

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**The Coach House, Speen,  
Newbury, West Berkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Tim Dawson and Phil Parker**

**Site Code: CHS09/61**

**(SU 4540 6780)**

# **The Coach House, Speen, Newbury, West Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr. Keith Woods**

by TimDawsonandPhilParker  
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices  
Ltd

SiteCodeCHS09/61

**November 2009**

## Summary

**Site name:** The Coach House, Speen, Newbury, West Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4540 6780

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 25th–27th November 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Phil Parker

**Site code:** CHS 09/61

**Summary of results:** No features or finds of archaeological interest were identified

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 02.12.09<br>Steve Preston✓ 01.12.09 |
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# **The Coach House, Speen, Newbury, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Tim Dawson and Phil Parker

**Report 09/61**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Coach House, Speen, Newbury, West Berkshire (SU 4540 6780) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Tompkins of Edge Architecture, Boames Farm, Enborne, Newbury, RG20 0JT, on behalf of Mr Keith Woods, The Coach House, Speen, Newbury.

Planning consent (application no. 09/00288/LBC) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new extension at The Coach House with removal of part of a boundary wall. The consent includes a condition (11) relating to archaeology, which requires that a programme of archaeological work be implemented: this was determined to take the form of a watching brief. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer at West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Phil Parker from the 25th–27th November 2009 and the site code is CHS 09/61.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the south of the modern centre of Speen, a village that now forms part of the western fringe of Newbury (Fig. 2). The Coach House itself is *c.*15m west of Elmore Abbey and *c.*100m west of St. Mary's Church. These are located on the south-facing slope of the Kennet Valley with the River Kennet flowing eastwards *c.*800m to the south. The land is currently occupied by the Coach House building, which has been converted for residential use. The site's underlying geology is mottled clay and sand Reading Beds (BGS 1971), this was observed during the groundworks. The Coach House is *c.*95m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has several components. The village of Speen is recorded in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002, 157) and therefore has late Saxon origins. It is assumed that the core of this settlement, at least in medieval times, lay close to the parish church, 100m to the east of the proposal site. However a watching brief on a pipe trench (Gleave 1998) and evaluation on Elmore Abbey extension did not reveal any archaeological deposits.

It has also been considered that Speen was a Roman road station (the *Spinae/Spinis* of the Antonine Itinerary) on the route of the Roman road (Ermin Street) from Silchester to Cirencester, which runs close to the site (Margary 1955). As yet, such a settlement has not been recorded at Speen, whereas the Roman site at Thatcham seems to be too distant to match recorded distances (Lobb and Rose 1996, 86–7). It was possible that evidence for the Roman settlement would be encountered in this watching brief.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the new extensions. In general the watching brief involved the monitoring of foundation trenches. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

## **Results**

The foundation trenches were dug using a mechanical excavator with a toothed bucket. They were 0.60m wide and varied from 1.45m deep in the southern end of the site to 2.00m deep at the northern end. The foundation trenches were dug following the plan of the proposed extension (Fig. 3). Towards the southern end of the site the stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.30m of topsoil covering 0.90m of mid orange/brown sandy clay which lay on top of the mid orange/brown clay which makes up the local geology (Fig. 4). Further up the hill at the northern end of the site the strata exposed consisted of the same topsoil, sandy clay and clay but in thicker bands. The topsoil in this area was 0.50m deep and the underlying layer of sandy clay was only 0.20m thick, this covered the natural clay which was observed to the full 2.00m depth of the foundation trench. These variations in depth reflect the hillside location of the site. No features or finds of archaeological interest were identified.

