

Archaeological Field Evaluation

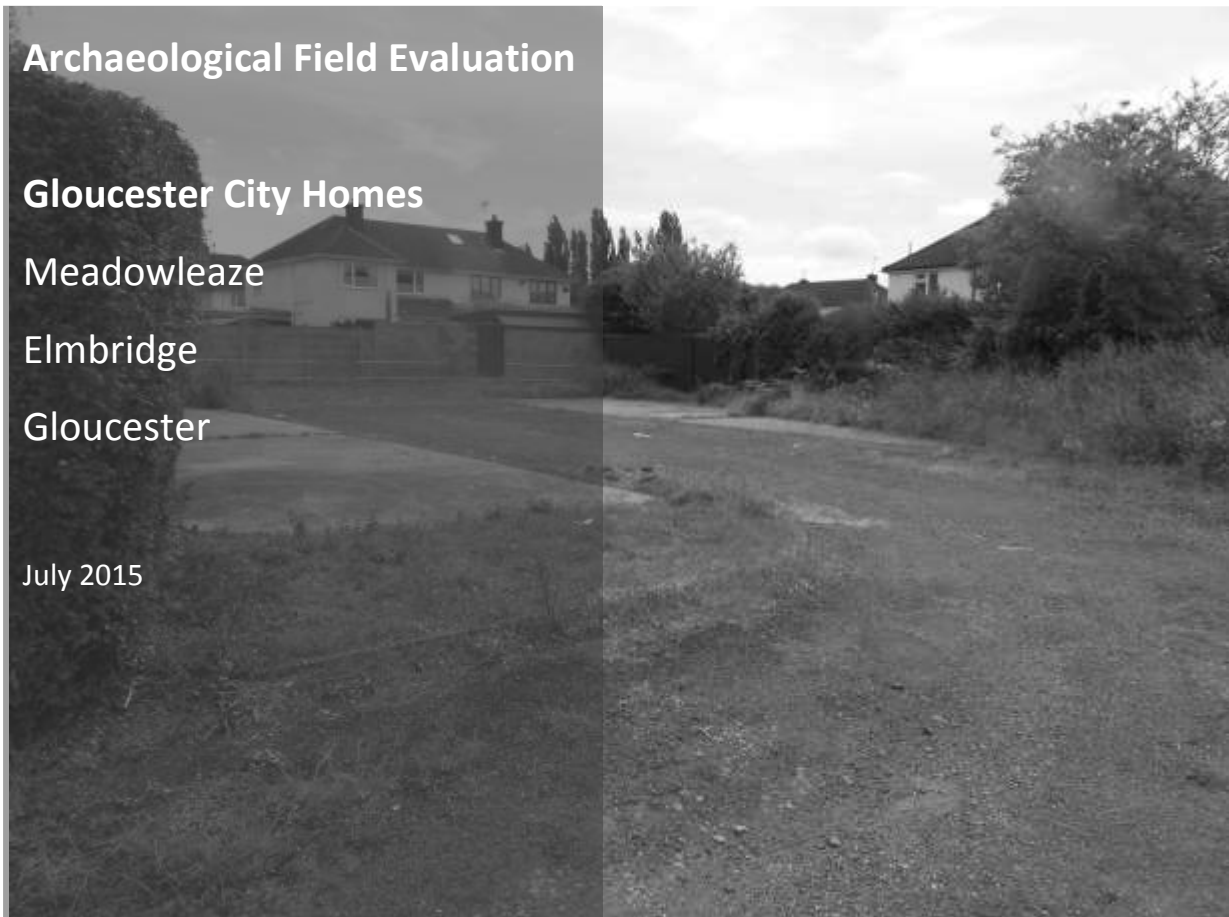
Gloucester City Homes

Meadowleaze

Elmbridge

Gloucester

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Contents:

1	Executive Summary	1
2	Introduction.....	2
	2.1 Soils & Geology	3
3	Historical and Archaeological background	3
	3.1 Prehistoric	3
	3.2 Roman	3
	3.3 Medieval.....	4
	3.4 Post-Medieval/Modern	4
4	Methodology	4
	4.1 Recording.....	5
5	Results	6
	5.1 Trench 1.....	6
	5.2 Trench 2.....	7
	5.3 Trench 3.....	8
6	Discussion.....	9
7	Copyright.....	10
8	Bibliography	11

1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Gloucester City Homes to undertake archaeological field evaluation of the site at Meadowleaze Elmbridge Gloucester prior to potential development. The site lies on former agricultural land attached to Elmbridge Field Farm, a large post-medieval farmstead located approximately 100m east of the site.

Following the Second World War, the site and its immediate surroundings witnessed a period of rapid housing development.

Evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity has been found within approximately 330m of the site. The site is thought to lie within the hinterland of the Roman colonia of Glevum and, although no recognizable features were present, scatters of Roman ceramic building material were found at the Helipecs Premier Works site on Sisson Road.

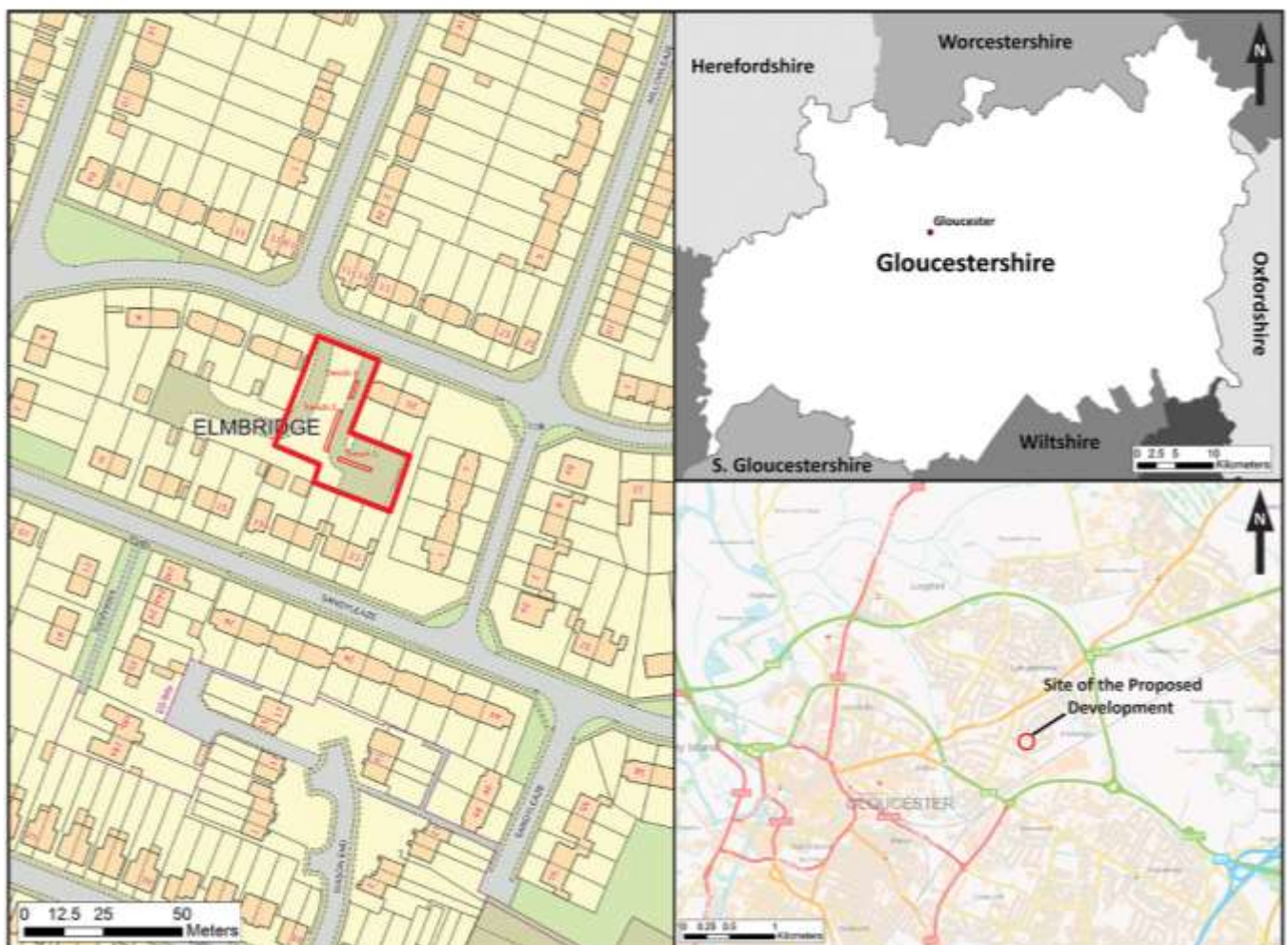
However, no archaeological features were present on the site at Meadowleaze. The only feature present was a large cut filled with modern demolition and building debris at the north end of Trench 3.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was instructed by Gloucester City Homes to undertake a programme of archaeological field evaluation at Meadowleaze Elmbridge Road Gloucester. The proposed development site currently comprises an area of open ground and is located on the NE side of the city of Gloucester, at a height of roughly 20m AOD. To the N, it fronts onto Meadowleaze, with the remaining boundaries adjoining neighbouring properties (*fig. 1*).

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains likely to be threatened by the proposed development, and to fully record the character, date, location and preservation of any such remains.

