

# Proposed development on land at Woolmore Manor, Melksham, Wiltshire

NGR 391594, 162505

## Results of a trench evaluation

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AC archaeology

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# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT WOOLMORE MANOR, MELKSHAM, WILTSHIRE

(NGR: 391594, 162505)

## Results of a Trench Evaluation

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### SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation, consisting of four machine-excavated trenches, was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd at Woolmore manor, Melksham, Wiltshire, (NGR: 391594, 162505), in March 2015. The investigation was undertaken in support of a planning application for the construction of 13 dwellings and associated infrastructure and followed a geophysical survey of the site. The evaluation revealed a number of modern field drains, most associated with magnetic anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey, but no remains of archaeological significance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation in support of a planning application for the construction of 13 dwellings and associated infrastructure, on land at Woolmore Manor, Melksham, Wiltshire (NGR: 391594, 162505). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The trench evaluation was undertaken at the request of Wiltshire Council in order to provide sufficient information regarding potential heritage assets on the site to determine a planning application for the new dwellings (no.14/03607/OUT). A brief was provided for the Wiltshire Council, Assistant County Archaeologist (WCACA).
- 1.3 The application area comprises c. 1.9 hectares on the south side of Melksham, adjacent to the Oak Community School. The superficial geology comprises clay and silt head deposits overlying mudstone of the Oxford Clay formation formed during the Jurassic period. The application area lies at around 45m OD and is under pasture.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The application area lies adjacent to Woolmore Farmhouse, a Grade II\* Listed Building (List Entry No. 1021762). The farmhouse dates to 1631 and was built by a London vintner, George Hubert, reputedly to a plan by Inigo Jones.
- 2.2 Woolmore Farmhouse is likely to lie on or around the site of the manor of Woolmore. The manor or lordship of Woolmore was among the properties of Amesbury Priory at the dissolution. The medieval settlement of Wolvemere is believed to lie in the immediate vicinity and the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (WHER) records that Woolmore Farm, immediately to the south of the application area, has medieval origins (WHER No. MWI3629). Google earth images of 2006 clearly show the earthwork remains of ridge and furrow cultivation (possibly medieval) within the application area and across an extensive area to the west. Photographs taken during a site visit for a heritage appraisal of the site in 2014 show that the cultivation earthworks remain extant within the application area. Woolmore Farm also retains some 17th century buildings (WHER No.

MWI68753) across multiple yards, although more recent buildings may have masked or destroyed other historic structures.

**2.3** A geophysical survey undertaken in the application area in December 2014 (Davies, 2014) did not identify significant archaeological features. The ridge and furrow cultivation remains are apparent on the survey as well as a probable former field boundary, which appears to pre-date the historic mapping. Other possible boundaries or drainage features have been identified.

**2.4** No other heritage assets have been recorded within the application area, although prehistoric and Romano-British activity has been recorded in the locality (c.1km from the application area); none has been recorded in the immediate vicinity.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

**3.1** The trench evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present on the site, as dictated by current best practice.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

**4.1** The trench evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology Ltd (Cottam, 2015), on behalf of CgMs, which was submitted to, and approved by, the WCACA prior to commencement of the works.

**4.2** The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches, each 30m x 1.8m in plan and positioned to target features identified by geophysical survey (Fig.1, Trenches 1 - 4).

**4.3** All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil was removed by tracked, mechanical, excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and stored alongside the trench, separated from any subsoil as necessary. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed.

**4.4** All deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2 (2012)*. The trench was recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

**4.5** The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW758 and is currently stored at the offices of AC archaeology (Wiltshire).

### **5. RESULTS**

#### **Trench 1 (Plate 1)**

**5.1** The trench was aligned north-northeast to south-southwest and positioned on level ground in the eastern corner of the field. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m before natural subsoil was identified, two field drains filled with clinker were identified matching with the geophysical anomalies. Ridge and furrow pattern ploughing could be seen in the horizon between F100 and F101, but was not visible any deeper. The general layer sequence is described in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Trench 1 general depositional layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100	0 – 200mm	Mid-dark grey brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks.	Turfline /topsoil - present ground surface.
101	200 – 450mm max	Mid-light orange brown silty clay.	Former agricultural soil horizon.
102	450mm +	Light orange brown silty clay containing occasional manganese flecks.	Natural – clay head deposit.

