JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

ON LAND AT

WINDSOR RACECOURSE MARINA,

MAIDENHEAD ROAD,

WINDSOR, BERKSHIRE

NGR SU49719304

On behalf of

The Historic Environment Consultancy

OCTOBER 2013

REPORT FOR   The Historic Environment Consultancy
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                        Goring on Thames
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ILLUSTRATIONS

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation comprising 18 test pits on land at Windsor Racecourse Marina to the north of Maidenhead Road, Windsor. Four of the test pits were excavated to the full depth of the underlying prehistoric riverbed; for health and safety reasons the rest of the trenches were only excavated to the top of the fluvial deposits of the former river channel. No evidence for gravel islands, human occupation or activity was present. The wall of the swimming pool associated with the former use of the marina complex – a holiday camp – was revealed as was evidence for an access track associated either with the holiday camp or more likely with the excavation of the marina.

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Site location (Figure 1)

The site lies on the north side of Maidenhead Road, Windsor centred on national grid reference SU 94685 77506, in the Royal Borough of Windsor. The area lies approximately at 20m AOD. The surface geology comprises alluvial deposits. The current land use is recreation grounds attached to the marina.

1.2   Planning Background

Planning permission has been has been granted by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council for an extension to the existing marina (11/01936). It was considered likely that some archaeological deposits of interest could be disturbed or exposed by the development. A programme of archaeological field evaluation comprising test pitting was required. Berkshire Archaeology advised on and set out the requirements for this.

A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by The Historic Environment Consultancy*,* which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, was submitted to and accepted by Berkshire Archaeology.

1.3   Archaeological Background

A Desk-Based Assessment was prepared by CgMs Consulting Ltd (Gidman 2012). Further detailed information can be found there. The WSI (Wardle 2013) condenses this information.

It noted that although the immediate area has not yielded much evidence for any period, the proposal site is located in a wider landscape of some potential.

