JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

AT

NUMBERS 209 TO 223 KINGS ROAD, READING,

BERKSHIRE

SU 7300 7324

MAY 2004

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT NUMBERS 209 TO 223 KINGS ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief, evaluation and area excavation were carried out at Kings Road, Reading by John Moore Heritage Services. The work took place during the ground-works for the redevelopment of a site previously occupied by a Victorian terrace and an office block. Nineteenth century building work had uncovered a structure thought to be a Roman building and a cemetery of possible Saxon or Medieval date. A re-assessment of the earlier findings suggests that the remains are all of medieval date and may be connected with a leper hospital and cemetery thought to occupy the site.

Despite significant ground reduction and disturbance caused by earlier development, a range of archaeological features survived in a small area at the south-western end of the site. These consisted of a rectilinear arrangement of ditches and several pits, which produced late prehistoric and Roman pottery, as well as medieval pottery dating between the middle 11th and 15th centuries. Disarticulated and re-deposited human remains were also recovered from the site, and are almost certainly linked to the discoveries made during the nineteenth century. No trace of a Roman building was found, but the finds of medieval pottery and tile strengthen the case for a medieval building, possibly associated with garden or horticultural plots defined by the layout of ditches.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin of the Project

A planning application (No. 03/00950) for the redevelopment of the Kings Road site was submitted to Reading Borough Council. The proposed scheme involved the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of 98 affordable units, along with car parking and communal amenities. The redevelopment was intended to occupy the footprint of existing buildings, but with an extension to the rear at a reduced ground floor level. In accordance with Government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 16), the Catalyst Housing Group Ltd commissioned a desk-based assessment to determine the likely archaeological implications of the development proposal.

1.2 Archaeological Background

The assessment report (Moore 2003) drew attention to the relatively high level of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, with a particular emphasis on the well-drained soils over the Valley Gravel. Activity during the Roman and Saxon periods was similarly well represented, and included burials of possible Roman date found on the site during housing construction in 1890's. Late nineteenth century building work also uncovered traces of an undated building and part of a cemetery including burials dating to the Saxon period, or possibly the medieval period.

A recent review of the material discovered during the 19th century building works has led to the finds being re-classified as medieval, rather than Roman or Saxon. It now seems likely

that the cemetery was associated with a medieval leper hospital, which is thought to have been located on the eastern side of Reading (J. Greenaway, Reading Museum, pers. comm.).

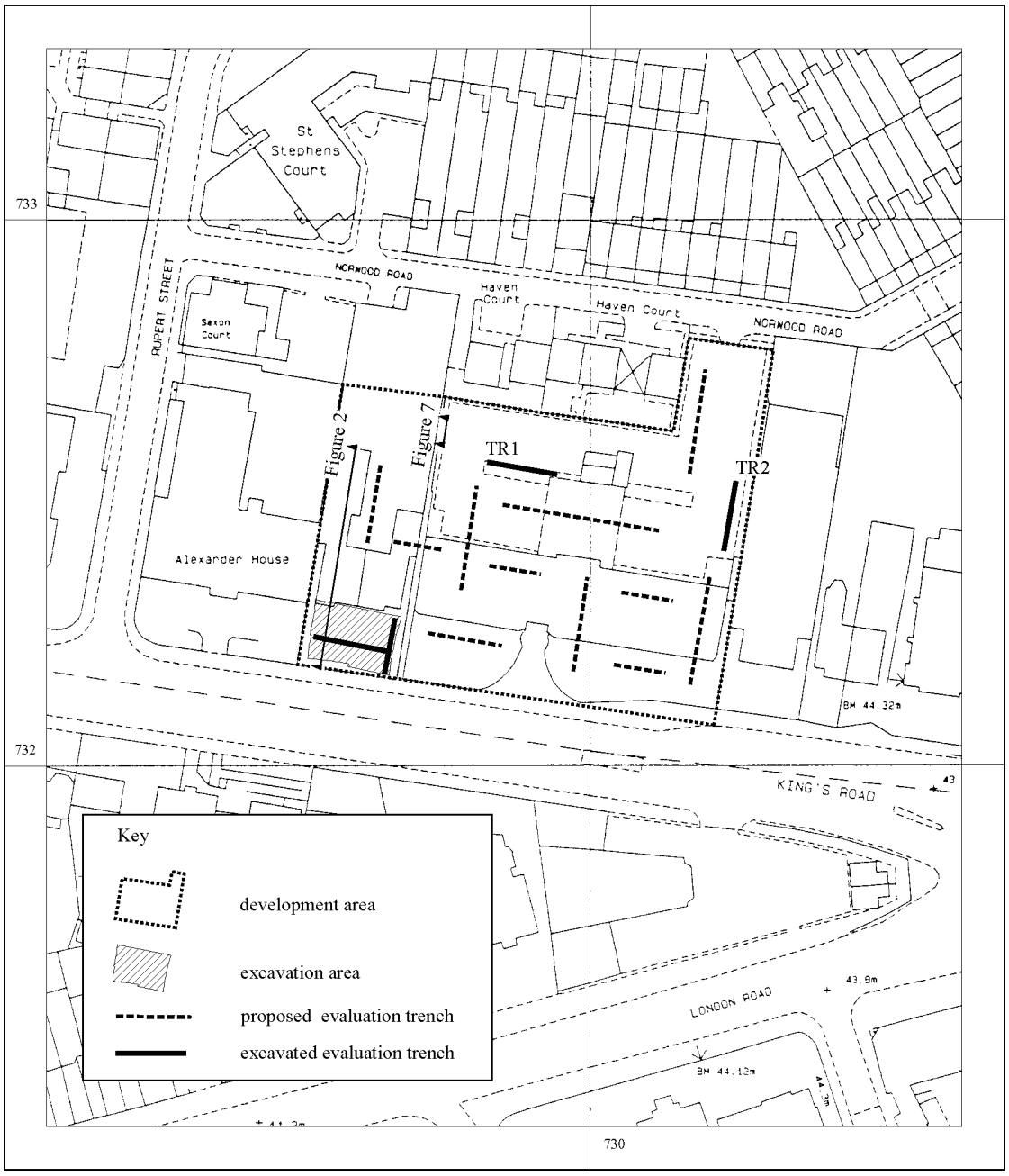

Figure 1: development site location showing position of evaluation trenches and area excavation (scale at 1:1250)

The post-medieval period is represented by pits excavated to the rear of the site that produced pottery dating between the 16th and 19th centuries (Henderson and Moore 2002). During the late nineteenth century terraced housing was built along the Kings Road frontage on land which was previously a small 'meadow' which was flanked by buildings known as Norwood House (Moore 2003, 4).

The assessment report concluded that the potential for Roman, Saxon and possibly medieval remains surviving on the proposed development site was moderately high. However, in view of the ground disturbance caused by late 19th century building foundations and cellars, it was suggested that any surviving remains were likely to be confined to relatively small and isolated areas.

In response to the concern that potential archaeological remains might be damaged or destroyed during the course of the development ground-works, Babtie Environmental advised Reading Borough Council that a watching brief and evaluation should be undertaken. In compliance with the terms the project brief, John Moore Heritage Services submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) setting out the methods for determining whether or not any archaeological remains survived on the site and establishing their significance in relation to the development proposal.

The approved field strategy set out in the WSI specified a continuous watching brief during the removal of floor slabs or foundations and any other operations causing ground disturbance. Following demolition, the evaluation was to consist of 11 machine excavated trenches, providing a 10 % sample of the site. In agreement with the Babtie representative, acting on behalf of the Borough Council, areas identified during the watching brief having no archaeological potential would not be sampled. The evaluation strategy required that any archaeological features that might be more appropriately investigated under full excavation conditions, or might warrant *in situ* preservation, would not be compromised.

