



**EMMER GREEN CHILDREN'S CENTRE**  
**Grove Road**  
**Reading RG4**

County of Berkshire

Excavation report

August 2010

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**Grove Road**  
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Excavation report

Site Code: BR-EGC09

National Grid Reference: 471620 176529

Project Manager  
Author  
Graphics

Stewart Hoad  
Stephen Turner  
Judit Peresztegi

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Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED  
tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201  
MOLAGeneralEnquiries@museumoflondon.org.uk  
www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk

## Summary (non-technical)

*This report presents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out by Museum Of London Archaeology (MOLA) at Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre, Caversham, Reading. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Hampshire Property Services on behalf of the client Reading Borough Council.*

*Work on the re-development of the existing school service road and community centre was monitored between 05-06-2010 and 09-06-2010 a strip, map and sample excavation was carried out on the playing fields north of and adjacent to Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre*

*The highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at 82.59m OD. The main feature on the site was a late Iron Age to mid AD 3rd-century Roman boundary ditch which ran 18.40m from north to south across the area under investigation. Two smaller ditches ran off east to west roughly at right angles to the main ditch, one was dated by pottery to the late Iron Age the other yielded no finds but was probably contemporary to the other two ditches. The remaining features consisted of one stakehole adjacent to the main boundary ditch and one posthole unconnected to any of the other features, to the western extent of the site which was also dated to the late Iron Age/ early Roman period.*

