

AFCW/01



ABBNEY FIELDS COMMUNITY CENTRE, WINCHCOMBE

Archaeological Watching Brief

commissioned by Winchcombe Town Council

SMC Ref. S00109080

September 2015

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CONTENTS

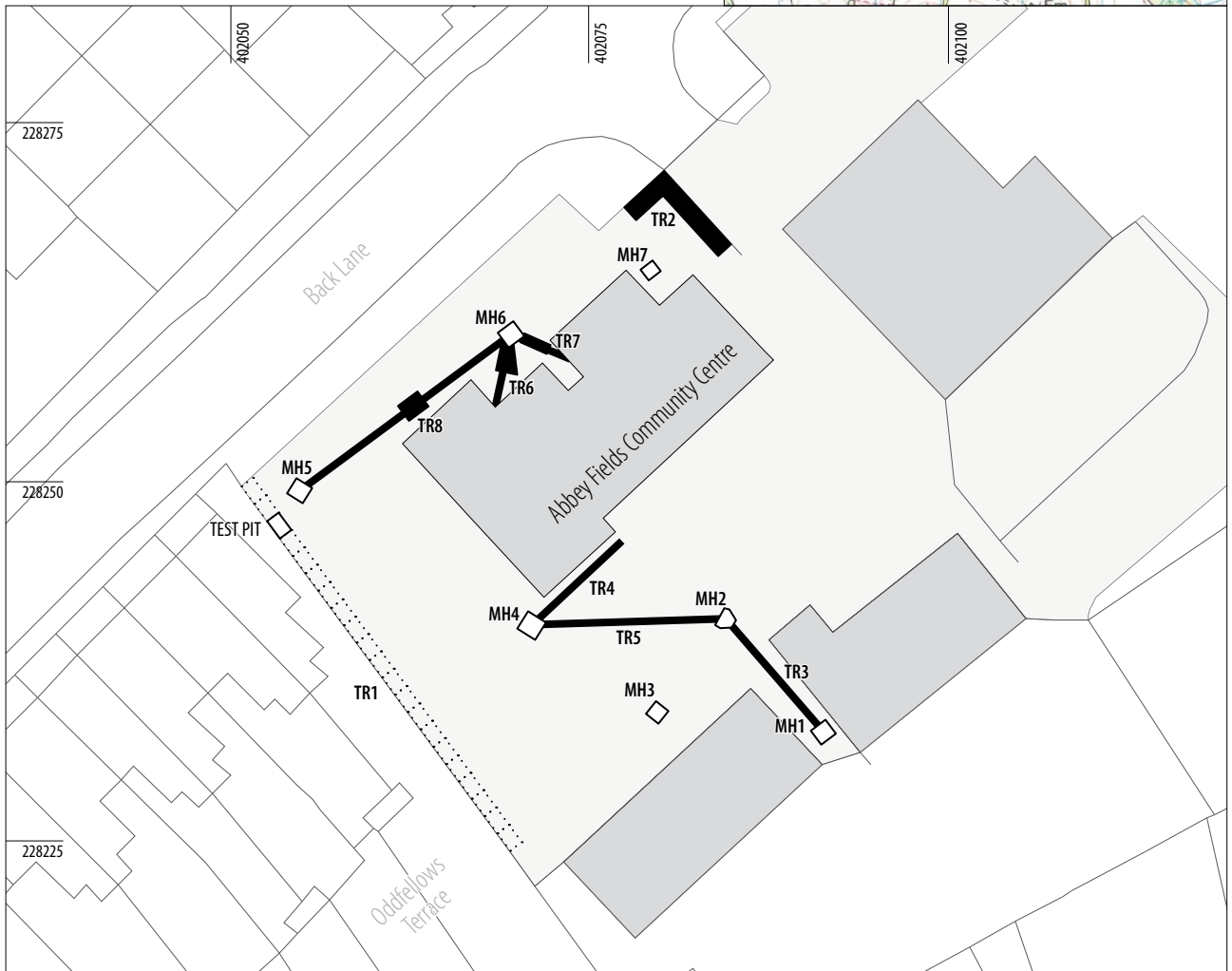
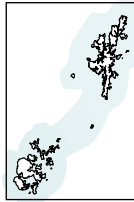
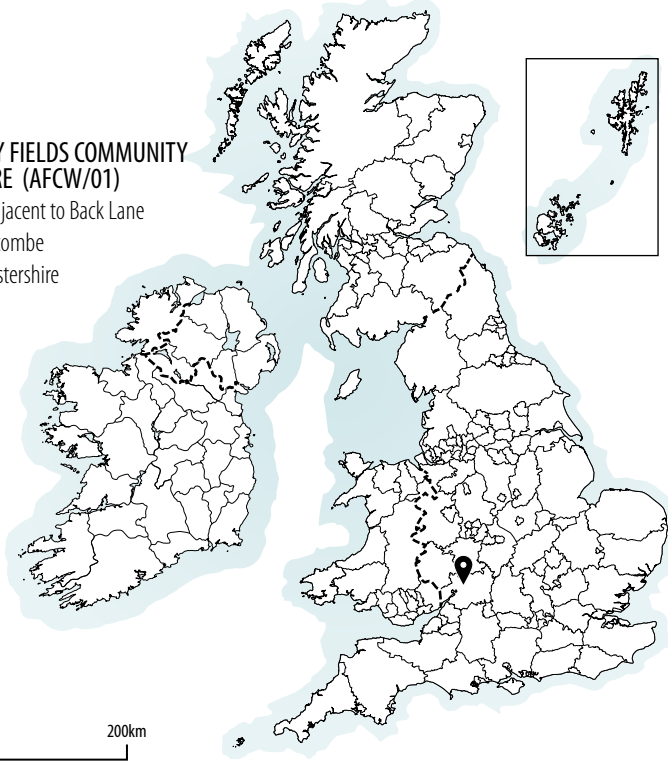
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION	1
	1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
2	OBJECTIVES	2
3	METHOD	2
	3.1 PHASES OF WORK	2
	3.2 EXCAVATION AND RECORDING	2
4	RESULTS	4
	4.1 PHASE 1: WALL UNDERPINNING (TRENCH 1)	4
	4.2 PHASE 2: GROUND REDUCTION AT SITE ENTRANCE (TRENCH 2)	4
	4.3 PHASE 3: (TRENCHES 3–8)	4
5	DISCUSSION	5
6	CONCLUSION	5
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	5
8	APPENDICES	6
	APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS	6
	Appendix 1.1 Trench and context register	6

