

## Archaeological Observation

For

South East Water

Concerning

Groundworks for Cookham  
Dean Reservoir Pipeline  
Renewal

February 2017

The logo for South East Water, featuring the text "south east water" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a blue arc above the word "water".

south east water



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*Cover: View west showing trenching easement excavation in progress*

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## 1 Non-Technical Summary

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*Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by South East Water to carry out an Archaeological Observation of groundworks associated with a pipeline renewal at Cookham Dean Reservoir between November 8<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> 2016.*

*Prior to the main excavation topsoil removal was undertaken by machine to create a 10m-wide easement extending east over a distance of approximately 100m from the Reservoir outlet to the connection point at on Spring Lane. The main trench was 0.60m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m.*

*No features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the groundworks, but three worked flints were recovered from the topsoil. Whilst undiagnostic it is suggestive of prehistoric activity within the immediate area.*

## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by South East Water to carry out an Archaeological Observation of groundworks associated with a pipeline renewal at Cookham Dean Reservoir. The work was carried out between November 8<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> 2016 (fig 1).

Prior to the main excavation topsoil removal was undertaken by machine to create an 10m-wide easement extending east over a distance of approximately 100m from the reservoir outlet (NGR: SU 86978 84473) to the connection point at on Spring Lane (NGR: SU 87064 84427). The main trench was 0.60m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m.