**Trench 2 (Plate 2)**

- 5.2** The trench was aligned northwest to southeast and positioned on level ground. The trench was excavated to a maximum of 0.57m before natural subsoil was identified. One field drain, filled with clinker, was identified matching with the geophysical anomaly. The general layer sequence is described in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Trench 2 general depositional layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 250mm	Mid-dark grey brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks.	Turfline /topsoil - present ground surface.
201	250 – 570mm max	Mid-light orange brown silty clay.	Former agricultural soil horizon.
202	570mm +	Light orange brown silty clay containing occasional manganese flecks.	Natural – clay head deposit.

**Trench 3 (Plate 3)**

- 5.3** The trench was aligned northwest to southeast and positioned on level ground. The trench was excavated to a maximum of 0.8m. The general layer sequence is described in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Trench 3 general depositional layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
300	0 – 300mm	Mid-dark grey brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks.	Turfline /topsoil - present ground surface.
301	200 – 800mm max	Mid-light orange brown silty clay.	Former agricultural soil horizon.
202	800mm +	Light orange brown silty clay containing occasional manganese flecks.	Natural – clay head deposit.

**Trench 4 (Plate 4)**

- 5.4** The trench was aligned northwest to southeast and positioned on level ground. The trench was excavated to a maximum of 0.5m before natural subsoil was identified. The general layer sequence described in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Trench 4 general depositional layer sequence**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Depth b.g.s.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
400	0 – 310mm	Mid-dark grey brown silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks.	Turfline /topsoil - present ground surface.
401	310 – 500mm max	Mid-light orange brown silty clay.	Former agricultural soil horizon.
402	500mm +	Light orange brown silty clay containing occasional manganese flecks.	Natural – clay head deposit.

## **6. FINDS**

- 6.1** A small quantity of fragments of modern material was seen during excavation of the trenches which was not recovered, no finds of archaeological interest seen.

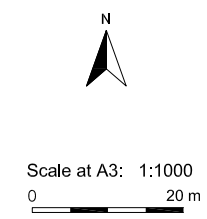
## **7. COMMENT**

- 7.1** The trench evaluation has identified no evidence for archaeological activity on the site of the proposed development.
- 7.2** The investigations indicate that further deposits of archaeological interest are unlikely to exist within the development area. The location of Woolmore farm immediately to the south of the development area, along with the remains of a ridge and furrow system visible as earthworks, indicate that the land was being used as farmland during the middle ages.
- 7.3** There is no evidence for pre-medieval activity on the site.

## **8. REFERENCES**

Cottam S., 2015, *Proposed development on land at Woolmore Manor, Melksham, Wiltshire (NGR 391594, 162505): Project Design for archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished document, ref ACW758/1/0

Davies, R., 2014, Geophysical Survey report: Melksham, Wiltshire, Stratascan Job Ref. J7662



PROBABLE ARCHAEOLOGY	
	Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - probable cut feature of archaeological origin
	Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - probable bank or earthwork of archaeological origin
	Linear anomaly - probably related to former field boundary, not visible on available historic mapping
	Widely spaced curving parallel linear anomalies - probably related to ridge-and-furrow
POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY	
	Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - possible cut feature of archaeological origin
	Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - possible bank or earthwork of archaeological origin
OTHER ANOMALIES	
	Closely spaced parallel linear anomalies - probably related to agricultural activity such as ploughing
	Linear anomaly - probably related to pipe, cable or other modern service
	Linear anomaly - possibly related to land drain
	Magnetic disturbance associated with nearby metal object such as service or field boundary
	Strong magnetic debris - possible disturbed or made ground
	Scattered magnetic debris
	Area of amorphous magnetic variation - probable natural (e.g. geological or pedological) origin
	Magnetic spike - probable ferrous object

