

**An archaeological evaluation on land
at the rear of the Plaza Garage,
Winchester Road, Romsey, Hants**

NGR: SU 3574 2127

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Report to Emlor Homes Ltd

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Summary statement

A programme of archaeological works was requested by the local planning authority, Test Valley Borough Council, on land to the rear of Winchester Road, Romsey, Hants (NGR: SU 3574 2127). This has been requested following a planning condition being imposed on the site (**planning application no TVS.04318/10**). It is proposed to build a block of residential flats on land that previously contained workshops at the rear of the Plaza (Winchester Road) Petrol Station. The condition is required to secure appropriate recording of the archaeological impact of the development. The work was carried out by C K Currie of CKC Archaeology for Emlor Homes Ltd.

A curving ditch-like feature was observed on the site. This may have originated as a late medieval feature, but it seems certain to have continued in use into the post-medieval period. Its curving nature suggests a provisional interpretation as a former field boundary that would appear to have been abandoned before 1800 on the limited evidence available. Small quantities of burnt flint and a sherd of medieval pottery in the dirty subsoil above the largely undisturbed brickearths might suggest agricultural activity. This probably dates back to prehistoric times although the evidence was not sufficient to state this with certainty. Elsewhere on the site there was no evidence for activity before the 19th century.

The work on site was carried out during frequent heavy rain, making recording difficult at times. However, it is considered that the results reflect a reasonable appraisal of the archaeology of the site. It was agreed with the District Archaeologist that a watching brief on the groundworks was the only further work that would be required on this site.

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This report has been written based on the format suggested by the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluations* (Birmingham, 1994). The ordering of information follows the guidelines given in this document, although alterations may have been made to fit in with the particular requirements of the work. All work is carried out according to the *Code of Conduct* and By-laws of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, of which CKC Archaeology is an IFA-registered archaeological organisation (reference: RAO no. 1).

1.0 Introduction (Fig. 1)

A programme of archaeological works was requested by the local planning authority, Test Valley Borough Council, on land to the rear of Winchester Road, Romsey, Hants (NGR: SU 3574 2127). This has been requested following a planning condition being imposed on the site (**planning application no TVS.04318/10**). It is proposed to build a block of residential flats on land that previously contained workshops at the rear of the Plaza (Winchester Road) Petrol Station. The condition is required to secure appropriate recording of the archaeological impact of the development.

The client, Emlor Homes Ltd, has asked C K Currie of CKC Archaeology to carry out an archaeological evaluation that will satisfy the above planning condition.

2.0 Historical background (Figs. 5-7)

The development site is at the rear of Plaza Petrol Station in Winchester Road, and to the east of the Romsey Fire Station. It lies just outside of the historic core of the late Saxon and medieval market town, but within an area confined between parallel channels of the River Test. Until recently the site was covered by workshops at the rear of the petrol station, covering an area approximately 40m N-S by 60m E-W. The area has been heavily developed over the last hundred years or so, and is surrounded by residential housing.

Romsey was an important late Saxon and medieval market town, centred on what was one of the largest nunneries in England. This was founded around AD 907 by King Edward the Elder for his daughter, Elflada (Pevsner & Lloyd 1967, 477-88). At the time of Domesday Book (1086) the abbey was recorded as holding 'the whole village in which the Church itself lies'. This 'village' was obviously a considerable place as 43 villeins, 66 smallholders and four slaves are recorded living there (Munby 1982, 15.1). The abbey church survives entire as the parish church, and contains some of the finest Norman architecture in a parish church anywhere in the UK. The market town of Romsey grew up around the west gate of the nunnery between the main channel of the River Test, and a subsidiary channel known as Fishlake Stream. It was granted a market and a fair in the reign of Henry I, from which time its 'town' status probably derives (Hughes 1976, 126).

Although the development site is outside of the main historic core of the market town, it was clearly within a prime area for human activity from the prehistoric period onwards. Ribbon development along Winchester Road seems to have occurred from at least the late medieval period. Housing is shown on the north side of this road on both Taylor's county map of 1759 and the 1810 1st edition one-inch Ordnance survey map (Margary 1976). A number of these properties disguise late medieval cores behind their Georgian and later fronts (Frank Green, District Archaeologist pers comm).

