

**BRASENOSE FARMHOUSE,
OXFORD.**

NGR: SP 556 049

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

March 2015
Report No. 1042



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

**BRASENOSE FARMHOUSE,
OXFORD**

NGR: SP 556 049

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

March 2015

Report No. 1042

Quality Assurance

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

Author N. Wells, MA ACIfA

Date 11/03/15

Approved D. King BA MCIfA

QA Checked R. King BA MCIfA

This report has been compiled with all reasonable skill care and attention to detail within the terms of the project as specified by the client and within the general terms and conditions of Archaeological Management Services Ltd trading as Foundations Archaeology but no explicit warranty is provided for information and opinions stated. AMS Ltd accepts no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known. Any such party relies on this report at their own risk. Copyright of this document is retained by AMS Ltd, but unlimited licence to reproduce it in whole or part is granted to the client and/or their agents and/or assignees on payment of invoice.

CONTENTS

Summary

Glossary

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

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Trench Locations
- Figure 3: Southeast Facing Section in Trench 1
- Figure 4: Northeast Facing Section in Trench 2

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 10th March 2015 by Foundations Archaeology at Brasenose Farmhouse, Oxford (NGR: SP 556 049) in response to a pre-planning enquiry from the Regeneration and Major Projects section of Oxford County Council.

The evaluation involved the excavation of two 10m by 1.6m trenches within the area of the proposed development, located and excavated in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation.

No archaeological features were found in either of the trenches and deposits in both consisted of made-ground to a maximum depth of 0.59m below ground level, which directly sealed the limestone bedrock natural. It is clear from the evaluation that the development area had been reduced down to bedrock with a layer of made-ground placed down and then compacted. Subsequently a thick layer of gravel/stone hardcore was laid and then covered by tarmac. The late 19th/early 20th finds from the basal layers show that this activity occurred relatively recently.

The archaeological evaluation has indicated that there is a low potential for the presence of significant archaeological remains within this reduced area, however, these results are not necessarily a reflection of the archaeological potential in any undisturbed areas in the 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 the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c.* 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.

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period from *c.* AD 1500 onwards.

Romano-British

Term used to define the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated AD 43 to *c.* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 10th March 2015 Foundations Archaeology conducted an archaeological evaluation at Brasenose Farmhouse, Oxford (NGR: SP 556 049) in response to a pre-planning enquiry from the Regeneration and Major Projects section of Oxford County Council.
- 1.2 The project was conducted in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2015); CIfA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (2008) and MoRPHE, issued by English Heritage (2006).
- 1.3 This report constitutes the results of the archaeological works.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The proposed development area (Figures 1 & 2) lies on a tarmaced area encompassed on two sides by Brasenose Farmhouse, lay to the north of the Horspath Driftway and east of the A4142 Oxford Ring Road, at approximately 86.35m above Ordnance Datum.
 - 2.2.1 The site is located 100m from the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road which was the focus of an extensive corridor of pottery manufacturing compounds stretching from Otmoor, through Headington, Lye Valley, Cowley, Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Rose Hill, towards Abingdon. This extensive manufacturing zone formed a regionally important Roman pottery industry, the remains of which are of national significance in the field of Roman studies. Previously likely kilns have been identified 160m to the north-west (HER 16300) and 290m to the east along the edge of Brasenose Wood (HER No 5482). Furthermore Iron Age and Roman settlement remains have previously been excavated 130m to south-west at Brasenose Driftway (HER No 17002) and the concentration of burials and Roman finds to the south of Brasenose Farmhouse suggest that there may have been a road-side settlement in the vicinity (nearest pottery recovered 130m to the south (HER 6157).
 - 2.2.2 A Heritage Assessment has been previously produced for this site by the Heritage and Specialist Services Team (2011) and should be consulted in conjunction with this project background. This notes that the surviving farmhouse, stables and threshing barn at the site date back to at least the later 17th century. The earliest available map showing the farm dates to 1790 when it is recorded as 'Bullington Farm', the morphology of the buildings could suggest a mid-17th century date.
 - 2.2.3 It is possible that the site was occupied before the 17th century. The site lies on the edge of the mapped extent of Bullington Green which was associated with the Late Saxon meeting place for the Bullington Hundred. In the 13th

century the nearby wood may have been the ‘Minchery Wood’ owned by the Benedictine Nunnery at Littlemore. The wood was purchased by Brasenose College in 1579 when it was being actively managed for coppice. The college sold the farm to ‘the citizens of Oxford’ in 1935.

