

SMR 13060
SW 2593

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Glos 13060
SO 951280

**Hitchins Phase 5, Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire:
Archaeological evaluation, October 1991**

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Gloucestershire County Council, November 1991

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1 Summary

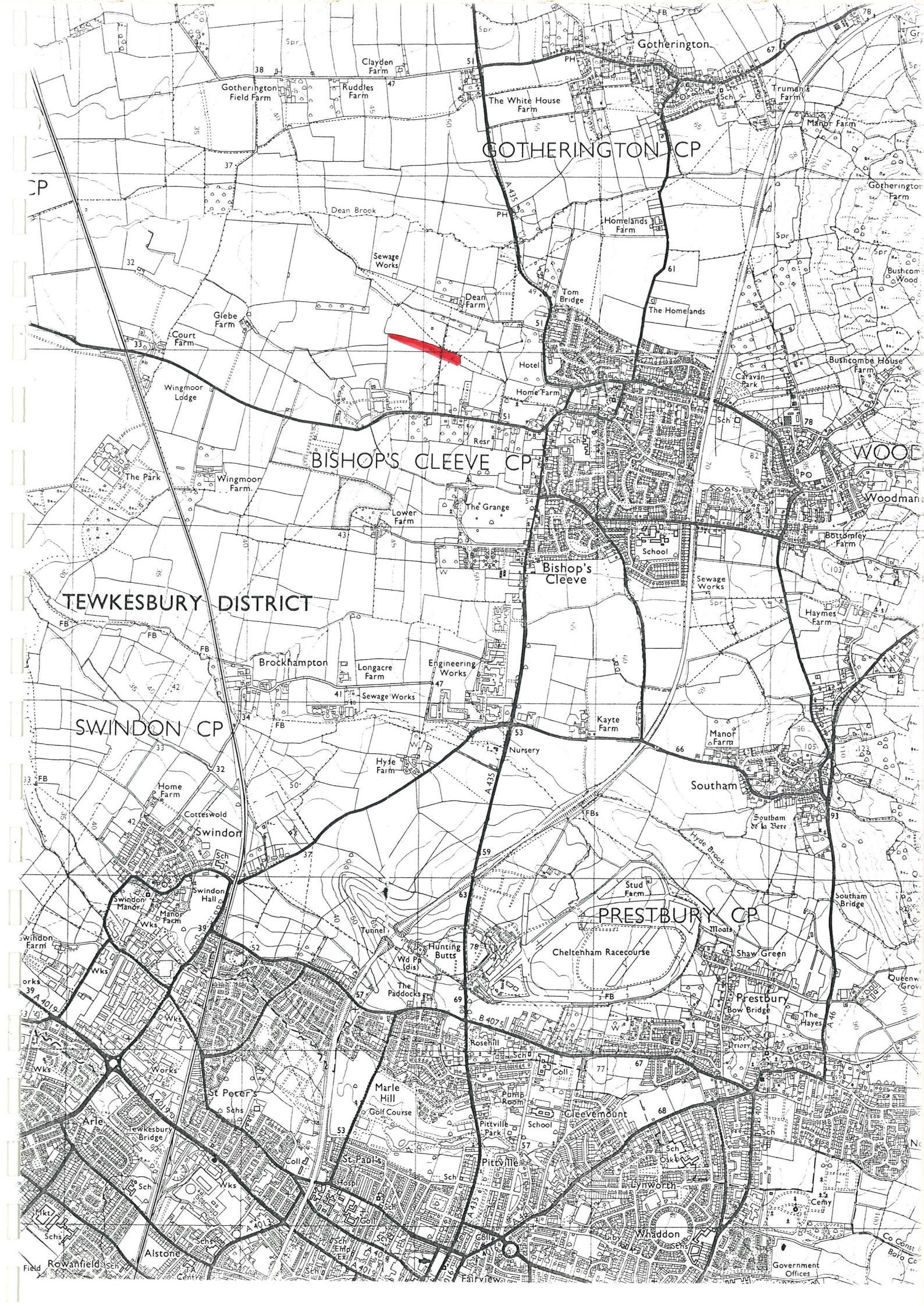
In October 1991 the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council undertook an evaluation of c 2.5 hectares of land at NGR SO 951280 located some 0.7 km west of Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire. Some 2% of the area was examined by the excavation of seven trial trenches. One trench produced evidence for the presence of significant archaeological features and deposits, interpreted as elements of a Romano-British settlement. Recommendations for further archaeological work are made.

