

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**74 Northcourt Avenue,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Kyle Beaverstock

**Site Code: NAR17/123
(SU 7298 7115)**

**74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading
Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Tom Abram

by Kyle Beaverstock

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code NAR17/123

September 2017

Summary

Site name: 74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7298 7115

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th of September 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Kyle Beaverstock

Site code: NAR17/123

Area of site: c. 1800 sq m

Summary of results: The evaluation uncovered several features of Middle Bronze Age date as well as undated features and some modern truncation. The site therefore has a high archaeological potential in within the area to be affected by the proposed groundworks.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 15.09.17 Steve Preston ✓ 15.09.17

74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Kyle Beaverstock

Report 17/123

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (SU 72979 71148) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Tom Abram of 74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HQ.

Planning consent (app 160255) has been gained from Reading Borough Council to construct a new house on land to the rear of 74 Northcourt Avenue. The consent is subject to an archaeological condition (6) requiring a phased programme of archaeological investigation prior to the development.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. It was determined that the investigation should take the form, initially, of a field evaluation by means of trial trenches, based on the results of which further mitigation measures might be required. This report presents the results of the evaluation.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Miss Ellie Leary, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverstock and Aidan Colyer on 6th September 2017 and the site code is NAR17/123. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of Northcourt Avenue in southern Reading (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by private property on all sides with fencing to the north, west and south and open garden to the east and is currently being used as a garden (Fig. 2). This relatively flat parcel of land is approximately 81.5m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as sixth terrace gravel (BGS 2000) which was seen in the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing document produced by Ms Ellie Leary of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary this potential stems from the location of the site on the plateau margin overlooking the valley of the Kennet Valley/Foudry Brook. This is a location from which several sites and finds have now been recorded. In particular field evaluation nearby located residual finds of Roman pottery, a medieval ditch and undated postholes (Ford and Pine 1998) and excavation next door at 68-72 Northcourt Avenue (Milbank 2010) revealed an early Roman occupation site. Iron Age pottery and Roman ditches were also recorded to the north (Carlsson 2010) and a Roman cremation burial to the north-west, although evaluation at Windermere Road to the north revealed nothing of interest (Ford 2010). Recent excavation at Ridgeway School around 750m to the south has also revealed Middle/Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Early Roman occupation (Ford 2017). Finds included a hoard of Roman coins placed within a pot. The unexplained monument known (in the archaeological literature) as Marshall's Hill which lies nearby is possibly a Late Bronze Age ring-fort (Bradley 1984).

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 are:

- To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any Roman deposits are present continuing the site previously located to the north; and
- to collect information with which to prepare a mitigation strategy if necessary.

It was proposed to dig two trenches each 15m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision. Any features were to be cleaned, excavated and recorded using the appropriate tools to an agreed sampling fraction, without compromising the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in-situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Results

Both trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3). A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1.3.4.6)

Trench 1 was aligned S - N and measured 15.3m in length, with a depth of 0.5m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m topsoil and 0.25m subsoil overlying a natural geology of brownish-red sandy gravel. Feature (2) was situated at the north end of the trench, and extended beyond the limit of excavation. It measured 1.6m wide and 1.2m deep and contained three fills. A mid grey-brown sandy silt (53) containing a few fragments of brick and tile overlay a dark greyish brown silty sand (54) which contained modern china and brick and tile. In turn, (54) overlay a mid grey-brown sandy silt (55) which contained a few fragments of brick and tile. The finds from these fills indicate that feature (2) is of a modern date. Underlying feature (2) is pit (3), which measured 1m long, 0.8m wide and 0.6m deep. The pit was filled with a pale brownish yellow silty sand (56) and contained a few fragments of brick and tile.

