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Northamptonshire County Council
Northamptonshire Archaeology

Gifford

BICESTER PARK PHASE 4

NGR SP6002 2239

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

JULY – OCTOBER 2004

ASSESSMENT REPORT AND UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN

Rec 2007

KIER PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS LTD
6 Cavendish Place
London
W1G 9NB

Report No. 11026/096/RO6
March 2005

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Between July and October 2004 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation followed by open area excavation on 2.3ha of development land at Bicester Park on the outskirts of Bicester, Oxfordshire. A multi-phase complex of boundary ditches had its origins in the late Iron Age, the 1st century AD, with the main focus of activity through the 2nd century AD and 3rd century AD. In the 2nd century AD the ditches defined an agricultural field system including a trackway. In the 3rd century there was a series of rectangular enclosures superseding the earlier trackway and field system. There was no direct evidence for buildings within the excavated area, but a number of features particularly two wells, one of which was stone-lined, on the southern part of the site indicate that the main focus for this middle status Roman farmstead lay to the south, in an area lost to a railway cutting. The educated status of the inhabitants may be indicated by the recovery of part of a wooden writing tablet.

A lack of evidence for occupation after the 3rd century and the first edition Ordnance Survey map indicates abandonment of the site and subsequent agricultural use.

The report concludes that a programme of post-excavation analysis, leading to preparation of an academic text for publication in the county archaeological journal *Oxoniensia* is required. Proposals for resources and programming to carry out this work, which is required to discharge the archaeological condition attached to the planning consent for the site, are included.

2. INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Gifford and Partners Ltd on behalf of Kier Property Developments Ltd to conduct archaeological evaluation at Bicester Park, Eastern Perimeter Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 6002 2239), in advance of a proposed development comprising industrial buildings and associated infrastructure (Fig 1). This was followed by open area excavation.

As a condition of the planning consent, the impact of the development on archaeological remains was to be mitigated through a programme of archaeological works as outlined in a Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation (Oxfordshire County Council, 30th June 2004). A Written Scheme of Investigation was subsequently prepared and issued by Gifford and Partners Ltd (Gifford 2004).

A geophysical survey undertaken by Stratascan Ltd (2004) indicated faint traces of potentially archaeological 'cut' features. Of particular interest were linear features and two curvilinear features in the centre of the site.

In July 2004 Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated ten trial trenches. No separate report was prepared as the programme proceeded straight to open area excavation. The open area excavation was completed during October 2004.

The project was designed and implemented in accordance with Appendix 2 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

This report contains an assessment of the results of the trial trenching and open area excavation and an updated project design to ensure that the full potential of the excavated assemblage can be realised.

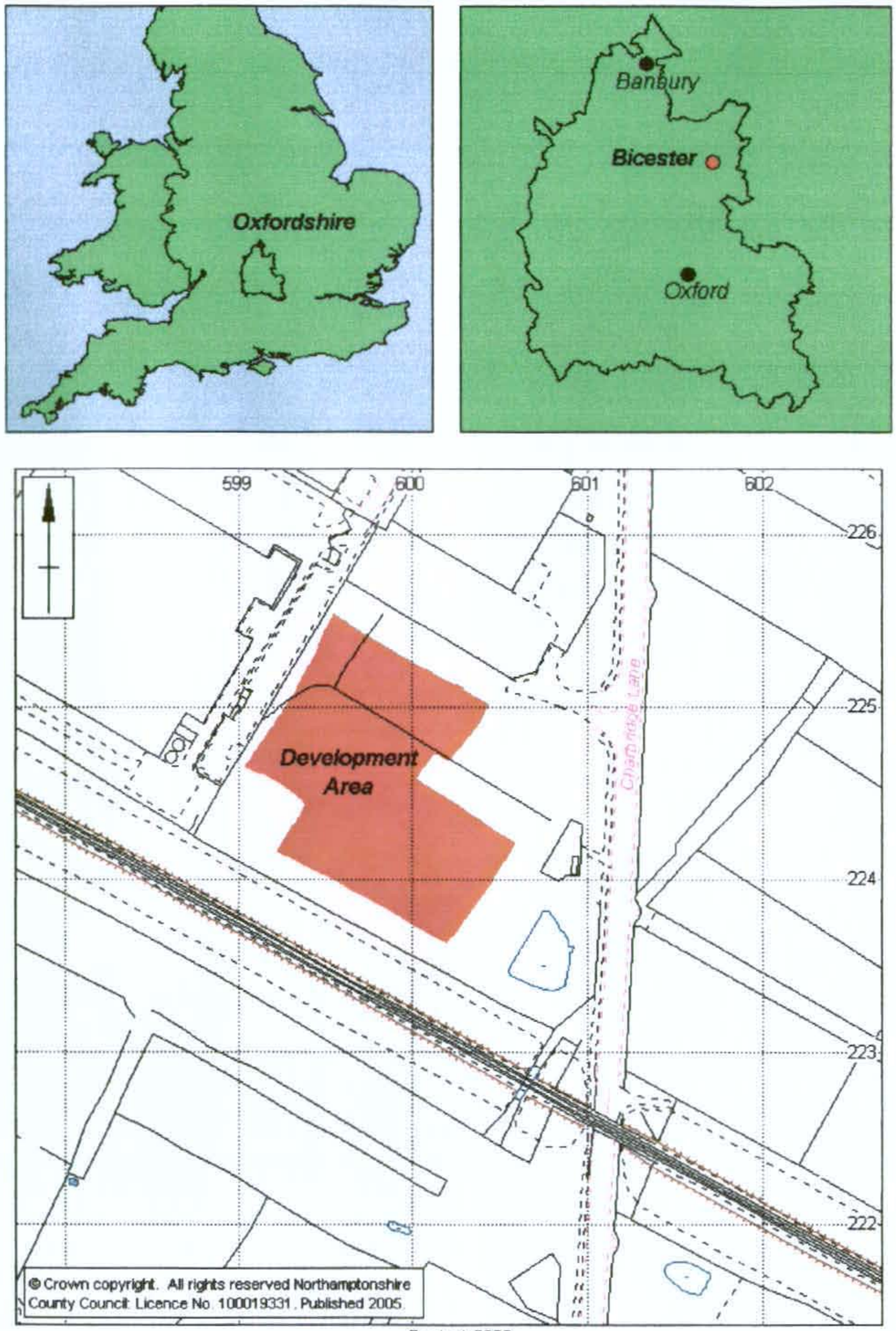

Figure 1. Site Location

3. PLANNING BACKGROUND

Kier Property Developments Ltd was granted Planning Permission (03/00170/F) by Cherwell District Council for Phase 4 and Phase 5 Bicester Park, Eastern Perimeter Road, Bicester. A number of conditions were attached to the Planning Permission including Condition 14, relating to Provision for Archaeological Works.

Condition 14 states that:

> *No development shall commence of Phase 4 until the applicant has been responsible for organising an archaeological watching brief, to be maintained during the period of construction. The watching brief shall be carried out in accordance with a written specification and by a professional archaeological organisation that has first been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*
>
> *Reason – To safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological importance on the site.*

The design brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, issued by Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist on 13th August 2003, states that:

> *A formal programme of archaeological observation and investigation shall be conducted during any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological deposits. Significant features to be hand cleaned and sample excavated. (*Section 1.2*)*

It further states that:

> *The archaeological watching brief will be maintained during the period of groundworks. Such groundworks will include the excavation of foundations and service trenches, surface stripping and other invasive groundworks. Provision should be made for taking environmental/organic samples. (*Section 4.1*)*

A revised planning application (04/0118/F) was submitted to Cherwell District Council for the erection of a production/distribution warehouse with ancillary ground and first floor offices, service yard and car parking facilities. The condition for a watching brief with a programme of mitigation to be agreed if archaeological remains were present would not allow the potential archaeological risks to be identified prior to the start of construction. Consequently, following discussion between Gifford & Partners and the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, a *Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation* was issued by Oxfordshire County Council, (30th June 2004) at the request of the developer.

Trial trenching confirmed that archaeological features, mainly field boundaries, survived in the north of the site with curvilinear features of possible prehistoric date identified in the east and the south-west corner of the site. An extensive area in the southern and central areas of the site appears to be devoid of significant archaeological remains.

Consequently the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist, issued a *Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* (30th June 2004) in line with the requirements of *Planning and Policy Guidance 16* (PPG16) and Cherwell District Council Local Plan.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development site lies within an area of considerable archaeological potential on the outskirts of Bicester.

The development site lies approximately 0.5km to the east of the modern town centre, and 2km from Launton. Several archaeological sites are known within the vicinity. A later prehistoric settlement of probable mid–late Iron Age date (SMR 16120) was discovered during an evaluation at Bicester Fields Farm, *c* 700m to the south-west of the proposed development site (OAU 1998).

A large amount of Roman activity is recorded within the wider area (Fig 2). Within the immediate area this includes a Romano-British ditched enclosure, of probable 2nd century date, and evidence for later Anglo-Saxon activity (SMR 16071), both of which were discovered during an archaeological field evaluation to the south of the railway line, less than 100m to the south of the proposed development site (OAU 1997). A section excavated through the enclosure ditch revealed that it was *c* 1m wide and up to 0.35m deep, with a gently rounded profile and a single fill of dark blueish grey, silty clay containing Roman pottery dating to the 2nd century AD (OAU 1997). The ditch appeared to form the corner of an enclosure with the eastern arm of the ditch extending north-eastwards towards the proposed development site (Fig 3).

The Roman small town of Alchester, which has an origin in the second half of the 2nd century, lies 2km to the south of the development area. The town is positioned on Akeman Street, near the junction with another Roman road (Fig 2). The town consisted of an irregular internal layout, with defensive wall and rampart, measuring 10.5 hectares (Woodfield 1995).

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows the development site and its surrounding area as a series of enclosed fields and trackways situated either side of the railway line (Fig 4).

