

Woolhampton Power Supply Improvements West Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Woolhampton Power Supply Improvements, West Berkshire

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Summary

Between March and April 2012 Oxford Archaeology completed an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a service trench for a new electricity cable along Woolhampton Hill and the Bath Road in Woolhampton, West Berkshire centred at NGR SU 5730 6680. The watching brief observed evidence for two of the buildings demolished when the Bath Road was widened in 1931: a brick built building, possibly the brewery or part of the original Angel Inn, and a second brick building, probably the east wall of the old Post Office. In both cases only the brick-built foundations survived, with the majority of the floor levels and any associated occupation layers absent. No evidence for any activity or structures pre-dating the 18th century was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 As part of their ongoing improvements to the power supply, Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSEPD) planned to link the substation in Orchard Close, Woolhampton to the existing underground cables running along the A4 Bath Road by means of a new underground cable.
- 1.1.2 Consultations with the West Berkshire Archaeological Services identified that the cable trench would run through the site of former buildings, including the Angel Inn, that were demolished when the A4 was widened in the early 20th century and recommended that any work within this area should be subject to an archaeological monitoring and recording action (watching brief). SSE commissioned Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) to undertake the archaeological recording during the excavation of the cable trench where this coincided with the areas of greatest archaeological potential.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The village of Woolhampton is located approximately 11km east of Newbury and is situated on the A4 running between Newbury and Reading (Fig. 1). The cable trenches comprised two sections: one between Orchard Close in the north of the village and the northern carriageway of the A4, and the other running along the A4 from the substation at the base of New Road Hill to a point just beyond the junction with Station Road (Centred at SU 5730 6680) (Fig. 2). The cable trench measured approximately 360m length in total of which 120m was monitored.
- 1.2.2 The site runs from approximately 64m above OD in Orchard Close down to approximately 59m above OD along the A4 road. The road also follows the edge of the river terrace marking the boundary between the London Clay Formation and overlying Head deposits to the north and the river valley floor to the south with alluvial deposits overlying the bedrock (BGS website data).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The original form of the village name was 'Ollavintone', a composite word with the common Saxon suffix, -ton meaning simply 'settlement', the rest of the name is probably derived from the Celtic word "Alebhion" meaning 'Ridge Place' and referring to the high ground in the parish which stretches alongside the Kennet Valley and the Bath Road. By the 1580s it was known as the more recognisable Woulhampton.



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- 1.3.2 The Saxon village was held by Earl Godric and, after the Battle of Hastings, by Henry Ferrers who later came the Earl of Derby. From around 1150, the resident lords of the manor were the Knights Hospitallers with a house at Shalfords and a chapel at Brimpton. They were possibly responsible for the building of St Peter's church sometime between 1200 and 1300.
 - 1.3.3 The Woolhampton estate, that included Brimpton, was requisitioned from the Knights Hospitallers by Henry VIII at the time of the Reformation and obtained in 1544 by the Wollascott family. The estate remained in various private hands until the break up of the estate at the beginning of the 20th century.
 - 1.3.4 By the 18th and early 19th centuries the village had become an important staging point on the route between Bath and London on what is now the A4, leading to the construction of a number of coaching inns including the Sun and Angel Inns.
 - 1.3.5 Post-First World War development included Sun Hill cottages (1921) and in 1931, the demolition of the "Angel" inn, the adjacent brewery holding the newsagents and stationers (both sited towards the centre of the present Bath Road), the post office and "Rose Cottage" as part of a road widening programme. The "Angel" courtyard was the site of the village butcher's shop and was replaced as part of the re-building of the inn by a shop that now holds the post office.
 - 1.3.6 There were later private housing developments at Angel Mead (1963) and Orchard Close (1964).



2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to:

- (i) Preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during the course of ground intrusions;
- (ii) Seek to establish the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits encountered within the scope of the ground intrusion;
- (iii) To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.;
- (iv) To disseminate results through the production of a grey literature report.

