

**47 Denmark Street, Wokingham,
Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Irvin Bros (Fleet Works) Ltd**

by M J Saunders
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code 47DSW01/34

May 2001

Summary

Site name: 47 Denmark Street, Wokingham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8105 6837

Site activity: Evaluation trenching

Date and duration of project: May 3rd–9th 2001

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: M John Saunders

Site code: 47DSW01/34

Area of site: 450 sq. m

Summary of results: One posthole and four pits, all undated, probably modern. No artefacts were retained.

Monuments identified: One undated posthole and four undated pits.

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course (accession no. REDMG: 2001.132).

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47 Denmark Street, Wokingham, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 01/34

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the rear of 47 Denmark Street, Wokingham, Berkshire (SU 8105 6837) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr A V Sylvester of BDS Chartered Surveyors and Property Consultants, Windward House, Hollow Lane, Shinfield, Reading, Berkshire RG2 9AB, on behalf of their clients Irvin Bros (Fleet Works) Ltd. A planning application (F/2000/2632) has been made to Wokingham District Council for the replacement of a fire-damaged building. As the development site lies within an area of archaeological potential, it is possible that it may contain archaeological remains. In order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site for the planning authority to make a reasonable and informed decision on how to mitigate the effects of development, a programme of archaeological work in the form of evaluation trenching has been requested.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) and the District policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr K Beachus, Archaeologist for Babbie Group Limited, who advise the local authority on archaeological matters related to planning. The fieldwork was undertaken by Clare Challis and M John Saunders on May 3rd, 4th and 9th 2001 and the site code is 47DSW01/34. The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a parcel of land to the rear of 47 Denmark Street, Wokingham (Fig. 1). The site is currently unoccupied by any structures and lies at a mean height of c. ^{65m} ~~20m~~ above Ordnance Datum. It is bounded to the west by public open space and slopes down towards Denmark Street. According to geological maps (BGS 1971) the underlying geology is Plateau Gravel but a fine, soft orange-brown sand was present in the evaluation trenches.

Archaeological background

The brief prepared by Mr K Beachus has highlighted the potential of the site. The development area lies within the historic core of the town and Wokingham is thought to have been a new town created in the 12th or early 13th century (Astill 1978, 101). Denmark Street may have been a later addition to the original town (*op. cit.* 102) and was originally known as Down Street at least as early as 1639. The buildings to either side of the site are of 16th century date and are Grade II listed, one being a timber framed hall house, now the Crispin public house, the other a printworks.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. Specific research aims of the project are to determine if any archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site; to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; to determine whether the town may have had late Saxon origins; and to provide information on the topography and development of medieval and post-medieval Wokingham. These aims were to be achieved by digging two trenches, each 6m long and 1.6m wide, using a mini-excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features or layers were certainly or possibly present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using the appropriate hand tools and sufficient of these excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the terms of the brief. This would 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 under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

A list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

The trenches were excavated in the positions shown on Figure 2 but with the angle of Trench 2 adjusted very slightly to avoid a soakaway at its eastern end. Prior to excavation of both trenches, surface concrete was removed using a small toothed bucket. Below this was a surface consisting of a single layer of both red and blue brick overlying made ground, consisting of fragments of brick and tile.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Trench 1 was aligned north-east/south-west along the north-western boundary of the site and due to the presence of thick concrete it had to be dog-legged, to achieve a full 6m length (Fig. 2). It was 1.15m deep at the north-east end and 1.20m deep at the south-west end. No features were present in the southern part of the trench but the west side of the more northerly leg of the trench exposed a brick wall. This consisted of five courses of red bricks which were stepped (see profile, Fig. 3), overlying footings comprising cement and small cobbles 0.20m thick. This wall was on the same alignment as the boundary of the adjacent Crispin public house beer garden and may represent its continuation. These footings in turn overlay subsoil. Two features were visible only in section (Fig. 3). Feature 1 was a posthole 0.20m across and 0.40m deep and feature 2 was a probable pit, 0.84m of which lay within the trench and this had a maximum depth of 0.29m. Both features were excavated in section, although no finds were recovered from either and both therefore remain undated. Both these features have been truncated by the wall footings and it seems likely that they are both comparatively modern in origin.

