

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**248-252 Priory Road, Southampton,  
Hampshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by David Sanchez**

**Site Code: PRS17/127  
(SOU1778)**

**(SU 4365 1399)**

**248-252 Priory Road  
Southampton, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Homer and Pardy Developments Limited**

by David Sánchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PRS 17/127

**November 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** 248-252 Priory Road, Southampton, Hampshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4365 1399

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 8th - 13th November 2017

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Sánchez

**Site code:** PRS 17/127 (SOU 1778)

**Summary of results:** The excavation of three trenches and one test pit revealed a number of made ground deposits of 20th-century date overlie the valley gravel natural geology. The stratigraphy of the site is likely to be the consequence of 20th-century development, raising the ground above the flood levels of the tidal river. No traces of earlier activity were uncovered. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential

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

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 29.11.17<br>Steve Preston ✓ 29.11.17 |
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# 248-252 Priory Road, Southampton, Hampshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Sánchez

Report 17/127

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 248-252 Priory Road, Southampton, Hampshire (SU 4365 1399) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Luker of Homer and Pardy Developments Limited, 27-29 Columbia Road, Ensbury Park, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH10 4DZ.

Planning permission (16/01741/FUL) has been granted by Southampton City Council for the conversion of the existing frontage building on the site and the construction of additional housing, along with associated parking and cycle/refuse storage. The consent is subject to four conditions relating to archaeology, which require the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological investigation. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a field evaluation is required initially. Based on the results of this, further work may be required. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the City Council's policies on archaeology. The investigation was to take place according to a written scheme of investigation (WSI) approved by Ms Ingrid Peckham, Southampton City Historic Environment Team (SCC HET).

The fieldwork was undertaken by David Sánchez and David Wallace, between 8th and 13th November 2017 and the site code is PRS 17/127 (SOU 1778). The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Southampton Museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the St Denys area of Southampton, on the east side of Priory Road, just to the south of the A3035, St Denys' Road, at Cobden Bridge (Fig. 1). The site extends to the banks of the River Itchen. The site lies within the Portswood, Highfield and northern St Denys area of local archaeological potential (LAAP 10). The local topography surrounding the site is fairly flat, with a height about *c.* 2m above Ordnance Datum and with the river Itchen immediately to the east, and commercial properties and residential housing of 20th century construction encompassing the site. Further to the south is the railway line, with St Denys Station to the south-

west. The site was occupied by a commercial property already demolished by the time the archaeological evaluation started. The underlying geology is mapped as valley gravel (BGS 1973). Previous investigations in the area appear to confirm the presence of gravel in this vicinity with a brickearth cap present further to the south along Priory Road, to the west along St Denys' Road and to the north at Priory Avenue.

## **Archaeological background**

### Map regression.

The 1846 map shows the site to be located within a field, to the south of the site of St Denys Priory (SAM DSH 354). By the First Edition of Ordnance Survey (1876) the area has substantially altered with the construction of the railway and the suburb of St Denys. Priory Road has been constructed and a number of houses are present on the eastern side of it, backing onto the river. The northern part of the site falls within the grounds of Firgrove House which fronts onto St Denys Road. The southern part of the site, including the existing building fronting onto Priory Road is outside the boundary of this property. The house itself (or a house in the same location) is present on the map with a bow window, which the existing house does not have. Cobden Bridge has not yet been built but appears to be intended at a later date with indicators on both sides of the river that a road will join up. By 1897 the area is substantially more built up. Firgrove House has been replaced by a boat house and houses fronting onto Priory Road. Cobden Bridge has also opened. The site itself is now built upon, containing a number of buildings, the setting of which suggests that they are commercial in nature.

The 1933 map labels a 'laundry' as being present on the site and there are now landing stages present within the Itchen. Between the 1960s to 1970s the original buildings to the rear were demolished and replaced by two buildings labelled as 'works'.

