

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Croft Road, Spencers Wood,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by David Platt**

**Site Code: CSW15/26**

**(SU 7215 6692)**

**Croft Road, Spencers Wood,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Country Estates Ltd**

by David Platt

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CSW15/26

**May 2015**

## Summary

**Site name:** Croft Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7215 6692

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 18th - 19th May 2015

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Platt

**Site code:** CSW15/26

**Area of site:** c.0.6ha

**Summary of results:** A curving gully of Iron Age date was observed with a second ditch of unknown date recorded nearby. These are likely to represent elements of a Middle Iron Age occupation site and as such the site is considered to have 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 local museum in due course.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 27.05.15 Steve Preston ✓ 27.05.15
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# Croft Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Report 15/26

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Croft Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire (SU7215 6692) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Matthew Jeal on behalf of Country Estates Ltd, Kingfisher House, 17 Albury Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1BD.

Planning consent (F/2014/2323) has been granted from Wokingham Borough Council for the construction of nine detached dwellings with associated car parking and amenity space. The consent is subject to a condition (25) relating to archaeology. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a field evaluation is required as detailed in the *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 Kathelen Leary, Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological adviser to the Borough.

The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Will Attard between the 18th and 19th May 2015 and the site code is CSW15/26. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate local museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a parcel of land on the eastern margins of Spencers Wood, Reading and located to the north of Croft Road. The site was an area of scrubland with several copses of silver birch trees. The site is on a flat plot of land at a height of *c.*50m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology consists of Valley Gravels at the western end with London Clay becoming more prevalent towards the east (BGS 1946).

## Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from an earlier evaluation in the vicinity (Taylor 2012) which identified Iron Age to post medieval deposits. These consisted of an Iron Age pit, two ditches containing Roman material, four Saxon linear features and a number of post medieval field boundaries. In general, the archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in an area with a range of archaeological deposits.

Field survey (Ford 1997) and aerial photography (Gates 1975) had previously recorded several sites, with recently excavated sites having shown an emphasis on deposits of Iron Age and Roman date, such as at Grazeley Road and Mere oak Lane to the west (Ford *et al.* 2011; Milbank 2010) and Iron Age to the south-west (ASE 2004a, 2004b).

## **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 research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if Iron Age, Roman or Saxon deposits were present; and
- to provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy

Eight trenches were to be dug, 25m long and 1.6m wide, the trenches were to be located as close as possible to the areas affected by the proposed buildings. A contingency of 25m of trench was included should it be required to clarify findings made in the initial evaluation. These were dug using a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the project with compromising the integrity of deposits that might be better investigated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

## **Results**

Some trenches were dug as intended but others had to be moved due to the presence of thick copses of silver birch trees. The trenches ranged in length from 22.20 to 28.10m and in depth from 0.42 to 0.52m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

### Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Trench 1 was aligned N - S and was 24.16m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.27m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was aligned E - W and was 22.20m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.30m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 25.10m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.24m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

Trench 4 was aligned NE - SW and was 25.0m long and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.24m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned N - S and was 28.10m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.19m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 6 (Fig. 3)

Trench 6 was aligned E - W and was 26.0m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil and 0.26m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

#### Trench 7 (Figs 3 and 4, Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 7 was aligned NW - SE and was 26.10m long and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.23m subsoil overlying natural geology. A ditch was observed at the SE end of the trench through which a slot (2) was dug showing that the ditch was 0.75m wide and 0.33m deep. The ditch appeared to be aligned NW - SE and may be the same as that observed in Trench 8. The single fill (53) consisted of a mottled light brown and grey sandy clay with c.50g of burnt flint inclusions, no other finds were recovered.

