



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**15/03431/FULD – BRAY COTTAGE, CHEAP STREET,
COMPTON, NEWBURY, WEST BERKSHIRE RG20 6QH**

NGR SU 5204380105

On behalf of

Mr J Ramsay & Ms J Franklin

**Project No. 3672
Site code: COCS 17**

OCTOBER 2017

REPORT FOR Mr J Ramsay & Ms J Franklin
Bray Cottage
Cheap Street
Compton
Newbury
West Berkshire
RG20 6QH

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CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	4
3.1 Research Design	4
3.2 Methodology	4
4 RESULTS	4
5 FINDS	6
5.1 Pottery <i>by Stephanie N. Duensing</i>	6
6 DISCUSSION	7
7 ARCHIVE	8
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
 FIGURES AND PLATES	
Figure 1. Site location	2
Figure 2. Site plan with sections	5
 Plate 1. Representative section S.2	6
Plate 2. Foundation trench looking south	6

SUMMARY

This document represents the results of a watching brief for archaeological remains at Bray Cottage, Cheap St, in Compton, Newbury (NGR SU 52043 80105). This involved monitoring the excavation of the new house foundation trench which was devoid of any archaeological features. Some sherds of pottery and an intact medicine bottle in English stoneware were recovered from the topsoil.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at Bray Cottage which is situated on the west side of Cheap Street in the northern area of Compton (NGR SU5204380105 centred). The site lies between 102 m and 103 m above OD. The underlying geology is second terrace river deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

