

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road,
Sonning, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: SGC 25/209

(SU 7650 7465)

Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation for Sonning Golf Club

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SGC 25/209

December 2025

Summary

Site name: Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7650 7465

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 15th-17th December 2025

Project coordinator: David Sanchez

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: SGC 25/209

Area of site: c.2.4ha

Summary of results: The evaluation was successfully completed with all trenches opened as close as possible to their intended locations. A ditch of late medieval/early post medieval date was observed crossing four trenches along with an undated gully.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept archive material and a digital copy of the records will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Genni Elliott✓ 19.12.25 Steve Preston✓ 19.12.25
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Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 25/209

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning, Berkshire (SU 7650 7465) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ben Stephenson of BSA Heritage, 7 Spring Gardens, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1AZ on behalf of Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road, Sonning, Berkshire, RG4 6GJ.

Planning permission (223458) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for changes to the layout of a parcel of land including a residential development. Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features, the consent is subject to a condition (18) requiring a programme of archaeological work which may include more than one phase. Initially an archaeological evaluation (trenching) was requested, to assess the site's archaeological potential and to produce information on which to base a mitigation strategy if necessary.

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 with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Alfie Peters between 15th and 17th December 2025 and the site code is SGC 25/209.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept archive material and a digital copy will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the southern edge of Sonning, which lies c.6km east of Reading (Fig. 1). It currently consists of a flat parcel of land used as a driving range as part of the golf club. It is bounded by the golf course to the east with its club house and venue building to the south. Under construction housing lies to the south-west with properties and their grounds to the north along the A4 Bath Road. The underlying geology is mapped as 4th

terrace gravel deposits (BGS 2000), which was observed throughout the trenches and the site lies at a height of c.50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Stephenson 2025). In summary the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley. The archaeology of the valley is relatively well known from a variety of sources of information. For example, many cropmark sites have been recorded from the air (Gates 1975) and numerous finds from both prehistoric and later periods represented by tools and weapons of flint, bronze and iron dredged from the Thames (e.g. Chappell 1987). Many finds have also come to light during both casual, and, more recently, systematic examination of large areas in advance of mineral extraction (e.g. Barnes and Cleal 1995), field survey in general (Ford 1987) and fieldwork carried out as a part of the planning process (Barnes *et al.* 1997; Preston 2003).

The general environs of the Golf Club have a number of notable sites. To the north is a Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial complex at Sonning visible as cropmarks from the air which includes a *cursus* (processional way?) monument (Gates 1975, pl. 11; Slade 1964); recent survey work there has extended our knowledge of this monument and associated features (Dawson 2012). To the east and north-east field survey in the Loddon Valley has revealed amongst other sites, one of Saxon date at Wargrave (Ford 1997) and one of Mesolithic date at Whistley Green, Twyford (Ford 1997), the latter subsequently excavated (Harding and Richards 1993). Excavations east of the proposal site have investigated various prehistoric sites of Upper Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age date (Lovell and Mephram 2003; Taylor 2022 with Bronze Age deposits to the south (Hardy 1999).

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 that would be affected by the foundations, services and ground reduction.

The specific research aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically significant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine whether any archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to inform a strategy for mitigation if required.

It was proposed to dig 16 trenches, each 25m long and 1.8-2m wide. Topsoil and other overburden was removed using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were then excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above. This work was carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. The evaluation was undertaken to the standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2023 a and b) and Berkshire Archaeology (BA 2025).

The potential and significance of deposits located has been assessed according to research priorities including those set out in Historic England's *Research Agenda* (HE 2017) and the Solent Thames Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014) as necessary.

Results

All 16 trenches were opened as close as possible to their intended locations, although some slight repositioning was necessary due to tree canopies, an irrigation pipe and areas heavily landscaped for the golf course (Fig. 2). The trenches measured 1.8m wide, between 23.20m and 25.90m long and between 0.31m and 0.90m deep.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. Only trenches 11, 12, 14 and 15 contained features. The excavated features, with dating evidence, are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 1)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 25.40m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.18m subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were present and no finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned east-west and measured 25.60m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.11m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.39m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. There were no finds or features of archaeological interest in Trench 2.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 2)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 25.40m long and 0.31m deep at the west end and 0.58m deep at the east end. At the western end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.11m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.20m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. At the eastern end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.38m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. No features or finds of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 4 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned north-south and measured 25.10m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.14m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.19m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. Trench 4 revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest.

