

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**4 Old Bath Road,
Charvil, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site Code: OBC25/08

(SU 7721 7561)

4 Old Bath Road, Charvil Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Christopher Wren Developments**

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OBC 25/08

January 2025

Summary

Site name: 4 Old Bath Road, Charvil, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7721 7561

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 20th January 2025

Project coordinator: David Sanchez

Site supervisor: Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site code: OBC 25/08

Area of site: c.700 sq m

Summary of results: Three trenches were successfully opened. No archaeological features nor finds of archaeological interest were encountered. On the basis of these results the site is considered to have very low archaeological potential

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 21.05.25 Steve Preston✓ 21.01.25
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4 Old Bath Road, Charvil, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Report 25/08

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 4 Old Bath Road, Charvil, Berkshire, RG10 9RL (NGR: SU 7721 7561) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Phil Robinson, on behalf of Christopher Wren Developments, PO Box 8104, Hurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 9HS.

Planning permission (app no 231682) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the erection of two semi-detached dwellings and associated parking and landscaping, following the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological remains, the consent is subject to a condition pertaining to archaeology, that requires the implementation of a programme of field investigation. This was to take the form, initially, of evaluation by means of trial trenching, based on the results of which, further fieldwork might be required to mitigate the effects of the development.

This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2023) and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Linden Ellicott, archaeology officer at Berkshire Archaeology, the adviser to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pierre-Damien Manisse, on 20th January 2025 and the site code is OBC25/08. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located close to the western limit of Charvil (Fig. 1). The site was a residential property south of Old Bath Road (A3032), near its junction with Bath Road (A4). It is a rectangular plot of land with garden, driveways and now demolished house and outbuildings. It is surrounded on three sides by other residential properties (Fig. 1). The site is moderately sloping from c.43m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the south, down to 41m aOD at North, arranged in three terraces (front garden, house and back garden). According to maps (BGS 2000), the underlying bedrock geology is Upper Chalk (Seaford and Newhaven Chalk Formation), while from

work carried out in the immediate vicinity, the superficial geology is 3rd or 4th Terrace gravel deposits overlying Lambeth Group (mix of clay and silt). The geology observed was yellow to brown orange sand and gravels.

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological potential stems from its location close to the confluence of the Thames and Loddon Valleys, a rich archaeological zone. The latter is well known through aerial survey (Gates 1975) highlighting the many sites present, river dredging (e.g. Chappell 1987) providing many finds, and more extensive work in advance of mineral extraction (e.g. Barnes and Cleal 1995). Field survey (Ford 1987) has also added sites and finds to the list, as has regular archaeological fieldwork (Barnes *et al.* 1997; Preston 2003).

Charvil lies in an area containing several noteworthy sites. At Sonning to the north-west, a notable Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial complex, likely including a *cursus* monument, is documented from aerial photographs (Gates 1975, pl. 11), complemented by geophysical survey (Dawson 2012). The other side of Charvil, at Wargrave is a Saxon site and at Whistley Green, Twyford Mesolithic occupation had been brought to light during fieldwalking (Ford 1997) and excavation (Harding and Richards 1993). At East Park Farm, to the south and south east, multi-phase activity is recorded, spanning from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Roman period (Lovell and Mephram 2003; Taylor 2022).

Closer to site, an area to the south of the current site was the object of archaeological evaluation trenching (Mundin and Weale 2008) and watching brief (Mundin and Weale 2009). This work revealed only three undated linear features and a modern gully.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. More specifically the project was to address the following objectives:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if there are any prehistoric or Roman sites within the proposal area; and
- to provide information in order to draw up a mitigation strategy if necessary.

It was proposed to open three trenches, each 10m long and 1.6-1.8m wide. Topsoil and other overburden was to be removed by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of features which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The significance of any such features was to be assessed in regards to current general research agendas (HE 2017) or more thematic/local research priorities (Hey and Hind 2014). The relevant standards and guidance of the CIfA (CIfA 2023a and b) and the 'Berkshire Archaeology general standards for archaeological fieldwork projects (April 2021)' were followed.

