

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**STFC Car Park Site, Severn Road, Rutherford Appleton
Laboratory, Harwell, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by David Sanchez and Kyle Beaverstock

Site Code: HCD17/16wb

(SU 4791 8603)

STFC Car Park Site, Severn Road, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mace Group

by David Sanchez and Kyle Beaverstock

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HCD 17/16

February 2020

Summary

Site name: STFC Car Park Site, Severn Road, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4791 8603

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th November 2019 - 23rd January 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: David Sanchez, Anne-Michelle Huvig, Pierre-Damien Manisse, Kyle Beaverstock

Site code: HCD 17/16

Area of site: c.1.5ha

Summary of results: Those components of the development which exposed the natural geology were monitored. However, no features or finds of archaeological interest were encountered over the course of the watching brief.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 22.02.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 18.02.20

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Report 17/16b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Severn Road, Harwell, Oxfordshire (SU 4791 8603) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rob Bridges of the Mace Group, Mace Harwell Development Project Office, Building R18, Science and Technology Facilities Council, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell Campus, Didcot, OX11 0QX.

Planning permission (P19/V0926/FUL) has been granted by the Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of a new car park on land east of Severn Road, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell, Oxfordshire. The consent is subject to two conditions (6 and 7) relating to archaeology. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features, an archaeological watching brief is to be maintained during the groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Lead for Oxfordshire County Council, the archaeological advisers to the District, and based on his design brief (Coddington 2019). The fieldwork was undertaken by David Sanchez, Anne-Michelle Huvig, Pierre-Damien Manisse and Kyle Beaverstock between 7th November 2019 and 23rd January 2020 and the site code is HCD 17/16.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the North part of Berkshire Downs, west of the A34 within the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory Complex at the Harwell Science Campus (Figs 1 and 2). The site is bounded by Severn Road to the east, Avon Road to the south, an unnamed road to the north and open grassland to the west. This quadrangular land parcel lies at a height of approximately 125m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and is currently open grassland. The underlying geology is mapped as Chilton Stone Lower Chalk (BGS 1971) though on the site this is capped by a flinty gravel.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. In summary a range of sites and finds are recorded for the environs of the site. However, perhaps the most significant is a Roman villa and its fields excavated to the south along with an Iron Age roundhouse (Pine and Preston 2015). Excavations located to the north west revealed an Iron Age occupation site to the north-west (Moore 2005b), with additional Iron Age settlement with an inhumation burial to the north east of the site (Moore 2005a). Harwell was an RAF air base during airbase World War II and parts were subsequently used as an aerodrome for some time afterwards (Mcnamarra 2017).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of surface stripping and the excavation of service trenches, landscaping and all other invasive work as necessary. In particular, the groundworks in this area was comprised of a number of trenches for roads and services.

Results

Areas monitored on the site where the natural geology (archaeologically relevant level) was expected to be exposed included a service trench, a soakaway, an area for a temporary access road and an area for a contractors' compound. (Fig. 2). Areas for the main car parking bays were not stripped below topsoil depth. Spoil heaps and sections were monitored for finds retrieval but none were forthcoming.

Temporary access road (Pls 1 and 2)

The access road was 8m wide and 0.5m deep. It was stripped of topsoil down to approximately 0.3m deep and subsoil to at least 0.5m to expose flinty gravel geology (Pl. 1). The only features observed were two parallel cuts for modern pipe trenches aligned north-west to south-east across the centre of the stripped area (Pl. 2).

Eastern service trench (Pl.4)

This trench was c. 2m wide and 0.5m deep. This trench was stripped of topsoil down to approximately 0.3m deep and then subsoil to 0.5m. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed

Site compound

An area in the south-eastern corner of the site an area of 630 sq m, was topsoil stripped to create a levelled area for a compound. No features were seen cutting the light brown chalk and clayey silt subsoil.

