Wessex Archaeology



Raghill Farm, Aldermaston, West Berkshire

Initial Statement of Results: Phase 3a





Ref: 58252.02

September 200

INITIAL STATEMENT OF RESULTS: PHASE 3a

Prepared on behalf of S Grundon (Ewelme) Ltd

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September 2005

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by S Grundon (Ewelme) Ltd to undertake archaeological strip and record works on land at Raghill Farm, Aldermaston, West Berkshire and centred on NGR 46137 16476. This report covers the results of archaeological fieldwork in the southern half of the Phase 3 area (referred to as Phase 3a) and is part of an ongoing programme of archaeological fieldwork.

This phase of fieldwork has identified archaeological evidence for multi-period activity. This activity consists of 29 features, dating to the Romano-British to post-medieval periods and consists of field/enclosure ditches, trackways and postholes. These features are located on the fringes of the plateau, which occupies the northern part of the Raghill Farm quarry site, and would strongly suggest that the plateau is likely to have a high potential for further archaeological remains.

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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Paul Wormald and the staff of S Grundon (Ewelme) for their co-operation and assistance in the successful completion of this project. Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Heritage Service monitored the fieldwork and his help during the course of the fieldwork is gratefully acknowledged.

The fieldwork was supervised by Mike Dinwiddy with the assistance of Andy Cole, Andy Bains and Tim Murphy. The report was complied by Mike Dinwiddy and Andrew Manning with the illustrations prepared by Matthew McMurray and Linda Colman. The environmental assessment was undertaken by Hayley Clark, Sarah Wyles and Chris Stevens. Finds were assessed by Lorraine Mepham and coins by Nick Cooke. The project was managed by Andrew Manning on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by S Grundon (Ewelme) Ltd to conduct an archaeological strip and record work on land at Raghill Farm, Aldermaston, West Berkshire and centred on NGR 46137 16476, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The 29ha Site at Raghill Farm was granted planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel in 2002. This process will be undertaken in nine phases over a seven-year period. As a condition of the planning permission, archaeological 'strip and record' will be undertaken, together with further mitigation, if required, before the extraction of sand and gravel.
- 1.1.3 The methodology used in the archaeological fieldwork is set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation and Recording (Wessex Archaeology 2002), which was approved by the West Berkshire Heritage Service, prior to the commencement of the first stage of works.
- 1.1.4 This report presents the results of the strip and record fieldwork on the southern section of the Phase 3 area (Phase 3a), which was carried out between the 25th May to 22nd June 2005.
- 1.1.5 It is intended that on completion of the final phase of works, an assessment report covering all phases of the fieldwork will be produced, containing an overall assessment of the archaeological results for the entire Site.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Phase 3a area was located on the eastern edge of the proposed quarry site, immediately to the north of the public bridleway and lay approximately 20m to the north of the previously investigated Phase 2b area (Figure 1).
- 1.2.2 The Phase 3a area, which covered an area of approximately 1ha, lies at the south-eastern edge of a plateau which occupies the northern half of the quarry. The western half of the Site lay at a height of approximately 98m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), sloping down to 94m aOD at a small stream, which lies just beyond the eastern extent of the Site. Plateau gravel was evident across the majority of the Site, with natural clay and sands evident along the eastern boundaries of the Site. The area along the eastern edge of

