

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

—ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street,
Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Site Code: AUD13/97

(SU5530 8640)

Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr Michael Moore

by David Platt

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code AUD13/97

July 2013

Summary

Site name: Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU5530 8640

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 1st – 3rd July 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: AUD 13/97

Area of site: c.0.48ha

Summary of results: The evaluation has revealed a number of features of certain and probable archaeological interest with a range of dates represented. The earliest feature is a ditch tentatively of Bronze Age date with others certainly and probably of Roman and medieval date. A chalk-lined well is undated.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 15.07.13 Steve Preston✓ 15.07.13

Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire **An Archaeological Evaluation**

by David Platt

Report 13/97

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire (SU5530 8640) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Moore, of Langdons, The Croft, Aston Tirrold, OX11 9DL.

Planning permission (P12/S1381/FUL) has been gained on Appeal (APP/Q3115/A/12/2187399) from South Oxfordshire District Council for residential development comprising the construction of four new houses and conversion of existing structures at Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a field evaluation has been requested by the county archaeological officer. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 128) and the District Council's Local Plan policies.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Anna Ginger between 1st and 3rd July 2013 and the site code is AUD13/97. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire county Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Aston Upthorpe which lies *c.* 3km west of Cholsey and 2km east of Blewbury (Fig. 1). The site is at a height of between 65m and 65m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as Lower Chalk (BGS 1980). This was observed in the trenches as a pale grey chalk marl with areas of a mid reddish brown clay with frequent gravel inclusions. The site was previously used as a stables and is currently an area of demolition.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2013). In summary the site lies within the historic core of the settlement. Aston Upthorpe has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002). Various listed buildings are present in the vicinity of the site of 17th century date with, until a recent fire, a barn of similar date on the site itself. There has been no archaeological investigation in the immediate vicinity but the Iron Age hillfort of Blewburton Hill lies just to the west. It is also possible that a Neolithic monumental site underlies the hillfort (Harding 1976; Oswald *et al.* 2001). A Roman coin, a gold *solidus* of Honorius, was found in 1969 during the laying of a garden path 130m to the south of the site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site; and
- to determine if there were later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig six trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m wide, targeted at the footprints of the new structures. A contingency of 10m of trenching was included should it be required to clarify findings made in the initial evaluation. Topsoil and overburden was to be removed by a JCB-type machine equipped with a ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels and under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were present or suspected they were cleaned and excavated using hand tools.

Results

Trenches 4 and 6 were dug as intended however trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5 were moved slightly due to large concrete foundations on the site from the stables that were previously present (Fig. 3). This was after consultation with the monitor. The trenches ranged in length from 14.50m to 15.40m and in depth from 0.57 to 1.25m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned roughly west–east and was 14.50m long and 0.57m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of Tarmac/gravel above 0.30m of made ground overlying chalk marl natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified nor artefacts recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 1 and 3)

Trench 2 was aligned W – E and was 15m long and 1.05m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of Tarmac overlying 0.10m of hardcore, this in turn overlay 0.50m of dark grey brown clayey silt made ground (64) with occasional chalk marl and flint inclusions, which overlay the natural geology. A ditch (2) was recorded which was 1.10m wide and 0.50m deep and filled with a single fill (52) which consisted of a mid brown grey clayey silt with frequent chalk inclusions.

Ditch 2 was re-cut by Ditch 1, which almost entirely removed ditch 2 towards the east but was narrower towards the west. This was approximately 1.0m wide and 0.50m deep and contained a single fill (53) which consisted of a mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional flint inclusions. It contained 22 sherds of 2nd century AD Roman pottery and 20 fragments of cattle and large mammal animal bone.

Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 3 was aligned SW – NE and was 15m long and 1.25m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of demolition rubble overlying 0.30m of mid grey clayey silt with frequent flint inclusions, this in turn overlay 0.45m of dark brown grey clayey silt with occasional chalk inclusions, this overlay 0.25m of mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional chalk inclusions, which overlay the natural geology. A single pit (4) was recorded, this was 0.48m deep but due to its location at the end of the trench it was impossible to observe its diameter. Pit 4 had two fills, the primary fill (55) consisted of a dark grey brown clayey silt with occasional chalk and flint inclusions and the secondary fill (54) consisted of a mid greyish brown clayey silt with occasional chalk and flint inclusions. No finds were recovered from either fill.