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

Trench 2 was 6.2m long and aligned approximately east-west. It was 1.00m deep at the west end and 1.15m deep at the east end. Again, due to the disturbed nature of the ground caused by storm water drains and gas/water pipes, features could not be identified in plan. However, following cleaning of the sections three features (3–5) (Fig. 3) were visible in the north facing section of the trench cutting the subsoil layer. These features were not visible in the south facing section and it is therefore likely that they represent pits rather than linear features. Pit 3 lay at the eastern end of the trench and was 0.52m deep and 0.60m wide, with vertical sides to a flat base. Pit 4 lay towards the middle of the trench and had a maximum depth of 0.80m. This feature was cut on its eastern side by pit 5 which had a maximum depth of 0.60m and was 1.90m long. It is probable that all three features have been truncated by later disturbance. All the features were excavated in section to recover any dating evidence but only pit 5 produced any finds. These comprised fragments of glass bottles, blue and white decorated china and fragments of brown-glazed earthenwares of 18th/19th century date. Finds of similarly late date were also recovered from the spoilheaps but these were not retained.

Finds

No finds other than of late post-medieval date were recovered and none of this material was retained for further study.

Conclusion

Nothing indicative of earlier post-medieval, medieval or late Saxon occupation was identified during the evaluation and no features were present cutting the natural. No evidence of burgage plot boundaries was found in either trench.

References

Astill, G G, 1978, *Historic Towns in Berkshire*, Berkshire Archaeological Committee Publication 2, Reading
BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1 inch to 1 mile, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
 0m at south or west end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	6.00	1.60	1.15 (NE), 1.20 (SW)	Brick foundation wall 0.37m deep over cement and cobble footings 0.20m thick over 0.58m of subsoil onto orange-brown natural sand. Features 1 and 2.
2	6.20	1.60	1.00 (N), 1.15 (S)	0.55m of made ground over 0.45m of subsoil onto orange-brown natural sand. Features 3–5.



**47 Denmark Street, Wokingham,
Berkshire, 2001**

Figure 1. Location of site within Wokingham and Berkshire.

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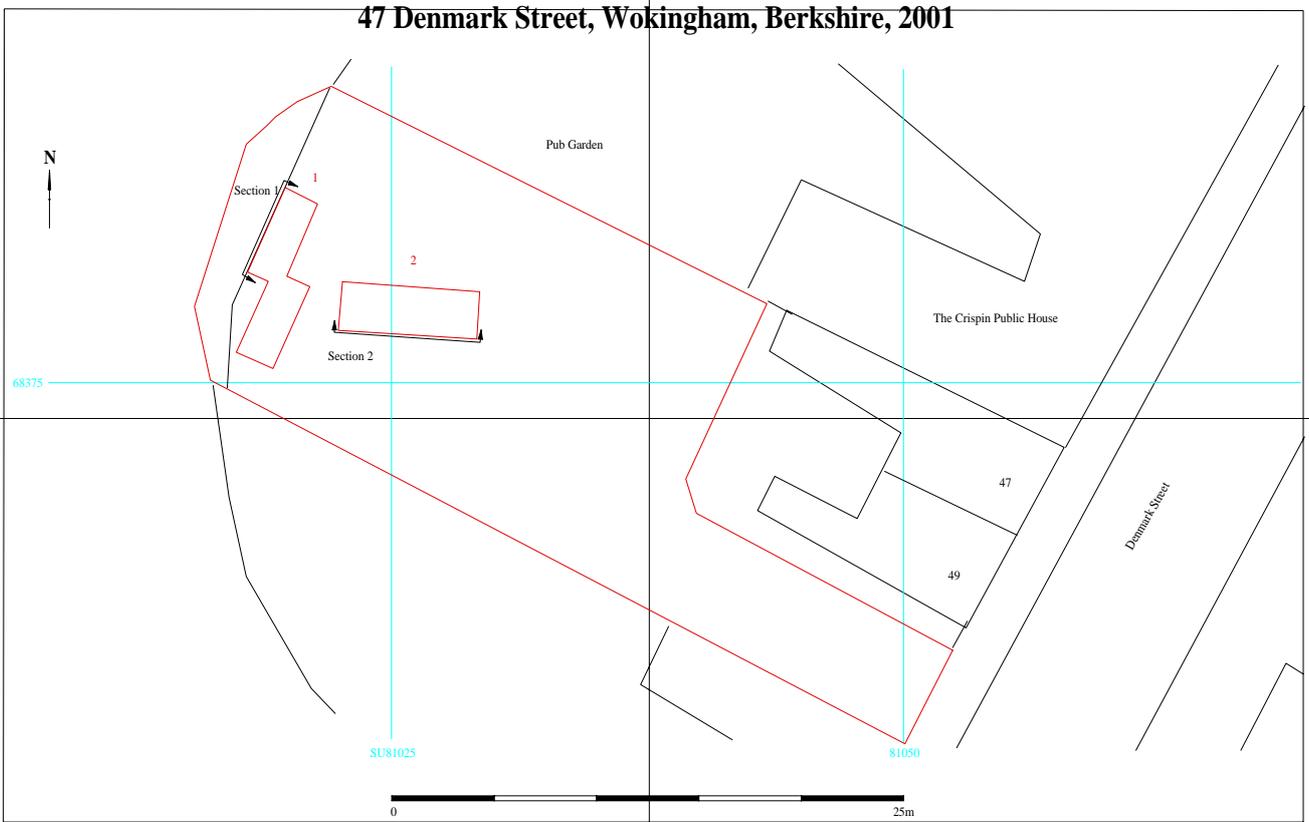