## **Finds**

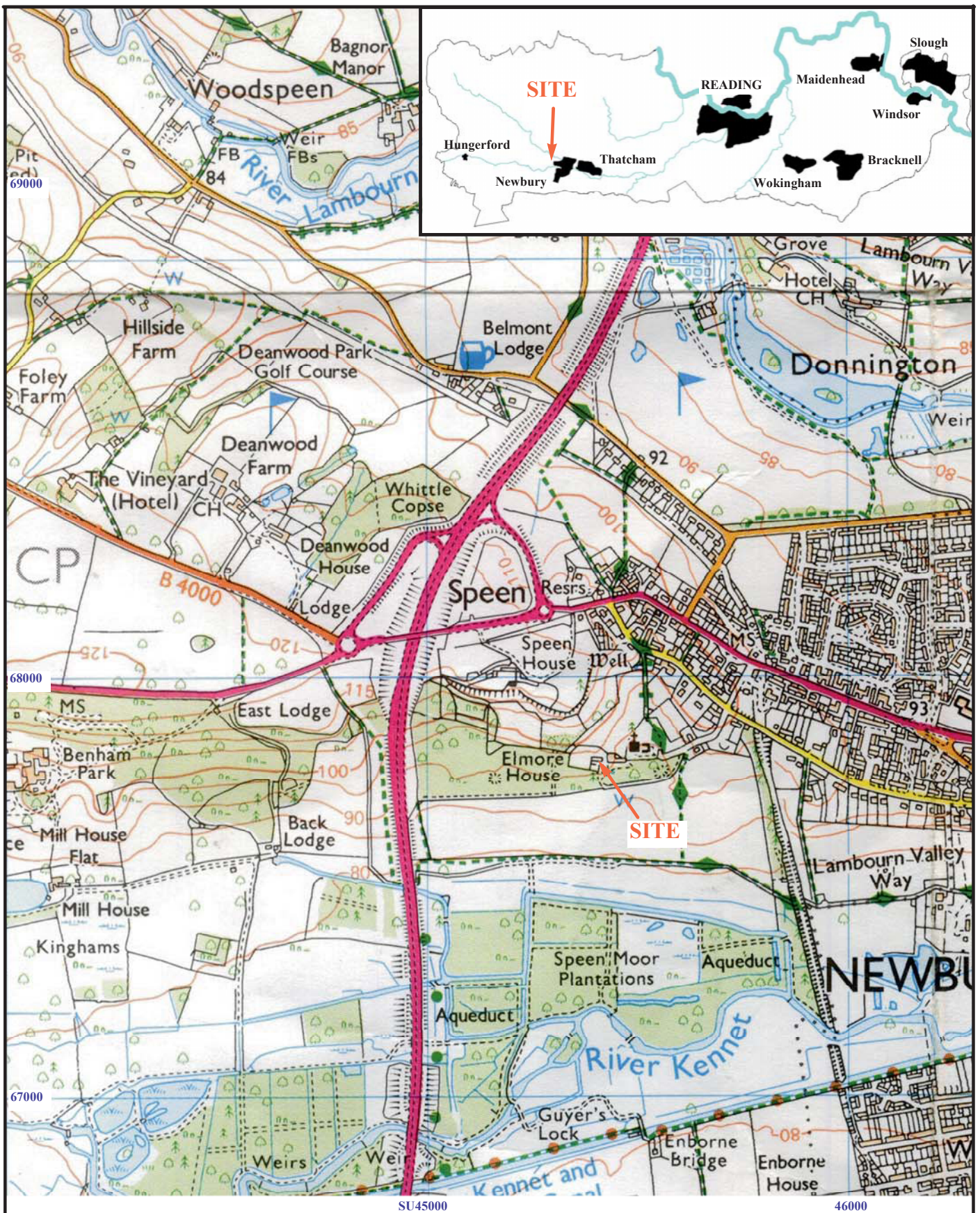
No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the potential of the site to expose archaeological features of Roman, Saxon and/or medieval dates, nothing of archaeological significance was found.

## **References**

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 267, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Gleave, M, 1998, 'Elmore Abbey, Speen, Newbury; an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 98/1, Reading
- Lobb, S J and Rose, P G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 9, Salisbury
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London