### Archaeological background.

The site lies within an archaeologically rich area with significant finds and sites to the north, south, and east within the Itchen itself, covering a range of periods. To the north at Priory Avenue, a Mesolithic flint working site was identified, overlain by a peaty layer and water-laid calcareous tufa (MSH 1800, SOU 448). Also to the north two residual worked flints were found (a scraper and blade) (MSH 1378, SOU 1049) with further worked flints and a core to the north-west (MSH 1428, 1793, 4723, 1517, SOU 1084, 420), possibly associated with the flint working site. A Mesolithic/Neolithic tranchet axe has also been found in the vicinity (MSH 360). Sampling within the Itchen identified a peat deposit and submerged forest dating to the early Mesolithic period (MSH

1646, SOU 881). A further peat layer and estuarine deposit was found to the north-west at the former Kent Road depot, though no contemporary late Mesolithic activity was identified (MSH 1791, SOU 437, 489).

There was settlement in St Denys (MSH 2568) in the Roman period, as demonstrated from a number of archaeological investigations and findspots within the area. SOU 794 to the west found significant occupation evidence including a large boundary ditch and Roman building material, including that from a high status building. Further Roman ditches and building material were found to the south (MSH 5572, SOU 822, 1602). Evidence for a road and timber-framed buildings was also found to the south (SOU 960 and 981) as well as evidence for iron working. The relationship to the named settlement of *Clausentum* (at Bitterne on the opposite side of the river) is as yet unknown though a number of structures have been found within the river and along its banks. To the south of the site are the remains of two piers and a revetment which have been scheduled (SAM DSH 642, MSH 1645, SOU 881). Further to the south at 64 Priory Road (MSH1643, SOU 750) a possible timber hard was found and at number 78, further timbers were found (MSH 291).

The Medieval Priory of St Denys founded c.1124/1127 and dissolved in 1536 (MSH 1501) was located immediately to the north of the site and early 19th century maps still show the abbey buildings. A short stretch of 14th century wall forming the standing remains of the Priory within the back gardens of 1 and 2 Priory Avenue, is Scheduled (SAM DSH 354). Further below ground remains of the Priory, consisting of stone wall foundations, a large ditch and other features including a kiln, were found at 13-18 Priory Avenue (MSH 1082, SOU 1136), with further medieval deposits at 189 Priory Road including a ditch and a limestone- and clay-lined drain (MSH 1406, SOU 918, SOU 1056). Within the area of the Priory itself have been several medieval findspots including 12th-century pottery (MSH 3019), encaustic tiles and a stone coffin (MSH 3020).

More recent deposits in the Itchen include the remains of various barges and boats (MSH 2961, 4018, 2964, 2975, SOU 988).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality, significance and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. Additional aims were to identify and record the nature, dimensions and relationship of natural deposits on the site, and assess the potential of geological deposits to contain or conceal archaeological remains, whether prehistoric or later.

The specific research aims of this project were;

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this part of the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to provide evidence so that the scale of the threat from redevelopment can be gauged and provide data that help determine if further work were required and what the nature of that work would be;
- to identify whether any Mesolithic peat deposits survived; and
- to identify the presence or absence of Roman St Denys.

Five trenches were proposed to be dug, each 15m long and 1.6-2m wide targeted predominantly at the footprints of the proposed new buildings. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The excavation had to be undertaken in spits of no more than 100mm, and the top of each spit cleaned and inspected for archaeologically significant features. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably exposed the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools.

Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above. A single context recording system was to be used. Finds from archaeologically significant contexts were to be retained and processed according to the standards laid down in "Standards for the Creation, Compilation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives" (SCC 2016).

## **Results**

Five trenches were to be dug during the archaeological evaluation but only three trenches and one test pit were dug as a consequence of quick flooding from the rising tide of the river. Trenches 1 and 2 were dug as intended and Trench 3 was relocated to adjust it to the space available due to the presence of demolition debris and a footpath access to the boats of the riverfront (Fig. 3). Trenches 4 and 5 flooded and after consultation with the Historic Environment Record Officer of Southampton City Council, Trench 4 was abandoned, Trench 5 was dug as a test pit with a length of 3.50m and Trench 1 was extended 3.50m to the SE.