Three ditches (4), (5) and (6) aligned east-west were recorded in the southern end of Trench 1. Ditch (6) measured 0.88m in width with a depth of 0.21m, and contained a single dark brown-grey sandy gravel fill. Sherds of pottery recovered from this fill are dated to the Bronze Age (see 'Pottery' section below). Ditch (5) measured 0.56m in width with a depth of 0.39m, and contained a mid grey-brown silty sand. Ditch (4) measured 0.65m in width with a depth of 0.39m, and was filled with pale grey-brown silty sand deposit. Neither (4) nor (5) contained finds, though both are earlier in the stratigraphic sequence than ditch (6), which is dated to the Bronze Age. It follows that (4) and (5) must be of at least this age.

Post hole (7) was located just to the south of ditches (4), (5) & (6) in Trench 1. It measured 0.3m in diameter with a maximum depth of 0.11m. A single fill of dark brown-grey silty sand produced pottery dated to the later Bronze Age.

Two intercutting ditches were recorded at the northern end of Trench 1. Ditch 8 was aligned NW-SE and contained a single fill of dark brown-grey silty sand (61). Pottery and tile dating to the 19th century was recovered from this fill. A slot 0.95m long and 0.39m wide was excavated through this, which measured 1.6m wide in total across the trench, and was 0.32m deep.

Ditch 9 was truncated by ditch 8. This ditch was excavated in a slot 0.39m wide and was 1.04m wide and 0.22m deep overall. It contained a single fill of mid brown-grey silty sand (62). No finds were recovered from this context.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4 ; Pls 2 and 5)

Trench 2 was aligned SE - NW and was 15m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil and 0.25m subsoil overlying natural geology. A single pit (1) was recorded which was 0.48m long and 0.44m wide and 0.13m deep and filled with a loose mid greyish brown sandy silt (52). One 5l soil sample <1> was processed for finds and environmental evidence, but none were recovered.

Finds

Pottery by Richard Tabor

The prehistoric assemblage comprised 10 sherds weighing 155g from two cuts. The pottery appears to belong to a single Middle Bronze Age phase, the consistency in fabric implying that as few as two vessels may be represented, sherds from one of which was distributed across both cuts. All sherds included a combination of grog and flint temper (Appendix 3).

Middle Bronze Age: Grog and flint

GF1 (medium) Friable, buff pink fabric with buff pink exterior and pale pink to pale grey interior surfaces including poorly sorted common fine (<1mm), moderate medium (<2mm) and sparse coarse (<6mm) burnt angular flint and moderate fine to medium (<2mm) and sparsely coarse (<5mm) sub-angular and sub-rounded grog.

GF2 (medium) Friable, dark grey to buff pink fabric with buff pink exterior and pink to dark grey interior surfaces including poorly sorted moderate fine (<1mm), sparse medium (<2mm) and sparse coarse (<6mm) burnt angular flint and moderate fine to medium (<2mm) and sparsely coarse (<8mm) sub-angular and sub-rounded grog and rarely dark brown rounded iron stones (<3mm).

The mixing of flint and grog is more typical of the earlier Bronze Age in the middle and lower Thames Valley although it has been noted as possible in coarse Deverel-Rimbury vessels which typically have thick walls (Raymond 2013, 76; Machling 1999, 4). The wall thickness range of 12mm to 15mm for all but one sherd from the two cuts would be typical. The base from cut 7 is of a form which can occur on bucket form vessels of that tradition (Ellison 1981, fig. 177, D/E1). On balance an earlier Deverel-Rimbury date seems most likely.

Conclusion

The evaluation uncovered several features including a ditch (6) and a post hole (7) of Middle Bronze Age date suggesting the possibility of prehistoric occupation deposits, as well as several undated features. Although there seems to have been some modern truncation on the site there remains the possibility of underlying archaeological deposits. The site therefore has a high archaeological potential.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at southern and south-eastern ends

