

Land south of

# Berry House

Gypsy Lane, Dordon, Warwickshire

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Gypsy Lane, Dordon, Warwickshire

Archaeological evaluation

NGR: SK 26113 00026

Site code: DORD17

OASIS ID: 110archa1-285031

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May 2017

one ten archaeology

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Front cover; overall view of the study site to the north-east

## SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out during May 2017 at land south of Berry House, Gypsy Lane, Gordon, Warwickshire in advance of residential development. The work was carried out to assess the archaeological potential of the site in line with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Historic mapping shows the site as part of a larger landscape consisting of open undeveloped field parcels lying to the south-west of Dordon village. There appears to have been little activity within or around the site until the erection of a row of terraced houses to the north along the Walting Street frontage, probably during the 1920s when the local colliery (opened in 1878) underwent expansion.

The evaluation revealed no archaeological deposits situated within the site. Instead, a sequence of three homogenous layers comprising natural clay overlain by a relict subsoil and the existing topsoil characterized the underlying stratigraphy across most of the site. The evidence indicates an open undisturbed rural environment with little human activity until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time a series of domestic waste deposits, possibly associated with pitting, were placed in the north-east corner of the site and subsequently sealed by a tarmac hardstanding and construction debris.

The results suggest that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present within the area of proposed development and that further excavation will have no impact.



Fig. 1; site location (circled in red)

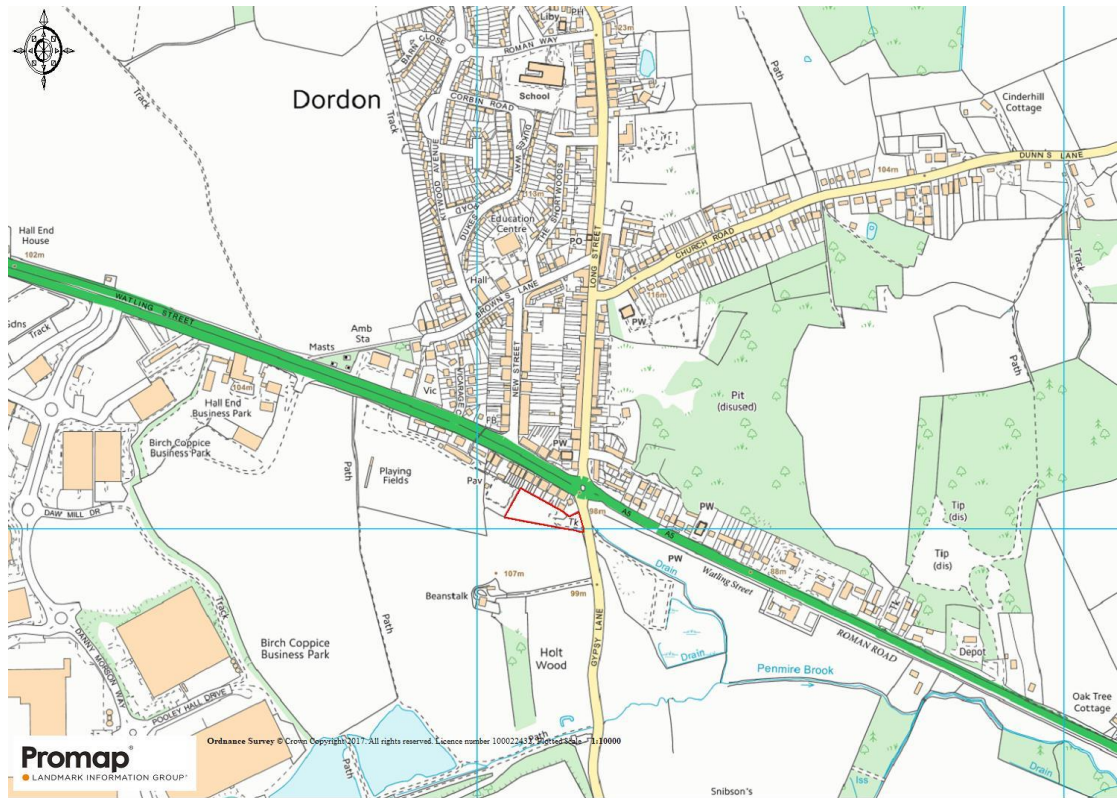


Fig. 2; study site (outlined in red)

## INTRODUCTION

### *Location and scope of work (Figs. 1 & 2)*

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at land south of Berry House, Gypsy Lane, Gordon, Warwickshire, B78 1SX at the request of Sidley Piper Ltd. Planning permission (Ref; PAP/2015/0745) had been granted by North Warwickshire District Council for the erection of 14 houses on the site conditional on an evaluation (trial trenching) in line with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The investigation would assess the archaeological potential of the site and provide sufficient archaeological information in which to assess the impact of the proposal and if necessary to inform the development of an appropriate mitigation strategy.

