

# **Culham Court, Aston, Remenham, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Woody Clark Limited**

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CCA 07/117

**October 2007**

## Summary

**Site name:** Culham Court, Aston, Remenham, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7892 8380

**Site activity:** Field Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 26th – 29th September 2007

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Sean Wallis

**Site code:** CCA 07/117

**Summary of results:** The remains of a late post-medieval brick structure, probably a silt trap or drain, were recorded immediately in front of the entrance to the current house.

**Monuments identified:** None

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 02.10.07 Steve Preston ✓ 02.10.07
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# **Culham Court, Aston, Remenham, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation**

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**Report 07/117**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Culham Court, Aston, Remenham, Berkshire (SU 7892 8380) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Max Ward of Timothy Hatton Architects Limited, The Workshop, 139 Freston Road, London, W10 6TH, on behalf of Woody Clark Limited, 181 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2RN.

Planning permission (F/2007/1955) has been gained from Wokingham District Council for the construction of a new basement extension, in addition to interior alterations and refurbishment. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires that a field evaluation be carried out to provide information on the archaeological potential of the site, based on which an appropriate mitigation strategy could be designed if necessary.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, who act as archaeological advisers to the District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Crabb and Sean Wallis between 26th and 29th September 2007, and the site code is CCA 07/117. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

Culham Court is a listed (grade II\*) building which sits within its own large managed estate. The estate is located on a bend in the River Thames, which flows within 150m of the house. The closest villages to the estate are Aston, Remenham and Remenham Hill, with the nearest large town being Henley-on-Thames, about 3km west of Culham Court (Fig. 1). According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Upper Chalk (BGS 1980), and this was confirmed in all three evaluation trenches. The site lies at a height of approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum, sloping down from south to north towards the river. The evaluation

was carried out immediately in front of the house, on an area of stone paving slabs and decorative cobbling (following their recording and removal).

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Mary O'Donoghue of Berkshire Archaeology, from information within the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record. In summary, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide range of sites and finds recorded (Ford 1987; Gates 1975). A range of deposits, including a Neolithic pit, were found during work on a gas pipeline to the west (Holgate and Start 1985). Also to the west are the remains of a Saxon cemetery. Two Roman villas lie just across the river near Mill End. The house itself is of early post-medieval date, and is a listed (grade II\*) building.

## **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. The work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in-situ*, or might better be excavated in conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project were;

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

To determine if deposits of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval date are present on the site.

It was originally planned to excavate two trenches, each 10m long and 1.6m wide, within the proposed development area. However, due to the presence of two cobble and stone decorative markings, it was decided to excavate three shorter trenches in the areas which were merely paved. Trenches 1 and 2 were widened slightly to make up for the resulting shortfall in the stripped area (Fig. 3) . The stone slabs were lifted prior to the evaluation commencing, along with their concrete bedding layer. The trenches were dug using a small 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. 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.

## **Results**

### Trench 1

This trench was 6m long and aligned approximately NNW-SSE. Due to the way the slabs had been removed prior to excavation, the trench was 1.9m wide at its northern end, widening to 2.25m at its southern end. The stone slabs and their associated concrete bedding layer had already been removed to expose a layer of hardcore. This deposit was only 0.1m thick and lay directly above the natural chalk. The top of the chalk was quite weathered which, coupled with the complete lack of buried soil deposits, seems to suggest that the area had been stripped and truncated prior the paving slab surface being laid. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this trench.

### Trench 2 (Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 2 was aligned approximately NNE-SSW, and was 2m wide. The trench varied in depth due to the slope of the natural chalk, and was 5.2m long at its base. Up to 0.17m of chalk rubble, with occasional brick and tile fragments, was recorded immediately below the stone slabs and their associated bedding layers. This lay above a deposit of greyish brown sandy silt with occasional chalk fragments and flecks (53). This layer varied in depth from about 0.37m at the northern end of the trench to about 0.15m at the southern end, and probably represents a buried soil horizon. This deposit lay directly above the natural chalk, which showed evidence of peri-glacial stripes.

