

**BROADWATER, MANOR ROAD,
WANTAGE,
OXFORDSHIRE.**

NGR: SU 3971 8740 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

September 2019
Report No. 1328



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Photograph Taken During Site Visit 19th March 2019

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Quality Assurance

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CONTENTS

Summary

Glossary of Archaeological Terms and Abbreviations

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURE LIST

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Watching Brief Areas

SUMMARY

Between the 15th March to the 5th May 2016 and the 26th March to the 8th August 2019, Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new residential development to the rear of Broadwater, Wantage, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 3971 8740 centred). The project was originally commissioned by Alf Hambridge of John O'Flynn Developments Ltd. However, Mr O'Flynn passed away and the site was purchased from his estate by Rivar Ltd in 2018, on the understanding that the archaeological works had been completed. Foundations Archaeology were subsequently re-commissioned to carry out a watching brief on the remaining works by James Bull of Rivar Ltd, once it became apparent that the archaeological condition had not been complied with.

The first phase of watching brief in 2016 comprised the archaeological monitoring of the road strip and associated roadside drainage. The second phase of watching brief in 2019 comprised the archaeological monitoring of the remaining service trenches across the site (see Figure 2).

The first phase of watching brief identified possible intact soils across the northeast-southwest road strip, with significant Modern disturbance from Broadwater House present in the northwest-southeast road. Natural deposits were only encountered within the associated roadside drainage trench.

The Phase II watching brief in 2019 identified that there had been considerable Modern disturbance across the greater part of the site, predominantly resulting from the current development; with only traces of possible subsoil present within the vicinity of Plot 10 and 12. The natural deposits were not encountered within any of the monitored service trenches.

No archaeological finds, features or deposits were present within any of the monitored groundworks. However, it should be noted that the natural deposits were only revealed the roadside drainage excavations, so this negative result does not preclude the possibility of further archaeological remains being preserved within the site area and its immediate vicinity.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between the 15th March to the 5th May 2016 and the 26th March to the 8th August 2019, Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new residential development to the rear of Broadwater, Wantage, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 3971 8740 centred). The project was originally commissioned by Alf Hambridge of John O’Flynn Developments Ltd. However, Mr O’Flynn subsequently passed away and the site was purchased by Rivar Ltd on the understanding that the archaeological condition had been complied with. Foundations Archaeology were thereafter re-commissioned by James Bull of Rivar Ltd to carry out a watching brief on the remaining works.
- 1.2 This project was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological watching brief prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2012). The WSI was written in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) and complies with the principles of NPPF (2019).
- 1.3 The Code of Conduct of the CifA was adhered to throughout.
- 1.4 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission to develop the site for residential use was originally sought from the Vale of White Horse District Council in 2011 (P11/V1453/O). An archaeological evaluation (Foundations Archaeology 2011) was undertaken in response to a pre-determination condition, which revealed numerous features occurring both above and beneath an agricultural soil horizon. The features included pits, postholes and linear ditches and gullies, which indicated activity dating from the Medieval period. Subsequent archaeological investigation east of Newbury Street has also revealed a complex sequence of historic activity. The site therefore appears to lie within an area containing significant evidence for the development of medieval Wantage.
 - 2.1.1 The application was, however, subsequently refused but was allowed at appeal with the application of a watching brief condition, rather than the condition recommended by the County Archaeological Service.
- 2.2 The site is located to the rear of Broadwater, on the west side of Manor Road. The site lies at a height of approximately 95m AOD and, prior to construction the site consisted of rough grassland with some trees in the northwest corner. The existing Broadwater House was also demolished to provide an access road for the development.

