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Roke Manor Farm Quarry, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief and assessment of Pleistocene gravel deposits

by Will Attard

Site Code: RMR14/178

(SU 3320 2290)

Land at Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief and assessment of Pleistocene gravel deposits

For Raymond Brown Aggregates Ltd

by Will Attard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RMR14/178

August 2017

Summary

Site name: Roke Manor Farm Quarry, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire

Grid reference: SU 3320 2290

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project:

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Will Attard

Site code: RMR 14/178

Summary of results: The fieldwork, including detailed sedimentological assessment, for the first two areas of extraction (project phases 2 and 3) revealed no artefacts of Palaeolithic date nor any deposits which may have contained in-situ Palaeolithic remains.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Hampshire Cultural Trust in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 11.08.17 Steve Preston ✓ 11.08.17

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Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire
An Archaeological Watching Brief and assessment of Pleistocene gravel deposits

by Will Attard
with a contribution by Simon Colcutt

Report 14/78c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire (SU 3320 2290) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Josephs of Andrew Josephs Associates on behalf of Raymond Brown Aggregates, Lee Lane, Nursling, Southampton, SO16 0AD.

Planning permission (07/02771/CMAS) has been gained from Hampshire County Council for the extraction of sand and gravel from, and subsequent restoration of land at Roke Manor Farm, Romsey. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology as guided by *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the County Council Mineral Policies. It is acknowledged that the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) has superseded PPG16. The application was supported by cultural heritage desk-based assessment (Raymond 2007, presented in SBPC 2008), which detailed the archaeological potential of the site and the likely requirements to satisfy the expected planning conditions. There were to be two components to the archaeological study of the site: archaeology of late or post-glacial date; that is, stratigraphically, located on top of the gravel, typically just beneath the topsoil ('upper' archaeology) and; Lower or Middle Palaeolithic archaeology, which could lie within or beneath the gravel on the site ('lower' archaeology). It is the purpose of this document to report on the 'lower' aspects of the archaeology. Several phases of work relating to the post-glacial archaeology on the site have been carried out and some already reported on (Porter and Strachan 2015; Porter 2015; Lewins in prep).

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Hopkins, County Archaeologist for Hampshire. The fieldwork was undertaken by Lizzie Lewins and Will Attard in June 2015 and July 2017 with the site code RMR 14/178.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Cultural Trust in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located *c*.2.5km north-west of the centre of Romsey (Fig. 1). The entrance to Roke Manor Farm is off Old Salisbury Lane and the Medieval manor of Roke Manor is itself located to the south-east of the site. To the north-east lies Stanbridge Earls, and Stanbridge Ranvills Farm is located to the west of the site, close to the access road. The underlying geology of the site is recorded as River Terrace Deposits (BGS 1987) namely the 6th terrace (to the east) and 7th terrace (to the west) of the Test/Proto Solent river . The terrace represents fluvial deposition between c. 400,000 and 250,000 years BP. The terraces overlie the Bracklesham Beds. The geology is described more fully in Appendix 1.

Archaeological background

The cultural heritage assessment (Raymond 2007; SPSC 2008) has detailed the archaeological background for the site and its environs. The site lies in an area with little recorded post-glacial activity with few finds recorded close to the site. For later periods, to the east and west are recorded clusters of struck flint, with a Mesolithic carved and decorated horn recorded to the south-east, along with further clusters of flints and an Iron Age ditch. Further to the north, Roman pottery and a coin have been recorded. On the southern edge of the overall site (to the south of the area investigated here), a single vessel of middle to late Bronze Age date was recovered during preliminary test pitting. The medieval Roke Manor lies just to the south-east and whilst first documented in 1448 presumably has earlier origins. The deserted village of Stanbridge Earls lies to the north-east with earthwork features such as fish ponds still present. Many of the farms and hamlets in the surrounding areas are also documented as having medieval origins; including Stanbridge Ranvilles Farm located to the west of the site.

The previous phases of work on the site recorded the remains of an 18th-19th century wood seen on early maps (Porter and Strachan 2015), a number of small rectangular pens of post-medieval date (Porter 2015) and part of an enclosure of Roman date (Lewins in prep).

