

**Priory Gate, Church Road,**

**Old Windsor, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for

Mr. M. Oliver

April 1997

## Priory Gate, Church Road, Old Windsor

### An Archaeological Watching Brief by Leigh Pollinger

Report 97/28

#### Introduction

9898 7468  
This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Priory Gate, Old Windsor, Berkshire (SU990748) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr. M. Oliver, Langcross House, Common House, Eton Wick, Windsor.

Planning permission was granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the demolition of an existing structure and construction of a new garage at Priory Gate. This permission was granted with the condition that an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks on the site. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, **Archaeology and Planning** (PPG 16, 1990). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr. P. Fasham, Principal Archaeologist at Babtie Public Services archaeological advisors for Berkshire County council. The field work was undertaken by Leigh Pollinger on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1997 and the site code is PGOW 97/28.

#### Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located to the south of Church Road approximately 300 metres to the west of the River Thames on the eastern edge of the modern settlement of Old Windsor (Fig. 2). It is a generally flat area at a height of c. 20 metres above OD. The underlying geology is Flood-plain Gravel according to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1981), which was confirmed during observation of the excavated trenches.

#### Archaeological Background

The site lies close to the area of the Late Saxon Royal Palace excavated by Dr. Hope-Taylor between 1953 and 1958, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (BERKS 79). These excavations failed to find the probable centre of the residence or of the likely village or town which would have supported it (Astill 1978, 70-71). Adjacent to Church Road a number of crop marks have been observed which may have a relationship with the palace or be of other periods (ibid. 72, Gates 1975, 48-49). The high status occupation of the immediate area and the potential development of the associated environment, particularly during the early Medieval period, allows the possibility of residual archaeological deposits, the discovery of which which may help clarify the early growth of the area and its importance to the region.

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor the groundworks for the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was achieved by examining the top soil stripped area and foundation trenches, once excavated, for the presence of archaeological deposits and by monitoring the spoil heaps for artefacts.

## **Results**

The foundation trenches (Fig. 3) for the garage ran along three sides of the total area which measured 7.5 x 7.5 metres, with the area within and defined by the new garage wall being stripped of top soil. The trench sizes were 0.6-0.7 metres wide and up to 1.8 metres deep, ultimately cutting into the natural geology. Sections of two of the trenches (those running east/west) proved to be of little value. The area of the northernmost (closest to the road) had been considerably disturbed by tree roots, whilst the southern trench cut through an early twentieth century midden which had been subsequently bisected by the insertion of a cess pit.

The third trench ran generally north/south and was considerably disturbed by the groundworks relating to three service pipes. A study of the west facing section (Fig. 4) revealed that a clay dump (53) had been laid over an earlier land surface. This had effectively masked all earlier features thus making the inspection of the top soil strip unfruitful. The earlier land surface (54) seen in section contained finds of late nineteenth/early twentieth century date and was possibly related to the midden seen in the southern trench. At the northern end of trench, a shallow scoop F[05] was observed below the land surface (54). No artefacts were recovered from this and its date and purpose remains unknown. Scoop F[05] cut into a shallow sided U-shaped ditch F[06] with a maximum depth of 0.61 m., seen to be running in a northeast to south west direction and also observed in the opposing section. No finds were recovered from this feature. It is likely, however, that this ditch had some relationship with a ditch and culvert seen to the north side of Church Road and running on the same axis.

## **Conclusions**

No archaeological finds or confirmed features of the Medieval period or earlier were observed during this watching brief.

