

West Berkshire Community Hospital Rookes Way Thatcham Berkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

CA Project: 770476
CA Report: 17165

August 2017



West Berkshire Community Hospital
 Rookes Way
 Thatcham
 Berkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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SUMMARY

Project Name: West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way

Location: Thatcham, Berkshire

NGR: SU 4932 6769

Type: Watching Brief

Date: 29-30 June and 25-26 July 2017

Planning Reference: 16/02800/COMIND (14/00912/COMIND)

Location of Archive: West Berkshire Museum

Site Code: RWT 16

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in June and July 2017 during groundworks associated with a two storey extension to the existing hospital buildings at West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, West Berkshire to provide a new Renal Dialysis Unit.

An early Roman field system was recorded consisting of two sets of parallel ditches, that appear to form the continuation of a trackway previously identified during an excavation by Oxford Archaeology. One of the ditches, 105/205, is on the same general N/S alignment as the ditch systems identified by an excavation conducted by Oxford Archaeology 100m further to the south, while ditch 112 and 110 appear to form a continuation of the trackway system that runs in a general E/W direction. These two field systems or trackways are probably contemporary and form part of a wider landscape of agricultural fields systems and trackways as identified in the previous works on the site. The sites proximity to the Roman road linking Silchester and Cirencester and the trackway possibly leading from it further indicate that the site was part of an intensively managed landscape.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June and July 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust at West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham (centred on NGR: 449336 167789; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil 'Condition 5' of a planning consent for a two storey extension to the existing hospital buildings to provide a new Renal Dialysis Unit (Planning ref: 16/02800/COMIND, superseding 14/00912/COMIND).
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by the West Berkshire County Archaeologist (WBCA) the archaeological advisor to the West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) and with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2016) and approved by the WBDC acting on the advice of the WBCA. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 0.1ha, and comprises flat grassland within the grounds of West Berkshire Community Hospital, next to the existing hospital building (Figure 2). The site lies at approximately 79m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), with the hospital grounds sloping to the south, from 84m aOD from the north end of Rookes Way to 74m aOD at the southern end of Rookes Way, adjacent to the A4.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Lambeth Group, clay, silt and sand with superficial deposits of Thatcham Gravel, sand and gravel (BGS 2017). The natural substrate encountered during the watching brief comprised silt clay overlying gravel, consistent with the mapped deposits.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The archaeological background provided below is a succinct summary of information garnered from a previous evaluation and subsequent strip, map and sample by Oxford Archaeology in 2002 on the site of the hospital (OA2002a).

- 2.2 The strip, map and sample investigation revealed part of a late Iron Age early Romano-British ditched field system and trackway, along with two cremations and a scattering of pits. Phase 2 uncovered a northward continuation of these features and a possible grave. It also confirmed that the trackway, and probably the field system, had two phases, and that the flanking drainage ditches of the trackway were dug as part of a single integrated system with the field boundaries.
- 2.3 The site of the proposed extension is in an area not covered by previous archaeological investigations and as such demonstrates potential that further remains could be impacted on (Godden 2014).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
 - to ascertain whether further Iron Age and Romano-British activity were present on the site and if so what the nature of that activity might be: in particular in regards to a possible connection to Thatcham Newtown Roman settlement
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2016). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising of the striping of the modern deposits overlying natural substrate and archaeological deposits in the area of the new Renal Dialysis Unit and associated road and car parking (Figure 2). In addition, three, 5m long by 1.5m wide evaluation trenches (**Trenches 1, 2, and 3**), were excavated along the line of the new road to determine depth and level of survival of any archaeological deposits (Figure 2).

- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGURES 2-5)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the watching brief results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively.
- 5.2 The natural geological substrate (**103/104/203/204/303**) consisting of a soft yellow brown clay silt overlying clays and sandy gravels, was revealed at 81.54m aOD (0.55m below present ground level (bpgl)) in **Trench 1** and 82.09m aOD (0.4m bpgl) in **Trench 2** and between 81.1m aOD (southern end) and 81.97m aOD (northern end) in **Trench 3**. This was overlain by a dump (**102/202/302**) of mixed soil and gravel containing plastic and builders waste dating to the construction of the adjacent buildings, as confirmed by the Site Manager (*pers. comm.* Phil Desio) who was present during the construction of the earlier hospital buildings. The interface between the dump and natural substrate was very irregular. The surface of the natural was scoured by the teeth of machine buckets, and in the area of **Trench 3** there were numerous wheel ruts from site plant. Sealing the dump was a layer of topsoil and turf c. 0.1m thick. No archaeological features or finds were identified in **Trench 3**.

