

**Old Reading Room Cottage, Church Road,
Penn, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Old English Developments Ltd**

by Sian Anthony

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CRP 03/35

April 2003

Summary

Site name: Old Reading Room Cottage, Church Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SU 9087 9337

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 14th-15th April 2003

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sian Anthony

Site code: CRP 03/35

Area of site: -

Summary of results: No archaeological features or finds were discovered.

Monuments identified: None

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

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	Graham Hull ✓ 17.04.03

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Report CRP03/35

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out the Old Reading Room, Cottage, Church Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr L. Warburton, Old English Developments Limited, 9 Old Town Close, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, HP9 1LF.

Planning permission has been granted (2003/230/CH) for the redevelopment of the existing structure and erection of a new conservatory at the back of the cottage (Figs 2 and 3). This permission is subject to a condition that requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work and is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sian Anthony on the 14-15th April 2003 and the site code is CRP03/35.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the centre of the village of Penn, lying to the east of High Wycombe, in the Chiltern Hills (Fig. 1). The site lies on high ground below Beacon Hill at approx. 175m above Ordnance Datum. The site itself has been graded flat at the front of the cottage but slopes up steeply from the back of the cottage to the south. The natural geology is part of the Reading Beds with mottled clay with sand and pebbles at the base (BGS 1974). Natural geological deposits were observed in the trenches as mid brown orange clay with occasional pebbles.

Archaeological background

Penn is known to have been the centre of a major tile manufacturing industry in the 14th century and documentation shows that large orders were supplied to many high status sites, including Windsor Castle, the Tower of London and Waltham Abbey. Although no medieval tile kilns have been positively located, large quantities of decorated tiles and wasters centred on the junction of Beacon Hill and Church Road indicate the possible focus of this activity

A search was conducted on 14th April 2003 of the Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record for Penn and the immediate environs of the site. A total of 28 records are entered into the database with a further four records of disturbed areas that are not part of the SMR database. The four entries relating to disturbed areas result from a volunteer survey of areas known or suspected to be resulting from human activity, however, they are not confirmed by archaeological observation. The results are shown in Appendix 1 and Figure 1. Often, entries are from the same site and are plotted together.

There are no entries for periods earlier than the 13th century although it has been noted that there has been a Late Neolithic scraper, Bronze Age spearhead and some Roman activity found around Penn (Fell 2001) but not near the site.

Medieval

Thirteen entries relate to the medieval period, all but one relate to documentary and finds evidence of the tile industry from Penn. One entry records the remains of a timber framed building [17] that formed the original alms-houses. No confirmed kilns or associated structures have been located. Only one entry [13] may represent the partial remains of a kiln in the grounds of what is now Slades Garage. Extensive deposits of decorated tiles and wasters have been found near to the development site [7, 15], in Yew Tree Cottage and Cobblers Cottage. A large clay pit is situated to the south of the development site in the garden of Orchard House [6] and is thought to have been used for tile production. Entries [2, 3] refer to the parish of Penn and documentary evidence for the tilers.

Post medieval

Fourteen entries refer to the post-medieval or modern periods. Most of these indicate Grade II listed buildings [5, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22] with original features and mostly unaltered exteriors. Providence Chapel, a Wesleyan methodist chapel and its associated cemetery [11] from the 19th century is not listed. Rayners Garden is a 19th century garden [12] and although not listed as a Historic Park or Garden it does lie on the B List register review as an interesting site for garden history for the region.

Negative evidence and disturbed areas

An entry [1] refers to a watching brief at the Red Lion Cottages which produced only negative evidence. Four areas are marked as possibly having a human origin; [23] may mark the clay pit that is already located on the SMR as [6], [24] represents a dumped tile scatter found near Puttenham Place Farm. Pits [25, 26] have not been investigated and may have a connection with the medieval village.

A recent evaluation that has not yet been included in the SMR (Fell 2001), at Rose Cottage in Tylers Green, did find evidence of a post-medieval kiln and a structure built of tiles (interpreted as a storehouse) associated with the tile kiln. Only residual medieval decorated tiles were found but the site is designated of regional importance as the first example of this period. Recent watching brief reports have found only negative evidence. Hindmarch (2003) found that there was no evidence for tile making at the far south end of the village and a watching brief at Cotters Barn (Anthony 2002) showed only modern disturbance of what may have been the archaeologically relevant layers.

