

**New Wet Dock, Somerville, Bray Road,
Maidenhead, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr E Wallner

by Pamela Jenkins

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SBR 02/26

May 2002

Summary

Site name: New wet dock, Somerville, Bray Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9005 7992

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 4th April–3rd May

Project manager: Joanna Pine

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins

Site code: SBR 02/26

Area of site: -

Summary of results: One butchered cow bone, one piece of burnt flint and seven struck flints were found, two of which are of Mesolithic or early Neolithic date. No features were observed.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 07.05.02
	Steve Preston ✓ 08.05.02

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Report 02/26

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Somerville, Bray Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 9005 7992) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Burley of Thamesis Design and Construction Ltd, The Lodge, 66 St Leonards Road, Windsor, SL4 3BY, on behalf of Mr E Wallner.

Planning consent (01/37748) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a new wet dock, enlargement of a culvert and creation of a wetland area on the banks of the river Thames, subject to a condition (5) which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological recording during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus, Senior Archaeologist, Babtie Environmental, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pamela Jenkins, Andy Mundin and Lisa-Maree Hardy on 4th, 5th, 8th and 15th April and 1st, 2nd and 3rd May, 2002 and the site code is SBR 02/26.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the bank of the river Thames at Somerville, Bray Road, Maidenhead (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is Flood Plain Gravel (BGS 1981) and the site lies at a height of *c.*25m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

Riverside locations were preferred areas for occupation in earlier prehistoric times. Numerous prehistoric and later stone and metal tools have previously been recovered during dredging along the section of the river Thames where this site is located. These finds may have eroded from occupation sites situated along the riverbank, suggesting that such sites might be encountered within the area of the groundworks.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record all archaeological deposits within areas of ground disturbance associated with the construction of the new mooring and to excavate and record any features that would be disturbed during these groundworks. This would involve observing the excavation of a new culvert and three trenches for the building of a cofferdam, followed by removal of overburden and gravel to form a dock.

Results

Wet dock (Fig.3)

Three trenches (Trenches 1, 2 and 3) measuring 0.70m wide and c.16m, 10.90m and 5.50m long respectively, were excavated to a depth of c.1.90m prior to the insertion of sheet piling. All revealed similar stratigraphy. Modern garden soil to a depth of 0.35m was visible overlying made ground comprising 0.15m of redeposited gravel over 1.10m of mid orange-brown clay containing occasional patches of brick and tile. Below this, 0.20m of a mid greyish-black humic clay containing twigs and water snail shells was observed overlying the natural gravel, which was exposed to a depth of c.0.10m.

One flint blade and one piece of bone were found in Trench 1, within 5m of the north-east end (A) and a piece of burnt flint was also found c.7m from the northeast end (B). Trench 2 produced two flint flakes and a blade c. 3.50m from the northeast end (C). Three flint flakes were found in the remaining spoilheaps from the dock excavation (D).

Punt dock (Fig.3)

The punt dock was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.90m. Topsoil to a depth of 0.30m overlay 1.10m of light yellowish-brown silty sand containing occasional brick and tile fragments. 0.30m of bluish-grey clay was visible below this. The depth of the clay at this point was unclear due to flooding from the river Thames. Excavations were not deeper than the humic clay layer which lay directly above the natural gravel as observed in nearby areas.

The culvert

An existing culvert on the site was enlarged by deepening to 1.8m depth. This revealed a similar stratigraphic sequence to the punt dock.

Finds

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of seven struck flints was recovered during the watching brief. All of the pieces are in a fresh condition on good quality flint with pieces which retain cortex indicating a gravel source. Two of the pieces were blades, one of which exceeded 80mm in length. The latter piece retained faint traces of edge polishing from use along with 'retouch' consistent with utilisation damage. Both of these are unambiguously of Mesolithic (or possibly early Neolithic) date. The other pieces are not closely diagnostic but could easily be of similar date.

Catalogue

A) interface of humic clay layer and gravel	Blade
C) Gravel from Trench 2	2 flakes; Blade
D) Spoilheap from dock excavation	3 flakes (one burnt)

Burnt Flint

One piece of unworked burnt flint (B) was also found in the gravel from Trench 1 (20g). This was not retained.