2.1.2 The specific aim and objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any floor levels or structures relating to the buildings demolished during the 1931 road widening.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The main focus of the archaeological watching brief was the line of the cable trench where this coincided with the former buildings demolished when the A4 was widened. For this part of the cable trench a continuous archaeological presence was maintained. The trench was machine excavated to the required depth by SSE contractors with the OA archaeologist observing the works at all times over this area. Elsewhere archaeological attendance was limited to occasional visits to observe the open machine excavated trench. Where structural remains were encountered, these were recorded by the archaeologist prior to the construction works continuing. Since the available time for the works was strictly limited due to the license for works on the active carriage way, archaeological recording was focused upon the recording walls and any associated occupation levels in the exposed sections and the recovery of finds from these deposits so as to not significantly delay the construction works. Due to the confines of the trench hand excavation was not possible.

2.2.2 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording will be in accordance with established OAS practices. All contexts, and any small finds and samples from them were allocated unique numbers. Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record were taken of all trenches, general settings and archaeological features/sections.

2.2.3 Site plans were drawn at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) and section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches drawn at a scale of 1:20.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The cable trench arrangement is described in three parts: from the sub-station in Orchard Close down Woolhampton Hill to the A4, from the sub-station at the base of New Road Hill along the north side of the A4 to the Falmouth Arms and from the Falmouth Arms to east of the present day Angel Inn alongside the A4.
- 3.1.2 The first two parts were subject to only periodic monitoring while the third part was continuously monitored. These sections and the recorded stratigraphy are described below with dimensions and depths only given where needed for clarity to the description. Specific details such as layer depths and feature dimensions are recorded in Appendix A.

Orchard Close and Woolhampton Hill to the A4 (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 Section 2)

- 3.1.3 The trench within this section was excavated to 0.6m wide and 1.5m deep. The trench was excavated along the eastern side of Woolhampton Hill in order to avoid the existing services and did not impact upon the potential sites identified on the western side of the road that were demolished during the 1931 road widening. No archaeological or historically significant features or structures were present and the stratigraphy observed was similar along its full length. A sample section was recorded.
- 3.1.4 The natural Head geology was encountered within much of the excavated depth of the trench and comprised a reddish grey sandy clay (9) overlain by a layer of sand and gravel (8). Directly overlying layer 8 was a deposit of crushed brick (7) and a layer of coarse sand and gravel (6) forming the compacted base for the existing modern tarmac road surface (5).

New Road Hill to the Falmouth Arms (Fig. 2 and Section 1 and 3)

- 3.1.5 The trench within this section was excavated to 0.6m wide and was up to 1.3m deep. This section ran from the sub-station at the base of New Road Hill and along the pavement on the northern side of the A4 before connecting to the trench originating from Orchard Close at the base of Woolhampton Hill. No archaeological or historically significant features or structures were present. Two sample sections were recorded.
- 3.1.6 At the location of Section 1 the natural Head geology (4) comprised a reddish brown sandy clay which was directly overlain by a layer of tarmac (3) which was probably an earlier phase of pavement. Above this was layer of made ground (2) consisting of mixed yellowish brown silts, sand and gravel topped by a landscaping layer of silty loam (1) forming the present day topsoil and turf.
- 3.1.7 At the location of Section 3 at the base of Woolhampton Hill a similar sequence of natural and modern deposits was recorded culminating in the existing tarmac road surface. In summary sequence these deposits were natural Head silt and clay (14) and (13), crushed brick (12), concrete (11) and the road surface (10).

Woolhampton Hill to the Angel Inn (Fig. 2 and Sections 4 to 9)

- 3.1.8 This part of the trench extended from the junction between Woolhampton Hill and the A4, along the northern side of the A4 and was generally shallower at between 0.8m and 0.95m in depth and was only excavated to an average width of 0.3m.