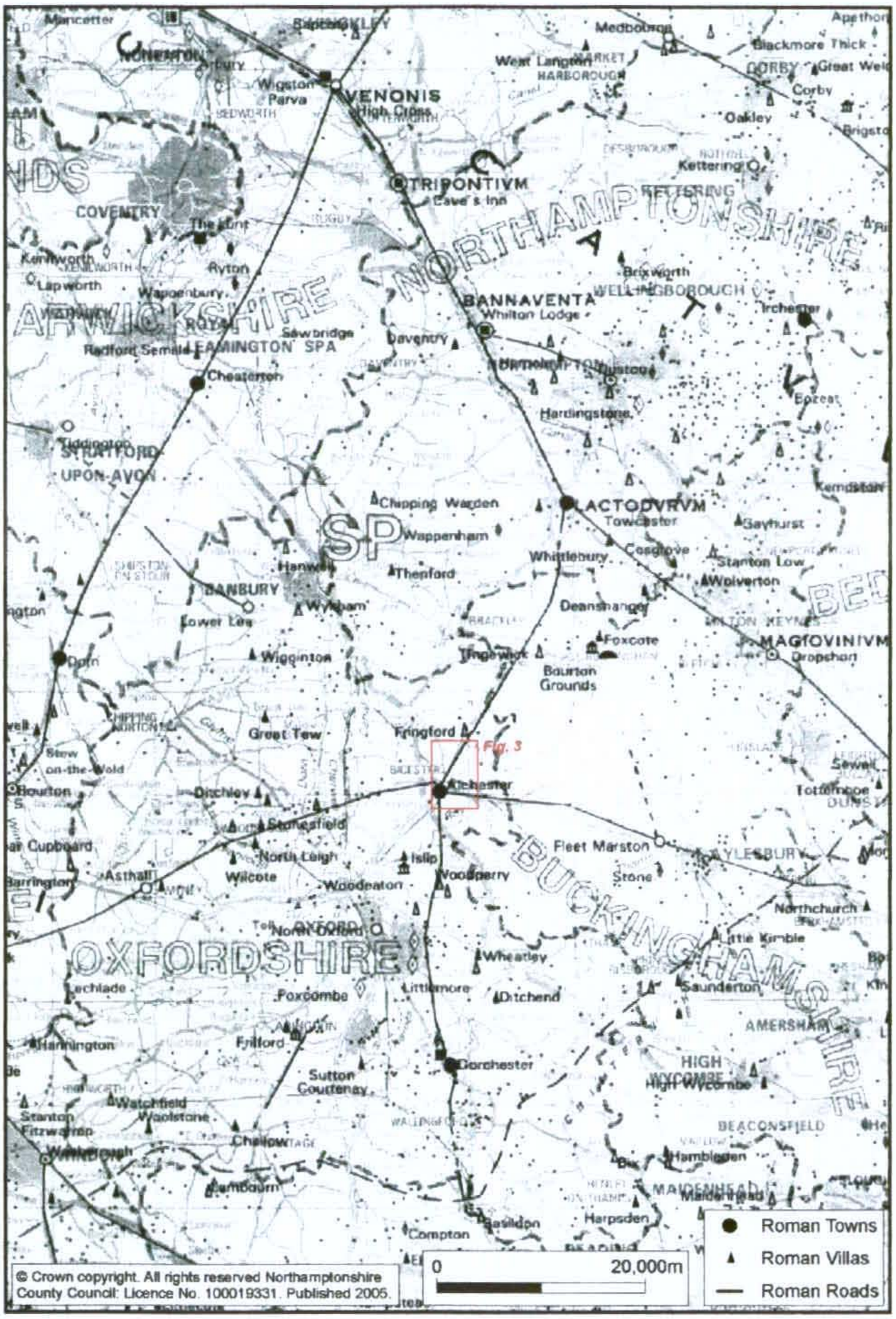

Figure 2. Known Roman sites within the vicinity of Bicester Park

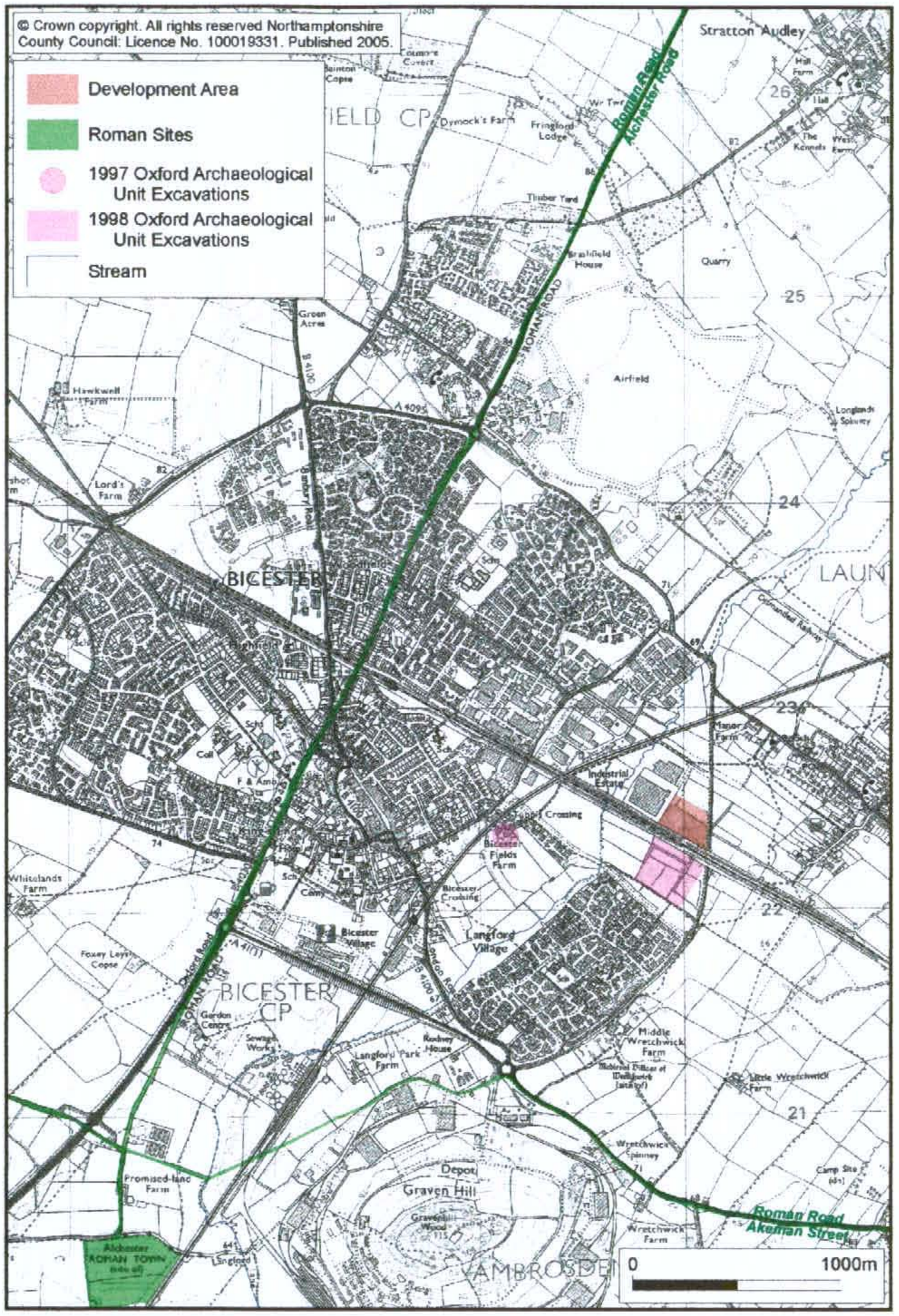

Figure 3. Previous Archaeological Investigations

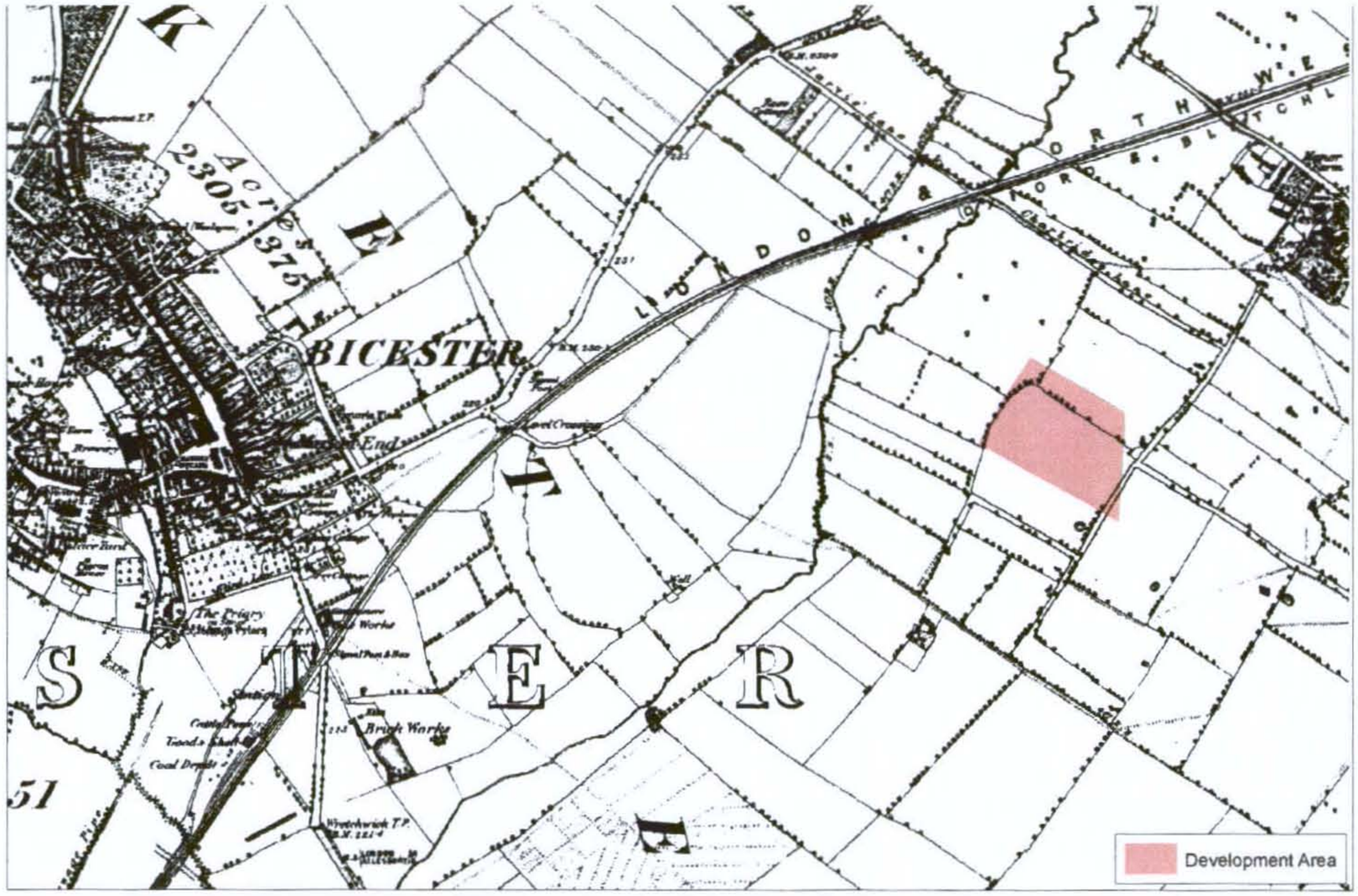

Figure 4. 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1885

5. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site occupies approximately 2.3 hectares and is located on the eastern outskirts of Bicester, centred on NGR SP 6002 2239 (Fig 1). It is bounded by existing industrial units to the west and north, by Charbridge Road (Eastern Perimeter Road) to the east and by the London – Birmingham railway line to the south. The site is generally flat at *c* 70m above Ordnance Datum. A small stream runs NE – SW to the north of the development site (Fig 3).

The underlying geology has been recorded as Oxford Clay. The Brief issued by Oxfordshire County Council states that the site lies in the Combrash geological area. www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm.

