

**Land to the east of Priory Lane, Warfield,
Bracknell, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation
for CgMs Limited

by Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code PLB00/26

May 2000

Summary

Site name: Land to the east of Priory Lane, Warfield, Bracknell, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8760 7060

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 10th–12th May 2000

Site code: PLB00/26

Area of site: 2 ha.

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were identified. A few sherds of late post-Medieval pottery, brick and tile were recorded as spoilheap finds, but were not retained.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR, and it is intended that it will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Land to the east of Priory Lane, Warfield, Bracknell, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 00/26

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out on land on the east side of Priory Lane, Warfield, Bracknell (SU 8760 7060) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of CgMs Limited, 7th Floor, Newspaper House, 8-16 Great New Street, London, EC4A 3BN, on behalf of Wilcon Homes Limited. Planning permission (1994/620/232) has been granted by Bracknell Forest Borough Council for the construction of housing on the site. The permission includes a condition relating to the archaeological heritage. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the Borough policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr R Bourn, Senior Archaeologist for Babcote Group, archaeological advisors to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, John Saunders and Ruth Appleby on the 10th-12th May 2000. The site code is PLB00/26 and the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is approximately rectangular in plan and occupies an area of about 3 hectares. It lies on almost level ground at a height of c. 68m above Ordnance Datum and was used as pasture until recently. The site lies on the northern margins of Bracknell (Fig. 1). Immediately to the south was the site of the Lawrence Brickworks and areas used for clay extraction. The areas to the west are occupied by recently constructed housing, to the east by pasture to be retained as open space and to the north by a distributor road (Harvest Ride) with pasture land to the north (Figs 1 and 2). According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1969) the underlying geology is London Clay and this was confirmed during the evaluation. At the time of the evaluation some of the infra-structure for the new development was already in place (roads, main services, etc.).

Archaeological Background

A desktop assessment produced by Paul Chadwick (Chadwick 1998) of CgMs Limited highlighted the potential of the site. In general, the areas of East Berkshire occupied by London Clay and other Tertiary period outcrops

occupying the London Basin are not renowned for their range and density of archaeological deposits (Ford 1987). Nevertheless, sites of several periods are present. Recent fieldwork, which has taken place as a result of the expansion of north Bracknell, has revealed a number of archaeological sites. Excavations to the west at Park Farm Binfield examined a late Iron Age/early Roman settlement (Roberts 1995) and a middle Iron Age site at Fairclough Farm (Torrance et al. forthcoming). Just to the south-west of the site an evaluation located pottery and loomweight fragments of Bronze Age date (Ford 1994).

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was to comprise the digging of 20 evaluation trenches, each 20m long. The trenches were targeted to avoid the footprints of the proposed new structures but were otherwise to be located randomly across the site but giving coverage of the whole area.

The topsoil, subsoil (if present) and overburden were removed using a 360° machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The natural was truncated slightly to clarify and define any archaeological features present. The machining was conducted under direct and continuous archaeological supervision and where applicable the spoilheaps were monitored for finds. Archaeological and potential archaeological deposits were hand cleaned and a full written, drawn and photographic record of the trenches and archaeological deposits was made.

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

Results

Twenty-one trenches were dug, ranging in length from 11m to 38m (Fig. 3); all were 1.6m wide. Most of the trenches revealed a uniform stratigraphy comprising turf and topsoil 0.25m thick overlying a sandy clay natural with occasional pebbles (Plate 1). Several trenches had been previously stripped of their topsoil and were just skimmed by the machine bucket to reveal a fresh surface suitable for examination (Plate 2). The topsoil was examined for finds after heavy rain.

Few features cutting the subsoil were observed. All of these features were of relatively recent date and comprised brick-filled land drains and wheel ruts. In Trench 6 a line of four postholes was observed at approximately 2m spacing but all of these were of modern date. Also in Trench 6 was the floor of a recently demolished hut but this did not penetrate the subsoil. A straight-sided grey stripe in Trench 17 contained post-

Medieval brick/tile fragments and this is probably a wheel rut or plough stripe. Several decayed tree root channels were also observed. One of these, in Trench 14, was substantial and was investigated as a possible archaeological feature. However, this only revealed brick/tile finds of post-Medieval date.

Two areas of the site had been stripped of topsoil by groundworkers (Fig. 3) and had weathered slightly. They were examined for finds and archaeological deposits but, apart from a fragment of burnt flint, none were observed.

A search of the spoilheaps and trench bases only revealed a small number of late post-Medieval pottery sherds, fragments of brick/tile and various other materials of relatively recent date. These were not retained.

Finds

Pottery

Only three sherds of pottery were recovered from the site. All were of a post-Medieval red-ware fabric. One was a large rim sherd with brown glaze from Trench 16; another rim sherd with a yellow glaze came from Trench 11; and an unglazed body sherd came from Trench 3. These finds were not retained.

