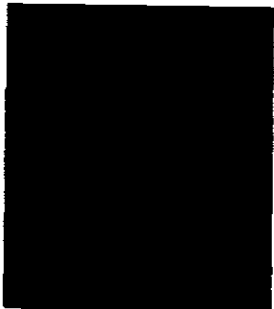


Wessex
Archaeology



**DUMMER GOLF COURSE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Report No. W477

**Wessex Archaeology
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction.....	2
The Watching Brief.....	4
Results.....	4
Discussion.....	5
The Archive.....	6
References.....	6
Fig. 1: Location Plan.....	3

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INTRODUCTION

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by O & J House Limited on behalf of the developer Mr John Stevens of Kirtons Farm Hotel and Country Club to undertake a watching brief. The area to be observed was farmland situated 0.5km north-east of the village of Dummer and 5km south of Basingstoke. The area is centred on SU594467 and has been developed into a golf course.

The site contains a small plateau, at a height of 175m OD, at its south-eastern boundary. The area slopes away to the north and west to 150m OD. The underlying geology is Upper Chalk which is overlain with localised Clay-with-Flint deposits.

The Hampshire Sites and Monuments Records have a plot from aerial photography evidence of an enclosure and associated features within the south-east quarter of the site. The enclosure is of a type, defined by a characteristic shape, known as 'Banjo' enclosures. A rectangle of sides 160m by 140m was marked out on the ground over the position of the enclosure and the developer entered an agreement not to alter the ground level within the prescribed area.

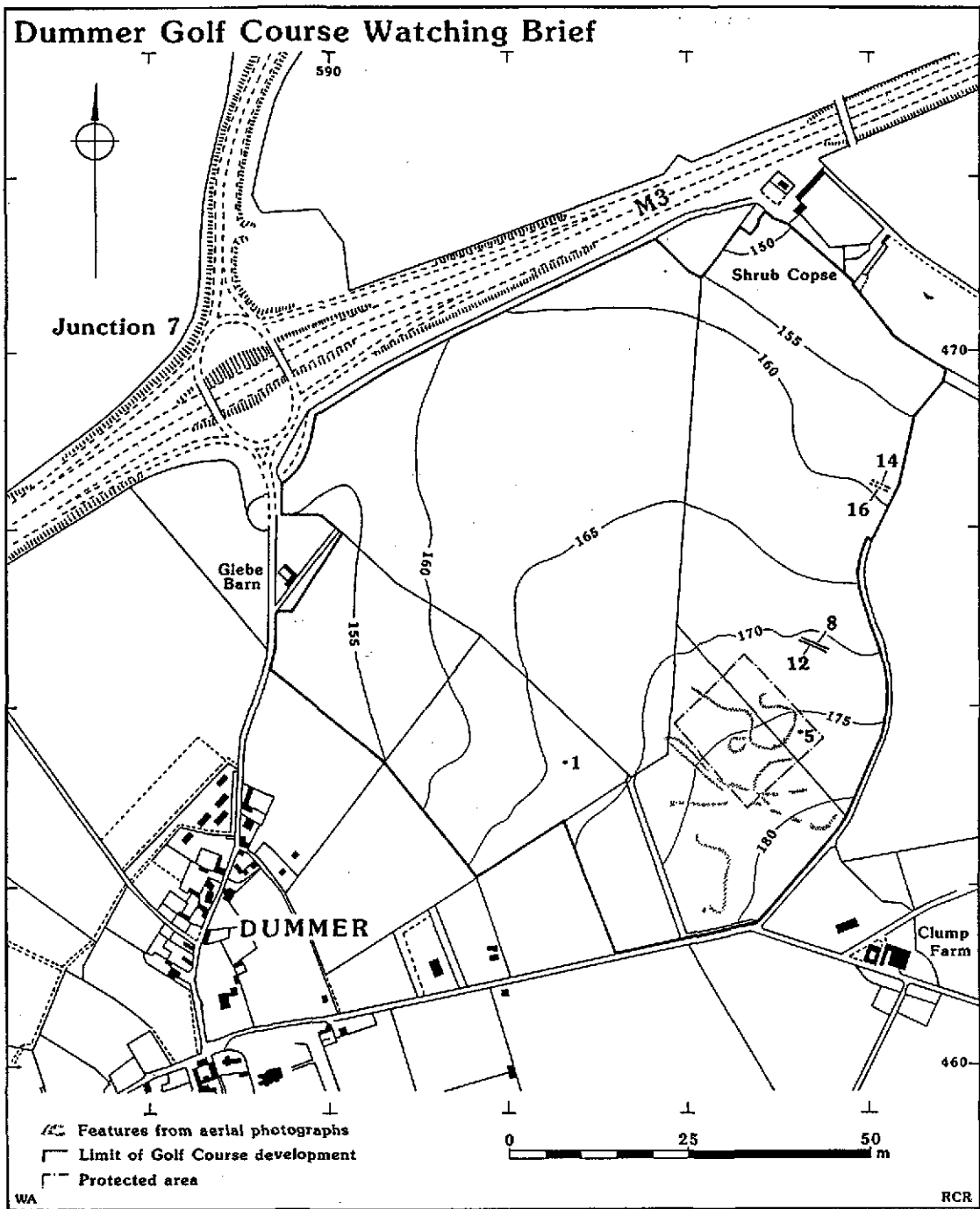


Fig 1: Location plan

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief started on the 2nd of December 1991 and ended on the 18th of March 1992. Much of the development area was not materially altered by the works and the archaeological observations were restricted to those positions where topsoil was removed. Occasional pieces of burnt flint and waste flakes were apparent on the surface of the fields, enough to indicate general activity in the area but no significant concentrations were observed. A 1:1250 scale plan of the proposed design was supplied to Wessex Archaeology and used to gauge the extent and progress of the development. All areas of development, access roads, borrow pits, tees, bunkers and grading areas, were monitored. Two visits were normally made to each area. The first to observe the surface of the subsoil upon removal of the topsoil and the second to see sections exposed by the removal of the natural subsoil in those areas so graded. The majority of the areas observed proved to be devoid of features bar those formed by solution hollows and other natural variations in the Chalk and Clay-with-Flint. A proportion of the natural features were tested by sample excavation, and it swiftly became possible to identify the naturally occurring clean clay fills of the natural features from the surface.

