

**Archaeological Field Evaluation**

**Gloucester City Homes**

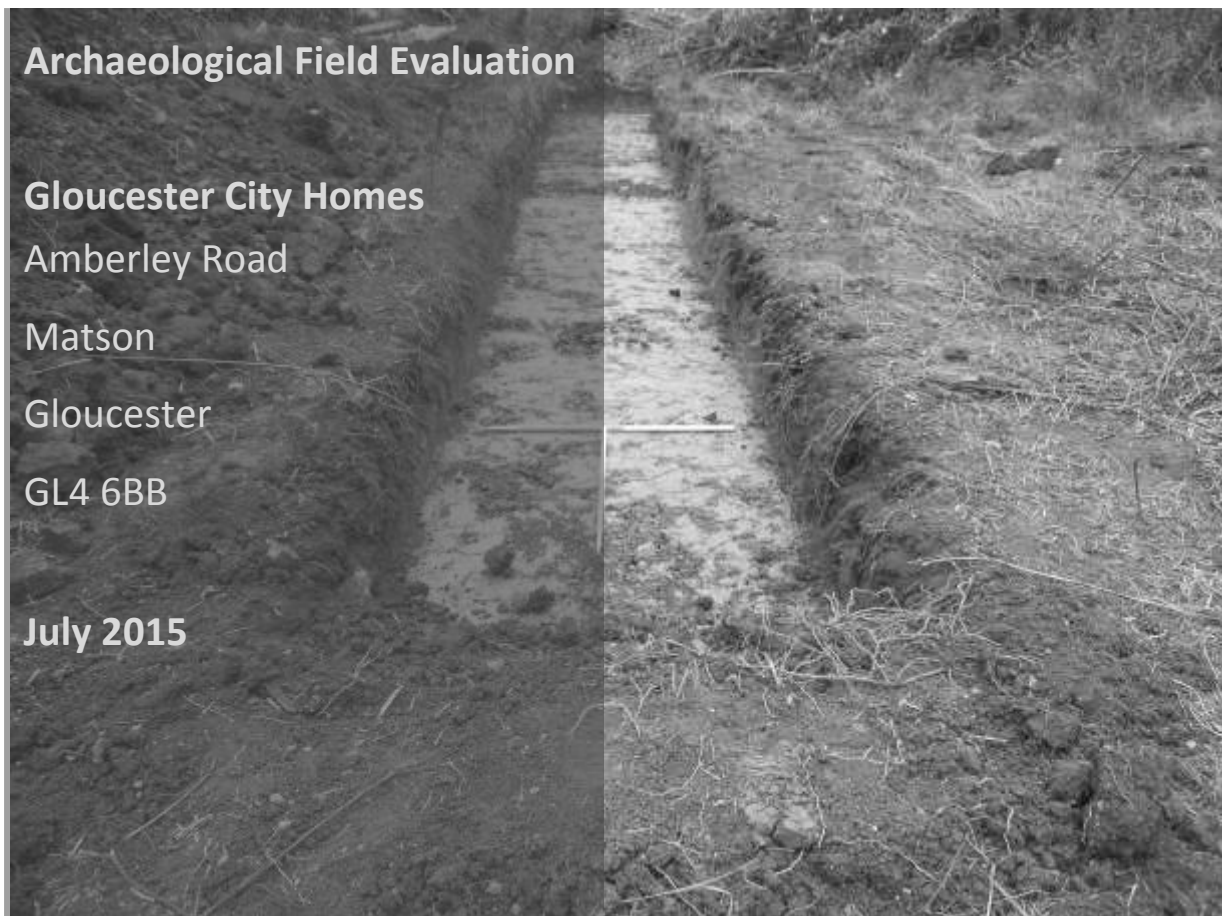
Amberley Road

Matson

Gloucester

GL4 6BB

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## Report Specification:

### Compilation:

Lyndsey Bromage BSc & Katherine Crooks BA

### Artwork:

Holly Litherland BA

### Editing:

George Children MA MCIfA

### Final Edit & Approval:

Neil Shurety Dip.M G M Inst M

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*Cover: Trench 1 facing east*