2 Introduction

2.1 In October 1991 the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council undertook an evaluation of c 2.5 hectares of land at NGR SO 951280 located some 0.7 km west of Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire (fig 1). The work was commissioned by Robert Hitchins Ltd, and undertaken in advance of a planning application to construct an estate road within the northern portion of two fields (the former OS land parcel nos 0005 and 1300). Further proposals are awaited for the development of the remainder of OS land parcel no. 0005, and the evaluation reported on below forms the first stage in a more extensive programme of assessment.

2.2 Description of the evaluation area (fig 2)

The evaluation area measures c 450m (east-west) by a maximum of 40m (north-south). The ground is fairly level, at around 45m AOD, although sloping upwards slightly towards the east. The underlying subsoil is a deposit of sand and gravel. The majority of the evaluation area lies within OS land parcel no 0005, a featureless arable field covered in stubble. This field was bounded to the north by Gilder's Brook, a large watercourse excavated as part of the construction of the Bishop's Cleeve Bypass in 1989. A smaller part of the evaluation site was contained within the former OS land parcel no 1300, an area of pasture transected by the Bishop's Cleeve Bypass. This field contained well-preserved ridge and furrow earthworks indicative of medieval arable cultivation, aligned approximately north-east to south-west. Similarly aligned earthworks, much lower in height, were also present within OS land parcel no 0005: these can be presumed to have formed part of a medieval field system.



GOTHERINGTON CP

BISHOP'S CLEEVE CP

TEWKESBURY DISTRICT

SWINDON CP

PRESTBURY CP

38

Clayden Farm

Ruddles Farm

51

Gotherington

The White House Farm

Truman's Farm

Manor Farm

Dean Brook

Sewage Works

Dean Farm

Tom Bridge

The Homelands

32

Glebe Farm

Court Farm

Wingmoor Lodge

Hotel

Home Farm

Caravan Park

Bushcombe House Farm

The Park

Wingmoor Farm

Lower Farm

The Grange

Bishop's Cleeve

School

Sewage Works

WOOD

Woodman

Bottomley Farm

Haymes Farm

Brockhampton

Longacre Farm

Engineering Works

Sewage Works

Hyde Farm

Nursery

Kayte Farm

Southam

Southam de la Bere

Home Farm

Cotteswold

Swindon

Swindon Hall

Swindon Manor

Manor Farm

Stud Farm

Cheltenham Racecourse

Shaw Green

Prestbury

Bow Bridge

The Hayes

St Peter's

Marle Hill

Golf Course

St Paul's

Pittville

Pittville

Gleevemount

Pittville Park

Pittville

Whaddon

Rowanfield

Alstone

Government Offices

2.3 Archaeological background

The Gloucestershire County Sites and Monuments Record records two sites of potential archaeological interest within, or adjacent to, the proposed construction site. Features interpreted as elements of a settlement dating to the early Romano-British period (Glos 9882) were revealed along a \approx 80m length of Gilder's Brook during its construction in 1989 (Parry 1990a). The site (plotted on fig 2) lies \approx 60m north of the proposed road within OS land parcel no 1300. Within OS land parcel no 0005, aerial photography has revealed a rectangular enclosure (Glos 6429) of uncertain nature and date.