#### Trench 8 (Figs 3 and 4, Pl. 3)

Trench 8 was aligned NE - SW and was 24.80m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.20m subsoil overlying natural geology. A curved gully was observed 10m from the SW end of the trench and this terminated within the trench. A slot (1) was dug in this terminus showing the gully to be 0.45m wide and 0.30m deep and the single fill (52) consisted of a pale brown grey sandy clay with occasional gravel inclusions. Eighty-two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered. The gully appeared to curve to the west so an

additional trench was added to confirm this. A ditch was observed at 10m from the SW end of the trench and appeared to be aligned NW - SE and may be the same ditch as that observed in trench 7. This was not excavated as it was deemed to be better examined under excavation conditions: in plan it appeared to underlie the gully but this was not confirmed.

#### Trench 9 (Figs 3 and 4, Pl. 4)

Trench 9 was aligned NW - SE and was 10.0m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.20m subsoil overlying natural geology. This trench was added to clarify the findings in trench 8 and was therefore located perpendicular to trench 8 and in such a location to see if the gully (1) observed continued. The gully was observed curving to the east but was not seen returning at the end of the trench, however the trench could not be extended due to the confines of the site and the return may be beyond the NW extent of the trench.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery* by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 82 sherds with a total weight of 503g. It was all Iron Age, and all occurred in a single context (52). The following fabric types were noted:

**F1: Iron-rich Sandy.** Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, sparse to moderate sub-rounded black iron ore of the same size. 17 sherds, 139g.

**F2: Sand and Fine Shell.** Sparse to moderate shell fragments up to 3mm, rare sub-angular flint of the same size, sparse to moderate sub-angular quartz up to 0.2mm, sparse rounded red grog up to 3mm. 65 sherds, 364g.

The sherds are all in good condition, other than the fact that the shell has leached out of most of the examples of F2, and appears securely stratified. They probably originate from no more than two or three vessels, and represent a primary deposit. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of sites in the region (eg. Lobb and Morris 1993, 53), and suggests that the material is all of middle-late Iron Age date, as does the fact that all the vessels were hand-built, and the few rims present are all simple and everted.

## **Conclusion**

The curving linear observed in trenches 8 and 9 is likely to be a ring gully structure and due to the number of pottery sherds recovered from the terminus it can be securely dated to the Iron Age. Ring gully structures representing roundhouses or small pens/enclosures are typical of the Middle Iron Age but this can only be

confirmed here after further work. The ditch observed in 7 is possibly the same as that observed in trench 8 and as this seems to respect, or underlie, the gully it may be contemporary in date or earlier. The site is considered to have archaeological potential.

