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S E R V I C E S

**Lower House Farm, Ownham,  
West Berkshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Michael Johnson and Luís Esteves**

**Site Code: LON17/36**

**(SU 4216 7028)**

**Lower House Farm, Ownham  
West Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**For Mr G. Williams**

by Luís Esteves

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LON 17/36

**April 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** Lower House Farm, Ownham, West Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4216 7028

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 20th to 22nd March 2017

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Michael Johnson

**Site code:** LON 17/36

**Area of site:** c.64sqm

**Summary of results:** The excavation for a new swimming pool at Lower House Farm located on or close to the projected line of the Roman road from Silchester to Wanborough was monitored. However no finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

**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✓ 12.04.17<br>Steve Preston✓ 11.04.17 |
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# Lower House Farm, Ownham, West Berkshire An Archaeological Recording Action

by Michael Johnson and Luís Esteves

**Report 17/36**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Lower House Farm, Ownham, West Berkshire (SU 4216 7028) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Claire Welburn of Fowler Architecture and Planning Ltd, 19 High Street, Pewsey, SN9 5AF on behalf of Mr G. Williams.

Planning consent (app 16/03552/House) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new swimming pool at Lower House Farm. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires a recording action to be carried out during groundworks, due to the possibility of damage or destruction to archaeological deposits which may be present on site.

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 Ms Sarah Orr, Historic Environment Record Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Michael Johnson between 20th and 22nd March 2017 and the site code is LON17/36. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located at Lower Farm, Ownham (Figs 1 and 2). Ownham is part of the civil parish of Boxford, south of the M4 motorway, and approximately 6.km north-west of Newbury. Located at the top of a hill above Boxford, the hamlet has views over the Lambourn Valley. The site for the swimming pool is bounded at the west by the main house and by fields in the other directions. The underlying geology is mapped as Valley Bottom Head (superficial deposits) clayey sand and gravel, very close to an outcrop of the underlying Lambeth Group (clay) (BGS 2006). The deposits observed on the site appeared to be Head. The site is at an elevation between 108m and 110m above Ordnance Datum. The area for the pool slopes down markedly from both north and south at the head of what appears to be a dry valley (Fig. 1).

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing document prepared by Mr Alex Godden formerly of West Berkshire Archaeology Service. In summary this potential stems from the location of the site immediately adjacent to, or on, the projected course of the Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester via *Spinae* (near Newbury) and Warborough (near Swindon) (Margary 1973). Roman roads are also often the foci of smaller roadside settlement and burial. A barn at the farm complex is of 18th century date and is listed (grade II). It is also possible that the farm has late medieval origins.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the recording action was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved the monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks in particularly the areas of ground reduction.

The specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if elements of a Roman road are present along with any roadside settlement.

Overburden was to be removed to expose the top of the archaeologically relevant horizon under archaeological supervision by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Archaeological deposits which were threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded to an agreed sampling fraction.

## **Results**

The area for the swimming pool measured 11.9m long by 5.4m wide. It was excavated in spits to a depth of 1.8m at the floor of the pool and 2.3m to the base of footings (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 2). The stratigraphy varied as the natural geology sloped but typically consisted of 0.07m of dark brown sandy clay with modern debris overlying 0.13m Brown/grey sandy clay considered to be a subsoil. The excavation continued into the natural geology which comprised 0.1m of light yellow/white sand overlying 0.65m of mid grey/yellow silty sand, overlying a yellow orange silty clay with stones (Fig. 4; Pls 3 and 4). No archaeological features were observed.

