

Trafalgar House Reading Berkshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July 2006 Oxford Archaeology (O.A.) carried out a field evaluation at Trafalgar House, Richfield Avenue, Reading, Berkshire on behalf of Barratt Maidenhead. The evaluation revealed natural gravels below alluvium at c 2.4 m below ground level. The alluvium was truncated and overlain by dumped deposits containing 20th century waste. The site was probably levelled during the construction of Trafalgar House in the 1970s. No archaeological features or deposits were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Trafalgar House, Richfield Avenue, Reading, Berkshire on behalf of Barratt Maidenhead. The work was in respect of a planning application for the construction of an apartment block comprising forty-eight residential flats, following the demolition of the existing vacant building (Planning Application No. 06/00114/FUL). A brief was set by Berkshire Archaeology on behalf of Reading Borough Council, outlining the archaeological requirements of the work. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), outlining how OA would deal with the archaeological requirements of the work, was agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

1.1.2 The development site is situated on land currently occupied by a disused office block, Trafalgar House (NGR SU 7102 7442). It lies c130 m south-west of Caversham Bridge, at the north-east end of Richfield Road, on the north side of Reading (Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site occupies an area of land measuring approximately 0.33 hectares and is located at approximately 38 m above Ordnance Datum (A.O.D.).

1.2.2 The site sits upon alluvial deposits overlying river terrace gravels on the south side of the Thames (British Geological Survey, 1:50,000 Drift series, Sheet 268).

1.2.3 The evaluation area is situated to the north and south of the disused Trafalgar House.

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation is provided in the Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation, produced by Berkshire Archaeology (BA 2005) and is summarised below. The site has produced no known archaeological evidence.

1.3.2 The site lies only 130 m from Caversham Bridge, where documentary evidence shows that a bridge previously existed dating from A.D. 1231. A hoard of Roman

coins was found in the river on the west side of the bridge (SMR 020740000). Bronze Age remains are known from the wider vicinity.

- 1.3.3 Historic maps show that one or two properties bordered Caversham Road as it approached the bridge, but these do not appear to have extended as far west as the site. Otherwise this area was low-lying meadows until well into the 20th century.
- 1.3.4 Previous archaeological evaluations have been carried out by Wessex Archaeology on the site of the former Caversham Bridge Hotel, north of Richfield Avenue (TWA 1985, site W149) and by Foundations Archaeology on the site of St. Paul's Church, York Road to the south (Foundations Archaeology 2001). The Wessex evaluation consisted of a single trench at right angles to the river, which found a sequence of peat deposits below sterile alluvial clay, beneath modern overburden. This was probably the site of a palaeochannel; it was undated. The Foundations Archaeology evaluation found terrace gravel at a depth of 2 m, overlain by c 1 m of sterile alluvial clay overlain by a similar depth of modern overburden.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

The aims of the evaluation were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed area.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- To establish the exigency for a mitigation strategy.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- To make available the results of the investigation.
- To define any relevant research priorities if additional archaeological investigation proved necessary.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 Two trenches (Fig. 2) were excavated:
- 3.1.2 Trench 1, to the north of Trafalgar House, measured 16 m long (east-west) and 4 m wide.
- 3.1.3 Trench 2, to the south of Trafalgar House measured 16 m (north-south) x 10 m (east-west) x 4 m wide.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. Machining stopped at the top of the natural geology, although the overlying alluvium was machined in 0.1 m spits so as to determine if any archaeological activity was present in the upper deposits.

3.3 **Finds**

3.3.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the excavation.

3.4 **Palaeo-environmental evidence**

3.4.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were identified during the evaluation.

3.5 **Presentation of results**

3.5.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below with the stratigraphic accounts of each trench described individually, followed by an overall discussion and interpretation. Individual context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

4 **RESULTS:**

4.1 **Description of deposits**

Trench 1

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located in the car park to the north of Trafalgar House, it was orientated roughly NE-SW and it measured 16 m x 4 m.
- 4.1.2 The earliest deposit found in this trench was a firm, light to mid grey sandy gravel, interpreted as natural river gravel (103). It was reached at a depth of 2 m below ground level (36.6 m A.O.D.).
- 4.1.3 Above 103 was a firm to compact, mid to light grey sand, with occasional gravel inclusions (102). Overlying it was a firm to friable, mid grey sand with frequent organic inclusions (101), possibly an alluvial deposit.
- 4.1.4 Sealing the trench was a thick layer of grey-brown sand, clay and silt, with frequent bricks, cobbles and modern rubbish inclusions (100).