### *Geology and topography*

Dordon is a village and civil parish in North Warwickshire located on the A5 and is adjacent to Polesworth a settlement and parish to the north which Dordon was formerly a part of. Other nearby places include Grendon, Wood End, Baddesley Ensor, Atherstone, Nuneaton and Tamworth. The proposed development site, comprising approx. 4,670m<sup>2</sup> lies in an area of archaeological potential, to the rear of a row of terraced houses built between 1903 and 1924 that straddle the existing A5 road formerly referred to as Watling Street, an ancient trackway later paved by the Romans connecting Dover with the fort at Wroxeter. Roadside settlement deposits associated with earlier occupation could be expected to survive within the study site. Gypsy Lane, which appears to be an established route-way connecting Dordon to the south, is adjacent to the east side of the site and joins the A5 at about 50m to the north. Topographically the site is mostly on a gentle slope downwards to the A5 on the north side and Gypsy Lane along the eastern edge at between approximately 95-100m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The underlying geology comprises Pennine Middle Coal Measure Formation; mudstone, siltstone & sandstone (BGS, 1972). This was confirmed during excavation as a light brown sandy-clay with a component of small stones.

### *Archaeological and historical background*

A total of 31 monument records and 11 event records are identified from the Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 1km search area centred on the study site. A summary of the more significant information is outlined below.

#### *Prehistoric*

MWA13081 Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pit at Birch Coppice Phase II, Baddesley Ensor. Sherds of pottery probably from a Beaker vessel were recovered from a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pit (6703), with an undercutting profile. The pit measured 0.82 m in diameter and had a depth of 0.52m. The pit contained two distinct fills. The basal fill (6705) contained quantities of charcoal and burnt sandstone. The natural sandstone in the base of the pit also appeared burnt, perhaps indicative of the pit being used for cooking. The upper fill (6704) contained charcoal flecks, and a flint plano-convex knife. Both fills contained pottery probably from a Beaker vessel (Thacker, 2010).

MWA13086 Bronze Age Cremation pits at Birch Coppice, Baddesley Ensor. A group of five small pits containing cremated bone and charcoal dating to the Middle Bronze Age were discovered at Birch Coppice. Five small pits containing cremated bone and charcoal were found. A radiocarbon date from one of the human bone fragments dated to 1495-1319 Cal. BC. They are likely to represent redeposited pyre debris rather than formal cremation deposits (Sykes, 2011).

MWA13087; Iron Age pits and a four-post structure at Birch Coppice, Baddesley Ensor. Two pits of possible early Iron Age date were discovered and a four-post structure which was also likely to have been Iron Age in date. A pit containing early Iron Age pottery was discovered along with a pit likely to be of similar date. A four-post structure of probable Iron Age date was found. A further isolated pit which contained charcoal and burnt flint could also have been Iron Age (Sykes, 2011).

#### *Roman*

MWA238 Findspot-Roman coin hoard. Large hoard of denarii of Vespasian, Hadrian, Pius, the Younger Faustina and others found at Hall End in 1848.

MWA420; Watling Street, a Roman road running from London to Wroxeter which passes through Warwickshire. The early Watling Street, at Mancetter, appears to have been about ten feet wide and south of the present line. In 1975, a magnetometer survey was followed by excavation. Two trenches were cut, the first revealed the road ditch of Watling Street. It was found to be of two periods and contained pottery, some ironwork and a Trumpet brooch.

### *Medieval*

MWA125; The site of the Medieval church of St. Nicholas, which was demolished in 1848. It was situated south west of Lower House Farm. Original site of the parish church. This was rebuilt on a new site in 1848, but the 12th century doorway to the church was reset in a passageway in the village and another 12th century doorway is in Atherstone churchyard.

MWA127; The possible site of a deserted settlement of Medieval date located 300m south east of Lower House Farm. A Medieval church (now demolished) in an area without modern habitation may suggest a deserted Medieval village site. There are no indications of a site on the ground. The fields around the church are under pasture and arable. A light scatter of medieval pottery was recorded in the fields immediately adjacent to the church by fieldwalking. A slightly higher concentration was recorded in fields to the west (see MWA7212). It was tentatively suggested that these represent the extent of settlement, away from the church to the west.

MWA13084; Ditch of possible medieval origin at Birch Coppice, Baddesle uncovered during trial trenching.