Results (Figs 3-4; Pls 1-3)

A 14-tonne 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, 1.8m wide, was used to open three trenches with very slight adjustments from their intended locations due to site constraints and machine manoeuvrability. The weather conditions were considered to be fair with a decent light. The trenches ranged in length from 10.3m to 10.4m and in depth from 0.30m to 0.80m. A metal detector was used to enhance finds recovery, to no avail. The spoil heaps were checked for finds with similarly negative results.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3-4; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned WNW - ESE and was 10.3m long and 0.30-0.40m deep with a 0.75m deep test slot at the ESE end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil (only present for the first 5m from the south-east end), a soft dark brown silty sand and occasional gravels above 0.25m of subsoil, a soft brown silty sand with common gravels, overlying natural geology of yellow sand and gravels/pebbles. This was the only trench where topsoil had been preserved. No finds were recovered and no features were observed.

Trench 2 (Figs 3-4; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 10.4m long and 0.30-0.35m deep, taken to total depth of a 0.80m in a test slot at the northern end. The stratigraphy consisted of up to 0.20m of demolition levelling, above up to 0.10m of orange to yellow sandy gravels (former driveway levelling layer), onto 0.10m of made ground and

finally 0.15m of subsoil overlying natural geology. On the southern end, the demolition overburden (0.20m) was directly covering 0.10m of subsoil on top of the natural horizon. There were no finds nor any features.

Trench 3 (Figs 3-4; Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned N – S and was 10.3m long and 0.50-0.70m deep. The trench orientation had been slightly modified due to site constraints. The stratigraphy at the north end consisted of 0.20m of overburden from the demolition and 0.25m of subsoil overlying natural sandy gravel geology, here more brown-orange than yellow. The stratigraphy at the southern end was more akin to trench 2 as it encompasses part of the old driveway: Tarmac (0.08m deep) overlay a levelling layer (0.10m), built-up over the subsoil (0.14m) and natural geology underneath. Again, no features and no finds were present.

Finds

No finds were collected from the trenches nor from the spoil heaps.

Conclusion

Three trenches were successfully opened with only very minor alignment modifications. No features of archaeological interest were present and no finds were discovered. As a consequence, the site's archaeological potential is considered to be very low.

