

# Summer Fields School, Mayfield Road, Oxford

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



*understanding heritage matters*

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1470  
September 2014



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

**Project:** Summer Fields School,  
**Commissioned by:** Graham Hale & Co  
**Project Report No.** 1470  
**Site Code:** OSS14  
**Planning Reference:** 13/03393/FUL  
**National Grid Reference:** SP 51270888  
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## SUMMARY

*An archaeological trial trench excavated as part of a planning condition for a new sports pavilion at Summer Fields School uncovered no evidence associated with nearby prehistoric activity or the Anglo-Saxon cemetery recorded at the school in 1898. No other significant archaeological remains were present.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Oxford City Council for the construction of a sports pavilion with changing facilities (13/03393/FUL) at Summer Fields School, Oxford. The City of Oxford archaeological advisor determined that the proposed development was within an area of significant archaeological potential.

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire have been commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with Written Schemes of Investigation (WSI) approved by the planning authority. An initial desk-based assessment of the site and a visit to observe and record several geotechnical test pits as part of planning conditions 13/03393/FUL and 13/03469/FUL (Soden 2014) was followed by an archaeological trial trench. This report presents the results of the fieldwork which was undertaken in September 2014. The project archive will be temporarily stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code OSS14.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located on the eastern side of Mayfield Road in north Oxford, in a non-parished area of Oxford at National Grid Reference SP 51270888. The site lies on generally level ground and includes the present buildings of Summer Fields School and associated grounds.

2.2 The geological sequence is recorded by British Geological Survey as Summertown – Radley Sands and Gravels and nearby alluvial deposits. The site lies some 700m north-west of the River Cherwell.

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The archaeological background to the site has recently been detailed and need not be repeated here (Soden 2014). In summary, to the south of the site the Oxford University parks area is demonstrably rich in prehistoric remains, particularly Neolithic and Bronze Age. Just to the west of this is the Radcliffe Infirmary, an area similarly well-endowed.

3.2 The character of this concentration of remains seems to be mostly funerary and/or ceremonial, including a Neolithic henge monument and a possible mortuary enclosure. At the site of the former Radcliffe Infirmary an alignment of three Bronze Age ring ditches with cremations within were excavated. Geophysical survey has shown that this linear cemetery continues eastward, with another five underlying the University Parks. Outliers are known to both south and north of this line, the result of chance discoveries. A discrete Bronze Age burial was found just east of the Banbury Road, in an area between the University Parks and the Summer Fields School (Lambrick 2013, 21).

3.3 Lambrick also notes that fieldwork has demonstrated numerous probable Iron Age enclosures within the Oxford University Parks (Lambrick 2013, 41-5). Other crop-marks at the Summer Fields School site may relate to this period.

Historic or archaeological remains in the vicinity of the site (*courtesy of Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record*)

HER	NGR (SP)	Period	Details
1000	5052 0862	Post-medieval	Brick kiln and brickyard
1003	5080 0917	Post-medieval	Summertown Congregational Church
3577	5100 0929	Palaeolithic?	Flints
3674	506 090	Palaeolithic	Flint
3690	5117 0898	Anglo-Saxon	Find of spearhead
3814	5048 0892	Roman	Occupation site
6218	5095 0910	Anglo-Saxon	Inhumation cemetery (1898)
6399	5052 0898	Post-medieval	School
6724	5062 0916	Post-medieval	Former Congregational chapel (1843)
6782	5065 0880	Palaeolithic	Flint
8080	509 093	Palaeolithic	Find of Hand Axe
11445	5060 0913	Post-medieval	10 & 12 Middle Way: former chapel (1824)
15407	5115 0925	Bronze Age	Crop-mark of possible ring-ditch
15408	5110 0905	'Prehistoric'	Crop-mark enclosures
15858	5102 0878	Iron Age	Ditch and sparse features, eval: Ferry Pool Rd 1995
26007	5047 0940	Roman	Periphery of Romano-British settlement
26309	5092 0879	Post-medieval	Terrace of Grade II Listed cottages
26885	5101 0860	Post-medieval	Somerville House Grade II Listed Victorian villa
27132	5084 0926	Post-medieval	St Michael and All Angels Grade II Listed church
27348	5056 0909	Post-medieval	23 South Parade: Grade II Listed Regency villa
27399	5044 0943	Post-medieval	The Lodge, 304 Woodstock Rd; Grade II Listed Regency Villa
27400	5047 0942	Post-medieval	Grade II Listed gate piers and walls to E of 304 Woodstock Rd

## Anglo-Saxon

3.4 In 1898 Anglo-Saxon skeletons with grave goods, and nearby a spear head, point to the location of a cemetery of unknown size (Ox HER 6218).