- 3.1.9 Immediately east of the Woolhampton Hill junction the trench crossed the pavement in front of the Falmouth Arms (Section 4). A continuation of the natural reddish grey silty clay Head (14) was observed at a depth of 0.35m below the level of the existing pavement. This was overlain by a layer of crushed brick (17) and a thin bedding layer of tarmac scalplings (16) forming the base for the modern tarmac pavement surface (15).
- 3.1.10 A similar sequence of deposits was encountered at Section 5. Here the natural clay Head (21) was exposed within the base of the excavation. In the localised region around Section 5 this had been overlaid by a layer of crushed brick (20). Overlying 20 and layer 21 elsewhere was a layer of concrete (19). This formed a base for the present day tarmac road surface (18).
- 3.1.11 To the east of Sections 4 and 5 the cable trench crossed the pavement and neared the road. Here the silty clay (21) encountered at the base of the trench had an olive grey appearance and it was not entirely clear if this was a natural deposit or one reflecting other activities or staining from the overlying layer at this location. The overlying layer (27) comprised a dark grey silty clay containing charcoal and small brick fragments (Section 8). Set upon this was a brick surface (26) constructed using a single layer of plain hand moulded red brick, 0.22m x 0.11m x 0.07m in size, butted together without any bonding agent. This was visible within an approximate 3m length of the trench. Concrete (25) had been poured directly onto the brick surface supporting the kerbstones (24) for the present day Bath Road.
- 3.1.12 East of Section 8, the cable trench followed the northern edge of the A4, passing the present day shops before kinking to follow the line of the existing bus stop. Just before the trench changed direction the corner of a brick-built foundation was recorded (Section 7). The natural clay (21) was exposed within the base of the cable trench into which a vertical-sided construction trench (23) was cut. This contained the brick foundation two courses wide (22) constructed using plain hand moulded red brick measuring 0.22m x 0.1m x 0.06m laid in English stretcher bond with a yellow-brown lime mortar. The wall was aligned NNE-SSW across the cable trench with an WNW-ESE return extending to the east. A maximum of three courses of brick survived within the foundation trench and the brick size and manufacture is broadly suggestive of an 18th century origin. The foundation and surface of the underlying natural deposit was overlain by the concrete kerb and road base layer (19) over which was the existing tarmac road surface (18).
- 3.1.13 Approximately 24m east of the walls recorded in Section 7, a further brick-built foundation was recorded (Section 9). As with to the immediate west and east an olive grey clay deposit (21) was exposed within the base of the cable trench into which a foundation trench (29) was cut. This was aligned NNE-SSW across the cable trench perpendicular to Bath Road and parallel to part of the wall recorded in Section 7. The brick foundation structure (28) was also of very similar appearance to that recorded in Section 7 comprising plain hand moulded red bricks of the same dimensions, same bond, similar mortar and the same number of surviving courses. This foundation was also overlain by the modern concrete and road surface sequence (19 and 18).
- 3.1.14 At the eastern end of the cable trench at its termination within the cable jointing pit, the stratigraphy exposed was generally similar to elsewhere with the natural clay Head (21) exposed at the base of the trench. This was directly overlaid by the layer of concrete (19) upon which the tarmac surface (18) had been laid (Section 6).



3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Brick samples were recovered from the two structures encountered, 22 and 28. These are broadly datable to the 18th century.

3.3 Environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.



4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The stratigraphy observed between New Road Hill and Woolhampton Hill, together with the observations between Woolhampton Hill and Orchard Close suggest that the archaeological potential along this route is either absent or heavily disturbed by the modern road construction which has truncated many of the historically significant levels.
- 4.1.2 The underlying natural Head deposits (layers 4, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 21) were exposed throughout the length of the cable trench. In places the modern (post 1931) road construction impacted directly upon the natural geology, truncating any potential earlier horizons. Within Sections 7 and 9 only the building foundations were deep enough to survive this truncation, although, here too, the road construction still impacted directly upon the natural deposits presumably removing any associated floor levels. However, within Section 8 a brick floor was recorded suggesting that the original stratigraphy associated with the former buildings may only ever have been very shallow. This surface along with the foundation recorded in Section 7 seem most likely to be part of the original Angel Inn and brewery whilst the brick wall (28) observed within Section 9 is in the approximate position to form the east wall of the original Post Office (Fig. 4).