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUS 1		
Site location		vi
ILLUS 2		
Excavation of a test pit in Trench 1		2
ILLUS 3		
Location of NW facing section of section in the area of reduction (Trench 2) showing remnants of the probable Saxon-period 'clay bank'		3
ILLUS 4		
Example of the excavation of drainage and the modern, made ground beneath the carpark		4

ABBEY FIELDS COMMUNITY CENTRE (AFCW/01)

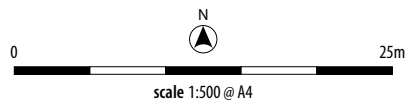
land adjacent to Back Lane
Winchcombe
Gloucestershire



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- KEY**
- trench location
 - test pit location
 - undug part of trench

ILLUS 1
Site location



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ABBEY FIELDS COMMUNITY CENTRE, WINCHCOMBE

Archaeological Watching Brief

Headland Archaeology undertook a watching brief during repair works at Abbey Fields Community Centre in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire during July and August 2015. The site is located within the Scheduled Monument of Winchcombe Priory.

During groundworks adjacent to the front entrance of the Community Centre, the remains of an earthen bank were identified. The feature is believed to be a continuation of the earthen bank visible as an extant earthwork in the adjacent field which has previously been dated to the Anglo-Saxon period or earlier.

No further deposits of archaeological significance were identified during the works.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Winchcombe Town Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during repair works at Abbey Fields Community Centre in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. The Community Centre is located within the scheduled area of Winchcombe Abbey (SM 28873, HA 1019146) and Scheduled Monument Consent for the works was granted by Historic England in May 2015 (Ref: S00109080). The works included:

- excavation within existing service trenches to repair/renew damaged underground foul and surface water drainage pipework;
- the reduction of a raised area of paving and the removal and rebuilding of supporting brickwork wall;

Condition (e) of the consent stipulates:

No ground works / building works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work before and/or during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by the Historic England.

A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by Headland Archaeology (Craddock-Bennett 2015) and approved by Historic England in June 2015.

In accordance with the WSI, an archaeologist from Headland Archaeology was on site to monitor and record all ground penetrating works undertaken by the sub-contracted groundworks team. Monitoring was undertaken between 21st July and 4th August 2015.

1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed development site is located at NGR 402102,228273 (site centre), at the south-western extent of the scheduled area. The Community Centre is located with the renovated buildings of the old junior school which dates to 1911 and fronts onto Back Lane in the centre of Winchcombe. The buildings are surrounded by tarmac hardstanding.