Burnt flint

A single piece of burnt flint (<5gms) was observed to the west of Trench 8 on the larger of the areas previously stripped of topsoil and examined. This was not retained.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed no items of archaeological interest. Only a single subsoil feature was revealed but when investigated this was shown clearly to be of modern date. Apart from a few finds of late post-Medieval pottery from the spoilheaps there were no other finds of archaeological interest. As such, it can be concluded that the site has no archaeological potential.

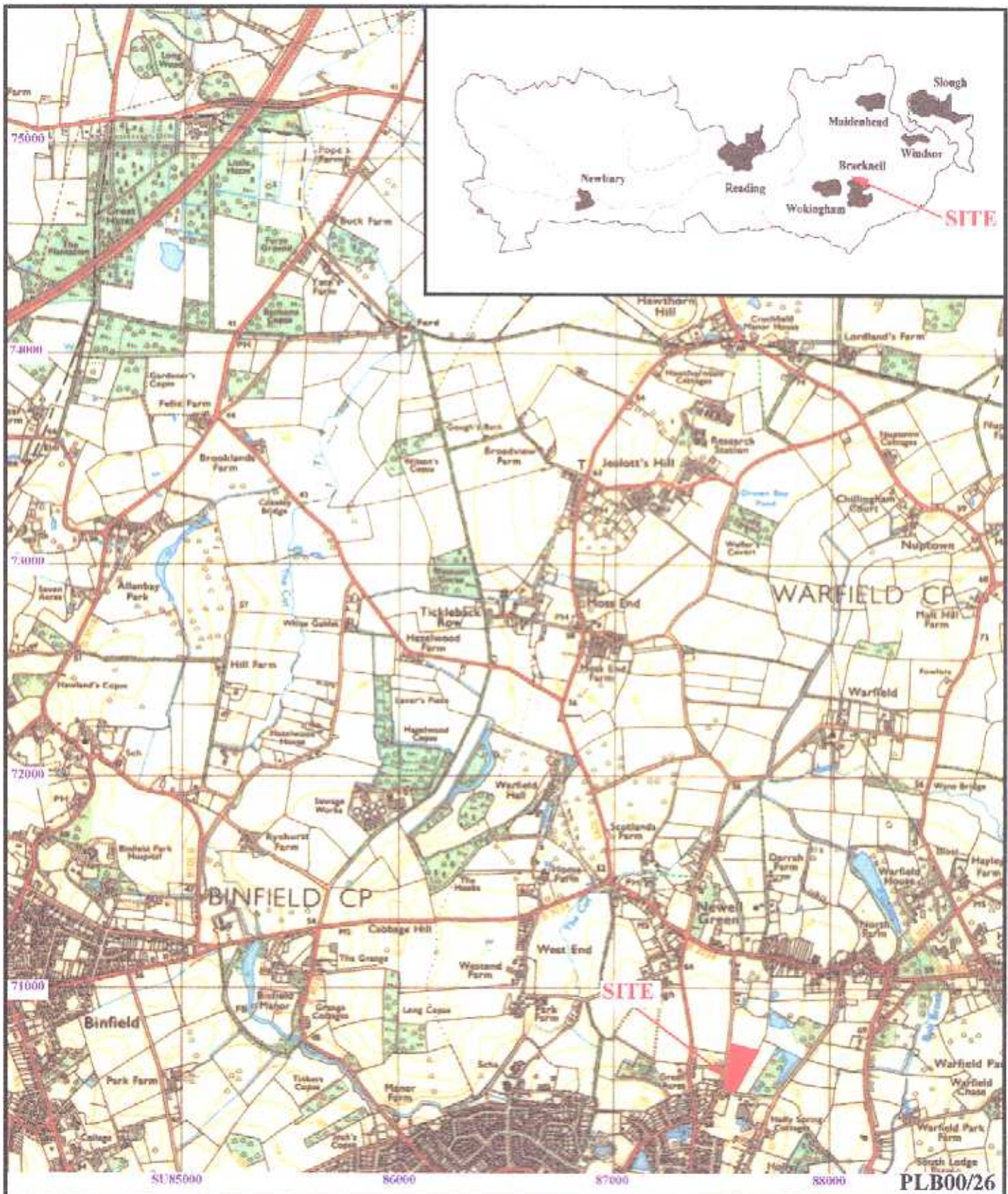
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- Torrance, L and Durden T, forthcoming, Excavation of a middle Iron Age settlement at Fairclough Farm, Warfield, Thames Valley Archaeological Services draft publication report 92/6, Reading