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.18m	-	> 5m	Present day topsoil and turf	-	C20th
2	Layer	0.4m	-	> 5m	Modern made ground	-	C20th
3	Surface	0.15m	-	> 5m	Earlier phase of pavement	-	C20th
4	Layer	> 0.3m	-	> 5m	Natural	-	-
5	Surface	0.15m	-	> 4m	Modern tarmac road surface	-	C20th
6	Layer	0.15m	-	> 4m	Base for tarmac	-	C20th
7	Layer	0.15m	-	> 4m	Hardcore base for road	-	C20th
8	Layer	0.5m	-	> 4 m	Natural sand and gravel	-	-
9	Layer	> 0.6m	-	> 5m	Natural clay	-	-
10	Surface	0.18m	-	> 4m	Modern tarmac road surface	-	C20th
11	Layer	0.22m	-	> 4m	Concrete base for tarmac	-	C20th
12	Layer	0.14m	-	> 4m	Hardcore base for road	-	C20th
13	Layer	0.2m	-	> 5m	Natural clay	-	-
14	Layer	> 0.5m	-	> 5m	Natural clay	-	-
15	Surface	0.12m	-	> 4m	Modern tarmac pavement	-	C20th
16	Layer	0.08m	-	> 4m	Broken tarmac base for pavement	-	C20th
17	Layer	0.12m	-	> 4m	Hardcore base for pavement	-	C20th
18	Surface	0.18m	-	> 4m	Modern tarmac road surface	-	C20th
19	Layer	0.25m – 0.3m	-	> 4m	Concrete base for tarmac	-	C20th
20	Layer	0.12m	-	> 4m	Hardcore base for road	-	C20th
21	Layer	> 0.4m	-	> 4m	Natural clay	-	-



22	Structure	0.3m	0.3m	> 1m	Corner of brick wall	Brick	C18th/ C19th
23	Cut	0.3m	0.3m	> 1m	Construction cut	-	C18th/ C19th
24	Structure	0.25m	0.2m	> 2m	Modern roadside kerbing	Concrete	C20th
25	Layer	0.12m	0.2 m	> 2m	Concrete base for kerbstones	-	C20th
26	Surface	0.07m	> 0.8m	> 2m	Brick surface, probably associated with the Falmouth Arms	Brick	C18th/ C19th
27	Layer	0.1m	0.8 m	> 2m	Leveling layer/base for 26	Bottle glass, Iron fragment	C18th/ C19th
28	Structure	0.3m	0.23m	> 1m	Brick wall	Brick	C18th/ C19th
29	Cut	0.23m	0.23m	> 1m	Construction cut	-	C18th/ C19th



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2012

Woolhampton Power Supply Improvements: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Woolhampton Power Supply Improvements, West Berkshire
Site code:	WONCT 12
Grid reference:	Centred at SU 5730 6680
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of a new cable trench
Date and duration of project:	Between March and April 2012
Area of site:	Approximately 500 m ²

Summary of results:

Between March and April 2012 Oxford Archaeology completed an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a service trench for a new electricity cable along Woolhampton Hill and the Bath Road in Woolhampton, West Berkshire centred at NGR SU 5730 6680. The watching brief observed evidence for two of the buildings demolished when the Bath Road was widened in 1931: a brick built building, possibly the brewery or part of the original Angel Inn, and a second brick building, probably the east wall of the old Post Office. In both cases only the brick-built foundations survived, with the majority of the floor levels and any associated occupation layers absent. No evidence for any activity or structures pre-dating the 18th century was observed.