2.4 The objective of the evaluation was to sample the area of proposed construction to determine whether significant archaeological deposits were present. The evaluation was undertaken during the period 14-22.10.1991, the work being combined with the assessment of a neighbouring site. Seven trenches, each \approx 30m long by 2m wide, were excavated to uncover a combined total area of \approx 420 square metres, representing a sample of some 2% of the proposed development area. Initially, the trenches were excavated using a machine excavator equipped with a toothless bucket to remove topsoils and cultivated soils to expose the uppermost surface of the natural subsoil. The trenches were aligned at right angles to, or with, the ridge and furrow earthworks to facilitate soil removal and sampling of the cultivated soils: otherwise the trenches were placed randomly at regular intervals. The trench sections and subsoil surfaces were then cleaned by hand revealing, in some instances, archaeological deposits preserved within features dug into subsoil. These anomalies were tested by hand-excavation, and a written, drawn and photographic record of significant archaeological deposits was made.

3. Description

3.1 Deposits of medieval/modern date

3.1.1 The excavation of Trenches 1-7 revealed that cultivated soils dating to the medieval and modern periods were present over the entire area of interest.

3.1.2 Medieval cultivated soil

A deposit interpreted as a cultivated soil associated with the formation of the ridge and furrow earthworks in the medieval period, was defined in every trench, where it lay directly over natural subsoil. The deposit, designated context 2, was a compact yellowish-brown (Munsell 10YR 5/4) clayey, sandy-silt. This soil formed the earthwork ridges preserved within OS land parcel no