Trench 4 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 2 and 4)

Trench 4 was aligned S – N and was 15.40m long and 0.90m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.45m of topsoil overlying 0.10m of subsoil, this overlay the natural geology. A well (3) was observed at the southern end of the trench, it was approximately 2.6m in diameter but was only excavated down 0.30m. The well was formed of roughly shaped chalk blocks (57) approximately 0.20x0.30m in size bonded with a dark grey clay. The well

was backfilled with a mid brown grey clayey silt (66) overlying a pale grey silty chalk marl with frequent chalk and occasional flint inclusions (56). The chalk blocks were not flush with the cut of the well and there was a deposit (58) between them. This was approximately 0.30m in width and consisted of a pale grey brown silty chalk with occasional large chalk and flint inclusions.

A ditch (5) was also observed and this was cut by the well (3) and was therefore stratigraphically earlier. The ditch was 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep and contained a single fill (59) which consisted of a dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent gravel inclusions. It contained two sherds of Bronze Age pottery and 10 fragments of large mammal bone

A pit (6) was also observed against the side of the trench and this was 0.70m deep and contained three fills. The primary fill (62) was a pale green grey clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions, the secondary fill (61) was a mid brown grey clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. The tertiary fill consisted of a dark grey brown clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. It contained two sherds of pottery one tentatively of prehistoric date and the other of Roman date. A few flacks of fired clay were also recorded and 12 bone fragments of sheep/goat bone.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was aligned NW – SE and was 15m long and 0.80m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of demolition rubble overlying 0.23m of dark brown grey clayey silt with occasional chalk marl inclusions, this overlay 0.05m of pale brown grey chalk marl which overlay 0.20m of mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional small flint inclusions, this in turn overlay the natural chalk marl geology. No archaeological deposits were observed, however, a large concrete plinth was observed from 12.40 – 15m at the east end of the trench which cut into the natural geology .

Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 6 was aligned SE – NW and was 15.10m long and 0.85m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil overlying 0.30m of pale grey brown chalk marl with post medieval brick inclusions, this overlay 0.32m of mid brown grey chalk marl with occasional chalk marl inclusions, this in turn overlay the natural chalk marl geology. A single pit (7) was observed at the NW end of the trench and this contained a single fill (63) which consisted of a mid brown grey clayey silt with frequent chalk and flint inclusions. It contained 3 sherds of medieval pottery.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 29 sherds of pottery dating to the early Prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods. The assemblage was accompanied by two pieces of undated fired clay. The pottery was recovered from four defined contexts with the greatest quantity, 22 sherds from ditch [1]. The other groups were thus very small which has to be taken into account for the dating. The sherds from pit [6] were particularly tiny and thus difficult to identify with confidence. The material is of mixed preservation which in part reflects the mixed date of the group. The overall average sherd size at 8.8 g is quite low suggesting some possible disturbance of deposits. For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess the likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Appendix 3.

Early prehistoric

Two thick-walled handmade bodysherds with a calcined flint temper were recovered from ditch [5] (59). One sherd is 14 mm thick. Such material is typical of Bronze Age urn. The sherds appear to be from two different vessels. A third very small handmade sandy ware from pit [6] (62) weighing just 1g could be prehistoric or early Roman.

Roman

Sherds of early Roman date account for the bulk of the recovered assemblage some 23 sherds mainly from ditch [1] with one tiny piece from pit [6]. The group includes the base of a Central Gaulish (Lezoux) samian dish; six sherds from a Dorset black burnished ware jar; a sherd of grog-tempered storage jar and various local Oxfordshire products. Amongst the Oxfordshire wares are a sherd of white-ware mortarium, various grey sandy wares, a white ware and two sherds of fine oxidised ware. Overall the group suggests a date in the first half of the 2nd century.

Medieval

Three sherds of medieval date were recovered from pit [7]. Two sherds are from a glazed Brill-Boarstall type jug and one sherd is from an unglazed jar or cooking pot in a sandy grey ware with calcareous inclusions.

