

RFSG13



# LAND OFF DR NEWTON'S WAY, RODBOROUGH FIELDS, STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*for Lioncourt Homes*

*June 2013*



**HEADLAND**  
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd





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STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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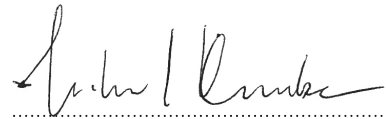
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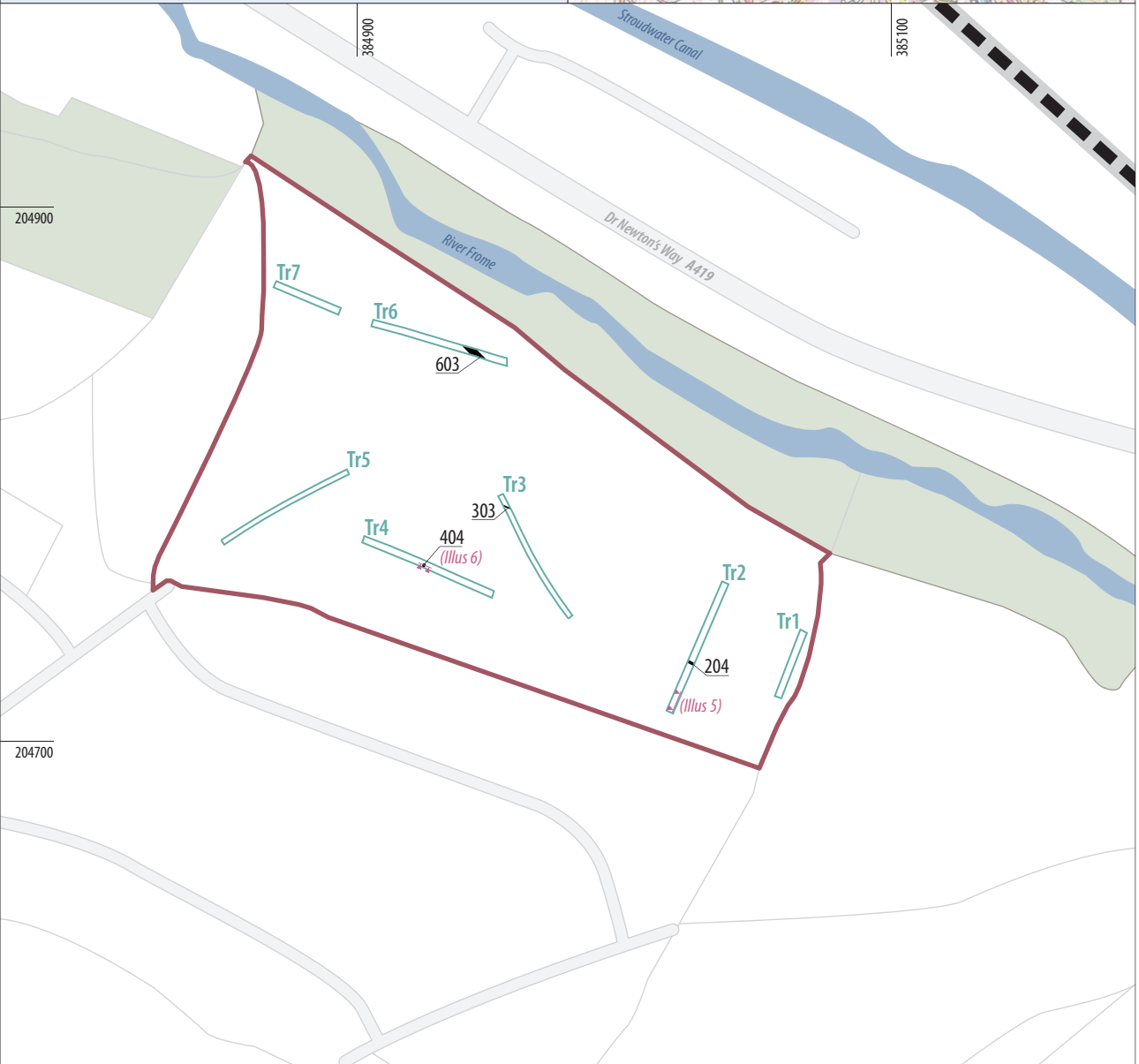
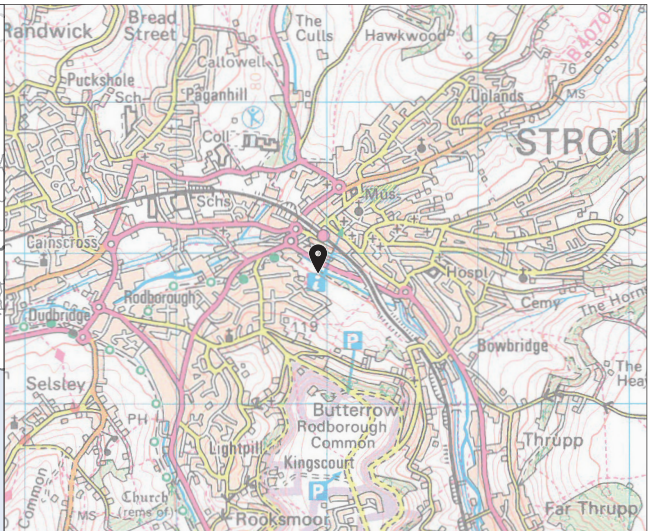
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scale 1:2,500 @ A4



