

Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr H Somerville

by James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code FLC 09/56

June 2009

Summary

Site name: Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU89765 85490

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 23rd and 24th June 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: FLC 09/56

Summary of results: A single ditch with two fills was found containing Saxon and early medieval pottery

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✓ 30.06.09 Jo Pine✓ 30.06.09
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Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Report 09/56

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire, SL6 9XH (SU 89765 85490) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Hugh Somerville of Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire, SL6 9XH.

Planning consent (08/02480) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of two small extensions on the site. The consent gained is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principle Archaeologist of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken James McNicoll-Norbury on 23rd and 24th June 2009 and the site code is FLC 09/56. This document reports on the one approved extension carried out at this time. Construction of the second extension is proposed for some time in the future.

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 in the historic core of Cookham on Ferry Lane, off Odney Lane, some 40m from the parish church. The River Thames lies just to the north (Fig. 2). The site is currently in use as a residential property with associated gardens and out buildings. The underlying geology is described as Shepperton Gravel (BGS 2005) which was observed in the exposed groundworks with a clay capping overlaying it to a thickness of 0.41m. The site lies at c. 28.25m Above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project provided by Berkshire Archaeology. In summary this potential stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley

with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area (Ford 1987, Gates 1975). More specifically the site lies within the historic core of Cookham which is thought to have middle Saxon origins and have a minster church by the 8th Century AD (Astill 1978). Cookham had borough status until eclipsed by Maidenhead, following the building of the bridge across the Thames in medieval times. The proposal site lies close to the medieval parish church which is considered to be the historic focus of the settlement, though recent fieldwork at Spencers, on The Pound to the west which revealed Saxon deposits, has complicated what was thought to be known about the early topography of the settlement (Mundin 2008).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular ground reduction and the digging of foundation trenches for the new extension and any service runs. Archaeological deposits that were threatened by the groundworks were to be excavated and recorded and all finds to be retained. Spoil heaps were monitored for additional finds.

Results

The footings were dug using a 1 tonne mini-digger fitted with a toothless bucket to a depth of 1.02m and were 0.60m wide (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy comprised 0.43m of topsoil overlying 0.26m of clayey gravelly subsoil which in turn overlay 0.34m of orange/brown clay (54) that overlay sandy gravel. The area within the footings was also reduced by 0.20m.

A single linear feature of archaeological interest was identified in the northern footing cut from beneath the subsoil and into the clay capping to the gravel. The feature was 1.50m wide and 0.86m deep (Fig. 4), (Plate 1). The ditch had two separate fills, the upper fill (52) consisted of a dark grey silty clay which contained no finds. The lower fill consisted of a lighter grey sandy silt (53) and contained two sherds of pottery, one of Early/middle Saxon date and one of Early medieval pottery.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised two sherds with a total weight of 14g, both from the same context ditch 1 (53), the lower fill of the ditch. The following fabrics were noted:

Early/Middle Saxon Chaff-tempered, 5th – 9th century. Handmade. Moderate to dense chaff voids up to 10mm, rare sub-rounded chalk fragments up to 4mm. 1 sherd, 9 g

?Saxo-Norman sandy-shelly ware. Wheel-finished. Moderate to dense quartz sand up to 5mm, rare to sparse shell platelets up to 3mm. 1 sherd, 5g.

The chaff-tempered sherd is typical of the early-middle Saxon pottery tradition of the Thames, and is known from a number of centres in the Thames Valley (Blinkhorn 2005, 166). The other sherd, with its distinctive sand and fine shell temper, is more problematic. The sherd is a rim, with a lid-seat and triangular bead which appears typical of the Saxo-Norman period, if not a little earlier, but it is entirely untypical of the late Saxon and medieval pottery traditions of this region of the Thames Valley and to the south and west, with no parallels at centres such as Reading, Newbury or Windsor (ibid.), where Saxo-Norman or medieval wares with shell inclusions are unknown. All the calcareous inclusions in the pottery with from that area are usually rounded limestone or chalk. The fabric does however, have many similarities with Early Medieval Sand and Shell ware, which is well-known from early 11th century sites in London (Vince 1985, 37), and this seems the most likely source of the material, and suggests an early-mid 11th century date for the backfill of the feature.