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	23.3	0.28	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
2	22.1	0.30	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Land drain 2m.
3	29.0	0.35	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Land drain 4m.
4	18.7	0.30	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Modern burnt patch in topsoil only.
5	25.0	0.30	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
6	38.5	0.40	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Four modern postholes in a line 12-18m. Floor of demolished shed in topsoil/subsoil.
7	16.6	0.05	Topsoil already stripped. Sandy clay with some pebbles.
8	38.0	0.03	Topsoil already stripped. Sandy clay with some pebbles. Land drain 21m.
9	13.0	0.10	Topsoil already stripped. Sandy clay with some pebbles.
10	17.0	0.12	Topsoil already stripped. Sandy clay with some pebbles.
11	19.0	0.30	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
12	17.8	0.05 SW; 0.30 NE	Topsoil already stripped 0-12m. Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles 12-17.8m
13	11.2	0.40	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
14	15.1	0.40	Topsoil previously stripped and replaced. One dark grey linear feature (3-6m) containing post-Medieval brick fragments. Probable tree root.
15	19.6	0.30	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
16	32.5	0.33	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Some grey/brown clay patches investigated - subsoil patches.
17	9.5	0.33	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles. Straight grey stripe 0.5m - plough stripe or wheel rut with post-Medieval brick/tile fragments
18	17.3	0.28	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
19	25.2	0.12	Topsoil already stripped. Sandy clay with some pebbles.
20	20.0	0.31	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.
21	20.0	0.34	Topsoil above sandy clay with some pebbles.



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Berkshire, 2000

Figure 1. Location of site within Bracknell and
Berkshire.

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Priority Lane, Warfield, Bracknell, Berkshire, 2000

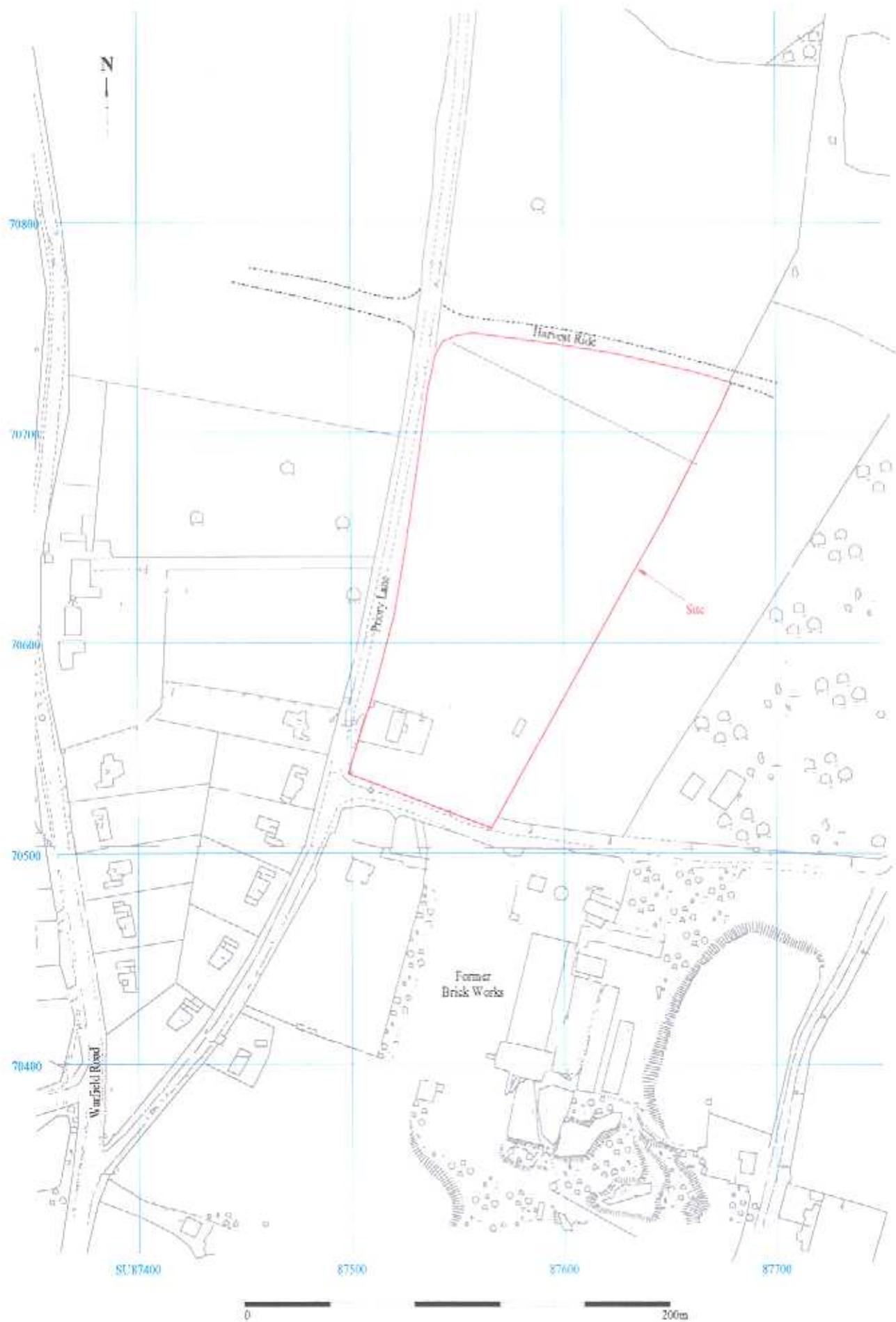


Figure 2. Location of site.

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Figure 3 Location of Trenches showing Watching Brief areas and layout of proposed development.



Plate 1. Trench 2, looking east, scales :0.50m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 8 before extension, looking north, showing topsoil stripped area.