

Land to the North of Nethercote Road Tackley Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd

On behalf of
Barwood Homes Ltd

CA Project: 660919
Report no: 17372
Site Code: BFN17
Accession no: OXCMS: 2017.81

July 2017



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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land to the North of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire
NGR:	SP 4832 2088
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	7th – 9th June 2017
Planning Reference:	West Oxfordshire District Council 15/01999/OUT (Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/W/15/3138076
Location of Archive:	Oxfordshire Museums Service
Site Code:	BFN17
Accession no:	OXCMS: 2017.81

In June 2017, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on land north of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire. The work, which was commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) on behalf of Barwood Homes Ltd, was required in order to fulfil a condition that had been attached to planning consent by West Oxfordshire District Council for the residential development of the site.

Seven of the nine evaluation trenches revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance but a small pit and a north-east/south-west aligned ditch were exposed in a trench in a north-central part of the site, both of which appeared to be of Middle Bronze Age date, indicating that there was some activity during this period in the vicinity, though not extending to any of the other evaluation trenches. These features appear to be associated with an intermittent geophysical anomaly extending to the west.

In a trench towards the south of the site a large pit or ditch terminus produced finds of mid-16th- to 18th-century date, whilst a more extensive feature, further to the east in the same trench indicated 18th- to 19th-century activity. Again, there was no evidence of this post-medieval activity extending to other trenches.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2017, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land north of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire (site centred on NGR: SP 4832 2088; Fig. 1). It was commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) on behalf of Barwood Homes Ltd and comprised the excavation of nine 50m trial trenches to determine if archaeological remains were present within the site.

1.2 The evaluation was required in order to fulfil a condition that had been attached to planning consent by West Oxfordshire District Council for the residential development of the site. The planning consent for the development was granted on appeal in November 2016 (West Oxfordshire District Council planning ref. 15/01999/OUT; appeal ref. APP/D3125/W/15/3138076, Conditions 18 and 19). The conditions read as follows:

18) Prior to any demolition and the commencement of the development a programme of archaeological work shall be implemented in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

19) Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in Condition (17) [sic], and prior to any demolition on the site and the commencement of the development (other than in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation), a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The programme of work shall include all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority by a date to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

1.3 The scope of the evaluation was agreed following discussions between EDP and Hugh Coddington, Archaeological Officer with Oxfordshire County Council's Archaeological Service (OCCAS). The discussions were informed by the results of an *Archaeological and Heritage Assessment* prepared by EDP (2015) and a

supporting geophysical survey undertaken by West Yorkshire Archaeological Services (WYAS 2015).

- 1.4 The project was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2017) and abided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), the Historic England (formerly English Heritage) procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (HE 2015).

2. SITE BACKGROUND

Site location, topography and geology

- 2.1 The proposed development site covers an area of c. 4.2ha and is located at the north-eastern edge of the village of Tackley, which lies c. 15km north of Oxford city centre (Fig. 1). It comprises an agricultural field, a short section of a green lane and a small, overgrown and derelict farmyard containing semi-ruinous farm buildings and piles of debris in the far west. The site is bounded by a farm track and residential properties to the north, residential properties fronting on to Nethercote Road to the west, residential properties fronting on to Balliol Close to the south and a railway line in a deep cutting to the east.
- 2.2 The site is situated on a low ridge that lies on an approximate north-west to south-east alignment, with ground level descending from c. 94m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the top of a ridge to c. 86–88m aOD to the east and west. The solid geology comprises interbedded Jurassic limestone and argillaceous rocks of the Great Oolite Group; no superficial deposits are mapped within the site (BGS 2017).

Historical and archaeological background

- 2.3 The historical and archaeological background of the site has been presented in detail in the *Archaeological and Heritage Assessment* prepared by EDP (2015). In brief, this concluded that the site does not contain any designated heritage assets where there would be a presumption in favour of preservation *in situ* and against development proceeding. Likewise, there are no non-designated heritage assets within the site, as would have been recorded in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). In the wider area, archaeological sites recorded in the Oxfordshire

HER indicate a moderate potential for prehistoric and Roman remains to occur within the site and a low potential for remains of later periods.

