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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**King's Meadow Lido, Kings Meadow Road,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Aidan Colyer**

**Site Code: KML15/58  
(SU 7197 7398)**

# **King's Meadow Lido, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Thames Lido Ltd**

by Aidan Colyer

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KML 15/58

**November 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** King's Meadow Lido, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7197 7398

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 4th - 7th September 2017

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Aidan Colyer

**Site code:** KML 15/58

**Summary of results:** Observations at 4 locations were undertaken, which included pipe trenches and test pits investigating service locations. These locations revealed only modern and late post-medieval layers overlying alluvial (river silt) deposits. No archaeologically significant finds or features were uncovered on the site.

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 08.11.17 Steve Preston✓ 06.11.17
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# **King's Meadow Lido, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Aidan Colyer

**Report 15/58**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at King's Meadow Lido, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire. (SU 7197 7398) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Arne Ringner of Thames Lido Ltd. 25 St Mathews Road, Bristol, BS6 5TT.

Planning permission (ref. 141604) has been gained from Reading Borough council to refurbish the Lido at King's Meadow. The Edwardian Lido is Grade II Listed and thought to be a prime example of its type for the early 20th century. Though later additions such as the plant room in the west and the detached changing rooms in the east were to be demolished, the architectural details of the core of the building were to be retained. A new plant room was to be built slightly off the original footprint, but still on the west side of the building. Basements were to be constructed below ground level for the new plant room, as were modifications of the existing pool, which was to be modernized and replaced with a shallower, shorter tank.

The consent was subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken, 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. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary of Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological advisers to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aidan Colyer from the 4th to 7th September 2017 with the site code KML 15/58.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum service in due course.

### **Location, topography and geology**

The Lido is located in the north-western corner of King's Meadow in Reading (Figs 1 and 2), north of the town centre, and immediately adjacent to the River Thames. Reading Bridge crosses the Thames some 200m further to the west, and the area is located within an area with office buildings. The natural geology, according to the British Geological Survey, is alluvium which is variable (BGS 2000).

## **Archaeological background**

The building was originally constructed in 1902, as the female municipal bathing area for Reading Corporation (later Borough Council), and is a fine example and one of the most complete in the country. It has been Grade II Listed since 2004 (1391153), when it came under threat of demolition due to its structural instability. It was originally fed by water from the Thames, but was converted to mains supply in the 1950s. It was closed in 1974.

More generally, the site lies in the archaeologically rich Thames valley (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick *et al.* 2009), although the immediate vicinity has only a few recorded finds and sites of archaeological interest. These include three Saxon burials, located to the south west, and a Roman coin which was found at a location west of the site. The site is close to the centre of Reading and north-east of the medieval and Saxon core of the town. Directly south of the site lies the remains of Reading abbey which occupies the north-east corner of Reading's historic centre (Cram 1988; Fasham and Stewart 1991; Hawkes 1991; Hawkes and Fasham 1986; Preston 2005).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was originally to include the digging of a basement as well as any service trenches.

## **Results**

Ground works were undertaken by a small 360° type excavator. Archaeological supervision was given where excavation occurred to surrounding soils not previously disturbed by existing modern service trenches. An area of basement excavation was not monitored but four locations of test pits were examined.

### *Location 1*

This area measured 1.80m by 1.80m square and was located 2m south of the buildings. The trench exposing pipe work closest to the structure was taken below the modern layers (layers 50, 51, 52) to a total depth of 1.7m, which reached grey-blue alluvial clay (53) from 0.8m to the depth of excavation (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.1). Topsoil, 0.15m thick, overlay made ground, which contained modern brick and tile (51). Beneath this, was a dark green grey sandy clay (52), which also contained 20th-century material and roots. Excavation was stopped due to the water table being breached.

