


Radnor Road Wallingford Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

In February 2013 Oxford Archaeology monitored the excavation of an electric cable trench around the border of a playing field off Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. The watching brief identified two horizons of cultivated soil along with modern made ground. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered or impacted upon by the works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by Savills on behalf of SSE to undertake a watching brief along the route of a high voltage underground cabling works at Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Due to the proximity of the historic core of Wallingford, Richard Oram of the Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Service requested an archaeological watching brief to be completed during the excavation of the cable trench.
- 1.1.2 As part of the project planning OA issued a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to Richard Oram detailing how OA would implement the requirement for the watching (OA, 2013). This was approved prior to the start of the fieldwork which was completed on a single visit 6th February 2013.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is situated towards the western side of Wallingford, centred on NGR: SU 5989 8953 (Fig. 1). The current land use is as an open grass playing field situated on relatively flat land to the south of Radnor Road with a ground level of approximately 48m aOD. The playing field is bounded to the north and east by residential developments, to the west by a school playing field and to the south by a stream and footpath. The route of the new cable trench ran inside the western and northern boundaries of this field.
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology is Upper Greensand Formation - Siltstone And Sandstone overlain by Alluvium and Northmoor Sand And Gravel Member, Upper Facet - Sand and Gravel (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Wallingford grew up around an important crossing point of the River Thames. The place has been fortified since at least Saxon times, when it was an important fortified borough of Wessex with the right to mint Royal coinage.
- 1.3.2 It was enclosed with substantial earthworks by King Alfred the Great in the 9th century as part of a network of fortified towns known as burhs or "burghs" to protect Wessex against the Vikings.
- 1.3.3 These defences can still be clearly discerned as a group of four roughly square areas around the centre of the town and are probably the best preserved such fortifications in England. Wallingford became the chief town of Berkshire and the seat of the county's Ealdorman.

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- 1.3.4 Although the site is located approximately 500m west of the Saxon defences it lies within the area of fertile land bordering the River Thames and there is potential for evidence of activity to be encountered.
- 1.3.5 Finds from the area just to the south-east include several fragments of Bronze Age urn, Roman pottery and Roman coins of a 4th century date. Several features of Iron Age date were uncovered to the north of the area of the new cabling works.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the investigation were:

- (i) to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains which may survive,
- (ii) to preserve any encountered remains by record,
- (iii) to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remain,
- (iv) to determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means,
- (v) to determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains,
- (vi) to assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape,
- (vii) to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive,
- (viii) to determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity,
- (ix) to determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence throughout the intrusive excavation phase that had the potential to disturb or destroy below ground archaeological remains. This was specifically limited to the excavation of the cable trench completed using a mini digger. The cable trench measured approximately 105m of linear trench and between 0.2m - 0.3m wide and up to 1m in depth.
- 2.2.2 The topsoil and subsoil were removed in controlled spits to the required depth for the installation of the electric cable or to the surface of any potential archaeological deposits. Provision was made for the halting of the machine and for appropriate archaeological investigation where deemed necessary by the attending archaeologist.
- 2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, with context recording undertaken in accordance with established OA practices. Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record was taken the trench, general settings and archaeological features or sections.
- 2.2.4 Site plans and sections were drawn at appropriate scales for the remains encountered.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 At the north-western end of the cable trench a layer of clean light yellow-brown silty clay (3) was exposed in the base of the trench at approximately 0.7m below the current ground level (Fig. 3 Section 1). This deposit was not encountered in any other part of the trench.
- 3.1.2 Overlying layer 3, and exposed throughout the base of the remainder of the trench was a layer of dark yellow-brown silty clay containing gravel and sand flecks (2). This measured between 0.2m and 0.5m in depth (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2 and 3).
- 3.1.3 Along the north-south aligned part of the trench layer 2 was overlain directly by the existing topsoil and turf (1) (Sections 1 and 2). This deposit contained some charcoal flecking and produced abraded fragments of brick and modern finds including bottle glass.
- 3.1.4 Along the east-west alignment of the trench, and overlying layer 1, was a 0.5m deep layer of grey-brown clayey silt loam (5) which contained numerous fragments of construction debris including modern (1970s) frogged bricks, metal strapping and plastic sheeting (Fig. 3, section 3). This had been covered with a landscaping layer of topsoil and turf (4).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Modern artefacts were encountered from layers 1 and 5. These finds included bricks, corrugated iron sheeting, metal strapping, plastic sheeting and wrappers and broken bottle glass. These were identified on site and not retained.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The relatively small area of layer 3 that was exposed may represent an alluvial layer although this was difficult to interpret within the limited exposure of this layer. This was overlain by the layer of dark yellow-brown clayey silt (2). Although no evidence of activity such as charcoal flecking or artefacts was observed within this deposit, its composition and compaction was suggestive of a worked soil and it probably represents a buried ploughsoil horizon. The overlying topsoil and turf (1) had a similar, if, more humic appearance, and may have had a similar origin prior to the existing playing field.
- 4.1.2 The made ground deposit (5) is likely to have derived from the adjacent residential development along Radnor Road. The brick debris debris is similar to the material used to construct the houses. The layer of topsoil and turf, 4, was probably also deposited during this phase of work.
- 4.1.3 There was no evidence of archaeological remains within the levels impacted upon by the cable trench. However, this does not exclude the possibility that these may be present either at a greater depth or elsewhere within the playing field area.

APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.25m – 0.28m	Modern layer of cultivated soil	Brick, glass, plastic	C20th
2	Layer	0.2m – 0.5m	Buried ploughsoil	-	-
3	Layer	> 0.12m	Clay. Possible alluvium	-	-
4	Layer	0.5m	Mix of soils and construction debris	Brick, concrete, metal, plastic	C20th
5	Layer	0.15m – 0.18m	Landscaping layer of topsoil and turf	Plastic	C20th

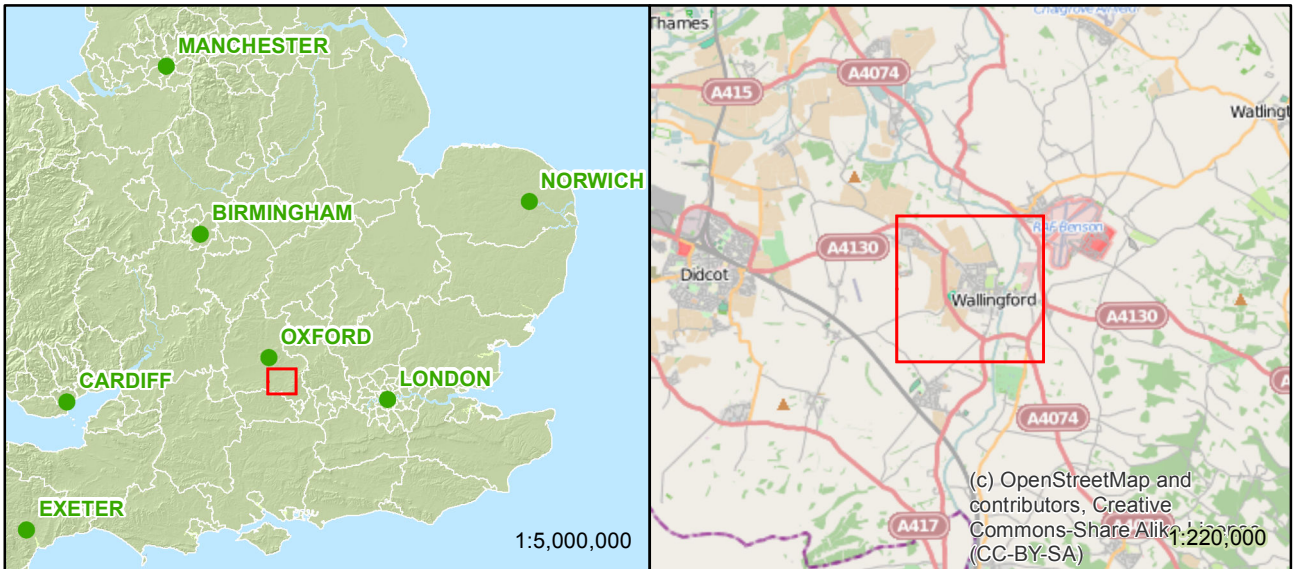
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology 2013

Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire
Site code:	WALRAD 13
Grid reference:	Centred at SU 5989 8953
Type of watching brief:	Machine excavation of new cable trenching, approximately 105m in length by 0.3m wide by 1m deep (maximum dimensions)
Date and duration of project:	6th February 2013
Area of site:	Approximately 0.25 hectare
Summary of results:	In February 2013 Oxford Archaeology monitored the excavation of an electric cable trench around the border of a playing field off Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. The watching brief identified two horizons of cultivated soil along with modern made ground. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered or impacted upon by the works.
Location of archive:	The Archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology's head office (Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES) and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service under the Accession Number OXCMS:2013.20.



