

Burghfield Mill Fish Pass, Burghfield, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Lean and Higgin Ltd**

by Andy Smith
Thames Valley Archaeological
Services

Site Code BMF98/50

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Report 98/50

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Burghfield Mill, Burghfield, Berkshire (SU 6691070950) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr C Mead of Lean and Higgin Limited, 20 Thame Road, Chinnor, Oxfordshire, OX9 4QS. The watching brief was undertaken as part of the requirements of the Environment Agency, during the installation of a fish pass between the Kennet and Avon canal and the River Kennet.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr R Bourn of Babbie, archaeological advisors to West Berkshire District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Smith on the 17th of August 1998 and the site code is BMF 98/50.

Location, Topography and Geology

Burghfield Mill Estate lies on the Kennet and Avon Canal to the west of the Burghfield Road (Fig 1). The area to be observed was a short peninsular of land between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Kennet, adjacent to an existing weir and the Burghfield Mill stream. The underlying geology is alluvium (BGS 1982) and the height above Ordnance Datum is c 40 m. At the location for the proposed fish pass the canal side is concreted and the land slopes gently down to the river.

Archaeological Background

The Burghfield area has considerable archaeological potential. A number of late Neolithic and Bronze Age sites have been discovered to the south of the site at Field Farm (SU 671703) and Heron's House (SU 662701) (Lobb and Rose 1996). Cropmarks show an enclosure to the south of Mill Road (SU 676707; Gates 1975). Bronze Age metal objects were retrieved to the east of the site, near the lock (SU 674709).

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the watching brief were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the fish pass. The preliminary groundworks which were the subject of the watching brief comprised the excavation of a trench 8 m long, 2 m wide and c 0.50 m deep to allow the insertion of sheet piling (Fig 2). This initial excavation was carried out by a floating crane with toothed grab bucket. Subsequent deposits within the sheet piled area were removed in spits of c 200 mm by a small 360° mechanical excavator on a graded incline to a depth of c 1 m.

Results

Excavation of the trench for the sheet piling revealed a section through part of the river bank, showing a mixed loose topsoil/made-ground containing modern debris such as tin cans, Victorian bottles and brick/tile fragments c 0.50 m. thick. Beneath this horizon lay another layer of made-ground comprising a mixed alluvial deposit c 0.25 m thick which was only partially exposed to the east. This deposit lay above another mixed deposit largely comprising gravel and alluvium. The foundation levels of the fish pass were not sufficiently deep to expose the natural geology in the trench. Close to the north-western end of the trench on the northern side, a 0.6 m length of timberwork was exposed. This comprised four close-set upright planks aligned north-west - south-east (Fig 2). They were 0.14 m wide, c 3 m long and 0.04 m thick and lay beneath the topsoil/made-ground level. The upper parts of the planks were damaged/decayed. The timberwork continued beyond the trench side to the north east and appears to be the remains of an earlier revetment to the canal bank.

Other than this timberwork, no artefacts or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered.

References

- BGS, 1982, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 236, solid and drift edition, Keyworth
Gates, T, 1975, *The Middle Thames Valley: An archaeological survey of the river gravels*, Berkshire Archaeological Committee Publication No 1
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO
Lobb, J S and Rose, P G 1996, *Archaeological survey of the Lower Kennet valley*, Berkshire, Wessex Archaeological Report No 9 Salisbury



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Figure 1. Location of site within Burghfield Mill and Berkshire.

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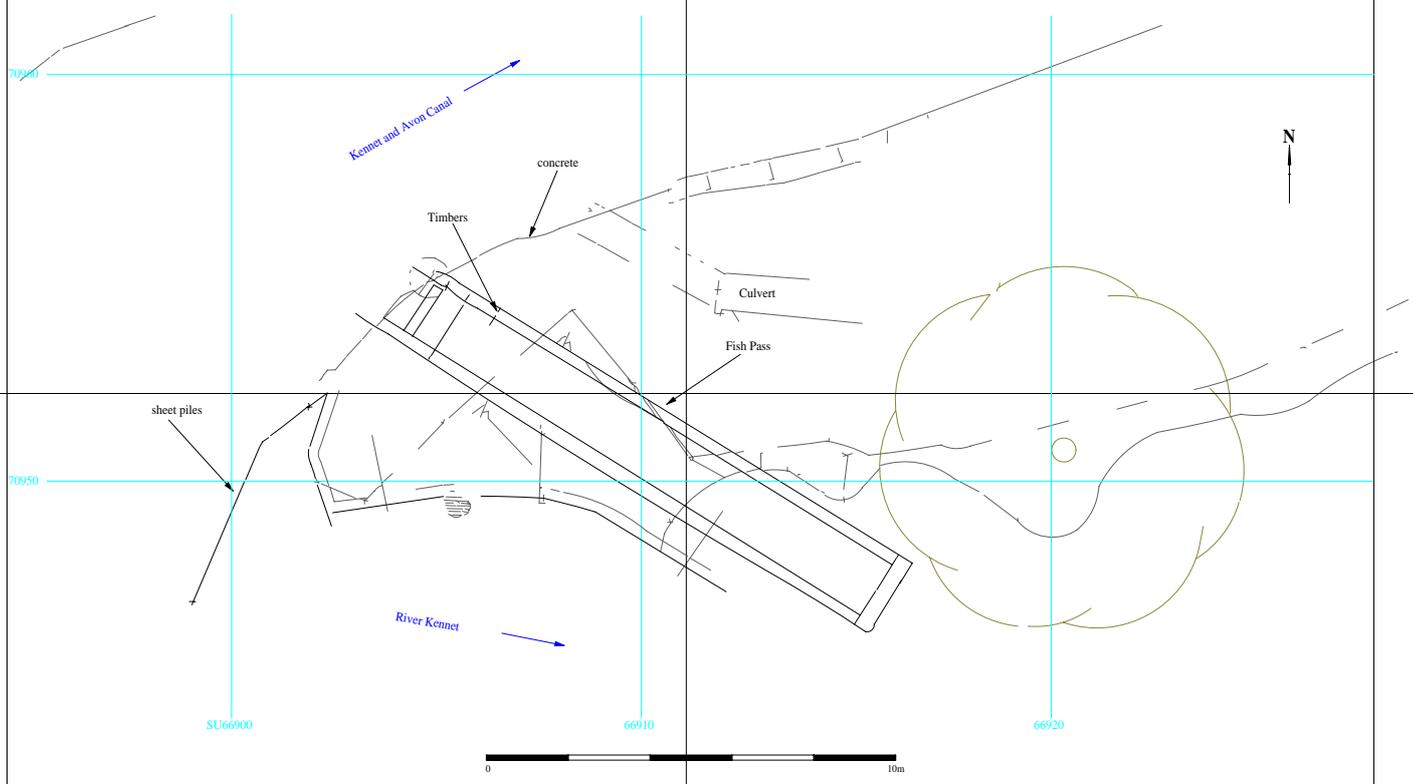


Figure 2. Plan of fish pass observed during watching brief.