The development site seems to have been within the manor of Romsey Extra. This was held by Romsey Abbey until the Dissolution of that monastery in 1539 (Perry 1911, 454). Although much of this large manor quickly lost all its connections with the former abbey, the land on which the development site sits can still be identified as being former monastic land as late as 1845, when it appears on the Romsey tithe map as a blank area marked 'tithe free' (HRO 21M65/F7/197/1-2). Another early large-scale map made in 1807 shows the site as being within a large field numbered 575, and indicates that it was open land in agricultural use behind the back plots of the houses along Winchester Road (HRO 10M58/PO27).

By the time of the first edition large-scale Ordnance Survey map (at 1:500 scale) of 1867 (Fig. 5), a group of buildings had been put up in the far SE corner of the site. The site of the most northerly of these may be just clipped by the foundations of the proposed building. Alma Road first appears on this map, having been cut through a gap in the housing along Winchester Road, although the development area still remained a large field. By 1909 this field had been subdivided, the development site now falling into part of two unnumbered fields. The field to the north of these had been converted into a cricket pitch by this time (1909 OS 25" map, sheet 56.4; Fig. 6). This arrangement was still unchanged in 1944 (1944 OS 25" map, sheet 56.4; Fig. 7). It would appear that the fire station and much of the housing along the southern part of Alma Road was erected after the Second World War.

3.0 Strategy

The strategy for this work is outlined in the project design written for this project. Copies of this report were deposited with Test Valley Borough Council's Planning Department, the Hampshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (hereafter SMR) and in the project archive, to be held by Hampshire Museums Services.

4.0 Results (Figs 2-4)

4.1 Trench 1 (Figs 2-4)

This trench was 50m by 2.1m. It was aligned approximately E-W across the centre of the site, and was sited to follow the central support walls of the proposed block of flats. There was evidence for the hard-standing and workshops that stood on the site until recently. Although the hard-standing had been removed prior to work commencing, a layer of stone chippings [context 01] overlay most of the site. This was above a mixed layer of mainly ashy loam [context 02], probably laid as a bedding for the chipping and hard-standing. These

layers took up the top 0.2m of the local soils. Cut into context 02 were the remains of a shallow brick footing [context 05].

Below these obviously modern layers was a dark clay loam soil [context 03], probably the former topsoil. It contained moderately frequent pieces of 19th and early 20th-century ceramics. This layer was about 0.3m thick, and gradually changed into a less dark brown clay loam [context 04] up to 0.45m thick. There were few artefacts within this layer although occasional pieces of burnt flint, and one small sherd of possibly early medieval pottery indicated possible agricultural activity in the area. This overlay a much lighter brown loamy clay soil, known locally as brickearth, which varying from 0.2 to 0.35m thick [context 08]. The brickearth overlay gravelly soils that were largely undisturbed throughout the trench.

Only one significant feature was discovered in this trench. This was a linear cut [context 06] filled by a silty loam soil [context 07]. This varied from 0.6 to 0.7m in width. The cut extended from the east end of the trench, in a shallow curve along the line of the excavated trench. It disappeared into the southern baulk of the trench between approximately 13m and 17m from the east end. It cut into the underlying gravel, for the most part by between 0.15 and 0.2m. At the east end of the trench the feature appeared to cut into both the brickearth [context 08] and the lower part of the layer above [context 04], making for an overall depth of about 0.5m. At this end of the trench the feature appeared to cut deeper into the undisturbed gravels. There was a possibility that it had been recut here, but there was no evidence for this beyond the most eastern two metres or so of the trench. If this was a recut, the earlier feature was filled entirely with brickearth [context 10], with no sign of silting in the bottom, with the silty fill [context 07] of the rest of the cut passing directly over the top of this. The last few metres at the eastern end of the trench were disturbed by tree roots and animal burrows, making the exact relationships uncertain.

Three sherds of pottery were recovered from the fill of feature 06. These were two pieces of unglazed medieval pottery, and a sherd of green-glazed post-medieval coarseware.

