

# Proposed Housing Development on land at Gibbs Close, Westbury, Wiltshire

NGR ST87495158

## Results of archaeological evaluation

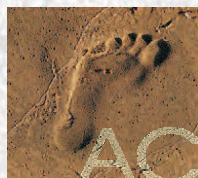
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Commissioned by:  
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archaeology

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# **PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT GIBBS CLOSE, WESTBURY, WILTSHIRE (NGR: ST87495158)**

## **Results of Archaeological Evaluation**

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### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation consisting of three machine-excavated trenches was undertaken by AC archaeology on land at Gibbs Close, Westbury, Wiltshire, in December 2010. The work was undertaken in support of a planning application for the residential development of the site. Although only limited archaeological activity was revealed within the evaluation, it has demonstrated that archaeological deposits may survive in the east portion of the site where Trench 2 was positioned. A single feature of medieval or post-Medieval origin and representing part of a probable former field boundary ditch was recorded in here. The west extent of the proposed development contained extensive evidence of relatively modern disturbance and truncation. Two subsoil features of post-medieval date were recorded here. A small quantity of artefacts, including medieval and later pottery was recovered.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land off Gibbs Close, Westbury, Wiltshire (ST87495158). The work was commissioned by the Jonathan Kamm Consultancy on behalf of the site developers.
- 1.2** The evaluation was undertaken in order to provide supporting information for a planning application (Ref E/10/01810/FUL) for the construction of ten dwellings, provision of car park with access and works to the existing highway at Gibbs Close. It was requested by Wiltshire Council Archaeological Officer (WCAO), advisor to the Wiltshire Council Planning Officer. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.3** The proposed development covers an area of approximately 0.34 hectares and is situated on the south side of the Bitham Brook. It is sub-divided into three areas; site investigations were requested only in the west and central areas. Both areas lie within the Conservation Area and are covered in dense vegetation, with the west area also containing dumped spoil.
- 1.4** The topography comprises ground generally sloping down to the north and northwest and lies around 61mOD. The underlying geology comprises mudstone,

sandstone and limestone of the Gault Formation and Upper Greensand Formation.

## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** A desk-based archaeological study (Cottam & Cox 2010) of the site identified the area of the proposed development to be in an area of high archaeological potential/interest, due to its proximity to the historic medieval core of the town. Cartographic evidence suggests the possibility of remnants of Saxon minster precincts within the existing street layout of the town, though the site lies just outside the precinct's conjectured boundaries. Former 18th century mills (*Westbury Mills*) are situated to the north and west of the site, on the west bank of the Bitham Brook.

## **3. OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1** The 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 investigations was undertaken in response to a brief provided by the Wiltshire Council Archaeological Officer and in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Cox 2010) and approved prior to commencement on site.
- 4.2** The investigations initially comprised the excavation of two trenches, each measuring 10 x 1m in plan and positioned within two areas of the proposed new development (Fig. 2). A further trench measuring 4 x 1m was excavated by agreement on site with WCAO, after it was revealed within one of the trenches, that part of the western extent of the proposed development contained relatively recent disturbance/truncation associated with an adjacent housing block. All site levels relate to an ordnance survey benchmark.
- 4.3** All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator, using a toothless bucket, and ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed.
- 4.4** The trench was recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system. The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW313.

## 5. RESULTS

### Introduction

- 5.1** Trench 1 was positioned within the west side of the proposed development, in an area initially thought to contain a depth of relatively recent dumped spoil. On excavation of this trench it was revealed that while there was some dumped spoil, the bulk of the area had also been subject to fairly extensive truncation/disturbance, likely to be associated with the existing modern housing development, immediately to the east of the trench position. Survival of archaeological features was unlikely here and it was felt that the trench did not provide an appropriate characterisation of the site's potential. It was agreed on site with the WCAO, that a further trench (Tr 3) would be positioned almost adjacent to Trench 1 and in an area that appeared undisturbed, although only a length of 4m could be excavated. Trench 2 was positioned within the central area of the proposed development in an area containing dense undergrowth.

