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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway,
Riseley, Wokingham, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Jamie Williams

Site Code: MCR20/69

(SU 7349 6325)

Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway, Riseley, Wokingham, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Mr & Mrs Walters

by Jamie Williams

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MCR 20/69

March 2021

Summary

Site name: Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway, Riseley, Wokingham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7349 6325

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th – 9th December 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Elspeth St John-Brooks and Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site code: MCR 20/69

Summary of results: The watching brief at Mistletoe Cottage successfully monitored the groundworks associated with the new development on the site. Despite the rich archaeological landscape surrounding the site, no archaeological finds or features were observed.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

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	Steve Preston ✓ 03.03.21

Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway, Riseley, Wokingham, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Jamie Williams

Report 20/69

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway, Riseley, Wokingham, Berkshire (SU 7349 6325) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Emily Temple of ET Planning, 200 Dukes Ride, Crowthorne, RG45 6DS, on behalf of Mr & Mrs Walters, Sunnybank, 18 Exeter Road, Swanage, Dorset, BH19 2BL.

Planning consent (app 191963) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the demolition of the existing building and garage and replacement with a new dwelling and outbuilding. The consent is subject to a condition (6) which requires a programme of archaeological work to be carried out. A watching brief was requested to be carried out during groundworks due to the potential for below-ground archaeological deposits to have survived on the site. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the Borough's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, former Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Elspeth St John-Brooks and Pierre-Damien Manisse between 7th and 9th December 2020 and the site code is MCR 20/69.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a rectangular parcel of land south-east of the village of Swallowfield and east of Riseley Village (Fig. 1). The site lies just north of 'The Devil's Highway' Roman road, east of its junction with School Lane (Fig. 2). The site consisted of grass and the footprint of the old dwelling which was demolished before arrival. The underlying geology was mapped as Third River Terrace Deposits (Sand and Gravel) (BGS 2000). Geology observed in these trenches consisted of a yellow-orange clay sand. The site lies at about 48m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site stems from its position next to the Devil's Highway, a Roman road connecting London and Silchester, and close to numerous cropmarks seen in the aerial photographs in the 1970s (Gates 1975). To the west, fieldwalking has revealed an extensive Roman settlement adjacent to the Roman road (Ford 1997). Investigation into some of the cropmarks has identified a Bronze Age ring ditch and two Iron Age enclosures north of Riseley Farm (Lobb and Morris 1993). West of the present site, a recent excavation revealed three phases of Iron Age activity, including small scale iron smelting in the Late Iron Age, and a few features of Roman date (Taylor 2019). The Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record also records finds of Mesolithic flints, a prehistoric quern stone and various Roman artefacts from the surrounding area. The cottage which was to be demolished on the site may have had origins in the 18th century, but little of that period was thought to survive and the main fabric was probably mid- to late 19th century.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved the archaeological monitoring of areas of intrusive groundworks, specifically those associated with the demolition and removal of existing structures as well as those for the new development.

All significant ground reduction was to be carried out using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

Results

The watching brief was carried out as intended and the site was visited in the beginning of December 2020, after the previous cottage had been demolished. All the footings were observed (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 2), with the majority of the trenches placed into grass, and the rest being placed into the footprint of the previous dwelling. Natural geology, a yellow-orange clay sand, was observed in all trenches. The stratigraphy (Fig. 4; Pls 3 and 4) consisted of 0.2m topsoil, 0.15m subsoil over natural geology for the areas on the grass, with the trenches into the previous footprint revealing undulating rubble deposits related to the house directly above natural geology, with no subsoil in this area. No archaeological finds or features were present.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered.

