

**NEW EQUESTRIAN ARENA,
BENBOW HOUSE,
CHALFORD,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**

NGR: SO 8852 0154

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Report No. 919
November 2013



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Quality Assurance

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

Summary

Glossary

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

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Site Area

Site name: New Equestrian Arena, Benbow House, Chalford
Site code: BAB13
NGR: SO 8852 0154
Site activity: Watching Brief
Date and duration: 12th August 2013, 1 day
Location of archive: Currently the stores of Foundations Archaeology

Summary

A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of a new equestrian arena at Benbow House, Chalford, Gloucestershire. The work was commissioned by Peter Jacob of Benbow House.

The footprint for the arena was 40m long and 20m wide and was located approximately 17m west of Benbow House. The arena was stripped down to the natural limestone across the entire footprint of the arena.

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts; with the exception of late Post-medieval material, was present within the monitored area. Natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.3m to 1m from the Modern ground level.

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 the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and <i>circa</i> AD 1500.
MGS:	Modern ground surface.
Modern:	From 1900 to the present day.
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 from <i>circa</i> AD 1500 to 1900.
Prehistoric:	The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43. Traditionally sub divided into; Palaeolithic – <i>c.</i> 500,000 BC to <i>c.</i> 12,000 BC; Mesolithic – <i>c.</i> 12,000 BC to <i>c.</i> 4,500 BC; Neolithic – <i>c.</i> 4,500 BC to <i>c.</i> 2,000 BC; Bronze Age – <i>c.</i> 2,000 BC to <i>c.</i> 800 BC; Iron Age – <i>c.</i> 800 BC to AD 43.
Roman:	The period between AD 43 to <i>circa</i> AD 410.
Romano-British:	Term used to describe the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture.
Saxon:	The period between <i>circa</i> AD 410 and the Norman Conquest (AD 1066), sometimes referred to as Early Medieval.
WSI:	Written Scheme of Investigation

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On the 12th August 2013 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks associated with the construction of a new equestrian arena at Benbow House, Chalford, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 8852 0154) (Figures 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Peter Jacob of Benbow House.
- 1.2 The project was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) issued by Foundations Archaeology (2013), which was based upon the brief issued by Gloucestershire County Council. The work conformed to the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008), and *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Watching Briefs: (guidelines)* issued by English Heritage (London Region).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological monitoring.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The project involved the construction of a new equestrian arena at Benbow House, Chalford. Planning permission for the arena was granted by Stroud District Council under Reference 13/0758/FUL. The permission included a condition requiring a programme of archaeological monitoring.
- 2.2 The geology of the site is recorded as Athelstan Oolite Limestone Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).
- 2.3 The proposed development area is located in an area of archaeological and historic sensitivity which has been subject to a desk-based assessment (Archaeology & Planning, 2013). The assessment has highlighted the presence of a possible Prehistoric hut circle to the north-west of the site, which may be associated with a known late Neolithic or early Bronze Age barrow cemetery to the east.
- 2.4 The assessment further noted that historic mapping has identified a cross-shaped building close to the southern boundary of the site in 1803; the buried remains of which could be exposed during groundworks required for the arena. The fieldname of Pump Ground to the north may imply that this building was a pumphouse. The building had been demolished by 1830 and replaced by Benbow House.
- 2.5 A number of earthwork banks within the site may represent the partial survival of a field system which pre-dates the regular layout of the fields otherwise present in 1803. These boundaries had been removed by 1830 in order to create a single

large field, although the former boundaries along with others to the east and north-east remained visible on aerial photographs dating from 1946 and are still visible on the ground as low banks. One of these banks, which forms the southwestern corner of a sub-rectangular enclosure, will probably be exposed during the groundworks required for the arena, as will a further boundary which separated the cross-shaped building from Pump Ground to the north. The date of the earthwork banks and enclosure is unknown and, although these have been interpreted as part of a Medieval field system, an earlier origin cannot be ruled out.

- 2.6 The development area therefore contains the potential for archaeological deposits, predominately associated with the Prehistoric, Medieval and Early Post-medieval periods, which may be adversely impacted upon by the proposed development. This will not prejudice the watching brief against features and finds relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of the archaeological deposits.

