

**43 Grove Hill, Caversham,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Highfield Developments**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GHC 09/17

June 2009

Summary

Site name: 43 Grove Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7125 7595

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 24th–26th June 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: GHC 09/17

Area of site: c.0.22 hectares

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed.

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✓ 29.06.09
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Report 09/17

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 43 Grove Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7125 7595) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Frances Candlin of Highfield Developments, 17 Peppard Road, Sonning Common, Reading, RG4 9SS.

Planning consent (07/0.304/FUL) has been gained on appeal (APP/E0345/A/08/2064446) from Reading Borough Council for the demolition of the existing building on the site and the construction of two blocks of flats and houses. The consent is subject to a condition (9) requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor, Aidan Colyer and Henrietta Longdon between 24th and 26th June 2009 and the site code is GHC09/17. 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 is located on the west side of Grove Hill, Caversham, which is on the northern margins of Reading (Fig. 1). The site is a rectangular parcel of land centred on SU 7125 7595 on a fairly steep slope dropping down to the south west. It is bounded by residential housing on the southern sides with Grove Road on the north east side and Beech Wood on the north west side (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as Plateau Gravel (BGS 1946) but chalk was recorded in three of the four trenches. The site lies at a height of *c.*65.5m above Ordnance Datum at the north eastern end, dropping down to *c.*59m at the south western end.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Mary O'Donoghue of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary the potential of the site stems from its location in an area where prehistoric and Roman finds have been recorded in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. Most notable is the finding of a hoard of Bronze Age axes and an Iron Age gold coin at Emmer Green Primary School to the north-east of the site. However, a watching brief carried out at the school failed to find any archaeological deposits (Oram 2001). A Roman coin and Palaeolithic stone tools are recorded in the vicinity, and Iron Age deposits have been observed in an evaluation to the north-east (Ford 2006). The various relict gravel terraces of the Thames in the vicinity are known to be rich in Palaeolithic finds, though *in-situ* deposits from this period are rare (Wymer 1968).

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.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if there are any Roman or prehistoric deposits present on the site; and
- to determine if the site has deposits of potential for palaeo-environmental reconstruction.

Four trenches were to be dug, each 15m in length and 1.6m wide using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were located to target the areas of impact from the new buildings. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

The four trenches were dug measuring between 9.7m and 15.6m in length and 0.5 and 1.6m deep (Fig. 3). Some shortening of some of the trenches had to take place due to access constraints, which was carried out in consultation with Berkshire Archaeology. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

This trench measured 13.80m in length and was 0.9m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of made ground, comprising demolition rubble, overlying degraded chalk and clay, overlying chalk natural geology. Some truncation from the former house was evident throughout this trench. No archaeological deposits or finds were observed.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4; Plate 1)

This trench measured 9.70m in length and was 1.1m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of made ground, comprising demolition rubble, overlying subsoil overlying degraded chalk, overlying chalk natural geology. No archaeological deposits or finds were observed.

Trench 3 (Plate 2)

This trench measured 15.0m in length and was 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying natural chalk. A tree bole was located at the northern end of the trench, which was investigated and determined to be from the former garden of the site. No archaeological deposits or finds were observed.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4)

This trench measured 15.60m in length and was between 1.2m and 1.6m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying gravel natural geology. No archaeological deposits or finds were observed.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeology being present on the site no deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed. The north-eastern end of the site, where the former house stood, showed evidence of truncation from foundations and underpinning that had taken place, due to subsidence several years ago. On the basis of these results, it therefore seems unlikely that any archaeology will be encountered while construction works are being carried.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 2006, 'Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, Emmer Green, Reading Berkshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 06/132, Reading
- Oram, R, 2001, 'Emmer Green Primary School, Grove Road, Reading, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 01/77, Reading
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Wymer, J, 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	13.80	1.60	0.90	0.00–0.40m demolition rubble made ground; 0.40–0.60m natural geology 0.60m decayed chalk with brick fragments; 0.60m–0.90m+ natural chalk geology (highly truncated at the southern end from house foundations).
2	9.70	1.60	1.10	0.00–0.20m demolition rubble made ground; 0.20–0.90m subsoil; 0.90–1.10m degraded chalk with occasional brick fragments; 1.10m+ natural chalk geology. [Plate 1]
3	15.00	1.60	0.50	0.00–0.17m topsoil; 0.17–0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ chalk natural geology [Plate 2]
4	15.60	1.60	1.60 (SW) 1.20 (NE)	SW end: 0.00–0.50m topsoil; 0.50–1.60m silty clay subsoil; 1.60m+ gravel natural. NE end: 0.00–0.40m topsoil; 0.40–1.20m subsoil 1.20m+ clayey gravel natural.



