

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Rear of 112-126 Southampton Street,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Site Code: SSR1777

(SU 7170 7274)

**Rear of 112-126 Southampton Street,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Euro Link Property Services**

by Aidan Colyer

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SSR17/77

November 2020

Summary

Site name: Rear of 112-126 Southampton Street, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7170 7274

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 16th November 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Aidan Colyer

Site code: SSR 17/77

Area of site: c. 825 sq. m.

Summary of results: The site was found to have been considerably raised up by modern made ground to form its recent use as a car park. The made ground directly overlay the natural geology and several modern truncations of the latter were observed.

A single ditch terminal or pit was uncovered in Trench 2 dated by bricks which might date from as early as the 15th century. No other finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were observed and the site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 24.11.20 Steve Preston ✓ 23.11.20

Rear of 112-126 Southampton Street, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Report 17/77

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the rear of 112-126 Southampton Street, Reading, Berks, RG1 2QX (SU 7170 7274) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Lucett Lample of the Keen Partnership, The Courtyard, Edinburgh Road, Reading, RG30 2UA, on behalf of Euro Link Property Services, 9 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5BJ.

Planning consent (150517) has been gained from Reading Borough Council for the demolition of existing garages and the construction of three new houses. The consent is subject to a condition (4) requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. The archaeological potential for the site was highlighted in a briefing document produced by Ms Ellie Leary (formerly) of Berkshire Archaeology and an archaeological evaluation has been requested to fulfil this condition.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 141), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the Borough as advised by Ms Leary. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aidan Colyer and Elspeth St John-Brooks on 16th November 2020 and the site code is SSR17/77. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site covers c.825 sq. m, located to the rear of Southampton Street on the margins of the centre of Reading (Fig. 1) on sloping ground forming the side of the Kennet Valley. The underlying geology of the site is mapped as Lambeth Group clay and sand with sand beds (BGS 2000). The geology observed on site was clayey sand with large quantities of gravel. The site lies near the edge of the mapped geology and as such this may well be an area of Thatcham gravel from the Kennet river terrace deposits. The site is at c. 49m above Ordnance Datum although it has been built up and levelled off to create a car park and garages at this height and has retaining walls to the North and East of the site (Fig. 2).

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological potential stems from its location on the edge of the historic (medieval) core of Reading (Astill 1978; Preston 2005). The town originates in late Saxon times with a focus thought to be around St. Mary's church in the town centre. A suburb of the town extended as far as St Gile's Church, 200m to the north and the site is also enclosed by the 17th-century Civil War defences. Multiple archaeological investigations have taken place in the surrounding area including several on London Street which produced medieval and post-medieval archaeological evidence, and also, more recently, on Silver Street to the east where medieval tile kilns and other occupation remains were excavated (Sanchez 2020).

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 this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any medieval or early post-medieval deposits are present; and
- to collect information with which to prepare a mitigation strategy if necessary.

Two trenches were to be dug, each 10m long and 1.6m wide with a contingency of 10m of trench should it be needed to clarify the initial findings. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed by a JCB type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably exposed the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above.

Results

Due to demolition and preparatory groundworks on the site, and due to the size of the area, both trenches had to be repositioned to accommodate the machine and allow for safe access. (Fig. 3).

Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 1 and 2)

The location of Trench 1 was altered due to a number of constraints present on the north end of the site and a significant depth of modern made ground. The groundworkers had removed some of the made ground before the evaluation trench was dug. Their existing excavation stopped at c.1.2m above the natural geology, which lay at up to 3.8m down from the existing Tarmac. The exposed made ground was the same as the Victorian and modern made ground observed in trench 2, however, due to the depth of the excavations no true section was observed. The natural geology at the base was truncated and filled by Victorian made ground and a modern soakaway in the centre of the site. The geology observed was mid brownish orange clayey sand with frequent small and medium gravel throughout.

Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 3 and 4)

Trench 2 was shifted to the north and west along the site but was dug close to the proposed location. Trench 2 was aligned W - E and was 10.3m long, 1.9m wide, and 2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of crushed rubble made ground, above 0.3m of brick wall footings and infill, over 0.35m of redeposited dark topsoil with pipes and rubble throughout, 0.45m of redeposited natural and subsoil made ground with occasional brick, above 0.7m of made ground mixed natural and subsoil overlying natural sandy gravel geology. From all of these layers came stray brick rubble and sherds of blue and white ('china') pottery that were retained on site. Underneath this final mixed layer a slope of natural gravel/clay was exposed. It is unclear how much if any truncation of the natural geology has taken place.