*All features were sealed by subsoil and a top soil/ turf layer at 83.03m OD.*

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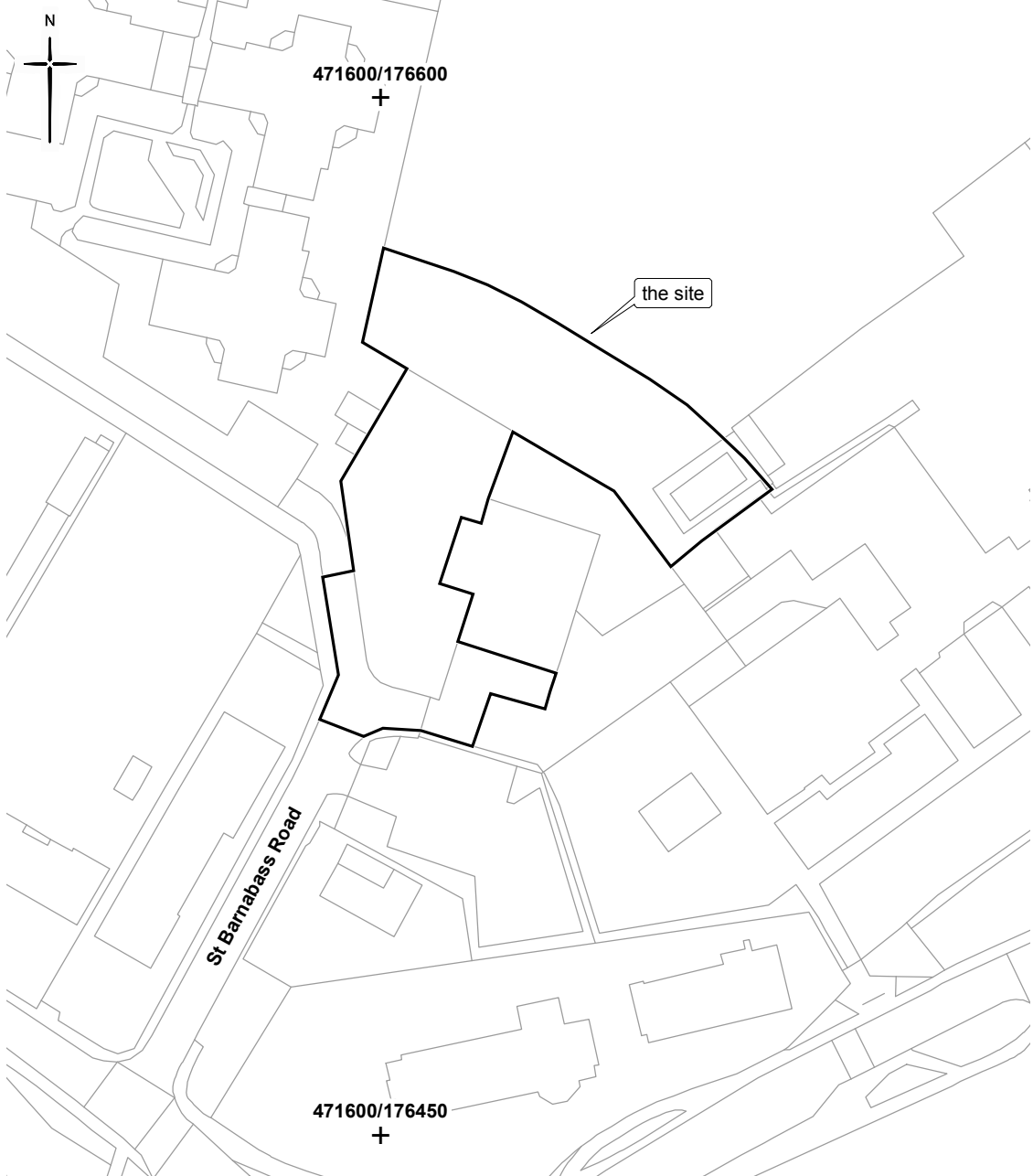
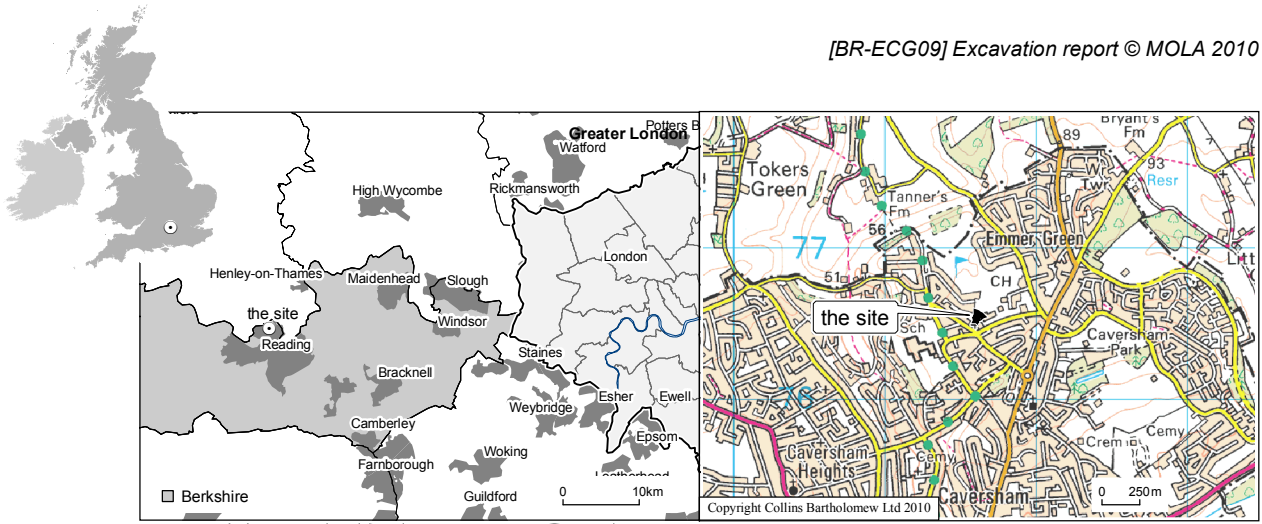
# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

The excavation took place at Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre, Grove Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8LN, hereafter called 'the site'. The site comprises a community centre single storey building, car park and grassed areas, and is bounded by residential properties fronting Chiltern Road to the southwest, St Barnabas Road to the south and Emmer Green Primary School to the north and east. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference SU 471620 176529. Modern pavement level near to the site lies at c 82m OD. The site code is BR-EGC09.

A desk top *Archaeological (impact) assessment* was previously written (MOLA, 2010) for the site. This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology and the historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential.

A field evaluation was also carried out between 06-04-2010 and 08-04-10 and an *Evaluation report* written on the results of this exercise (MOLA, 2010). This document, and the previous *Assessment*, informed the design for the excavation which was eventually carried out (*Method Statement section 1.2* MOLA, 2010).



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Fig 1 Site location

## 1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement* which formed the project design for the excavation (see Section 1.2, MOLA, 2010)

## 1.3 Planning background

The excavation was in response to an archaeological condition on the planning application for the development.

## 1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Hampshire Property Services on behalf of Reading Borough Council and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLA). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The report analyses the results of the excavation carried out on the site between 05-07-10 to 09-07-10.

