

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Pumping Station site, Three Mile Cross,
Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson

Site Code: PSSW17/166

(SU 7159 6840)

Pumping Station site, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For CgMs Consulting

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PSSW 17/166

November 2017

Summary

Site name: Pumping Station site, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7159 6840

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 28th July – 8th November 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: PSSW 17/166

Area of site: c.1100 sq m

Summary of results: The groundworks for the new pumping station and associated pipeline were monitored but no finds or features of archaeological interest were present.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority).

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 27.11.17 Steve Preston ✓ 22.11.17

Pumping Station site, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 17/166

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on a plot of land on the northern edge of Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7159 6840) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steven Weaver of CgMs Consulting, Burlington House, Lypiatt Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2SY.

Planning permission (160968) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the construction of a new pumping station and access road on land north of Three Mile Cross and south of the M4 Junction 11. This permission is subject to a condition (4) which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, Archaeology Officer at Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological advisers to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverstock, Tim Dawson and Luis Esteves on five dates between 28th July and 8th November 2017 and the site code is PSSW 17/166.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority).

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on an irregular plot of land which straddles two fields on the northern edge of Three Mile Cross, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7159 6840) (Fig. 2). The northern field is in Reading Borough and the southern in Shinfield parish in Wokingham. The fields are bordered to the north by Junction 11 of the M4 motorway, to the west by the A33 Basingstoke Road and to the east and south by further fields. The centre of Three Mile Cross lies *c.*500m to the south while the southern Reading suburb of Whitley Wood is located *c.*500m to the north (Fig. 1). Topographically, the site is flat with a segmented hedgerow dividing the two areas, which are currently in use as pasture. It is at a height of *c.*43m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is described as London Clay (BGS 2000), which was recorded on site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within an archaeologically rich zone on the valley margins of the Foudry Brook/River Kennet. Field survey (Ford 1997) and aerial photography (Gates 1975) had previously indicated the archaeological potential of the area 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 (ASE 2004a, 2004b; Taylor and Dawson 2017). To the north-west, both Roman (Booth 2007 fig. 3.5) and Bronze Age (Brossler *et al.* 2004; 2013; Moore and Jennings 1992) occupation is also recorded. Preliminary evaluation within the southern field (Fig. 3) revealed a range of features of various dates (Taylor 2012; CA 2017).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved monitoring of the digging of the footprint of the pumping station and a pipe trench which followed the line of the access road.

Results

Stripping of the overburden under archaeological supervision in the pipe trench and pumping station areas was undertaken using a 360°-type excavator with a wide toothless bucket. A toothed bucket was used for subsequent deeper excavation below the levels of archaeological interest. The area was heavily waterlogged which caused the stripped surface to become quickly obscured by liquid mud but where possible, potential archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned. Due to its liquid nature, it was not possible to monitor the spoil for finds.

The access route

An area 10m wide and a total of *c.*90m long was stripped for the pipe easement along the line of the proposed access road (Fig. 3; Pl. 1). It was eventually dug to a total depth of *c.*4m exposing a stratigraphy consisting of 0.1m of topsoil and 0.2m of subsoil, both very wet, overlying the yellow-brown clay natural geology. Slight variations in the depths of topsoil/subsoil were noted near the previous hedge lines, as were patches of modern debris which were mixed within the top- and subsoil.

The pumping station

The area excavated for the pumping station measured approximately 15m × 15m and consisted of a c.4m deep pit for the pipe connection around which the pumping station structure would be built (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). The stratigraphy exposed in this area consisted of 0.15m of topsoil and 0.2m of subsoil overlying the clay natural geology.

No finds or features of archaeological interest were identified in either the pipe easement or the pumping station footprint.

