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Southampton Archaeology Unit Report 1262

Archaeological Watching Brief at Sturminster House, Southampton SOU 1729

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2017

Client: Southampton City Council



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Cover photograph. Trench 6.

Summary Sheet

Site name/address: Sturminster House, Irving Road, Southampton.
SOU site code: SOU 1729
Contractor site code: SOU 1729
HET consultation number: 8029
Grid reference: SU 39072 14327
Fieldwork dates: 12/09/2016 to 11/11/2016
Type of fieldwork: watching brief
Name of contracting unit: Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit
Report author: E Young and Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA
Report number: 1262
SCC Accession Number: 2017.4
Name of client: Southampton City Council
Summary: The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief in September to November 2016 on groundworks for the construction of an energy centre adjacent to Sturminster House, in Irving Road, Southampton. The work was commissioned by Southampton City Council. A number of undated pits, probably of prehistoric date, were recorded.

Report on the Archaeological Watching Brief at Sturminster House, Southampton. SOU 1729

Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA

1. Summary

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out a watching brief in September to November 2016 on groundworks for the construction of an energy centre adjacent to Sturminster House, in Irving Road, Southampton. The work was commissioned by Southampton City Council. A number of undated pits, probably of prehistoric date were recorded.

2. Introduction

2.1 Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit carried out a watching brief on groundworks for an energy centre at Sturminster House for Southampton City Council between 12/09/2016 and 11/11/2016.

2.2 The site lies in Area 16 of the Local Areas of Archaeological Potential (LAAP) as defined in the City of Southampton Core Strategy 2013 and on the edge of Area 3 (Old Shirley).

2.3 The observations were made by AK Fedorowicz and T Riley. The artefacts were identified by Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA and MF Garner BA MCIfA. The report was edited by Dr AD Russel. The project was managed by MF Garner. On completion of the archaeological work the archive will be deposited with Southampton City Council Museums under Accession number 2017.4.

3. Site location, topography and geology

3.1 The proposed site lies on the top of Redbridge Hill to the north of the valley cut by Tanners Brook at Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 39072 14327 (fig). A spot height of 21m OD is recorded some 76m to the south of the site.

3.2 Sturminster House is a fifteen-storey prefabricated slab block completed in 1966. The site of the energy centre lay in an area of car parking to the east of the block. This area was some 1.2m lower than the surrounding roads and was accessed by a ramp.

3.3 The geology is the Wittering Formation covered by deposits of River Terrace 3. (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>) dated to 250,000 to 300,000 years BP (Briant *et al* 2012).