- 2.3 The site was also the subject of a desk-based archaeological assessment (Foundations Archaeology 2011), which highlighted its archaeological potential. A summary of these results is provided below.
- 2.3.1 Significant Prehistoric features are known from the former St Mary's School site, although the potential for this period at the Broadwater site was considered low-moderate; depending on whether the nearby watercourse was present on its Modern alignment at this early date.
- 2.3.2 The site lies outside of the Roman, Saxon and Medieval cores of the town, in an area that would probably have been utilised for agricultural purposes. Its location close to a watercourse suggested that it might have been utilised as meadow. Significant Early Medieval and Medieval activity is also known from the former St Mary's School site demonstrating that activity during these periods was taking place some distance from the Market Square, the assumed centre at this time. The implication is that settlement of these periods was either more substantial than previously suspected, or that it was more dispersed with more than one focus.
- 2.3.3 The site appeared to have seen no development prior to 1937, with the exception of a late 19th century building (Broadwater House) in the northwest corner. It was therefore considered unlikely that it would have seen any significant disturbance, other than the limited impact that may have occurred from agricultural activities, which may be limited if the site consisted of pasture/meadow. The potential preservation of any archaeological deposits within the larger part of the site was therefore considered good, although preservation within the area previously occupied by Broadwater House and its immediate curtilage was considered likely to have suffered a significant degree of impact.
- 2.4 A subsequent evaluation was carried out by Foundations Archaeology in 2011. The evaluation revealed the presence of numerous archaeological features, which were stratified beneath an agricultural soil horizon. These included ditches, possible gullies, pits, a possible posthole, two large cuts and other possible features. Later features, which cut the agricultural soils, were also present. The recovered artefact assemblage included Medieval and Post-medieval pottery, CBM, bone, shell, metal artefacts, glass and clay pipe, which suggested that settlement activity at the site spanned the Medieval to Post-medieval periods. A small assemblage of struck flints probably represented re-deposited material and indicated Prehistoric activity in the general vicinity of the site.
- 2.5 The geology within the site comprises *Upper Greensand Formation - Calcareous Sandstone and Siltstone*, with no superficial deposits recorded (BGS – on-line viewer).
- 2.6 The site therefore contains the potential for archaeological features and deposits, predominately dating to the Medieval and Post-medieval periods. This did not prejudice the works against evidence relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological monitoring are to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary.
- 3.2 This was achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) to record prior to their destruction archaeological deposits within the monitored areas, and date these where possible;
 - ii) to attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present within the monitored areas;
 - iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
 - iv) to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 All relevant groundworks were to be conducted whilst under the constant observation of an archaeologist. This was initially adhered to during the first phase of site works by John O’Flynn Developments in 2016 during excavations for the road strip and associated drainage. Groundworks subsequently ceased until the site was purchased by Rivar Ltd. from the estate of John O’Flynn in 2018 on the understanding that all pre-development matters had been resolved prior to the sale. Rivar Ltd thereafter commenced construction of the permitted housing.
- 4.2 However, when it came to the notice of Rivar Ltd. that there was no record of a report for a completed watching brief, they contacted Foundations Archaeology to check on the status of the archaeological works. Foundations Archaeology informed Rivar Ltd that the watching brief was still in place and were immediately re-commissioned to monitor the remaining excavations for the service trenches. Mr Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire Council, who act as the archaeological advisors to the Vale of the White Horse District Council, was advised of these issues in March 2019, prior to the start of the second phase of watching brief.