The remains of a rectangular brick chamber (50), 1.4m across which survived up to 4 courses high, was recorded in the middle of the trench (Fig. 4). The brick size indicates a late post-medieval date. The structure appears to be either a silt trap or part of a drainage system such as a soakaway, and was partly demolished before the current paved surface was laid down. The stratigraphy observed in the trench section suggests that the layer of chalk rubble was laid down after structure 50 was built, but before it was partially demolished.

### Trench 3 (Plates 3 and 4)

This trench was 5.2m long at its base, and aligned approximately NNE-SSW. Due to the slope of the natural chalk, the trench varied in depth from 1.4m at its southern end to 1.8m at its northern end (Fig. 5). The stone slabs and related concrete bedding layer had been previously removed to reveal a further bedding layer of hardcore, up to 0.2m thick. This lay above 0.1m of re-deposited chalk, beneath which was a deposit of light brown chalky silt made ground approximately 0.25m thick. A further layer of re-deposited chalk, up to 0.6m thick, was recorded immediately above a thin (0.1m) layer of brick rubble. Beneath this was a probable buried soil layer (53), about 0.25m thick and very similar to that observed in trench 2. As with trench 2, the buried soil

lay directly above the natural chalk, which once again showed signs of peri-glacial stripes. The trench contained no archaeological finds or features.

## **Finds**

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the fieldwork

## **Conclusion**

Apart from the brick-built chamber in Trench 2, no archaeological finds or features were recorded during the evaluation. However, the project did shed some light on the extent to which the area in front of Culham Court has been landscaped in the past, and the survival of a probable buried soil horizon in Trenches 2 and 3 means that archaeological deposits could have potentially survived in the eastern part of the development area. Nevertheless, based on the results of the evaluation, the site appears to have little or no archaeological potential.

## **References**

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning Occas Paper 1, Reading
- Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley, An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn 1, Reading
- Holgate, R and Start, D, 1985, 'A Neolithic pit at Remenham, near Henley-on-Thames, Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol J* 72, 1-8
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

