

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**15 - 27 High Street, Wargrave,
Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Mundin and Steven Crabb

Site Code: HSW16/232

(SU 7863 7879)

**15-27 High Street,
Wargrave, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Oraclemaker Ltd**

by Andrew Munding and Steven Crabb
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HSW 16/232

February 2018

Summary

Site name: 15 - 27 High Street, Wargrave, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7863 7879

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 31st January - 21st February 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Steven Crabb, Will Attard

Site code: HSW 16/232

Area of site: 0.26 ha

Summary of results: Observations were carried out after demolition works, while terracing across the site was underway. Observations were also made of some of the new footing trenches. The site showed signs of previous ground disturbance, particularly at its lowest point in the west near the High Street. Some degree of terracing had previously been carried out in the 20th century. There were no remains from earlier periods. No finds of archaeological interest were encountered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum willing to accept the archive in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 28.02.18 Steve Preston✓ 26.02.18

15 – 27 High Street, Wargrave, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 16/232b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on the site of Wargrave Village Car Sales (17 – 27, which also included the site of a mechanics garage), and No.15 High Street (Suncroft) which was behind this to the east with its access leading to Wargrave Hill in the north (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rob Edwards of Oraclemaker Ltd, Upper Culham Farm, Upper Culham Lane, Wargrave, Berkshire, RG10 8NR.

Planning permission (171328) has been gained from Wokingham Borough Council for the construction of new housing, comprising ten new plots with associated access, parking and bin storage. The consent is subject to a condition (22) which requires 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. A desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2017) had shown that the site lies in an Area of High Archaeological Potential. The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Ms Ellie Leary of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough. It was agreed that observations were only to occur during groundworks, and not required during demolition.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Crabb, Will Attard and Josh Hargreaves between 31st January and 21st February 2018, and the site code is HSW 16/232. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept the archive.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located towards the north-western extent of Wargrave to the east of the High Street and less than 100m east of the River Thames. It comprises an irregular parcel of land covering an area of 0.26ha. The site is bounded by residential properties, though as it is positioned facing the High Street, is less than 100m north of the core of the village. The underlying geology is Upper Chalk (BGS 2000). The site lies at a height of *c.*39m above Ordnance Datum (OD) in the west and rising via a slight terracing between the garage site and the neighbouring house to 44m AOD in the south-east. The site boundary wall masks the level difference between the site and Wargrave Hill in the north-east and the access road to the east.

Archaeological background

Wargrave lies on the east bank of the archaeologically rich Thames Valley at the confluence of its meeting point with the equally rich Loddon Valley from the south. A wide range of sites of prehistoric date are present (Gates 1975; Ford 1987). These are represented through finds from fieldwalking which has recovered numerous flint tools and pottery finds, but are also features visible from the air as cropmarks. Roman and Saxon remains and findspots are also known locally.

The core of the historic centre of the village is to the west, thought to be associated with Mill Green at the point the rivers meet. Documentary sources mention the village in 1061, and Domesday Book (1086) notes that the manor was in possession of the King and was previously held by Edward the Confessor's wife Edith (VCH 1923). At this time, it was one of the richest estates in East Berkshire, assessed at '33 *hides*, with enough arable land for 29 *ploughs*'. (William and Martin 2002) The river was clearly important in the village economy, there was a mill, and three fisheries that were 'capable of supplying 3000 eels' for the manor.

The Church of St Mary dates from the 12th century and is also in the west of the village, and archaeological works have found pottery of late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age date and Medieval pottery.

Wargrave was considered to have urban (Borough) status in 1225 (Astill 1978). Flooding could have led to the abandonment of the west parts of the village, with a favouring of the higher ground in the east. The High Street is considered to be an old route between Twyford and Henley, though evidence that a minor Roman Road (160cc; Margery 1967) passed through Wargrave is not proven (Whaley 2004). Burgage plots are evident from the 13th century, with the existing back lanes of Ferry Lane and Backsideans formed in the later Medieval period (Astill 1978). Wargrave Court dates from the 16th century with much alteration, and is a likely site for the original Medieval manor. This may have been finally abandoned to residential development as late as the 17th century.

Only a small number of investigations have taken place in the older parts of the village; the majority have not recovered archaeologically significant remains, but a unstratified medieval sherd was recovered from a probable boundary ditch on under Glebe Cottage on Ferry Lane (Dawson 2011).