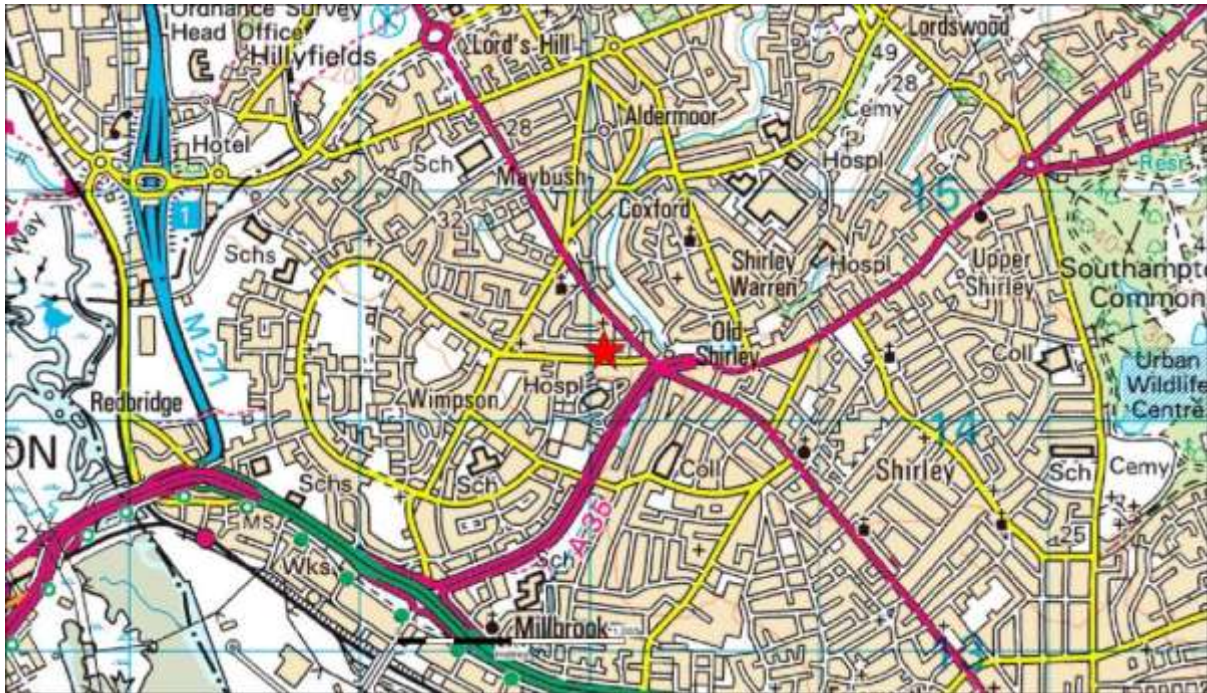


Figure 1. Location of the site, marked with a red star.

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4. Historical background

4.1 The site lies within the large parish of Millbrook, to the west of the village of Shirley, which is first mentioned in the Domesday Book. The Victoria County History of Hampshire gives the history of the manor of Shirley as follows:

The manor of Shirley (Sirelei, xi cent.; Schyrlegh and Shirlee, xiii cent.) was held before the Conquest by Cheping of the king, and it was assessed at 1 hide. Ralph de Mortimer held in Cheping's stead at the time of the Domesday Survey, and his descendants held knights' fees in Shirley as late at least as 1362. By the fifteenth century, however, the manor had come to be looked upon as held of the prior and convent of St Denis, which held much property in the neighbourhood. In the fourteenth century the manor was held by the family of Shirley. Nicholas de Shirley in 1240 granted the advowson of the church of Shirley, which up to this time had no doubt gone with the manor, to the prior of St. Denis, and Isabel de Shirley, widow of Roger de Shirley, and Nicholas, Roger, John, and Simon, sons of Roger de Shirley, were also benefactors to the priory. In 1272 Nicholas son of Roger, son of Roger de Shirley, granted two parts of a messuage, a mill, and other appurtenances in Shirley to Nicholas de Barbflete or Barnflete and Alice his wife. Nicholas was a member of a family coming originally from Barfleur which had long been settled at Southampton. In 1286 he was appointed by the king to collect the murage at Southampton and to apply the same towards rebuilding Southampton Castle. Four years later licence was given him to grant a spring in his manor of Shirley to the Friars Minor of Southampton. In 1327 Maud widow of Richard Barbeflete released all right in Shirley and Hill to Roger Normand and Joan his wife, to whom free warren within the manor was granted ten years later. Roger was a wealthy merchant and one of the most prominent burgesses of Southampton at this time, being M.P. for the town in 1328, 1332, and 1338–9 and mayor in 1330. He also assisted so largely in the building of

the church of Holy Rood or St. Cross, Southampton, that in 1333 by decision of John, bishop of Winchester, permission was granted to him to be interred within it. By 1391 the charter of Edward III granting free warren in his demesne lands in Shirley to Roger Normand was confirmed to Richard Beket and Alice his wife, kinswoman and heir of Roger Normand. The manor later passed to the Whitehead family, and later to the Thistlethwaytes. In the middle of the nineteenth century the greater part of Shirley was sold in building allotments, and consequently the manor ceased to exist. A water-mill was appurtenant to the manor of Shirley and Hill from an early date, but it has now fallen into disuse.