- 2.4 A geophysical survey of accessible parts of the site was carried out in February 2015 (WYAS 2015). The results identified one anomaly that may be archaeological in nature, although it was considered equally likely that it could be geological in origin or the result of modern activity.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation as outlined in the WSI were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable West Oxfordshire District Council, as advised by OCCAS, to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance, 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 evaluation comprised the excavation of nine 50m trial trenches (450 linear metres at 1.8m wide) in the locations shown in Figure 2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and scanned for live services by trained CA staff using CAT and Genny equipment in accordance with the CA *Safe System of Work for Avoiding Underground Services*. The final 'as dug' trench plan was recorded with GPS.
- 4.2 All trenches were excavated using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision and ceased when the first archaeological horizon or geological substrate was revealed (whichever was encountered first). Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately adjacent to each trench.

- 4.3 Following machining, all archaeological features and deposits were planned and recorded in accordance with CA's *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual* (CA 2007). Each context was recorded on a *pro forma* context sheet by written and measured description. Principal deposits were recorded electronically using Leica GPS (as appropriate). Sections were drawn at 1:10 scale. Where detailed feature planning was undertaken using GPS, this was carried out in accordance with *Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual* (CA 2017). Photographs were taken as appropriate, using a digital SLR camera. Finds were bagged separately and related to the context record. Artefacts were recovered and retained for processing and analysis, in accordance with *Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (CA 2010).
- 4.4 Sample excavation of archaeological deposits was sufficient to permit their characterisation and to achieve the objectives of the project. Discrete features were half-sectioned and excavated sections through linear features were as extensive as possible within the limited area of the evaluation trenches.
- 4.5 Due care was taken to identify deposits which may have had environmental potential, but no such deposits were recognised and therefore a programme of environmental sampling was not initiated.
- 4.6 Upon completion of the evaluation all trenches were simply backfilled, with topsoil uppermost, and made level as far as practicable through the tracking of the excavator.
- 4.7 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes and will be deposited with the *Oxfordshire Museums Service*. A summary of information from this project, as set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.



5. EVALUATION RESULTS

- 5.1 The same broad stratigraphic sequence was observed in all nine trenches; the earliest deposit, recorded within 0.5m of the surface, was a firm, natural, mid blue grey to mid brown clay, which was overlain by a thin deposit of slightly friable, mid brownish red, natural silty sand. The sequence in each trench was capped by between 0.28m and 0.38m of loose, light grey brown, sandy silt ploughsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were present within Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8, though limited evidence from Trenches 3 and 9 indicated two broad phases of occupation were represented within the site.

Middle Bronze Age (1500BC to 1100BC)

Trench 3

- 5.2 In a north-central part of the site, cutting into the upper natural deposit less than 18m from the north end of Trench 3 and extending beyond the western edge of the trench was a shallow, sub-circular pit 302 (Figs 3 and 4). The pit measured 2m north to south by at least 1.15m east to west and was 0.21m deep with gently sloping, concave sides breaking to a concave base. The single fill (303) comprised soft, dark red brown silt clay with occasional small, angular limestone fragments. A small assemblage of pottery recovered from this deposit has been dated to the Middle Bronze Age. Fragments of identifiable cattle bone were also recovered.
- 5.3 A short distance to the south of the pit was what appeared to be the north-eastern terminus of a north-east/south-west aligned, shallow linear feature 304 that extended beyond the western trench edge (Fig. 5). Excavation of the terminus revealed a feature 0.52m wide and 0.2m deep with steeply sloping, slightly concave sides breaking to a gently concave base. The single fill (305) comprised soft, mid red brown silt clay with occasional small, angular limestone fragments. Three very small fragments of pottery recovered from the fill have also been dated to the Middle Bronze Age.

Post-medieval/modern (1485 to present)

Trench 9

- 5.4 In the western half of Trench 9 towards the south of the site was a feature 902 that was either the terminus of a north/south aligned ditch or a pit that extended beyond the southern edge of the trench (Fig. 6). The feature measured at least 3.8m across but was just 0.36m deep. It was filled with a single deposit (903) that comprised

loose, light yellow brown sand silt, from which a small finds assemblage was recovered, including iron fragments, a copper alloy button and a single sherd of mid-16th- to 18th-century pottery.