1.3 The Site

The site is bounded on its southern side by Kings Road and to the north by Norwood Road and is centred on National Grid Reference SU 7300 7324 (Figure 1). The land is low-lying, approximately 44 metres above Ordnance Datum, with a drift geology of Valley Gravel overlying Upper Chalk. The development area encompassed a pair of Victorian houses (Nos. 209 to 211) and an office block (Nos. 217 to 223). The office block was built during the 1970's and was later extended to include the land formerly occupied by numbers 213 to 215 Kings Road. The area to the front of the buildings lies below street level and was mainly hard landscaped with some ornamental planting. The Victorian houses (Nos. 209 to 211) had basements under the original frontage, but not under the later extensions at the rear. The office block was supported by piles and had under-croft parking, with additional ground level parking to the rear.

The gardens of the Victorian terrace originally fronting onto Kings Road lay below the level of the road, while at the rear the plots were reduced to the lower ground floor level. It would appear that the original ground surface had sloped downwards to the north of Kings Road, and that the dwellings had been built on a terrace which cut into the slope and reached a depth of approximately three metres at the rear of the plots.

2 FIELDWORK

2.1 The Watching Brief

The fieldwork for the watching brief was carried out between the 24th of November 2003 and the 21st of January 2004. The ground-works monitored during this stage mainly consisted of the removal of ground slabs, pile caps and the walls and cellar floor of the surviving part of the Victorian terrace (No. 209/211). This work afforded an opportunity to observe and record the machine cut section through the house and front garden (Figure 2).

The watching brief demonstrated that the area that had been occupied by the office block was heavily disturbed below the level of the natural gravel. However, with the exception of the areas disturbed by wall footings and cellars, truncation was less severe along the Kings Road frontage.

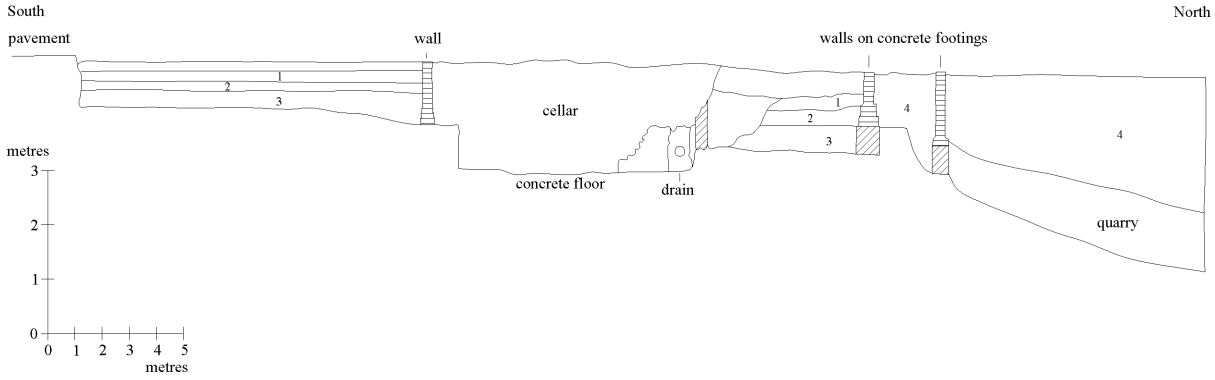

Figure 2: post demolition machine-cut section through No. 209 Kings Road

2.2 The Evaluation

The Written Scheme of Investigation proposed that eleven evaluation trenches should be excavated in order to meet the required sample size of 10%. The trenches were to vary in length between 10 and 13 metres and would be excavated by a machine fitted with a five foot wide toothless bucket. The specification stipulated that the trenches should be machined to a depth sufficient to exposed the natural gravels or the surfaces of any archaeological deposits. This would be followed by hand excavation to define and characterise any archaeological features and deposits, but without compromising any remains that might be more appropriately investigated by full excavation.

In practice the ground works for the buildings previously occupying the site had in many places reduced the ground level below the depth of any archaeological features. In these circumstances it was agreed with the Babtie representative that the evaluation scheme should be amended to concentrate on peripheral areas of the site that were likely to be less affected by ground reduction. Of the four trenches excavated, two were located in the south-western corner of the site, an area corresponding to the front garden of the demolished Victorian terrace; a third was positioned along the eastern side of the site, and the fourth was located close to the northern boundary (Figure 1).

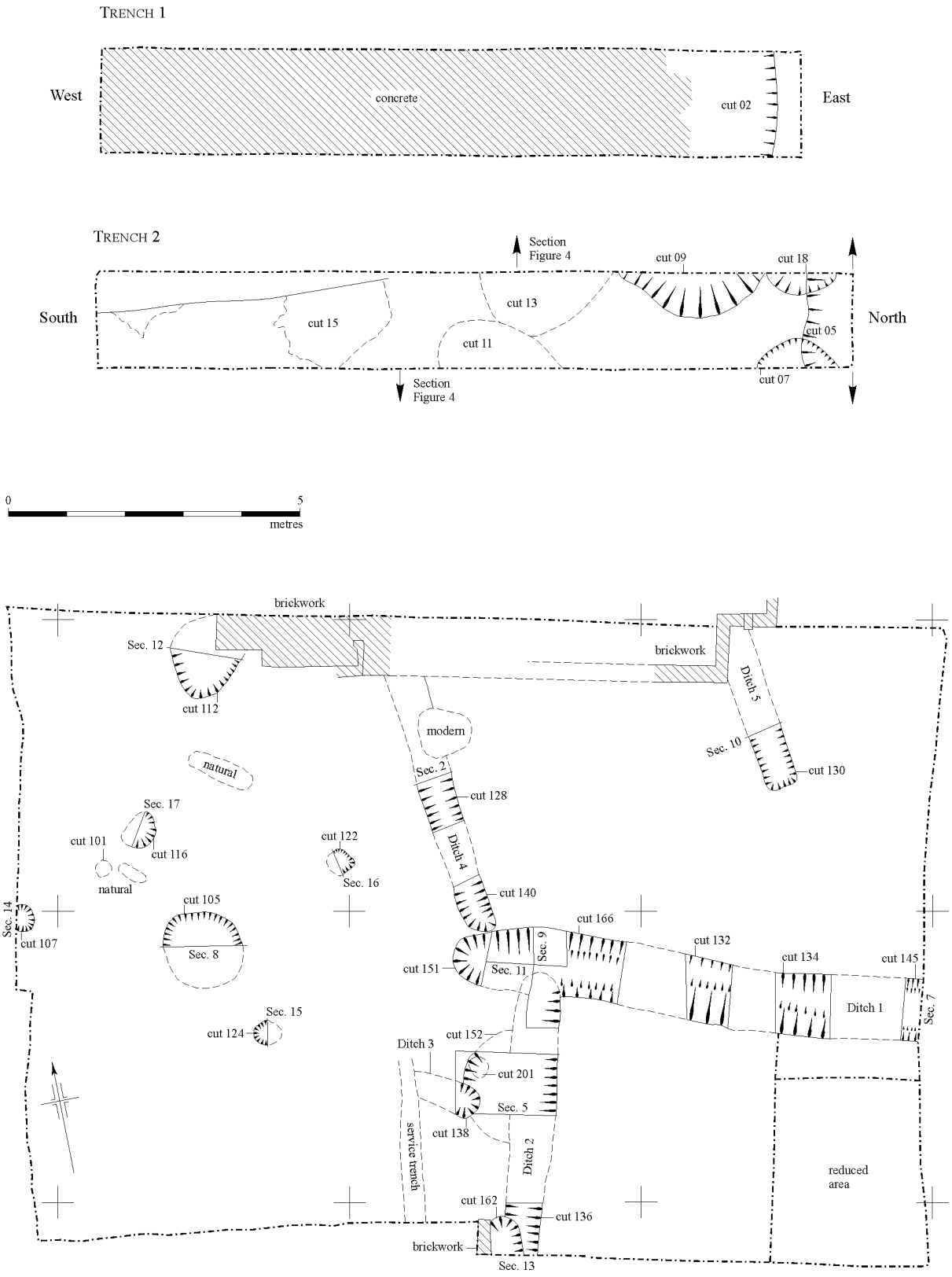

Figure 3: post excavation plans of evaluation trenches 1 and 2 the area excavation

The more northerly of the evaluation trenches (Figure 1, TR1) was machined to a depth of 0.80 metres at the eastern end and 0.46 metres at the opposite end. The sequence of deposits across most of the trench consisted of tarmac overlying hardcore and concrete. The natural gravel was only exposed at the eastern end, where it was cut by a large undated feature (Figure 3, cut 02).

