

Land at Restrop Road Purton Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Persimmon Homes Wessex

CA Project: 5926
CA Report: 16394

July 2016



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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land at Restrop Road, Purton
Location:	Purton, Wiltshire
NGR:	SU 08308 87276
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	14-15 July 2016
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Wiltshire Museum
Site Code:	RRP 16

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in July 2016 at Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire. Seven trenches measuring 25m x 1.8m representing a 4% sample of the c. 0.84ha site were excavated.

A single shallow modern gully was identified during the evaluation. No other features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered. Anomalies of possible archaeological interest identified during a previous geophysical survey of the site were confirmed to be geological in nature.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2016 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Persimmon Homes Wessex at Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire (centred on NGR: SU 08308 87276; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to inform a planning application which is currently being prepared for submission to Wiltshire Council, the local planning authority, for residential development at the Site.
- 1.2 Following consultee comments to Wiltshire Council by their planning advisor, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, the Wiltshire County Archaeologist, a geophysical survey of the site (WA 2014) was undertaken to inform a previous application (Ref: 13/04676/FUL). On the basis of the geophysical survey results and following consultation with Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, the scope for a trial trench evaluation of the site was agreed.
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2016) and approved by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the *Statement of Standards and Practices for Archaeological Fieldwork in Wiltshire* (Wiltshire County Council 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991), and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). It was monitored by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger.

The site

- 1.4 The site, an area of approximately 0.84ha, is located within the south-western outskirts of Purton, Wiltshire. It is currently occupied by agricultural land and is bounded to the west by Restrop Road, to the north by residential housing, to the east by allotment gardens and to the south by fields. It is situated on a slight, south-east facing slope at elevations of between 130m and 135m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.5 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Stanford Formation Limestone of the Jurassic period (BGS 2016). The natural substrate identified during the evaluation comprised yellow brown sandy-clay with limestone inclusions.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Heritage Assessment of the site was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology (WA) which consisted of a study of records within a 500m Study Area around the site (WA 2011). A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken in 2014 (WA 2014). A summary of these results is presented below.
- 2.2 No early prehistoric findspots or sites were identified within the study area. However, Neolithic flint scrapers and flakes were found in Purton, c. 950m to the north-east of the site. Another assemblage of Neolithic flint implements was found at Ringsbury Camp, to the south-west of the Site.
- 2.3 During the Iron Age, the site was situated within a landscape defined by a number of hillforts, such as Ringsbury Camp and Bury Hill. Iron Age activity within the Study Area is represented by findspots of pottery and a bronze coin, found c. 260m and c. 390m to the north-west of the Site, respectively.
- 2.4 During the Romano-British period, the landscape within which the site was situated was scattered with dispersed settlements, industrial sites and agricultural activity. Romano-British occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site is represented by remains of a building with a mosaic floor, possibly a villa, which was identified in 1896 approximately 250m to the north of the Site.
- 2.5 To the north of the site, adjacent to Restrop Road, is an area known as Blacklands. This name is generally associated with Romano-British occupation, particularly pottery manufacture. In addition to the settlement evidence, a likely focus of Romano-British industrial activity has been recorded some 250m to the west of the site. Here four pottery kilns were investigated and it is thought that pottery manufacture was undertaken in the mid-2nd century AD.
- 2.6 Assemblages of pottery and ceramic building material, including tiles and tesserae, were found in the vicinity of a building and industrial sites, approximately 250m and 340m to the north-west of the site. Stray finds, comprising a 1st century brooch and a group including a brooch fragment and a coin of Crispus (died AD326) were collected to the south-east and east of the Site, respectively.
- 2.7 Romano-British funerary activity is represented by a walled cemetery comprising unusually rich burials c. 210m to the north-east of the Site. Excavations undertaken

in 1987-1988 recorded seven burials, including three in stone sarcophagi and a cremation burial within a glass bottle placed in a highly decorated lead coffin.

- 2.8 Purton is first mentioned in AD795 in a charter of Egfrith, Saxon King of Mercia, granting 35 hides at Purton to the Benedictines of Malmesbury Abbey. The possession of lands at Purton by Malmesbury Abbey is confirmed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and an early to middle Saxon cemetery was found at The Fox, approximately 2km to the east of the site.
- 2.9 It is likely that during the medieval period, settlement activity continued to have been focused around Purton village and a high occurrence of medieval findspots associated with the settlement has been noted (WA 2007). The settlement is likely to have developed around St. Mary's parish church, which dates back to the 13th century.
- 2.10 Finds of 14th century pottery fragments are recorded at Dogridge, c. 260m to the north-west of the site.
- 2.11 Medieval settlement also developed to the south of Purton, at Restrop, approximately 480m to the south of the site. This settlement is first recorded in 1250 as Radestrope.
- 2.12 The earliest cartographic depiction of the site is the 1773 Andrews and Drury's Map of Wiltshire. It indicates that the village of Purton developed alongside the High Street, some 160m to the north of the site. A small settlement at Restrop to the south of the Site is also indicated on the map with the late 16th century Restrop House illustrated. At the time the map was published, the site lay within a rural hinterland of known larger settlements.
- 2.13 The early Ordnance Survey maps (1886, 1900, 1923 and later) illustrate the development and changes within the site and its environs in the post-medieval and modern periods. In the late 19th century, the site comprised part of a larger field (1.6ha), within a landscape of agricultural fields located to the south of Purton. The western, eastern and southern boundaries of the site were already extant at the time of the 1886 Ordnance Survey map.