- 5.5 Located just to the east of the centre of Trench 9 was a large, sub-rectangular pit 904 that extended beyond the northern and southern edges of the trench. The pit measured at least 8m across and 1m deep, exhibiting slightly irregular, steeply sloping sides. The single fill (905) comprised a loose, mid yellow brown, sand silt that yielded a small finds assemblage including ceramic building material (CBM) and pottery, the latter being dated from the 18th to mid-19th century. Cut into the backfilled pit was a small, sub-circular pit or posthole 907, of clearly quite recent origin.

6. THE FINDS *by Jacky Sommerville*

- 6.1 Artefactual material was hand-recovered from four deposits. The recovered material dates to the Middle Bronze Age and post-medieval/modern periods. Quantities of the artefact types recorded are given in Appendix B. The pottery has been recorded according to sherd count/weight per fabric. Codes have been created for post-medieval/modern fabric types.

Pottery: Early prehistoric

- 6.2 A total of eight sherds (25g) was recorded from this date range, from fill 303 of pit 302 and fill 305 of ditch terminus 304. All presented in a coarse, shell-tempered fabric and were relatively unabraded. Rimsherds representing two vessels (one each from fills 303 and 305) are of simple, slightly in-curved form, suggestive of neckless, barrel-shaped vessels. That from pit fill 303 featured subtle impressions along the top of the rim. Middle Bronze Age dating is suggested for this pottery, based on the fabric, form and decoration.

Post-medieval/modern

- 6.3 The post-medieval/modern pottery totalled four sherds (6g). Of mid 16th to 18th century date are sherds of glazed earthenware (GRE) and unglazed earthenware (UGRE). A rimsherd from a small vessel (probably a cup or jug) in transfer-printed Pearlware (TRP) dates to the late 18th to mid 19th centuries.

Ceramic building material

- 6.4 Four fragments of ceramic building material (8g), in a moderately abraded condition, were retrieved from fill 905 of pit 904.

Other finds

- 6.5 Fill 903 of ditch terminus 902 produced seven metal items. A copper alloy button (3g) is identified as a Type 7 or 9 according to South's typology, which is dateable to the 18th century (Noël Hume 1969, 90–1). Six fragmentary iron objects comprise four nails and two strip fragments, all of uncertain date.

7. THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Animal bone

- 7.1 Animal bone amounting to six fragments (256g) was recovered from deposits 303 and 305, the fills of Middle Bronze Age pit 302 and ditch 304, and from deposit 905, the fill of pit 904 dating to the post-medieval/modern period. The bone was poorly preserved and fragmentary; however it was possible to identify the remains of cattle (*Bos taurus*).

Middle Bronze Age

- 7.2 Five fragments of bone (239g) were recovered in association with Middle Bronze Age artefacts. Of these, the only identifiable material was a partial cattle tibia and scapula recovered from deposit 303. There were no observable cut marks to suggest an origin in butchery waste. This, together with the low recovery of identifiable bone, prevents any interpretative inference beyond species identification.

Post medieval/modern

- 7.3 A single fragment (4g) was recovered from deposit 905; it was poorly preserved and could not be identified beyond the level of cattle-size mammal.



8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation generally confirmed the results of the geophysical survey and demonstrated that the only geophysical anomaly of any archaeological significance within the site was an intermittent linear feature on an east/west alignment, which was investigated in Trench 3. It is likely that the pit exposed in the trench corresponded with one of the eastern elements of the linear anomaly. Given that Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from this feature and the adjacent ditch, there is a suggestion that the other elements of the anomaly extending westwards may also be of this date. As only two features of this date were exposed by the evaluation it was not possible to determine whether the geophysical anomaly represented an intermittent linear feature or some other type of monument such as a pit alignment.
- 8.2 Towards the south of the site, the large pit exposed in Trench 9 also appears to have been visible as a geophysical anomaly, though the recent date of this feature and the smaller and slightly earlier feature to the west indicates a low archaeological significance.

9. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 9.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Whelan assisted by Pete Banks and Rob Falvey. The report was written by Andy Whelan and Peter Boyer and the illustrations were prepared by Charlotte Patman. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans and prepared for deposition by Jessica Cook. The project was managed for CA by Simon Carlyle.



10. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2017 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 26th June 2017

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 *Land to the North of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*, unpublished document

DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

EDP 2015 *Land to the East of Nethercote Road, Tackley: Archaeological and Heritage Assessment*, report **EDP2383_05a**

EH (English Heritage) 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*

HE (Historic England) 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide*

Noël Hume, I. N. 1969 *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press.