The most significant potential identified was for prehistoric use of gravel islands and river-edge activities as evidenced c. 500m to the northwest on the site of Eton Rowing Lake where Oxford Archaeology (then Oxford Archaeological Unit) undertook an extended campaign of excavation in advance of construction of the lake, which revealed gravel islands and river-edge activities from the Mesolithic onwards. Extensive detail concerning the river's hydrography were revealed by the
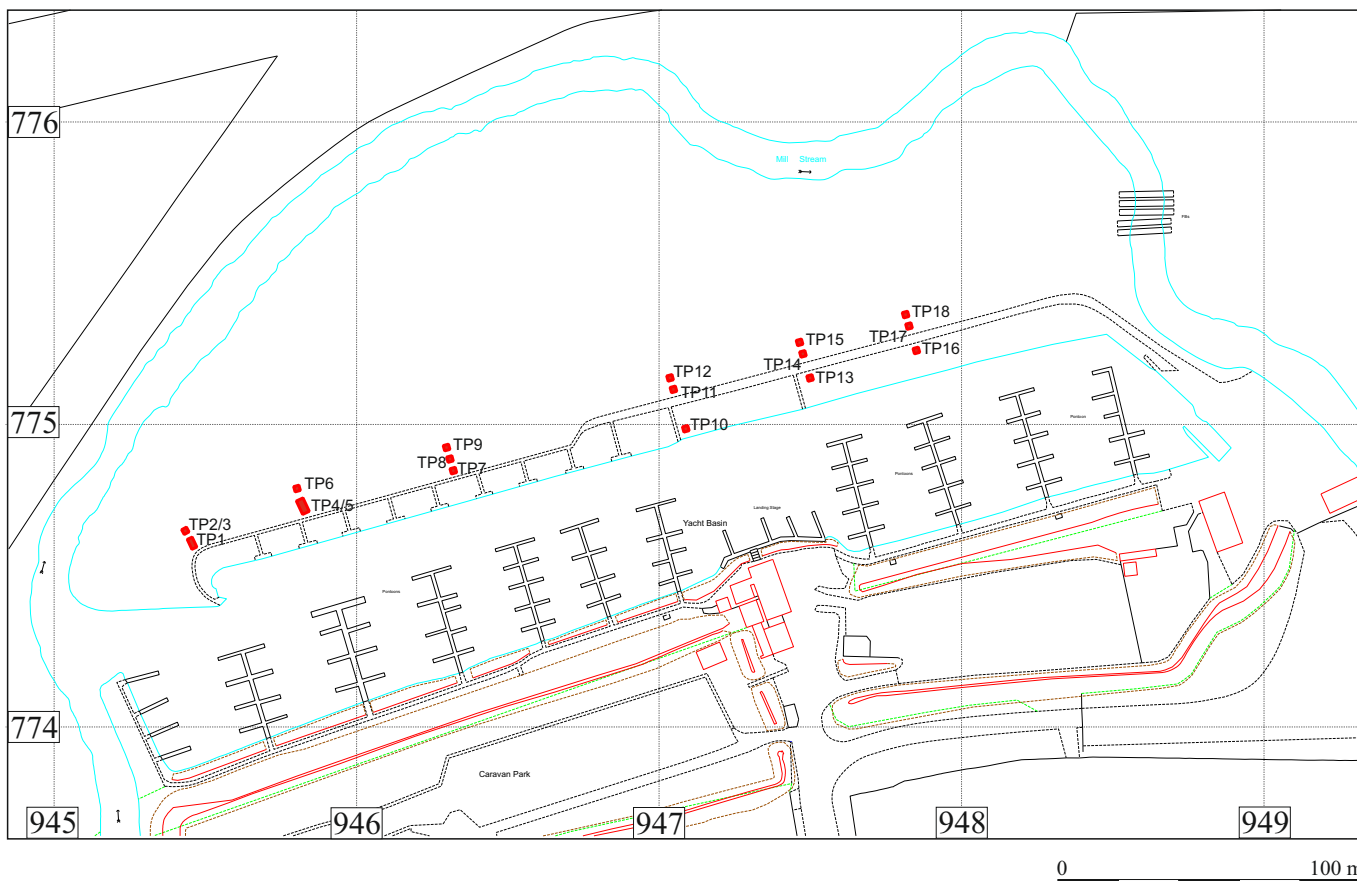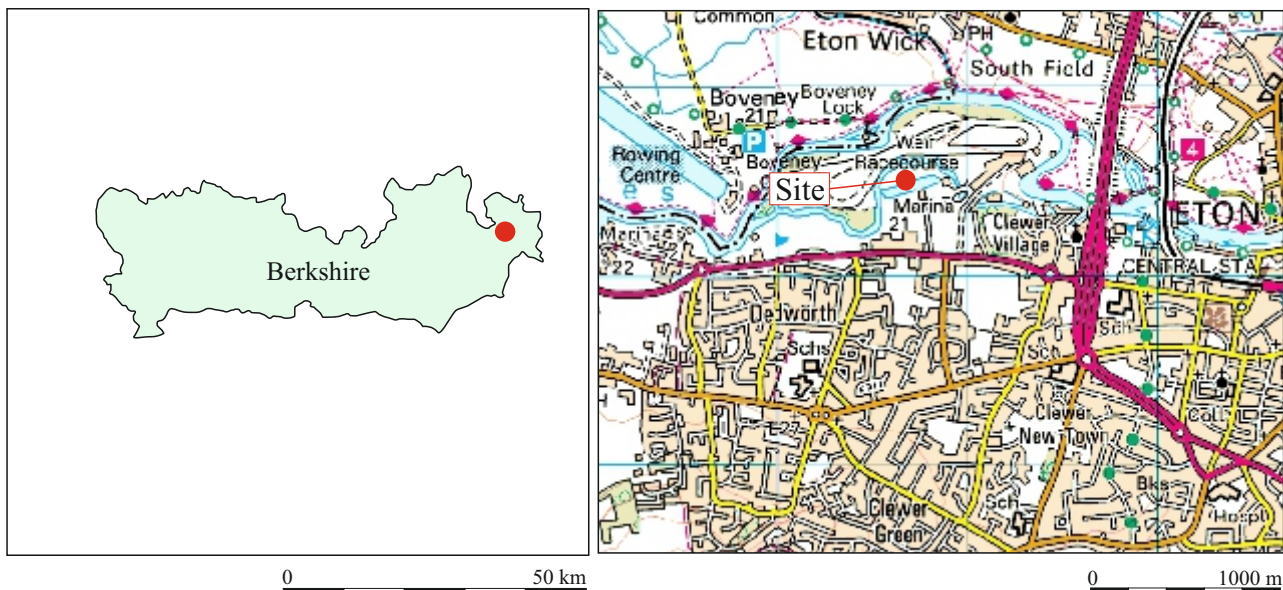
Figure 1: Site location

investigations showing how the various channels evolved and silted up falling into desuetude (Allen & Welsh 1996).

2   AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To determine if any archaeological remains exist on the development area

- To assess the condition, survival, quality and significance of any archaeological remains found

If archaeological remains are found, further more comprehensive examination may take place, if they will be disturbed by the development.