The site is underlain by Charmouth Mudstone. No drift deposits are recorded. (British Geological Survey website: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Winchcombe Abbey lay in one of the chief royal centres of the Saxon period, which from 1007 to 1017 was the centre of a shire, a large block of land consisting of many subdivisions called hundreds.

The monastery is therefore expected to preserve rare evidence for late Saxon religious buildings. Despite demolition following



ILLUS 2

Excavation of a test pit in Trench 1



the Dissolution, the site of the monastic precinct has had only limited disturbance, and therefore good survival of below ground archaeological levels can be expected.

Excavations undertaken in 1963 and 1972 (Ellis 1986) to the east of the present site found evidence for a trackway, apparently dating to the Saxon period, which cuts through a Saxon-period clay bank with stone facing lying immediately to the south-east of Back Lane. An accompanying ditch runs parallel to the bank on the north-west side along its length.

Further excavations undertaken in 1985 (Guy 1986) still further to the east of the present site in the school grounds uncovered buildings dating to the late 13th- or 14th century probably associated with the abbey, which lay to the south. Evidence for smithing or the dumping of smithing slag was found along with an aisled barn or open faced structure.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the archaeological works were as follows:

- to ensure the excavation and recording of any archaeological remains that would be disturbed by the proposed groundworks;
- to produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey literature reporting and publication as appropriate.

The local and regional research contexts were provided by the Archaeological Research Framework for the South West. The resulting archive (finds and records) were organised and will be deposited with Gloucestershire Museums Service to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.

3 METHOD

The watching-brief was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Historic England. Three phases of work were monitored.

3.1 PHASES OF WORK

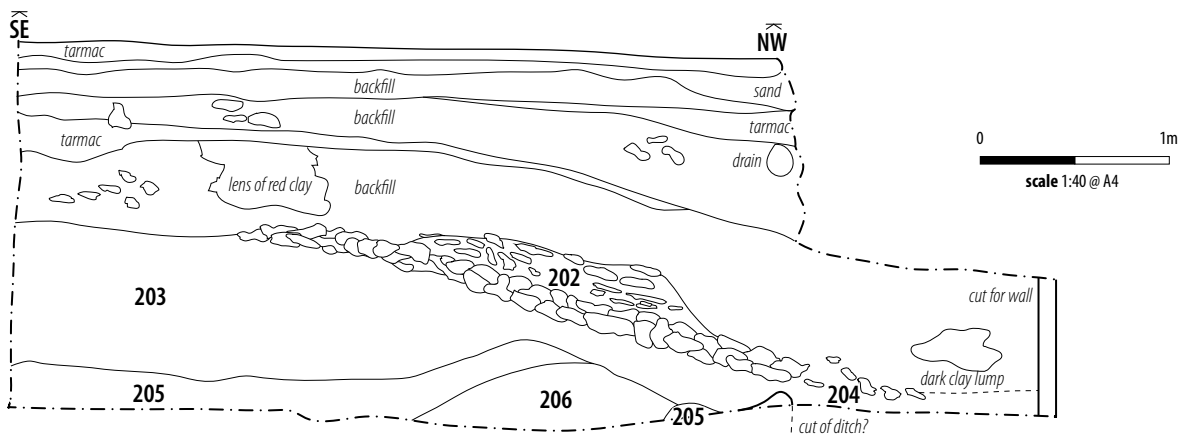
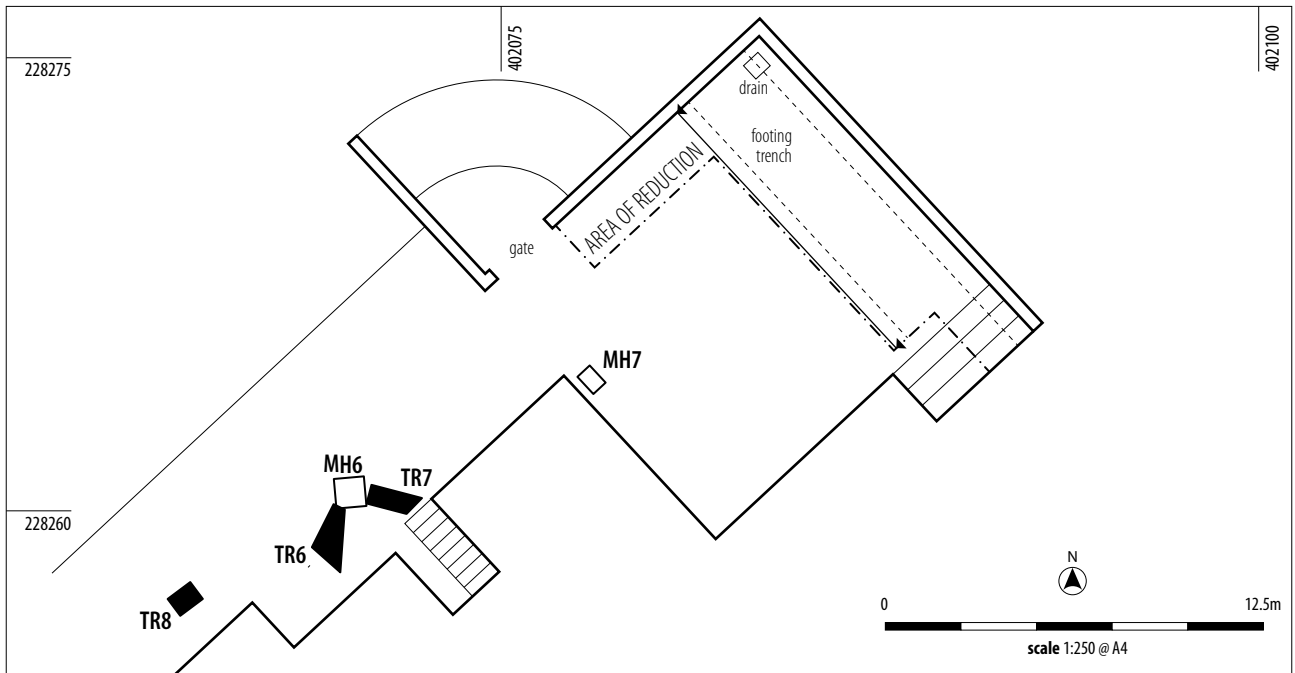
1. Excavation of a test pit adjacent to a subsiding wall at the SW end of the site to investigate damage and to possibly underpin and repoint the wall (Trench 1).
2. The reduction of a raised area of paving and the removal and rebuilding of supporting brickwork wall by the site access (Trench 2).
3. Excavation within existing service trenches to repair/renew damaged underground foul and surface water drainage pipework (Trenches 3–8).