**Illus 1**  
Site location

# LAND OFF DR NEWTON'S WAY, RODBOROUGH FIELDS, STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

## Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology excavated seven evaluation trenches on a plot of land to the south of Dr Newton's Way, Stroud, Gloucestershire. Lioncourt Homes intends to apply for planning permission to use the site for the construction of a new housing estate. Evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture was revealed. One small, undated pit, filled with charcoal was exposed and excavated in the central-south part of the site. One medieval pottery sherd was recorded in a subsoil layer in the north-western part of the site. The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be very low.

The evaluation also targeted several linear anomalies, previously detected by geophysical survey. These turned out to be spreads of modern rubble (possible footpaths), a modern trackway in the southern part of the site, and geological features.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (acting on behalf of Lioncourt Homes) to undertake an archaeological evaluation on a plot of land to the south of Dr Newton's Way, Stroud, Gloucestershire.

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned to provide further information about the archaeological resource, to enable appropriate decisions to be reached regarding planning permission for a proposed housing development.

A Project Design was prepared by Headland Archaeology and submitted to the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority.

## 2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The Development Area (DA) is approximately 2.625ha in size and is located within a single field to the south of Dr Newton's Way, at the southern extent of the town of Stroud (NGR – site centre: SO 84929 04801). The field is currently used as pasture land and slopes steeply from south to north. To the west and south of the DA there are residential dwellings and to the north the land drops steeply towards the River Frome. Further pasture land is present to the east of the site (*Illus 1 & 2*).

The underlying solid geology across the majority of the site comprises Ferruginous limestone and interbedded limestone and marls of the Lias group (British Geological Survey website; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

### 2.1 Archaeological background

A desk-based assessment of the site was produced in 2012 by EDP (Lewis 2012). The assessment reported the presence of ridge-and-furrow earthworks and post-medieval agricultural buildings within the site. The potential for earlier archaeological remains to be present was considered to be low.

The northern boundary of the site adjoins an Industrial Heritage Conservation Area, which links several smaller conservation areas to the north-west and north-east. These conservation areas include numerous listed buildings, the closest to the site being former industrial buildings, such as mills and warehouses, on the opposite site of the River Frome, in the Stroud Station Conservation Area (Lewis 2012, 3).

There is however good evidence for Romano-British activity in the near vicinity overlooking the confluence of the River Frome and Slad Brook, as well as for prehistoric activity on the higher ground of Rodborough Common to the south.