The formation of the river terraces of the lower Test took place in the Pleistocene at a time when there was Lower and Middle Palaeolithic occupation of Britain and there are five findspots of flint tools recorded from the environs of the site,. Four of these are not especially close, as detailed in the cultural heritage assessment archaeological background (SBSC 2008) but one lies on the site (below). Three of the findspots comprise a total of seven handaxes, but the other refers to 58 handaxes recovered from a gravel pit (Timsbury Manor) 1.8km to the north east. The gravel formations of the Solent River catchment are amongst the richest in the British Isles for Palaeolithic remains (Wymer 1999) with a site at Dunbridge having produced c. 1000

handaxes. As yet the most prolific sites in this area correspond with the lower gravel terraces (3-5) with the higher terraces on which the site lies being relatively impoverished (Wymer 1999).

An extensive test-pitting survey of the site aiming to evaluate Palaeolithic potential and identify any in-situ Palaeolithic deposits was carried out and recovered a small number of flint artefacts. Some 41 pits were dug located mainly to the west of of the development site (extraction phases 1-3). The test pits were 3m x 1.5m long, with the gravel removed in 0.1-0.15m spits and sieved for artefacts and faunal remains. The survey did locate two handaxes, but only from a near surface context of TP28 and also a Bronze Age pit in TP1. However, no material was recorded from the arising of the pits themselves (SBPC 2008, figs 5 and 6).

Objectives and methodology

Establish the character of geological deposits to define topographic areas where in-situ or near in-situ Palaeolithic occupation remains might be encountered

Sample excavate and record occurrences of Palaeolithic artefacts to determine their nature and significance (that is in terms of whether they are redeposited stray finds, in-situ stray finds or in-situ occupation/activity sites).

Determine locations which merit formal excavation (governed by a separate site-specific written scheme of investigation)

Produce information on the local palaeoenvironment linked to the chronological development of the gravel formation and any Palaeolithic archaeological deposits.

Results

The watching brief comprised two components: Episodic monitoring of the exposed gravel faces through to the underlying clay beds to evaluate the potential for preserved in-situ Pleistocene deposits within the gravels and the monitoring of gravel on the reject pile at the processing plant.

No Palaeolithic finds were made during the course of these visits, nor were any in situ horizons present in the active gravel faces.

A flint cobble was recovered with a number of flake scars, predominantly affecting one surface. Some of these scars cut the light brown patina covering the flint and thus are of a more recent age than those that do not. Given the haphazard and sparse nature of these flake scars (with no real evidence of systematic working) it is the opinion of the current author that this item represents an ecofact, not an anthropogenic artefact.

A detailed sedimentological assessment has been carried out by Simon Colcutt of Oxford Archaeological Associates. His report is presented as Appendix 1.

Conclusion

The fieldwork for the first two areas of extraction (project phases 2 and 3) revealed no finds of Palaeolithic date nor any deposits which may have contained in-situ Palaeolithic remains. No deposits suitable for Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating of the strata were encountered.

References

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NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

PPG16 1990, *Archaeology and Planning* DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16, (HMSO)

Porter, S and Strachan, D, 2015, 'Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire, Access Road and Plant Area; an archaeological recording action', TVAS unpubl rep **14/178**, Reading

Porter, S 2015, 'Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire, phase 2; an archaeological recording action', TVAS unpubl rep **14/178b**, Reading

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SBPC 2008, 'Proposed extraction of sand and gravel from Roke Manor , Shootash, nr Romsey, Hampshire, Environmental Statement', Stephen Bowley Planning Consultancy, Thame

Wymer, J.J. 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain* 2 Vols. Trust for Wessex Archaeology, Salisbury

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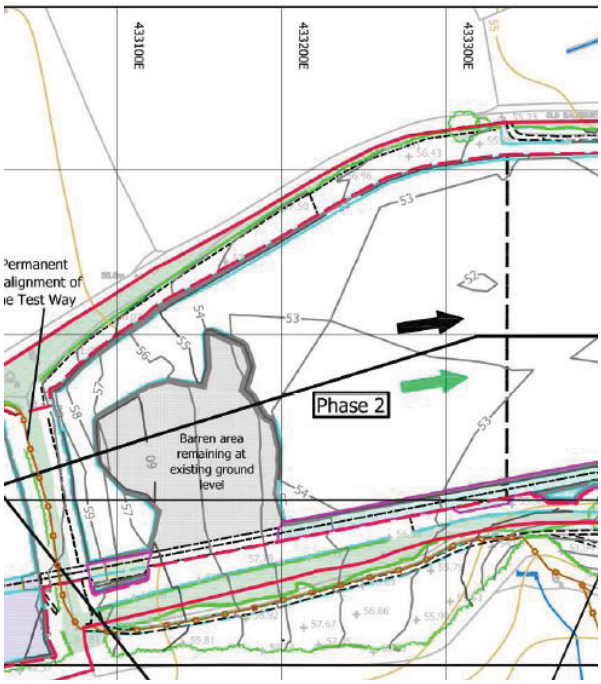
ROKE MANOR QUARRY (RAYMOND BROWN AGGRREGATES) SHOOTASH, ROMSEY, HAMPSHIRE

