

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Daniel Bray and Daniel Strachan**

**Site Code: OFB15/144**

**(SP 4082 3468)**

# **Oak Farm, Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for The Estate of JW Tustian**

By Daniel Bray and Daniel Strachan  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OFB 15/144

**July 2015**

## Summary

**Site name:** Oak Farm, Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SP 4082 3468

**Site activity:** Archaeological Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 29th June – 2nd July 2015

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Daniel Strachan

**Site code:** OFB 15/144

**Area of site:** c. 1.36ha

**Summary of results:** A modest quantity of probable archaeological features were recorded. Features observed include ditches, gullies and pits, although only two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service.

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:  
[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 03.08.15
	Steve Preston ✓ 03.08.15

# Oak Farm, Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Daniel Bray and Daniel Strachan

Report 15/144

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Oak Farm, Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire (SP 4082 3468) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sarah Revans of RSK Environment Ltd (RSK), Spring Lodge, 172 Chester Road, Helsby, Cheshire, WA6 0AR, on behalf of Savills for The Estate of JW Tustian.

Planning permission is to be sought from Cherwell District Council to erect housing on site. 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 to inform the planning application. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, and based on a brief supplied by him (Oram 2015). The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Strachan with Kyle Beaverstock and Benedikt Tebbit between 9th June and 2nd July 2015, and the site code is OFB 15/144. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the edge of the village of Milcombe, to the south-west of Banbury (Fig. 1). The site covers approximately 1.36ha, bounded by a disused railway line running NE-SW across the northern portion of the field, north of Bloxham Road. Immediately to the west is a new housing development (not mapped on Fig. 1, see Fig. 2). The land is currently tall grassland. The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Lias Clay (BGS 1968) which was observed in the majority of the trenches. Several trenches exposed alluvial clays. Portions of the field are prone to flooding. The site lies approximately 135m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2015) and a desk-based assessment (Revans 2015). In summary, Milcombe has at least Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book. The site lies adjacent to a recent excavation to the west which recorded components of a medieval settlement represented by, amongst other features, remains of stone buildings including a probable dovecote (Platt and Tabor 2014). Various ill-defined earthworks lie further to the east, including some within the proposal site itself, visible both on aerial photographs and during a site visit (Revans 2015). Evaluation on the same site to the west had also recovered a small collection of prehistoric flints and a small quantity of Roman tile and pottery (Riley 2010), though the excavation found no features from those periods (Platt and Tabor 2014).

## **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. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

to determine if any deposits of medieval date are present which represent further elements of the medieval village.

It was proposed to dig 17 trenches, 20m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were arranged in a stratified random pattern. A contingency of 40m of trench was included, 5m of which was implemented to investigate a possible ring-gully. Topsoil and overburden were removed by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. A sufficient sample of the archaeological features and deposits exposed was excavated and sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief.

The evaluation site works were monitored by the Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist (Richard Oram) and confirmed to be of a high standard. The site meeting was also attended by a RSK archaeologist (Andy Towle) and the provisional results discussed in relation to the proposed development.

## Results

The 17 trenches were excavated (Fig. 3.) They ranged in length from 13.50m to 24.0m and were between 0.43m and 1.75m deep. All trenches were 1.60m wide. Several trenches had to be repositioned/shortened due to certain obstacles as well as the requirements of the on-site ecologist. Any trenches which fell short of the 20m specified were made up for by the lengthening of other trenches where possible. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2. Trenches 2, 4, 9, 10, and 14–17 contained no possible archaeological deposits or finds and are not discussed in detail. Field drains were noted in several trenches but not recorded in detail.

### Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 6; Pls 1 and 5)

Trench 1 was aligned roughly E - W and was 20 long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.33m of subsoil above the natural light yellow-brown grey clay. At the eastern end of the trench two small pits (1 and 2) were recorded which were 0.52m and 0.65m in diameter respectively and 0.07m and 0.10m deep. In the middle of the trench possible pit or ditch terminus (3) and gully terminus (5) were observed. The gully terminus produced a single sherd of medieval pottery. At the western end of the trench pit (4) which was 1.05m in diameter and 0.09m deep was recorded. The only find from these features was a small sherd of medieval pottery from gully 5 (56).

### Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 3 was aligned NW - SE and was 20.20m long and 1.16m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.19m of topsoil and 0.53m of made ground above 0.18m of buried soil and 0.17m of subsoil above the natural geology. A single ditch (15) which was 1.00m wide was observed at the base of the trench beneath the subsoil but not excavated.

### Trench 5 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 5 was aligned N - S and was 22.20m long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil and 0.33m of subsoil overlying the light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 13 was recorded on a NW – SE alignment and was 1.24m wide and 0.42m deep. The single mid pale brownish grey silty clay fill (65) produced no finds.

#### Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 6 was aligned NW - SE and was 13.0m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil above 0.27m of subsoil overlying the mid yellow grey silty clay natural geology. Two large parallel ditches (11) and (12) were observed. Ditch 11 was 2.0 wide and 0.40m deep and contained a single mid brown red sandy clay fill (63), from which a single fragment of cattle tooth was the only find recovered. Ditch 12 was 1.50m wide and 0.37m deep and also contained a single reddish brown silty clay deposit. No datable finds were recovered from either ditch.

#### Trench 7 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 7 was aligned NE - SW and was 19m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.39m of subsoil above the natural yellow brown silty clay geology. A 'u-profiled' ditch (10) was recorded at the northern end and was aligned north-south. It was 1.16m wide and 0.24m deep but no finds were recovered from the pale grey brown sandy clay fill (62).

#### Trench 8 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 8 was aligned E - W and was 20.00m long and 0.66m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.35m of subsoil overlying natural geology. A large but shallow ditch (14) was recorded which was 1.30m wide and 0.13m deep. No finds were recovered.

#### Trench 11 (Figs 4 and 6)

Trench 11 was aligned NW - SE and was 22.50m long and 0.59m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.24m of subsoil above the light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. A gully (7) was recorded at the southern end of the trench which was aligned north-south and was 0.53m wide and 0.23m deep. The single pale grey brown sandy clay fill (59) produced a single sherd of medieval pottery. Further north a possible gully terminus (8) was excavated which was 0.35m wide and 0.20m deep. The trench was extended north-east by 2.90m at the northern end to investigate this gully further but it was not present; either of the gullies in this trench may potentially turn east to meet gully 9 in Trench 12.

#### Trench 12 (Figs 5 and 6)

Trench 12 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 24.00m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.18m of subsoil above the natural geology (light yellow brown silty clay). At the southern end of the trench, ditch 9 was aligned ENE-WSW and was 0.78m wide and 0.08m deep. At the northern end, gully 16 was observed but not excavated. No finds were recovered from either feature.

### Trench 13 (Figs 4 and 7)

Trench 13 was aligned N - S and was 21.50m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.24m of subsoil overlying the natural geology. Ditch 6 was observed which was 1.50m wide and 0.37m deep. It was aligned north-south turning north-east at the northern end. No finds were recovered from its single fill (58).

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

Two sherds were noted, with a total weight of 11g. They are both bodysherds of unglazed medieval Oxford Ware, fabric OXY in the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series, and of late 11th – mid 14th century date (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994). Such pottery is a common find in the region. A single sherd weighing 7g occurred in Trench 11 gully 7 (fill 59). The sherd has a lightly sooted outer surface, and is from a jar, but it also shows signs of abrasion, so may be redeposited or residual. The other sherd, weighing 4g, in gully 5 (fill 56) is in fairly good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

### *Animal Bone by Daniel Bray*

A fragment of cattle molar or pre molar weighing approximately 2g was recovered from a sample <5> taken from ditch 11 (63).

### *Charred Plant Remains by Jo Pine*

Seven sub-samples of 10L volume were floated and wet sieved using a 0.25mm (Appendix 2). They were air dried and examined under a low-power binocular microscope at a magnification of x10m. Very few charred plant remains were recovered comprising just a little commuted charcoal.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation has been successful in recording the presence of possible archaeological features. A total of 16 cut features comprising 11 ditches, 2 gullies and 3 pits were recording from the 17 trenches but only two produced dating evidence. Gully terminus 5 located in trench 1 to the south and ditch 7 in trench 11 each



produced a single sherd of 11th – 14th century medieval pottery: in the latter case, however, it is suspected that the sherd might be residual. It is not possible to say whether any of the linear features continue into other trenches and relate to other linear features identified. The linear features are assumed to have formed part of field boundaries pre dating the current arrangement. The features recorded do not cohere into a single regular arrangement and are therefore considered to have arisen out of multiple phases of agricultural activity which is largely undated although a single phase of medieval activity is confirmed by the presence of a small quantity of pottery. The results of the evaluation although mainly undated are comparable in type and density to the site excavated directly to the west although not necessarily related; finds were remarkably sparse, and there was no sign of further stone-footed buildings associated with a settlement or cemetery. None of the features revealed can be matched to the early Ordnance Survey maps nor is there a very close match to the cropmarks (Revans 2015).

