

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New Team Buildings, Bearwood Park, Mole Road,
Sindlesham, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Will Attard

Site Code: BPS14/121

(SU 7693 6874)

First Team Buildings, Bearwood Park, Mole Lane, Sindlesham, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Reading Football Club Ltd**

by Will Attard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BPS 14/121

March 2020

Summary

Site name: New Team Buildings, Bearwood Park, Mole Road, Sindlesham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7697 6878

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 11th March - 22nd May 2019

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisors: Josh Hargreaves, Pierre Manisse, David Sanchez, Tom Stewart and Andy Taylor

Site code: BPS14/121

Summary of results: Monitoring of groundworks revealed the foundations and below-ground structures of the former country house complex. However, no deposits nor artefacts pre-dating the 19th century were observed during this watching brief.

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

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	Steve Preston✓ 16.03.20

First Team Building, Bearwood, Mole Road, Sindlesham, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Will Attard

Report 14/121d

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Bearwood Park, Mole Road, Sindlesham, Berkshire (SU 7697 6878) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Martin Sykes of Thornbridge Group on behalf of Reading Football Club Ltd, Madejski Stadium, Reading, RG2 0FL.

Planning consent (F2014/2119) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site of the former Bearwood Riding Centre (SU 7693 6874), to comprise new buildings, conversion of existing buildings and the construction of several outdoor sports pitches. Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features the consent was subject to a condition requiring that a programme of archaeological investigation be carried out. Previous work on the overall site included evaluation trenching and an open area excavation in areas to the north (Fig. 2). This report details a watching brief required in the southern portion of the overall site, where it was felt the archaeological potential was likely to be lower.

All archaeological work was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Josh Hargreaves, Pierre-Damien Manisse, David Sanchez, Thomas Stewart and Andy Taylor between 11th March and 22nd May 2019 and the site code was BPS14/121. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading, and will be deposited with a local museum willing to accept archive material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the site of the former Bearwood Riding Centre, Mole Lane, Sindlesham, Berkshire, just over a kilometre south-west of the estate village of Sindlesham, and 1.25km south of the M4. The River Loddon runs 1.7km to the west. The archaeological watching brief reported here was focused on an area formerly occupied by greenhouses (centred on NGR: SU 7967 6878). The underlying geology is recorded as London Clay (BGS 1946). This is consistent with deposits observed during this phase of work. The site lies at approximately

50m above Ordnance Datum, sloping up slightly towards the south and east towards the western edge of Bearwood Lake.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted in an archaeological desktop study (Preston 2014, revised 2017) which accompanied the planning application, deriving the overall potential from the site's large size and location within the moderately archaeologically productive East Berkshire landscape. The most significant archaeological finds in the local area are Bronze Age burials and a large Iron Age iron production site to the east at Sadler's Lane (Lewis *et al.* 2013), and an extensive cropmark complex to the west, assumed to be a settlement of Iron Age or Roman date (Gates 1975, map 14). More recent archaeological work to the north at Hatch Farm, Winnersh has revealed Middle Iron Age and Roman occupation (McNicoll-Norbury and Ford 2017).

Within the wider overall development site at Bearwood Park, evaluation trenching (Taylor 2015) and subsequent archaeological excavation (Taylor 2018) revealed a modest number of archaeological features dating from the Bronze Age through to the Roman period. Neither of these elements of the archaeological programme extended as far south as the area covered in this report. Several of the estate buildings are listed, and the park itself is registered.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of this watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks associated with the demolition and removal of existing structures, as well as works for the new development. This involved monitoring grubbing out of existing foundations and areas of hard standing, excavation of foundation trenches and other intrusive groundworks such as the excavation of service trenches and overburden removal. Three new buildings were originally planned, but the client decided not to proceed with construction of the third, which would have been located to the south of the new Academy Building (Fig. 3).