RESULTS

Six features of archaeological significance were found during the watching brief. They comprised two pits and four ditches:-

Feature 1 was a shallow oval pit, 1.86m long, 0.80m wide and 0.13m deep. It was filled with very dark brown silty clay and contained many fragments of charcoal, one flint flake and a small fragment of fired clay. The feature was half-sectioned, recorded, drawn and photographed. Possibly a hearth or fire-pit. Two flint flakes and a scraper were recovered from topsoil in the general area of the pit, but no further features were observed during the subsequent grading of this area.

Feature 5 was a pit with a diameter of 3m. It was not excavated, but its upper fill was a mid-brown silty clay and two fragments of Roman pottery were observed on the surface. One fragment was too small to be dated further, but the other was a rim sherd from a vessel dated from the 3rd-4th century AD. This feature was within the protected area surrounding the enclosure and so survives intact. The location was planned and the surface photographed.

Features 8 and 12 were two parallel ditches both filled with strong brown silt clay. They were 1.2m apart and ran roughly east-west for at least 45m. Feature 8 was the northern of the two ditches and was 1.1m wide and 0.4m deep with a V-shaped profile. No finds were recovered from the feature. Feature 12 was to the south and was 0.7m wide and 0.35m deep with a rounded profile. A fragment of Roman pottery and a flint flake were recovered from the fill. Both features were planned, sectioned, recorded and photographed.

Features 14 and 16 were two parallel ditches both filled with strong brown silt clay. They were 1m apart and ran roughly east-west. Feature 14 was the northern of the two ditches and was 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep with a rounded profile. Four small fragments of Roman pottery were recovered from the fill. Feature 16 was to the south and was 1.1m wide and 0.25m deep with a rounded, flat-bottomed profile. No finds were recovered from the feature. These two features were within a Clay-with-Flints deposit and were not recognised upon the removal of the topsoil. Their presence became obvious after the area had been graded and they were visible in

section. Their original extent is, therefore, not known. The sections were cleaned, drawn and recorded.

DISCUSSION

The extent of the archaeological evidence recovered from the watching brief is slight, but its nature is intriguing. The most prominent feature, the enclosure, remains untouched and therefore its function is still unknown. Its form suggests that it is part of Champion and Champion's type 1 enclosure or 'banjo' enclosure (Champion and Champion in Shennan and Schadla Hall 1981, 40). These are variously linked with stock control and/or occupation from the 3rd century BC into the Roman period. The pit (Feature 5), uncovered within the protected area but not excavated, suggests that the enclosure may be similar in nature to that excavated in Micheldever Wood (Fasham 1987) some 12 kilometres to the south-west of Dummer, where positive evidence for occupation within the enclosure was found. Fasham (1987, 63) goes on to suggest that the function of enclosures in the Micheldever Wood area may in part relate to a specific agricultural regime dictated by the local sub-soil, Clay-with-Flint over Upper Chalk.

The four ditches discovered during the watching brief, features 8, 12, 14 and 16, suggests that the enclosure was set within a series of small fields delimited by ditches. The ditches were found to the north of the enclosure and form evidence complimentary to that derived from aerial photography plots in which two parallel linear features can be seen to the south of the enclosure. Hingley (1984, Fig 5.2) illustrates two possible interpretations for the function of banjo enclosures, firstly as stock-corralling enclosures within more extensive settlement complexes and secondly as individual enclosed settlements with divided arable and pastoral territory. It appears that the presence of field boundaries at Dummer, coupled with the lack of settlement evidence over most of the watching brief area would more readily support the second interpretation in this case. However, only two kilometres to the north-east at Beggarwood Lane (Fasham and Keevil forthcoming) a banjo enclosure, albeit again preserved and therefore unexcavated, has been discovered within an area of extensive unenclosed settlement. It then complies more closely with the first interpretation.

Hingley (1984, 80) identifies two idealised settlement landscapes, one being a dense distribution of open settlements and the other being a widely-dispersed distribution of enclosed settlements. These idealised landscapes are apparently reflected within the observed settlement-patterning in his survey area of the Upper Thames Valley, with a dense distribution of open settlements occurring on the gravels of the Oxford Clay Vale and spatially isolated enclosed settlements occurring in the Oxford Uplands. By contrast, central northern Hampshire between Winchester and Basingstoke exhibits a dense distribution of settlements of varying form.

The evidence from the watching brief at Dummer is too slight to support reliable interpretations, but it does serve to shed light on another example of settlement variation within the very rich settlement-landscape of central northern Hampshire during the last millennium BC.

THE ARCHIVE

The project archive (WA reference W477/project 34891) is currently stored in the Offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. It will eventually be deposited with the Hampshire County Museum Service at Chilcombe House, Winchester.

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