

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**40-48 Mount Pleasant,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Beth Tucker

Site Code: MPR23/27

(SU 7192 7259)

40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Jhahanger Zaman**

by Beth Tucker

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MPR 23/27

May 2024

Summary

Site name: 40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7192 7259

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 3rd April - 7th May 2024

Project coordinator: David Sanchez

Site supervisor: Anne-Michelle Huvig

Site code: MPR 23/27

Area of site: 450 sq m

Summary of results: No finds or features of any archaeological interest were recorded at 40-48 Mount Pleasant. Post-Medieval pottery was recovered from some of the made ground layers, however, these deposits were of Victorian date and likely relate to the 19th century building on site. A late 19th century decorative brick was recovered from one of the Victorian made ground deposits.

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

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	Steve Preston ✓ 13.05.24

40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Beth Tucker

Report 23/27

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7192 7259) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jhahanger Zaman c/o 40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, Berkshire

Planning permission (201880/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the construction of six new houses following the demolition of the existing buildings on the site. The permission is subject to a condition (20) which requires an archaeological watching brief to be conducted during the groundworks. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and the Borough's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist at Berkshire Archaeology, the adviser to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Anne-Michelle Huvig, Pierre Manisse and Beth Tucker between 4th April and 7th May 2024 and the site code is MPR23/27.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the town of Reading, 720m south of the town centre, 470m east of the River Kennet and 1.4km south of the River Thames (Fig. 2). Prior to demolition works a series of garages bordered the west of the site with the rest of the site functioning as a Tarmacadamed parking area. With the exception of the A327 to the east, the site is surrounded by residential buildings and gardens. The site slopes moderately from 52.8m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the south-west end to 50.0m aOD at the north-east end of the site. The natural geology is mapped as Lambeth Group, clay, silt and sand (BGS 2000), and this was witnessed during the works on site.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley. The area boasts a wealth of sites and finds covering a wide range of time periods (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick 2009). The archaeological potential of the site at 40-48 Mount Pleasant stems from its location just beyond the southern limit of the late Saxon and Medieval town of Reading, and the A327 road to the east of the site was a major road out of the town during this period (Astill 1978). Until recently the limit of the Medieval town was thought to lie close to the junction between Silver Street and London Road, however, recent archaeological fieldwork has demonstrated Medieval occupation further south on Silver Street just c.130m north of the proposal site. Alongside Medieval occupation, the excavation works at Silver Street also revealed a Medieval tile works which supplied Reading Abbey (Sanchez 2020). The projected route of the Reading civil war defences from the 1640s is also approximately 150m north of the proposal site (Slade 2001), however, given the Medieval occupation uncovered on Silver Street during the 2020 excavation works, it is possible that it may lie closer to the proposal site. It is unclear how far south the Medieval and early Post-Medieval limits of the settlement of Reading were, and it is possible that occupation may continued as far south as the proposal site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks on site. This was to involve the continuous monitoring of all areas of intrusive ground works, including the observation of all ground reduction to the top of the relevant horizon and the excavation of foundation trenches and service trenches.

Overburden was to be removed using hand tools or a small 360° machine fitted with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision, and spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds throughout the works. Where appropriate and necessary stripped areas were to be cleaned using hand tools and any features of archaeological interest were to be recorded using the appropriate methodology.

All work undertaken on site adhered to the CIfA's standard and guidance (CIfA 2020) and the recommendations in the draft 'Berkshire Archaeology general standards for archaeological fieldwork projects (April 2019)' were to be followed. The potential and significance of any archaeological deposits observed were to be assessed in accordance to research priorities such as those set out in the *Solent Thames Research Agenda* (Hey and Hind 2014) or the *Historic England Research Agenda* (HE 2017).

Results

The works monitored on site consisted of three parts: the excavation of a test pit, ground reduction of the entire site, and the stripping of the foundations for the new buildings (Fig. 3).

