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Longstock Nursery,
Longstock, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

Wessex Archaeology



Ref: 48111.2

November 2000

**PROPOSED RESERVOIR, LONGSTOCK NURSERY,
LONGSTOCK, HAMPSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

prepared on behalf of
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Figure 1: Location of Watching Brief

Figure 2: Area of Watching Brief showing archaeological features

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barclay and Phillips to undertake an archaeological watching brief during both tree clearance and stripping of the site during the construction of a water storage reservoir at Longstock Nursery on the Leckford Estate (centred on NGR SU 367 388).

The Hazeldown prehistoric field system, a Scheduled Monument (33851) forms the northern and eastern boundary to the site. Visible earthworks probably associated with the field system were observed in the woods to the north and east of the site,

The watching brief was undertaken over six days between 21st and 28th of September. A single north-east to south-west aligned 'V'-shaped ditch and a large east to west aligned linear spread were recorded in the east of the site. Artefacts recovered from these deposits were Romano-British in date, with some ceramic and stone building material which indicate the former existence of a substantial building in the vicinity, associated with the field system.

Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Barclay and Phillips on behalf of the Leckford Estate. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Ben Gibbons from the Leckford Estate and Paul Ashby (Barclay and Phillips) for their co-operation and interest throughout the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Mark Dunkley, Julie Lovell, Dave Parham and Steve Webster. The illustrations were prepared by S.E. James. This report was compiled by Julie Lovell. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Rachel Morse.

**PROPOSED RESERVOIR, LONGSTOCK NURSERY,
LONGSTOCK, HAMPSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Background

- 1.1.1. Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barclay and Phillips, on behalf of the Leckford Estate, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a water storage reservoir at Longstock Nursery on the Leckford Estate. The work was required to meet the planning condition (TVN 7012/1), imposed by the local planning authority.
- 1.1.2. The site of the proposed reservoir was located within a belt of woodland, immediately on the north side of the car parks associated with Longstock House and Park, centred on NGR SU 367 388 (**Figure 1**). The Hazeldown prehistoric field system, a Scheduled Monument (33851), forms the eastern and northern boundary of the site.

1.2. Archaeological background

- 1.2.1. The scheduled monument includes the surviving part of an Iron Age and Romano-British field system lying on the steep northern slopes of Hazel Down, 850m north of Hazeldown Farm.
- 1.2.2. The field system comprises a series of rectangular fields, between 0.2ha and 0.6ha in overall size. The individual fields are defined by lynchets running along the contours, up to 3m high, and by field banks up to 2m high, running down the slope. A trackway runs up the slope defined by two lynchets at the eastern end of the Site. A section of a similar double lynchet track can be seen on aerial photographs running along the top of the slope further west.
- 1.2.3. On the level hilltop are a series of shallow circular depressions up to 8m in diameter. Prehistoric and Romano-British pottery occurs in dark soils associated with these depressions, which are interpreted as hut platforms representing an area of settlement associated with the field system.
- 1.2.4. The monument is part of a more extensive field system covering an area of about 2.5km, extending to the west and south. However, to the south, on more level ground (which includes the area of the watching brief), the individual field elements lack cohesion, and to the west the fields have been levelled by ploughing and are no longer visible on the surface.

1.3. Geology and topography

- 1.3.1. The underlying geology of the area comprises clay with flints and loam overlying chalk (Geological Map of Great Britain 1:50,000 Series Sheet 299). The site is relatively flat at 76m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), with

the steep northern slopes of Hazeldown sloping away to the north and east (Figure 1).

1.4. Aims

- 1.4.1. The aim of the watching brief was to provide a record of any archaeological features and deposits observed during groundworks associated with construction of the reservoir.

2. METHODS

- 2.1.1. All groundworks associated with the construction of the reservoir were monitored to the surface of natural geology. Where archaeological remains were revealed, hand excavation and recording was carried out.
- 2.1.2. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets with a continuous unique numbering system. A full written, graphic and photographic record was undertaken.
- 2.1.3. The archive is currently stored at the offices of Wessex Archaeology, Old Sarum, Salisbury, Wiltshire, under the site code 48111. It is intended that the complete archive will be deposited in due course with Hampshire Museum Service.