PLEISTOCENE ISSUES SITE INSPECTION 19 APRIL 2017



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1. Introduction

1.1 In accordance with an instruction from TVAS concerning the geological context of potential Middle Pleistocene archaeology, Dr. Simon Collcutt (OAA) visited the workings at Roke Manor Farm Quarry on the 19th. April 2017. Will Attard (TVAS) was present, both to explain fieldwork results to date and to consult over future watching techniques and priorities.

1.2 Relevant background information is contained in the 2007 Environmental Statement (and its appendices, in particular Chapter 3 Hydrology & Hydrogeology and Chapter 4 Archaeology) for Permission 07/02771/CMAS.

1.3 It should also be noted that the site has been the subject of a separate programme of research test-pitting with a specifically Palaeolithic objective (Wenban-Smith et al. 2007 [1]). These authors commented (p.16):

> *The* [total] *gravel extraction area comprised approximately 8 hectares. The site was thought suitable for the intensive survey as:*
> - *It was at a level, and in an area, where there is a history of previous Palaeolithic finds, with some sites producing rich concentrations (Eg. Dunbridge)*
> - *The earmarked plot includes two distinct gravel bodies at separate elevations — the westerly end of the site contains a gravel body outcropping between c. 60 and 62 m OD; the easterly end contains a gravel body outcropping between c. 55 and 58 m OD. Thus investigation allowed the possibility of discovering contrasts in the remains from the different periods represented by each gravel deposit*
> - *The main east–west axis of the earmarked plot runs at right angles across the main flow of the river channel that laid down the two gravel bodies. The site includes areas of gravel both at the palaeo-channel bank and at different distances towards the centre of the palaeo-channel. This makes it possible to investigate whether Palaeolithic remains are more likely to occur near the channel bank, or are evenly distributed across the deposit.*

1.4 The current (2017) observations were carried out in Phase 2 of the workings (centred at NGR SU 332 226), the long section along the northern part of the eastern Phase boundary providing the best exposure of the Pleistocene sequence (most other faces now being battered). This area corresponds to the eastern (lower) terrace (mapped by the BGS as Test Terrace 6 [2]) noted by Wenban-Smith et al. (2007), which would have a "palaeochannel bank" (i.e. a metachannel margin with the next terrace riser behind) west of the currently available exposures and a base locally at c.53 m AOD. It may be noted that, whilst two Palaeolithic ovate bifaces were found in the topsoil during fieldwork (reported at SU 33500 22700, corresponding to the eastern side of quarry Phase 3), "few" artefacts (and none described) were recovered *in situ* from the relatively extensive test-pitting. Known fluvial sites in the general vicinity with "rich concentrations" of Palaeolithic artefacts lie within younger terraces and usually at special geomorphological locations (such as the Dunbridge site, which is at a significant confluence).

1.5 The underlying Tertiary geology is formed by the Wittering Formation (Bracklesham Group), comprising laterally variable and interdigitated, intertidal to shallow marine fine sands and clays (similar to the London Clay).

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1 Wenban-Smith et al. (2007) gave a central grid reference for their work of "SU 335 237"; this was significantly incorrect. The plan shows the 2005 test-pits to have been of standard width but variable length, whilst the text suggests the pits were 1.5 x 3 m in plan; excavation was by machined spits (followed by riddling), although no total depths were specified; it was noted, however, in the 2006 site investigation appendix in the ES that the 2005 archaeological test-pits reached the base of the gravels (with altitudes given on p.2 of Table 1).

2 The Hydrology & Hydrogeology section (in Chapter 3 of the ES) mapped this incorrectly as Terrace 7.

2. Observations

2.1 The most striking aspect of the current exposure is a planar non-conformity, continuous along the eastern face of the workings for a length of some 200 m; this feature is clearly visible passing the individual at chest height in Fig. 1 (and at the 0.9 m level on the staff in Fig. 2). The non-conformity is remarkable in its regularity and in the fact that, whilst showing very local angular unconformities, there is no significant change in depositional mode across this boundary. The only point to note is that, at the base of the upper subunit, the gravel tends to openwork, although there has been some Fe-Mn-clay enrichment/induration (cf. darker colour).