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

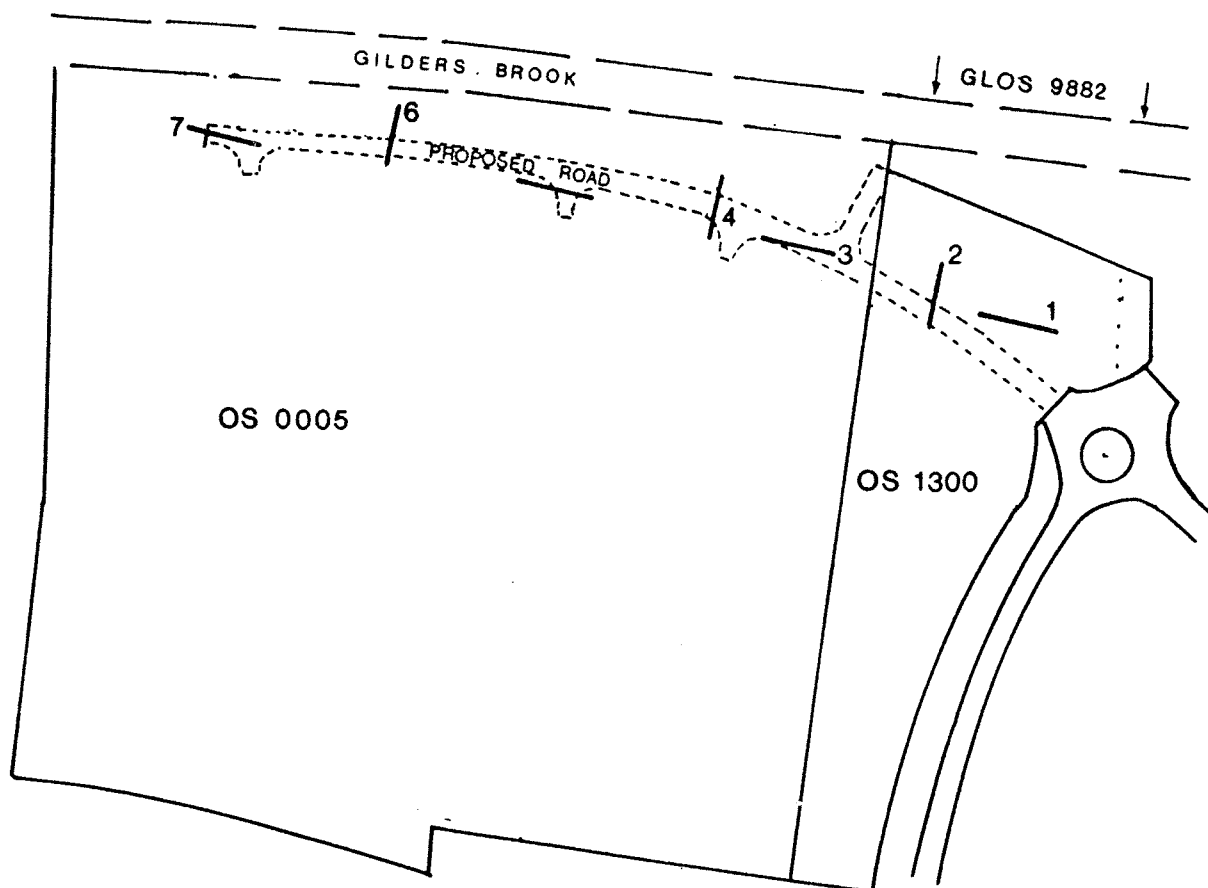


FIG 2

1300, where it was a maximum of 0.65m deep (in Trench 1). The ridges were not present within OS land parcel no 0005, presumably because the earthworks had been eroded by modern ploughing, but there, context 2 formed a continuous deposit covering the subsoil, between 0.3m-0.4m thick. In both land parcels the deposit also filled linear hollows within the subsoil, spaced 5m-8m apart, whose locations corresponded to the furrows between the earthwork ridges. The bases of the hollows, which were presumably scooped-out by ploughing, were 0.4m-0.5m below the subsoil underlying the area of the ridge to either side.

3.1.3 Modern soils and deposits

Above the medieval cultivated soil lay a topsoil/ploughsoil of modern formation. This deposit, context 1, was dark-grey (Munsell 10YR 4/1) sandy silt \leq 0.2m deep in the area of pasture, and \leq 0.3m deep in the area of arable. All trenches contained modern ceramic land drains, which were inserted into, and aligned with, the medieval plough furrows described above. Trench 6 contained a rubble-drain.

3.2 Romano-British deposits

3.2.1 Significant archaeological deposits dating to the Romano-British period were located in Trench 1. Trenches 5 and 7 produced undated features which may be broadly contemporary. Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 6 contained no deposits earlier than the medieval and modern soils described above.

3.2.2 Trench 1

Three archaeological features were excavated within Trench 1: all were contained within the eastern portion of the trench, buried a maximum of \leq 0.85m below the present ground level. Adjacent to the eastern end of the trench was a circular pit, context 4, measuring a minimum of 1.6m in diameter and 0.55m deep. It was filled by context 3, a deposit of hard, light olive-brown (Munsell 2.5Y 5/4) sandy clay, incorporating a few flecks of charcoal. The infill contained many sherds of Roman pottery and a few fragments of animal bone. Approximately 1m to the west of pit 4 lay context 6, a ditch with a V-profile, aligned north-east to south-west, measuring a maximum of 1.05m wide by 0.88m deep. The ditch was infilled by a deposit of hard, olive-brown (Munsell 2.5Y 4/4) sandy clay incorporating a mass of broken pottery of Romano-British date. Some 13m west of ditch 6 was a second ditch, context 9, aligned north-west to south-east, a maximum of 1.15m wide by 0.5m deep. It was filled with contexts 7 and 8, respectively olive-brown (Munsell 2.5Y 4/4) and brownish-yellow

(Munsell 10YR 6/6) sandy clays, which both incorporated Roman pottery sherds and fragments of animal bone.

3.2.3 Trench 5

Towards the centre of Trench 5 was a V-profiled ditch, context 12, aligned north-east to south-west, measuring a maximum of 1.03m wide by 0.57m deep. The ditch was infilled with context 11, a light olive-grey (Munsell 5Y 6/2) sandy clay. A few fragments of animal bone were found incorporated within the fill, but no other dateable finds. The feature must, however, pre-date farming of the area in the medieval period, for it was sealed by the cultivated soil, context 2.