- 2.2.4 Historic maps show the footprint of the proposed new building at the site was occupied by a stable block. The heritage assessment report notes that whilst buildings are not listed they have significant heritage interest. Furthermore the farm has additional historic interest because of its association with the Morris family, William Morris (the car plant owner) lived there as a boy.
- 2.2.5 The archives of Brasenose College were consulted on the 29th January 2015. All historic maps held by the archive were examined. None of the maps held predated the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1881. Two tracings of estate maps were examined, but the plot numbers on the maps were identical to those found on the First Edition OS map. The other documents relating to Brasenose Farm concerned leases and valuations and yielded no relevant archaeological information.
- 2.2.6 The site is located on the eastern boundary of the Oxford Archaeological Plan. This document has identified Bronze Age and middle Iron Age pottery, along with evidence of continuity of occupation from the late Iron Age into the early Roman period and infant inhumations at Eastfield House, to the west of the site. Also noted in the Plan was a possible Roman kiln site on Horspath Driftway.
- 2.3 Therefore it was regarded that the development area would have some potential for archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Roman and Post-medieval periods, although this did not prejudice the works against the recovery of finds or features associated with other periods.
- 2.4 The site’s bedrock geology consists of a Wheatley limestone member with no appreciable superficial deposits (BGS online viewer).

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 will 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 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 establish the character, extent and preservation of any Iron Age or Roman activity.

3.3 Specific aims for this site were as follows:

- i) establish whether significant Iron Age or Roman remains are present bearing in mind the proximity of the Roman Road and the wider distribution of known finds and sites;
- ii) establish whether for Late Saxon and Medieval remains are present bearing in mind the proximity of Bullingdon Green and the history of managed coppiced woodland at 'Minchery' and later 'Brasenose' Wood;
- iii) establish the character and extent of any Post-medieval farm buildings bearing in mind the available map evidence.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 In accordance with the WSI two 10m x 1.6m trenches were excavated within the area of the proposed build (Figure 2).
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substrates, whichever was encountered first by use of a 'minidigger' mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket, whilst under constant archaeological direction.
- 4.3 All subsequent hand excavation and recording of archaeological features/deposits was undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 5.1 No archaeological features were found in either of the trenches and deposits in both consisted of made ground to a maximum depth of 0.59m below ground level lying directly over limestone bedrock, encountered at approximately 85.8m above Ordnance Datum.
- 5.2 **Trench 1** (Figure 3): Natural limestone bedrock was encountered at 0.52m below Modern ground level – at 85.83m above Ordnance Datum. The natural was overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of dark greyish brown compact clay silt (**102**) with very frequent small to large sub-rounded and sub-angular limestone inclusions. This was in turn sealed by a 0.15m thick deposit (**101**) very similar in nature to (**102**) but with smaller inclusions. Above this was a 0.25m thick deposit of mixed gravel and stone hardcore layers (**100**) sealed by tarmac. These deposits were present throughout the length of the trench.
- 5.3 **Trench 2** (Figure 4): natural limestone bedrock (**202**) was encountered at 0.59m below Modern ground level – at 85.77m above Ordnance Datum. The natural was overlain by a 0.24m thick dark greyish brown compact clay silt (**201**) with very frequent small to large sub-rounded and sub-angular limestone fragments. This was overlain by a 0.39m thick mixed gravel and stone hardcore layer (**200**) covered by tarmac.
- 5.4 A 0.3m wide cut for a Modern electrical cable ran across the southeastern end of Trench 2, aligned east-west.
- 5.5 No finds earlier in date than late Post-medieval were recovered.
- 5.6 It is clear from the evaluation that the development area had been reduced down to bedrock with a layer of made-ground placed down (layers **101/102** and **201**) and then compacted. Subsequently a thick layer of gravel/stone hardcore (**100** and **200**) was laid and then sealed by tarmac. The late 19th/early 20th finds from the basal layers show that this activity occurred relatively recently.
- 5.7 The lack of archaeological finds and features pre-dating the late Post-medieval period within the trenches indicates a low potential for significant archaeological deposits to be present within the site.
- 5.8 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited with the appropriate 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.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