### *Lo*

### *cation 2*

This investigation was excavated within the existing access (south-west of the building (Fig. 3). The pit was locating services runs which were located at a depth of 0.55m (Pl. 2). Under a layer of brick crush (51) was a modern made ground deposit (52). Natural geology (alluvium) was located on the east side of this excavation, but no cutting features were observed truncating this layer beyond 0.55-0.6m. No archaeological deposits were identified.

### *Location 3*

This excavation occurred near the site entrance in the south-west, and uncovered the run of an existing gas pipe and the stop cock of the mains water from the road into the site (Pl. 3). Though the deepest parts of this pit were excavated to 0.42m no areas of previously undisturbed ground were uncovered.

### *Location 4*

A fourth test pit was excavated 4m to the west of location 1 and 3m to the south of the new structure. Similar upper stratigraphic layers (50, 51, 52 and 53) were revealed to a depth of 0.8m in this 3m long and 0.9m wide trench. The alluvial layers (56 and 57) in this trench were sandy clay of a browner hue than those in the pipe trench which were grey blue. Again no archaeological features were observed and no layers earlier than the late 19th century were uncovered. This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.50m to confirm that the alluvial clay was not re-deposited during the original works to build the Lido. The alluvial layers were potentially 3-4m deep. The evidence for this was the length of the water level testing pipes that had been removed which showed signs of alluvium on the ends that were in the ground.

No archaeological deposits were noted during the groundwork, and no finds were recovered.