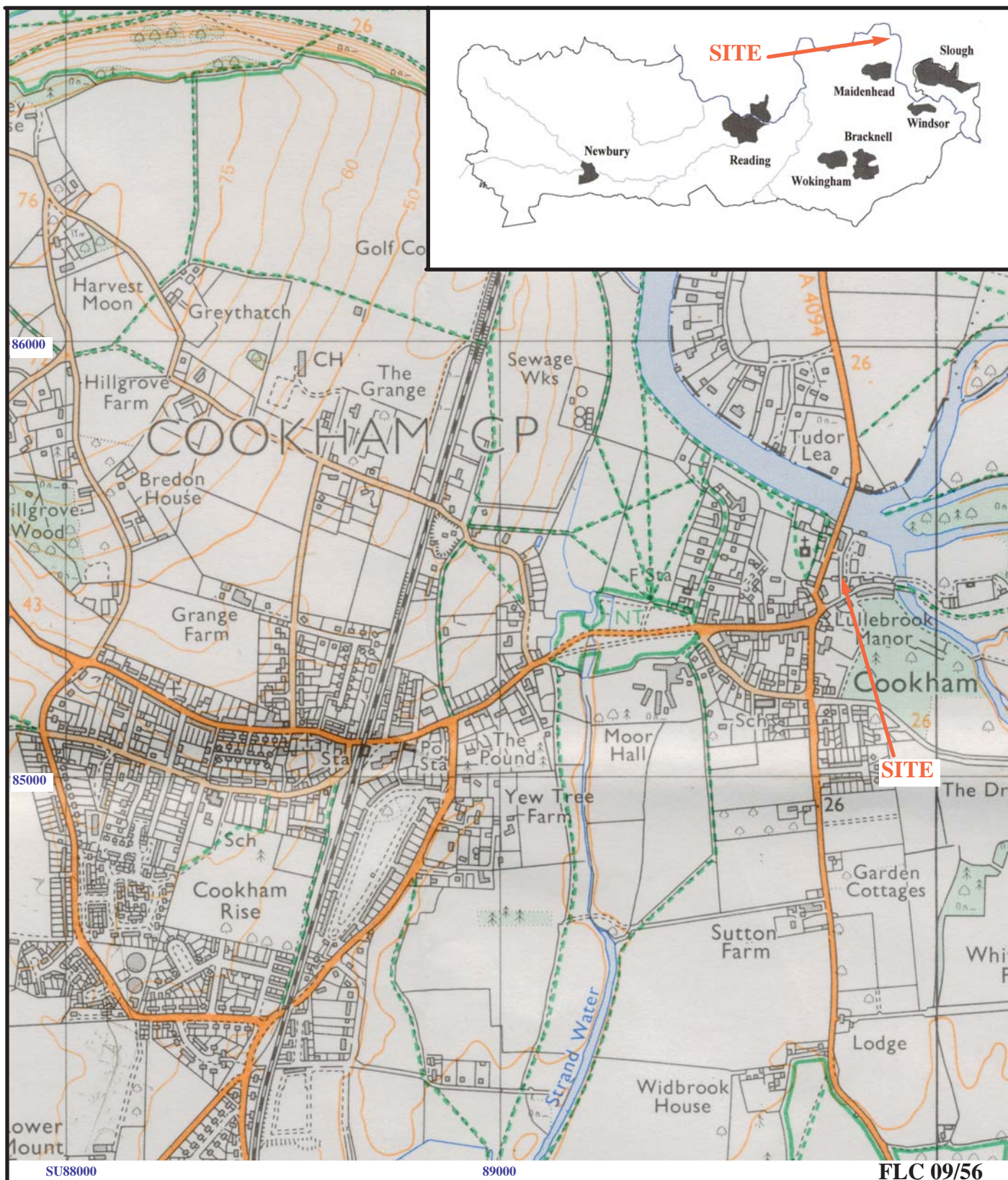
Conclusion

The watching brief carried out during the course of the groundworks identified a ditch of probable late Saxon or early medieval date (11th century) on a possible north-south alignment. A residual sherd of Early/middle Saxon date (5th-9th Century) was also recovered. Although these findings are necessarily modest given the small scale nature of the development, they do add a small amount to the corpus of information about the chronology and topography of historic Cookham.