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Grove Hill.

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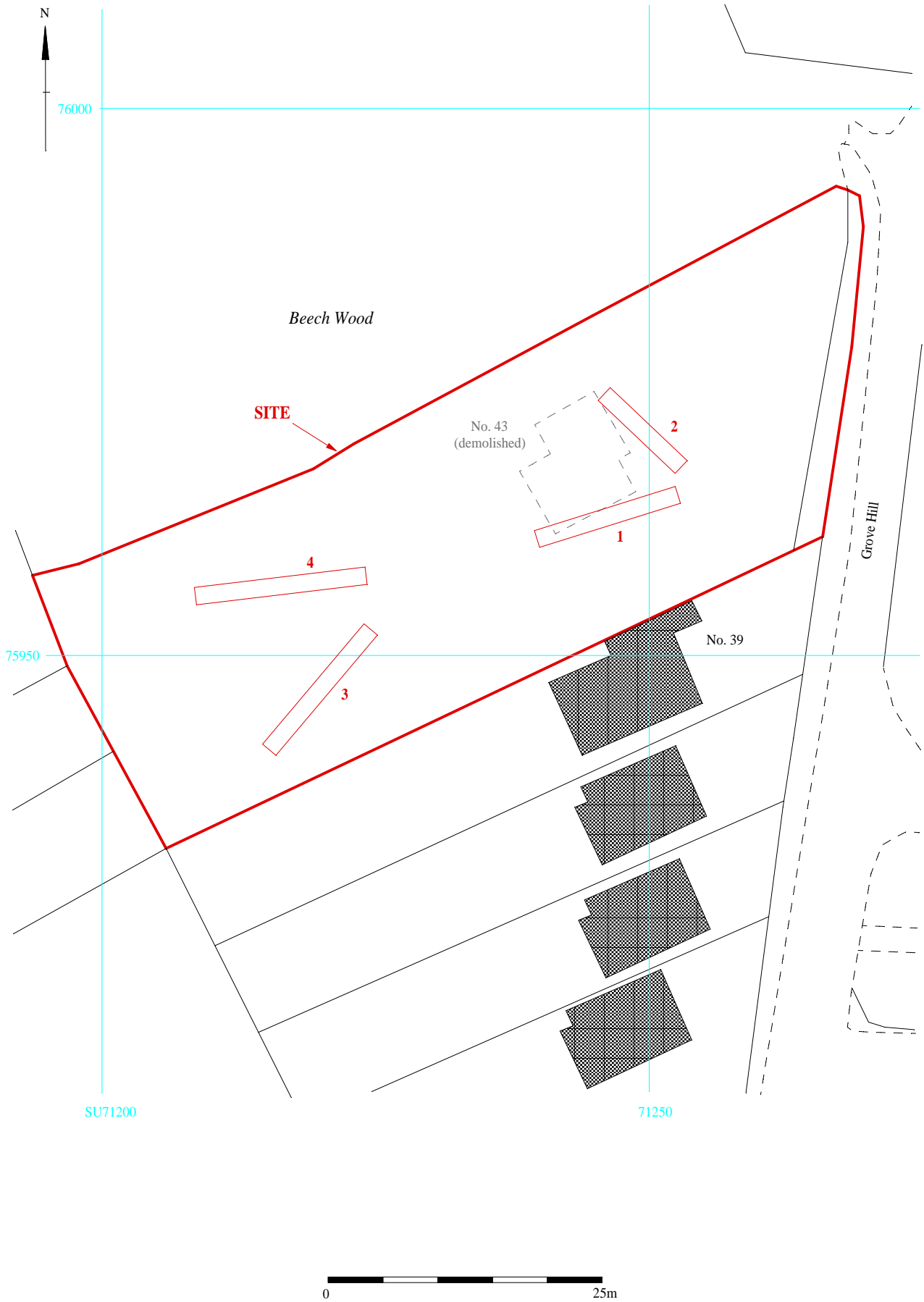


