

**New Fourth Form House, Bradfield College,
Bradfield, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for

Bradfield College

April 1998

**New Fourth Form House, Bradfield College, Bradfield, Berkshire
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Matthew Gleave

Report 98/2

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Bradfield College, Bradfield, Berkshire (NGR SU60807257). The work was commissioned by Helen Logan of DEGW London Limited, Porters North, 8 Crinan Street, London, N1 9SQ, on behalf of Bradfield College. Planning permission was granted by Newbury District Council for the construction of a single new boarding house, associated carparking and access road, with the condition that an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundwork on the site. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, 1990). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr. R. Bourn, Archaeologist of Babbie Public Services Division, archaeological advisors to Berkshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Matthew Gleave between 23rd February and 31 March 1998. The site code is BCB98/2.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located approximately 0.3 km from Bradfield, 4 km to the north-west of Theale (Fig. 1). It is situated at a height of about 85 m above Ordnance Datum on a level terrace at the top of a hill with a valley containing the River Pang to the north, and is adjacent to the main school buildings. Access to the site is from the main road into Bradfield to the south onto land that has previously been used as a sports field. The British Geological Survey of the underlying drift geology shows the site to be located in an area between the Plateau Gravel and the Reading Beds (BGS 1946).

Archaeological Background

The site lies within an area from which a number of archaeological finds of Roman date have been made. A coin of Constantius has been found close by and recent archaeological investigations carried out in connection with a new sewer pipe identified Roman remains approximately 3 km to the east of Bradfield (Raymond, in

with a new sewer pipe identified Roman remains approximately 3 km to the east of Bradfield (Raymond, in press). The village of Bradfield itself, thought to have Saxon origins, has Medieval and post-Medieval buildings (SMR No. 1613). Documentary sources also suggest that Bradfield is the location of a Saxon monastery founded in AD 699, although this site is still unlocated (SMR No. 1618). There was the possibility, therefore, that the site at Bradfield College may provide evidence of Roman settlement, the Saxon origins of Bradfield, and further evidence of the Medieval extent of the village, which would contribute to our understanding of the development of Bradfield.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor the groundwork for the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality, and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was achieved by monitoring the stripping of topsoil for the access road and excavation of the foundations for the presence of archaeological deposits. Spoil heaps were also monitored for artefacts.

Results

The site was stripped of topsoil to a depth of approximately 0.35 m before a layer of hardcore was laid (Fig. 2). Observations of the stripping showed no archaeological features. Numerous fragments of modern brick and tile were observed within the topsoil. An existing sewer pipe which ran across the site was re-routed around the periphery of the new building (Fig. 2). Observations of the trenching for the new route of the sewer pipe showed the stratigraphy of the site to be topsoil to a depth of 0.45 m, gravel to 1.70 m and clay to 3.50 m. No archaeological features were observed. The mains supports for the foundations were piled and this operation was not monitored. Trenches for the foundations between the pile caps were observed; they were approximately 1 m wide by 0.60 m deep from the stripped surface (Fig. 3). Around the pile caps the foundation trenches were excavated approximately 0.1 m deeper. The sections of the foundation trenches appeared to cut the topsoil (where remaining) and natural deposits only. However, to the north-east of the site, nearest to the existing buildings, a layer of made-ground approximately 0.25 m thick was observed overlying the natural. This is presumably related to the construction of the existing school buildings and/or any levelling work that may have taken place on the site prior to the new construction work.