Animal Bone by Danielle Milbank

A small assemblage of fragmented disarticulated animal bone was hand collected from four contexts encountered in the evaluation, including material from three sieved soil samples. A total of 42 fragments were recovered, weighing 800g, which are summarised in Appendix 4. The preservation of the remains was moderate to good, with medium fragmentation and occasional surface erosion. In many contexts the fragment size limited the amount of identifiable bone. Where species could not be identified, the remains were categorised as large (horse, bovine), medium (sheep/goat, pig) or small (cat, dog, rodent).

Ditch 1 (53) contained a cattle tibia-fibula (left, proximal end only) with butchery marks indicating cutting at an oblique angle to the bone's surface. The context also contained a cattle calcaneus (left) in two pieces, and several fragments of scapula (probably also cattle). Ditch 5 (59) contained a complete right cattle metacarpal, a cattle tooth and jaw fragment, a cranium fragment and a piece of horn core bearing a small cut mark. A further fragment of long bone from a large animal was recovered from the sieved soil sample. Pit 6 (61) contained six fragments (two rib pieces and four long bone fragments) from a sheep/goat, of which one (a long bone) has a cut mark. A sieved soil sample from Ditch 5 (62) also contained 6 long bone fragments of sheep/goat size.

Due to the lack of duplicated skeletal elements, the minimum number of individuals present in the assemblage was found to be 2: 1 sheep/goat and 1 cattle species. Evidence of butchery was found on several pieces which suggests that overall, the modest animal bone assemblage is likely to represent domestic consumption.

Fired clay by Danielle Milbank

Two pieces of fired clay, one just a small piece (1g) came from ditch 1 (59). The other piece weighed 26g and is of a fine sandy clay fabric with an orange red colour. It has no characteristics to suggest that it represents daub or an object such as a loomweight. A second small fragment (1g) came from pit 6 (62).

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed the archaeological potential of the site with the discovery of several archaeological features comprising pits, ditches and a well. One feature (ditch 1/2) is almost certainly of Roman date and pit 6 possibly of Roman date. Pit 7 is most probably of medieval date. The remaining features are undated or poorly dated. Probable well (3) cuts ditch (5) but the latter is only tentatively dated to the Bronze Age and the finds are as likely to be residual.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254 Solid and drift edition, Keyworth
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R, 2013, Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, A Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation
- Harding, D W, 1976, 'Blewburton Hill, Berkshire, re-excavation and re-appraisal', in D W Harding (ed), *Hillforts: Later Prehistoric Earthworks in Britain and Ireland*, London, 133–46
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London
- Oswald, A, Dyer, C and Barber, M, 2001, *The creation of monuments: Neolithic causewayed enclosures in the British Isles*, Swindon
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at W, SW, NW or SE end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	14.50	1.6	0.57	0-0.15m Tarmac, 0.15-0.45m mid greyish brown clayey silt made ground, 0.45m+ natural chalk marl geology.
2	15	1.6	1.05	0-0.10m Tarmac, 0.10-0.20m hardcore, 0.20-0.70m dark grey brown clayey silt made ground, 0.70m+ natural geology. Ditch (2) and recut (1). [Pls 1 and 3]
3	15	1.6	1.25	0-0.15m rubble, 0.15-0.45 mid grey clayey silt with frequent flint inclusions, 0.45-0.90m dark grey brown clayey silt with occasional chalk inclusions, 0.90-1.15m mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional chalk inclusions, 1.15m+ natural geology. Pit (4).
4	15.40	1.6	0.90	0-0.45m topsoil, 0.45-0.55m mid brownish grey clayey silt subsoil, 0.55m+ natural geology. Well (3), Ditch (5) and Pit (6) [Pls 2 and 4]
5	15	1.6	0.80	0-0.22m demolition layer, 0.22-0.45m dark brown grey clayey silt with occasional chalk inclusions, 0.45-0.50m pale brownish grey redeposited chalk marl natural, 0.50-0.70 mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions, 0.70m+ natural geology.
6	15.10	1.6	0.85	0-0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.46m pale grey brown chalk marl with occasional brick inclusions, 0.46-0.78m mid brown grey chalk marl with brick inclusions, 0.78m+ natural geology. Pit (7)

