

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Weighbridge Site, Land at Wasing Lane,
Aldermaston, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Charlotte Procter

Site Code: WLA11/69

(SU 5858 6570)

Weighbridge Site Land at Wasing Lane, Aldermaston, West Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Marley Eternit and Lafarge Aggregates**

by Charlotte Procter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WLA 11/69

April 2023

Summary

Site name: Weighbridge Site, Land at Wasing Lane, Aldermaston, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5858 6570

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th - 14th July 2016

Project coordinator:

Site supervisor: Luis Esteves

Site code: WLA 11/69

Area of site: 0.86ha

Summary of results: Construction of a weighbridge comprised the digging the stripping of the top soil and subsoil. A single ditch was revealed and a slot dug but no datable finds were identified.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course,

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 14.04.23 Steve Preston✓ 13.04.23

Weighbridge Site, Land at Wasing Lane, Aldermaston, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Charlotte Procter

Report 11/69c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on a weighbridge construction at Land at Wasing Lane, Aldermaston, West Berkshire (SU 5850 6570) (Fig.1) work was commissioned by Andy Richmond, Phoenix Consulting Archaeology Ltd, Studley House, Station Road, Turvey, MK43 8BH, on behalf of Tarmac, T3 Solihull Office, Trinity Park, Bickenhill Lane, Ground Floor, T3, Birmingham, B37 7ES.

Planning consent (12/01220/MINMAJ) has been granted from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new access onto A340 and ancillary buildings including a weighbridge within the land at Wasing Lane. This consent included a condition (15) relating to archaeology requiring a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Alex Godden, (former) Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luis Esteves between 12th July and 14th July 2016 and the site code is WLA 11/69.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the northeast of Wasing and north-west of Aldermaston in West Berkshire. The site is bound by fields (Pl. 1) with a trackway to the south adjoining with Wasing lane to the southwest (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay Formation with alluvium superficial deposits (BGS 2000) and lies at a height of c.56m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The Kennet Valley is an archaeologically rich area, exhibiting finds and features from all periods and it has been extensively studied previously (Gates 1975; Lobb and Rose 1996). Well to the west of the site, the river's head-

waters rise in Wiltshire near the World Heritage complex at Avebury, but closer to the site, the valley floor between Thatcham and Hungerford is particularly well known for its dense Mesolithic evidence (Froom 1971; Hey and Hind 2014). Several important Mesolithic sites within the Kennet valley (and a number of Upper Palaeolithic sites) have been examined, as at Thatcham (Wymer 1962; Healy *et al.* 1992; Ellis *et al.* 2003), Wawcott (Froom 1976) and Avington (Barton and Froom 1986).

Later prehistoric activity is no less intense though, curiously, the earlier Neolithic is under-represented for the lower stretch of the valley, in which the proposal site lies (Ford 2007). Roman activity is more-or-less ubiquitous, with an extensive Roman roadside settlement recorded to the west at Thatcham (Harris 1937; Pine 2010a) and various high status settlements such as at Aldermaston Wharf to the north-east (Cowell *et al.* 1978). Saxon settlement, as for many regions, is little known archaeologically but Thatcham is considered to be an important late Saxon settlement (Pine 2010b) and some early Saxon occupation is recorded as at Ufton Nervet and Brimpton (Manning 1964; Lobb 1990).

The presence of on the valley floor peat and alluvial deposits which span the whole of the post-glacial period has also enabled detailed knowledge of the past environment and its change through time to be determined relative to the archaeological evidence (Keith-Lucas 2002).

Detailed survey information is available for the area as it lay within the study area of the Kennet Valley Survey (Lobb and Rose 1996). This study included systematic fieldwalking of arable farmland and many of the entries in the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record refer to individual or groups of artefactual finds recovered. The area's aerial photographic record has also been intensively studied, as is reflected in the wealth of data from this source in the HER (see below).

The environmental potential for the lowland areas of the Kennet Valley is well documented and it has been found that despite peat-cutting in the area, high quality waterlogged late glacial to early Holocene materials remain in relative proximity to the archaeology (Chisham 2006). The Late glacial period saw high-energy braided river channels depositing thick bodies of calcareous marls in West Berkshire. Subsequent landscape stabilization saw first aspen-birch-pine woodland followed by hazel and oak, elm, lime and alder (Holyoak 1983). Peat formation occurred on the floodplains and low terraces of the Kennet and although significant woodland cover is evident from the early Mesolithic, indications are that a mosaic of small gaps remained at the river margins. There is evidence of small patches of burning of both dry terrace edge and wetland landscapes in the early Mesolithic period at both Thatcham and Woolhampton (Chisham 2006). Alluvial deposits began to

accumulate in Neolithic and continued throughout the Bronze Age (Lobb and Rose 1996), in some areas peat and alluvium continued to develop through the Roman into the Saxon periods.

Within the area surrounding the proposal site features and deposits have been recorded in numerous investigations, dating from a wide range of periods including the later Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and Post-medieval periods with a particularly good representation of the Iron Age and Roman periods.

