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SUMMARY

In August 2002 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Commonhead Roundabout, Liddington, Swindon, Wiltshire at NGR: SU 192 825 (centred). The project was commissioned by Swindon Borough Council.

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of two 60m by 2m trenches, three 80m by 2m trenches, one 100m by 2m trench and one 140m by 2m trench; across the proposed development area. (Figure 2)

Archaeological features were encountered in all trenches. The earliest features consisted of elements of a Middle Bronze Age settlement in Trenches 2 and 3. Roman features, dating to the 2nd century AD were present in Trenches 4 and 5. Undated and post-medieval/modern features were also present in trenches 1, 6 and 7.

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.

Bronze Age

Division of the prehistoric period dated approximately between 2000 BC and 800 BC.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

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.

Romano-British

Term used to describe the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated between AD 43 and *circa*. AD 410.

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology in August 2002 on land adjacent to Commonhead Roundabout, Liddington, Swindon, Wiltshire at NGR: SU 192 825 (Figure 1). The project was commissioned by Swindon Borough Council.
- 1.2 It is proposed to construct a new Park and Ride facility with service buildings, access and landscaping works on an area of land near Commonhead Roundabout. A programme of archaeological works was required by Swindon Borough Council on the advice of Wiltshire County Council prior to the determination of planning permission in accordance with the principals of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990) and the archaeological policies of Swindon Borough Council.
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works. The project was undertaken in accordance with the Project Design prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2002), based upon a brief (2002) prepared by Roy Canham of Wiltshire County Council acting as archaeological advisor to Swindon Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with IFA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (1994, revised 2001) and *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (1995).

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies west of Commonhead Roundabout, the area is bordered to the east by the A419 and to the north by the A4259. The proposed development works cover an area of approximately 3 ha.
- 2.2 The application site lies within an area of archaeological importance, as defined by Swindon Borough Council. The site has seen earlier phases of archaeological works comprising geophysical survey, field evaluation and a watching brief. These previous works have identified Roman features associated with a settlement identified at the adjacent Hospital site, as well as late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity.
- 2.3 The main archaeological potential for the site was therefore for prehistoric and Roman activity. This did not prejudice the evaluation to the recovery of features from 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; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if

necessary. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

3.2 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 of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The project required the excavation of two 60m by 2m trenches, three 80m by 2m trenches, one 100m by 2m trench and one 140m by 2m trench; across the proposed development area. Trench locations are shown on Figure 2.

4.2 Topsoil and non-significant overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or natural, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved with the use of a mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter the trenches were cleaned and all additional excavation was conducted by hand.

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

5 RESULTS

5.1 All the trenches were excavated in a single large field under rough pasture.

5.2 **Trench 1** (Figures 3 & 4) was 61.50m long and aligned northwest-southeast and was excavated onto the natural grey/orange clay at an average depth of 0.37m (109.31m OD) from the modern ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed beneath (102), a mid brown clay silt subsoil, up to 0.26m thick. Subsoil (102) contained occasional sub-angular flint nodules and chalk fragments. The subsoil was sealed beneath (101), a mid brown clay silt humus topsoil, up to 0.16m thick. Unstratified finds recovered during the excavation of the trench included one sherd of Prehistoric pottery and a fragment of Post-medieval/modern CBM.

5.3 Located near the centre of Trench 1 was linear cut [103]. Ditch [103] was orientated northeast/southwest and was 3.50m wide by 0.48m deep. The cut

had a slightly irregular U-shaped profile, with signs of waterlogging at the base. Ditch [103] contained a grey clay silt fill (104), with iron-panning; occasional charcoal flecks, one sherd of Post-medieval CBM and one fragment of blue and white transfer chinaware. Ditch [103] was cut by wall cut [108].