WYAS (West Yorkshire Archaeological Services) 2015 *Land at Balliol Farm, Tackley, Oxfordshire: Geophysical Survey*, report **2718**



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Context Interpretation	Context Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)
Trench 1						
100	Layer	Topsoil	Same as (800)	-	-	0.38
101	Layer	Subsoil	Same as (801)	-	-	0.18
102	Layer	Geology	Glacial clay, mid brown gray clay, firm	-	-	-
Trench 2						
200	Layer	Topsoil	Same as (800)	-	-	0.25
201	Layer	Subsoil	Same as (801)	-	-	0.30
202	Layer	Geology	Same as (102)	-	-	-
Trench 3						
300	Layer	Plough soil		-	-	0.38
301	Layer	Geology		-	-	-
302	Cut	Cut of pit	Oval, concave sides, rounded base	2	1.15	0.21
303	Fill	Fill of pit	Dark red brown, silty clay	2	1.15	0.21
304	Cut	Cut of Ditch terminus	Linear, irregular rounded end, rounded base, NE-SW	3.2	1.65	0.2
305	Fill	Fill of ditch terminus	Mid red brown, silty clay	3.2	1.65	0.2
Trench 4						
400	Layer	Plough soil	Same as (800)	-	-	-
401	Layer	Geology	Same as (801)	-	-	-
402	Layer	Geology	Mid blueish grey, firm, clay, no inclusions	-	-	-
Trench 5						
500	Layer		Same as (800)	-	-	0.34
501	Layer		Same as (801)	-	-	-
Trench 6						
600	Layer	Plough soil	Same as (800)	-	-	0.30
601	Layer	layer	Same as (801)	-	-	-
Trench 7						
700	layer	Plough soil	Same as (800)	-	-	0.35
701	layer	Geology	Same as (801)	-	-	-
702	layer	geology	Same as (802)	-	-	-
Trench 8						
800	layer	Plough soil	Light greyish brown, sandy silt	-	-	0.36
801	layer	Geology	Mid brownish red, silty sand, pieces of limestone	-	-	-
802	layer	Geology	Light blueish grey, firm, sandy clay. Layer markedly diff. with high concentration of plough scars	-	-	-
Trench 9						
900	layer	Plough soil	Light greyish brown, sandy silt	-	-	-
901	layer	natural	Mid brownish red, silty sand W1- limestone deposits	-	-	-
902	Cut	Cut of ditch terminus	Ditch terminus	3.8	1.1	0.36
903	Fill	Fill of ditch terminus	Lightly yellowish brown, sandy silt, post-med/ modern ditch, Fe nails, pot and Cu button	3.8	1.1	0.36
904	Cut	Cut of pit	Not fully excavated	8	2	1
905	Fill	Fill of pit	Mid yellowish brown, sandy silt, post med/modern, CBM, pot	8	2	1
906	Cut	Cut of pit		-	-	-
907	fill	Fill of pit	unexcavated	-	-	-