## **Finds**

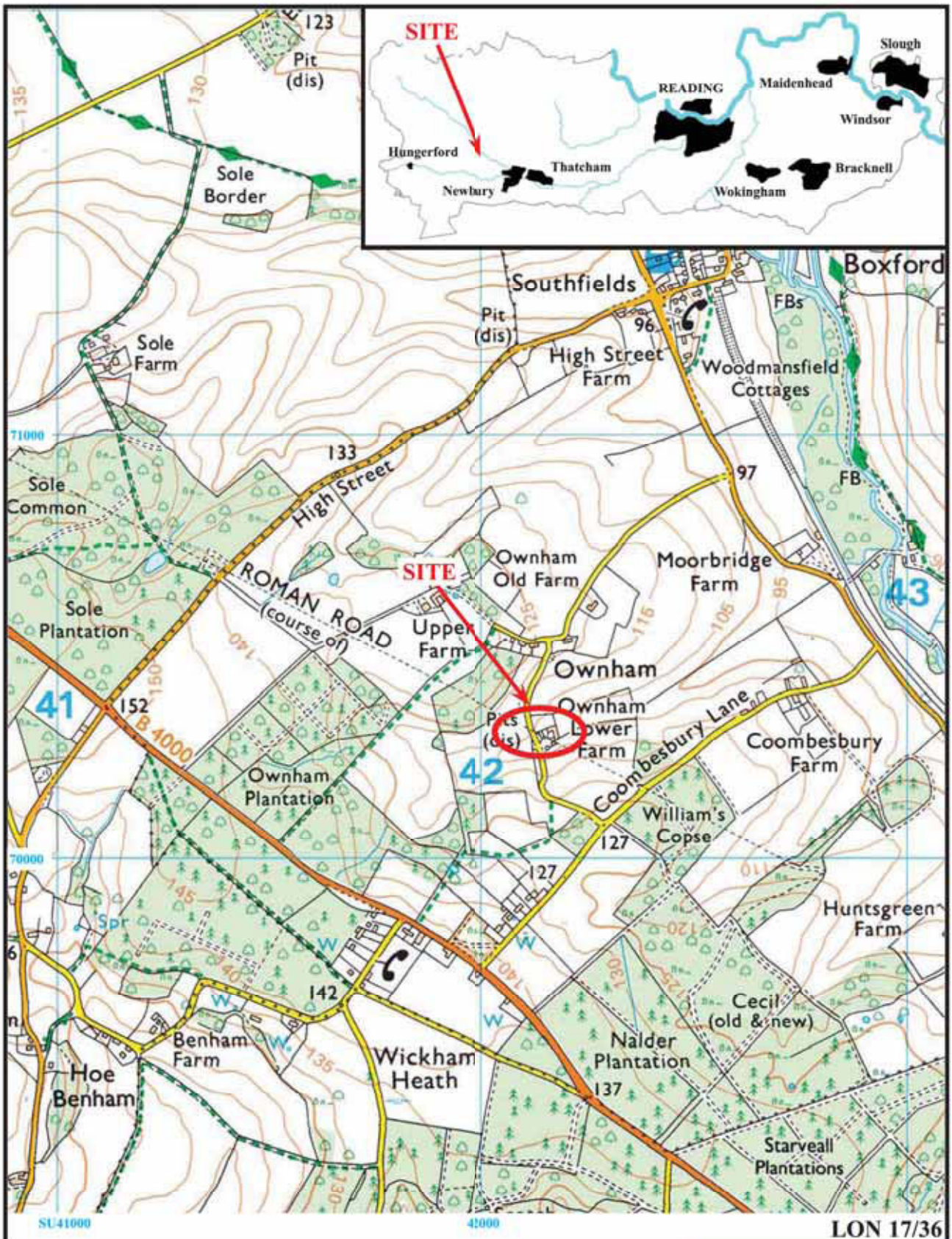
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the recording action.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the potential of the site, no archaeological features or finds were encountered during the course of this recording action. The projected course of Roman roads often involves the drawing of straight lines between quite distant points where the route is already known, though it is known that there are often local deviations of the route. In this instance the Ordnance Survey's straight line projection (Fig. 1) appears to make little sense in this locality in relation to the local topography and a route either along the valley floor to the east or the ridge to the south west (occupied by the modern B4000) seems more plausible.

## **References**

BGS, 2006, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 267, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Margary, I D, 1973, *Roman Roads in Britain* (3rd Edn), London  
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dep: Communities and Local Govt, London