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

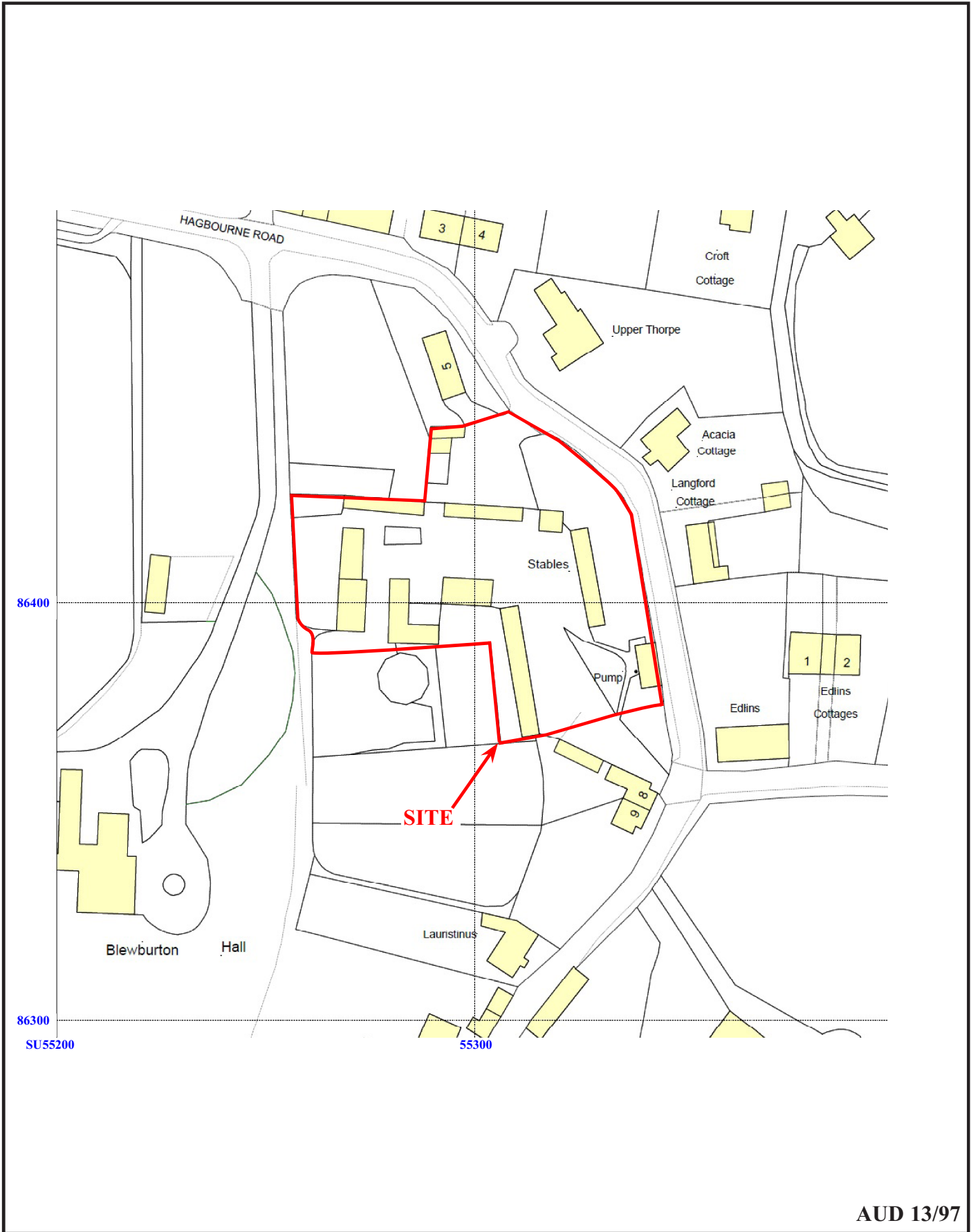
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	53	Re-cut of Ditch 2	Roman	Pottery
2	2	52	Ditch	Roman	stratigraphy
4	3	56, 57, 58, 66	Well	-	
3	4	54, 55	Pit	-	
4	5	59	Ditch	Bronze Age (or later)	Pottery
4	6	60, 61, 62	Pit	Roman (or later)	Pottery
6	7	63	Pit	Medieval	Pottery

APPENDIX 3: Pottery catalogue

Cut	Deposit	Early Prehistoric	?Prehistoric	Roman	Medieval	Total No	Total Wt (g)
1	53	0	0	22	0	22	195
5	59	2	0	0	0	2	23
6	62	0	1	1	0	2	1
7	63	0	0	0	3	3	38