## References

- Astill G.G. 1978. **Historic towns in Berkshire: An Archaeological Appraisal**. Berkshire Archaeological Committee No 2. Reading.
- Gates T. 1975: **The Middle Thames Valley. An archaeological Survey of the River Gravels.** Berkshire Archaeological Committee No.2 Reading.
- BGS, 1981: **British Geological Survey**, 1:50000 series, Sheet 269, 1981 Drift Edition. Keyworth.
- PPG 16, 1990: **Archaeology and Planning**. Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (HMSO)

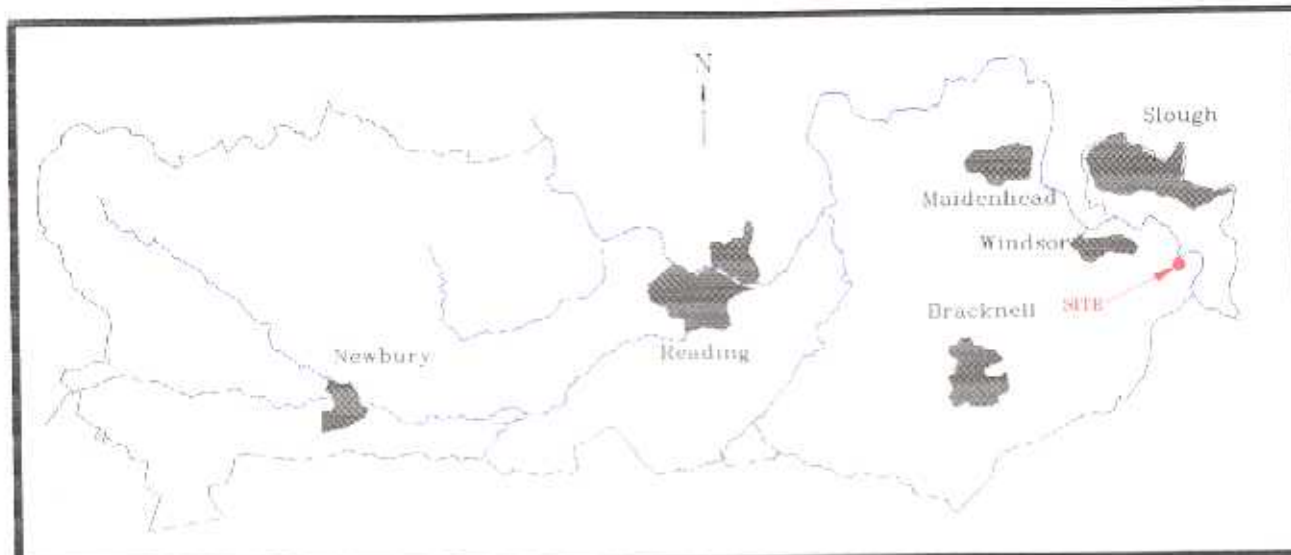
## APPENDIX 1 - Listing of Deposits and Features

### Contexts

Deposit	Description	Interpretation
(51)	Grey/black peat based with fine inclusions	Remains of garden flower bed.
(52)	Mid yellowish brown sandy gravel with 20% sub rounded and rounded pebbles.	Garden top soil.
(53)	Yellowish brown clay with some flecks of lime/chalk and tile	Dump of levelling clay.
(54)	Dark brown clay silt with 50% sub angular and sub rounded grit and charcoal flecks.	Old landsurface.
(55)	Grey brown silty gravelly clay with 10% sub rounded gravel.	Earlier land surface?
(56)	Grey yellow gravel clay	Back fill of service trench F[03]
(57)	Yellow brown clay	Back fill of service trench F[04]
(58)	Mid grey brown silty clay with 20% sub rounded pebbles.	Fill of feature F[05].
(59)	Grey Brown silt with 5% rounded pebbles	Fill of F[06]

### Features

Feature	Description	Interpretation
F[03]	0.30 m. wide by 1.2 m. slot	Service trench for electricity and gas supplies
F[04]	2.2 m. wide by 1.6 m. deep V shaped trench	Service trench for sewer / soak away.
F[05]	0.80 m. wide by 0.35 m. deep shallow scoop	Shallow scoop
F[06]	0.82 m. wide by 0.61 m. deep shallow shelving U shaped linear feature	Ditch