## References

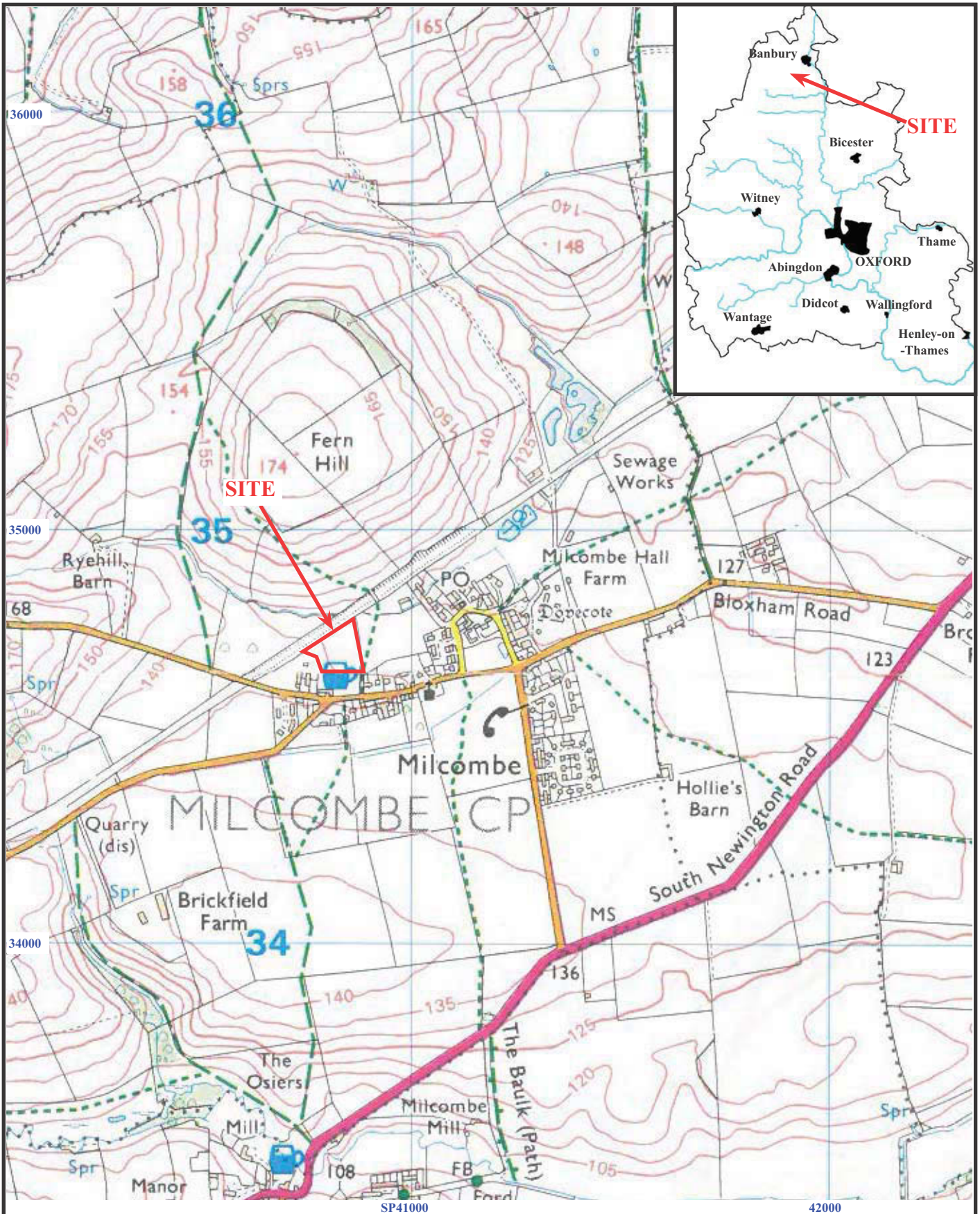
- BGS, 1968, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 218, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Mellor, M and Oakley, G, 1984, 'A summary of the key assemblages, a study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century', in T G Hassall, C E Halpin and M Mellor, 'Excavations in St Ebbe's, Oxford, 1967–1976: Part II: Post-medieval domestic tenements and the Post-Dissolution site of the Greyfriars', *Oxoniensia*, **49**, 181–211
- Mellor, M, 1994, 'Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 17–217
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R, 2015 'Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation', OCAS, Oxford
- Platt, D and Tabor, R, 2014, *Medieval Settlement at Oak Farm, Milcombe, Banbury, Oxfordshire: Excavation in 2012*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Occas Pap 7, Reading
- Revans, S, 2015, 'Land North of Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire: Historic Environment Assessment', RSK Environment project no. 855813, Helsby
- Riley, R, 2010, 'Oak Farm, Milcombe, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation', Cotswold Archaeol unpub rep **10030**, Kemble