Trench 5 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned north-south and measured 25m long and 0.32m deep at its northern end and 0.63m at its southern end. The stratigraphy, at the northern end, consisted of 0.14m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.16m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. The stratigraphy of the southern end consisted of 0.18m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.38m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. There were no finds or features of archaeological interest in Trench 5.

Trench 6 (Figs 2 and 3;)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 25m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.16m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. Trench 6 revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest.

Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 3)

This trench was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 25.20m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.25m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were present and no finds were recovered.

Trench 8 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 4)

This trench was aligned east-west and measured 25.30m long and up to 0.72m deep (shallower at the east). The stratigraphy consisted of 0.43m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.29m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were present and no finds were recovered.

Trench 9 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 25.90m long and 0.90m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.46m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.39m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. Trench 9 revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest.

Trench 10 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 25.60m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.15m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. There were no finds or features of archaeological interest in Trench 10.

Trench 11 (Figs 2, 3 and 4; Pl. 5)

This trench was aligned east-west and measured 25.20m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.25m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. A ditch (1) was observed between 16.50m and 19.20m from the eastern end. This was the same ditch noted in trenches 12, 14 and 15 and so was not excavated in this trench.

Trench 12 (Figs 2–5; Pls 6, 10 and 11)

This trench was aligned north-west to south-east and measured 25.20m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.37m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. A ditch was noted between 6.70m and 8m, from the south-eastern end. A slot (3) was excavated into it that showed it to measure 1.55m wide, 0.20m deep and had a fill of mid brown grey silty sand (54), which contained three pieces of tile of broadly late medieval to early post-medieval date. A gully was noted between 13.50m and 16m from the same end, into which a slot (2) was dug showing it to measure 0.55m wide, 0.08m deep with a fill (53) of light brown grey silty sand, although this did not contain any dating evidence.

Trench 13 (Figs 2 and 3; Pl. 7)

This trench was aligned east-west and measured 25.30m long and 0.24m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of turf/topsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. Between 5m and 20m was a large area of truncation with a mix of soils and gravels evident. This may be from an area of trees that had been removed before the creation of the golf course.

Trench 14 (Fig. 4; Pls. 8.)

This trench was aligned approximately north-south and measured 25.60m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.25m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. The

ditch (4) was noted between 4m and 7.30m, from the southern end. This was the same ditch noted in Trenches 11, 12 and 15 so was not excavated in this trench, but five pieces of post-medieval tile were recovered from the surface (fill 55).

Trench 15 (Figs 2–5; Pls 9 and 12)

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and measured 23.20m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.27m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. The same ditch as seen in Trenches 11, 12 and 14 was noted between 3.40m and 6.20m, from the western end. A slot (5) was dug into it showing it to measure 1.30m wide, 0.16m deep and had a fill of mid grey brown silty sand (56) that produced a sherd of 16th-18th century pottery, tile and two pieces of clay tobacco pipe.

Trench 16 (Figs 2 and 3)

This trench was aligned approximately north-south and measured 25.40m long and 0.39m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of turf/topsoil overlying 0.17m of subsoil overlying sand and gravel natural geology. Further truncation was noted between 5m and 10m, likely a continuation of that seen in Trench 13.

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

A sherd (31g) of Surrey-Hampshire Border ware was recovered from ditch slot 5, deposit (56) (Appendix 3). The fragment is part of the footstand base of a green-glazed vessel and is sooted externally. It dates between the 16th to 18th centuries.

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Milbank

Roof tile fragments were recovered from three features encountered in the evaluation, weighing a total of 2.127kg (Appendix 4). These were examined under x10 magnification, categorised according to fabric, finish and dimensions, and where possible, date range. The majority of the material has little potential for further study and all but a representative sample is suitable for discard, in line with the recipient museum's policy.

Ditch slot 3 (fill 54) contained three pieces (402g), all in tile fabric T1 (specific to this report) which is of medium hardness, fairly dense, with poorly-sorted rounded sand, occasional fine black iron oxide and small clay pellets, and a light red colour. The thickness is 15mm and the finish is fairly even, with thickened edges,

suggestive of a broadly late medieval to early post-medieval date range (possibly formed by the ‘pastry’ method and towards the earlier part of the range).

Ditch slot 4 was recorded in trench 14, and five pieces of tile weighing 1.197kg were recovered from the upper surface (deposit 55). These all represent fabric T2, which is a hard, dense homogenous fabric, with frequent coarse sand, and an orange red colour. The thickness is 15mm to 16mm, intact width of one example 165mm, and the finish is fairly regular, with a shallow band along each long side indicating it was mould-made. They are of likely 16th to 18th century in date.

