

Archaeological Field Evaluation

Gloucester City Homes

Bazeley Road

Matson

Gloucester

GL4 6JD

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1 Executive Summary

Border Archaeology was instructed by Gloucester City Homes to undertake archaeological field evaluation of land situated between Nos. 22 and 28 Bazeley Road Matson Gloucester GL4 6JD (centred upon NGR SO 84886 14815) prior to its proposed residential development. The site is currently a derelict parking court and grassed area with access from Bazeley Road and Matson Lane.

A single trench measuring 30m × 1.8m running approximately east/west at right-angles to Matson Lane was excavated within the study area (fig 1).

No deposits of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of the work.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by Gloucester City Homes to undertake a programme of archaeological field evaluation of land situated between Nos. 22 and 28 Bazeley Road Matson Gloucester GL4 6JD (centred upon NGR SO 84886 14815) prior to proposed residential development (Planning ref. 14/01460/FUL) (fig. 1). The site is currently a derelict parking court and grassed area with access from Bazeley Road and Matson Lane.



Fig 1: Plan showing trench location

The archaeological programme of work was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by Andrew Armstrong Esq City Archaeologist (CA) Gloucester City Council.

2 Site description

The trenched area lies on the western side of Bazeley Road within the medieval settlement of Matson and slopes from W (65.73m AOD) to E (64.57m AOD). The fieldwork results indicate that this slope had originally been more pronounced, with the presence of a colluvial layer overlying the natural substrate revealed beneath modern levelling material.

The site is located approximately 3.5km SE of Gloucester city centre and roughly 1km SSW of the known focus of Roman, Saxon and medieval settlement activity around Rectory Road. The eastern slopes of Robinswood Hill lie immediately W of the site and the Portway Roman road and medieval Painswick Road approximately 750m to the E.

2.1 Soils & Geology

Due to its urban location, this area has not been surveyed by the Soil 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 Great Britain Sheet 234) (BGS, 2014).

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The site at Bazeley Road lies on the southern fringes of Matson, within an area that has been revealed through documentary evidence and previous archaeological investigations to exhibit evidence of prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval occupation.

The site lies to the E of Robinswood Hill, where previous fieldwork has revealed evidence of prehistoric activity including a Neolithic stone axe, leaf-shaped arrowheads and an assemblage of worked flint. A possible barrow site has been identified at the eastern end of the summit of the hill and Iron Age pottery sherds have also been found (Bazeley, 1921; Cook, 2000). No further evidence suggesting a significant level of prehistoric activity has been established in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Recorded evidence of Roman occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site is limited. An excavation on the site of the former Robinswood Hill barracks in advance of housing development (Garrod & Heighway 1984) revealed evidence of a settlement site of late Iron Age/Roman date comprising a series of ditches and a considerable quantity of pottery ranging in date from the late Iron Age to the 3rd-century AD.

Several find-spots producing Romano-British coins and pottery have also been identified, on Robinswood Hill and at Matson Rectory, respectively. The pottery assemblage was uncovered during the construction of Matson Rectory in 1878 within what was described as a 'moat or trench' (Bazeley 1877-8, 24I). Although this location is

marked on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1884, no evidence of earthworks has survived to the present. Nevertheless, these finds may be indicative of a focus of Roman occupation somewhere in the immediate locality.

Roman activity in the wider area, including a site located immediately W of the M5 motorway approximately 750-800m to the E of the study area that appears to have been occupied from the end of the 1st century until the late 3rd /early 4th century and which the evidence suggests may have developed into a minor religious centre (Rawes 1984).

The present site lies to the S of the village of Matson (now a suburb of Gloucester), which is first recorded as 'Mattesdune' in the cartulary of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, in 1100 (Cook 2000, 4). Matson Lane appears to have been a long-established route-way leading S from Matson towards a medieval settlement at Sneedham's Green, where scheduled earthworks of a moated site of probable 13th -14th -century date are located

Possible evidence of medieval settlement activity which is visible on an RAF vertical photograph of 1946 has been identified in relatively close proximity (less than 100m W of the site) comprising a series of nine sub-rectangular earthwork platforms or crofts and boundary ditches, together with two sections of linear track-way following the line of the parish boundary SW.