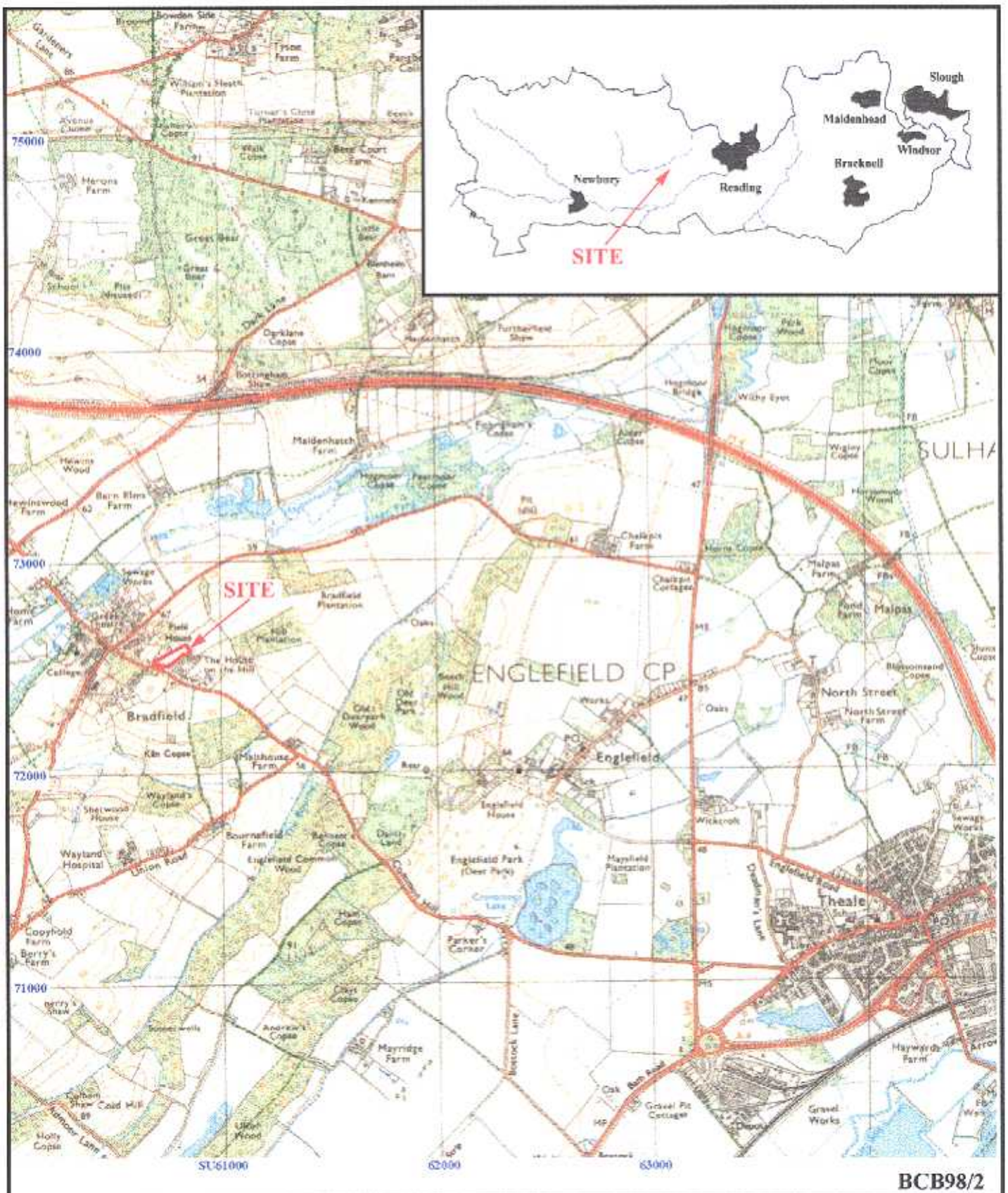
The site in general lies on the flat area of the ridge top. There is evidence for terracing during the construction of other housing and sports facilities in the area. The extent of truncation of the original ground surface is not clear but some truncation is likely to have taken place during construction of the former playing field on which the new development lies.

Conclusion

The observations made during the watching brief have shown that the groundworks for the new fourth form house have not disturbed any archaeological deposits and no artefacts were recovered from any of the spoil heaps. The topsoil contained numerous building rubble and appeared to overly the natural. However, terracing observed in the vicinity casts some doubt as to the nature of the natural and it is possible that some parts of the site have been raised or reduced to accommodate the sports field.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth.
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO.
- Raymond, F., in press, The investigation of Roman and Medieval settlements found during the construction of the Theale to Bradfield pipeline, *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*.