Ditch slot 5 (56) contained six pieces (528g), five in fabric T2, with a thickness of 15mm to 16mm, neat finish, and circular peg holes on one example, and the pieces are of broad late medieval to post-medieval date. A further piece in fabric T1 is likely to date to the earlier part of the range, and has a peg hole and uneven finish, slightly warped with thickened edges.

Clay Tobacco Pipe by Danielle Milbank

Ditch slot 5 (56) contained two fragments of clay pipe stem (12g) (Appendix 5), both stem pieces, though one has part of a flat pedestal foot present. The bore diameter, although not closely datable, is wide and tentatively suggests a date up to the end of the 17th century.

Conclusion

The evaluation was successfully carried out with all trenches opened close to their intended locations. An undated gully and a ditch of 16th-18th century date were identified, which may represent a former field boundary prior to the existence of the golf course. No boundary is shown on this line on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, so the 16th-18th century date for its filling seems plausible.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	25.40	1.80	0.33	0-0.15m turf/topsoil; 0.15m-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ sand and gravel natural geology. [Pl. 1]
2	25.60	1.80	0.50	0-0.11m turf/topsoil; 0.11m-0.50m subsoil; 0.50m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
3	25.40	1.80	0.31 (W. End) 0.58 (E. End)	W. End: 0-0.11m turf/topsoil; 0.11m-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ sand and gravel natural geology. E. End: 0-0.20m turf/topsoil; 0.20m-0.58m subsoil; 0.58m+ sand and gravel natural geology. [Pl. 2]
4	25.10	1.80	0.33	0-0.14m turf/topsoil; 0.14m-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
5	25.00	1.80	0.32 (N. End) 0.63 (S. End)	N. End: 0-0.14m turf/topsoil; 0.14m-0.30m subsoil; 0.30m-0.32m+ sand and gravel natural geology. S. End: 0-0.18m turf/topsoil; 0.18m-0.56m subsoil; 0.56m-0.63m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
6	25.00	1.80	0.33	0-0.17m turf/topsoil; 0.17m-0.33m subsoil; 0.33m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
7	25.20	1.80	0.47	0-0.20m turf/topsoil; 0.20m-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m-0.47m+ sand and gravel natural geology. [Pl. 3]
8	25.30	1.80	0.72 (W. End) 0.35 (E. End)	W. End: 0-0.43m turf/topsoil; 0.43m-0.72m subsoil; 0.72m+ sand and gravel natural geology. E. End: 0-0.10m turf/topsoil; 0.10m-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m+ sand and gravel natural geology. [Pl. 4]
9	25.90	1.80	0.90	0-0.46m turf/topsoil; 0.46m-0.85m subsoil; 0.85m-0.90m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
10	25.60	1.80	0.34	0-0.16m turf/topsoil; 0.16m-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m-0.34m+ sand and gravel natural geology.
11	25.20	1.80	0.58	0-0.30m turf/topsoil; 0.30m-0.55m subsoil; 0.55m-0.58m+ sand and gravel natural geology. Ditch 1. [Pl. 5]
12	25.20	1.80	0.68	0-0.28m turf/topsoil; 0.28m-0.65m subsoil; 0.65m-0.68m+ sand and gravel natural geology. Gully 2, Ditch 3. [Pls 6, 10, 11]
13	25.30	1.80	0.24	0-0.24m turf/topsoil; 0.24m+ sand and gravel natural geology. Pl. 7]
14	25.60	1.80	0.47	0-0.20m turf/topsoil; 0.20m-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m-0.47m+ sand and gravel natural geology. Ditch 4. [Pl. 8]
15	23.20	1.80	0.50	0-0.20m turf/topsoil; 0.20m-0.47m subsoil; 0.47m-0.50m+ sand and gravel natural geology. Ditch 5. [Pls 9 and 12]
16	25.40	1.80	0.39	0-0.20m turf/topsoil; 0.20m-0.37m subsoil; 0.37m-0.39m+ sand and gravel natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
11	1	52	Ditch	Late medieval/early post medieval	Association
12	2	53	Gully	-	-
12	3	54	Ditch	Late medieval/early post medieval	Tile
14	4	55	Ditch	Late medieval/early post medieval	Association
15	5	56	Ditch	Late medieval/early post medieval	Pottery, Tile, Clay Pipe