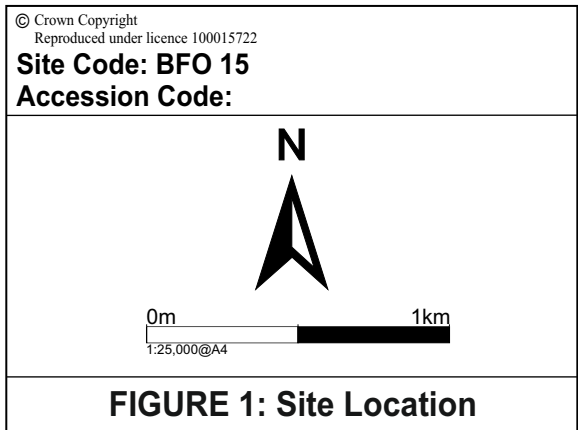
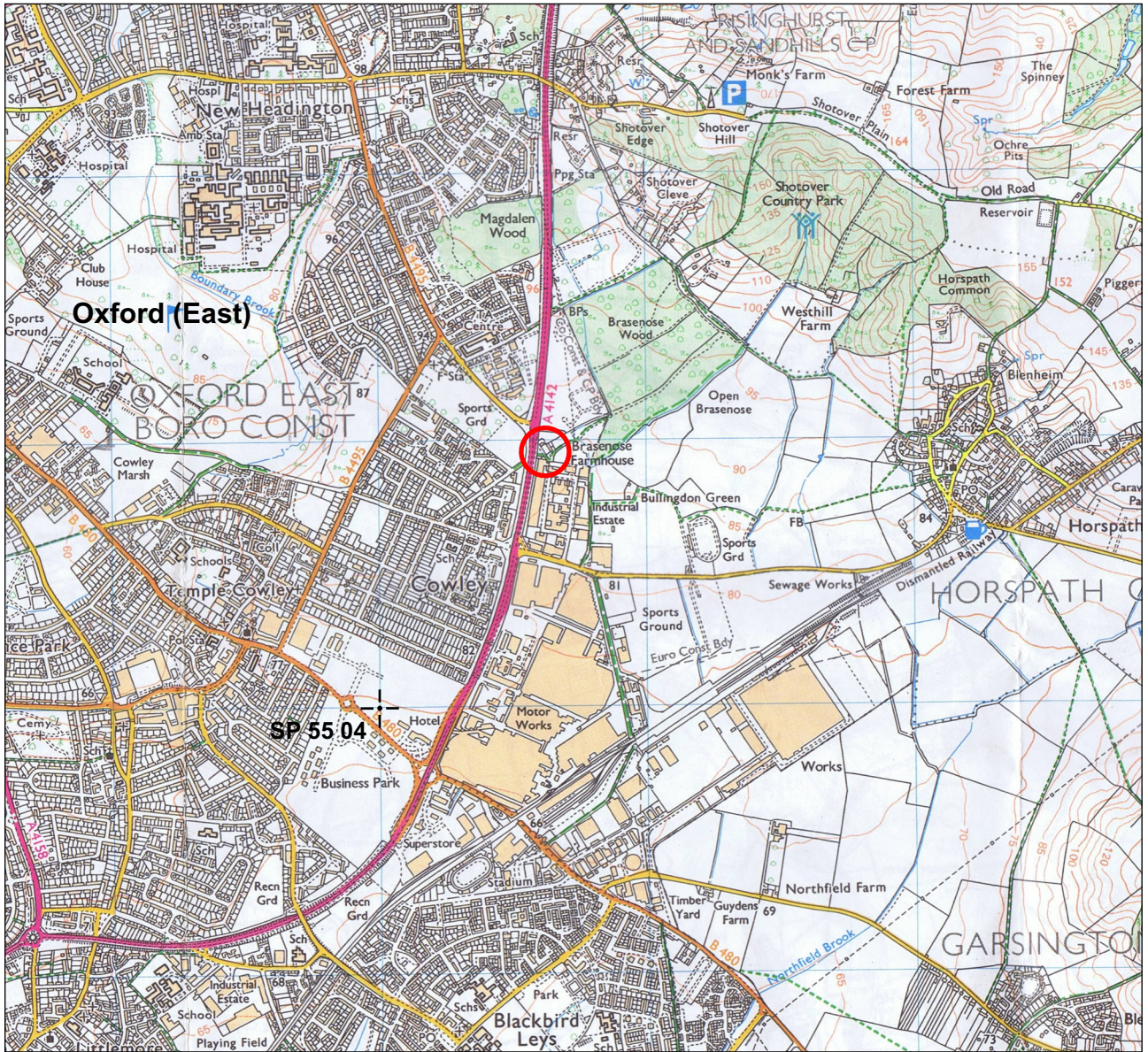
Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994 (revised 2008). *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished.