'Parishes: Millbrook', in *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London, 1908), pp. 427-432 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol3/pp427-432> [accessed 4 February 2016].

5. Historic maps

5.1 Greenwood's map of Hampshire shows the site as fields behind houses on Romsey Road, with no development along Redbridge Hill (fig 2).



Figure 2. Extract from Greenwood's map of Hampshire of 1826. Approximate position of site marked by a red circle.

5.2 Late 19th century maps show scattered buildings along Redbridge Hill such as Fir Cottage (fig 3) with the site still shown as a field.

5.3 The 1946 map shows the area had been chosen as a post-war prefab housing estate (fig 4). An aerial photograph of 1953 shows it covering a wider area than is shown on the 1946 map.



Figure 3. The 1871 Ordnance Survey map. Approximate position of site marked by a red circle.



Figure 4. The 1946 Ordnance Survey map. The red circle marks the approximate location of the site. The area is being developed with pre-fabricated temporary housing.

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6. Archaeological Background

6.1 The site lies in Area 16 of the Local Areas of Archaeological Potential (LAAP) as defined in the City of Southampton Core Strategy 2013 and on the edge of Area 3 (Old Shirley). Area 16 is described as

Area 16 encompasses the parts of the city not marked as areas 1 to 15. Anywhere within the city boundary is an area of potential archaeological importance, about which little is known at the moment. An example is any stretch of land between two designated areas. Other, more specific, examples are the many small sites that are too small to show on the accompanying maps: industrial works such as brick manufactories, isolated buildings such as farms and country houses, and the immediate surroundings of such places.

Area 3 is described as:

*The village of Shirley developed at the confluence of Holly Brook and Tanners Brook, probably by the end of the 10th century. The area was an important road junction, where routes across the peninsula met routes between Southampton and Romsey. The area of Old Shirley includes Shirley Mill and the millponds, and the site of Shirley Church.
(https://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/LAAPs%20descriptions_tcm63-360361.pdf)*

6.2 The Historic Environment Record for Southampton was searched for information on heritage assets within 1km of the site. The results have been plotted on a map of the area (fig 5). The full list of sites is included in the desk-based assessment that accompanied the planning application. Key sites are given below:

Palaeolithic

MSH87

Mousehole, Shirley - Flint Finds SU 38958 14082

Flint artifacts were found in a gravel pit in the Mousehole area of Shirley in the late 19th century. The location of the gravel pit is now the Western Community Hospital, off Tebourba Way and Walnut Grove.

MSH107

Old Shirley - Flint Handaxe Finds SU 39326 14209

There are 18 Palaeolithic flint handaxes from "Old Shirley" in Gloucester Museum, Southampton Museum and Winchester Museum. The precise findspots are not known.

MSH116

Anglesea Road - Flint Handaxe Find SU 39905 14165

A Palaeolithic flint handaxe from Anglesea Road, Shirley, is now in Winchester Museum. It was found before 1919 but the precise findspot is unknown.

MSH138

Pit near "Shirley Church" (St James's Church/St James's Park) - Flint Tool Finds SU 40138 14342

There are three undated flints (a ?palaeolith, a flake and a scraper) from the general area of Shirley Warren, recorded in the Dale Collection in Winchester, so found before 1919. Two of the flints have been discarded.

MSH462

Coxford - Flint Tool Finds SU 39266 14916

Palaeolithic flint implements were found in the general area of Coxford. Most came from a gravel pit being worked in 1898. The flints are now (2003) in the British Museum, Salisbury Museum and Winchester Museum.

MSH580

Part of former site of Western Hospital - Prehistoric Phase SU 38959 13939

A palaeochannel was found in the plateau gravels during a watching brief on part of former site of Western Hospital in 1993/4 (SOU 543).