## 1.5 Research aims and objectives of excavation

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the excavation (Section 2.2);

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- What are the latest deposits identified?
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity on the site associated with the three socketed axes of late Bronze Age date found during the construction of the adjacent Emmer Green Primary School?
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity relating to the Middle Iron Age remains found at the nearby site of Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, or the later Iron Age coin found on St Barnabas Road?
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity relating to the Roman period? If so are these remains associated with those found at the nearby sites of Highdown Hill Road and Grove House, by either date, form or function?
- Does the AD 1st century ditch recorded in Trench 3 continue to the south and is there further evidence of comparable ditches/field systems on site?



## 2 Topographical and historical background

The site is located in Caversham to the north of Reading. Here the ground is relatively flat and lies at a height of 83.40 – 83.23m OD. The underlying geology comprises of River Gravels (BGS1946).

### 2.1 Prehistoric

For references to gazetteer numbers please refer back to the WSI (MOLA 2010).

Twenty-three flint handaxes, three choppers, one borer, one scraper and one flake have been recovered from a gravel pit located to the south east of the site on Caversham Hill, SMR00793 (Gaz. No.11). These were recovered from the gravels and were dated to the Lower Palaeolithic.

At Emmer Green Primary School, adjacent to the site, three socketed axes of late Bronze Age date were recovered during construction of the school SMR00785-MRD862. Later archaeological investigation on the site failed to recover any further archaeological remains. (Gaz. No.46).

A gold stater of Iron Age date with the head of Tincommius (c.35-10BC) was recovered from St Barnabas Road SMR00786 – MRD863. (Gaz. No.20).

At Cedarcot, Lyefield Court (ERM657) an archaeological evaluation recovered sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery, three flint flakes and fragments of burnt flint. A small terminal gully, which may have formed part of a ring gully for a house/hut was also uncovered. (Gaz. No.50).

An evaluation at 41-49 Grove Road (ERM776) revealed an undated struck flint scraper and possible flint flake. (Gaz. No.52).

A watching brief at Shipnell's Farm (ERM964) to the west of the site revealed a flint flake on the natural gravels, but no features. (Gaz. No.53).

### 2.2 Roman

An iron brooch and Roman pottery of possible Belgic origin were recovered during excavation at 7 Highdown Hill Road (ERM260) SMR00819-MRD123. An irregular pit with coarse pottery, fourteen bronze coins of 4th century date and metal objects were found on the site. Two post hole and fragments of burnt wattle daub were also recorded. (Gaz. No.44). Fifteen pot-boilers and a fragment of hand thrown pottery of possible pre-Roman date were also noted.

Evidence of late Roman occupation by the Old Tythe Barn at Grove House was found during building of new houses in 1966 SMR00819 – MRD868. A shallow pit or part of a ditch was found and produced a large amount of Roman pottery and sixteen coins (some of which were forgeries). (Gaz. No.21).

### **2.3 Undated**

Three crop mark ring features at The Common Recreation Ground at Emmer Green have been identified from aerial photographs MRM16170. They are located to the north of the recreation ground.

## **3 The excavation**

### **3.1 Methodology**

All archaeological excavation and recording during the excavation was done in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2010) and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

The area under investigation was stripped by the sub-contractor and was monitored by MOL Archaeology staff.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by MOLA surveying team. This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

The heights of observations and/or archaeological remains were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum using GPS/GNSS surveying equipment.

Where relevant, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20; numbered contexts were allocated where appropriate.

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 16 context records; 8 plans at 1:20; and 10 photographs. In addition 1 box of finds was recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code BR-EGC09 and will be transferred to the Reading Museums Service on completion of the project.

### **3.2 Results of the excavation**

A single archaeological intervention was made on the site.

A description of the archaeological deposits follows below. For all areas of excavation see Fig 2.

