

# **Rooksbury Mill, Rooksbury Road, Andover, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Petra Developments Ltd**

by Sean Wallis and Danielle Milbank

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RMA 07/90

**November 2007**

## Summary

**Site name:** Rooksbury Mill, Rooksbury Road, Andover, Hampshire

**Grid reference:** SU 3544 4455

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 20th September – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Sean Wallis

**Site code:** RMA 07/90

**Area of site:** c.210 sq m

**Summary of results:** No deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were encountered.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 08.12.07 Jo Pine ✓ 10.12.07
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# **Rooksbury Mill, Rooksbury Road, Andover, Hampshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**Report 07/90**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Rooksbury Mill, Rooksbury Road, Andover, Hampshire (SU 355 445) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Simon Dugdale of Petra Developments Ltd, Charis Holt, Sleepers Hill, Winchester, SO22 4NA.

Planning consent (app no 06/02456/VARN) has been gained from Test Valley Borough Council for the conversion of two existing barns to residential use, and the construction of two new dwellings. The consent is subject to several conditions, including one concerning archaeology (4) which requires a watching brief to take place during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Hopkins, of Hampshire County Council, archaeological adviser to Test Valley Borough Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis and David Platt between 20th September and 13<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and the site code is RMA 07/90. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Museum Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on the east side of Rooksbury Road, on the west bank of the River Anton. The two barns, which are to be converted, stand on the western boundary of the site adjacent to the former route of the Andover to Winchester railway (Fig. 2). The main mill building and mill master's house stand just to the east. The site lies on the floor of the valley of the river Anton at a height of approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology consists of Alluvium over Upper Chalk (BGS 1975). However, no Alluvium was noted during the watching brief, and the geology recorded across the site mainly consisted of Upper Chalk with patches of River Gravels.

## **Archaeological background**

The proposed development site lies in the vicinity of the Iron Age hillfort of Balksbury Camp (Ellis and Rawlings 2001) which is sited just to the west of the site. As such it is possible that contemporary prehistoric deposits may be encountered during the watching brief. There is also the likelihood of earlier structural remains of mill buildings being present on the site. According to Domesday Book, Andover had ten mills in 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002). The mill buildings were first recorded by the name of Rooksbury in the 17th century and they functioned as a flour mill. This ceased functioning as a working mill in the early 20th century. A building survey of the two barns which are to be converted was recently carried out (Ford 2007).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This was to involve examination of areas of ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations, services and soakaways as necessary.

## **Results**

### *The new cottages*

These two cottages were to be built just to the south of the South Barn (Fig. 3). To account for the natural slope of the site, the footprint of the new buildings was stripped of overburden and leveled. This involved removal of topsoil and subsoil from an area measuring approximately 10m (north-south) by 16m (east-west). The stratigraphy here comprised topsoil 0.20m thick, which overlay brown clay silt subsoil with moderate pea grit and gravel inclusions, also 0.20m thick on average. This overlay the natural geology, which (immediately below the subsoil) comprised brown/white clay silt with frequent chalk inclusions, though the chalk appeared cleaner at lower levels (Fig. 4).

These layers were removed by machine to a depth of 1.05m at the west side, where the ground level was highest. The ground level fell by approximately 1.05m from the west side of the area to the east, therefore no overburden was removed from the eastern limit. This represented the eventual stripped level, which lay at approximately 54.1m AOD.

At the north of this area, a feature was observed which appeared to be cut into the chalk natural, and was recorded in plan. This was a possible pit 1.2m in diameter, and though it could not be fully excavated, modern metal and brick/tile fragments were recovered from its surface (not retained). It was infilled with dark brown

grey clay silt with occasional flecks of chalk and charcoal, and gravel inclusions. No other deposits of archaeological interest were noted.

#### *The barn conversion*

The floor level inside the north barn was to be reduced. This was carried out in two sections, as the extant concrete floor had yet to be removed from the northern part of the building. The southern half of the floor was reduced to a level 0.80m lower than the surrounding ground level, and 0.53m lower than the concrete surface (approximately 53.5m above Ordnance Datum). In the southwest facing section against the remaining floor, concrete 0.11m thick overlay a brown silty clay layer 0.15m thick, with chalk inclusions (likely to be redeposited natural chalk). This overlay a dark brown silty clay and chalk layer with frequent gravel inclusions 0.14m thick, which in turn overlay the natural geology.

The stratigraphy visible at the northeast side of the reduced area was similar, with a dark black brown organic layer (topsoil?) 0.20m thick overlying dark grey silty clay with gravel which was 0.30m thick. This in turn overlay silty clay and chalk with frequent gravel inclusions, which comprised the natural geology. In this area of ground reduction, no archaeological finds or features were encountered, and no deposits of an archaeological nature were observed.

