

READING (BR)

Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Assessment

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
March 1989**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

SHINFIELD ROAD, READING, BERKS

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SHINFIELD ROAD - UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRE

Background Information

An archaeological assessment was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in March 1989 on behalf of Development Planning and Design Services for a proposed planning application.

Topographically the ground slopes from 76m OD at Shinfield Road to 63.70m OD in the north east area of the site and continues to a dry valley. The subsoils are a series of weathered clay silts over stiff clay and angular to sub rounded flint and quartzite which rest on coarse sand and flint gravel. Much of the application area is now derelict grassland.

Archaeological Background

To the south of the application area is a deserted medieval hamlet. Earthworks and aerial photographs show probable house platforms in the field bordering onto Shinfield Road. An overgrown pond and ditch are the remnants of a moated site forming the present nucleus of the hamlet. Documentary evidence reveals that it was a moated site until 1702, the house being demolished in 1804.

Method

Five trenches (Fig 1) were excavated by JCB using a 5 foot ditching bucket. Trenches 1 and 2 were cut to establish whether the medieval hamlet extended to the area immediately west of the moated site. Trenches 3-5 were to investigate the possibility of archaeology (medieval or otherwise) on ground sloping away from the medieval nucleus. Hand excavation of possible archaeological deposits was carried out.

Results

The paddock in which Trench 1 was located, immediately to the west of the moated site, contained dumped deposits mainly of tile and brick. The small amount of pottery recovered from these layers suggests a mid seventeenth century date or later. It is possible that these are associated with the demolition of the house on the moated site. Pit 8 was associated with this dumping. Beneath the dumped deposits was an undated compacted layer of pebbles cut by a drain or gully (Fig 2,5). Underlying this (at the south end of Trench 1) was a pebble surface 4A which was associated with two post holes 6 and 7, and a pebble free horizon 4B. Overlying 4B was layer 9 which sloped down towards the moat. This layer contained Surrey white wares and glazed sherds of the SW Oxon/N Berks group from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

The piece of land further west bordering onto Shinfield Road has been heavily disturbed. The bottom of a ditch oriented east-west containing tile fragments and an iron nail and thought to be of post-medieval date was found under 0.93m of dumped clays, rubble and coal dust.

Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds.

From Trench 4 one flint flake was recovered while five flints were located in Trench 5. Three of these are nodules with minor removals while two have retouched edges. Otherwise these trenches contained no archaeological features.

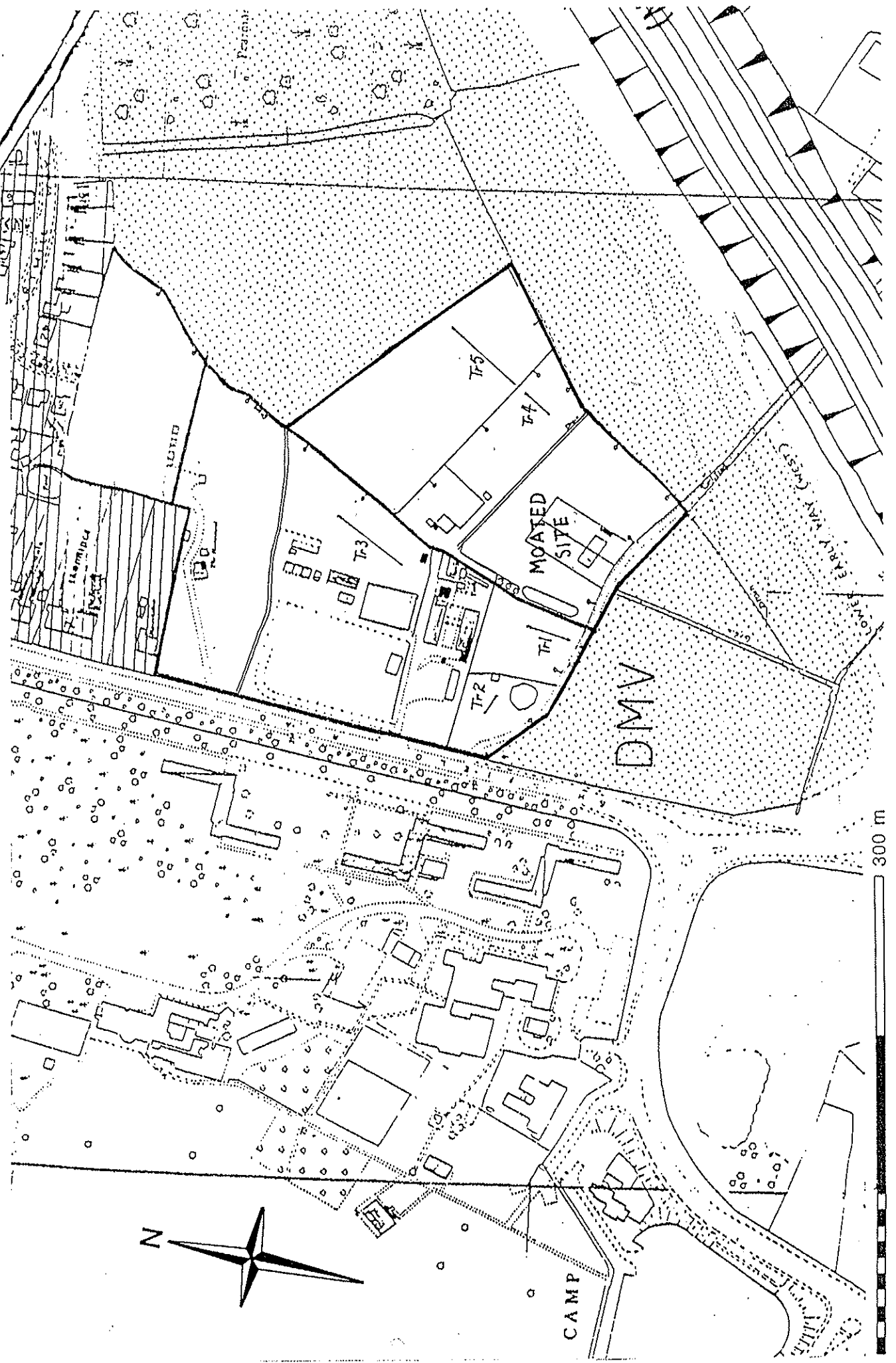
Summary

The area to the west of the moated site has a pebble horizon possibly associated with the post-medieval phase of the moated site. Covering this are dumps of material perhaps associated with the demolition of the moated house. Medieval deposits in the form of a pebble surface and two post holes were located immediately to the west of the moat.

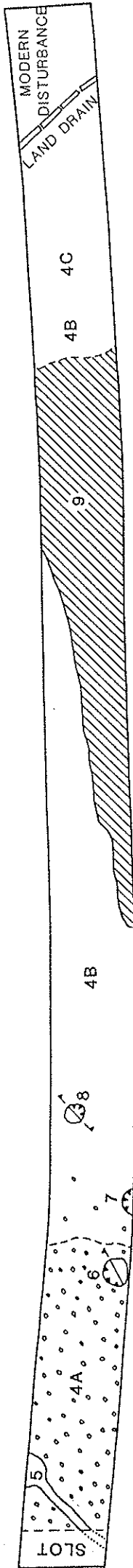
The flints recovered from Trenches 4 and 5 are generally hard hammer struck flakes with miscellaneous retouch removed from rough nodules or cores of which 3 examples were recovered. They were impossible to date accurately but their unrefined character suggests a broad late Bronze Age or Iron Age date. Their presence indicates not the proximity of a site but background residual activity.

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TRENCH 1 PLAN