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Figure 1. Location of site within Bradfield and Berkshire.

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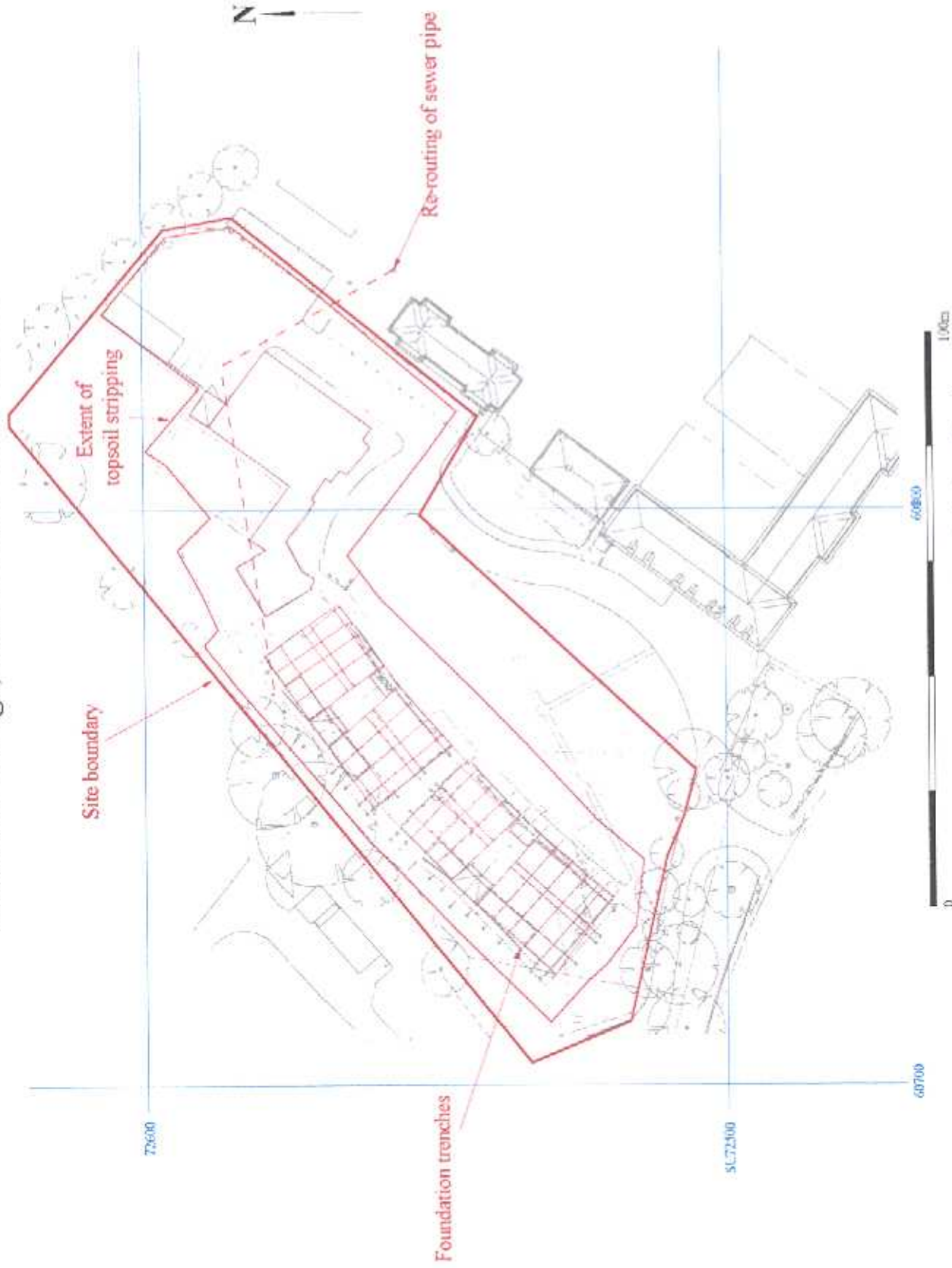


Figure 2. Plan of site showing extent of topsoil stripping and location of foundation and service trenches observed during watching brief.