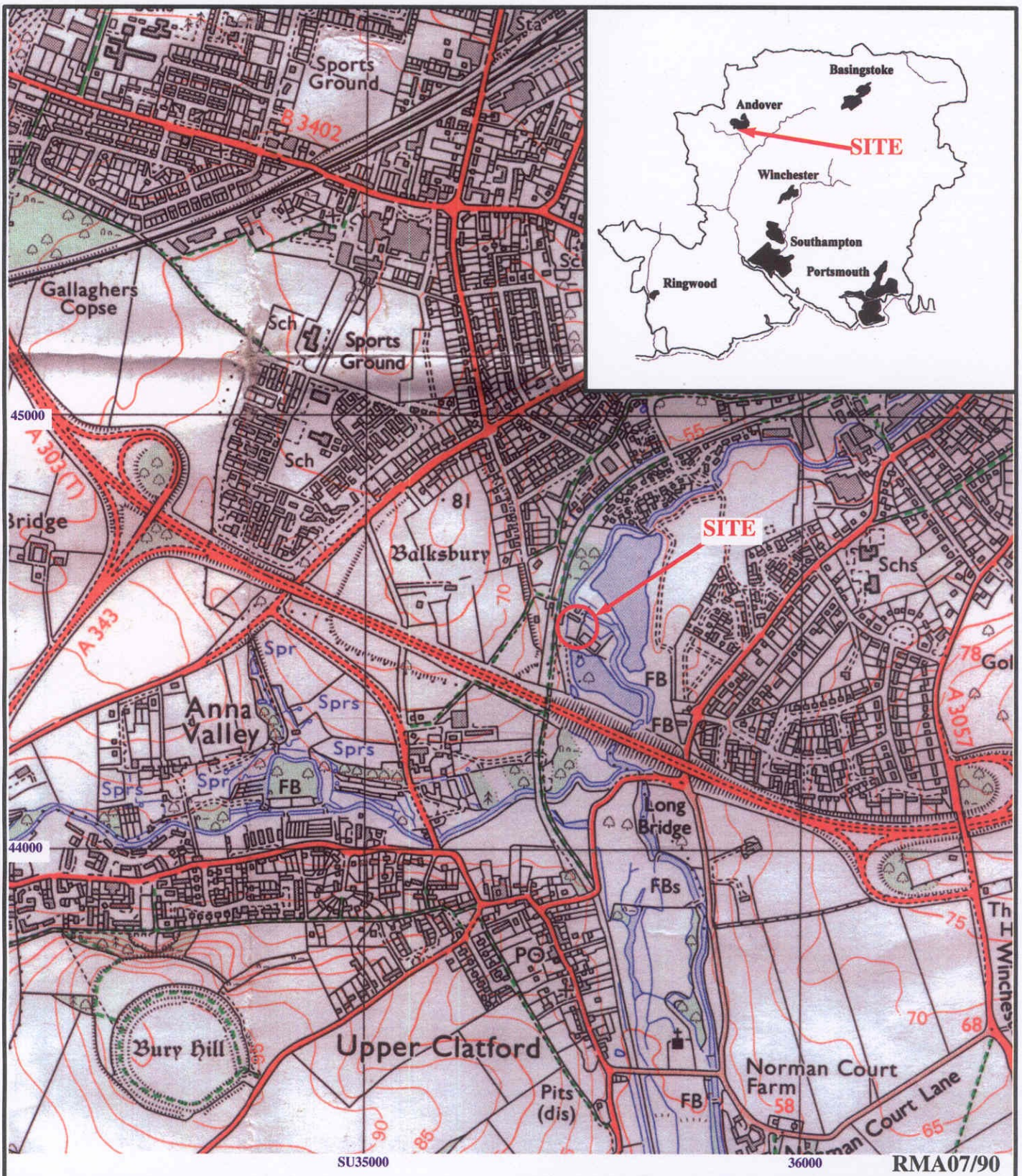
## **Conclusion**

Although the extant north and south barns are of an early post-medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century or possibly earlier) date, the watching brief provided no evidence to suggest that they were built on the plot of earlier structures or buildings. In the area of ground reduction for the new buildings, a probable pit was observed of late post-medieval or early modern date, and may be broadly contemporary with the barns. The archaeologically relevant levels seemed to be well-preserved, with minimal, if any, modern truncation of the site prior to the ground reduction described here. This would provide ideal conditions to identify any archaeological deposits, if any were present. Despite the potential for evidence of Iron Age or other prehistoric activity to be present on the site, no deposits of this nature were encountered.