Trench 2

- 4.1.5 Trench 2 was located in the area to the south of Trafalgar House, it was 'L'- shaped and measured 16 m (N-S) x 10 m (E-W) x 4 m wide.
- 4.1.6 The earliest deposit found in this trench was a compact, light to mid greenish grey silty gravel, interpreted as natural river gravel (208). It was reached at a maximum depth of 2.2 m below ground level (36.7 m A.O.D.).
- 4.1.7 Above the gravel was a friable, greenish grey silty clay, with occasional small stones (202). This was an alluvial deposit sitting on top of the river gravel.
- 4.1.8 This deposit was overlain by an organic friable, dark grey silt, with very occasional small stones (201).

- 4.1.9 Overlaying 201 was a loose, grey black mix of silt and rubble, with stone, bricks, wood and general modern rubbish inclusions (200). This deposit had a maximum thickness of 1.26 m.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The percentage sample of the site, the location of the trenches and the consistent results from within these trenches gives a high confidence that the interpretation of the results will apply equally throughout the development site.

5.2 Overall interpretation

- 5.2.1 The evaluation produced no evidence of activity prior to the 20th century within the footprint of the proposed new developments. The only apparent use of this land prior to the construction of Trafalgar House in 1979 was as a possible rubbish tip, due to the high amount of modern waste found within the levelling deposits for Trafalgar House.
- 5.2.2 The construction of Trafalgar House had truncated much of the underlying alluvium and it is possible that early archaeological features had been removed. However, there was no evidence of any residual material remains.
- 5.2.3 No archaeological deposits or features were identified during the evaluation. The site has no archaeological potential and any further development will not impact on any archaeologically significant deposits.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	Ctxt No	Type	Thick. (m)	Comment
001	100	Layer	1.38	Made ground
	101	Layer	0.30	Peat/organic
	102	Layer	0.30	Alluvium
	103	Layer	-	Natural gravel
002	200	Layer	1.30m	Made ground
	201	Layer	0.22m	Peat/organic
	202	Layer	0.15m	Alluvium
	203	Layer	1.26m	Made ground
	204	Layer	0.1m	Peat/organic
	205	Layer	0.05m	Stone layer
	206	Layer	0.9m	Peat/organic
	207	Layer	0.36	Alluvium
	208	Layer	-	Natural river gravel

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Berkshire Archaeology 2005, Trafalgar House, Richfield Avenue, Reading: Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation

Foundations Archaeology, 2001, St Pauls, York Road, Reading. Archaeological Evaluation

OA, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA, 2000 Environmental Sampling Guidelines and Instruction Manual

TWA, 1985, The Former Caversham Bridge Hotel, Archaeological Evaluation, Site W149