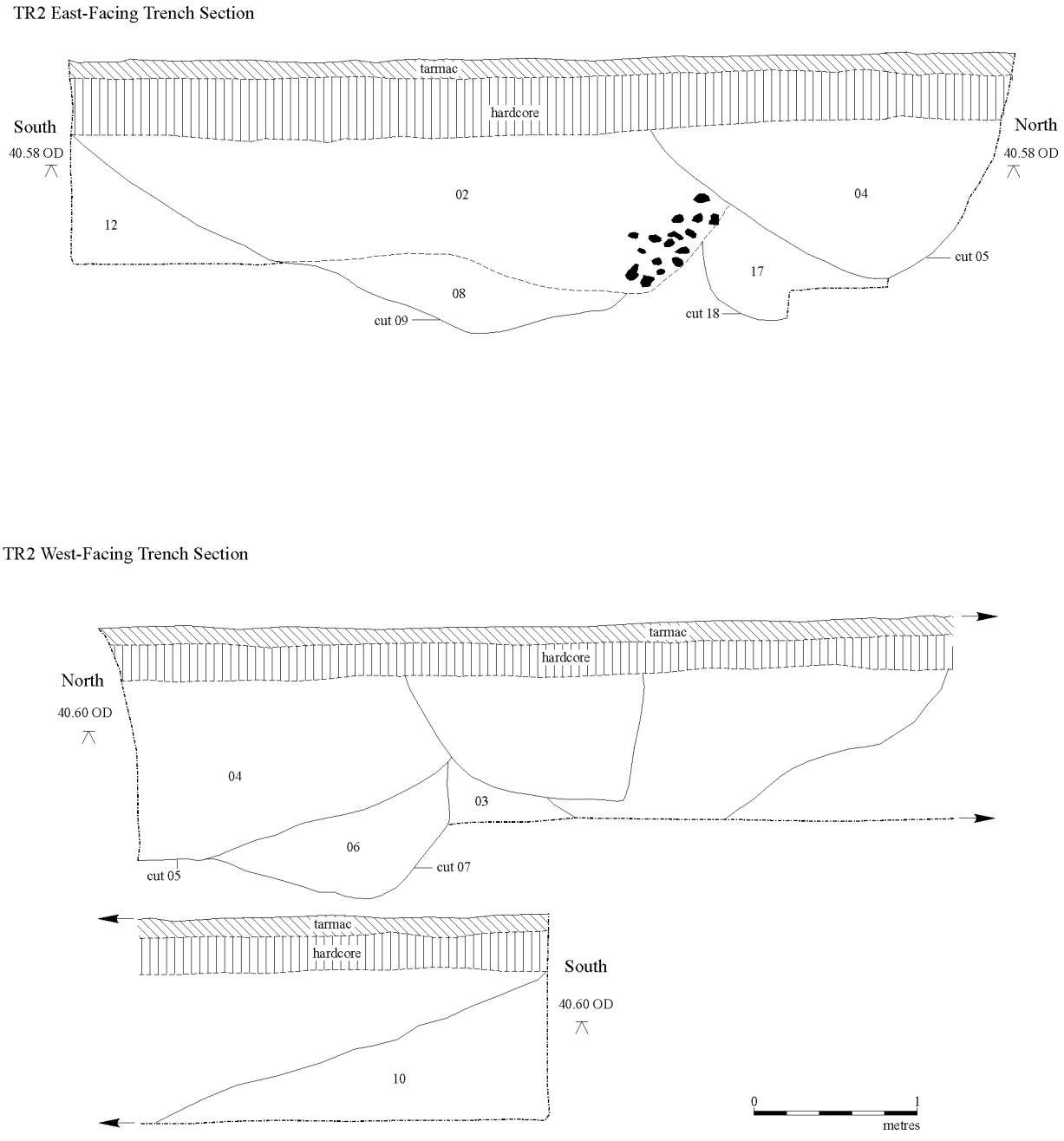

Figure 4: evaluation trench sections

Trench 2 (Figure 1, TR2) was machined to a depth of 1.44 metres at the northern end and 1.26 metres at the southern end. Hand cleaning exposed a number of inter-cutting features of which four were excavated (Figure 3, cuts 05, 07, 09 and 18). Cut 05 was a linear feature only partly exposed at the northern end of the trench and was stratigraphically later than cuts

07 and 18, both of which it truncated (Figure 3). The single fill was excavated to a depth of 0.96 metres and was entirely devoid of finds. Cut 07 measured 1.50 meters across and 0.54 metres deep and was filled by a single layer (Figure 4, context 06). The only finds from context 06 consisted of two flint flakes. Cut 09 was 1.14 metres in width and 0.44 metres in depth (Figure 4). The single fill (ibid, context 08) produced a small assemblage of worked flint comprising five flakes, one irregular waste flake and one multi-platform flake core. No finds were recovered from cut 18 which measured 1.10 metres across and 0.62 metres deep and was filled with a single layer (Figure 4, context 17).

The two remaining trenches in the south-western corner of the site crossed the area formerly occupied by the gardens of Nos. 209 and 211 Kings Road (Figure 1). The machining of these two trenches revealed a weakly sorted and flinty sub-soil some 0.25 metres deep, lying above a drift geology of sandy silt clay and gravel. At the geological surface a number of discrete and linear archaeological features were encountered. These were clearly part of a more extensive distribution which could not be investigated adequately within the narrow confines of the evaluation trenches. For that reason that evaluation was abandoned in favour of a larger scale area excavation.

2.3 The Area Excavation

The excavation was confined to the relatively undisturbed area in the extreme south-western corner of the development site (Figure 1). Since this part of the site had been mostly unaffected by the ground reduction that extended across much of the site, it was one of the few areas where archaeological remains were found to survive without severe truncation. The evaluation in that area had identified pits, post holes and ditches to the front and rear of the cellars belonging to Nos. 209-211 Kings Road, some of which were associated with pottery of medieval or earlier date.

The area available for excavation comprised approximately 167 square metres and was stripped by machine under archaeological supervision. Subsequent hand cleaning revealed a number of discrete features and a series of five ditches terminating within the stripped area (Figure 3). Ditch 1 followed an east to west alignment, terminating close to the centre of the excavated area. The ditch was sectioned in five places to reveal an irregular 'V' shaped profile with a flat base. It had a maximum width of 0.80 metres and a depth of 0.53 metres (Figure 5, Sec. Nos. 7 and 9).

Section 7 was excavated against the trench baulk and clearly demonstrated that the ditch lay directly below an un-sorted flinty soil (context 108 in Sec. No. 7, Figure 5) which may have been agricultural in origin, but was later reworked as a garden soil. The few finds recovered from this layer comprised one sherd of Roman grey ware weighing 16 grams and one fragment of CBM weighing 20 grams; three flint flakes, one flint blade and a flint core fragment and a single sherd of medieval pottery weighing 17 grams. The medieval sherd was from a Newbury coarse ware vessel dated between the middle of the 13th and the middle of the 15th centuries AD.

The ditch primary fill (Figure 5, context 144/167) produced a small pottery assemblage comprising one sherd of Bronze Age pottery weighing 11 grams and a single sherd (weighing 10 grams) from the base of a grog tempered vessel dating to the late Iron Age or early Roman period. The same layer also produced a heavily corroded iron nail, a single fragment of animal bone and six pieces of worked flint.