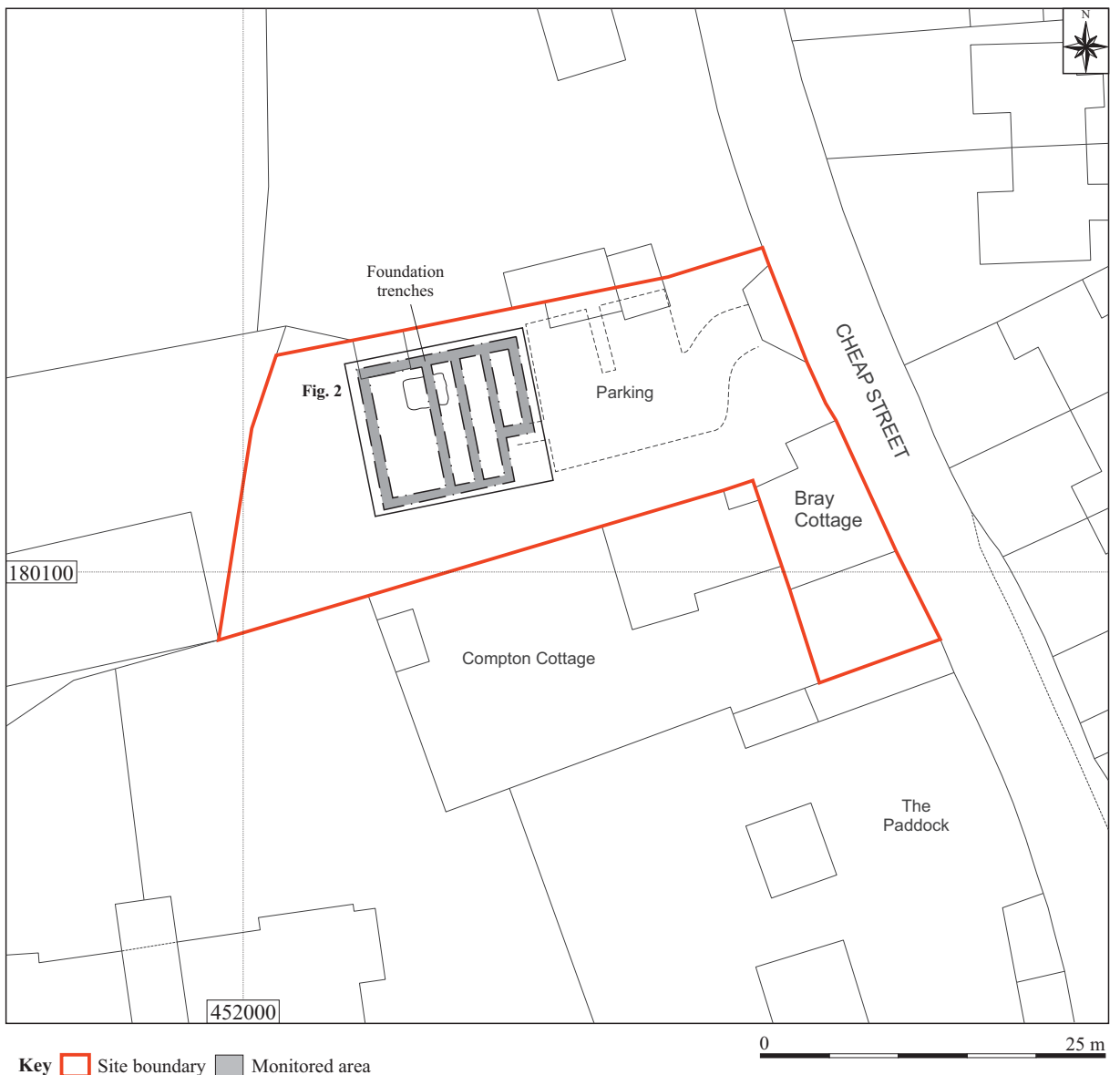
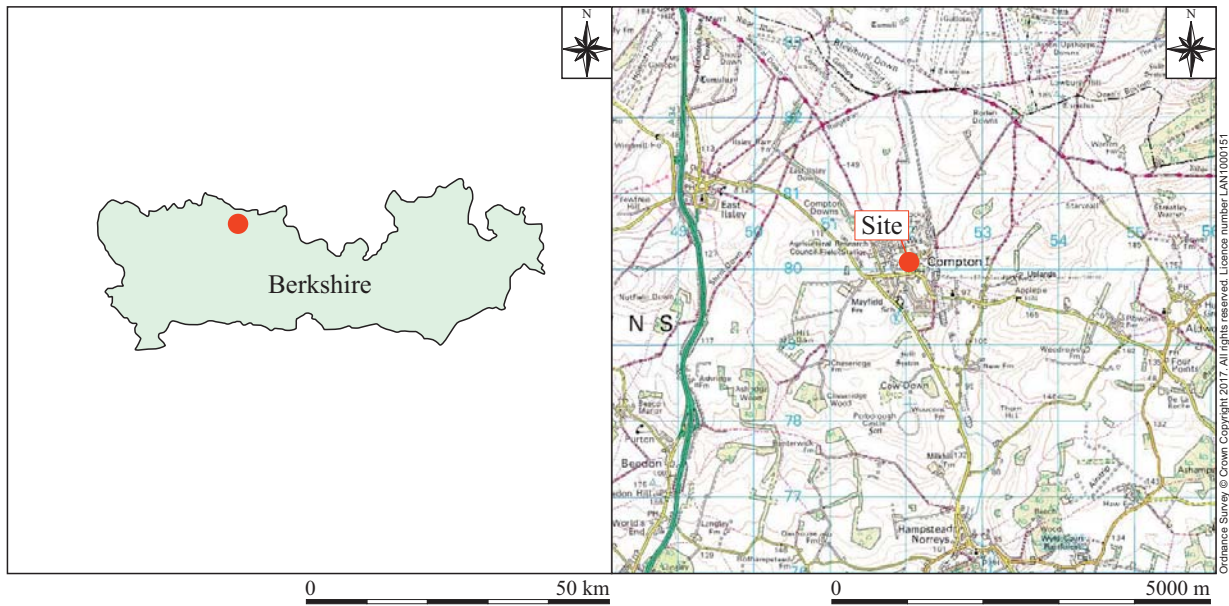
West Berkshire Council granted planning permission for the construction of new dwellings with associated curtilage and car parking with modifications to boundary wall (dismantle and reconstruct) and removal of boundary outbuildings 15/03431/FULD). Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains a condition for a programme of archaeological works was attached. This was that no development or site preparation should take place until a programme of archaeological work had been implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which had been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service (WBCAS) had indicated that this should be a watching brief during groundworks with a subsequent report.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Domesday Book recorded the place name of 'Contone' in 1098. Later variants of the name include Cumpton (1195) but Compton is recorded first in 1204. The name means 'Valley Farm', and the village lies in a wide, shallow valley. A study of the parish boundaries of Compton concluded that there was no convincing evidence of prehistoric or Roman boundary continuity, and there was probably a landscape reorganisation in the Anglo-Saxon period. Though there are no scheduled monuments within the area of impact, there are 47 monuments listed within a 500m radius of Bray Cottage. These range from Anglo-Saxon to the late 19th century in date.