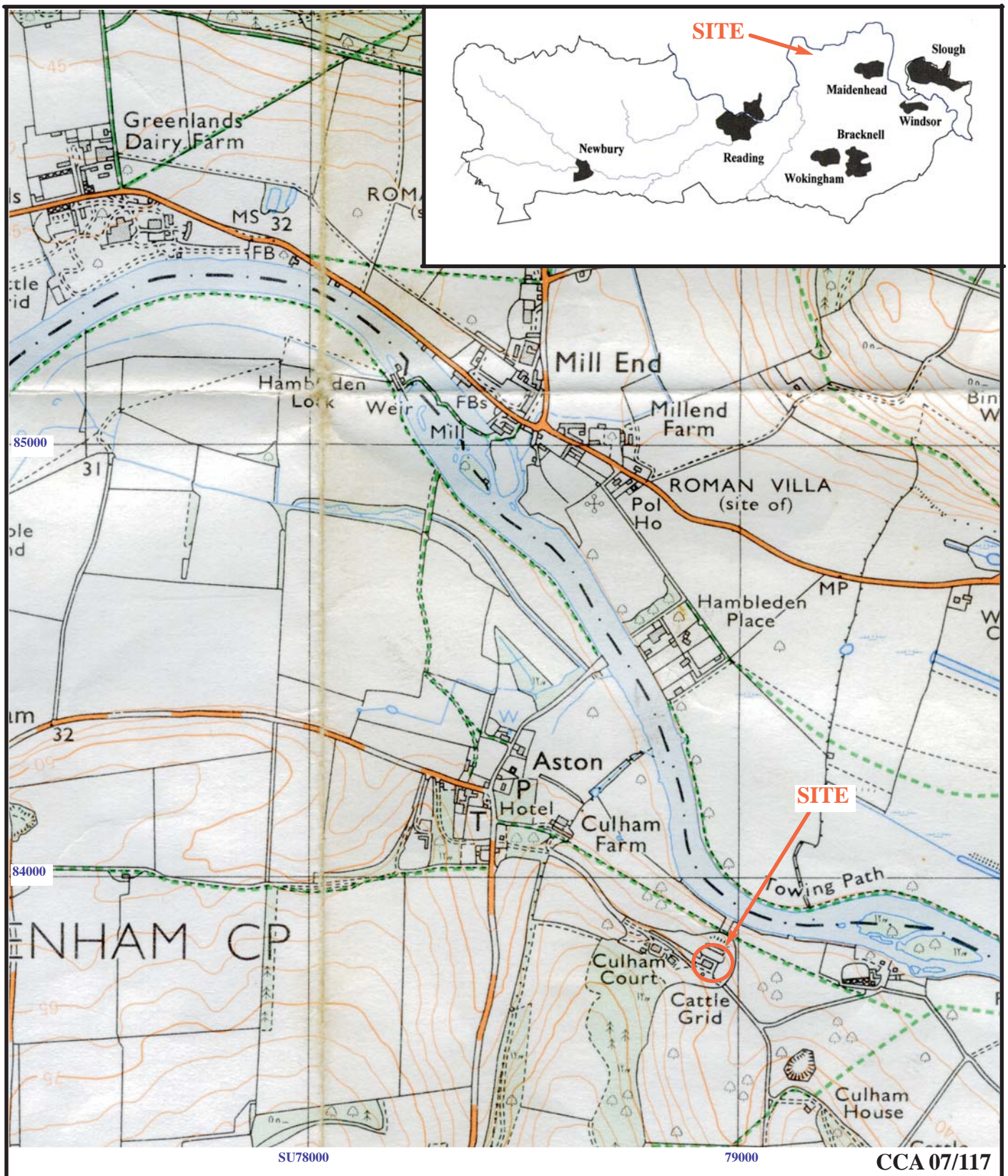
## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	6.00	2.25 (NNE) 1.90 (SSW)	0.5	0-0.06m stone slabs; 0.06-0.22m concrete bedding layer; 0.22-0.32m hardcore bedding layer; 0.32m+ chalk natural geology.
2	5.20	2.00	0.87 (NNE) 0.55 (SSW)	0-0.1m stone slabs; 0.1-0.29m concrete bedding layer; 0.29-0.46m chalk rubble with brick/tile fragments; 0.46-0.83m greyish brown sandy silt (53); 0.83m+ chalk natural geology. Brick Structure 50 with associated construction cut 1. Backfilled with 52 following partial demolition. <b>[Plates 1 and 2]</b>
3	5.10	1.50	1.80 (NNE) 1.40 (SSW)	0-0.06m stone slabs; 0.06-0.2m concrete bedding layer; 0.2-0.4m hardcore bedding layer; 0.4-0.5m re-deposited chalk layer; 0.5-0.75m chalky silt made ground; 0.75-1.35m re-deposited chalk; 1.35-1.45m brick rubble; 1.45-1.7m greyish brown sandy silt (53); 1.7m+ chalk natural geology. <b>[Plates 3 and 4]</b>

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	50, 51, 52	Construction cut for brick structure 50, backfilled with 51. Structure 50 backfilled with 52, following demolition.	Late Post-medieval	Brick





