



# River Kennet Chamberhouse Draught Berkshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

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## River Kennet, Chamberhouse Draught, Berkshire

### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on a section of the River Kennet at Chamberhouse Draught. The work was commissioned by the Environmental agency in advance of fisheries habitat enhancement works. The watching brief monitored the desilting of the draught, during which two 19th-20th century brick culverts were exposed. No evidence for earlier archaeological remains was encountered.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Chamberhouse Draught on the River Kennet, Berkshire (NGR SU 515 655)(Fig.1). This included monitoring the desilting of the draught and later removal of one of the two culverts exposed during the initial desilting works. The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency under best practise in respect of river enhancement work.

1.1.2 In line with the brief (EA 2003) OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2003).

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated on the edge of flood meadows on the north bank of the River Kennet at approximately 66 m OD and is roughly 1 hectare in area. The underlying geology is alluvium overlying peat.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 A gazetteer of known archaeological sites and find clusters was produced for the Project brief by the Environmental Agency (EA 2003) for an area of approximately 300 m radius around the site and is summarised below.

1.3.2 Approximately 80 m due south of the site on the opposite bank of the River Kennet, a first century Fibula was recovered. Field walking by Wessex Archaeology during 1991 in the fields immediately abutting Chamberhouse Draught and fields abutting Chamberhouse farm produced 5 worked flints, 43 burnt flints, 317 pottery sherds and 1316 fragments of brick and tile. The flints were tentatively dated to the Late Bronze age, with the pottery ranging from Bronze age to post-medieval in date, the majority being medieval in origin, widely scattered and probably the result of field manuring.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected during the desilting work on the draught and demolition work on the culverts.
- 2.1.2 To examine the spoil produced during the desilting works for the recovery of artifacts.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The majority of desilting was undertaken by a 13 ton 360 degree mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. A "Kuboto" mini-digger was used in the remainder to avoid damaging trees on the draught banks. The desilting operation was monitored on the basis of periodic visits during which the spoil from the desilting works was visually checked for artefacts.
- 2.2.2 The demolition of the culverts was done under archaeological supervision, using the 13 ton machine.
- 2.2.3 A plan of the areas affected, detailed cross sections and construction notes of the culverts and a section of the deposits exposed by the operations was compiled (Fig.2). Colour slides and black and white prints were taken of these sections. A general photographic record of the two phases of work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OA *Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The draught (18) measured 5 m wide by 1.2 m deep. A total of four distinct deposits were recorded within the draught during the desilting of the works (Fig.3, Section 1). During the desilting operation a shallow trench 1.0 m wide by 0.2m deep was cut in the centre of the dark grey organic silts (17), which sealed the base of this channel, exposing the natural peat.
- 3.1.2 At the base of the draught channel was a layer of tenacious black peat (14), representing an area of previous marsh/wetland. This was sealed by a 0.45 m thick layer of a friable dark yellowish brown clay silt (15), an alluvial layer which forms part of the flood plain adjoining the River Kennet to the south. Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of a dark greyish brown friable clay silt ploughsoil (16).
- 3.1.3 At roughly the centre of the draught the top of a brick culvert (12) was exposed (Fig.3, section 2). Its construction trench (13) was seen to cross the draught at right angles, although it was not clear whether the culvert pre-dated the draught. Culvert 12 was constructed using red bricks forming a circular structure with an internal

diameter of 60 cm. Examination of the inside showed that it ran roughly north-south appearing to drain southwards and could be seen running approximately 15 m northwards and approximately 10 m southwards, with blockages rather than collapses at either end. The construction trench was backfilled by a mix of redeposited soils and construction debris (19).

- 3.1.4 At the north-eastern corner of the site an access causeway (20) overlying a second brick culvert (10) had been constructed across the draught (Fig.3, section 3). The causeway, measuring 3.5 m wide appears to be a later insertion. The culvert itself, was of arched construction and measured 1 m wide by 1.1 m high with a similar 60 cm wide internal channel. Both the bricks and mortar are identical to those in culvert 12.