Located approximately 500m NNW of the site is a medieval well site known as the 'Holy Red Well' or 'Chalybeate Well', which is recorded as having belonged to the Canons of Llanthony Priory.

Examination of cartographic sources, including the 1799 enclosure map and the Ordnance Survey 1st -4th edition maps, has revealed that during the post-medieval period the site lay within the northern part of an irregularly shaped field just to the S of the boundary between the parishes of Matson and Upton St Leonards.

The site remained as undeveloped agricultural land until c 1970 when the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of that date shows that the fields E of Matson Lane had been developed for housing and a system of residential streets laid out that including Bazeley Road.

4 Methodology

The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with practices set out in *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CifA 2014) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CifA 2014). Border Archaeology adheres to the CifA *Code of conduct* (2014) and *Regulations for professional conduct* (2015)

A single trench measuring 30m × 1.8m was opened by machine and toothless ditching bucket within the study area. The length of the trench was reduced from 40m to 30m in view of Health & Safety concerns, where trench depths exceeding 1m were revealed at the eastern end without the natural substrate being reached.

Excavation revealed no significant archaeological deposits or surviving archaeological remains likely to be impacted by development.

4.1 Recording

Full written, graphic and photographic records were made in accordance with Border Archaeology's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2014). Records included:

- A *pro-forma* context record for each stratigraphic unit
- Plans of excavated areas showing: the extent of the area (tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on a 1:2500 plan), the extent of all stratigraphic units, and appropriate detail within stratigraphic units.
- A photographic record of all stratigraphic units - including a representative photographic record of the progress of the archaeological work. The record was made using a high-resolution digital camera and an appropriate scale was included in each photograph; 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 artefactual information was identified during the course of the evaluation and no deposits containing potential palaeoenvironmental/palaeoeconomic data were revealed.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Item	Context No.	Matrix Phase	Type	Interpretation	Discussion	Finds					Comments
						Small Find	Pot	Bone	Misc.	Sample No.	
1	(101)	-	Layer	Topsoil & turf	Loose mid brown clayey silt; occasional small stones; extended trench wide, average thickness 0.29m	-	-	-	-	-	Deposition resulting from landscaping: not an agricultural topsoil
2	(102)	-	Deposit	Landscaping: made ground material	Firm mid orange/greyish-brown clayey silt; occasional brick fragments & large stones; extended trench-wide, minimum thickness 0.10m, maximum thickness 0.32m	-	-	-	-	-	Deposit thickness increased towards the E
3	(103)	-	Layer	Colluvium	Firm mid orange-brown sterile, slightly silty clay; extended trench-wide, minimum thickness 0.1m, maximum thickness 0.22m	-	-	-	-	-	Deposit thickness increased towards the E
4	(104)	-	Layer	Natural substrate	Firm mottled light orange-brown & blue-grey sterile clay	-	-	-	-	-	-

Trench 1 contained no deposits of archaeological significance. The stratigraphic sequence comprised topsoil sealing modern landscaping material. This landscaping material acted as a levelling deposit overlying a sloping colluvial layer and thus increased in thickness towards the E end of the trench. Underlying this colluvium was a sterile clay natural substrate (*Plate 1*).



Plate 1: S-facing section of Trench 1

6 Discussion

The evaluation was carried out on a small area of land between existing properties, fronting onto the western side of Bazeley Road and the eastern side of Matson Lane, with the eastern slopes of Robinswood Hill immediately to the W of the site.

The site itself was located on a slight slope with the levels of the western and eastern ends of the trench varying between 65.73m AOD and 64.57m AOD, respectively. Excavation revealed that this slope had originally been more pronounced, with the presence of a colluvial layer (103) overlying the natural substrate (104). This colluvium (103) was clearly present at the base and lower extent of Robinswood Hill, with the area of the site most likely being located on sloping ground throughout antiquity.

Overlying this colluvium was a layer of modern levelling material formed of silty clays with inclusions of large stones and brick rubble (102), which increased in thickness from 0.1m to 0.3m towards the eastern end of the trench. This material and the overlying topsoil and turf deposit (101) were considered likely to be associated with the extensive landscaping of the area that occurred during the 1970s, when the fields to the E of Matson Lane were developed for residential use, comprising housing and an associated road system, of which Bazeley Road forms one component.

No stratified finds or features of archaeological significance were identified during the course of the evaluation.

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