### Trench 1 (Plate 1; Fig. 3)

- 5.2** This trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 200mm, through previously truncated natural mudstone, for a length of 10m. An extension to this trench measuring 2m in length was excavated at its NW extent, which revealed the limit of truncation as well as a surviving subsoil (101), directly underlying the tarmac pathway surface. No archaeological features were present. The recorded layer sequence (north end only) is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100	0 – 100mm max	Tarmac.	Part of existing lane / ground surface at NW extent of area.
101	100 – 300mm+	Dark brown silty clay with sparse small gravels and charcoal flecks.	Buried soil horizon. Possibly same as context 201 in Tr 2.
102	20mm+	Blue-grey sandy clay, partially obscured by light vegetation only.	Natural Mudstone.

### Trench 2 (Plate 2; plan Fig. 2a, sections Fig. 2b-c)

- 5.3** This trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m at its NE extent – 900mm at its SW extent - through topsoil and a depth of buried soils, before natural mudstone was revealed. Roots and other natural disturbance were present throughout the base of this trench. A single feature, representing part of former ditch, was only revealed at a depth where natural subsoil was exposed. On cleaning of the trench section however, this feature could be seen as cutting from a considerably higher level. A small quantity of 12th/13th century pottery was recovered both from this feature and buried soil horizon (201). The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 2 and the cut feature described text.



**Plate 1: View of Trench 1 from the south-east**

**Table 2: Layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 250mm	Compact, black silty clay loam with small gravels, cinder and charcoal flecks.	Topsoil.
201	250 – 900mm max	Stiff dark brown silty clay loam with sparse small gravels and charcoal flecks.	Buried soil horizon. Contains medieval and Romano-British pottery.
204	900mm – 1.05m max	Soft black silty clay with no coarse components.	Possible buried former land surface ? Undated.
205/206	1.05 – 1.25m	'Banded' mixed grey-white sandy clay containing much natural disturbance, including root activity and small mammal burrowing.	Appears as very disturbed natural mudstone.
207	1.25m+	Blue-grey sandy clay.	Natural - Mudstone.

### ***Feature F202***

- 5.4** This feature was present below topsoil and cutting through layer (201). It was linear in plan and on an approximate north-south alignment. Where exposed in plan it had dimensions of 1m x 0.3m, although much wider at its uppermost level as revealed in the trench section. It had a steep uniform profile and narrow concave base at a depth of 900mm. Two fills were recorded. They comprised an uppermost fill composed of slightly mixed dark brown / light grey silty clay (context 208), and a dark greyish brown silty clay with sparse small gravels and charcoal flecks (context 202). Two sherds of 12th/13th century pottery and a small quantity of animal bone were recovered from fill (202).



**Plate 2: View of Trench 2 from the south-west**



## 5.5 Trench 3 (Plate 3; plan Fig. 3d; section Fig. 3e)

This trench was excavated to a depth of 350mm through topsoil before two archaeological features cutting through natural sand were revealed. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 3 and the two cut features described in text. A small quantity of post-medieval artefacts was recovered from each of these features.

**Table 3: Layer sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
300	0 – 350mm	Black silty clay loam containing occasional gravels, charcoal flecks and modern building debris.	Topsoil. Appears disturbed in places.
305	350mm+	Mottled white gritty sand with much iron panning.	Natural.

### ***Feature F302***

This feature was present directly below topsoil and cutting through natural sand. It was linear in plan and on an approximate NW-SE alignment. Where exposed, it had plan dimensions of 1m x 0.4m, with a moderate or steep-sloping profile and flat base at a depth of 250mm. It contained a single fill (context 301), which was disturbed by root and burrowing activity and composed of slightly mixed mid-grey brown silty clay, with sparse charcoal flecks. A single sherd of 18th century pottery was recovered from the fill of this feature. This feature is likely to represent part of a former boundary ditch.

### ***Feature F304***

This feature, undetermined in nature, was present directly below topsoil and cutting through natural sand. It was slightly irregular to sub-linear in plan, with a maximum width of 0.8m. It had a moderately sloping profile and slightly rounded base at a maximum depth of 400mm. It contained a single fill (context 303), disturbed by root and burrowing activity and composed of slightly mixed mid-grey brown / black loamy silt clay, with sparse charcoal flecks and pea grits. A small quantity of 17th / 18th century pottery was recovered from the fill of this feature.



**Plate 3: View of Trench 3 from the southwest**

## **6. The Finds**

**By Emma Firth**

### **Summary**

- 6.1** The finds recovered during the evaluation include a small assemblage of medieval pottery sherds; all of which are fairly local in origin and a possible late medieval roof tile. Several sherds of post medieval pottery and a small quantity animal bone were also recovered.