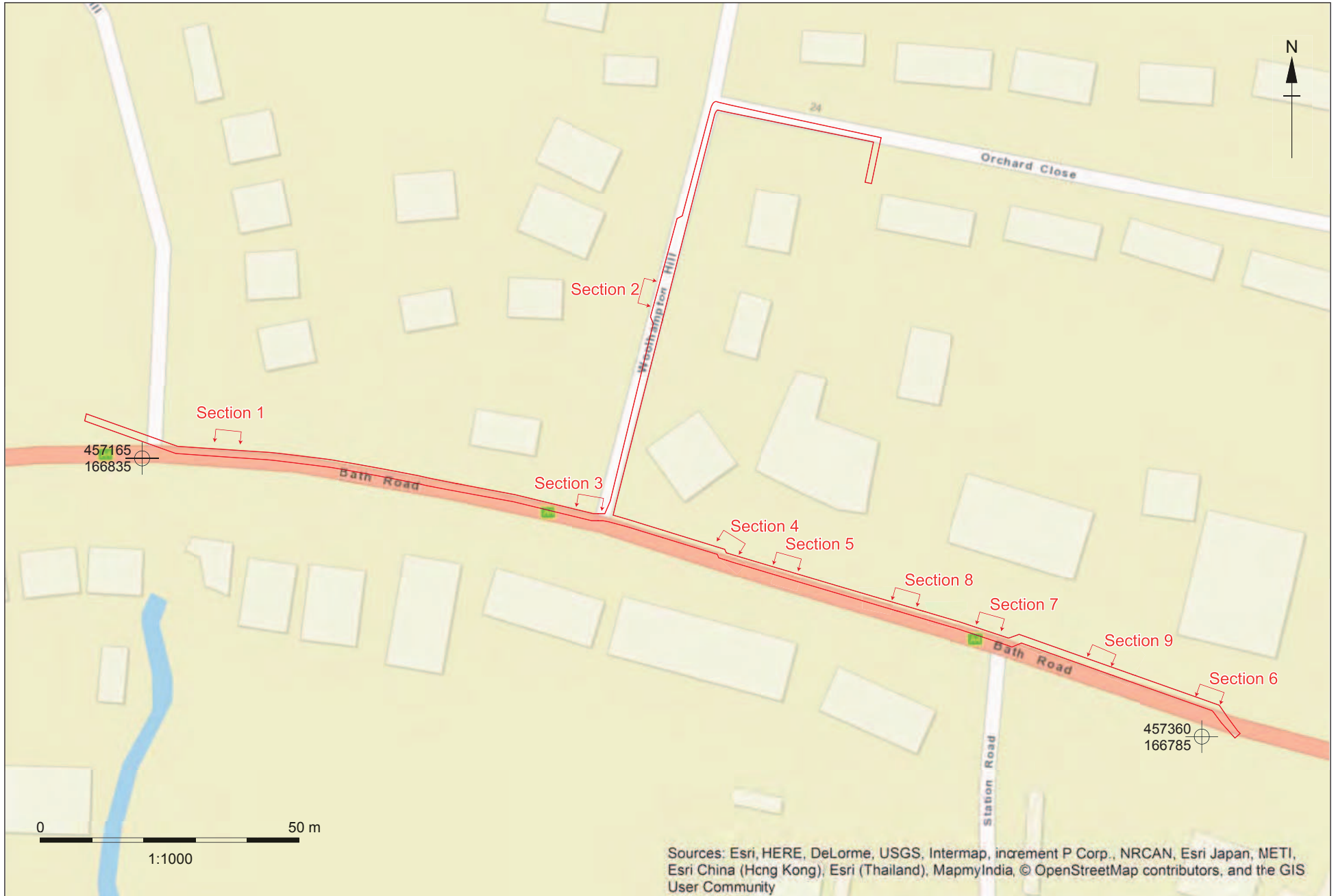
Location of archive:

The archive is currently being held at Janus House and will in due course be deposited with the West Berkshire Heritage Service under the Accession Number NEBYM:2012.6



