

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Report Ref: 70093.02 Accession Code: CWB3591 Planning Ref: 09/00971/OUTMAJ April 2015





Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Quality Assurance

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by David Wilson Homes to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land south of Newbury racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire, in advance of construction of a clubhouse associated with the golf course. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 449055 165910.

Planning permission had been granted for the proposed scheme, with this watching brief forming part of the archaeological mitigation associated with the consent prior to construction. The development works comprised of the levelling of the area, construction of a clubhouse and associated buildings and cable trenching for services.

The watching brief identified and confirmed the presence of low level later prehistoric activity in this area. A ditch dating to the Iron Age has confirmed part of a field system previously identified as cropmarks in the wider landscape and characterised during previous archaeological investigation. The results also confirm that the main archaeological activity extended to the south and east of the site in accordance with the visible crop marks. Residual finds from the Romano-British and late Saxon periods also suggest later occupation of the immediate landscape



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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank David Wilson Homes, and particularly Cormack Flanagan and Charlie Thomas, for their help and assistance during the course of the works. Thanks are also due to Agetur ground work team for their help and cooperation. Thanks are also offered Alex Godden, Archaeological Officer at West Berkshire Council, for his interest and support.

The watching brief was undertaken by Piotr Orczewski, Matthew Kendall and Rachel Williams. The report was written and compiled by Piotr Orczewski and Rachel Williams. The illustrations were prepared by Nancy Dixon and the finds were assessed by Lorraine Mepham. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Simon Cleggett.



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by David Wilson Homes ('the Client') to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land south of Newbury racecourse at Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire, (hereafter 'the Site'). The Site, is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 449055 165910 (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of Newbury Racecourse to provide new and enhanced leisure, racing, administrative and visitor facilities. This report is associated with a specific planning application (09/00971/OUTMAJ) relating to the construction of a replacement golf clubhouse with associated service trenching and landscaping.
- 1.1.3 Consultation with the Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council (WBC) highlighted the potential for archaeological remains to survive within the Site in an area with known cropmarks mapped from aerial photographs. The results of an earlier trial trench evaluation (WA 2013a) were assessed in combination with the mapping to inform the scope of any further works. The Archaeological Officer for (WBC) advised that a watching brief should be maintained during groundworks on the site of the proposed golf clubhouse to discharge the archaeological planning condition which has been levied against application 09/00971/OUTMAJ. The planning condition (27) relating to the archaeological resource stated that:

No development shall take within the Southern Area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a program of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

- 1.1.4 The watching brief follows earlier programmes of archaeological investigation which were implemented to identify previously unknown areas of archaeological activity within the Site, assess the survival and density of below ground deposits, and/or confirm their absence.
- 1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (WA 2013b) for the watching brief was prepared by WA and submitted to, and approved by, the Archaeological Officer for WBC prior to any groundworks commencing. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (ClfA 2014a).
- 1.1.6 The watching brief was undertaken between 24th September 2014 and 3rd February 2015.



1.2 Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is situated to the south of Newbury racecourse and comprised an area of open fields laid to pasture. It is bounded to the north by Newbury racecourse, to the west by Young Copse, to the south by Pigeons Farm Road and the east by open fields (**Figure 1**).
- 1.2.2 The Site occupies a sub-rectangular parcel of land measuring 18ha and slopes gently southwards from 80m to 90m approximately above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.3 The underlying natural geology of the Site is mapped as Thatcham gravel, variably sandy and clayey (British Geological Survey (BGS)).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 A detailed archaeological and historical background for the Site has been compiled and presented previously (WA 2013b; Terence O'Rourke 2007), and as such only a summary will be provided in this report.
- 2.1.2 In summary, the Site lies within an area of known archaeological potential due to its situation on the floodplain of the River Kennet and its close proximity to the historic core of Newbury, whose origins date to around the time of the Norman Conquest. The potential of the Site was identified as being predominantly for prehistoric and Romano-British remains. However, it also indicated that the Site may have been previously disturbed during the large scale construction of the racecourse which may have left little or no below ground archaeological remains intact.
- 2.1.3 The Lower Kennet Valley has been the subject of considerable archaeological interest in the past and gravel extraction on a large scale from the 1960s has resulted in numerous fieldwork investigations. A small number of prehistoric findspots, including Mesolithic flint tools, have been recovered from the area, with an important site of repeated occupation excavated at Newbury Sewage Treatment Works 1.5km to the north-east (Healey *et al.* 1992).
- 2.1.4 A large number of findspots of Roman coins and other material have been discovered in the Newbury area, and their concentration and distance from the known road network, suggests that the River Kennet was navigable in this period. A single find of a 4th century coin has been made within Newbury Racecourse itself (MWB12473).
- 2.1.5 Early medieval activity has been found in close proximity to the River Kennet, whilst medieval structures (including a chapel, manor and Knight's Hospitallers preceptory) are known from documentary sources to have existed in Greenham. Several post-medieval structures are recorded within the search area including the late 19th century Church of St Mary (MWB15829) and Greenham Lodge (MWB15830).
- 2.1.6 Newbury Racecourse was built in 1905 on previously undeveloped land to the south of the Great Western Railway. No modern impacts on the Site have been identified through historic map regression.