Test pit (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2)

A small test pit measuring 1.3m long, 0.7m wide and 1m deep was excavated near the western boundary of the site. A small Victorian pit (1) containing 'china' and animal bone was recorded cutting the mid reddish-brown sandy-clay gravel natural geology. The feature was 0.09m deep and at least 0.85m wide. The pit was overlain by 0.35m of mid brownish-grey silty-sand made ground and 0.35m of dark brownish-grey silt made ground.

Ground reduction (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1)

A portion of overburden was removed across the entire site. At the west end of the site only 0.35m of Tarmac and overburden was removed whereas at the east end of the site up to 0.72m of Tarmac and overburden was removed. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.11m of Tarmac, above 0.06m of concrete, set on 0.19m of light yellow sand made ground and 0.36m of dark brownish-black sandy-clay made ground, from which a decorative late 19th century brick was recovered. At a depth of 0.72m occasional patches of mid reddish-brown sandy-clay gravel natural geology were noted, however, the area was very disturbed and further made ground was witnessed in the foundation trenches. The stratigraphy to the west end of the site was similar, though the made ground in this area was a mid brownish-grey silty-sand. Victorian bricks, clay pipes, china and porcelain were noted in these made ground deposits but not retained. An additional up to 0.2m of overburden was reduced within the foundations of the buildings, though the natural geology was still not visible in these areas.

Foundations (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 3-8)

The excavation of the foundations for the six new houses were monitored. The foundations varied in depth from 0.96m to 1.41m from the top of the ground reduction level. The stratigraphy within the foundations varied across the site due to Victorian disturbance. The foundation for house 1 (the most easterly) consisted of 0.34m of dark brownish-black sandy-clay made ground (containing bricks, clay pipes, china, porcelain and post-Medieval pottery) overlying the mid reddish-brown sandy-clay gravel natural geology. The stratigraphy of the remaining foundations consisted of between 0.25-0.35m of mid brownish-grey silty-sand made ground (containing bricks, clay pipes, china and porcelain).

Multiple areas of disturbance were observed across the site, which included four pits containing clay pipe and china within the foundations of houses 3, 4 and 5 and a large area of demolition rubble containing china,

concrete, two walls and service pipes within the foundations of houses 1 and 2. Additionally a roughly north to south aligned Victorian ditch containing china, porcelain and bricks was recorded along the western boundary of the site (likely a previous boundary ditch prior to the construction of the brick wall boundary) in the foundation of house 6. The section against the western boundary of the site was considerably deeper than elsewhere suggesting that the site had already witnessed some ground reduction prior to these works. With the exception of the Victorian disturbance, no finds or features of any archaeological interest were observed on the site.

Finds

Ceramic building material by Danielle Milbank

A near-complete example of a moulded decorative terracotta brick of late 19th century date was recovered from the dark brownish-black sandy-clay made ground recorded in the eastern area of the sit. It is square, of dense, slightly soft dark red fabric, and is stamped on the reverse with the maker's mark.

The maker is Poulton and Sons, who took over the already-established Waterloo Kiln brickworks at Katesgrove (less than 500m to the west of the site) in 1866. These decorative ceramics were manufactured by the company throughout the 1870s to the early 1900s, and were supplied to prominent architects such as Alfred Waterhouse, in addition to their widespread use in house construction locally.