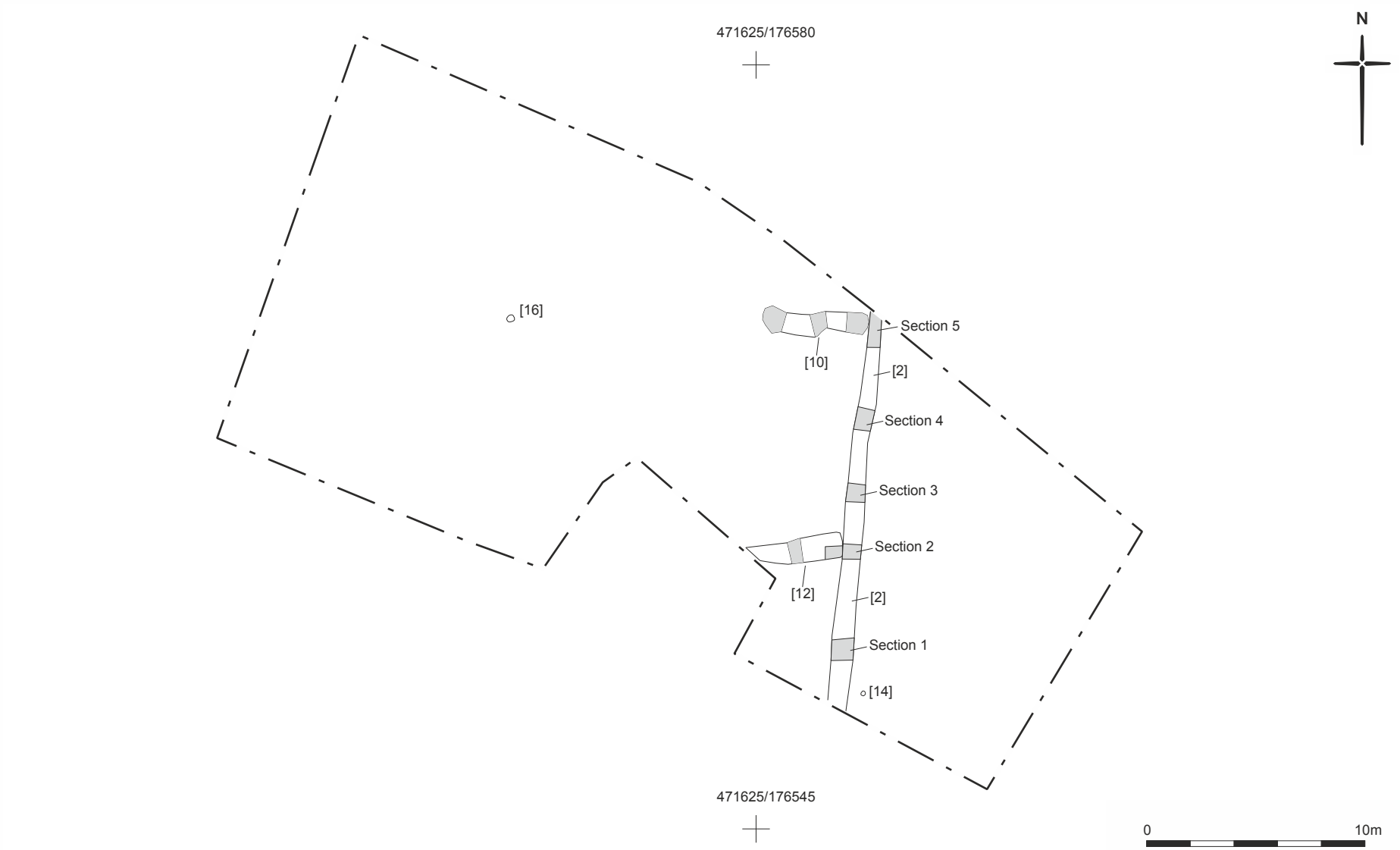


Fig 2 Excavation area

### 3.3 Excavation Area 1

The natural river terrace sands and gravels were encountered at 82.46m OD to the north of the site and 82.57m at the south, truncating the natural deposits were several features, comprising three ditches, a post-hole and a stake-hole.

Ditch [2] which was partially excavated during the previous evaluation was observed to run roughly north to south for 18.40m across the site and beyond the limits of the excavation.

Five sections were excavated into the ditch [2] along its length to ascertain the form and function of this feature. See (Fig 2 and Fig 3)

#### Section 1

The rounded base of the ditch cut into the natural sands and gravel to a depth of 82.26m OD. This section showed the ditch to have gradually sloping sides rising up. The top of the ditch cut measured 1.05m wide at 82.57m OD. The ditch consisted of two fills. The primary fill of the ditch was 0.12m thick, sloping slightly down from east to west, and consisted of a dark, brownish grey, clayey silt with frequent inclusions of sub-angular flints and charcoal flecks [4] (Fig 4). This fill yielded several sherds of late Iron Age/early Roman and later Roman pottery (see appendix 3).