3   STRATEGY

3.1   Research Design

In response to a *Brief* from Berkshire Archaeology a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by The Historic Environment Consultancy and submitted to and agreed with Berkshire Archaeology. JMHS carried out the work according to the WSI.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2   Methodology

The evaluation required the mechanical excavation of 18 test pits measuring 2m×2m; in the event due to on-site considerations 14 test pits measuring at least 2m×2m were opened with a further two test pits measuring at least 2m×4.5m also opened. The trenches – with the exception of Trench 10 – were excavated to a minimum depth of 0.7m; the top of the ?pre-medieval fluvium (105). Excavation of the trenches was carried out by a 7-tonne excavator with a ditching bucket under archaeological control (Fig. 1).

4   RESULTS

All deposits were assigned an individual context number and due to the proximity of the test pits during the evaluation these were linked across the test pits. Context numbers indicate features i.e. cuts that were investigated during the evaluation; while numbers in parentheses - ( ) - show feature fills or deposits of material. All measurements are given in metres. A general description of the features and fills, or
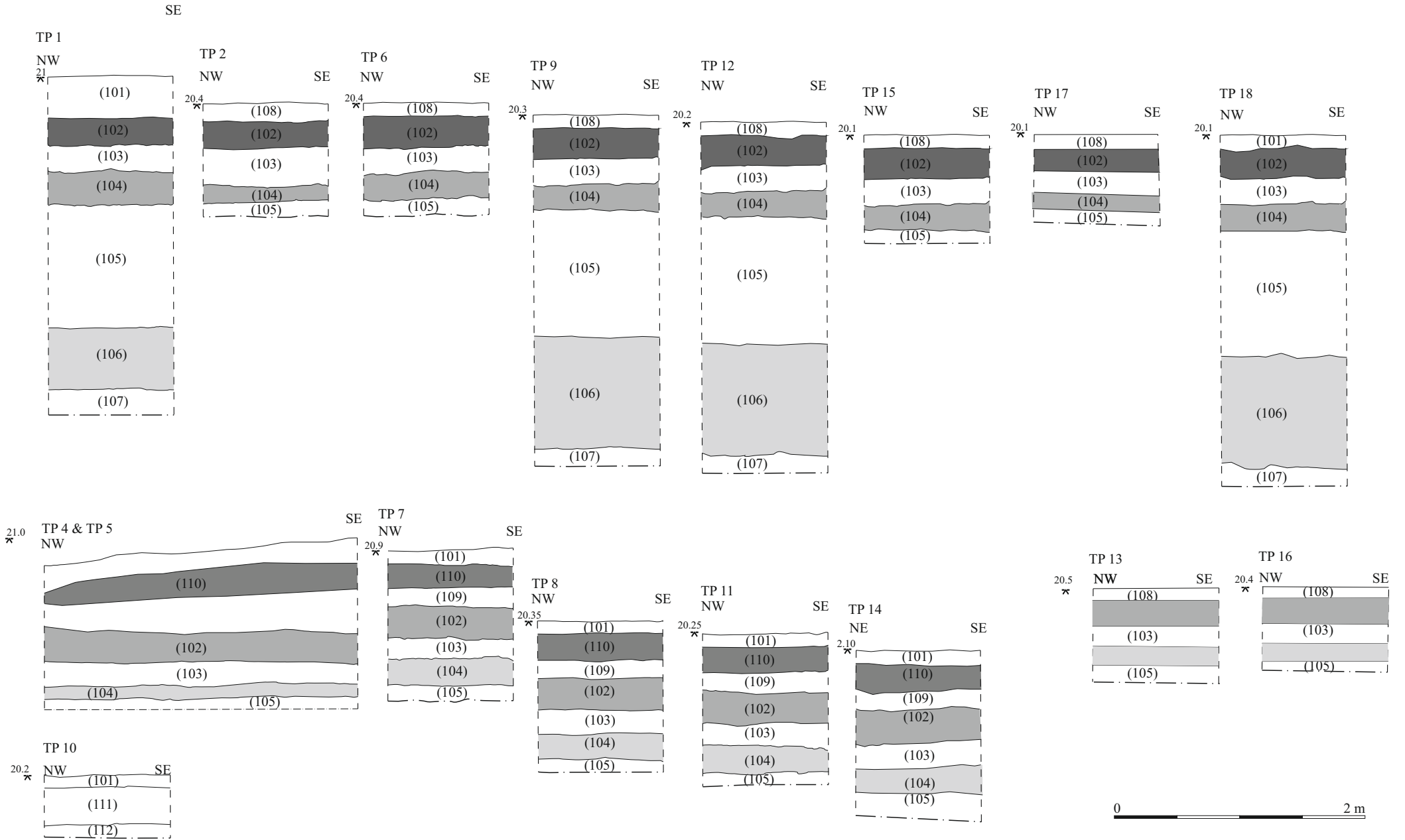
Figure 2: Test pit locations

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deposits, observed is given in the Appendix Context Description at the rear of the report.