- 5.4 Wall cut [108] was orientated northeast-southwest and cut through the centre of ditch [103]. The wall cut was 2.80m wide, 0.60m deep and contained three distinct fills (105), (106) and (107). Fill (105) constituted the wall fabric, with a width of 0.60m and a height of 0.40m, which consisted of sub-angular sandstone blocks, with no visible signs of facing. The wall was extant for a height of up to three courses, with larger stones on the east facing edge and smaller stones on the west facing edge. The wall fabric was bonded with a mid grey sand silt mortar (106). Surrounding the wall was fill (107), a mid brown clay silt fill, with occasional sub-angular flints and charcoal flecks. The fill also contained one sherd of modern blue and white transfer pottery.
- 5.5 At the northwestern end of Trench 1 were two parallel linears, [109] and [111]. Both were orientated north-south, with U-shaped profiles and similar dimensions, [109] was 0.40m wide and 0.09m deep, while [111] was 0.40m wide and 0.13m deep. The two linears also contained identical fills (110) and (112) respectively, which were mid brown clay silt fills with occasional small sub-angular flints occasional small fragments of CBM, but no charcoal. These features are most likely to represent plough marks.
- 5.6 **Trench 2** (Figure 5) was 80m long and aligned approximately north-south and was excavated onto the natural orange clay substrate at an average depth of 0.35m (112.76m OD) from the modern ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed beneath (203), an interface layer up to 0.13m thick, of mid brown/orange clay, with frequent sub-angular flint nodules. This was in turn overlaid by a mid brown silty clay subsoil (202), up to 0.18m thick. Unstratified finds recovered during the excavation of the trench included six sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery, four sherds of prehistoric pottery and occasional charcoal flecks. The subsoil was sealed beneath (201), a mid brown silty clay humic topsoil, up to 0.19m thick.
- 5.7 A number of archaeological features were present within the northern half of the trench. The northernmost feature consisted of a narrow ditch [212] aligned northwest-southeast. It measured 0.50m in width by 0.11m in depth with sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a light orange brown silty clay fill (213) from which seven sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered.
- 5.8 To the south of [212] was a ditch terminus or pit [216], aligned east-west. The feature measured 0.63m wide by 0.12m deep and extended into the trench for a length of 1.15m. The feature had sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a light orange brown silty clay with occasional flint fragments (217) from which four sherds of probable Bronze Age pottery were recovered.
- 5.9 A shallow irregular pit [220] was present to the south of feature [216]. It measured 0.94m by 1.40m across by 0.16m deep and was badly disturbed on

its western edge by animal burrowing. The pit had sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a light orange brown silty clay fill with occasional flint fragments, (221) from which three sherds of probable Bronze Age pottery were recovered.

- 5.10 A roughly north-south aligned elongated oval pit, or segment of ditch [214] was present 27m from the northern end of the trench. This feature measured 2.8m in length by 0.7m wide by 0.15m deep with sloping sides and a relatively flat base. It contained a light grey and orange mottled fill with occasional angular flint fragments (215), from which three fragments of Middle Bronze Age pottery were recovered.
- 5.11 An elongated oval pit, or short segment of ditch was present immediately to the south of [214]. This feature [208] was oriented north-south with gently sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a light grey silt clay with orange mottles and occasional flint fragments (209) from which a single sherd of Bronze Age pottery was recovered. Pit [208] was cut by a shallow irregular pit-like feature with indistinct edges, [210], that may represent a treebole rather than an archaeological feature. This feature contained a light grey silt clay fill (211) from which five sherds of Middle Bronze Age pottery were recovered.
- 5.12 Feature [204], immediately to the south of [208], was a northeast-southwest orientated ditch terminus. The ditch was very shallow, with a wide uneven base. The feature was visible for 1.33m, with a width of 0.82m and depth of 0.09m. Within the excavated section of the feature was a small depression with a concentration of charcoal directly over it. This could possibly represent a small stakehole within the ditch, but no evidence of a separate feature was visible in the section. Feature [204] contained a mottled, light grey/orange silty clay, with frequent charcoal flecks and occasional small sub-angular flints and limestone fragments (205), from which a small quantity of Middle Bronze Age pottery sherds was recovered. A second, larger, cut [206] was also present within the base of the ditch. This cut contained a single, crushed, pottery vessel and a flint scraper of Middle Bronze Age date.
- 5.13 A posthole, or small pit [218], was present against the eastern section of the trench to the south of [204]. This pit/posthole measured approximately 0.6m long by 0.5m wide by 0.31m deep with steep sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a dark orange grey mottled silty clay (219) from which no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.14 An east-west aligned ditch terminus or pit [222] was present to the south of [218] and represented the limit of archaeological activity within the trench. It consisted of a steep-sided cut with a narrow base. It contained a light orange grey mottled silty clay fill (223) from which no dating evidence was recovered.