the Phase 3a area is not proposed for extraction and therefore was not stripped (Figure 1).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 A detailed review of the archaeological and historical background of the 29ha site and surrounding area was submitted in the form of a desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2001). This identified a number of historic boundaries and flint findspots within the Raghill Farm site. Overall, the potential for significant archaeological remains was considered to be small.
- 2.1.2 Interim reports have been prepared after completion of each phase of fieldwork. While it is not intended to repeat in detail the findings so far, the fieldwork carried out so far comprises;
- 2.1.3 Phase 1 area undertaken in October/November 2002. Fieldwork uncovered a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age hearth and thirteen small pits/postholes, mainly concentrated within two clusters at the south edge of the quarry area. A post-medieval field boundary was also uncovered, which extends in all the subsequent areas (Wessex Archaeology 2003a and 2003b)
- 2.1.4 Phase 1b area undertaken in May/June 2004. No significant archaeological features were identified, although a single Neolithic flint blade was recovered during stripping (Wessex Archaeology 2004a)
- 2.1.5 Phase 2a was carried out during October/November 2004. Fieldwork exposed three post-medieval boundary ditches, once of which is a continuation of the ditch found in earlier phases of work (Wessex Archaeology 2004b)
- 2.1.6 Phase 2b was carried out in April 2005. More of the post-medieval boundary ditch was uncovered, as well as a section of trackway. Two 18th century brick kilns were discovered nearby, demonstrating that small-scale brick production, possibly for the local Raghill Estate, was taking place on the eastern edge of the quarry area (Wessex Archaeology 2005).

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The aim of the fieldwork was to determine as far as possible the significance and quantity of any surviving archaeological remains within the proposed quarry area and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource by ensuring its preservation by record.
- 3.1.2 The Phase 3a area was stripped of topsoil using 360°-tracked mechanical excavators under constant archaeological supervision. All features,

- archaeological or otherwise were recorded in plan using a Total Station Theodolite (TST) and located within the National Grid.
- 3.1.3 All fieldwork was conducted in compliance with the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation and Recording (Wessex Archaeology 2002) and standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations, and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA 1999).

4 RESULTS

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 This phase of fieldwork has identified archaeological evidence for multiperiod activity. Twenty-nine features, mainly field/enclosure ditches, trackways and pit and postholes, which are located on the fringes of, and likely to expand onto, the plateau, which occupies the northern part of the Raghill Farm quarry site (Figure 2).
- 4.1.2 The identified features date from the Late Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval periods and comprise:
 - Three Late Romano-British ditches, representing possible field or enclosure boundaries (Ditches 2013, 2015 and 2018)
 - One medieval ditch/gully (Ditch 2011)
 - Seven post-medieval field boundaries, trackways and possible enclosures (Ditches 2006, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2034, 2037 and 2126)
 - Sixteen undated boundary ditches, trackway ditches and postholes, (Ditches 2010, 2021, 2028, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2040 and posthole group 2030), the majority of which are likely to be post-medieval in date.

4.2 Late Roman Period

4.2.1 Two ditches **2018** and **2015** were identified at the north-western corner of the excavation area. Both ditches were similar in size, 0.70m in width and 0.30m in depth. The earlier of the two ditches, **2018**, runs approximately north/south for 40m before turning to the south-west. The northern end of this ditch may have originally run further to the north. The fills of this ditch were cut by the second ditch, **2015**, which defined a possible enclosure at least 30m by 50m in size (0.15ha) and which continues beyond the western, and possibly northern, extent of the excavation area.

- 4.2.2 In the same area, one additional short section of ditch was also recorded, 2013, 1.60m 0.80m in width and 0.47 0.27m in depth, which post-dated ditch 2018, and is truncated by post-medieval ditches.
- 4.2.3 A small quantity of Romano-British coarse greywares, grog-tempered wares, and Oxfordshire colour coated finewares and Ceramic Building Material (CBM) were recovered from these ditches, with a date range in the Late Roman period (3rd/4th century AD).

4.3 Medieval Period

4.3.1 A single medieval curvilinear ditch 2011 was uncovered in the north-western corner of the excavation area. The feature was approximately 22m in length, 0.70m in width and between 0.10 - 0.30m in depth and was heavily truncated along part of its length. The fill of the feature contained a small number of medieval pottery sherds, including an internally glazed skillet rim and handle.