The three trenches dug ranged in length (at base) between 12.20 and 18.50m with depths between 1.60m and 2.30m. As a consequence of this, all the trenches were stepped at a depth of 1.20m with a width of 3.50m at the higher step and 1.60 at the lower step. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The recorded deposits, with dating evidence, are summarized in Appendix 2.

#### Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned NW - SE and was 18.50m long and 2.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of recent demolition debris (64) overlying between 0.20 and 1.10m of modern made ground consisting of three different deposits (Fig. 4). Deposit 65 was 0.20m thick, composed of dark brownish grey silty clay with frequent rounded stones, ceramic building material (CBM) fragments and other modern construction debris such as Tarmac and steel pieces. Deposit 71 was partially overlaid by deposit 65 which was 0.30m thick, composed of mid brown clay with gravel patches and frequent rounded stones and construction debris. Deposit 72 was located at the NW end of the trench and it was 1.10m thick composed of dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent construction debris such as modern bricks, concrete fragments, etc.

Below deposits 65 and 71 a previous made ground (66) was uncovered, with a depth of 1.10m and composed of dark blue grey clay with frequent modern CBM fragments. Its relationship with deposit 72 is unclear as a modern foundation cut (1) truncated most of the area. This is likely to be part of the foundations of the 1960s/1970s building which was demolished in this area. A number of modern CBM fragments and 20th century pottery sherds were recovered as dating evidence and discarded after recording, dating these made ground deposits to the 20th century.

Two other modern truncations were uncovered cutting this made ground, belonging to fuel tanks removed as part of the demolition works. At the central and south-east part of the trench this made ground overlay one deposit of light blue grey silty clay (67) with occasional flint gravel inclusions, extending to a depth of 2.2m (ie c. 0.13m below OD) and sloping down at the south-east end where a slot was dug to clarify its relationship with deposit 66 in this area. At the south-east end of the trench a deposit (78) of similar composition but light orange brown colour was uncovered at the same depth. One slot was dug to clarify the nature and relationship between these two deposits showing 78 to overlie 67 and both of these to be probably natural alluvial deposits overlying the Valley Gravel natural geology uncovered at a depth of 2.20m. One possible feature (70) was uncovered between deposits 66 and 67 and one metre long slot was dug through it to clarify its nature showing this to be a deposit of mid brownish grey silty clay with frequent flint gravel inclusions, but no finds or any other evidence of an archaeological origin were recovered so it is considered to be a natural deposit.

No features of archaeological interest were uncovered in this trench and no finds other than 20th century pottery sherds and brick fragments were recovered.



### Trench 2 (Figs 3; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned WNW - ESE and was 12.20m long and 2.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil, 0.35m subsoil, 0.85m of mid brown gravel in a clay matrix (58), and 0.70m of light blue grey clay (59) overlying the Valley Gravel natural geology. One possible palaeochannel was uncovered at the WNW end of trench 2 but this was quickly flooded by the rising river and could not be investigated. No other features of archaeological interest were uncovered and the only finds consisted of a fragment of cow bone and a fragment of modern brick from context 58.

### Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 7; Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned NW - SE and was 15.20m long and 1.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of demolition debris overlying between 0.70 and 1.02m of made ground composed of six different dumps (deposits 61, 68, 69, 73, 74 and 75) all with frequent modern construction debris such as concrete fragments, modern bricks, steel pieces, etc. Deposit 61 was 0.70m thick composed of dark greyish brown sandy silt with darker gravel patches. It partially overlaid deposit 73 in the SE half of the trench, composed of mid green/yellow brown gravel with clay patches and a thickness of 0.70m. At the central portion of the trench this made ground consisted of one deposit (74) of dark brownish grey sandy silt and gravels with modern inclusions such as boat rope and timber fragments, with a thickness of 1.00m. The NW end of the made ground consisted of three successive dumps: deposit 75 was composed of dark greyish brown sandy silt and gravel, with a thickness of 0.45m; deposit 69 was composed of dark orange construction gravel with very frequent CBM fragments and a thickness of 0.20m; and deposit 68 was composed of dark brownish grey clay with a thickness of 0.30m.