- 5.15 **Trench 3** (Figure 6) was 60m long and aligned north-south and was excavated onto the natural orange/brown clay substrate at an average depth of 0.33m (114.28m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were sealed beneath (302), a light brown clay silt subsoil, up to 0.24m thick. The subsoil was sealed beneath (301), a mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.16m thick. Three archaeological features were present within this trench and several fragments of a clay loomweight were recovered as unstratified finds.
- 5.16 Ditch [303] was present at the northern end of the trench. It was aligned northeast-southwest and was cut at the southwestern end by a modern feature. The modern feature measured 1.8m wide and appeared to represent an earlier archaeological evaluation trench, although it did not readily match the locations of any of the trenches excavated by the Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) in 1999. Ditch [303] measured 1.05m wide by 0.14m deep with shallow sloping sides and a relatively flat base. It contained a mid orange grey mottled silty clay with occasional flint fragments (304) from which no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.17 A shallow, irregular pit [305] was present against the eastern section of the trench, to the south of ditch [303]. The pit measured 2.5m in width by 0.15m in depth with sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a mid orange grey mottled silty clay fill with occasional flint fragments (306) from which a single sherd of unidentified prehistoric pottery was recovered.
- 5.18 A shallow irregular pit [307] was present 14m to the south of pit [305]. It measured 1.35m in diameter by 0.15m deep with sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a mid orange grey mottled silty clay fill (308) from which two sherds of probable Bronze Age pottery were recovered.
- 5.19 **Trench 4** (Figure 7) was 140m long and aligned east-west and was excavated onto the natural orange/brown clay substrate at an average depth of 0.35m (113.28m OD) from the modern ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed beneath (403), a subsoil/natural interface layer up to 0.12m thick, which may have been the result of deeper ploughing techniques in this part of the field. This layer was sealed beneath (402), a light brown silty clay subsoil, up to 0.17m thick. No charcoal or CBM was present within the subsoil. The subsoil was in turn overlaid by (401), a mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.10m thick. Three archaeological features were present within this trench.
- 5.20 Ditch [406] was orientated approximately northwest-southeast. It was steeply cut on the southwestern side with a more gently slope to the northeast with a rounded base. It measured 0.78m in width by 0.10m in depth and was cut by a modern land drain. The feature contained a light orange/grey silty clay fill with occasional small sub-angular fragments of flint (407) from which four sherds of early 2nd century Roman pottery were recovered along with a single sherd of residual prehistoric pottery.
- 5.21 A post-medieval/modern gully [404] was present to the west of ditch [406]. It was present for a length of 5m on an east-west alignment before turning sharply to the north. It measured 0.34m in width by 0.09m in depth and

contained a mid grey-red mottled sandy silt fill (405) from which chinawares were recovered.

