

Land Adjacent to Baylis Court School, Granville Avenue, Slough, Berkshire

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Catalyst Housing Group Ltd

by James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code GAS 08/113

July 2009

Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to Baylis Court School, Granville Avenue, Slough, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9660 8172

Site activity: Archaeological Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 10th–20th May 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: GAS 08/113

Area of site: 0.3ha

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were identified

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 ✓ 22.07.09 Steve Preston ✓ 17.07.09

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Report 08/113c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out on land adjacent to Baylis Court School, Granville Avenue, Slough, Berkshire (SU 9660 8172) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Stevens of Thomas Vale Construction, Foundation House, Paddock Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5BY on behalf of Catalyst Housing Group Ltd.

Planning consent has been gained (app nos P/14395/000; P/14395/001) from Slough Borough Council to construct twelve terrace houses on the site, along with associated car parking areas and access road. The consent is subject to a condition (13) relating to archaeology, requiring a phased 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 Ms Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury between 10th May and 20th May 2009 and the site code is GAS08/113.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited Reading Museum in due course, with accession number REDMG2009.219.

Location, topography and geology

The site comprised a roughly rectangular parcel of land of c. 0.3ha to the rear of 1–18 Granville Avenue, Slough with Baylis Court School directly to the south (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is described as Langley Silt, a mixture of sandy clay and silt (brickearth) (BGS 2004). However, what was observed in the footings excavated was a medium to dark brown sandy clayey gravel. The site lies at a height of c. 30m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been considered in a desk-based assessment (Hopkins 2008). In summary, the site lies on a brickearth-capped terrace of the Thames Valley which is usually regarded as archaeologically rich with a wide range of sites and finds of many periods recorded from field survey, aerial

photography and, increasingly, trial trenching (Ford 1987; Gates 1975; Foreman *et al.* 2002). The deeply buried underlying gravel deposits are also noteworthy in the vicinity for the presence of Palaeolithic finds. However, for later, post-glacial periods, relatively few finds or sites are recorded in the vicinity, with just a single Roman coin and Bronze Age round barrow recorded to the north. Recent fieldwork on the north-eastern margins of Slough (Wexham) and over the administrative boundary in South Buckinghamshire, has revealed further prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity (Ford 2008a and b). Recent evaluation of the site (McNicoll-Norbury 2009) revealed two shallow gullies thought to represent boundary features. Whilst the features are considered to be potentially of archaeological interest, they contained no datable finds.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the project was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks, namely during ground reduction and examination of other intrusive ground works. The specific aims of the project were to determine the nature and dates of the gullies already recorded for the site and determine if additional, contemporary deposits were also present. It was originally intended to strip overburden from both the access road zone and building plots to expose the archaeologically relevant levels. However, in the event difficult working conditions made it possible only to fully strip the access road in this manner. Parts of the footprints of the new buildings were thus examined by inspection of the footing trenches.

Results

The access road and car parks

The overburden (made ground and subsoil) of the access road was removed using a 360⁰ machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision to a depth of 0.40-0.50m onto natural geology (Fig. 3). The areas of car parking were also monitored at the same time with the same depth of overburden removal as that of the road area c.0.40-0.50m. to expose the natural geology. Despite the presence of the two separate archaeological features identified in the evaluation lying close by, neither were found to extend into any of these stripped areas. Spoil heaps and the stripped surface were monitored for finds retrieval purposes but none were recovered.

The building plots

These comprised four plots (Fig. 3) which lay to either side of the access road. Following some overburden removal, which did not expose the natural geology clearly, the footing trenches were dug and observed. The footing trenches were 0.4m wide and 1.1m deep penetrating both the remnant brickearth cap and into gravel. The stratigraphy in these areas comprised typically 0.14m made ground (loose gravel and crushed concrete) overlying between 0.30–0.48m brown clay subsoil overlying natural gravel, which is the same as that observed in the evaluation trenches which had previously examined these areas. For the second plot from the west, which covered the area where evaluation trench 3 had recorded gully 1, this gully was observed both to the north east and south west but was very ephemeral and mostly comprising a stone free stain rather than a distinctive cut feature. For the easternmost plot gully 2 was aligned along a footing trench and it too was ephemeral, being of similar nature to the section exposed in the evaluation trench. No finds were recovered from it.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered either from the ephemeral cut features nor the stripped areas of the road.

Conclusion

A substantial proportion of the site was examined during the overburden stripping for the road/car parking area and the previous evaluation trenches, along with observations of deep groundworks on other parts of the site. Despite the presence of two gullies identified during the evaluation no further deposits of archaeological interest were revealed. Extensions to the two gullies were recorded but these were again revealed to be ephemeral and possibly discontinuous and also devoid of dating evidence.