To the south of the site are a number of Listed properties of later post-medieval date. These include No. 33 High Street (Jessmine Cottage; Late 18th century) and the Methodist Chapel of 1835. Some housing in the area has 15th- or 16th-century origins: parts of No.6 High Street, to the west of the site, and No.45 High Street, the site of the White Hart Inn.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was expected to involve monitoring of foundation trenches, ground reduction and other groundworks, related to drainage. Machinery used under archaeological supervision was fitted with a toothless grading bucket.

Results

At the start of observations all previous buildings (Fig. 2) and their foundations had been removed. No observations were undertaken during the demolition. Instead, ground reduction was observed across the site, which covered most of the areas where previous structures had stood. These works were to create landscaped platforms for the new buildings to stand, as these locations had formerly sloped quite sharply.

A total of *c.* 300 sq m of ground was reduced on the upper (eastern) terrace (Fig 3; Pl.1). This was dug to a maximum depth of 0.94m through subsoil no deeper than 0.8m deep (Fig. 4, Pls 2 and 3), in places no thicker than 0.45m. Natural chalk patches were observed at the base of excavation in the eastern side of the reduction, though an edge of redeposited natural and dark brown silty sand was noted in the south-west. No finds of interest were encountered. Only modern brick and tile and occasional white or blue/white transfer printed 'china' was noted.

The new lower terracing was L-shaped and was *c.* 650 sq m in total (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.4). Two small areas of truncation (pits?) were encountered on the eastern side of the strip cutting natural. Modern brick was encountered in one of these. The total depth of excavation here was 0.96m, no subsoil was present, instead this area was made ground, the base of which was reached, though it varied in depth greatly either from high truncation or from recent disturbance of the ground from demolition. A large area of truncation was present in the south-west of the site, at the previous location of the garage. Most of this was a homogeneous fill of chalk and dark brown sandy silt. No archaeological finds were encountered.

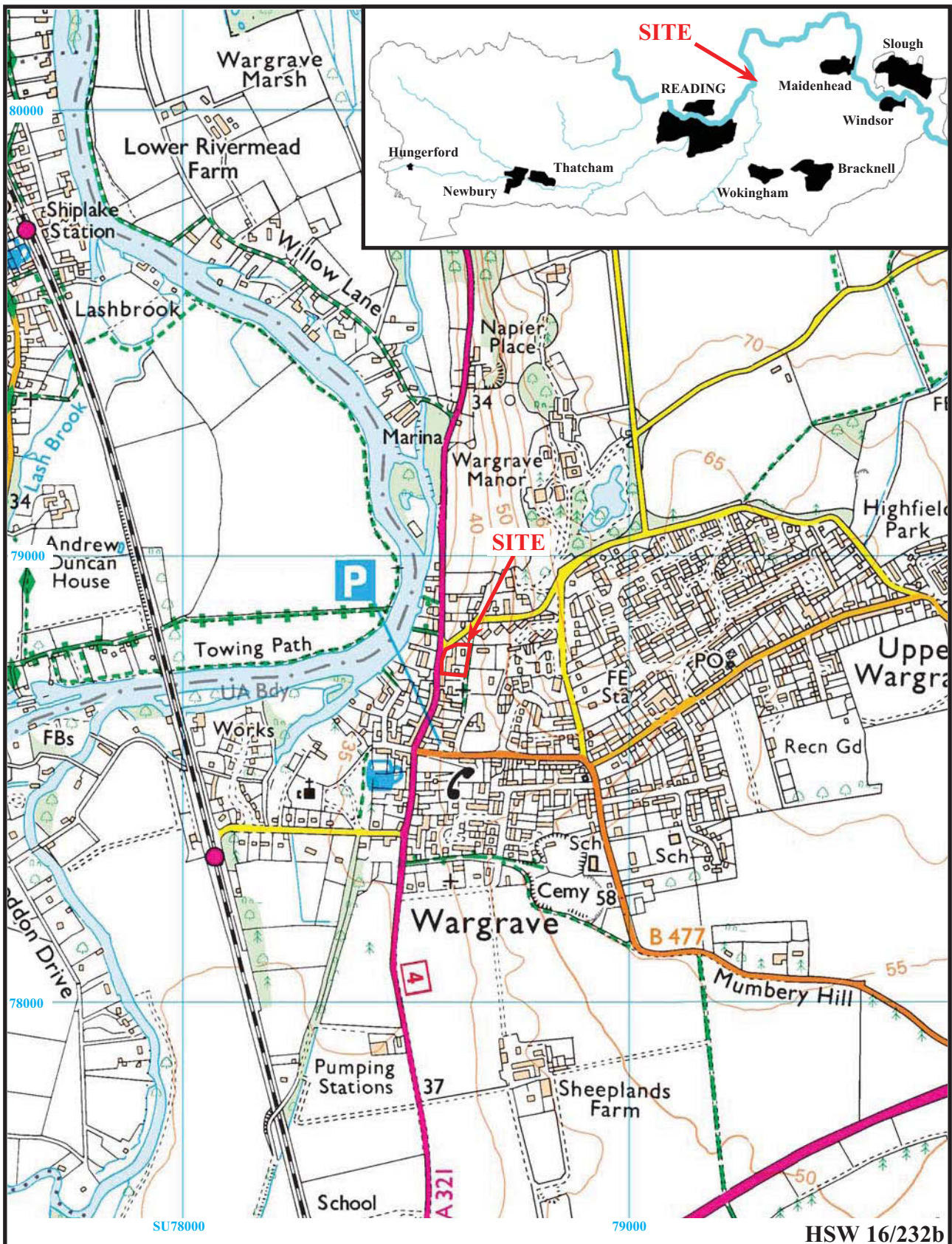
Only the foundations of Plot 5 to 8 were observed further as these were in an area not affected by the earlier site terracing. The footings were dug between 0.8m and 1.1m deep. All the sections contained a layer of made ground over natural geology which varied in depth between 0.4m and 0.8m deep. The made ground was a dark grey brown sandy silt with flint nodules containing modern brick and tile. The natural exposed was brown yellow silty sand. No finds of interest were encountered and no deposits of pre-20th century date were observed.