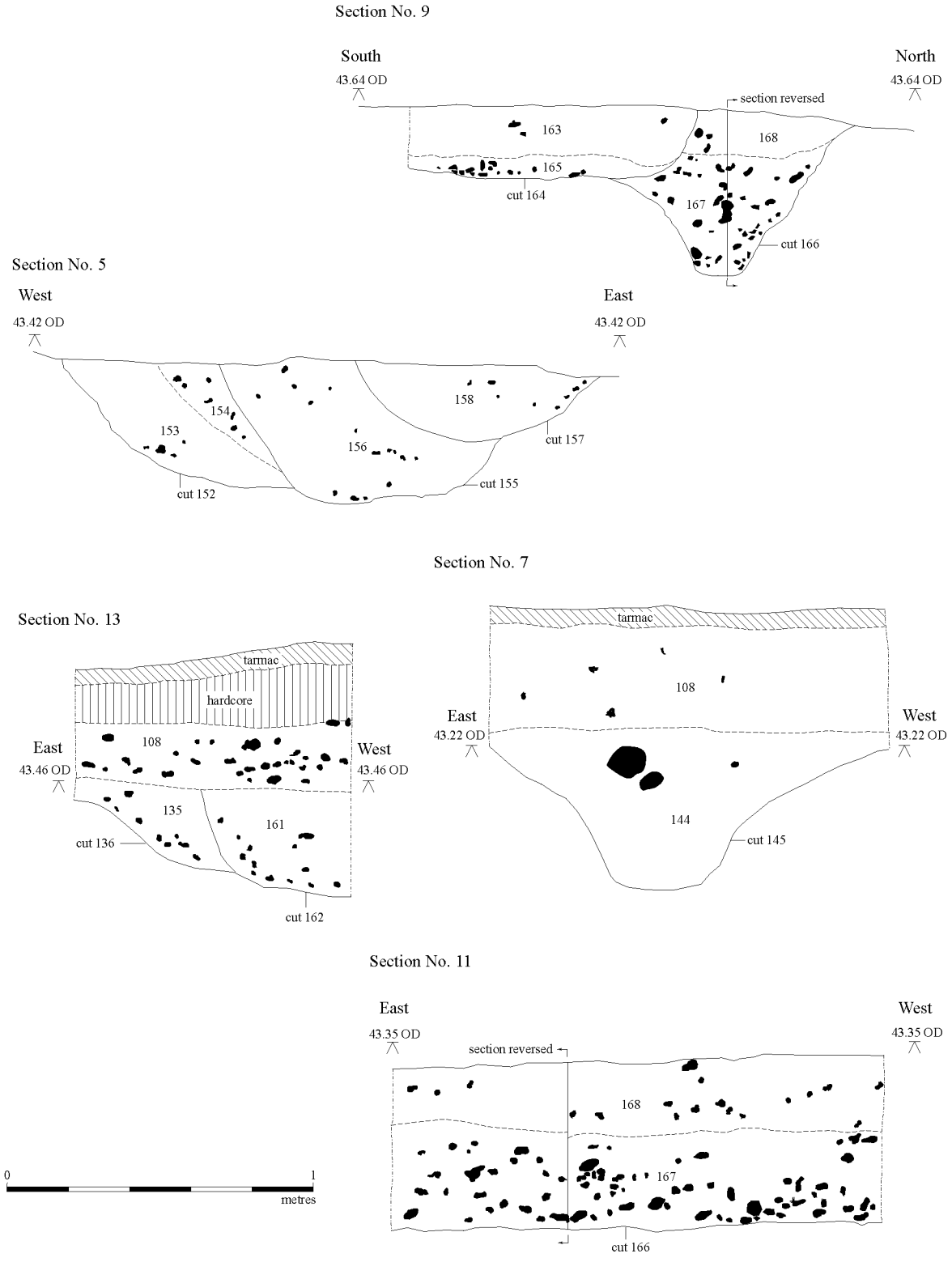

Figure 5: excavated sections

A second ditch entered the site from the south (Figure 3, Ditch 2) and joined Ditch 1 close to its terminal. Ditch 2 itself had been re-cut by a slightly larger ditch that terminated close to the southern trench edge (Figure 3, cut 162). Both ditches were shallow 'U' shaped features,

with the re-cut measuring 0.35 metres in depth and 0.85 metres in width. Just under two metres to the north, further re-cutting was evident (Figure 5, Sec. No. 5). At this location Ditch 2 (cut 155) passed through a sub-circular pit (ibid, cut 152), which measured approximately 1.48 metres in diameter and 0.41 metres in depth, and was itself cut by a smaller ditch (cut 157 in Figure 5, Sec. No. 5). No finds were recovered from the fills of the pit and the ditches (cuts 155 and 157). The only indication of relative dating for this sequence was provided by the stratigraphic relationship between the most recent ditch (cut 157) and Ditch 1, which was truncated by cut 157.

Two further features were investigated in the vicinity of Ditch 2. The first of these was a short length of ditch, or gully, that terminated where it cut the upper fill of the pit, cut 152 (Figure 3, Ditch 3). This ditch was very shallow (approximately 0.11 metres deep) and could not be traced beyond its intersection with a modern service trench. The single fill of the ditch in cut 138 (Figure 3) failed to produce any finds that might date the feature, although on stratigraphic grounds it was demonstrably later than the pit (Figure 3, cut 152). The second feature was a small post hole (Figure 3, cut 201) again cut into the upper fill of the pit, cut 152. No finds were recovered from the post hole, but the composition of the single fill (context 202) suggested that it was of recent origin.

Two parallel ditches sharing a north to south alignment both terminated in the northern half of the site (Figure 3, Ditches 4 and 5). The profile of Ditch 4 was broadly 'U' shaped and measured 0.58 metres in width and 0.18 metres in depth (Figure 6, Sec. No. 2). Ditch 5 was somewhat larger, measuring 0.77 metres across and 0.22 metres in depth, with steep sides and a flat base (ibid, Sec. No. 10).

The single fill of Ditch 4 (Figure 6, context 127 in Sec. No. 2) produced a single sherd of late Bronze Age pottery weighing nine grams; two sherds of pottery in a locally made coarse sandy ware, dated between the late 11th century and the 13th century; a single fragment of CBM (ceramic building material) weighing 10 grams; five abraded fragments of animal bone and a heavily corroded iron key (Figure 8).

Unlike the other ditches, Ditch 5 was regularly cut and ended in a markedly square terminal. The single fill (Figure 6, context 129 in Sec. No. 10) produced one sherd of late Bronze Age pottery weighing six grams, a single fragment of CBM weighing 40 grams, one flint flake and a single flint blade.

The only other archaeological features identified during the excavations were six pits which clustered in the north-western part of the site (Figure 3, cuts 105, 107, 112, 116, 122 and 124). The two largest pits (cuts 105 and 112 in Figure 3; Figure 6, Sec. Nos. 8 and 12) had maximum diameters of 1.45 metres and 1.50 metres respectively and corresponding depths of 0.45 and 0.27 metres. The single fill of cut 105 (Figure 6, Sec. No. 8) produced a single late Iron Age or early Roman sherd weighing 16 grams; 22 fragments of CBM weighing 800 grams; a fragment of clay pipe stem; one unidentified iron object; two fragments of animal bone; a flint flake and one retouched flint flake. Cut 112 also contained a single fill which produced a single sherd of pottery in a local fine sandy ware, possibly manufactured between the late 11th and the 14th century. The other finds from cut 112 consisted of 12 fragments of CBM weighing 540 grams and two clay pipe stem fragments.