MWA13161; Site of medieval and post medieval settlement along Watling Street. Site of medieval and post medieval settlement of Hall End, Polesworth. Sited on Watling Street. Medieval pottery found in enclosure 200m S of Hall End farm. The manor of Holt Hall was first mentioned in 1526.

MWA20834; Findspot. Medieval artefact found during metal detecting.

MWA21053; Medieval artefacts found during metal detecting

MWA21137 Find Spot (bridle fitting). Early Mediaeval artefact found during metal detecting.



MWA6014; Findspot. Pottery dating to the Medieval period was recovered from a location 250m southwest of Hall End Farm and may be related to an enclosure, visible as a cropmark.

MWA6239; Findspot. Pottery dating to the Medieval period was found in the near an enclosure, 200m southwest of Hall End Farm, Dordon. Field survey of a cropmark enclosure produced quantities of Medieval pottery. The pottery was spread generally over the area of the enclosure and seems to thin out away from the enclosure, although a more thorough survey would be required to prove this. This site could represent an Iron Age settlement with Medieval occupation in the vicinity, or a Medieval enclosure.

MWA7212; A scatter of Medieval pottery was found during field walking at Birch Coppice. It may indicate the extension of medieval settlement to the west of St Nicholas' Church, Baddesley Ensor.

MWA13088 Medieval enclosure at Birch Coppice, Baddesley Ensor. A sequence of medieval enclosure ditches aligned broadly parallel to Gypsy Lane, with a return at the south-west corner to form the southern boundary. A single oven was uncovered near the south-west corner of the enclosure. A medieval enclosure with several phases of ditches was identified. A single oven was found near the south-west corner. Within the enclosure were a series of ditches, pits and post holes. Pottery from within the features was dated to the 12th-14th century (Sykes, 2011).

#### *Post-medieval*

MWA13085; Post-medieval field boundary was uncovered during an evaluation at Birch Coppice, Baddesley Ensor. It appeared to correspond to the boundaries shown on the 1848 tithe map (Thacker, 2011).

MWA230 Site of Hall End Hall, Dordon, an Elizabethan or earlier manor house altered in the 17th century and subsequently (VCH, 1947).

#### *Modern*

MWA13152; Tramway connecting Birch Coppice Colliery and Polesworth Canal Basin. For transport of coal from the mine to, initially, the canal and later the

railway. The tramway appears to tunnel beneath Birchmoor Road, the grounds of Hall End Hall and Watling Street.

#### *Undated*

MWA13083; Undated features were identified during an evaluation at Birch Coppice, Baddesley, Ensor (Thacker, 2010).

MWA4822 Enclosure and linear cropmarks of unknown date 200m S of Hall End Farm which may be the remains of a field system. Medieval pottery may provide evidence of a settlement nearby. The enclosure and linear cropmarks lie 200m south of Hall End Farm. An irregular D-shaped enclosure shows on aerial photographs. Linear features may also indicate a field system in association with the enclosure. Fieldwork on the site produced Medieval pottery (PRN 6239). The enclosure could be Medieval, or the association of the pottery with the enclosure could be fortuitous. It is possible that the enclosure is Iron Age and that Medieval settlement occurs nearby. Excavation in 2013 confirmed this to be a substantial ditched feature, although no dating material was recovered from the ditch fill. A later prehistoric/Roman date has been suggested based on morphological characteristics and the enclosure being located apart from later settlement. (Walker, 2013).

## EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

### *Aims of the work*

The objective of the trial trenching was to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the application area likely to be threatened by the proposed development. Should significant finds or features had been identified then an appropriate excavation strategy would be implemented as a final stage of mitigation by the planning advisory service. This would be the subject of a separate brief.

### *Sample size and scope of fieldwork*

The evaluation comprised five trenches totalling approx. 139m of linear trenching at 1.50m wide and these were located to investigate the whole of the proposed development site.

### *Fieldwork methods and recording*

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. A plans and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

### RESULTS: GENERAL

#### *Soil and ground conditions*

Conditions were generally dry during excavation, the deposits showing some moisture retention. Excavation was relatively smooth throughout most of the trenching (trenches 2-5) being made through alternate layers of topsoil and underlying subsoil leaving a clean and visible surface within the natural substrate. In trench 1 a tarmac surface and stone base 0.30m thick (102) was encountered at about 0.40m below existing ground level from the north end of the trench extending southwards for 15m. Two machine excavated sondages were excavated using a toothed bucket to break the hard surface before reverting to the toothless for the remainder of the excavation.