Conclusion

The site showed signs of extensive previous ground disturbance, particularly at its lowest point in the west near the High Street. Some degree of terracing had previously been carried out in the 20th century. There were no remains from earlier periods and only modern artefacts observed.

References

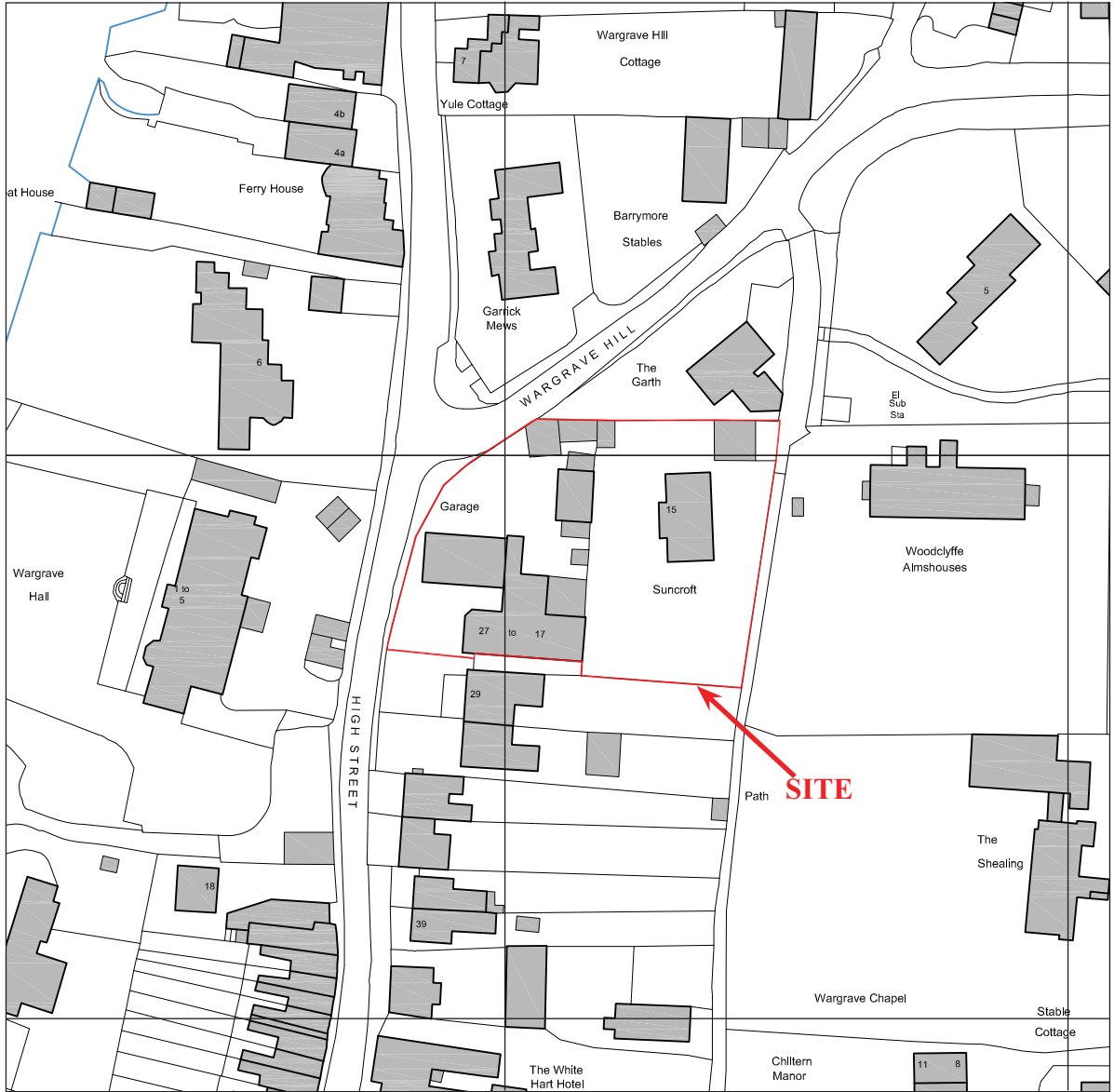
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Figure 1. Location of site within Wargrave and Berkshire.

