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S E R V I C E S

**East Gate Cottage, Craven Hill,
Hamstead Marshall, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by David Platt, Kyle Beaverstock and Genni Elliott

Site Code: EGC11/42

(SU 4192 6671)

East Gate Cottage, Craven Hill, Hamstead Marshall, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Mr Martin Bates and Ms Alexandra Gibbs

by David Platt, Kyle Beaverstock

and Genni Elliot

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code EGC11/42

**May 2014
(updated November 2014)**

Summary

Site name: East Gate Cottage, Craven Hill, Hamstead Marshall, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4192 6671

Site activity: Archaeological watching brief

Date and duration of project: 25th September-11th October 2013 and 17th April-15th July 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: EGC11/42

Area of site: c. 0.4ha

Summary of results: The groundworks on this watching brief have uncovered features dating possibly from medieval times into the post-medieval period. A well possibly of medieval date with an in-situ wooden structure, was identified along with an undated pit and two tunnels or culverts of post-medieval date. The function of these latter features are unknown, but may be part of a network of tunnels or drainage within the local area possibly associated with the site of the nearby mansion of Hamstead Marshall.

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

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Report 11/42b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at East Gate Cottage, Craven Hill, Hamstead Marshall, West Berkshire (SU 4192 6671) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Barry McNaboe of TFF Architects Ltd, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD on behalf of Mr Martin Bates and Ms Alexandra Gibbs.

Planning consent (13/00935/HOUSE) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the demolition of a 1960's extension followed by new side extensions, a poolhouse and landscaping. The consent includes a condition (13) relating to archaeology. This replaces a previous planning consent (app 12/02785/HOUSE and 13/010022/COND1). As a condition on the granting of planning permission a watching brief during groundworks has been required, as a result of the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits, and as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) and the West Berkshire Council policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Acting Archaeological Officer, Culture and Environmental Protection for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt, Tim Dawson and Andrew Mundin between 25th September and 17th April 2014 and the site code is EGC 11/42. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located 1.5km north-east of Hamstead Marshall and 5km west of Newbury (Figs 1 and 2). The River Kennet lies 0.3km to the north and the site occupies a flat parcel of land c.115m AOD. The underlying geology is Plateau Gravel above the Reading Beds (mottled clay and sand) (BGS 1947). The observed natural geology was a combination of both the Plateau Gravel and the Reading Beds.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Preston 2012). In summary the site lies within the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley with a wealth of finds and sites from many periods (Lobb and Rose 1996). More specifically the site lies close to the east gate of Hamstead Park and is within the area of the registered park. Close by are two Scheduled Monuments (two adjacent medieval motte and bailey complexes). Of specific interest given the findings below, is the development of a series of buildings south of the site.

The manor house, variously known as Ham(p)stead Lodge or Park, stands in the large park to the south-east of the area studied here. The present house was originally a keeper's house or hunting lodge built just after the previous mansion burnt down, and enlarged in the late 19th century. The 17th-century mansion stood in the south closer to the church, but was largely destroyed by fire in 1718. Soon after 1590, Thomas Parry apparently rebuilt a house already on the site, and this may have been reconstructed again *c.* 1620. After the Restoration the Earl of Craven reputedly set about building a miniature version of Heidelberg castle for the dispossessed Queen of Bohemia (the 'Queen of Hearts'). If this intended design by Sir Balthazar Gerbier was ever begun, it was only completed with considerable modification. An engraving by Kip *c.* 1709, shows a large rectangular house of three stories and an attic ranged around three sides of a court with stables and gardens (VCH 1924) which is 'emphatically English and not at all like Heidelberg' (Pevsner 1966, 152). The area of the site appears to be a working or 'productive' garden in Kip's view.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits or finds affected by the new construction work. In general the watching brief involved examination of the digging of the foundation trench for the new structures and deep trenches for services as necessary, paying particular attention to the presence of any garden or landscaping features that may be related to the historic park. Archaeological deposits which are threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded.

Results

The stratigraphy within the area of new footings to the east of East Gate Cottage consisted of between 0.30m and 1.50m of made ground above the natural clay and gravel. The made ground consisted of dark brownish grey clay with gravel and ceramic building material inclusions (Pl. 1).

Ground reduction within the area of the former garage to the south of East Gate Cottage revealed between 0.18–0.35m of topsoil above 0.26m of pale greyish brown, sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions (context 53). Cut through context 53 was a modern cable trench (feature 2). Feature 3 was a tree bole, containing tree roots, approximately 0.60m deep, sealed by layer 53 and cut through fill 56. Further work to the east dug extensively into the slope that existed here and its formation level for the pool was 3.3m from ground level on its southern section. A second tunnel [4] and well [5] was located within these works.

