



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation of land
at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire
November 2012



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**Northamptonshire
County Council**

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Report 12/208
December 2012
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 139109	
Project name	Archaeological evaluation of land at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire November 2012		
Short description	In November 2012, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Manor Oak Homes, on land at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire. A scatter of late Iron Age or Romano-British ditches and pits were observed in the eastern part of the development area.		
Project type	Evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current Land use	Pasture		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	Iron Age/Romano-British		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Oxfordshire		
Site address	Farleigh Road, Shrivenham		
Study area	2.7ha		
OS co-ords	SU 2321 8891		
Height OD	c105m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Project brief originator	Oxfordshire County Council		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith		
Project Manager	Charlotte Walker		
Sponsor or funding body	Manor Oak Homes		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	11/2012		
End date	11/2012		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content	
Physical	OXFCMS 2012.151	Pottery	
Paper	OXFCMS 2012.151	Evaluation pro forma sheets, context sheets, colour slides, black and white contact prints, digital photographs	
Digital	OXFCMS 2012.151	Report text and figures	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Title	Archaeological evaluation of land at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire November 2012		
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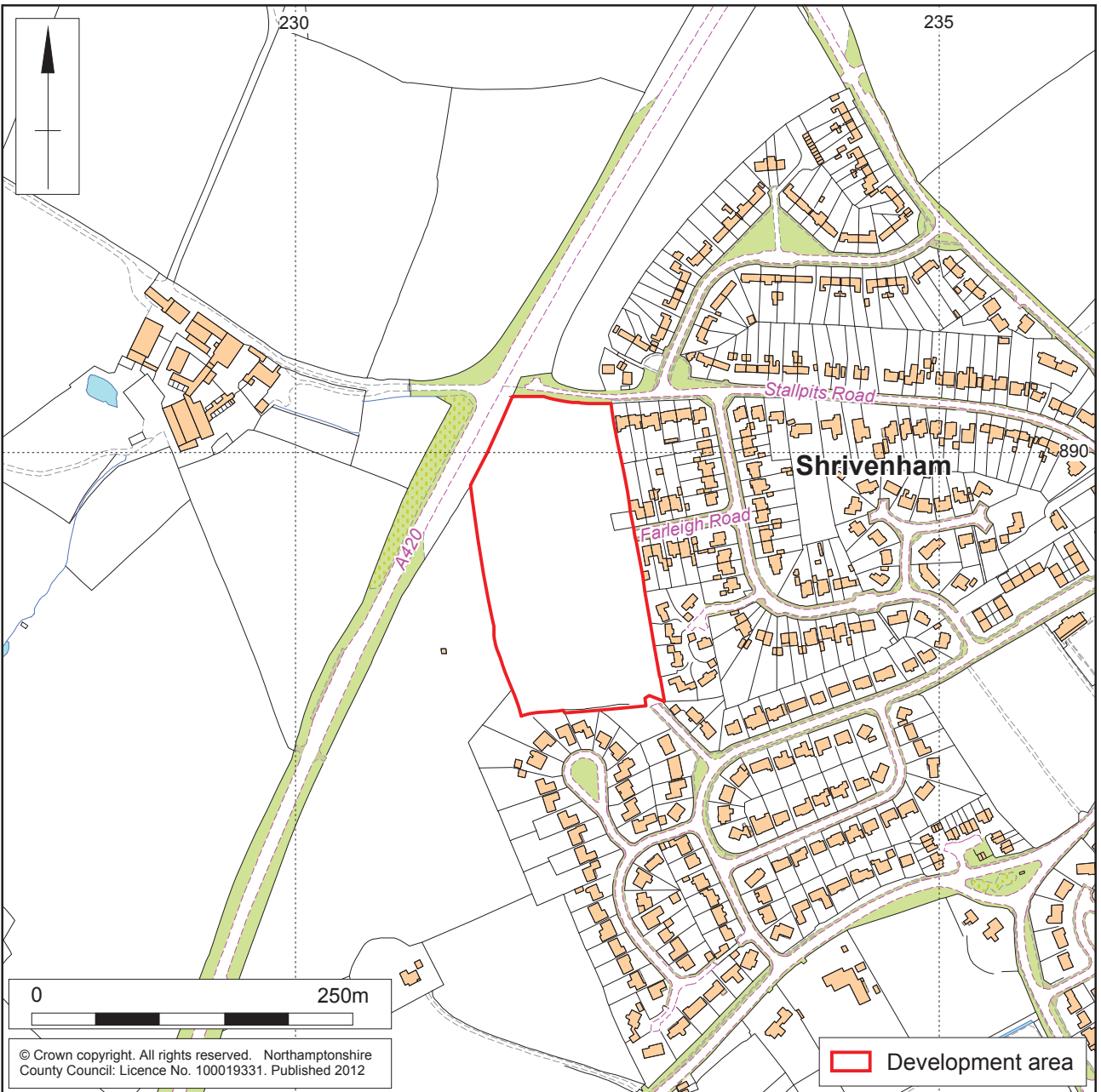
Fig 3: Trench location