Below all these deposits a 0.24m depth of a previous made ground (62) was uncovered, consisting of an homogeneous deposit of dark blue grey clay with frequent modern CBM fragments. A number of modern CBM fragments and 20th-century pottery sherds were recovered as dating evidence and discarded after recording, dating all of these made ground deposits to the 20th century.

Overlaid by deposit 62 was 0.34m of light blue grey alluvium on top of the gravel natural geology which was uncovered to a depth of 1.60m. At 8.20m from the NW end of the trench one possible feature was investigated but shown to be a natural clay patch. A single fragment of brick was recovered from alluvium deposit 63, of possible medieval date. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no other finds were recovered from this trench.

### Trench 5 (Figs 3)

Trench 5 was aligned roughly west–east and was dug as a test pit with a length of 3.50m and a depth of 2.20m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of demolition debris and three successive deposits of made ground (deposits 53, 54 and 55). Deposit 53 was composed of dark grey clay silt with frequent rounded stone and CBM fragment inclusions and it had a thickness of 0.38m; deposit 54 was composed of light yellowish grey sand and gravel with occasional CBM fragments and a thickness of 0.15m; and deposit 55 was composed of mid greyish brown silty clay with frequent rounded stones and small CBM fragments, and it had a thickness of 0.35m. A number of modern CBM fragments and 20th century pottery sherds were recovered as dating evidence and discarded after recording, dating these made grounds deposits to the 20th century.

Below this made ground two successive deposits of alluvial clay (56 and 57) were uncovered overlying the gravel natural geology, with a thickness of 0.28 and 0.55m respectively. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no other finds were recovered from this trench.

## **Finds**

### *Ceramic Building Material* by Danielle Milbank

A single piece of ceramic building material (136g) was recovered from alluvial deposit 63, in Trench 3. It was examined under x10 magnification and comprised a hard, slightly coarse clay fabric with frequent poorly-sorted sand and larger inclusions, a mid orange red colour with a dark grey (reduced) core. The piece is 35mm thick, with a rough base with occasional possible straw impressions. The form and fabric suggest the piece represents brick of possible medieval date.

## **Conclusion**

Three trenches and one test pit were dug during the archaeological evaluation revealing a number of made ground deposits of 20th-century date covering natural alluvial deposits which overly gravel natural geology. Frequent modern truncations were uncovered, such as foundation cuts of the 1960s/1970s buildings and fuel tanks. The stratigraphy of the site is likely to be the consequence of 20th-century development, making the ground up to avoid floods of the tidal river. No trace of previous activity was uncovered. Only the northern edge of the site, where Trench 2 was located seems to remain relatively untouched with topsoil and subsoil observed overlying natural deposits, but again no archaeological features.

## References

- BGS, 1973, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 315, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept of Communities and Local Government, London
- SCC, 2016, 'Standards for the Creation, Completion and Transfer of Archaeological Archives', Southampton City Council, Southampton