During the demolition and reduction of the previous garage, cut 1 with a tunnel 52 was exposed (Fig. 4). This was a large, steep-sided feature cut through the natural gravel (Pl. 2). It measured more than 2m wide by 2.5m deep. Built within the feature was vaulted tunnel structure 52. Internally it measured 0.5m wide, increasing to 0.75m wide at the springer course by 1.6m high and continued to the NNE and SSW, with a total length of more than 56m. The tunnel was of mixed construction with a combination of flint and brick walls bonded with lime mortar (Pls 5 and 6). The tunnel was less stable to the north and therefore not investigated (Pl. 4). To the south; the initial 30m was of brick construction, between 30–40m the west side wall was of flint construction and beyond 40m both walls were of flint construction. The arched roof was of brick construction along the entire length (Pl. 7). The floor was paved with bricks (Pl. 8). The flint walls were roughly coursed with occasional brick repairs. The brick walls were laid in stretcher bond with the springer course laid in header bond. Above the springer course were another three rows of bricks laid in stretcher bond before forming the curve of the arch with brick headers exposed.

Two samples of brick were taken; the first measured 245mm (9 5/8") x 115mm (4 1/2") x 55mm (2 1/8"). The brick is of a moderate to hard, evenly-fired sandy fabric with occasional groggy inclusions. The form is handmade and slightly uneven, with the thickness varying from 52-55mm and the arrises slightly rounded. Based on the dimensions, form and finish of the brick, it is likely to be of 17th century date, and can be categorized broadly as Harley (1974) type 4.

The second sample taken from the structure comprises two bricks and a tile, bonded with a white lime mortar. These measure 52-55 x 110 x 230mm and are also slightly uneven and of the same fabric. The tile is

seen as a broken section only, and is 15mm thick, uneven and with some edge thickening, and can be only broadly dated to the medieval or early post-medieval periods.

Feature 1 was backfilled with context 56, mid reddish brown, sandy clay and gravel, 0.83m thick, above a thin (0.11m thick) band of brick and chalk, context 57. This was above dark grey, sandy clay (58) with frequent gravel inclusions, 0.57m thick. This overlay reddish brown clay (59), more than 0.28m thick. No finds were recovered from the backfill but three sherds of post-medieval pottery were found within the tunnel and may relate to the partial collapse of a section of tunnel. A boundary wall was built upon the tunnel.

Works associated with construction of the poolhouse identified two features. A second tunnel (61), within its construction cut (4), aligned NNW-SSE but not parallel to the first tunnel, was identified (Pl. 9), running across the eastern end of the location of the new pool house footing. At the time of the visit, this brick structure had not be broken, and 8.5m of its length had been exposed. Only the outside of the exterior brick vaulting was visible. Its cut was visible in the southern section, which showed that this was 2.3m deep, beneath 1.1m of made ground. From this depth the cut truncated natural gravel. The backfill for the tunnel was 1.2m wide, with no finds uncovered from this fill 60. This was a light grey brown silty clay, containing frequent rounded gravel mixed with silty clay.

Four metres to the west of this, visible in section was the cut for a well (5). which contained wooden framing (64) (Pl.10).

The upper part of this structure was 2m below the base of the made ground. The widest part of this cut, which was roughly rectangular in shape was 1.6m wide. The framework seemed to originally have been 0.7m square, though three of the corner timbers had been disturbed during discovery. One of these posts was 200mm wide and 1800mm long, with a tenon cut into one end (Pl. 12). One of the planks measured 7300mm long, with a wedge shape profile, widening to 45mm (Pl. 11). It was thought that this would have located with a morticed box frame at either the base or top. Within the wooden framing, a backfill was visible, which contained one piece of white china (62). This fill was a dark grey clayey silty gravel. On the outside of the wooden structure, was a separate fill (63), contemporary with backfilling at the time of the wells construction. One sherd of pottery was recovered from this fill, which was a firm brown grey clayey silt. From this sherd it is thought that the well is of Medieval or later construction. This was the only feature of possible Medieval date identified during archaeological observations.

Works on the western part of the site revealed a small pit (6) which was 0.85m across and 0.49m deep and contained a single fill of grey brown silty sand with gravel but no dating evidence (Figs 3 and 6).

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 5 sherds with a total weight of 493g. One sherd was Early Medieval in date, the other sherds were Post-Medieval. The following types were noted:

A/B: Newbury 'A/B' ware, Late 11th -14th century (Mephram 1997, 51-2). A range of sand-flint and limestone-tempered wares. Sparse to moderate limestone up to 2mm, rounded white or clear quartz up to 0.5mm, angular fragments of white, grey and black flint. Jars, bowls and pitchers.

GRE: Red Earthenware, mid 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. 2 sherds, 165g.

MANG: Manganese Glazed Ware. Late 17th – 18th century. Well-fired brick-red fabric with distinctive dark orange-brown streaky glaze. Largely utilitarian vessel forms. 2 sherds, 317g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 1. The fabrics are common finds in the region. The sherds are large and in good condition, and appear to be reliably stratified. The sherds of MANG are from the bases of two different vessels, one a chamber-pot, the other a large tankard. The GRE assemblage consists of two bodysherds from vessels of uncertain type. The A/B sherd is also a bodysherd, and in good condition.