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Pottery

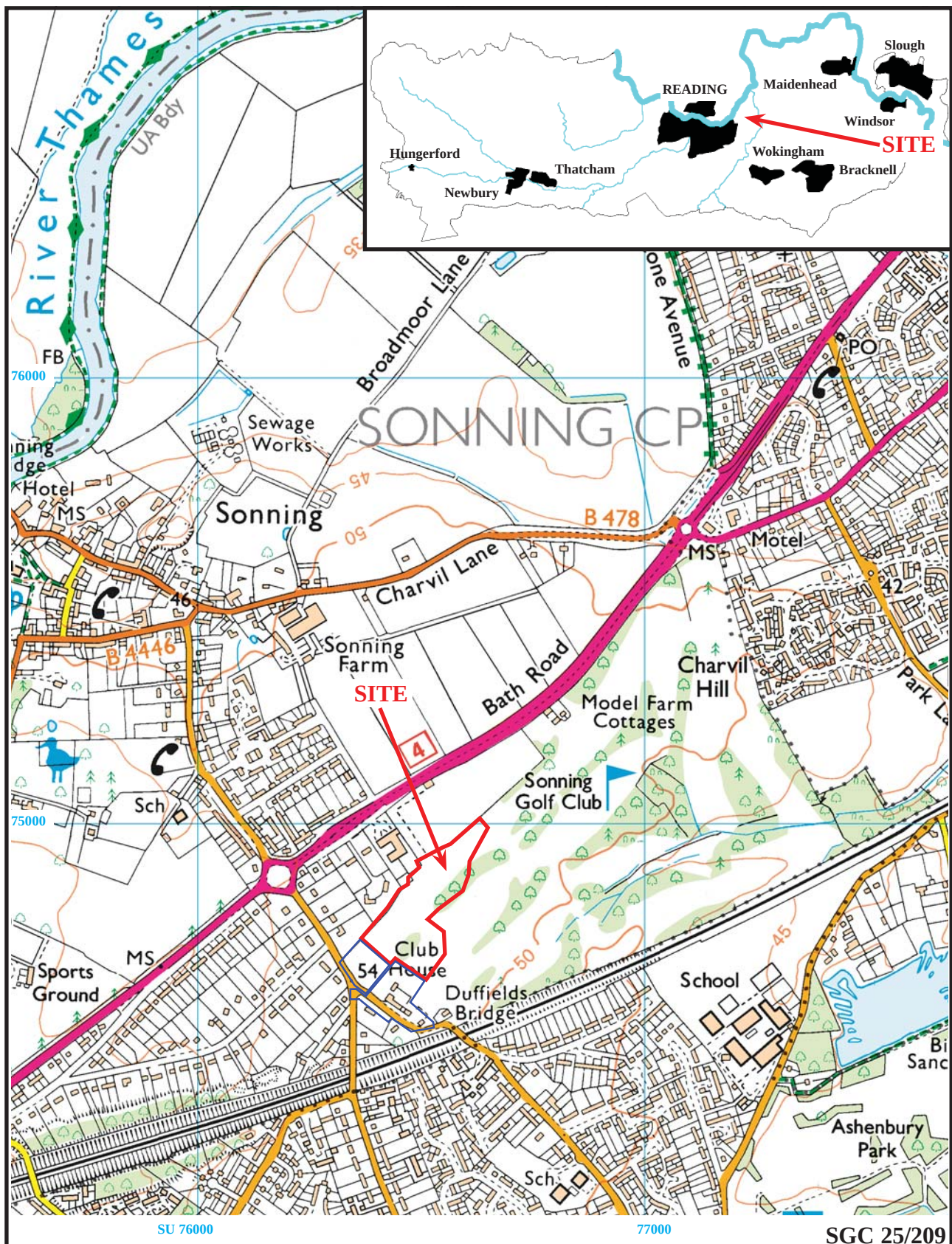
<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>
5	56	16th-18th century	1	31

APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of Ceramic Building Material

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>
3	54	Late medieval-early post medieval	3	402
4	55	16th-18th century	5	1197
5	56	Late medieval-early post medieval	6	528

APPENDIX 5: Catalogue of Clay Pipe

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>
5	56	Late 17th century?	2	12