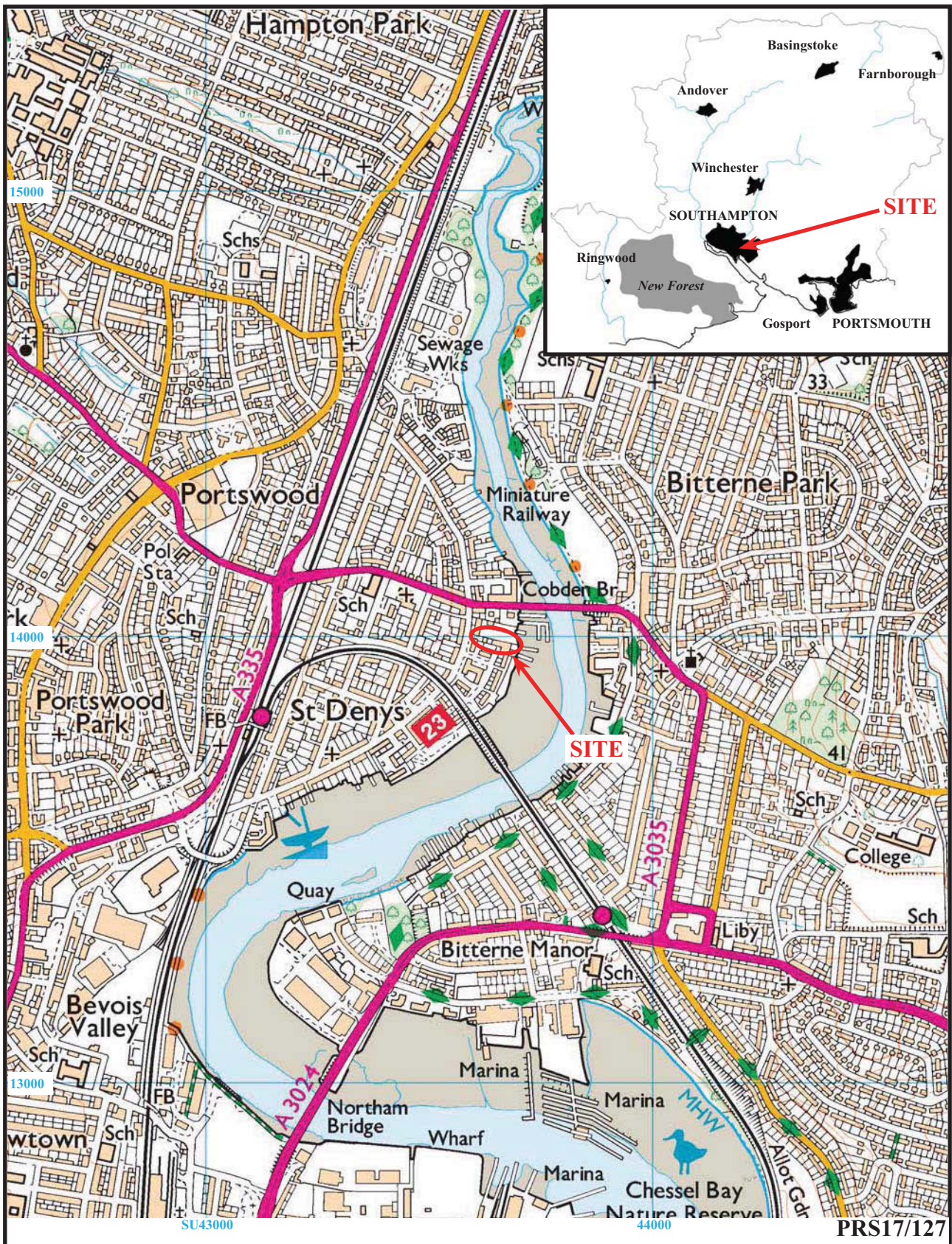
**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at WSW, WNW and NW end

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Length (m)</i> | <i>Breadth (m)</i> | <i>Depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | 18.50             | 3.50               | 2.30             | 0-0.20m demolition layer (64), 0.20-0.40/1.30m made ground (65)(71)(72), 0.40-1.10m clay made ground (66), 1.10-2.20m light blue grey silty clay (67) , 2.20m+ Natural gravel. <b>[Pl. 1]</b>   |
| 2             | 12.20             | 3.50               | 2.20             | 0-0.30m topsoil, 0.30-0.65m subsoil, 0.65-1.50m light yellowish brown gravel in clay matrix (58), 1.50-2.20m light blue grey silty clay (59), 2.20m+ Natural gravel. <b>[Pl. 2]</b>             |
| 3             | 15.20             | 3.50               | 1.60             | 0-0.30m demolition layer (60), 0.00/0.30-1.02m made ground (61)(68)(69)(73) (74)(75), 1.02-1.26m clay made ground (62), 1.26-1.60m alluvium (63), 1.60m+ Natural gravel. <b>[Pls 3 and 4]</b>   |
| 4             | -                 | -                  | -                | Abandoned. Flooding                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5             | 3.50              | 3.50               | 20.20            | 0-0.30m demolition layer (52), 0.30-0.78m made ground (53), 0.78-0.92m made ground (54), 0.92-1.27m made ground (55), 1.27-1.55m alluvium (56), 1.55-2.10m alluvium (57), 2.10m+ Natural gravel |

