

Manor Farm Sewage Treatment Works, Whitley, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For CgMs Consulting

by Stephen Hammond

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MSR 04/18

March 2004

Summary

Site name: Manor Farm Sewage Works, Manor Farm Road, Whitley, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 712 707

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th February - 3rd March 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Sean Wallis and Steve Hammond

Site code: MSR 04/18

Area of site: 28ha

Summary of results: No deposits of archaeological interest were identified though a humic horizon was noted within alluvium

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 Service 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 ✓ 5.04.04
	Steve Preston ✓ 05.04.03

Manor Farm Sewage Works, Whitley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Stephen Hammond

Report 04/18

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Manor Farm Sewage Treatment Works, Manor Farm Road, Whitley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 712 707) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting, 7th Floor, Newspaper House, 8–16 Great New Street, London, EC4A 3BN.

Planning permission has been agreed by Reading Borough Council for a comprehensive mixed use development on the site. A new planning application for a development known as 'Reading Gateway' is proposed shortly. An archaeological desk-based assessment (Chadwick 2004) indicated that the site has archaeological potential. Therefore, as there is a possibility of archaeological deposits being damaged or destroyed during any ground work an archaeological watching brief was to take place during any intrusive work. This report documents the results of geo-technical trial pits dug on the site.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus, Senior Archaeologist of Babbie, archaeological advisers to Reading Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis, Pamela Jenkins and Stephen Hammond between 25th February and 3rd March 2004. The site code is MSR 04/18.

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

The site is located well to the south of the historic core of Reading, just to the east of Foudry Brook and is currently occupied by Whitley Sewage Treatment Works which is due to be de-commissioned in the near future. The site lies at a height of c.45m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology according to the British Geological Survey is alluvium, Reading Beds and London Clay (BGS 1946). All were observed during the watching brief.

Archaeological background

An archaeological desk-based assessment (Chadwick 2004) was carried out for the site and its environs. In summary, the site has little or no potential for evidence of Palaeolithic material and the prospect of Mesolithic evidence seems slight. However, there is evidence to suggest that from the Neolithic period and through the Bronze Age and Iron Age, the area has much greater potential, with Bronze Age burial deposits previously recorded for the Manor Farm site, 3km to the south. There is a possibility that if archaeological deposits are present on the formerly low-lying land adjacent to the River Kennet, their preservation may be enhanced due to burial by alluvium.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any archaeological deposits exposed by the test pit digging and if possible recover dating evidence.

Results

Eighteen test pits were observed as shown on Figure 2 and as detailed in Appendix 1. Most of these were dug by machine but three were hand dug (HP1–3). Boreholes were also drilled across the site but these were not monitored.

The machine dug trenches were typically 0.6m wide and between 3m and 5m long at the top but tapering towards the base. The test pits were dug to depths usually in excess of 2.5m and occasionally to 5m which was the full reach of the machine. The hand dug pits, which were located in sensitive areas containing buried services were usually 1.5m square. One hand dug pit (HP2) was subsequently reused as a borehole location.

Typically, beneath topsoil made ground was routinely encountered. This occasionally overlay the natural geology (clay of the Reading Beds) sometimes at the relatively shallow depth of 0.55m. Usually the made ground overlay deposits thought to be cess, along with concrete and brick foundations, and services. Some test pits appeared to retain a buried topsoil, predating the sewage treatment works beneath the made ground and/or cess.

Two test pits (213 and 217) on the formerly lower lying land towards the north-west portion of the site revealed a grey silty clay (alluvium), gravel, and for TP217, a humic horizon with a thickness of about 0.2m within the alluvium. It was not possible to examine the humic horizon *in situ*, nor to sample it for further study, or for dating evidence.