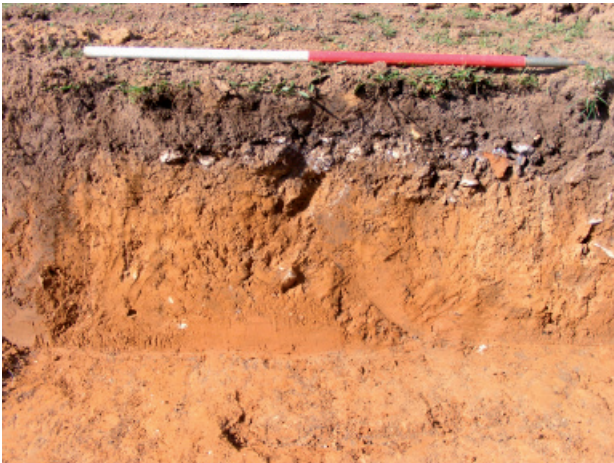
A magnetometer survey carried out by Archaeological Surveys Ltd in 2012 (Sabin & Donaldson 2012) located anomalies associated with former and extant ridge and furrow; a possible former hollow way in the northern part of the site; a small number of positive and negative linear anomalies oriented north-south across the southern part of the site; discrete positive responses in the eastern part of the field; and a linear positive response close to the River Frome. Those features identified as having the potential for being archaeological in origin were targeted by the trial trenching.





**Illus 2**

*General view of site*



**Illus 3**

*Tr2 SE-facing section with modern rubble deposit [204]*



**Illus 4**

*Tr6 with feature [603] in plan, looking east*

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### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide sufficient evidence to assess the impact of the proposal by establishing the extent, nature and importance of any heritage assets within the affected area.

Specifically the evaluation aimed to:

- Establish the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the areas proposed to be disturbed during the development.
- Establish the integrity and state of preservation of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the areas proposed to be disturbed during the development.
- Establish the nature of the anomalies identified by the magnetometer survey.

### 4. METHOD

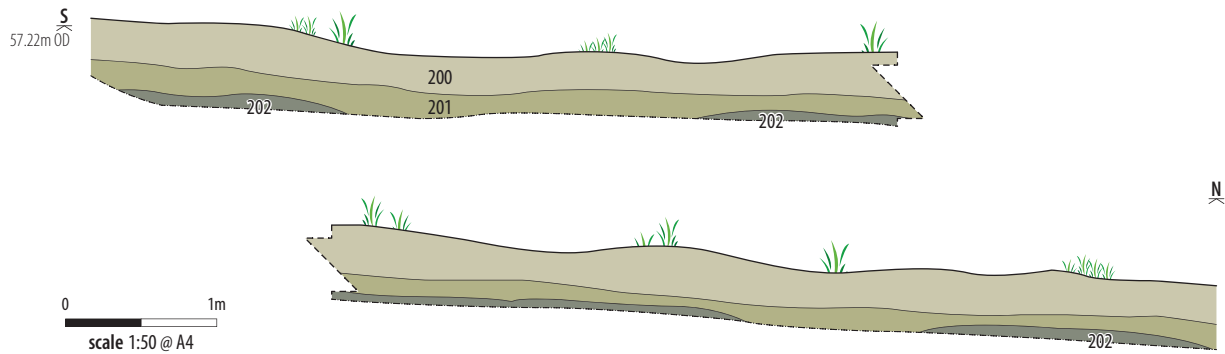
Eight trenches (four measuring 50m x 1.8m and four measuring 25m x 1.8m) were proposed on the trench location plan submitted with the Project Design. The trenches were positioned to target anomalies identified by the magnetometer survey and to achieve maximum coverage of the site.

Two trenches could not be excavated, due to their location on a very steep slope close to the River Frome valley. Therefore, with the consent of the Environmental Dimension Partnership and the Archaeological Advisor to the planning authority the two trenches were repositioned and joined, forming the 50m long Trench 6. This trench still crossed the strong linear positive anomaly at the northern edge of the site.

Altogether, seven trenches, five measuring 50m by 1.85m and two 25m by 1.85m, were excavated within the proposed development area.

Trenches were excavated by a 3CX mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.84m wide ditching bucket. All trenches were excavated under direct archaeological supervision, with topsoil being removed by machine and excavation terminating at the uppermost significant archaeological horizon or when geological deposits were encountered. Spoil was stored besides the trench, with topsoil and subsoil separated.

All trenches were surveyed using a Trimble differential GPS system. A record sheet was completed for each trench, for stratigraphic



**Illus 5**

*Tr2 E-facing section with ridge and furrow*

sequence, even where no deposits of archaeological significance were present. Identified archaeological features were subject to sample hand excavation, carried out to a sufficient degree to meet the objectives of the evaluation (excavation of 50% of discrete features, and a 1m wide slot through linear features).

All recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance. All contexts were given unique numbers and recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards. Colour transparencies and black and white photographs were taken to record archaeological contexts and to illustrate the progress of the trial trenching. Digital photographs on a 7.2mp camera were taken for illustrative purposes but will not form part of the site archive.

Trenches were backfilled by replacing excavated materials in the trench in reverse order of excavation; and by compressing with the excavator.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Stratigraphy

A consistent soil profile was observed in all trenches. This comprised a topsoil layer (eg context [100], 0.12m–0.32m in depth) sealing a subsoil layer (eg [101], 0.1–0.36m in depth) which sealed the geological horizon. Two types of geological deposit were recorded: silty clay (eg [202] with almost no inclusions (similar in composition to the subsoil) and clayey silt eg [203] with frequent fragments of limestone. The silty clay [202] was generally found to overlie the clayey silt. In Trenches 2 and 5 the silty clay formed channel-like lenses within the underlying layer – probably the result of periglacial processes. Two slots were excavated by hand across the channels to rule out the possibility that they were archaeological features. The irregular, undulating character of the natural deposits can explain the wide linear anomalies orientated north-south in the southern part of the field that were recorded in the geophysical survey (Illus 1, 3–5).

### 5.2 Ridge and furrow

Evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture was observed in all trenches located in the southern part of the site (Trenches 1–5) in the form of bands passing through the trenches on an east to west alignment. The bands representing the furrows varied in width between 2m and 2.5m. The observed spacing between the furrows was relatively

consistent. Vertically the ridge and furrows were relatively shallow, forming an undulating profile. The ridges were visible on the surface as an earthwork with a maximum height of 0.15m. When excavated the furrow bases were on average 0.1m deep (Illus 5).

### 5.3 Modern deposits

Modern contexts were present in three trenches. Trench 3 revealed a c0.05m thick layer of crushed brick and angular limestone rubble [303] at its north-western end. Trench 2 exposed a similar c0.05m thick layer [204] below the topsoil layer in the central-north part of the trench (Illus 3). The deposit matches the location of the linear positive anomaly recorded in the geophysical survey. It could be interpreted as the remains of a footpath running east-west across the central part of the field – with [204] and [303] being parts of the same feature. A very similar deposit was recorded in the central part of Trench 6, in the northern part of the field – [604], similarly it was sealed by topsoil and its location corresponded with a north-west to south-east running positive linear anomaly recorded in the geophysical survey.

A further modern feature was recorded in the eastern part of Trench 6. Feature [603] was a c2m wide cut for a modern trackway. The southern side of the cut was retained by a red-brick (single thickness) wall within the cut. The feature had been filled with modern rubble (Illus 4). This structure was also recorded by the magnetometer survey as a strong linear anomaly running alongside the River Frome valley (Illus 1).

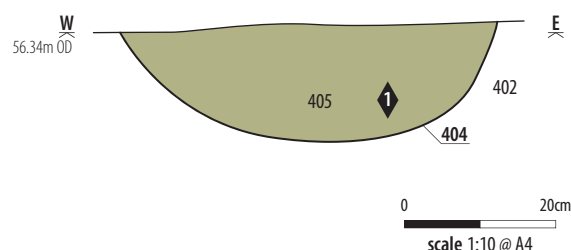
### 5.4 Archaeological remains

The central part of Trench 4 revealed one round pit [404], measuring 0.5m in diameter and 0.14m in depth. The pit was cut into geological deposits and sealed by subsoil (Illus 6). The feature was filled with a charcoal rich clayey silt deposit [405], the outer 0.03m of which had oxidised where it was in contact with the cut. The pit fill was sampled for environmental analysis and charcoal and fragments of pottery were recovered (see Finds Assessment below and Appendix 2 & 3).

### 5.5 Finds assessment

*by Julie Franklin & Imogen Wood*

One sherd of pottery was recovered from the site during the excavations. A few fragments of ceramic and industrial waste were



**Illus 6**

*Tr4 S-facing section of [404]*

recovered from a sample of a pit fill [405]. The whole assemblage weighs only 26g (Appendix 3).

anomalies that are not ridge and furrow are likely to be even more recent in date.

