

**Land adjacent to 2, Northumberland Avenue,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Maultway Construction Limited**

by M J Saunders

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code NAR00/06

**February 2000**

## Summary

**Name of site:** Land adjacent to 2, Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire.

**Grid reference:** SU 72150 71950

**Site activity:** Evaluation trenching.

**Date of project:** 3-7/02/00

**Site code:** NAR00/06

**Area of site:** 0.12 hectares

**Summary of results:** Negative evidence

**Monuments identified:** None

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

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**Report 00/06**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land adjacent to 2, Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (SU 72150 71950) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Lewis of Maultway Construction Ltd, Maultway House, Harpton Parade, Village Way, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 7SB.

Planning permission (99/00712/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the construction of a block of bedsit flats for student accommodation and associated parking. The application has been approved subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in the form of evaluation trenching. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Rob Bourn, Senior Archaeologist for Babtie, who advise the Council on archaeological matters related to planning. The fieldwork was undertaken by M John Saunders and Jo Pine on 3 February 2000 and the site code is NAR00/06.

## **Location, Topography and Geology**

The site is located on a parcel of derelict land 0.12 hectares in area, immediately adjacent to 2, Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (Fig 2). The site is generally level at a height of c. 68 m AOD and according to geological maps (BGS 1946) the underlying geology is plateau gravel. This was confirmed during the evaluation trenching.

## **Archaeological Background**

The brief provided by Babtie has highlighted the archaeological potential of the site. It lies in the vicinity of a Bronze Age circular enclosure recorded at Marshall's Hill (Seaby 1932). The nature and status of this settlement site is obscure but it may possibly be of high status (Bradley 1984, 121). The site also lies immediately adjacent

to the former Grovelands gravel pit, the excavation of which produced numerous Palaeolithic implements and located a Late Bronze Age cremation cemetery. The latter is likely to be contemporary with, and related to, the Bronze Age enclosure mentioned above. There is a possibility that the cemetery may extend into the proposal area.

## **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. This was to be achieved by digging two 15 m evaluation trenches each 1.6 m wide in the positions shown on Figure 2. This comprised a 4% sample of the site area. The trenches were located to target the footprint of the proposed new building but also avoiding the positions of telephone and electricity cables and were dug using a Kubota-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. All certain or possible archaeological features were to be hand-cleaned and sufficient of these excavated and fully recorded to satisfy the terms of the brief. 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

Trench 1 was 15 m long and aligned east-west along the western side of the evaluation area (Fig 2). It varied in depth from 0.75 m at the west end to 0.68 m at the east end. The stratigraphy (Fig 3) consisted of between 0.12 and 0.23 m of dark black-brown humic topsoil mixed with modern rubbish over a dark brown sandy silt subsoil which varied in depth between 0.34 and 0.36 m. This overlay a natural geology of light brown gravel with patches of sand. There was considerable root disturbance within the trench and three possible features were examined but found to be the product of tree root activity. No archaeological features were present and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 was 14.60 m long and also aligned east-west along the eastern side of the evaluation area (Fig 2). It varied in depth from 0.75 m at the west end to 0.90 m at the east end. The stratigraphy (Fig 3) consisted of between 0.15 and 0.25 m of dark black-brown humic topsoil mixed with modern rubbish over a dark brown

sandy silt subsoil which varied in depth between 0.44 and 0.50 m. This overlay a natural geology of light brown gravel with patches of sand. As with Trench 1 there was a great deal of root disturbance and the trench could not be machined to its full depth at the extreme eastern end due to the presence of roots of a tree which was to be retained. No archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

## **Conclusion**

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in either trench during the course of the evaluation and no artefacts were retrieved from the spoilheaps other than a few pieces of modern roof tile. These were not retained. It therefore seems unlikely that destruction or damage to archaeological deposits will be caused during groundworks for the new development.

