BLOUNT'S COURT NURSERY
STUDLEY LANE
STUDLEY
WILTSHIRE

NGR: ST 9637 7112 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Report No. 978
July 2014

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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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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Date: 2nd July 2014

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken between the 18th and 20th June 2014 by Foundations Archaeology on land at the former Blount's Court Nursery, Studley, Wiltshire (NGR: ST 9637 7112 - centred). The works were commissioned by the Bowood Estate.

The evaluation revealed that the site contained a thin nursery/garden soil onto a natural strong orange sand with outcroppings of sandstone.

No features of archaeological significance were present; a modern pit (Trench 6), a field drain (Trench 5), two water pipes (Trenches 1 and 11) and former glasshouse footings (Trench 13) were identified cut into the natural sands, which were heavily disturbed by root action and, in the cases of Trenches 2 and 10, by rabbit burrowing.

Despite the likely potential of the site to contain Roman features, it does not appear to have been utilised during that period for any activity which might have left a trace in the physical record.

No archaeological finds or features were identified within the evaluated area.

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.

Headland

A linear bank, formed of accumulated plough soil, which occurred at the end of, and perpendicular to, plough strips or rows. They are commonly associated with ridge and furrow ploughing.

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.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken between the 18th and 20th June 2014 by Foundations Archaeology on land at Blount's Court Nursery, Studley Lane, Studley, Wiltshire (NGR: ST 9637 7112 - centred). The works were commissioned by the Bowood Estate.

1.2 The project was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2014); IfA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (2008); *Standards for Field Assessment in Wiltshire* (CAS 1995) and *MoRPHE*, issued by English Heritage (2006).

1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The site is located to the west of Studley Lane, from which it is accessed. The site is bordered to the north by the Vastern timberworks, to the south by New Road (A4) and to the west by hedge and fence line beyond which lies open ground. At the time of the works the land was under grass. The underlying geology consists of *Hazelbury Bryan Member - Sandstone*. (BGS Online Viewer). The site is generally flat with a slight slope from south to north.

2.2 Planning permission has been sought for new residential housing, with access roads, garages, parking areas and landscaping. In accordance with the principles of National Planning Policy Framework (2012), a programme of archaeological evaluation was required in advance of the determination of the planning application.

2.3 No formal desk-based archaeological assessment has been undertaken, but the site is known to lie within a landscape rich in archaeological remains, particularly of the Roman period. Significant Roman deposits have been found in the immediate vicinity of the site, which given the proximity of these previously identified remains and its location on well-drained high ground suggested that it should be considered of high potential.

2.4 Given the likely degree of sub-surface impact from root and bedding activity from the former use of the site as a nursery garden, geophysical survey was deemed unlikely to be a suitable assessment tool for this site.

2.5 The site therefore contained the potential for the presence of archaeological features, predominately relating to the Roman period. This did not prejudice the evaluation against deposits dating 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; 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, 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 define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 A total of thirteen 1.6m wide trenches were excavated within the site, as shown in Figure 2. A number of trenches were relocated from the position proposed in the Written Scheme of Investigation as the northern part of the site was unavailable for evaluation due to the presence of two oil fuel pipelines.

4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the archaeological deposits, or the underlying natural substrates, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB type excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.

4.3 Where possible, all excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

4.4 Visibility conditions were very good and, as such, it was possible to confidently identify features.

4.5 All amendments to the trenching and excavation methodology were agreed with the County Archaeological Service.

5 RESULTS

5.1 **Trench 1** was orientated approximately north northwest-south southeast and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.29m (117.38m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (101) up to 0.30m thick.

5.1.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench. The northern end of the trench was crossed by a water pipe.

5.2 **Trench 2** was orientated approximately northeast-southwest and excavated down onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.33m (117.33m OD) from the modern ground surface. The central and southern parts of the trench contained significant disturbance from rabbit burrowing. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (201) up to 0.35m thick with rabbit-mixed soils present at the southern end of the trench.

5.2.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.3 **Trench 3** was orientated approximately east-west and excavated down onto the natural deposits of orange sand with occasional sandstone fragments at the eastern end at an average depth of 0.46m (117.13m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (301) up to 0.5m thick.

5.3.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.4 **Trench 4** was orientated approximately north northeast-south southwest and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.34m (116.66m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (401) up to 0.38m thick.

5.4.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.5 **Trench 5** was orientated approximately north northeast-south southwest and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.30m (117.49m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (501) up to 0.30m thick.

5.5.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench. A modern ceramic land drain crossed the trench on an east-west orientation.

5.6 **Trench 6** was orientated approximately northeast-southwest and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.27m (117.09 OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (601) up to 0.38m thick.

5.6.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench. A modern cut [602] measuring at least 1.4m in length was present at the eastern end of the trench. The feature contained a fill (603) indistinguishable from the topsoil; investigation revealed root material and a plastic plant tag.

5.7 **Trench 7** was orientated approximately east-west and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.34m (116.87m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (701) up to 0.38m thick.

5.7.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.8 **Trench 8** was orientated approximately northeast-southwest and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand at an average depth of 0.31m (116.58m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (801) up to 0.38m thick.

5.8.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.9 **Trench 9** was orientated approximately northwest-southeast and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand with sandstone fragments at an average depth of 0.40m (116.74m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (901) up to 0.40m thick.

5.9.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.10 **Trench 10** was orientated approximately northwest-southeast and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand with sandstone fragments at an average depth of 0.30m (115.65m OD) from the modern ground surface for most of its length, deepening to 0.56m (115.03m OD) at the eastern end as a result of rabbit burrowing and a sandstone outcrop. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (1001) up to 0.56m thick.