## References

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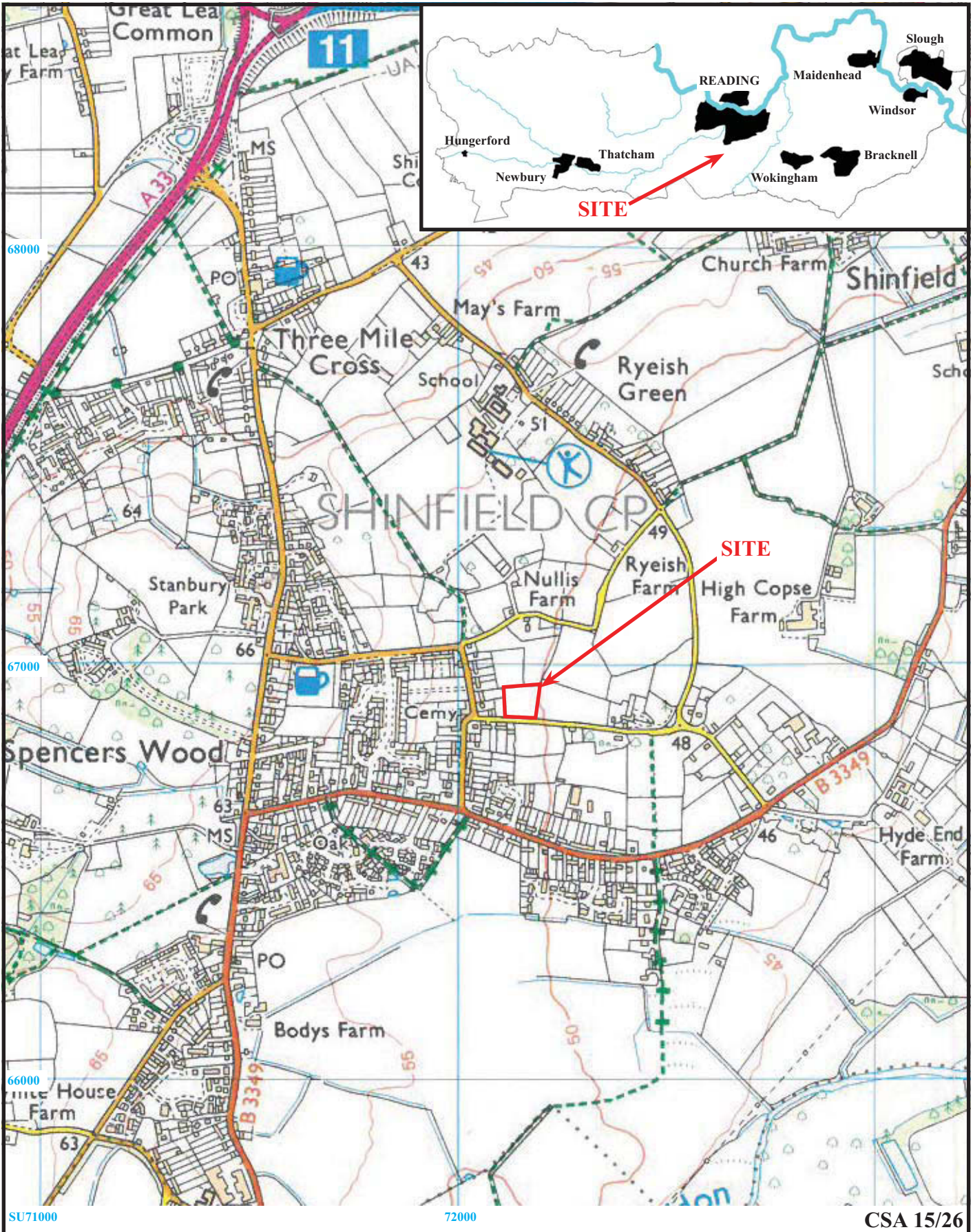
## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S, W, SSE, SW and SE end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	24.16	1.6	0.50	0–0.15m topsoil, 0.15-0.42m subsoil, 0.42m+ natural geology.
2	22.20	1.6	0.55	0–0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.50m subsoil, 0.50m+ natural geology.
3	25.10	1.6	0.52	0–0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.42m subsoil, 0.42m+ natural geology.
4	25.0	1.6	0.44	0–0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.40m subsoil, 0.40m+ natural geology.
5	28.10	1.6	0.45	0–0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.37m subsoil, 0.37m+ natural geology.
6	26.0	1.6	0.50	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.43m subsoil, 0.43m+ natural geology.
7	26.10	1.6	0.44	0–0.15m topsoil, 0.15-0.38m subsoil, 0.38m+ natural geology. Ditch 2 [ <b>PIs 1 and 2</b> ]
8	24.80	1.6	0.42	0–0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.36m subsoil, 0.36m+ natural geology. Gully terminus 1 [ <b>PI 3</b> ]
9	10.0	1.6	0.42	0–0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.36m subsoil, 0.36m+ natural geology. Gully 1 [ <b>PI 4</b> ]

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
8	1	52	Gully Terminus	Iron Age	Pottery
7	2	53	Ditch	Unknown	