Mesolithic

MSH108

Old Shirley - Flint Axe Find SU 39326 14209

A Mesolithic tranchet axe from "Old Shirley" is in Southampton's archaeological collections. The precise findspot is unknown. (See also MSH509.)

MSH463

Coxford - Flint Tool Find SU 39298 15006

A Mesolithic axehead was found in "Coxford" in or before 1978. It is now in Southampton's Archaeology Collections (2003).

Neolithic

MSH90

Near Tanners Brook, off Tebourba Way - Flint Finds SU 3892 1354

Neolithic flints were found in 1948 at grid reference SU 3892 1354. There were allotment gardens at this grid reference. The flints may have come from the allotments or from the construction of Tebourba Way.

MSH109

Old Shirley - Stone Axehead Find SU 39326 14209

A Neolithic polished clay-limestone celt from "Old Shirley" is now in Southampton's archaeological collections. The precise findspot is unknown. (The axehead is possibly the same as that recorded on MSH499.)

MSH110

Old Shirley - Neolithic Flint Dagger Blade SU 39326 14209

A Neolithic polished flint dagger blade found at "Old Shirley" is in Southampton's archaeological collections. The precise findspot is unknown.

Bronze Age

MSH465

Coxford - Flint Tool Finds SU 39276 15012

A Bronze Age flint segmental knife and flint flake found in the general area of Coxford, were accessioned to the Winchester City Museums collections in 1919. It is not known whether the finds are still in those collections (2003).

MSH589

80 Prince of Wales Avenue - Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age deposits and finds SU 39198 13629

An archaeological excavation took place at 80 Prince of Wales Avenue in 1984 (SOU 189). A pit, two postholes and a post/stakehole were excavated. The finds from the pit included late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery from six vessels. A few burnt bones and one unburnt bone may have been human, possibly indicating a cremation-burial site. There was evidence of ironworking/smithing in the vicinity. A sherd of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery was found, but it was not in a secure context.

Iron Age

MSH4889

Newlands Primary School, Ullswater Road - deposits and finds SU 38350 14331

Features of Iron Age, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date were found during an archaeological watching brief and excavation at Newlands Primary School, Ullswater Road in 2011 (SOU 1564), on groundworks for a new school building. The Iron Age activity consisted of ditches, pits, post-holes, stake-holes and a hearth. Two buildings were identified - a circular building and a second building with less regular form. Fragments of prehistoric pottery, burnt flints and worked flint were recovered. A radiocarbon date of 390-410BC was obtained from charcoal in one feature.

Roman

MSH581

Part of former site of Western Hospital - Roman Evidence SU 38959 13939

Roman evidence was found during a watching brief on part of former site of Western Hospital in 1993/4 (SOU 543). Six features, including a linear feature, which between them contained a few pieces of Roman pottery, are interpreted as being of Roman date.

Medieval

MSH4889

Newlands Primary School, Ullswater Road - deposits and finds SU 38350 14331

Features of Iron Age, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date were found during an archaeological watching brief and excavation at Newlands Primary School, Ullswater Road in 2011 (SOU 1564), on groundworks for a new school building. Two shallow medieval pits/post-holes were found.

MSH586

South corner of Romsey Road and Lower Brownhill Road - Medieval/Post-Medieval Field System SU 38316 15074

Former field system dating back to the 14th century or earlier, known from documentary sources. Some backfilled field boundary ditches, perhaps associated

with this field system, were found during archaeological watching briefs on groundworks at Baron's Mead, off Lower Brownhill Road in the late 1990s (SOU 804, SOU 946).

MSH2957

Former village of Shirley (Old Shirley) SU 39336 14209

The village of Shirley (Sirelei) is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It is now part of the larger suburb of Shirley, within the city of Southampton.

6. Aims of the watching brief

6.1 The aims of the watching brief were 'to make a record of any archaeology disturbed by the works and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, and date of any archaeological remains encountered, as dictated by current best practice', an additional aim was to identify and record the nature, dimensions, and relationship of natural deposits should they be revealed' (Russel 2016, 2).