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Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
OF LAND AT FARLEIGH ROAD, SHRIVENHAM, OXFORDSHIRE
NOVEMBER 2012**

Abstract

In November 2012, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Manor Oak Homes on land at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham, Oxfordshire. Roman remains, including stone buildings, had been found during the construction of the A420 about 200m to the north, although the extent of these remains was not known.

A scatter of late Iron Age or Romano-British ditches and pits were observed in the eastern part of the development area. Flooding of the trenches prevented detailed investigation of the archaeological features, but they appear to represent the western edge of activity during this period.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at Farleigh Road, Shrivenham (NGR SU 2321 8891; Fig 1). The works are being undertaken in response to a brief issued by the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC 2012) and complied with the Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2012) prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and approved by the Planning Archaeologist for OCC. The works were being undertaken in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

The programme of archaeological investigation involved the excavation of twenty-four 30m long trenches across the development area, the results of which are presented in this report. The accession number for this project is OXFCMS 2012.151.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, geology and topography

The proposed development site comprises c 2.7ha of land, currently used as pasture, located to the west of the historic core of the village, adjacent to the A420 (Fig 1). The site is bounded by Stallpits Road to the north, modern residential development to the east and south and the A420 to the west. The proposed development site lies at c105m above Ordnance Datum, although the eastern part of the site is slightly more elevated, with the ground sloping gently to the west and south. The geology comprises mudstone at the western edge, with the remainder Red Down Sandstone.



The site prior to trenching, looking north Fig 2

2.2 Archaeological background

Extensive evidence of Romano-British settlement was found during the construction of the Shrivenham bypass approximately 200m to the north of the current site. The features were not subject to detailed investigation, but included pits, ditches, cobbled areas and areas of dark soil which produced large quantities of pottery. A spread of large limestone rubble suggested that a large stone building lay on, or just beyond the edge of, the route of the bypass. It has been reported locally that Black-Burnished Ware pottery has been found in gardens of houses along Stallpits Road.

To the north of Watchfield, extensive evidence of late Iron Age/early Roman activity, largely comprising ditch systems, has been investigated by both Wessex Archaeology and Oxford Archaeology, and probably relate to a nearby low-status rural settlement (Heawood 2004).

In 1086, Shrivenham was part of the royal demesne and remained so until the 13th century. In the mid-13th century a weekly market was granted to the Earl of Pembroke. The site lies to the west of the historic core of the village.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the application area.

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the following:

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site;
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site.

3.2 Research Agenda

The project was to address the research aims and make reference to the Solent Thames Research Frameworks as appropriate (thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277).

3.3 Methodology

The works were conducted in accordance with the specification, *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008) and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, revised 2010). Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IfA 2008b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006).

The evaluation comprised twenty-four trial trenches, each 30m long with a total length 720m, amounting to approximately 4% of the area available (Fig 2). No geophysical survey was undertaken and the trenches were therefore evenly spaced across the site.