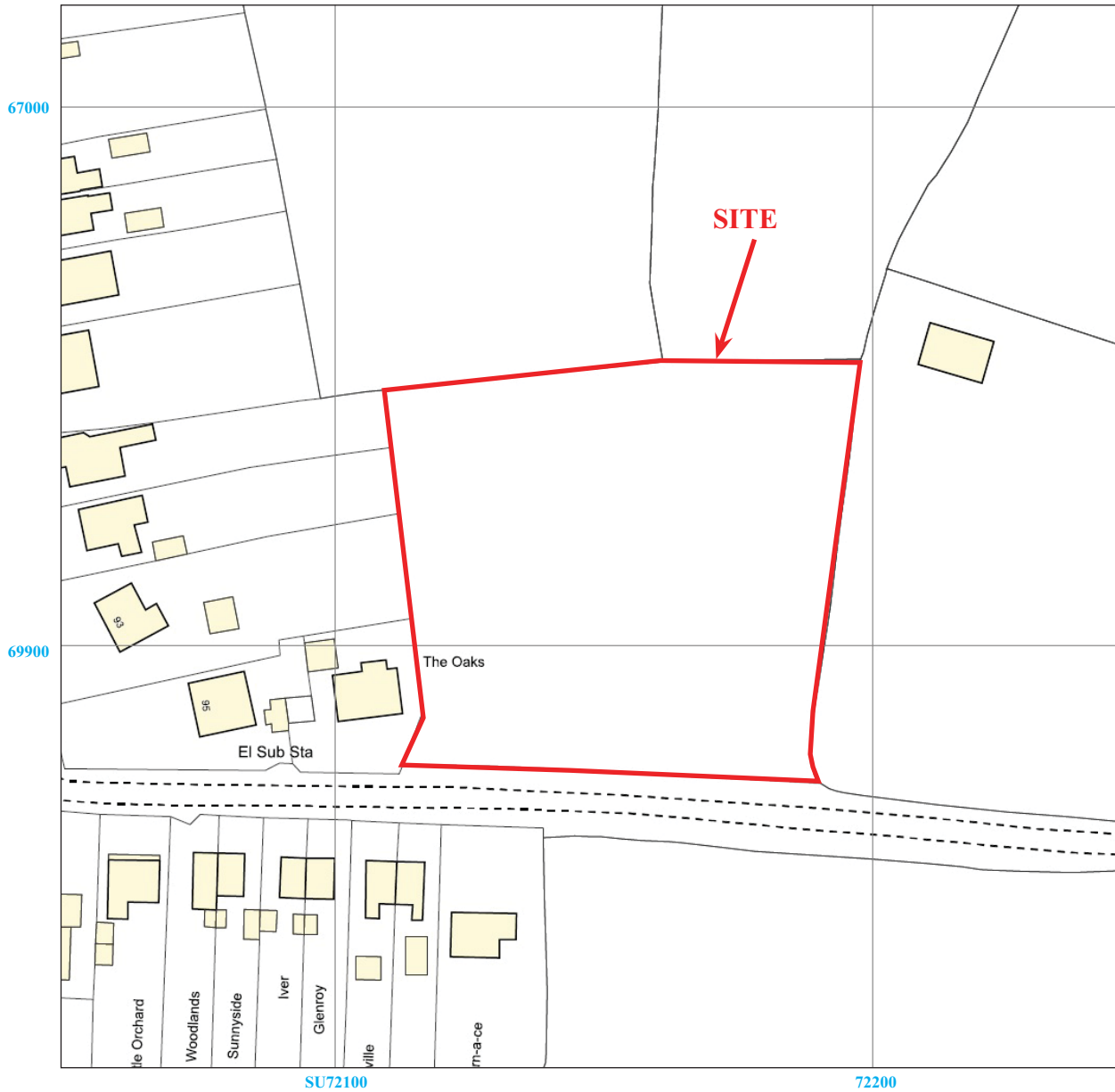
**Land at Croft Road, Spencers Wood,  
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Figure 1. Location of site within Spencers Wood and Berkshire.

