JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND AT 29 CRESSINGHAM ROAD, READING

NGU SU 7268 7089

On behalf of

Mr. S. S Ahluwalia

MAY 2010

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services concluded an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a new development. One trench, totalling approximately 8 metres in length, and two test pits, measuring 1.5m², were excavated to the underlying natural geology. Seven features were revealed in the trench comprising of two pits, two gullies, a ditch and one posthole; all were sealed by the subsoil and topsoil. Only one pit: [010]/fill (011) contained a piece of post-medieval handmade brick. All the other features were undated.

Two test pits were excavated to the front and rear of the property, and the soil from them sieved using a 10mm mesh in order to assess the potential for the presence of prehistoric flint. No flint finds were recovered. A single, undated gully was present in Test Pit 2 to the front of the property.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Geology *(Figure 1)*

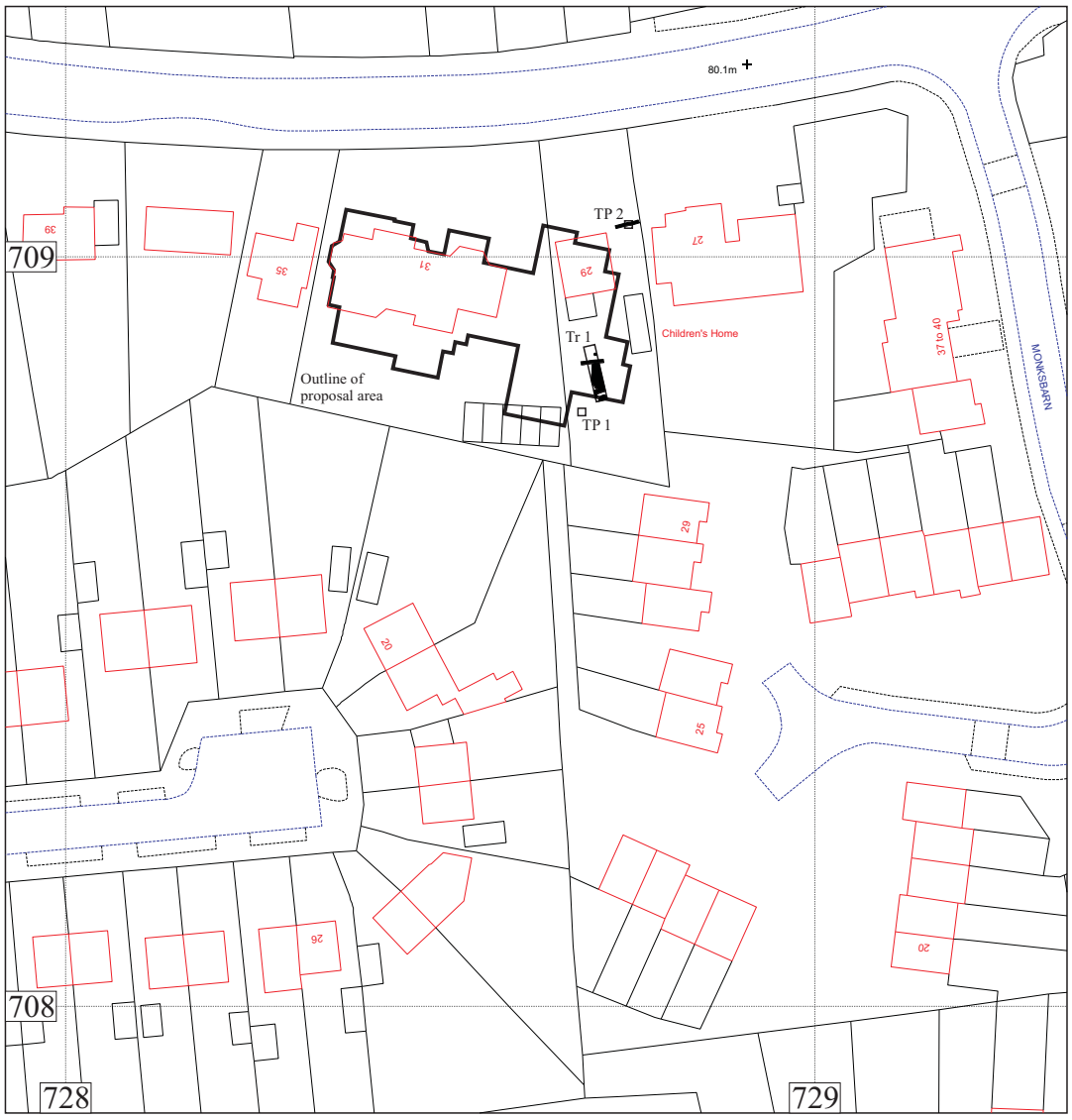
The site is located at 29 Cressingham Rd, Reading (NGR 7268 7089) and is currently occupied by a residential dwelling with a drive at the front and garden to the rear. The site lies at c. 80m AOD and the underlying geology according to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 268; 1:50 000) is 6th Terrace gravel and sands over London Clay. As a result of the trench excavation the geology in the rear garden was seen to be bright yellow clay. The front garden test pit revealed the geology to be terrace gravel.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning application number 07/01661 submitted to Reading Borough Council proposes the demolition of 29 Cressingham Rd and construction of new stand alone development for a new dementia home. In addition, an extension to the rear of 31 Cressingham Road (phase 2) will be carried out subsequently. The Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology prepared a Brief for an archaeological evaluation. This first phase of evaluation work was for that part of the proposal within the grounds of 29 Cressingham Road. John Moore Heritage Services prepared a *Written Scheme of Investigation* which proposed a method to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, and which was agreed with the Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology.