A large plastic pipe cut through part of the trench [cut – context 11, fill – context 12]. A short distance to the west of where this pipe entered the trench was a small feature cutting the top half of context 04. This was interpreted as a small 19th-century pit [context 20]. The clay loam fill [context 21] contained a small piece of creamware.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figs 2 & 4)

This trench was 15.2m by 1m, and was cut parallel to, and 10m to the south of, trench 1. It followed the southern footing of the building, being restricted to the western half of the site nearest Alma Road. The soil sequence was found to be similar to that in trench 2, although it was much disturbed by three possibly intercutting pipe trenches. The individual cuts of these trenches were not recognised, being all of similar composition. They were recorded as a single cut [context 12] and fill [context 13]. All three sections of pipe that were observed were identical and may have been part of a single interconnecting system. They were made of a coarse black plastic-like material, with a diameter of about 0.15m. They were cut to a depth ranging from 0.65m at the east end of the trench increasing to 1m towards the west.

Only in the last 2m of the western end of the trench was a continuous sequence of the historic soils seen. Dirty dark grey-brown topsoil [context 14] overlay a dark brown clay loam [context 15]. The latter extending to a depth of 0.9m. This was followed by a layer of loamy clay 'brickearth' [context 16] that was about 0.2m deep, followed by undisturbed gravel [context 17].

4.3 Environmental sampling

Environmental sampling was undertaken on the suspected agricultural soils seen in trench 1. This comprised a column of five ten-litre samples taken at 0.2m intervals from undisturbed gravels upwards to the topsoil. A similar sample was also taken of the lowest fill of the ditch feature found in trench 1. The results are still awaited at the time of writing, and will be reported elsewhere.

5.0 Discussion

Trench 1 had a reasonable depth of dark loamy soils throughout its length. These were possibly ploughsoils or rich meadow soils formed through centuries of being within what was probably once the River Test floodplain. The curving linear feature [context 06] identified in this trench may have originated as a medieval ditch, which continued in use into the post-medieval period. However, it is possible the medieval sherds recovered may have been residual, which may have dated the ditch to the post-medieval period. The post-medieval sherd recovered was of a green-glazed earthenware type that could be dated at any time from the late 16th through to the 18th century. This type of pottery is unlikely to be any later than about 1800, and the depth of the feature below the present ground surface suggests that it was probably abandoned by this time.

Map evidence supports this tenuous evidence. There is no sign of the ditch as a boundary division of the manorial map of 1807 or the tithe map of 1845. It would seem therefore that the boundary had probably fallen out of use before these maps were made.

Pipe trenches cutting through trenches 1 and 2 were thought to be associated with post-Second World War workshops that existed on the site until recently.

6.0 Conclusions

A curving ditch-like feature was observed on the site. This may have originated as a late medieval feature, but it seems certain to have continued in use into the post-medieval period. Its curving nature suggests a provisional interpretation as a former field boundary that would appear to have been abandoned before 1800 on the limited evidence available. Small quantities of burnt flint and a sherd of medieval pottery in the dirty subsoil above the largely undisturbed brickearths might suggest agricultural activity. This probably dates back to prehistoric times although the evidence was not sufficient to state this with certainty. Elsewhere on the site there was no evidence for activity before the 19th century.

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7.0 Finds

7.1 Burnt flint

Three fragments of burnt flint weighing 25 grms were found in context 04. These were cleaned and weighed before discarding on site. Their presence might indicate possible prehistoric activity in the general vicinity.

7.2 Pottery

Four sherds of pottery were found. One sherd of sandy fabric medieval (?) coarseware was found in context 04 (weight 4gms). The other sherds were all found in context 07 (fill of ditch 06). These were:

Description	weight	approximate date
One sherd of unglazed sandy fabric; pinky-beige inner surface, black outer surface	12 grms	12 th -14 th century
One sherd of unglazed sandy coarseware fabric; reddish fabric, blackened outer surface	4grms	11 th -14 th century
One sherd of green glazed reddish earthenware	4 grms	16 th -18 th century

All pottery types were body sherds and were otherwise undiagnostic of vessel type. They were all in fabrics that are relatively common throughout southern Hampshire, although green-glazed post-medieval wares are rarer than brownish or clear-glazed earthenware types in Romsey (Frank Green pers comm).