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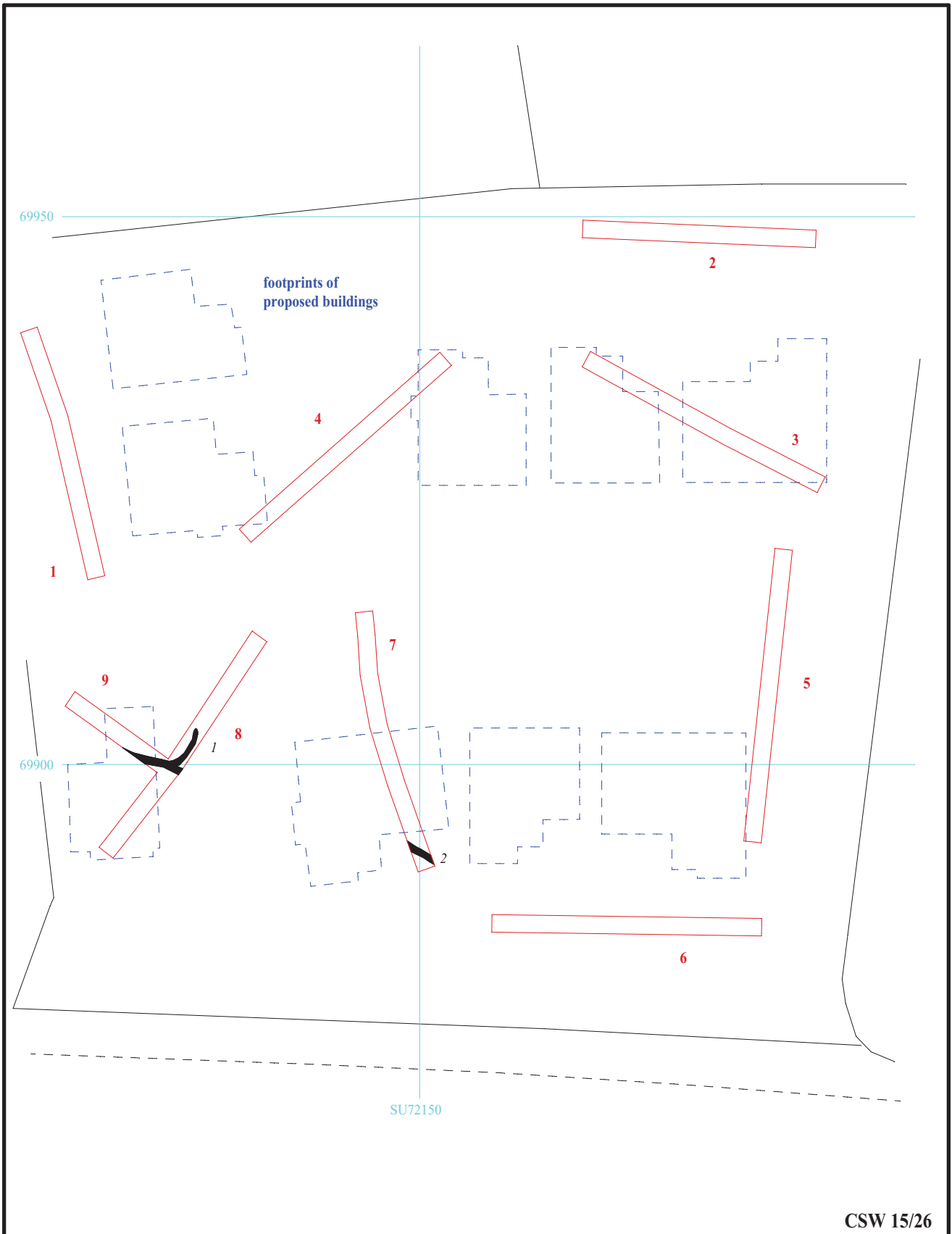
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Croft Road.