6. OBJECTIVES

The programme of works was requested by Oxfordshire County Council to assess the archaeological resource. The broad objectives of the archaeological excavation as set out in the written scheme of investigation (Gifford 2004) were to mitigate the impact of the development by ensuring the preservation of the archaeological remains through record and to enable the understanding of the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting. Specific objectives include:

- To record the extent of the linear features revealed by the evaluation in the north of the site.
- To examine the full extent of the curvilinear features located within evaluation trenches 6 and 7, within the proposed development area.
- To determine whether there is any evidence for the continuation of the Romano-British ditched enclosure (SMR 16071) located to the south of the site (Gifford 2004) within the development area.

7. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in two phases. The first phase was conducted in July 2004 when ten trial trenches, each measuring 30m by 1.5m, were excavated using a 360° tracked excavator under archaeological supervision. Archaeological features were cleaned by hand, excavated and recorded prior to the open area excavation. Trenches 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 9 contained shallow ditches and discrete pits. Trenches 4, 5, 8 and 10 revealed no archaeology. No evaluation report was prepared as the open area excavation began immediately following the completion of the evaluation.

The second phase of works comprised an open area excavation undertaken between August and October 2004. The overburden was removed using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket with the topsoil and subsoil separately stacked.

A site grid was established at 10m intervals and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The overall aim was to achieve a consistent level of feature sampling across the site. This included the investigation and recording of all relationships wherever possible between all features and deposits. All discrete features were sectioned, and those forming parts of recognisable structures or containing environmental or significant artefactual assemblages were investigated in more detail. Where necessary the archaeological surface was cleaned by hand and planned at a scale of 1:100. All discrete features and approximately 5% of linear features were sectioned, drawn at a scale of 1:10 and recorded on pro-forma sheets with pottery, animal bone, etc allocated to individual contexts. A unique context number in a single continuous sequence was allocated to each distinct deposit and feature.

Soil samples, of between 10-40 litres (where possible), were taken for flotation from dateable contexts with a potential for the recovery of charcoal and carbonised plant remains.

A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives, with associated prints, colour transparencies and digital photographs were maintained throughout the duration of the excavation.

8. THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Three broad phases of archaeological occupation have been identified: late Iron Age and successive phases of occupation in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Later activity on the site is represented by scattered Saxon pottery found within the subsoil and a single medieval ditch.

The excavated features comprised a series of linear ditches defining a trackway and field system superseded by several rectangular enclosures or plots. Several pit groups and two wells were also present. Although no direct evidence for the presence of domestic buildings was recovered the presence of the wells, and an increase in the quantity of pottery, roof tile and coins would appear to indicate domestic activity immediately beyond the southern limits of the site, probably underneath the present railway line.

The natural geology across the site comprised a horizon of orange Oxford Clays (1103). In two areas of the site, at the base of deep cut features, earlier horizontal natural clay layers were encountered including blue grey Oxford Clay and brown grey Oxford Clay. All of the archaeological features cut the natural geology and were sealed by a subsoil deposit of light orange brown silty loam (1102) 0.40m thick, which in turn was sealed by dark brown loam topsoil (1101), up to 0.25m thick.

The feature fills were generally similar in composition, comprising mid orange brown silty clays and mid grey brown silty clays with very few inclusions, all indicative of silting, rather than deliberate backfill. Where marked differences to the composition of the above occurred, they have been detailed separately.

8.1 Phase One: Late Iron Age / Early Roman agricultural land use

A sparse residual flint assemblage from four contexts, provided the only evidence for Neolithic/early Bronze Age presence. There was no evidence for early to mid Iron Age activity.

Evidence for late Iron Age/early Roman occupation is slight compared to later phases (Fig 5). The earliest archaeological features comprised two ditches in the north-west corner of the site and a pit group (PG1) in the centre of the site. The activity within this period indicates a newly established field system.

Ditches
Several ditches were dated to this phase. An east – west aligned ditch ran across the length of the site, measuring between 0.50m and 1m wide. Two further east – west ditches within the middle of the site, measured *c.* 0.50m wide. A single north – south aligned ditch, *c.* 0.50m wide, crossed the centre of the site. A sparse assemblage of late Iron Age / early Roman pottery was recovered from these ditches.

Pit Group 1 (PG1)
Three similar sized pits lay within the south-west corner of the site. They were less than 1m in diameter and less than 0.50m deep and contained a darker brown silty clay fill with 10% charcoal inclusions and pottery of a late Iron Age date.

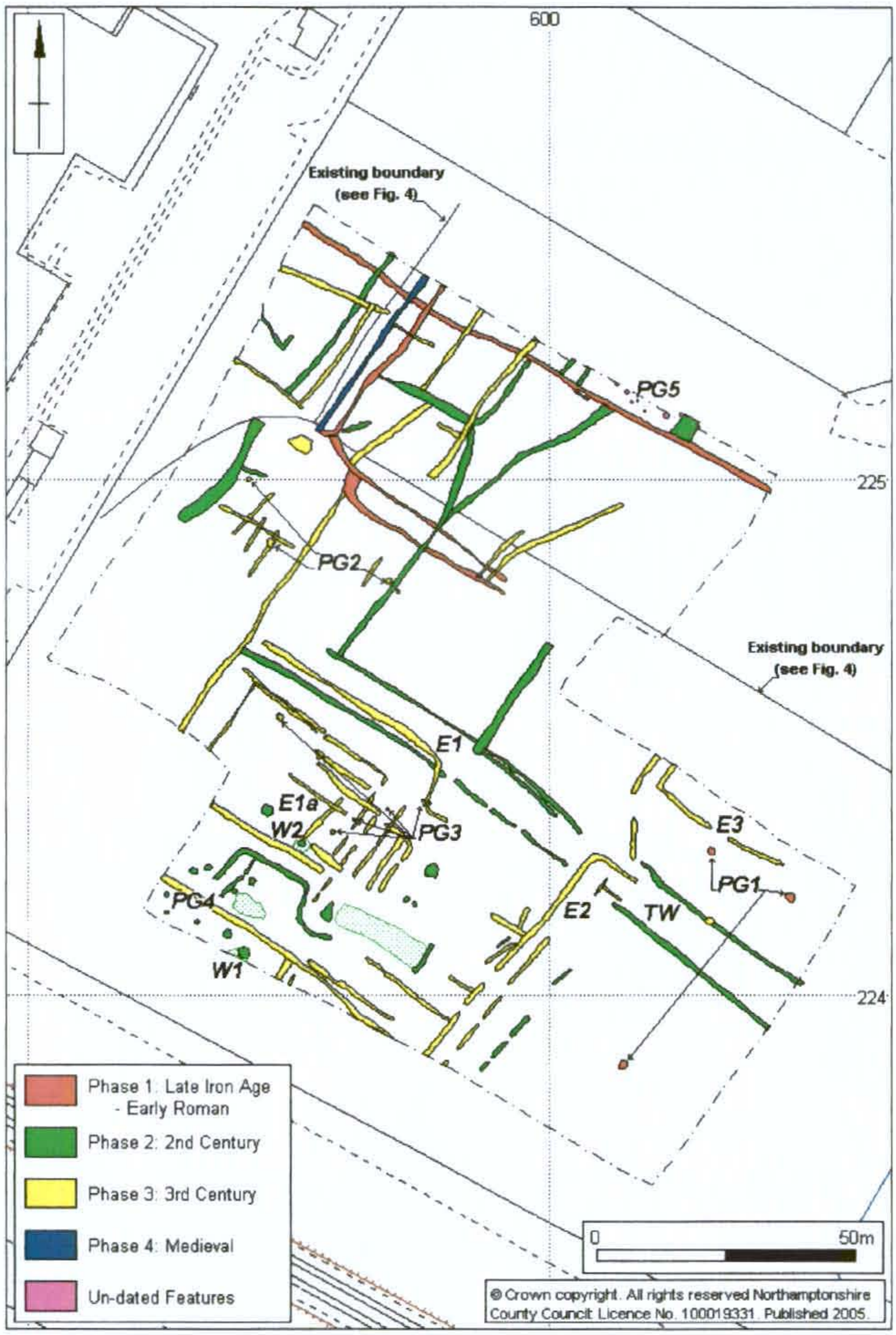

Figure 5. All Features Phase Plan

8.2 Phase Two: Early settlement and associated land use in the 2nd century AD

During this phase, land use was expanded, which indicated a more organised and intensive agricultural utilisation (Fig 5). Modification of the ditch alignments within the field system in the north of the site was undertaken, along with the construction of a trackway across the centre of the site. Further activity within the area is represented in the south-west corner of the site by a series of pit groups, wells and soil layers, with several short ditches possibly representing early organisation of the settlement. Although no structural remains were recovered from these areas, the presence of wells and soil layers containing stone and pottery of mid 2nd century date, indicate domestic activity. Other finds from the soil layers include a single piece of glass, and several bone fragments.

Ditches
A series of north – south aligned ditches and gullies were in the north area of the site, with differences in alignment possibly indicating potential sub phases. All the ditches were less than 1m wide and 0.50m deep ([1240] Fig 6 Section 2).

Pit Group 2 (PG2)
Following the abandonment of the ditch system, several pits were excavated, all measuring up to 1m diameter and less than 0.50m deep. The pits typically had a rounded profile and do not appear to form part of an alignment or structural group.

Trackway (TW)
Two parallel ditches, 10 – 12m apart, ran from the eastern extent of excavation, and were aligned east – west across the centre of the development area. A slightly splayed 10m wide entrance was noted in both ditches 40m from the eastern edge of the site, indicating access to both north and south. The splaying to the north suggests that an attempt was made to restrict the movement of cattle or people. The southern ditch included a series of short segments creating three breaks or entrances, each less than 1m wide.

Pit Group 3 (PG3)
Pit Group 3 was located in the southern half of the site and comprised a series of small pits and postholes, all measuring c. 0.80m diameter and less than 0.50m deep. They do not appear to form part of structural groups or pit alignments.

Pit Group 4 (PG4)
Pit group 4 comprised seven small pits located in the south-west corner of the site. One of these contained a number of medium sized stones, which showed some evidence of burning, within its fill.

Wells (W1 and W2)
Two wells were excavated within the south-west corner of the site. *W1* [1518] lay against the southern edge of the excavation and comprised a 2.0m diameter bell-shaped cut narrowing to a near vertical shaft, 0.50m wide with a maximum depth of 2.30m. The lower fills comprised light blue grey clay, overlain by mixed orange brown sandy clays containing a writing tablet, small plank and 2nd century pottery (Fig 6 Section 3, Plate 3 and Appendix 5).

The second well *W2* [1541] lay close to a series of small pits. It was 1.0m diameter at the top gradually narrowing to a diameter of 0.50m at the maximum depth of 5.0m. The well

was stone-lined to a depth of 4.2m. The lower fill (1567) within the stone-lined area of the well comprised loose stone rubble with locally produced pottery dated to the 2nd century, ceramic roof tile of the type associated with local villas and animal bone and small pieces of waterlogged worked wood (Fig 6 Section 4, Plates 4 and 5). Butchery marks and canid gnawing were evident on a single bone from this context.