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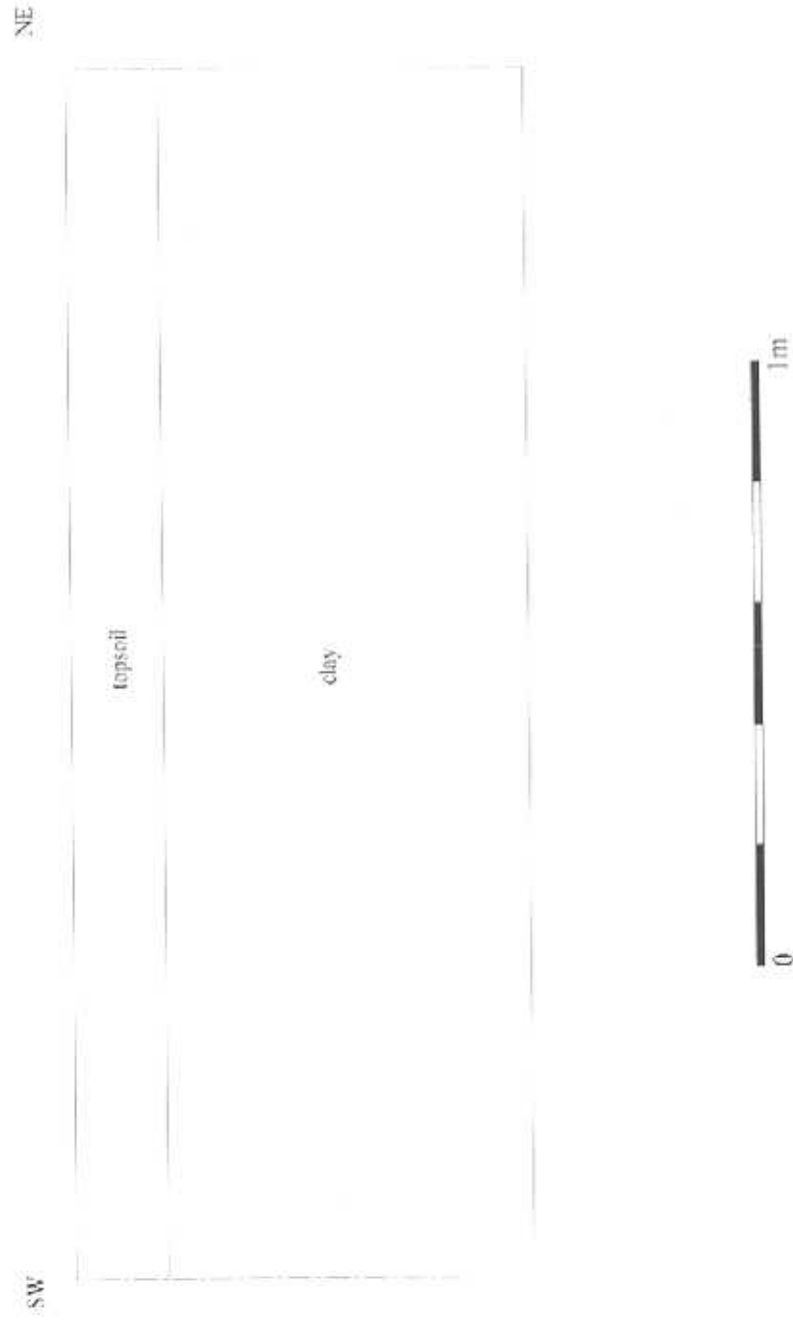


Figure 3. Representative section of foundation trenches.