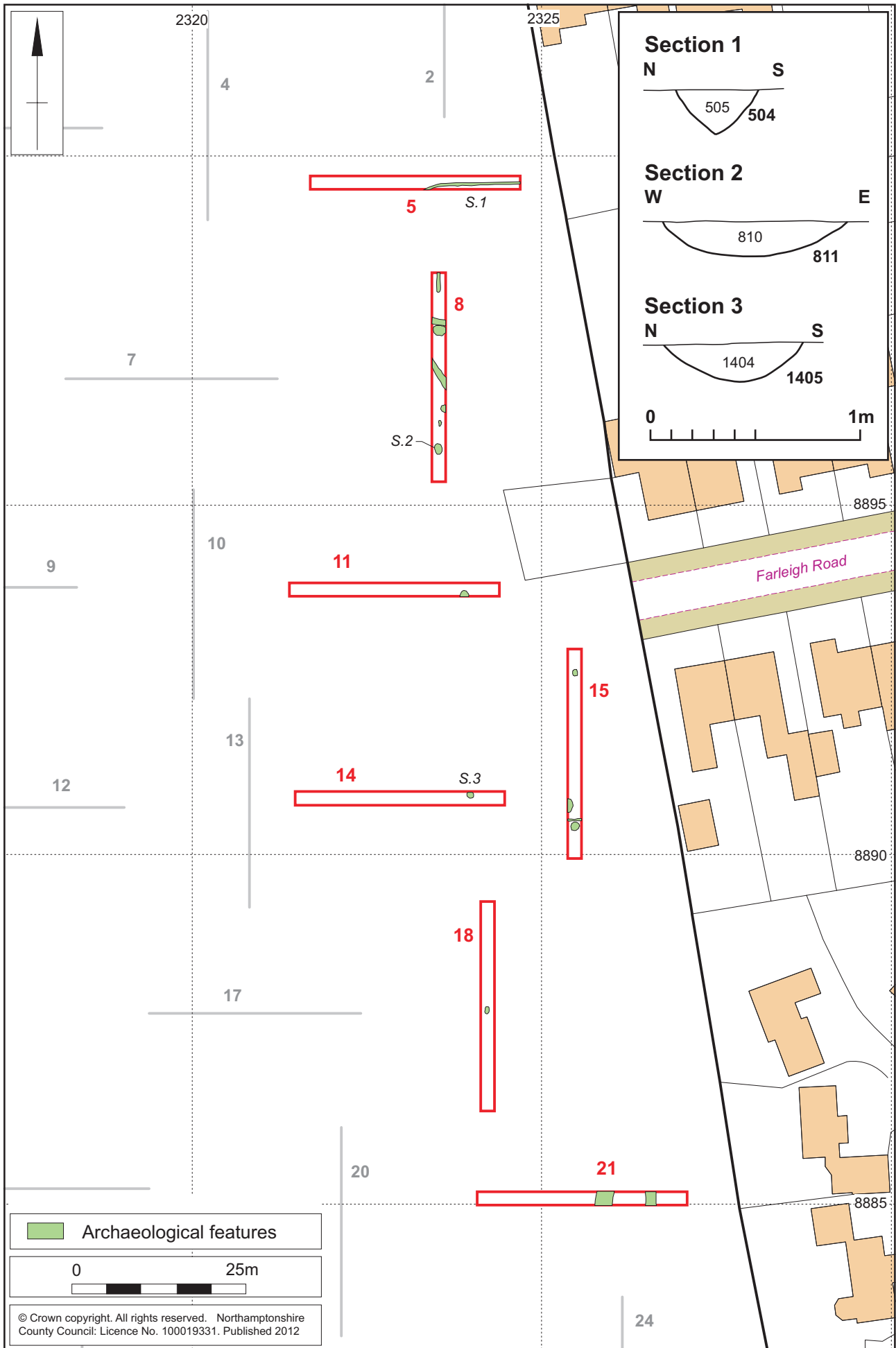
Trenches were positioned using Leica System 1200 Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. The topsoil, subsoil and non-structural post-medieval and later deposits were removed by a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to reveal significant archaeological remains or, where these were absent, the natural substrate. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil and other deposits. This work was carried out under archaeological supervision. Once the evaluation was completed, the trenches were simply backfilled, with the topsoil replaced uppermost and lightly compacted.

Each trench was hand cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological remains present. The extreme weather conditions preceding the start of the evaluation meant that the trenches flooded almost as soon as they were excavated, making excavation of the features virtually impossible. It was agreed with the Planning Archaeologist during the monitoring meeting that no further excavation was necessary. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were recorded following standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). Trenches with archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50, the trench sections and profiles through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Levels were related to the Ordnance Datum.



