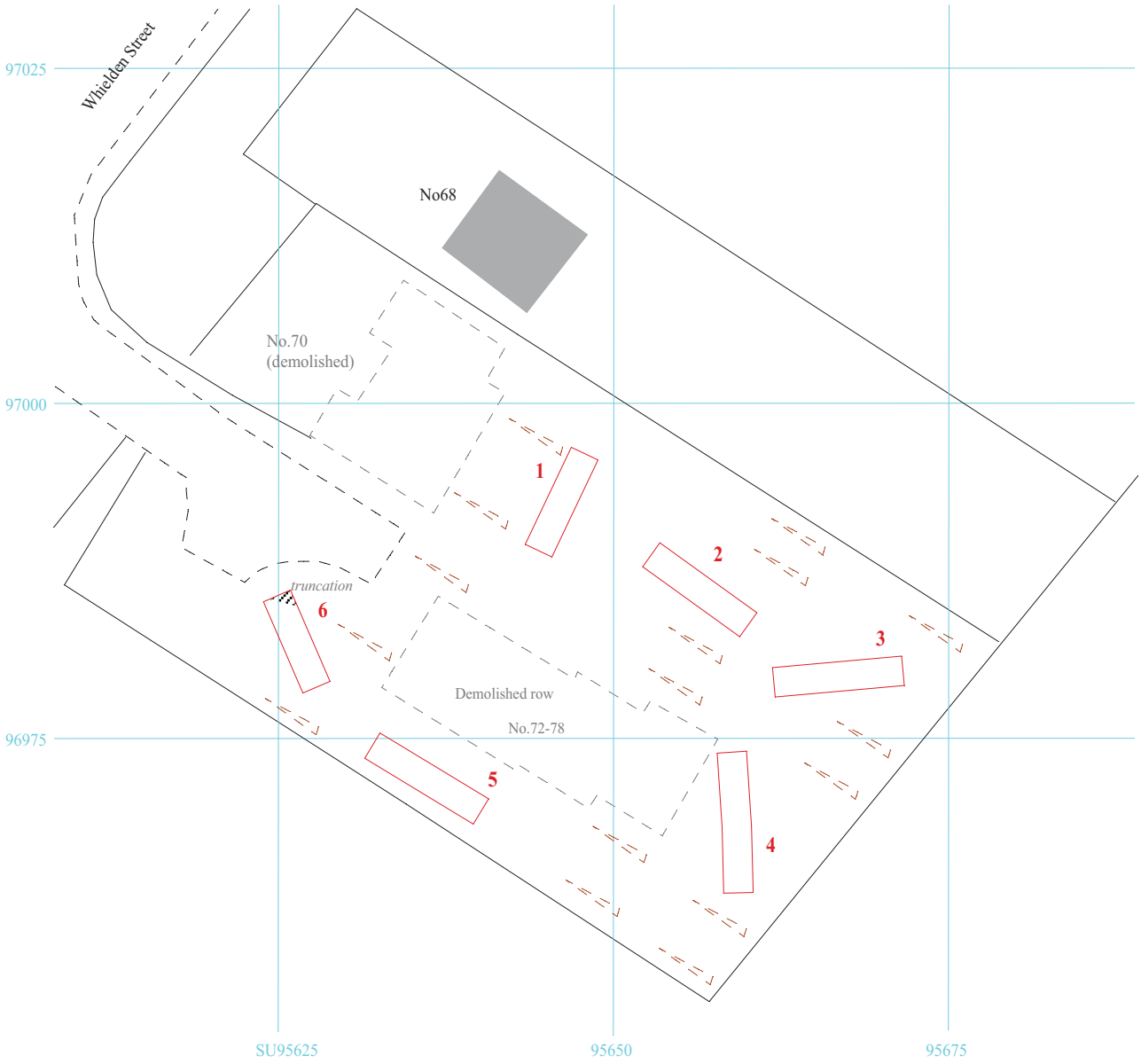

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 25m

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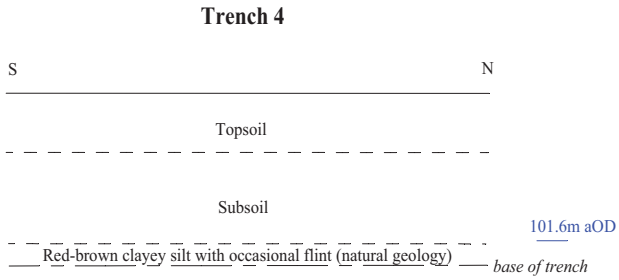

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Site, showing gradient, looking north.