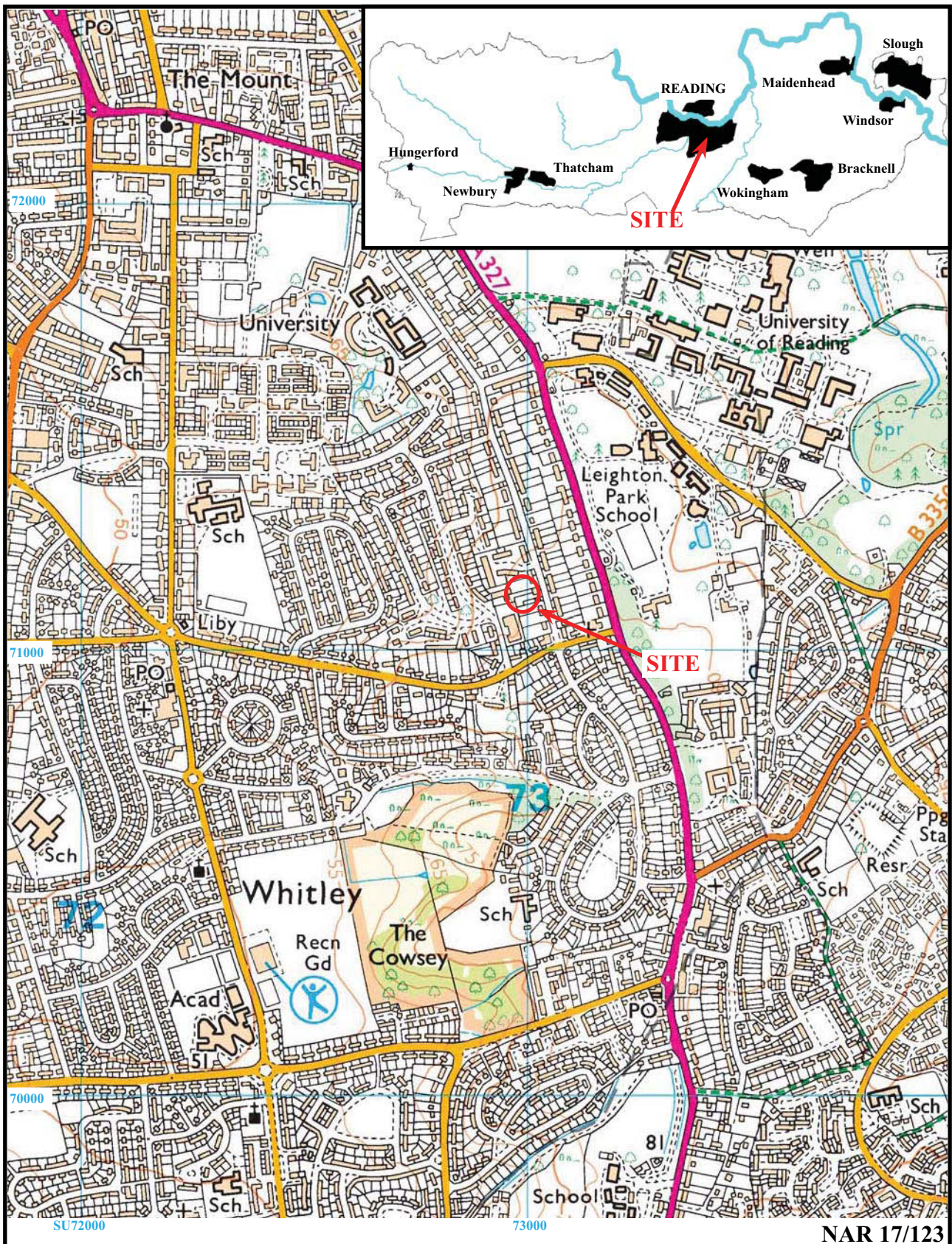
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	15.3	1.6	0.5	0m-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.5m subsoil; 0.5m+ mid brownish red sandy gravel natural geology. Feature [2], Pit [3], ditches [4], [5], [8], [9] and Post Hole [7] [Pls 1, 3, 4, 6]
2	15.0	1.6	0.45	0m-0.2m topsoil; 0.2-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ a mid brownish red sandy gravel natural geology. Pit [1] [Pls2, 5]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	2	(53) (54) (55)	Large feature	19th Century	Pot, Brick/tile
1	3	(56)	Possible linear	19th Century	Brick/tile
1	4	(57)	Ditch	Earlier than cut [5]	-
1	5	(58)	Ditch	Earlier than cut [6]	-
1	6	(59)	Ditch	Bronze Age	Pot
1	7	(60)	Post Hole	Later Bronze Age	Pot
1	8	(61)	Ditch	19th century	Pot, Brick/tile
1	9	(62)	Ditch	Earlier than cut [8]	-
2	1	(52)	Pit	-	-

