

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**139-141 Bath Road, Thatcham,
West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Ellen McManus-Fry and Luis Esteves

Site Code: BRT16/77

(SU 5040 6763)

**139-141 Bath Road, Thatcham,
West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Ressance Ltd

by Luís Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRT 16/77

September 2016

Summary

Site name: 139-141 Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5040 6763

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 6th July to 25th August 2016

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Ellen McManus-Fry

Site code: BRT 16/77

Area of site: c. 753 sqm

Summary of results: A ditch and three post holes were observed and recorded during the course of the watching brief but no dating evidence was recovered.

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 edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 26.09.16

139-141 Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Ellen McManus-Fry and Luís Esteves

Report 16/77

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 139-141 Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire (SU 5040 6763) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Creek on behalf of Ressance Limited, 116 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5DT.

Planning consent (app 11/01559/OUTMAJ) has been gained on appeal (APP/W0340/A/12/2168107) from West Berkshire Council for the demolition of the existing buildings followed by the construction of a block of apartments. The consent is subject to a condition (13) which requires a watching brief to be maintained during the groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Alex Godden, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ellen McManus-Fry and Luís Esteves between the 6th July and 25th August and the site code is BRT16/77.

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 at 139-141 Bath Road (A4) on the north west margins of Thatcham within a residential area known as Newtown (Fig. 2). The site is mapped as lying on the Lambeth Group, a silt and sand clay (BGS 2000), and this geology was observed on the site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within an area of known Roman archaeology located along side the Roman road 'Ermin Street' from Silchester to Cirencester (Harris 1930; 1937; Pine 2010). A section of this Roman road was observed in front of 95 Bath Road in the 1920's and 1930's and further recorded at 69 Bath Road together with roadside ditches (Pine 2010). The projected line of this road

would appear to cross the proposed development area. Adjacent and to the north of the Roman road settlement evidence has been recorded which comprises several stone-lined wells, pits, gullies, postholes and stone foundations for several buildings (Harris 1930; 1937; Pine 2010). An evaluation at 123–129 Bath Road close to the site identified a probable Roman roadside ditch an undated pit and a posthole (Pine, 2007).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular the stripping of overburden and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs.

Any archaeological deposits threatened by the groundworks were to be excavated and recorded with sufficient time allowed within the groundworks schedule without causing undue delay.

Results

Ground reduction (Fig. 3; Pl. 1)

Preliminary ground reduction took place at the southern end of the site. (Fig. 3) The stratigraphy comprised 0.08m of topsoil above 0.32m light red brown clayey silt subsoil above light yellow brown clayey silt natural geology. The ground reduction was not done to archaeological standards and left patches of subsoil above the natural geology. Three post holes were observed and excavated (cuts 1, 2 and 3) (Figs. 3 and 4; Pl. 4). Post hole (1) (0.35m of diameter, 0.05m deep) was circular in plan, had a flat base, gently sloping sides and contained a single fill (50) of dark grey brown silty clay. Post hole (2) (0.3m of diameter, 0.05m deep) was circular in plan, had a concave base, gently sloping sides and contained a single fill (51) of dark grey brown clayey silt. Post hole (3) (0.48m of diameter, 0.08m deep) was circular in plan, had a flat base, gently sloping sides and contained a single fill (52) of dark grey brown clayey silt (Pl. 4). No finds were recovered.

Foundations trenches (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

The digging of the foundation trenches for the new building were also observed and recorded (Pl. 2) (Fig. 3). They were typically 0.7m wide with a depth between 0.6m and 0.7m, showing a 0.25m of mid grey brown silty clay subsoil and a 0.45m of light red brown silty clay with gravel natural geology. On the southwest side of the site a single ditch (cuts 4, 5 and 6) (Pls. 5 and 6) was observed and recorded in section cutting the natural geology. It was between 1.2 to 1.4m wide and 0.35 to 0.5m deep. It was linear in plan, had sloping sides,

concave base and had a fill of firm mid grey/brown silty clay (53, 54 and 55) in all three cuts observed. No finds were recovered.

Access Road (Fig. 3; Pl. 3)

An area was stripped for a new access road located to the north of the site (Fig. 3). This was approximately 17m long and 6m wide and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of subsoil overlying the natural geology which consisted of a light red brown silty clay with gravel patches. No features were observed or finds recovered in this area.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were observed.