Scale 1:1250 (A4)

The excavated trenches Fig 3



Scales 1:75 & 1:25 (A4)

The archaeological features Fig 4

Artefacts were collected from archaeological deposits but unstratified bone and modern material was not retained.

Photographs were taken as 35mm monochrome negatives, colour transparencies and digital photographs as a supplement for reporting purposes. A photographic record of vehicle movements and reinstatements was maintained. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned by metal detector.

All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

4.1 General comments

The trenches were typically aligned north-south or east-west. The trenches were placed to give a broad coverage of the development area (Fig 3). Archaeological features were uncovered along the eastern boundary of the site in nine trenches (Trenches 5, 8, 11, 15, 18 and 21) (Fig 4).

Generally, the natural substrate comprised orange-brown sandy clay overlain by mid brown sandy clay subsoil, 0.48-0.76m thick, and dark brown sandy loam topsoil which was between 0.23-0.40m thick (Fig 5). Due to the wet conditions and subsequent flooding of the trenches, several features remained un-excavated.



Representative section, Trench 12, looking south Fig 5

4.2 Trench 5

A small V-shaped gully [504], 0.40m wide and 0.21 deep, was uncovered in the eastern half of Trench 5, running east-west (Fig 4). At the west it appeared to be turning south. It had a fill of mid grey sandy clay (505), which contained two sherds of late Iron Age pottery.



Trench 8, looking south Fig 6

4.3 Trench 8

Trench 8 contained three possible gullies and four pits. At the north of the trench, gully [804] was aligned north to south, and was c 0.40m wide but was very faint. It was not excavated, but two sherds of greyware found in the uppermost fill dated to the Roman period.

Ditch [805] was aligned east-west and was 0.90m wide, with a fill of grey-brown sandy clay. On its southern edge, pit [806] was 1.4m in diameter. It was not excavated, but there were a number of white stones near the edge of the pit. The fill was dark grey-brown sandy clay with a sherd of black-burnished ware probably dated to the late 2nd century. Gully [807] was aligned north-west to south-east and was c 1.00m wide.

There were two further circular pits, measuring 0.80m and 1.4m in diameter, and one oblong pit measuring 0.80m by 0.40m. The excavated pit [811] was 0.95m in diameter and 0.15m deep with a U-shaped profile (Figs 4, section 2 and 7). The fill (810) was grey-brown sandy clay.



Pit [811], looking north Fig 7

4.4 Trench 11

A single pit, 1.28m in diameter, was noted in the eastern part of Trench 11. The fill was orange-brown sandy clay.

4.5 Trench 14

Pit [1405], 0.67m in diameter and 0.18m deep, was situated in the eastern part of the trench (Fig 4, section 3). The shallow U-shaped feature was filled with mid grey-brown sandy clay (1404).

4.6 Trench 15

Trench 15 contained one pit, measuring 0.30m in diameter, in the northern corner and two further pits either side of an east-west orientated gully. These two pits measured 0.80m and 1.1m in diameter, the gully was 1.40m wide. The features were filled with mid grey-brown sandy clay.

4.7 Trench 18

Trench 18 contained a single sub-circular pit [1804] in the centre, measuring 1.00m in diameter.

4.8 Trench 21

In the eastern half of Trench 21 were two roughly parallel gullies, [2104] and [2105], both orientated north-south. The ditches were 1.5m and 2.4m wide.

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Prehistoric pottery by Andy Chapman

The fill (505) of gully [504] produced two plain body sherds, weighing 18g and 10mm thick, from a hand-built vessel with a smoothed surface, in a hard fabric containing scattered small inclusions of angular flint. The core is grey and the surfaces are light brown. An Iron Age date may be suggested.

5.2 Roman pottery by Tora Hylton

The evaluation produced three sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 57g. One sherd in a black-burnished-type fabric, weighing 26g, was recovered from the fill of pit [806]. The sherd represents a bodysherd from a jar decorated with burnishing and a lattice motif. Excavations at the nearby Watchfield Triangle (Heawood 2004) indicate that wheel-turned black-burnished-type wares (Fabric type B30*) arrived after the mid 2nd century (Biddulph 2004, 305). Two undiagnostic body sherds in greyware fabrics, weighing 31g, were recovered from gully [804].