References

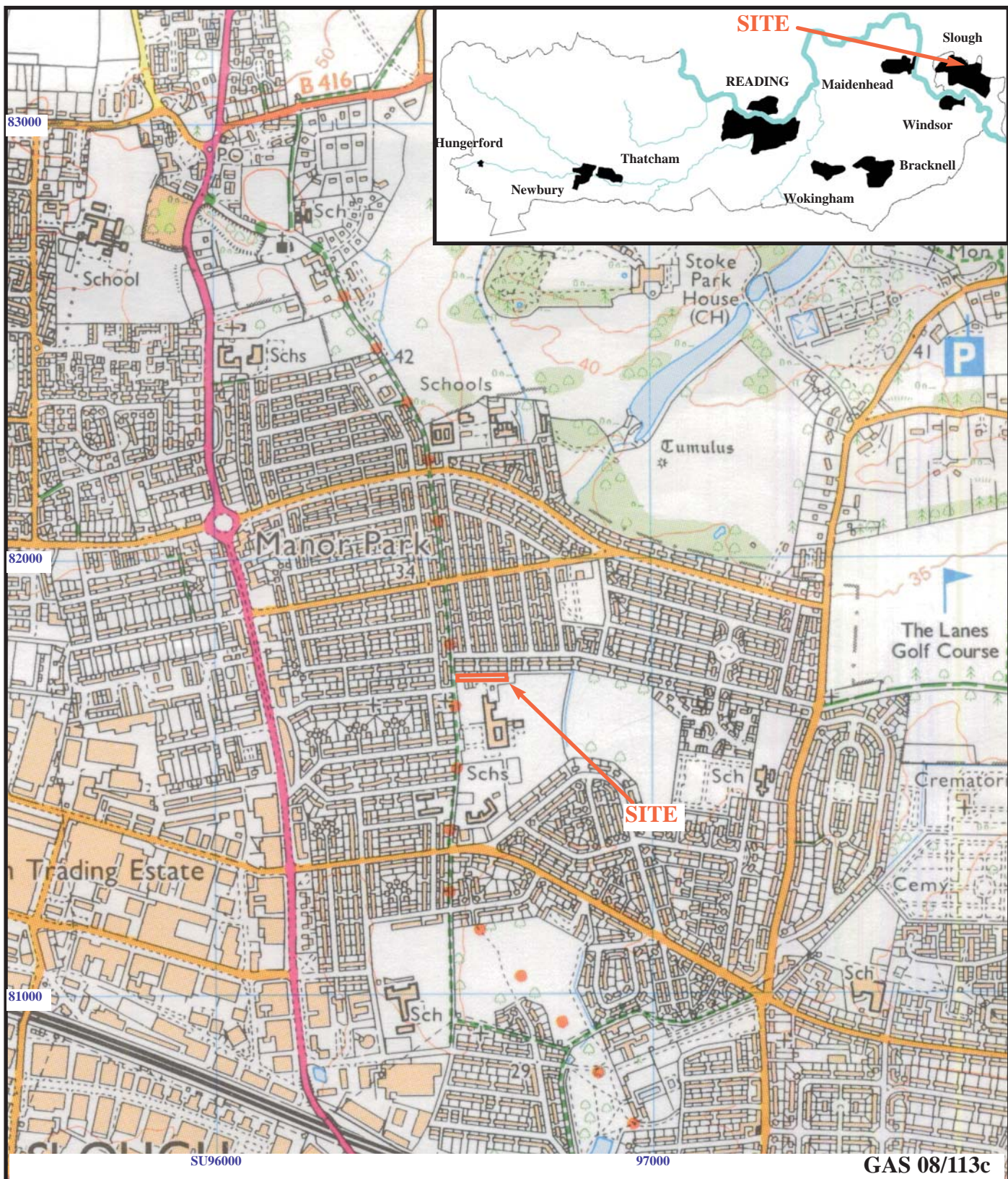
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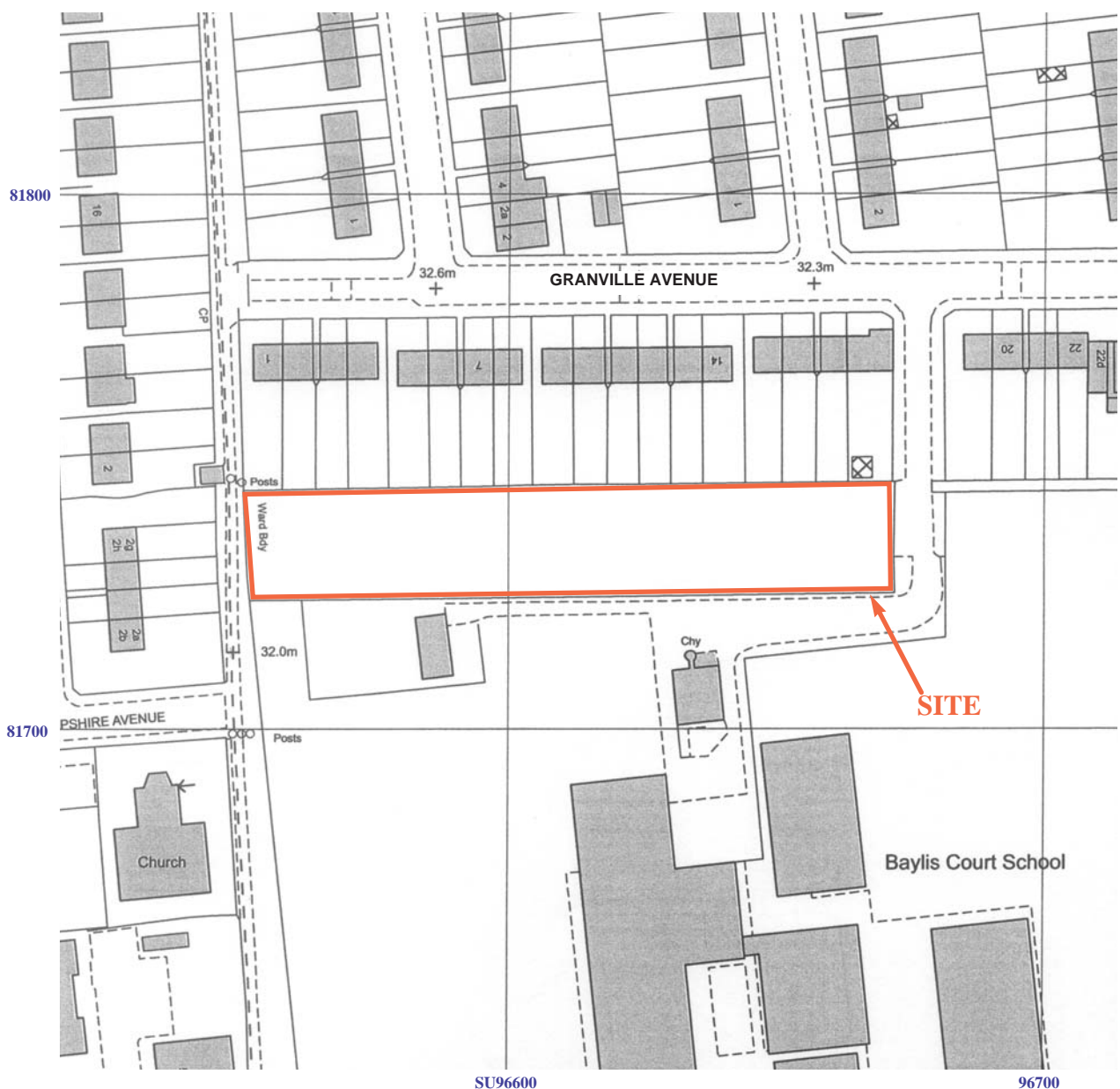
**Land adjacent to Baylis Court School,
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Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 1. Location of site within Slough
and Berkshire.

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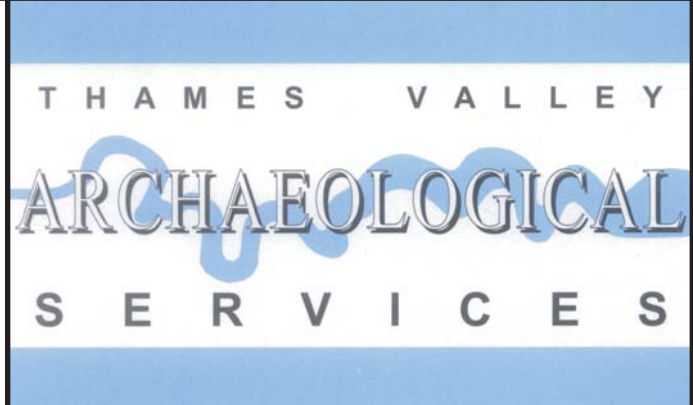


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Figure 2. Location of site off Granville Avenue.

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Land adjacent to Baylis Court School, Granville Avenue, Slough, Berkshire, 2009



Figure 3. Areas stripped and footing trenches.

Land adjacent to Baylis Court School, Granville Avenue, Slough, Berkshire, 2009

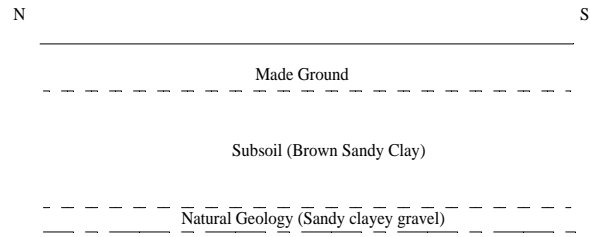


Figure 4. Representative Section