The importance of the Penn tile industry has generated many studies throughout the years, a recent survey of the industry (Green 2003) draws together archaeological and documentary evidence to highlight the large scale of the tile making industry in the 14th century. Tilers are first mentioned in Knotty Green to the south of Penn in 1222, and so this was already a focus of activity. The first evidence in Penn comes from a subsidy roll from 1332 naming three men as tilers. All had extensive personal property and it is thought that tile making was profitable by this period. By the late 14th century there is evidence of seven main tile manufacturers and evidence of pavers to lay the tiles. This has led to estimates of between three to five tileries operating perhaps as many as fifteen kilns. The concentration is also suggested as surrounding the Tylers Green Common and the houses lining Elm Road and up to Beacon Hill. Large amounts of tiles and wasters found at Puttenham Farm and Ashwells are suggested as rubbish dumps placed far away from the tileries to allow a clear working space (Green 2003).

Studies of the tiles show that although they were not of a high quality (Eames 1968) they were of simple designs allowing rapid transportation and laying. Many have been classified (Hohler 1942) and few new designs are now found. Roof tiles as well as floor tiles were made in Penn; often twice as many are recorded as being ordered for Windsor Castle (Green 2003) and other high status places.

Cartographic sources indicate that occupation was constant from the early 18th century. Jeffery's map of 1720 shows Penn as in the Burnham Hundred and part of Hertfordshire, although the map is extremely small scale some structures are visible on the site. Bryant's map of 1820 also small scale shows a structure on the site, the first detailed map is the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1875. This shows the Reading Room present and mostly surrounded by fields, there is one cottage to the west on the corner of Church Road and Beacon Hill. The site of Slades Garage is also built upon, although there are only two or three cottages opposite on the north side of Church Road. There is little change in the modern maps and by 1973 there is only the addition of a small bathroom to the rear of the cottage in the same place as the new conservatory. Evidence suggests that the present cottage was constructed in 1865 as a Reading Room for the village and was constructed out of bricks from the

previous demolished house (L. Warburton, *pers. comm*). A small two storey section was available for the curator of the reading room on the west side while the east side remained a reading room, it has since been used as a community meeting place.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological features which could be affected by the new groundworks (Figs 2 and 3). The foundation trenches consisted of two trenches 8.8m and 4.3m long. The trenches were slightly wider at the top (1.15m) and stepped in at a depth of 0.35m from the garden surface to a regular width of 0.6m. The internal space for the conservatory was also stripped of topsoil to a depth of 0.15m at the cottage wall, rising to 0.35m at the edge of the southern foundation. The foundation trenches were excavated with a toothed bucket and were under archaeologically monitored. Spoilheaps were also monitored for finds.

Results (Figs 2 and 3)

The excavation of the two foundation trenches was observed and recorded but no archaeological deposits or finds were noted. As the trenches exceeded 1.45m in depth, it was not possible to hand clean inside the trenches due to health and safety considerations. Observed stratigraphy was a layer of topsoil (0.3m), onto made ground of 0.2m thickness. This made ground included the remains of a two course garden wall constructed of red bricks of differing fabric to the bricks of the cottage. The brickwork was unmortared and similar garden borders were seen on the lawn. This layer of made ground lay directly over the natural geological deposits. These deposits were brown orange clay with occasional pebble inclusions

Within the footprint of the new conservatory, no features were visible beneath the stripped topsoil. The spoilheaps were closely monitored for finds, especially tile, but only moderate amounts of naturally occurring flint nodules were found, none of which were worked.

Finds

No finds were recovered from this site.