## Medieval/Post-medieval

3.5 The site lay within an area of agricultural fields and enclosures prior to its development as Summertown in the early 19th century (Ordnance Survey First Edition and enclosure maps of 1829 and 1834).

3.6 Summertown was created around 1820 and piecemeal residential development took place during the 1830s onwards. This included domestic properties along the east side of Mayfield Road. Summer Fields School has been a prominent feature of the locality since the 1860s and it expanded during the 1890s with a suite of new buildings. It is during this phase of construction that Anglo Saxon graves were revealed (Soden 2014).

## 4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there were any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the Summerfield area.

4.2 Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.

4.3 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.

## 5 RESULTS

### Trench 1

Context No	Context Type	Levels aOD		Finds	Summary/Interpretation
		max	min		
1	Layer	63.11m	62.99m	None	Modern overburden and drainage
2	Layer	62.76m	62.73m	None	Former agricultural or plough soil
3	Layer	62.46m	62.40m	None	Geological natural

5.1 A single trench, 24m long and 1.6m wide was opened up by a 6 tonne 360° excavator. The trench was located, with the agreement of the City of Oxford archaeologist

and developers, across the proposed footprint of the new building. Topsoil and other plough soils were removed in “spits” under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist until either the top of archaeological remains or geological natural; was revealed.

5.2 At a depth of 0.5m below current ground surface an extensive layer of yellowish brown gravel (3) was revealed. This contained no inclusions and no finds were apparent. Several small patches of colour or texture variations were investigated; however these all lacked distinct edges, defined shape, or characteristic fills and were most likely the result of root action or variations in the geological deposit. No unique reference was allotted to these variations within the layer. Additional investigation at the north-western end of the trench showed that the layer of gravel extended to at least 0.45m thick at a maximum recorded depth of 62.00m aOD.

5.3 An extensive layer of reddish brown sandy loam (2) extended across the trench and directly overlaid the natural gravel. The layer varied between 0.27m and 0.30m in thickness across the trench. No archaeological features or remains were present within this deposit.

5.4 A layer of modern aggregates and adjacent grass formed the current ground surface. The 0.2m thick layer (1) contained occasional drainage trenches within it.

5.5 No archaeological remains were revealed within the trench and no finds were present.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The evaluation of the footprint of the new sports pavilion building at Summer Fields School revealed no evidence associated with prehistoric remains or the Anglo-Saxon cemetery recorded in 1898.

6.2 No other significant archaeological remains were present and the recorded deposit sequence reflects the history of site as fields and enclosures until the early part of the 19th century.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## REFERENCES

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[http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277](http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277)  
<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordArchaeologicalPlan.htm>

