



**BLADON RESERVOIR,
BLADON,
OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR: SP 4544 1412 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

May 2011
Report No. 948

Quality Assurance

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Bladon Reservoir, Bladon, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief

Site name: Bladon Reservoir, Bladon, Oxfordshire
Site code: BRB10
Grid reference: SP 4544 1412
Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief
Date of fieldwork: 21st March 2011
Project manager: Roy King
Site supervisor: James Vessey
Archive location: Foundations Archaeology

SUMMARY

In March 2011 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief on land at Manor Road, Bladon Reservoir, Bladon Heath, Oxfordshire. The project was commissioned by Optimise (Water) LLP.

The Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist advised that a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was to be undertaken during the installation of a new external power supply to Bladon Reservoir by directional drilling of a new cable. Due to the potential presence of archaeological features an archaeological watching brief was requested to monitor the excavation of the launch/receptor pits for the direct drilled cable.

Six launch and receive pits were excavated in total. These measured 1.5 by 2m, with depths averaging 1.5m.

No archaeological features were revealed during the course of the project; the topsoil directly overlay natural deposits across the site. The absence of archaeological deposits in the launch and receive pits is, however, not necessarily representative of the rest of the site: the relatively small area observed would be unlikely to identify discrete features.

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.

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.

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.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a programme of archaeological watching brief undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on the 21st March 2011 on land at Manor Road, Bladon Reservoir, Bladon Heath, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 4544 1412, centred). The project was commissioned by Optimise (Water) LLP.
- 1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2010), and approved by the Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist. The WSI was based on a specification within the planning consent. The fieldwork complied with IfA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008) and *Archaeological Guidance Paper: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region). The project was undertaken in accordance with the principles of *Planning Policy Statement 5* (PPS5, 2010).
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist advised that a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was to be undertaken during the installation of a new external power supply to Bladon Reservoir by directional drilling of a new cable. Due to the potential presence of archaeological features an archaeological watching brief was requested to monitor the excavation of the launch/receptor pits for the direct drilled cable.
- 2.2 The site of the proposed development is located to the south of Bladon and west of Begbroke, on the north side of the current reservoir (SP 4544 1412). The site lies at approximately 103m OD and the geology is Oxford Clay. The site lies within woodland. The archaeological background to the site has been taken from the brief issued by the County Archaeology Service.
- 2.3 The site of the new cable is located to the North of the Iron Age Hillfort of Bladon Camp, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM21812). The hillfort has defences which include two concentric oval ramparts with outer ditches which combine to enclose an area up to 200m across from N to S and 180m from E to W. Both ramparts are of stone rubble construction and have been partly levelled, varying in original width from 4m to 7m and standing up to 0.7m high. The ditches have become partly in-filled over the years and some sections were re-cut earlier this century. The undisturbed sections are, however, visible at ground level as slight depressions 0.3m deep and up to 7m wide.
- 2.4 The site is also located 280m south of part of the Witney Branch Ridgeway, this forms part of Grundy's 'Road 3', the NE end of which is called 'Heh Straet' in the Shipton-on-Cherwell charter of 1005 (PRN 8862).

- 2.5 The site therefore contained the potential to reveal archaeological deposits, predominantly associated with the prehistoric period. This did not prejudice the works against the recovery of data relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were 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. This would allow informed decisions to be taken regarding potential mitigation works for any identified archaeological resource within the areas affected by the proposed development

- 3.2 Given the potential for the presence of Palaeolithic remains within the site, it was a specific aim of the project to provide information relating to deposits which could potentially contain Palaeolithic material.

- 3.3 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, 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 on the site;

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 determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present;

v) to identify the presence of Palaeolithic material within River Terrace Gravel or Head deposits.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief was maintained throughout the period of ground works involved in the excavation of the launch/receptor pits for the direct drilled cable, service trenches and all other invasive work. All appropriate groundworks were monitored and recorded (where health and safety considerations permitted) in order to identify archaeological finds and deposits.

- 4.2 Groundworks were carried out under the direction of the archaeologist. Where machine excavation was required this was only used for the removal of overburden that has no archaeological significance. A 360° excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket was used for all machine excavation.

- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Six launch and receive pits were excavated in total, all pits measured 1.50m by 2m, with varying depths (Figure 2).
- 5.2 Pit 1 measured 1.50m in depth. The stratigraphy comprised a dark brown friable clay silt topsoil (101) approximately 0.07m thick. This directly overlay a firm mid orange course clay gravel (102).
- 5.3 Pit 2 measured 1.56m deep. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (202, same as 101) which was 0.04m deep, which overlay a firm mid orange clay with grey mottling and occasional small sub rounded stones (102).
- 5.4 Pit 3 measured 1.48m deep. The stratigraphy matched that observed in pit two, with topsoil (301, same as 101, up to 0.08m thick) which overlay a firm mid orange clay with grey mottling and occasional small sub rounded stones (302).
- 5.5 Pit 4 measured 1.52m deep. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (401, same as 101, up to 0.08m thick) overlying a plastic dark orange clay with bands of blue oxford clay (402).
- 5.6 Pit 5 measured 1.55m deep. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (501) (same as 101), 0.08m thick, which overlay a firm mid orange clay with grey mottling and occasional small sub rounded stones (502).
- 5.7 Pit 6 measured 1.58m deep. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (601, same as 101, up to 0.09m thick), which overlay a firm mid orange clay with grey mottling and occasional small sub rounded stones (602).