5.10.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.11 **Trench 11** was orientated approximately north-south and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand with sandstone fragments at an average depth of 0.34m (116.09m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (1101) up to 0.41m thick.

5.11.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench. A waterpipe crossed the northern part of the trench on an east-west alignment.

5.12 **Trench 12** was orientated approximately east-west and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand with sandstone fragments at an average depth of 0.27m (116.40m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (1201) up to 0.30m thick.

5.12.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench.

5.13 **Trench 13** was orientated approximately west northwest-east southeast and excavated onto the natural deposits of orange sand with sandstone fragments at an average depth of 0.23m (115.61m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural deposits showed significant degrees of root disturbance and were sealed by a light orange brown friable sand silt topsoil and turf (1301) up to 0.25m thick.

5.13.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trench. The eastern end of the trench was crossed by two footings relating to former glasshouses.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The evaluation revealed no features of archaeological significance; a modern pit (Trench 6), a field drain (Trench 5), two water pipes (Trenches 1 and 11) and former glasshouse footings (Trench 13) were identified cut into the natural sands, which were heavily disturbed by root action and, in the cases of Trenches 2 and 10, by rabbit burrowing.

6.2 Despite the likely potential of the site to contain Roman features, it does not appear to have been utilised during that period for any activity which might have left a trace in the physical record.

6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course. 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

English Heritage. 2006. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment.* English Heritage (Swindon).

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Institute for Archaeologists. 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation.*

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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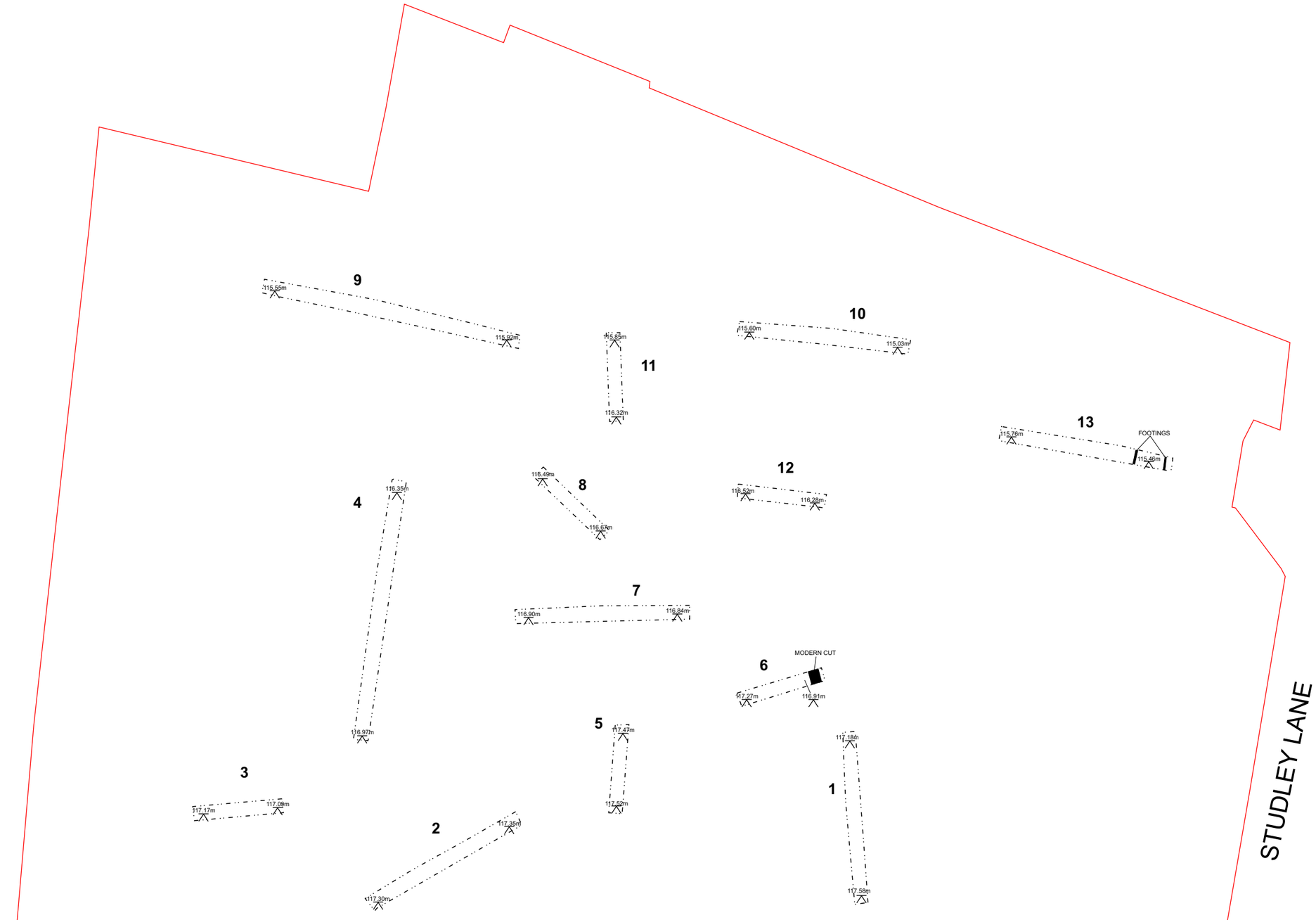
Site Code: BCS14
Accession Code:

N

0m 2km

1:50,000@A4

FIGURE 1: Site Location



Site Code: BCS14
Accession Code:

N

0m 20m

1:500@A4

FIGURE 2: Trench plan