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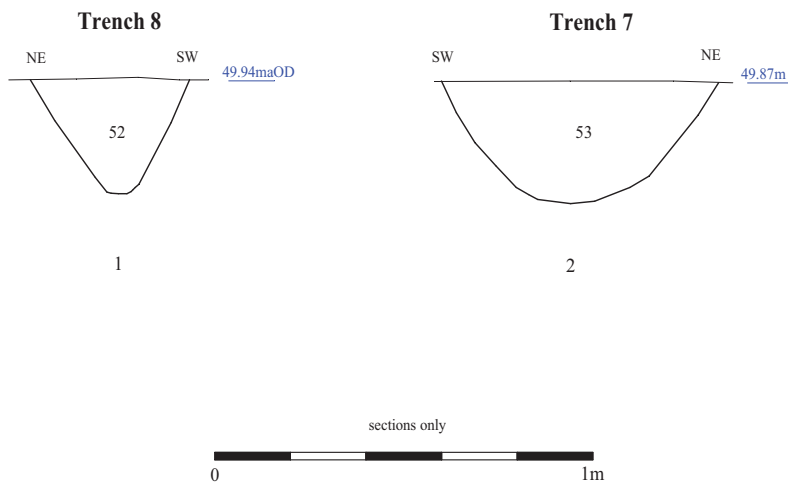
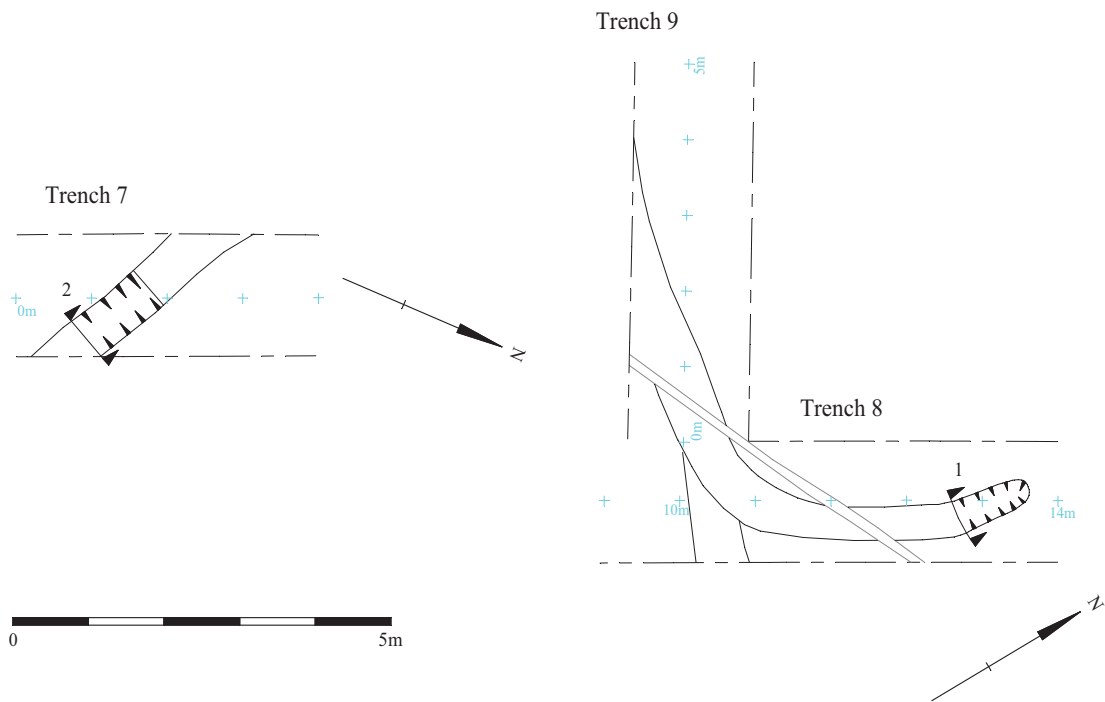
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

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Plate 1. Trench 7, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 7, ditch slot 2, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 8, looking south west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 9, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 3 - 4.**