2.2 Previous Work

2.2.1 Within the area of the watching brief, two trial trenches had previously been excavated within the footprint of the proposed clubhouse (WA 2013a). The evaluation revealed three ditches, one gully and one pit. One of the ditches contained pottery dated on fabric grounds to the Early Iron Age though the remaining features were undated. The results of



the evaluation suggest the presence of low level later prehistoric activity within the immediate area but did not produce any evidence to suggest the presence of any significant archaeological remains.

2.2.2 Elsewhere within the wider Site to the north-west of the watching brief area, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken (WA 2008), targeted on anomalies identified by aerial photography. A total of 15 machine-dug trial trenches were excavated and evaluated. The trenches in the main were clear of archaeological features and a high level of modern disturbance was identified throughout. The evaluation recorded the remnants of a 19th century structure known as Round Oak, and a mid-late Bronze Age boundary ditch. This evaluation was followed by a phase of mitigation to further investigate these features (WA 2010).

3 AIMS AND METHODS

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief were to:
 - clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be disturbed by development;
 - identify, within the constraints of the investigation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site;
 - assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits; and
 - produce a report which will present the results of the fieldwork.
- 3.1.2 The specific aims of the archaeological watching brief were to:
 - record any features which may be encountered during the course of groundworks, in particular those which may help to characterise and inform the spread, density and nature of the late Prehistoric activity highlighted in the 2013 trial trench evaluation.
- 3.1.3 In addition to the aims of this piece of fieldwork, There are overarching research questions identified for this area (Newbury Fringe East) set out in the West Berkshire Historic Environment Character Zoning Project, including:
 - Do unrecorded archaeological sites/features survive within this zone?
 - Where was the historic core of Greenham? Does evidence survive on the nature and origins of the medieval settlement?
 - Does archaeological evidence for the Knights Hospitaller's preceptory survive?

3.2 Fieldwork Methodology

3.2.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in the agreed WSI (WA 2013b) and comprised of the monitoring of the groundworks associated with the construction of the clubhouse, including the service and foundation trenches. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance or an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a).



- 3.2.2 The trenches and foundations were excavated using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator employing, where possible, a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision by an experienced archaeologist. Machine levels were determined by construction levels, although they ceased immediately when archaeological remains were encountered to allow further investigation and recording. The compound area was reduced gradually towards the centre by up to approximately 1.0m below ground level. The cable trench was reduced in 0.2m spits to a depth of 1m in a linear progression. The topsoil was separated from the subsoil and the spoil from the trenches scanned for artefacts.
- 3.2.3 All archaeological deposits were recorded using WA's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate.
- 3.2.4 A full photographic record was maintained during the watching brief using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.
- 3.2.5 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit, using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system. A unique site code **70093** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds. A unique accession code **CWB3591** was also used.

3.3 Health and Safety

- 3.3.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices would override archaeological considerations at all times.
- 3.3.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act* 1974 and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations* 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following section provides a summary description of the results of the archaeological watching brief. Details of individual excavated contexts and features are retained in the project archive. Summaries of the excavated sequences can be found in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Natural Deposits and Soil Sequences

- 4.2.1 The stratigraphy across the Site was generally uniform. The stratigraphic sequence consisted of 0.15m of mid-brown, loose silty loam topsoil overlying 0.15-0.45m of subsoil. Natural geology consisted of light-greyish yellow, loose loam with abundant flint gravel. Towards the southern part of the Site, the natural geology changed to clay with rare gravel inclusions.
- 4.2.2 Two areas relating to the development were subject to deep excavation (**Figure 1**), namely an area for gravel extraction (**Plate 1**) and a water sump (**Plate 2**). Both areas



were excavated to a depth of approximately 2m through the natural gravel geology. No archaeological features were recorded.