#### *Reliability of field investigation*

Truncation of the underlying deposits comprising probable modern pitting connected with early 20<sup>th</sup> century activity and a hardstanding and services with more recent development was observed in trench 1. In the remaining trenches (2-5) there was no evidence of truncation, the stratified deposits surviving intact.

#### *Distribution of archaeological deposits*

No archaeological significant deposits or cut features were observed during the excavation. A sequence of early 20<sup>th</sup> century deposits, possibly associated with the occupation of the row of houses to the north were recorded beneath more recent hardstanding in the north-east of the site (trench 1). The remaining trenches (2-5) showed no activity and only residual modern finds within a sequence of indicative of an undisturbed open rural environment.

### Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. The trench was attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

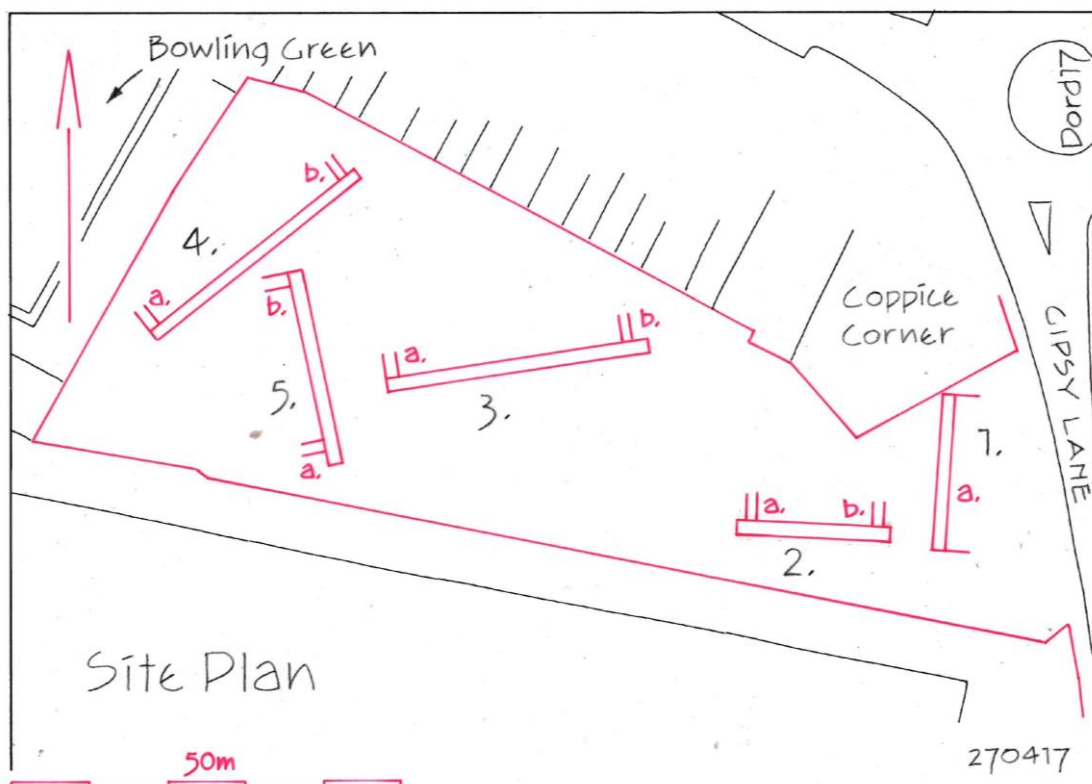


Fig. 3; trench plan with section locations

### RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Figs. 3 & 4)

#### TRENCH 1

##### Context 106 (natural substrate)

The surface of the natural substrate (106), comprising a light brown sandy-clay was exposed within two machine excavated sondages (1 & 2) located at separate points along the trench at a height of about 94.50m AOD. No cut features were observed within the surface of the exposed clay, instead the stratigraphic evidence suggests substantial ground consolidation above this deposit comprising a sequence of layers (described below) that seem attributed to approx. three events.

Contexts 104 (?layer/fill), 105 (?layer/fill) & 103 (layer).

Overlying the natural clay (106) was a sequence of three stratified deposits, the first two appeared sloping. The earliest of these was 104, although only partially exposed it was at least 0.25m thick comprising a greyish-brown silty clay with light brown mottling throughout the deposit and frequent red flecking. There was also a considerable component of small to large flecks of charcoal. Finds consisted of decorated and undecorated porcelain and flower pot sherds, modern roof tile, fragments of glass and a large piece of concrete.