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No archaeological features were revealed during the course of the project. A thin layer of topsoil directly overlay natural deposits across the site. No Head deposits were identified and River Terrace Gravel deposits were only identified in Pit 1. The potential for the site to contain Palaeolithic remains can be considered low. However, due to the limited size of the sample, the absence of archaeological remains in the launch and receive pits is not necessarily representative of the rest of the site: the relatively small area observed would be unlikely to identify discrete features.
- 6.2 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with Oxfordshire Museums Service. A

short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

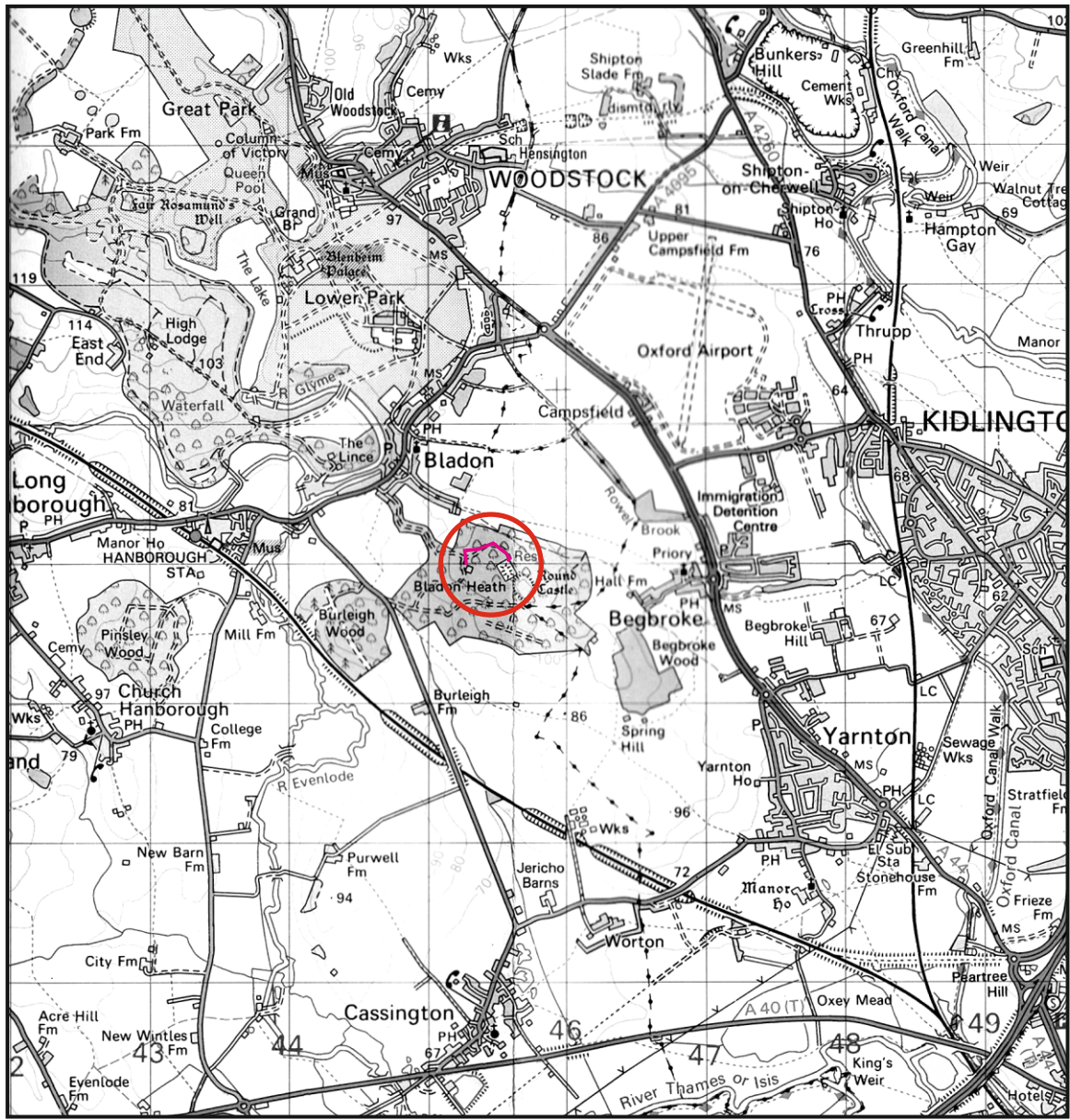
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Adrian Gan of Optimise (Water) LLP the on-site ground workers from Barhale Construction for their help during the course of this project.



Site Code: BRB10

Accession Code:

N



SITE LOCATION



POWER ROUTE LOCATION

0km

2km

1:50,000@A4

FIGURE 1: Site Location