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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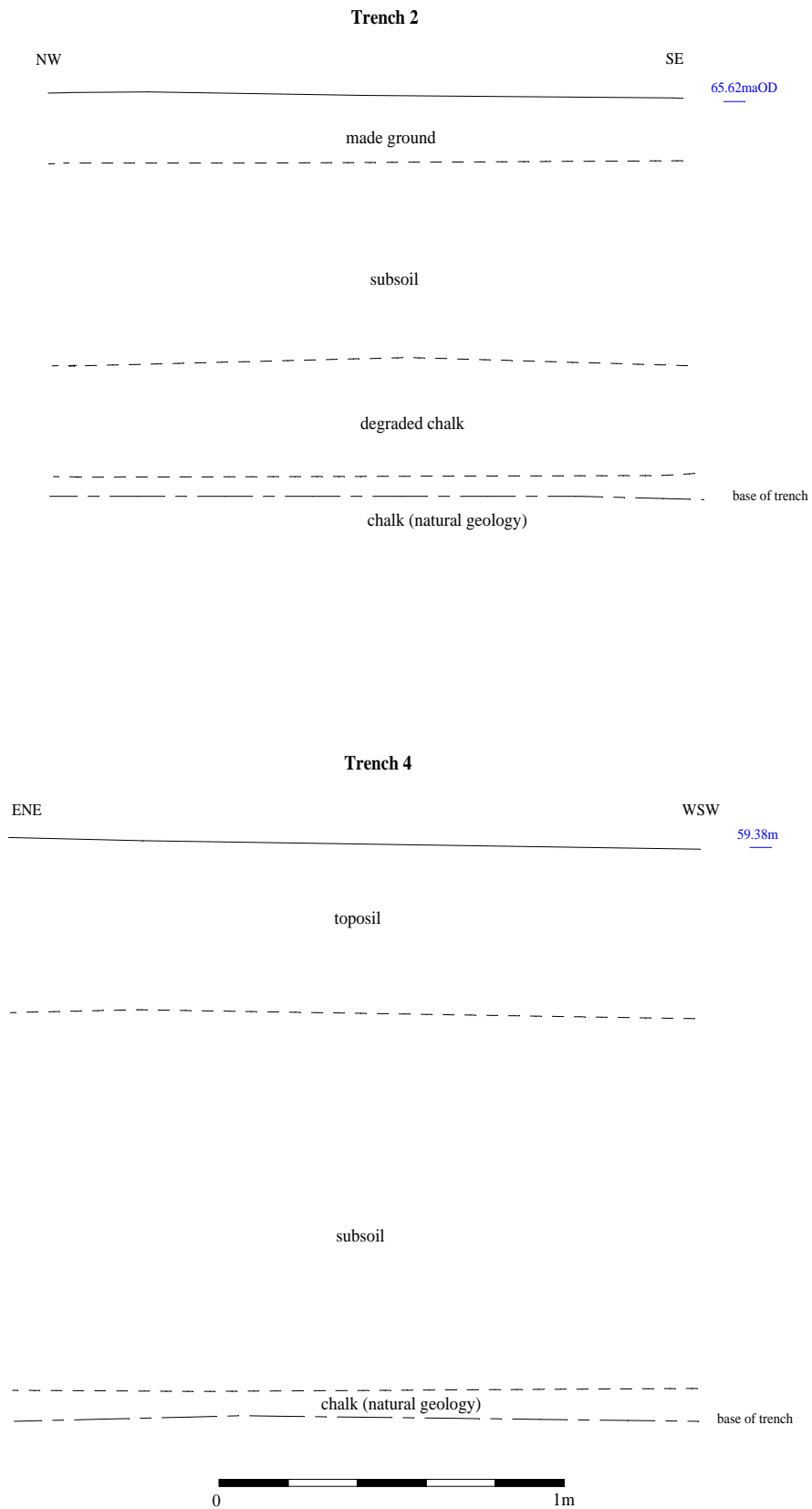


Figure 4. Representative sections.



Plate 1. Trench 2, looking south-east, scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking north-east, scales: horizontal 1m and 2m, vertical 0.5m.