The most notable of these include:

- The West Berkshire HER recorded a large area of field system traces ('celtic fields') and a ditched enclosure situated to northwest of Compton and visible on aerial photographs. Features are mainly confined to upper chalk with some continuation onto slopes of dry valley (upper reaches of the valley of the River Pang) on the northeast. Also includes scheduled barrows. The Lambourn Downs National Mapping Programme recorded an extensive Iron Age or Roman field system, visible as both earthworks and cropmarks on aerial photographs. Although



Key Site boundary Monitored area

Figure 1: Site location

- most of the earthworks are ploughed out in the 21st century, some traces of the fields survive as cropmarks or soilmarks in a 2003 and 2010 aerial photograph and in early 21st century LiDAR data modelling. Additionally, there are several mentions of field boundaries from the Saxon through the post-medieval periods noted.
- Several Grade II listed buildings including:
 - A Grade II listed manor house, built c1600, with 19th and 20th century additions and alterations.
 - A Grade II listed 17th century dovecote, garage, storehouse, weather vane.
 - Grade II listed 18th century to Late 19th century house
- Several listed and unlisted features associated with the Late 19th century Railway Station, including:
 - Site of railway station on the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton branch line between 1882 and 1964 – now residential use.
 - Late 19th c Railway line - The section of the DNS railway line through West Berkshire is not shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1880-81 but had been mapped by the Second Epoch of 1899.
- A large number of objects were collected presumably through metal detecting, and taken to Newbury Museum for identification. They included:
 - A Neolithic axehead found whilst gardening, two feet below surface in made ground composed of a variety of soils with building rubble. It therefore seemed likely the find had been redeposited from elsewhere. Staff from Reading Museum visited the site and obtained the axe (Reading Museum Accession Register. 451:77).
 - A rare Iron Age silver coin of Tasciovanus (at the time only the 7th recorded example),
 - A silver unit of Verica
 - Several Roman coins (one of Carausius, AD 287-293) and two brooches,
 - An Anglo-Saxon silver sceat,
 - Several 18th century coins, tokens and medals.

The site is within the historic core of Compton, which may relate to one of two hamlets documented in the 13th century that have amalgamated over time to form the modern village. As the proposed house is to be situated with an area of relatively undisturbed ground, there is some potential that buried archaeological deposits may survive – these deposits (if present) would offer an opportunity to further understand the development of Compton as a settlement, as well as further define the limits of the Medieval occupation.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To record any archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks.
- In particular to identify any remains relating to the development of Compton.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service.

3.2 Methodology

The groundworks on the site consisted initially in the ground reduction for the new build footprint and the excavation for the foundation trenches (Fig. 1). The area was stripped by a 360 ° excavator under the continuous watch of the archaeologist. An archaeologist was present on site during the course of all groundwork associated with the development that could potentially impact archaeological remains. Archaeology was checked for both in plan and section. The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned for finds. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

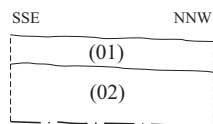
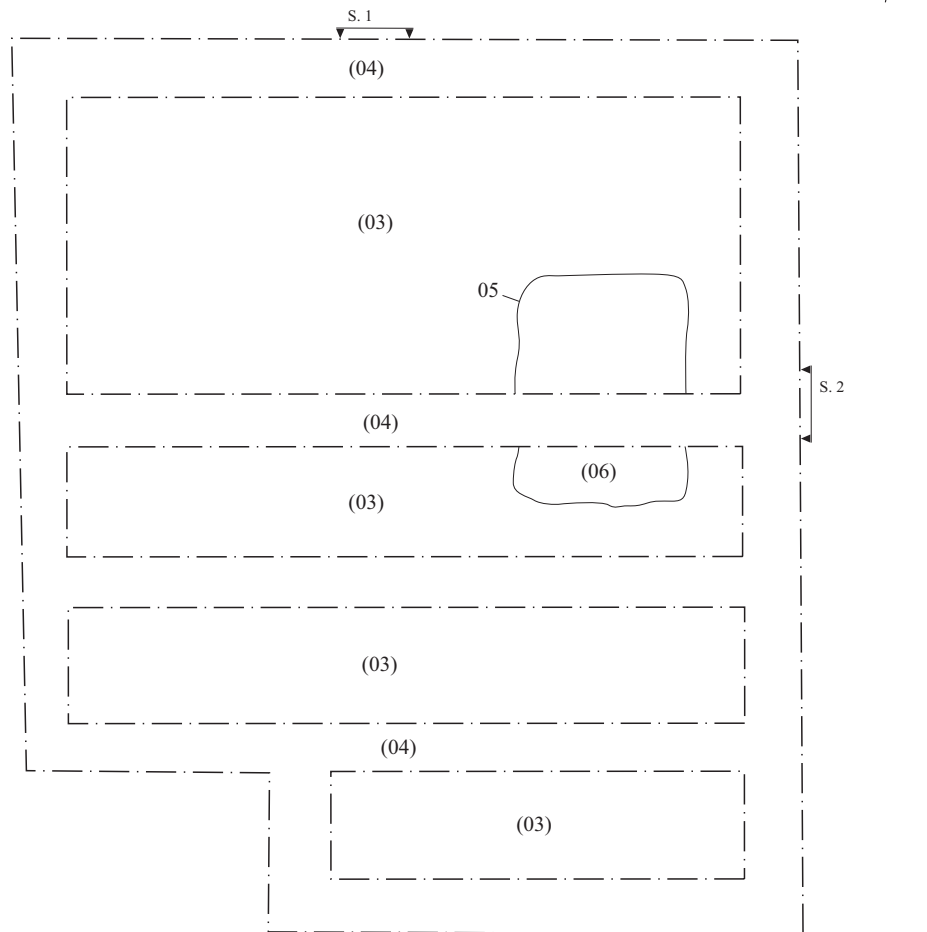
4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material; while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