8.0 Copyright

C K Currie (trading as CKC Archaeology) shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports or other project documents written by himself or his agents, under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* of 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client, the local planning authority and the Hampshire County Council SMR for the use of such documents by them in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the project design.

9.0 Archive

The archive for this work will be deposited with the Hampshire Museum Services, Chilcombe House, Bar End, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8RD (Accession number A2001/7). Copies of the report were lodged with the client, the Hampshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and the National Monuments Record in Swindon, Wiltshire.

10.0 Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are given to all those involved with this project. Carl Tunnicliffe, Design Manager for Emlor Homes, provided plans, liaison with the various parties on site, and use of machinery for excavating the site. Ian Wykes of the Archaeology Section of Hampshire County Council provided information from the county Sites & Monuments Record (SMR). The staff of the Hampshire Record Office provided the author with access to historic maps of the area. Frank Green MPhil MIFA, Archaeological Officer for Test Valley Borough Council, monitored the site on behalf of the local planning authority.

11.0 References

11.1 Original sources in the Hampshire Record Office (HRO):

HRO 10M58/PO27 Map of Romsey Extra manor (northern portion), surveyed 1807, corrected 1819

HRO 21M65/F7/197/1-2 Tithe map & award for Romsey, 1845-6

Ordnance Survey maps in HRO:

1st edition 1:500 scale sheet (1867 ed; sheet 56.4.13)

3rd edition 25" sheet (1909 ed; sheet 56.4)

4th edition 25" sheet (1944 ed, sheet 56.4)

11.2 Original sources in print

J Munby, *Domesday Book. Hampshire*, Chichester, 1982

11.3 Secondary sources

English Heritage, *The management of archaeological projects*, London, 1992, revised edition

M Hughes, *The small towns of Hampshire*, Winchester, 1976

Institute of Field Archaeologists, *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluations*, Birmingham, 1994

M Perry, 'Romsey Extra & Infra' in W Page (ed), *The Victoria history of the county of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, vol 4, London, 1911, 452-69

N Pevsner & D Lloyd, *The buildings of England. Hampshire*, Harmondsworth, 1967

Appendix 1: key to contexts excavated

Context	Description	Munsell Colour
01	T/1; stone chippings	7.5YR 6/4
02	T/1; ashy loam	2.5YR 2/0
03	T/1; clay loam	10YR 3/2
04	T/1; clay loam	10YR 4/3
05	T/1; brick foundation	
06	T/1; linear cut	
07	T/1; silty loam fill of 06	10YR 4/2
08	T/1; loamy clay	10YR 5/4
09	T/1; gravelly soil	10YR 4/6
10	T/1; sandy clay loam fill of 06	10YR 5/4
11	T/1; cut of pipe trench	
12	T/1; clay loam fill of 11	10YR 3/2
13	T/2; hardcore & loam mixed layers	10YR 3/2
14	T/2; linear cut of pipe trenches	
15	T/2; clay loam fill of 14	10YR 3/2
16	T/2; clay loam layer	10YR 3/2
17	T/2; clay loam layer	10YR 4/3
18	T/2; loamy clay	10YR 5/4
19	T/2; gravelly soil	10YR 3/6
20	T/1; small irregular cut	
21	T/1, clay loam fill of 20	10YR 3/2

Appendix 2: catalogue of photographs taken

Photographs were taken in both colour slide and monochrome print. In the archive the colour slides are pre-fixed with the site code, followed by 'S' to indicate photograph type, eg PG/S/* (* indicating the photograph number). Monochrome prints are number PG/M/*, following the same procedure as for slides.

- 1 T/1, overall shot of most easterly 40m of trench from E
 - 2 ditto
 - 3 T/1, linear cut 06, showing sections cut through it from E
 - 4 ditto
 - 5 T/1, western 15m of trench from SW
 - 6 ditto
 - 7 T/1, full 50m length of trench showing south facing section from SE
 - 8 ditto
 - 9 T/2, north facing section of full length of trench from NW
 - 10 ditto
-

Appendix 3: glossary of archaeological terms

Archaeology: the study of man's past by means of the material relics he has left behind him. By material relics, this means both materials buried within the soil (artefacts and remains of structures), and those surviving above the surface such as buildings, structures (e.g. stone circles) and earthworks (e.g. hillforts, old field boundaries etc.). Even the study of old tree or shrub alignments, where they have been artificially planted in the past, can give vital information on past activity.