The sherd of pottery was found in Trench 7 in the north-west corner of the research area, at the bottom of the subsoil layer. It is a hand-made basal sherd, made from a very poor silty clay with few inclusions. It has been tempered with abundant well rounded decayed oolitic limestone pieces (totally lost in firing), sparse well rounded quartz grains and rare limonitic grains. It may be of 11th to 12th century date, similar to oolitic limestone-tempered ware, but with more voids where the limestone has decayed. Similar pottery of this date was recovered from Maidenhill, Gloucestershire (Timby 2000, 28). However it should be born in mind that this dating is by no means certain, that one sherd could easily be residual and as it was not found associated with any archaeological feature cannot be used as secure dating evidence for any activity on site.

Other positive and negative weak anomalies from the geophysical survey can be attributed to the geology of the site.

The potential for unrecorded archaeological features to be present in the unexcavated parts of the site is considered to be low.

## 7. REFERENCES

### 7.1 Bibliographic sources

English Heritage 2011 *Environmental Archaeology: a Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation*. 2nd ed.

English Heritage 2005 *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains from Christian Burial Grounds in England*. Church Archaeology Human Remains Working Group Report.

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*.

IfA 2008 (revised) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

Lewis, D 2012 *Land off Dr Newton's Way, Stroud: Archaeological Assessment*. Environmental Dimension Partnership EDP1392\_01.

PPS 5 2010 *Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*.

Sabin, D & Donaldson, K 2012 'Land off Dr Newton's Way, Rodborough Fields, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Magnetometer Survey', *Archaeological Surveys Ltd Report 412*.

The fragments recovered from pit fill 405 are largely undiagnostic. The two ceramic fragments are very small and abraded and may belong to either pottery or ceramic building material. The industrial waste includes a single piece of spheroid hammerscale which is indicative of blacksmithing. However, again such meager remains do not indicate this activity was in the immediate vicinity.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture was particularly clear in the southern part of the site. The remains were visible on the surface, recorded by magnetometer survey and visible as sub-surface features. The pottery sherd found in the subsoil layer in Trench 7 does not necessarily imply nearby archaeological remains as it may have been transported there by a variety of difference processes, such as manuring of the fields. The undated charcoal filled pit with traces of burning around its edges [404] appears to relate to a single episode of in situ burning.

The modern deposits found in the south-eastern, central and north-western parts of the field suggest that those linear geophysical



## 7.2 Online sources

British Geological Survey *UK geology*' <<http://bgs.ac.uk>> [accessed March 2013].

Timby, J 2000 'Pottery' in Kenyon, D & Leah, M 'A Medieval Building and Occupation at Maidenhill, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire' in Oakey, N (ed) *Three Medieval Sites in Gloucestershire: Excavations at Westward Road, Ebley; Tinker's Close, Moreton-in-Marsh; and Maidenhill, Stonehouse 1995-1998*. Cotswold Archaeological Trust, Occasional Paper Number 1, <[http://www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Maidenhill\\_200dpi.pdf](http://www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Maidenhill_200dpi.pdf)> [accessed June 2013].



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Site registers

#### Appendix 1.1 Trench register

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Av. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)
1	25	1.85	0.4	0.45
2	50	1.85	0.45	0.52
3	50	1.85	0.55	0.7
4	50	1.85	0.55	0.7
5	50	1.85	0.45	0.84
6	50	1.85	0.33	0.5
7	25	1.85	0.45	0.5

#### Appendix 1.2 Context register

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
1	100	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.18
1	101	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.18–0.30
1	102	Brownish red silty clay. Geological deposit.	0.30+
2	200	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.32
2	201	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.32–0.45
2	202	Brownish red silty clay. Geological deposit.	0.45+
2	203	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent pieces of limestone. Geological deposit.	0.45+
2	204	Deposit with crushed bricks and angular limestone fragments. Modern.	0.19–0.24
3	300	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.14
3	301	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone and occasional pieces of coal. Subsoil.	0.12–0.48
3	302	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent pieces of limestone. Geological deposit.	0.48+
3	303	Deposit with crushed bricks and angular limestone fragments. Modern.	0.00–0.05
4	400	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.10–0.20