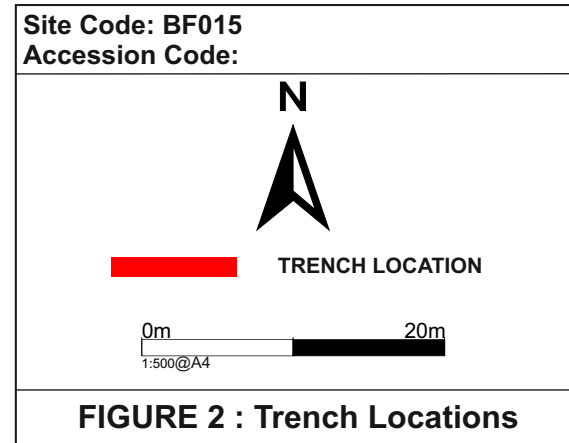
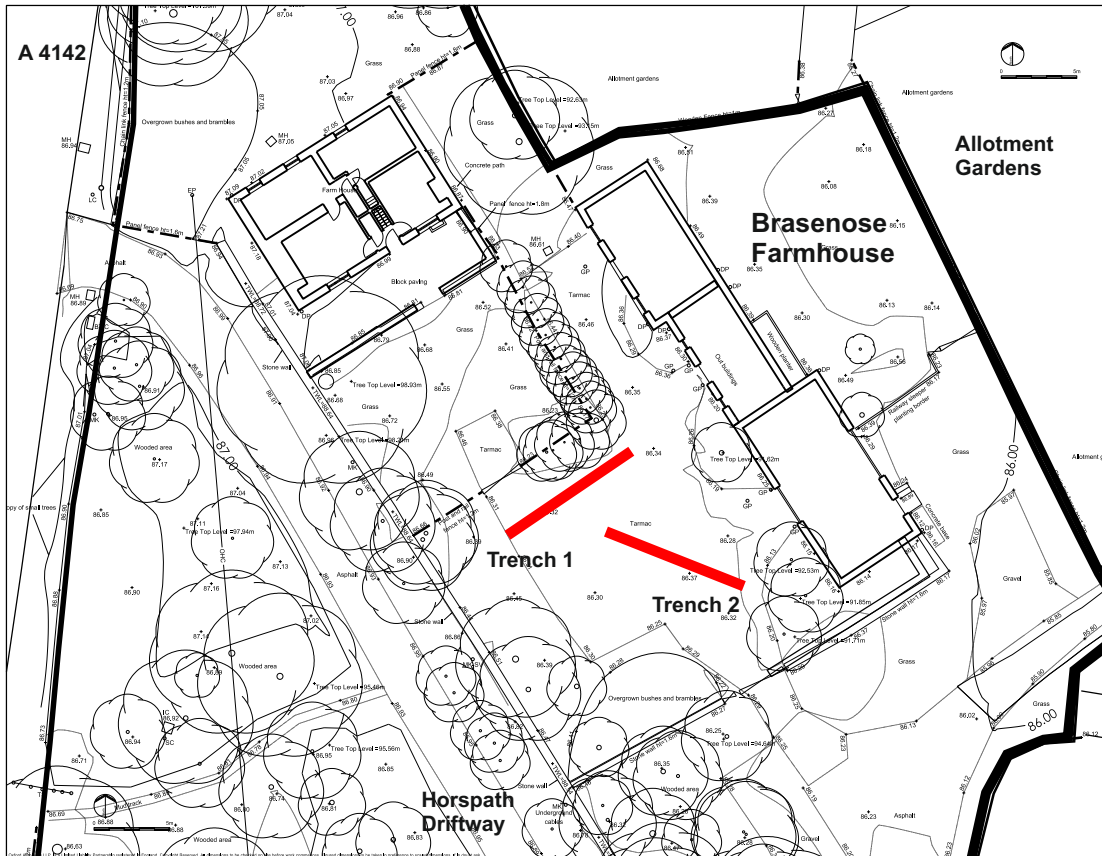
English Heritage. 2006. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*. English Heritage (Swindon).

Foundations Archaeology. 2015. Brasenose Farmhouse, Oxford: Archaeological Evaluation *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank David Radford, Oxford City Archaeologist and David Grundy of Oxford Architects for their assistance during the course of this project.







Site Code: BFO 15
Accession Code:

FIGURE 3: Southeast Facing Section in Trench 1



Site Code: BFO 15
Accession Code:

FIGURE 4: Northeast Facing Section in Trench 2