4.4 Post-medieval Period

Rectangular enclosures 2006 and 2034

- 4.4.1 The earliest post-medieval feature comprises a possible enclosure or pen, partly defined along its western and northern sides by a curvilinear ditch 2006, 0.72m in width and up to 0.27m in depth. If ditch 2006 was associated with a second undated parallel ditch, 2028, of similar dimensions, this would have formed an enclosure approximately 55m by 25m in size (0.14ha). No trace of the southern end of the possible enclosure was found, although this may have been truncated by a later trackway ditch 2014. The enclosure had a 5m gap in its western side and a larger gap in its north-east corner, which may have provided access into the enclosure.
- 4.4.2 Subsequently, the northern end of the enclosure was cut by a second curvilinear ditch 2034, 0.55m in width and up to 0.22m in depth, which may have been either a remodelling of the entrance or the forming a new smaller enclosure, possibly associated with the later trackway and boundary ditches 2012 and 2037. Both ditches 2006 and 2034 contained a small quantity of post-medieval pottery and CBM.

Trackway 2012/2126 and 2013/2014

- 4.4.3 Post-dating enclosure 2006 was a funnel-shaped trackway, which ran north-west/south-east across the southern half of the excavation area. The origins of this feature lay with two parallel ditches 2126 and 2103, between 1.23 1.58m in width, 0.35-0.40m in depth and approximately 8m apart.
- 4.4.4 Both ditches were recut (Ditch 2126 by Ditch 2012 and Ditch 2103 by 2014) in maintaining the trackway, which gradually opened out at the eastern edge of the Site, to a maximum width of 40m between the ditches. Both ditches

2126 and 2014 contained a broad mix of Romano-British pottery and coins and post medieval metal-work and CBM. In addition, ditch 2014 contained a small quantity of medieval CBM and a silver medieval coin. The eastern end of the trackway was cut by the large north/south running boundary ditch 2037, up to 4 m in width and 1m in depth, which has been consistently traced within the previously stripped areas (Figure 1).

Undated features

- 4.4.5 A group of nine undated postholes (2030) were located within the central area of the Site. The postholes were all approximately 0.37m in diameter and 0.15m in depth with no evidence for post-pipes or packing. The postholes appear to be paired in a broad north/south alignment, which may be related with enclosure 2006.
- 4.4.6 A short section of undated linear ditch 2010 was revealed in north-western corner of the excavation area. There was no stratigraphic relationship with any other features. Further to the south, a second linear ditch 2021, approximately 1m wide and 0.25m in depth, is cut buy the post-medieval trackway ditch 2014, and may indicate a further enclosure, beyond the western limits of the Site.
- 4.4.7 Two pairs of undated ditches 2038/2039 and 2040/2041 were located in the north-eastern corner of the Site. The first pair (2038/2039), 1-2m in width, ran approximately parallel to the line of the main boundary ditch 2037. These ditches may represent two subsequent phases of a narrow trackway (using the main boundary ditch 2037, in a similar manner to that seen further to the south in Phase 2b (Wessex Archaeology 2005). Immediately to the east of the main boundary ditch 2037, was a second possible trackway formed from two parallel ditches 2040 and 2041, each 2m wide and 4m apart, which runs north-east/south –west beyond the limits of the excavation area, towards the clay deposits and stream at the eastern edge of the quarry.

5 FINDS

5.1 Introduction

A small quantity of finds was recovered during the strip and record of Phase 3a, in a restricted range of material types. The date range of the finds is from Romano-British to post-medieval. All finds have been quantified by material type within each context, and the results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Description		Burnt		Fired		
<u>-</u>	Context	Flint	CBM	Clay	Pottery	Metal
ditch 2006	2007		1/1158			
ditch 2006	2085	· · · · · · · ·			1/4	
ditch 2006	2099		2/143			
ditch 2011	2001	2/35	3/68		4/44	
ditch 2012	2112		1/15	1/12		
ditch 2013	2067			·	1/10	
ditch 2014	2060		4/215		5/42	1 Romano-British coin
ditch 2014	2106					1 button; 1 medieval coin; 3 iron objs
ditch 2015	2052				1/1	2 Hon obja
ditch 2015	2063		3/65		12/173	5 nails
ditch 2018	2058				1/5	
ditch 2034	2101		1/97			
ditch 2037	2125					4 cartridge cases; 1 copper alloy ring
ditch 2126	2097					1 Romano-British coin
ditch 2126	2114				1/14	
topsoil	2000				2/217	
	TOTAL	2/35	15/1761	1/12	28/510	