**General Enquiries:** E: [info@borderarchaeology.com](mailto:info@borderarchaeology.com) | T: 01568 610101

## Border Archaeology Regional Offices

### Bristol

Park House, 10 Park Street,  
Bristol, BS1 5HX  
T: 0117 907 4735

### Leeds

No 1 Leeds, 26 Whitehall Road,  
Leeds, LS12 1BE  
T: 0113 3570390

### Leominster (Administration)

Chapel Walk, Burgess Street,  
Leominster, HR6 8DE  
T: 01568 610101

### London

23 Hanover Square, London, W1S 1JB  
T: 020 3714 9345

### Milton Keynes

Luminous House, 300 South Row,  
Milton Keynes, MK9 2FR  
T: 01908 933765

### Newport

Merlin House, No1 Langstone Business Park,  
Newport, NP18 2HJ  
T: 01633 415339

### Winchester

Basepoint Business Centre, Winnal Valley Road,  
Winchester, SO23 0LD  
T: 01962 832777

**Bristol | Leeds | Leominster | London | Milton Keynes | Newport | Winchester**

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## 1 Executive Summary

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*Border Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Gloucester City Homes to carry out a programme of archaeological field evaluation at Amberley Road Matson Gloucester (NGR: SO 8461 1607) in advance of potential future development of the site for social housing.*

*Two trenches were opened and excavated down to the natural deposits. No disturbance to the natural soil deposits were detected in either Trench 1 or Trench 2.*

*No deposits, features or finds of archaeological significance were present on the site.*

## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology Ltd (BAL) was commissioned by Gloucester City Homes to undertake a programme of archaeological field evaluation at Amberley Road, Matson, Gloucester GL4 6BB (NGR: SO 8461 1607) in advance of a proposed development (*fig.1*). Site work took place on July 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.