References

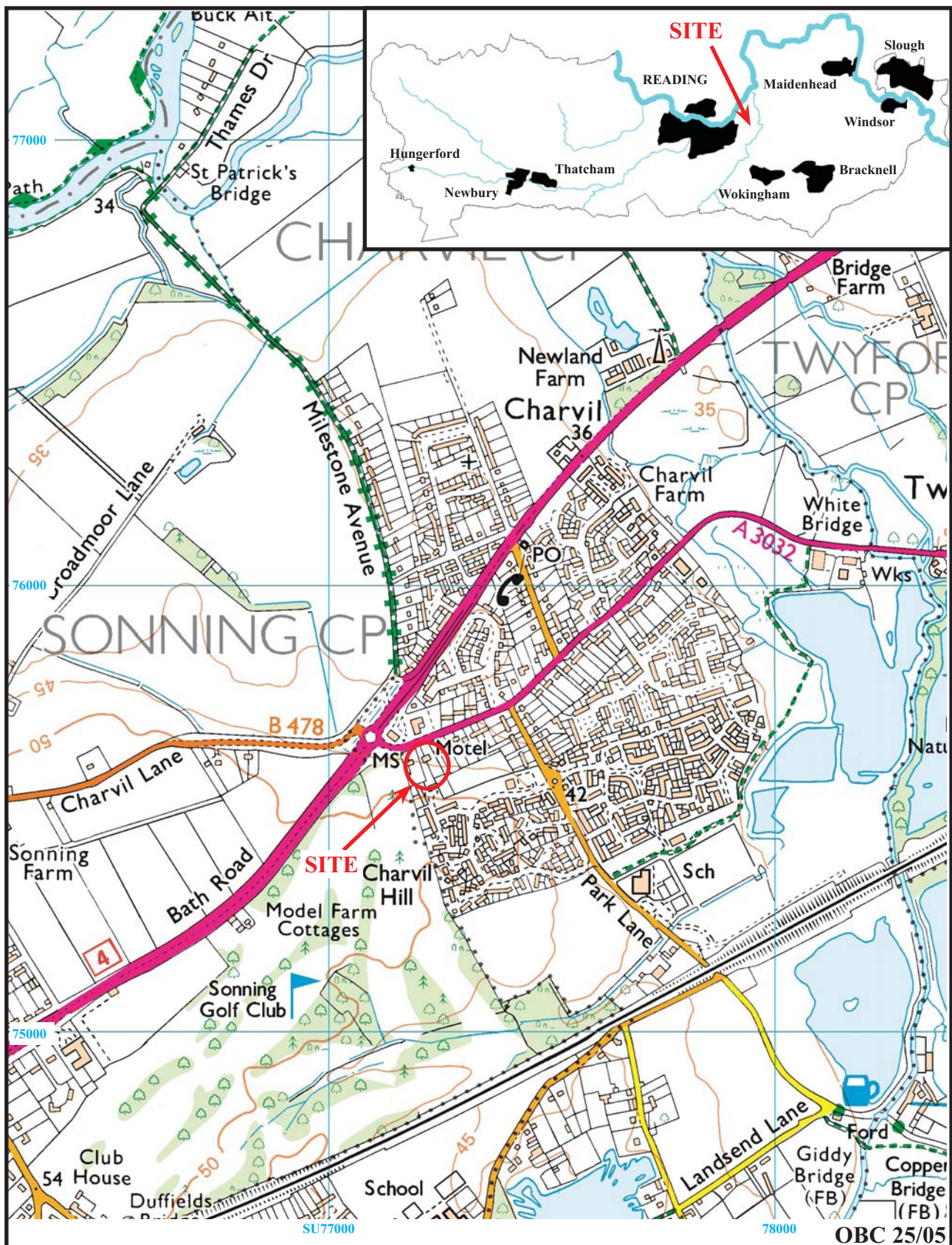
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at ESE, SSE or S end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	10.3	1.85	0.30 to 0.75	0–0.15m topsoil (dark brown silty sand and occasional gravels); 0.15–0.40m subsoil (soft brown silty sand with common gravels); 0.40m+ natural geology (yellow sand and gravels/pebbles). [Pl. 1]
2	10.4	1.85	0.30 to 0.80	At northern end, 0–0.14m overburden; 0.14–0.22m levelling layer; 0.22–0.32 made ground; 0.32–0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ natural geology. At southern end, 0–0.20m overburden; 0.20–0.30m subsoil; 0.30m+ natural geology. [Pl. 2]
3	10.3	1.85	0.50 to 0.70	0–0.20m overburden; 0.20–0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ natural geology. [Pl. 3]

