

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon,  
Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Anne-Michelle Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse**

**Site Code: MGB19/73**

**(SP 6484 2300)**

# **Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action  
for Deanfield Homes Ltd**

by Anne-Michelle Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MGB 19/73

**February 2020**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SP 6484 2300

**Site activity:** Recording Action

**Date and duration of project:** 22nd to 28th January 2020

**Project coordinator:** Danielle Milbank

**Site supervisor:** Pierre-Damien Manisse

**Site code:** MGB 19/73

**Area of site:** c.1375 sq m

**Summary of results:** The excavation confirmed that the suspected archaeological features revealed by the evaluation were simply subsoil which infilled some natural dips in the geology, although this did contain a mixed pottery assemblage, mostly of Medieval date with some Roman material, testifying to manuring practice. No deposits of archaeological interest were revealed.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, with accession number AYBCM: 2019.121.

*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 All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:  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 ✓ 26.02.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 25.02.20

# Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Recording Action

by Anne-Michelle Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse

Report 19/73b

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action on land to the south of Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire, OX27 0HJ (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Tom Rider on behalf of Deanfield Homes Ltd, 8 Packhorse Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 7QE.

Planning permission (17/01248/AOP) has been granted by Aylesbury Vale District Council for a new residential development with associated access. The consent is subject to a condition (16) relating to archaeology, requiring archaeological field evaluation, and, if necessary, further archaeological work. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2018), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The evaluation (Attard and Mundin 2019) investigated numerous features seemingly cutting the natural geology with several containing pottery, although with significant doubt as to whether any were in fact of archaeological interest. Follow-up excavation was requested in order to clarify the nature of the deposits and should any prove to be archaeological to ensure their preservation by record.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Lucy Lawrence, Archaeology Officer at Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Pierre-Damien Manisse and Anne-Michelle Huvig from 22nd to 28th January 2020 and the site code is MGB 19/73. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, with accession number AYBCM: 2019.121.

## Location, topography and geology

Located about 6.4km north-east of Bicester (Oxfordshire), Marsh Gibbon is a village and civil parish in Aylesbury Vale district in Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The site is located in a parcel of land south of Castle Street, between two listed grade II listed properties, Box Farm and Longherdon. The River Ray flows *c.* 300m to the south. The site is an irregular plot of around 1.76ha, with the excavation area itself covering about 1375 sq. m,

around evaluation trenches 7-9 (Fig. 2). The natural geology is mapped (BGS 2002) as a dark brownish grey fissile Peterborough Member Mudstone belonging generally to the Oxford Clay formation. The site lies at a height of c.70m above Ordnance Datum (OD), with a very slight fall to the south. The site was currently used as pasture and had not been recently ploughed. The geological horizon was encountered at up to 0.50m beneath modern ground level during previous investigations.

## **Archaeological background**

An archaeological desk-based assessment (Reeves 2015) highlighted the site's general archaeological potential. This was followed by an archaeological evaluation of the site (Attard and MUNDIN 2019). There is no record for the Prehistoric or Roman periods in the vicinity. The historical medieval settlement, possibly originating during Late Saxon times, is relatively close to the site, 200m to the west. A few listed properties surround it in Castle Street.

The evaluation had produced a mixed assemblage of Roman and Early Medieval pottery although there was uncertainty whether the deposits revealed are of archaeological significance or simply a product of post-medieval or modern agricultural activity.

## **Objectives and methodology**

Based on the evaluation results the site was to be excavated in order to investigate the nature of the occupation.

The general purpose of the excavation was to:

- excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development;
- produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site;
- establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.; and to
- produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

More specific research objectives were defined to answer the following questions:

- When was the site first utilised and when was it abandoned?
- Is there evidence for any Roman activity on the site, and if so, what is the nature and extent of this activity?
- Is there any late Saxon activity on the site? If so, what is the nature and extent of this activity?
- What is the nature of the transition from late Saxon to medieval use?
- What is the nature and extent of the Medieval use of the site? Is it occupation or is it some form of agricultural complex?

What is the palaeo-environmental setting of the area?