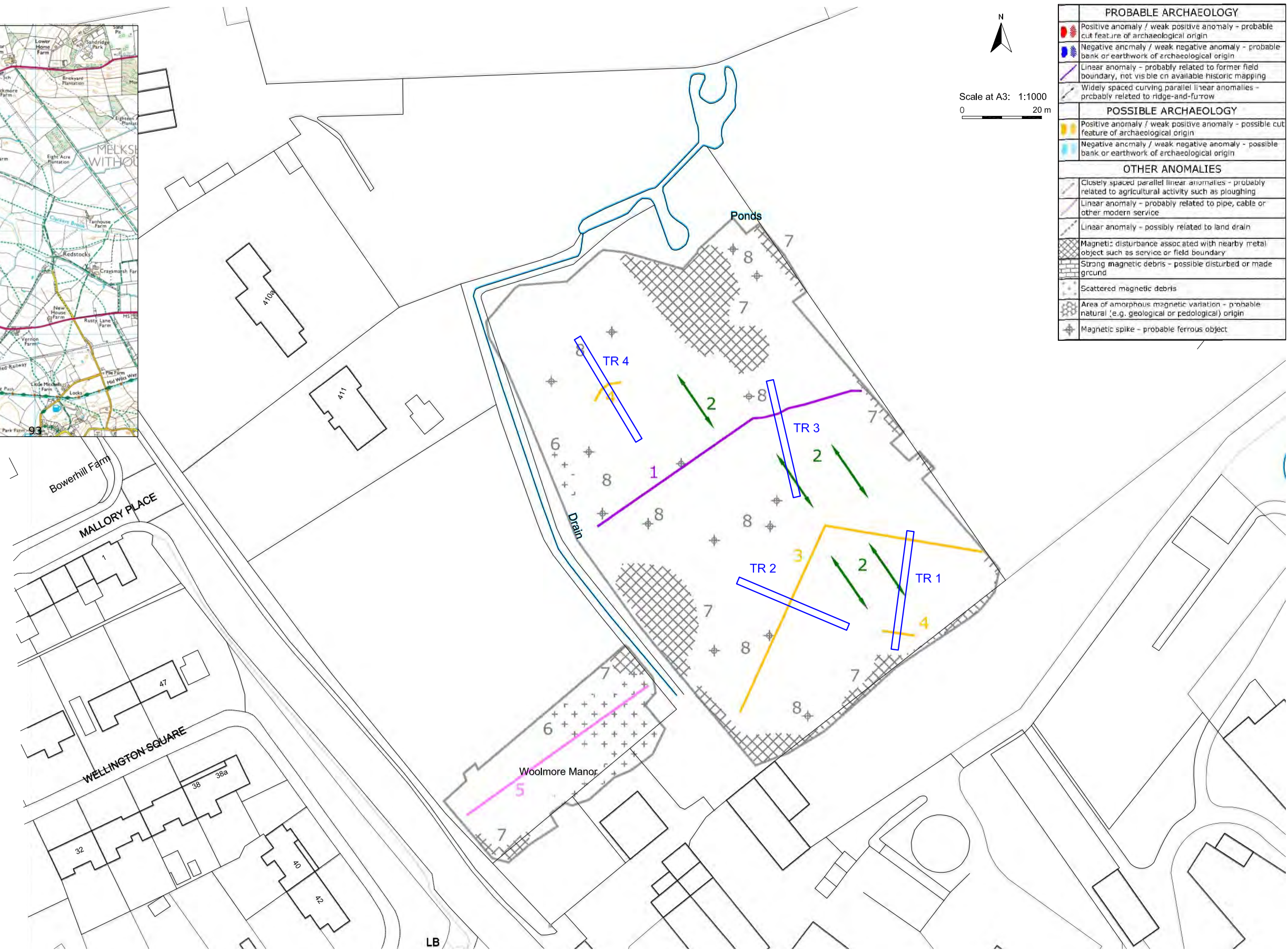




Plate 1: General view along Trench 1



Plate 2: General view along Trench 2



Plate 3: General view along Trench 3



Plate 4: General view along Trench 4

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