Site work took place on July 21st and 22nd 2015.



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Fig. 1: Site location

2.1 Soils & Geology

The area is characterised by typical calcareous pelosols of the Evesham 1 series (411a), which are composed of slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils associated with shallow, well-drained brashy calcareous soils over Jurassic clay and limestone (Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983).

3 Historical and Archaeological background

3.1 Prehistoric

Evidence of early prehistoric activity has been identified on the southern periphery of the site, along Barnwood Road. Lower Palaeolithic flint flakes have been recovered from gravel deposits about 500m S of the site, while a flint axehead of possible Mesolithic date was identified at No 167 Barnwood Road. A residual flint scraper of Mesolithic or Neolithic date was recovered during a programme of evaluation trenching at Centre Severn Barnwood Road, approximately 330m SE of the site.

3.2 Roman

The site occupies the N periphery of the Roman extramural suburb of Barnwood, which appears to have extended along both sides of the Roman road of Ermin Street, the line of which is represented Barnwood Road, running approximately 660m SSE of the site.

Geophysical survey and subsequent archaeological evaluation carried out on a site at Elmbridge Road (to the W of Meadowleaze) has revealed a series of ditches and gullies from which a small quantity of Roman ceramics were recovered. These features evidently formed part of a Roman agricultural field system (Cook 1998).

Watching briefs at 20-48 Sandyleaze (NMRAD no. 652932) and Sisson End (GCCHER no. 1239) identified quantities of unstratified Roman ceramic building material (CBM) and pottery whilst an archaeological evaluation at Centre Severn Barnwood (about 330m SE of the site) produced remains of mostly NW-SE -aligned ditches containing 2nd -4th century pottery, together with a hearth and two inhumation burials (Barber 2014). Another recent evaluation undertaken on the Helipecs Premier Works site at Sisson Road (about 230m SE of Meadowleaze) produced small assemblages of Roman pottery and ceramic building material but no dateable features (Sausins 2014).

Evidence of a substantial Roman building, possibly a villa complex, was identified at SO 8651 1905 (approximately 750m due E of the site) during road construction works in 1971. Finds 1st -4th -century date pottery were recovered, together with building stone, roof and hypocaust tiles, plaster and *tesserae* (Rawes 1972).

3.3 Medieval

A small medieval pottery assemblage comprising glazed and unglazed Malvernian wares was recovered during the programme of field evaluation on the Helipecs Premier Works site at Sisson Road in 2014 (Sausins 2014). A number of furrow features were also identified, possibly of medieval date, whilst a further series of NE-SW - aligned plough furrows was recorded during the evaluation at the Centre Severn site at Barnwood (Barber 2014).

3.4 Post-Medieval/Modern

From the early 19th century up to the late 1930s, the site lay within agricultural land, about 100m to the E of the large post-medieval farmstead of Elmbridge Field Farm. A rapid programme of residential development took place following the Second World War, as shown on late 1940s RAF photographs and the OS 1:1250 map of 1956.

Post-medieval quarrying has been identified in the wider vicinity but the historic map evidence gives no indication of quarry features within the immediate locality.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with practices set out in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014). BAL adheres to the ClfA *Code of conduct* (2014).

An agreed 5% sample of the site gave a total trench area of some 51.5m². Three evaluation trenches one of 12.5m × 1.5m, one measuring 10m × 1.5m and one of 5m × 1.5m (*fig. 2*) were excavated by machine using a wide-blade toothless ditching bucket.

Undifferentiated topsoil and overburden of recent origin was removed by machine. Potential archaeological features were investigated by hand.

The evaluation sought to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion and assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits. Investigation was sufficient to define any identified archaeological deposits, features and structures in terms of their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enable an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate.



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Fig. 2: Trench locations

4.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with BAL's *Field Recording Manual* (2014). The written record comprised a *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit.

A trench location plan was produced on archive stable polyester drafting film.

A temporary benchmark (TBM) of 20.42m AOD was established at No 130 Cheltenham Road and each trench was levelled based upon this value.

A photographic record of all stratigraphic units was made using a high-resolution digital camera. An appropriate scale was included in each photograph and all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details of subject and direction of view were recorded in a photographic register, indexed by frame number. A representative photographic record of the progress of the archaeological work was also made.