3. RESULTS

- 3.1.1. The watching brief was undertaken over six days between 21st and 28th of September 2000. Modern tree roots had heavily disturbed the majority of the stripped area. Visibility was poor due to the uneven surface caused by the toothed bucket of the machine stripping the site. Archaeological deposits and features were observed in the east of the site.
- 3.1.2. A single north-east to south-west aligned 'V'-shaped ditch (101) was recorded on the northern edge of the site. The linear ditch (Figure 2) measured 3.64m wide and 1.76m deep. A total of eleven separate layers were recorded within the ditch, the majority of which were the result of natural silting. Layer 104 appeared to be a deliberate dump of back-filled material comprising very dark brown/black clayey silt with sparse sub-angular chalk fragments and moderate rounded flints. Pottery recovered from layer 105 revealed the ditch fell out of use in the Roman period.
- 3.1.3. To the west of the ditch was a large east to west aligned linear spread (119). The spread c.17m long by 10m wide and up to 0.17m deep comprised a dark greyish brown silty clay and contained large quantities of Roman occupation debris. A greater concentration of finds was recovered from the eastern part of the spread (100) suggesting that any occupation close to the site lies in the woods to the east. A number of discrete dumps of large flints were recorded within the spread and these were probably used to fill in ancient tree throws.

- 3.1.4. Visible earthworks were observed in the woods to the north and east of the site, in particular a number of east to west aligned lynchets. Spread 119 covered a short length of this lynchet suggesting that the occupation debris was used to fill and level the depression after the field system fell out of use.

4. FINDS

4.1. Introduction

- 4.1.1. Finds were retrieved during the watching brief, mostly from a large spread containing occupation debris, with small quantities also from the fills of one lynchet and one ditch. The finds are quantified by material type in **Table 1**. With the exception of a small amount of pottery, and the worked and burnt flint, all of this material is demonstrably or probably Romano-British in date.

4.2. Pottery

- 4.2.1. The most commonly occurring material type was pottery, of which a very small quantity (5 sherds), all from the occupation debris, was identified as prehistoric. Four sherds are in flint-tempered fabrics; these include one rim sherd in a well-sorted flint-tempered fabric, which can be identified as a Middle Iron Age saucepan pot. The other three sherds are less chronologically distinctive but could be of late Iron Age date. One sherd is in a fabric with sparse organic inclusions. Organic-tempered fabrics are characteristic of the early/middle Saxon period in southern England, but are also known in the Early Iron Age, and those belonging to the latter period are generally more sparsely tempered than Saxon examples. This example is therefore more likely to be prehistoric than Saxon.
- 4.2.2. The Romano-British assemblage is dominated by coarsewares, both sandy and grog-tempered. Some of these at least are likely to be of relatively local manufacture. Potential sources for the sandy wares include the production centres of the New Forest and the Hampshire/Surrey border (Alice Holt); a handful of sherds of the 4th century AD Alice Holt buff-firing variant (Overwey-Tilford fabric) are present, including examples of the characteristic late Roman rilled jar form. A small quantity of Black Burnished ware (BB1) from the Poole Harbour region of Dorset has also been identified. Vessel forms found in the sandy wares consist almost exclusively of everted rim jars and dropped-flange bowls, the latter another typical later Roman form (mid 3rd to 4th century AD). The grog-tempered wares are likely to include examples of 'Wessex grog-tempered ware', a late Roman ware found commonly across Hampshire but for which no production sites are known; grog-tempered vessel forms include dropped-flange bowls, everted rim jars and large storage jars with 'cabled' rims.
- 4.2.3. The finewares include later Roman colour-coated products of the Oxfordshire and New Forest kilns, the former predominating. The Oxfordshire kilns were supplying largely open vessels (bowls) while the New Forest kilns supplied closed forms (beakers and flagons); mortaria from both centres are present.

4.2.4. The range of fabrics and forms here indicates a late Roman date for much of this assemblage, with activity extending well into the 4th century AD, although some earlier Roman material is certainly present, in the form of a samian cup of 2nd century AD type (Central Gaulish Drag. 33). Since most of the pottery was derived from the occupation spread, it is not possible to discern chronological distinctions between this group and the material from the stratified features (lynchet and ditch), although it can be noted that the single sherd from lynchet 114 is a late Roman Oxfordshire fineware.

4.3. Ceramic and Stone Building Material

4.3.1. The presence of a small quantity of ceramic and stone building material indicates the former existence of a substantial building in the vicinity of the site. The ceramic fragments include *imbrex* roof tiles, combed flue tiles and floor/hypocaust bricks, while the stone comprises ten fragments of flat roof tiles in sandstone and shelly limestone.

4.4. Other Finds

4.4.1. Other finds comprise two tiny fragments of vessel glass, one whetstone fragment, one greensand quern fragment, two copper alloy coins, 26 iron nails and eight miscellaneous iron fragments, all recovered from the spread of occupation debris. All these are certainly or probably of Romano-British date; one of the coins has been identified as an issue of Carausius (AD 287-93), while the second coin is an illegible 3rd/4th century issue. In addition, three worked flint flakes and five pieces of burnt, unworked flint could be residual prehistoric finds.