Soil Layers
Three areas of dark brown silty organic material were located in the south of the site. Each layer was less than 0.10m deep, with no obvious structure. Pottery, animal bone and charcoal were found within each layer. They appear to be surface consolidation infilling hollows within the natural surface which may have become flooded and uneven.

8.3 Phase Three: Reorganisation of the settlement in the 3rd century AD

This phase of activity is represented by the highest density of archaeological features, concentrated mainly in the south-west corner of the excavated area. During this phase a further series of modifications were undertaken to the ditch system in the north, mainly consisting of new north – south ditches, indicating realignment of existing fields or enclosures. A complete reorganisation of the land in the southern part of the site resulted in the creation of a series of enclosures, replacing the trackway and previous field system. The focus of activity in the south-west of the site appears to be Enclosure 1, which possibly represents settlement activity, while Enclosures 2 and 3 may represent paddocks.

Ditches
A series of north - south ditches measuring less than 0.50m wide and 0.40m deep, indicates possible realignment and reorganisation of the preceding field system during the 3rd century (Fig 6, Section 1).

Enclosure 1 (E1)
Enclosure *E1* comprises a series of ditches measuring between 6m and 40m in length and 0.50m and 1m wide, which form the northern side of a north – south aligned rectangular enclosure.

The northern side of the enclosure comprised a 40m long continuous ditch with its eastern side turning south to create a 5m wide splayed entrance (Fig 6 Section 6). The eastern side of the enclosure comprised a 40m long segmented north-south ditch set back 3m from the terminal point of the northern inturned ditch. The southern and western ditches presumably lay beyond the limit of excavation.

Enclosure 1a (E1a)
A possible sub enclosure measuring 30m long by 25m wide, was identified within the northern part of Enclosure 1. The north and west sides were represented by a continuous ditch, 0.60m wide by 0.35m deep. Three entrances along the eastern side of Enclosure 1a aligned with those in the eastern side of Enclosure 1. The southern boundary ditch was 1.0m wide, but very shallow.

A series of short segmented ditches represent later activity within this part of Enclosure 1a and indicate modifications to the existing enclosure. A 5m section of ditch cut into the terminus of the northern arm of Enclosure 1a formed an extended entrance. A further curved section of ditch formed the southern arm of the later entrance.

Further modifications were represented by a series of east – west aligned ditches measuring between 10m and 15m.

Enclosure 2 (E2)
Only the western side of this enclosure was found, comprising a ditch measuring 50m long by less than 1m wide with a maximum depth of 0.50m. Two 2m wide breaks in the western ditch created narrow entrances. These entrances appear to correspond to the east facing entrances within Enclosure 1a. Two further alignments of segmented ditches with similar entrances possibly represent later adaptation to the enclosure. The lack of archaeological features within the surrounding enclosure would indicate that it was probably used as a paddock, although any trace of discrete shallow features may have been erased by later truncation.

Enclosure 3 (E3)
An inturned segmented ditch less than 1m wide and more than 30m long was created in the south-west corner of a further enclosure. There was an entrance 3m wide.

8.4 Phase Four: Abandonment of the Roman settlement

Later activity on the site is represented by a sparse scatter of Saxon pottery within the subsoil (1102) and a single medieval ditch (Fig 5). The lack of evidence indicates an absence of occupation in the area following the abandonment in the late 3rd century AD.

The first edition 1885 Ordnance Survey map shows the area as fields, with evident boundaries across the centre of the site which can be related to existing disturbance (Fig 4). A north – south boundary appears to be a later modification of the earlier medieval ditch.

8.5 Phase Five: modern land use

The land use of the site immediately prior to excavation was a disused and overgrown field, bounded by a recent road to the east, a railway line to the south and a new business park to the north and west.

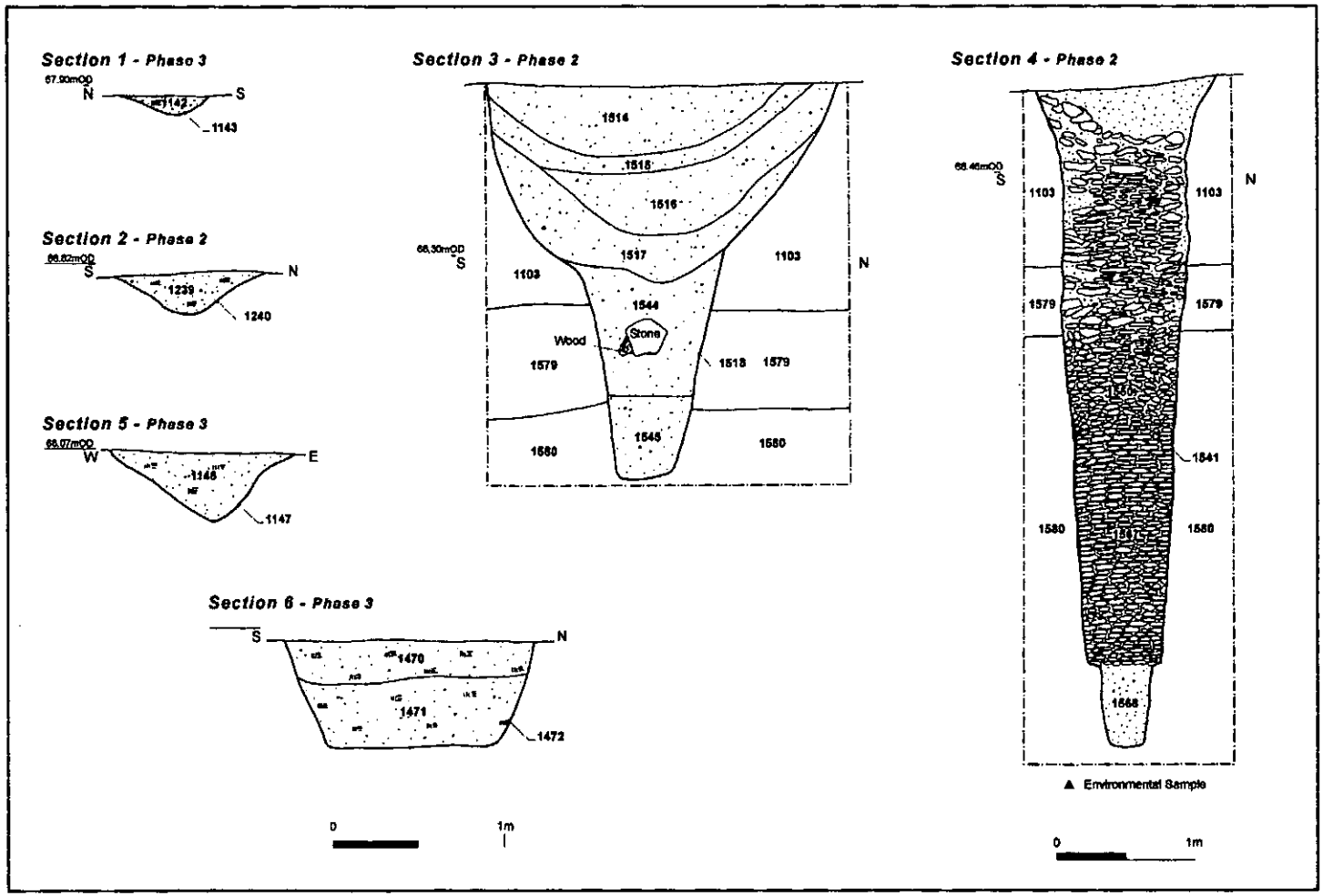

Figure 6. Sections 1 - 6

9. QUANTIFICATION OF THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive is summarised below:-

Stage	Contexts	Plans	Sections	Photos	Samples
1	75	6	16	46	0
2	467	15	181	206	16
Totals	**543**	**21**	**197**	**252**	**16**

Table 1. Summary of Site Records

9.1 The Finds

The excavated features produced a variety of finds assemblages, including flint, pottery, metal objects, worked wood, quern stone fragments, metal working debris, ceramic building material and fired clay. These are fully discussed in the appendices (A1 – A13).

Flint (A1)
Four small pieces of residual flint were found. Due to the lack of diagnostic features they can only be broadly assigned to the Neolithic / early Bronze Age.

Pottery (A2)
A total of 2067 pottery sherds were recovered from the site. In general terms the assemblage was in poor condition. The sherds were generally very abraded, with very few surfaces evident.

The earliest material present appears to be Iron Age or earlier, comprising a single sherd of grey thick walled sandy ware. A further 48 sherds date to the late Iron Age / early Roman period comprising handmade wares, with shell inclusions.

Roman pottery accounts for the bulk of the assemblage, mainly dating from the period spanning the early 2nd century to the later 3rd century AD. The assemblage mainly comprises local oxidised and reduced wares, together with a small quantity of Gaulish Samian, Dorset black burnished ware, along with local Oxfordshire mortaria, flagon and colour coated wares.

Four sherds of Saxon pottery were recovered from subsoil (1102), comprising handmade sandy wares and one sherd of St Neots ware. It is likely that they are not contemporary and span the 6/7th to 10th centuries.

Other finds (A3)
In total 23 other finds were listed in the small finds catalogue, comprising 8 copper alloy objects, 14 iron objects, 1 lead object and 1 piece of glass.

The copper alloy objects include 3 coins and 1 brooch recovered from the topsoil (1101) and subsoil (1102) layers. Further fragments were undiagnostic. The coins date from the mid 2nd to 4th centuries AD. The brooch is an incomplete Colchester derivative type. It is decorated and dates from the mid to late 1st century AD.

The iron assemblage mainly comprises nails, and one ox goad. The remaining iron pieces are undiagnostic.

One piece of glass was found within ditch (1519). It is a base sherd from a square prismatic bottle in blue glass, with decoration on the base. Bottles of this type generally date from between 43AD to the end of the 2nd century, becoming more common from the last quarter of the 1st century.

The worked wood (A4)
The worked wood assemblage comprised seven pieces from the two wells, W1 [1518] and W2 [1541]. Well 1 contained a small plank fragment, and a writing tablet. Well 2 produced two pieces of turned wood, and two flat pieces.

The writing tablet (A5)
Of particular note was the writing tablet from well W1 (Fig 6 & 7, Plate 1). It is a double sided rectangular piece of wood, measuring 147mm long by 47mm wide and 5mm thick. It has a 7mm wide and 1mm deep rim around the intact edges which would have retained a wax surface. There are several faint vertical and diagonal scratches running across the surface.

The querns (A6)
Eight contexts produced quern fragments. They are generally single fragments although subsoil (1102) contained five fragments which may join. They are generally of Millstone grit and appear to have come from standard, Roman, flat topped rotary querns. One piece is a fine grained sandstone, and a further fragment is unidentified. Most of the fragments have lost their grinding surfaces and comprise small rectangular pieces.

The metal working debris (A7)
A total of 3.0kg of metal working debris was recovered. All of the material comprised undiagnostic irregular lumps of miscellaneous ironworking slag. There is also a little fuel ash slag. All of the material appears to have come from ironworking hearths and is indicative of secondary smithing being carried out on site.