4.3 Archaeological Features

- 4.3.1 A small number of archaeological features were identified during the course of the works (**Figure 1**).
- 4.3.2 A single archaeological feature was recorded in the Compound Area of the Site. Ditch 17 comprised a wide, 'U'-shaped ditch (excavated as ditch 4 (Plate 4) and ditch 6 (Plate 5)). It continued for approximately 15m from the southern edge of the strip to the north-west, and then turned 90 degrees towards the south-west. The ditch was up to 3m wide and 1m deep with moderate, straight edges and a 'U'-shaped base. The ditch contained two distinct fills including a substantial primary fill consisting of redeposited natural and a midbluish grey silty clay secondary fill with rare flint gravel.
- 4.3.3 The feature contained areas of heavy charcoal concentrations as well as pottery datable to the Early/Middle Iron Age, ceramic building material (CBM) and slag. The ditch corresponds with the crop mark identified on the surface and possibly forms part of an Iron Age field system.
- 4.3.4 A further three archaeological features were noted during the excavation of a cable trench which connected the main construction area with Pigeons Farm Road to the south. Shallow gully 9 and ditch 11 were located towards the north of the trench and appear to correlate to previously identified cropmarks (Figure 1). Gully 9 (Plate 6) measured 2m in length, 0.40m in width and 0.17m in depth, and curved in an east to west direction. Ditch 11 (Plate 7) was located approximately 11m to the south-east of gully 9 and featured a shallow 'U'-shaped profile. The ditch measured 2m in length, 1.1m in width and 0.20m in depth. Neither feature contained datable material, but correspond with a small rectilinear enclosure recorded as a cropmark. A possible archaeological feature (13) was investigated (Plate 8), although it is likely to represent a natural tree-throw hole or some other form of natural feature. No evidence of anthropogenic activity was noted.
- 4.3.5 In the southern part of the cable trench an area of woodland was cleared during the groundworks. The rooting from the removed trees was relatively shallow, (approximately 0.3m deep), and had been planted on made ground covering modern disturbed ground containing CBM, concrete, terram and tarmac.

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered, deriving from three contexts (subsoil **2**, ditch fill **5**, ditch fill **8**); quantities are given in **Table 1**. This small assemblage includes material of late prehistoric, Romano-British and late Saxon date.

5.2 Pottery

- 5.2.1 Pottery provides the primary dating evidence. Sherds from subsoil **2** and ditch fill **8** are in relatively soft-fired sandy fabrics, the sherd from ditch fill **8** also containing sparse organic inclusions. Although undiagnostic, these sherds can be dated on fabric grounds to the Early/Middle Iron Age.
- 5.2.2 Two conjoining sherds from ditch fill **5** are in a relatively hard-fired, medium-grained sandy fabric that is non-distinctive, but is probably Romano-British.



5.2.3 The remaining seven sherds from ditch fill **5** derive from two vessels, both represented by jar rims. One is in a coarse, flint-tempered fabric, the flint inclusions subangular and gravel-derived; the second in a sandy fabric with sparse calcareous (probably chalk) inclusions. Both rims are everted, with a simple rounded profile. Both fabrics and forms find parallels within the late Saxon period (9th to 11th century). Comparable examples are known, for instance, from Faccombe Netherton, about 12km to the south-west (Fairbrother 1990, 290-1, fabric S/N, 294, fabric A8).

5.3 Other Finds

5.3.1 Other finds comprise a fragment of Romano-British tile, two pieces of mortar (undatable), and two pieces of ironworking slag (also undatable), all from ditch fill **5**.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Feature	СВМ	Mortar	Pottery	Slag
2	-			2/16	
5	4	1/45	2/99	9/57	2/94
8	6			1/38	
TOTALS		1/45	2/99	12/111	2/94

CBM = ceramic building material

6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was present within the monitored areas.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 This watching brief identified and confirmed presence of low level later prehistoric activity in this area. The Early/Middle Iron Age ditch represents part of the field system identified as cropmarks and characterised during previous archaeological works. The results also confirmed that the main archaeological activity extended to the south and east of the site in accordance with the visible cropmarks. Not all of the cropmarks had corresponding archaeological features. This may be due to the nature of the strip, inaccuracies occurring from the transfer of data from images created by aerial photography in to georeferenced survey data and the discrete nature of some of the archaeology.
- 7.1.2 Finds of Romano-British and late Saxon date recovered from top fill of ditch **17** may suggest that this land was cultivated continuously from Early Iron Age through to at least late Saxon period.
- 7.1.3 Given the close correlation of some of the cropmarks from aerial photographs and the archaeological features it is recommended that any further work within this area is closely monitored in the future.
- 7.1.4 Any potential archaeological remains that might have existed in the wooded area of the Site may either have been destroyed by the modern disturbance or underlie the disturbance and not have been affected by the cable trenching.



