Lewington Wood–Moulsford Down High Voltage Cable Trench Test Pits, Streatley, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Entec UK Ltd

by David Platt

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RRS 07/128

November 2007

Summary

Site name: Lewington Wood -Moulsford Down High Voltage Cable Trench Test Pits, Streatley, West Berkshire

Grid reference: Lewingdon Wood (SU 5820 7955) to Moulsford Down (SU 5835 8215)

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 6th–9th November 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: RRS 07/128

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 14.11.07 Steve Preston✓ 16.11.07

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Report 07/128

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on test pits dug for geotechnical fieldwork and a single test pit (TP15), which was used to locate an already existing gas pipeline, in preparation for laying electrical cable These test pits are located between the electrical substations of Lewingdon Wood (SU 58200 79550) and Moulsford Down (SU 58350 82150), West Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Williamson of Entec UK Ltd, North Canon Court, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury, SY2 5DE.

The scheme of archaeological monitoring is in line with government guidance on archaeology and development, as set out in *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990), and with section 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 which obliges utility companies to: 'have regard to the desirability of…. Protecting sites, buildings (including structures) and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest'.

The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt between the 6th and 9th November 2007 and the site code is RRS 07/128. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western margins of Streatley, between the electrical substations of Lewington Wood and Moulsford Down, on a route crossing both the B4009 and Rectory Road, close to Streatley, West Berkshire (Fig.1). The site is currently used for agricultural purposes, the majority being land for grazing but the fields closest to the B4009 being used for crops of winter wheat. The underlying geology comprises a mixture of Upper, Middle and Lower Chalk (BGS 1980), which was observed in some of the test pits. The site lies on undulating ground at heights between 90m and 165m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 1).

Archaeological background

The fieldwork took place on the eastern margins of the Berkshire Downs close to the Goring Gap, where the Thames breaks through the chalk escarpment. Streatley occupies a strategic crossing point of the River Thames and this location appears to have been a focus for human settlement from the earliest times (Gates 1975;

Richards 1978). Roman coins discovered within the village suggest settlement in the near environs, whose precise location has yet not been discovered, although Roman occupation and boundary features are recorded to the south west (Ford 1982). A Saxon settlement is indicated in this area by references to charters of the time. 'Stretlea' is first recorded in AD690 and the village is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086 as *'Estriei'*. At this time in the early medieval period it is believed Streatley was home to a Minster church indicating some significance for the settlement.

Of most significance is the site of five ring ditches, presumably the levelled remains of Bronze Age barrows which lie adjacent to the route of the proposed cable (Richards 1978, fig 19).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor the digging of test pits across the site in order to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area.

A total of 13 test pits were dug, measuring between 0.60m and 1.50m wide, between 1.95m and 2.50m in length and between 1.20m and 1.80m deep (Fig. 2)

Results

Test Pit 1

This pit was 1.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of brownish grey silty clay topsoil overlying natural chalk which was present at 0.2m.

Test Pit 2

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.6m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.4m of a dark orangey brown sandy clay. This overlay the natural clay which was present at 1m.

Test Pit 3

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.32m of pale orangey yellow clayey sand overlying 0.39m of dark orangey clayey sand. This overlay 0.24m of dark orangey brown clayey sand natural.

Test Pit 4

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.40m of dark orangey brown sandy clay overlying 0.5m of dark brown sandy clay natural

Test Pit 5

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.25m of dark orangey brown sandy clay. This overlay 0.65m of bright brownish orange sandy clay natural.

Test Pit 6

This pit was 1.23m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of brownish grey silty clay topsoil overlying 0.42m of mid orangey brown clay. This overlay the natural chalk at 0.64m.

Test Pit 7

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of brownish grey sandy silt topsoil overlying 0.98m of dark orangey brown clay.

Test Pit 8

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of greyish brown silty clay topsoil overlying the natural chalk which was present at 0.18m.

Test Pit 9

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying natural chalk which was present at 0.22m.

Test Pit 10

This pit was 1.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of brownish grey sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.47m of pale brown clayey chalk overlying chalk natural which was present at 0.7m. (Fig. 3)

Test Pit 13

This pit was 1.1m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of greyish brown sandy clay topsoil overlying 0.2m of pale yellowish brown sandy silty clay overlying natural chalk which was present at 0.50m.

Test Pit 14

This pit was 1.26m deep. The stratigraphy consisted 0.34m of dark greyish brown sandy clay topsoil overlying natural chalk which was present at 0.34m.

Test Pit 15 (TPG)

This pit was 1.8m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of dark brown silty clay topsoil overlying 0.34m of greyish brown silty chalk overlying re-deposited natural chalk which was present at 0.60m.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered during the fieldwork.

Conclusion

Despite the presence of the Bronze Age ring ditches near the area of test pitting, there were no finds nor deposits of archaeological interest observed during the watching brief.

