

University of Reading
Land between the Student's
Union and Palmer Buildings
Reading
Berkshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



October 2006

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of the University of Reading**

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on behalf of
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University of Reading, Land between the Student's Union and Palmer
Buildings, Reading, Berkshire

NGR: SU 7351 7188

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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SUMMARY

Between the 19th of July and 4th of September 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire (NGR: SU 7351 7188). The watching brief was commissioned by Stride Treglown on behalf of the University of Reading, to be carried out during all ground works associated with the erection of a new building. The watching brief revealed a large number of modern services running throughout the site and two dubious pit features. No archaeological features were uncovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 19th of July and 4th of September 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the University of Reading, Reading, Berkshire (NGR: SU 7351 7188). The work was commissioned by Stride Treglown on behalf of the University of Reading in respect of the erection of a new building for use as a student services centre with additional new access from the north of the building (Planning Application No. F/2005/6318).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by David Thomason, the Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology (BA, 2005), and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet these requests (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the University of Reading Campus, Whiteknights Park, directly to the south west of Whiteknights Lake, Earley (NGR SU 7351 7188) (Fig. 1), lying at approximately 67 m OD. The underlying geology is plateau gravel and London Clay.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The following background has been reproduced from the Berkshire Archaeology *Brief* (BA, 2005).
- 2.1.2 The site has been identified as being of archaeological potential, due to a number of sites in the vicinity which are recorded on the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record for this area.
- 2.1.3 Various cropmarks are noted within the Whiteknights area of the university, showing as linears, possibly associated with early parish boundaries. Other cropmarks in the area suggest enclosure systems, possibly agricultural with several additional findspots indicating prehistoric and medieval activity.

3 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims

- 3.1.1 To determine the existence or absence of any archaeological remains; and should they be present, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
- 3.1.2 To determine or confirm the approximate date or range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- 3.1.3 To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains.
- 3.1.4 To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains.
- 3.1.5 To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- 3.1.6 To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- 3.1.7 To determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- 3.1.8 To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence.
- 3.1.9 To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

3.2 Watching brief methodology

- 3.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during all invasive groundworks. These works included the excavation of service and foundation trenches and the stripping of the site.
- 3.2.2 Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Photographs were taken using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Description of deposits

- 4.1.1 The natural geology (3), a deposit of reddish brown gravelly silt was encountered at an average of 0.8 m below the ground surface throughout the site. This was overlain

by a maximum 0.5 m thick layer of light grey flint gravel and silt (2), which was in turn overlain by a maximum 0.3 m thick layer of mid grey sandy silt (1), capped by the modern turf.

4.1.2 A possible sloped pit (Pit A) (Fig. 3) was visible within a service trench section, although due to health and safety constraints, close inspection was impossible. Pit A had a width of 3 m at the top, and 0.5 m at the base with a depth of 0.65 m. The south-eastern edge was near vertical, while the north-western edge sloped sharply. It was filled with a brownish grey stony silt (5).

4.1.3 Another possible pit (Pit B) (Fig. 4) was visible within a service trench section, although due to health and safety constraints, close inspection was impossible. It had a width of 1.3 m and a depth of 0.6 m, with near vertical sides. Pit B was filled with a greyish black stony silt (6).

4.2 Finds

4.2.1 No finds were recovered from site.

4.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 A large percentage of the site had been previously truncated by a number of modern services criss-crossing the area, which would have destroyed any surviving archaeological features. However two possible pits were observed in the section of one service trench.

5.1.2 Due to health and safety constraints, close inspection of Pit A was impossible. The size and shape of the pit coupled with the similarity of its fill (5) to the overlying subsoil (2), suggests that it was the result of the machine excavators bucket scraping the side of the trench.

5.1.3 Close inspection of Pit B was also impossible due to health and safety constraints. The shape of this pit coupled with the close proximity of modern services suggest that this is also part of the modern truncation seen throughout the site.

5.1.4 All groundworks came down onto the natural gravelly silt (3) which was overlain by a 0.5 m thick modern levelling layer (2), which was in turn overlain by a 0.3 m thick layer of topsoil and turf (1). The modern services encountered throughout the site were all cut into the natural (3) and sealed by the modern levelling layer (2).