The secondary backfill of the ditch was 0.19m thick and had a compact, dark brown, sandy silt with frequent gravels and medium to large flint nodules [3]. Several small fragments of Roman tile and brick were recovered (Fig 4).

#### Section 2

The base of the cut of the ditch was recorded at 82.41m OD, with the sides gradually sloping up. The ditch measured 0.95m wide at the top of the cut, at 82.58m OD. The ditch was filled with a 0.17m thick deposit of compact, light brown, clayey silt and gravels with occasional medium sized flints [5]. No finds were recovered.

#### Section 3

The base of the ditch in this section was at 82.55m OD and was 0.85m wide at the top of the cut, which was recorded at 82.35m OD. The ditch was filled with a light brown, silt and gravel, 0.20m thick, with occasional medium sized flints [6]. No finds were recovered.

#### Section 4

This section incorporated and extended the section excavated during the evaluation. The base of the ditch, recorded at 82.46m OD, cut into the natural sand and gravels and had concave sides. The ditch being measured 0.40m wide at the top of the cut (at 82.30m OD). The fill of the ditch comprised a loose, mid-greyish brown, sandy silt with frequent small flints and occasional flecks of charcoal [8]. Several sherds of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery were recovered from this fill (see appendix 3).

## Section 5

The ditch base was recorded at 82.31m OD with sides gradually rising up to 82.49m OD. The top of the ditch at this point measured 0.65m wide. The fill comprised a compact, light brown, sandy silt and gravel, with occasional medium sized flints [7]. No finds were recovered.

To the south-east of the ditch a small post/stake hole was observed. The pointed base of the hole at 82.35m OD had sharply rising sides and was circular in plan measuring 0.23m in diameter at 82.57m OD [14]. The fill of this feature was composed of a loose, mid grey, sandy silt, with frequent small gravel and charcoal flecks [13]. No finds were recovered.

To the west of ditch [2] were two separate linear features, the first, located towards the southern extent to the site varied in width from 1.10m to 0.60m and ran east to west for 4.05m into the limit of the excavation [12]. At the eastern end the linear features terminus abutted ditch [2]. The association between these features is not known but [12] may have truncated or have been truncated at a higher level by [2]. This ditch had a flat base recorded at 82.43m OD. It had gradually sloping sides with the top of the cut recorded at 82.59m OD. The fill comprised a light, brownish-grey, silty sand with frequent rounded and angular flints [11]. Several sherds of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery were recovered from this feature (see appendix 3).

A second parallel ditch was located at the northern end of site, to the west of ditch [2]. This feature was 5.20m long and varied in width from 0.50m to 0.85m. The ditch had a flat base at 82.31m had gradually sloping sides up to 82.46m OD [10]. The fill of this ditch comprised a compact, light yellowish-brown, fine silt and gravels with occasional charcoal fleck [9]. No finds were recovered.

Towards the western extent of the site was a single post-hole, which measured 0.30m in diameter. It had a flat base, recorded at 82.21m OD and vertical sides, the top of which were recorded at 82.41m OD [16]. The fill was loose mid-grey, clayey sand with frequent gravel, charcoal, and medium sized flints [15]. Several sherds of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery and a fragment of daub were recovered from this context (see appendix 3).

All features were sealed by a subsoil 0.40m thick, composed of a mid greyish brown, clayey silt layer containing moderate quantities of gravel. This was in turn capped by 0.10m of a dark brown, silty top soil and turf layer at 83.03m OD.