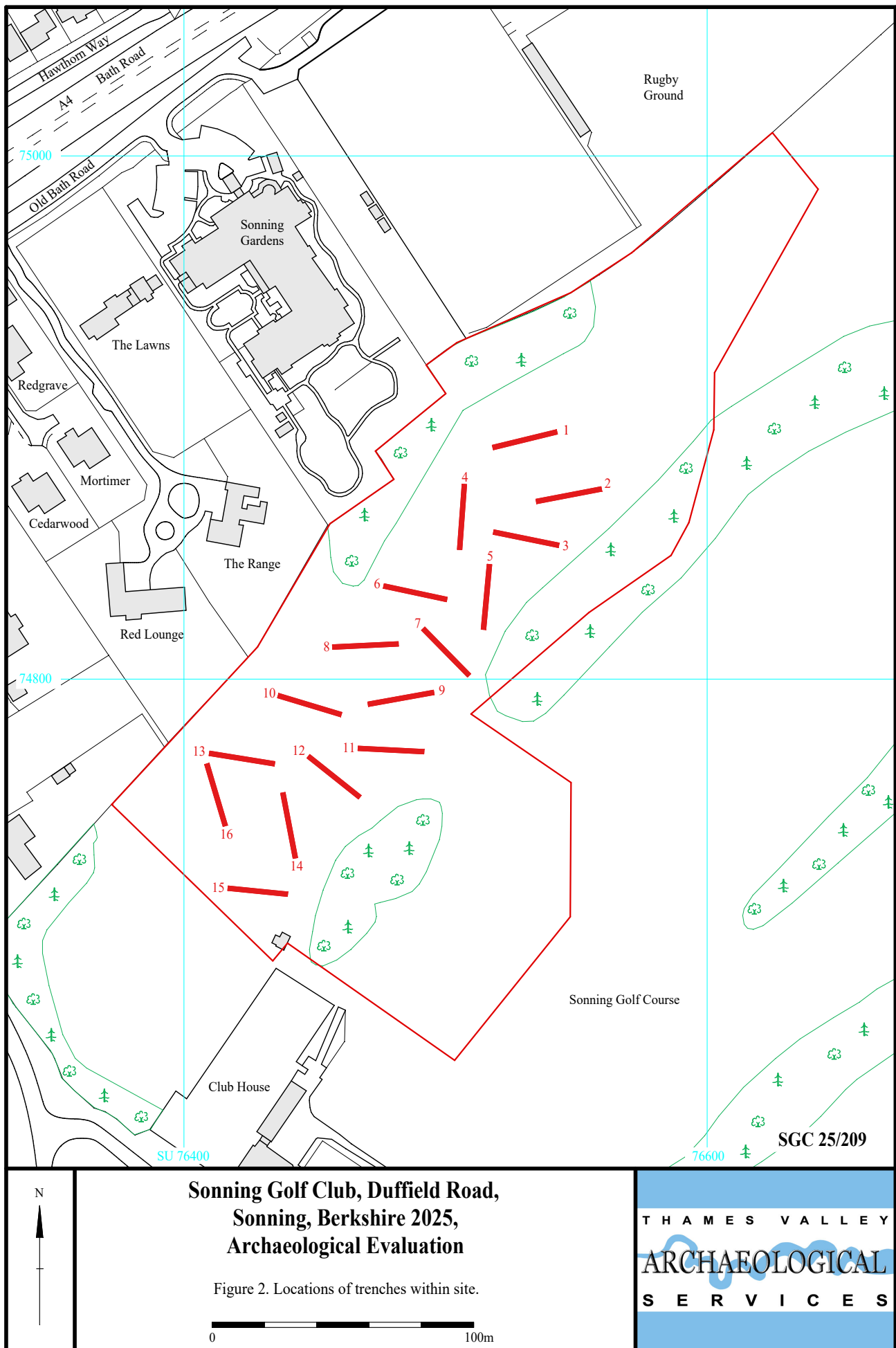


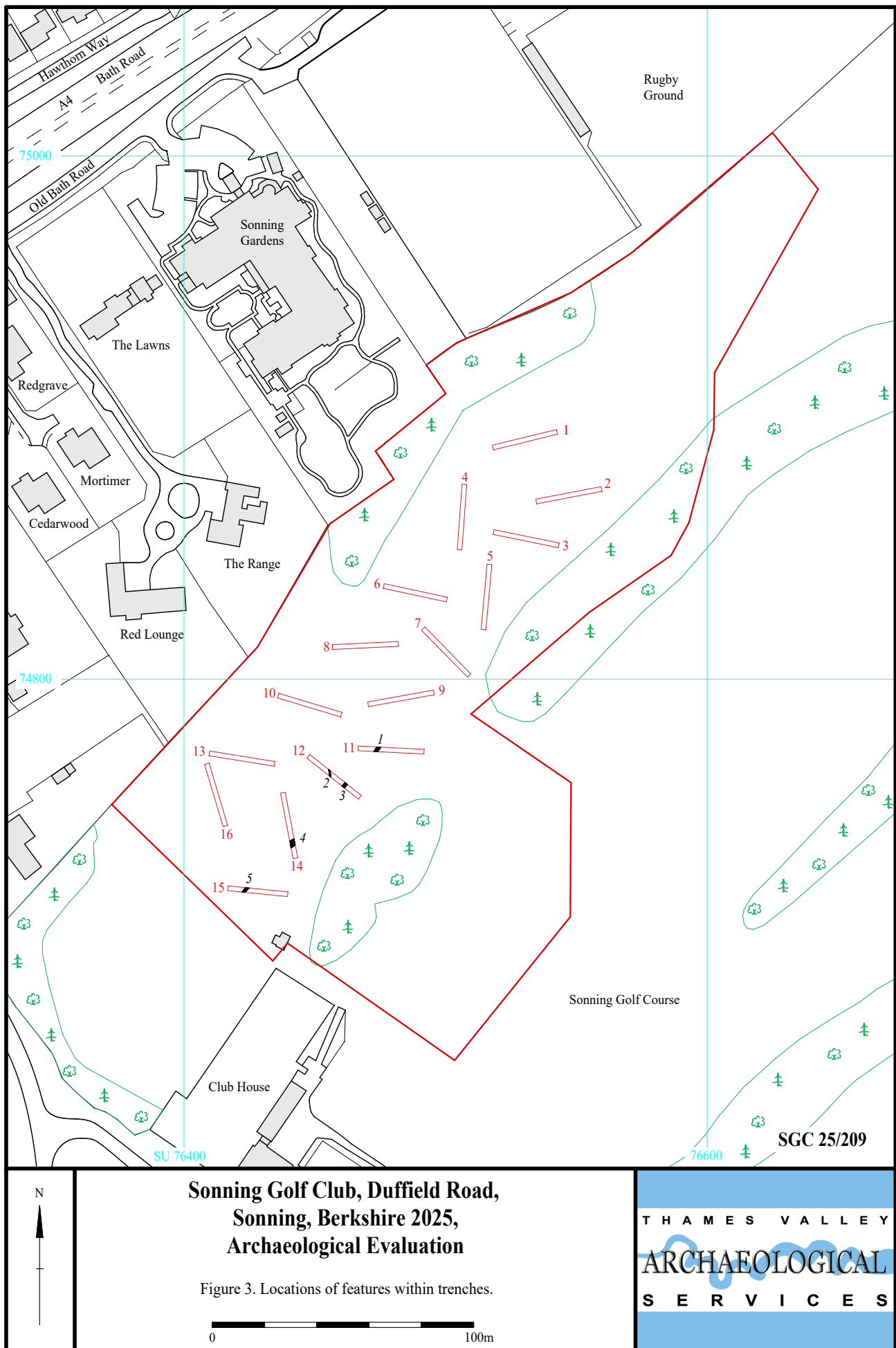
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