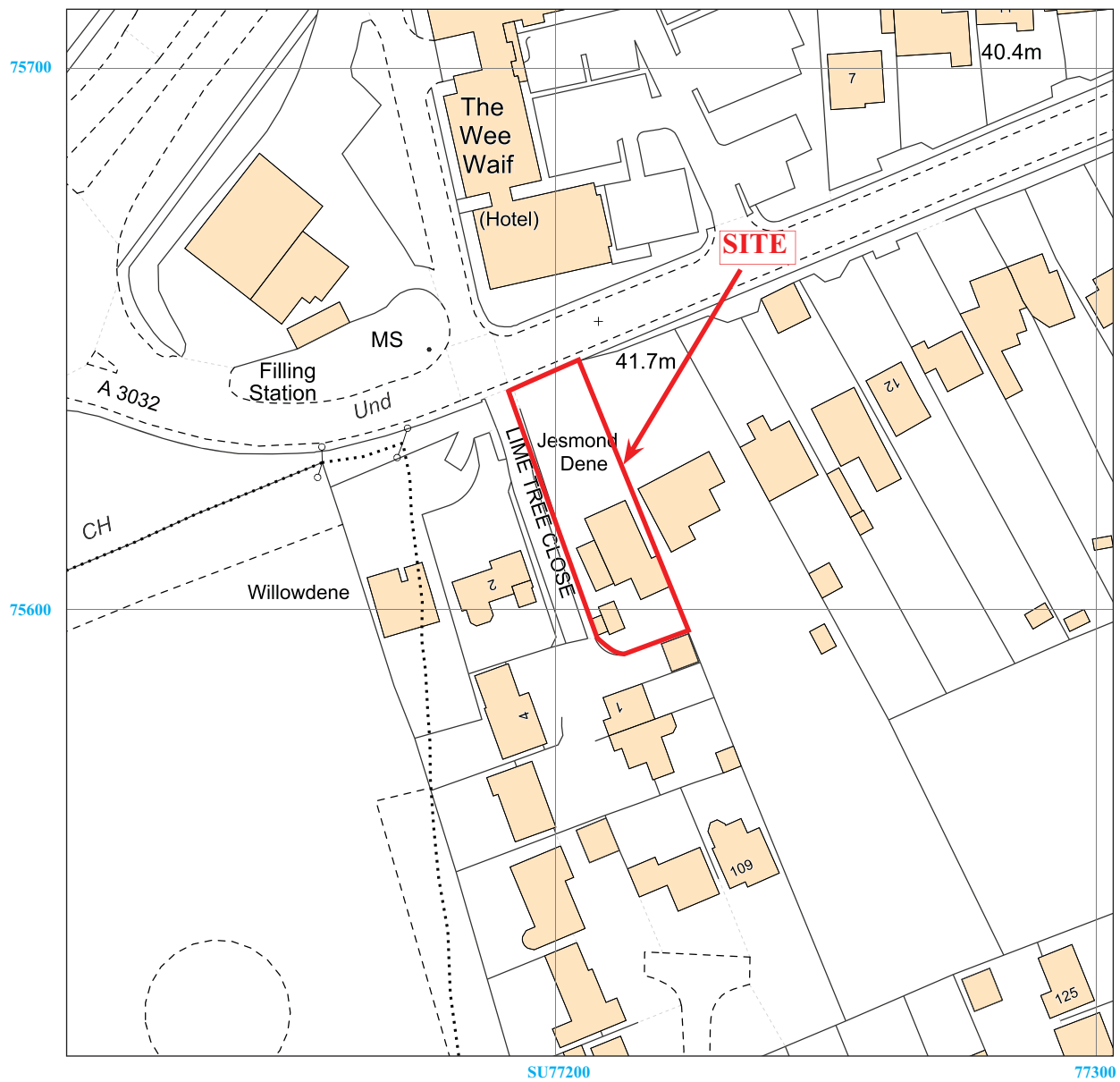


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Figure 1. Location of site within Charvil and Berkshire.