Conclusion

The watching brief has been successful in recording a number of deposits of archaeological interest comprising three post holes and a ditch. Unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered though they are likely to relate to the Roman use of this part of Thatcham,

References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Harris, W E, 1930, 'A Romano-British settlement at Thatcham Newtown, Berkshire', *Trans Newbury Dist Fld Club* **6**, 6–17
- Harris, W E, 1937, 'Romano-British settlement at Thatcham-Newtown, Berks', *Trans Newbury Dist Fld Club* **7**, 219–55
- Pine, J, 2010, 'Excavation of the Silchester to Cirencester Roman road, and adjacent Roman occupation deposits, at 69, 71A and 73 Bath Road, Thatcham, 2007', in J Pine, *Archaeological investigations along the line of Ermin Street, in West Berkshire, 1992-2008, Exploring Prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlement*, TVAS Monograph **12**, Reading, 19–32
- Pine, J, 2007, 123–129a Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire, An Archaeological Evaluation, TVAS Report 07/142, Reading

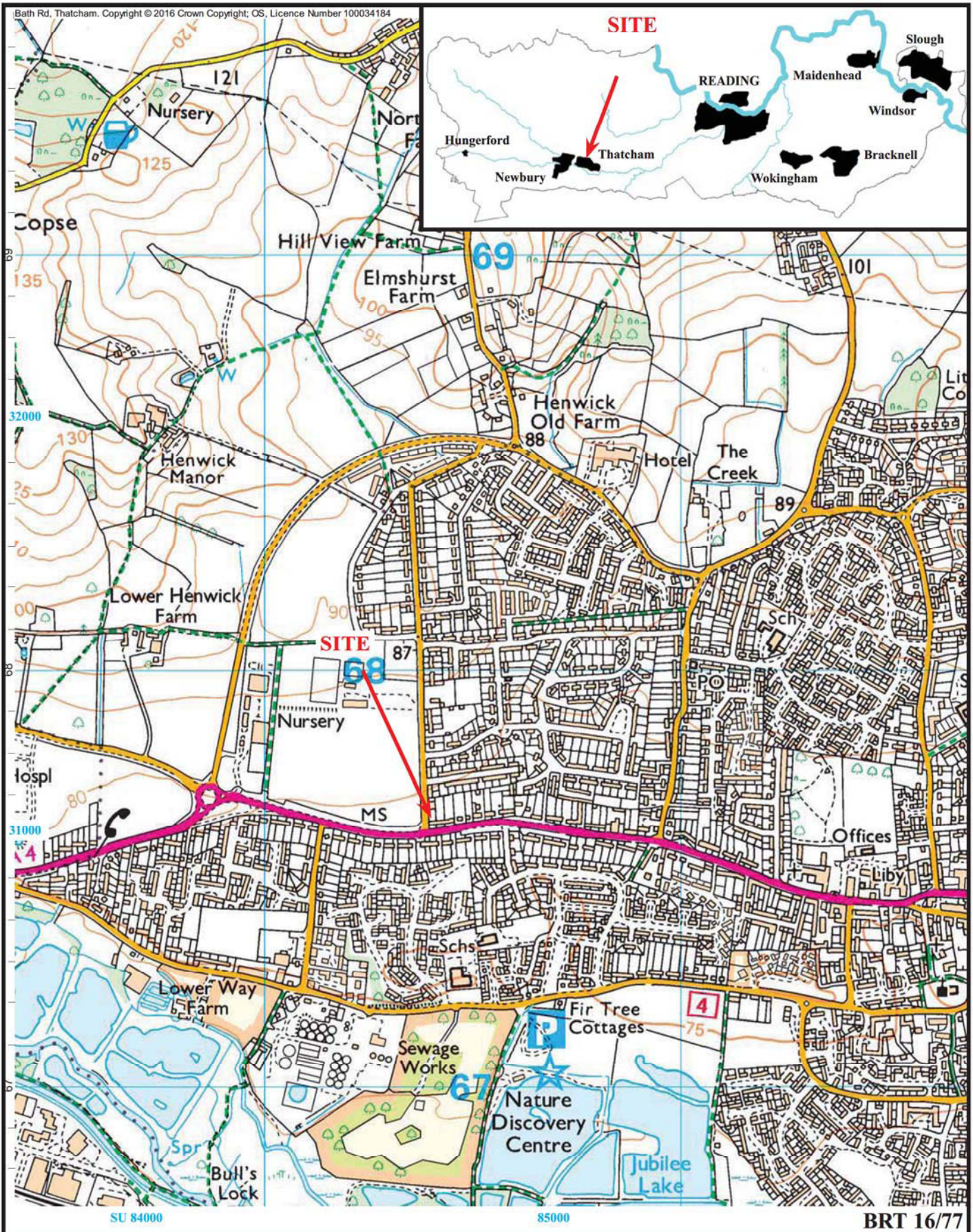
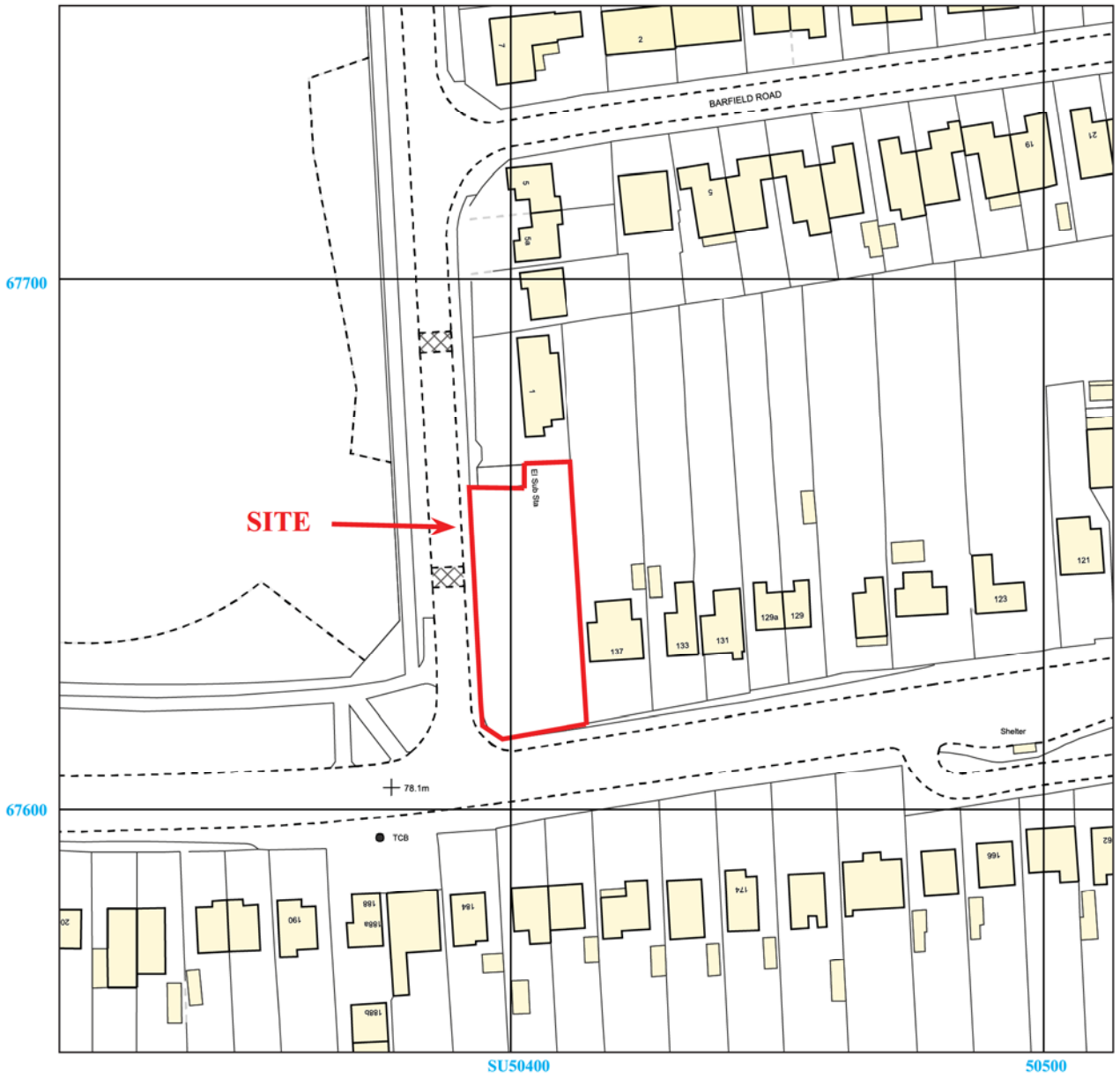


Figure 1. Location of site within Thatcham and Berkshire.