It was stated within this document that:

> *"If significant archaeological remains are present then Berkshire Archaeology, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, may require further stages of archaeological work prior to, or during, groundworks associated with the development. Any further stages of work will be subject to further Written Schemes of work submitted to, and agreed with both, Reading Borough Council and Berkshire Archaeology."*



0 50 m

Figure 1. Site Location

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site was identified as being of archaeological potential, due to a number of sites noted on the Berkshire Historic Environment Records for this area.

The proposed development site lies within 150m of a disc barrow, which was located to the west of Cressingham Road (formerly Grosvenor Road) and levelled in 1909 for housing. The site has since been reinterpreted and may have been a high status enclosure such as a small hillfort. A Bronze Age spearhead and a Roman funerary urn were recovered from the immediate vicinity during housing development. There is therefore potential for encountering remains from different phases of activity.

Land to the rear of 74 Northcourt Avenue, approximately 200m to the northeast of the site, was subject to archaeological trenching by TVAS in 2008 during which ditches, pits and post-holes were encountered dating to the medieval period. Some Roman finds were also recovered. An evaluation trench and zoned archaeological evaluation at 68-72 Northcourt Avenue revealed Roman activity including a field system and possible habitation close by.

The site is shown as within open fields on the first edition 1:2500 OS map (1878) of the area. Development in the area of the proposed development was started by 1913 and later with residential houses on the north side of the road by 1936.

Most of the above information is taken from the Berkshire Archaeology's Brief.

2.0 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To determine the existence or absence of archaeological remains and, shall archaeological remains be present, to assess their general nature and significance.
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains.
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains.
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- To determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.

- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental, geo-archaeological and/or economic evidence.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of one 8m long trench and two test pits (1.5m²).

The trench was 1.5m in width and was excavated by a 360° type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand where necessary prior to hand excavation of the potential archaeological deposits and features.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

Ms Mary O'Donoghue, County Archaeologist for Berkshire County Council monitored the work.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

The trench was north by northwest-south by southeast to the rear of 29 Cressingham Rd. within the footprint of the proposed new build. The lowest deposit noted within the trenches consisted of natural clay (003) which was reached between varying heights of 79.45m to 79.53m AOD.

4.2 **Trench 1** (Figure 2)

Linear Features
One possible ditch 1/06 and two shallow gullies, 1/08 and 1/12 were noted cutting into the natural clay on an approximate east-west axis. Ditch 1/06 (79.54m AOD) was the furthest north of these (Fig. 2; S. 1). This was noted to be 1.10m wide and 0.35m deep, containing a mid brown grey loam fill (1/07) with no finds.

Cut into the south edge and parallel with ditch 1/06 was gully 1/008 (79.54m AOD) measuring 0.60m wide and 0.15m deep. It contained a light brown loam fill 1/09; no finds were recovered from the fill. After initial recording, both of these features were almost fully excavated within the trench but no dating evidence for either was recovered.

Towards the southern end of the trench was gully 1/12 (79.51m AOD) (Fig. 2; S. 2), which was also parallel with 1/08. It was a similar width to 1/08, 0.60m wide, and was 0.10m deep and contained mid grey brown silty clay (013). No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature.

Pit features
A large shallow pit (79.54m AOD) was seen in the centre of the trench 1/10 (Fig. 2; S. 1 & 2), which had very shallow concave sides and a flat base. This feature was 0.05m in depth and had a minimum width of 1.5m with a dark grey brown silty clay loam fill which contained a fragment of brick which was post medieval in date. Gully 1/12 was seen to probably cut this pit but a relationship was hard to define as the fills of the two features were almost identical.