4.1 Fieldwork *(Figures 1-2)*

Four of the test pits – Test pits 1, 9, 12, 18 – were excavated to the natural river terrace deposits of sandy gravel (107) which was at an approximate depth of between 17.45m AOD (Test pit 18) and 18.25m (Test pit 1). The change in height above sea-level is more than likely due to the location of the top of the gravel within the river-bed; Test pit 1 represented the river-bed nearer the river-bank whereas Test pit 18 was farther from the river-edge.

The gravel river-bed deposit (107) was overlain by a layer of coarse dark grey silty sand (106), measuring 0.45m thick, which had a strong organic smell and contained an increasing amount of waterlogged driftwood and vegetation the nearer to river-bed (107). This represents a relatively high-energy river deposit.

A layer of loose, grey blue sandy silt with orange streaking (105), measuring approximately 1m thick, which overlay the silty sand (106), was more compact than the high-energy deposit (106). The layer (105) represents a slower flowing river-course. All these layers would appear to have been consistently under water.

The layer of grey blue sand (105) was overlain by pale grey brown clay silt (104), measuring 0.25m thick, which represents a slow river channel in the process of silting up.

Dark mid brown slightly humic silty clay (103), measuring 0.2m thick, representing an alluvially derived former topsoil deposit sealed the uppermost river channel fill (105). Overlying the alluvial topsoil (103) was a later, paler brown silty clay alluvial former topsoil (102), approximately 0.25m thick.

Sealing this alluvial former topsoil (102) in the northern part of the west end investigation area was modern topsoil (108). A dirtier topsoil containing modern rubbish (101) sealed Test pit 1.

To the south the layer of alluvially derived topsoil (102) was overlain by crush (110) which formed a track seen in Test pits 4/5, 7, 8, 11 and 14, which was in turn sealed by a dirty topsoil matrix containing modern rubbish (109). Test pit 10 revealed the concrete wall (112) of the former swimming pool and a layer of demolition (111) associated with the swimming pool, sealed by (101); as water was pouring in the test pit and no breaker was fixed to the excavator, excavation in Test pit 10 stopped at *c.* 400mm.

4.2   Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The evaluation took place during clement conditions between 24th and 25th September. The work was monitored by Dr Peter Wardle on behalf of the Historic Environment Consultancy and Roland Smith of Berkshire Archaeology on behalf of Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Council.

Plates 1-4 Test pits 1, 9, 4/5 & 17

Test pit 1

Test pit 4/5

Test pit 9

Test pit 17

5   FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1   Finds

No finds were present, earleir than modern rubbish which was noted but not retained.

5.2   Environmental Remains

No palaeoenvironmental samples were taken, as the potential was not felt to be sufficient to warrant sampling.

6   DISCUSSION

The site comprises a former channel of the Thames which can be likened to the activity seen to the northwest at Eton Rowing Lake (Allen 1995). Similar historic river channels, dating from the Mesolithic onwards, were seen to have been cut through what is now the present floodplain.

The intervention under consideration is located within the river channel and so, unlike some of the evidence for occupation such as Mesolithic flint-knapping spreads or Bronze Age burial at Eton which were on former gravel islands, there is no evidence for occupation. Evidence for bridges or piers, which was also recovered from the Eton Rowing Lake excavations (Allen & Welsh 1996, Fig 13), was not present.

The deposits present indicate a deep river channel, the base of which was at approximately 2m below modern ground level, in which are a sequence of deposits demonstrating the change from a fast flowing, high energy river − in which a moderate amount of waterlogged brushwood and vegetation is present − to a sluggish, shallow, low energy, silt-laden stream, before it finally silted up.

Following the silting up of the stream, the depression formed by the former stream was filled by successive periods of alluviation with seasonal regeneration, evidenced by the slightly to quite humic nature of the alluvially derived topsoil horizons.