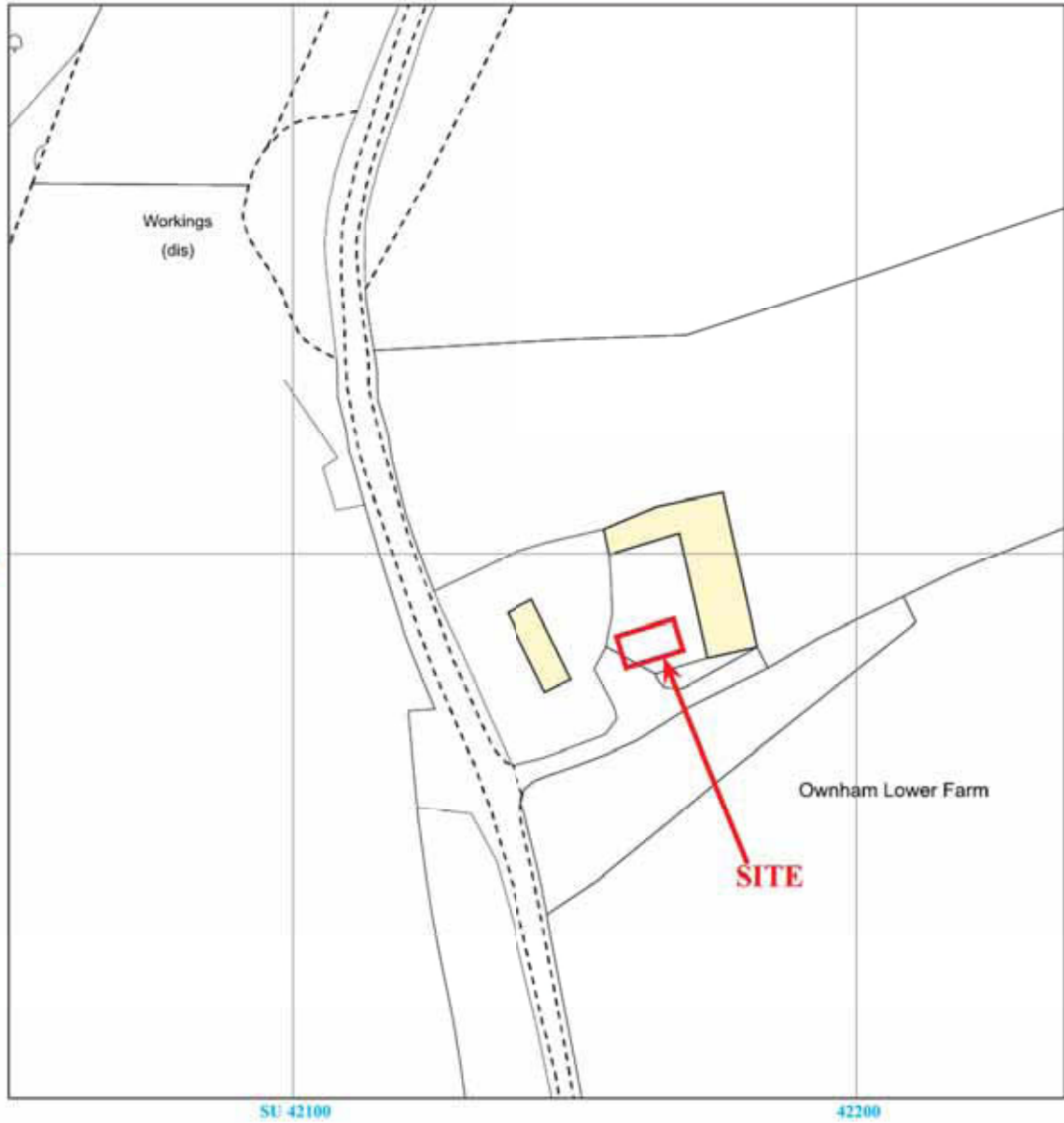


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Figure 1. Location of site within Owningham and Berkshire.