## APPENDIX

### List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Layer	
2	Layer	
3	Layer	Natural geology





Fig 1: Location of site with relevant HER information

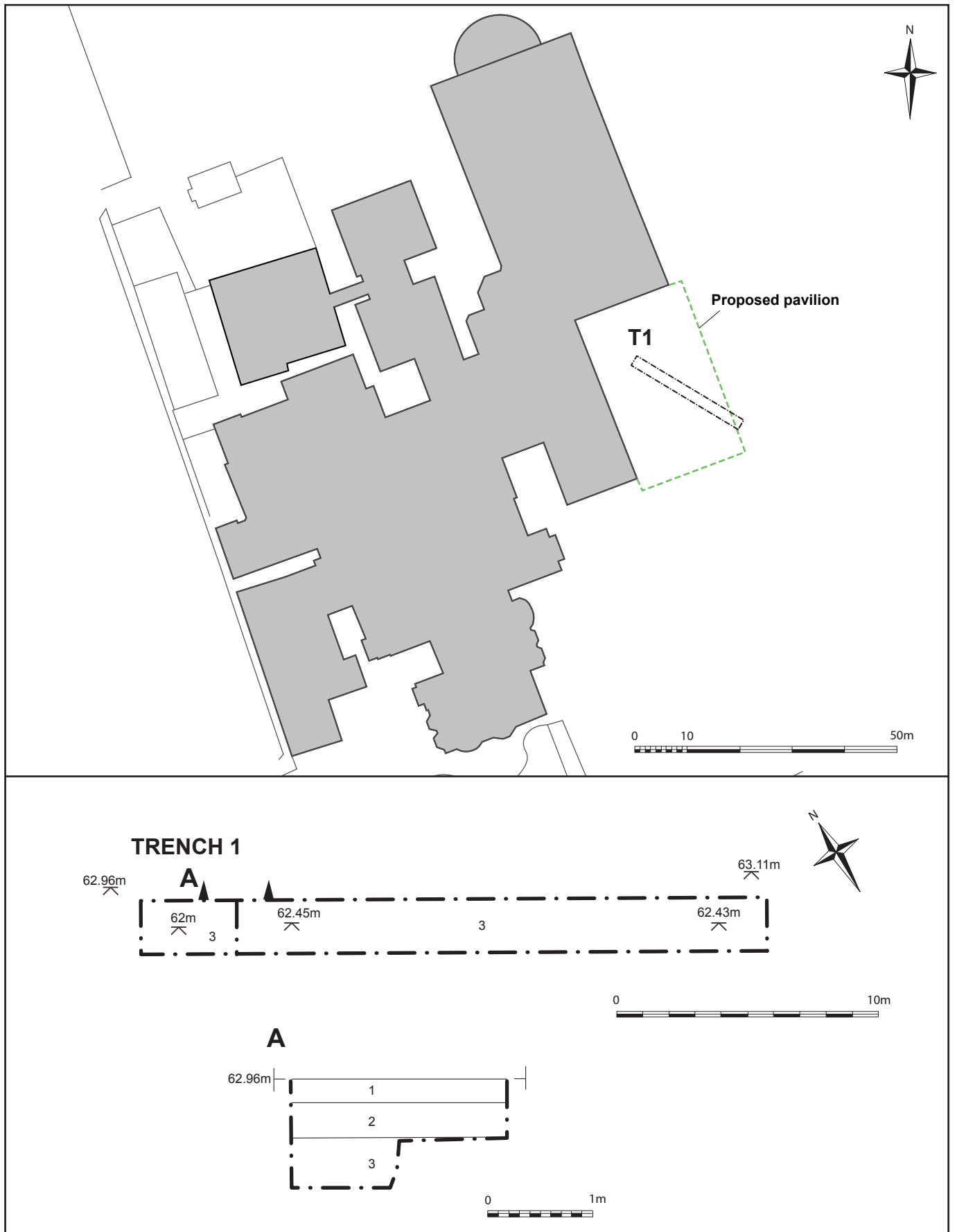


Fig 2: Location and detail of excavated trench and section A

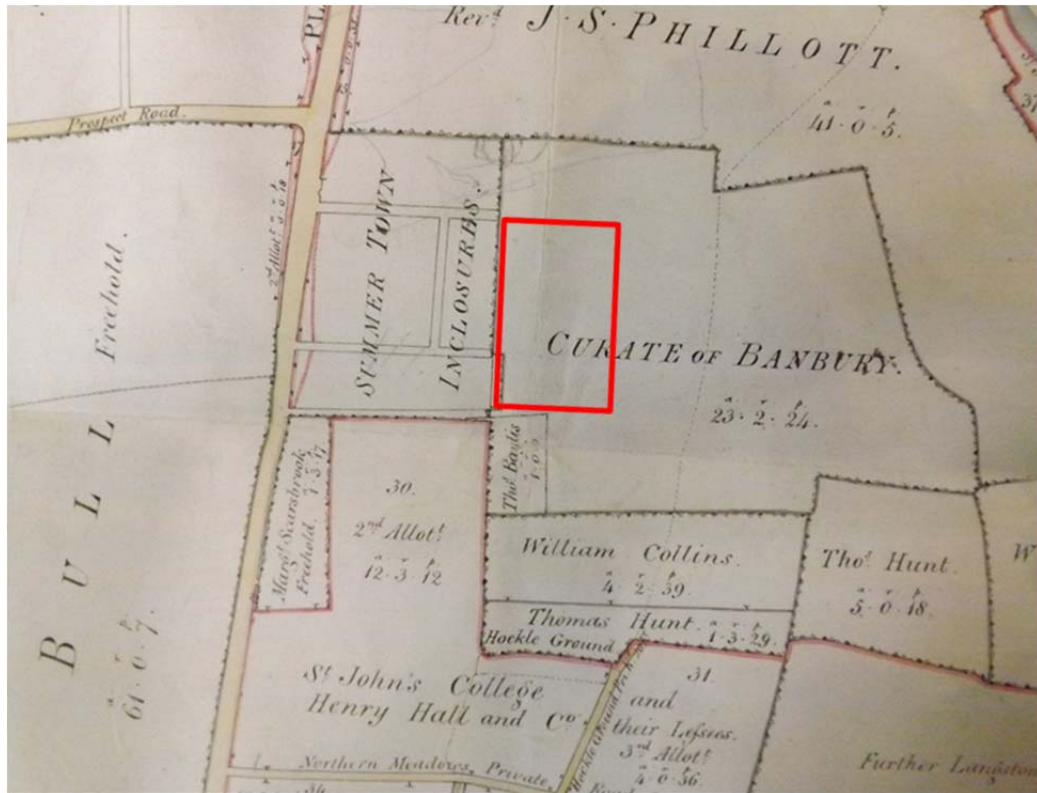


Fig 3: St Giles' Parish Enclosure map of 1829 (Courtesy of ORO).



Fig 4: Evaluation trench looking south-east