Animal Bone by Sian Anthony

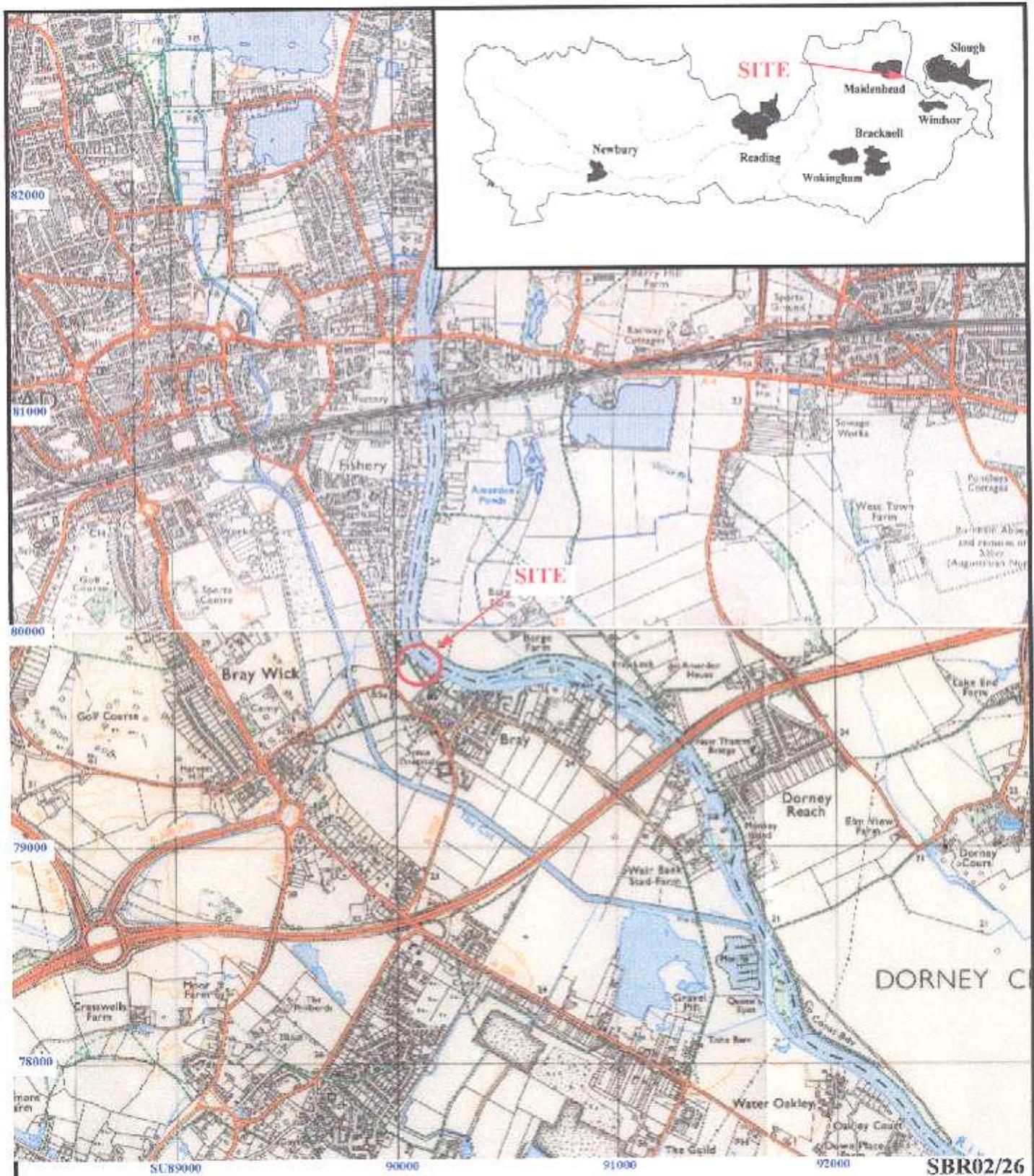
A single fragment of animal bone was recovered from the interface between the humic clay and the gravel in Trench 1. This was a cattle-sized tibia (176g), which had clearly been butchered, perhaps for the extraction of the marrow.