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.00	1.60	0.58	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m-0.51m subsoil; 0.51m natural light yellow brown clay geology. Pit 1,2 and 4; Pit or ditch terminus 3, gully terminus 5 <b>[Pls 1 and 5]</b>
2	19.70	1.60	0.93-1.75	Southern end: 0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.60m made ground; 0.60m-0.75m buried soil; 0.75-0.93m subsoil; 0.93m+light yellow brown silty clay natural geology Northern end: 0-0.33m topsoil; 0.33m-0.52m made ground; 0.52m-1.02m buried soil; 1.02m-1.59m subsoil/alluvium;; 1.59m+ natural geology
3	20.20	1.60	1.16	0-0.19m topsoil; 0.19m-0.72m made ground; 0.72m-0.90m buried soil; 0.90m-1.07m subsoil 1.07m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 15 (unexcavated)
4	19.50	1.60	1.08	0-0.12m topsoil; 0.12m-0.70m made ground; 0.70m-0.88m buried soil; 0.88m-1.02m subsoil; 1.02m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
5	22.20	1.60	0.56	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 13
6	13.00	1.60	0.60	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.53m subsoil; 0.53m+ mid yellow grey silty clay natural geology. Ditch 11 and 12 <b>[Pl. 2]</b>
7	19.00	1.60	0.68	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21m-0.60m subsoil;0.60m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 10
8	20.00	1.60	0.66	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m-0.57m subsoil; 0.57m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 14 <b>[Pl. 3]</b>
9	21.50	1.60	0.55	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21m-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
10	17.50	1.60	0.48	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
11	22.50	1.60	0.59	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 7, gully terminus 8 <b>[Pls 4, 6-8]</b>
12	24.00	1.60	0.43	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.36m subsoil; 0.36m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology. Ditch 9 gully 16 (unexcavated)
13	21.50	1.60	0.52	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.47m subsoil; 0.47m+ light yellow brown silty clay geology. Ditch 6
14	17.50	1.60	0.60	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.52m subsoil; 0.52m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
15	22.00	1.60	0.54	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
16	17.00	1.60	0.60	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.53m subsoil; 0.53m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology
17	21.70	1.60	0.58	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.54m subsoil; 0.54m+ light yellow brown silty clay natural geology

**APPENDIX 2: Feature details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Sample number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Pit			
1	2	53	Pit			
1	3	54, 57	Pit or ditch terminus			
1	4	55	Pit			
1	5	56	Gully terminus		Medieval	Pottery
13	6	58	Ditch	1		
11	7	59	Ditch		Medieval ?	Pottery
11	8	60	Gully terminus	2		
12	9	61	Ditch	3		
7	10	62	Ditch	4		
6	11	63	Ditch	5		
6	12	64	Ditch			
5	13	65	Ditch	6		
8	14	66	Ditch	7		
3	15	67	Unexcavated ditch			
12	16	68	Unexcavated ditch			