- 4.3 Excavation was undertaken by appropriate plant which was equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All spoil tips were investigated both visually and with a metal detector.
- 4.4 All excavation and recording work was completed in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The first phase of watching brief in 2016 consisted of a road strip and subsequent excavation for roadside drainage (see Figure 2).
 - 5.1.1 The road strip was approximately 6 metres wide and penetrated to a depth of 0.6m below the Modern ground level. The roadside drainage cut was 0.9m wide and was excavated to a further 1m in depth. The trench followed the southeast edge of the road between Plot 12 and 10 and then turned southeast to follow the access road down to the junction with Manor Road.
 - 5.1.2 During this phase of works, the natural substrates of a light beige chalk clay were only encountered within the drainage cut, at a depth of between 0.9 to 1.4m (93m to 93.5m AOD) below the Modern ground level. The natural substrates within the northeast-southwest orientated road strip, were sealed by a dark grey clay sand (1001) up to 0.15m thick, which contained occasional charcoal flecks and rare oyster shell fragments, but no dateable material. This sand layer was in turn sealed by a dark brown clay silt (1003) between 0.35 to 0.5m thick, which contained frequent Modern debris of brick, glass, metal and pottery. These finds were noted but not retained in accordance with the agreed site discard policy. The majority of the road strip did not penetrate through layer (1001) and therefore did not expose the natural deposits.
 - 5.1.3 Within the drainage cut for the northwest-southeast orientated road, the northwestern extent of the trench contained a similar stratigraphy to the northeast-southwest road. However, significant Modern disturbance containing frequent building material within the upper 0.2m of layer (1003) was encountered at the southwestern end. This disturbance appeared to be connected to the earlier demolition of Broadwater House. A sub-circular feature comprised of brick, stone and concrete was present at the northwest end of the road strip and cut through layer (1001). This was likely to be a Modern garden feature associated with the previous dwelling.
 - 5.1.4 No archaeological finds, features or deposits were present within any of the areas monitored in 2016.
- 5.2 In 2019 the excavation of the remaining service trenches were monitored; the location of these trenches are marked on Figure 2.
 - 5.2.1 The service trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 600mm below the Modern ground level and were 500mm wide, with short connector trenches

(not shown on Figure 2) to the house plots measuring up to 600m deep and 500mm wide. The service cuts penetrated through mixed deposits of mid orange brown clay sands (1007), with frequent Modern brick inclusions, a dark grey sandy clay (1008), with frequent Modern brick inclusions and a light blue grey silty clay (1009) with Modern CBM and brick inclusions throughout. The only deposit encountered during this phase which did not appear to have been significantly disturbed by the previous on-site construction, was a mid to dark grey silty clay possible subsoil (1012). This was up to 0.2m thick, was visible for a length of approximately 2m and was present only at the southern end of the service trench.

- 5.2.2 No archaeological finds, features or deposits were present within any of the service trenches; however, the top of the natural deposits was not encountered during any of the monitored excavations.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 A watching brief was undertaken during the road strip and associated drainage trench in 2016 and for the remaining service trenches in 2019. However, the excavations for the house plots were not archaeologically monitored.
- 6.2 The first phase of watching brief identified possible intact soils across the northeast-southwest road strip, with significant Modern disturbance from Broadwater House, which was formerly present in area of the northwest-southeast road. Natural deposits were only encountered within the associated roadside drainage trench.
- 6.3 During the subsequent watching brief in 2019 it was clear that there had been considerable Modern disturbance across the majority of the site, predominantly resulting from the current development; with only traces of possible subsoil present within the vicinity of Plot 10 and 12. The natural deposits were not encountered within any of the monitored service trenches.
- 6.4 No archaeological finds, features or deposits were present within any of the monitored groundworks. However, it should be noted that the natural deposits were only revealed the roadside drainage excavations, so this negative result, does not preclude the possibility of further archaeological remains being present within the site area and its immediate vicinity.
- 6.5 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