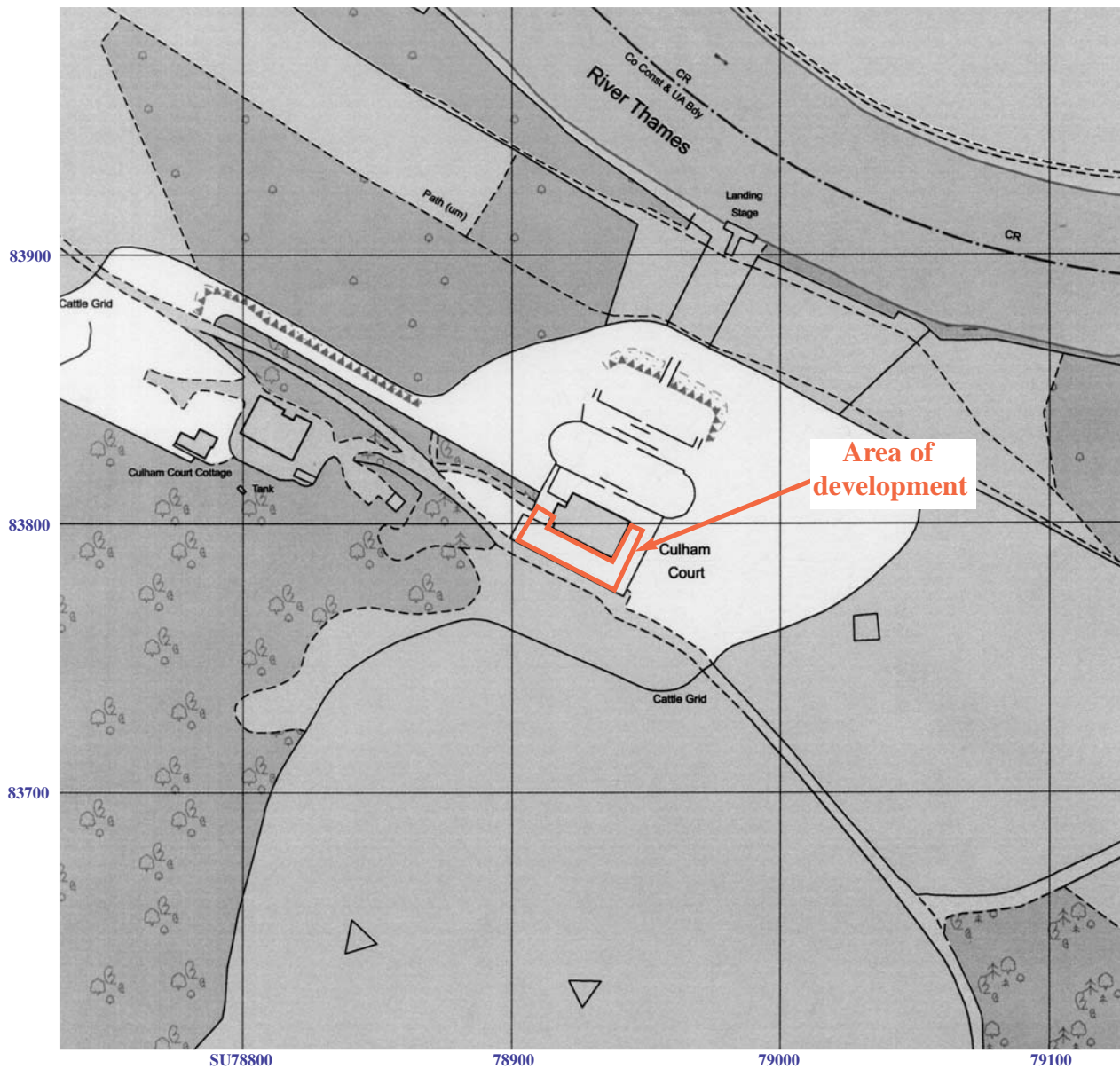
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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Remenham Hill and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site, with area of development.