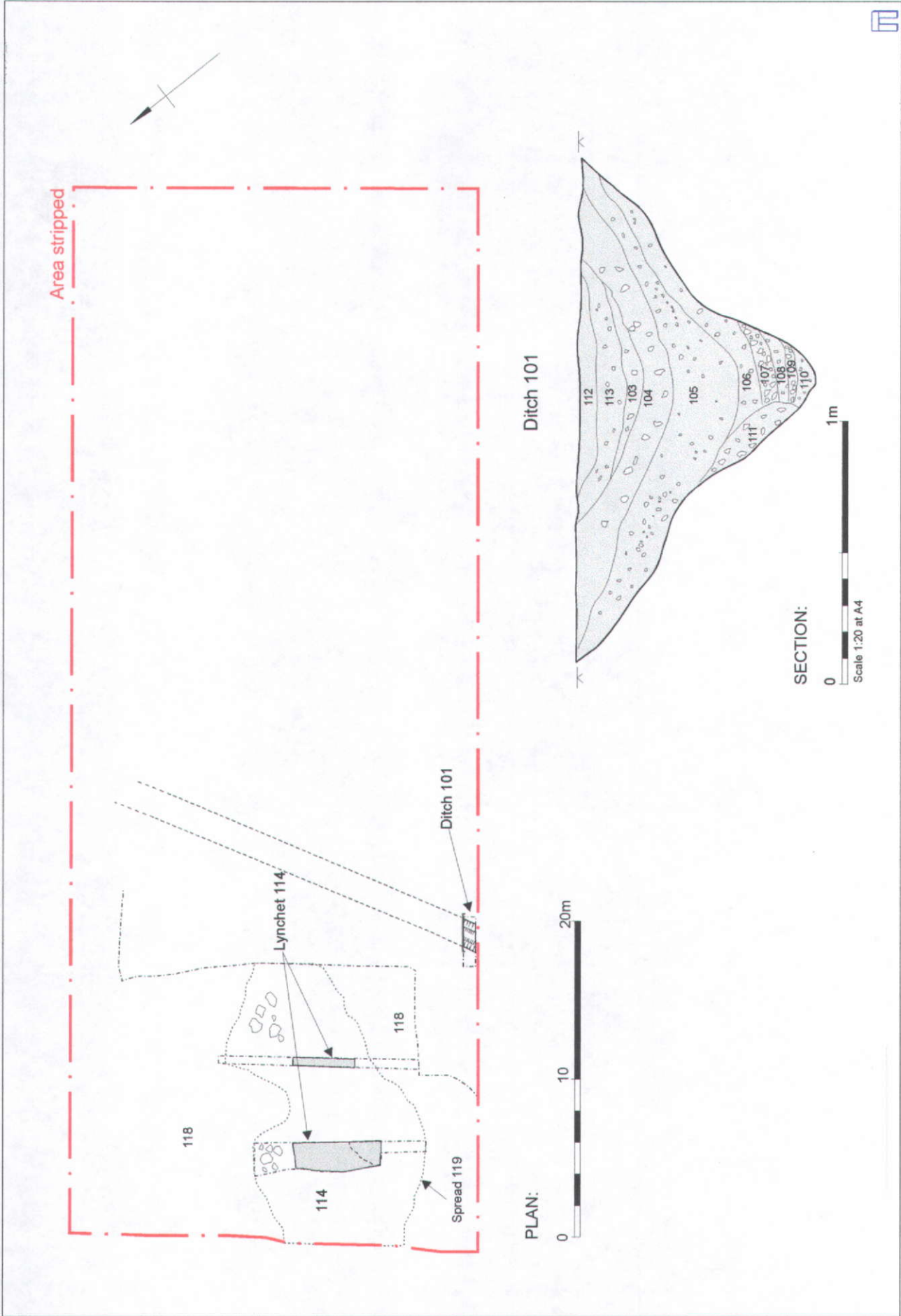
4.4.2. Table 1: All finds by context (number/weight in grammes)

CBM = ceramic building material

Context	Description	Prehist pottery	R-B pottery	CBM	Worked Flint	Burnt Flint	Glass	Stone	Metal
100	Occupation debris	5/107	559/6546	53/3477	3/19	5/394	2/2	12/1746	2 cu alloy 34 iron
105	Ditch 101		1/5			1/3			
113	Occupation debris		20/311	3/301					
115	Lynchet 114		1/24	2/51					
TOTALS		5/107	581/6886	58/3829	3/19	6/397	2/2	12/1746	2 cu alloy 34 iron

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1. The Roman boundary ditch and the layer of occupation debris are consistent with activity and settlement associated with the Iron Age and Romano-British field system.



Area stripped showing archaeological features and section across Ditch 101.

Figure 2



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