Soakaway (Pl. 3)

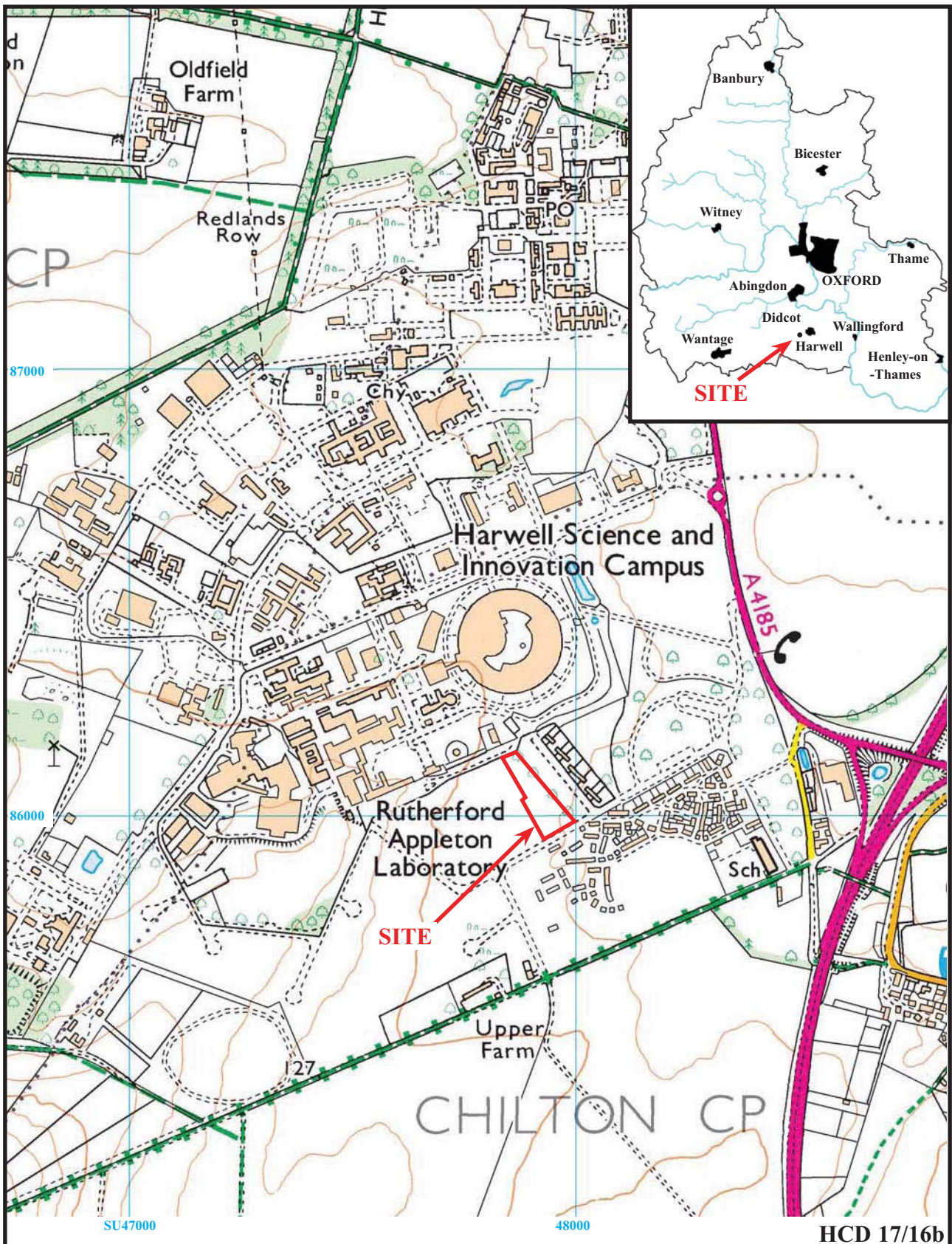
To the west of the compound area a soakaway trench was dug, 7.6m long and 5.8m wide and over 1m deep in places, The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of subsoil above the natural geology. Within this trench two cuts for modern services orientated north-west to south-east as seen in the road trench to the west were defined and excavated.