Conclusion

The groundworks on this watching brief have uncovered features dating from the Early-Medieval and Post-Medieval periods. A well, with *in situ* wooden structure, was identified within the ground reduction for the poolhouse. A sherd of pottery uncovered within its construction cut was dated no earlier than the 11th century.

The alignment of the tunnels appears to bear no relation to any features on the ground or to anything on historic maps of the area including that of the Craven Estate in 1775 (Fig. 5), which shows the line of the existing boundary wall, to which the tunnels are at a slight angle. Nor does it appear to have been detected by geophysical survey of the mansion house site (Linford 1997, plan F). It would however lead into the general area occupied by the mansion house on this map. Other tunnels are known for the area (Penny Stokes pers comm) with entrances in woodland to the north. The functions of the tunnels are unknown but are likely to relate to known building episodes for the house and a gardens of *c.* 1620 and/or *c.* 1670.

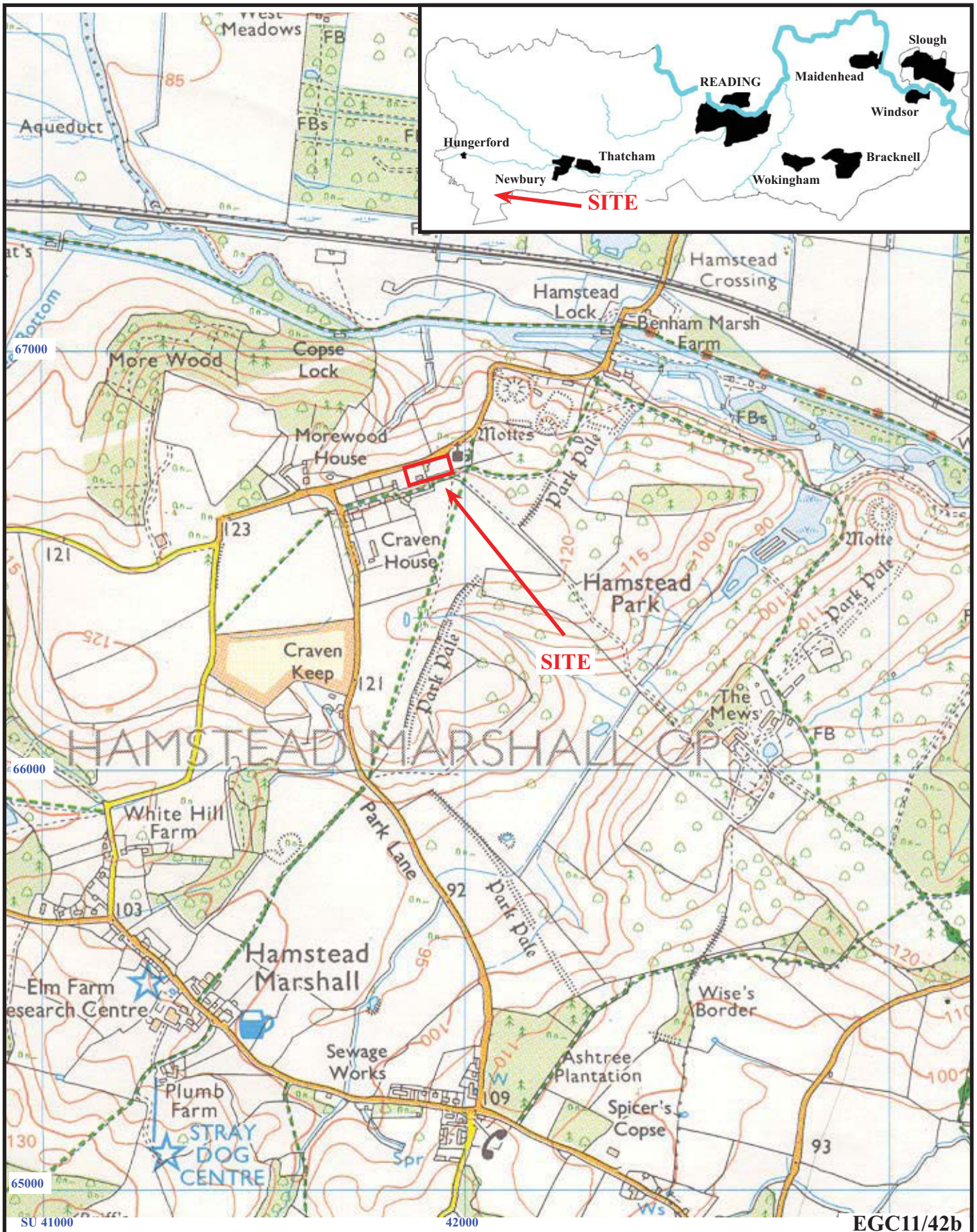
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Appendix 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	A/B		GRE		MANG	
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
made ground			1	76		
52			1	89	2	317
62	1	11				
Total	1	11	2	165	2	317