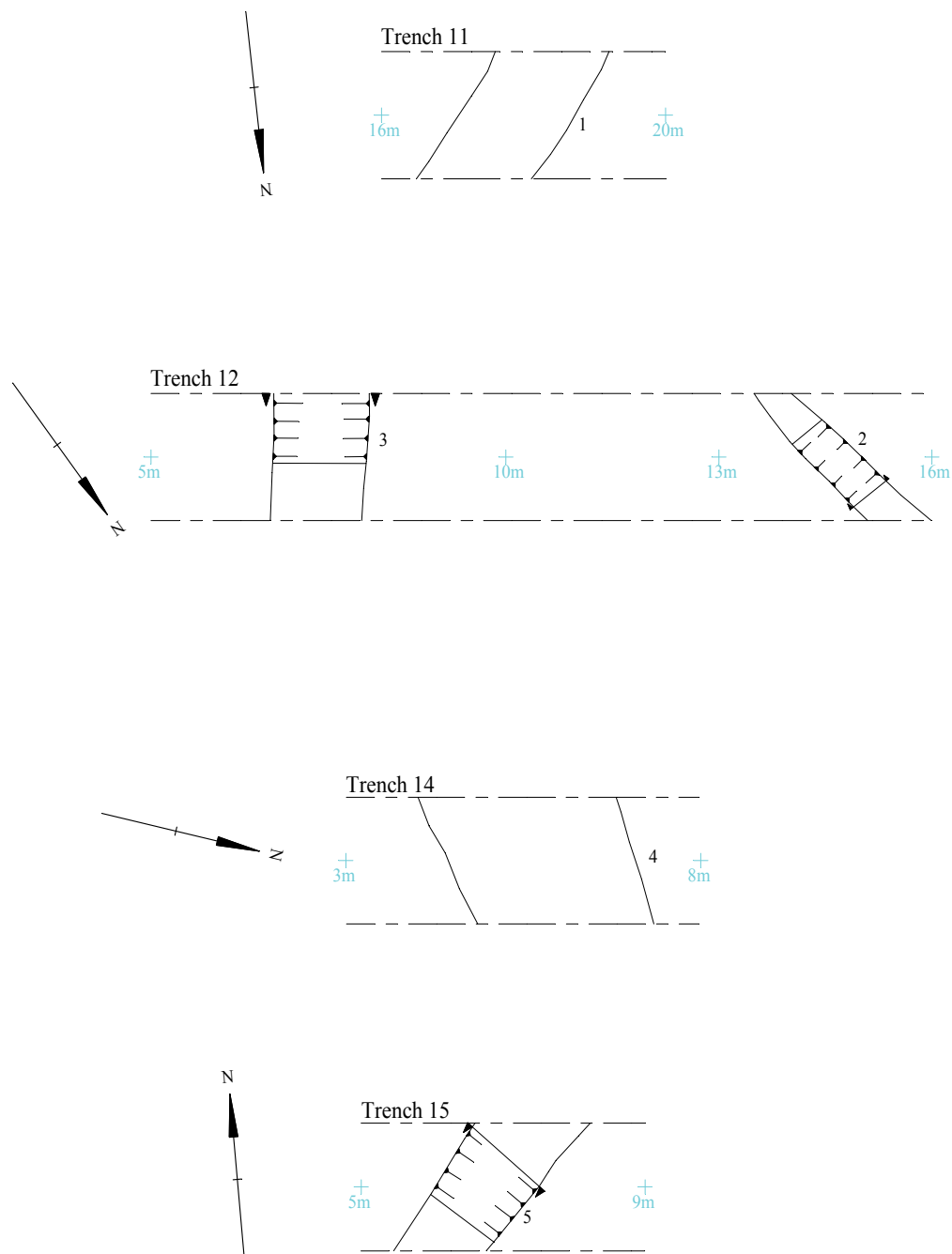
Figure 1. Location of site within Sonning and Berkshire.