The ceramic building material (A8)
This assemblage comprises 142 sherds of tile. Twenty sherds are identifiable as *tegulae* and six as *imbrices*. The assemblage comprises of two main fabric types, type A is a fine silty fabric, orange in colour with a reddish core. Fabric B has no inclusions and has an orange surface with a medium grey reduced core. The remaining sherds are sandy brown in colour with cracked surfaces, presumably as a result of weathering. One sherd, from well deposit (1567), is of particular interest. it comprised a reduced core and a pink surface that had been covered with a dark maroon wash, with a curving finger impression. These features have been noted at Wootton Villa, Northampton (Hylton 2000, Chapman P, 2002) and Croughton Villa in Northamptonshire, only eight miles to the north-west of the development area (Dawson 2003).

The fired clay (A9)
Three small featureless fragments of fired clay were found within the site.

9.2 The animal bone and environmental evidence

Animal bone, charred and waterlogged plant remains, organic material and waterlogged wood were recovered and analysed.

Animal bone (A9)
In total 5.685kg of animal bone was recovered from the excavated features. The preservation of the bone was generally poor, with a high frequency of abrasion, the wood from well context (1567) showed staining consistent with waterlogging. Four instances of gnawing and a single instance of butchery marks were noted.

A limited range of domestic animals are present; cow, sheep / goat and horse are not unexpected from a Roman site.

The charred and waterlogged wood (A10)
Samples were taken from 16 contexts during the excavation and were assessed for the presence of ecofacts. The charred seeds were largely abraded and fragmentary. The waterlogged deposits were reasonably well preserved.

Both hulled barley and naked barley were present within the samples. Chaff fragments confirmed the presence of spelt wheat. The small quantities of chaff and lack of charred wild / weed seed may suggest a late stage in crop processing, however, this may be due to the size and preservation of the assemblage.

Waterlogged plant remains comprised nettles and docks, both of which are common colonisers of waste ground.

The environmental sample
A single fibrous mass was recovered from well W2 context (1567). Initial identification by Bradford University Archaeological Sciences Department indicates a fungal matt common to stagnant water.

The wood
A single root was recovered from well W1 context (1545).

10. PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

10.1 Review of the original research objectives

Objective One: *Recording the extent of the linear features revealed by the evaluation in the north of the site.* The multiphased series of ditches identified during the excavation extend throughout the area of development (Fig 5).

Objective Two: *Examine the full extent of the curvilinear features located within evaluation trenches 6 and 7, within the proposed development area.* The curvilinear features noted during the evaluation were not located during open area excavation, however, they can be related to the trackway ditches and activity within that area.

Objective Three: *To determine whether there is any evidence for the continuation of the Romano-British ditched enclosure (SMR 16071) located to the south of the site (Gifford 2004) within the development area.* The evidence from Enclosure 1 would indicate a continuation related to SMR 16071. It is likely that the main settlement activity lies within the area of the railway line to the south of the site.

10.2 Revised research objectives

Objective Four: *to interpret the evidence within the wider Roman landscape, specifically concentrating on the hinterland of the small Roman town of Alchester.*

10.3 The excavated evidence

The excavation produced a range of evidence from the late Iron Age to the 3rd century AD. The principal activity began in the 2nd century. The phasing / chronology indicate a focus of activity in an area previously devoid of occupation.

Stratigraphic relationships between all major features on the site have been determined and recorded allowing the production of a general plan. A matrix for the site has not been constructed at this stage. However, a provisional phase plan has been determined (Fig 5).

The preservation of features was variable across the site, with the upper fills lost in the majority of cases. The shallow nature of many of the ditches may indicate a high degree of truncation by later activity. Preservation of artefacts and ecofacts within the southern half of the site indicate some potential to recreate the environment and economic uses of the site. Analysis of artefact distribution may assist in definition of specific areas of activity, for example metal working, analysis of the stone content of features may also indicate proximity of structural remains. This will in turn assist with structural group definition. Although the level of preservation of environmental evidence suggests the potential to recreate the former environment, this will be no more than an overview.

Further examination of the stratigraphic relationships in conjunction with the artefact assemblages may allow further definition of the phased economic and settlement activity within the site. Comparison of recorded features within the site, combined with the body of evidence from the wider area, will allow placement of the site within the general knowledge of settlement and economic activity in the Bicester area, specifically relating to the small Roman town of Alchester and its hinterland.

10.4 The Finds

No further analysis is required for the flint, other finds, quern stones, ceramic building material and fired clay due to the small and fragmentary nature of the assemblages. A short summary will be included in the final report.

The pottery
It is recommended that the Roman assemblage is fully recorded and quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalence to allow it to be compared to other assemblages similarly quantified from the locality. This will allow questions relating to the chronology, social and economic status of the site, patterns of trade and the nature of the local pottery to be addressed. The pottery needs to be assessed against the stratigraphic record to check for any irregularities.

The worked wood
The worked wood will be sent to Rowena Gale for wood species identification. Further research will be undertaken in relation to Roman writing tablets.

The metal working debris
An examination of the distribution of the metal working debris should be undertaken in order to examine any localised deposition areas. Relevant contexts should be examined to determine the chronology and duration of iron working on the site.

10.5 The animal bone and environmental evidence

The animal bone, charred and waterlogged plant remains, wood and environmental sample provide no potential for further study. A short summary of results will be included within the final report.

11. REPORTING AND ARCHIVE

11.1 Report Synopsis

It is proposed to undertake a programme of post-excavation analysis that will result in a site narrative with supporting specialist data for publication in the Oxfordshire county archaeological journal *Oxoniensia*. This will concentrate largely on the results of the excavation. The article will contain interpretations of the project objectives set out in the written scheme of investigation (Gifford 2004).

The report will follow the format of the intended journal for publication and will comprise a number of sections under the following principal headings:

Summary

Introduction

Acknowledgements

Topography and geology

Results of excavations

- Phase One: late Iron Age / early Roman agricultural land use
  - The boundary ditches
  - The pit groups
- Phase Two: Early settlement and associated land use in the 2nd century AD
  - The field system
  - The trackway
  - The wells
  - The pit groups
- Phase Three: Reorganisation of the settlement in the 3rd century AD
  - The field system
  - Settlement evidence (wells, soil layers and potential artefact scatters)
  - Enclosure 1
  - Enclosure 2
  - Enclosure 3
  - Other features
- Phase Four: Saxon and Medieval activity
  - Saxon pottery scatter within subsoil
  - Medieval field boundary
  - Map regression
- Phase Five: Modern land use
  - Recent activity within the site

The Finds

- The flint by Andy Chapman
- The pottery by Jane Timby
- The other finds by Tora Hylton
- The worked wood by Pat Chapman
- The querns by Andy Chapman
- The metal working debris by Andy Chapman
- Fired clay by Pat Chapman
- The ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

The animal bone and environmental evidence

- Animal bone by Karen Deighton
- The charred and waterlogged plant remains by Karen Deighton
- Environmental sample by Rob Janaway
- The waterlogged wood by Rowena Gale

Discussion

Bibliography

11.2 Provisional Illustration List

Illustrations will be prepared by Jacqueline Harding to support the text. These will comprise location plans, phase plans, detailed plans of excavated features and sections where appropriate. Finds will be illustrated as required.

- Figure 1 Site location
- Figure 2 Roman sites around Bicester
- Figure 3 Detail plan of Roman sites around Bicester
- Figure 4 First edition Ordnance Survey 1885
- Figure 5 General plan of excavated features
- Figure 6 Phase 1 plan
- Figure 7 Phase 2 plan
- Figure 8 Phase 3 plan
- Figure 9 Detail of Phase 3 plan
- Figure 10 Detail of phase 3 plan
- Figure 11 – 13 Sections of wells and other major features
- Figure 14 – 15 Pottery illustrations
- Figure 16 – 17 Various finds illustrations

11.3 Archiving

All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991).

All finds will be cleaned, catalogued and prepared for storage. Artefacts will be analysed, catalogued and quantified according to artefact type series currently in use in Oxfordshire.

The archive will be sorted and cross-referenced. A stratigraphic account will be prepared and reports on the analysis of artefactual and ecofactual assemblages incorporated into the archive.

A microform copy of the site archive and narrative will be made to RCHME standards and submitted to the National Archaeological Record. The archive and finds together with a copy of the excavation report will be deposited at a local museum. Deposition of the archive will conform to the guidelines of the receiving museum.

12. RESOURCES AND TIMETABLE

12.1 Work programme

The proposed work programme is as follows:

	Spring 2005	Summer 2005	Autumn 2005	Winter 2005
Stratigraphic analysis				
Production of site narrative				
Specialist analysis				
Illustration				
Introduction and discussion				
Editing and submission of publication text				
Archive preparation				

Table 2. Proposed post-excavation work programme

12.2 Key personnel

Overall project management will be undertaken by Sean Steadman BA MIFA for Gifford and Partners Ltd. Anthony Maull Cert Arch, will manage the post-excavation programme for Northamptonshire Archaeology.

Stratigraphic analysis and production of the site narrative will be undertaken by Ailsa Westgarth with the assistance of other Northamptonshire Archaeology personnel. Illustrations will be prepared by Jacqueline Harding BA HND. The writing of the Introduction and Discussion sections and final editing will be undertaken by Anthony Maull and Andy Chapman of Northamptonshire Archaeology and Sean Steadman of Gifford.

Specialist reports will be prepared as shown below:

The waterlogged wood by Rowena Gale

The pottery by Jane Timby

12.3 Resources

Task	Undertaken By	Total Allocated Time
Further analysis	AJ Westgarth	6 Person Days
Integration of finds reports	AJ Westgarth	2 Person Days
Research	AJ Westgarth	2 Person Days
Site Narrative	AJ Westgarth	12 Person Days
Illustrations	J Harding	8 Person Days
Introduction and discussion	A Westgarth A Maull	2 Person Days
Editing of publication text	AJ Westgarth A Maull A Chapman	5 Person Days
Pottery Report	Jane Timby	5 Person Days
Wood Identification	Rowena Gale	1 Person Day
Travel	AJ Westgarth	3 Person Days
Final editing	A Chapman P Chapman S Steadman	6 Person Days
Archive preparation	T Anastasiadou	8 Person Days
Total		60 Person Days

Table 3. Breakdown of Resources

13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gifford are grateful to Nicholas Jackson of Kier Property Developments Ltd for providing support throughout the project. Hannah Fluck of Oxfordshire County Council monitored the fieldwork and provided helpful advice during the post-excavation assessment.

The fieldwork and post-excavation assessment programme were managed for Northamptonshire Archaeology by Anthony Maull, Cert Arch. The fieldwork was supervised by Ailsa Jayne Westgarth BSc, Tim Upson Smith BA PGDip and Simon Carlyle MSc AIFA. The fieldwork was carried out by Sharon Clough MA, Andrew Ginns BA, Nathan Flavell BA PGDip, Jennifer Jackson BA, Ben Savine BSc, Carol Simmonds BA AAAI&S, Rob Smith, Steve Tamburello MA, Michael Tunnicliffe and LeeAnne Whitelaw BSc.