7. Watching brief methodology

7.1 The methodology followed that specified in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Russel 2016), with an archaeologist in attendance during the excavation of test pits and the main excavation trenches.

7.2 A total of eight trenches were excavated.

Trench Number	Location	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)
1	Sturminster House carpark	1	1	1
2		1	1	1
3		1	1	1
4		1	1	1
5	West of the games court	10 (East-West) 7.8 (North-South)	1	1.6-1.8
6	North of the games court	14	0.5	1+
7	Northwest of the games court	6	3	2.6
8	West of Trench 6	13.8	1.2	1.8m

7.3 All trenches and features were mapped using Ordnance Survey scaled maps. All archaeological records were made using the Southampton City Council archaeological recording system.

7.4 Soils were recorded following the Soil Survey Handbook and colours of deposits were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart and these are used in this report (Munsell Color 2000). Contexts 1–18 were assigned. Finds were recovered.

8. Results

The results are presented in chronological order from the oldest to the most recent. Stone abundance refers to naturally occurring flint pebbles. Appendix 1 lists basic details of the contexts and Appendix 2 lists the finds.

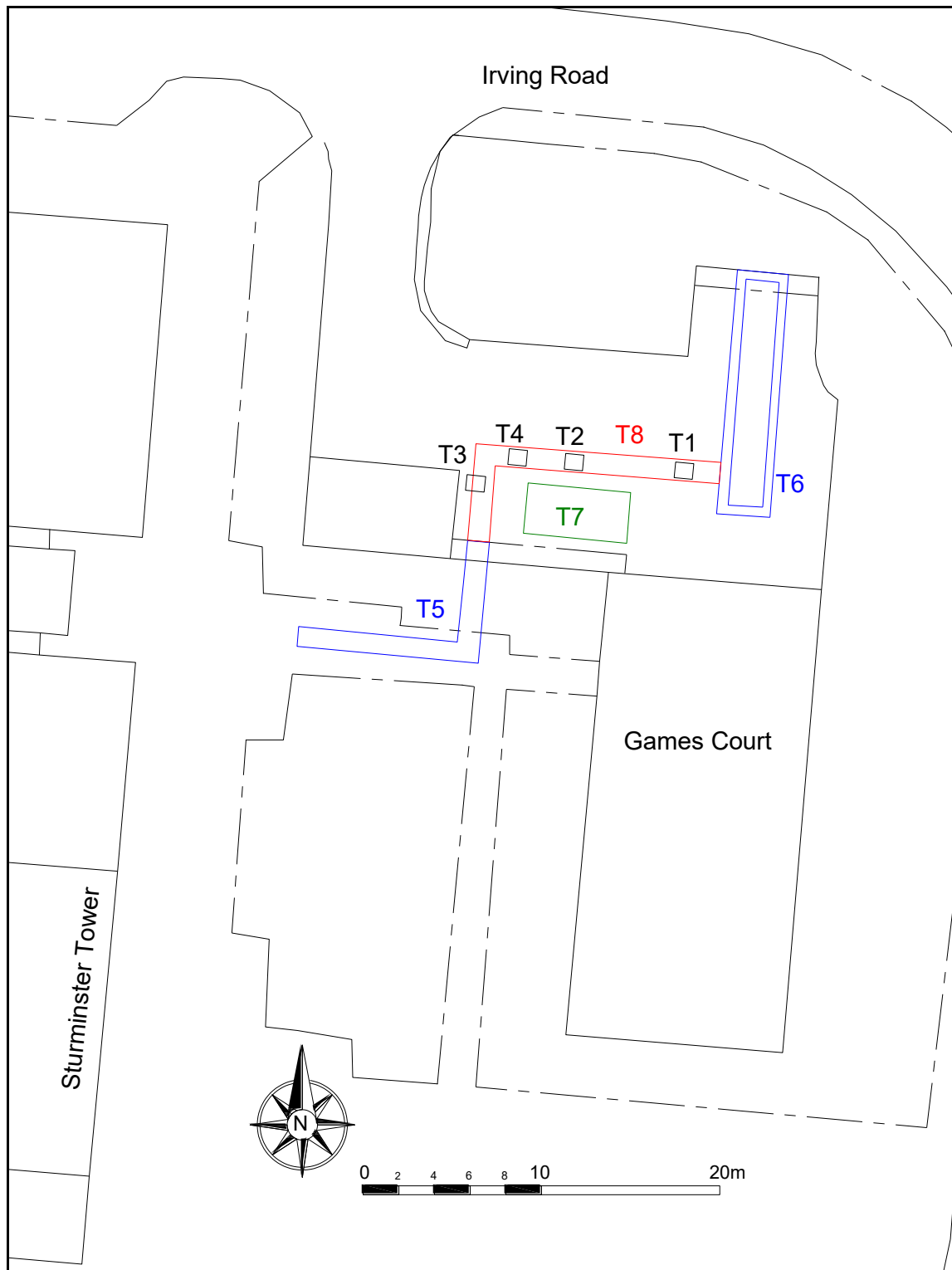


Figure 5 Locations of trenches

8.1 Natural deposits

8.1.1 Wittering Formation

Layer 18 was a layer of silty clay belonging to the Wittering Formation, and was only found in the deepest excavation, Trench 7, at 2.4m below ground level. It was present over the entire trench. The layer was primarily light brownish grey (10YR 6/2) clay, but was mixed with yellowish red (5YR 5/8) and yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sandy and silty clays. The layer was slightly thicker at the western end of the trench, and there was more reddish yellow sand present at the western end of trench than the eastern end. Layer 18 was sealed by the River Terrace gravels 17.

8.1.2 River Terrace Gravels