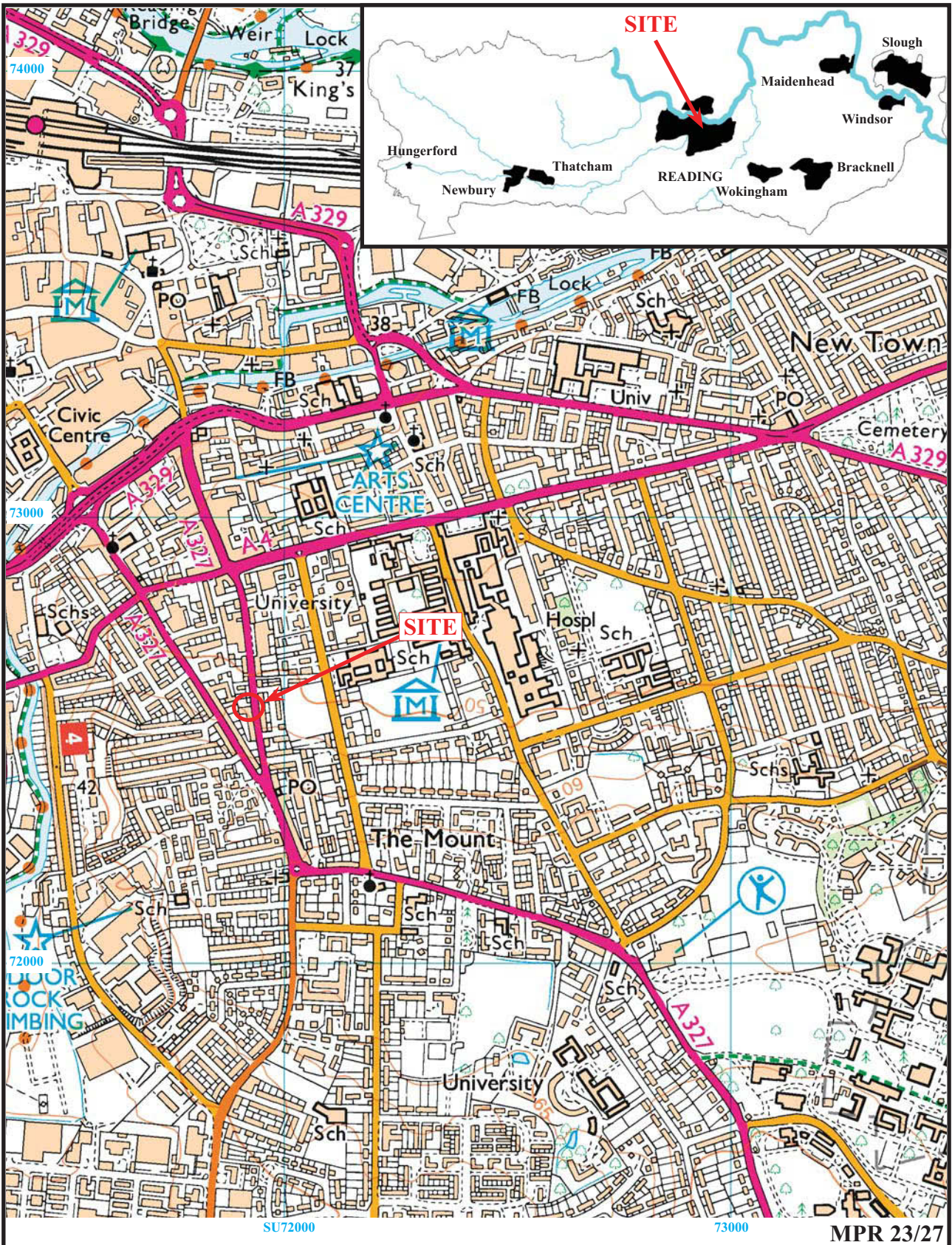
Examples of this specific square four-petal moulded motif brick are visible as part of a decorative plat band on brick-built terraced houses of the period 1890-1900 on Elgar Road, adjacent to Poulton and Son's office on the corner of Waterloo Road and Elgar Road. The company was sold to the Collier brickworks company in 1905, but continued to produce patent bricks under the Poulton name in subsequent decades.

Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief undertaken at 40-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, observed the ground reduction of the entire site and the excavation of six new building foundations and a small test pit. It was clear that the site had seen a moderate amount of disturbance in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The eastern portion of the site had witnessed the most disturbance with the remains of a 19th-century building uncovered. A series of Victorian pits were recorded throughout the site and a Victorian boundary ditch was present where the current western boundary wall lies. No finds nor features of an earlier date were observed which indicates that the southern limit of the Medieval and post-Medieval settlement lies in the area between the proposal site and the site of the 2020 excavations on Silver Street.