At 4.4m from the west end of the trench, north-south ditch 1 was recorded. Ditch terminus 1 had steep sides and a concave base with a width of 1m at the top and depth of 0.6m. The two fills (50 and 51) were of a similar clayey sand with some gravel composition although the lower fill was darker. Ceramic building material was recovered from both fills and hints at intentional backfilling of at least the top layer of the ditch. The bricks that were recovered put this date as c. 15th century.

Finds

Ceramic building material by Aidan Colyer

Seven pieces of brick were recovered from terminus 1 in both fills (50 and 51) and weighed a total of 4832g. All pieces of brick are of the same type, dimensions and composition. None of the pieces were complete therefore full measurements of length were not obtained, but the average width of the bricks is 115mm and the height is

45mm. These handmade bricks can be roughly dated to from around the 15th century, but they do not have any associated pottery or other identifiable finds to give a more accurate date.

Conclusion

The depth of the made ground on the site showed extensive management of the slope in the area from at least the Victorian period, and probably earlier. The lower layers of made ground lay directly over the natural geology and were composed of natural geology and subsoil mixed together. Several areas of truncation of the natural geology were observed.

A single terminal of a ditch or elongated pit was the only deposit of possible archaeological interest revealed. It only contained bricks which might date from as early as the 15th century, but as often with bricks and tile, they may have been reused on several occasions after manufacture. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

References

- Astill, G G, 1978, *Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Publ 2 Reading
- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet **268**, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London
- Preston, S (ed), 2005, *Reading and Windsor: Old and New. Excavations 1995–2002*, TVAS Monogr 7, Reading
- Sanchez, D, 2020, *A medieval Tillery and Occupation at 40-68 Silver Street, Reading, Berkshire*, TVAS Monogr 39, Reading

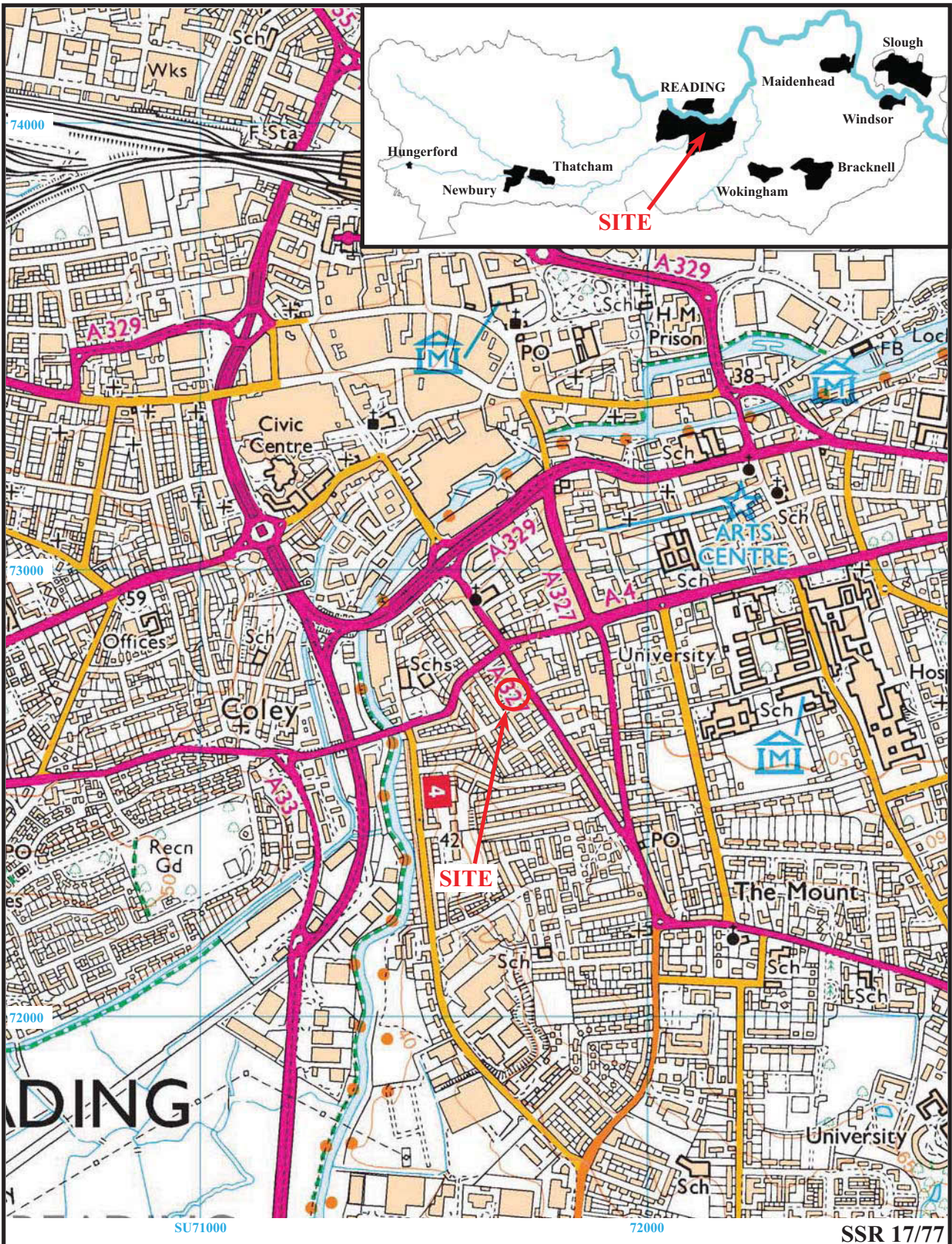
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at W or SW end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	10	2	1.2-3.8	0-3.8m mixed made ground, 3.8m+ mid orange brown clayey sand with frequent small and medium gravels natural geology. [Pls 1 and 2]
2	10.3	1.9	2	0-0.2m crush, 0.2-0.5m Brick wall and infill, 0.5-0.85m redeposited topsoil, 0.85-1.3m mixed subsoil and natural made ground, 1.3-2m mixed subsoil and natural made ground, 2m+ mid orange brown clayey sand with copious small to medium gravel and pea-grit. Ditch 1. [Pls 3 and 4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	50, 51	Ditch terminus	c.15th century or later	Brick