Fig 3 General view of site looking south



Fig 4 Section 1 of ditch [2] looking north

## 4 Potential of archaeology

### 4.1 Realisation of original research aims

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?  
The natural river terrace sands and gravels were exposed at 82.46m to 82.57m OD.
- What are the earliest deposits identified?  
The earliest deposits dated by the pottery recovered from the fills would appear to be posthole [16] and ditch [10] from the Late Iron Age/early Roman period, however ditch [2] also produced pottery from this and the later Roman period showing that the feature may have been open for quite a considerable period
- What are the latest deposits identified?  
The latest deposit identified was the upper backfill [3] in ditch [2] which was dated by pottery, deposited in a lower fill [4], to be at least after the mid AD 3rd–Century.
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity on the site associated with the three socketed axes of late Bronze Age date found during the construction of the adjacent Emmer Green Primary School?  
No evidence was observed relating to Bronze Age activity within the area of the site.
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity relating to the Middle Iron Age remains found at the nearby site of Cedarcot, Lyefield Court, or the later Iron Age coin found on St Barnabas Road?  
There appears to be no evidence of activity on the site during the middle Iron Age, but the pottery recovered dates most of the features to at least the late Iron Age and beyond.
- Is there any evidence of occupation or activity relating to the Roman period? If so are these remains associated with those found at the nearby sites of Highdown Hill Road and Grove House, by either date, form or function?  
Ditches [2], [12] and posthole [16] all produced pottery dating to the late Iron Age/early Roman period; however the presence of Roman brick and tile as well as pottery dating to the mid AD 3rd –century from ditch [2]. No evidence linking these features with those at Highdown Hill Road and Grove House was uncovered.
- Does the AD 1st–century ditch recorded in Trench 3 continue to the south and is there further evidence of comparable ditches/field systems on site?  
The Ditch [2] dated to AD 1st–century was observed running south and north beyond the area of excavation. The ditch was the main feature on the site but its relationship to ditches [10] and [12] remains unclear.



## **4.2 General discussion of the archaeology**

Whilst only a few archaeological features were observed during the investigation, they indicate activity on site from at least the AD 1st-century to the mid AD 3rd-century. The main feature initially found during the previous evaluation of a boundary ditch running across site indicates that a settlement may well lay close by. The features all date to within the same time frame but their relationship to each other and the crop marks close by (MRM16170) is uncertain.

## **4.3 Significance of the data**

Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

## 5 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic research into the development of London.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2010) with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 4) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 4.3) it is suggested that a short article or note on the results of the strip map and sample should be published in the Berkshire Archaeological Journal.

## 6 Conclusions

The limited number of archaeological features and finds recovered from the excavation makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions about occupation and past activities on the site. However, the assessment of the evidence from ditch [2] indicates that it became narrower and shallower as it extended across the excavation area to the north, possibly signifying that landscaping had occurred at some point in the past (possibly relating to the construction of the school), reducing the ground level in that area and probably removing some if any surviving horizontal archaeological remains.

The gradual silting up and slumping of the basal fill [4] in the base of the ditch could indicate that a bank, running along the eastern side of the ditch, into which post-hole [14] may have been cut, possibly marked it as a boundary ditch. This feature appears to have been open for some period of time with pottery from the late Iron Age to the mid AD 3rd-century in its fill with a deliberate later backfill [3] when it went out of use. The presence of Roman building material in this later backfill possibly indicates that a structure may well have stood nearby.

The function of the two east west running ditches [10] and [12] is as yet unknown, as well as isolated post-hole [16], which yielded late Iron Age/early Roman pottery and daub. It was noted that the natural material became increasingly more clayey towards the western extent of the site possibly rendering the area less suitable for habitation or working, than the well drained gravels to the east.

## 7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following for their contributions and help in producing this report:

Morgan Sindell plc  
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Museum of London, 1994 *Archaeological Site Manual 3rd edition*

## 9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

### 9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-80897

#### Project details

Project name	EMMER GREEN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE
Short description of the project	Strip, map and sample excavation five features recorded natural sand and gravels at 82.57m OD truncated by one large boundary ditch running from north to south 18.4m long by c0.50m wide dating from the AD 1st-century to the mid AD 3rd century. another two shorter ditches c 5.0m long running east-west at a tangent to the main ditch dated to the AD 1st-century and one stakehole and one post hole c. 0.2m dia also dated to the AD 1st century.
Project dates	Start: 05-06-2010 End: 09-06-2010
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	BR-ECG09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	DITCH Late Iron Age
Monument type	DITCH Late Iron Age
Monument type	DITCH Late Iron Age
Monument type	STAKEHOLE Late Iron Age
Monument type	POSTHOLE Late Iron Age
Significant Finds	POTTERY Late Iron Age

Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE READING READING EMMER GREEN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE
Postcode	RG4 8LN
Study area	1000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 471620 176529 50.9558263646 -1.328455387420 50 57 20 N 001 19 42 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 82.41m Max: 82.57m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoL Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	MOL Archaeology
Project director/manager	Stewart Hoad