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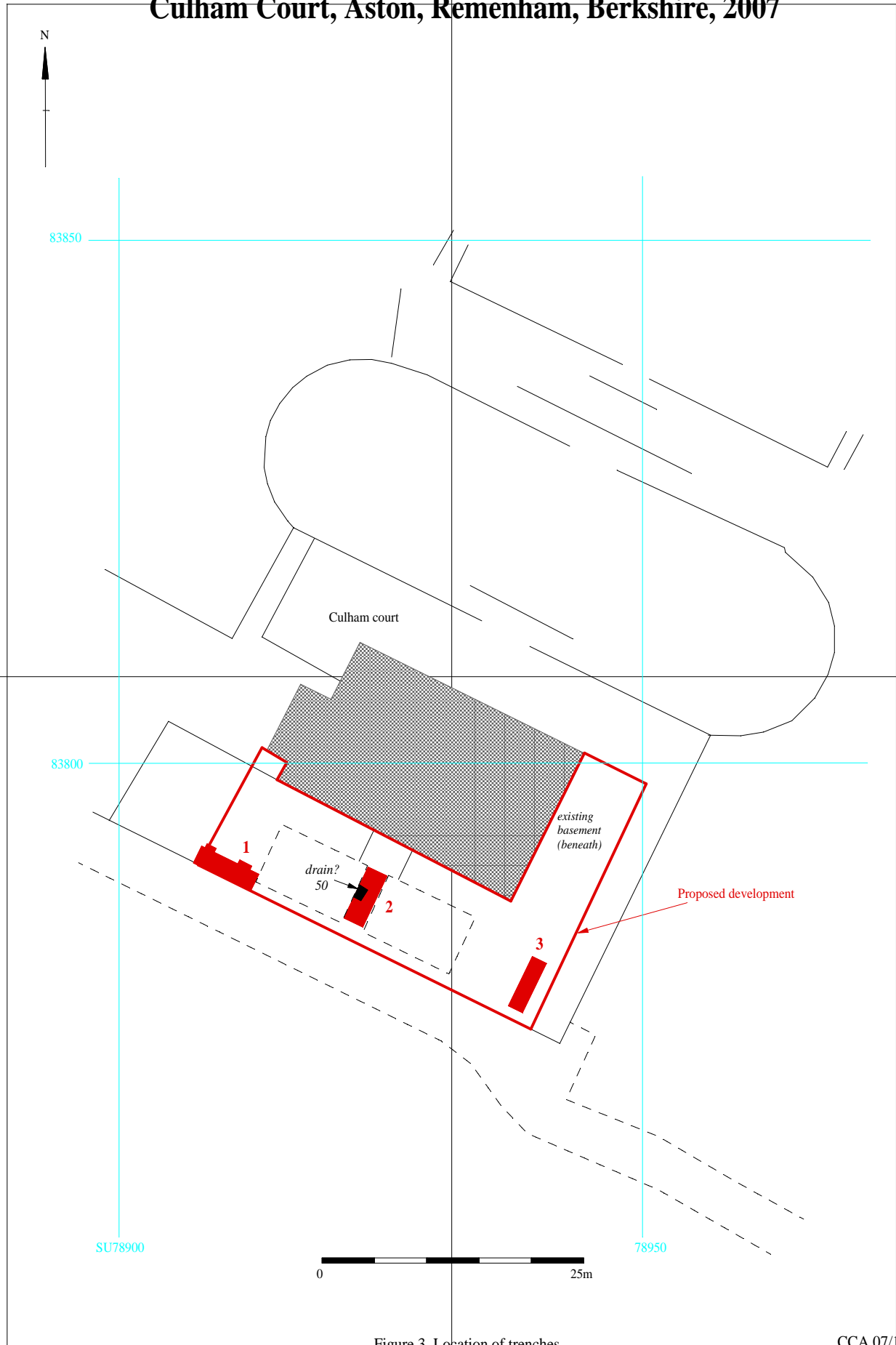


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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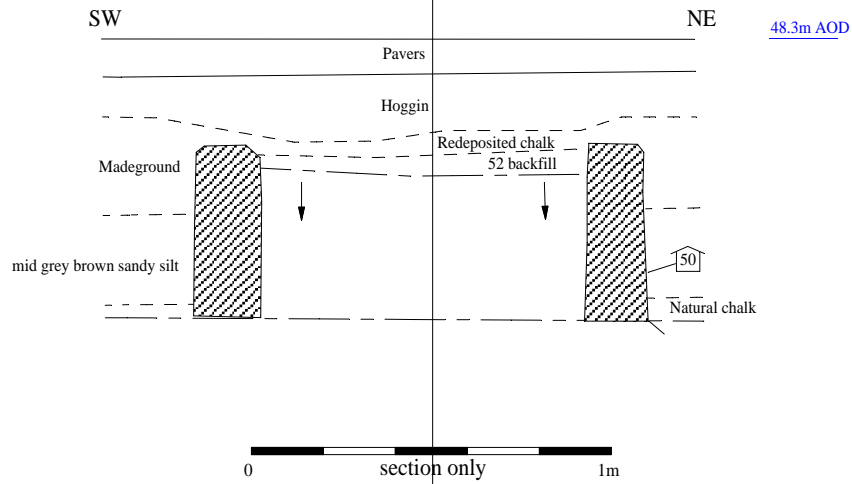
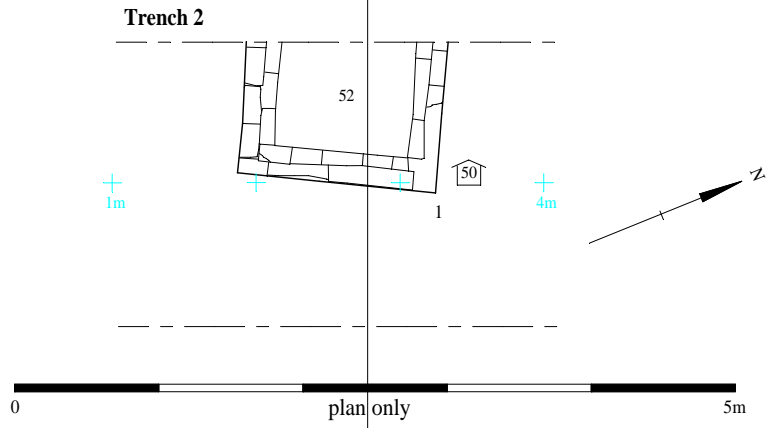