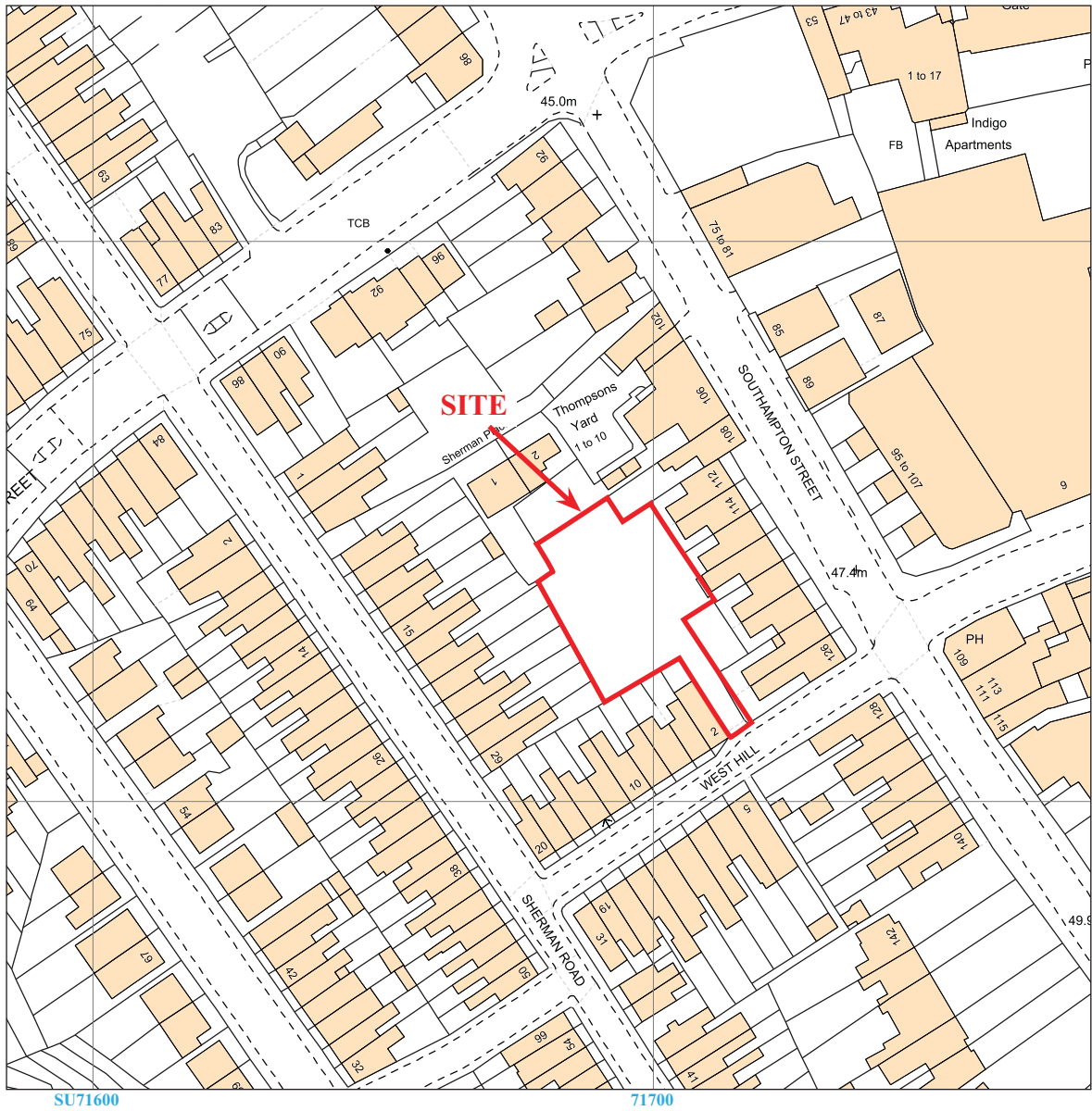


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