Results

First Team Building

Overburden was removed from the footprint of the planned First Team Building, which was to occupy the area immediately to the north and partially overlying the site of the demolished greenhouses (Fig 3; Pls1-5). Following overburden removal, the excavations of eight footings within the building's footprint were monitored. Two deposits of made ground overlying the clay natural geology, were encountered in this area. The uppermost deposit of dark brown grey clay made ground, which contained frequent pieces of modern brick and tile, and measured 0.20m thick. Below this was a light brown grey made ground deposit, consisting of frequent pieces of modern or Victorian brick and tile, which measured 0.25m thick, and directly overlay the natural London Clay. The eight footings were located at the north-west end of the building's footprint, and ranged in depth from 1.0m-1.50m, with the remainder of this depth entirely within the London Clay.

Where the proposed southern wing of the First Team Building overlies the site of the demolished greenhouses, the remaining brick foundations were to be grubbed out (Pl. 6). Monitoring of this work revealed the same two layers of post-medieval made ground overlying natural clay. A metal pipe, presumably broadly contemporary with the construction of the greenhouses, was observed, and is of the same type as a pipe encountered in the under-floor arches (see below). The natural geology was present from a depth of 0.50m onwards, and the foundations were observed to a depth of *c.*0.95-1.15m.

Academy Building

Overburden removal along the northern edge of the footprint of the proposed Academy Building adjacent to the wall of the former walled garden revealed a series of brick-built low vaulted tunnels, representing the remains of an underground heating system dug directly into the natural clay (Pls. 8-12), capped by a brick floor surface (Pl. 7; Fig. 3). This latter feature was traced over an area *c.* 9m wide and slightly greater in length. The floor lay parallel to the extant stables. There had been a long brick built lean to building against the walled garden wall. Amongst the many improvements on the estate carried out by the second John Walter in the 1860s–70s was a system of underground heating for the gardens. The greenhouse area north of the stables was labelled 'nursery' on historic maps and could have been one of the heated garden areas. It was not known that this extended south into this area, although this has been shown to be the case. A formal garden is shown immediately south of the stables on the 1871 Ordnance Survey First Edition map (Preston 2017, fig. 9) and later. A metal pipe observed along the length of the base of the cellar structure underneath the former greenhouses may also be related to

heating. It is of the same type as that observed during removal of the greenhouse foundations. The investment required to provide underground heating for the fruit and vegetable gardens would have been negligible compared to that required to flood the valley for the lakes, and the use of tunnelling for that was also suggested in the desk-based assessment (Preston 2014; 2017).

The remainder of the footprint of the Academy Building was stripped of overburden to a depth of 0.25m, revealing the upper, dark grey brown clay made ground observed across the site.