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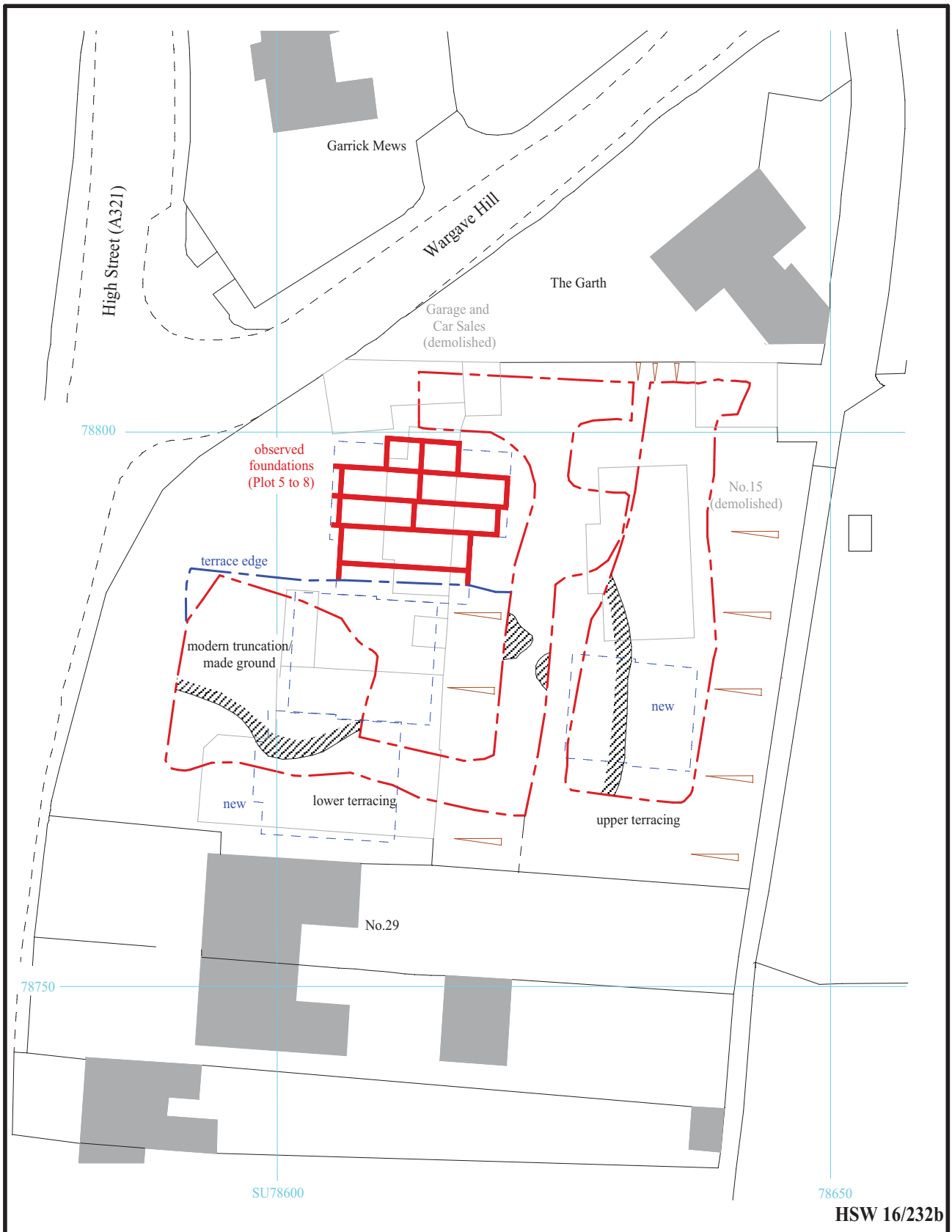


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at junction of High Street and Wargrave Hill.