Fig.1 Pleistocene gravel subunits (Roke Manor, Phase 2, looking NNE)

2.2 Judging by the diffuse internal structure and by the evidence in restricted E-W exposures, these 3-4 m thick fluvial deposits (both subunits and including turbated overburden) relate to graded streamways running roughly N-S and drifting dominantly westwards. The sediments comprise rather matrix-rich (indeed, partially matrix-supported), fine to medium flint gravels, with a little coarser material only nearer the base. Fabric is generally poor (surviving best in the lower subunit) and there are practically no finer beds or even local lenses. Manganese-rich horizons (past watertable levels) cross or overprint the stratification at various levels. At the base, there are very localised diapirs of grey clays, with associated disturbance of the overlying fluvial bedding; within the first few tens of centimetres of the gravels, there are minor lenses and a few actual lithorelics from the underlying Tertiaries.

2.3 The upper gravel unit (whilst appearing to have been originally very similar to the lower) has been widely affected (in places, in festoon trains) by deep turbation (plausibly cryoturbation) pockets, reaching down to, and sometimes a little beyond, the mid-level non-conformity; a diffuse example can be seen on the left hand side of Fig. 2. These pockets are usually accompanied by a tendency towards vertical orientation of clasts but there are no obvious exotic inclusions. There are no ice-wedge casts in these exposures.

Fig.2 Pleistocene gravel structure (Roke Manor, Phase 2)

3. Conclusions

3.1 These sediments would appear to represent rather rapid accumulation of poorly sorted sediment, probably under periglacial conditions. There are no signs of emergence or of any particular channel morphologies what might favour archaeological or palaeontological preservation in near-primary context.

3.2 The significance of the major non-conformity is unclear. The facts that there are no associated 'pendant' structures nor any great sedimentary changes suggest that only a short timescale (with no major 'gap') was involved; it would appear that a strong flood simply swept right across the area under study as part of a single accretion stage. Nevertheless, this feature is a clear stratigraphic marker and it will be useful to observe in future how far it continues to the east and whether differentiation between the upper and lower subunits increases.

3.3 TVAS were particularly keen to seek an opinion as to the utility of OSL dating of sand grains. One of the most pressing technical issues in such cases is the matter of the efficiency of zeroing by sunlight, so that better sorted sand bodies are the best target (rather than individual grains within coarser sediment). In the present exposures, there are only a very few cleaner sand lenses. Even in these cases, material may be derived from nearby Tertiary deposits, so that ancient ('bright') grains could be a problem if single-grain (or at least 'skinny aliquot') OSL determinations were not made. It would seem preferable to hold OSL dating in reserve until later Phases of the workings, to discover whether there are better sorted sand bodies (although none have been reported in the site investigations by borehole and test-pit to date), perhaps associated with archaeological and/or palaeontological material.

3.4 Phase 3 of the workings may be of some Palaeolithic interest. Remembering that two bifaces have already been recovered from a superficial context, the question arises as to whether these relate to activities on top of (thus, secondary derivation aside, probably after) Terrace 6 or to activities actually during that fluvial accretion. It is therefore recommended that vigilance should be maintained, not only during inspections of the gravels during actual extraction (with perhaps 2-3 visits being optimal, with co-ordination with the quarry management to maximise exposure availability) but also initially, during any preparatory soil and overburden stripping (with investigation of any superficial finer-grained channel deposits, if apparent).

Reference

Wenban-Smith, F.F., Bates, M.R. & Marshall, G. 2007. *Medway Valley Palaeolithic Project Final Report: The Palaeolithic Resource in the Medway Gravels (Kent)* Unpublished report for English Heritage, March 2007 (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/medway_eh_2009/) [Document indeed also referring to Roke Manor Farm, Hampshire].