## APPENDIX 2: Deposit details

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i>      | <i>Date</i> | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 2             | -          | 50              | Topsoil          | -           | -                      |
| 2             | -          | 51              | Subsoil          | -           | -                      |
| 5             | -          | 52              | Demolition layer | Modern      | Modern pottery         |
| 5             | -          | 53              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 5             | -          | 54              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery         |
| 5             | -          | 55              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery         |
| 5             | -          | 56              | Alluvium         | Undated     | -                      |
| 5             | -          | 57              | Alluvium         | Undated     | -                      |
| 2             | -          | 58              | Buried soil      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 2             | -          | 59              | Natural deposit  | Natural     | -                      |
| 3             | -          | 60              | Demolition layer | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 3             | -          | 61              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery         |
| 3             | -          | 62              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 3             | -          | 63              | Alluvium         | Medieval?   | CBM                    |
| 1             | -          | 64              | Demolition layer | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 1             | -          | 65              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery         |
| 1             | -          | 66              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 1             | -          | 67              | Alluvial clay    | Undated     | -                      |
| 3             | -          | 68              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 3             | -          | 69              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 1             | -          | 70              | Natural deposit  | Natural     | -                      |
| 1             | -          | 71              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 1             | -          | 72              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 3             | -          | 73              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 3             | -          | 74              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern pottery and CBM |
| 3             | -          | 75              | Made ground      | Modern      | Modern CBM             |
| 1             | 1          | 76              | Foundation cut   | Modern      | Stratigraphy           |
| 1             | 1          | 77              | Foundation wall  | Modern      | Stratigraphy           |
| 1             | -          | 78              | Brickearth?      | Undated     | -                      |