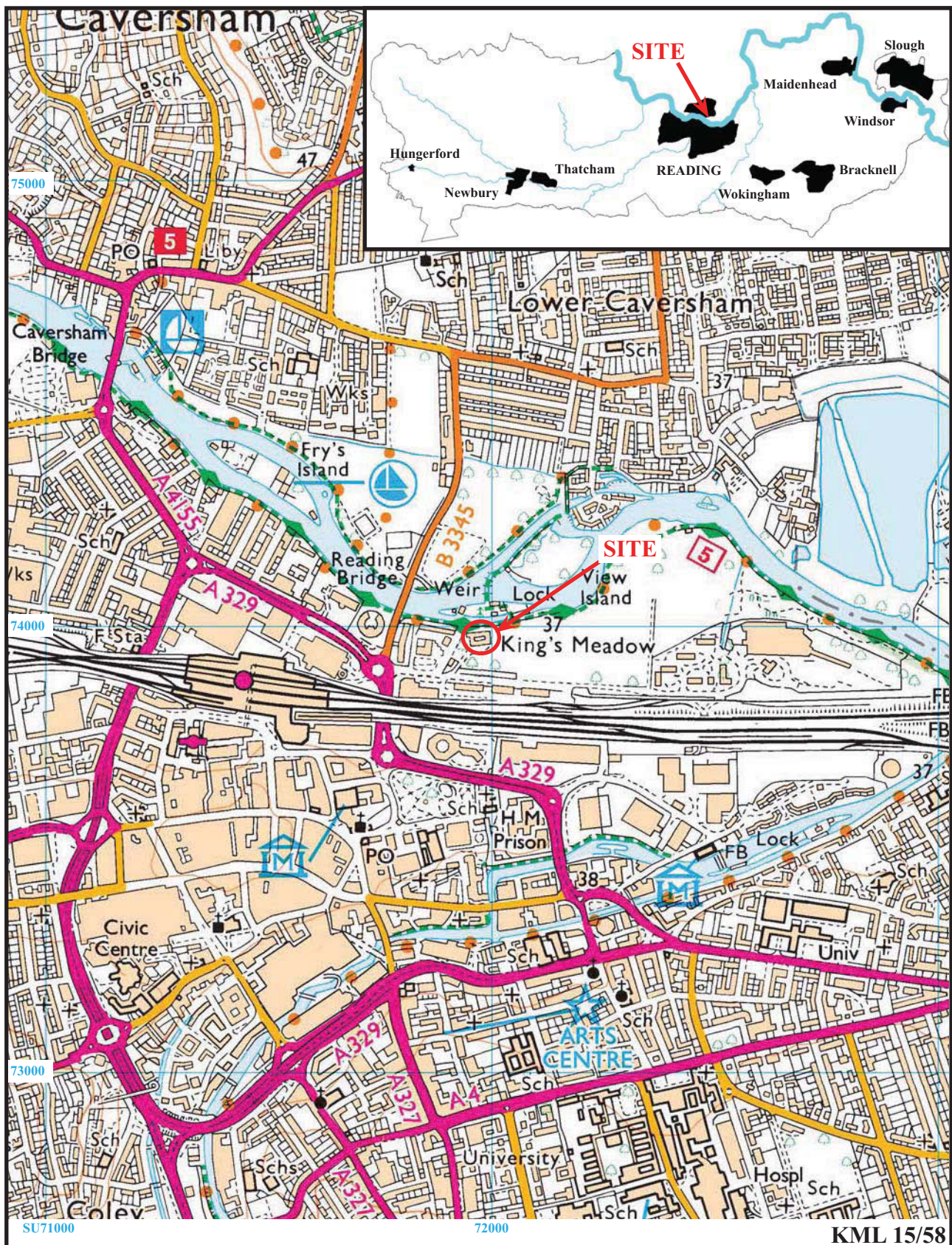
## **Conclusion**

The groundwork, though limited, identified stratified deposits, dating to the construction of the Lido, and also identified river silts of an unknown date. All other areas did not reach depths that would have been archaeologically relevant. The area close to the structure revealed that there was a reduced level of around 0.8m during original construction of the Lido. This ground reduction was back filled with various rubble and gravels from the construction. No archaeologically relevant features were uncovered nor finds retrieved.

## References

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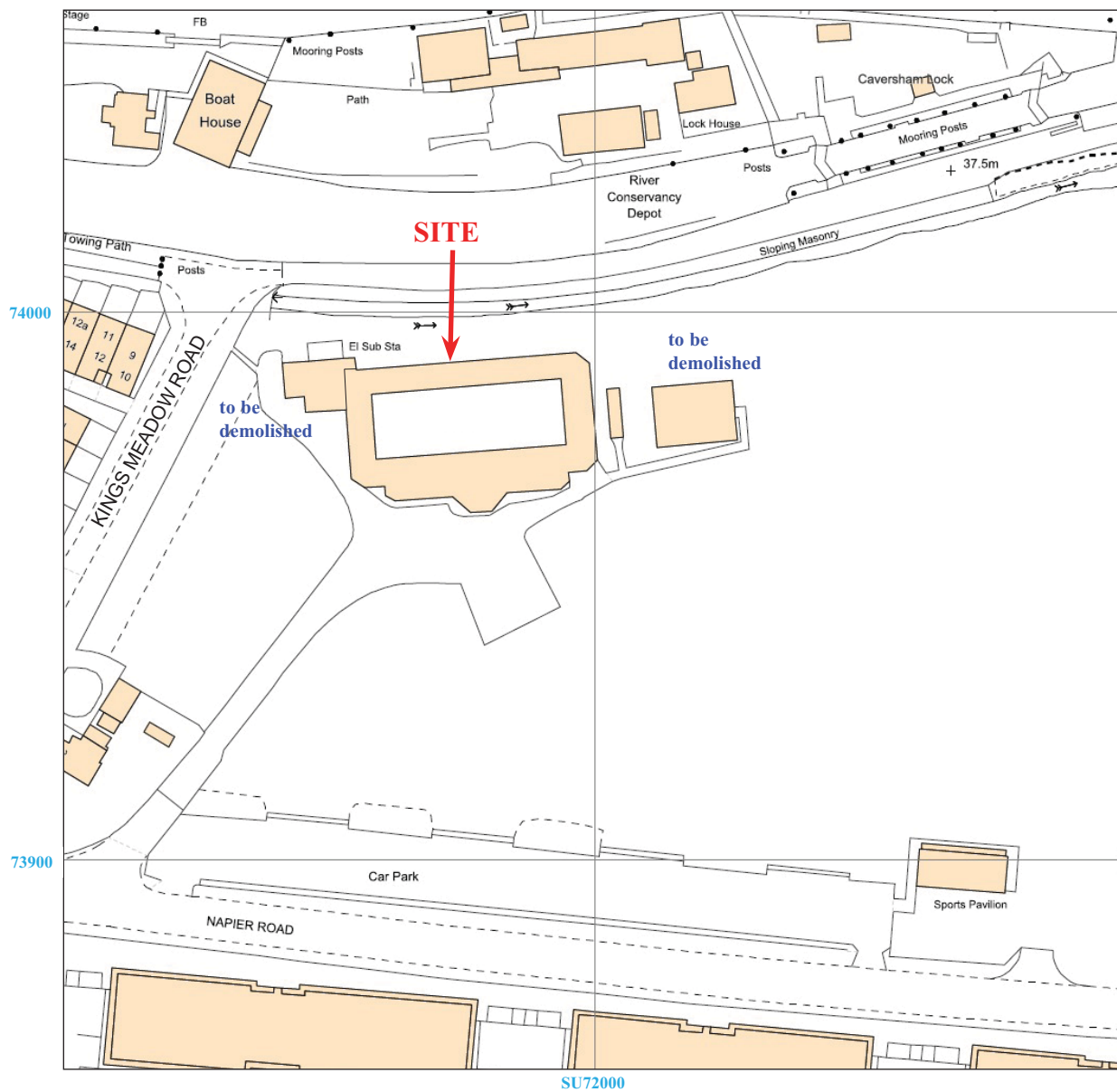