Finds

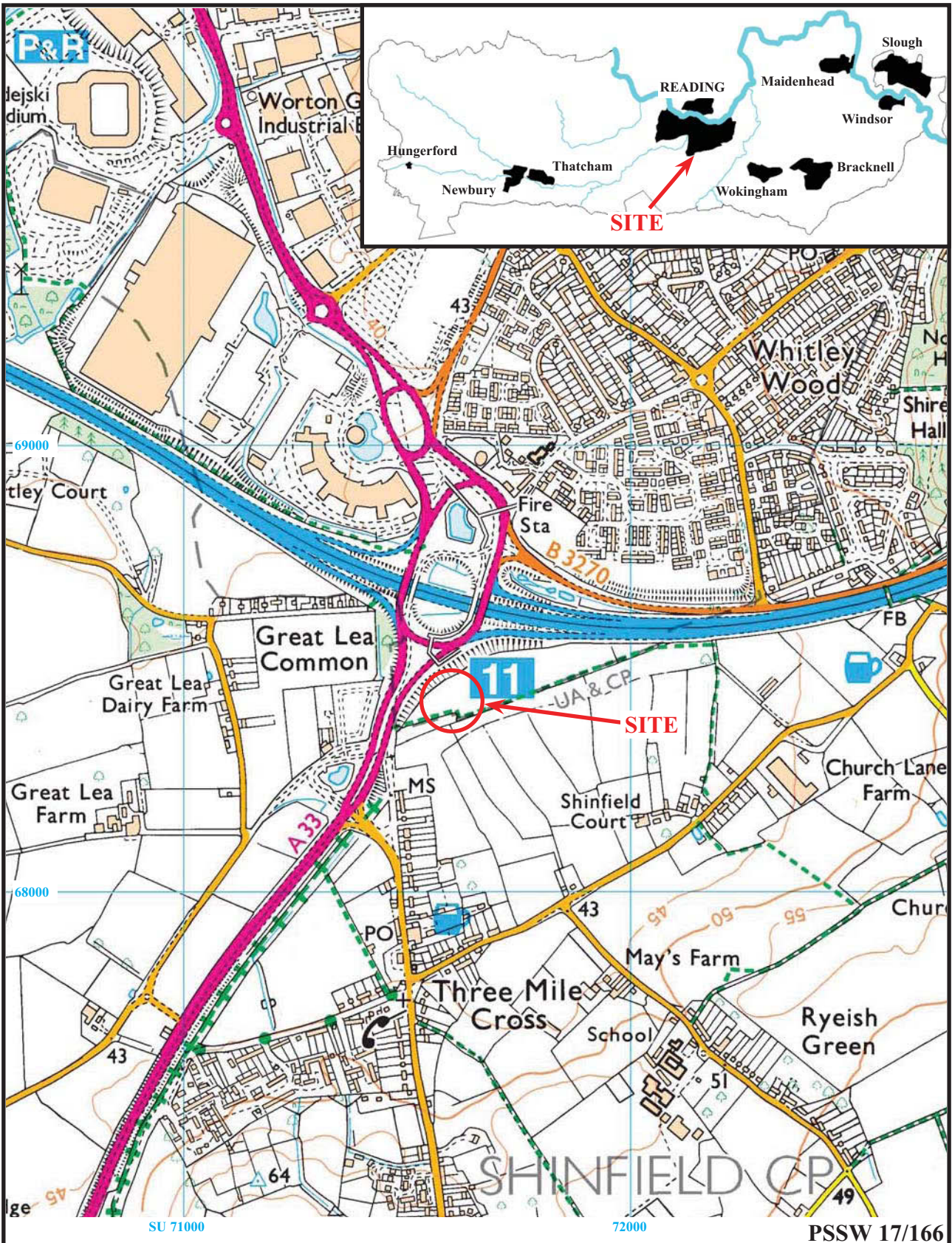
No finds of archaeological significance were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

The watching brief monitored the line of the pipe easement and the footprint of the pumping station but neither area of excavation was found to contain anything of archaeological interest.