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	GF1		GF2		Total	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
6	59	1	3	3	10	4	13
7	60			6	142	6	142
	Total	1	3	9	152	10	155



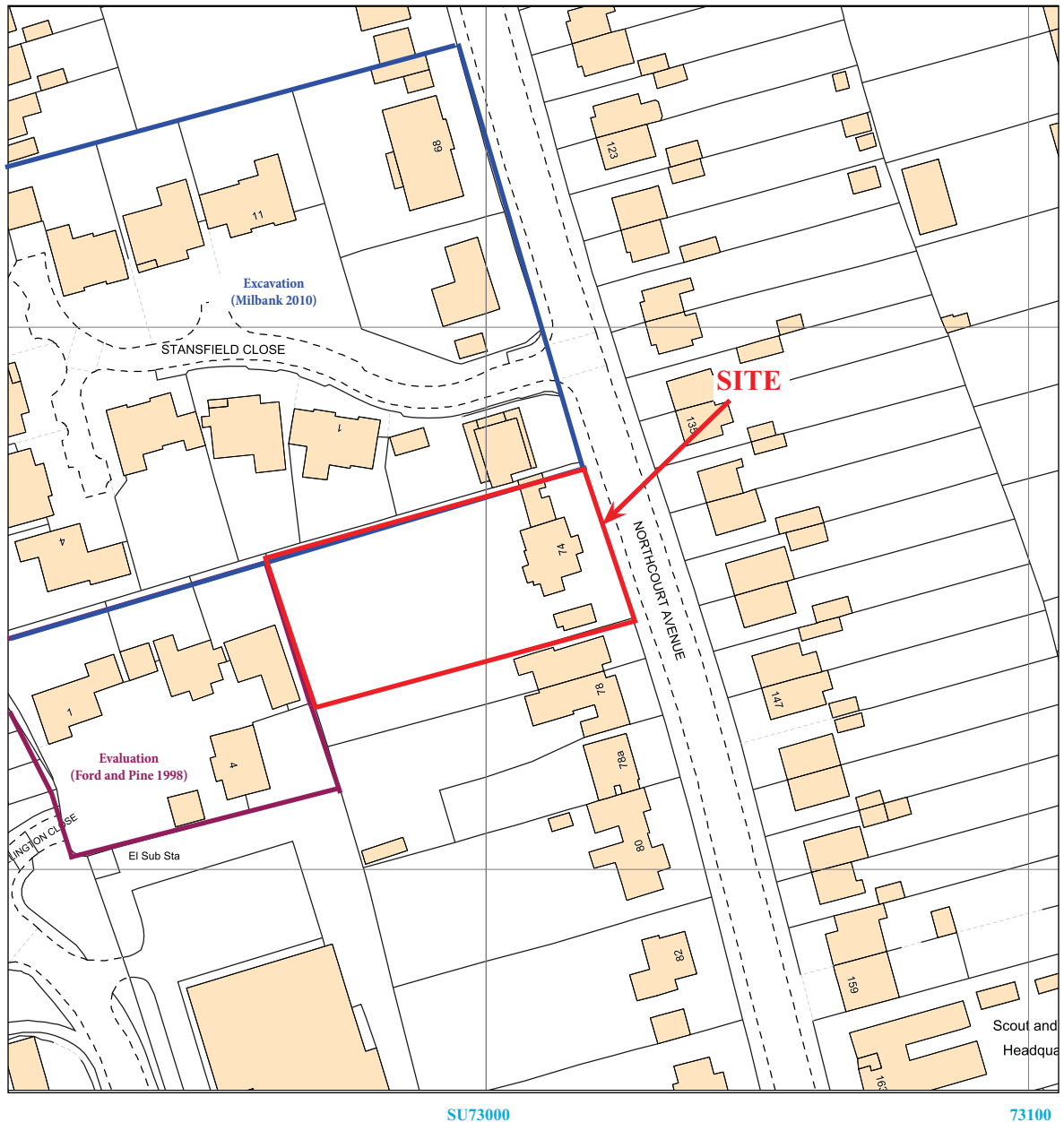
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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Northcourt Avenue.