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Trafalgar House, Reading

Site code: RETH06

Grid reference: SU 7101 7442

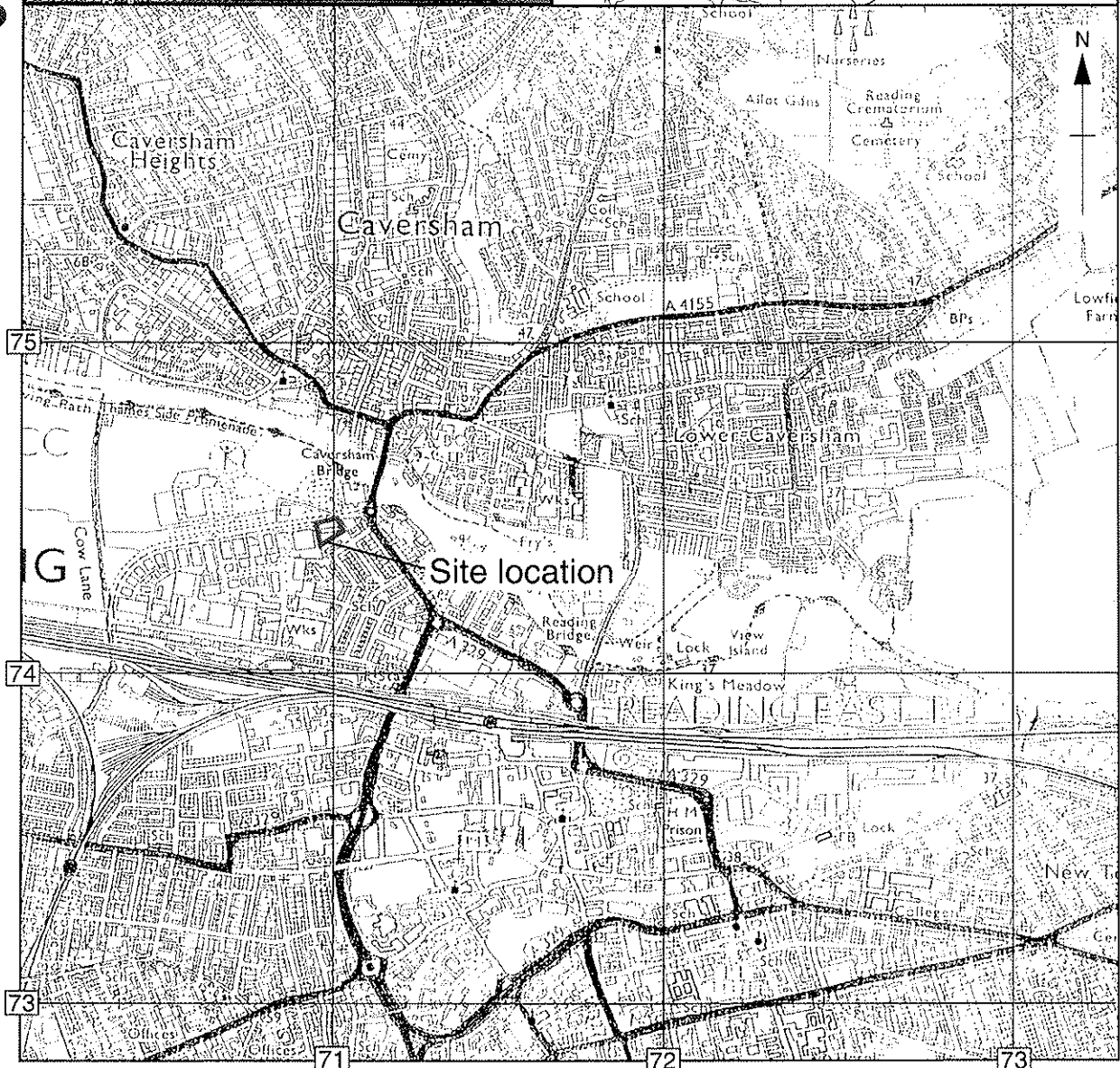
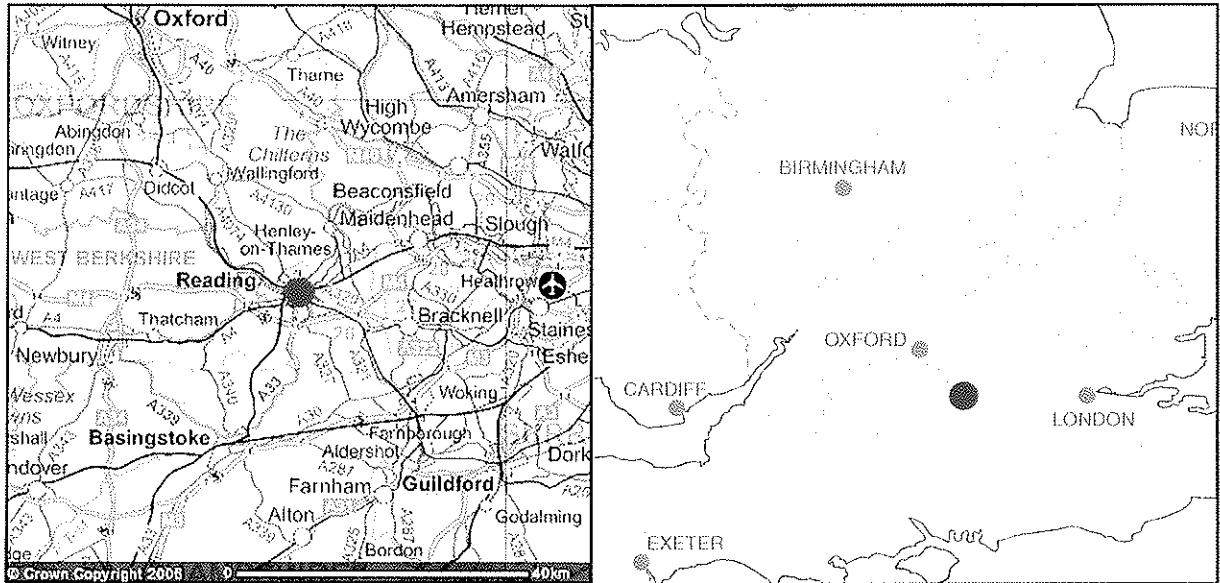
Type of evaluation: 2 trench evaluation, within the grounds of a disused building.