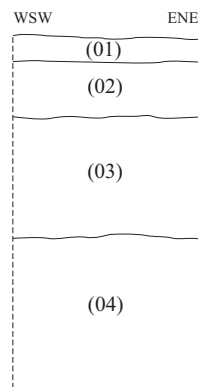
The results of the excavation revealed no archaeological remains. The lowest layer recorded was a light yellow silt deposit with moderate inclusions of flint nodules and rare fine pebbles, which corresponds to the geological horizon (04). This geological horizon was excavated 0.7m deep for the foundation trenches of the building. Above the natural was the subsoil, a mid-brown clayey silt deposit (03) 0.65m thick with occasional fragments of angular flint. Above it was an old topsoil (02), a mid-brown sandy silt loam 0.3m deep with frequent inclusions of chalk and flint. Finally, there was a mid to dark brown top deposit of garden soil (01) of silty loam 0.15 m thick.

No archaeological features were identified in plan or section in all the property. The area showed some very recent disturbances (Fig. 2) in the form of a dumping area [05], 3m in length, 2.2m width and 0.65m depth located in the SW of the site. The material in the fill (06) was mainly rubble, bricks and plastic.

Plan 1



Section 1



Section 2

0 5 m

Plan

0 2 m

Sections

Figure 2: Site plan with sections



Plate 1. Representative section S.2



Plate 2. Foundation trench looking south.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by *Stephanie N. Duensing*

The pottery assemblage comprised 7 sherds (471g), one complete bottle (264g) and one sherd of roof tile (32g) with a combined weight of 767g. This was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Reading Waterfront type-series (Underwood 1997), the following fabrics were noted:

EST: English Stoneware. 1680 onwards (Underwood 1997; Blacker 1922). Hard, grey fabric, often with a brown, iron-rich exterior wash. Range of utilitarian vessels, particularly mugs, jugs and bottles. This example is from the late 19th century. This intact bottle was retrieved from deposit 02, the topsoil. There was no maker's mark but the vessel's form is likely of a medicine bottle. The form makes the most likely date for this vessel one from the last half of the 19th century. 1 complete vessel, 264g.

WHEW: Mass produced white earthenwares. Late 19th century +. One rim sherd from a late 19th century Ironstone plate was recovered. 1 sherd, 21g.

REW: Red Earthenware. 16th – 19th century. Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the late 19th century. 5 sherds, 398g.

The following, not included in the Reading Waterfront type-series, were also noted:

Terracotta: Flower pot. 13th century – 1900+. 1 sherd, 52g.

CBM: Ceramic Building Material. 17th century – 1900+. One ceramic (terracotta) roofing tile with peg hole. 1 sherd, 32g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of sites in the region. The assemblage was post-medieval in date. Overall the range of pottery types present indicates that there was activity at the site during the mid to late 19th century.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	EST		WHEW		REW		TERRACOTTA		CBM		Context Date
	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	
02	1	264	1	21	5	398	1	52	1	32	AD 1860-1900+
Totals	1	264	1	21	5	398	1	52	1	32	

6 DISCUSSION

The house foundation trench was devoid of any archaeological features. Nevertheless, some pottery sherds and an intact medicine bottle in English stoneware (STE) were recovered from the topsoil (02). The analysis of this assemblage of finds shows that there was important domestic activity in the area in the 19th century, between 1860 and 1900.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the West Berkshire Museum (Newbury) with accession number NEBYM: 2017.1

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Underwood, C., 1997 Pottery in JW Hawkes and PJ Fasham 'Excavations on Reading Waterfront Sites, 1979-1988' *Wessex Archaeological Report* 5, 142-161.