

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land off Salisbury Road,
Hungerford, West Berkshire- East Site**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford

Site Code: SRH11/124

(SU3350 6730)

**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
West Berkshire, East Site**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Bewley Homes**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SRH11/124

February 2020

Summary

Site name: Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU3370 6745

Site activity: Field Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 19th - 21st February 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: SRH11/124

Area of site: c. 1.7 ha

Summary of results: Some 18 trenches were eventually dug. These revealed a single feature of archaeological interest, a pit of Earlier Neolithic date, along with a few struck flints from topsoil contexts. The archaeological potential of the site overall is considered to be low, but with one modest area of higher potential around the Neolithic pit.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 28.02.20
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Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation - East Site

by Steve Ford

Report 11/124d

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford, West Berkshire (SU3370 6745) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Geoff Wilde of Bewley Homes, Inhurst House, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, RG26 5JJ.

Planning permission (16/03061/OUTMAJ) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of new housing on a 4.68 hectare plot of land. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits, a programme of archaeological work has been requested in order to inform the planning process with regards to potential archaeological implications, in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Council's policies on archaeology. This component of work comprised field evaluation by means of machine dug trenches and follows earlier desktop study and geophysical survey. Further work was possibly to be required if significant archaeological deposits are encountered.

The whole of the overall development site was subject to a geophysical survey (Constable 2016) and the western portion of the overall site has already been evaluated and reported on (Ford 2019). This report concerns trenching on the eastern portion of the site.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, archaeological officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Emily Gibson from 19th to 21st February 2020, and the site code SRH11/124. 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 comprises an elongated parcel of abandoned grassland located immediately to the south of the suburbs of Hungerford (Fig. 1). The site is more or less flat and lies at a height of *c.* 130m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as chalk and clay-with flints (BGS 2006) which was observed in the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Ford 2016) and subsequent geophysical survey. In summary the site's general potential stems from its location within an area of West Berkshire which is considered as being archaeologically rich, lying on the margins of the Kennet Valley. The site lies beyond the historic core of Hungerford (Astill 1978). A modest number of finds of prehistoric date are recorded for the environs but there are a number of circular and linear cropmarks just to the south of the site visible from the air which may be of archaeological origin. Geophysical survey of the site itself revealed a marked linear anomaly extending across both portions of the site, that was considered likely to be of archaeological origin (Constable 2016).

The trenching in the western part of the site revealed a prehistoric linear ditch along with a number of pits of Bronze Age date in two locations as well as a scatter of prehistoric flintwork from the topsoil. A few sherds of Roman pottery were also recorded (Ford 2019).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of the project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site; and
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

It was proposed to excavate 16 trenches, each 25-28m long and 1.8-2m wide under the supervision of an archaeologist. A contingency of 50m of trenching was included within the proposal should it be necessary for clarification of any deposits recorded in the initial trenching. Any archaeological features identified were to be cleaned and investigated using appropriate hand tools. Metal detectors were to be used on spoil heaps to aid in recovery of metal artefacts.

Results

Eighteen trenches were eventually opened, mostly as intended (Fig. 2). They ranged between 7.9m and 31.2m in length and between 0.25m and 0.52m in depth. Spoil heaps were checked for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1 and the excavated feature is summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

Trench 1 was aligned SW- NE and was 26.3m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil above 0.07m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned NW- SE and was 25.4m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil above 0.06m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2; Pl 1)

Trench 3 was aligned NNE-SSW and was 27.4m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil above 0.06m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology with some chalk present. A large circular geophysical anomaly was investigated and found to be 0.52m deep containing post-medieval tile and some clinker. It was similar to those investigated on the west site and are thought possibly to be small clay or chalk pits.

Trench 4 (Fig. 2)

Trench 4 was aligned N- S and was 26.6m long and 0.35m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil above 0.05m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 5 (Fig. 2; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned NW-SE and was 25.2m long and 0.26m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil above 0.04m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2)

Trench 6 was aligned N- S and was 26.2m long and 0.31m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil above 0.04m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 7 (Fig. 2)

Trench 7 was aligned SW-NE and was 26.3m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil above 0.07m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 8 (Fig. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned NW- SE and was 25.6m long and 0.31m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil above 0.03m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 9 (Fig. 2; Pl. 3)

Trench 9 was aligned W- E and was 28.2m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of topsoil above 0.08m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2)

Trench 10 was aligned SW- NE and was 27.6m long and 0.28m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil above 0.04m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 11 (Fig. 2)

Trench 11 was aligned NW- SE and was 28.5m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil above 0.1m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology. There was no obvious trace of the cause of the geophysical anomalies that should have been located by this trench.