All archaeological features were to be hand cleaned, sufficiently sampled, planned and recorded. The work was to be undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

## **Results**

The area selected for excavation was an irregular polygon centred around trenches 7-9 from the evaluation phase. It was stripped using a 360°-type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The ground being relatively wet it was judged unwise to use a dumper. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately for later backfill immediately on the side of the excavated area. A metal detector (Fisher F5) was used to scan the site and the spoil heaps, with low success.

The lowest deposit encountered was the top of the geological horizon, a mid yellow and very light greenish grey clay. Above it was the subsoil (51), a light grey-brown clayey silt or silty clay, 0.25-0.30m thick. On top was topsoil (50), a dark brown loamy clayey silt, 0.15-0.20m thick. Transition between the two was gradual.

It appeared that the "features" considered during the evaluation phase - at least around the targeted trenches - were not cuts but abundant amorphous and irregular patches of subsoil-like infill of dips and depressions, always very shallow. These deposits were identical with the subsoil. From various of these areas came several sherds of pottery, of mixed date. A sample of the deposits was recorded by GPS and is shown on Figure 2, but they spread all over the site and none is considered to be an archaeological feature.

Several N-S and E-W land drains were noted. In the north-east corner a ditch was visible. It had a modern backfill (bricks, concrete slabs, modern glass and pottery - not retained). It is a former field boundary ditch, shown on historic Ordnance Survey mapping (Reeves 2015, figs 6 to 11) and still partially visible in the landscape.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Sue Anderson*

Seventy-one sherds of pottery weighing 598g were collected from 17 contexts during the evaluation and excavation. All the material from the excavation came from the subsoil and the 'features' identified in the

evaluation are also now considered to be the same deposit. Table 1 shows the quantification by fabric and a summary catalogue is included as Appendix 1 (full catalogue in archive).

Table 1. Pottery summary quantification by fabric.

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Date range</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>EVE</i>	<i>MNV</i>
Roman greywares	RBGW	1st-4th c.	4	44	0.13	4
Roman oxidized wares	RBOX	1st-4th c.	6	60		6
Roman whitewares	RBWW	1st-4th c.	2	20		2
Sandy-shelly ware	SSHW	Rom/Sax/Med	1	2		1
St. Neots-type Ware	NEOT	L.9th-13th c.	1	10		1
Medieval shelly wares	MSHW	12th-13th c.	1	1		1
Medieval coarseware (F304?)	MCW	12th-14th c.	15	109	0.33	14
Brill/Boarstall Ware	OXAW	L.12th-13th c.+	16	111	0.19	13
Brill/Boarstall Ware	OXAM	M.13th-15th c.	7	42	0.11	6
Potterspury-type ware	POTT	13th-15th c.	4	34	0.03	4
Unprovenanced glazed wares	UPG	12th-15th c.	2	28		2
Late medieval reduced ware	LMR	14th-15th c.	1	2		1
Glazed red earthenware	GRE	16th-18th c.	4	53		4
Post-medieval slipwares	PMSW	17th c.	4	54	0.06	3
Staffordshire-type slipware	STAF	L.17th-18th c.	1	20		1
Staffs white salt-glazed stoneware	SWSW	18th c.	1	1		1
Pearlware	PEW	L.18th-19th c.	1	7		1
<i>Totals</i>			<i>71</i>	<i>598</i>	<i>0.85</i>	<i>65</i>

Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (EVE) and minimum number of vessels (MNV). Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows MPRG (1998). Fabric codes were assigned from the author's post-Roman fabric series. Local wares were identified with the aid of Mellor (1994), plus other reports on local sites as appropriate. Recording uses a system of letters for fabric codes. The results were input onto an Access database, which forms the full archive catalogue. The assemblage as a whole showed a moderate to high level of abrasion, and some sherds could not be positively identified as a result.