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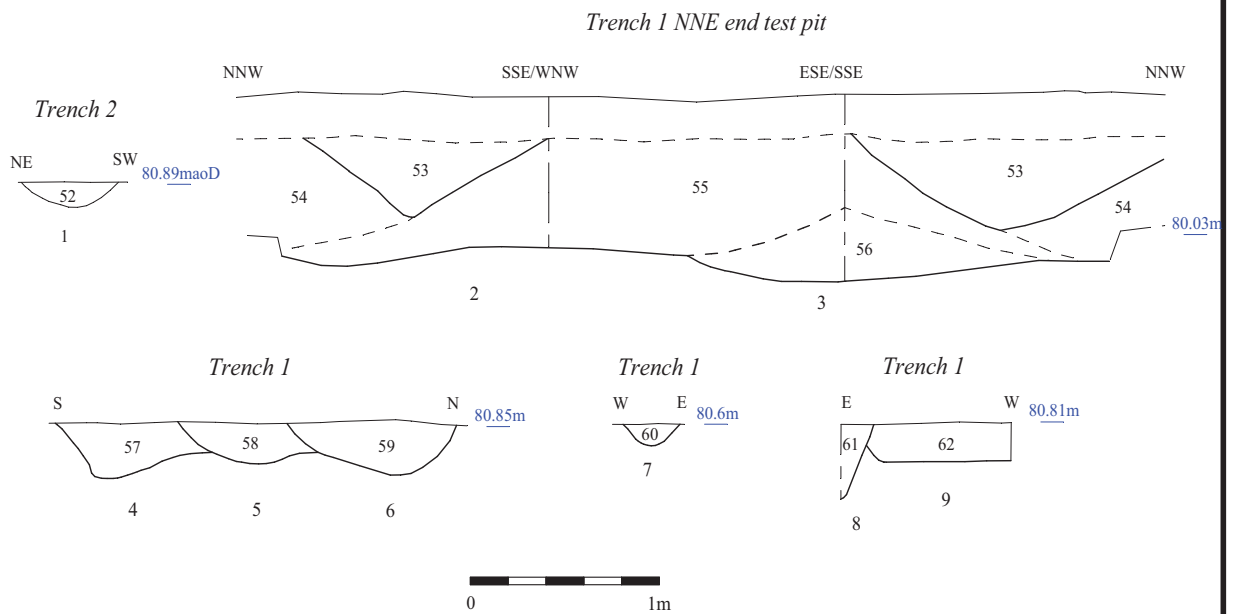
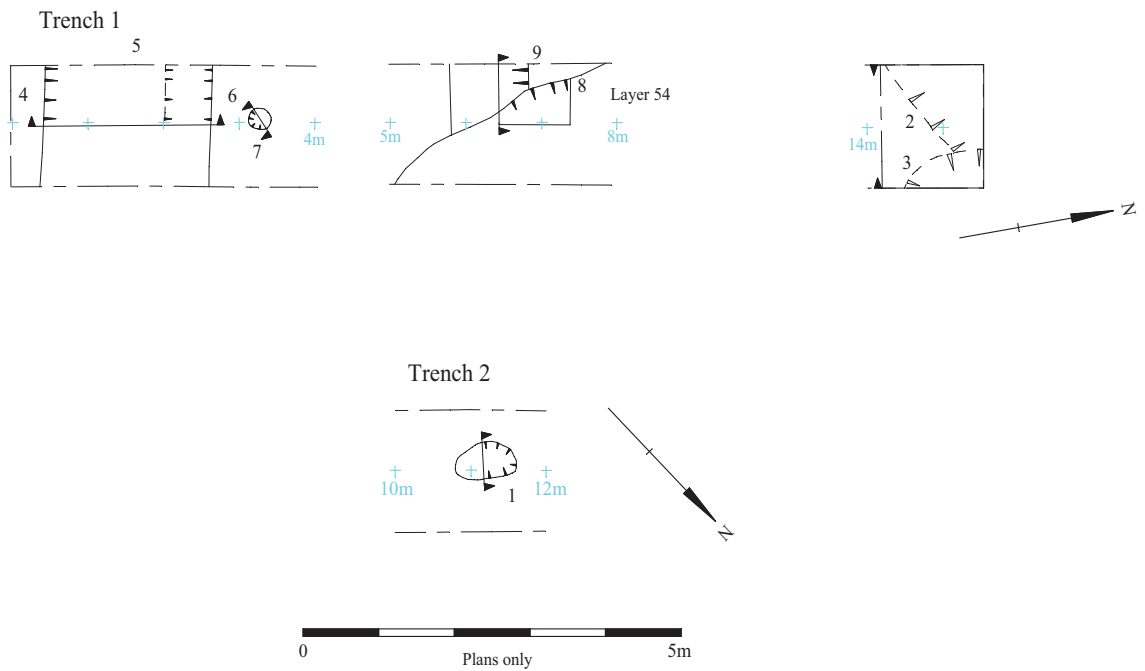
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.