5.2 Pottery

- 5.2.1 Pottery provides the primary dating evidence for the site. Sherds of Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval date were identified.
- 5.2.2 Romano-British sherds were recovered from six contexts (topsoil and ditches 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2126), totalling 22 sherds. These comprise coarse greywares (including some Alice Holt products), grog-tempered wares, and Oxfordshire colour coated finewares. The range of wares and the vessel forms represented here (everted rim jars) suggests a date range in the Late Roman period (3rd/4th century AD).
- 5.2.3 Medieval sherds came from two contexts (topsoil, ditch 2011), totalling five sherds. These include an internally glazed skillet rim/handle and a bowl rim, both in sandy fabrics, while two body sherds are in a sandy/calcareous fabric of a type found widely in the Kennet Valley in west Berkshire and north-east Wiltshire.

5.2.4 One post-medieval sherd (a coarse redware) was recovered from ditch 2006.

5.3 Ceramic Building Material

5.3.1 This comprises fragments of brick and tile. Fragments from ditches 2011, 2015 and 2014 have been tentatively identified as Romano-British, largely on fabric grounds as these pieces are undiagnostic. One medieval roof tile came from ditch 2014, post-medieval tiles from ditches 2034 and 2126, and one post-medieval brick from ditch 2006. One undiagnostic fragment from ditch 2012 remains undated.

5.4 Coins

- 5.4.1 Three coins were recovered from the excavations at Raghill Quarry. Two of these date to the Romano-British period, whilst the third is late medieval in date. Both of the Romano-British coins date to the 4th century AD. The first, from context 2126, is too badly damaged and corroded to be dated closely, although its size and form would support a 4th century date. The second, from context 2014, is also worn and corroded, but can be identified as a 'Securitas Reipublicae' issue struck by an Emperor of the House of Valentinian, and dating to between AD 364 and 478. Neither coin is unusual as a site find.
- 5.4.2 The third coin was extracted from context 2014 by way of a metal detector is rather more unusual. This is a silver double patard issued by Charles the Bold, who was Duke of Burgundy between 1467 and his death in 1477. He became Duke of Burgundy on the death of his father, Philip the Good, at which time, Burgundy had been an independent state since 1270, and was strongly allied to England. Coins of Charles the Bold are unusual as site finds in Britain, although they may well have circulated in small numbers within the coinage of the time The size and weight of the coin is similar to the English groat of the time, and its bullion value is likely to have ensured its acceptability as currency. It may have entered the country through trade with Burgundy, or as change carried by a traveller. The coin shows fairly heavy wear, along with a number of scratches, and a couple of small cuts are visible in the edge of the coin. Some of these may have been caused by attempts to check its silver content.

5.5 Other Finds

5.5.1 Other finds comprise two pieces of burnt, unworked flint (ditch 2011, undated), one piece of fired clay (ditch 2012, undated), five iron nails (ditch 2015, associated with Romano-British pottery), and several other metal objects (see Table 1), all definitely or probably post-medieval.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

6.1 Introduction

A series of three bulk samples of 10 litres were taken from one Romano-British ditch 2015 and one medieval ditch 2011. The samples were processed using standard Wessex Archaeology flotation methods for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoal.