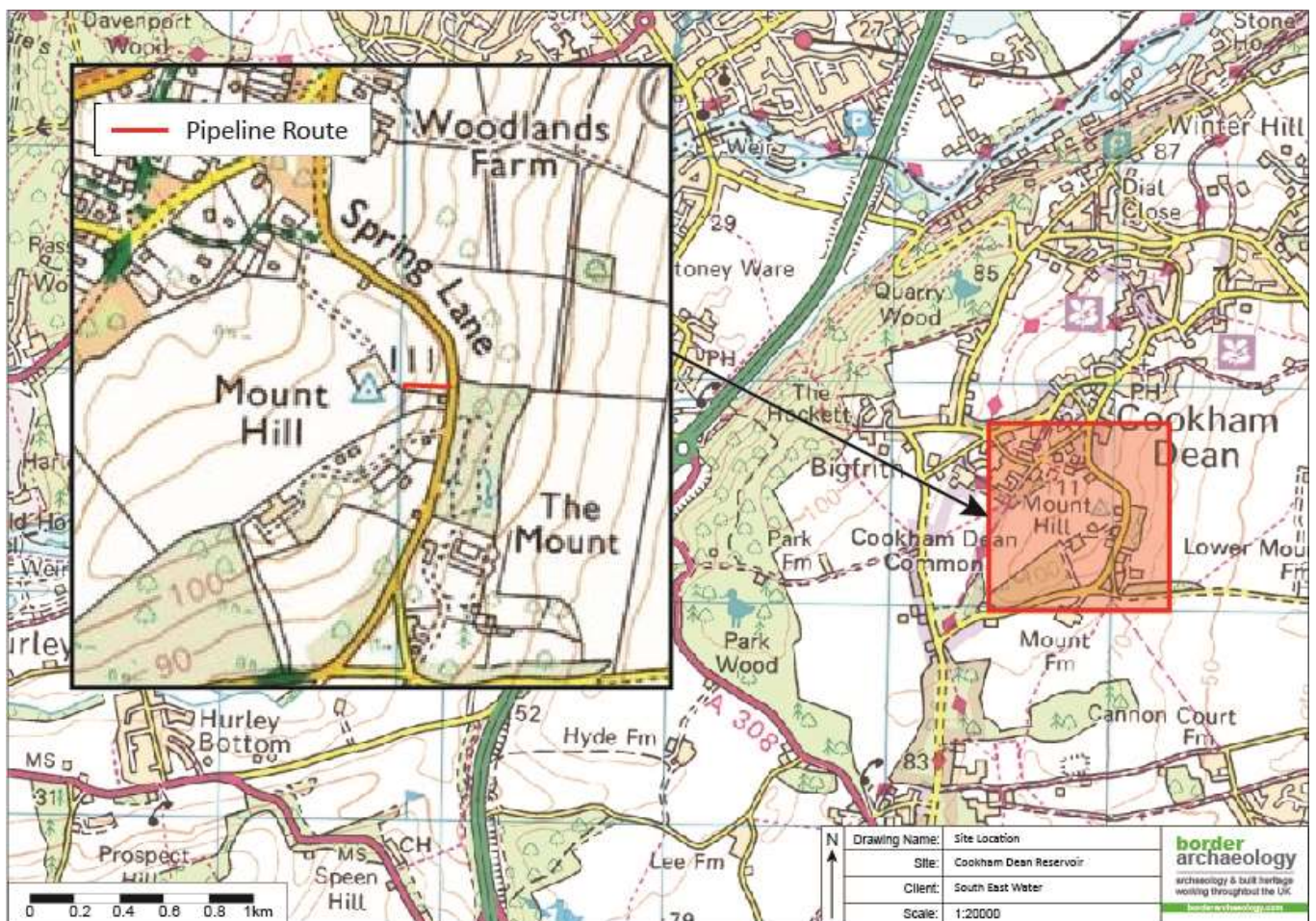


Fig. 1: Plan showing location of pipeline trench

### 2.1 Topography, Soils and Geology

The reservoir enclosure is located on a small rise at 110m that falls to 95m at the Spring Lane road exit, the slope running W to E in the pipeline direction. The surface geology is sand and gravel over a solid geology of London

Clay over Chalk. The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) classifies the site as the typical stagnogley soils of the WICKHAM 4 Series; consisting of slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clay, however, given the varied geology and slope in the area the soils will also be locally variable. The topsoil here suggested it was formed from the surface sand and gravel with an element of London clay and the Chalk (Table 1).

### 3 Historical and Archaeological Background

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Sites in the vicinity of the pipeline recorded in the Historic Environment Record for Berkshire include early prehistoric activity, attested by a number of lithic finds, including Palaeolithic artefact scatters at Lower Mount Farm (SU 880 841), Switchback Road (SU 876 837) and Danefield Pit (SU 878 852). Lower Palaeolithic and Neolithic handaxes have also been identified in Cookham (SU 876 842 & SU 870 854), and a number of Mesolithic tranchet axe heads have been found on Mount Hill itself at SU 868 842.

At Switchback Road, excavations prior to gravel extraction also revealed a short lived late Bronze Age settlement, consisting of two round post-built structures, 25 pits, postholes, wells and hearths, as well as a ceramic assemblage dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. The impoverished material assemblage recovered suggested the site was of a low status. Further Bronze Age occupation in the vicinity of the site is suggested by a pair of possible late Bronze Age/early Iron Age hut circles accompanied by fragments of very coarse pottery and a spindle whorl on Mount Hill (SU 868 842), a series of ring ditches in Cookham Dean (SU 861 838 & SU 860 838), and a fragment from the edge of a circular bronze ingot found in Quarry Wood, Bisham (SU 861 853). A Bronze Age round barrow cemetery, consisting of closely-spaced groups of up to 30 round barrows, has been recorded at Cock Marsh, located in a bend of the River Thames to the N of Cookham (SU 886 870).

Romano-British finds identified near the site are limited to a *denarius* of AD 91 found in Little Dean Close, Cookham SU 874 854, a fragment of Romano-British roof tile at Cannon Court Farm (SU 873 835), and scatters of Romano-British and medieval pottery sherds on Mount Hill (SU 870 845).

The site lies approximately 200m to the N of 'The Mount', A Grade II Listed large country house set in landscaped surroundings. The original structure of the house dates to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, but with late 19<sup>th</sup> century alterations and extensions.

### 4 Methodology

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The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014), *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015).