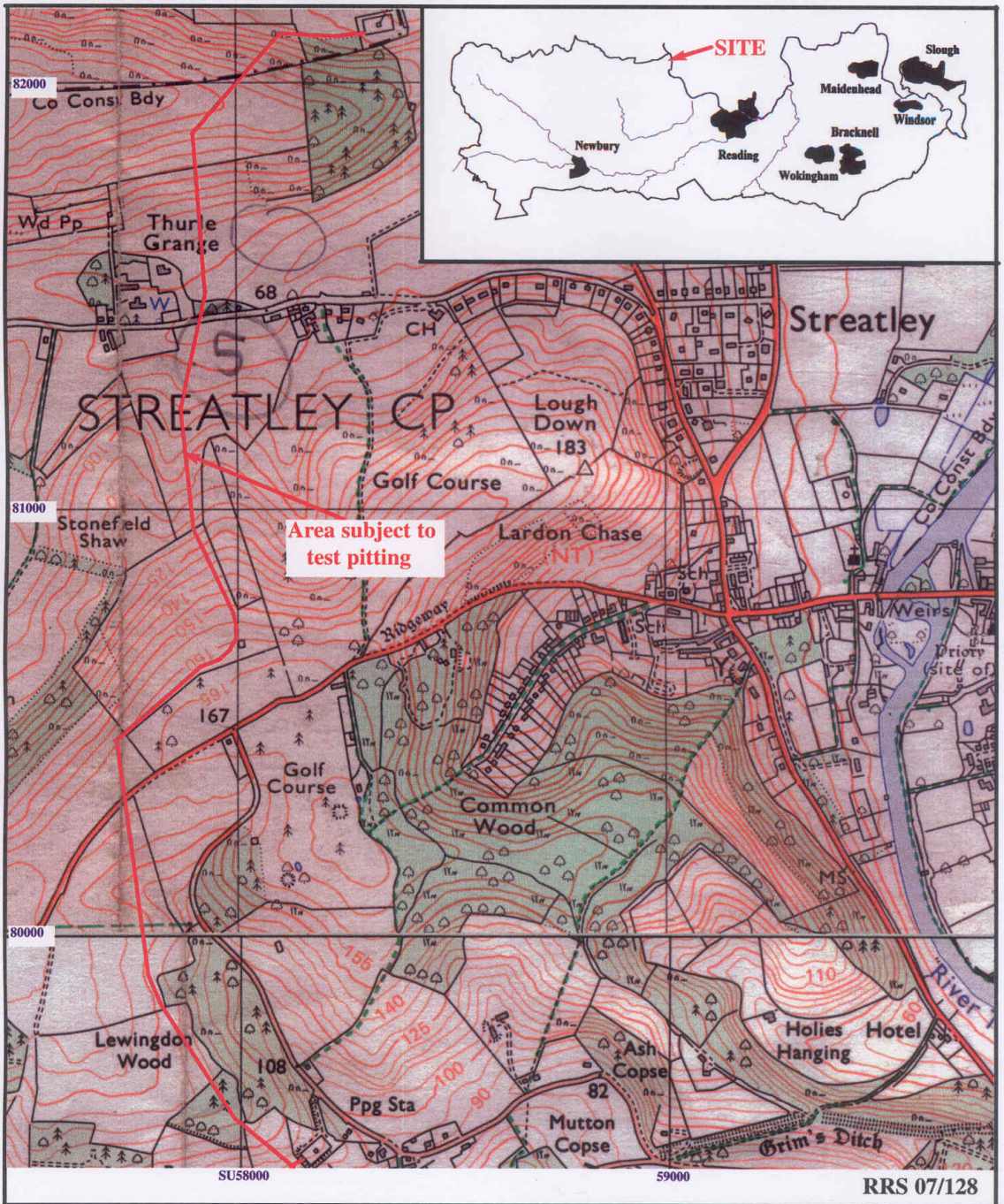
References

BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

Ford, S, 1982, 'Linear earthworks on the Berkshire Downs', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **71**, 1–20

Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley, An archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn **1**, Reading

Richards, J C, 1978, *The Archaeology of the Berkshire Downs,* Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn **3**, Reading



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Archaeological test pitting

Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Streatley and West Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of test pits.

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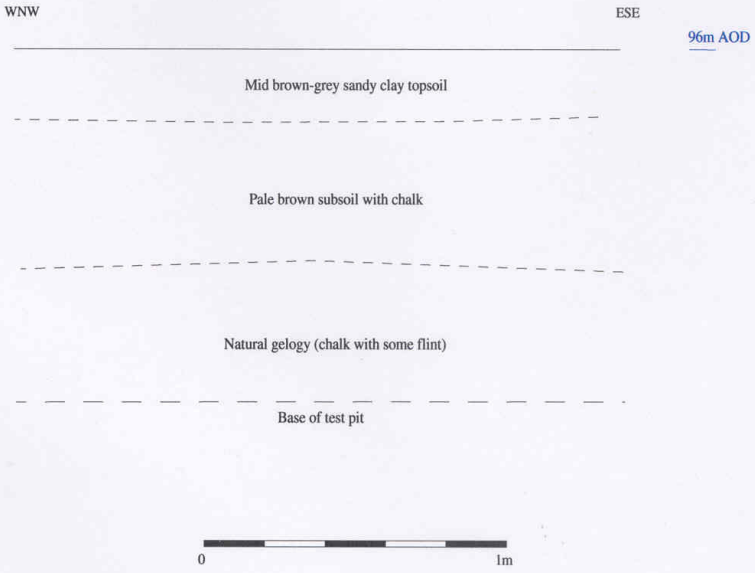

Figure 3. Representative section of Test Pit 10A.

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