APPENDIX 4: Inventory of animal bone

Cut	Deposit	Sample	Number of Fragments	Weight (g)	Large	Cow	Sheep/goat	Unidentified
1	53		15	310	4	2		9
1	53	1	5	26		1		4
5	59		8	344		5		3
5	59	4	2	34	1			1
6	61		6	60			6	-
6	62	5	6	26			6	
Total			42	800				
MNI						1	1	

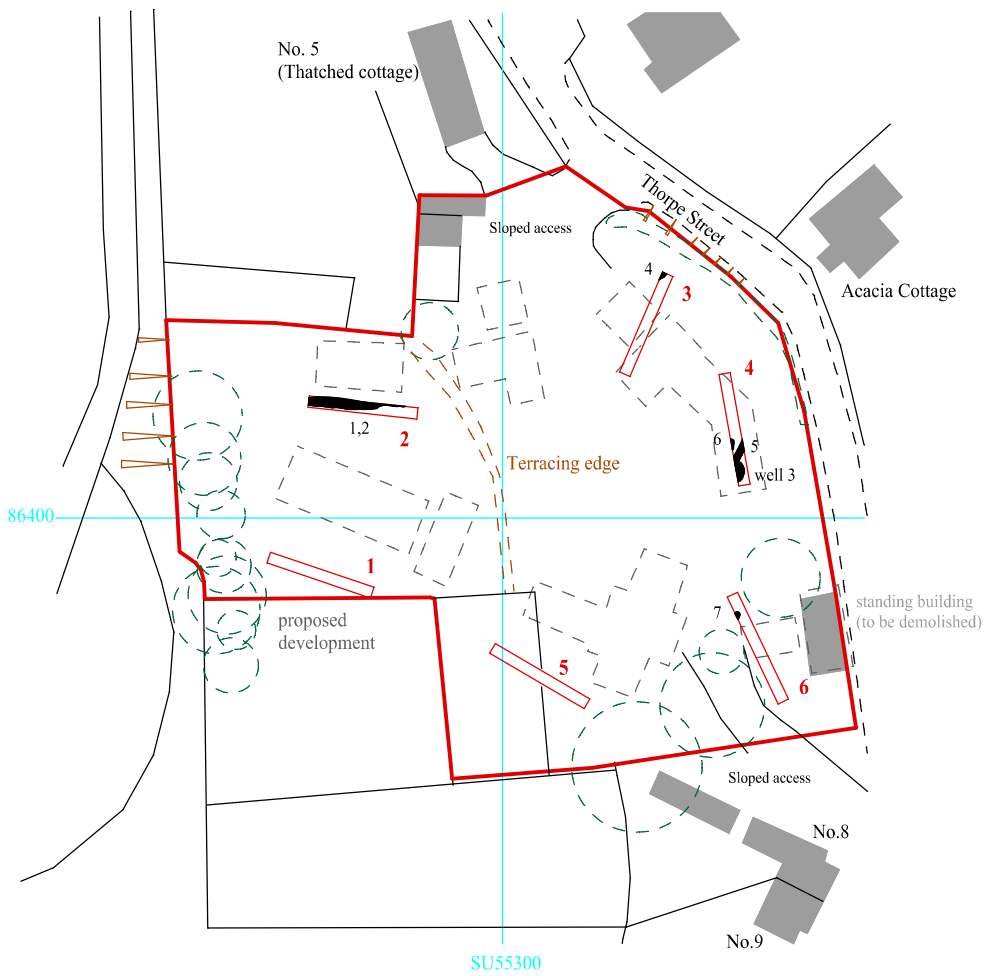


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**Frimley Stables, Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe,
Oxfordshire, 2013**
Archaeological Evaluation
 Figure 2. Detailed location of site, prior to demolition of
 stables.
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 Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:1250