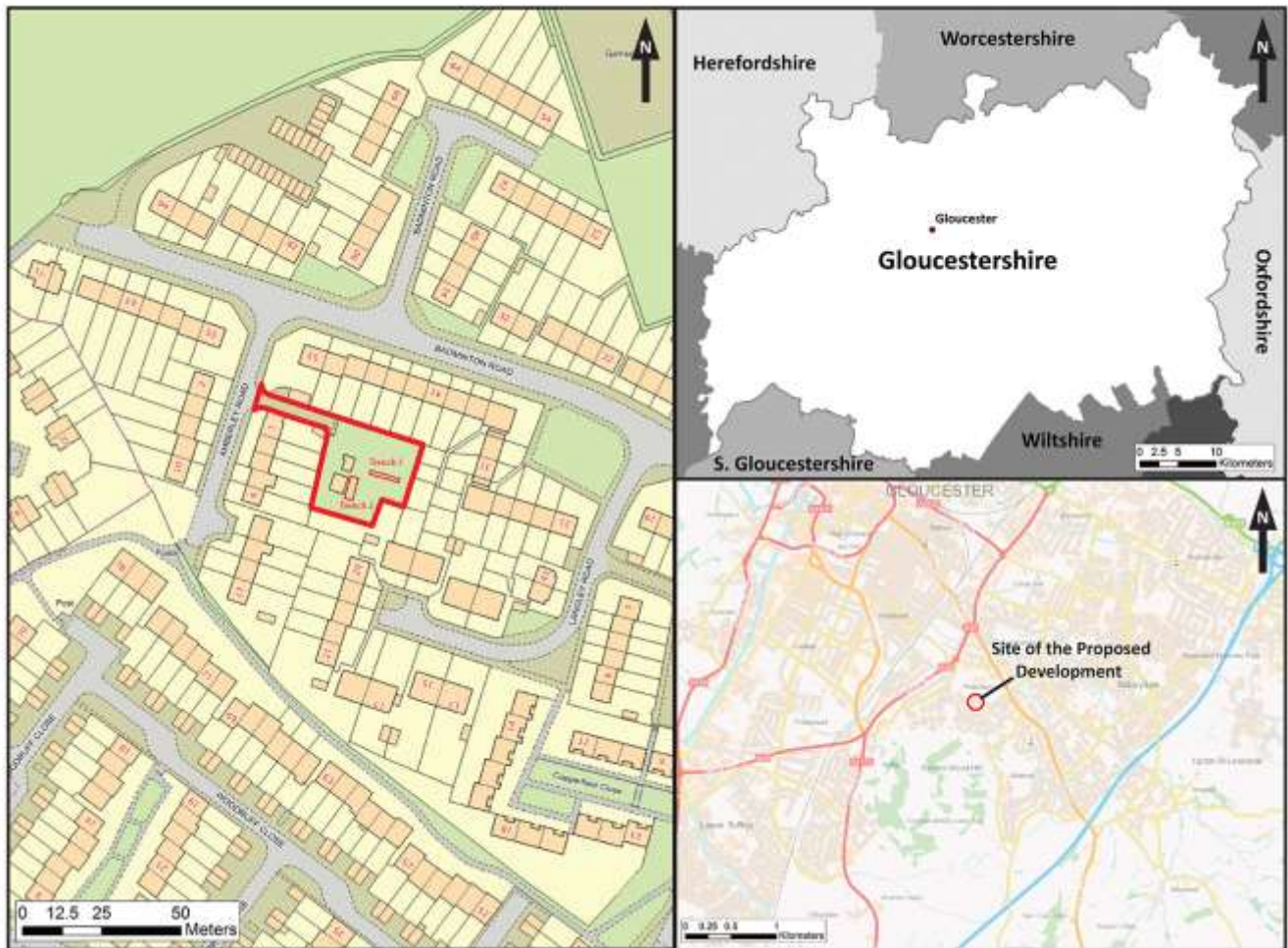


Fig.1: Site location plan

The study area lies within the medieval settlement of Matson, approximately 3.5km SE of Gloucester city centre and lies approximately 400m W of the line of the Portway Roman road.

The site is surrounded by a modern housing development and is bordered by gardens on all four sides. The most recent use of the site was as an allotment/garden and garage area.

At the time of the evaluation, the site was heavily overgrown with large quantities of refuse dumped since abandonment.



## 2.1 Soils & Geology

Due to its urban location, this area has not been surveyed by the Soils Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983). However, the British Geological Survey records the underlying geology of the study area as comprising Lower Lias clays of the Jurassic period (Geological Survey of Britain 234) (BGS, 2014).

## 3 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (Lee 2014) and practices set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) in *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2014).

Two trenches (*Fig. 1*) were excavated using a wide-blade toothless ditching bucket. Trench 1 (*Plate 1*) measured 13m × 1.5m and Trench 2 (*Plate 2*) measured 8m × 3m covering the agreed 5% sample area. Undifferentiated topsoil and overburden of recent origin were removed by machine to natural deposits. No significant archaeological deposits were found.

### 3.1 Recording

Full written and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Field Recording Manual* (2014). The written record comprised a pro-forma context record for each stratigraphic unit. No archaeological features or deposits were present on the site so minimum levels of recording were carried out. Sketch plans and sections were drawn on each record sheet. A temporary benchmark (TBM) was established.

A photographic record of all stratigraphic units was made using a high-resolution digital camera. Included in each photograph was an appropriate scale and all photographic records were indexed and cross-referenced to written site records. Details concerning subject and direction of view were maintained in a photographic register, indexed by frame number.

No deposits or features of archaeological significance were present on the site. No finds were recovered and no samples were taken.

## 4 Historical and Archaeological Background

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### 4.1 Early Prehistoric

Robinswood Hill, which rises approximately 500m SW of the site, has produced significant evidence of prehistoric activity; the hill appears to have been the focus of human activity as early as the Neolithic period. Finds of this date include a Neolithic polished stone axe, worked flints and leaf-shaped arrow heads. A possible barrow site has also been identified at the eastern end of the summit of the hill (Bazeley, 1921; Grinsell & O'Neil, 1960, 114; Cook, 2000, 5-7).