Finds

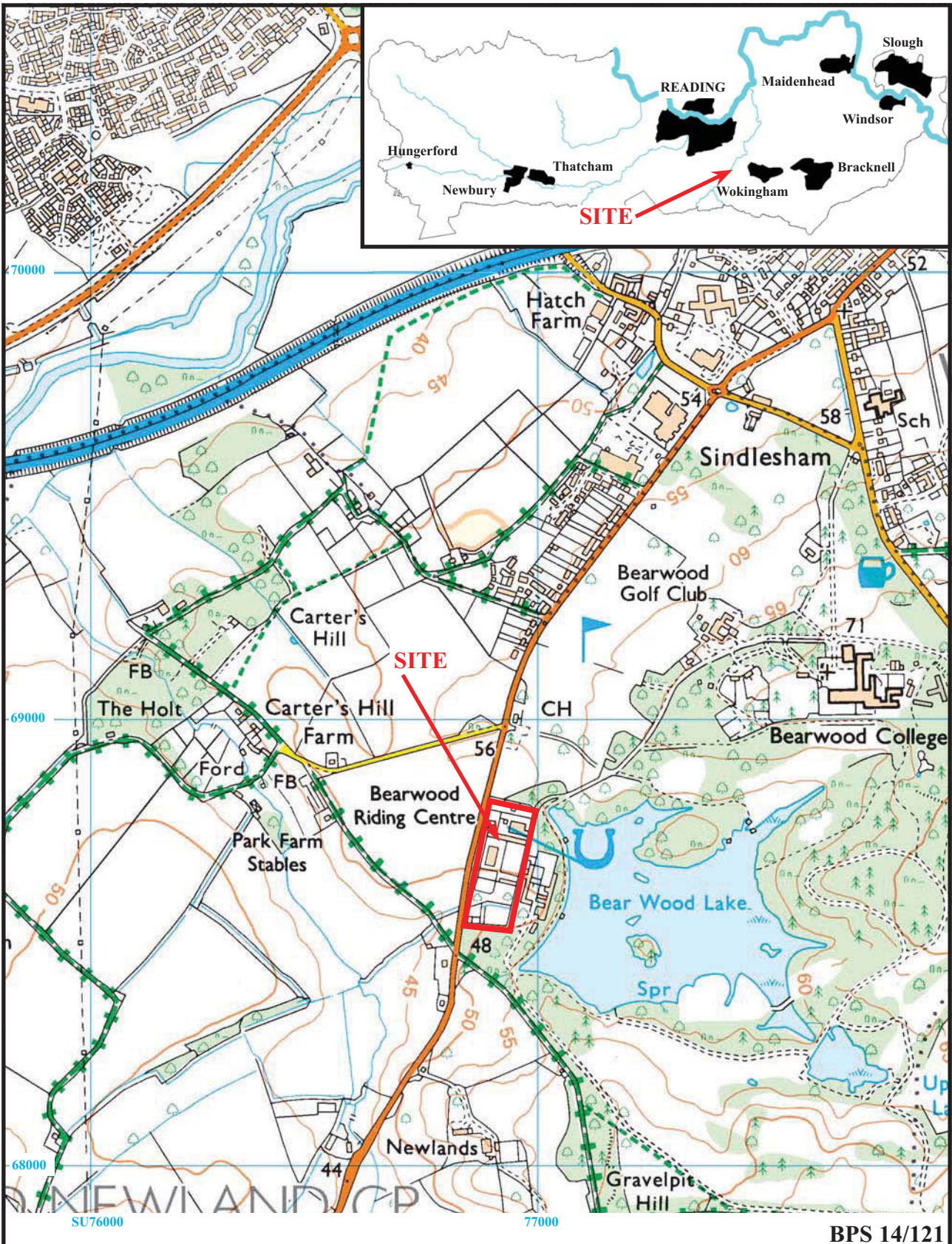
The only finds encountered were late Post-Medieval and modern building material, none of which were retained.

Conclusion

The site appears to have been first occupied only during late post-Medieval/Victorian times. The made ground deposits observed were Victorian or later in date, as are the brick-built under-floor arches and greenhouses. No preserved archaeological features or horizons of interest pre-dating the 19th century were encountered during monitoring of groundworks, nor were any finds of archaeological interest recovered.