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

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Plates 1 - 2.

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

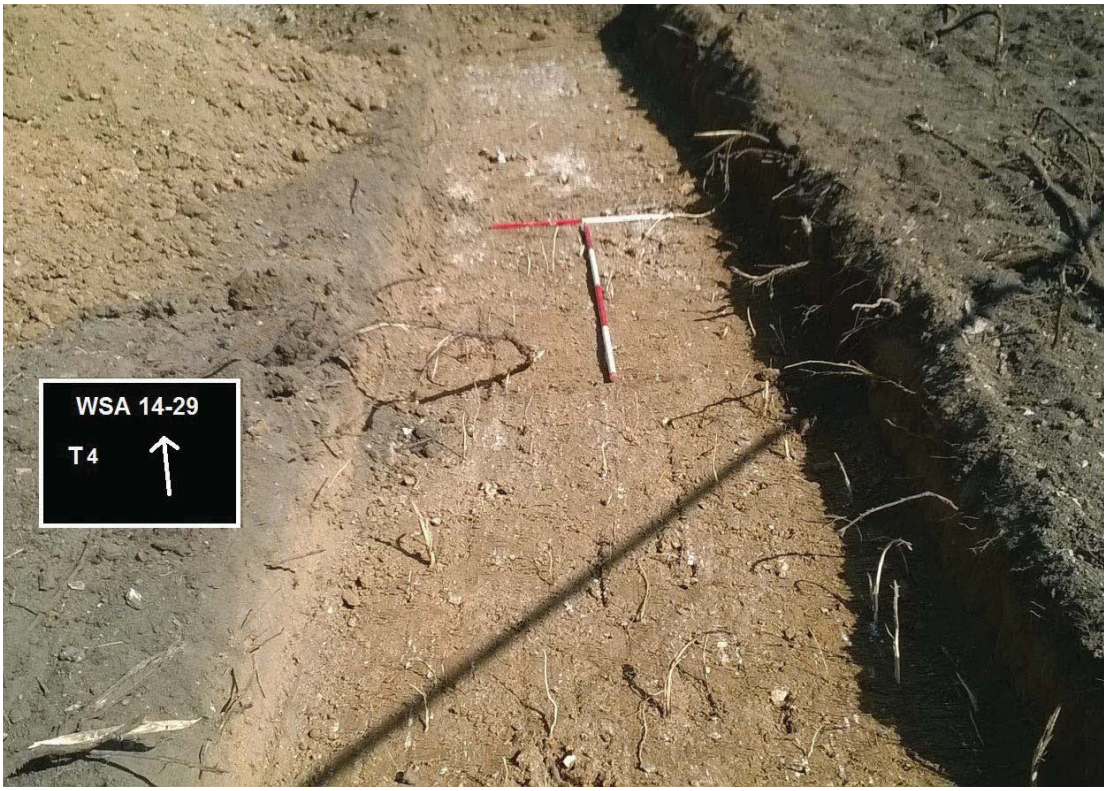

Plate 4. Trench 4, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 5, looking south east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 6. Trench r, looking north west, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 5 - 6.

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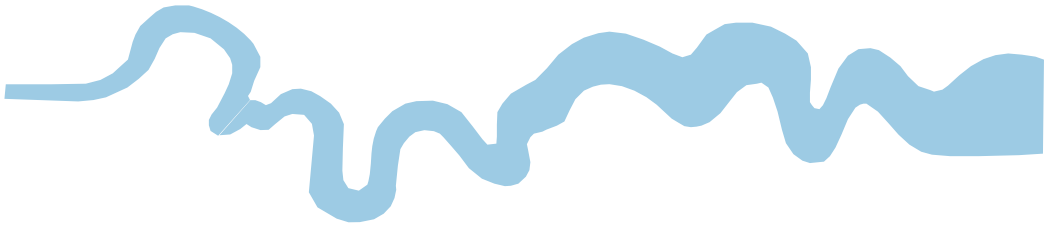
TIME CHART

	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



Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR

Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk