

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Ashdown, Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Susan Colley**

**Site Code: ASW09/75**

**(SU 7145 6604)**

**Ashdown, Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr D. Cox and Mr C. Bedwell**

by Susan Colley

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeASW 09/75

**November 2009**

## Summary

**Site name:** Ashdown, Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7145 6604

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 5th October to 20th November 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Natasha Bennett, Susan Colley

**Site code:** ASW 09/75

**Summary of results:** A ditch of late post-medieval or modern date was 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 ✓ 26.11.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 27.11.09

# Ashdown, Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Colley

**Report 09/75**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Ashdown, Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7145 6604) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Alan Barnes of Alan Barnes Consulting Engineers Ltd, The Street, Swallowfield, Reading, Berkshire, on behalf of Mr D. Cox and Mr C. Bedwell.

Planning permission was gained from Wokingham Borough Council (app no F2009/0930) to construct a new detached garage and utility room plus a single storey side/rear extension with a balcony, and a new chimney on the north elevation. The consent was subject to a condition (7) which required an archaeological 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 Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald of Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to Wokingham Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Natasha Bennett, Dan Bray and Susan Colley between 5th October and 20th November 2009 and the site code is ASW 09/75.

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 to the south of Reading, at the southern end of the village of Spencer's Wood, in the parish of Shinfield (Fig. 1). The land currently forms gardens and a driveway around the existing house, to the west of Basingstoke Road (B3349) and is surrounded by other residential properties (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as (BGS 1946) valley gravel, which was observed on site. The site lies at the top of a slight rise in the land at an elevation of *c.*58m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location close to an area where archaeological deposits have recently been discovered prior to development of the adjacent site to the south. Occupation deposits of Middle Iron Age date were revealed by trial trenching and subsequently excavated (ASE 2004). The environs of the site contains a modest range of finds from other periods, many recorded as cropmarks visible from the air (Gates 1975) and from field survey. Areas subject to field survey to the east of the site revealed a modest quantity of prehistoric struck flint and Roman and medieval pottery, with a probable medieval site to the south (Ford 1997).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits threatened by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundwork, which was to comprise the digging of two groups of foundation trenches, three service trenches and a foundation for a new chimney. The foundations were dug with a machine fitted with a toothless bucket 0.90m wide. The chimney foundation was dug by hand. The spoil heaps were to be monitored for artefacts.

## **Results**

### Rear Extension

The footing for the area for the rear extension were 0.9m wide and 1.3m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of a deep topsoil with frequent roots and modern inclusions which was 0.62m thick. This was above 0.30m of brown sandy clay subsoil, above a compact red/brown sandy clay with frequent gravel inclusions which was the natural geology. No archaeological deposits were observed.

A test pit was dug to a depth of 2.10m within the footing. The footings were intended to go down to a depth of 2.50m to counter the effects of a nearby tree. The continuing stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.62m of mid brown red gravel followed by 0.18m dark, brown red sandy clay and 0.40m of orange/blue grey clayey sand.

### Chimney

The chimney footing was dug by hand, along the north wall of the existing building. The slot measured 0.85m width and was 1.8m in length, the total depth was 1m. The stratigraphy consisted of building foundations (0.82m) and light, red grey sandy clay made ground (0.18m). No archaeological deposits were observed.

### Garage and Utility Room

The footing trench was 0.90m wide. The stratigraphy revealed was the same as for the rear extension (above). In the north-south footing a modern ditch (1) was observed. This feature was 1.5m wide and 1m in depth and cut the subsoil (Figs 3 and 4). The feature contained a dark brown grey fill (50) with modern tile inclusions.

### Service Trenches and Soakaway

Three service trenches were dug for gas, water and electricity. The electricity trench was 0.90m wide and reached a depth of 0.60m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.1m of topsoil above subsoil but the natural geology was not reached. Within this trench ditch 2 was observed. This is thought to be the continuation of ditch 1 observed in the garage footing trenches. The ditch was 1.60m wide and at least 0.50m deep but the base was not reached. This feature contained a dark brown grey fill (51) with modern tile inclusions.

The trenches for the gas and water services were also 0.90m wide and 0.6m and 0.7m deep, respectively. The stratigraphy revealed was the same as that noted in the electricity trench. No archaeological deposits were observed.

A soakaway was dug for the garage drainage. It measured 1.60m long and 0.80m wide and was 1.40 deep. The stratigraphy was heavily disturbed by tree roots and comprised 0.1m of topsoil above 0.4m of subsoil above the red/brown gravely clayey natural geology. No archaeology was observed.

## **Finds**

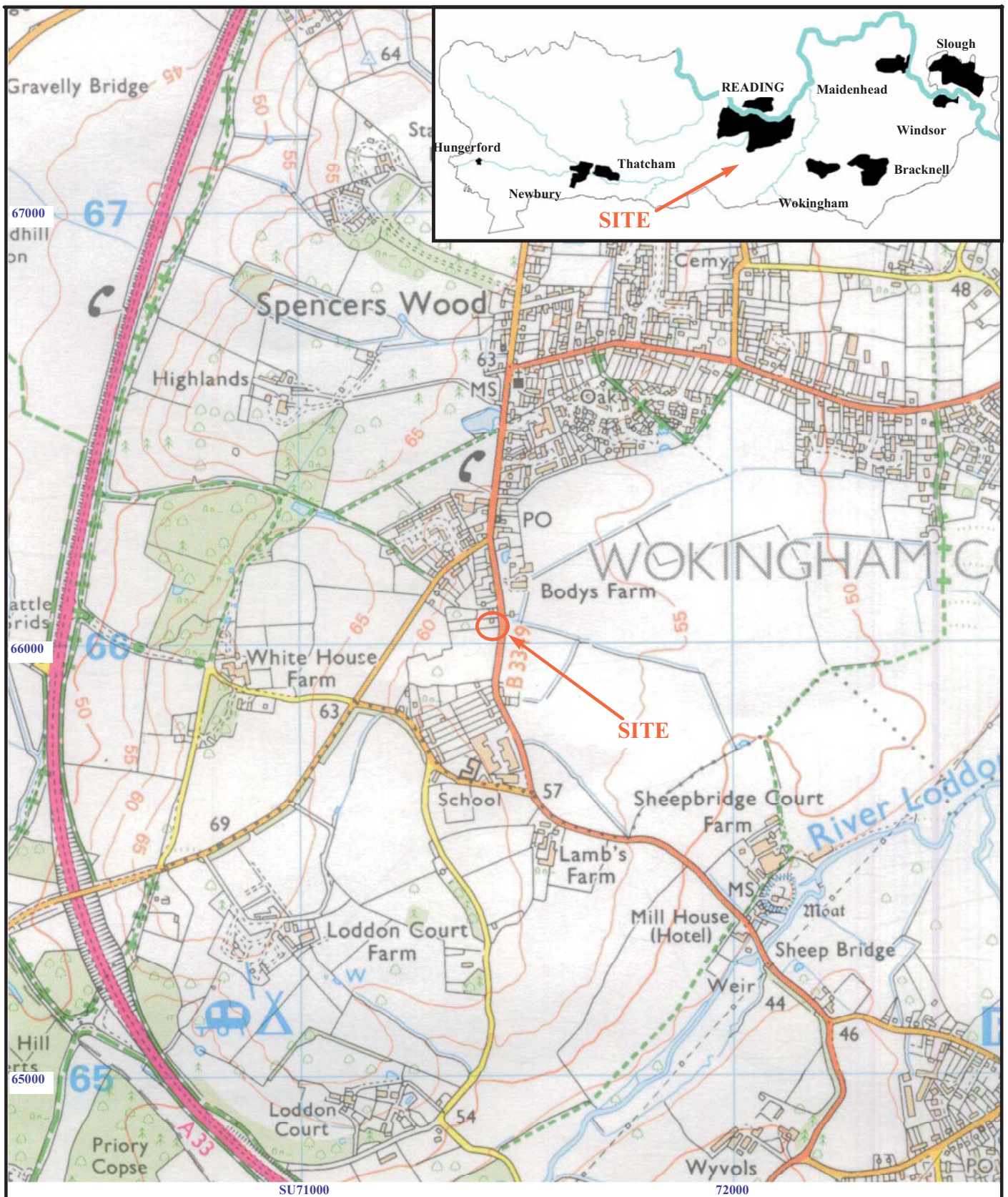
No archaeological finds were recovered.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief recorded two cut features on the site, both almost certainly the same ditch. This ditch contained modern tile and is likely to date from late post-medieval times and to have been backfilled when the existing house was built. No deposits nor finds of archaeological interest were revealed relating to the Iron Age deposits recorded nearby nor of any other period.

## **References**

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth  
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ASE 2004, 'An Archaeological Evaluation on land at Basingstoke Road, Spencer's Wood, Reading, Berkshire',  
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Ford, S, 1997, 'Loddon Valley (Berkshire) Fieldwalking survey', *Berkshire Archaeol J* 75, (for 1994-7), 11-33.  
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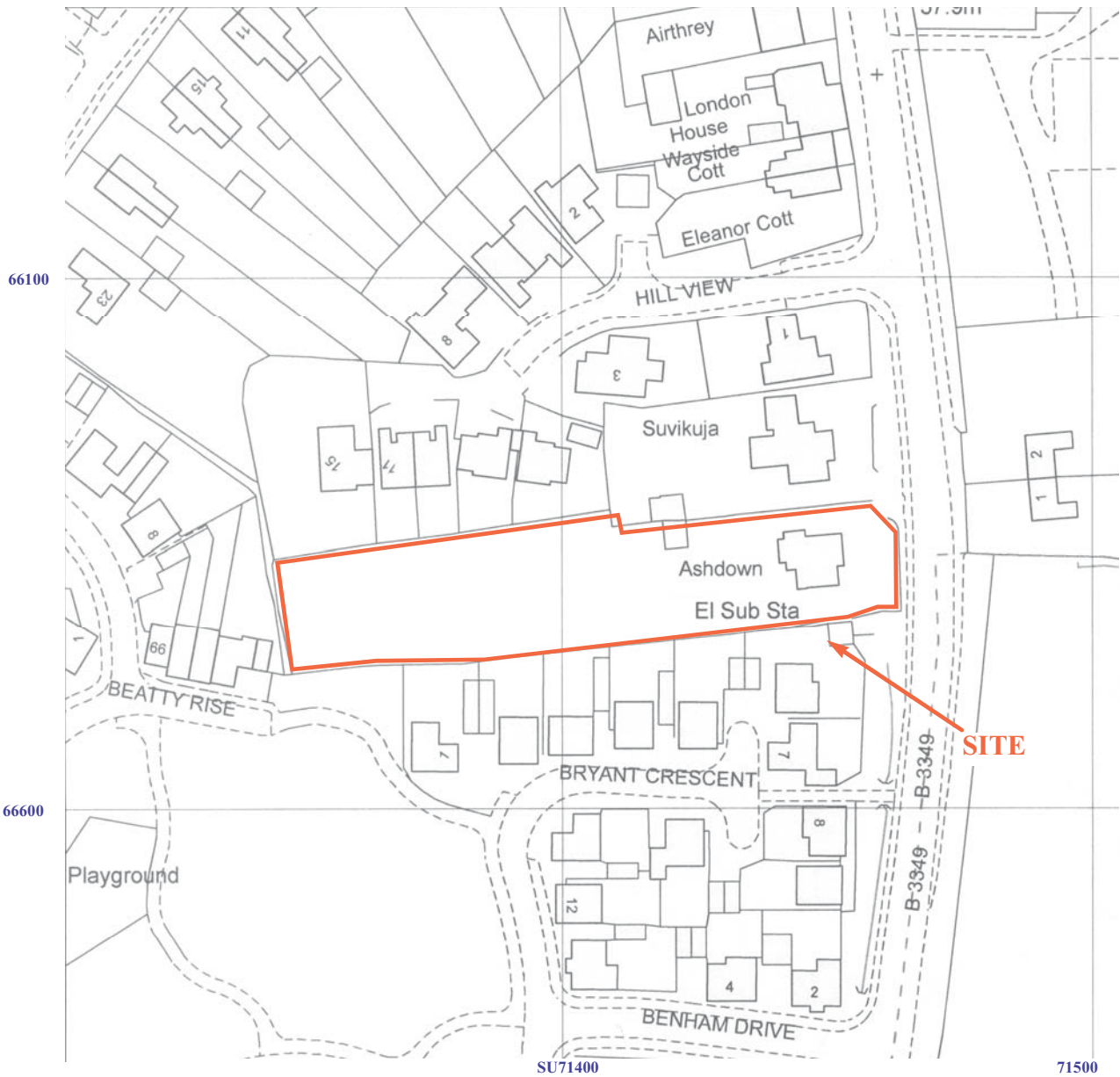


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 Figure 1. Location of site within Spencers Wood and  
 Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Basingstoke Road.

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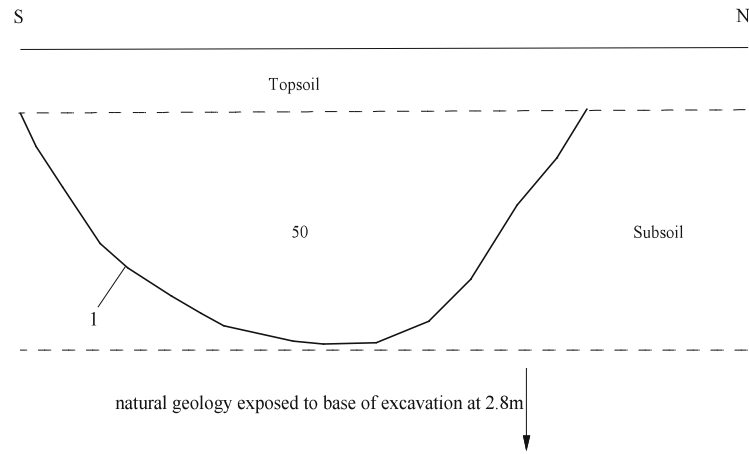


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Figure 3. Location of groundworks observed.



*Garage section*



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Figure 4. Section of ditch at slot 1.

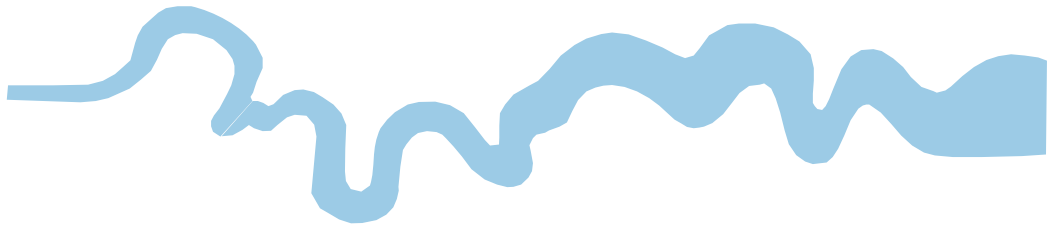


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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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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