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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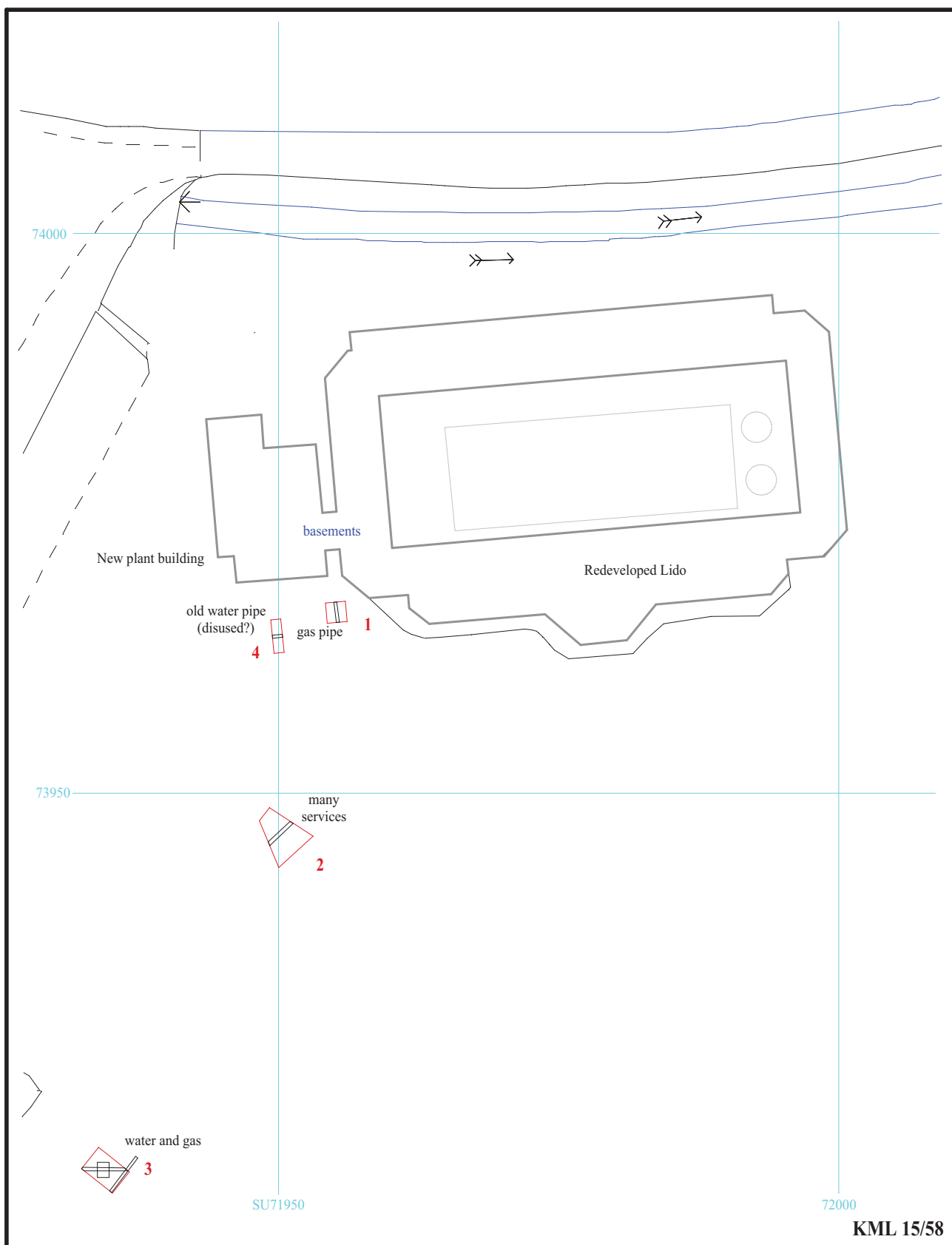
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Kings Meadow Road,  
showing structure prior to redevelopment.