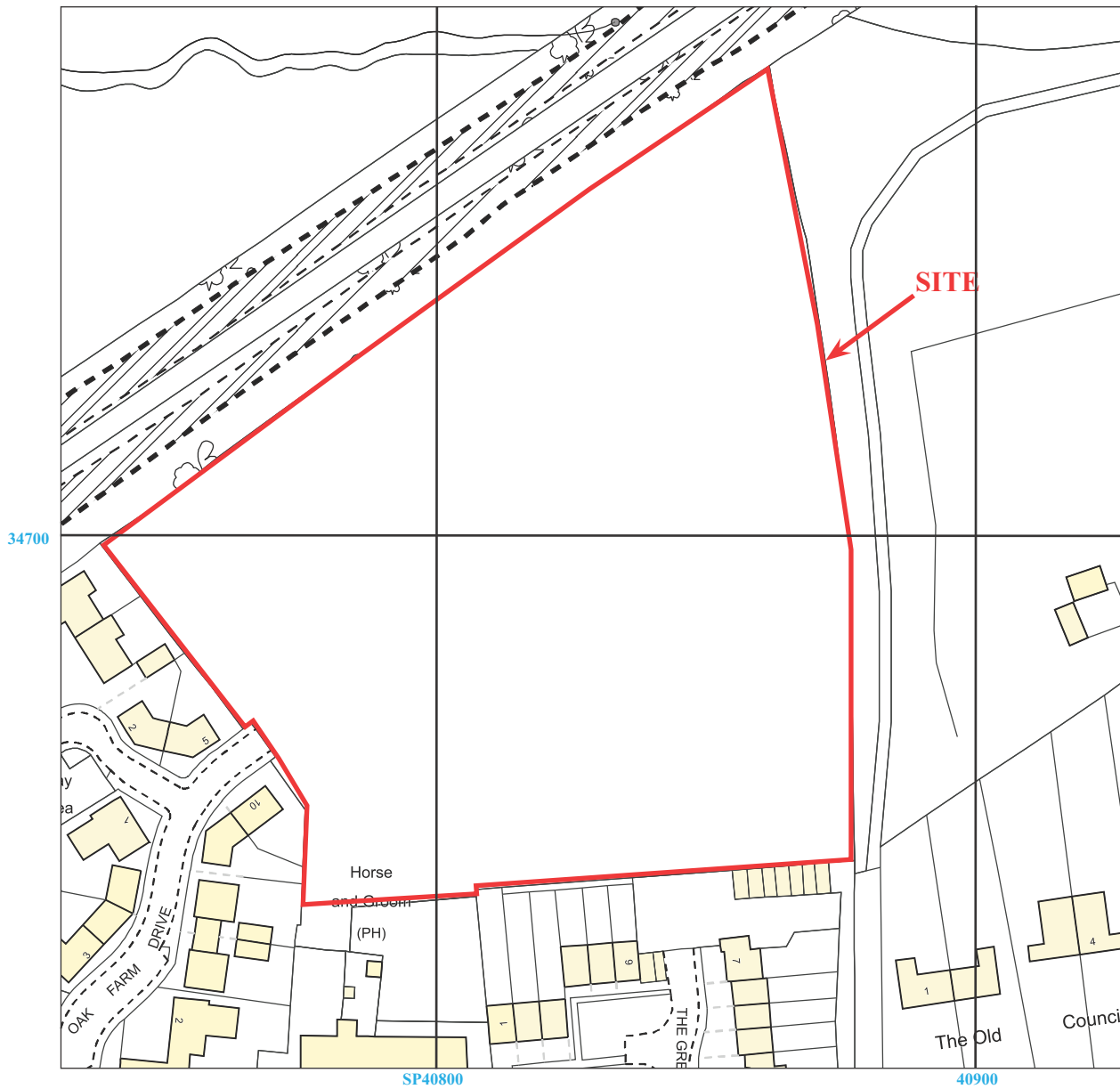
OFB 15/144

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Milcombe and Oxfordshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 191 at 1:12500  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



OFB 15/144



**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**  
Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

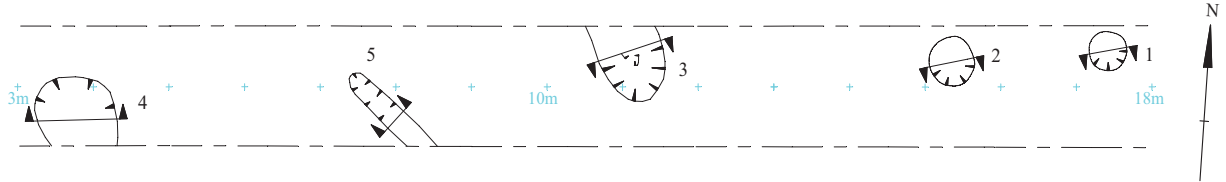
THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