Finds

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

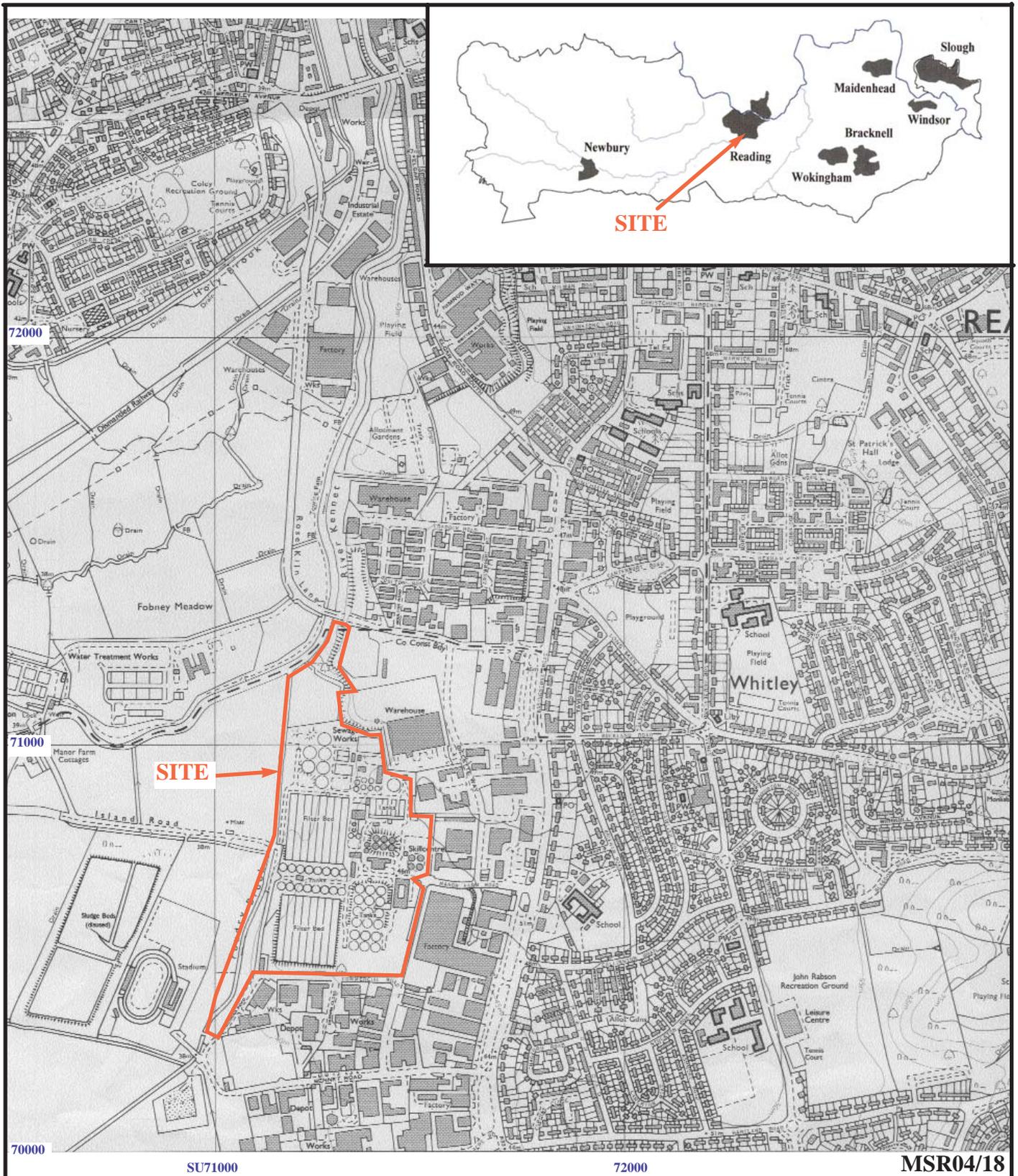
No finds nor deposits of archaeological interest or origin were revealed. However, one test pit (217) revealed a humic lens within alluvium on the originally low-lying parts of the site, which may have some potential for palaeo-environmental reconstruction using pollen analysis.

References

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Chadwick P, 2004, Reading Gateway, Cultural Heritage desk-based assessment, CgMs consulting report 4467, London
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

Appendix 1: Details of test pits monitored

<i>Test Pit</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comment</i>
203b	5m x 0.6m	3.1m	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.55m made ground; 0.55-0.78m brown sandy clay (buried soil?); 0.78m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
204	2.5m x 0.6m	3.4m	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-1.20m made ground; 1.20-1.50m cess?; 1.5m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
205	3.2m x 0.6m	4.5m	0-0.05m topsoil; 0.05-3.40m made ground; 3.40m- 3.70m cess?; 3.70-m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
206	3.2m x 0.6m	3.5m	0-0.06 topsoil; 0.06-0.61m made ground; 0.61-0.72 concrete; 0.72-1.06 brown silty clay; 1.06-1.31m cess?; 1.31m+ clay with fossil shell layer (Reading Beds or London Clay)
207	3.5m x 0.6m	4.0m	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-1.90m made ground; 1.90-2.30m cess?; 2.30m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
208	2.8m x 0.6m	2.7m	0-0.1m topsoil; 0.1-0.64m made ground; 0.64m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay). Field drain at 1.1m
209	3.5m x 0.6m	3.4m	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-1.90m made ground; 1.9-2.10m foundations; 2.10-2.50 cess?; 2.5m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
210	3.5m x 0.6m	4.3m	0-3.50m made ground; 3.50+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
211	3.5m x 0.6m	4.0m	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-4.0m+made ground
212	5m x 0.6m	0.9m	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17-0.90m made ground; 0.90m+ concrete
213	5m x 0.6m	3.4m	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-1.60m made ground; 1.60-2.40m dark blue silty clay (alluvium); 2.40-3.20m dark blue silty clay with gravel (alluvium); 3.20m+ sandy gravel
214	5m x 0.6m	4.6m (max)	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-4.60m+ made ground
215	5m x 0.6m	3.1m	0-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-2.00m made ground; 2.00-3.60m+ cess?
216	3.5m x 0.6m	5.0m	0-5.0m+ made ground
217	2.5m x 0.6m	3.2m	0-1.40m made ground; 1.40-1.55m cess?; 1.55-1.85m greenish grey clay (alluvium?); 1.85m-2.05m humic layer; 2.05-3.20m+ greenish grey clay, gravelly towards base.
HP1	1.5m x 1.5m	3.2m	0-0.05 topsoil; 0.05-1.45m made ground; 1.45-1.60m cess?; 1.60m-1.85m grey silty clay (buried soil?); 1.85m+ clay (Reading Beds or London Clay)
HP2	1.5m x 1.5m	1.5m	0-0.05 topsoil; 0.05+ made ground
HP3	2.5m x 1.5m	1.6m	0-0.21 topsoil; 0.21-1.60m made ground; 1.60m+ concrete