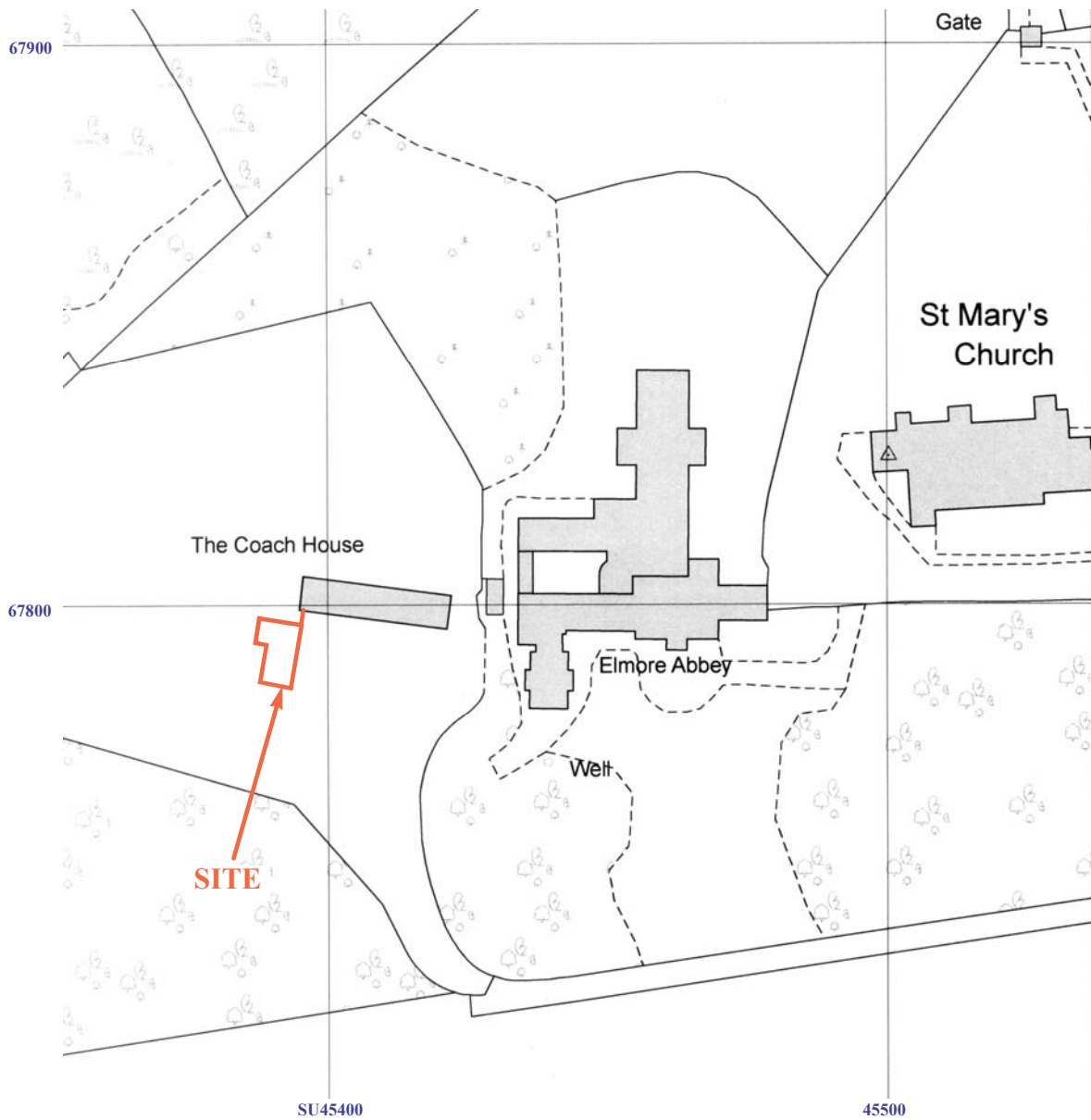
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Figure 1. Location of site within Speen and Berkshire.