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the monitoring and recording of the culverts, although fragments of 20th century pottery was recovered during the desilting operation but were not retained.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits were found suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The desilting of the draught produced no evidence of earlier archaeological deposits, finds or features. The brick structures exposed, culverts 10 and 12, (and an existing bridge over the draught) were constructed of identical bricks and mortar suggesting that they are contemporary. Culvert 12 appears to have been constructed to drain the fields to the north of the draught, which are approximately 1 m lower than the field to the south of the draught. Since all three structures are contemporary this suggests that they are part of a single phase of organised water management, the brick types suggesting a date between the late 18th and mid 19th century. Culverts 10 and 12 were subsequently collapsed within the draught in order to allow for deeper water circulation.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
10	Structure	0.9 m	Brick and sluice gate	-	Late C18th to mid C19th
11	Structure	1.2 m	Brick twin arch bridge	-	Late C18th to mid C19th
12	Structure	1 m	Brick culvert	-	Late C18th to mid C19th
13	Cut	1.5 m	Construction trench for culvert	-	Late C18th to mid C19th
14	Layer	>0.3 m	Natural peat	-	-
15	Layer	0.45 m	Clay silt alluvium	-	-
16	Layer	0.25 m	Topsoil	Pottery, Brick	C20th
17	Deposit	0.3 m	Alluvial silts	Pottery, Plastic	C20th
18	Cut	1.2 m	Chamberhouse Draught	-	Late C18th onwards
19	Fill	1.2 m	Backfill of construction trench 13	-	Late C18th onwards
20	Structure	1.2 m	Earth causeway across draught, overlies culvert 10	-	Late C18th onwards

## APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

EA, 2003 *Project Brief, Habitat Enhancement at Chamberhouse Draught*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D.Wilkinson)