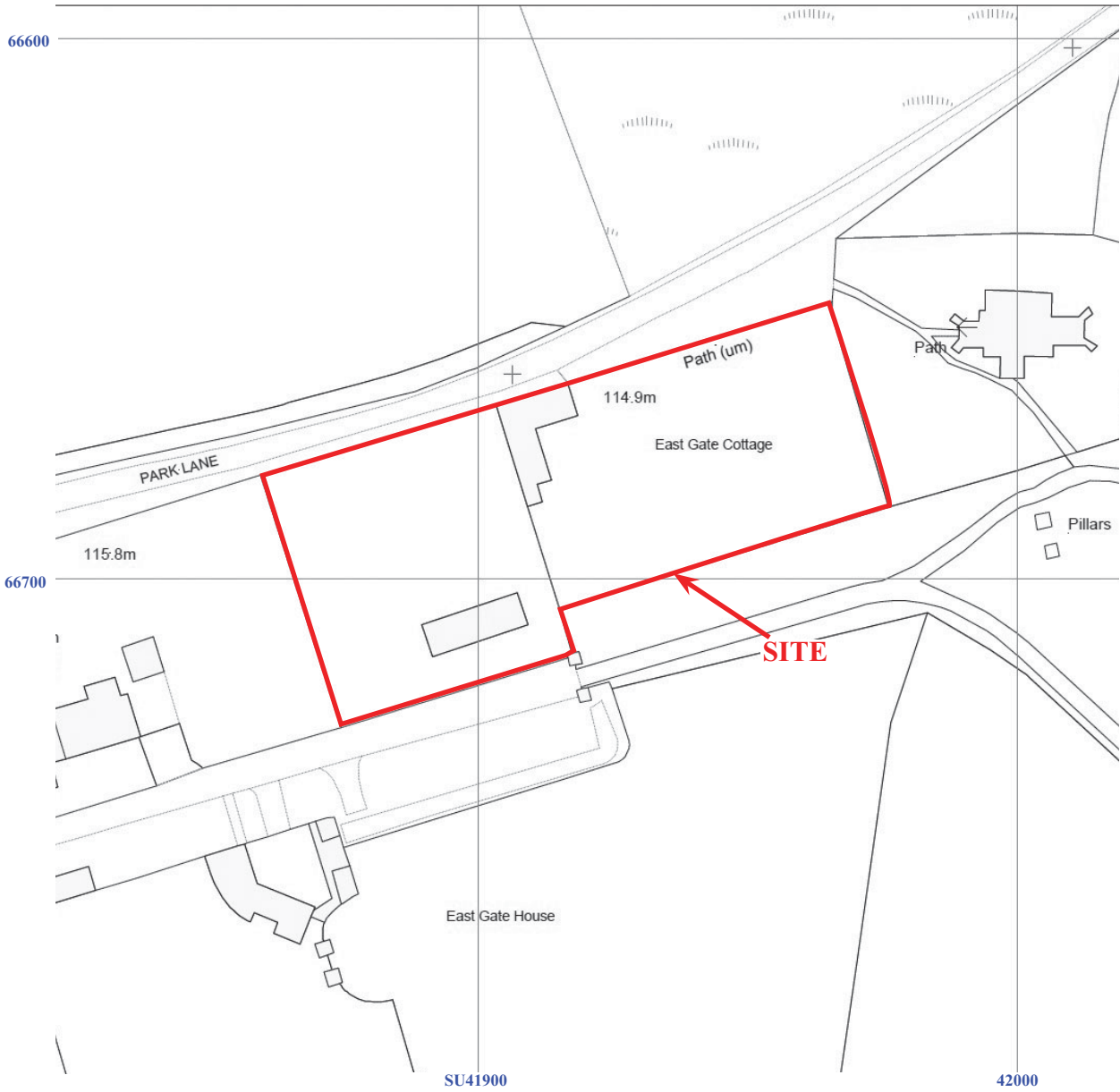


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Figure 1. Location of site within Hamstead Marshall and Berkshire.