- 5.22 A north-south aligned gully [408] was present to the west of gully [404]. It measured 0.23m in width by 0.12m in depth with steep sides and a rounded base. It contained a light orange grey mottled silty clay fill (409) from which no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.23 **Trench 5** (Figure 8) was 80m long and aligned north-south and was excavated onto the natural orange/brown clay substrate at an average depth of 0.41m (114.05m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits were sealed beneath (503), a subsoil/natural interface layer, up to 0.13m thick. This layer was sealed beneath (502), a light brown silty clay subsoil, up to 0.19m thick. No charcoal or CBM was present within the subsoil. The subsoil was in turn overlaid by (501), a mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.10m thick. Three archaeological features were present within this trench.
- 5.24 A north-south aligned gully [504] was present for a length of 28m within the evaluation trench. It measured 0.33m in width by 0.06m in depth with sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a light orange grey mottled silty clay with occasional sub-angular flint fragments (505) from which no dating evidence was recovered. A small spread of 2nd century Roman pottery was present to the east of this feature in the northernmost part of the trench, extending for a length of approximately 1.5m. This material was present atop the natural clays and had no direct relationship to the gully.
- 5.25 An east-west aligned gully [506] cut gully [504] within the confines of the evaluation trench. It had sloping sides and a rounded base and measured 0.31m wide by 0.06m deep. It contained a mid orange grey silty clay fill with occasional sub-angular flint fragments (507) from which two undiagnostic flint flakes and an unidentified iron object were recovered.
- 5.26 An oval posthole/small pit [508] was present 24m from the northern end of the trench. It measured 0.58m long by 0.33m wide by 0.20m deep with steep sides and an uneven base. It contained a light orange grey silty clay fill with occasional sub-angular flint fragments (509) from which two sherds of probable 2nd century Roman pottery and a residual sherd of Prehistoric pottery were recovered.
- 5.27 **Trench 6** (Figure 9) was 101m long and aligned east-west and was excavated onto the natural orange/brown clay substrate at an average depth of 0.33m (115.34m OD) from the modern ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed beneath (603), a subsoil/natural interface layer, up to 0.07m thick which may have been the result of deeper ploughing techniques in this part of the field. This layer was sealed beneath (602), a light brown silty clay subsoil, up to 0.13m thick. The subsoil was in turn overlaid by (601), a mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.18m thick. A single archaeological feature was present within this trench.

- 5.28 A shallow ditch [604] was present 6m from the western end of the trench. It measured 0.70m in width by 0.08m in depth with sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained an orange grey mottled silty clay with occasional flint fragments (605), from which no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.29 **Trench 7** (Figure 10) was 81.5m long and aligned east-west and was excavated onto the natural orange/brown clay substrate at an average depth of 0.36m (105.32m OD) from the modern ground surface. These natural deposits were sealed beneath (703), a subsoil/natural interface layer, up to 0.12m thick. This layer was sealed beneath (702), a light brown silty clay subsoil, up to 0.15m thick. The subsoil was in turn overlaid by (701), a mid brown humic topsoil, up to 0.19m thick. Two archaeological features were present within this trench.
- 5.30 A northeast-southwest aligned terminus to a gully [704] was present towards the eastern end of the trench. It measured 0.35m in width by 0.07m in depth with sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a light orange brown mottled silty clay with occasional flint fragments (705) from which no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.31 A northwest-southeast aligned terminus to a gully [706] was present to the west of gully [704]. It measured 0.27m in width by 0.05m in depth with sloping sides and an uneven base. It contained a light orange brown mottled silty clay with occasional flint fragments (707) from which no dating evidence was recovered.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Archaeological features were present in all of the evaluation trenches.
- 6.2 The earliest archaeological features identified during the evaluation works were present in Trenches 2 and 3. An extensive complex of features within Trench 2 was dateable to the Middle Bronze Age and is clearly representative of settlement activity. Two features in Trench 3 also yielded prehistoric pottery that may be of contemporary date. No trace of this early settlement was identified by the CAT evaluation (1999). Traces of a CAT evaluation trench were present in Trench 3, although the angle did not match the plan - it is evident that the site boundaries have changed between the different phases of evaluation. It is noticeable that ditch [303] was not recorded within the CAT evaluation trench (Trench 1) suggesting that the feature may either have previously been destroyed by ploughing, or was not visible at the time. The feature was difficult to see, even in the relatively optimum conditions under which Trench 3 was opened. In poor weather conditions it is possible that the feature would not have been visible at all.
- 6.3 Roman features of 2nd century date were present in Trenches 4 and 5 within the eastern part of the study area. No trace of Roman activity was present within the western part of Trench 4, which bears out the absence of archaeological features in the trenches excavated by CAT (Trenches 2, 3 and