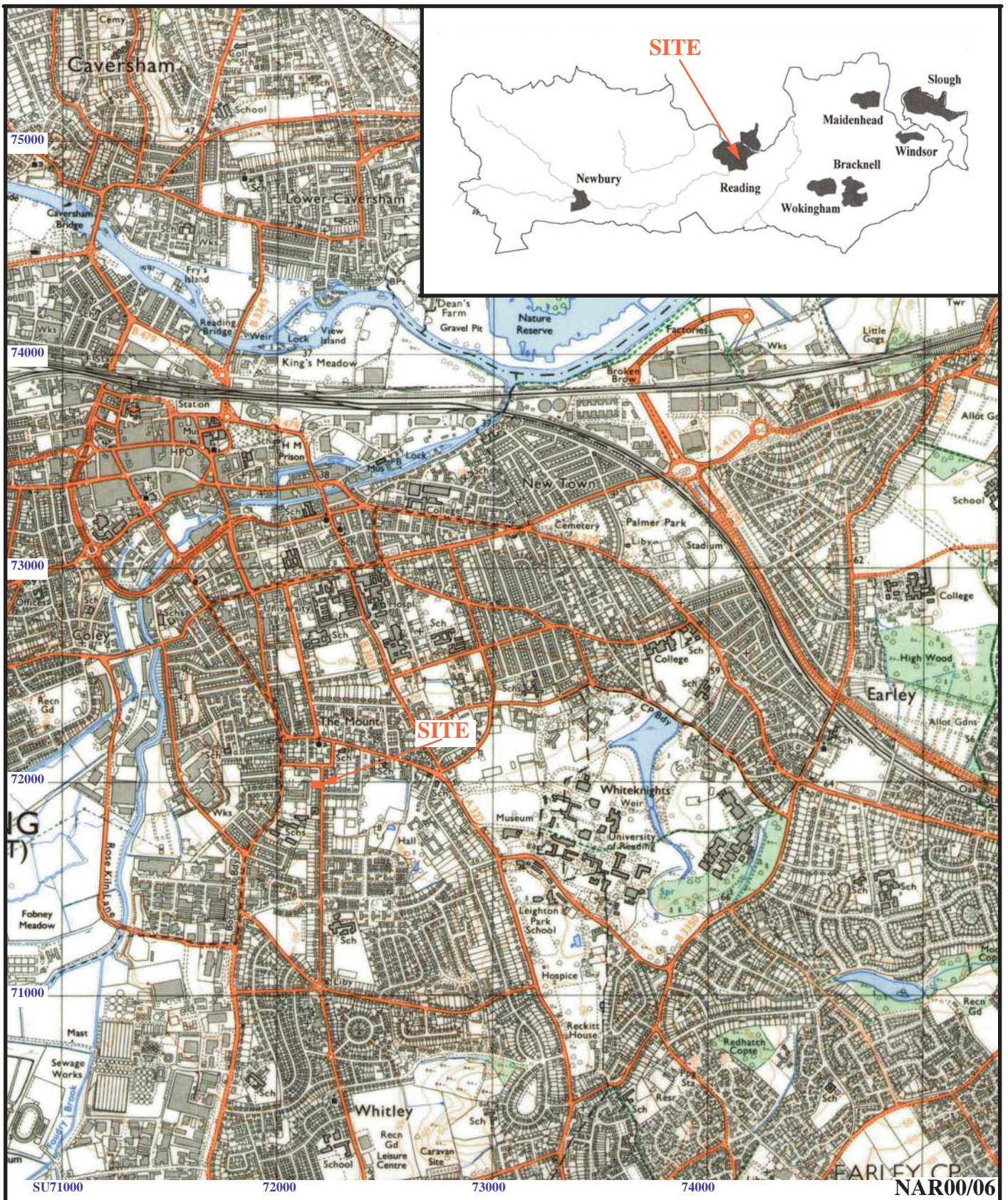
## **References**

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Bradley R J, 1984, *The Social Foundations of Prehistoric Britain*, Longmann  
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, HMSO  
Seaby W A, 1932, 'Some pre-Roman remains from south Reading', *Berks. Archaeol. J.* **36**, 121-5

## Appendix 1: Trench Details

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	15.00	1.50 - 1.60	0.68 - 0.75	0.12 - 0.23 m of topsoil mixed with modern dumped rubbish over 0.34 - 0.36 m of dark grey-brown sandy silt subsoil onto gravel with sand (natural). Much root disturbance.
2	14.60	1.45 - 1.60	0.75 - 0.90	0.15 - 0.25 m of topsoil mixed with modern dumped rubbish over 0.44 - 0.50 m of dark grey-brown sandy silt subsoil onto gravel with sand (natural). Much root disturbance.





**Northumberland Avenue, Reading,  
Berkshire, 2000**

Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and  
Berkshire.