Feature 1/16 (79.53m AOD) was seen near the southern end of the trench and was only partially exposed (F. 2; S. 3). It had a width of almost 1m and a total depth of 0.12m, filled by a mid brown grey silty clay loam with gravel inclusions throughout but no dating evidence. It was not clear whether this was a pit or the terminal of a ditch.

Feature 1/14 (79.60m AOD) was seen protruding from the southern end of the trench measuring 1.2m by 0.65m, concave curving sides and a gently rounded base (F. 2; S. 5). It was filled by (1/15), a 0.18m thick dark greyish brown loam with no dating evidence.

Post hole
Feature 1/04 (79.54m AOD) was a sub circular shaped feature which had concave sides and a gently rounded base (Fig. 2; S. 1) measuring 0.30m diameter and 0.10m deep. It was filled by (1/05) dark brown grey silty clay loam with compacted gravels seen throughout but no dating evidence was recovered.

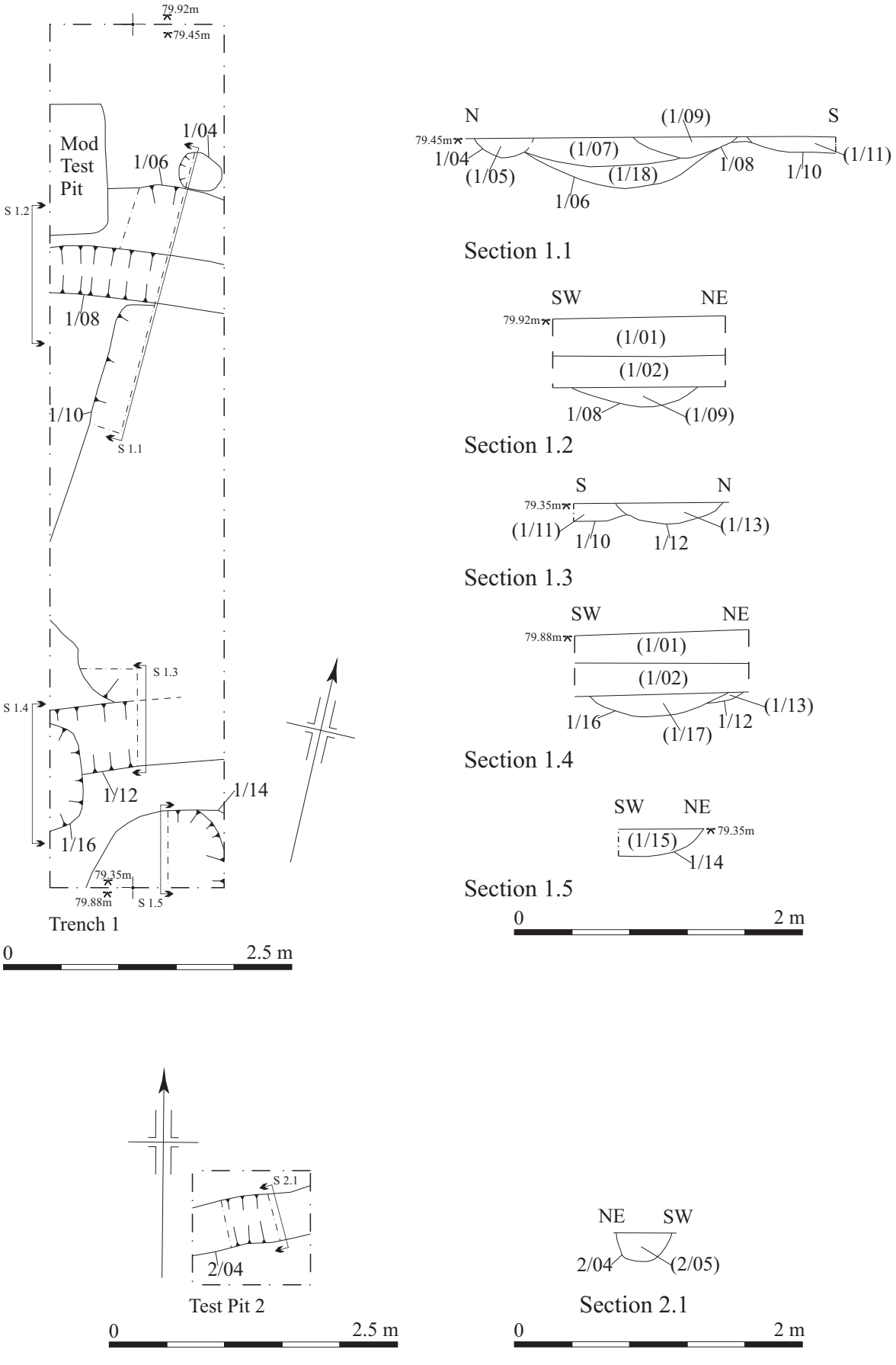


Figure 2. Trench 1 and Test Pit 2 plans and sections

All of these features were sealed by a mid grey gravelly loam subsoil layer (002) *c*. 0.20m thick. Overlying this was a dark grey brown silty clay topsoil with occasional gravel inclusions (001), *c*. 0.25m thick.

4.3 Test Pit 1

The natural clay (TP1/03) geology was revealed at the base of the test pit (79.45m AOD). Overlying the natural was *c*. 0.30m thick mid brown grey silty loam subsoil with gravel inclusions throughout (TP1/01). The latest deposit was *c*. 0.20m dark grey brown silty clay topsoil (TP1/02).

No worked flints were discovered in this test pit

4.4 Test Pit 2 (Fig. 2)

The natural geology consisted of densely compacted gravels and light silt (TP2/03) and was seen at the base of the test pit (79.58m AOD). The natural was cut by an east-west oriented gully TP2/04, filled with brown loam (TP2/05). Directly above the natural was *c*. 0.28m thick mid grey brown sandy silt gravels (TP2/02) with high density of tree roots. The latest deposit was a 0.15m thick grade 1 hardcore used as a foundation for the present driveway (TP2/01).

No worked flints were discovered in this test pit

4.5 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The excavation of the trench took place in favourable weather conditions.

5 FINDS

The brief required sieving of deposits from Test Pits 1 and 2; no finds were recovered during the sieving.

A single piece of undated post-medieval, and probably pre-19th century, brick was recovered from pit 1/10. The brick was of orange-red, sandy fabric, with no indication of frogging.