8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

8.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with West Berkshire Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, under the accession code **CWB3591**. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

8.2 Preparation of Archive

The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, 8.2.1 graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the West Berkshire Museumand in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; CIfA 2014b: Brown 2011: **ADS** 2013). An OASIS http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/ will be initiated and key fields completed on Details. Location and Creator Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the West Berkshire HER. A copy of the OASIS entry form has been included in this report (Appendix 2).

8.3 Discard Policy

- 8.3.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 8.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2011)

8.4 Security Copy

8.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

9 REFERENCES

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10 APPENDIX 1: STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARIES

Context	Description		Depth (m)
1	Layer	Topsoil: Mid-brown grey silty loam, loose with occasional sub	0.00-0.15
	1	rounded and sub angular flint gravel (1-3cm)	bgl
2	Layer	Subsoil: Mid-brown grey silty loam loose with abundant flint sub	0.15-0.30
3	Natural	rounded gravel (1-5cm)	bgl 0.30+ bgl
		Natural geology: Light mid-brown greyish yellow silty loam, loose with abundant sub rounded flint gravel (1-5cm)	o o
4	Cut	Cut of ditch. Top, truncated part of likely Iron Age enclosure ditch. Aligned NE-SW, width and depth not determined as recorded in area that was reduced to the lower part of the subsoil. Excavated only to depth of 0.13m.	0.20 bgl
5	Fill	Dark brown silty, loose loam with rare gravel inclusions (1-5cm, sub angular) top fill of ditch. Contained common charcoal fragments and pottery sherds, CBM and slag. Likely truncated top fill of Iron Age ditch.	0.33 bgl
6	Cut	Cut of ditch. Wide, likely Iron Age ditch with considerable redeposited gravel primary fill and silty secondary fill. 3.0m wide and 1.0m deep, N-S aligned. Likely enclosure ditch.	0.35 bgl
7	Fill	Mid pale grey silty clay with abundant flint gravel (sub rounded, 1-5cm) primary fill of ditch.	1.00 bgl
8	Fill	Mid-bluish grey silty clay with rare flint gravel (sub rounded, 1-4cm) and iron staining (mostly near base of the fill). Rare charcoal flecks. Secondary ditch fill.	1.10 bgl
9	Cut	Cut of gully. Shallow, curvilinear gully aligned E-W. 0.4m wide, 0.17 deep. Probably used to channel water.	0.89 bgl
10	Fill	Mid pale grey silty clay with sparse fine gravel (rounded, 1-5 cm). Secondary fill of gully.	1.06 bgl
11	Cut	Cut of ditch. Shallow U shaped ditch. Aligned E-W 1.1m wide, depth uncertain but approx. 0.2m. The ditch flooded faster than it could be excavated.	0.82 bgl
12	Fill	Light brown silty clay with fine gravel (rounded 1-5 cm). Secondary fill of ditch.	approx. 1m bgl
13	Cut	Buried surface. Sub-oval feature with clear edges. Similar features showed in section. 1m long, 0.43 wide, 0.24 deep. Probably natural in origin.	0.72 bgl
14	Fill	Black, almost oily looking silt with common gravel and flint pebbles (rounded, 0.1 – 10 cm). Buried surface.	0.96 bgl
15	Layer	Natural geology. Mid brown clay. Patches of fine gravel. Located at the southern end of the site.	0.4 + bgl
16	Layer	Made ground. Mid brown clay with flints, overlaying patches of tarmac, terram, CBM and concrete. Located at the southern part of the site in the woodland. Not fully excavated.	0.3 + bgl



11 APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: wessexar1-201953

Project details

Project name Newbury Racecourse Archaeological Watching Brief

> Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by David Wilson Homes to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land south of Newbury racecourse at Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire, in advance of construction of a clubhouse associated with the golf course. The Site is centred on

> National Grid Reference (NGR) 449055 165910. The watching brief identified and confirmed the presence of low level later prehistoric activity in this area.