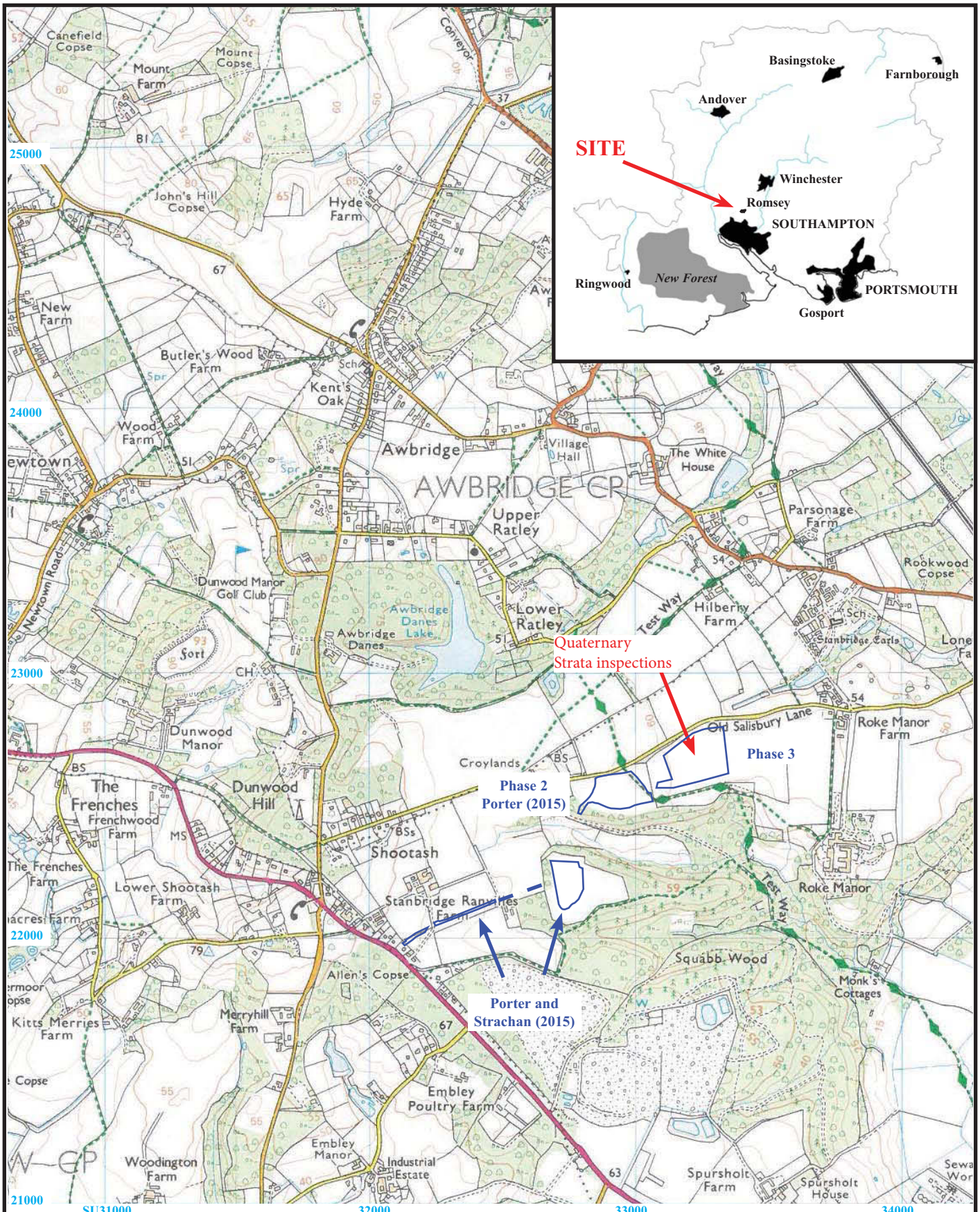

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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Roke Manor, Shootash and within Hampshire.