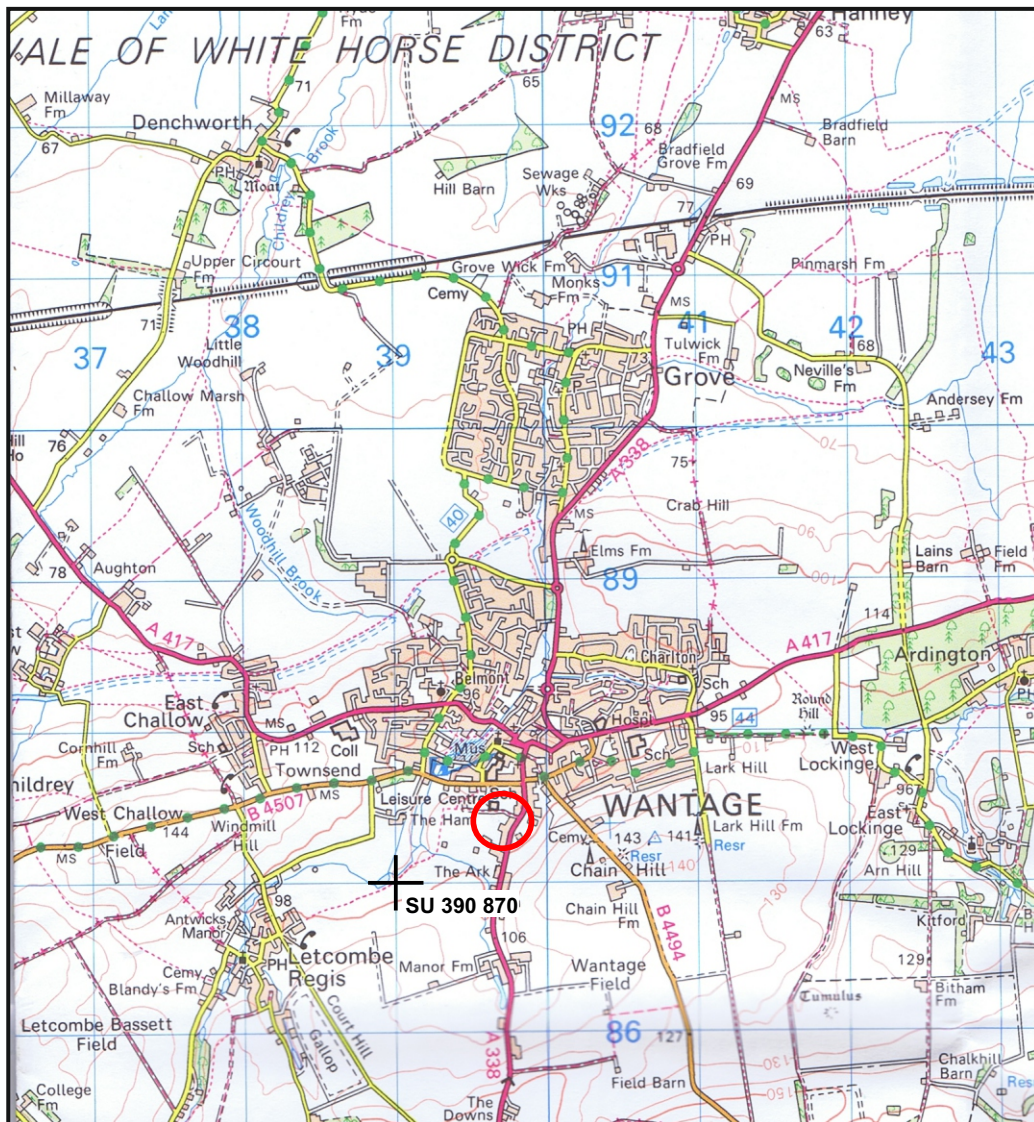
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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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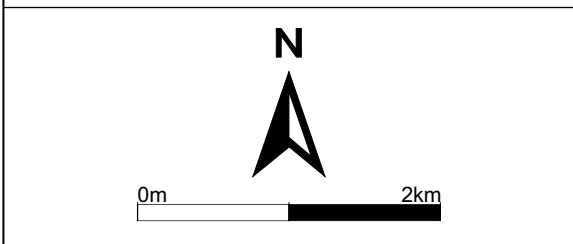


FIGURE 1: Site Location



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N

— Approximate Location of Road Strip 2016
— Location of Monitored Service Cuts 2019

0m 20m

FIGURE 2: Watching Brief Areas