

**Land to the rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham,
West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr. Barry Belcher

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code BRT 02/58

June 2002

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6079 6765

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 20th June 2002

Project manager: Jo Pine

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: BRT 02/58

Area of site: 600 sq m

Summary of results: Terminal end of a gully, probably of Roman date

Monuments identified: Gully terminus

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum in due course.

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 21.06.02

Land to the rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 02/58

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire (SU 6079 6765) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ken Neal, Building Design Consultant of Bunker Farm, Basingstoke Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7HQ on behalf of Mr. Barry Belcher, 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 3BD. A planning application has been made to West Berkshire Council (02//00034/out) for the construction of a block of four apartments on the site. as the site lies within an area of archaeological potential a field evaluation was requested to provide detailed information to accompany the planning application. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the districts policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Veronica Fiorato, Principle Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Clare Challis in June 2002 and the site code is BRT 02/58.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of Thatcham and the northern side of the Bath Road and is adjacent to Whitakers Close (Fig. 2). The underlying geology of the site is river and valley gravels (BGS 1971), which was observed in both trenches. The site lies at a height of c.78m above OD.

Archaeological background

The site lies within an area of Roman Thatcham. Various observations were made during development of the area in the 1930's (Harris 1934-7) and revealed deposits spread over c.600m along the Bath Road with some stretching 150m away from the road to the north. Finds included footings for stone buildings, stone lined wells, and a flue. Dating evidence spans the 1st-4th centuries AD with an emphasis on later Roman date. Harris concluded that this was the Roman town of *Spinae* sited on the Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester-

Margary route 41A (Margary 1955). However, Margary's assessment of the recorded distances between *Spinae*, Cirencester and Silchester would better fit with a location near to the modern village of Speen, west of Newbury. An evaluation on the western margins of Thatcham (now Henwick playing fields) carried out in 1992 located a large number of Roman deposits including ditches, gullies, pits and postholes (Ford 1992).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project are:

- a) Determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on site.
- b) Determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present on the site.
- c) Determine if deposits representing part of the Roman settlement are present on the site.

Two trenches were proposed for excavation sited to examine the area of the footprint of the proposed new structure.

Results.

Both trenches were dug as near as possible to their intended positions and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench contained turf and topsoil overlying an orang brown sandy subsoil with frequent inclusions of gravel, overlying gravel natural (Figs 3 and 4). At the western end of the trench was the terminal end of a gully (1) aligned north-south. This was cut from beneath the subsoil and measured 0.70m in width and 0.31m in depth. A 0.65m long slot was excavated across the feature revealing a fill (52) of grey brown sandy silt with frequent inclusions of small sub-angular flints. Two fragments of tile and two sherds of pottery were recovered.

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

This trench contained turf and topsoil overlying an orangey brown subsoil, with frequent gravel inclusions, overlying gravel natural. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

Pottery

Two small abraded sherds of Roman pottery, (2 gm) with micaceous fabrics were recovered from the gully terminal (1) in trench 1.

Brick and Tile

Two fragments of tile (78g) were recovered from gully terminal (1) in trench 1.