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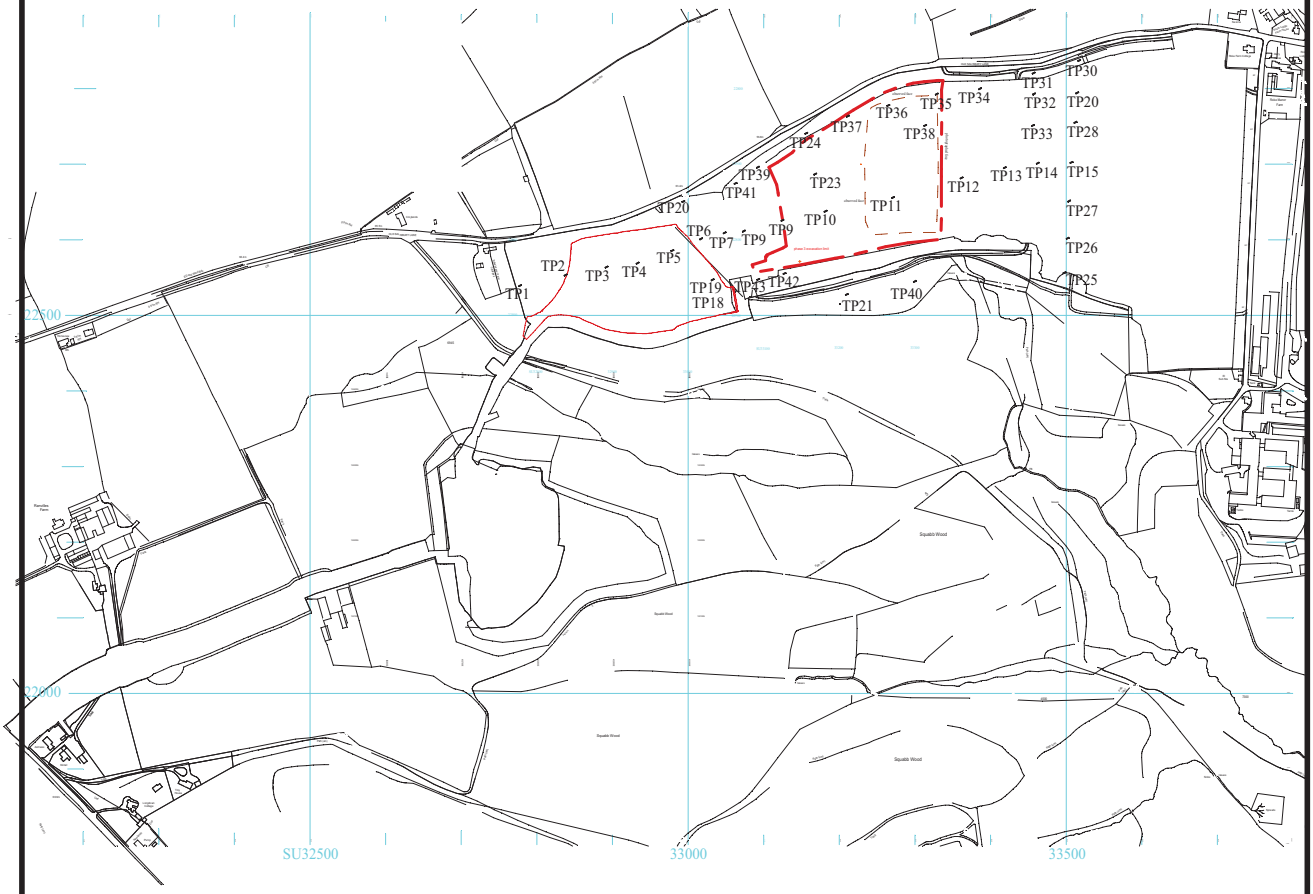

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Figure 2. Overal site plan and areas of previous test pits.

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Roke Manor Farm, Shootash, Romsey, Hampshire, Phase 3
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Figure 3. Extraction phase 3.

0 100m

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Plate 1. Extraction face, looking east north east.

Plate 2. Extraction face section, looking east, Scale: 2m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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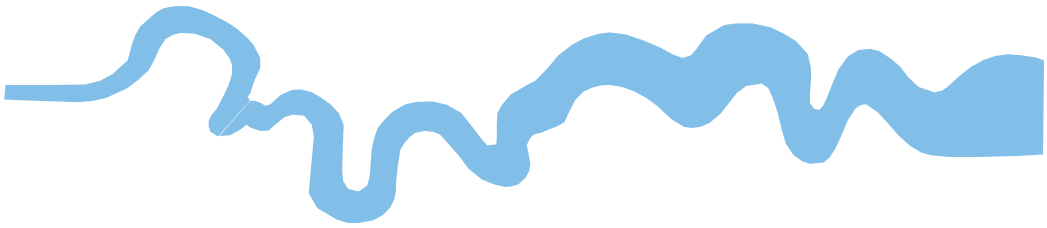
TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern	AD 1901
Victorian	AD 1837
Post Medieval	AD 1500
Medieval	AD 1066
Saxon	AD 410
Roman	AD 43
	AD 0 BC
Iron Age	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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