The post-excavation assessment report was prepared by Ailsa Jayne Westgarth and the illustrations were produced by Jacqueline Harding BA HND. Artefacts and Ecofacts reports were prepared by individual named specialists credited in the Appendices. The draft assessment report was edited and approved for Northamptonshire Archaeology by Pat Chapman and Andy Chapman.

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15. APPENDIX 1 THE FLINT
by Andy Chapman

Four pieces of flint were recovered. There are three flakes, from contexts 608, 1192 and 1436. These are all in a good quality brown vitreous flint and two of the pieces have been struck from well-prepared cores. Given the lack of diagnostic features, they can only be broadly assigned to the Neolithic/early Bronze Age. A lump of shattered flint comes from context 1192.

No further analysis required.

16. APPENDIX 2 THE POTTERY
by Jane Timby

16.1 Introduction

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 2067 sherds of pottery weighing 19.7 kg. Most of this dates to the Romano-British period but small quantities of later prehistoric, Saxon and medieval material are also present. In addition a small amount of ceramic building material (CBM), 30 fragments in total, was included with the pottery.

In general terms the assemblage was in very poor condition, reflected in the overall average sherd weight of 9.5 g. The sherds were generally very abraded and in many instances very fragmented. In nearly all cases surface treatments were no longer evident, for example slips, glazes or colour-coats were largely absent making ware recognition difficult.

At this stage no detailed research work has been carried out specifically to compare the assemblage with other material from the immediate locality.

Following a comment on the methodology used, the assemblage is briefly described by broad period. A section follows this on the potential of the group and further work.

16.2 Methodology

The assemblage was sorted into broad fabric groups based on inclusions present, the frequency and grade of the inclusions and the firing colour. Known regional or traded wares were coded following the system advocated for the National Roman reference collection (Tomber and Dore 1998).

The sorted assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context.

The dating is purely based on the ceramic material without knowledge of the stratigraphic relationships. In many cases the dating is slightly uncertain, particularly where contexts have produced unfeatured local wares or just single sherds, which could date to anytime after the earliest known production date. Further refinement may be possible at a later date.

Prehistoric
The earliest material present appears to be a sherd of handmade grey, thick-walled sandy ware from (104) which may be Iron Age or earlier. Six flint-tempered sherds from (1370) are also probably Iron Age in origin, as is a residual sherd of fine flint-tempered ware from (1528).

Most of the remaining 64 sherds allocated to this column comprise a handmade ware with a very vesicular fabric originally containing shell. This ware could be Iron Age proper or later Iron Age-early Roman in date. Fill (1211) produced 41 such sherds alongside Roman wares suggesting these are probably early Roman whereas contexts 1172 and 1127 produced fifteen and eight sherds unaccompanied by other material which might indicate a pre-Roman date.

Roman
Roman pottery accounts for the bulk of the assemblage, some 1975 sherds. The range of material is extremely limited, the main traded wares encountered being limited to Central Gaulish samian, Dorset black burnished ware and one sherd of Nene Valley colour-coat. In terms of date the material appears mainly range from the later 1st or early 2nd century through to the later 3rd/early 4th century with most of the material appearing to date to the mid-later 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The assemblage is overwhelmingly dominated by local oxidized and reduced wares either in fine sandy fabrics or with varying quantities of grog present. A small quantity of standard Oxfordshire wares are present, most notably whitewares, in particular mortaria and flagon and colour-coated wares. The latter are particularly difficult to recognize with the loss of the colour-coats.

Continental imports are limited to 34 sherds mainly plain, but some decorated, Samian from Central Gaul, 1.7% of the total assemblage. There are no amphorae or other imported continental finewares present.

Other regional imports include 16 sherds of Dorset black burnished ware, and a single sherd of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware.

A sherd join was noted between contexts (1546) and (1549).

Some 30 fragments of fragmentary ceramic building material (CBM) were present most of which appears to be Roman in date. The only recognizable pieces suggest roofing tile.

Saxon
Four sherds were identified which indicate some Saxon activity in the locality. These all came from context (1102) and comprise one large sherd of organic-tempered ware, two handmade sandy wares and one large rim of what is probably St Neots ware (Oxford fabric OXR). These are probably not contemporary and are likely to span the Saxon period from the 6/7th-10th centuries.

Medieval
A total of 16 sherds of medieval date were recovered, six from context (1102), four from (1101), two sherds from (304) and (602) and single sherds from (604) and (1108). These include jug sherds of Brill Boarstall type suggesting a date within the 13th-15th century.

16.3 Statement of potential

The archaeological work has produced a moderately substantial assemblage of mainly Romano-British pottery spanning the 1st to later 3rd/early 4th centuries with a particular focus of activity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The assemblage is of some interest in terms of its geographical location in relation to previous work in the immediate area at Bicester Fields Farm, which has suggested predominantly Iron Age occupation (Cromarty *et al* 1999). Other investigations in the locality have identified M-LIA occupation at Slade Farm some 2 km to the NW and LIA-early Roman occupation at Oxford Road, Bicester, which appears to fade out by the early 2nd century. The development at Bicester Park appears to indicate a fairly low status site

established in the 2nd century, thus following a pattern of development quite common in the Upper Thames Valley.

Saxon pottery is also well documented from the present town of Bicester dating from the 7th century (Harding and Andrews 2002).

The potential of the assemblage in ceramic terms is somewhat diminished by the condition of the material which appears to have been affected by adverse ground conditions. The assemblage is of particular value in determining the chronological span of occupation.

17. APPENDIX 3 THE OTHER FINDS
by Tora Hylton

The excavation produced a small collection of Roman objects. There are 22 individually recorded small finds in four material types: copper alloy (x 7), iron (x 14), lead (x 1) and glass (x 1).

The majority of artefacts (15) were recovered from stratified deposits, while the remainder (7) were recovered from topsoil and subsoil deposits using a metal detector. All the datable Roman artefacts were recovered from topsoil (1101) and subsoil (1102) deposits, these include a 1st century brooch and three coins which span the mid 2nd to 4th century AD. The remainder of the assemblage, although predominantly represented by undiagnostic fragments, includes an ox goad and three nails, all from stratified deposits.

17.1 Data collection

All finds were recorded on site manually following Northamptonshire Archaeology guidelines. All of the finds were recovered by hand and their position recorded by three-dimensional co-ordinates. A basic catalogue has been compiled, comprising, material type and object identifications, together with stratigraphic information.

The copper alloy objects are in a stable condition and no further work is required. The ironwork is in a reasonable condition, some of it is encrusted in corrosion products.

17.2 Summary of material recovered

Copper alloy
Seven copper alloy objects were recovered. Objects worthy of note include three coins and one brooch, all recovered from topsoil and subsoil deposits, the remainder comprise three undiagnostic fragments from stratified deposits (1162, 1299).

The coins have been identified by Steve Critchley, a metal detectorist working for NA over many years. The coins date from the mid 2nd to 4th centuries.

Identification	Date	SF No/Context No.
Ae.Sestertius. Legend and reverse illegible. Portrait suggestive of Marcus Aurelius as Caesar	AD139-161	12/1102 (Topsoil)
Ae as. Vestige of female portrait facing right. Possibly Faurtina who died in AD141	c. AD 141	6/1102 (Topsoil)
module. BEATA TRANQUILLITAS altar – VOTIS XX Inscribed Type issued by Constantine I Crispus and Constantine II	AD 309- 337	3/1102 (Topsoil)

Table 4. Coin Identification

The brooch is a Colchester derivative type, it is incomplete (the terminal of the bow - foot/catch plate, pin and spring mechanism are missing) and damaged by corrosion and this has obscured much of the ornament on the wings and bow. The wings are decorated with transverse mouldings and the bow is decorated with a double ridge ornamented with fine notches. Brooches of this type generally date from the mid to late 1st century. No further work is necessary.

Iron

There are 14 individual iron objects, with the exception of a fragment of an ox goad and three nails, the entire assemblage comprises unidentifiable fragments. The ox goad was recovered from Well 1 (1514) and consists of a spiral-former cylinder with a short spike (now missing), which would have fitted on to the end of a pole and used to guide oxen (Isaac 2001, 135). It is possible to classify two of the nails according to Mannings Type series (1985, 134ff), they include a Type 3 with a T-shaped head and a Type 1B with a flat sub-circular head; the remaining nail has lost its head. The remaining ironwork is so fragmented and amorphous that there is no need to X-ray it. No further work is necessary.

Lead

This comprises one small amorphous fragment of lead, possibly a molten driblet, which was recovered from ditch 1470. No further work is necessary

Glass

A base sherd from a square prismatic bottle in blue glass was recovered from a ditch located within the southern part of the site (1519). The underside of the base is furnished with a design in relief, in the form of two concentric circles. Bottles of this type generally date from *c* AD 43 to the end of the 2nd century; they were particularly common from the last quarter of the 1st century onwards. For a general description and discussion see Price and Cottam, (1998, 194).

18. APPENDIX 4 THE WORKED WOOD
by Pat Chapman

There are seven pieces of waterlogged wood. A small fragment of a plank from context (1544), with a writing tablet and an unworked root fragment from (1545), are both from the lower fills within well [1518] W1. There are also four worked pieces from context (1567), the primary fill of stone-lined well [1541] W2, comprising two pieces of possible turned wood and two flat pieces.

The rectangular writing tablet (SF24) is double-sided, measuring 147mm long by 47mm wide and 5mm thick, but is not complete (Fig 7, Plate 1). It has a 7mm wide and 1mm deep rim around the intact edges on both faces, which would have retained a wax writing surface. One surface is plain, but the other has a roughly cut central slot, 27mm wide and 1 to 2mm deep. A series of shallow parallel grooves, *c* 7mm apart, run along the wood grain, and there are also faint vertical and diagonal scratches cutting across the grain. Both of these appear to be remnants of incisions that have just penetrated through the wax surface. The tablet is similar to an example found at the Roman settlement of Wavendon Gate in Milton Keynes (Williams et al 1996, 158). See Appendix 5, below, for assessment report by RSO Tomlin.

There are the remains of a thin plank (SF23) from context (1544). Only the central portion survives and there are no surviving worked edges. It is very slightly curved lengthways, but this may due to warping. The surviving dimensions are 290mm long by 90mm wide and 13mm thick (not illustrated).

One piece of turned wood from (1567) measures 115mm long with a diameter of *c* 20mm. One end has been cut while the other end has been broken. The other round wood piece is a longitudinal section, 30mm long and 12mm in diameter, with one end possibly cut.

The two flat pieces, context (1567) probably join, except that the edges are smooth. They are each *c* 70mm long and between 17 and 20mm wide and 6mm thick, with a possible combined width of 35 to 40mm.

Future work
It is recommended that the wood is sent for species identification.