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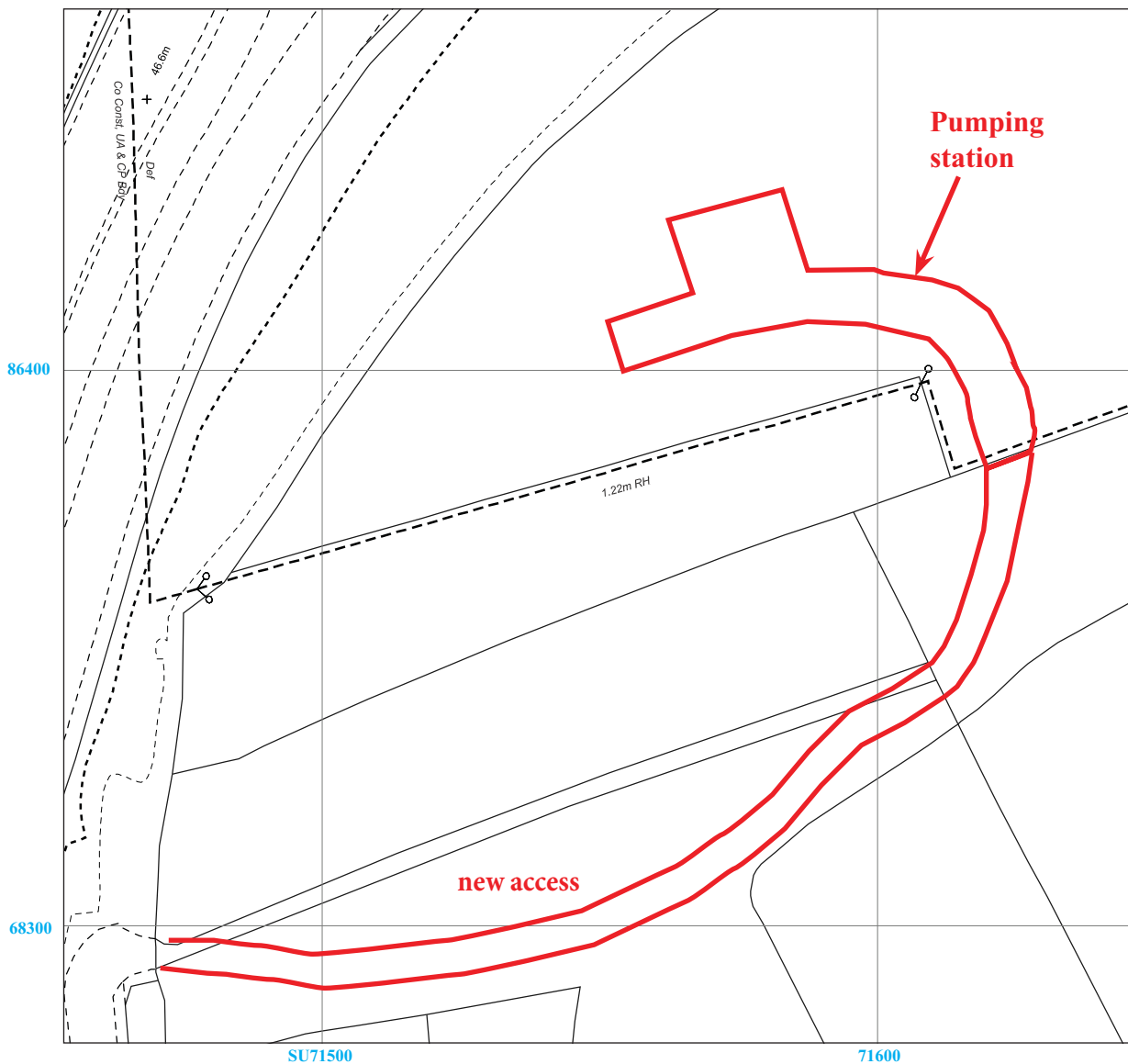


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Figure 1. Location of site within Three Mile Cross and Berkshire.