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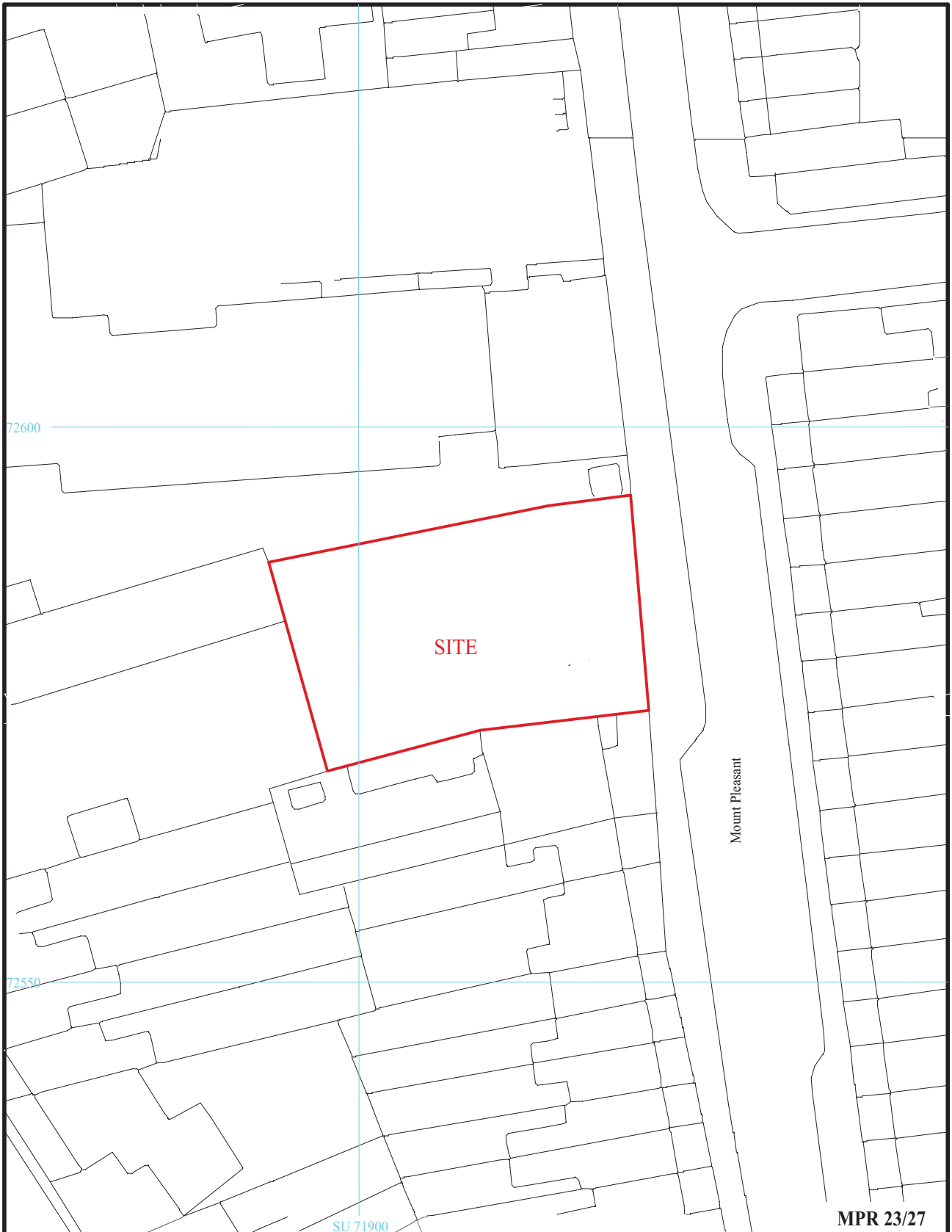