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Site plan

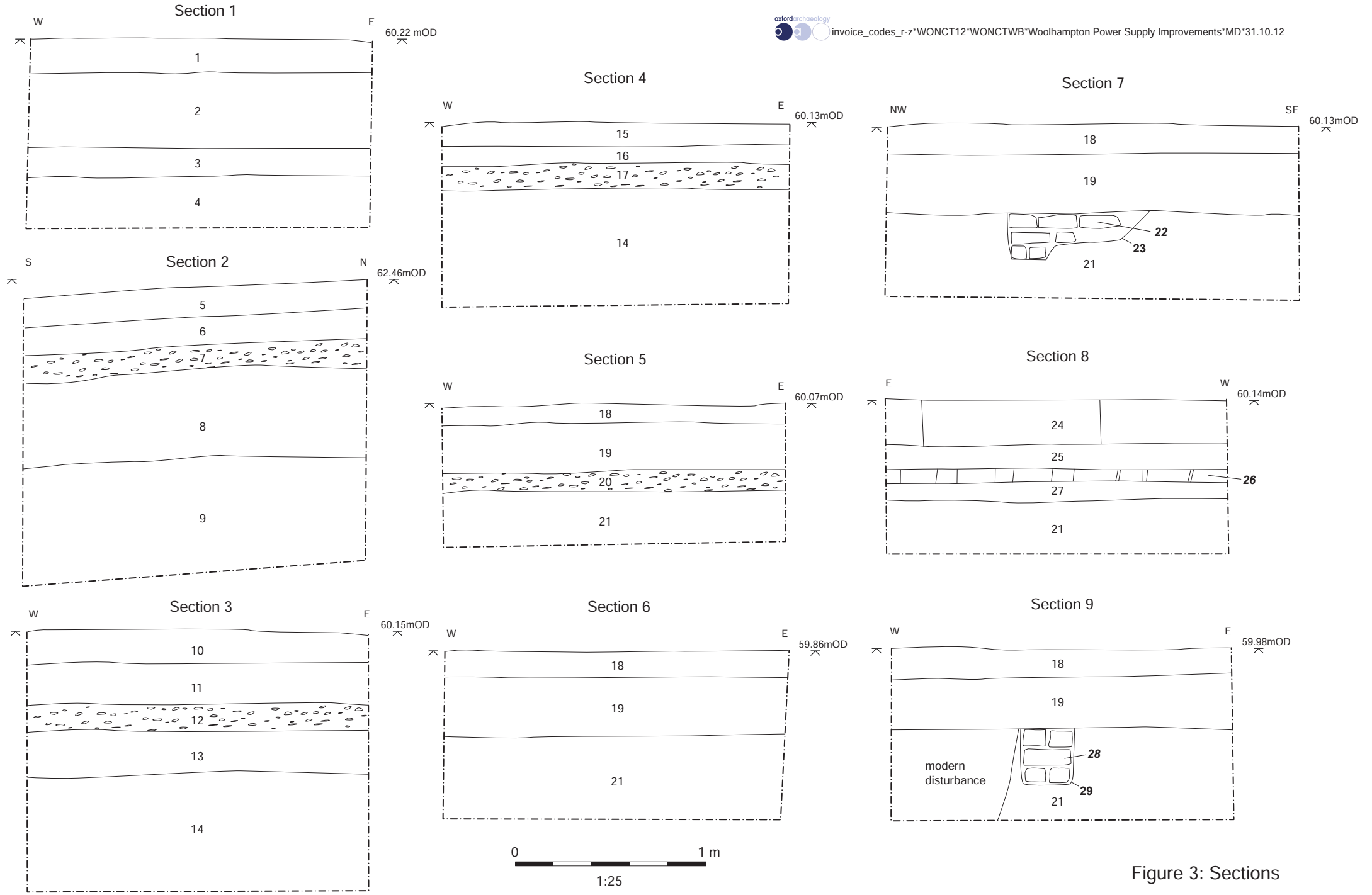


Figure 3: Sections



Figure 4: Overlay of the cable trench onto the OS plan of Woolhampton prior to 1931



Plate 1: Bath Road c1930 looking east with Angel Inn in the background



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