Project supervisor Stephen Turner

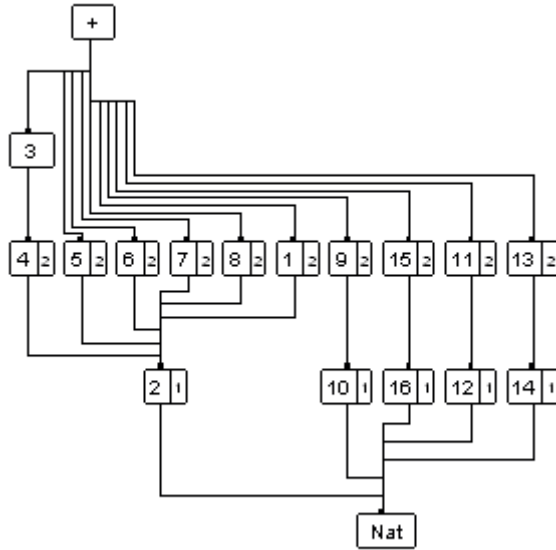
Type of sponsor/funding body Reading Borough Council

Name of sponsor/funding body Hampshire property Service

Entered by Stephen Turner (sturner@museumoflondon.org.uk)

Entered on 11 August 2010

## 10 Appendix 1 Site matrix





## 11 Appendix 2 List of contexts

- [1] Fill of ditch [2]
- [2] Cut of ditch
- [3] Upper fill of section 1 ditch [2]
- [4] Lower fill of section 1 ditch [2]
- [5] Fill of section 2 ditch [2]
- [6] Fill of section 3 ditch [2]
- [7] Fill of section 5 ditch [2]
- [8] Fill of section 4 ditch [2]
- [9] Fill of ditch/linear [10]
- [10] Cut ditch/linear
- [11] Fill of ditch/linear [12]
- [12] Cut of ditch/linear
- [13] Fill of post/stakehole [14]
- [14] Cut of post/stakehole
- [15] Fill of posthole [16]
- [16] *Cut of posthole*

## 12 Appendix 3 Specialist Reports

### 12.1 Pottery

*By Amy Thorp*

#### *Introduction*

The pottery from BR-EGC09 was spot-dated and recorded in accordance with current MOL Archaeology procedure, using standard fabric, form and decoration codes. The data were entered onto the Oracle database, including quantification by sherd count, estimated number of vessels and weight in grams. A total of 56 sherds of pottery from a maximum of twelve vessels (weight 714g) were recovered from the site from five contexts. This includes the previously recorded material from context [1].

#### *Late Iron Age and Roman Pottery*

The pottery recovered from the second phase of this site is predominantly similar to that recorded from context [1] with a strong Late Iron Age/early Roman appearance. Particularly important is Context [8] which contained a further six sherds from the same necked jar identified in context [1]. Context [15] demonstrated the most variety with sherds from five sand-tempered vessels. The presence of moderate scattering of flint inclusions in one of these vessels is another indication of a transitional LIA/RB date. The six sherds (two vessels) of grog-tempered fabrics present in context [11] have also been given a LIA/RB date from their general appearance and association with the rest of the assemblage.

The exception to this LIA/RB pattern is the black-burnished-style ware (BBS) vessel in context [4]; five sherds from this bowl were present giving its complete profile. A wide date of AD 120-250 has been given for this vessel, but it may be closer to the end of this range as the closest parallel from Holbrook and Bidwell (1991, Fig 44, No 57.2) is dated to approximately the mid AD 3rd century. This vessel would need closer examination with local examples of black burnished wares to provide a more definite date.

## 12.2 Summary Note on Building Materials

A total of 11 fragments of building material were recovered from BR-EGC09, comprising two very small fragments of Roman daub (context [15]) and nine pieces of Roman ceramic roofing tile and brick (context [3]).

The building material from BR-EGC09 has been fully recorded and the information added to the Oracle database.

### Discussion

The small fragments of Roman daub are made from light brown fairly sandy clay. They were found associated with pottery of AD40–100 date. There is no indication of form or function.

The fired ceramic building material comprises four pieces of tegula roofing, one brick and four broken scraps of uncertain function. All are Roman, but cannot be dated any more precisely without reference to dated Roman tile from the same area.

All the Roman tile and brick is the same rather nondescript orange and reddish-brown fabric (type BR15) suggesting they are probably originate from the same tiliary. This fabric comprises a slightly silty background clay matrix with a scatter of quartz (up to 0.5mm) with occasional dark orangey-red iron oxide inclusions.

The brick measures 45mm in thickness suggesting it is of bessalis, pedalis or lydion type.

Presumably these tiles came from a Roman building somewhere in the area, although their abraded surface suggests they could also have been transported on to the site from elsewhere.