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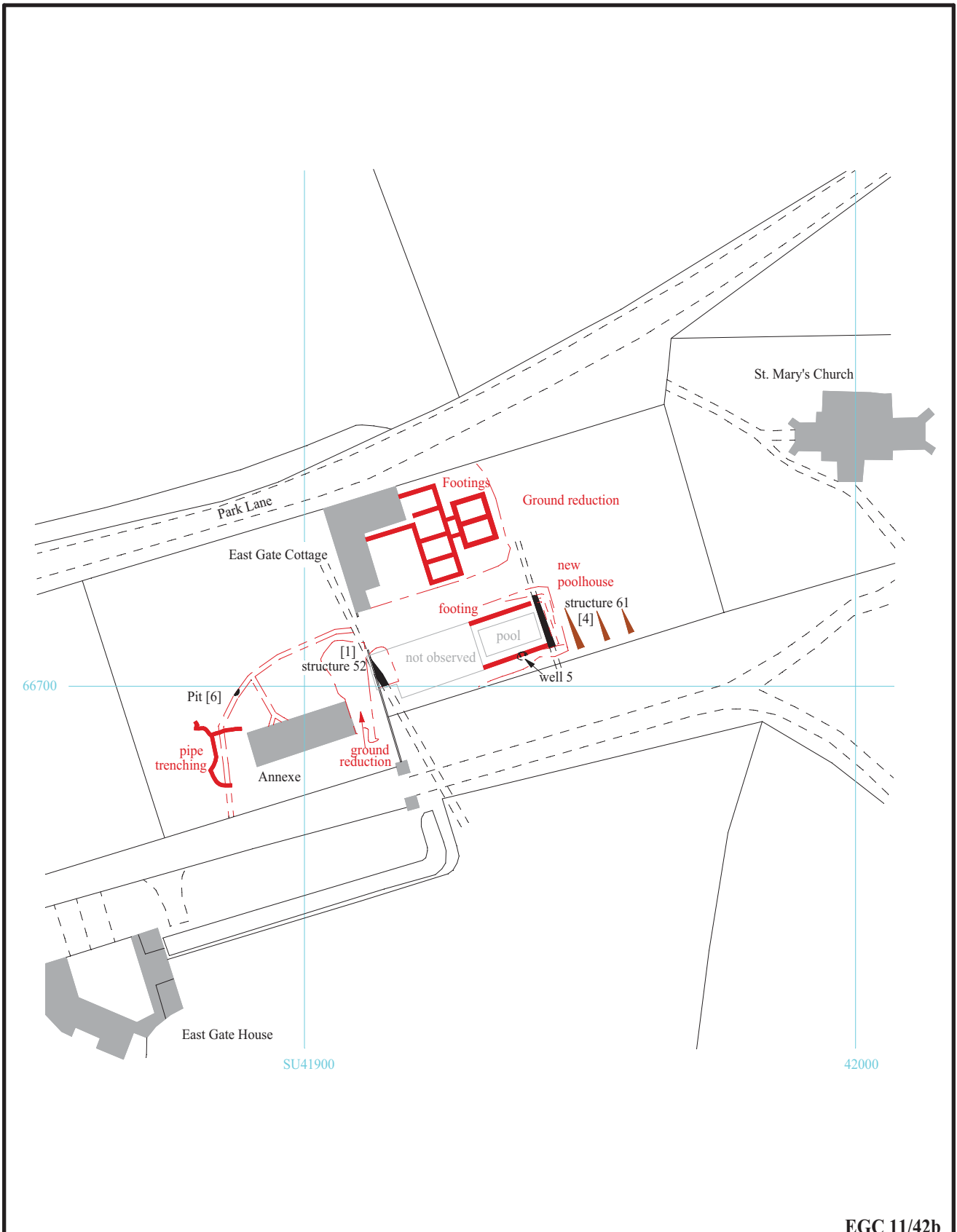