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Table 1: Finds concordance

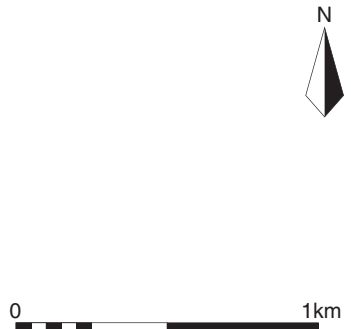
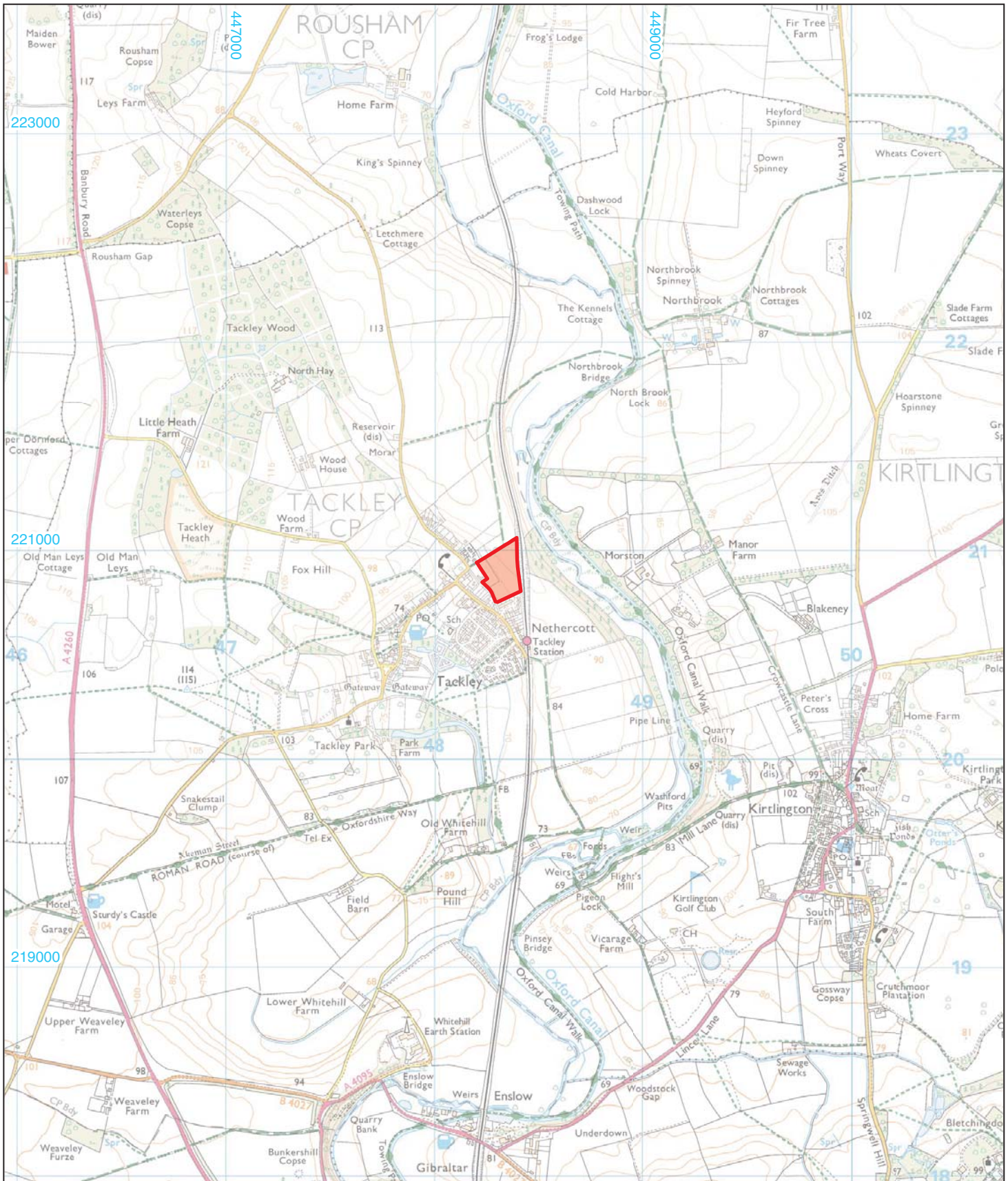
Context	Category	Description	Fabric	Count	Weight	Spot-date
303	Early prehistoric pottery	Coarse, shell-tempered fabric	SH	5	22	MBA
305	Early prehistoric pottery	Coarse, shell-tempered fabric	SH	3	3	MBA
903	Post-medieval pottery Copper alloy Iron	Glazed earthenware Button Nails, strip fragments	GRE	1 1 6	1 3 62	MC16-C18
905	Post-medieval pottery Post-medieval/modern pottery Post-medieval/modern pottery Ceramic building material	Glazed earthenware Unglazed earthenware Transfer-printed pearlware Fragment	GRE UGRE TRP	1 1 1 4	1 3 1 8	LC18-MC19

APPENDIX C: THE PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE*Table 2: Identified animal species by fragment count (NISP) and weight and context*

Cut	Fill	BOS	LM	Total	Weight (g)
Middle Bronze Age					
302	303	2	1	3	227
304	305			2	12
Subtotal		2	3	5	239
Post-medieval/modern					
904	905		1	1	17
Total		2	4	6	
Weight		211	45	256	