It was in turn overlain by deposit 105 to a depth of at least 0.25m, but continuing beyond the base of the trench. It comprised a greyish-black, clayey-silt mottled with small grey lenses of ash (domestic hearth residue). A few similar sherds of decorated porcelain represented the only finds.

Sealing 105 was a 0.50m thick level deposit (103) of dark greyish brown/black clayey-silt with a component of light brown clay visible as mottling throughout the soil. Finds were sparse consisting of a sherds fragments of modern roof tile.

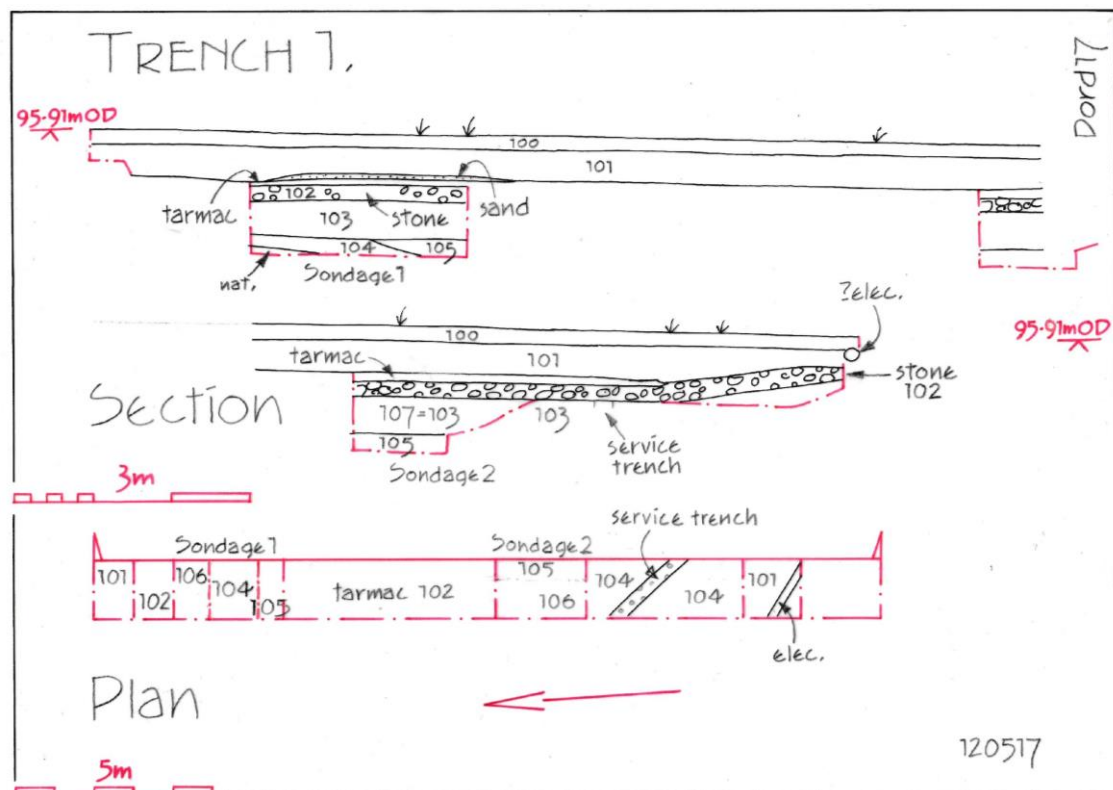


Fig. 4; trench 1, plan & section

#### *Context (layer) 102 & tarmac*

A marked change in the sequence of deposits is shown in the two layers (102 & tarmac) subsequently overlying deposits 103, 104 and 105. These consist of a 0.25m thick reddish-brown, stoney deposit (102) capped by a tarmac surface approx. 0.10m thick. Their presence, at a mid-point in the stratigraphic sequence relates to an earlier change in the use of this part of the site. Situated between the tarmac and layer 101 towards the north end of the trench was an isolated lens of re-deposited sand approx. 0.10m thick.

#### *Context 101 (layer) & context 100 (layer)*

Overlying the surface of the tarmac is a 0.45m thick layer (101) of re-deposited soil and brick and concrete rubble extending the length of the trench. The layer was later truncated at the south end of the trench by modern services consisting of a telecommunications and electric duct trenches aligned on an east-west axis.

#### TRENCHES 2, 3, 4 & 5

#### *Contexts 202, 302, 402 & 502 (natural substrate)*

The stiff light brown natural Lias clay located in trench 1 at approx. 1.50m below ground level was also recorded throughout all the remaining trenches 2-5 across the remainder of the study site. The surface of the natural substrate was at its highest at the south-west end of trench 4 where it was recorded at 101.15m AOD. From this elevated position, the ground slope down to the north-east where the surface of the clay is situated at 99.75m AOD at the end of trench 4 and 98.55m AOD at the end of trench 3. There is also a downward to the south where the natural clay (502) lies at 100.20m AOD and again towards the east end of the site where in trench 2 it was at 95.60m AOD.