Conclusion

The watching brief has revealed a few artefacts of archaeological interest. These comprised seven prehistoric flint flakes, two of which are of Mesolithic date. These indicate some prehistoric activity in the vicinity but the small number of finds could be a product of casual loss. No deposits of archaeological interest, such as cut features or occupation layers were observed

References

BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 269, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO



Somerville, Bray Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire,
2002

Figure 1. Location of site within Bray and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Bray.

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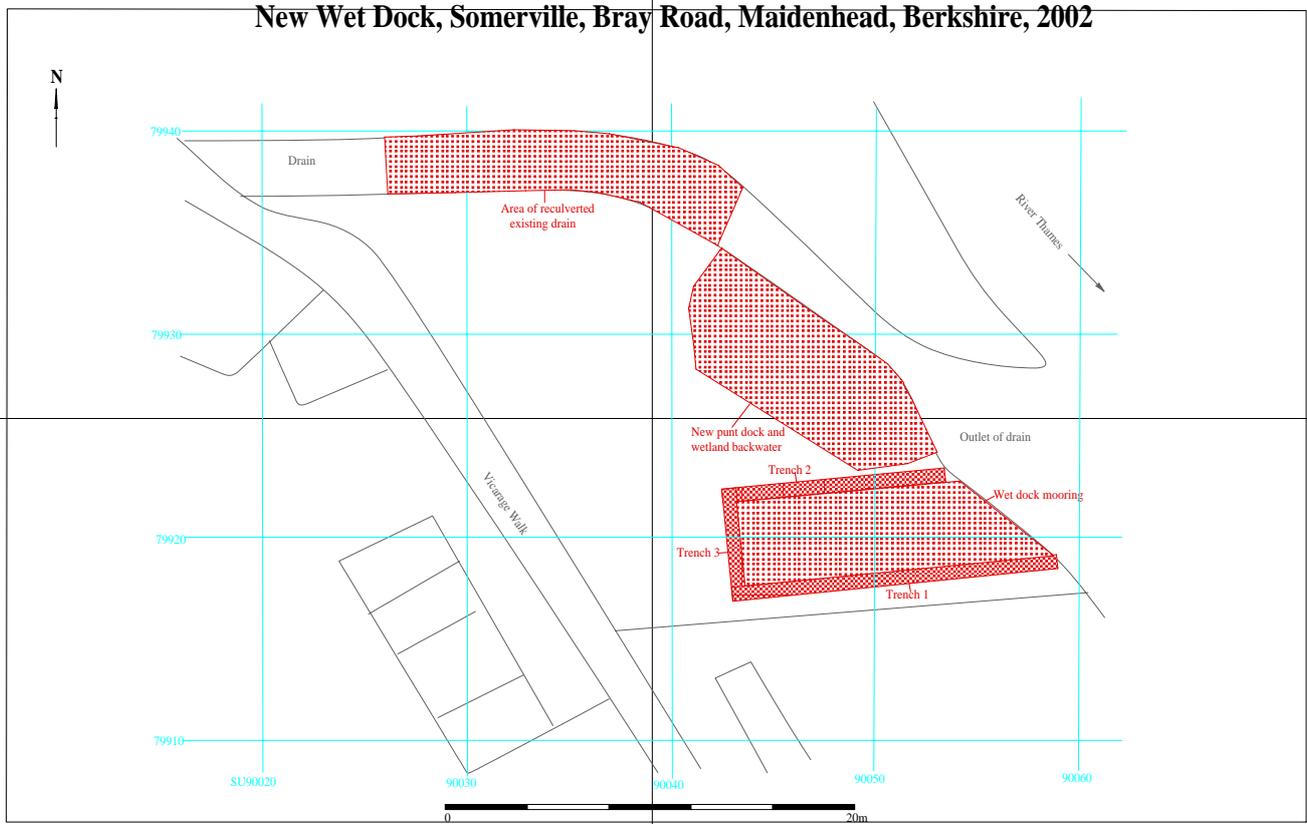


Figure 3. Location of areas observed during watching brief.