References

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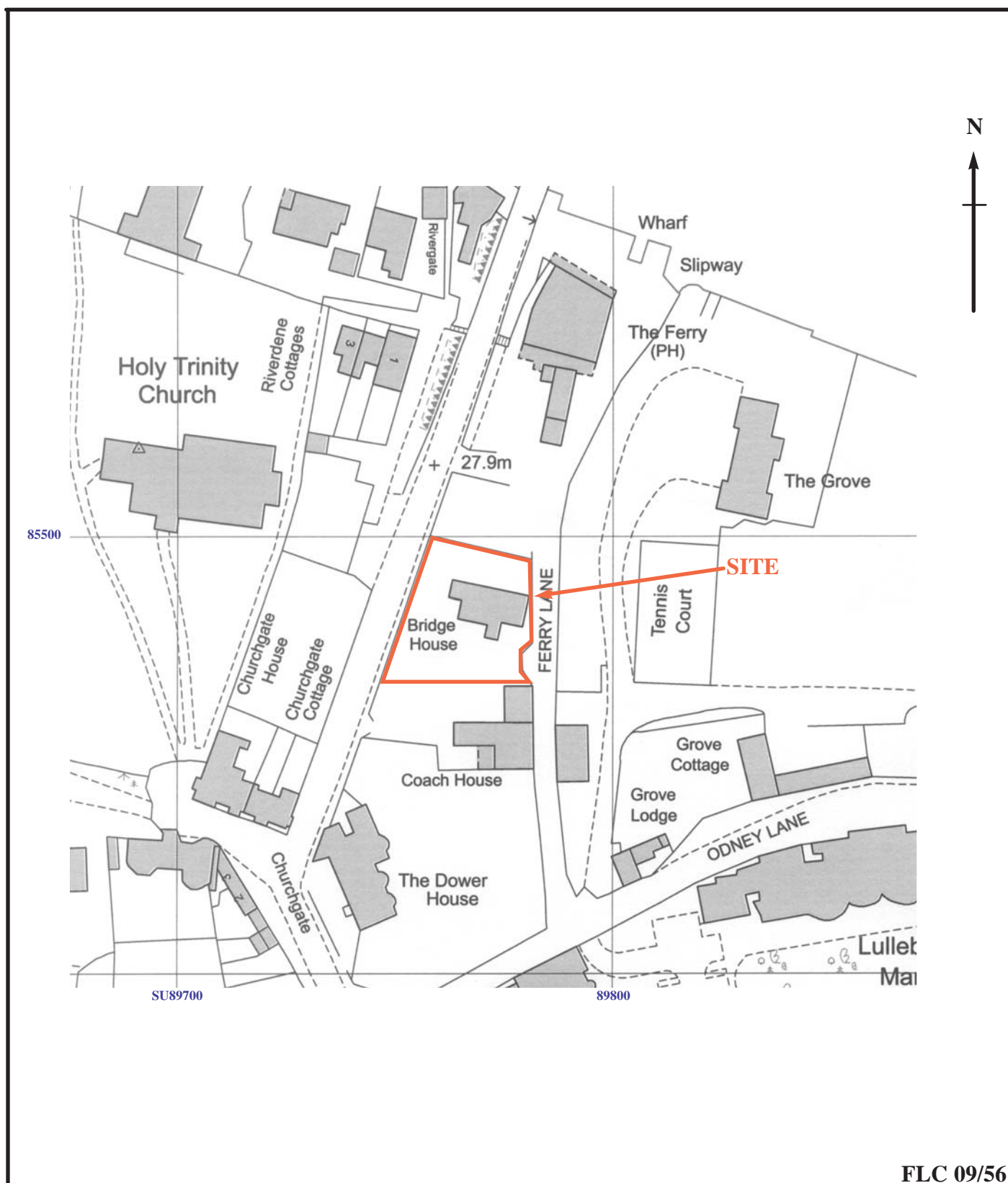


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Figure 1. Location of site within Cookham
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Ferry Lane.

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Bridge House, Ferry Lane, Cookham, Berkshire, 2009



Figure 3. Location of Footings

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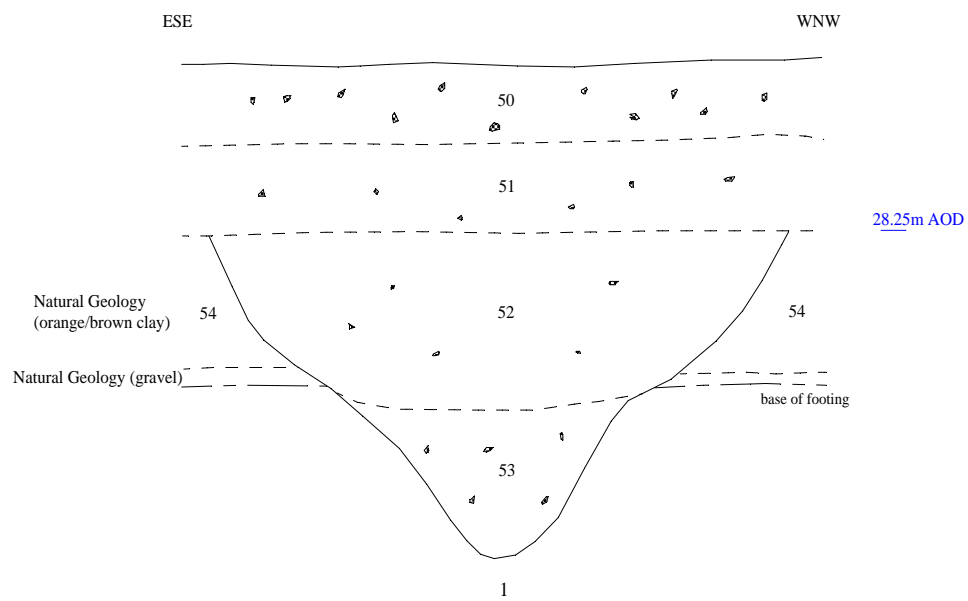


Figure 4. Representative Section and Ditch 1.



Plate 1. Ditch 1, Looking south-west, Scales, 2m and 1m