### **Introduction**

- 6.2** All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is summarised on Table 4 below. The finds are discussed by material type, date range and condition of the artefacts.

### **Ceramic Building Material**

- 6.3** An incomplete ridge tile was recovered from context 303. The fabric of the ridge tile is a fine sandy fabric with iron ore and is possibly a product of either the



postulated kilns at Westbury or the nearby kilns at Crockerton. The ridge tile is of possible later medieval date, and has a low knife trimmed crest.

### **Romano-British Pottery**

- 6.4** A single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered from context 201, and is a sherd of New Forest Colour coated ware. The sherd has a date range from the 3rd to 4th centuries AD and possibly derives from a flask.

### **Medieval Pottery**

- 6.5** The medieval pottery comprises six sherds (36g) of locally produced pottery, recovered from layer (201) and ditch fill (202). The fabrics present include;
- Hard fabric, with chalk, rare flint and quartz inclusions, surface oxidised and core reduced, locally produced in the Westbury area though the actual production site is not known. Comparable with Mephams Fabric D (1997).
  - Bath A type wares, slightly micaceous wares with sparse chert inclusions and clay matrix with quartz, iron ore and mica. A single thickened rim was present in this fabric dated from the 12th to 13th centuries.
  - Nash Hill Fabric B type ware, small oxidised sandy sherd simple everted rim with internal bevel though too small to be particularly diagnostic. Dated from the 13th to 14th centuries.
  - Very fine micaceous fabric with few or no inclusions – possibly another Bath A variant.

The pottery has a date range from the 12th to 14th centuries.

### **Post Medieval Pottery**

- 6.6** Three sherds of 17th / 18th century pottery were recovered from fills (301) and (303), and are all red earthenware with olive glazes. The sherds may derive from documented post medieval kilns at Crockerton, some 11km to the south of the site, which were in operation from the medieval period through to the post medieval period (Le Patourel 1968).

### **Animal Bone**

- 6.7** A total of eight fragments of unidentified animal bone were recovered from context 202. The animal bone includes a single piece that has been gnawed.

**Table 4: Quantification of Finds by Material type and by Context**

Context	Ceramic Building Material		Romano British Pottery		Medieval Pottery		Post Medieval Pottery		Animal Bone	
	no	wgt (g)	no	wgt (g)	No	wgt (g)	no	wgt (g)	no	wgt (g)
201	-	-	1	4	3	18	-	-	-	-
301	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	22	-	-
202	-	-	-	-	2	11	-	-	8	18
303	1	552	-	-	1	9	2	14	-	-
Total	1	552	1	4	6	38	3	36	8	18

## **7. COMMENT**

- 7.1** The evaluation has demonstrated limited evidence for archaeological activity on the site. Trench 2, situated within the eastern portion of the proposed development did however reveal a depth of buried soils, including a possible former land surface. These soils appear to be of medieval or earlier origin.
- 7.2** A single feature of possible medieval (or later) date, representing part of a probable former boundary / drainage ditch was observed to cut through layer (201) which contained both medieval and (a single sherd of) Romano-British pottery. Based on the existing deep soil sequence, it is considered likely that other archaeological remains present would survive in this area.
- 7.3** Unlike the area to the east, the west section of the proposed development revealed evidence of extensive modern disturbance and truncation, with only localised areas of undisturbed ground remaining. However, where the additional Trench 3 was positioned, two archaeological features were revealed, both of post-medieval date, one of which may represent part of a former boundary ditch as shown on Ordnance Survey maps from 1887.

## **8. REFERENCES**

- Cottam, S & Cox, P. W., 2010 *'Proposed Housing Development on land at Gibbs Close, Westbury, Wiltshire (NGR ST87495158): Desk-based historic environment assessment.* Unpublished document, ref ACW313/1/0
- Cox, P. W., 2010 *'Proposed Housing Development on land at Gibbs Close, Westbury, Wiltshire (NGR ST87495158): Project Design for archaeological evaluation.* Unpublished document, ref ACW313/2/0

Le Patourel, Jean. 1968 'Documentary Evidence and the Medieval Pottery Industry', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 12, pp.101-126