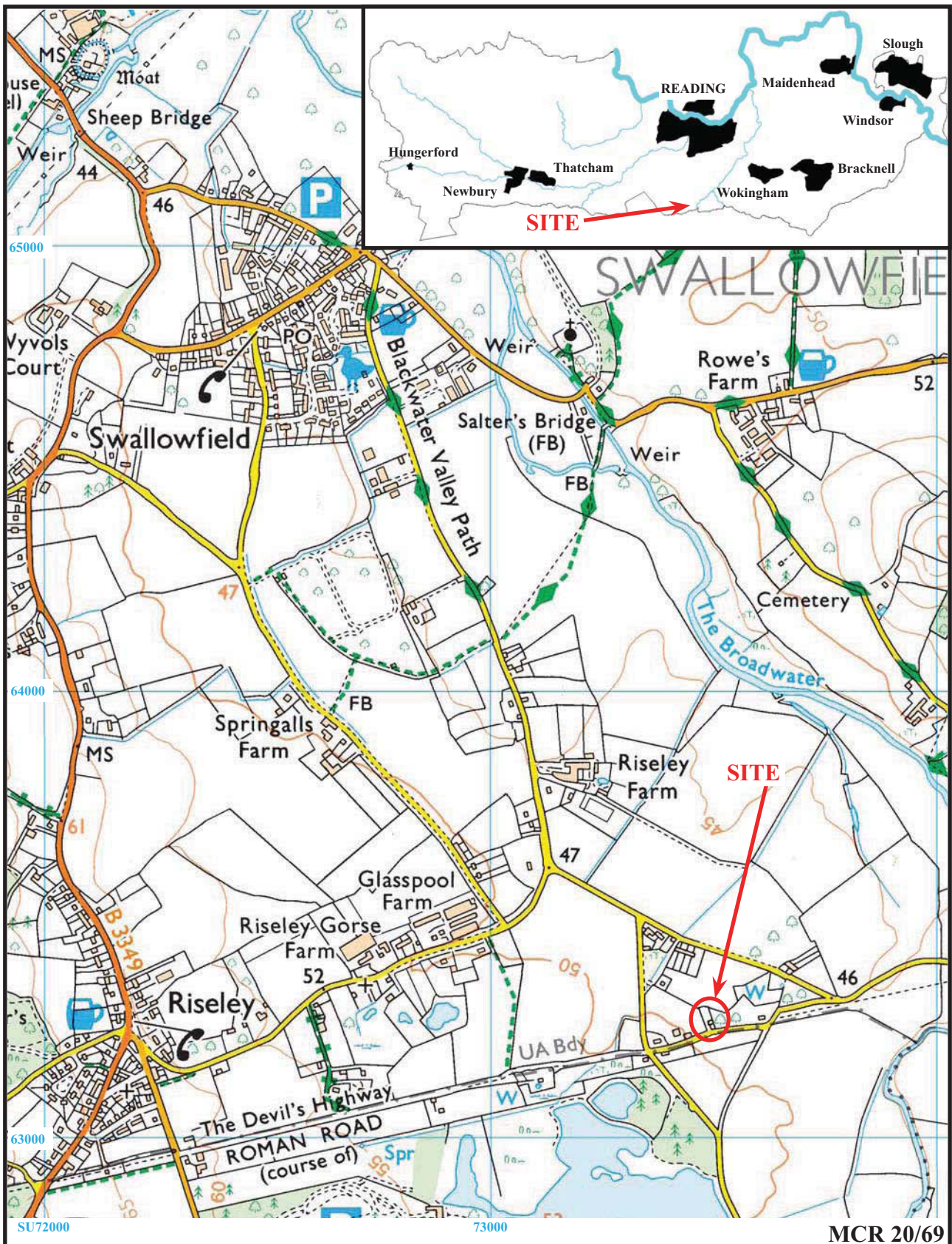
Conclusion

The watching brief was carried out as required and successfully monitored the groundworks for the new development. Natural geology was observed in all trenches, which were dug under constant archaeological supervision. Rubble relating to the recently demolished 18th-century cottage was observed in the trenches crossing its footprint, with the natural geology not being affected to a significant depth in this area.

Despite the high archaeological potential of the site - based on cropmarks, its proximity to the Roman road (The Devil's Highway), and Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement nearby - no archaeological finds or features were observed.