References

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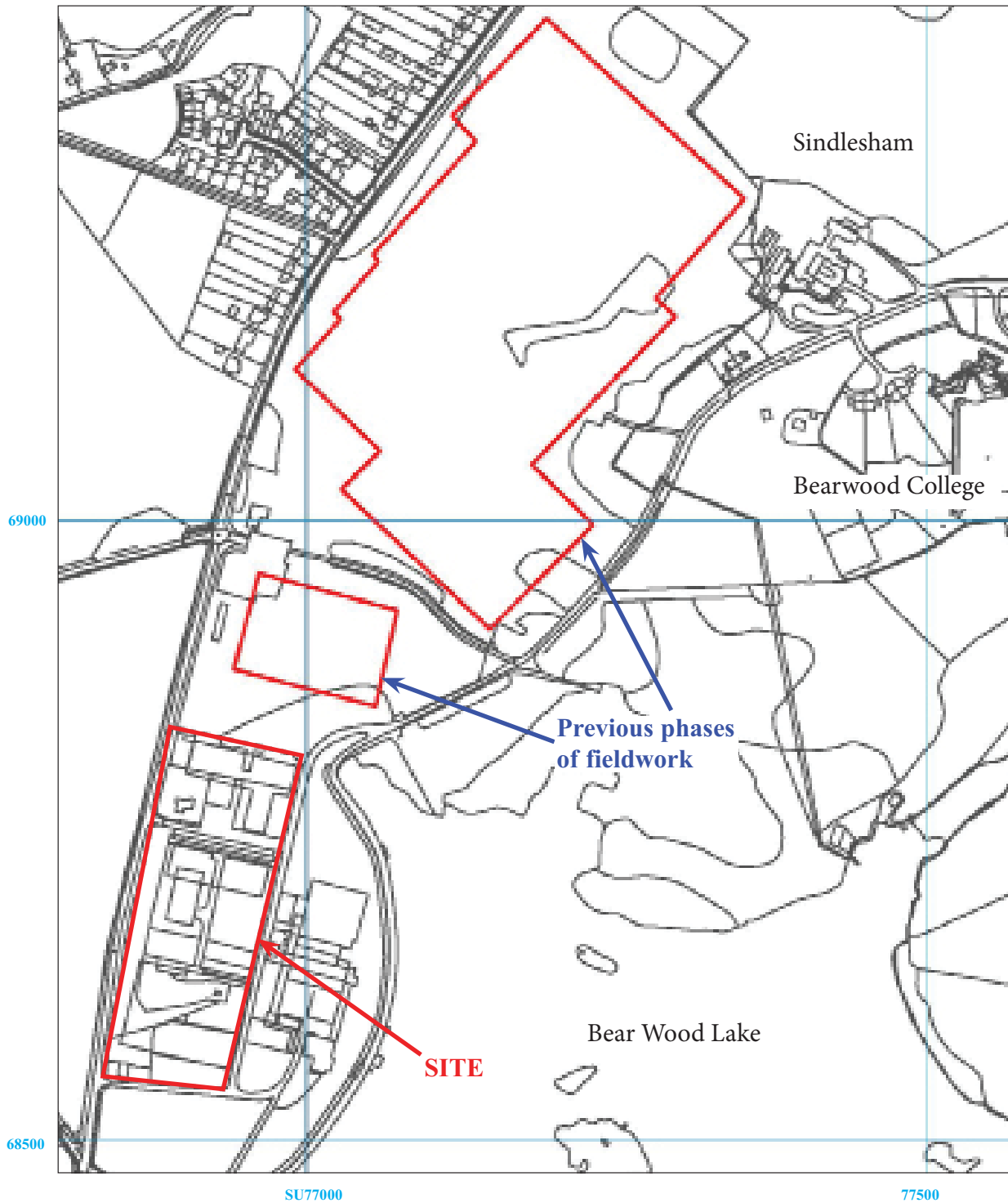
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Figure 1. Location of site within Sindlesham and Berkshire.