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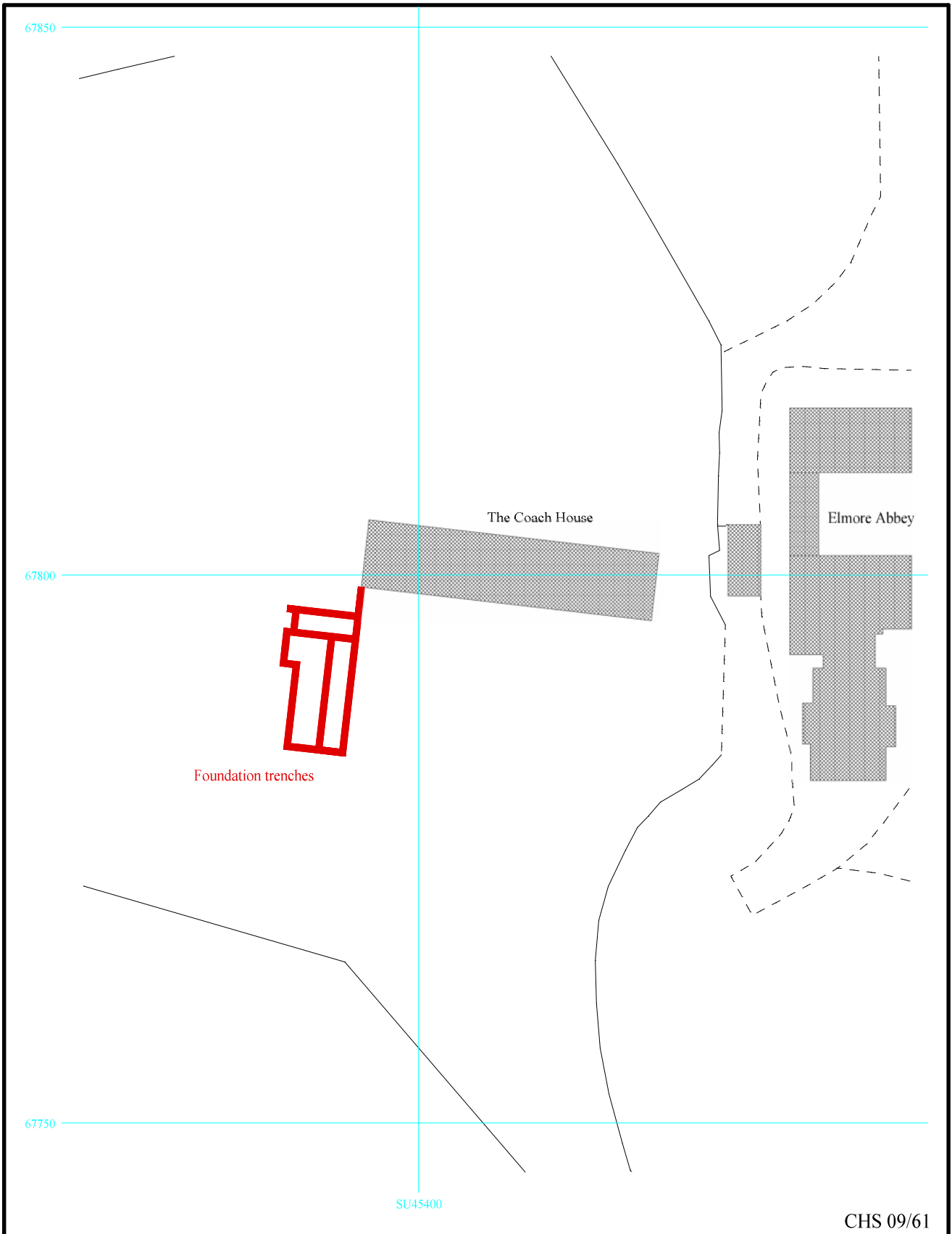
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Figure 2. Location of site near St Mary's Church  
and Elmore Abbey.

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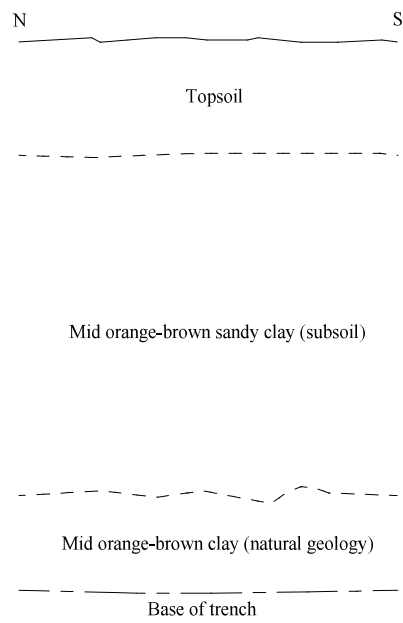
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Figure 3. Location and layout of the foundation trenches.





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Figure 4. Representative section.