### 4.2 Iron Age and Roman

Robinswood Hill barracks was formerly located immediately SW of Amberley Road and limited archaeological investigations on the site in the early-mid 1970s revealed evidence of a settlement site of late Iron Age/Roman date comprising ditches and a substantial pottery assemblage spanning the late Iron Age to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Garrod & Heighway 1984).

A possible 1<sup>st</sup> -century farmstead enclosure, 2<sup>nd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> -century villa and post-Roman farmstead trackway were identified at Rectory Road Matson, approximately 600m SE of the site, during a programme of foundation trench monitoring on a partially levelled site.

### 4.3 Medieval

The site lies within the parish of Matson, in close proximity to the historic boundary with the extramural parish of St Mary de Lode, Gloucester (Tuffley hamlet).

Evidence of medieval settlement has been identified to the SE of the site. Located approximately 450m SE of the site, immediately N of Moat Primary School, are the surviving earthworks of an oval moat enclosing an island measuring about 100m NE-SW and about 70m NW-SE. The moated site is presumed to be of medieval date and probably represents the site of the manor house of the de Mattesdon family who held the manor of Matson in the 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4.4 Post Medieval/Modern

Consultation of historic mapping indicates that from the early 19th century through to the late 1930s, the site lay within enclosed agricultural land.

The site at Amberley Road is located in close proximity to the site of Robinswood Hill Barracks which were erected in the early 1940s and occupied by the Royal Signals and the Royal Army Service Corps. The extent of the

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barracks is visible on late 1940s aerial photographs and an OS 1:1250 map of 1956. The barracks buildings survived until 1990 when they were largely demolished.



## 5 Results

### 5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 (*Plate 1*) was located on the N side of the site at height of 38.33m AOD. It measured 13m × 1.5m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.49m.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	101		Layer	Existing turf & topsoil	Loose mid greyish-brown silt clay, small fragments of modern rubbish; measured 0.12m thick. Above (102)	-	-	-	-	-	
2	102		Layer	Subsoil	Firm, fairly clean yellowish-grey silt clay; extended trench wide, 0.19m thick. Below (101), above (103)	-	-	-	-	-	
3	103		Layer	Natural deposit	Compact yellow/grey sterile clay; measured > 0.18m thick, trench wide. Beneath (102)	-	-	-	-	-	

## 5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 (*Plate 2*) was located on the W side of the site, adjacent to the modern fence line and at a height of 38.44m OD. It measured 8m × 3m and was a maximum depth of 0.49m.

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	201		Layer	Existing turf & topsoil	Loose mid greyish-brown silty clay, small fragments of modern rubbish. Above (202)	-	-	-	-	-	
2	202		Layer	Natural subsoil	Compact & fairly clean yellow/grey silt clay. Below (201) above (203)	-	-	-	-	-	
3	203		Layer	Natural deposit	Firm yellow/grey sterile clay. Below (202)	-	-	-	-	-	

## 6 Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were present on the site in either Trench 1 or 2. Associated evidence of early prehistoric activity was not evident at Amberley Road, perhaps due to the 500m distance of the finds (HER: 41291) from the site. The closest activity recorded was of an Iron Age settlement, immediately SW of Amberley Road, which was uncovered during excavation of the Robinswood Hill Barracks in the 1970s (HER: 41163). Records for this excavation are poor and no associated activity was found on site.

Evidence of previous modern structures remained as two areas of hard-standing and demolished garages. The site had most recently been used as a private allotment and aviary, maintained until very recently.



*Plate 1: View S of Trench 1 showing sample section and heavily rooted top soil*



*Plate 2: View S of Trench 2 showing natural deposits in base of trench and heavily rooted top soils*

The topsoil was fairly deep in places, possibly due to the site's associated position within post-medieval agricultural land and modern allotment. The soils were heavily contaminated in Trenches 1 and 2, particularly contexts (101) and (201), with further small fragments of modern rubbish also present in and (201) and (202).

## 7 Copyright

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Report written by	Lyndsey Bromage BSc & Katherine Crooks BA		
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