#### Summary of the assemblage

Twelve sherds were possibly or certainly of Roman date. Four greyware sherds were recovered, of which one small body fragment was limestone-tempered and two rimsherds and a body sherd were sandy wares. The rims comprised a rounded bead rim from a jar and an upright rim with flange from a bowl. Three very abraded body sherds, a base sherd and a small piece of cavetto rim from wheelmade vessels in oxidized sandy fabrics were also likely to be of Roman date. Similar coarsewares have been excavated in nearby Bicester (Timby 2008). A body sherd of whiteware with a red slip stripe was also recovered, possibly Oxfordshire parchment ware of mid 3rd to 4th-century date, and there was a heavily abraded base fragment in a pale buff 'whiteware' fabric.

There were three body sherds of calcareous-tempered wares of which one was St Neots-type and two were of uncertain provenance and could be Roman. The St Neots-type sherd appeared to be handmade but was flattish and may have been from the base of a bowl. A small body sherd was in a reddish fabric with a dark grey core and was also a shelly ware. The third fragment was a sandy-shelly ware and could be either Roman or medieval.

There were 44 sherds of high medieval date (broadly 12th–14th century), the majority of which were glazed. The medieval sandy coarsewares included a body sherd in a white fabric with combed horizontal lines externally (possibly a Brill variant), several abraded body sherds in fine sandy fabrics, and rim fragments of four jars and a possible bowl. Three body sherds and a jar rim of Brill/Boarstall OXAW fabric were unglazed and probably from coarseware vessels. The glazed wares were dominated by Brill/Boarstall wares, represented by body and base fragments with green or clear glaze and two jug rims. One vessel had an applied self-coloured vertical strip and copper green glaze, another had brown slip lines and a third had narrow applied red and white strips. A fragment of a rod handle was decorated with diagonal stabbing. Other glazed wares comprised a body sherd of a whiteware with abundant sand and sparse calcitic inclusions and traces of thin greenish glaze externally, and a medium sandy green-glazed body sherd which contained sparse inclusions of soft red clay pellets, iron oxide and calcareous fragments. Contemporary with the later Brill wares were a few heavily abraded sherds of Potterspury ware, including a possible bowl rim, and a fragment of late medieval reduced ware.

A few post-medieval wares were present, including body and base fragments of glazed red earthenware, a base fragment of a Staffordshire-type slipware mug, rimsherds and a base from two slipware bowls with sgraffito decoration internally, and a fragment of a slipware hollow-ware vessel with copper green glaze over white slip externally. Two modern sherds comprised a small fragment of Staffordshire-type white salt-glazed stoneware and a fragment of a pearlware ?teapot with transfer-printed decoration externally.

Topsoil and subsoil layers produced a mixed range of pottery from medieval to post-medieval date. A high proportion of the medieval assemblage was recovered from these and from ditch fills, and were scattered across much of the site. Roman wares did not occur in the northermost area (Trench 1) and appeared to concentrate more in the southern part of the site, but quantities were small and most pieces were abraded, some heavily so.

### Significance

No Roman sites are known in Marsh Gibbon parish to date, so the presence of pottery is significant. Fabrics were generally of broadly Roman date range, but some of the sherds may indicate a date in the second half of the Roman period for any occupation here. However given the abraded nature of the sherds, it is possible that they represent a manuring scatter which was redeposited in later features and layers.

Likewise, medieval pottery from the parish is a relatively rare find, and the assemblage is locally important in providing evidence for the types of pottery in use in a rural parish in this part of Buckinghamshire. Its position, relatively close to the potteries at Brill and Boarstall (Farley 1982; Ivens 1982) and the market town of Bicester, influenced the fabrics which appear in this assemblage.



### *Metalwork by Aidan Colyer*

A single ferrous nail was recovered from the topsoil of trench 8 during the evaluation. The nail is 62mm in length and is missing only the tip although the piece is corroded. The head is triangular which may suggest that it was meant to be hammered into wood so the head could not be seen. The nail is not dateable in and of itself.

The excavation produced four copper alloy objects, all from the subsoil (51).

Catalogue number 1 is a copper alloy buckle with decoration around the outside of its two D shaped loops. The piece has no corrosion and design detail is clear. The buckle is likely of 16th to 17th century date. The detail suggests a higher class individual dropped the item. Parallels to this design, albeit in a simpler form, were recovered from the wreck of the Mary Rose (Gardiner and Allen 2005).