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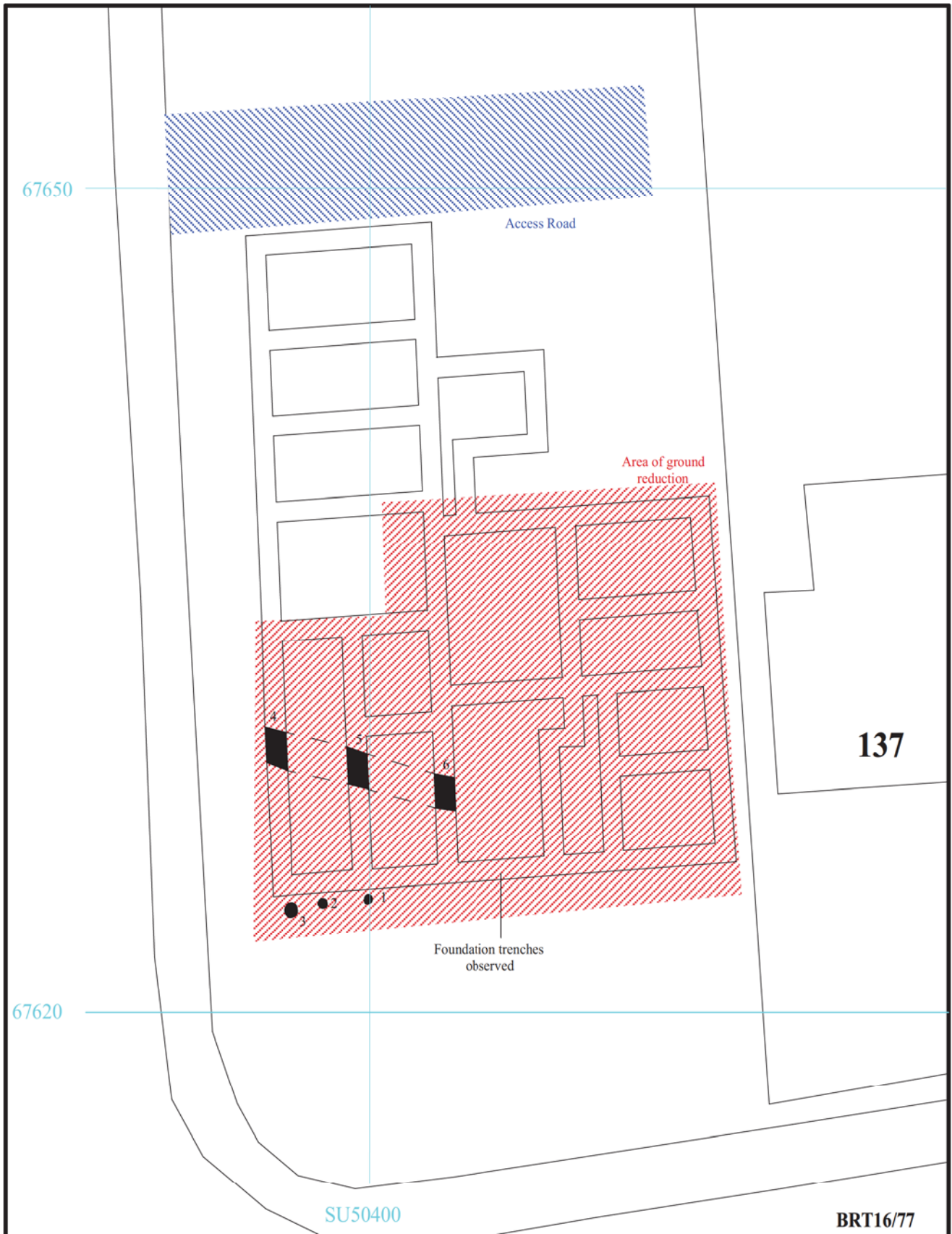
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Bath Road.

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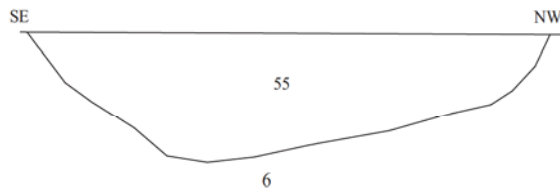
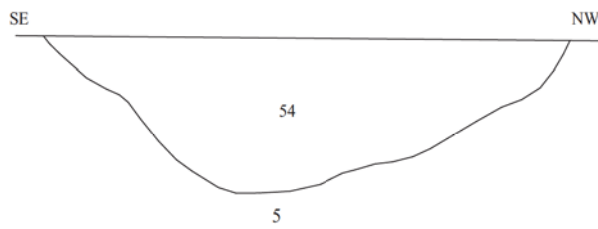
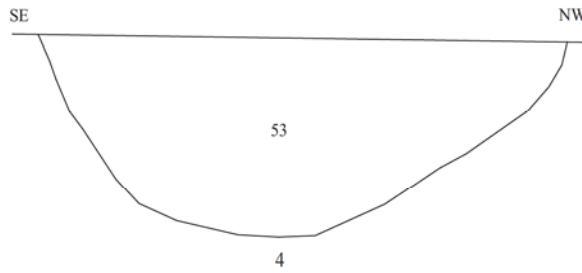
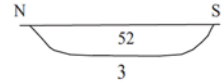
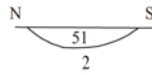
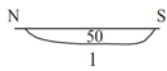
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Figure 3. Plan showing areas monitored and features recorded.