Trench 12 (Fig. 2)

Trench 12 was aligned NW- SE and was 26.5m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of topsoil above 0.07m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 13 (Figs 2 and 3; Pls 4 and 6)

Trench 13 was aligned W- E and was 29.4m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil above 0.07m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with flints natural geology. A small pit (1) was located towards the centre of the trench. It was circular in plan 0.65m across with steep sides and a flat base. It was 0.12m deep with a single fill (53) of dark brown clayey silt, charcoal, some rare burnt flint, a flint flake and some pottery of Early Neolithic date. A soil sample recovered a modest volume of charcoal but no other plant remains.

Two additional trenches (17 and 18) were dug to examine the environs of the pit in Trench 13.

Trench 14 (Fig. 2)

Trench 14 was aligned W-E and was 31.2m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil above 0.1m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 15 (Fig. 2)

Trench 15 was aligned N- S and was 26.8m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil above 0.06m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 16 (Fig. 2)

Trench 16 was aligned N- S and was 31m long and 0.27m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil above 0.05m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 17 (Fig. 2; Pl. 5)

Trench 17 was aligned W- E and was 8.2m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil above 0.07m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Trench 18 (Fig. 2)

Trench 18 was aligned W- E and was 7.9m long and 0.31m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil above 0.13m of brown silty clay subsoil above clay-with-flints natural geology.

Finds

Pottery by Richard Tabor

The prehistoric assemblage comprised 13 sherds weighing 49.5g, all from pit 1. The sherds were allocated to a single fabric group based on the material, size and sorting of the principal inclusions and surface treatment was described in accordance with guidelines for the recording and analysis of prehistoric pottery (PCRG 2010).

Early Neolithic

QF1 (medium) Moderately hard, grey fabric with grey surfaces including abundant very fine (<0.2mm) to sparse fine (<0.5mm) dark, probably glauconitic, sub-rounded quartz, poorly-sorted common fine (<1mm), sparse medium (<2mm) and rare to sparse coarse (<6mm) burnt sub-angular flint and sparse medium (<2mm) dark grey to red argillaceous pellets.

A minimum of two vessels appears to be represented, in one fabric. A small, incurved, rounded rim sherd is probably from a closed bowl but it is of very limited diagnostic potential. Four wall sherds with thicknesses of 4-5mm might equally belong to it or to five joining sherds making up the upper profile of a closed bowl. The upright rim was flattened with what appeared to be an applied strip on its outer edge giving it the impression of having a roll. It was set over a short concave neck emphasised by a broad, shallow groove falling to a straight shoulder at the base of which was a slightly upwardly tilted imperforate horizontal lug. The profile was rounded below the lug.

The grade of flint compares well with that incorporated into fabrics of sherds from early Neolithic pits at South Stoke, 34km north-east of the site, and glauconitic sand was recorded in one fabric from the same site (Edwards *et al.* 2005, table 6). Glauconitic sand, flint and argillaceous grains were noted at Abingdon causewayed enclosure but not within a single fabric (Williams 1982, 35). Similar lugs are a well-established feature of early Neolithic pottery in southern Britain and a broadly similar closed profile featured at the Windmill Hill type site (Smith 1965, fig. 20). Lugs were absent from similar bowl forms at Staines causewayed enclosure but there were several examples of comparably short concave necks and flattened or outwardly-turned rims (Robertson Mackay 1987, figs 41-2).

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of 13 struck flints were recovered from the evaluation as summarized in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 3. With the exception of a flake from pit 1, the material was recovered from topsoil contexts and most pieces were considerably plough damaged. There is therefore some doubt as to the identification of a scraper and serrated flake. With the exception of the latter, none of the pieces are especially distinctive (eg blade-like) and none obviously contemporary with the Neolithic pit. It is suggested that the collection is predominantly of Bronze Age date.

Table 1 Summary of struck flint

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Flakes	9
Cores	2
Serrated flake?	1
Scrapers	1

Charred plant remains by Joanna Pine

A single bulk soil sample of 16L from pit 1 was floated and wet sieved using a 0.25m mesh. Charcoal was present but no other charred plant remains.