Layer 2 was encountered in all trenches. It was very stony and compact, yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) gravel, and was sealed by context 1. Layer 17 was allocated to the deposit in Trench 7. It was approximately 1.5m below ground level and sealed layer 18. It was gravel in a yellowish brown (10YR 5/8), silty clay loam matrix, and was 0.9m thick. A possible secondary flint flake was recovered.

8.1.3 Natural features within the River Terrace Gravels.

Feature 15 was a natural feature within the gravel. It had a concave base, gently sloping sides, and was at least 1.7m long by 1.7m wide and 0.45m deep. The feature was filled by context 16, extremely abundant fine gravel up to cobble size in a yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) silty clay matrix. There was a thin horizon of iron panning at the bottom of the fill. It was below layer 1, modern makeup.



Figure 6. Feature 15, fill 16.

8.2 Prehistoric

8.2.1 Feature 3 in Trench 5 was a pit damaged by a modern disturbance and was only visible in section.. The pit cut natural gravel layer 2, was at least 0.5m long and 0.35m deep, had moderately sloping sides, and was filled by context 4. Fill 4 was a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) silty clay loam, with a small amount of fine to coarse gravel. This fill was below modern layer 9.



Figure 7. Feature 3, fill 4.

8.2.2 Feature 5 in Trench 5 was an irregular feature cutting layer 2, with an uneven base. It measured at least 1m long, by 1.1m wide, and was 0.3m deep. It was filled by context 6, a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) silty clay loam of moderate compaction with a little fine to coarse gravel (fig 8). No finds were recovered. It was sealed beneath modern layer 9.



Figure 8. Feature 5, fill 6.

8.2.3 Feature 7 was a pit with moderately sloping sides and a concave base in Trench 5. It was possibly oval in plan. The pit measured 1.55m long, approximately 1.58m wide and 0.58m deep. It cut layer 2 and was filled by context 8, a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) silty clay loam (fig 9). No finds were recovered. It was sealed by layer 9.



Figure 9. Feature 7, Fill 8.