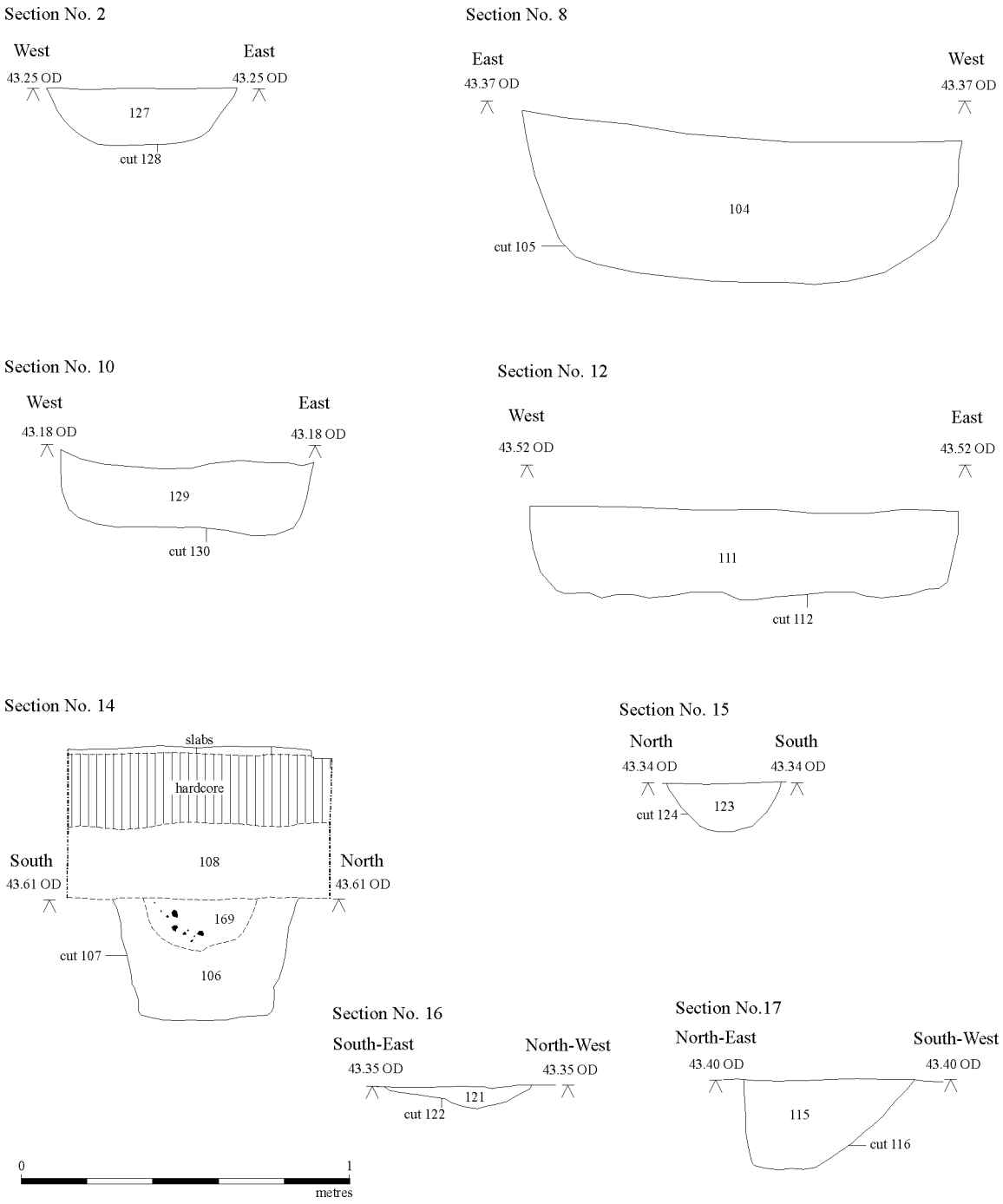

Figure 6: excavated sections

Cut 107 was excavated against the western trench side (Figure 3). The pit proved to be a sharp, steep sided cut measuring 0.56 metres across and reaching a depth of 0.37 metres below the surface of the natural. The pit lay below the putative cultivation soil (Figure 6, context 108 in Sec. No. 14) which spread across much of the site. The small assemblage of finds from the pit consisted of a single flint core fragment, one sherd weighing 14 grams from a pottery vessel made in a local coarse sandy ware (?late 11th to the middle 13th century) and a single fragment of CBM weighing 10 grams.

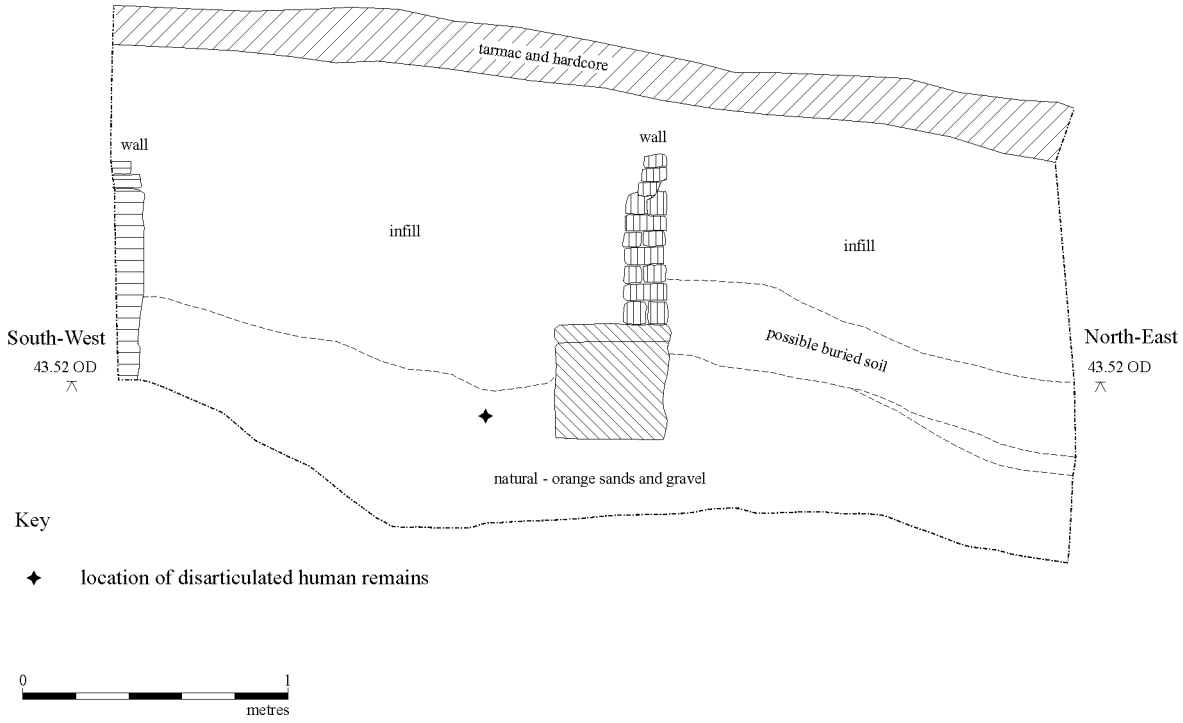

Figure 7: machine cut section adjacent to the northern site boundary

Cuts 116 and 124 (Figure 3) measured 0.40 and 0.20 metres in diameter respectively and had corresponding depths of 0.27 and 0.24 metres (Figure 6, Sec. Nos. 17 and 15). Both features were filled by a single deposit (ibid, contexts 115 and 123), but neither feature produced any finds.

The remaining pit (cut 122 in Figure 6, Sec. No. 16) was no more than a shallow scoop measuring 0.42 metres across and 0.07 metres in depth. The only archaeological material from the single fill (context 121 in Figure 5, Sec. No. 16) consisted one fragment of CBM weighing 40 grams.

Three small features in the same area as the pit cluster appeared to be natural in origin. One of these (cut 101, Figure 3) produced a single fragment of CBM weighing 100 grams.

During the course of the excavation ground reduction in the north-western part of the site was closely monitored. The area affected was adjacent to the site of a recent archaeological evaluation (Henderson and Moore 2002). The evaluation work identified a series of large pits thought to have been dug for gravel extraction, probably between the 16th and 18th centuries.

A machine cut section was recorded prior to the ground reduction revealed two walls buried beneath mixed deposits containing gravel and building debris (Figure 7). To the rear of the northern wall this deposit rested on a well sorted humic layer, probably representing a buried soil. It is unclear what purpose the walls served since that part of the site was occupied by the back gardens of properties fronting onto Kings Road from 1899 (OS Map, second edition

1899) to the 1960's. Before that the area was part of the grounds of Norwood House (OS Map, first edition 1899).