An evaluation of three large areas surrounding the proposal site to the north, east and west was carried out as a part of the planning consent for the mineral extraction. A total of 277 trenches were excavated uncovering a range of archaeological material dating from the later Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and post-medieval periods. These include a range of features variously representing settlement and landscape features (Weale 2011). The information from these trenches has been included in the Historic Environment Record and summarised on Figure 1 and in Appendix 1.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits or finds affected by the construction work. In general, the watching brief would involve the examination of any areas of ground reduction, excavation for the weighbridge and the digging of trenches for services as necessary. Areas observed consisted of the stripping of the topsoil and subsoil for the construction of the weighbridge (Pl. 2).

Results

A single ditch was revealed and investigated by a single slot which measured *c.*1m long. The feature, was *c.*1.2m wide and .0.25m deep with a shallow bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 3; Pl. 3). No dating evidence was recovered.

Finds

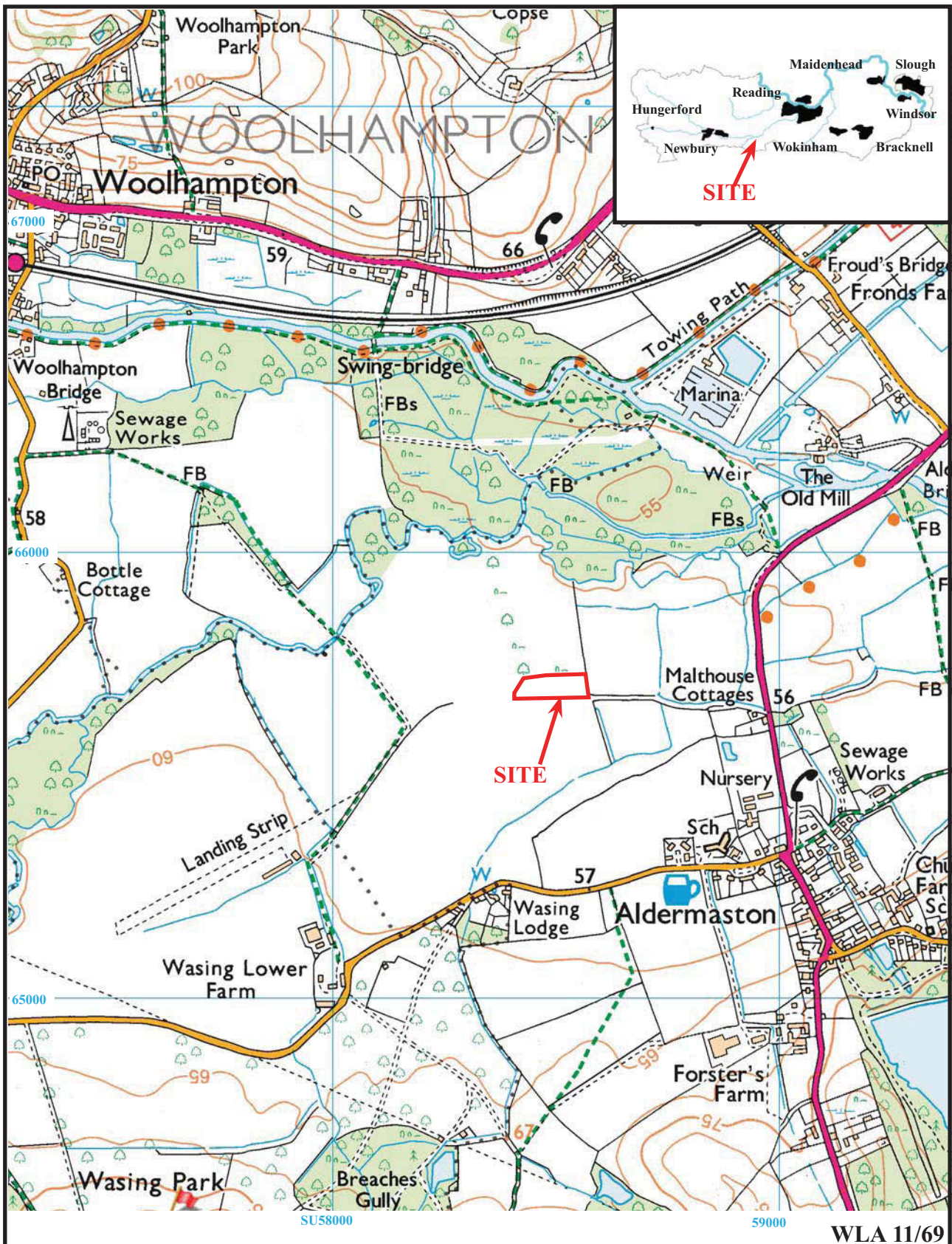
No finds of an archaeological nature were recorded during the watching brief.

Conclusion

The watching brief was carried out as planned, and the area was stripped to the appropriate level revealing a single ditch which extended beyond the area of investigation. A slot was dug of the feature however no datable material was uncounted during the watching brief.