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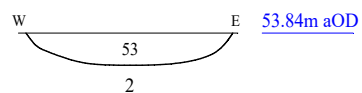
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Figure 4. Plans of features within trenches.

0 5m

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Trench 12

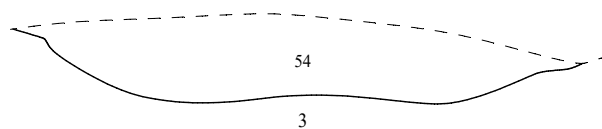


NW SE [53.84m](#)

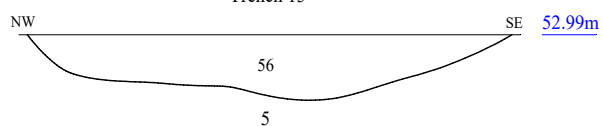
Topsoil



Subsoil



Trench 15



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking North East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking West,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 3. Trench 7, looking North West,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 8, looking East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 11, looking West,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 6. Trench 12, looking North West,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 7. Trench 13, looking East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 8. Trench 14, looking South East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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**Sonning Golf Club, Duffield Road,
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Plates 5 - 8.**

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Plate 9. Trench 15, looking South East,
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

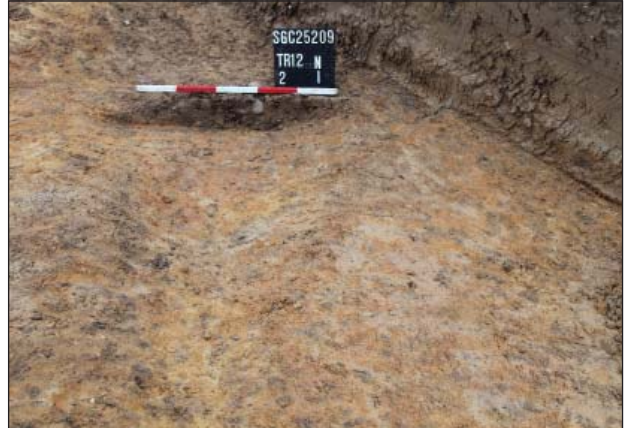


Plate 10. Trench 12, Gully 2, looking North,
Scale: 0.5m.