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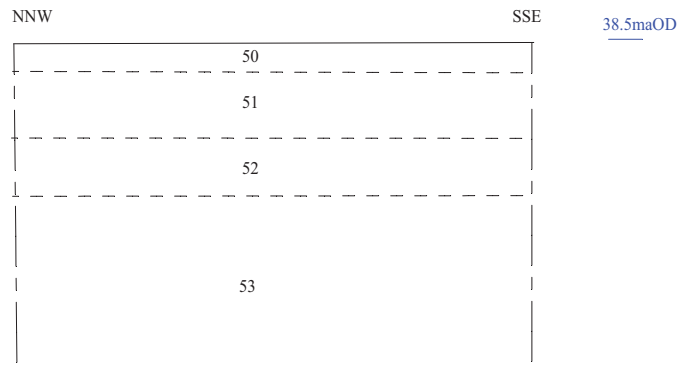
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Figure 3. Recently redeveloped complex with observed locations.

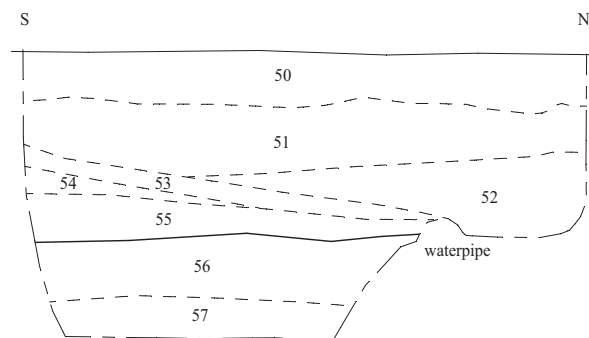
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*Test pit 1*



*Test pit 4*



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Figure 4. Section of Locations 1 and 4.



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Plate 1. Pipe trench (1), looking south east, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 1m.



Plate 2. Pipe trench (2), looking south west,

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Pipe trench (3), looking south west.