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken as intended. The only feature of interest was a small pit of Early Neolithic date. Such features are uncommonly encountered and often isolated pits represent the only below-ground traces of occupation sites of a largely mobile settlement pattern at this time. Despite a relative wealth of large scale fieldwork in the Kennet Valley, with the rich Thames Valley to the east and monumental landscape around Avebury to

the west, very few Earlier Neolithic sites or finds are recorded in this area. The single pit here is therefore of more interest than might be expected because of the rarity of such features both in general and in this region.

The archaeological potential of the site overall is considered to be low but with one modest area of higher potential in the vicinity of the Neolithic pit.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	26.3	1.8	0.30	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.3m brown silty clay subsoil; 0.3m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
2	25.4	1.8	0.30	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24-0.3m subsoil; 0.3m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
3	27.4	1.8	0.40	0-0.34m topsoil; 0.34-0.4m subsoil; 0.4m+ clay with flints (natural geology) Post-medieval quarry? 0.52m deep to chalk. [Pl. 1]
4	26.6	1.8	0.35	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.32m subsoil; 0.32m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
5	25.2	1.8	0.35	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ clay with flints (natural geology) [Pl. 2]
6	26.2	1.8	0.31	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
7	26.3	1.8	0.34	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.34m subsoil; 0.34m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
8	25.6	1.8	0.31	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
9	28.2	1.8	0.34	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.34m subsoil; 0.34m+ clay with flints (natural geology), [Pl. 3]
10	27.6	1.8	0.28	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24-0.28m subsoil; 0.28m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
11	28.5	1.8	0.33	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ clay with flints (natural geology) [
12	26.5	1.8	0.33	0-0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.33m subsoil; 0.332m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
13	29.4	1.8	0.30	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.3m subsoil; 0.3m+ clay with flints (natural geology). Pit 1 [Pls 4 and 6]
14	31.2	1.8	0.33	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
15	26.8	1.8	0.33	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
16	31.0	1.8	0.27	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22-0.27m subsoil; 0.27m+ clay with flints (natural geology)
17	8.2	1.8	0.30	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.3m subsoil; 0.3m+ clay with flints (natural geology), [Pl. 5]
18	7.9	1.8	0.31	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ clay with flints (natural geology)