6.2 Charred Plant Remains and Charcoal

- 6.2.1 The flots were small and very rooty (at least 80% in two of the flots), with high numbers of modern seeds. Several of the samples also contained a high number of probable modern fungal sclerotia (Coenococcum geophilum spores) and modern uncharred seeds. All there are representative of the proximity of the samples to active soils. Neither sample from the Romano-British ditch produced any plant remains. That from the medieval ditch produced one small fragment of hazelnut shell (Corylus avellana).
- 6.2.2 The scarcity of charred cereals may partly be attributed to the destruction of remains by rooting activity. However if such remains had ever been present in quantity it is reasonable to assume that at least some would have survived. Other samples from similarly dated sites in the region (e.g. de Moulins 1995) have produced relatively good evidence for both grains and chaff. The absence of such remains may therefore indicate that the ditch was not in close proximity to any settlement and/or that such settlement was small and short lived that such remains did not accumulate in any quantity.
- 6.2.3 Little charcoal was noted from the flots and is recorded in **Table 2**. That only a few largish fragments were recovered could certainly be attributable to the breakdown of such remains by rooting activity. Although it may also be in part attributed to the reasons listed above relating to the absence of cereal remains.

Table 2: Assessment of the charred plant remains and charcoal

						Flot								Residu	
Feature no	Context		size litres	flot ml	size	Grai n	Chaf f		eed see		Charcoa			Charcoal >5.6mm	
	<u>l</u>	<u></u>		ļļ	Ron	mano-	 Britisl	i Dite	a eh		>5.6mm	L		11	Щ
2015	2063	310	1	0		200	С	-	a		- 0		-	-	
2015	2071	311	1	0	35	10	-	-	a				-	_	
						Medic	val Di	tch							
2011	2091	312	1	0	60	55	-	-	a		- C(h)	-	_	

KEY: A^{**} = exceptional, A^{*} = 30+ items, $A = \ge 10$ items, B = 9 - 5 items, C = < 5 items, (h) = hazelnuts, smb = small mammal bones; Moll-t = terrestrial molluscs Moll-f = freshwater molluscs; NOTE: ¹ flot is total, but flot in superscript = ml of rooty material. ² Unburnt seed in lower case to distinguish from charted remains

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The results of the archaeological strip and record on the Phase 3a area has located evidence of multi-period activity, dating to the Late Romano-British period, medieval period and post-medieval period. This is an important addition to the results of the previous stages of fieldwork, which has up to the present time only produced evidence of late post-medieval/modern activity, with the single exception of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity in the Phase 1 area, at the southern limits of the quarry site.
- 7.1.2 The Romano-British evidence is also likely to be of local and regional significance, given the relatively little evidence for Romano-British activity on the wider plateau gravels. This absence of material is noteworthy in view of the proximity of the Romano-British town (*Calleva Atrebatum*), approximately 3km to the south of the Site (Wessex Archaeology 2001).
- 7.1.3 The focus of activity is located in a topographically significant part of the quarry site, lying as they do on the southern edge of the gravel plateau, which occupies the northern part of the Raghill quarry area. Based on the results of the Phase 3a fieldwork, in which features clearly extend further to the west and north of the excavation area, the remainder of the gravel plateau must be considered to have a high potential for further archaeological remains.
- 7.1.4 The majority of the dated features revealed in the Phase 3a area comprise large rectilinear enclosures of a Romano-British (2015 and 2018), post-medieval (2006 and 2034) and possibly medieval (2011) date. The function of these enclosures at this stage is unclear. The position of the enclosures close to the stream may indicate possible animal penning, or in the case of the post-medieval examples, an association with the brick-making. Although there is little evidence to support this from the recovered finds, the funnel-shaped nature of the later post-medieval trackway (2012 and 2014) is also very reminiscent of other attempts at animal management (Wessex Archaeology 1998).
- 7.1.5 The relatively small quantity of finds and notable absence of any significant quantities of charred plant remains recovered from these features would appear to preclude the existence of contemporary settlements in the immediate vicinity of the excavation area, although this does not rule out occupation within the remainder of the wider plateau area.
- 7.1.6 The function of the two pairs of possible post-medieval trackway ditches 2040/2041 and 2038/2039 is also unclear, although it is likely that they may be associated with the movement of clay and other materials associated with the brick-making which has already been identified along the eastern edge of the quarry area (Wessex Archaeology 2005).

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