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
4	401	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.20–0.46
4	402	Brownish red silty clay. Geological deposit.	0.46+
4	403	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent pieces of limestone. Geological deposit	0.46+
4	404	Cut of small pit.	0.46–0.72
4	405	Fill of small pit [404] with burnt material.	0.46–0.72
5	500	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.20
5	501	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.20–0.45
5	502	Brownish red silty clay. Geological deposit.	0.45+
5	503	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent pieces of limestone. Geological deposit.	0.45+
6	600	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.16
6	601	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.16–0.26
6	602	Brownish red silty clay. Geological deposit.	0.26+
6	603	East-west running trackway, 2m wide, cut into subsoil, 0.35m deep, sealed by modern rubble material, includes red-brick wall on its south side	0.24–0.59
6	604	1.2m wide deposit, sealed by topsoil, made of crushed bricks and angular limestone fragments. Modern.	0.16–0.24
7	700	Very dark brown silty loam with few inclusions. Topsoil.	0.00–0.2
7	701	Dark yellowish brown, firm, clayey silt with occasional small-small/medium sized pieces of limestone. Subsoil.	0.2–0.4
7	702	Brownish red clayey silt with frequent pieces of limestone. Geological deposit.	0.4+

#### Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Photo	C/S	B/W	Digital	Direction	Description
1	779/37	778/36	–	–	ID shot
2	–	–	1	SE	Site view, opening Trench 2
3	779/36	778/35	2	W	Trench 5 – East facing section
4	–	–	3	W	Trench 5 – East facing section
3	779/35	778/34	4	NW	Trench 5 – East facing section
4	–	–	5	NW	Trench 5 – East facing section



## Headland Archaeology

Photo	C/S	B/W	Digital	Direction	Description
5	–	–	6	S	Trench 5 – Spoil heap with topsoil
6	–	–	7	S	Trench 5 – Spoil heap with subsoil
7	779/34	778/33	8	N	Trench 4 – South facing section [404] pit
8	–	–	9	N	Trench 4 – South facing section [404] pit
9	–	–	10	-	Working shot with L.C-B
10	779/33	778/32	11	S	Trench 5 – General shot with (503) deposit
11	779/32	778/31	12	N	Trench 5 – General shot
12	779/31	778/30	13	E	Trench 4 – General shot
13	779/30	778/29	14	W	Trench 4 – General shot
14	779/29	778/28	15	S	Trench 4 – North facing section
15	–	–	16	S	Trench 4 – North facing section
16	779/28	778/27	17	W	Trench 7 – General shot
17	779/27	778/26	18	SW	Trench 7 – North-east facing section
18	779/26	778/25	19	W	Trench 6 – General shot
19	779/25	778/24	20	SE	Trench 6 – Feature [603] in plan
20	779/24	778/23	21	N	Trench 6 – South facing section
21	–	–	22	S	Trench 6 – Deposit [604] in section
22	–	–	23	S	Trench 6 – Deposit [604] in section
23	–	–	24	S	Trench 6 – General shot
24	779/23	778/22	25	SE	Trench 3 – General shot

Photo	C/S	B/W	Digital	Direction	Description
25	779/22	778/21	26	NW	Trench 3 – General shot
26	779/21	778/20	27	SW	Trench 3 – North-east facing section with modern rubble material (pathway?)
27	779/20	778/19	28	N	Trench 1 – General shot
28	779/19	778/18	29	W	Trench 1 – East facing section
29	779/18	778/17	30	NW	Trench 2 – South facing section with ridge and furrow
30	779/17	778/16	31	SE	Trench 2 – South facing section with ridge and furrow
31	779/16	778/15	32	W	Trench 2 – South facing section
32	779/15	778/14	33	S	Trench 2 – General view
33	779/14	778/13	34	N	Trench 2 – General view
34	779/13	778/12	35	W	Trench 2 – East facing section of (204) deposit
35	779/14	778/13	36	W	Trench 7 – Backfilled
36	779/14	778/13	37	N	Trench 6 – Backfilled
37	779/14	778/13	38	N	Trench 3 – Backfilled
38	779/14	778/13	39	W	Trench 4 – Backfilled
39	779/14	778/13	40	SW	Trench 5 – Backfilled
40	779/14	778/13	41	S	Trench 1 – Backfilled
41	779/14	778/13	42	S	Trench 2 – Backfilled