Catalogue number 2 is similar to no. 1 and of similar date range, but only has a single D. The ends of the D do not show signs of being broken so this is likely a single D buckle.

Catalogue number 3 is a copper alloy object shaped like a club that one might see on a deck of cards. The piece has a curve to it with four raised areas. The curve looks to be intentional as it is consistent. There are no holes to allow for rivets which suggests that the edges of the piece have received more damage than is immediately apparent. The object is similar to belt fittings in size and type although it also bears some similarity to early post-medieval book mounts. The lack of rivet holes hinders identification but both categories could fall within the Late Medieval to Early Post-Medieval period (15th to 17th centuries).

Catalogue number 4 is a trapezoid of copper alloy material. Two rivet heads are apparent on the wider end of the piece showing where it would be attached. This piece is likely a crude strap end although if cat. no 3 three is a book mount it is possible that this piece is also a book fitting.

The assemblage is small and all artefacts are from the subsoil which means that stratigraphic dating is not available. The objects within this group all have an overlap of the 16th and 17th centuries which suggests that this is the likely date of the entire assemblage. With the potential of book mounts allied to the detail of the buckles the items were likely from a person, or persons, of at least middling status in society.

### *Glass by Danielle Milbank*

A single small glass fragment was recovered from deposit 57 in the evaluation which is 18mm long and 4mm wide. It is a pale green blue colour and is of uncertain date and form.

## Conclusion

The doubtful character of the archaeological features as noted in the evaluation report was confirmed as no archaeological features were observed during the course of this fieldwork. The shallow pits or linear features noted in the trenches were in fact patches of subsoil filling irregular/amorphous dips and depressions in the geological horizon. A limited assemblage of pottery, mainly of Medieval date but with a broad span, and rare metal objects were collected from it. They testify to the use of the area as fields (manuring, or items causally lost in transit) rather than any long-lived occupation.