There were no archaeological cut features or overlying deposits observed in any of the trenches in association with this natural clay in these trenches. Instead, the stratigraphy was characterised by a relict subsoil (201, 301, 401 & 501) overlying the clay which was in turn sealed by the existing topsoil layer. A handful of residual finds consisting of modern brick and roof tile fragments were recovered from the relict subsoil layers in trenches 3 & 5. Along the southern half of trench 2 the relict subsoil layer (201) was sealed by a thin 0.05m layer of sand (204) which was subsequently overlain to a depth of 0.35m by a layer of redeposited subsoil (203) which tapered off northwards.

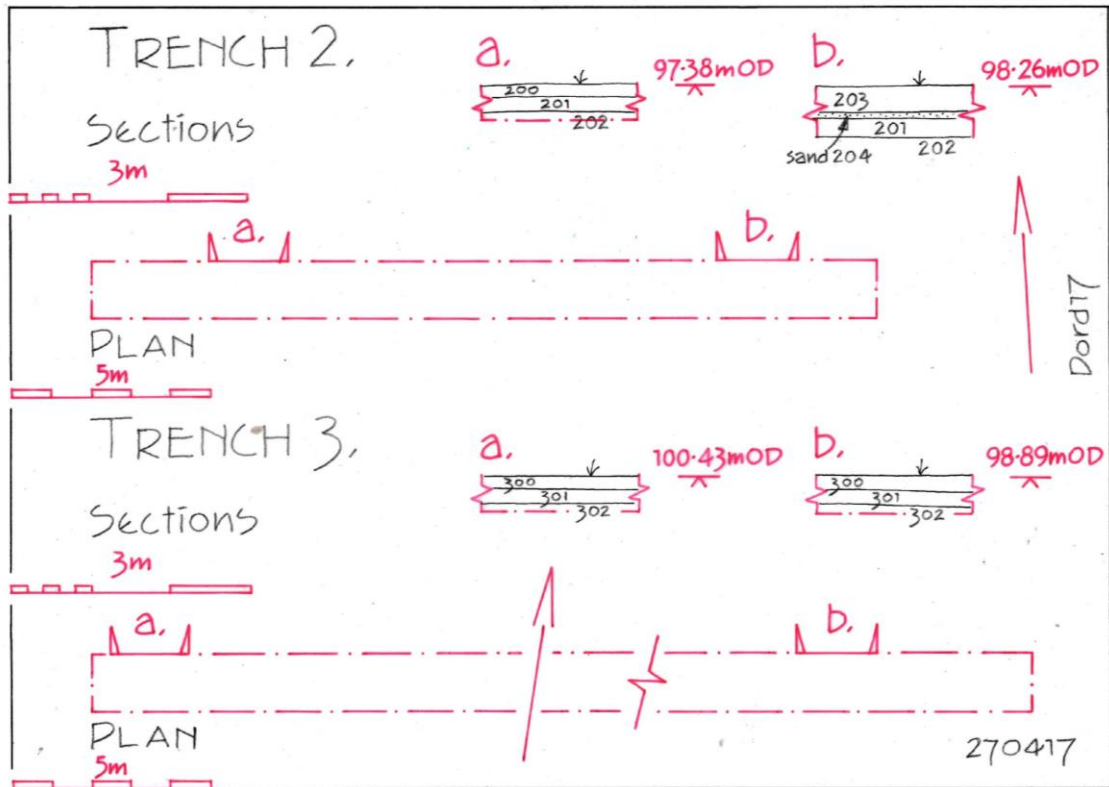


Fig. 5; trenches 2 & 3, plans & sections

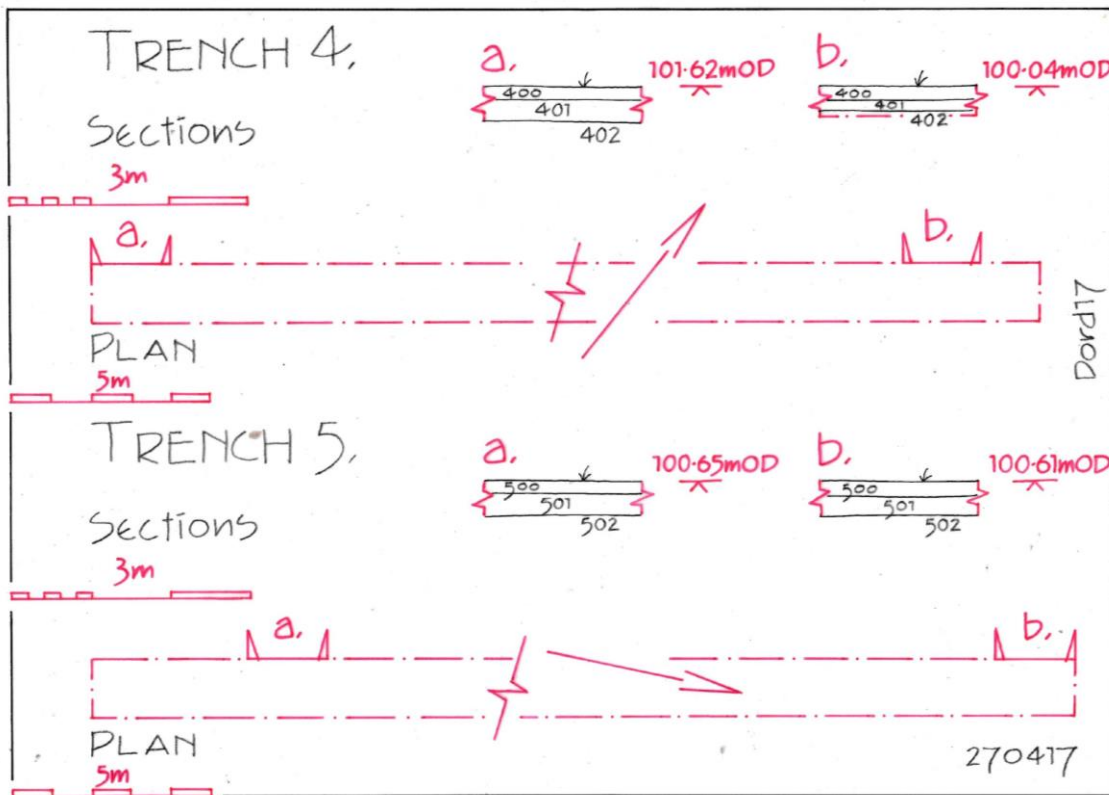


Fig. 6; trenches 4 & 5, plans & sections

Significant root disturbance associated with a former tree was observed within the surface of the natural clay (202) covering a large area at north end of the trench.

## FINDS

Finds comprising fragments of modern roof tile, flower pot and ceramic pipe were retrieved from context 103. A few sherds of white and decorated porcelain (late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) were recovered from context 104 & 105 including a fragment of concrete from 104. Context 301 produced 3 fragments of modern roof tile and context 501 a single fragment of modern roof tile and ceramic pipe and brick. These finds will not be retained.

### *Environmental data*

### *Palaeo-environmental evidence*

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

## DISCUSSION

Historically Dordon was a manor and village in the parish of Polesworth, a large area, measuring over 5 miles from north to south and about 3 miles from east to west. Although not mentioned in Domesday, Dordon is referenced in 12<sup>th</sup> century sources indicating that a medieval settlement is likely to have existed here at the time of the Norman conquest. The parish church of St. Editha, Polesworth, contains 12<sup>th</sup> century fabric in its construction.