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Figure 1: Site location

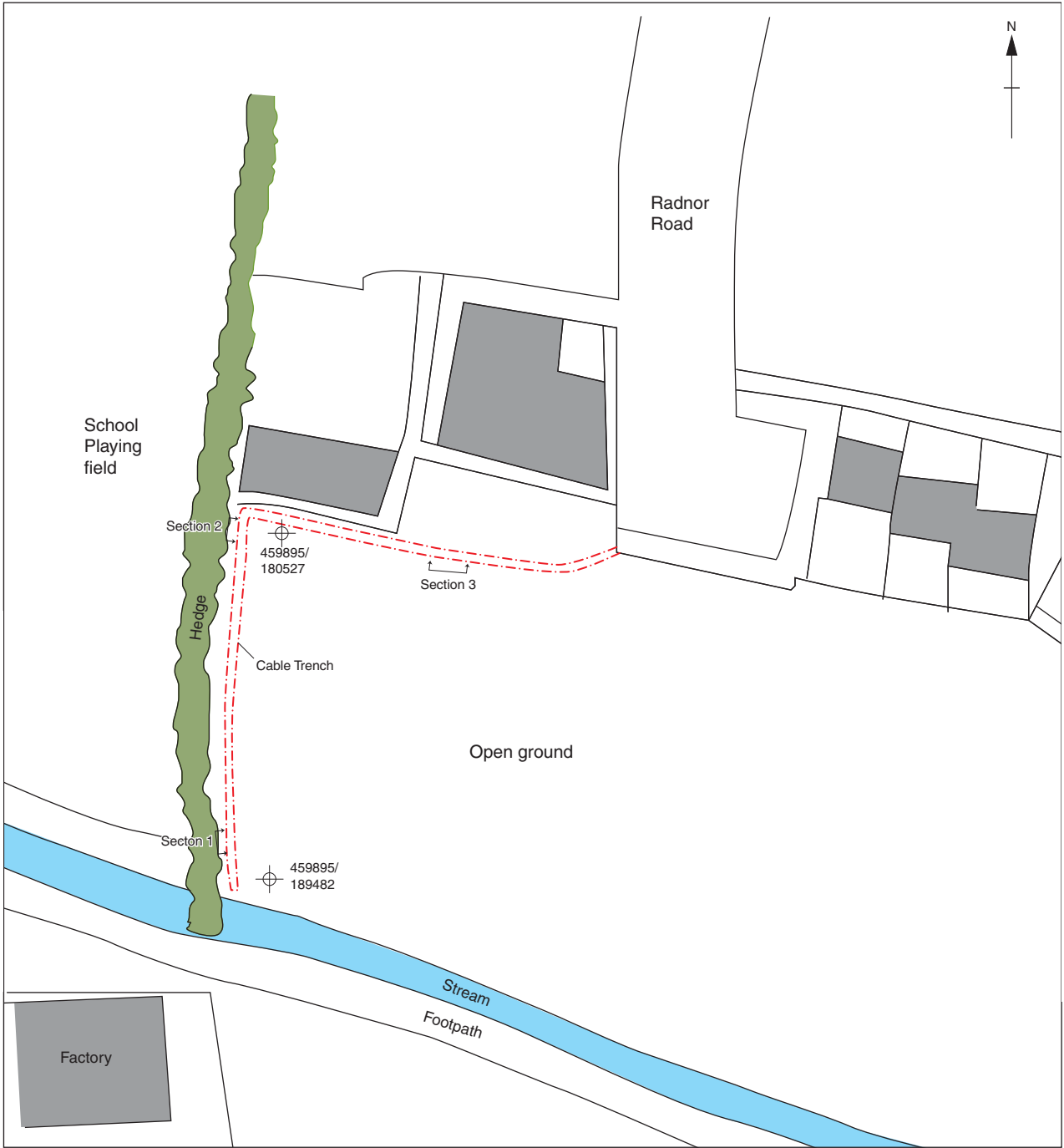


Figure 2: Site plan

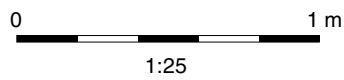
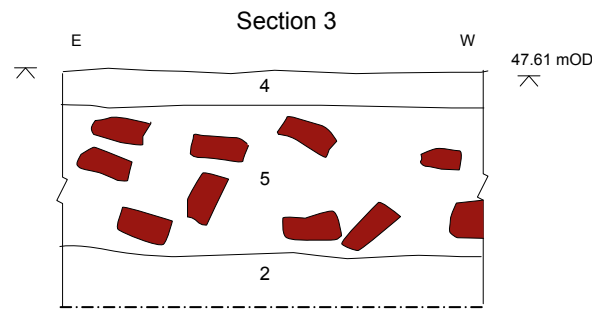
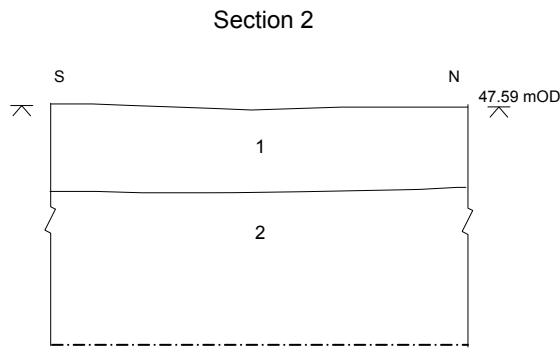
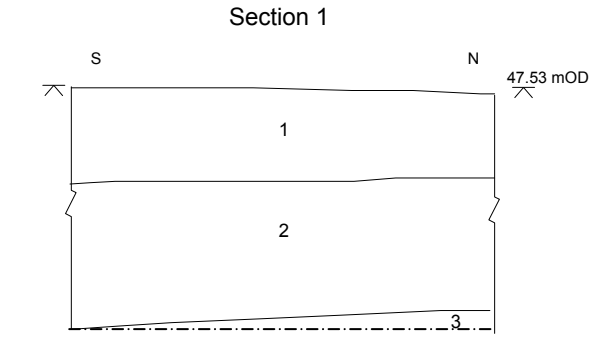


Figure 3: Sections



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