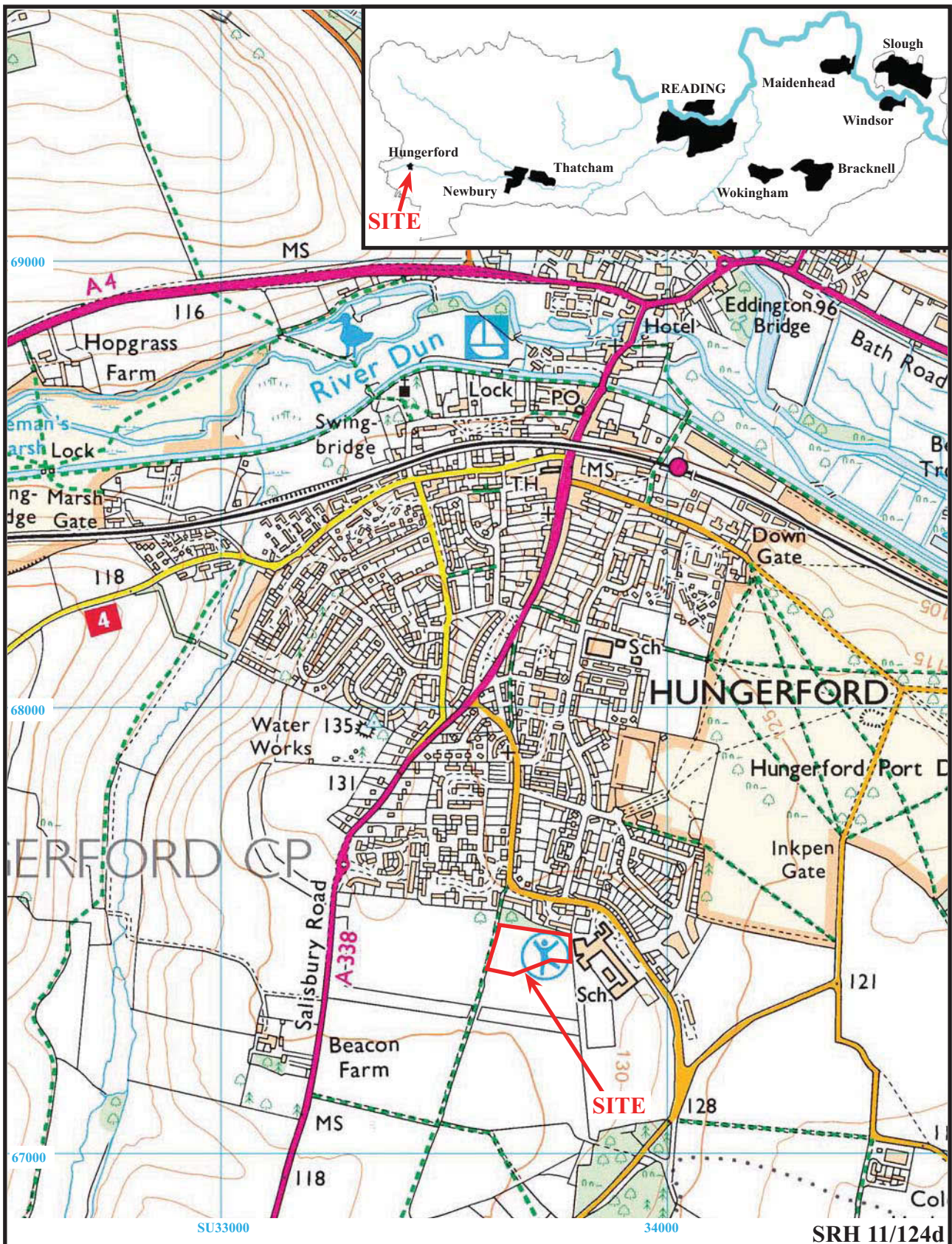
Appendix 2: Features

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fills</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Charcoal</i>
13	1	52	Pit	Early Neolithic	Pottery	1	X

X- present; XX- some; XXX abundant

Appendix 3: Catalogue of struck flint

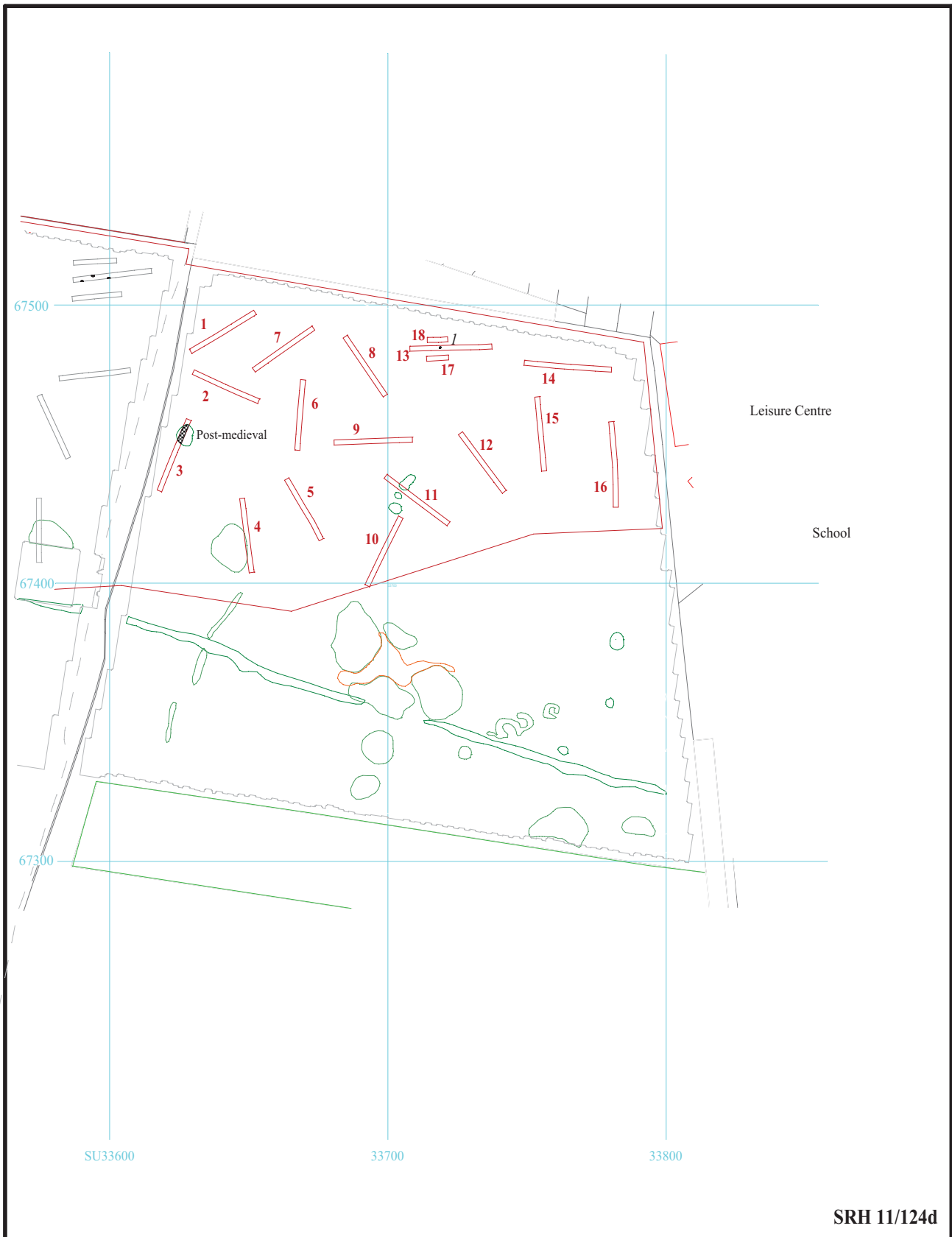
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Intact Flake</i>	<i>Broken flake</i>	<i>Core</i>	<i>Other</i>
1				1		
4			1	1	1	
5			1			
7				2	1	Scraper
13	1	53	1			
14			1	1		Serrated flake?