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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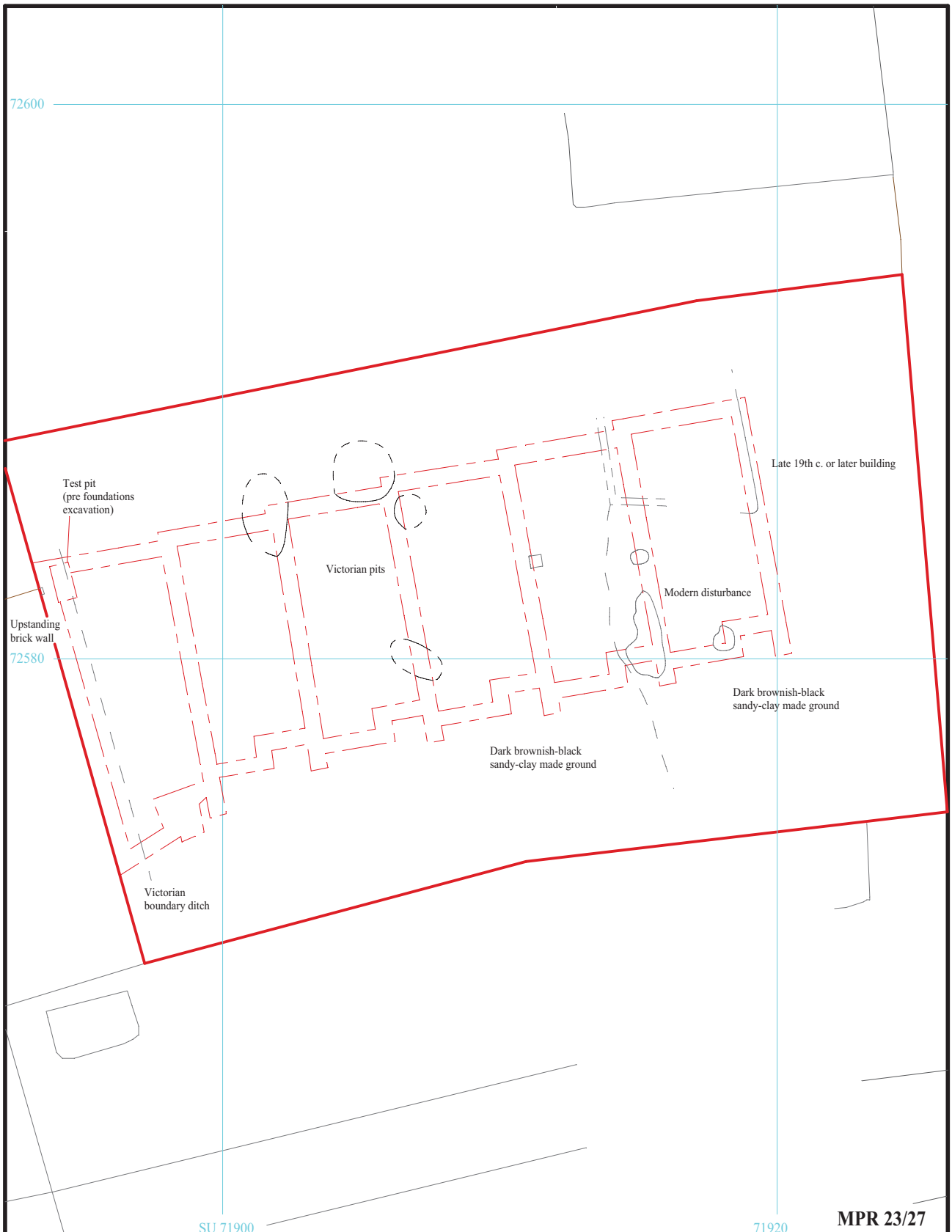


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Figure 2. Site plan.