Date and duration of project: 17-19 July 2007

Area of site: 0.33 ha

Summary of results: The site had been truncated during the construction of the existing building. No archaeological features were revealed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: tba



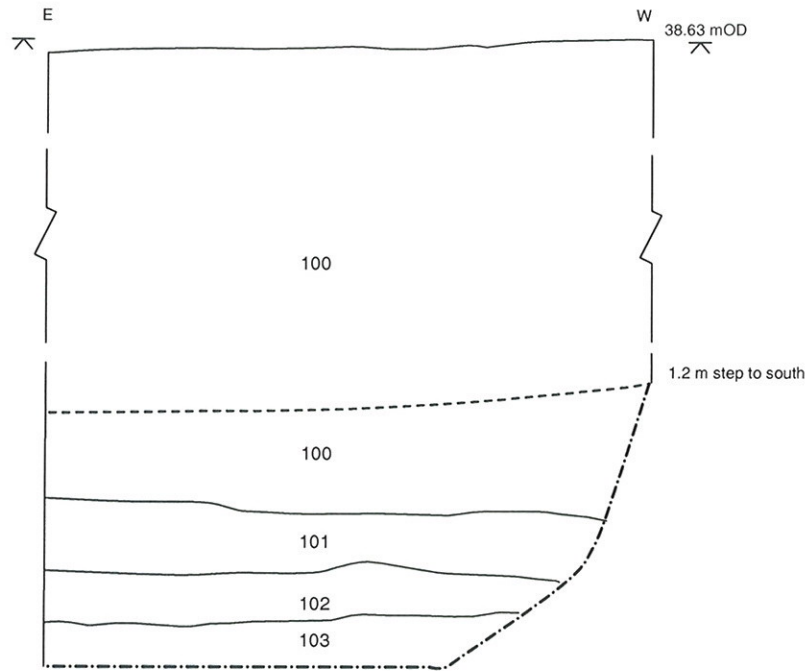
Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Section 100



Section 200

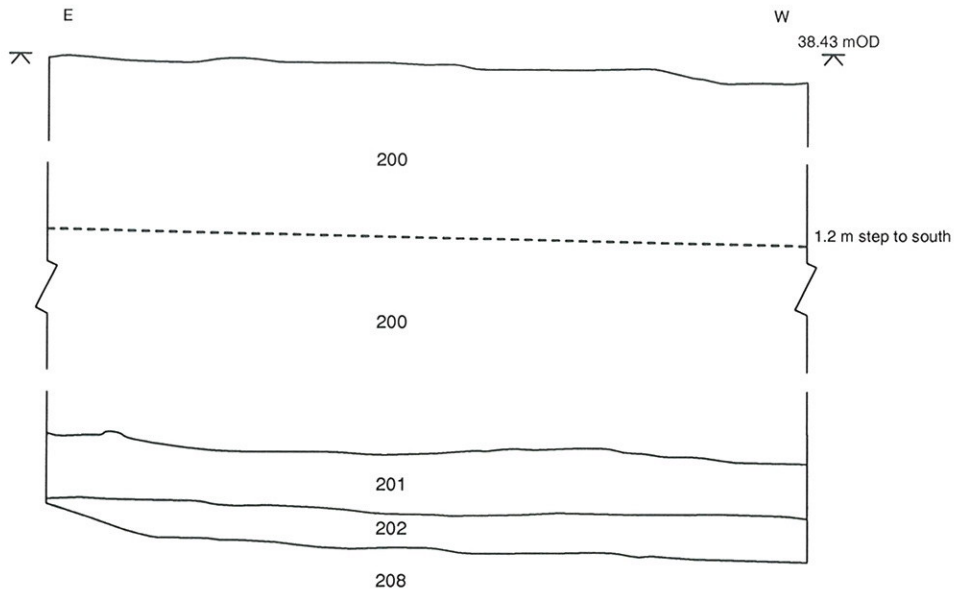


Figure 3: Section drawings



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