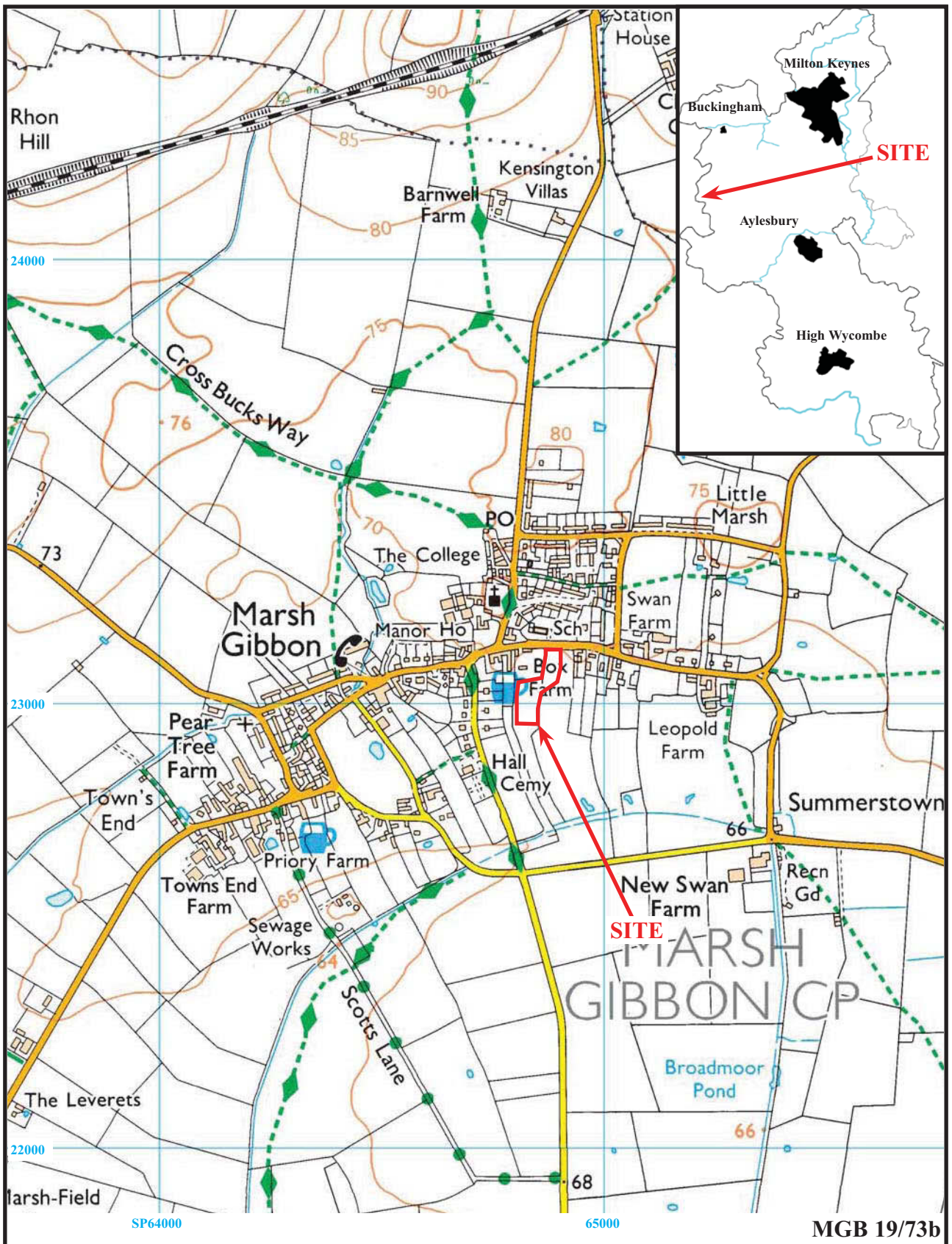
## References

- Attard, W and Muddin A, 2019, 'Land at Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire: An Archaeological Evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services, unpubl rep **19/73**, Reading
- BGS, 2002, *British Geological Survey - Buckingham*, 1:50,000, Sheet **219**, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- CIFA, 2014, *Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Reading
- Farley, M, 1982, 'A medieval pottery industry at Boarstall, Buckinghamshire', *Recs Buckinghamshire* **24**, 107–18
- Gardiner, J and Allen, M J, 2005, *Before the Mast: Life and Death Aboard the Mary Rose*, Portsmouth
- Ivens, R, 1982, 'Medieval pottery from the 1978 excavations at Temple Farm, Brill', *Recs Buckinghamshire* **24**, 144–70
- Mellor, M, 1994, 'A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 17–217
- MPRG, 1998, *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms*. Medieval Pottery Research Group Occas Pap **1**
- MPRG, 2001, *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*, Medieval Pottery Research Group Occas Pap **2**
- NPPF, 2018, *National Planning Policy Framework (revised)*, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
- Reeves, P, 2015, 'Archaeological desk-based assessment: Land off Castle Street (Site B), Marsh Gibbon, Buckinghamshire', CgMs Consulting unpubl rep **PR/19386**, London
- Timby, J, 2008, 'The Roman pottery', in A Westgarth and S Carlyle, 'A Roman settlement at Bicester Park, Bicester, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, **73**, 121–46

## APPENDIX 1: Summary Catalogue of Pottery

Full catalogue available in archive as an Access database; dates are centuries AD