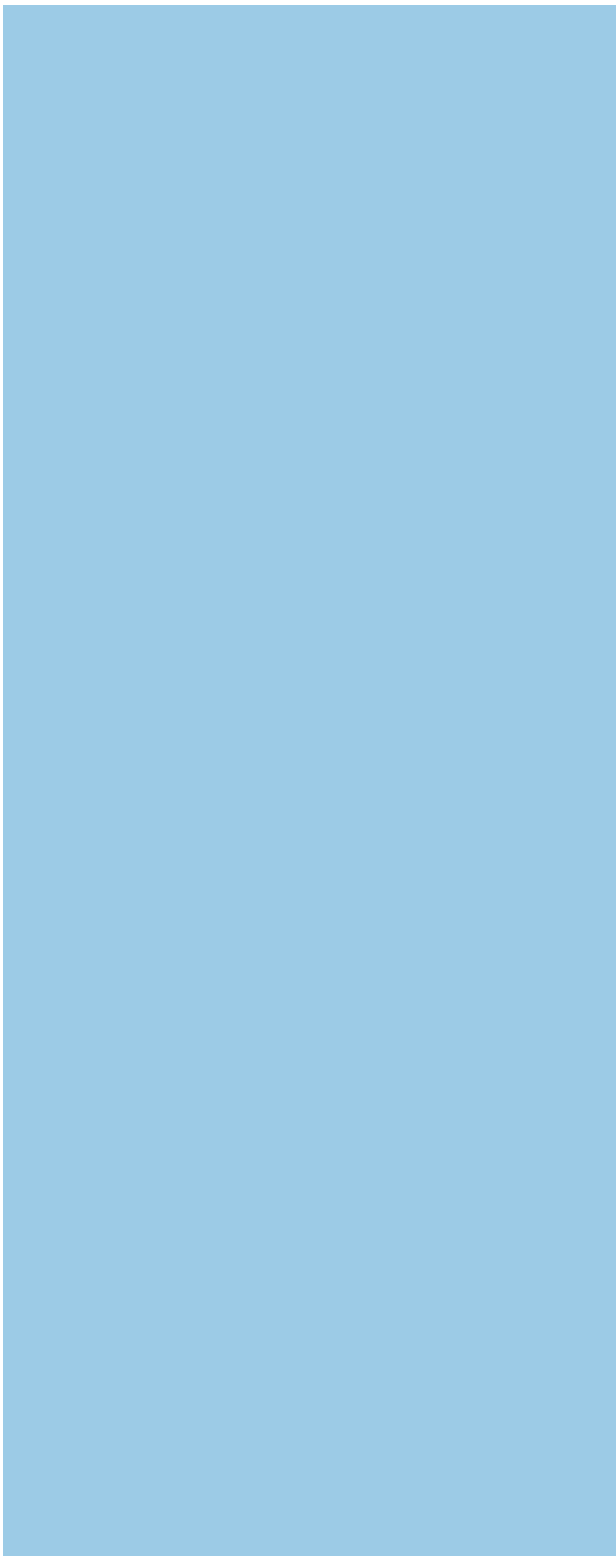
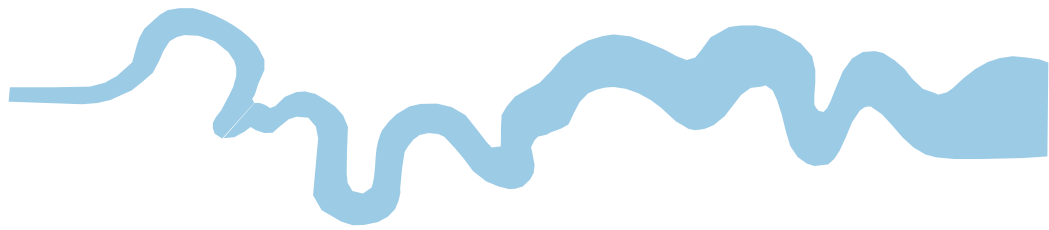


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## TIME CHART

|                            | <b>Calendar Years</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Modern _____               | AD 1901               |
| Victorian _____            | AD 1837               |
| Post Medieval _____        | AD 1500               |
| Medieval _____             | AD 1066               |
| Saxon _____                | AD 410                |
| Roman _____                | AD 43                 |
| Iron Age _____             | BC/AD<br>750 BC       |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Bronze Age: Late _____     | 1300 BC               |
| Bronze Age: Middle _____   | 1700 BC               |
| Bronze Age: Early _____    | 2100 BC               |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Neolithic: Late .....      | 3300 BC               |
| Neolithic: Early .....     | 4300 BC               |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Mesolithic: Late .....     | 6000 BC               |
| Mesolithic: Early .....    | 10000 BC              |
| <br>                       |                       |
| Palaeolithic: Upper .....  | 30000 BC              |
| Palaeolithic: Middle ..... | 70000 BC              |
| Palaeolithic: Lower .....  | 2,000,000 BC          |





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