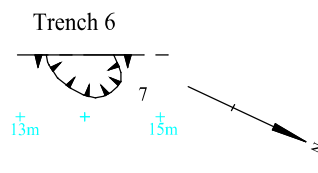
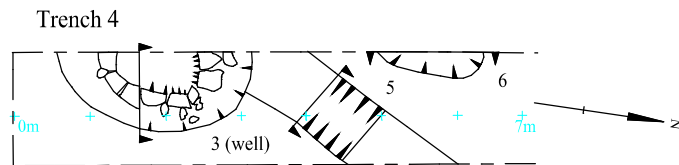
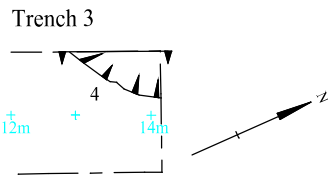
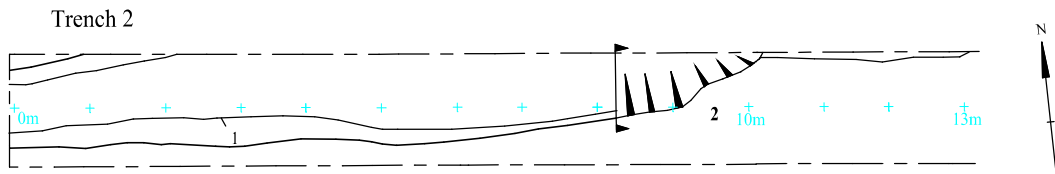
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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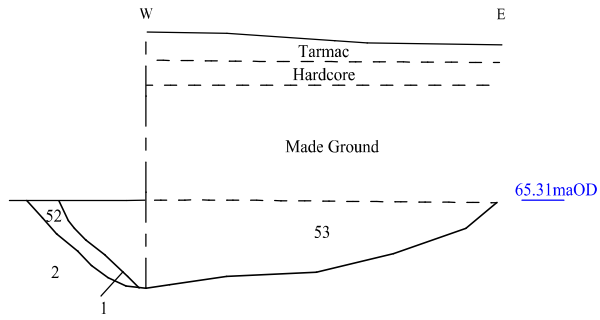
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

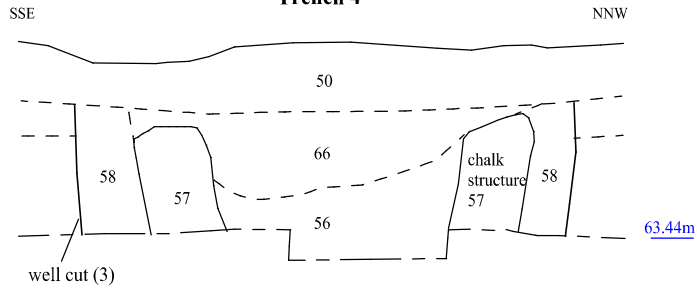


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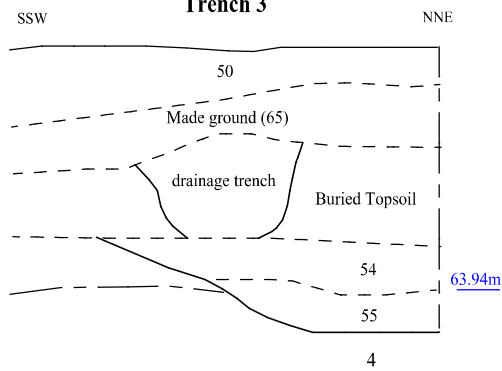
Trench 2



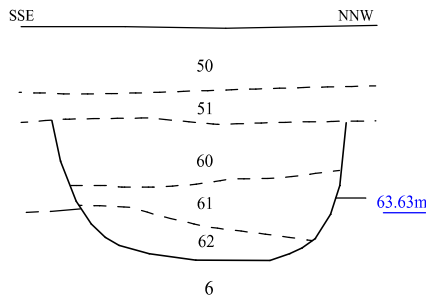
Trench 4



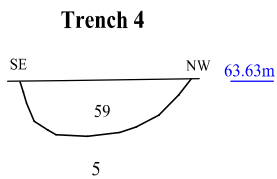
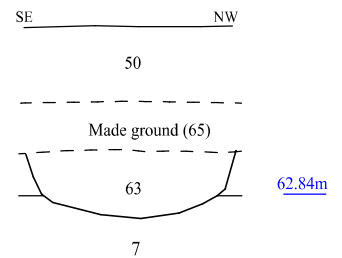
Trench 3



Trench 4



Trench 6



Hardcore

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Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 2, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m..