5.1.5 No archaeology was uncovered over the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Thickness (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Topsoil	0.3	-	-	Topsoil
2	Subsoil	0.5	-	-	Subsoil
3	Natural	-	-	-	Natural gravelly silt
4	Deposit	0.5	2.2	-	Mid brownish grey stony silt
5	Deposit	0.65	3	-	Brownish grey stony silt
6	Deposit	0.6	1.3	-	Greyish black stony silt

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BA, 2005 *Land between the Student's Union and The Palmer Buildings, University of Reading, Whiteknights Park, Earley, Wokingham: Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

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

OA, 2006 *University of Reading, Land between the Student's Union and Palmer Buildings, Reading, Berkshire: Written Scheme Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: University of Reading, Land between the Student's Union and Palmer Buildings, Reading, Berkshire

Site code: SHISSC06

Grid reference: SU 7351 7188

Type of watching brief: Monitoring all groundworks

Date and duration of project: 11 days between the 19th of July to 4th of September 2006

Summary of results: Modern services, and two dubious pit features

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading museum service in due course



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

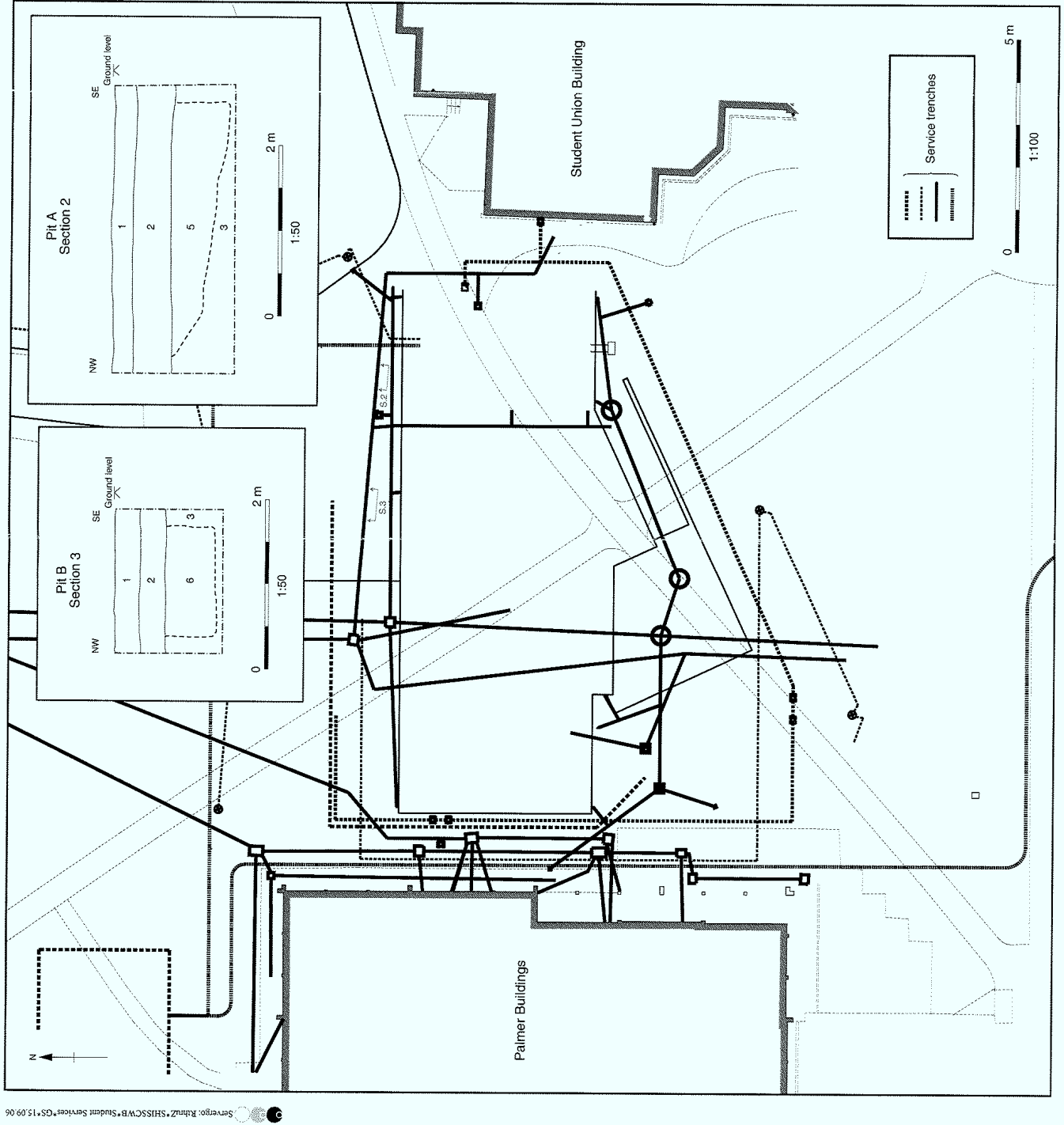


Figure 2: Site plan showing service trenches



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