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The depth of overburden was as expected and preservation of archaeological features was good. The results of the evaluation suggest that not much modern disturbance has taken place on the land, with a relatively significant presence of features. The features although mainly undated except the large shallow pit 1/10, may be of ancient date as they were sealed beneath the subsoil and topsoil. The density of archaeological features could extend to the front garden of the plot, where TP2 was

located. The narrow linear feature cut through natural gravels was also undated but may indicate further undated features in this area of the site.

The linear features extended beyond the edges of the trench and Test Pit 2. All were oriented roughly east-west. Sieving was carried out of the deposits excavated in Test Pits 1 & 2. No artefactual remains were recovered. It was therefore not possible to ascertain the condition of artefactual remains; preservation of negative features was good, however. Many of the other aims defined in the Brief were not achievable.

The gullies in the evaluation trench were parallel with the gully observed in Test Pit 2; this may well indicate the presence of a field-system. It is common on prehistoric sites, as well as later rural sites, not to expect large quantities of dateable material from features. Given that the site may be on or close to an Iron Age hillfort, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of the features may have a prehistoric origin; equally, the proximity of a Roman field-system at 68-72 Northcourt Avenue may indicate Roman activity extending this far south.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 1							
001	Layer	Topsoil	0.15- 0.20m	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
002	Layer	Light brown loam	0.15-0.30m	Tr.	Tr.		
003	Layer	Mid orange yellow clay silt	Tr.	Tr.	Tr.		Natural
004	Cut	Post hole	0.10m	0.30m	0.30m		
005	Fill	Dark brownish grey silty clay loam	0.10m	0.30m	0.30m	None	
006	Cut	Linear feature	0.20m	1.10m	Tr.		
007	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay loam	0.20m	1.10m	Tr.	None	
008	Cut	Gully	0.15m	0.60m	Tr.		
009	Fill	Dark grey brown silty loam	0.15m	0.60m		None	
010	Cut	Pit	0.10m	Tr.	3.5m		
011	Fill	Dark grey brown silty loam	0.1	Tr.	3.5m	Post Med tile	
012	Cut	Gully	0.10m	0.60m	Tr.		
013	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.10m	0.60m	Tr.	None	
014	Cut	Pit	0.20m	0.80m	1m		
015	Fill	Dark grey brown silty loam	0.20m	0.80m	1m	None	
016	Cut	Pit/posthole	0.18m	0.80m	Tr.		
017	Fill	Mid grey brown silty loam	0.18m	0.80m	Tr.	None	
018	Fill	Light orange grey silty sand	0.20m	1.10m	Tr.	None	