3.2.4 Trench 7

At the western end of Trench 7 two small features were located. Approximately 6m east of the western end of the trench lay a small linear gully, context 16, a maximum of 0.45m wide but only 0.16m deep. It was infilled with context 15, a compact brown (Munsell 10YR 5/3) silty clay. Some 2m east of the gully lay a small circular pit-like feature, context 14, which had a diameter of 0.37m and a maximum depth of 0.1m. It was infilled by a compact greyish-brown (Munsell 10YR 5/2) clay. Neither fill contained any finds. The significance of these deposits is uncertain: they may represent eroded features of archaeological significance, or alternatively, they may represent areas of plough disturbance to the natural subsoil.

4 Finds

4.1 Pottery

The Romano-British pottery recovered from the features excavated in Trench 1 can be dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. A full analysis has not been undertaken, but a preliminary view of the material indicates that a range of vessels are present. Locally manufactured Early Severn Valley wares form a major component of the assemblage, which also includes a substantial quantity of limestone-tempered pottery brought from the Malvern area. Imported Samian, a fine table ware manufactured in what is now eastern and central France, was also present in small quantities.

4.2 Animal bone

Animal bone was present in all three features excavated in Trench 1. No species identification has been undertaken, but it seems likely that bones of

domesticated animals are represented.

5 Interpretation and discussion

The Romano-British features excavated in Trench 1 are in close proximity to, and broadly contemporary with, the site identified some 60m to the north within the Gilder's Brook watercourse (Glos 9882). The nature of the settlement, and the precise function of the features sampled, is not known with certainty. However, at other locations within the Severn Valley, rural settlements of late prehistoric and Romano-British date have been excavated, demonstrating that these were comprised of areas where domestic, agricultural, and industrial activity were focused, demarcated by ditches forming land boundaries. Such sites can be extensive, covering several hectares. It is, therefore, probable that the ditches excavated in Trench 1 can be identified as land boundaries associated with Glos 9882.

The clustering of the features located within Trench 1, and the quantity of finds contained within them, might indicate that an area of domestic occupation, possibly the nucleus of the settlement, lay close by. Alternatively, the absence of features detected in Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 6, together with the uncertain nature of the deposits sampled within Trenches 5 and 7, may suggest that the proposed area of construction is located on the periphery of the Romano-British settlement area. Be that as it may, it seems probable that more features of archaeological significance lie within the proposed area of development at locations not tested by trenching.

6 Level of preservation

The effect of the medieval ploughing detected in all trenches (3.1.2 above) has been to erode much of the vertical stratigraphy, with the result that no surfaces contemporary with the archaeological features survive. The degree of the erosion cannot be ascertained precisely, although it is clear that some areas of the site (eg the plough furrows) are more eroded than others. However, up to 0.55m of deposit was contained within the sampled features, and the artefacts contained within these appeared to be well-preserved. The level of preservation over the proposed area of development does not, however, suggest that the archaeology would merit preservation in situ. There is, however, scope for the recovery of more archaeological features and artefacts that would add to our knowledge of the site, and of the archaeology of the locality.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 In view of the fact that archaeological deposits on the evaluated area do not merit preservation in situ, it is recommended that further work is undertaken in order to record the deposits in advance of their destruction.
- 7.2 In view of the apparent sparsity of archaeological deposits over most of the evaluation area, it is recommended that no further archaeological investigation is undertaken in advance of construction.
- 7.3 It is recommended that, when construction commences, removal of soils down to base level is undertaken under archaeological supervision, and an opportunity to record any exposed archaeological features should be provided by the developer.
- 7.4 It is recommended that any further proposals to develop the remainder of OS land parcel no 0005 should be preceded by an archaeological evaluation in advance of construction to determine whether significant archaeological deposits are present.

References

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Gloucestershire: archaeological
evaluation, October 1991

Abbreviations

AOD Above Ordnance Datum

OS Ordnance Survey

TBGAS Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire
Archaeological Society