No archaeological finds or features were present. The only deposits or features seen during the evaluation were of modern date or were naturally derived. No samples were taken.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

The trench was aligned E/W and measured 10m in length and 1.5m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.85m. The W end of the trench lay at 21.26mOD and the E end at 21.32m OD.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Deposit	Existing tarmac surface	Tarmac, stone levelling; overall thickness 0.30m. Overlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	102		Deposit	Levelling deposit	Moderately compacted black clay silt, occasional flecks of brick & CBM, small stones; measured 0.15m thick, trench wide. Overlying (103), underlying (101).	-	-	-	-	-	
3	103		Deposit	Subsoil—possible buried topsoil	Firm dark greyish-green silty clay & gravel; measured 0.15m thick, trench wide. Overlying (104), underlying (102).	-	-	-	-	-	
4	104		Deposit	Natural substrate	Firm pale bluish-grey clay, patches of gravel; measured >0.25m thick, trench wide. Underlying (103).	-	-	-	-	-	
5	105		Deposit	Fill of natural hollow [106]	Firm dark greyish-green silty clay & gravel. Fill of [106], same as (103).	-	-	-	-	-	
6	106		Cut	Depression in natural (104)-natural hollow	Linear; aligned N-S. Filled by (105); measured >3m × >1.5m × 0.11m (minimum) × 0.20m (maximum).	-	-	-	-	-	

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned N/S and was 12.5m long and 1.5m wide. It was excavated to a total depth of 1.10m. The N end of the trench lay at 21.32mOD and the S end at 21.43mOD.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201		Deposit	Existing surface	Turf; measured 0.10m thick, trench wide. Overlying (202).	-	-	-	-	-	
2	202		Deposit	Dumping/levelling deposit	Moderately compacted mottled dark bluish-grey & brown silty clay, frequent modern rubble; measured 0.17m thick, trench wide. Underlying (201), overlying (203).	-	-	-	-	-	
3	203		Deposit	Levelling dump	Firm dark orange-brown silty clay & gravel, moderate brick & stone inclusions Underlying (202), overlying (204); measured 0.38m thick, trench wide.	-	-	-	-	-	
4	204		Deposit	Buried subsoil	Firm dark brown sandy clay & gravel, occasional CBM & charcoal flecks; measured 0.30m thick, trench wide. Underlying (203) overlying (205).	-	-	-	✓	-	Undiagnostic CBM
5	205		layer	Natural substrate	(Patches of) firm light greyish-blue clay & light orangey-yellow gravel. Underlying (204), >0.15m thick, trench wide.	-	-	-	-	-	

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 5m in length and 1.5m wide and was aligned N/S. It was excavated to a depth of 1m, with the N end of the trench at 21.18m OD. No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench, although a dump of modern brick and rubble (306) was located at the N end of the trench.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	301		Deposit	Existing surface	Turf; measured 0.10m thick, trench wide. Overlying (302)	-	-	-	-	-	
2	302		Deposit	Levelling deposit	Firm mid orangey-brown sandy clay & gravel, redeposited natural gravel 0.45m thick trench wide. Underlying (301), overlying (303).	-	-	-	-	-	
3	303		Deposit	Subsoil – buried layer	Firm dark orange brown sandy clay & gravel; measured 0.28m thick trench wide. Underlying (302), overlying (304), cut by [305].	-	-	-	-	-	
4	304		Deposit	Natural substrate	Firm mottled light bluish-grey clay + patches of mid yellowish-orange gravel; measured >0.12m thick, trench wide. Underlying (303).	-	-	-	-	-	
5	305		Cut	Natural hollow or possible cut for rubbish dumping	Linear; irregular in plan; aligned NNW/SSE; measured >3.0m x >1.5m x >0.30m. Cuts (303), filled by (306).	-	-	-	-	-	
6	306		Deposit	Modern demolition debris	Loose rubble, stone, large brick, blocks; measured >3.0m x >1.5m x >0.30m. Underlying (302), fill of [305].						

6 Discussion

No features of archaeological significance were present on the site, although occasional flecks of CBM were recorded in subsoil deposits (103) and (204). A single larger fragment weighing 102.7g was recovered from (204) but this was undiagnostic. Fragments of Roman building debris were identified at the Helipecs Premier Works site at Sisson Road, located approximately 230m SE of Meadowleaze (Sausins 2014). The CBM fragment from (204) was much abraded and its form could not be determined, although a Roman origin cannot be ruled out. Other flecks of CBM or fired clay in the same deposit and in the equivalent deposit (103) in Trench 1 were too small to identify.

It would appear likely that the area was in agricultural use during the Roman period, as attested by the discovery of agricultural features at Elmbridge (Cook 1998). It is therefore possible that such features were fairly isolated and may also have been of an ephemeral nature.



Plate 1: Trench 1 view E showing natural feature [106] following investigation



Plate 2: Dump of rubble (306) at N end of Trench 3: view N

The site was heavily disturbed by housing development during the period following the Second World War, as attested by the dump of building debris revealed in Trench 3 (*Plate 2*), whilst deposits (102) (203) (203) and (302) were clearly indicative of site levelling activity.

Although these processes may have damaged later features, with the exception of [305] there was no evidence that they had impinged on natural deposits or features cutting them.

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