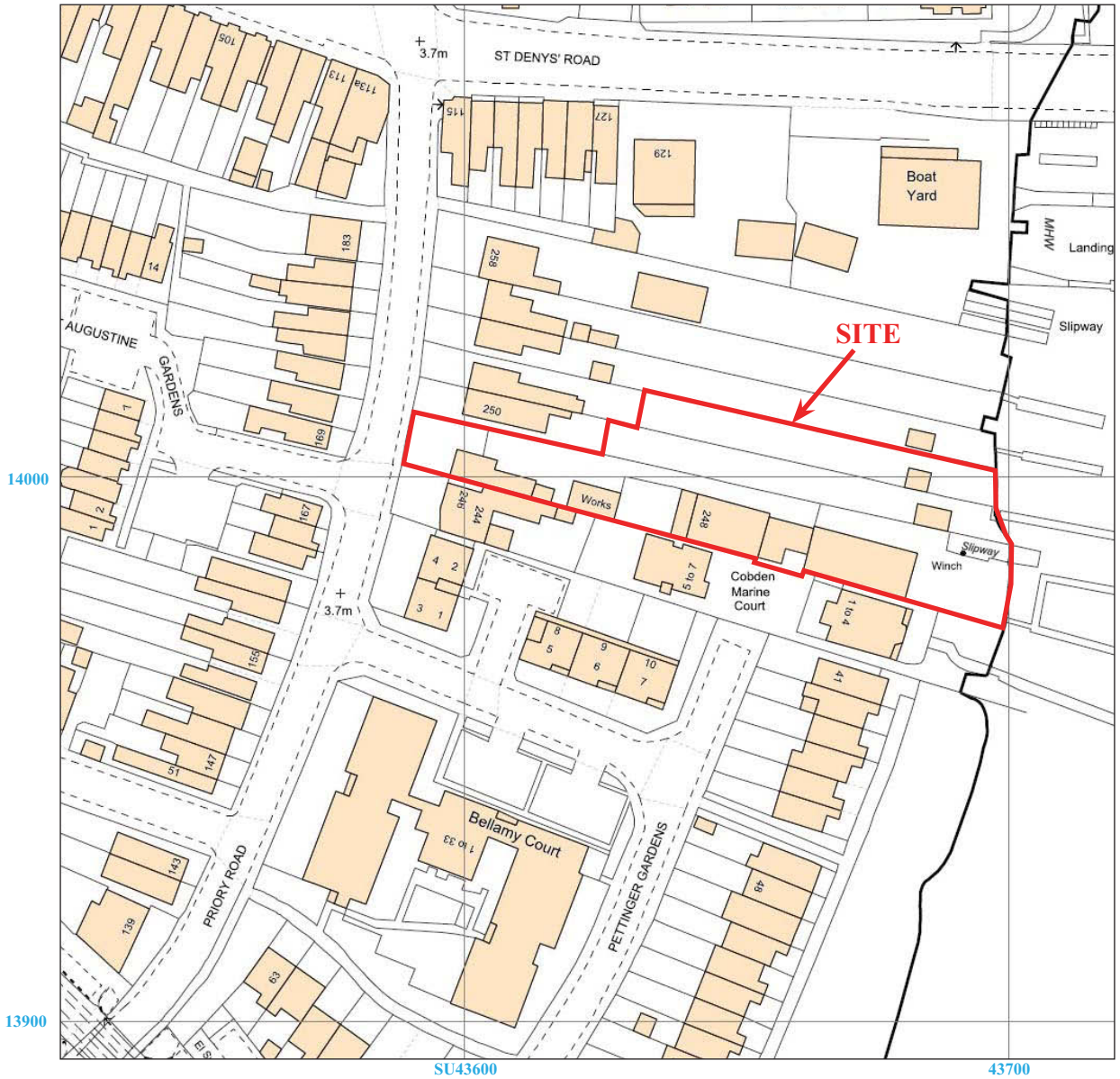


248-252 Priory Road,  
 Southampton, Hampshire, 2017  
 Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Southampton and Hampshire.

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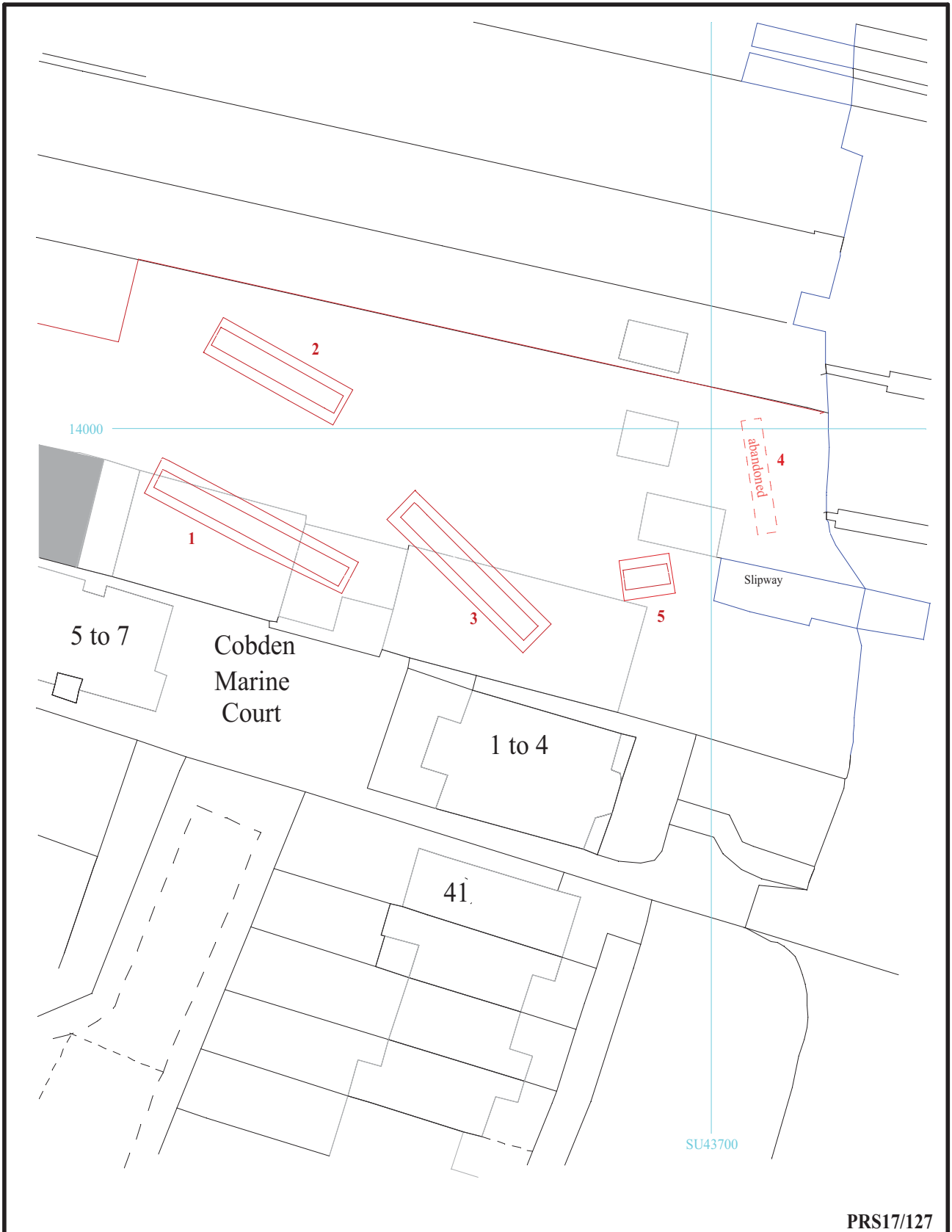
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**248-252 Priory Road,  
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Priory Road.