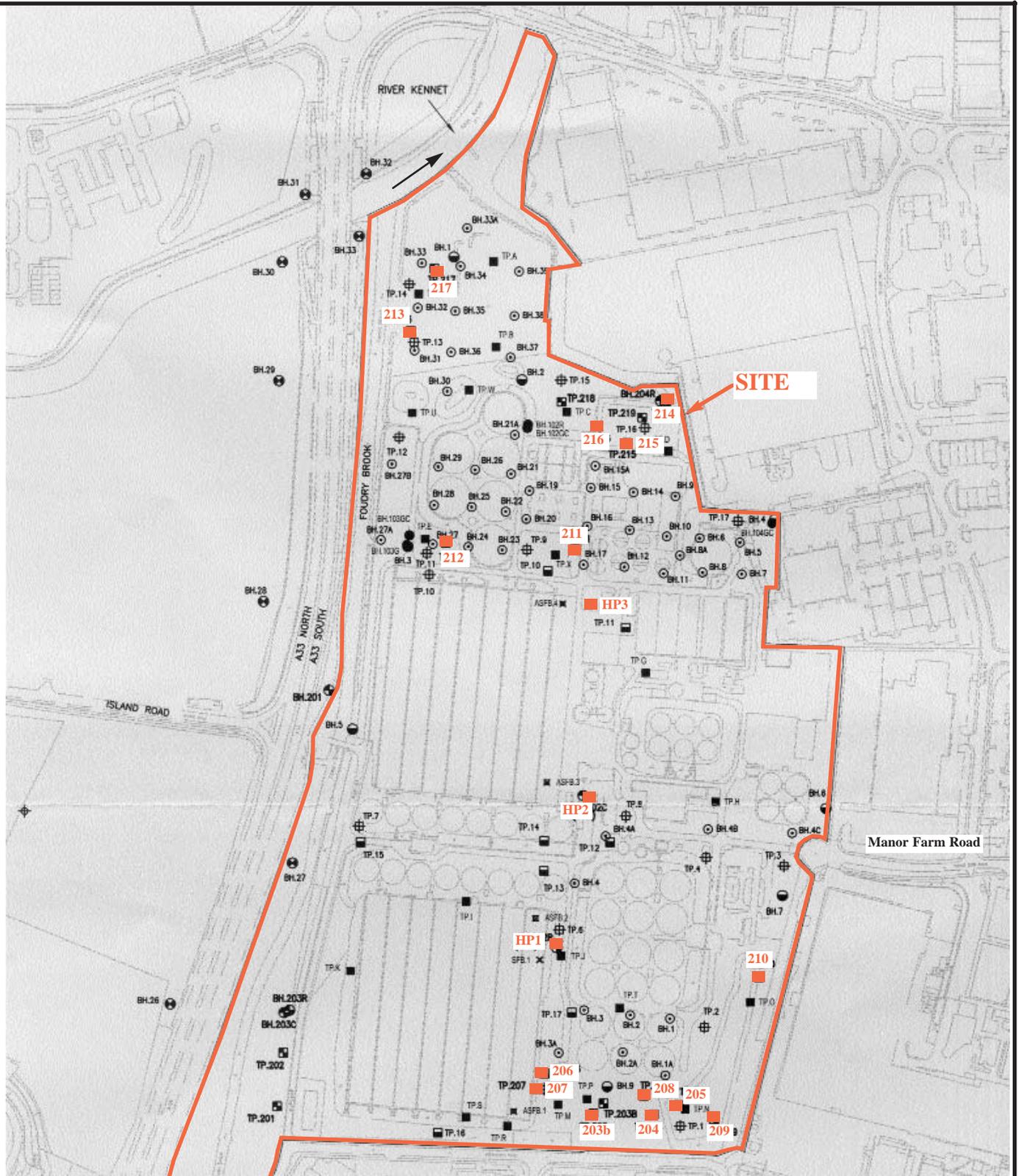
MSR04/18

**Manor Farm Sewage Treatment Works, Whitley,
Reading, Berkshire, 2004
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 SU77SW.
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



MSR04/18

**Manor Farm Sewage Treatment Works, Whitley,
Reading, Berkshire, 2004
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Location of test pits monitored.

(not to scale)