Conclusion

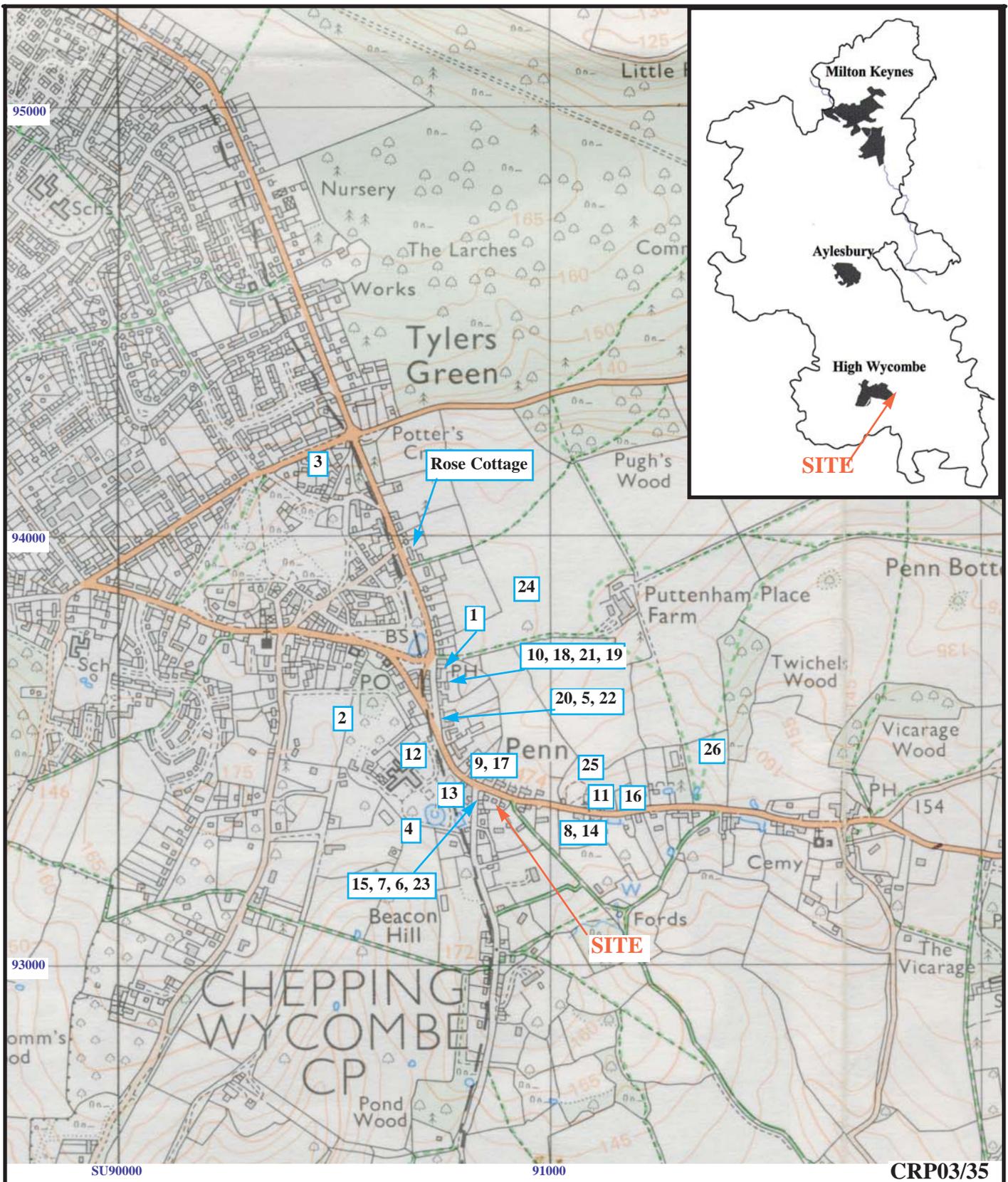
Despite the large quantities of tile found to the east of the site in Cobblers Cottage and Grass side, there was no evidence for either structures or unstratified finds in the foundation trenches for the new development. The presence of a small modern bathroom attached to the rear of the cottage may have disturbed any potential features. The evidence also points to the front part of the site being levelled at some period to build the cottage possibly in the early 18th century; this also may have destroyed any evidence. There is also little previous evidence of tile finds to the west of the site with finds only recovered from Dell Cottage [8]. It is possible that the development lies just outside tile kiln area with only stray finds of tile further to the west.