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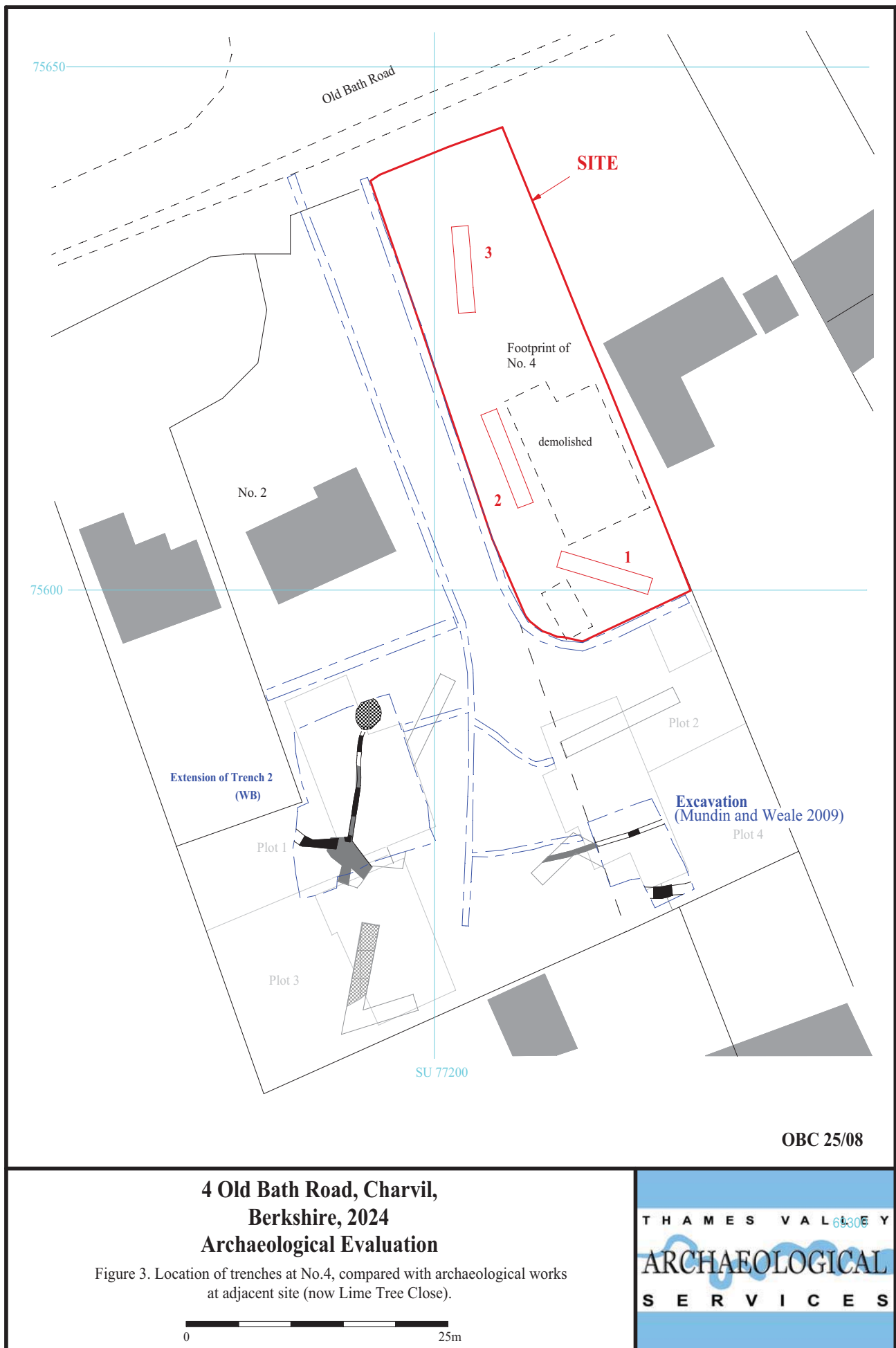
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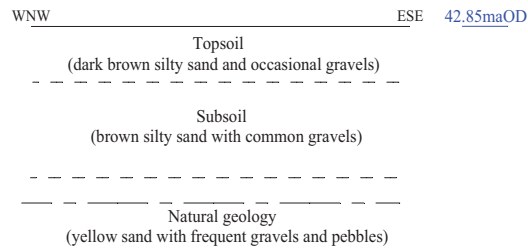
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Old Bath Road.

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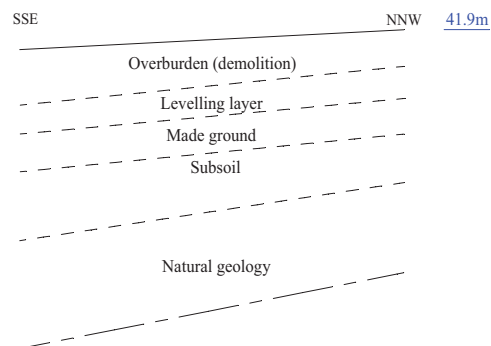
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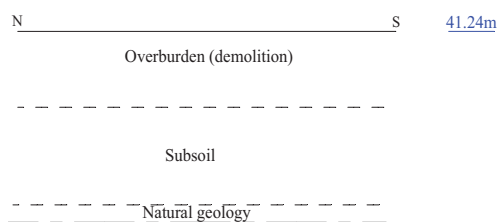
Trench 1



Trench 2



Trench 3



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking North-West,
Scales: horizontal 2 x 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, oblique view with section; looking
south-east, Scales: horizontal 2 x 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 3. Trench 3, looking south
Scales: horizontal 2 x 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 3.