APPENDIX D: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land to the North of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire	
Short description	Seven of the nine evaluation trenches revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance but a small pit and a north-east/south-west aligned ditch were exposed in a trench in a north-central part of the site, both of which appeared to be of Middle Bronze Age date, indicating that there was some activity during this period in the vicinity, though not extending to any of the other evaluation trenches. These features appear to be associated with an intermittent geophysical anomaly extending to the west. In a trench towards the south of the site a large pit or ditch terminus produced finds of mid-16th- to 18th-century date, whilst a more extensive feature, further to the east in the same trench indicated 18th- to 19th-century activity. Again, there was no evidence of this post-medieval activity extending to other trenches.	
Project dates	7 – 9 June 2017	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysics (WYAS 2015), AHA (EDP 2015)	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type	Middle Bronze Age pit and ditch	
Significant finds	Middle Bronze Age pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Land to the North of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire	
Study area	4.2 ha	
Site co-ordinates	SP 4832 2088	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology (CA)	
Project Brief originator	OCCAS	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CA	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
Project Supervisor	Andrew Whelan (CA)	
PROJECT ARCHIVE		
	Site Code: BFN17, Accession Number: OXCMS: 2017.81	Content
Physical	Oxfordshire Museums Service	Pottery, CBM, animal bone, iron, copper alloy
Paper		Context sheet, trench sheet, day record sheet, drawing
Digital	Oxfordshire HER	Report, digital photos, plans, database
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Land to the North of Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> , report 17372		



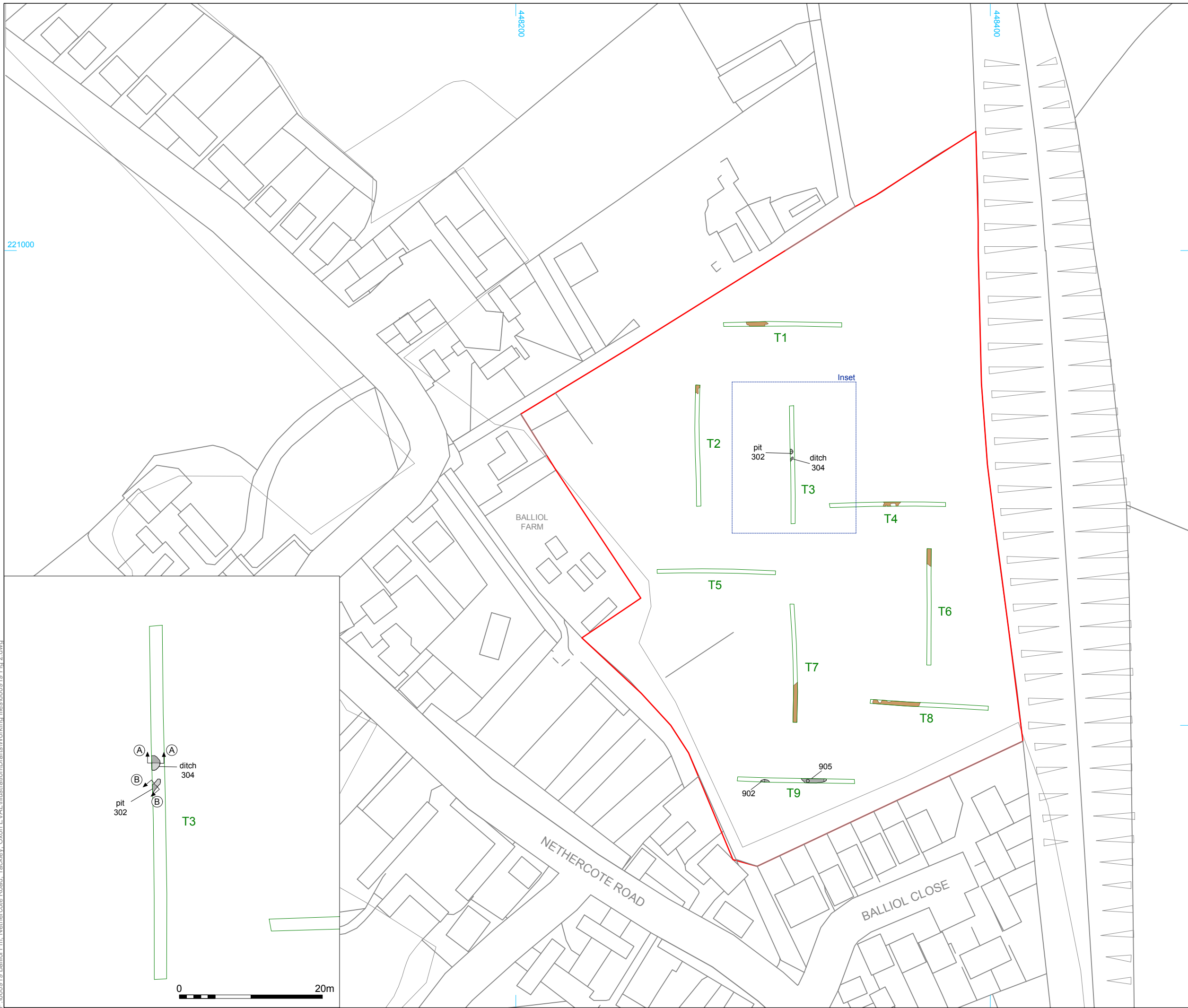
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PROJECT TITLE
 Balliol Farm, Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 27/06/2017	
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- site boundary
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- natural
- section location