References

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APPENDIX 1: SMR records in the vicinity of the site

No.	SMR No	NGR	Period	Type	Comment
1	7542	920 940	-	Negative	Watching brief at 1 and 2 Red Lion Cottages, Elm Road, Penn, 2002.
2	7543	920 940	13th to Post medieval	Documentary	Penn manor in the honour of Leicester, in 1222 divided into two Penn Manor and Seagraves.
3	7544	908 934	14th C	Documentary	Evidence for two tile makers and a paver from 1322 tax references. Tile examples are thought to represent three generations of tile makers.
4	7545	905 942	15th to 17th C	Find	A pottery kiln, general location not specific
5	11357	908 934	14th C	Find	A concentration of tiles, wasters and debris found at Stratford's Cottage, Church Road suggests a kiln site but may only be a dump of material.
	19103	907 935	18th C	Structure	Stratfords, Elm Road. Grade II listed brick cottage with original features
6	11358	908 933	Medieval	Find	A large former clay pit was discovered in the garden of Orchard house with extensive pottery finds to the north and east of the site.
7	11359	908 933	Medieval	Find	152 fragments and 48 complete tiles have been discovered over a period of several years in the garden of Yew Tree Cottage.
8	11360	910 933	Medieval	Find	Tiles found whilst digging a well in Dell Cottage, Church Road.
9	12427	908 934	14th C	Find	Allandale/ Hampdens, small amount of tiles found indicating a possible tile works?
	12428	908 934	14th C	Find	2 decorated tiles, one waster found in garden of Allandale/ Hampdens
10	13350	907 936	14th c	Find	Six designs of tile and pottery found in garden of April Cottage, Elm Road, probably not a kiln site.
	13353	907 936	17th to 19th C	Structure	April Cottage, timber framed with red bricks and old tile roof, listed Grade II, originally 17th century with front elevations of 18th and 19th century date.
11	14340	910 933	19th C	Structure	Providence Chapel, Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, first shown on OS 1875 map.
	14341	910 933	19th C	Cemetery	Providence Chapel burial ground.
12	21892	9059 9341	19th to 21st C	Structure	Rayners Garden, 19th century garden and pleasure grounds, on the 'B' list register review for the Historic Parks and Gardens
13	22972	908 933	Medieval	Find and structure	Finds of tiles and an underground passage interpreted as a possible firebox of a kiln found in Winter's Garage
14	19097	911 933	19th C to modern	Structure	Watercroft, Grade II early 19th century two storey cottage with many original features and fittings.
15	19098	908 933	18th C	Structure	Cobbler's Cottage, Grade II, 11th century cottage with many original features and many tiles found in garden.
	22974	908 933	Medieval	Find	Extensive tile finds from garden, Cobblers Cottage backs onto a large former clay pit.
16	19101	911 933	18th C to modern	Structure	Grade II listed 18th century Penn Cottage with original features.
17	19102	908 934	17th C	Structure	Grade II listed 17th century almshouse with many original features, now converted into Yew Tree Cottages.
	21711	908 934	15th to 17th C	Structure	Remains of the earlier mid 15th century timber structure/ Great Hall were revealed in a building recording project.
18	19104	907 935	18th C	Structure	Gable Cottage, Elm Road. Grade II listed brick cottage with original features.
19	19105	907 936	18th to 19th C	Structure	17 Elm Road and shop. Grade II listed building, brick cottage and shop with original features
20	19106	907 936	18th C	Structure	Dilehurst and antique shop. Grade II listed 18th century brick building with original features
21	19107	907 936	17th to 18th C	Structure	Cotters Barn, Grade II listed brick building with original features. Watching brief in 2002 revealed no archaeology within the garden.
22	19108	907 936	18th C	Structure	Grade II listed brick cottage with original features
23	D2471	909 933	-	Disturbed area	Possible brick and tile works?
24	D0247	909 939	-	Disturbed area	Tile scatter
25	D0277	9109 9344	-	Disturbed area	Pit, possibly pit from 1883 or natural hollow
26	D0276	9137 9349	-	Disturbed area	Two pits northwest of Stonehouse Farm and Penn village



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Figure 1. Location of site within Penn and Buckinghamshire with SMR entries.