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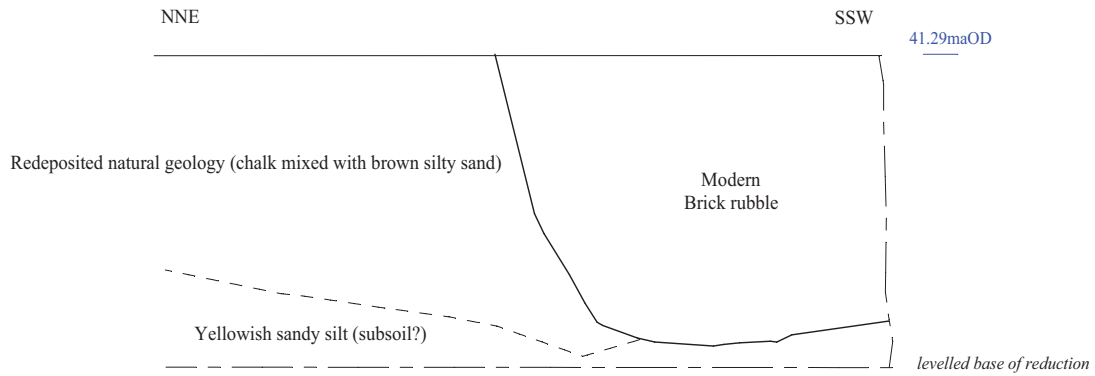
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Figure 3. Areas of ground reduction on the site, after demolition.

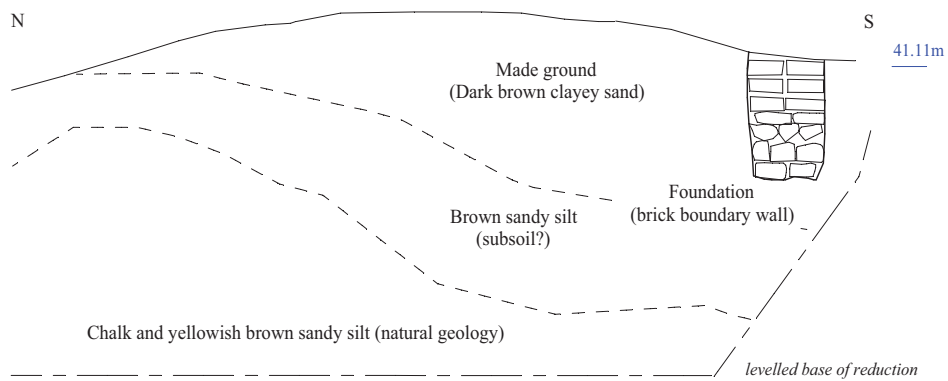


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Upper terracing (south east corner)



Lower terracing (southern edge)



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Figure 4. Representative sections of upper and lower terracing.



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Plate 1. Upper terracing, looking south west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Upper terracing section at north east corner, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Lower terracing, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Lower terracing section at southern side, looking east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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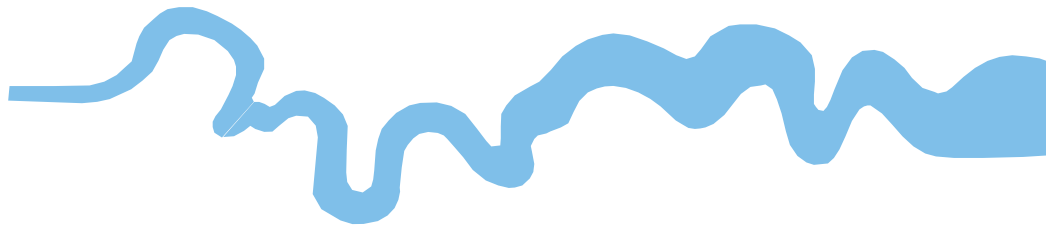
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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