

**GROUNDLOW HOSPITAL, TITTENSOR,  
BOROUGH OF STAFFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**Report No.179  
June 2001**

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## **SUMMARY**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2001 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at the former Groundslow Hospital, Tittensor, Stafford Borough (NGR: SJ 8645 3767) on behalf of Avonside Property.

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a proposal to redevelop camelot Court and construct a new residential scheme with public open spaces and infrastructure (Planning Application 40308). The development is located approximately 1km to the south west of Tittensor and is identified by Stafford Borough Council as being of archaeological importance.

The evaluation identified features of archaeological significance in Trenches 1 and 2. Trench 3 contained no archaeological deposits.

The archaeological features identified in Trenches 1 and 2 comprised large ditch sections that are almost certainly part of the prehistoric enclosure (PRN 4601) known from aerial photographs to the west of the development area. The gully identified along the western edge of the ditch in Trench 2 was not present in Trench 1, but the evaluated sample is too small to confirm whether this gully forms an integral part of the entire circuit of the enclosure, or is an unassociated feature. The large earthcut posthole in Trench 2 may represent an internal feature, possibly part of an internal palisade.

The results of the archaeological evaluation suggest that the westernmost part of the site is of high archaeological potential, although the evidence from Trench 3 suggested that there was relatively low potential outside this area. Although no information has yet been provided regarding proposed construction techniques, the existing proposals would appear to impact upon the enclosure ditch in Plots 31-33, with the potential for impact in Plot 34.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2001 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Avonside Property, on land at the former Groundslow Hospital site, Camelot Court, Tittensor, Bourough of Stafford NGR: SJ 8645 3767 (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The site lies approximately 1km south-west of Tittensor and consists of a disused hospital complex. The hospital was closed during the 1980's, although Camelot Court continued to be utilised as a nursing home until September 2000. The development area is bounded to the north by Groundslow Farm, to the east by Winghouse Lane and to the south and west by fields and agricultural land. The site area comprises 2.37ha. Underlying geology consists of undifferentiated river terrace deposits (BGS 1:50000 Sheet 123: Stoke-on-Trent)
- 1.3 The proposed scheme (Planning Application 40308) consists of the demolition of existing hospital buildings, existing house and single storey extensions to Camelot Court, the conversion of Camelot Court into 25 flats and 35 new dwellings together with associated public open space and infrastructure. The land immediately surrounding the location of the evaluation trench comprises a mixture of built environment and open fields.
- 1.4 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2001).
- 1.5 This document presents the findings of the archaeological evaluation and conforms to the specification set out in Appendices 4 and 5 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991).

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Stafford Sites and Monuments record indicates that the study area contains evidence of archaeological features. A sub-circular cropmark (PRN 4601), indicating a probable prehistoric earthwork, is known from aerial photography (CUCAP BYT9). The cropmark is visible in the field immediately to the west of the proposed development site and was believed to extend into the area of the proposal.
- 2.2 The study area also lies near to the deserted medieval settlement of Groundslow (PRN 591), recorded as a village during the mid 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The village was destroyed between 1819 and 1832, with the exception of two dwellings. The farmhouse and buildings to the north of the

site were built in 1832. No visible remains of the deserted village remain and the exact location is unknown.

- 2.3 The study area therefore had the potential for the preservation of archaeological features and deposits; in particular those associated with the prehistoric enclosure and the deserted medieval settlement. The evaluation remit covered the possible discovery of finds and features of all periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. It aimed to make recommendations for the management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary. This will allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development.

- 3.2 These aims were to be achieved by the pursuit of the following specific objectives as stated in the Project Design (Foundations Archaeology 2000).

i) to define, identify and record any archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible.

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site.

iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of three 15m x 2m evaluation trenches as illustrated on Figure 2. A photographic record of the existing hospital complex was also undertaken as part of the project. This survey has been produced as a separate document.
- 4.2 Within the evaluation trenches all non-significant overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first.