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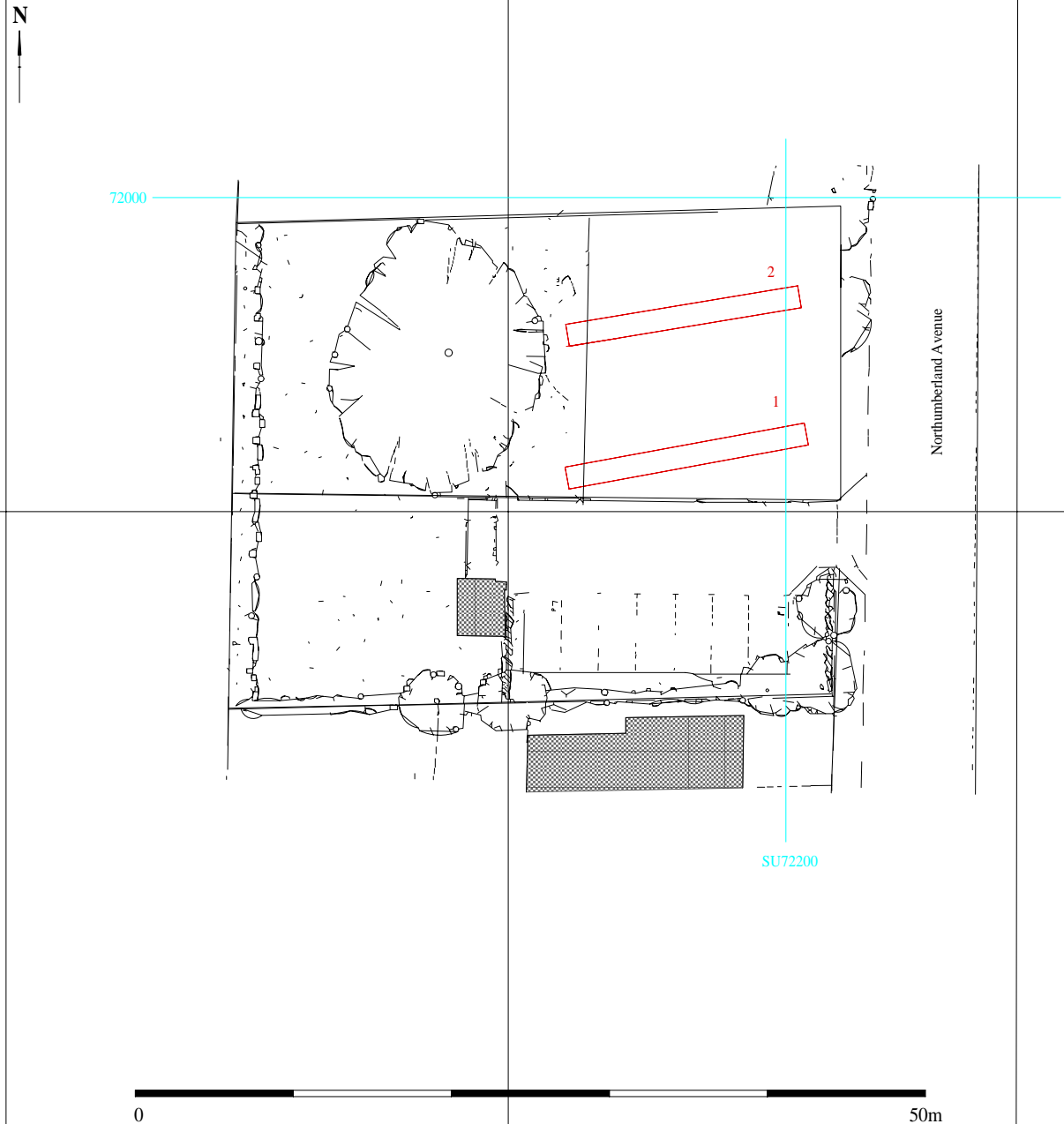


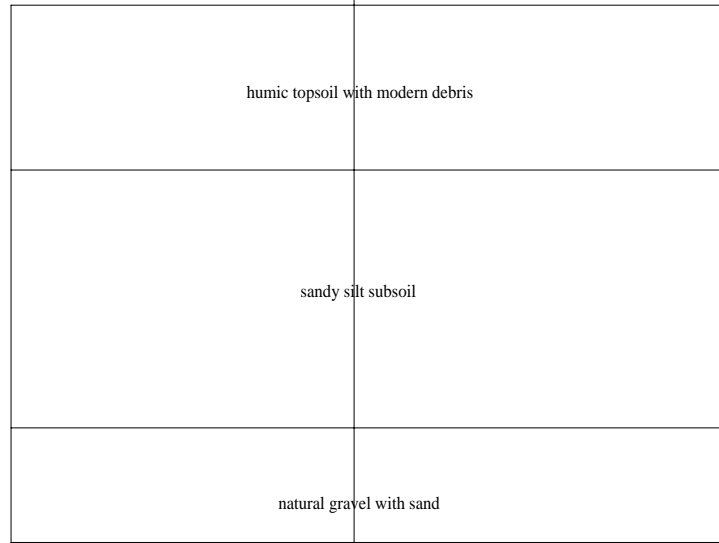
Figure 2. Location of Trenches.

NAR00/06

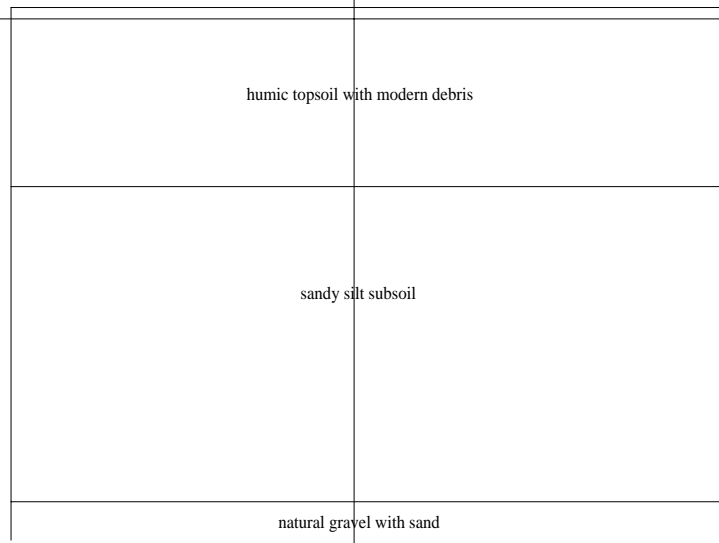


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W Trench 1 E



W Trench 2 E



0 1m

Figure 3. Representative sections.