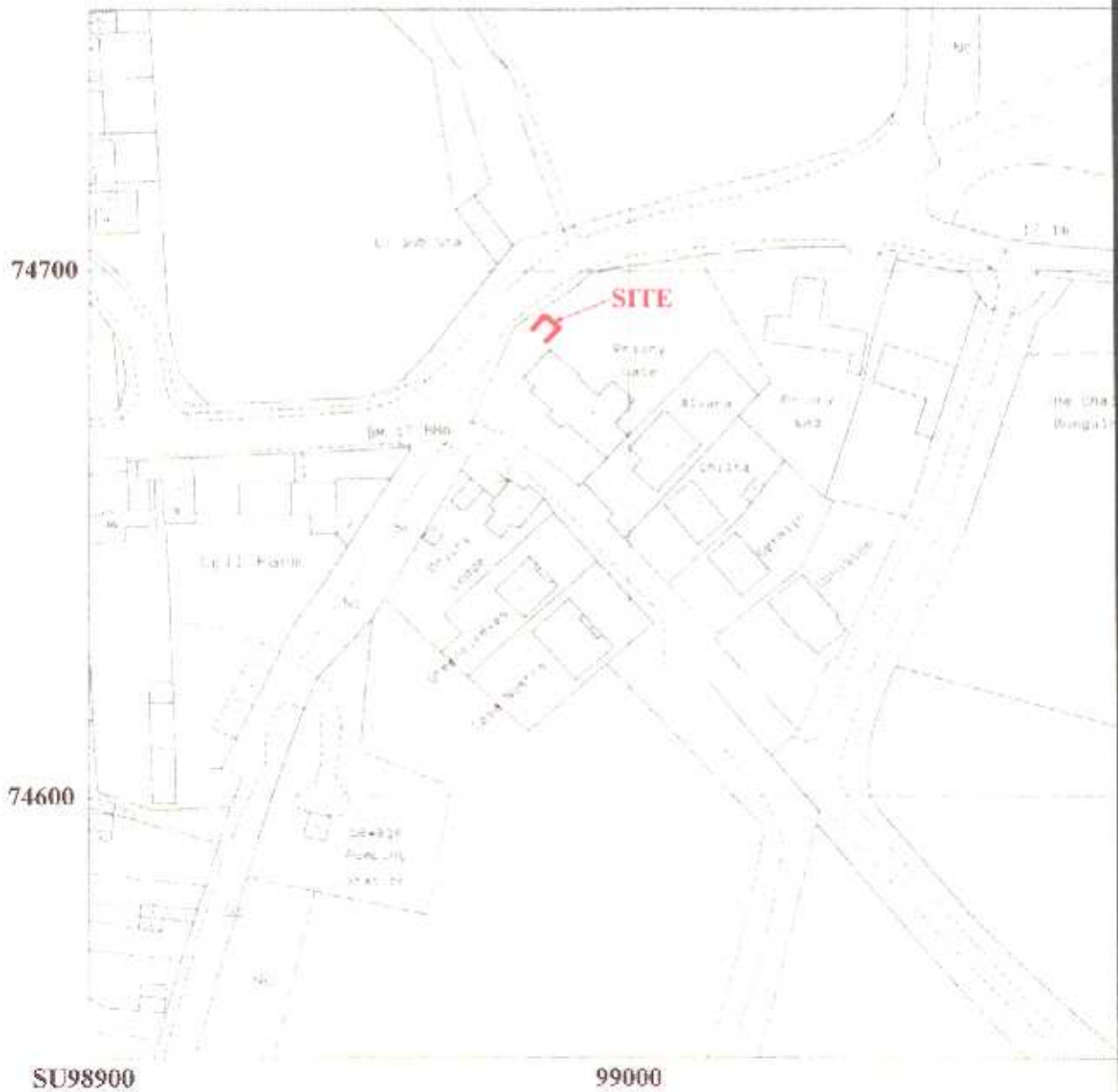


Priory Gate, Church Road, Old Windsor,  
Berkshire, 1997

Figure 1. Location of site within  
Berkshire and Old Windsor.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:25000, sheet SU87/97