Figure 2. Location of trenches.

47DSW01/34

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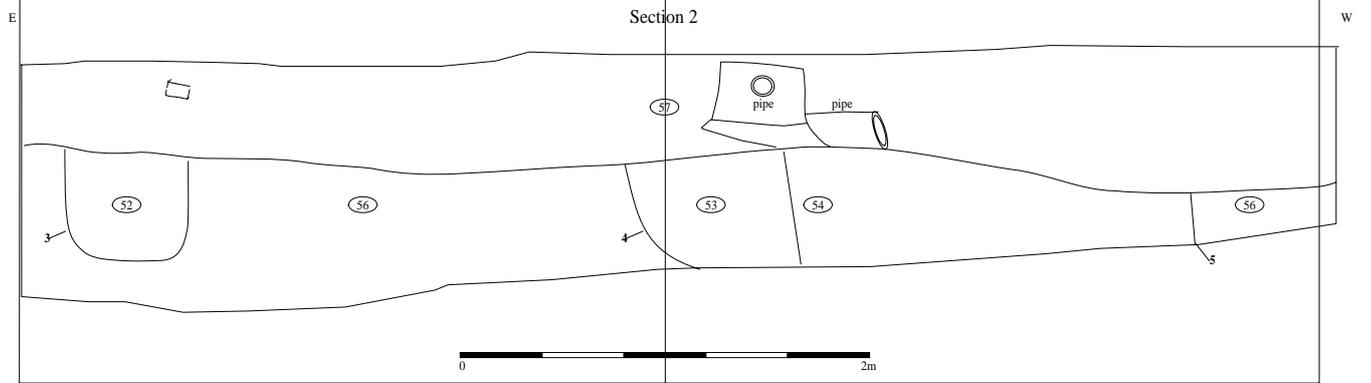
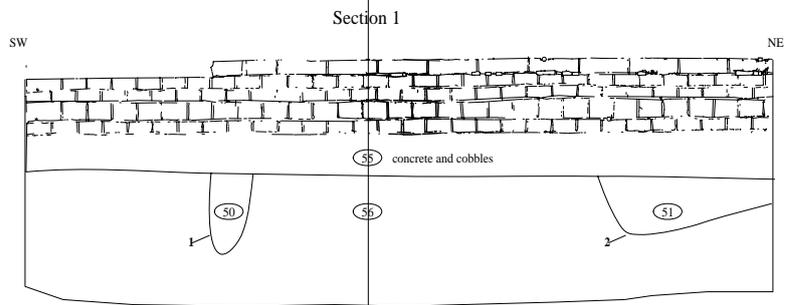


Figure 3. Sections.

47DSW01/34



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking west, scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 2 looking south, scales: 1m and 2m.