19. APPENDIX 5 THE WOODEN WRITING TABLET
by R.S.O. Tomlin

Part of a Roman stilus writing tablet in silver fir (Abies Alba), 148mm by 47mm, 7mm thick. Both faces have been recessed c. 1mm, leaving a raised margin c.7mm wide. A vertical rebate 28mm wide has been cut into the middle of one face. Two holes have been bored into the long margin for hinging cords, and midway between them is the trace left by the binding cord in the fore edge.

This fragment is between one third and a half of the original tablet, which was probably the second in the block of three tablets intended for a legal document (a lease, a deed of sale etc). The text would have been written in duplicate, with the inner text written on the inside of the first tablet and the plain recessed face of this tablet; The two tablets would then be sealed by a cord running down the rebate, where it was secured by the seals of seven witnesses whose names were written to one of both sides. The outer text was written on the rest of this face and on the third tablet, and could be checked by unsealing the inner text.

There is now no trace of the black waxed surface in which the text was written, nor of any scratches left by the stilus in the wood underneath, except perhaps for a series of tiny diagonal marks in one corner of the plain-recessed face. There is no sign of any secondary ink, either on the fore edge (for annotation) or if the wooden surface was reused.

In one panel of the rebated face there is a series of more or less vertical incised lines. They seem to be deliberate, and to resemble the elongated letters used in addresses, so perhaps the name of the person or place was written here if the tablet was reused for correspondence. The four letters would now be incomplete. Taking the raised margin to be the bottom edge, with the panel to the right of the rebate, it would be possible to read [...]. VIA, the first letter being indeterminate.

No further analysis is recommended.

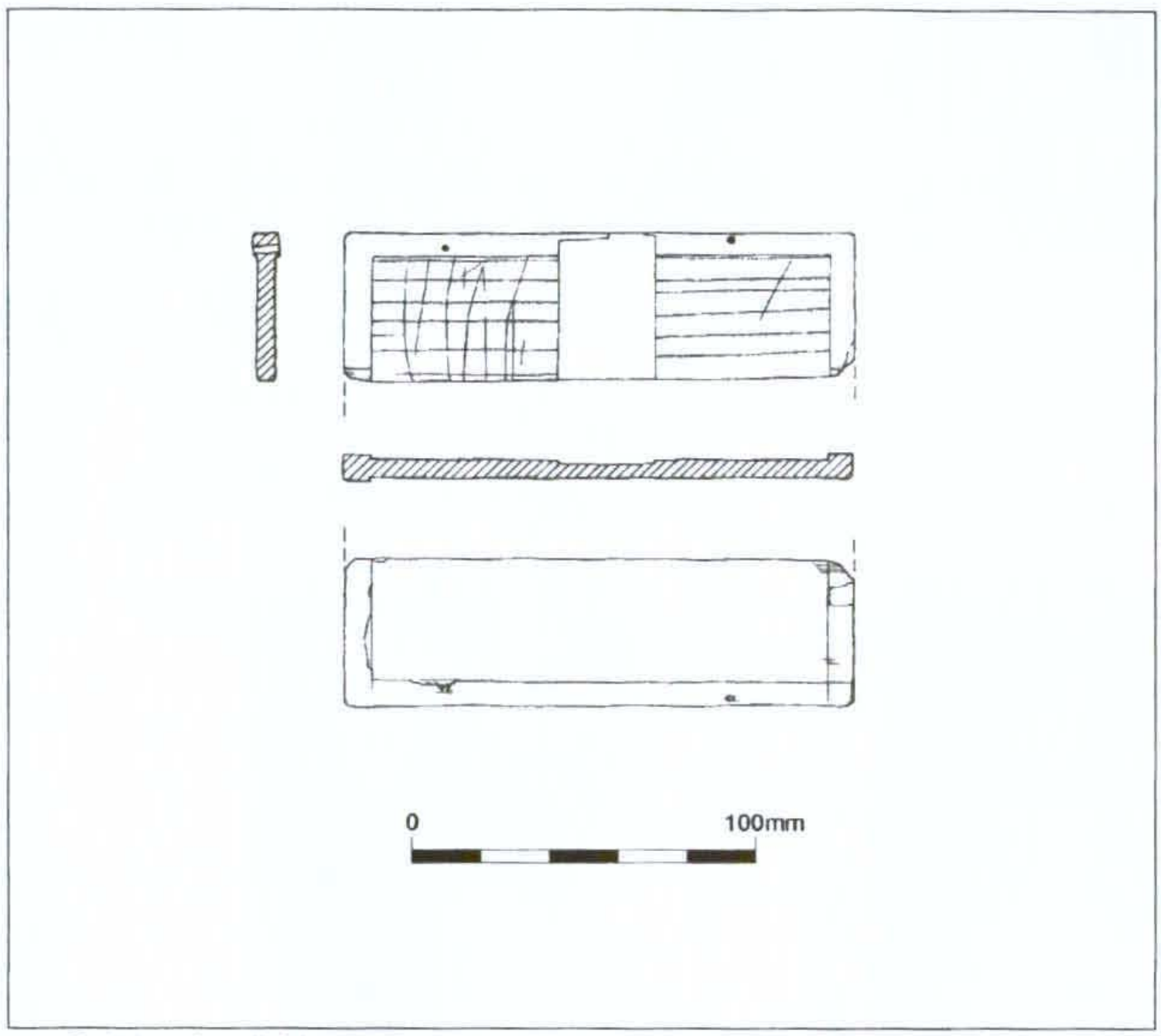

Figure 7. Wooden Writing Tablet

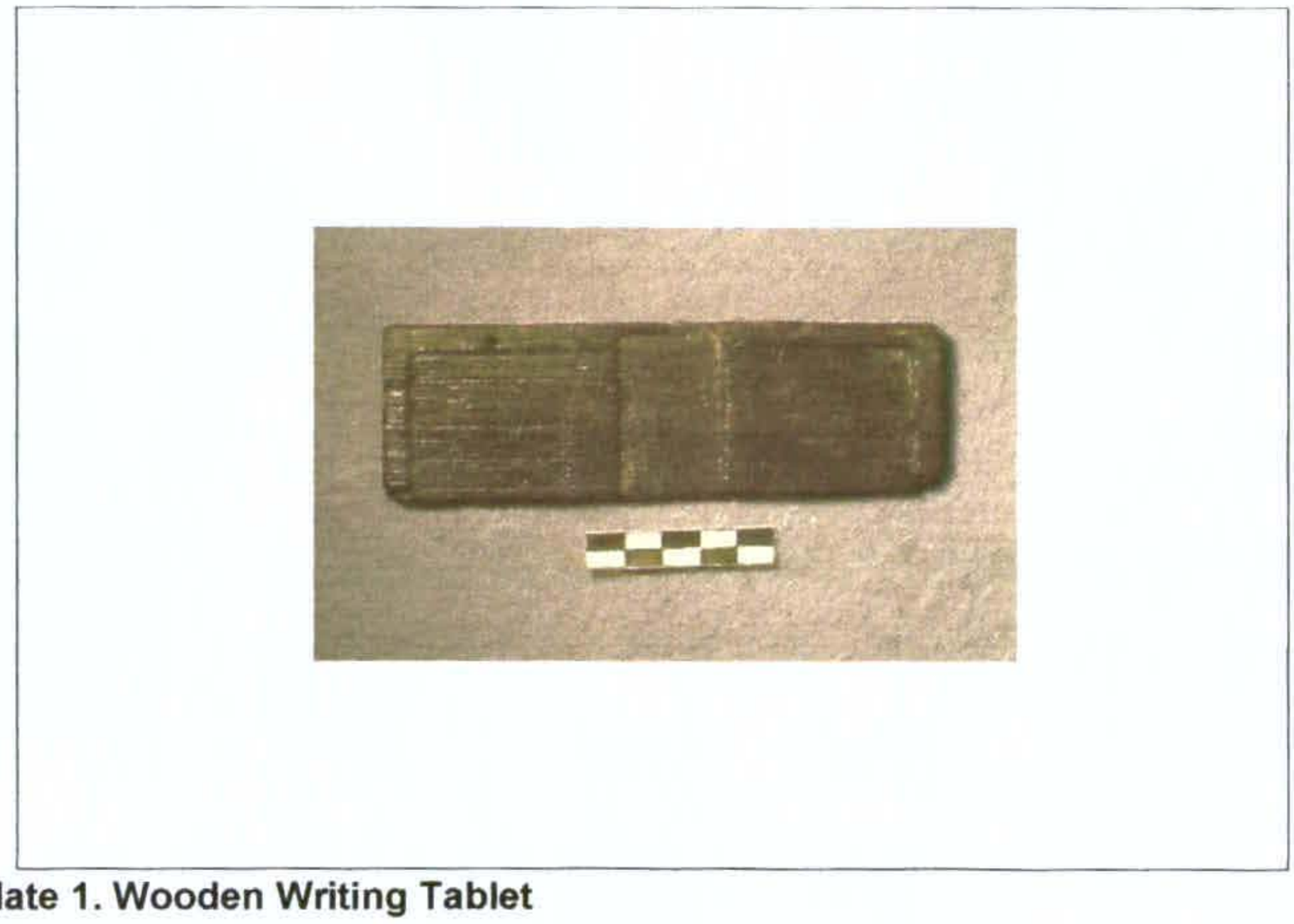

Plate 1. Wooden Writing Tablet

20. APPENDIX 6 THE QUERNS
by Andy Chapman

Eight contexts (604, 1102, 1450, 1470, 1475, 1506, 1509 and 1527) produced fragments from rotary querns. They were generally single fragments, although context (1102) contained five fragments probably from a single quern. In six instances they are of Millstone Grit, between 22mm and 44mm thick, and all appear to have come from standard Roman, flat-topped rotary querns (Watts 2002, 33-37 and fig 11). They all comprise small rectangular fragments, and most have lost the original grinding surfaces, but in two instances enough of the outer circumference survives to estimate the stone diameters at 600-700mm and 700-800mm. One piece is in a fine-grained sandstone, but containing occasionally large pieces of quartz, and a further fragment of rotary quern, from context (604), is in an unidentified stone type. A single context (1172) contained 30g of small eroded fragments of lava, which may have come from a lava quern.

The quern pieces are too fragmentary to warrant any further study, but the single unidentified stone, from context 604, should be submitted for geological identification.

21. APPENDIX 7 THE METAL WORKING DEBRIS
by Andy Chapman

A total of 3.0kg of metalworking debris was recovered from seven contexts. A single context (1211) produced 1.23kg, and context (1198) produced 0.71kg, while the others (1172, 1186, 1194 1207 and 1534) produced single pieces or two or three pieces weighing between 100g and 300g. All of the material consistently comprises undiagnostic irregular lumps of miscellaneous ironworking slag. There is also a little fuel ash slag, occurring either as small separate pieces or adhering to larger lumps of miscellaneous slag. Some pieces of slag retain impressions of the charcoal fuel, and all of the material appears to have come from ironworking hearths and is indicative of some secondary smithing being carried out on the site.