## **References**

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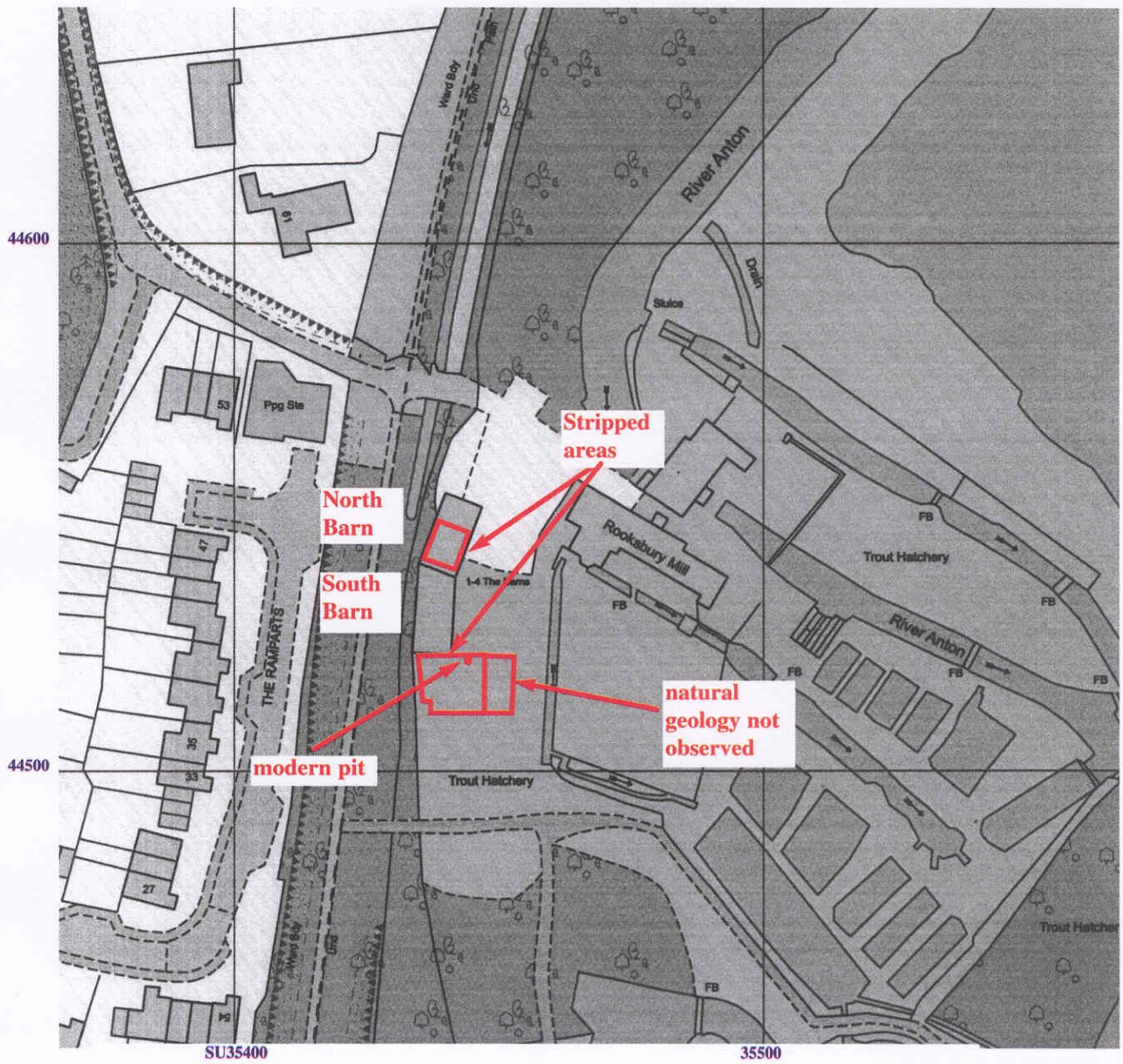
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Figure 1. Location of site within Andover and Hampshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Rooksbury Mill.

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# Rooksbury Mill, Rooksbury Road, Andover, Hampshire, 2007

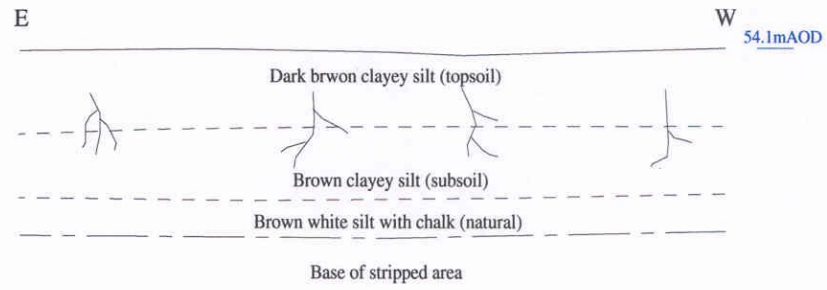


Figure 3. Representative section of stripped area for the new cottages.





Plate 1. Area in North Barn, looking north east, scale 1m.



Plate 2. Section of exterior area, looking south, horizontal scale 2m, vertical scale 1m.