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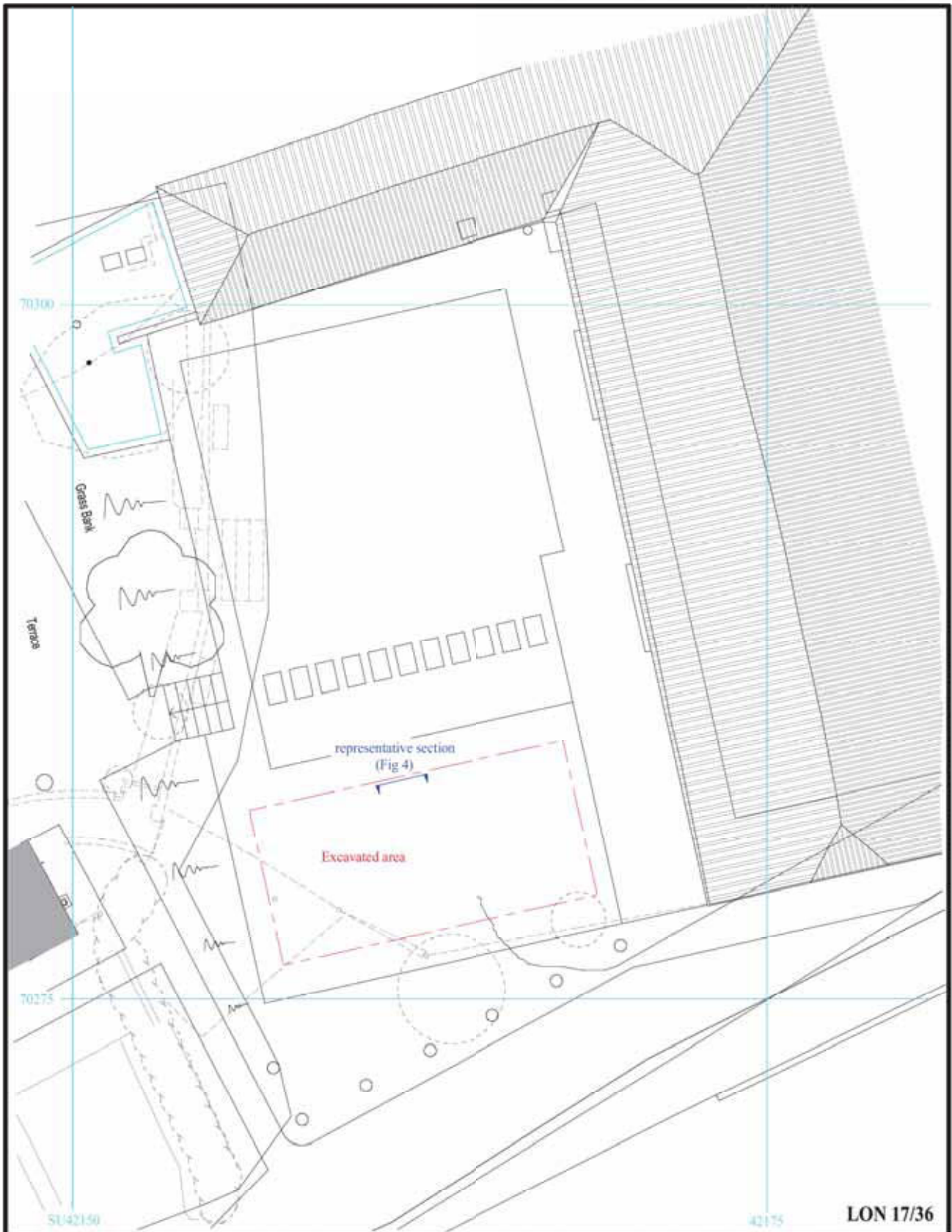


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Coombesbury Lane.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area.

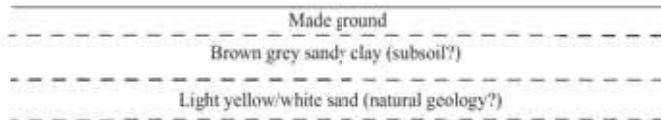


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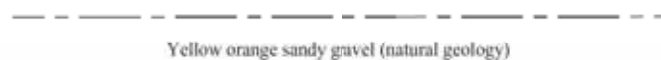
WSW

ENE

109.2mOD



Grey yellow coarse sand (natural geology)



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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Area under excavation, uncovering upper layers, looking east north east, Scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Area under excavation, uncovering lower layer.

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**Lower House Farm, Owningham,  
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Facing section of trench (representative), looking north north west, Scale: 1m.



Plate 4. Base of excavation, looking east north east, Scale: 1m.

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**Lower House Farm, Owningham,  
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Plates 3 and 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<br>AD 0 BC |
| Iron Age _____             | 750 BC           |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Bronze Age: Late _____     | 1300 BC          |
| Bronze Age: Middle _____   | 1700 BC          |
| Bronze Age: Early _____    | 2100 BC          |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Neolithic: Late .....      | 3300 BC          |
| Neolithic: Early .....     | 4300 BC          |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Mesolithic: Late .....     | 6000 BC          |
| Mesolithic: Early .....    | 10000 BC         |
| <br>                       |                  |
| Palaeolithic: Upper .....  | 30000 BC         |
| Palaeolithic: Middle ..... | 70000 BC         |
| Palaeolithic: Lower .....  | 2,000,000 BC     |





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