Topsoil was removed by machine using a 1.5m toothless bucket to create an E/W easement of 100m × 10m. A single 94m trench was then excavated by machine to a depth of 1.20m and a width of 0.6m using a 0.6m toothless bucket.

Observation was carried out along the full length of the easement strip and pipe trench. All stratigraphic layers were routinely checked during the groundworks to collect and record any significant finds.

#### 4.1 Recording

A full written, graphic and photographic record was made in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014) and included:

- A standard numbered context record for each stratigraphic unit encountered.
- A location plan tied into Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid data. Contractor regulatory conditions precluded entry to trenching in order to undertake detailed recording.
- A high-resolution digital photographic record was made. Photographs contain appropriate scales and were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register and on a photographic board, indexed by frame number.
- Sections were produced on gridded, archive-stable polyester film at a scale of 1:10. All drawings were numbered and listed in a drawing register, these drawing numbers being cross-referenced to written site records.

## 5 Results

Topsoil stripping revealed a dark topsoil (1001) of *circa* 0.4m depth overlying a subsoil (1002) which was a grey orange silty sand. Lower down the slope a greyish brown colluvial deposit (1003) was encountered. No features were recorded. Three worked flints were recovered from the topsoil

Item	Context No.	Date	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	1001	Modern	Deposit	Topsoil	Dark greyish-brown organic clayey silty sand; frequent small rounded stones, and flints. 0.33-0.59m deep. Overlying (1002)	-	-	-	Worked Flint	-	-
2	1002	Unknown	Deposit	Subsoil	Light grey orange clayey silty sand; very frequent small rounded stones and flints. 0.28-0.52m deep. Underlying (1001), overlying (1003) & (1004).	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	1003	Unknown	Deposit	Colluvium	Dark grey brown clayey silty sand; frequent small rounded stones and flints. 0.56-0.64m deep. Underlying (1002), overlying (1004)	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	1004	N/A	Geology	Geology	Light orange grey silty sands on dark grey blue clays. Underlying (1002) & (1003).	-	-	-	-	-	-

### 5.1.1 Table 1; Table of Contexts



## 6 Discussion

The land over which the groundworks was undertaken sloped significantly towards the E (*Plate 1*) and topsoil and sub-soil were seen increase in depth towards the E, where the subsoil was seen to seal a colluvial deposit (*Plate 2*).

The three worked flints whilst chronologically undiagnostic indicate prehistoric activity within the immediate area (*Appendix 1*).



*Plate 1: View W of incline of ground towards Cookham Dean reservoir*



*Plate 2: S-facing profile showing colluvial deposit (1003) sealed by the subsoil (1002)*

## 7 Conclusion

In spite of the evidence of prehistoric activity in this landscape, subsequent trenching did not reveal any deposits or features of archaeological significance.

The flints recovered from the topsoil (*Appendix 1*) included an end scraper and two flakes; whilst chronologically undiagnostic, these finds provide some evidence for prehistoric activity within the immediate area.

Whilst no features of antiquity were encountered, this should not be seen to reflect the archaeological potential of the area, which has shown evidence for extensive prehistoric activity from the Mesolithic through to Roman period, and has seen a continued and varied evolution of landscape development.

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## 9 Bibliography

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Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983, *Soil Survey of England and Wales*, Silsoe

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## 10 Appendix 1: The Flint

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*Rebecca Devaney*

Three pieces of worked flint were recovered from the topsoil (1001). Two of the flints are unretouched flakes and one is a minimally worked end and side scraper, which exhibits direct retouch on its distal end and left lateral edge.

The flints are all secondary removals and retain areas of dorsal cortex, as well as the negatives of previous flake removals. The cortex is thick and white and indicates that the flint was sourced from chalk flint, which is local to the area.

The flints remain uncorticated but have suffered moderate levels of post-depositional damage, consistent with their recovery from topsoil.

These pieces are not chronologically diagnostic but their significance lies in their representation of human activity at the site during prehistory.

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