Trench 1 (Figures 1-5)

- 5.3 In **Trench 1** three ditches **105**, **110** and **112** and a gully **108** were recorded. A north/south orientated ditch (**105/205**) was identified, between 81.54m aOD (0.55m below present ground level (bpgl)) in **Trench 1** and 82.09m aOD (0.4m bpgl) in **Trench 2** (Figure 2).

- 5.4 North-south aligned ditch **105** was 0.65m wide and 0.3m in depth. It was linear in plan with undulating irregular sides and a concave base, and was filled with **106** and **107**. It is the same as ditch **205**. 19 shards of Roman pottery dating to the 1st or early 2nd century were found within the fill of **107**.
- 5.5 North-south aligned gully, **108**, was 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep. It had moderately concave sides and a concave base forming a u shaped profile and contained fill **109**. Burnt flint was found within fill **109**.
- 5.6 North-east/south-west ditch, **110**, was 0.7m wide and 0.16m deep. The sides of the feature were concave, with a concave base, and filled by **111**. Post-medieval ceramic building material, and worked, and burnt flint were recovered from the fill of the ditch but are all likely to be residual.
- 5.7 North-east/south-west ditch, **112**, was linear in plan and was unexcavated.

Trench 2

- 5.8 Ditch **205** was excavated in **Trench 2**. It is the same as ditch **105**. It cut the natural geology and was 0.53m wide by 0.26m deep, with a steep sided, round bottomed, 'U' shaped profile. The ditch contained a single, finely laminated grey brown clay silt, which had no inclusions. Early Romano British pot sherds from a single vessel and two waste flint flakes were recovered from the fill of the ditch.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 Artefact material was hand-recovered from four deposits (ditch and gully fills) and as unstratified finds. The recovered material dates to the prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval periods. Quantities of the artefact types are given in Appendix B. The pottery has been recorded according to sherd count/weight per fabric – fabric codes have been devised for the purpose of this report.

Pottery: Roman

- 6.2 A total of 43 sherds (316g) of Roman pottery was recorded from fills **107** and **204** of ditch **105** and ditch **205** respectively. All sherds have suffered surface loss, probably as a result of the burial environment. All present in a sandy greyware fabric (GW),

probably of local origin. Sherds from fill **107** derive from a carinated vessel, most likely dating to the mid-1st to early 2nd century AD.

Lithics

- 6.3 A total of four worked flints (23g) and three pieces of burnt, unworked flint (36g) was retrieved. The worked items comprised three flakes, which are not chronologically diagnostic, and one bladelet. The latter would be most typical in a Mesolithic assemblage, but is residual in fill **111** of ditch **110**.

Ceramic building material

- 6.4 Fill **111** of ditch **110** produced three fragments (10g) of ceramic building material, probably of post-medieval date.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The watching brief demonstrated that the historic topsoil and any subsoil were probably removed during the construction of the earlier hospital buildings (*pers. Comm.* Phil Desio, Site Manager) and that the natural substrate had also been substantially truncated during these works in the area of **Trench 3**. However, east of **Trench 3**, within **Trenches 1** and **2** the level of truncation was less significant and the upper surface of the natural substrate survived, along with archaeological features.
- 7.2 **Trench 1** contained two sets of parallel boundary ditches **105/108** that ran in a N/S direction and **110/112** that ran in an E/W direction. Ditch **205** represented a southerly extension of ditch **105** into **Trench 2**. This early Roman field system appears to form the continuation of a trackway previously identified during an excavation by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2002a). These two field systems or trackways are probably contemporary and form part of a wider landscape of agricultural fields systems and trackways. The sites proximity to the Roman road linking Silchester and Cirencester and the trackway possibly leading from it further indicate that the site was part of an intensively farmed and managed landscape.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Busby. The report was written by Peter Busby, and Ray Kennedy. The finds and biological evidence reports were written by Jacky Sommerville. The illustrations were prepared by Charlie Patman. The archive has been compiled by Zoe Emery, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Ray Kennedy.

9. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2017 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 3 July 2017

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 *West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, Berkshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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OA (Oxford Archaeology), 2002a, *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury, Berkshire, Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation, Strip, Map and Sample Investigation Interim Report*

OA, 2002b, *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury, Berkshire, Archaeological Watching Brief*





APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brownish grey clayey silt	16	14	0-0.1m
1	101	Layer		Made ground	Mixes mid brownish yellow sandy clay and gravel, and mid brown clayey silt with common sub-angular brick and concrete inclusions	16	14	0.1-0.4
1	102	Layer		Subsoil	Mid reddish brown clayey silt	16	14	0.2-0.4
1	103	Layer		Natural	Mid brownish red clayey silt	16	14	0.4+
1	104	Layer		Made ground	Gravel footings for path	16	14	0.2
1	105	Cut		Ditch	Linear in plan with undulating irregular sides and a concave base	1	0.65	0.3
1	106	Fill		Primary Fill	Mottled mid brownish grey moderately compact clayey silt with common charcoal flecks	1	0.65	0.18
1	107	Fill		Secondary Fill	Mid greyish brown moderately compact clayey silt with common charcoal flecks and occasional sub-rounded chert inclusions	1	0.47	0.11
1	108	Cut		Gully	Linear in plan with concave moderately sloping sides and a concave base	1	0.45	0.12
1	109	fill	108	Gully fill	mid yellowish brown clayey silt moderate compaction	>1	0.45	0.12
1	110	cut		Ditch	linear in plan slightly concave sides concave base north-east/south-west alignment	>1	0.7	0.16
1	111	fill	110	Ditch fill	mid greyish brown clayey sand firm	>1	0.7	0.16
1	112	cut		Ditch	linear north-east/south-west alignment unexcavated	>5	0.65	n/a
1	113	fill	112	Ditch fill	mid greyish brown clayey sand firm compaction	>5	0.65	n/a
2	201	Layer		Top soil	As 101	>6.3	>1.5	0.07
2	202	Layer		Dump	As 102	>6.3	>1.5	0.33
2	203	Layer		Upper natural	As 103	>6.3	>1.5	>0.26
2	204	Fill	205	Ditch fill	Grey brown clay silt	>1.5	0.53	0.26
2	205	Cut		Ditch	N/S orientated linear with a 'U' shaped profile, with steep sides and rounded base	>1.5	0.53	0.26
3	301	Layer		Top soil	Mixes mid brownish yellow sandy clay and gravel, and mid brown clayey silt with common sub-angular brick and concrete inclusions	32	19	0.1
3	302	Layer		Dump	Mid reddish brown clayey silt	32	19	0.7
3	303	Layer		Lower natural	Yellow brown silt clay overlying yellow orange sand gravel	32	19	-

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Category	Description	Fabric Code	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
0	Worked flint	Flake		1	3	-
107	Roman pottery	Sandy greyware	GW	19	137	C1-EC2
109	Burnt flint			1	28	-
111	Post-medieval ceramic building material	Fragment		3	10	Post-medieval
	Worked flint	Bladelet		1	<1	
	Burnt flint			1	2	
204	Roman pottery	Sandy greyware	GW	24	179	C1-EC2
	Worked flint	Flake		1	3	
	Burnt flint			1	6	

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project Name	West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, Berkshire: Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in June and July 2017 during groundworks associated with a two storey extension to the existing hospital buildings at West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, Berkshire to provide a new Renal Dialysis Unit.</p> <p>An early Roman field system was found consisting of two sets of parallel ditches, that appear to form the continuation of a trackway previously identified during an excavation by Oxford Archaeology. One of the ditches, 105/205, is on the same general N/S alignment as the ditch systems identified by an excavation conducted by Oxford Archaeology 100m further to the south, while ditch 112 and 110 appear to form a continuation of the trackway system that runs in a general E/W direction. These two field systems or trackways are probably contemporary and form part of a wider landscape of agricultural fields systems and trackways as identified in the previous works on the site. The sites proximity to the Roman road linking Silchester and Cirencester and the trackway possibly leading from it further indicate that the site was part of a more complex farmed landscape.</p>
Project dates	June and July 2017
Project type	Watching Brief
Previous work	<p>OAU (Oxford Archaeology Unit) 2000 <i>Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury</i> Evaluation Report</p> <p>OAU 2001 <i>Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury</i>. Phase 1 Archaeological Mitigation, Strip, Map and Sample Investigation Interim Report</p> <p>OA (Oxford Archaeology) 2002 <i>Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury, Berkshire</i>. Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation, Strip, Map and Sample Investigation Interim Report</p> <p>OA (Oxford Archaeology) 2002 <i>Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury, Berkshire</i>. Archaeological Watching Brief</p>
Future work	Unknown
PROJECT LOCATION	
Site Location	West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, Berkshire
Study area (M ² /ha)	0.1ha
Site co-ordinates	SU 4932 6769
PROJECT CREATORS	
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology
Project Brief originator	West Berkshire County Archaeologist
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology
Project Manager	Ray Kennedy
Project Supervisor	Peter Busby

MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.) West Berkshire Museum	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		Flint, ceramics
Paper		Context sheets, matrices
Digital		Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>West Berkshire Community Hospital, Rookes Way, Thatcham, Berkshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report 17165		