OA, 2003 *River Kennet, Chamberhouse Draught, Written Scheme of Investigation*



**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Chamberhouse Draught, West Berkshire

**Site code:** BRRVK 03

**Grid reference:** SU 515 655

**Type of watching brief:** Monitoring of desilting of drainage channel and remedial work of the brick culverts.

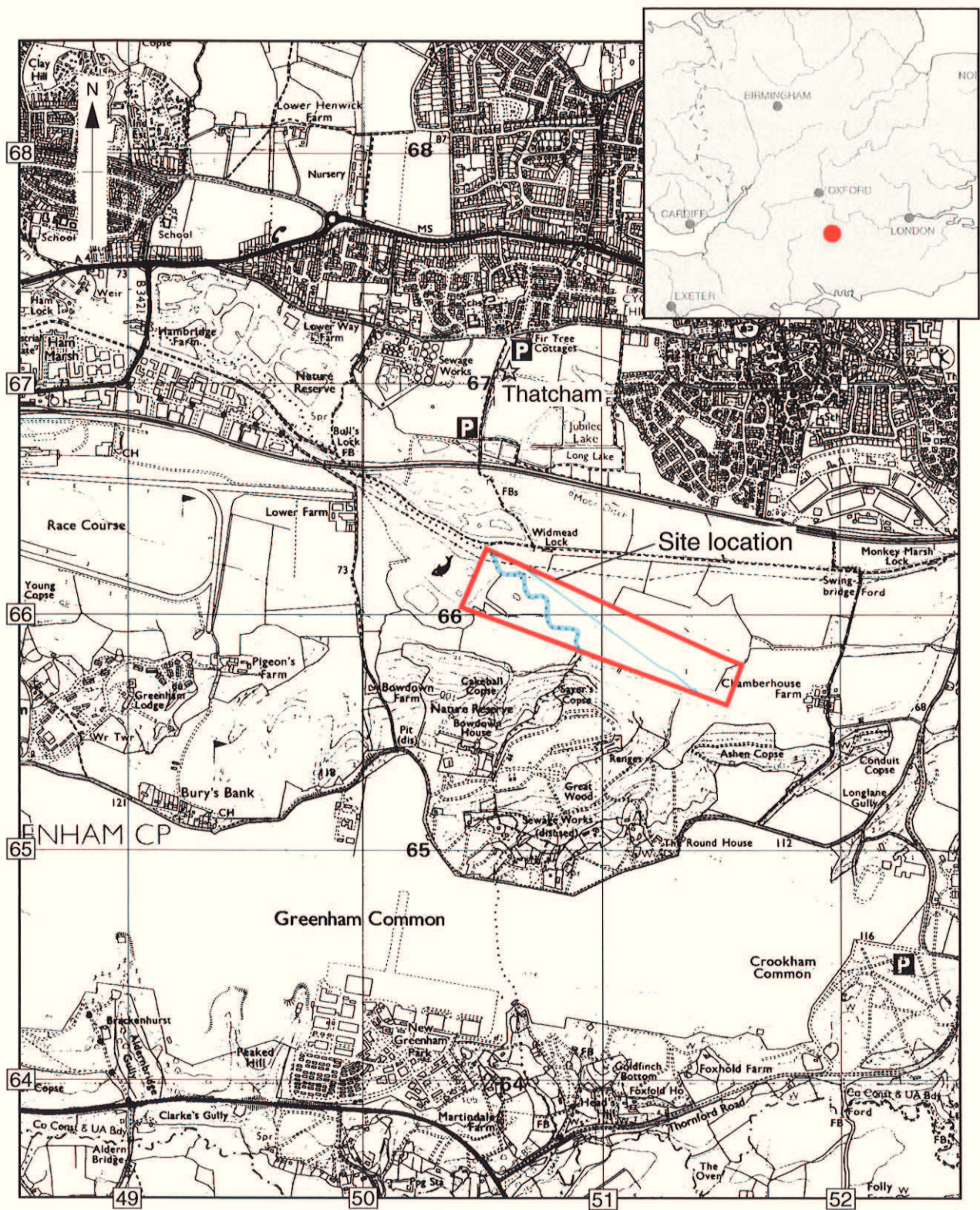
**Date and duration of project:** 17th to the 28th of November 2003.

**Area of site:** Approximately 1 hectare

**Summary of results:** Two 18th-19th century brick culverts were encountered within the draught. No further archaeological deposits, features or finds were encountered

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with West Berkshire Heritage Service in due course.