8.2.4 Pit 11 in trench 5 was oval in plan, with a concave base, and moderately sloping sides (fig 10). It measured 1.1m long, 0.5m+ wide and 0.19m deep, cut layer 2, and was filled by context 12. Fill 12 was a brown (10YR 5/3) silt clay loam. The fill produced some burnt flint. The feature was sealed by layer 9.



Figure 10. Feature 11, fill 12.

8.2.5 Pit 13 (Fig 11) in trench 5 had a concave shallow base, moderately sloping sides, and was possibly oval in plan. The feature measured 0.85m long, 0.5m+ wide and 0.3m deep. It cut layer 2 and was filled by 14. The fill was a very compact and

dry light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) silty clay with much flint gravel, and contained some burnt flints. It was sealed below modern layer 9.



Figure 11. Feature 13, fill 14.

8.3 Early Modern to Modern

Layer 9 was a compact, slightly stony, black (10YR 2/1), silty clay deposit some 0.2m deep. It lay above contexts 2, 4, 6, 8, 12 and 14, and was below modern layer 1. It contained Welsh slate, coal, and burnt flint inclusions, and was probably early modern to modern in date.

8.4 Modern

Layer 1 consisted of concrete, paving and tarmac and made up the current ground surface of the site. It was generally 0.35m deep. This layer was situated above layer 2 and 9.

8. Conclusions

The River Terrace gravels produced a single small flint flake. It would be classified as a secondary flake which would indicate flint-working, but was not associated with any other evidence of human activity, so was probably not in its original context.

Cutting into the truncated top of the gravels were five pits. Based on the burnt flints recovered from pits 11 and 13 they probably all date to the prehistoric period. Four unstratified flint fragments could be evidence of flint-working, but they are not very convincing. Nine fragments of burnt flint were also recovered from the modern layers.

The evidence shows that the River Terrace gravels, if examined closely, do contain much smaller artifacts than the handaxes which are the most common finds in the local museum collections.

At a much later period, perhaps in the later prehistoric period, the site was occupied on a short term basis.

Bibliography

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Appendix 1. Context list

Context	Trench	Category	Description	Munsell page	Col	Texture	Fill of	Filled by
1	1-6	LAYER						
2	1-6	LAYER	NATURAL GRAVEL	10YR	5/8	SILTY CLAY LOAM/SAND MATRIX		
3	5	FEATURE	PIT					4
4	5	FILL	PIT	10YR	4/6	SILTY CLAY LOAM	3	
5	5	FEATURE						6
6	5	FILL	GRAVEL	10YR	4/6	SILTY CLAY LOAM	5	
7	5	FEATURE	PIT					8
8	5	FILL	PIT	10YR	4/6	SILTY CLAY LOAM	7	
9	5	LAYER		10YR	2/1	SILTY CLAY		
10	5	UNSTRAT	UNSTRAT					
11	5	FEATURE	PIT					12
12	5	FILL	PIT	10YR	5/3	SILTY CLAY LOAM	11	
13	5	FEATURE	PIT					14
14	5	FILL	PIT	10YR	6/4	SILTY CLAY	13	
15	6	FEATURE	NATURAL					16
16	6	FILL	NATURAL GRAVEL	10YR	5/8	SILTY CLAY LOAM MATRIX	15	
17	7	LAYER	NATURAL GRAVEL	10YR	5/8	SILTY CLAY LOAM MATRIX		
18	7	LAYER	NATURAL	10YR	6/2	SANDY CLAY		

Appendix 2. Finds list

Context no	Mat grp	Mat Type	Find Type	No of frag	Wgt(gm)	Description
10	1	FLNT	BURN	9	85	Crazed
10	1	FLNT	FRAG	4	33	Possible waste from working
12	1	FLNT	BURN	4	104	Crazed
14	1	FLNT	BURN	1	5	Crazed
17	1	FLNT	FLKE	1	1	Secondary flake?