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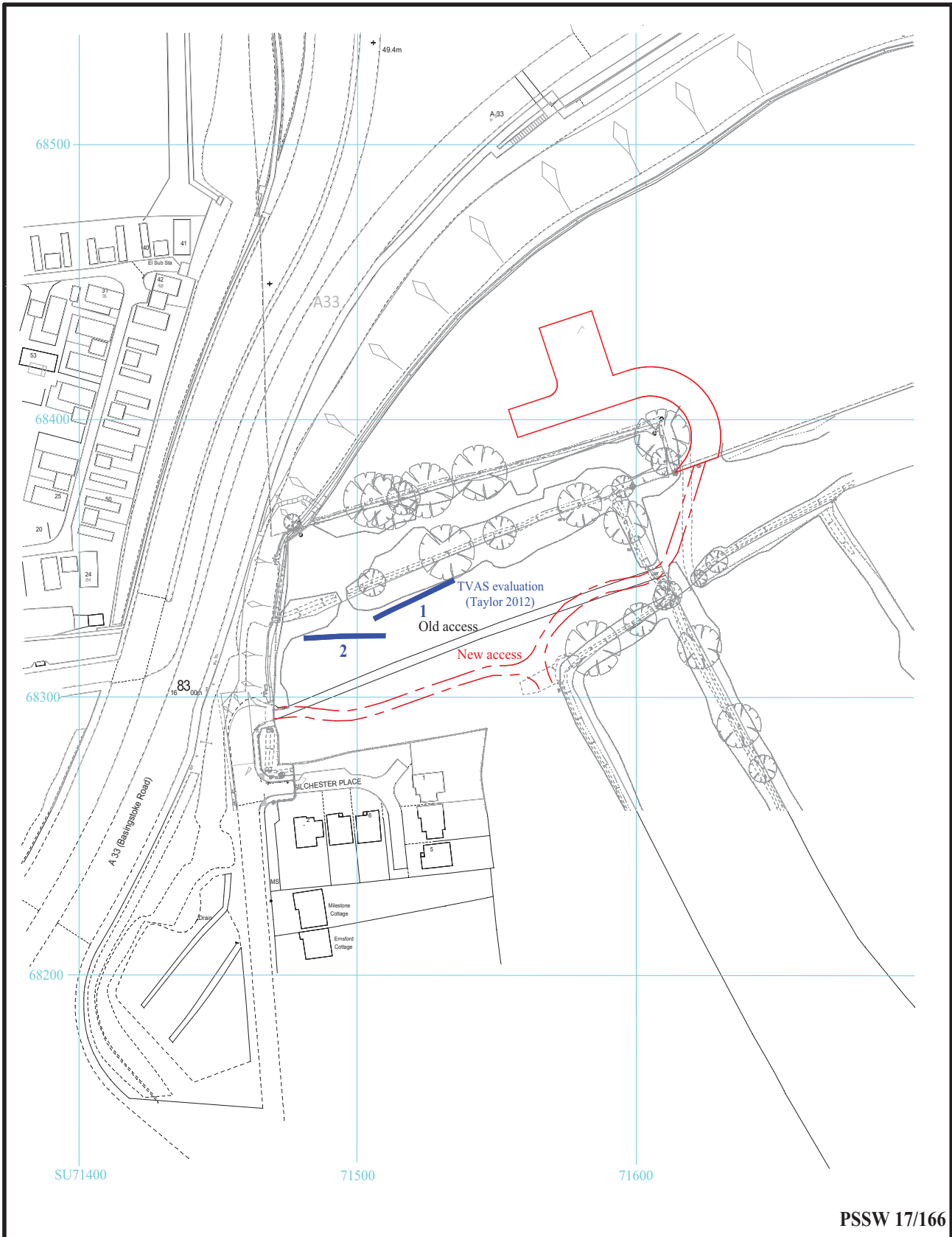
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Figure 2. Locations of observed areas.

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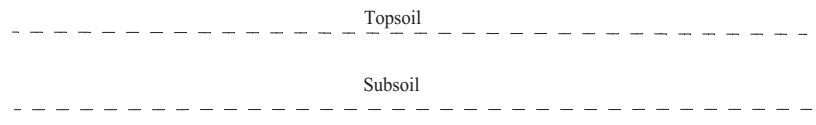
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Figure 3. Detail of observed areas.



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Natural geology
(Brownish grey clay)

base at 4m

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Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. Overburden removed to top of natural, looking south east, Scales: 1m.



Plate 2. Location of new pumping station, looking south south east.

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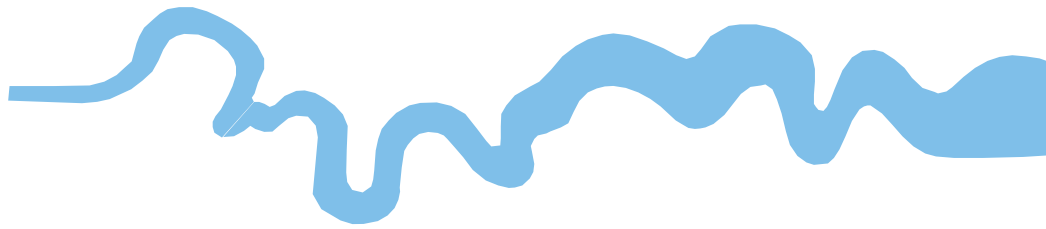
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

*Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)*