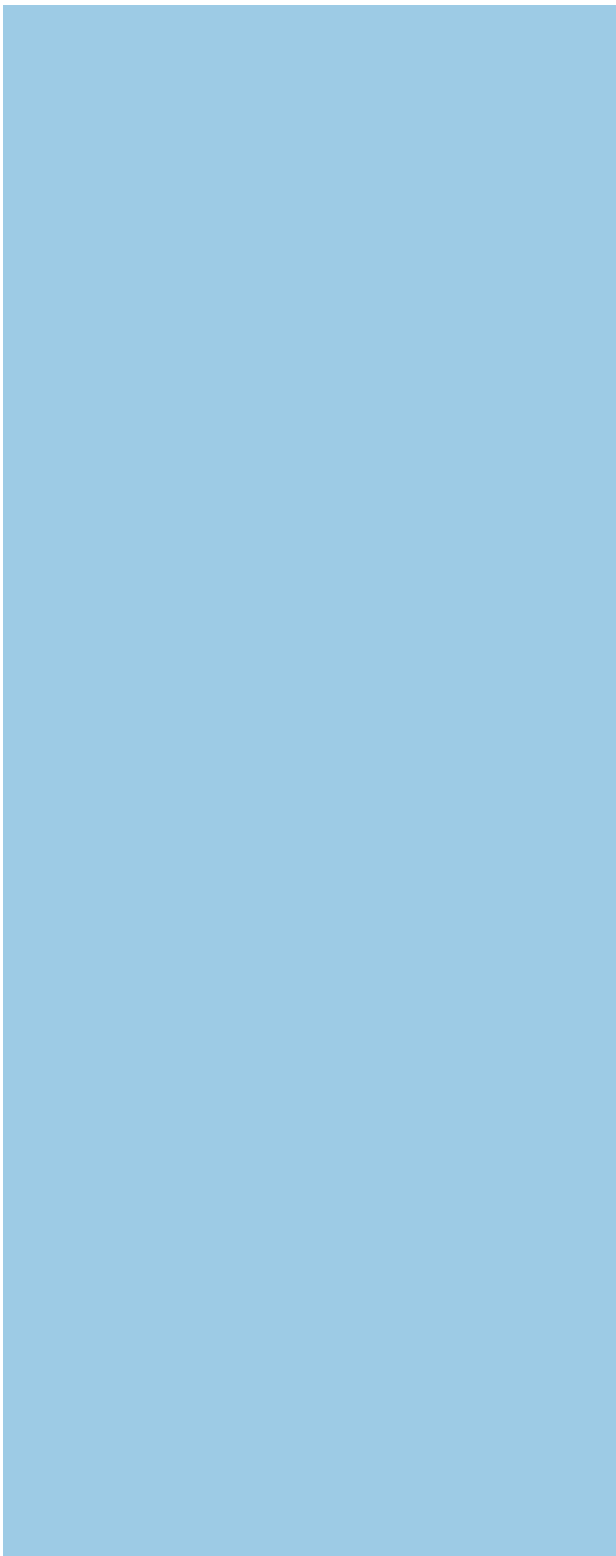
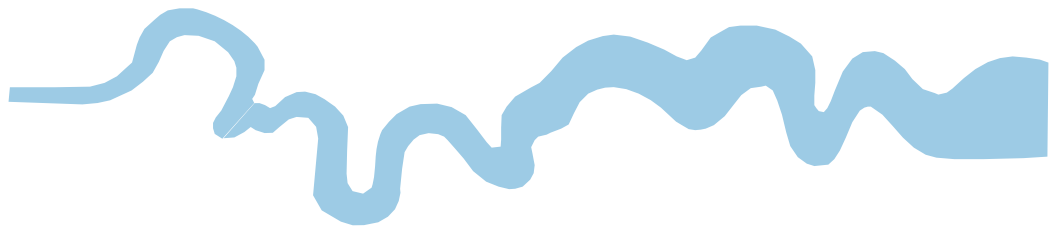
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## TIME CHART

	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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