An access track, undoubtedly associated with either the holiday camp or the excavation of the marina was observed in several of the test pits. This was modern and was sealed in places by topsoil.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY
APPENDIX 1 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctxt	Type	Description	D (m)	Finds	Date	Interpretation
101	Layer	Friable, grey brown silty clay humus	c. 0.35	No	–	Topsoil on bank
102	Layer	Mid brown humic silty clay	c. 0.25	No	–	Alluvially derived former topsoil
103	Layer	Dark mid brown, slightly humic silty clay	c. 0.2	No	–	Alluvially derived former topsoil
104	Layer	Pale grey brown clay silt	c. 0.25	No	–	Fluvially derived deposit
105	Layer	Loose, grey blue sandy silt with orange streaking	c. 1	No	–	Fluvium
106	Layer	Coarse, dark grey silty sandy with vegetation	c. 0.45	No	–	Fluvium
107	Layer	Grey gravel & sand	>0.15	No	–	Relict river bed
108	Layer	Friable, grey brown silty clay humus occ. brick	c. 0.1	No	–	Topsoil in field
109	Layer	Friable, grey brown silty clay humus occ. brick	c. 0.15	No	–	Topsoil over track
110	Layer	Hardcore comprising brick, concrete and stone	c. 0.2	Q	–	Access track make-up
111	Layer	Mid brown humic silty clay	c. 0.3	No	–	Redeposited (102); only in Test pit 10
112	Layer	Concrete	Unk.	No	–	Swimming pool

Test pit 1: m 2× 2.3×2.65m
NGR: 494549/177460
Top: c. 20.9 Base: c. 18.25

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.35
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.25
105	1
106	0.45
107	0.15

Test pit 2: 2m × 4.5×0.8m
NGR: 494542/177470
Top: c. 20.4 Base: c. 19.6

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.1
105	>0.15

Test pit 3
Test pit not excavated due to Test pit being 4.5m × 2m

Test pit 4/5: 5m × 2×1.4m
NGR: 494584/177479
Top: c. 21.0 Base: c. 19.6

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.35
110	0.2
109	0.15
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.15
105	>0.1

Test pit 6: 2m × 2.2×0.85m
NGR: 494580/177479
Top: c. 20.4 Base: c. 19.55

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.2
105	>0.1

Test pit 7: 2m × 2.15×1.45m
NGR: 494631/177485
Top: c. 20.9 Base: c. 18.45

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.1
110	0.2
109	0.15
102	0.25
103	0.15
104	0.2
105	>0.1

Test pit 8: 2m × 2.2×1.15m
NGR: 494630/177489
Top: c. 20.35 Base: 19.2

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
110	0.2
109	0.15
102	0.25
103	0.15
104	0.2
105	>0.1

Test pit 9: 2m × 2.1×2.7m
NGR: 494629/177493
Top: c. 20.3 Base: c. 17.6

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.2
105	1
106	0.9
107	>0.1

Test pit 10: 2m × 2×0.4m
NGR: 494709/177499
Top: c. 20.2 Base: 19.8

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.1
111	0.3
112	Unk.

Test pit 11: 2m × 2.5×1.15m
NGR: 494705/177511
Top: c. 20.25 Base: c. 19.1

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.1
110	0.2
109	0.15
102	0.25
103	0.15
104	0.2
105	>0.1

Test pit 12: 2m × 2×2.7m
NGR: 494703/177515
Top: c. 20.2 Base: c. 17.5

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.2
105	1
106	0.9
107	>0.5

Test pit 13: 2m × 2.2×0.7m
NGR: 494750/177515
Top: c. 20.5 Base: 19.8

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.2
103	0.15
104	0.15
105	>0.1

Test pit 14: 2m × 2.1×1.15m
NGR: 494748/177523
Top: c. 20.1 Base: 18.95

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.1
110	0.2
109	0.15
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.15
105	>0.1

Test pit 15: 2m × 2.15×0.85m
NGR: 494746/177527
Top: c. 20.1   Base: c. 19.25

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.2
105	>0.1

Test pit 16: 2m × 2×0.7m
NGR: 494785/177525
Top: c. 20.5   Base: 19.8

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.2
103	0.15
104	0.15
102	>0.1

Test pit 17: 2m × 2.2×0.7m
NGR: 494783/177533
Top: 20.1   Base: 19.4

Context	Depth (m)
101	0.1
102	0.2
103	0.15
104	0.15
105	>0.1

Test pit 18: 2m × 2.1×2.8m
NGR: 494781/177537
Top: 20.1   Base: c. 17.3

Context	Depth (m)
108	0.1
102	0.25
103	0.2
104	0.2
105	1
106	0.9
107	>0.15