Historic mapping (OS 1885) shows the study site was formerly open undeveloped land occupying part of a larger field parcel situated in the angled area to the south-west of the junction of the A5 and Gypsy Lane, a seemingly ancient north-south route-way continuing as Long Street on the north side of Watling Street towards Dordon and Polesworth. Between the study site and the road is a thin strip of land which may have originally evolved as a long slipway off Gypsy Lane as it joins Watling Street east bound to Tamworth. This strip of land, and an equivalent area straddling its southern border was subsequently developed (OS 1924) with a terraced row of housing stretching eastwards along the A5, the rear gardens now marking the boundary of the study site. This development is probably connected with a big growth in the village in 1920 brought about by an



expansion of the Birch Coppice Colliery (originally opened in 1878) situated to the east of Dordon at Hall End.

The eastern boundary of the site was established following construction of the bowling green (OS 1971-74), the existing southern boundary was created following sub-division of the field parcel (OS 1990-96). This was probably connected with the erection of a large warehouse which now occupies the area to the south.

The HER shows early prehistoric activity comprising a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pit (MWA13081); Bronze Age cremation pits (MWA13086) and Iron Age pits and a four-post structure (MWA13087) have been recorded approx. 700m to the south of the site at Birch Coppice, Baddesley Ensor (Thacker, 2010 & Sykes, 2011). The same area also revealed a sequence of medieval enclosure ditches aligned broadly parallel to Gypsy Lane (MWA13088); a scatter of medieval pottery (MWA7212) and a possible medieval ditch (MWA13084).