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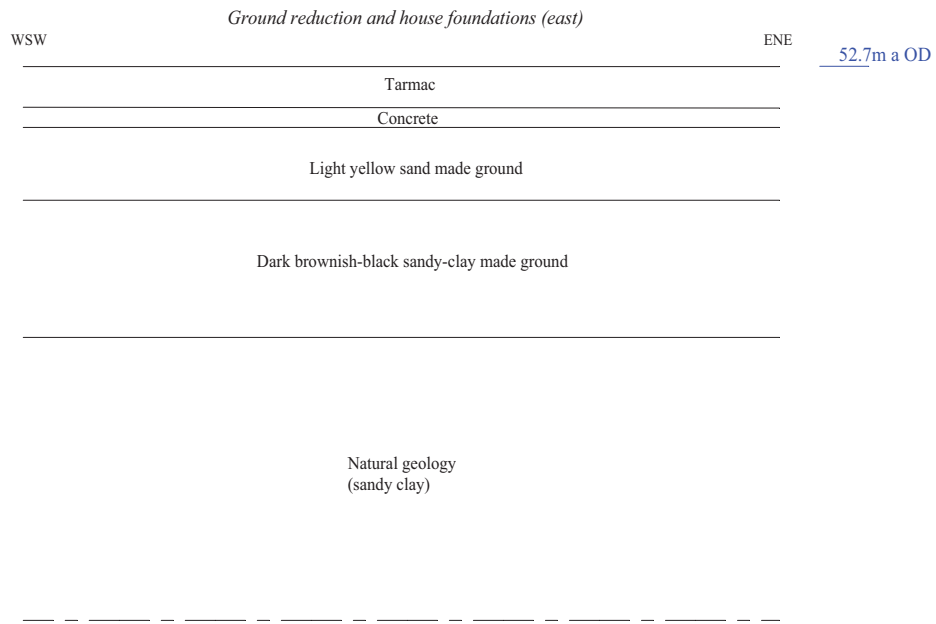
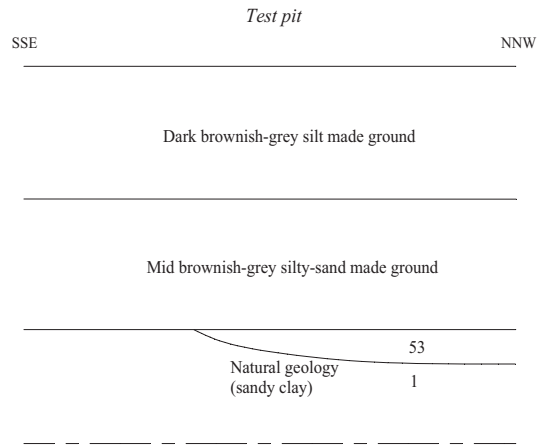


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Figure 3. Site plan showing foundations and test pit location.



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Figure 4. Representative sections.





Plate 1. Ground reduction, looking west.
Scales: 1m x2 and 0.4m



Plate 2. Test pit, looking west. Scales: 1m x2 and 0.4m.



Plate 3. 19th century or later building in house 1/2
foundations, looking north. Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. House 2/3 foundations, looking south-west.
Scales: 1m and 0.5m..

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Plates 1 - 4.**

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Plate 5. Stratigraphy in house 3 foundations, looking north. Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 6. Victorian pit in house 3/4 foundations, looking west. Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 7. Victorian pit in house 4 foundations, looking roughly north. Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 8. Victorian boundary ditch in house 6 foundations, looking south-west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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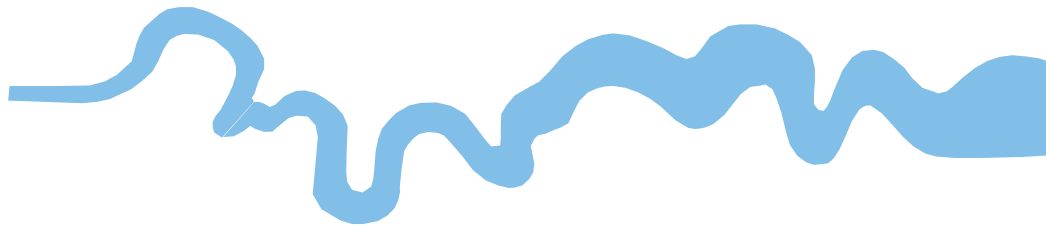
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Plates 5-8**

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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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