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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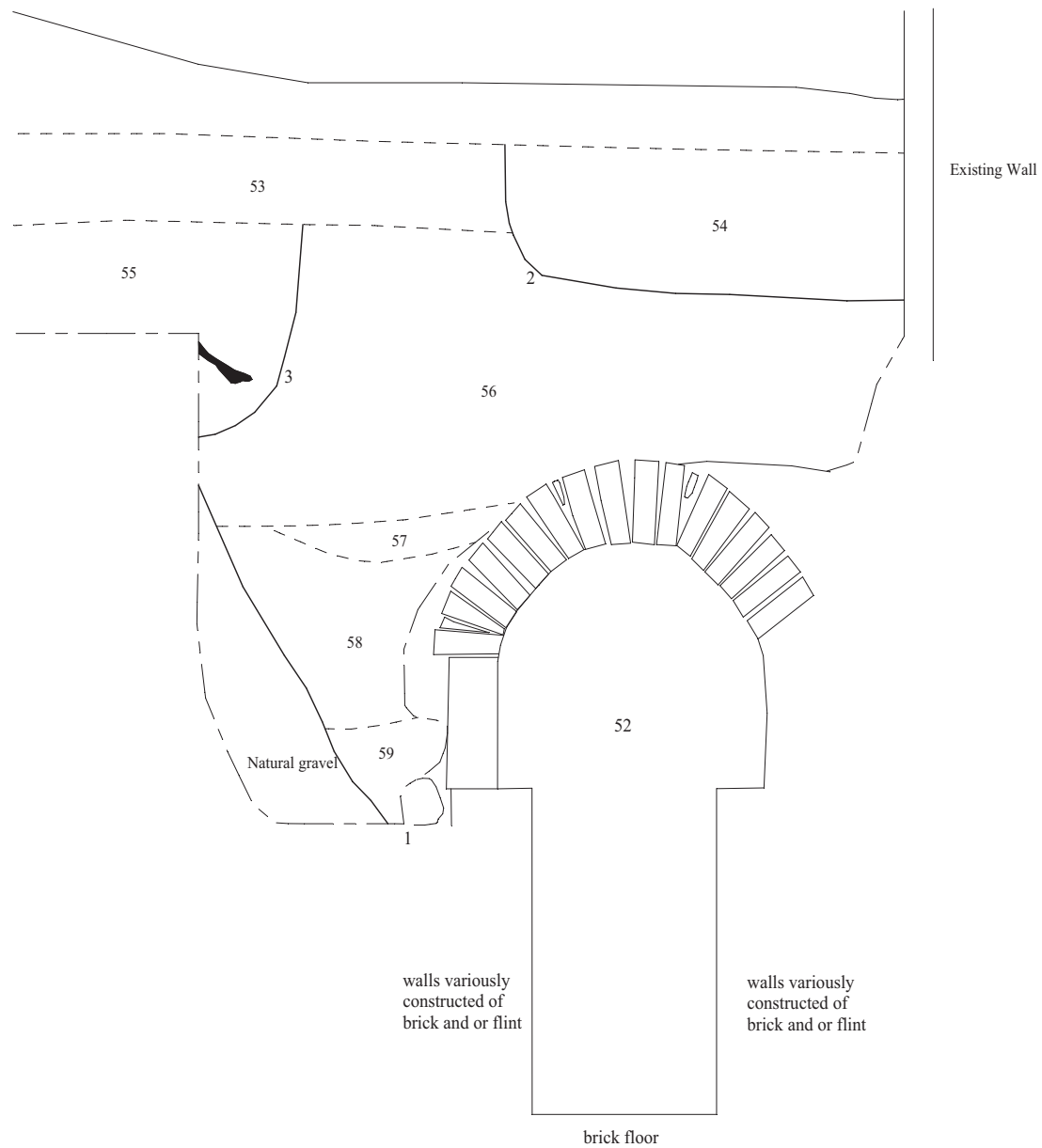
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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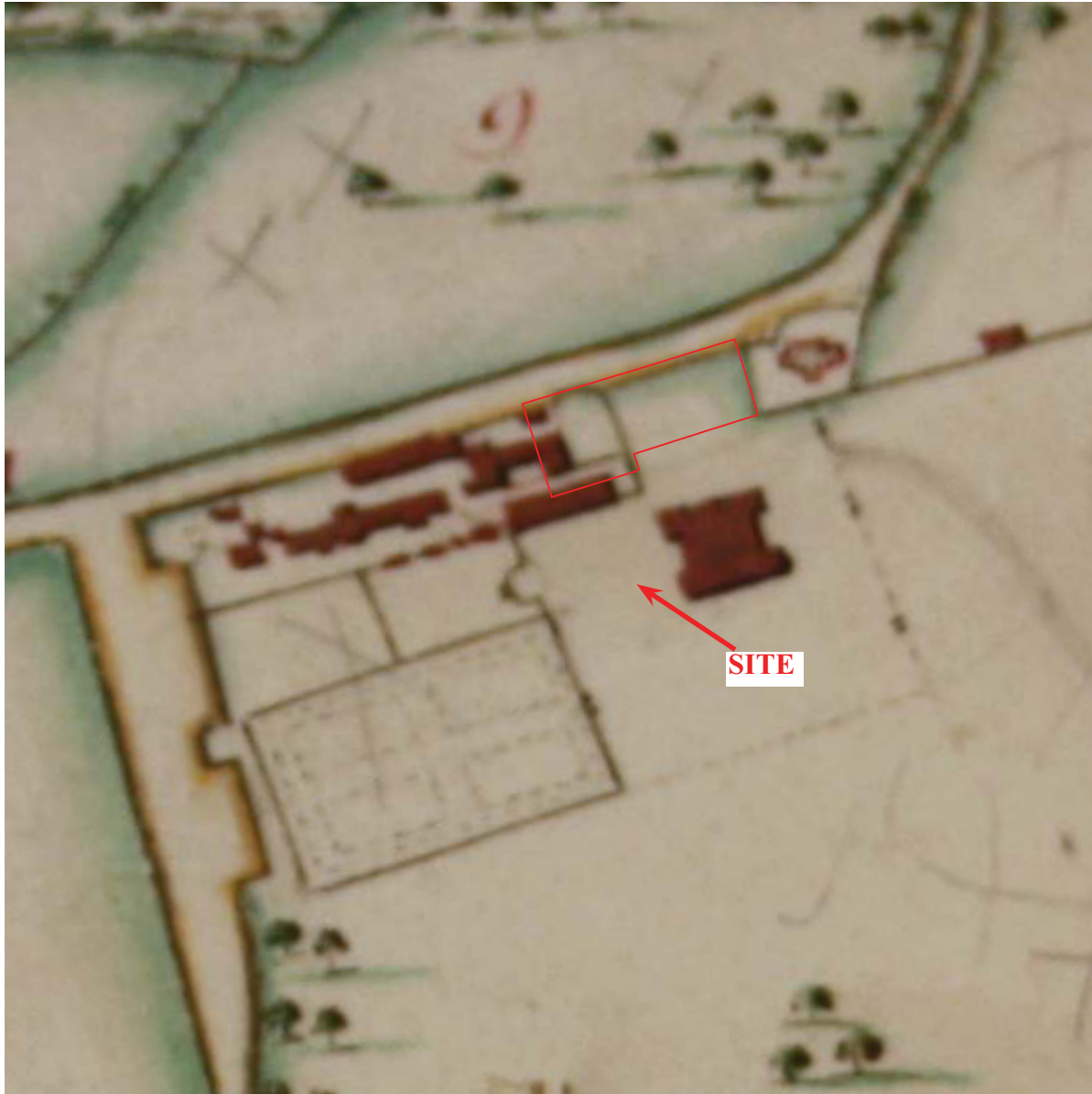
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Figure 4. North facing section at south end of garage strip showing structure 52 in section.