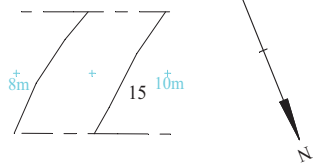
OFB 15/144

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Oak Farm, Bloxham Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015 Archaeological Evaluation</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 3. Location of trenches.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0  50m</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES</p>
--	--	--

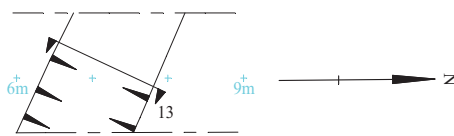
Trench 1



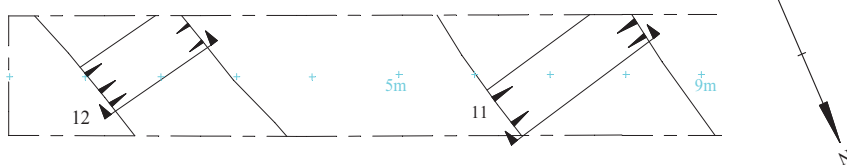
Trench 3



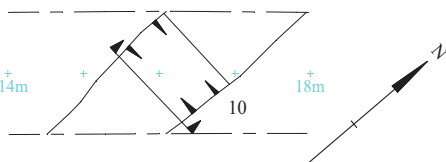
Trench 5



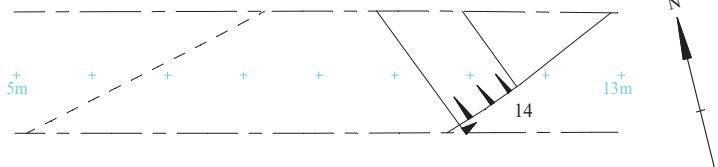
Trench 6



Trench 7



Trench 8



Trench 11

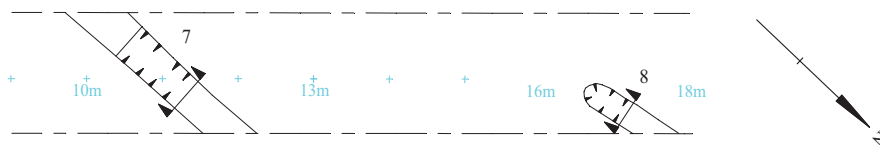
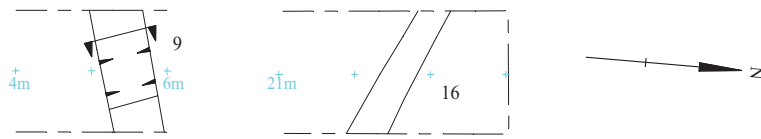


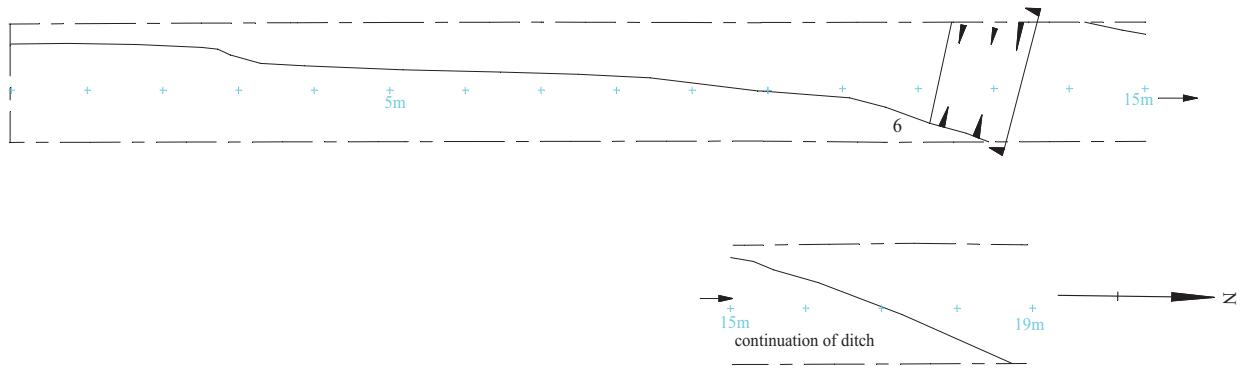
Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