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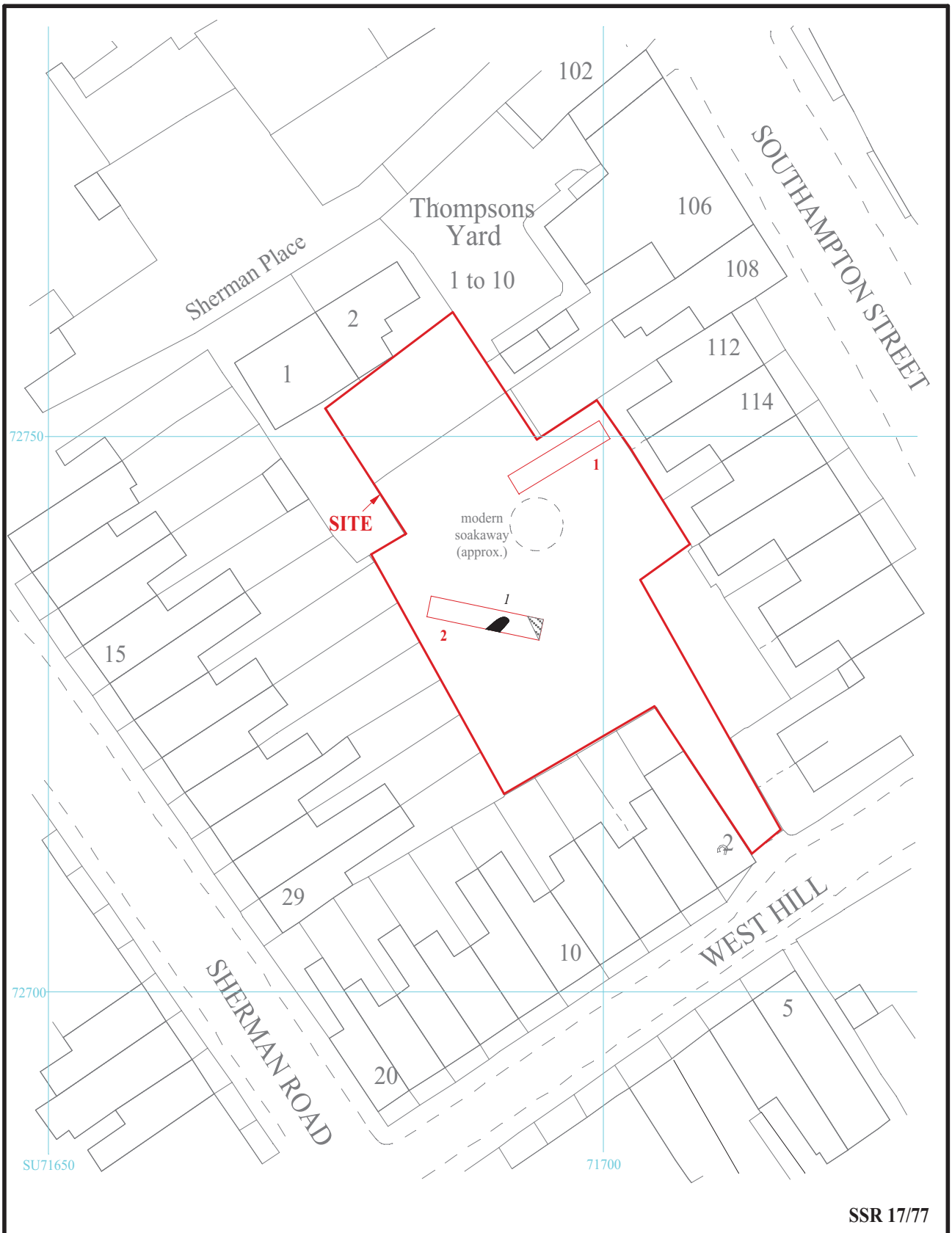