- 2.15 In the early 20th century, the large field was partitioned into smaller fields marked by field boundaries and by 1923 the present boundaries of the site had been established. At that time, the immediate surroundings of the site were subject to changes. The allotment gardens to the east of the site were created and houses immediately to the north of the site and to the west of Restrop Road were built. Even though in the post-Second World War period the areas to the north and west of the site were subject to residential development, the site itself was not developed and retained its rural character.
- 2.18 A geophysical survey (WA 2014) of the site demonstrated the presence of anomalies of possible archaeological interest within the survey area, along with areas of increased magnetic response. Several clusters of pit-like anomalies which could have an archaeological origin were identified within the dataset, although natural or agricultural processes may cause similar responses. Two linear anomalies, oriented N-S and E-W, were identified across the centre of the site. One of these corresponded with a historic field boundary and an existing manhole cover lay along the line of the other which suggested that these anomalies are unlikely to be of significant archaeological interest.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the trial trench evaluation were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality.
- 3.2 Specific aims were to:
- Target the results of the geophysical survey to establish the nature, character and date of the anomalies identified, and identify whether they are archaeological or geological in nature.
- 3.3 In accordance with *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable Wiltshire Council and their archaeological advisor to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development

upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 7 trenches, each measuring 25m in length and approximately 1.8m in width, in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). The trenches were targeted on the results of the geophysical survey and equated to a 4% sample of the Site. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual*.
- 4.2 Exclusion zones within which no trenches could be excavated were established due to overhead power cables on the eastern side of the site and an underground sewer which crossed the centre of the site.
- 4.3 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* and no deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts pre-dating the modern period were recovered; modern artefacts were noted but not retained.
- 4.5 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive will be deposited with The Swindon Museum and Art Gallery. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 The natural geological substrate consisting of yellow brown sandy-clay with limestone inclusions was revealed in all trenches at an average depth of 0.21m below present ground level. This was overlain by grey brown silty clay topsoil averaging 0.21m in thickness. No archaeological features or deposits were identified within Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.
- 5.3 A wide, shallow north/south aligned gully 102 measuring at least 2.5m in length, 1.4m in width and averaging 500mm in depth was identified within Trench 1. It contained silty clay fill 103 from which two sherds of modern pottery and the remains of a plastic bag were recovered (not retained). The shallowness and irregular sides of the feature appeared to suggest that it may have represented a variation in the level of the natural and was not archaeological in origin.
- 5.4 No other features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered. Within the majority of the trenches geological features and tree throws were identified which broadly correlated with anomalies suggested by the preceding geophysical survey.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above), the evaluation identified no significant archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. Within all trenches the geophysical anomalies tested during trenching have been shown to represent geological features. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that structural remains associated with the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval periods do not extend as far as the proposed area of development and suggests the site fell outside the centres of Roman or medieval settlement. It is likely to have been a peripheral area which, given the absence of subsoil and/or agricultural features such as plough scars, has probably seen use principally as pasture or meadowland.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jay Wood, assisted by Claudia Jorge and Jack Harrison. The report was written by Jay Wood. The illustrations were prepared by Leo Heatley. The archive has been compiled by and prepared for deposition by Jess Cooke. The project was managed for CA by Damian DeRosa.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 18 July 2016

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 *Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

WA (Wessex Archaeology) 2007 *Land at Ridgeway Farm, Swindon, Wiltshire. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, unpublished client report ref 65420.03

WA (Wessex Archaeology) 2011 *Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, unpublished client report ref 79580.01

WA (Wessex Archaeology) 2014 *Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire. Detailed Gradiometer Survey Report*, unpublished client report ref 79581.01



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.3	
1	101	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	>0.35	
1	102	Cut		gully	N/S orientation, shallow, irregular	>2.5	1.4	0.05	
1	103	Fill	102	fill of gully	mid brown silty clay	>2.5	1.4	0.05	
2	200	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.26	
2	201	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.03	
3	300	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.25	
3	301	Cut		geological feature	irregular base and sides, north-west/south-east alignment	>0.5	0.6	0.22	
3	302	Fill	301	fill of geological feature	dark brown clay and gravel	>0.5	0.6	0.22	
3	303	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.08	
4	400	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.24	
4	401	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.21	
5	500	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.2	
5	501	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.07	
6	600	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.22	
6	601	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.05	
7	700	Layer		topsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	>25	>1.8	0.23	
7	701	Layer		natural substrate	mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay with limestone inclusions	>25	>1.8	>0.04	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in July 2016 at Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire. Seven trenches measuring 25m x 1.8m representing a 4% sample of the c. 0.84ha site were excavated.</p> <p>A single shallow modern gully was identified during the evaluation. No other features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered. Anomalies of possible archaeological interest identified during a previous geophysical survey of the site were confirmed to be geological in nature.</p>	
Project dates	14 and 15 July 2016	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	Desk-based Assessment (WA 2011) Geophysical Survey (WA 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	22-24 Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	0.84ha	
Site co-ordinates	SU 08308 87276	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	n/a	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Damian DeRosa	
Project Supervisor	Jay Wood	
MONUMENT TYPE	none	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	none	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Paper	The Swindon Museum and Art Gallery	Context sheets, drawings
Digital	The Swindon Museum and Art Gallery	Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Land at Restrop Road, Purton, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 16394		

Andover Office

Stanley House
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5LH

t: 01264 347630

Cirencester Office

Building 11
Kemble Enterprise Park
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 6BQ

t: 01285 771022

Exeter Office

Unit 53
Basepoint Business Centre
Yeoford Way
Marsh Barton Trading Estate
Exeter
EX2 8LB

t: 01392 826185

Milton Keynes Office

41 Burners Lane South
Kiln Farm
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK11 3HA

t: 01908 564660