## Appendix 2 Environmental sample assessment

by Laura Bailey

### Introduction

One bulk sample recovered from the fill (405) of a discrete pit (F404) from an archaeological evaluation at Land off Dr Newton's Way, Rodborough Fields, Stroud, Gloucestershire, was processed for environmental assessment. The pit was located in Trench 4 and measured 0.5 x 0.5 x 0.14m. It was filled with burnt material comprising a band of oxidized clayey silt around the edges and clayey silt containing a large amount of charcoal.

### Method

The sample was subjected to flotation and wet sieving in a Siraf-style flotation machine. The floating debris (the flot) was collected in a 250 µm sieve and, once dry, scanned using a binocular microscope. Any material remaining in the flotation tank (retent) was wet-sieved through a 1mm mesh and air-dried. This was then sorted and any material of archaeological significance removed.

### Results

Results of the assessment are presented below in [Table 1](#) (Flot samples) and [Table 2](#) (Retent samples). Material suitable for AMS (Accelerated Mass Spectrometry) radiocarbon dating is shown in the tables.

### Retents

Two small fragments of pottery and a tiny slag fragment were recovered from the sample together with a small amount of charcoal ([Table 2](#)). It was not possible to identify the charcoal present in the retent as oak or non-oak due to its small size.

### Discussion

The environmental remains are neither abundant nor diverse. The oxidisation around the edges of the pit suggests that the charcoal derives from an in situ conflagration event. The presence of oak and non-oak charcoal suggest that the charcoal is not the remains of a single post burnt in situ. The charcoal assemblage offers little scope for further work and little more can be said about the primary function of the feature from the environmental remains.

The presence of pottery, slag and magnetic residue within the pit is likely incidental deposition rather than deliberate dumping, brought about by a mixture of human and natural agents and unlikely to relate to the primary function of the pit. Its survival is largely a result of its deposition in a protected position within a negative feature. The environmental remains offer little scope for further works.

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### Flots

The flots comprised modern root and stem fragments none of which are of any archaeological significance. However, several small charcoal fragments, with a maximum size of 1cm, identified as oak and non-oak were also recovered ([Table 1](#)).

**Table 1**

*Flot samples*

Context	Sample	Feature	Total flot vol (ml)	Charcoal qty	Charcoal max size (cm)	Material available for AMS dating	Comments
---------	--------	---------	---------------------	--------------	------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------

405	1	Pit fill	25	++++	1	Yes	Oak and non-oak
-----	---	----------	----	------	---	-----	-----------------

Key: + = rare (1–5), ++ = occasional (6–15), +++ = common (16–50) and ++++ = abundant (>50)  
NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating

**Table 2**

*Retent samples*

Context	Sample	Feature	Sample vol (l)	Ceramic			Industrial waste		Charcoal		Material available for AMS dating
				Pottery	Fe slag	Mag res	Qty	Max size (cm)			

405	1	Pit fill	20	+	+	++	++	0.5	No
-----	---	----------	----	---	---	----	----	-----	----

Key: + = rare (0–5), ++ = occasional (6–15), +++ = common (15–50) and ++++ = abundant (>50)  
NB charcoal over 1cm is suitable for identification and AMS dating

Appendix 3 Finds catalogue

Trench	Context	Sample	Qty	Weight (g)	Material	Object	Description	Spot date
4	405	1	2	2	Ceramic	Fragments	small, abraded, pottery/CBM?	–
4	405	1	–	1	Industrial waste	Mag Res	Spheroidal hammscale and what appears to be some magnetised stone	–
4	405	1	–	1	Industrial waste	Slag	Very small vitrified fragment	–
7	Subsoil	–	1	15	Pottery	Oolitic limestone – tempered ware?	Hand-made basal sherd, very poor silty clay with few inclusions, tempered with abundant well rounded decayed oolitic limestone pieces (totally lost in firing), sparse well rounded quartz grains and rare limonitic grains	11th/12th C?





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