Trench	Context	Fabric	No	Wt (g)	Form	Rim	Notes	Spot date
5	Surface	GRE	1	3			burnt, partly reduced	17th-18th
5	Surface	OXAM	1	2				13th-15th
5	Surface	OXAW	2	3				Late 12th-13th
5	Surface	RBGW	1	1				Roman
9	50	GRE	1	8			prob Brill type	17th-18th
2	50	GRE	1	38				17th-18th
2	50	RBOX	1	19			fairly thick-walled	Roman
8	50	RBOX	1	17			small diam base	Roman
2	50	STAF	1	20	mug			Late 17th-18th
exc	51	GRE	1	4			Brill type?	17th-18th
exc	51	LMR	1	2				14th-15th
exc	51	MCW	1	11	jar	everted beaded		12th-13th
exc	51	MCW	1	5	jar	everted beaded		12th-13th
exc	51	MCW	6	23			thin-walled	12th-14th
exc	51	MCW	1	8			thin-walled	12th-14th
exc	51	MCW	1	13	bowl?	thickened everted		12th-14th
exc	51	MCW	1	14	jar	flat-topped everted		12th-14th
exc	51	MCW	1	15				Late medieval?
exc	51	OXAM	1	7	jug	square-bead		13th-15th
3	51	OXAM	1	10				13th-15th
3	51	OXAW	1	3				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	2	15				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	1	4				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	2	6				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	1	7	jug	flat-topped bead		Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	1	19				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	2	15				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	1	19	jar	square-bead		Late 12th-13th
exc	51	OXAW	1	8				Late 12th-13th
exc	51	PEW	1	7	teapot?	lid-seated?		Late 18th-19th
exc	51	PMSW	1	16				17th
exc	51	POTT	3	21				13th-15th
exc	51	POTT	1	13	bowl	inturned?		13th-15th
exc	51	RBGW	1	3				Roman
exc	51	RBOX	1	1	?	cavetto?	soft, surfaces lost	Roman
exc	51	RBWW	1	15				Roman
3	51	STNE	1	10			flattish, HM?	Late 9th-13th
exc	51	SWSW	1	1				18th
1	52	MSHW	1	1				12th-14th
1	52	UPG	1	21			glaze v thin, wheel-finished?	12th-15th
1	53	MCW	1	2				12th-14th
1	53	OXAM	1	2				13th-15th
1	53	PMSW	2	20	bowl?	thickened everted		17th
1	53	PMSW	1	18				17th
1	53	SSHW	1	2				-
1	55	MCW	1	14	jar	upright beaded	WM rim, poss HM body	12th-13th
2	57	OXAW	1	2				Late 12th-13th
2	57	RBOX	1	7				Roman
2	58	UPG	1	7				12th-14th
2	59	OXAW	1	10				Late 12th-13th
5	63	RBOX	1	15				Roman
7	67	RBWW	1	5			parchment ware, but coarser than Oxford type? Or ?OXAM	Late Roman
6	68	MCW	1	4			overfired, partly vit sim to PING	12th-14th
8	70	RBOX	1	1				Roman
10	75	RBGW	1	24	bowl	flanged		Roman
9	80	OXAM	2	16	jug			13th-15th
9	80	OXAM	1	5				13th-15th
9	80	RBGW	1	16	jar	bead		Roman