3.2 EXCAVATION AND RECORDING

Excavation works were undertaken by mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket. The main contractor mechanically excavated deposits as necessary for the improvement works which were monitored by an archaeologist.

In most cases the archaeologist entered and recorded interventions once the limit of excavation was reached or the undisturbed geological horizon was exposed. Sufficient time was allowed prior to continuing excavation works for the archaeologist to make adequate records.

Due to Health and Safety considerations, Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd staff did not enter unsupported excavations deeper than



ILLUS 3
Location of NW facing section of section in the area of reduction (Trench 2) showing remnants of the probable Saxon-period 'clay bank'



ILLUS 4

Example of the excavation of drainage and the modern, made ground beneath the carpark

4.1 PHASE 1: WALL UNDERPINNING (TRENCH 1)

The excavation of a single test pit (Trench 1) adjacent to a length of subsiding wall at the western end of the site revealed modern, made ground to a depth of 0.65m+ at which point the foundation base was encountered. Upon removal of the tarmac and sub base (at a depth of 0.1–0.2m) along the length of the wall it was decided that no more excavation would be necessary due to the presence of concrete foundations (Illus 2) which were supporting the wall. No archaeological deposits were identified.

4.2 PHASE 2: GROUND REDUCTION AT SITE ENTRANCE (TRENCH 2)

The reduction of the raised area of paving and the removal of a supporting brickwork wall by the site access necessitated the excavation of a trench to a depth of 1.92m below the existing ground surface.

1.2m below existing ground level (or excavations shallower than this should they be deemed unsafe).

All recording followed ClfA Standards and Guidance for conducting archaeological monitoring and the Headland manual.

Context recording sheets were used to record stratigraphic units and registers were maintained for all contexts, drawings and photographs.

The photographic record comprised of 35mm black-and-white prints supplemented by digital photographs where appropriate for use in the report.

A site plan identifying excavated areas was maintained by annotating construction design drawings. Archaeological features were hand-drawn on permatrace at an appropriate scale (1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:20 or 1:10 for sections).

4 RESULTS

A full description of all deposits is included in Appendix 1. The location of excavated trenches are recorded on Illus 1.