Conclusion

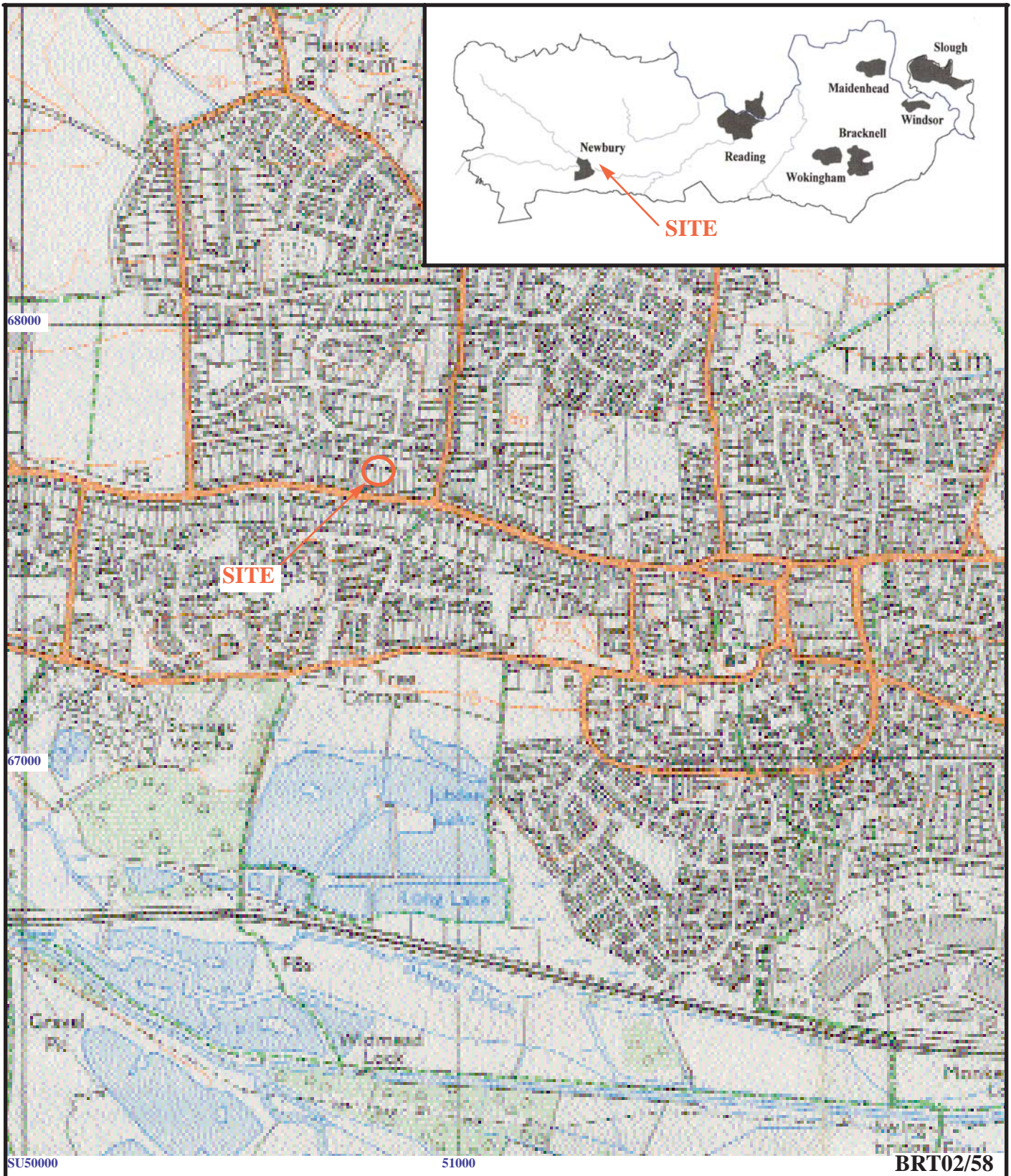
The evaluation revealed a terminal of a gully aligned north-south in trench 1. It is probably of Roman date but only two small abraded sherds were recovered along with undiagnostic tile. It is not clear what this feature represents: it may be the remains of a property boundary, drain or a structural feature. The presence of this feature has confirmed the archaeological potential of this part of Thatcham though the paucity of finds and absence of additional deposits suggests relatively light usage of this location.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1: 50000, Sheet 267, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1992, *Henwick Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire. An Archaeological Evaluation*. Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 92/1, Reading.
- Harris, W.E, 1934-7, Romano-British settlement at Thatcham-Newtown, Berkshire, *Transactions of Newbury District Field Club*, 8, 219-255.
- Margary, I.D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	6.25	1.60	0.45	0.00m-0.33m turf and topsoil; 0.33m-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m+ orange gravel natural.
2	8.80	1.60	0.62	0.00m-0.36m turf and topsoil; 0.36m-0.58m subsoil; 0.58m+ orange gravel natural.



**Rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham,
West Berkshire, 2002**

Figure 1. Location of site within Thatcham and Berkshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 1187 SU46/56 at 1:1250
Ordnance Survey Licence AL52324A0001

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



BRT02/58

Rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham,
West Berkshire, 2002

Figure 2. Location of site within Thatcham.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

Rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire, 2002



Figure 3. Location of evaluation trenches.

Rear of 71A Bath Road, Thatcham, West Berkshire, 2002

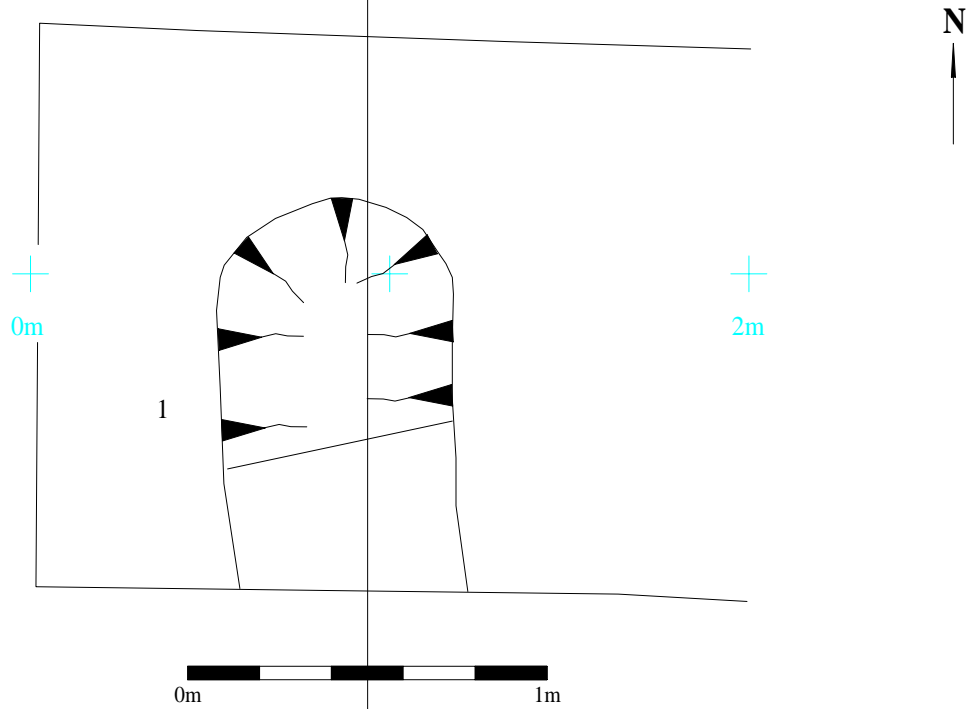
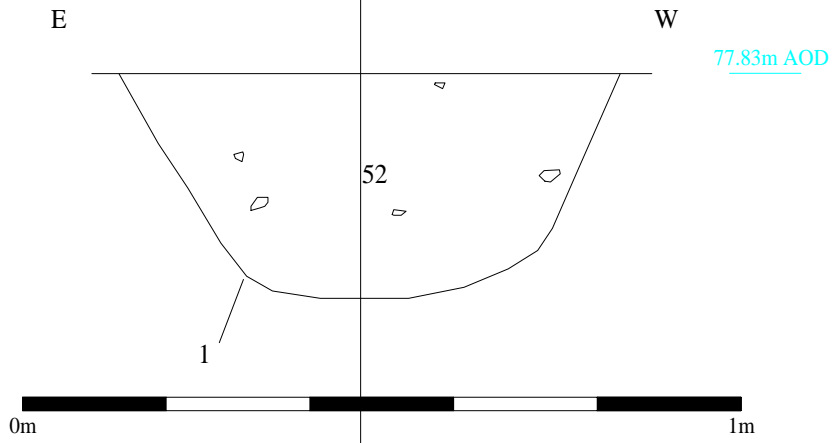


Figure 4. Plan and section of gully terminal in trench 1.



Plate 1: Gully terminal 1 looking south. Scales 1m and 0.1m



Plate 2: General view of site and trench 2 looking south west.