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Figure 1: Site location





Figure 2: Extent of enhancement works

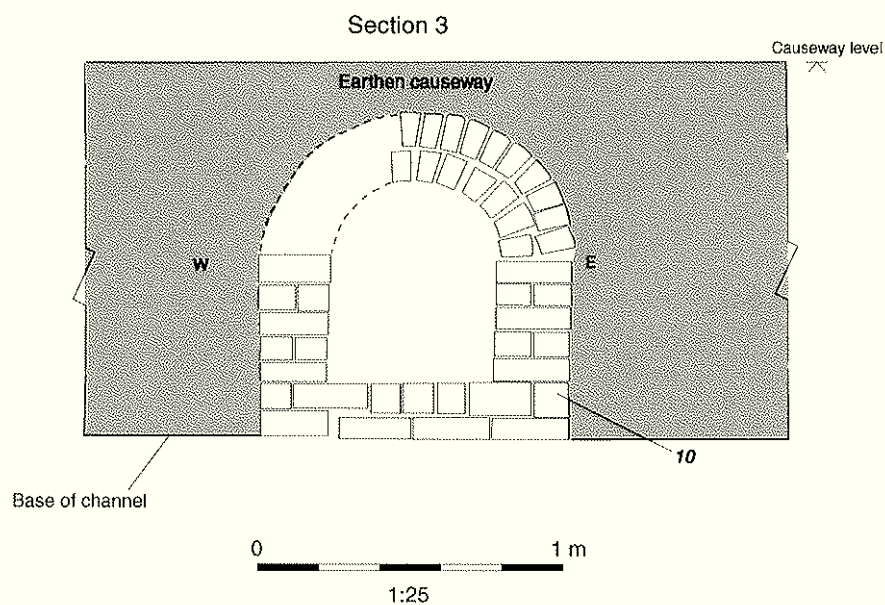
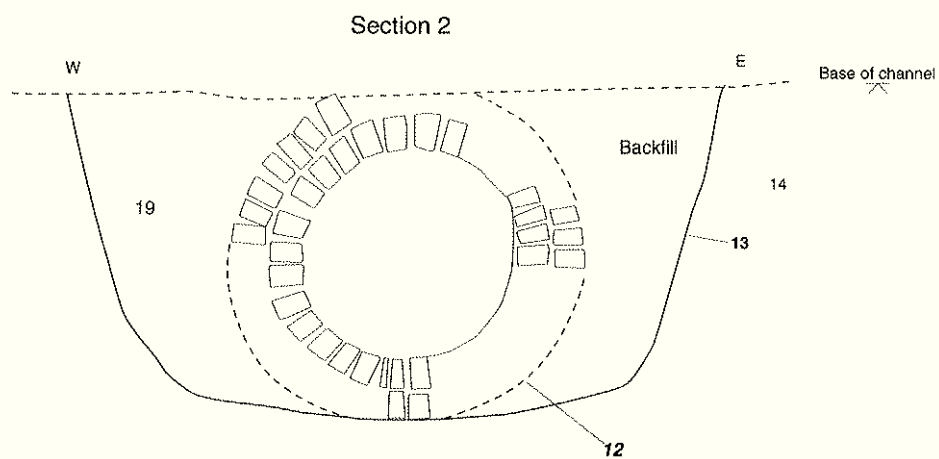
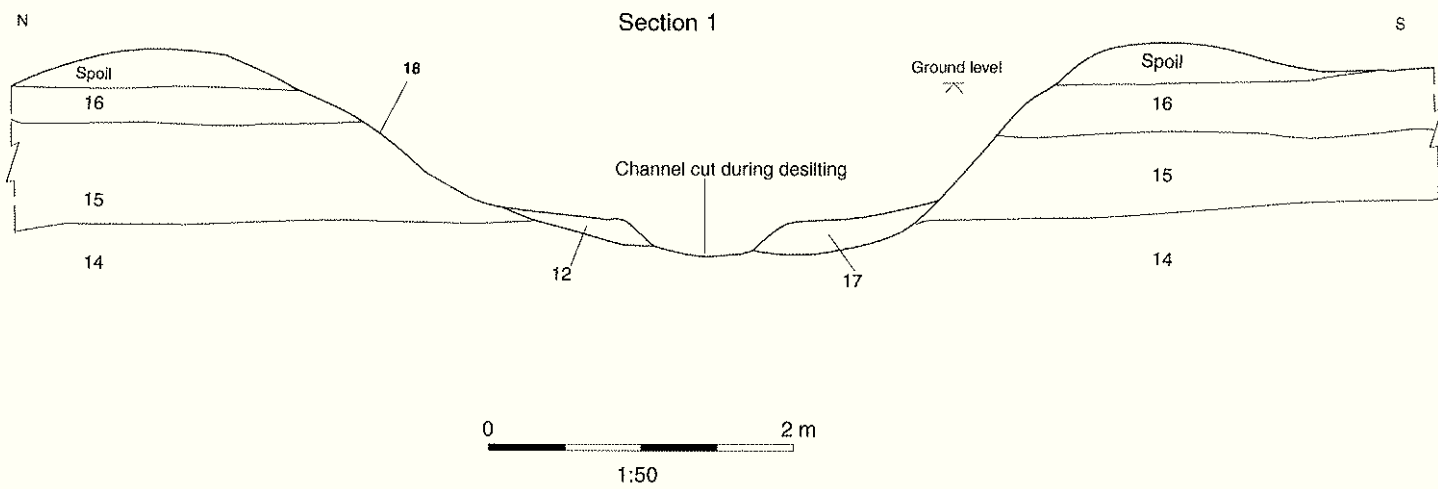


Figure 3: Sections through draughts and culverts



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