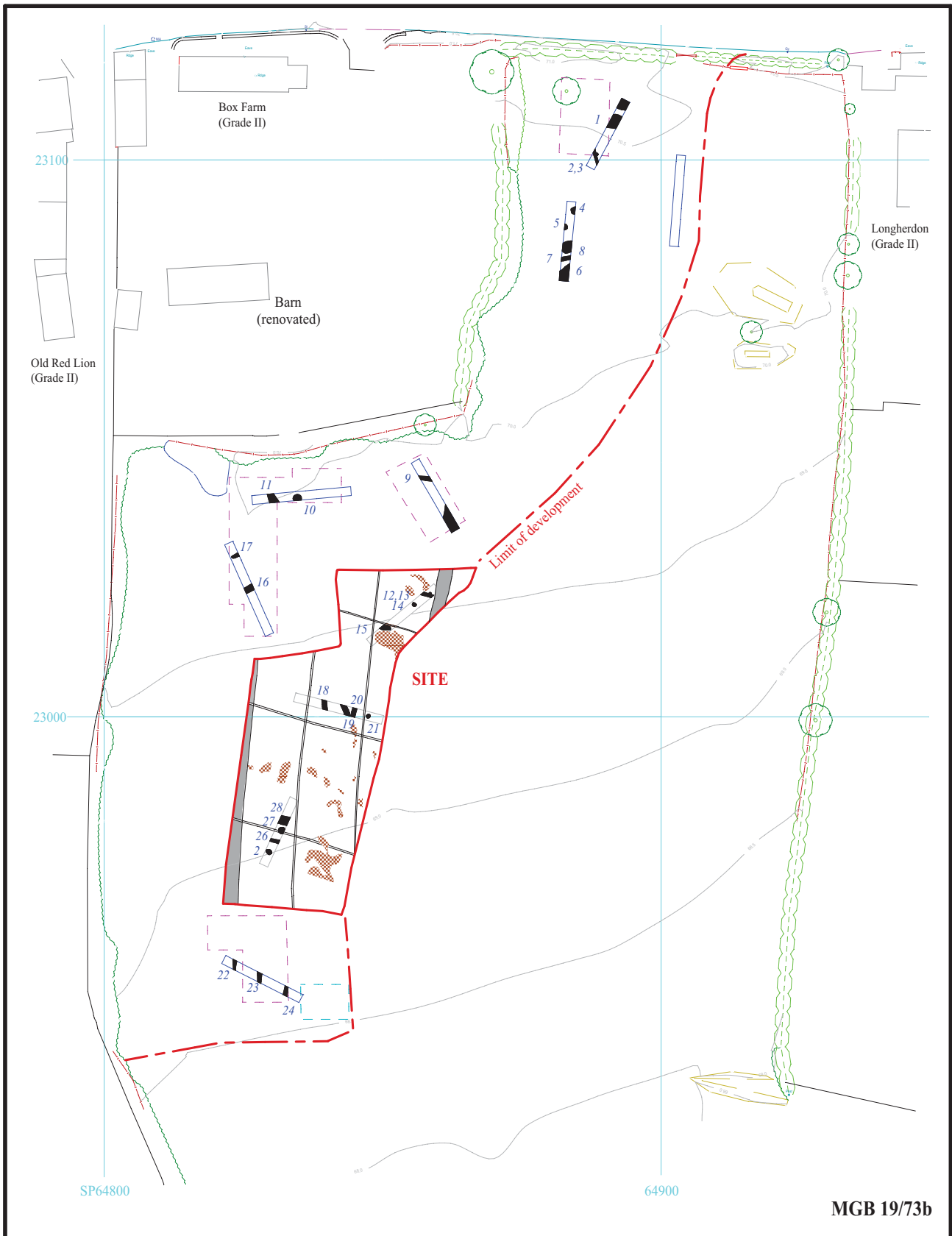
**Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon,  
Buckinghamshire, 2020**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 1. Location of site within Marsh Gibbon and Buckinghamshire.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500  
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



MGB 19/73b

**Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon,  
Buckinghamshire, 2020  
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 2. Location of area compared to previous investigation.



THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 1. General site view looking North.



Plate 2. Ditch partially backfilled during modern era, still visible in landscape, looking South West.



Plate 3. Representative section, looking East,  
Scales: 0.5m, 0.3m



Plate 4. Working shot, looking West.

MGB 19/73b

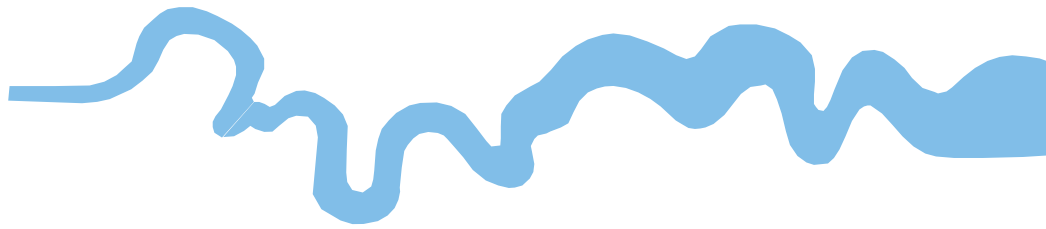
**Land off Castle Street, Marsh Gibbon,  
Buckinghamshire, 2020  
Archaeological Recording Action  
Plates 1 to 4.**

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 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





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

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

***Offices in:  
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent, Wellingborough  
and Ennis (Ireland)***