- 4.3 All archaeological deposits were excavated by hand, and recorded to an appropriate level in order to fulfil the aims of the evaluation as set out in the Project Design.
- 4.4 All archaeological deposits encountered were excavated and fully recorded to the standards set out in the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.
- 4.5 The archive will be deposited with the Potteries Museum, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

## **5 RESULTS**

- 5.1 Trench 1 (15m long by 2m wide) was located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site on an east-west alignment. The trench was excavated onto undisturbed natural sands at an average depth of 1m (121.65m OD) from the modern ground surface. A single archaeological feature [107] was present at the western end of the trench, cut into the natural sands. This feature consisted of a large ditch at least 3.0m wide by 0.54m deep (121.02m OD). The fill comprised an undifferentiated mid brown sand loam with occasional pebbles and charcoal fragments (108). The fill also showed evidence of root disturbance. A single land drain [105] was also present cut into the top of the natural sands.
- 5.2 The archaeological feature and the natural sands were sealed beneath a sandy subsoil layer (104) averaging 0.55m thick. This layer was overlain by a 0.10m thick layer of hardcore beneath the modern tarmac surface.
- 5.3 Trench 2 (15m long by 2m wide) was excavated on a north-west to south-east alignment. The trench was excavated onto undisturbed natural sands at an average depth of 1m (121.85m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural sands were cut by a single large ditch [209] measuring 4.4m in width by 0.70m deep (121.18m OD) and aligned north-east to south-west (Figure 3). The ditch contained a single fill (210) consisting of mid-brown sand loam with occasional river pebbles and small fragments of charcoal. The fill showed considerable evidence of later root disturbance and had also been affected by the insertion of a modern ceramic land drain.
- 5.4 A gully [211] measuring 1.10m wide by 0.44m deep (121.46m OD) was identified running along the north-western edge of the large ditch. This feature contained a single fill (212) visually little different from the fill of [209], but with no charcoal fragments and rare pebbles.
- 5.5 A single large posthole [207] measuring 0.91m by 0.74m by 0.39m deep (121.46m OD) was present 2.01m to the north-west of the ditch. The posthole contained a red sand fill with very occasional charcoal fragments.

- 5.6 The natural sands and archaeological features were all sealed beneath a mid brown sandy loam subsoil (204) averaging 0.40m in depth. The western half of this layer was sealed below a hardcore layer of chalk and limestone (206). A buried loamy topsoil (202) overlay the subsoil in the eastern half of the trench and was deposited over the hardcore layer in the western half. A 0.15m thick layer of modern topsoil had thereafter been deposited across the entire trench.
- 5.7 Trench 3 (15m long by 2m wide) was excavated on a north-south alignment primarily in order to test for features and deposits associated with the deserted medieval settlement. The trench was excavated onto undisturbed natural sands at an average depth of 0.50m (122.29m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural sands were sealed by a surface consisting of a single layer of bricks. The surface was sealed beneath a layer of hardcore averaging 0.15m thick beneath the modern tarmac. No archaeologically significant features were present within this trench.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The evaluation identified features of archaeological significance in Trenches 1 and 2. Trench 3 contained no archaeological deposits.
- 6.2 The archaeological features identified in Trenches 1 and 2 comprised large ditch sections that are almost certainly part of the prehistoric enclosure (PRN 4601) known from aerial photographs to the west of the development area. This feature may be considered to be of regional importance. The gully identified along the western edge of the ditch in Trench 2 was not identifiable in Trench 1 as the western edge of the ditch was not located in the latter trench. The evaluated sample is, therefore, too small to confirm whether this gully forms an integral part of the entire circuit of the enclosure, or is an unassociated feature. The large earthen posthole in Trench 2 may represent an internal feature, possibly part of an internal palisade.
- 6.3 Flecks of charcoal were present throughout the main fill of the two ditch sections, but these were too small to provide an accurate radiocarbon date, even without the extensive root disturbance which could also bias the sample. A single sherd of undiagnostic Iron Age pottery was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 1. No other artefactual material was recovered during the course of the evaluation.
- 6.4 The results of the archaeological evaluation suggest that the westernmost part of the site is of high archaeological potential, although the evidence from Trench 3 suggested that there was relatively low potential outside this area. Although no information has yet been provided regarding proposed construction techniques, the existing proposals would appear to impact upon the enclosure ditch in Plots 31-33, with the potential for impact in Plot 34 (Figure 4).

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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