Artefacts: any object made by man that finds itself discarded (usually as a broken object) or lost in the soil. The most common finds are usually pottery sherds, or waste flint flakes from prehistoric stone tool making. Metal finds are generally rare except in specialist areas such as the site of an old forge. The absence of finds from the activity of metal detectorists is not usually given much credibility by archaeologists as a means of defining if archaeology is present

Baulk: an area of unexcavated soil on an archaeological site. It usually refers to the sides of the archaeological trench.

Burnt flint: in prehistoric times, before metal containers were available, water was often boiled in pottery or wooden containers by dropping stones/flints heated in a fire into the container. The process of suddenly cooling hot stone, particularly flint, causes the stone to crack, and form distinctive crazed markings all over its surface. Finds of large quantities of such stone are usually taken as a preliminary indication of past human presence nearby.

Context: a number given to a unit of archaeological recording. This can include a layer, a cut, a fill of a cut, a surface or a structure.

Cut: usually used to mean an excavation made in the past. The 'hole' or cut existed in time as a void, before later being backfilled with soil. Archaeologists give a context number to the empty hole, as well as the backfilled feature (called the 'fill').

Earthwork: bank of earth, hollow, or other earthen feature created by human activity.

Environmental evidence: evidence of the potential effect of environmental considerations on man's past activity. This can range from the remains of wood giving an insight into the type of trees available for building materials etc, through to evidence of crops grown, and food eaten, locally.

Evaluation: a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork (mainly test-trenching) which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified land unit or area. If they are present, this will define their character, extent, and relative quality, and allow an assessment of their worth in local, regional and national terms.

Munsell colour: an objective method of defining soil colour using a specially designed colour chart for soils. The reading defines hue (an objective description of colour; eg YR means yellow-red), value (darkness or lightness of the colour) and chroma (the greyness or purity of the colour). For example 10YR 3/2 is a dark grey-brown.

Natural [layer]: in archaeological reports, this is a layer that has been formed by natural process, usually underlying man-made disturbance.

Period: time periods within British chronology are usually defined as Prehistoric (comprising the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age), Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-medieval. Although exact definitions are often challenged, the general date ranges are as given below.

Prehistoric c. 100,000 BC - AD 43. This is usually defined as the time before man began making written records of his activities.

Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age 100,000 - 8300 BC

Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age 8300 - 4000 BC

Neolithic or New Stone Age 4000 - 2500 BC

Bronze Age 2500 - 700 BC

Iron Age 700 BC - AD 43

Roman AD 43-410

Saxon AD 410-1066

Medieval AD 1066-1540

Post-medieval AD 1540-present

Pottery sherds: small pieces of broken baked clay vessels that find their way into ancient soils. These can be common in all periods from the Neolithic onwards. They often find their way into the soil by being dumped on the settlement rubbish tip, when broken, and subsequently taken out and scattered in fields with farmyard manure.

Project Design: a written statement on the project's objectives, methods, timetable and resources set out in sufficient detail to be quantifiable, implemented and monitored.

Settlement: usually defined as a site where human habitation in the form of permanent or temporary buildings or shelters in wood, stone, brick or any other building material has existed in the past.

Site: usually defined as an area where human activity has taken place in the past. It does not require the remains of buildings to be present. A scatter of prehistoric flint-working debris can be defined as a 'site', with or without evidence for permanent or temporary habitation.

Sondage: an arbitrary hole dug during archaeological excavation. Often dug after the main excavation is complete to quickly test for information that may be required to clarify points of the main excavation.

Stratigraphy: sequence of man-made soils overlying undisturbed soils; the lowest layers generally represent the oldest periods of man's past, with successive layers reaching forwards to the present. It is within these soils that archaeological information is obtained.

Worked flint or stone: usually taken to mean pieces of chipped stone or flint used to make prehistoric stone tools. A worked flint can comprise the tools themselves (arrowheads, blades etc.), or the waste material produced in their making (often called flint flakes, cores etc.).