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Figure 4. Sections of features.



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Plate 1. Ground reduction area, looking east, Scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Foundation trenches, looking north, Scales: 0.5m 1m and 2m.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Access road, looking west, Scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 4. Posthole 3, looking east, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Ditch slot 4, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 1m.



Plate 6. Ditch Slot 6, Looking west, Scales; 0.5m and 1m.

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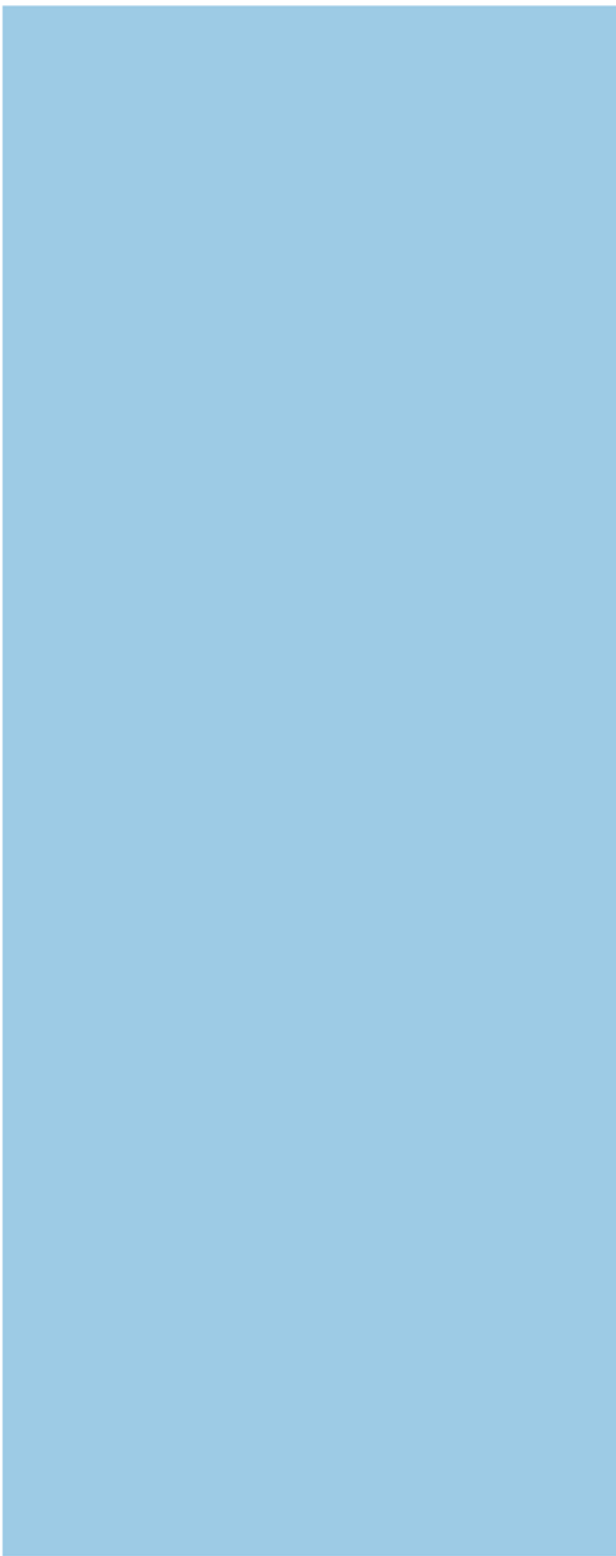
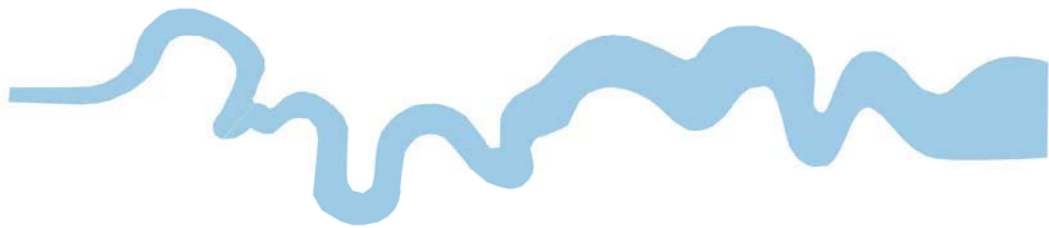
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Plates 5 - 6.

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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





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