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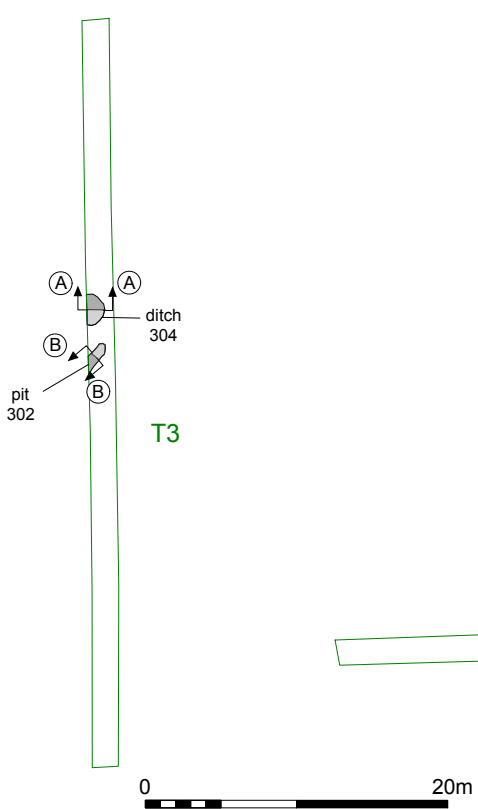
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PROJECT TITLE
 Balliol Farm, Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	CP	PROJECT NO.	660919	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	27/06/2017	
APPROVED BY	SC	SCALE@A3	1:1,500 & 1:500	2

P:\660919 Balliol Fm, Nethercote Road, Tackley, Oxon EVAL\Illustration\Drafts\Working files\660919 Fig 2.dwg





Trench 3, looking north (scales 0.4m and 1m)



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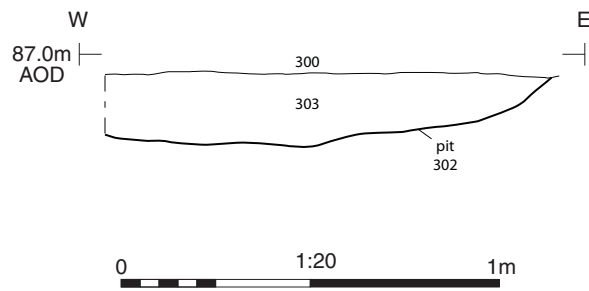
Balliol Farm, Nethercote Road, Tackley,
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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 3: photograph

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Section AA



Pit 302, looking north (scale 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

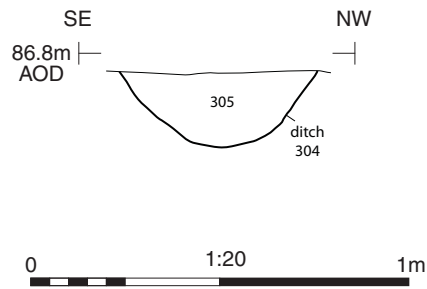
Pit 302: section and photograph

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FIGURE NO.

4

Section BB



Ditch 304, looking south-west (scale 0.4m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Ditch 304: section and photograph

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FIGURE NO.

5



Trench 9, looking west (scales 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

Balliol Farm, Nethercote Road, Tackley,
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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 9: photograph

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