Trench 12



Trench 13



OFB 15/144

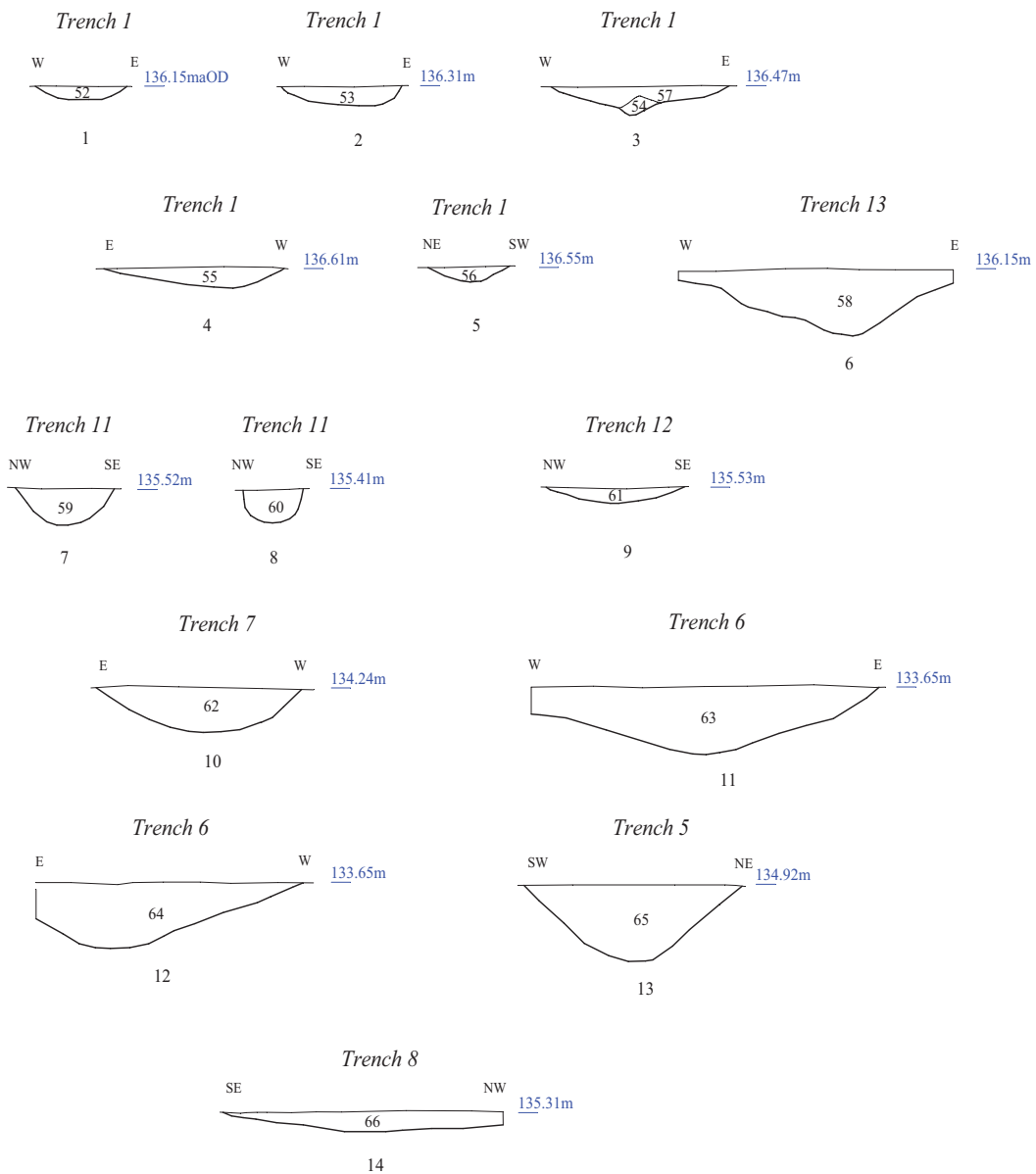
**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 5. Detail of trenches.



THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





OFB 15/144

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 6. Sections.



THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east north east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 6, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

OFB 15/144

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**  
Plates 1 - 2.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 3. Trench 8, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 11, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

OFB 15/144

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**  
Plates 3 - 4.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 5. Trench 1, pit 4, looking south, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 6. Trench 11, ditch 7, looking north, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

OFB 15/144

**Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation**  
Plates 5 - 6.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 7. Trench 11, terminus 8, looking north, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 8. Trench 6, ditch 11, looking east, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

OFB 15/144

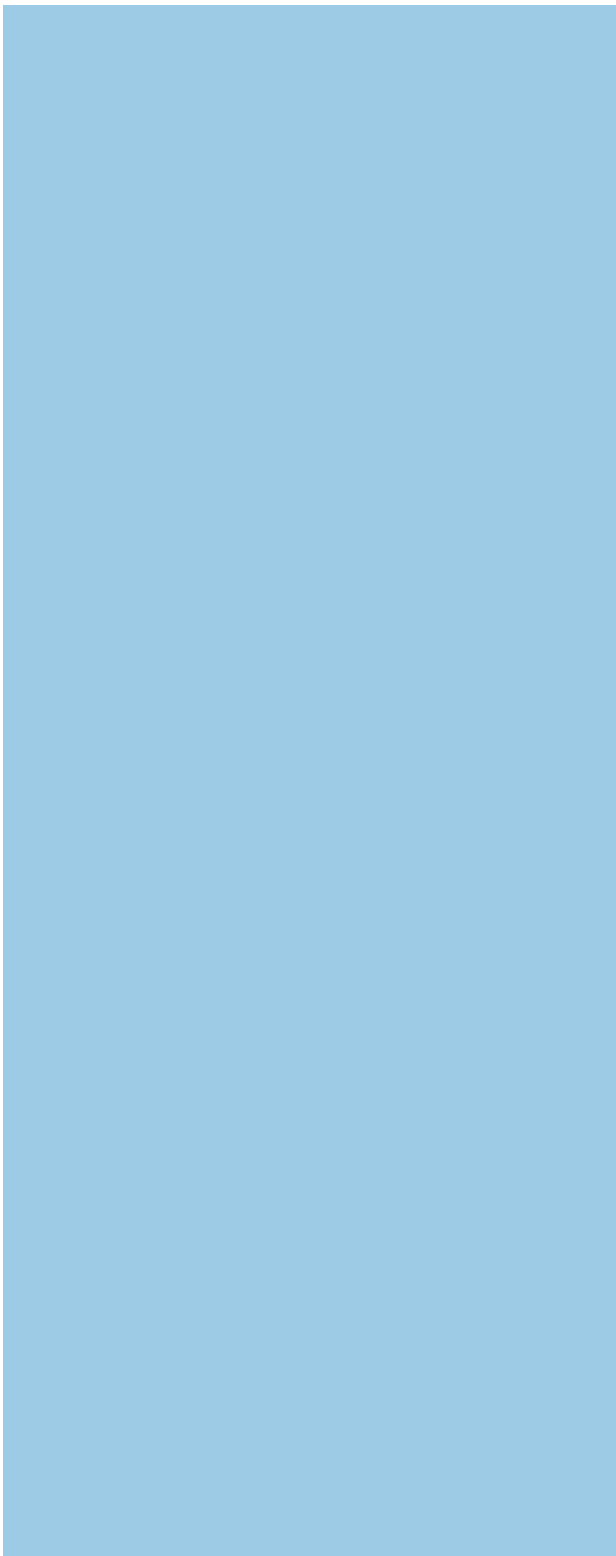
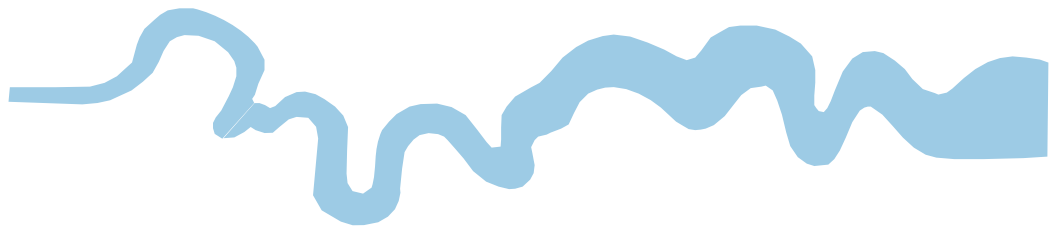
Oak Farm, Bloxham Road,  
Milcombe, Oxfordshire, 2015  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 7 - 8.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

## 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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**