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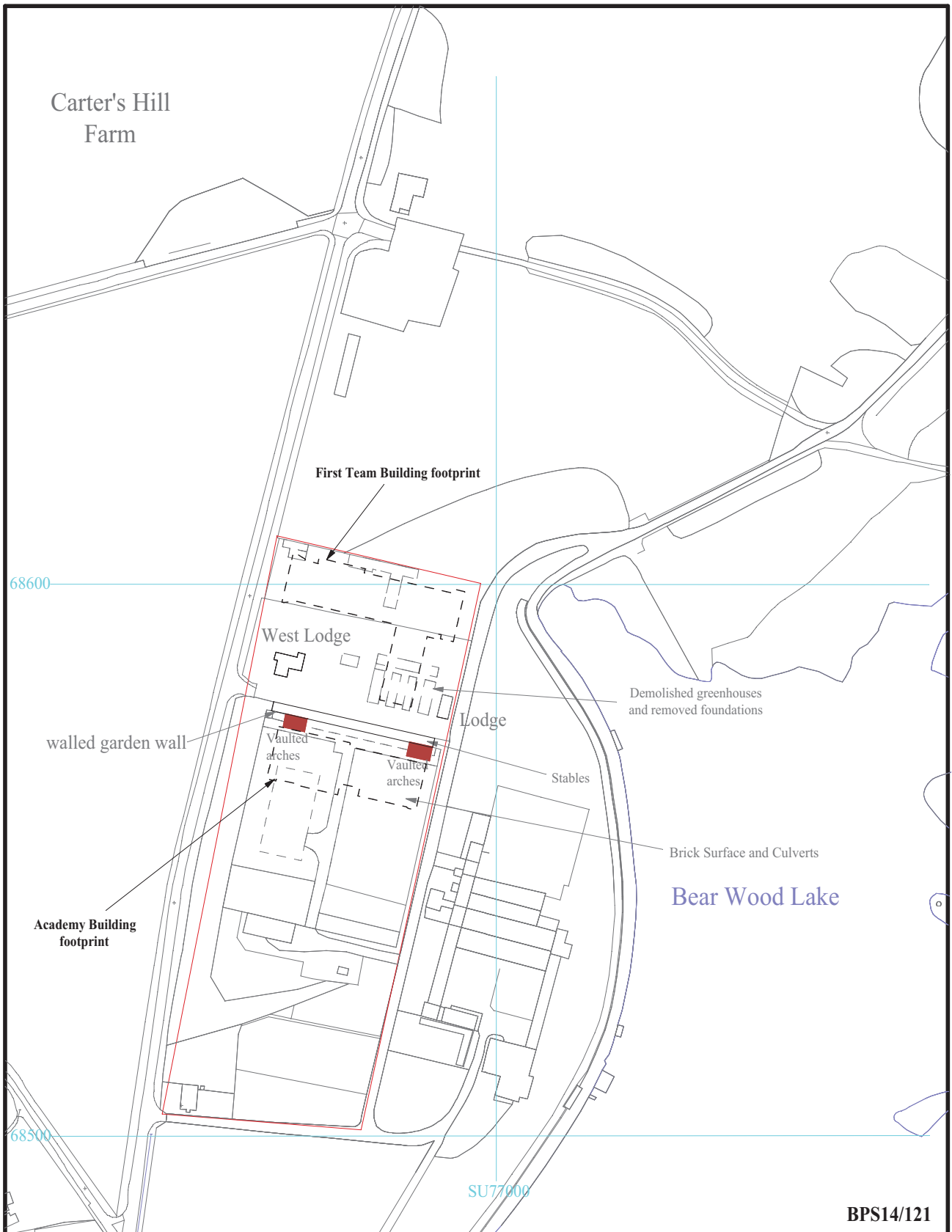
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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Figure 3. Site plan showing area monitors and demolished buildings



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Plate 1. Area strip for First Team Building. Site of former greenhouses, looking west



Plate 2. Area strip for First Team Building, looking north, Scales: 0.50 and 0.30m



Plate 3. Typical footing within former greenhouses, looking west, Scales: 0.50 and 0.30m



Plate 4. Footing at the west end of the footprint of the First Team Building, looking west



Plate 5. Area strip of First Team Building NE corner, looking NE, Scales 0.50m and 0.30m



Plate 6. Area strip of First Team Building showing former greenhouse foundations, looking SE

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Plates 1 to 6**

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Plate 7. Area strip within former walled garden, looking SE



Plate 8. Vaults during exposure, NE corner of the Academy building footprint, looking South



Plate 9. Area of vaults, looking East. Ceramic pipe visible along the section.



Plate 10. Segment of vaults, looking north-north-east, situated at the western end of the proposed academy building's footprint.



Plate 11. Close up of vault, looking north north-east, showing in-situ ceramic pipework
Scales: 2 x 1m



Plate 12. Interior of vault with in-situ pipework, looking north

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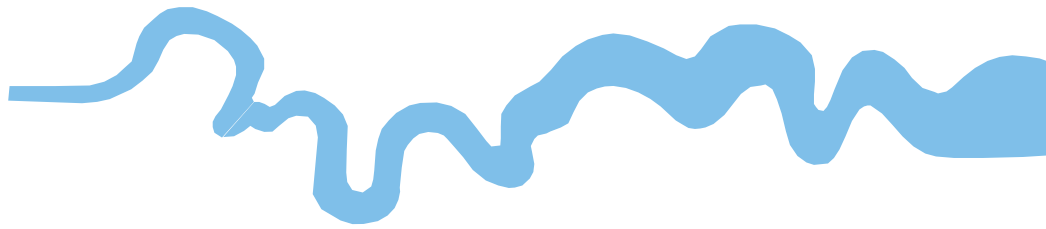
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TIME CHART

	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)***