References

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- Ford, S, 1997, 'Loddon Valley (Berkshire) fieldwalking survey', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **75**, (for 1994–7), 11–33
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- Lobb, S J and Morris, E L, 1993, 'Investigation of Bronze Age and Iron Age features at Riseley Farm, Swallowfield', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **74** (for 1991–3), 37–68 (and fiche)
- NPPF, 2019, *National Planning Policy Framework* (revised), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
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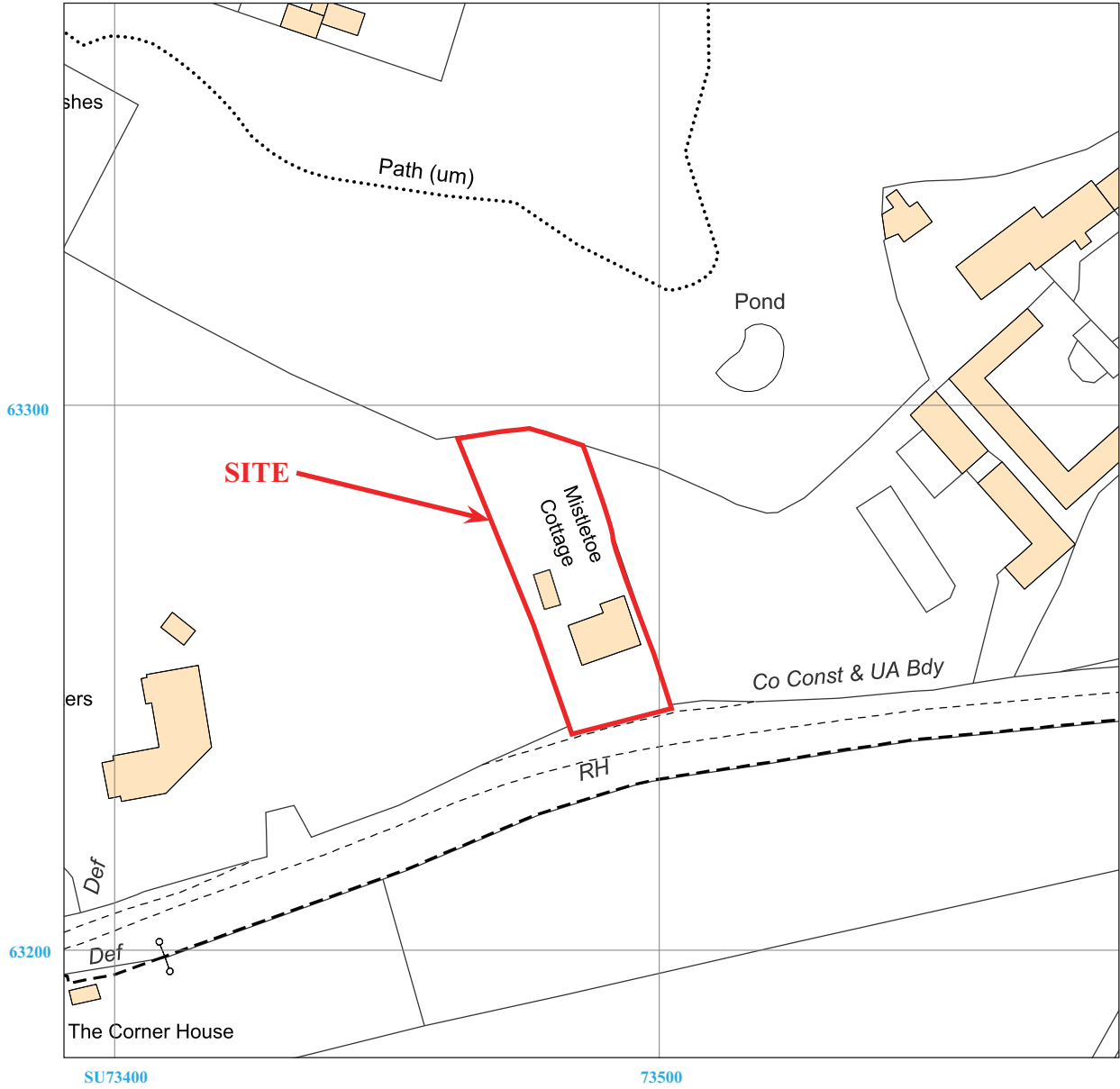


**Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway,
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Figure 1. Location of site within Riseley and Berkshire.

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Archaeological Desk-based Assessment
 Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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WSW ENE 48.5maOD

Topsoil/rubble (Dark brown grey silty sand with roots)

Yellow orange clay sand (natural geology)

WSW ENE 48.5maOD

Topsoil (Dark brown grey silty sand with roots)

Subsoil (Dark grey brown silty sand)

Yellow orange clay sand (natural geology)

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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. View over excavated footings, looking South East.



Plate 2. Excavated footing in progress on garage, looking North West, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. View at base of excavated footings, looking North East,
Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Representative section, looking East, Scales: 1m, and 0.3m.

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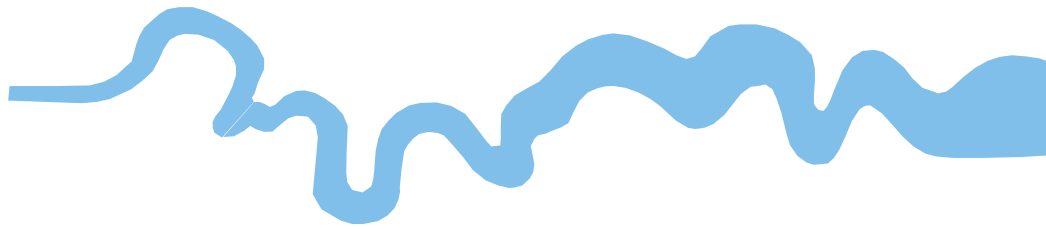
**Mistletoe Cottage, Devil's Highway,
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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





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