**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
West Berkshire, 2020**
Archaeological Evaluation- East Site
 Figure 1. Location of site within Hungerford and
 West Berkshire.

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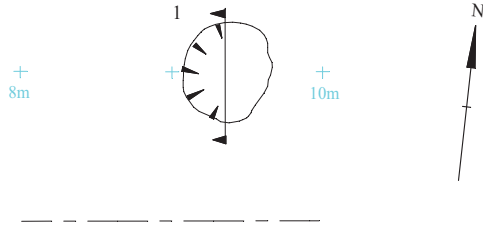
**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
West Berkshire, 2020
Archaeological Evaluation- East Site**

Figure 2. Location of trenches and features, compared to geophysical survey.



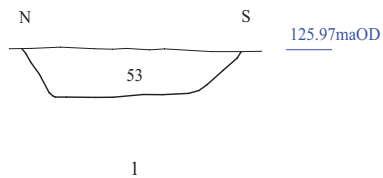
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Trench 13



0 5m

Trench 13



0 1m

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Figure 3. Details of Trench 13 and pit 1



Plate 1. Trench 3, looking North East, Scales: horizontal 1m x 2, vertical 0.2m.



Plate 2. Trench 5, looking North, Scales: horizontal 1m x 2, vertical 0.2m.

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**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
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Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 9, looking East, Scales: 1m x 2, vertical 0.2m.



Plate 4. Trench 13, looking East, Scales: horizontal 1m x 2, vertical 0.2m.

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**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 17, looking East, Scales: horizontal 1m,x 2 vertical 0.2m.



Plate 6. Trench 13, pit 1, looking East, Scales: 0.2m and 0.1m.

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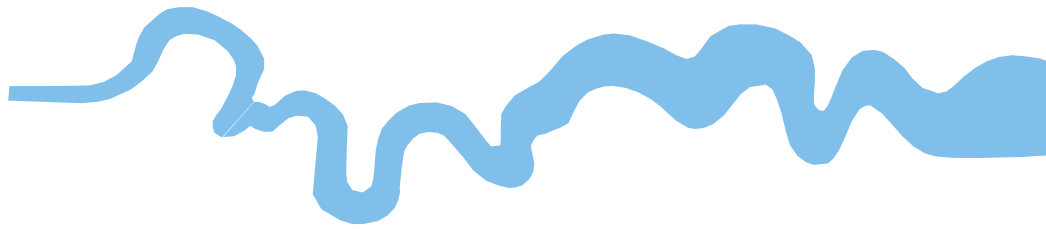
**Land off Salisbury Road, Hungerford,
West Berkshire, 2020
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 5 and 6.**

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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, Wellingborough
and Ennis (Ireland)***