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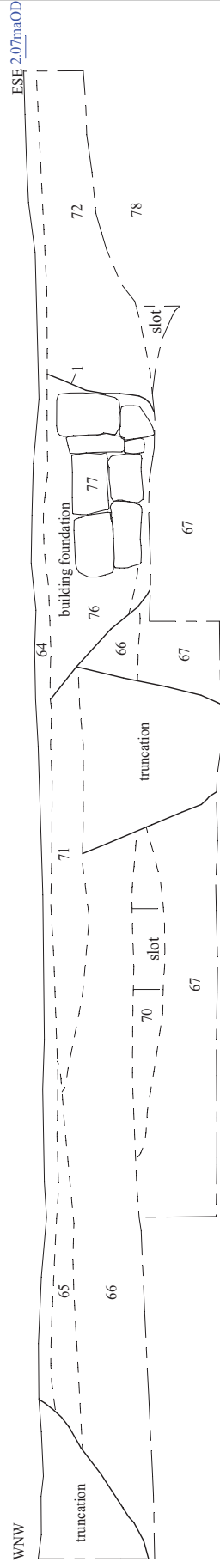
Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Trench 1



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Figure 4. Section of Trench 1.





Plate 1. Trench 1 section, looking west, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 section, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 3, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 3 section, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m and 0.3m

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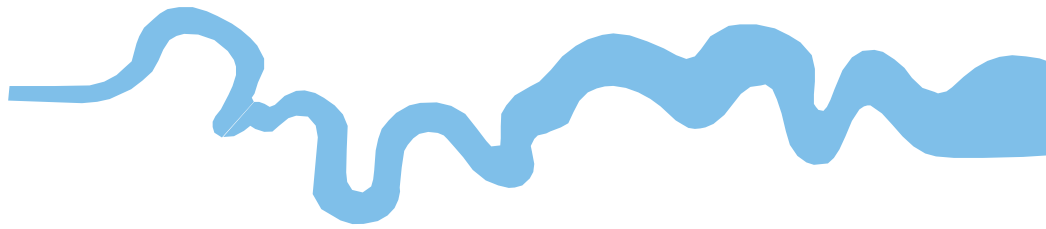
248-252 Priory Road,  
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Plates 3 and 4.

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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     |





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

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**

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