Conclusion

Monitoring of the groundworks which exposed the top of the natural geology took place. Most of the development did not entail removal of subsoil. A number of cut features were observed but were all clearly of natural or modern origin. No features or finds of archaeological interest were encountered.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63,630, Sheet **253**, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Coddington, H, 2019, 'Land West of Severn Road, Chilton; Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, Oxford
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- NPPF, 2019, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
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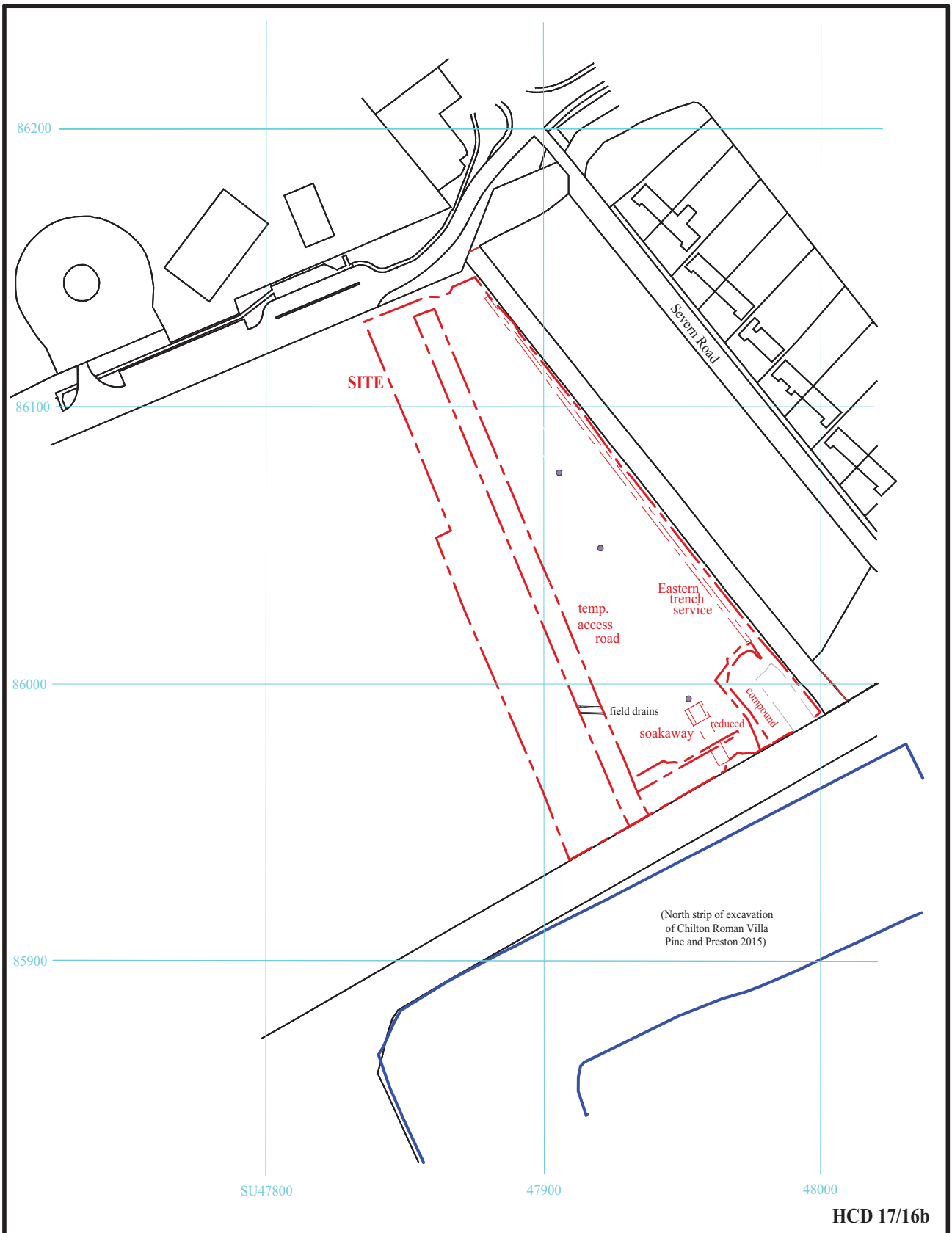


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Figure 1. Location of site in relation Harwell and Oxfordshire and within Harwell Science Campus.

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Figure 2. Observed areas.



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Plate 1. Temporary road access, looking North West, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Access road, land drains, looking North East, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Stepped trench located on route of pipe trench, looking South East, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench parallel to eastern site boundary, looking North West, Scales: 1m x2.

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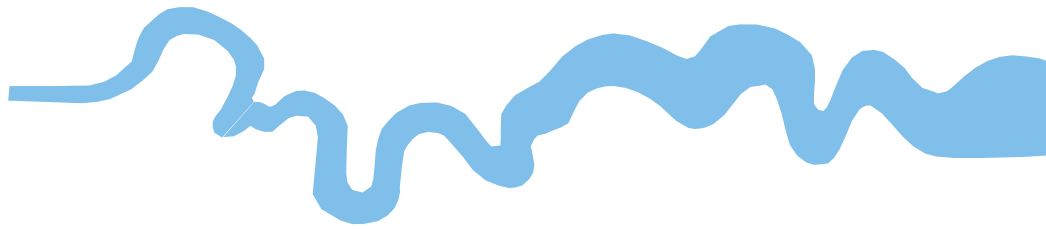
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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 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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