Given the small size of the assemblage and the consistency of the material, no further specialist analysis is required. The distribution of the material should be examined to determine whether it is a sparse general scatter or has a more localised distribution that might define the area in which the ironworking was carried out. Given the small quantity of material, it may also relate to a short period of working and the chronology of the contexts should be established to determine within which phase of occupation the smithing took place.

22. APPENDIX 8 THE CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL
by Pat Chapman

This assemblage comprises 142 sherds of tile, weighing 11036g. It is quite fragmentary, with no large pieces, no complete dimensions and just a few diagnostic fragments. Twenty sherds are identifiable as *tegulae* and six as *imbrices*. There are no obvious remains of box flue tiles. The tiles are mainly in small groups from various contexts. However, one third of the assemblage, including six of the *tegulae* sherds, comes from the subsoil (1102). The tiles, including the *imbrices*, are typically 16mm thick with a few of the *tegulae* sherds 26mm thick by the flange.

There are two main fabric types, which comprise two thirds of the assemblage.

The main fabric, Type A, comprising half the assemblage, is a fine silty fabric, with scarce small flint gravel and scarce to medium small grog. It is orange and occasionally has a reddish core.

Fabric B contains no inclusions and has an orange surface with a medium to dark grey reduced core and comprises a fifth of the assemblage. Some of the remaining sherds are sandy, and brown in colour, with cracked surfaces perhaps as a result of weathering; a few are in a hard red fabric with a very smooth surface.

The remaining sherds range from brown to red with variations in a reduced core and a more sandy fabric. From context (1567) were two sherds in a hard reduced fabric and another with a reduced core and a pink surface with a curving finger impression on the upper surface which had been covered with a dark maroon wash. These latter features have been noted at Wootton Villa, Northampton (Hylton 2000, Chapman, P 2002), at Piddington Villa, Northamptonshire (Ward 1999) and particularly at Croughton Villa in Northamptonshire, only eight miles to the north-west (Dawson 2003).

Given the fragmentary nature of this small assemblage it is recommended that no further study take place.

Context	Sherd count	Weight (g):	Context	Sherd count	Weight (g):
1102	51	3096	1470	8	675
1104	1	42	1471	1	179
1138	3	246	1475	8	629
1156	1	24	1476	5	547
1182	1	195	1486	1	210
1192	1	63	1499	5	257
1200	12	413	150	3	37
1202	2	216	1512	1	71
1211	1	157	1514	1	124
1227	2	166	1524	5	205
1335	1	49	1530	4	552
1378	1	36	1536	3	709
1380	5	692	1539	1	126
1390	3	561	1565	1	53
1416	2	34	1567	3	472
1444	4	183			
1448	1	20	**Totals**	**142**	**11036**

Table 5. Quantification of the Roman roof tile

23. APPENDIX 9 THE FIRED CLAY
by Pat Chapman

There are only three small featureless fragments of fired clay, weighing 26g, from contexts (1211) and (1343).

Given the fragmentary nature of this small assemblage it is recommended that no further study take place.

24. APPENDIX 10 THE ANIMAL BONE
by Karen Deighton

24.1 Method

A total of 5.685kg of animal bone was hand recovered from the excavation. These were scanned to determine the species present, the state of preservation and to assess the potential for future work. Identifiable bones were noted. Ageable and measurable bones (after Von den Driesch 1976) were also noted. Ageable elements included cheek tooth rows, bones where the state of fusion was apparent and neonatal bones. Wet sieving residues (1mm and 3.4mm) were also scanned for animal bone; sample sizes varied with context but were typically 10 or 20 litres. Hand collected bones had previously been washed.

24.2 Preservation

Surface condition of the bone was poor with a high frequency of abrasion and exfoliation.

Material from the well contexts (1517, 1567, and 1568) exhibited dark staining which is consistent with waterlogging. Fragmentation was also fairly high and appeared to be largely the result of old breaks. Four instances of canid gnawing were noted and a single example of possible butchery (knife marks consistent with filleting) was observed on a *bos* long bone from well context 1517. No burned or calcined bone was noted.

24.3 Taxonomic distribution

Context	Bos (Cow)	Ovicaprid (Sheep/Goat)	Equus (Horse)	Large ungulate	Total
1102	1				
1158	1	1			2
1162	1				1
1172		1			1
1192			1		1
1194	4				4
1196	1				1
1319				1	1
1446	1				1
1517	2		1		3
1562			1		1
1567	5	3	6		14
1568	1	1	1		3
Total	17	6	10	1	34

Table 6. Identifiable bones by context

The following contexts produced indeterminate bone fragments only: 1127, 1144, 1278, and 1449. No bone was recovered from the sieved samples.

Taxon	Bos Cow	Ovicaprid Sheep/goat Goat	Equus Horse
Ageable	7	3	6
Measurable	7	2	6

Table 7. Number of ageable and measurable bones by taxa

24.4 Discussion.

A limited range of common domesticates are present. The three species identified are not unexpected for a Roman site. The only evidence for the presence of juvenile animals is a sheep/goat skull with unfused cranial sutures and underdeveloped horncores ("buds") from well, W2, context 1567.

The bone recovered from contexts within the well was possibly the result of refuse dumping after the well fell into disuse or was incorporated during deliberate infilling.

The sparsity of the material prohibits any discussion concerning the economy of the site, the nature of the animal husbandry practised there or the origin of the assemblage. This paucity of material would appear to be the result of poor bone preservation conditions at the site.

24.5 Potential

The value of any further work would be limited by the small amount of bone recovered. The potential of the assemblage is further restricted by poor preservation which inhibits identification and recording, as demonstrated in part by the small amount of metric and ageing data available (see Table 7).

25. APPENDIX 11 THE CHARRED AND WATERLOGGED PLANT REMAINS by Karen Deighton

25.1 Method

A total of 16 samples was hand collected from the excavation. Assessment was undertaken to establish the nature, preservation and presence of ecofacts and their contribution to the understanding of the function and economy of the site. Nine samples were processed using a siraf tank fitted with a 500-micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots were dried and analysed using a microscope (10xmagnification). The remaining seven samples being waterlogged were subsampled and stack sieved though sieves 3.4mm-500microns. The retents were also examined under a microscope.

25.2 Preservation

Two kinds of preservation were encountered at the site, charring and waterlogging. Charcoal was fragmentary. Charred seeds were largely abraded and fragmentary. The preservation of waterlogged plants and animal remains was reasonable.

Sample	/fill	Feature type	me	coal	al	chaff	Wild/weed	Coleoptera	Notes
1	/1198	Pit	10	8					
2	/1262	Pit	20	4	+				
3	/1231	Ditch	20	4	1				
4	/1158	Ditch	20	8	4				
5	/1451	Ditch	20	2					
6	/1527	Linear	20	4	1	+			
7	/1534	Pit	20	1	3	+			
8	/1514	Well	20	1		1			
9*	/1515	Well	20						Sterile
10	/1516	Well	20	1	+	+			
11*	/1517	Well	20						Sterile
12*	/1542	Well	20						Sterile
13*	/1546	Well	40						Sterile
14*	/1549	Well	20						Sterile
15*	/1545	Well	20				1		
16*	/1567	Well	20				+	2	

Table 8. Taxa present by sample and context

Key * waterlogged, + present, 1=2-5ecofacts, 2=5-10 ecofacts, 3=10-20 ecofacts, 4=20-30 ecofacts, 5=30-40 ecofacts, 6=40-50 ecofacts, 7=50-100 ecofacts, 8=100-500 ecofacts, 9=500-1000 ecofacts, 10=1000+ecofacts

25.3 Discussion

Cereal grains indicated the presence of wheat/barley (Triticum/Hordeum). Both hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) and naked barley (*Hordeum vulgare* var.nudum) grains were observed in sample 4. Possible spelt (*Triticum spelta*) grains were noted in sample 7. Chaff fragments, which are more readily identified to species than grains, confirmed the presence of spelt wheat. The small quantities of chaff present and the lack of charred wild/weed seed could suggest a late stage in crop processing, however this statement must be regarded as tentative due to the small size of the charred assemblages and the poor preservation encountered. Both spelt wheat and barley were commonly grown crops for the Roman period.

Waterlogged weeds were nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and dock (Rumex sp).Nettle is a common coloniser of waste ground. The dock taxa present could not be identified to species therefore no comment can be made regarding habitat tolerances.

25.4 Potential

Although eleven samples produced ecofacts the value of further work would be limited. Plant taxa from waterlogged samples were too restricted in range (i.e. only two taxa were present) for environmental reconstruction.

Charcoal was too fragmentary (i.e. less than 2mm in any dimension) to permit further identification. Seven samples produced charred cereal (grains and/or chaff) however for five samples the numbers recovered were too small for further analysis to be viable. For the remaining two samples poor preservation would limit identification.

Coleoptera (beetles) occurred in one sample only which would not be sufficient to characterise the environment of the site and its environs.

26. APPENDIX 12 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLE
by Rob Janaway

An environmental sample was sent to Bradford University Archaeological Sciences Department for identification. The fibrous mass was recovered from the stone-lined well [1541].

Initial identification suggests a fungal mass (pers comm Janaway 2004).

27. APPENDIX 14 – PROJECT SUMMARY

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project title	Archaeological excavation at Bicester Park, Bicester,
Short description (250 words maximum)	Between July and October 2004 Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an evaluation followed by open area excavation on 2.3ha of development land at Bicester Park on the outskirts of Bicester, Oxfordshire. A multi-phase complex of boundary ditches had its origins in the late Iron Age / 1st century AD, with the main focus of activity through the 2nd century AD and 3rd century AD. The 2nd century AD ditches indicated a loose agricultural system including a trackway, with the 3rd century activity defining a series of rectangular enclosures superseding the earlier trackway and field system. There is no direct evidence for buildings within the excavated area, but a number of features particularly two wells, one of which was stone-lined, on the southern part of the site indicate that the main focus for this middle status Roman farmstead lay to the south, in an area lost to a railway cutting. The educated status of the inhabitants may be indicated by the recovery of part of a wooden writing tablet. A lack of evidence for occupation after the 3rd century indicates abandonment of the site and subsequent agricultural use through the medieval period.
Project type (e.g. desk-	Field Evaluation
Previous work(reference to	
Future work(yes, no,	no
Monument type and period	Roman
Significant finds (artefact	Roman wooden writing tablet
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Oxfordshire
Site address	Bicester Park, Bicester, Oxfordshire
Easting	460020
Northing	222390
Height OD	70m
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Gifford and Partners
Project Brief originator	Oxfordshire County Council
Project Design originator	Gifford and Partners
Director/Supervisor	Simon Carlyle, Tim Upson-Smith, Ailsa Westgarth
Project Manager	Anthony Maull
Sponsor or funding body	Kier Property Developments Ltd

PROJECT DATE		
Start date	21/07/04	
End date	18/10/04	
ARCHIVES	**Location**	**Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone)**
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		

28. PLATES

Plate 2. General View looking west

Plate 3. Section of well (W1). Scale = 2m

Plate 4. Top of Stone-lined Well Shaft (W2). Scale = 2m

Plate 5. Section of Well (W2). Scale = 2m