*Pottery Type Series devised by Oxford Archaeology and standard for Iron Age and Roman Sites in Oxfordshire

5.3 Animal bone

The fill of pit [1504] produced a single complete leg bone of a large ungulate, weighing 290g. The epiphyses were unfused indicating a juvenile animal. No cut marks were evident.

6 DISCUSSION

The extreme weather conditions prior to the start of the evaluation hampered investigation of the features exposed in the trenches, but the trial trench evaluation found evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British activity within the proposed development site which appears to have been concentrated at its eastern edge.

The features comprised ditches, gullies and pits and may be the western edge of a small settlement; some of the ditches possibly forming enclosures or field boundaries.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT TABLES OF TRENCHES WITH FEATURES

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	30m x 1.8m E-W	SU 23231 88996	107m aOD	0.93m, 106.09m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
501	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.33m thick	—
502	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.60m thick	—
503	Natural	Orange/brown sandy clay	—	—
504	Gully cut	V-shaped cut rounded base aligned E-W	0.4m wide 0.21m deep	—
505	Gully fill	Mid grey sandy clay	0.4m wide 0.21m deep	2 sherds late Iron Age pottery

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
8	30m x 1.8m N-S	SU 23235 88965	106.73	0.76m, 105.97m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
801	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.27m thick	—
802	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.49m thick	—
803	Natural	Orange/brown sandy clay	—	—
804	Gully	Un-excavated. N-S aligned gully	0.4m wide	Two sherds of Roman pottery on surface
805	Gully	Un-excavated. Mid Grey-brown sandy clay, aligned E-W	0.8m wide	—
806	Pit	Un-excavated. Mid Grey-brown sandy clay	c1.4m diam	One sherd of Roman pottery
807	Gully	Un-excavated. Mid Grey-brown sandy clay	0.9m wide	—
808	Pit	Un-excavated. Mid Grey-brown sandy clay	0.8m diam	—
809	Pit	Un-excavated. Mid Grey-brown sandy clay	0.8m long 0.4m wide	—
810	Pit fill	Mid grey-brown sandy clay	0.95m diameter 0.15m deep	—
811	Pit cut	Sub-circular pit with shallow U-shaped profile	0.95m diameter 0.15m deep	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
11	30m x 1.8m E-W	SU 23229 88938	106.30	0.75m, 105.55m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1101	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.30m thick	—
1102	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.45m thick	—
1103	Natural	Orange-brown sandy clay	—	—
1104	Pit	Un-excavated	c1.28m	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
14	30m x 1.8m E-W	SU 23229 889 08	105.98	0.82m, 105.16m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1401	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.22m thick	—
1402	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.60m thick	—
1403	Natural	Orange/brown sandy clay	—	—
1404	Pit fill	Mid grey/brown sandy clay	0.67m diameter 0.18m deep	—
1405	Pit cut	Shallow U-shaped profile	0.67m diameter 0.18m deep	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
15	30m x 1.8m N-S	SU 23254 88914	106.07m aOD	0.93m, 105.14m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1501	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.40m thick	—
1502	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.53m thick	—
1503	Natural	Orange-brown sandy clay	—	—
1504	Pit	Un-excavated. Sub-circular pit	0.3m wide	Animal bone
1505	Pit	Un-excavated pit in edge of excavation	0.8m wide	—
1506	Gully	Un-excavated. Mid grey-brown sandy clay	c1.4m diameter	—
1507	Pit	Un-excavated. Mid grey-brown sandy clay	c1.1m diameter	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
18	30m x 1.8m N-S	SU 23242 88877	105.48	0.87m, 104.61m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1801	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.33m thick	—
1802	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.54m thick	—
1803	Natural	Orange-brown sandy clay	—	—
1804	Pit	Un-excavated sub-circular pit	c1.00m in diameter	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
21	30m x 1.8m E-W	SU 23255 88850	104.84	0.80m, 104.04m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
2101	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy loam	0.30m thick	—
2102	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy clay	0.50m thick	—
2103	Natural	Orange-brown sandy clay	—	—
2104	Gully	Un-excavated	1.5m wide x	—
2105	Gully	Un-excavated	2.4m wide	—



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