The machine excavated section also revealed a cluster of disarticulated human bone consisting chiefly of long bones, pelvic and rib fragments. The remains were found in a shallow scoop in the natural geology close to the wall footings (Figure 7) and probably represented the reburial of remains disturbed during construction of the building. No finds were discovered in association with the remains, but it seems likely that originally they were part of the cemetery disturbed during the late nineteenth century building works.

The only other feature encountered during the ground reduction was a truncated quarry pit partly exposed during machining (Figure 9, cut 160). The fill of the pit (context 159) produced a mixed pottery assemblage comprising three sherds of Roman pottery weighing 24 grams and 216 sherds of medieval pottery (weighing 939 grams), the latter dated between the middle of the 13th century and the 15th century. The other finds consisted of nine fragments of CBM weighing two kilograms, two iron nails and nine fragments of animal bone. Although this was the largest single assemblage from the site, the stratigraphic integrity is dubious, particularly since the feature occupied an area previously shown to have been disturbed to a significant depth by quarrying (Henderson and Moore 2002).

3 THE FINDS

3.1 Prehistoric and Roman Pottery by Frances Raymond

Late Bronze Age Pottery

Two late Bronze Age sherds, with a combined weight of 15 grams, came from contexts 127 and 129 (Table 1). Both sherds are in fresh condition and are likely to be derived from two different vessels. The fragment from context 127 is thick walled (12 mm.), while the sherd from context 129 is significantly thinner (7 mm.).

Both pieces of pottery are made from similar sandy fabrics, which contain common quantities of medium to coarse sub-rounded quartzite and moderate amounts of crushed burnt flint (up to 4 mm.). Fabrics of this type have a long history of use throughout the late Bronze Age, and since the sherds are featureless they could have been produced at any time between 1000 and 600 BC.

Context	Shd. No.	Shd. Wt. (gms.)	Date	Description
104	1	6	LIA to ERB	Grog tempered wall sherd
108	1	16	RB	Grey ware – lower wall sherd
127	1	9	LBA	Sand and flint tempered wall sherd
129	1	6	LBA	Sand and flint tempered wall sherd
159	1	10	RB	Grey ware base sherd
	1	6	RB	BB1 wall sherd
	1	8	RB	BB1 rim sherd
167	1	10	LIA to ERB	Grog tempered base sherd
Totals	**8**	**71**		

Table 1: catalogue of prehistoric and Roman pottery

Although the activity which led to the deposition of this pottery is uncertain, its presence suggests that the surrounding landscape was being utilised during the late Bronze Age. This is consistent with the evidence from the site of the Reading Business Park (Moore and Jennings 1992) and the area around Burghfield, immediately to the south-west of Reading (Lobb 1992). Here, a number of new settlements were established on the valley floor in a similar topographic setting, near to the confluence of the rivers Thames and Kennet (Lobb 1992; Lobb and Rose 1996).

Late Iron Age to Roman Pottery
Two grog tempered sherds, weighing 16 grams, came from contexts 104 and 167 (Table 1). The example from context 104 is heavily abraded, while the fragment from context 167 is in relatively fresh condition. The fabrics have an origin in the late Iron Age and continued to be produced after the Roman Conquest, certainly throughout the pre-Flavian period (before AD 70).

An additional four sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 40 grams came from contexts 108 and 159 (Table 1). These include two fragments of featureless grey ware, which could have been made at any time between approximately AD 70 and 400. The example from context 108 is in good condition, but the sherd from context 159 is heavily abraded. A similarly broad chronology applies to the black burnished ware wall sherd from the Wareham-Poole Harbour area found in context 159. The BB1 rim from the same context, is from an early Roman necked vessel of second to early third century date. Both pieces of black burnished ware are in good condition.

3.2 Medieval Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprises 132 sherds with a total weight of 1572 grams. The assemblage comprised sherds of medieval date, with a range of fabric types typical for sites of the period in the Reading. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown below in Table 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The Fabrics

F1: Local fine sandy ware, ?late 11th to ? 14th century. 72 sherds weighing 784 grams
A range of fine sandy fabrics, similar to those noted at the Reading Waterfront excavations (Underwood 1997, 144). Wares such as these are found along a considerable length of the middle Thames Valley and its hinterland, and the problem of differentiating between the numerous different wares has been noted in the past (Mellor 1994, 84). For example, Mellor (ibid) has identified at least four different quartz-tempered fabrics in southern Oxfordshire and its environs, with centres such as Henley-on-Thames and Maidenhead producing very similar quartz tempered wares. Historical sources indicate that there were potters in Henley during the 13th and 14th centuries, and perhaps even Reading itself (ibid, 208 and 210), and it is likely that other, non-documented sources in the hinterland of Reading await discovery. The medieval kiln at nearby Ashampstead (see below) is another possible source. Consequently, this fabric category should be regarded as representing a group of several similar traditions, rather than pottery from a single source.

.	F1		F2		F202		F358		F361		F356		
Context	**No**	**Wt**	**No**	**Wt**	**No**	**Wt**	**No**	**Wt**	**No**	**Wt**	**No**	**Wt**	**Date**
51	-	-	1	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
52	1	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
102	4	40	2	69	2	45	-	-	1	9	-	-	CP2
106	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
108	-	-	-	-	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
109	2	26	2	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
111	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
127	-	-	2	97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
131	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
139	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
144	-	-	1	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
146	-	-	1	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	CP1?
159	62	679	15	172	16	125	8	114	-	-	6	66	CP3
Totals	**72**	**784**	**26**	**424**	**19**	**175**	**8**	**114**	**1**	**9**	**6**	**66**	

Table 2: pottery occurrence by number and weight (grams) of sherds by fabric type per context

F2: Local coarse sandy ware, ?late 11th to mid 13th century; 26 sherds weighing 424grams
A range of coarse sandy fabrics, similar to those noted at the Reading Waterfront excavations (Underwood 1997, 144). As with Fabric 1, it is very likely that these coarser sand-tempered wares are from a number of different sources.

F202: Newbury coarse wares, late 11th to early 15th century (Mepham 1997, 51-2); 19 sherds weighing 175grams
Flint, sand and shell tempered wares, probably manufactured in Savernake Forest (ibid, 65). It has a wide distribution throughout Berkshire, northern Hampshire and Oxfordshire (ibid, fig. 29). The range of vessel types is dominated by jars.

F356: Surrey whiteware, mid 13th to mid 15th century (Pearce and Vince 1988); 6 sherds weighing 66 grams
A range of whitewares from several sources in Surrey, including Kingston and Cheam. The production range included vessel forms which change over time, but the earlier assemblages are dominated by glazed jugs, some with slipped, incised and plastic decoration. The ware is invariably found on sites of the period in Reading, and occurs on a large number of sites all over southern England (ibid, figs 2 – 4).

F358: Ashampstead ware, 12th to 14th century (Mepham and Heaton, 1995); 8 sherds weighing 114 grams
The main products of the kiln in this sandy ware were jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs (eg. Figs). It is thought that the kiln, which is located some 15 kilometres to the west of Reading, was supplying the town with the bulk of its sandy wares.

F361: London ware c. 1150 to 1350 (Pearce et al., 1985); 1 sherd weighing 9 grams
This sandy ware was common in small quantities throughout the Home Counties, and at more distant locations such as Exeter, King's Lynn, Ipswich, Northampton, Hereford, Gloucester and the east coast of Scotland (ibid. 6-7 and figs. 4 and 5). The source is unknown, but seems likely to be close to the City of London, where it occurs in extremely large quantities. Jugs were by far the most common form and were often highly decorated, in the 13th century sometimes copying imported pottery from Northern France (eg. Ibid, pl. 2).

Chronology

Each context-specific pottery assemblage was given a Ceramic Phase (CP) date based on the range of wares present. The dating scheme is shown in Table 3, along with the pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per ceramic phase.