Plate 11. Trench 12, Ditch 3, looking South West,
Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 12. Trench 15, Ditch 5, looking North East,
Scales: 1m and 0.1m.

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Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 9 - 12.**

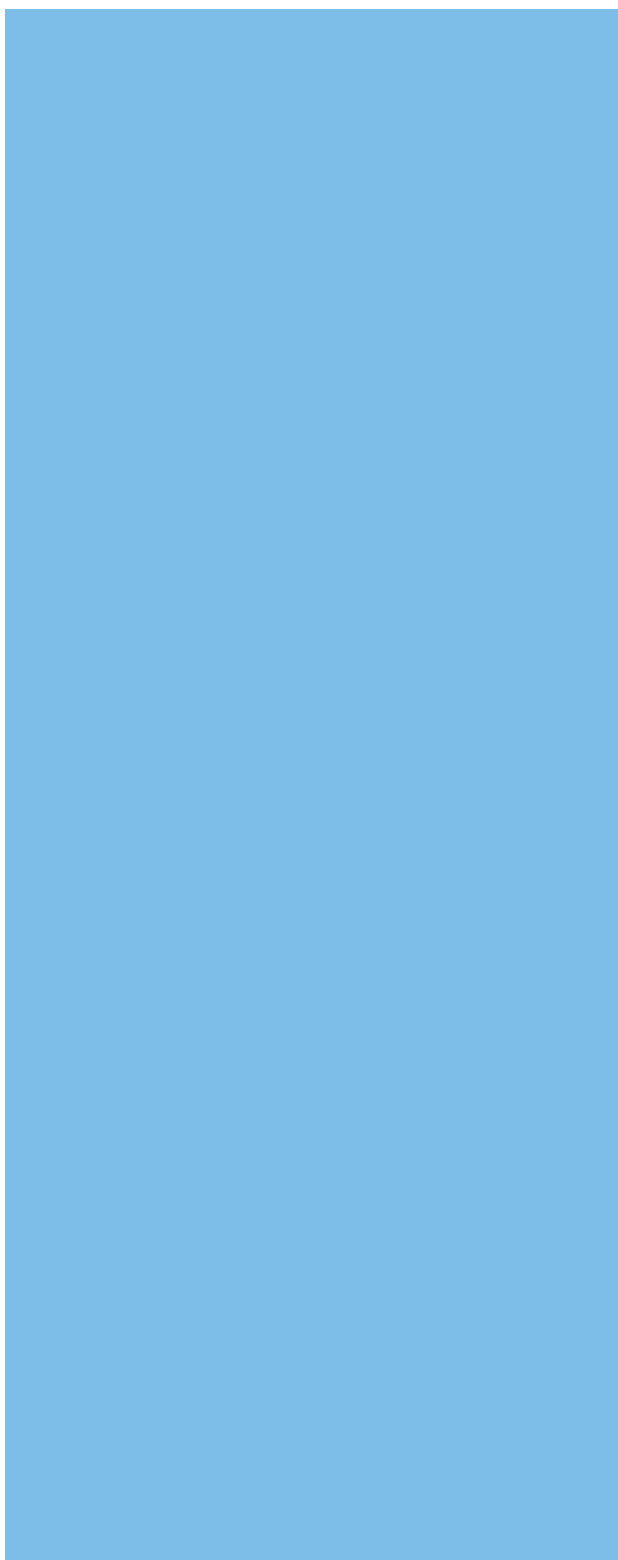
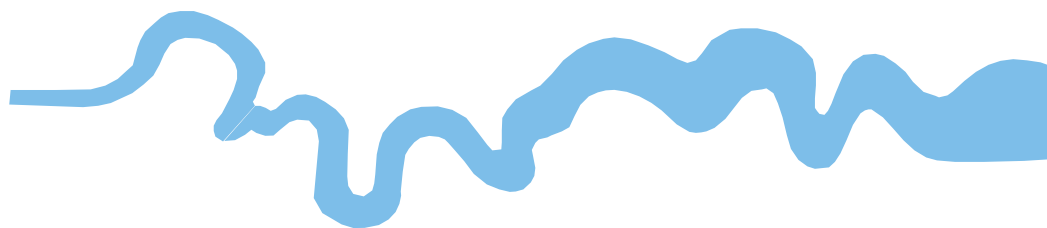
THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

TIME CHART

Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
	AD 1/1 BC
Iron Age: Late	100 BC
Iron Age: Middle	400 BC
Iron Age: Early	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





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