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ALDERMASTON ROAD TRIANGLE

By NICKY GARLAND

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in February 2017 at Aldermaston Road, Basingstoke and Deane, (SU 62335 53963) (CA 2017). Five ditches and a large number of tree-throw holes were uncovered within two areas of excavation, comprising 0.36 ha. The earliest feature represented the continuation of one of the Wessex Linear Ditches, identified during excavations by Wessex Archaeology at Marnel Park and Merton Rise, on the opposite site of Aldermaston Road (Wright *et al.* 2009). The ditch had a v-shaped profile and measured more than 1.56m wide and 1m deep. No finds were recovered from the fills of the Linear Ditch to confirm its probable Late Bronze Age/Early Iron-Age origins, although it was truncated by a later ditch that provided a possible date for the abandonment of the Linear Ditch in the late Roman period. The evidence suggests that the Linear Ditch may have been a long-lived feature of the landscape from the Bronze Age to Roman period. The late Roman ditch, which followed the line of the earlier Linear Ditch, also had a v-shaped profile and measured 3.4m wide and 1.36m deep. A single coin datable to AD 260–296 and nine sherds of 1st century AD pottery were recovered from a secondary fill, as well as large concentrations of flint nodules.

Mollusc assemblages recovered from the fills of the prehistoric and Roman ditches suggest that woodland persisted in the vicinity of the site during these periods, with possibly some areas of long grass present alongside the line of the ditches. Evidence from the later fills of the Roman ditch indicates that the landscape become more open during this period, although some woodland persisted. These assemblages are similar to those analysed during the excavations at Marnel Park/Merton Rise, but suggest that the site at Aldermaston Road Triangle was closer to areas of woodland and further from the well-established open environments present at Marnel Park/Merton Rise. Mollusc evidence, a relatively large number of tree-throw holes and the presence of large concentrations of flint in the Roman ditch suggest tree clearance of this area in the 3rd century AD. No evidence for arable cultivation was recovered from the biological evidence from these ditches and it is more likely that the area was cleared and used as pasture during this period. It appears that the re-establishment of part of the Wessex Linear Ditch in the later Roman period coincided with a change of land-use.

Of the remaining features, two further ditches formed part of a wider medieval/post-medieval field system and a single ditch was undated.

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