Watling Street itself is a Roman road and a coin hoard of this date (MWA238) was found approx. 500m to the north-west of the site at Hall End in 1848. Further to the north-west is the site of medieval and post medieval settlement of Hall End along Watling Street MWA230 Site of Hall End Hall, Dordon (MWA13161), an Elizabethan or earlier manor house.

An enclosure (D-shaped) and linear cropmarks of unknown date (MWA4822) have been identified from aerial photographs about 200m south of Hall End Farm, about 600m west of the site near the Birch Coppice Business park (formerly the colliery). Excavation of the enclosure (Walker, 2013) confirmed this to be a substantial ditched feature, although no dating material was recovered from the ditch fill, a later prehistoric/ Roman date was suggested based on morphological characteristics and the enclosure being located apart from later settlement. Medieval Pottery (MWA6239 & MWA6014) found during in the vicinity may provide evidence of a settlement nearby.

No known archaeological deposits are recorded within the site or in the surrounding area although there has been little in the way of recent development providing opportunities for investigation. There is no record in the HER relating to the large warehouse construction bordering the southern edge of the site.

Excavation revealed a stratigraphic sequence of deposits throughout most of the study site characteristic of an undisturbed open rural environment. The land is situated on the downward east and north-east facing slope of a 90-100m contour, levelling out towards the eastern edge of the site near to Gypsy Lane (trench 2). In the north-east corner of the site (trench 1) the stratigraphic evidence suggests substantial modern ground consolidation above the natural

clay comprising a sequence of layers attributed to various stages of development. The earliest of these comprises alternate deposits (103, 104 & 105) of domestic refuse each producing finds consistent with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century date and probably related to the row of houses along Waltling Street built during the 1920s. These were subsequently sealed by a thick stoned-based tarmac drive/roadway (102) which was subsequently covered by a thick layer of soil and concrete rubble (101).

The absence of any earlier finds, archaeological cut features and/or deposits within the study site suggests an open rural undisturbed agricultural environment with little early human activity.

### *Summary of results*

The evaluation revealed no archaeological features situated within the study site. Instead, a sequence of three homogenous deposits comprising natural clay overlain by a relict subsoil and the existing topsoil characterized the stratigraphy across most of the site. The evidence indicates an open undisturbed rural environment with little human activity until development within the north-east corner of the site during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An absence of residual pottery finds of an early date supports this interpretation.

### *Significance*

The results of the evaluation show an absence of archaeological cut features and deposits within the study site indicating little human activity. A lack of residual finds of an early date supports this interpretation. The evidence indicates an open undisturbed rural environment until development in north-east corner of the site during the 1920s and again more recently.

### *Impact of development*

The impact of the development is likely to be from the excavation of strip foundations, services and for the access roads and drives. The results of the trial trenching suggest that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present within the area of proposed development and that further excavation will have no impact.

### *Archive Location*

The archaeological documentary archive arising from the work will be appropriately conserved and deposited with the Warwickshire County Museum. The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

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Dordon Tithe map, 1850. WRO Ref CR0328/36

OS 1885

OS 1903

OS 1924

OS 1938

OS 1956

OS 1971-4

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Warwickshire Historic Environment Record 2017.



Plate 1; trench 1, overall view to the south-east



Plate 2; sondage 1 (section 1a)



Plate 3; sondage 2, east facing section



Plate 4; trench 2, view to the west



Plate 5; section 2a



Plate 6; section 2b



Plate 7; trench 3, view to the east



Plate 8; section 3a



Plate 9; section 3b



Plate 10; trench 4, view to the north-east





Plate 11; section 4a



Plate 12; section 4b



Plate 13; trench 5, view to the north



Plate 14; section 5a



Plate 15; section 5b

## APPENDIX 1 OASIS

Project name	Land south of Berry House, Gypsy Lane, Dordon, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
Project dates	Start: 02-05-2017 End: 04-05-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	DORD17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	NONE
Significant Finds	TILE Modern
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE NORTH WARWICKSHIRE DORDON land south of Berry House, Gypsy Lane
Postcode	B78 1SX
Study area	4670 Square metres
Site coordinates	SK 26113 00026 52.597043494048 -1.614436543116 52 35 49 N 001 36 51 W Point
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive recipient	county museum
Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land south of Berry House, Gypsy Lane, Dordon, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S
Date	2017
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