T H A M E S V A L L E Y
 A R C H A E O L O G I C A L
 S E R V I C E S

Old Reading Room, Church Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, 2003

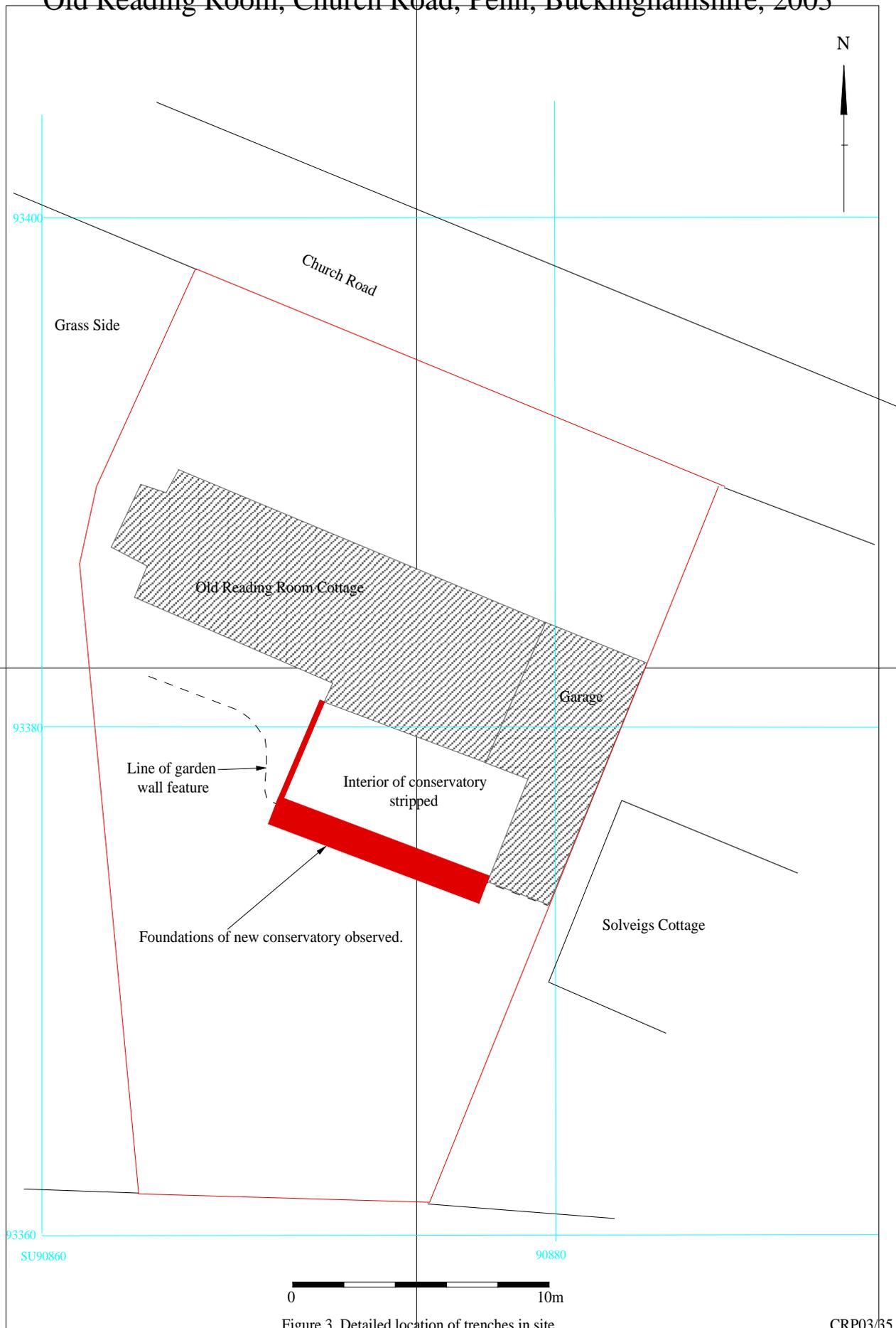


Figure 3. Detailed location of trenches in site.