- 3.2 These aims were achieved by the pursuit of the objectives as stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (2013):

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) to attempt to characterize the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

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

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The groundworks were undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, working under constant archaeological supervision.

- 4.2 Spoil tips were scanned for unstratified finds across the site area.

- 4.3 Any significant archaeological deposits and/or features within the study area were to be manually cleaned, investigated and recorded in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (2013).

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The stratigraphic sequence was consistent across the monitored area. Solid limestone bedrock was encountered at a depth of between 0.3 and 1m below the Modern ground surface. The natural deposits were sealed by a thin layer of an orangey brown silty subsoil (102), which was present for a depth of between 0.2 and 0.3m. This layer contained frequent limestone pieces, but no artefactual material. The subsoil was then sealed by a grey/black silty topsoil (101), which varied in depth between 0.1 and 0.7m across the study area. A small assemblage of late Post-medieval material, which consisted of three horse-shoes, iron nails, glass fragments and CBM was recovered from the topsoil and was concentrated mostly in the southeast corner of the site.
- 5.2 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts pre-dating the late Post-medieval period were exposed during the groundworks.

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts pre-dating the late Post-medieval period were present within the monitored area. This artefactual spread was located close to Benbow House and was most likely domestic/farming material. No substantial truncation of deposits was evident, which suggests that the area is relatively undisturbed, with the potential for good preservation conditions for archaeological deposits (if present in the vicinity).
- 6.2 There was no evidence for the presence of the sub-rectangular enclosure or the former pump house and bank, within the monitored area, which had been identified in the desk-based assessment.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with Corinium Museum. 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

Archaeology and Planning Solutions, 2013. *Benbow House, Upper Hyde, Chalford, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Assessment.*

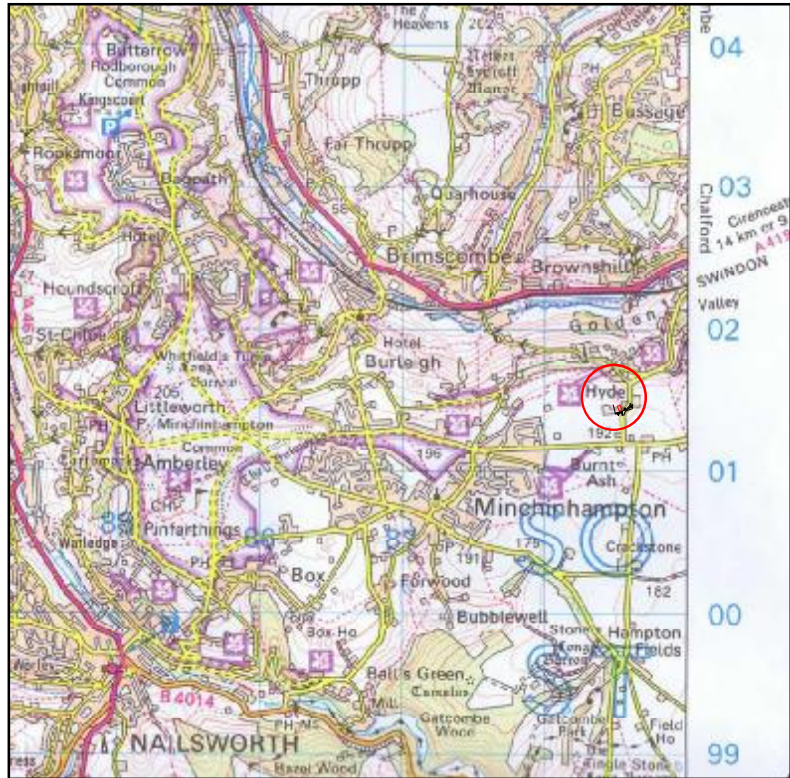
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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Site Code: BAB13

Accession Code:

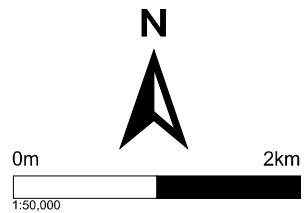
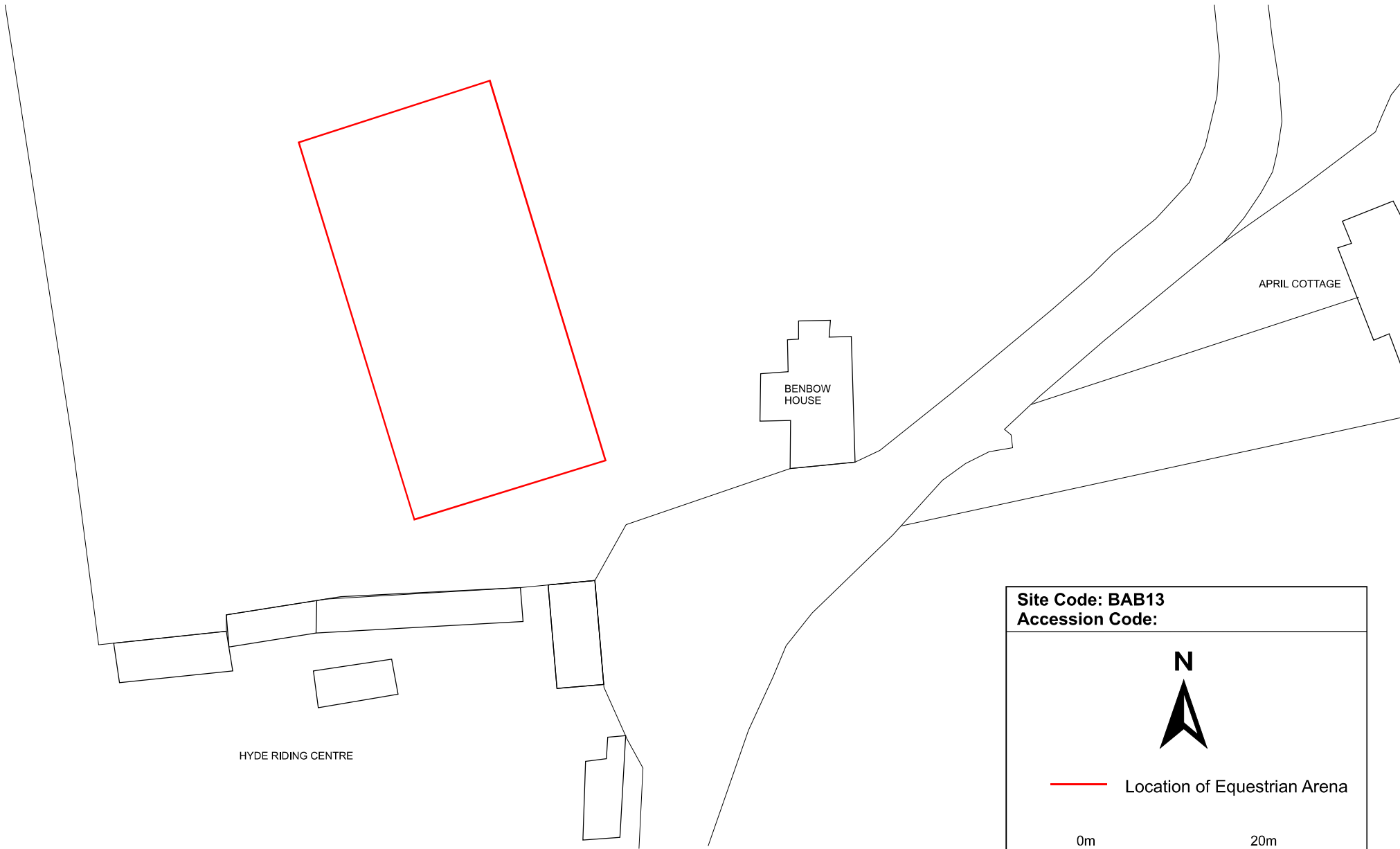


FIGURE 1: Site Location



Site Code: BAB13
Accession Code:

N

— Location of Equestrian Arena

0m 20m

1:500@A4

FIGURE 2: Watching Brief Area