Figure 4. Detail of Trench 2 with section.

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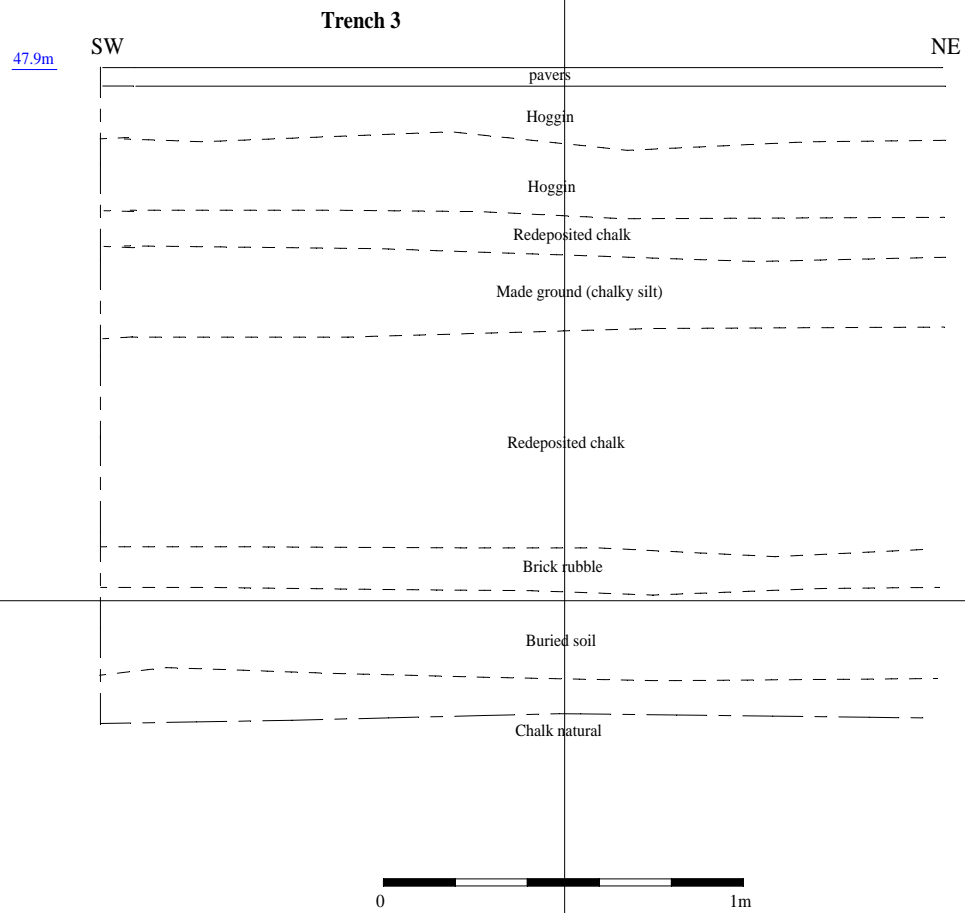


Figure 5. Trench 3 representative section.





Plate 1. Trench 2 looking north, brickwork 50, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking north east, in relation to house.