Plate 4. Test pit (4), looking west, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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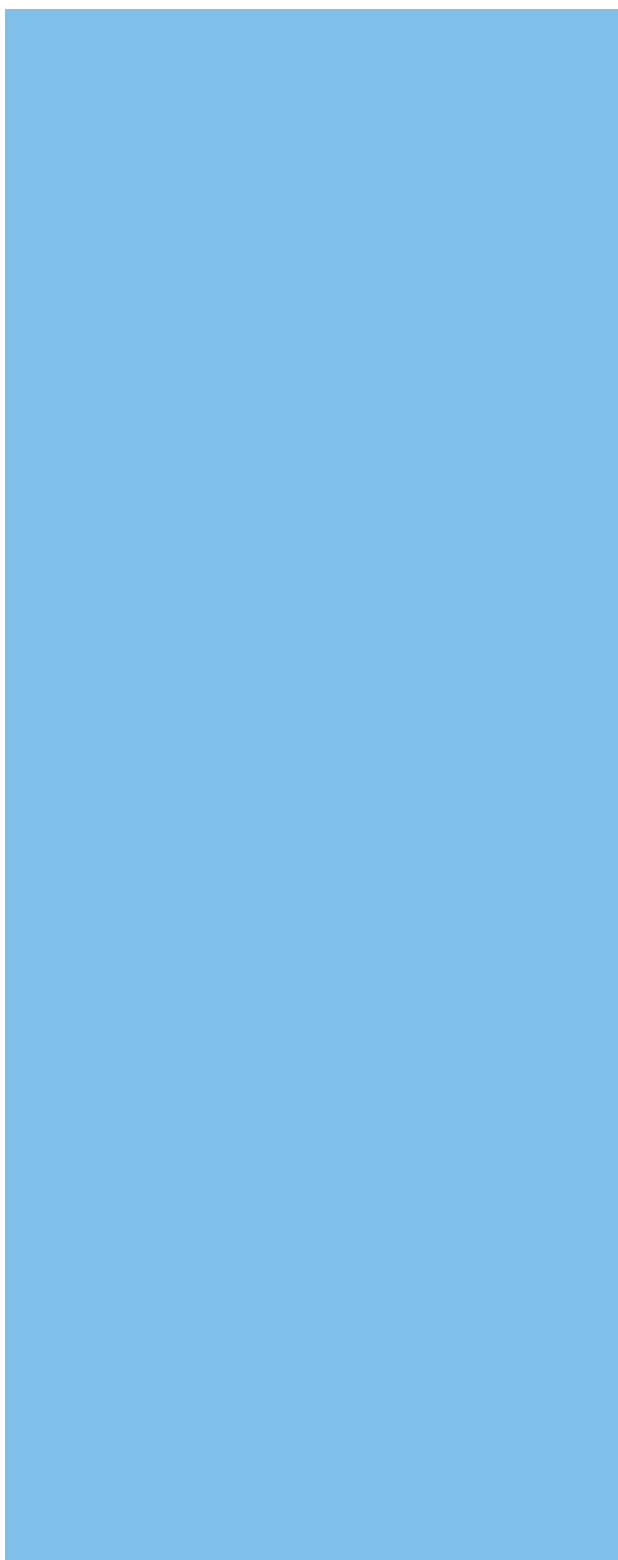
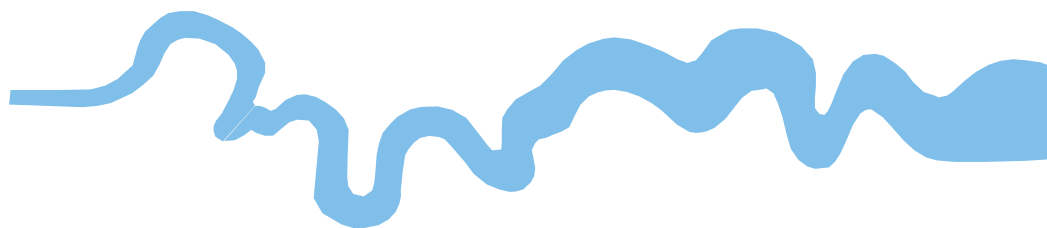


## TIME CHART

### Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
	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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