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**Rear of 112-126 Southampton Street,
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site to the rear of
Southampton Street.
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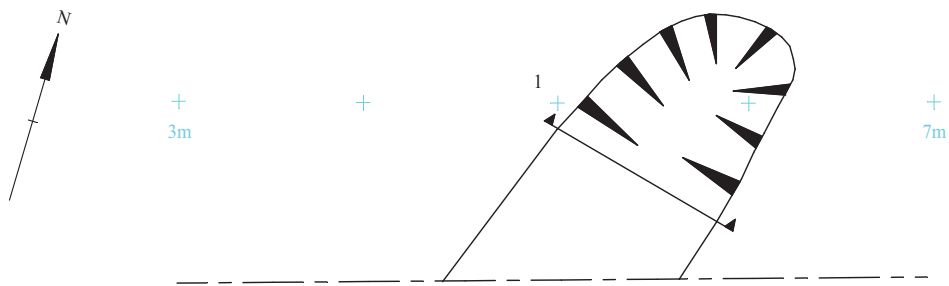


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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



Trench 2



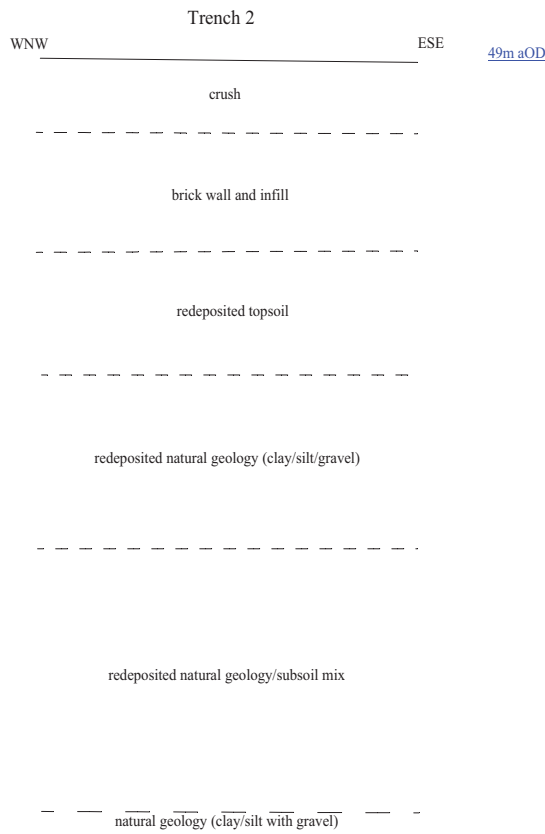
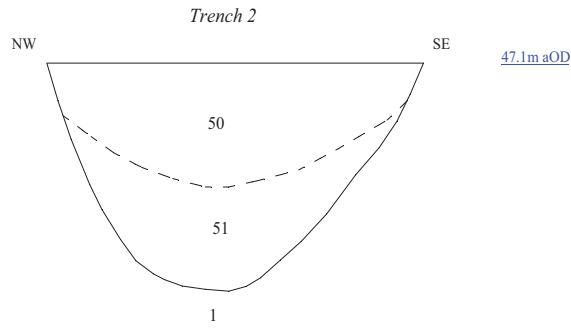
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Figure 4. Detail of Trench 2.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south, Scales: 2m, 1m, and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 1, looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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**Rear of 112-126 Southampton street,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 2, looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m, and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 2, ditch 1, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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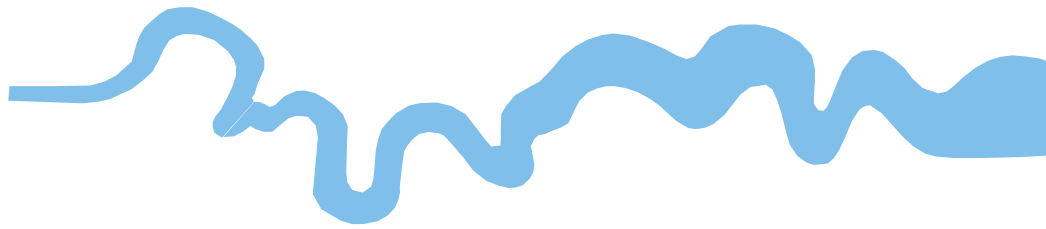
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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





**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
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