Mepham, L., 1997, Medieval Pottery in Smith, R., *Excavations at Emwell Street, Warminster: the Early Economy and Environmental of a Wiltshire Market Town*, Wessex Archaeology

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PROJECT

Gibbs Close, Westbury

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



archaeology

0 20m



PROJECT

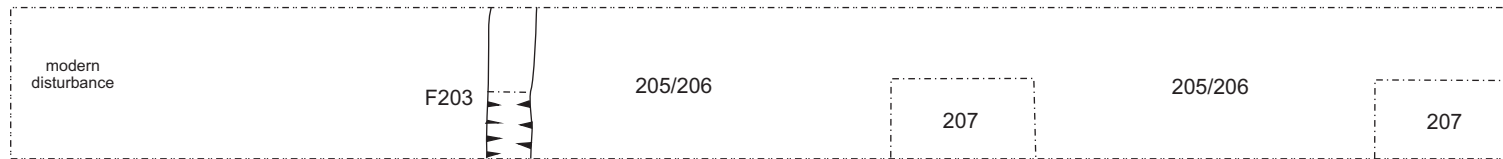
Gibbs Close, Westbury

TITLE

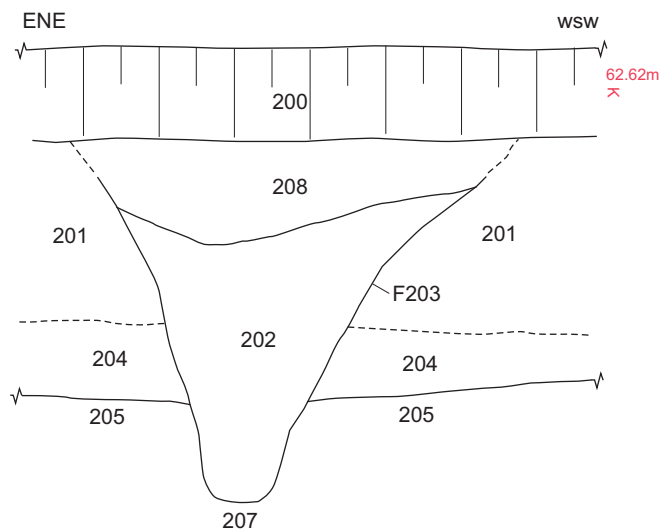
Fig. 2:  
Trench location plan

## Trench 2

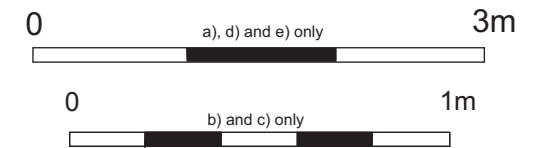
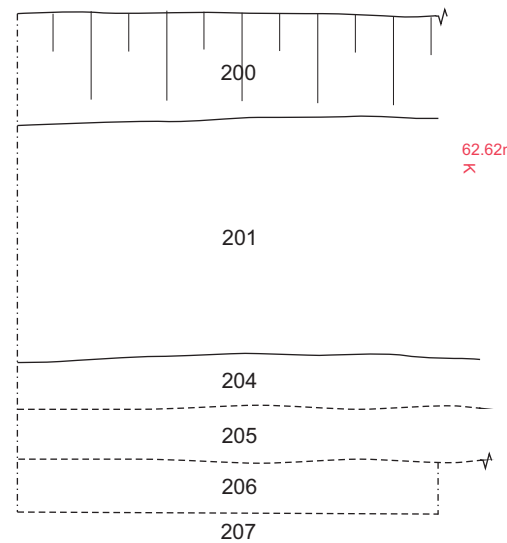
### a) Plan



### b) Section, F203



### c) Representative section

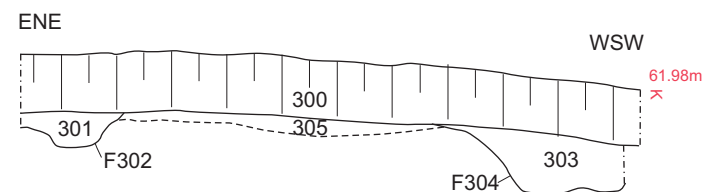


## Trench 3

### d) Plan



### e) Section



PROJECT

Gibbs Close, Westbury

TITLE

Fig. 3:  
Plans and sections, Trenches  
2 and 3





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