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Figure 4. Detail of trenches and sections.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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**74 Northcourt Avenue, Reading,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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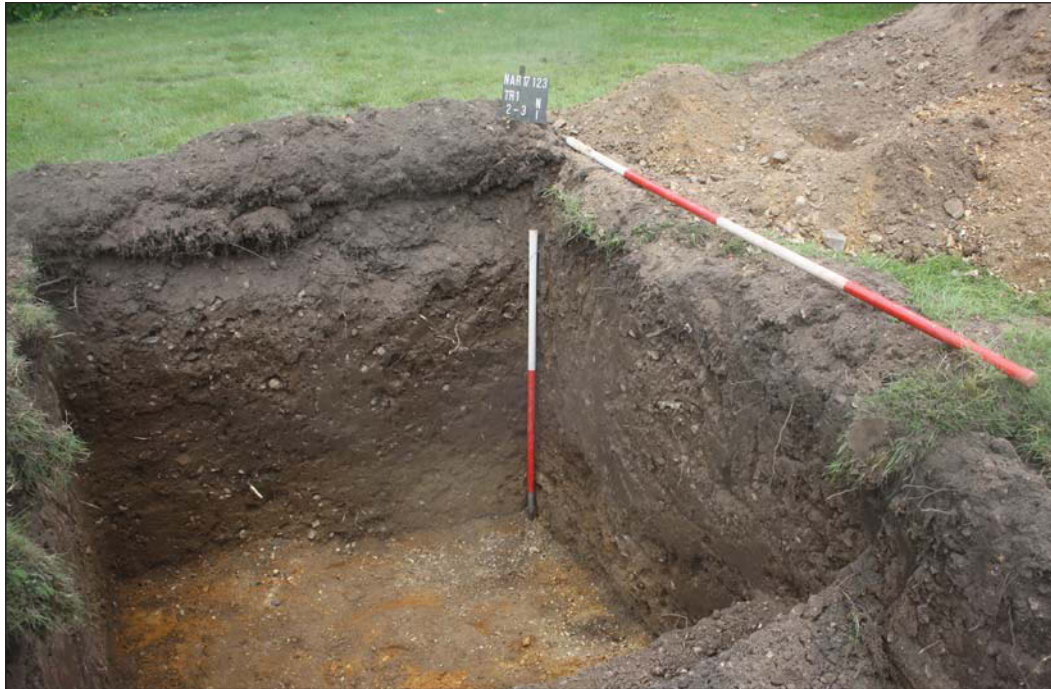