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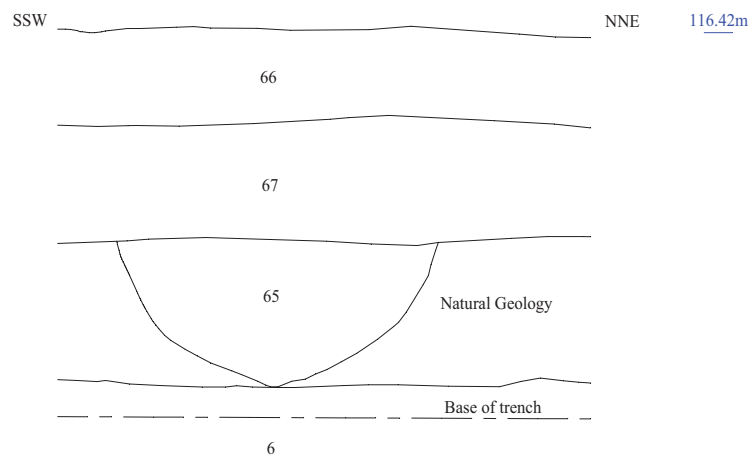
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Figure 5. Craven Estate Map, 1775.

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Figure 6. Sections.



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Plate 1. General view of watching brief, looking north west



Plate 2. View of tunnel cut (1) before opening, looking south,
Scales: 2m and 1m

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Plates 1-2**

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Plate 3. General view of tunnel, looking south from entry point



Plate 4 General view of tunnel, looking north from entry point
showing subsidence with blockage beyond, Scales: 2m and 1m

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Plates 3-4**

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Plate 5. General view of tunnel blockage at south end, looking south

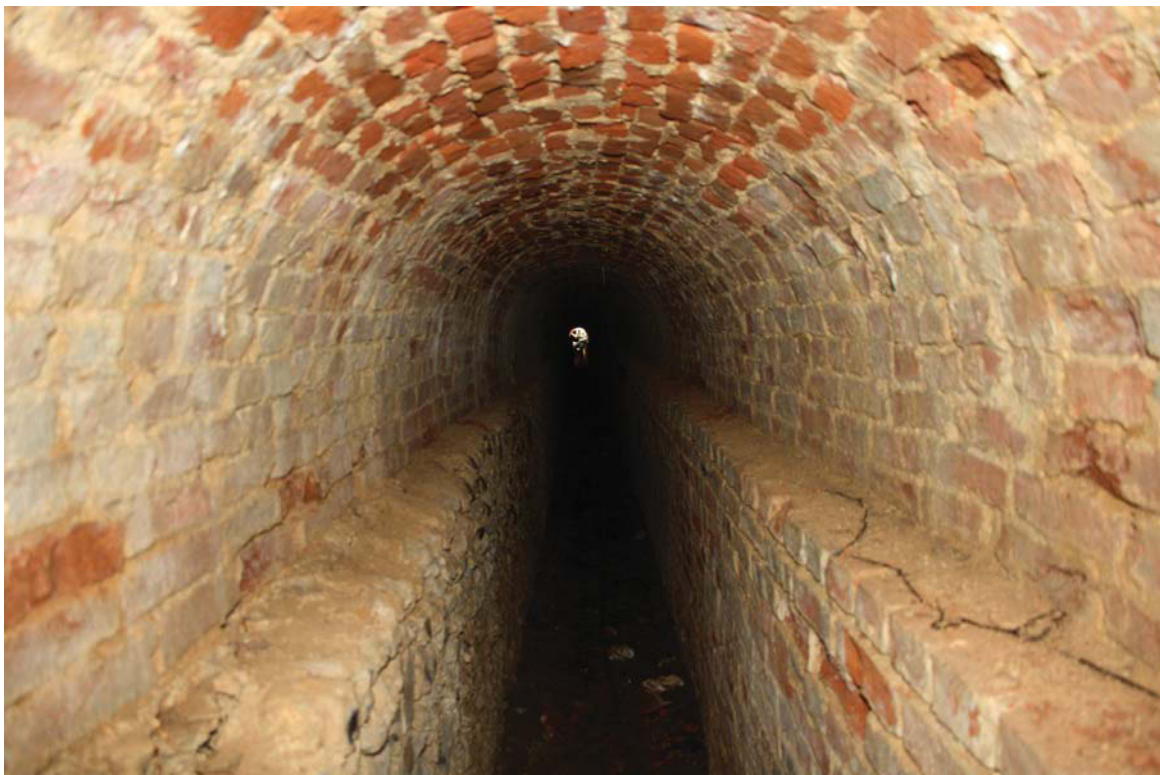


Plate 6. General view of tunnel from near southern blockage, looking north towards entry point