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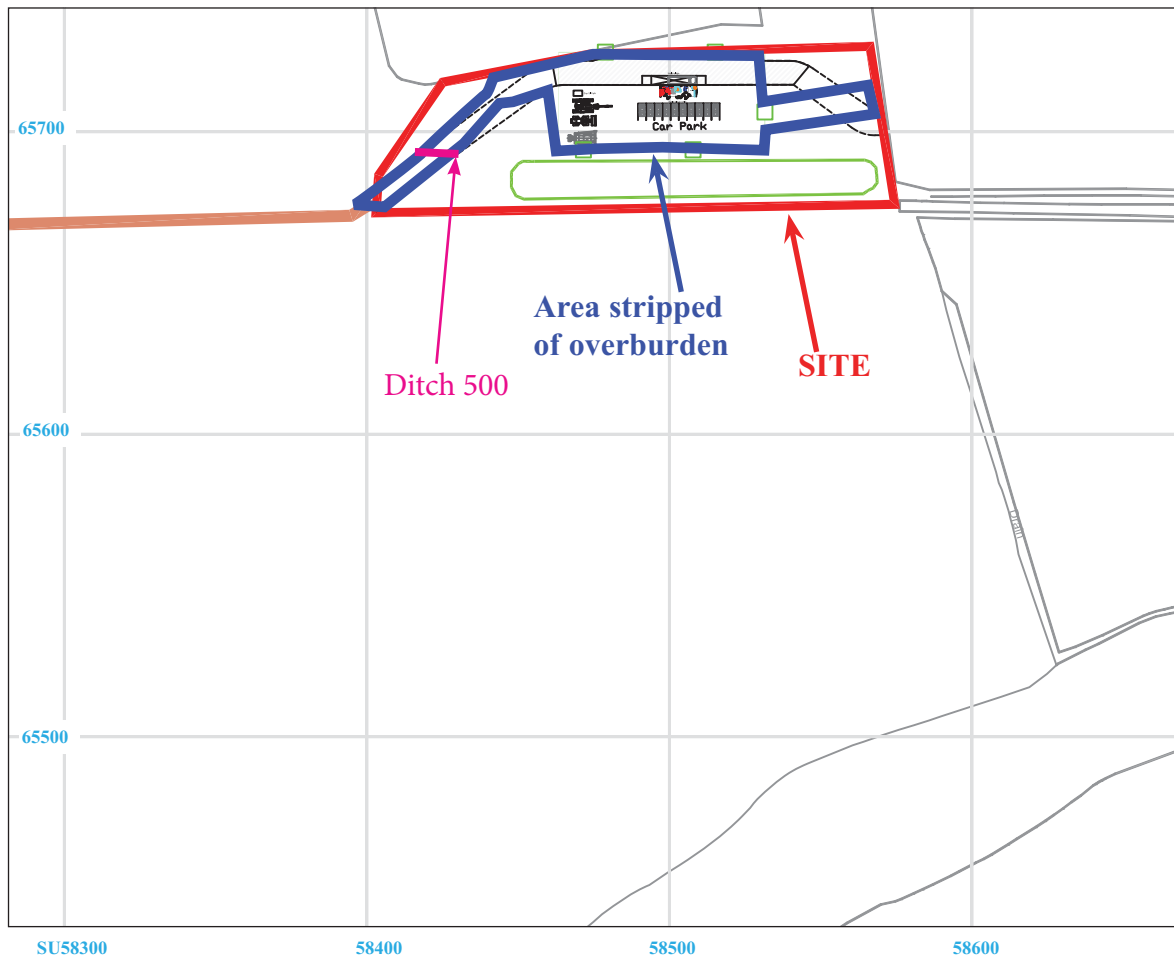
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Figure 1. Location of site within Wasing and Berkshire.

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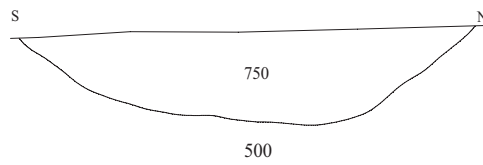


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Figure 2. Detailed location of weighbridge site.

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Figure 3. Section



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Plate 1. Site looking southeast across the proposal site.



Plate 2. Site, looking northeast across the proposal site towards the ditch, Scale: 1m.

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**Weighbridge Site, Land at Wasing Lane,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Ditch slot, looking west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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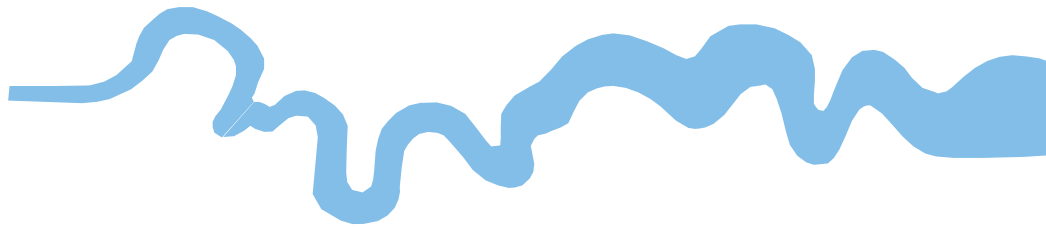
**Weighbridge Site, Land at Wasing Lane,
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Plate 3.**

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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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