- 6). No trace of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity identified in CAT Trench 4 was present in Trench 6 of the current phase of evaluation, which was located approximately 20m to the south of the identified activity.
- 6.4 A number of undated features were also identified, which may represent elements of Bronze Age through to Roman activity.
- 6.5 The two phases of archaeological evaluation have therefore identified a number of discrete areas of archaeological activity. A Middle Bronze Age domestic occupation site is located in the northern part of the site (Trenches 2 and 3). Settlements of this date (*c.* 1200-1000 BC) are of regional, rather than local, importance. The settlement appears to be restricted to the northern part of the study area, but appears to extend between Trenches 2 and 3 and may therefore be relatively extensive.
- 6.6 A Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age complex (*c.* 500 BC) was previously identified during the evaluation works undertaken by CAT in 1999 in the southern part of the site. The two phases of evaluation suggest that this activity may be relatively restricted in extent.
- 6.7 A number of Roman features were identified during both phases of evaluation, all in the southern half of the site. These are associated with the Roman settlement identified at the site of the new hospital, and are therefore unlikely to have a particular focus within the study area.

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APPENDIX 1: The Pottery

by Dr Jane Timby

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The archaeological evaluation resulted in the recovery of 151 sherds of pottery (3796g) dating to the earliest Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval and post-medieval periods. In addition one fragment of ceramic building material and eight fragments from a fired clay loomweight were present.
- 1.2 Pottery was recovered from 15 archaeological contexts and as unstratified collections from Trenches 1-7. The latter comprises 28.5% (43 sherds) of the total assemblage.
- 1.3 The assemblage was scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by context.
- 1.4 The pottery was of variable condition. Seventy of the sherds derive from one vessel from context (207) and these are relatively well-preserved. The remainder of the material had fared less well and had been considerably affected by adverse soil conditions. The sherds were generally quite small and abraded and iron-stained.

2 Earlier Prehistoric

- 2.1 Most of the assemblage appears to date to the Bronze Age, probably some 126 sherds, although positive assignation is made difficult by the almost total absence of diagnostic sherds. Several fabrics were present including calcined flint-tempered, mixed grits and grog.
- 2.2 Context (207) produced 70 sherds from the lower part of a single thick-walled vessel. Amongst the 70 sherds was a single basesherd and one bodysherd with a horizontal line of spaced finger-depressed decoration. The paste contains a coarse calcined flint temper. The vessel is probably a bucket urn and as such is likely to belong to the Deverel-Rimbury tradition dating to the middle Bronze Age (MBA) period.
- 2.3 Other coarse and finer flint-tempered sherds mixed with grog-tempered sherds and, from (213), quartzite-tempered sherds, suggests that perhaps most of the other prehistoric material should provisionally be seen as contemporary.
- 2.4 Further confirmation of a potential domestic settlement of MBA date is provided by eight fragments of fired clay from what appears to be a cylindrical loomweight recovered as an unstratified find from Trench 3.

3 Roman

- 3.1 Nineteen sherds of likely Roman date were recovered from Trenches 4, 5 and 6. Apart a basesherd from an unstratified samian dish from Trench 5 and one small sherd of Dorset black burnished ware, the pottery appears to be from local sources and would broadly support a date in the early second century.
- 3.2 One fragment of ceramic tile recovered as an unstratified find from Trench 1 may also be Roman in origin.

4 Medieval

- 4.1 A single sherd of Minety ware was recovered as an unstratified find from Trench 5. Five sherds of post-medieval/modern date were recovered from contexts (104), (107), (405) and as an unstratified find from Trench 7.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The possible presence of a domestic settlement of MBA date has considerable local and regional importance as such sites are rare in this area. It would be of some value to establish the nature and character of the archaeological features producing the pottery. The small size and condition of the existing assemblage limits conclusions in terms of whether the whole assemblage should be seen as contemporary, or whether there might be later prehistoric occupation present. Any opportunity for dating through radiocarbon or thermoluminescence should be considered if further work is anticipated. Further work should also clarify the chronological scope of the site.