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Plates 5-6**

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Plate 7. Detailed view of arched brickwork at opening



Plate 8. Detailed view of brick flooring at opening, Scale: 0.3m

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Plates 7-8

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Plate 9. Tunnel (61) showing cut 4 in section, looking south across reduced area for pool and its retaining wall. Scales:1m



Plate 10. Well 5, looking south, Scale: 0.5m.

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Plates 9-10**

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Plate 11. Timber plank recovered from the interior framework of the well (64), Scale 0.5m



Plate 12. Well corner timber, Scale 1m.

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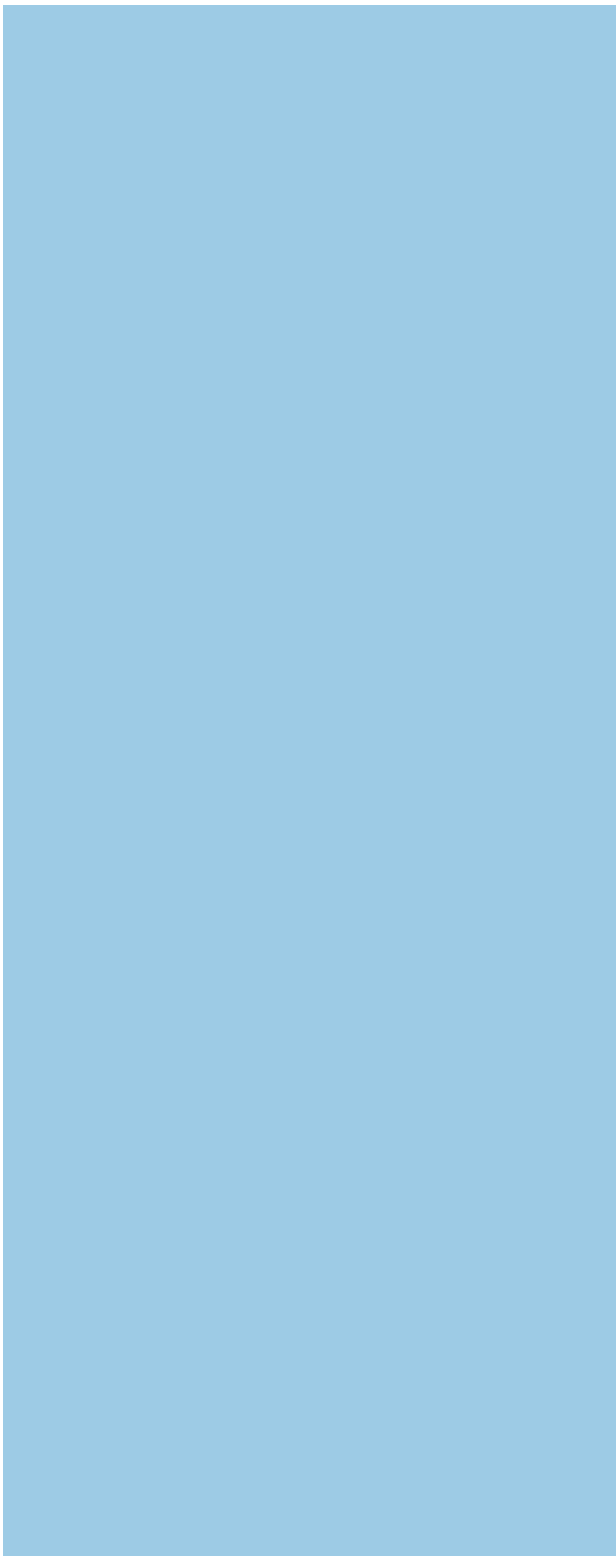
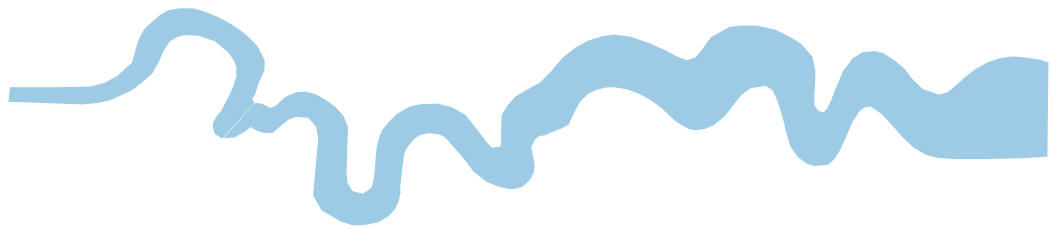
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Plates 11-12**

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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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