- site boundary
- previous archaeological works



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PROJECT TITLE
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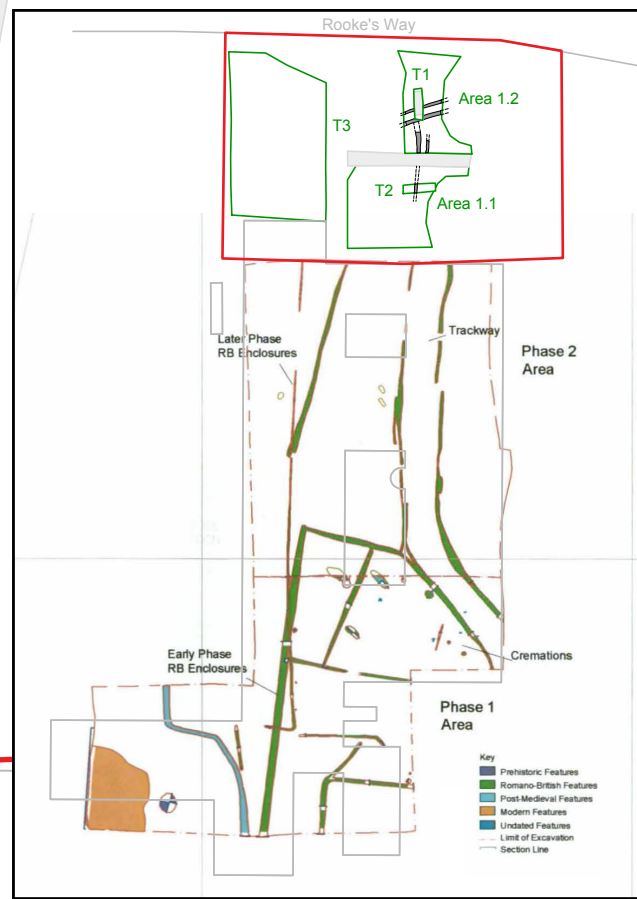
FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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APPROVED BY RK	SCALE@A4 1:25,000	1

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- site boundary
- evaluation trench/excavation area
- archaeological feature (excavated/unexcavated)
- modern
- B B section location



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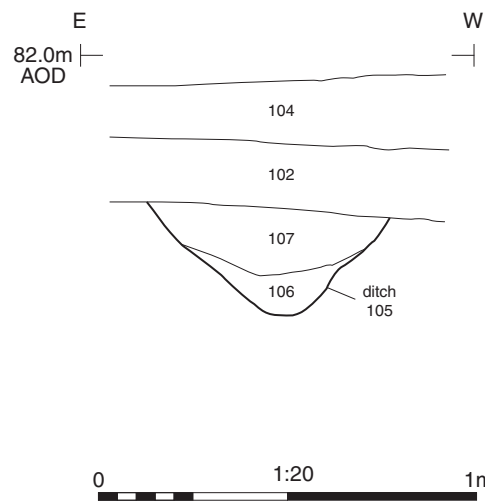
PROJECT TITLE
West Berkshire Community Hospital, Thatcham
FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	CP	PROJECT NO.	770476	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	08/08/2017	
APPROVED BY	RK	SCALE@A3	1:200	2

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0 1:1000 50m
 Oxford Archaeology 2002 feature plan

Section AA



Ditch 105, north facing section (scale 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

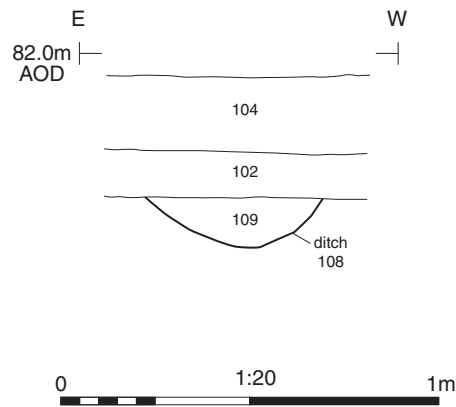
Ditch 105: section and photograph

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FIGURE NO.

3

Section BB



Ditch 108, north facing section (scale 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

West Berkshire Community Hospital

FIGURE TITLE

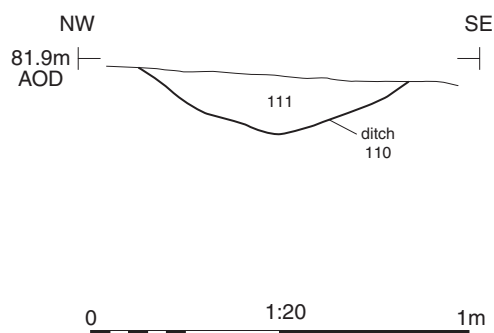
Ditch 108: section and photograph

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FIGURE NO.

4

Section CC



Ditch 110, south facing section (scale 1m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Ditch 110: section and photograph

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FIGURE NO.

5

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