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Oxfordshire, 2013
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 2, ditch 2 with recut 1, looking west, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, well 3, looking south west, Scales: 1m.

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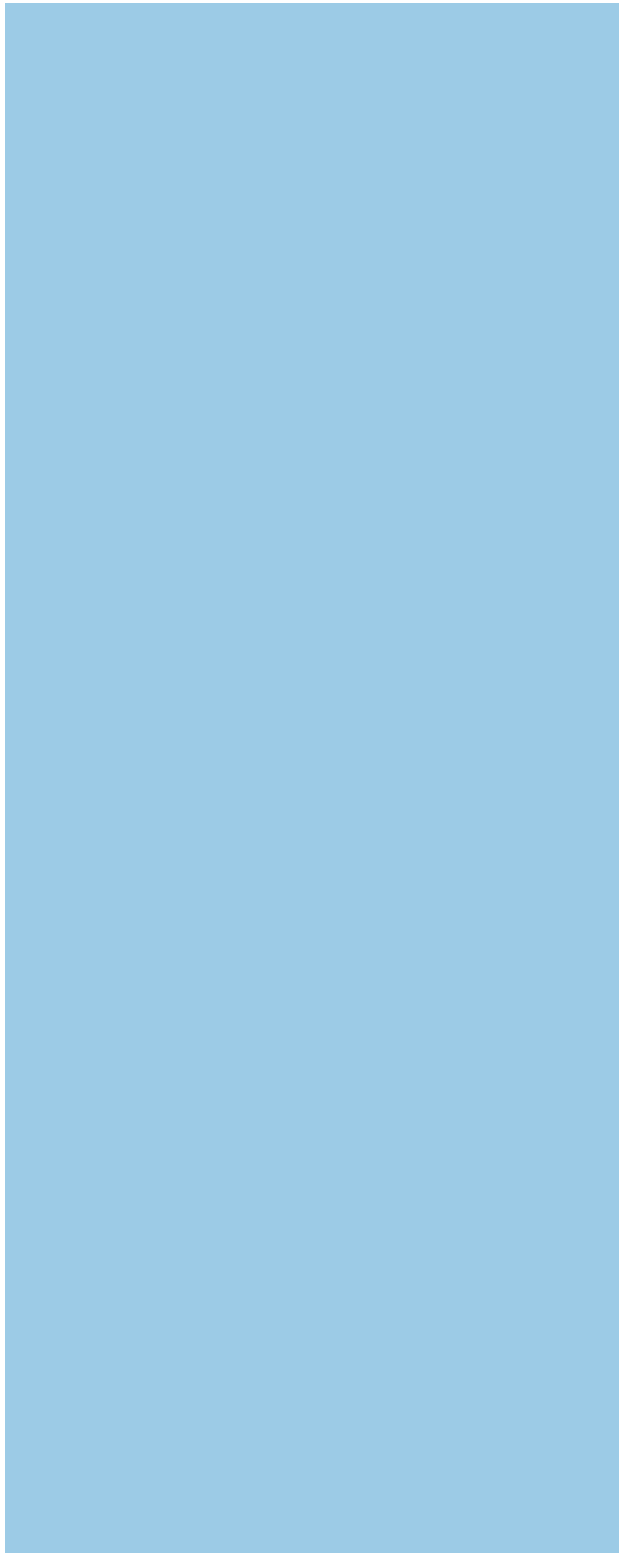
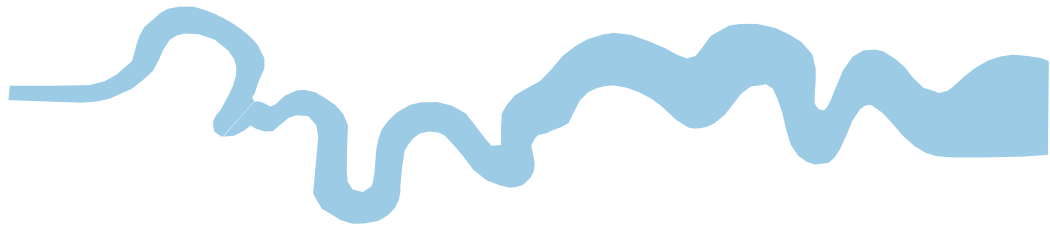
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Plates 3 - 4.**

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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