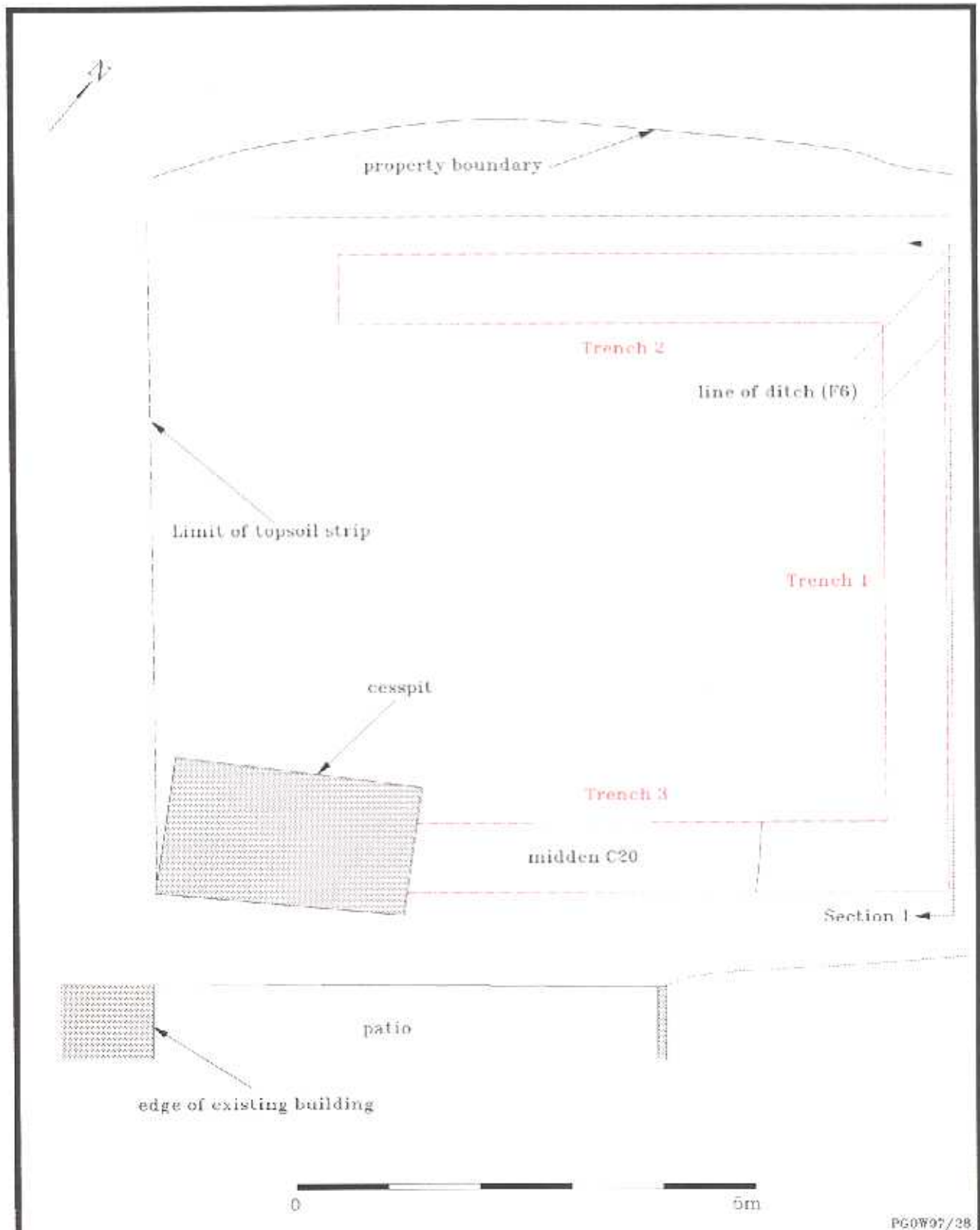




Priory Gate, Church Road, Old Windsor,  
Berkshire, 1997

Figure 2. Location of new building.





Priory Gate, Church Road, Old Windsor,  
Berkshire, 1997

Figure 3. Plan of foundation trenches.