Short description of

the project

The Iron Age ditch has confirmed part of the field system identified on the surface as crop marks and characterised during previous archaeological investigation. The results also confirm that the main archaeological activity extended to the south and east of the site in accordance with the visible crop marks. Romano-British and late Saxon residual finds from the tertiary fill of a

ditch may suggest a later use of this land.

Project dates Start: 24-09-2014 End: 03-02-2015

Previous/future

work

Yes / Not known

Any associated

project reference

70090 - Sitecode

codes

Any associated

project reference

codes

70091 - Sitecode

Any associated

project reference

codes

70092 - Sitecode

Any associated

project reference

codes

09/00971/OUTMAJ - Planning Application No.

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Grassland Heathland 2 - Undisturbed Grassland Current Land use

DITCH Uncertain Monument type Significant Finds POT Uncertain

Project location

Country **England**

Site location BERKSHIRE WEST BERKSHIRE NEWBURY Newbury Racecourse

Postcode **RG14 7NZ**

Study area 18.00 Hectares



Site coordinates SU 449055 165910 50.9464572705 -1.36071475196 50 56 47 N 001 21 38

W Point

Lat/Long Datum WGS 84 Datum

Height OD / Depth Min: 80.00m Max: 90.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation

Wessex Archaeology

Project brief originator

David Wilson Homes

Project design originator

Wessex Archaeology

Project

director/manager

Simon Cleggett

Project supervisor Piotr Orczewski
Project supervisor Matt Kendall
Project supervisor Rachel Williams

Type of

sponsor/funding

body

Developer

Name of

sponsor/funding

body

David Wilson Homes

Project archives

Digital Archive

recipient

ADS

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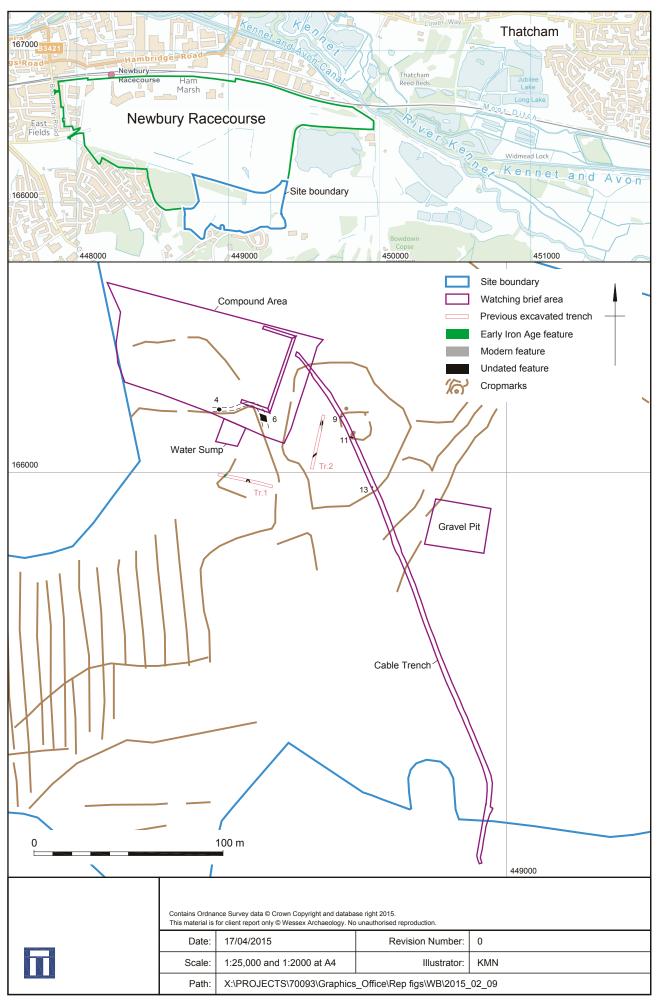




Plate 1: Stratigraphy revealed in gravel pit in southern area of the Site



Plate 2: Stratigraphy revealed in water sump excavation

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Plate 3: Stratigraphy revealed in the excavation of the cable trench



Plate 4: South-west facing section of ditch 4

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Plate 5: North facing section of ditch 6



Plate 6: East facing section of gully 9

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Plate 7: East facing section of ditch 11



Plate 8: East facing section of feature 13

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