Phase	Date Range	Defining Fabrics	No. of Sherds	Wt. of Sherds
CP1	?M/L11th – M 12th C	F1, F2, F202	20	282
CP2	M 12th – M 13th C	F358, F361	9	163
CP3	M 13th – 15th C	F356	107	1156

Table 3: ceramic phase chronology (weight in grams)

Commentary

The range of fabrics and forms is typical of that noted at other sites in Reading. The bulk of the assemblage comprises jars, especially in the earlier phases, although sherds of glazed jugs and pitchers became more common as Ashampstead and London wares began to arrive. Jars with vertical scored decoration on the body, a feature of some of the sandy ware traditions in the Middle Thames region, are particularly common in the earlier phases.

The bulk of the pottery from medieval contexts dates to the period of CP3, although all the pottery of this date came from the fill of the truncated quarry pit (context 159). Most of the other contexts with medieval pottery produced only small assemblages.

3.3 Ceramic Building Material by Terence Paul Smith

Introduction

The assemblage (including one fragment of daub) has been examined using a binocular microscope (×10) and has been recorded using standard Museum of London (MoL) recording sheets. A total of 52 items weighing 3.8 kilograms were recorded. The ceramic building materials have been assigned site-specific fabric numbers from 1 to 8; where these are similar to MoL fabrics it is noted in the List of Fabrics. The data have been entered into an Excel database.

All of the materials are of post-Roman date, even from contexts which produced prehistoric and/or Roman pottery; often, the ceramic building material consists of very small fragments and may be intrusive in these contexts; alternatively, of course, the pottery may be residual.

Five pieces are so small and fragmentary that it is impossible to ascertain their form; in these cases no attempt has been made to identify their fabric type. The pieces come from contexts 3/03, 104, and 108.

List of Fabrics

The following ceramic building materials fabrics have been used in recording and assessing the materials:

1. Red or orange-red, sometimes with grey core; hard and fairly fine (similar to MoL fabric 2271): peg tile.

2. Orange-red; varying degrees of sand, some being very sandy (similar to MoL fabric 2586): peg tile.

3. Orange; fine with quartz, silty streaks and siltstone, and some iron oxide (similar to MoL fabric 2816): peg tile.

4. Light orange; fine with red iron oxide and red and white/off-white silty bands: peg tile.

5. Light brown; sandy (similar to MoL fabric 1813): floor tile.

6. Orange; sandy with some silty streaks (similar to MoL fabric 2194): floor tile.

Post-Roman Ceramic Building Material

Peg tile
Plain peg tile comprised the bulk of the material, representing 77% by fragment number and no less than 90% by weight. The tiles are in fabrics 1, 2, 3, and 4. Only four peg/nail holes are present, all circular in shape; three taper from the upper to the lower face, one does not. Peg tiles were introduced in the later 12th century and changed little over time. Glazed examples, either with the glaze applied as splash-glaze or as a more adequate cover-glaze, seem to be limited to the medieval period. At the Kings Road site glazed examples were recovered from contexts 100 and 159. The first of these preserves an angle of less than 90º and so must be of the early (probably late 12th to early 13th century) tapering type; a further fragment of such tile, though with no glaze, comes from context 111. A number of the tiles are also quite thick (15 mm or more), and this too may indicate a fairly early date, perhaps in the late 12th or in the 13th century. Such thick tiles come from contexts 3/03, 100, 104, 106, 111, and 159.

No full lengths are preserved and only one full breadth survives, the latter being 176 mm. Thicknesses range from 11 mm to 19 mm, with a median of 15 mm.

The similarity of most of the peg tile fabrics to MoL fabrics should not be taken to imply London production. All that it reflects is the use of similar (superficial) deposits of raw materials. Reading has a long tradition of brick and tile making and most, perhaps all, of the peg tiles were probably made more or less locally.

Ridge tile?
Four fragments of probable ridge tile were recovered from contexts 104, 106, and 144 It is just possible, however, that these examples are slightly warped peg tiles. Ridge tiles too date from the late 12th century onwards, but these fragments have no features which would permit close dating. Again it is likely that the ridge tiles were made more or less locally.

Floor tile
A fragment of floor tile in fabric 6 was recovered from context 111. However, it is mostly reduced and therefore grey in colour. The top face is worn, but a little brown glaze is preserved on one edge, confirming that the tile was glazed. Tiles in this fabric date from the 14th and 15th centuries and are almost certainly of English manufacture, although the actual place of manufacture is not known. The tile is quite thick, at 33 mm, but no other dimensions are preserved.

A fragment from context 121 in fabric 5 preserves no dimensions, but is probably from a floor tile. Tiles in this fabric were also made in the 14th and 15th centuries, almost certainly in England, although once again the actual place of manufacture is not known.

Daub
A tiny fragment of abraded daub weighing10 grams came from context 127. The fabric is orange and fairly fine in texture.

Conclusion

The absence of Roman building materials strengthens the doubts surrounding the 19th century reference to a Roman building in the vicinity of the site. The peg tiles, which include some of early medieval date, indicate the presence of medieval buildings on, or near the site. The floor tiles suggest late medieval building activity, although the evidence is meagre, comprising just one definite and one probable example.

3.4 Worked Flint by Rebecca Devaney

A total of 69 pieces of struck flint were recovered from the evaluation and subsequent excavation (Table 5). No burnt or fire-cracked flint was found on the site. The assemblage can be dated broadly to the late Bronze Age on typological and technological grounds.

The flint was sparsely distributed across 16 contexts and includes two unstratified pieces. The majority of contexts produced less than ten pieces of flint; however, context 159 contained 32 pieces. Most of the flint was associated with later pottery and is likely, therefore, to be re-deposited.

The flint was examined and individually categorised according to a standard typology. Information about condition and cortication was recorded and, where possible, identifiable raw material and technological characteristics were noted. The data were entered into a MS Access database.

Raw Material and Condition

Where it was identification was possible, most of the raw material was gravel flint. Chalk flint was also present, with some of the pieces retaining a fresh, white cortex perhaps indicating a quarried source. Many pieces have a thin and abraded cortex, more typical of surface material. The condition of the flint is very good, with almost half of the assemblage (45%) being recorded as fresh. Slight post depositional damage is visible on 48% of the assemblage. Four pieces show moderate damage and one piece is rolled. The damage is most frequent on fragile un-retouched edges implying a degree of post depositional disturbance. Greater levels of damage would be more consistent with a re-deposited

assemblage. Surface alteration is minimal and most of the material is free from cortication. Just four pieces exhibit light cortication and one piece has moderate cortication. These pieces are spread between four contexts. A total of 25% of the assemblage has suffered breakage, most commonly to the proximal or distal ends and 4% show signs of light to moderate burning.

Context	u/s	1	6	8	15	51	102	104	106	108	109	129	135	144	148	159	167	Total
Type																		
Flake	1	1	2	5	1	2	1	1	1	3	-	1	2	-	1	26	2	50
Blade	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-		-	3	-	5
Blade-like flake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Irregular waste	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	4
Multi-platform flake core	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Single platform blade core	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Indet/ frag core	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
End scraper	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Scraper on non-flake blank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Retouched flake	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Total	**2**	**1**	**2**	**7**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**5**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**32**	**5**	**69**

Table 4: summary of worked flint by context

Technology and Dating

Flakes dominate the debitage with just five blades and on blade-like flake being present. This proportion is consistent with a Bronze Age date (Ford 1987). None of the blades have platform edge abrasion or definite soft hammer impacts, characteristics that are usually associated with the production of blades in earlier prehistoric industries. It is likely that these pieces were unintentional blade removals and do not necessarily suggest an earlier element in the assemblage. Most of the flakes are cortical (primary removals or trimming flakes) and many show signs of hard hammer impacts, which supports the suggested Bronze Age date There are no chips present in the assemblage, which might indicate that knapping took place away from the site.

The core categories comprise two multi-platform flake cores, one single platform blade core and two unclassifiable cores. This is just 7% of the total assemblage. The flake cores are fairly small at 46 grams and 52 grams and are irregularly worked. The blade core is also quite small at 76 grams and has been minimally worked, with just three parallel blade removals. There is no evidence of platform edge abrasion and the detached blades would have been small preparatory removals of little use. This indicates that the blade core is unlikely to be early prehistoric. The unclassifiable cores are very irregular, with many thermal surfaces and few removals, and are larger than the flakes cores at 68 grams and 72 grams.