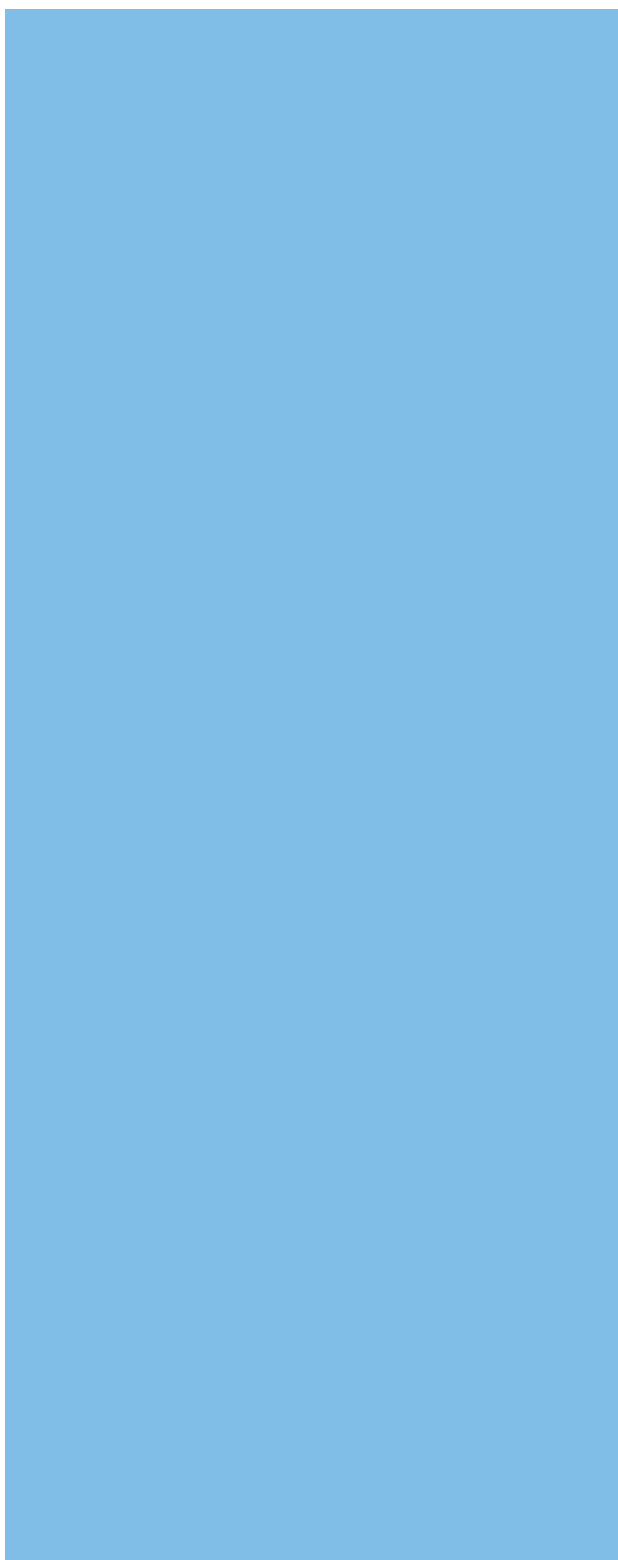
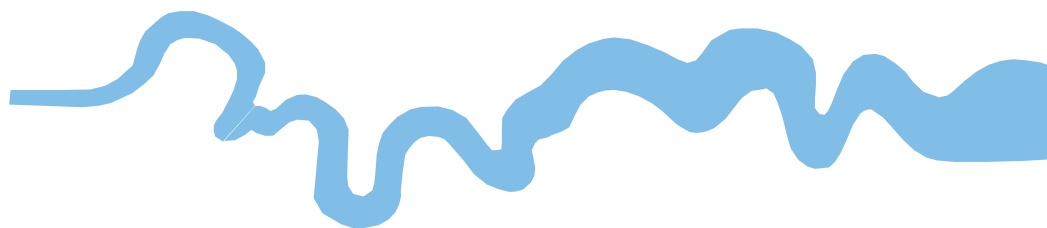
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TIME CHART

Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
	AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

***Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent, Wellingborough
and Ennis (Ireland)***