Plate 3. Trench 1, section of NNE end test pit with cuts 2 and 3, looking north north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 1, looking west, ditch 4, 5 and 6, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 2, pit 1, looking north north east,
Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

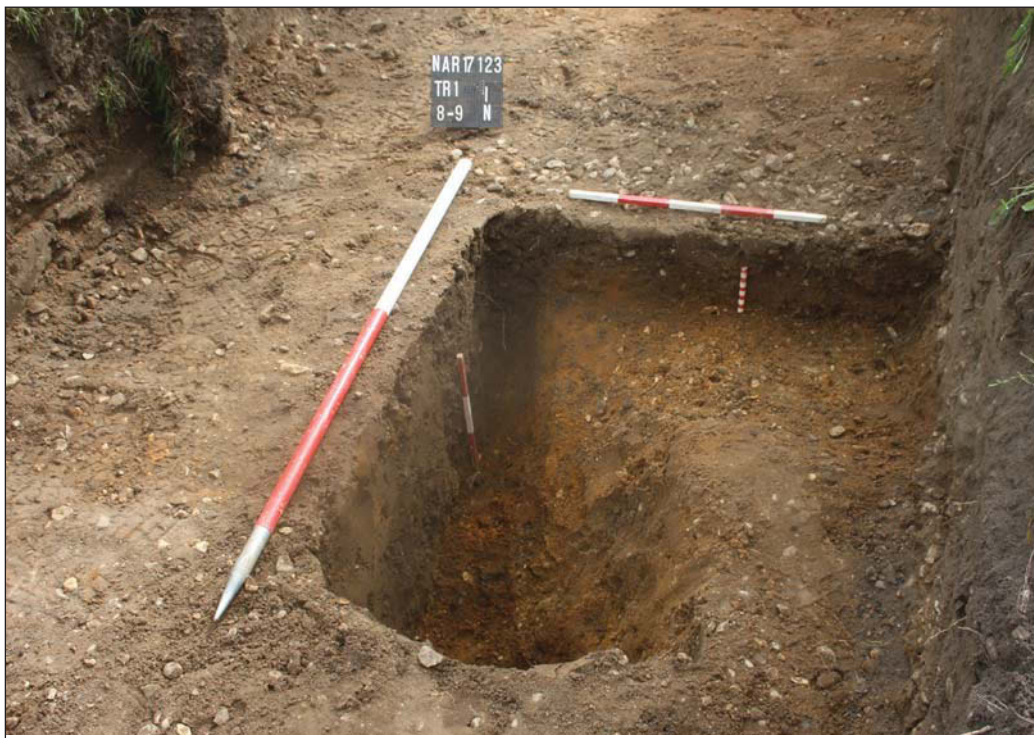


Plate 6. Trench 1, looking south, relation of ditches 8 and 9,
Scales: horizontal 1m and 0.5m, verticals 0.3 and 0.1m.

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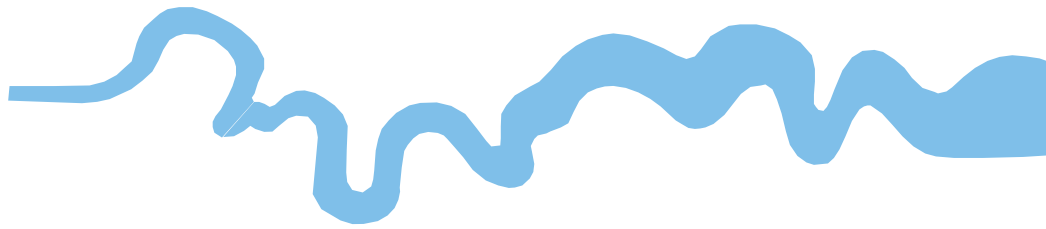
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Plates 5 and 6.

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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