Of the four tools (6% of the assemblage), none are chronologically diagnostic. The end scraper has abrupt direct retouch on its distal end and a damaged proximal end, while the scraper on a non-flake blank has minimal irregular retouch at one end. One of the retouched flakes is a small, primary flake with retouch along its distal end, whereas the other, a side trimming flake, has a small area of direct retouch along the right distal edge.

The flint from the fill of the quarry pit (context 159), while being technologically consistent with a Bronze Age date is in unusually fresh condition. The majority of the flakes are cortical and there no cores are present. Taken together these characteristics suggest a more recent origin for the flakes, which may have come from flint nodules used in nineteenth century building work.

Commentary

Viewed overall the flint assemblage is broadly consistent with a late Bronze Age date. This impression is based on the domination of flakes, the presence of hard hammer impacts and the lack of platform edge abrasion. Macroscopically identifiable use-wear was noted on a small proportion of the material, but no refitting pieces were seen. In contrast, the fresh condition and technological characteristics of some of the material suggests that a small component of the assemblage is likely to derive from Victorian flint dressing.

3.5 Metal Finds by Roy Entwistle

The small assemblage of metal finds consisted the following items:

Context 102
A folded strip of sheet copper alloy measuring 55 mm. in length and 14 mm. in width.

Context 104
An unidentifiable iron object measuring 87 mm. in length by 22 mm. in width. The item has a spine projecting from one end and may consist of more than one object fused together.

Context 125
A three penny piece dated 1942.

Context 127
An iron lift key (Figure 8). The key measures 152 mm. in length and has a rectangular section at the blade end. The handle end is flattened, while the extremity has been twisted through 90^{8} and turned over to form a loop. The blade is set at right angles to the shaft and terminates in three teeth. This example is very similar to a key dated between AD50 and AD 60 which was found at the Bancroft Roman villa site in Buckinghamshire (Skinner 1994, 326-328 and Fig. 157, No.192).

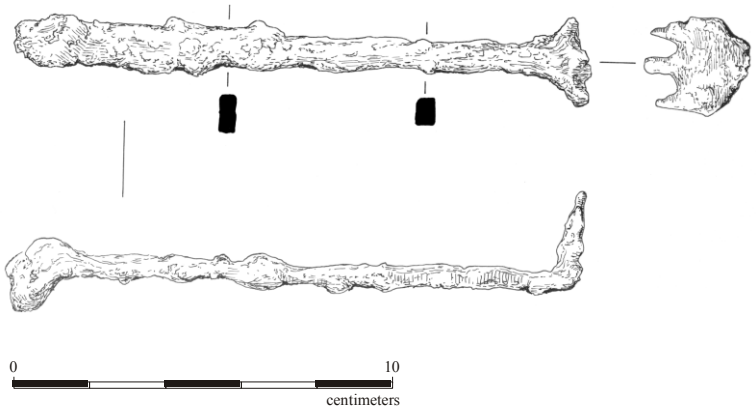

Figure 8: iron lift key from context 127

Context 159
Two heavily corroded iron nails. One has a rounded head with a square shaft, the other also has a square shaft but most of the head is missing.

Context 167
A severely corroded iron nail or stud.

4 DISCUSSION

Despite the severe truncation across much of the site, the evaluation and subsequent excavation demonstrated the survival of archaeological remains. As the desk-based assessment had concluded, the remains were confined to relatively small and isolated areas, principally in the south-eastern part of the site adjoining the Kings Road frontage.

Although none of the features in the excavated area can be confidently assigned to the prehistoric period, the small amount of late Bronze Age pottery, and late prehistoric flint-work, point to activity of the period in close proximity to the site. The presence of a possible agricultural soil suggests that the prehistoric material may have been derived from settlement to the south of Kings Road, and subsequently incorporated into later features by cultivation.

The late Iron Age and Roman periods are represented by a similarly small assemblage of uncertain stratigraphic integrity. The pottery consists of fresh and abraded sherds, which potentially span the pre-Conquest period through to AD 400. It is just possible that this material might reflect the use of domestic waste to manure fields associated with a nearby settlement. Indeed, the 'V' shaped profile of Ditch 1 (Figure 3) resembles the so-called 'Celtic' field ditches commonly associated with Roman fields. Although the evidence is slender, Ditch 1 may have defined the edge of a field plot, with Ditch 2 forming a later addition that was subsequently recut (Figure 3, cut 162). The discovery of an iron lift key (Figure 8) tentatively dated to the early Roman period might indicate the proximity of a Roman building, but it now seems unlikely that this could be identified with the building found in the 1890's.

Figure 9: location of cut 160 and the ground reduction area

Further evidence for burial was confined to the disarticulated human remains recovered during ground reduction in the north-western corner of the site. They were almost certainly part of the cemetery first located during the nineteenth century building works, but the remains were incomplete and re-deposited. Although the nineteenth century account refers to Roman burials (PRN 3892 and 2893), the dating has recently been revised and the burials are now believed to be associated with a medieval leper hospital (J. Greenaway, Reading Museum, pers. comm.).

The bulk of the pottery (132 sherds weighing 1572 grams) recovered during the fieldwork is medieval, with dates ranging from the 11th century through to the 15th century. In common with finds from the earlier periods, none of the sherds are likely to provide a reliable date for the individual features. A possible exception is the assemblage recovered from the heavily truncated quarry pit (Figure 9, cut 160) excavated in the north-western part of the development site. which produced the largest group of medieval sherds.

The two parallel ditches terminating in the northern half of the site (Figure 3, Ditches 4 and 5) follow an orientation which is set at an angle to the alignment of Ditches 1 and 2. While this suggests that Ditches 4 and 5 are part of a different layout, the dating evidence is not sufficiently reliable to determine their relative phasing. Ditch 4 produced 3 sherds of medieval pottery likely to date to the 11th or 12th century as well as a late Bronze Age sherd and a possible Roman key. Ditch 5 also produced a late Bronze Age sherd along with a fragment of peg tile.

The same dating problems arise with the pits, none of which produced single period artefact assemblages. The only pit that can be phased in relation to another feature is cut 152 (Figure 3) which is stratigraphically earlier than Ditch 2.

Although the interpretation of the excavation results is hampered by a lack of reliable dating evidence, the investigation has produced evidence which suggests the proximity of late prehistoric and Roman activity. This probably relates to the settlement and agricultural exploitation of the Valley Gravel soils, a pattern which is repeated elsewhere in the vicinity of Reading.

Although medieval activity was present on the site, it is unclear what form this might have taken. The site lies outside the core of the medieval town and it has been suggested that a chapel and burial ground may have existed in the vicinity (Moore 2003, 18). From the most recent work on the 19th century finds it now seems likely that a medieval leper hospital occupied the site, and indeed the pottery and the ceramic building material both indicate activity between the 12th and 15th centuries. However, the soil profile in the south-western part of the site showed signs of cultivation, and it is quite possible that the area was being farmed during the medieval period. The historic maps cited in desk-based assessment indicate that the land was waste ground in the early seventeenth century, but was under cultivation by 1813 (Moore 2003).

Medieval farming practices could account for the sparse, abraded and mixed character of the finds assemblages, as some material reached the site with domestic waste used as manure, and earlier material was incorporated into features by cultivation. The suggestion that a medieval leper hospital occupied the site raises the possibility that the excavated area had been part of the cultivated land used to support the hospital. This could provide a more

plausible explanation for the rectilinear arrangement of ditches, which might well have defined the individual horticultural plots belonging to the hospital.

ARCHIVE CONTENTS AND LOCATION

The Paper Record
The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records
Specialist reports

The Artefact Record
An index listing all materials retained or discarded
The pottery
The animal bone
Clay pipes
Metalwork

ARCHIVE LOCATION

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services pending transfer to the Reading Museum under Accession Number REDMG:2003. 295

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