Beneath made ground, at a depth of 1.0m below ground level, a mounded deposit of large compacted sandstone fragments [202] overlying a firm layer of light brown sandy clay [203] was identified (Illus 3). This in turn overlay a greyish blue clay [205] and an orange/brown sandy gravel deposit [206] considered to be geological in origin.

To the north-west of deposit [203] and apparently cutting [205] was a darker, less compact silt [204] which potentially represented a ditch fill, however, excavation ceased at the top of this deposit making interpretation speculative.

4.3 PHASE 3: (TRENCHES 3–8)

Machine excavation of existing service trenches was undertaken in order to repair and renew underground foul and surface water drainage pipework.

Deposits observed within the trench sections were consistent across the site; A layer of tarmac (or concrete in Trench 3) and sub-base to a depth of 0.2m covered the entire site, with a deposit of disturbed made ground (eg [302]) extending to a depth of 1m+ (Illus 4). Material including bricks, metal and plastics was present within the deposit suggesting the deposition of material within the modern period. No deposits of archaeological significance were identified.

5 DISCUSSION

Deposits [202] and [203] appear to represent a continuation of the NE-SW aligned earth bank visible within the Abbey Field to the northeast of the current works.

The bank, which has been interpreted as a Saxon rampart, is still an extant landscape feature within Abbey Field. Previous excavations (Ellis 1986) to the northeast of the current site identified a phase of agricultural activity underlying the rampart which may have been linked with middle-Saxon occupation. Three phases of rampart construction were identified, with an initial ditch and bank overlain by a timber and turf-revetted flat-topped bank, which was heightened and strengthened with a stone revetment. The latter two phases are argued to be respectively early 10th and late 10th/early 11th century in date.

The deposits identified during the current works appear to relate to the Saxon rampart; deposit [203] identifiable with the flat-topped bank previously excavated and deposit [202] representing a collapse of the stone revetment.

Although the rampart has previously been shown to have a flat top, the abrupt interface between modern overburden and the top of the feature is suggestive of truncation. The main body of the bank however, and potentially ditch material to the northwest of the feature appear to have been afforded a degree of protection in the form of made ground extending to a depth of c.1m below ground level. The made ground was present throughout the excavated areas, and as excavation did not continue below 1m in depth across the main part of the site, no further archaeological or geological deposits were observed.

6 CONCLUSION

The watching brief has succeeded in identifying the continuation into the site of an embanked feature believed to date to the Saxon period. A deposit of made ground, measuring in excess of 1m in depth, extends across the community centre site. The majority of excavations did not exceed this depth and therefore no further deposits, finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS

Appendix 1.1 Trench and context register

Trench 1

Dimensions 1.5m x 1m

Context	Description	Deposit D (BGL)
101	Tarmac	0.00 – 0.10m
102	Sub-base: mid-grey, compact gravel with brick and concrete rubble.	0.10 – 0.30m
103	Made ground: light yellow/brown, sandy clay. Firm, moist. Occasional fragments of brick and concrete.	0.30 – 0.65m
104	Concrete foundations beneath brick wall.	0.60 – 0.65m

Summary: No archaeological deposits

Trench 2

Dimensions 14m x 5m

Context	Description	Deposit D (BGL)
201	Made ground. Consisting of tarmac ground surface, builders sand, brown sandy clay and rubble backfill, buried tarmac layer, mid-grey/brown sandy clay backfill.	0.00 – 1.60m
202	Sandstone fragments. Light yellow/brown. Medium to large, sub-angular, compact. Fades out towards NW where it abuts [204].	0.94 – 1.80m
203	Light brown sandy clay, firm, occasional siltstone and redeposited clay natural. Flecks of charcoal.	0.94 – 1.80m
204	Mid-brown silty clay, loose compaction. Possible ditch fill.	1.75 – 1.84m+
205	Natural – Greyish blue clay.	1.52 – 2.00m+
206	Natural – Mid-brown/orange, sandy/gravelly clay.	1.64 – 2.00m

Summary: Saxon rampart and potential ditch identified.

Trench 3–8

Dimensions All drainage trenches measured 0.7 – 0.9m in width.

Context	Description	Deposit D (BGL)
301	Tarmac	0.00 – 0.06m
302	Grey gravel hardcore	0.06 – 0.13m
303	Layer of finer loose gravel mixed with bitumen	0.13 – 0.18m
304	Sandy yellow clay, very soft. Made ground deposit. Frequent pieces of modern brick, tile and angular pieces of concrete.	0.18m – 1.0m+

Summary: No archaeological features or deposits identified within drainage trenches.



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