Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Walnut Farm, Norton, Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology
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Contents

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land at Walnut Farm, Norton, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 85346 23771). It was undertaken on behalf of CGMS who are acting on behalf of Bixby Homes, and has been requested by the client to support a planning application.

The Roman road from Gloucester to Tewkesbury is located approximately 400m to the west of the Site and Roman occupation sites and features have been identified in the vicinity.

The site comprises pasture and the remains of demolished agricultural buildings.

Ten trenches were excavated across the proposed development site. Fragments of possible Iron Age pottery were found within the subsoil of one trench but they were not determined to have originated from any cut feature. Furrows, the remains of medieval strip agriculture were present in four of the trenches, and contained pottery sherds ranging from medieval to the 19th century. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land at Walnut Farm, Norton, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 85346 23771). It was undertaken on behalf of CgMs who are acting on behalf of Bixby Homes, and has been requested by the client to support a planning application.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation was produced by Worcestershire County Council and approved by Charles Parry Archaeologist for Gloucestershire County Council.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a)

2 Aims

The aims of the evaluation brief were;

- to describe any heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to assess the nature, importance and extent of any heritage asset;
- to assess the impact of the application on any heritage asset.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc, ACIfA); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2003, assisted by Jesse Wheeler (BA (hons), ACIfA). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project Tom Rogers (MSc; MCIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA) and finds analysis by Derek Hurst (BA hons).

3.2 Documentary research

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken on behalf of CgMs by Archaeology and Planning Solutions (2015)

3.3 List of sources consulted

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2018).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th August 2018 and 9th August 2018. The Worcestershire Archaeology project number is P5355.

Ten trenches, amounting to just over 480m² in area, were planned to be excavated over the site area of 3.5ha, representing a sample of 2%. However one trench was immediately backfilled after being opened to just under 6m² due to the presence of asbestos. All other trenches were opened as planned. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2. These trenches were laid out in a grid format.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).Trench 10 was only

partially excavated, but on the discovery of asbestos within the upper fill, it was photographed and immediately backfilled. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

3.5 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

Topographically the Site is located on level ground crossed by the 15m AOD contour. A small watercourse known as Cox's Brook runs from north to south approximately 90m to the west. The geology of the site is recorded as the Rugby Limestone Member of Mudstone and Limestone (Bgs 2018).

The Roman road which led northwards from Gloucester to Tewkesbury is located approximately 400m to the west of the Site and Roman occupation sites and features have been identified in archaeological investigations approximately 675m to the south and 1km to the north-east. During the medieval period the Site lay within an open field system known as Inlands Field around the settlement of Norton. Ridge and furrow earthworks associated with this field system can be observed in the eastern and middle fields and the southern part of the western field on aerial photographs dating from 1946 and these earthworks still survive in Field F1. The existing field boundary enclosing the eastern and middle fields was created when the site was enclosed around 1807.

4.2 Current land-use

The site is currently pasture to the south and the demolished remains of agricultural buildings to the north.

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Fig 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural geology consists of mudstone brash in a dark yellowish brown or dark brownish grey silty clay, both with occasional mid to dark blue clay lenses or patches.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Prehistoric

A small amount of sand-and-limestone-tempered pottery (3 sherds, 4.996g) which may date to the prehistoric period, possibly Iron Age (D Hurst pers comm), was recovered from the subsoil (301).

5.1.3 Phase 3: medieval to post-medieval deposits

Furrows were observed in trenches 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 and were visible on the ground before excavation. These were filled with a soft mid yellowy brown clay silt subsoil and contained ceramic dating from the medieval to the 19th century.

In Trench 3, a large spread of material approximately 11m wide consisting of mixed charcoal-rich clays with fragmented modern brick was deposited in a cut feature or hollow and was not excavated.

In Trench 5, and the southwestern end of Trench 9, there were fragmented modern building materials mixed with the topsoils, and Trench 10 was entirely filled with 20th century demolition material at the first 3m of its southwestern end, likely originating from the demolished building nearby, and the presence of asbestos prevented any further excavation.

The subsoil ranged from a mid-greyish brown silty clay in trenches 1, 2, and 3, to a mid-yellowish brown silty clay across the rest of the site, and was between 0.15m to 0.33m thick. Subsoil was sealed by a dark greyish brown clay silt topsoil, ranging from 0.24m to 0.44m in thickness.

Other pottery recovered from subsoil deposits included a sherd of medieval green glazed pottery, two sherds of a medieval jug (401; highly abraded), a large sherd of late medieval/early post-medieval glazed bowl (501), a 17th century sgraffito-decorated plate (101), and a fragment of a 19th century white china tankard (601) (D Hurst pers comm). Other finds from subsoil included glass, brick and shell.

6 Synthesis

The only archaeological features uncovered during this evaluation were furrows present in four of the ten trenches. These aligned with the slight remains of ridge and furrow earthworks which are still extant within the fields, the product of strip field agriculture probably associated with the village of Norton.

Fragments of highly abraded possibly Iron Age pottery were found in Trench 3 but were not within any cut feature and so probably represent a background scatter of prehistoric pottery in the area, representing some activity in this general area. Otherwise pottery recovered from the subsoil deposits ranged from medieval to 19th century. The medieval and earlier sherds were generally much abraded, whereas the later sherds were larger and largely unabraded suggesting that they were derived from post-medieval activity nearby. The presence of this pottery probably results from the practice of refuse discard and manuring from the nearby former Walnut Farm.

Trenches 5, 9 and 10 contained 20th century building material originating from the demolition of various buildings associated with the farm.

6.1 Research frameworks

The lack of archaeology did not allow for any interrogation of the relevant research framework.

6.2 Significance

The features found during the evaluation were of agricultural origin, and were previously observed on the 1946 aerial photographs in the Desk Based Assessment. The survival of extant ridge and furrow may be regarded as of local significance. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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Ten trenches were excavated across the proposed development site. Fragments of possible Iron Age pottery were found within the subsoil of one trench but they were not determined to have originated from any cut feature. Furrows, previously identified in the desk based assessment, were found in four of the trenches, and contained pottery sherds ranging from medieval to the 19th century. No evidence of any other archaeological activity was identified during the evaluation.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Susana Parker, CgMs Consulting and Charles Parry, Gloucestershire County Council.

9 Bibliography

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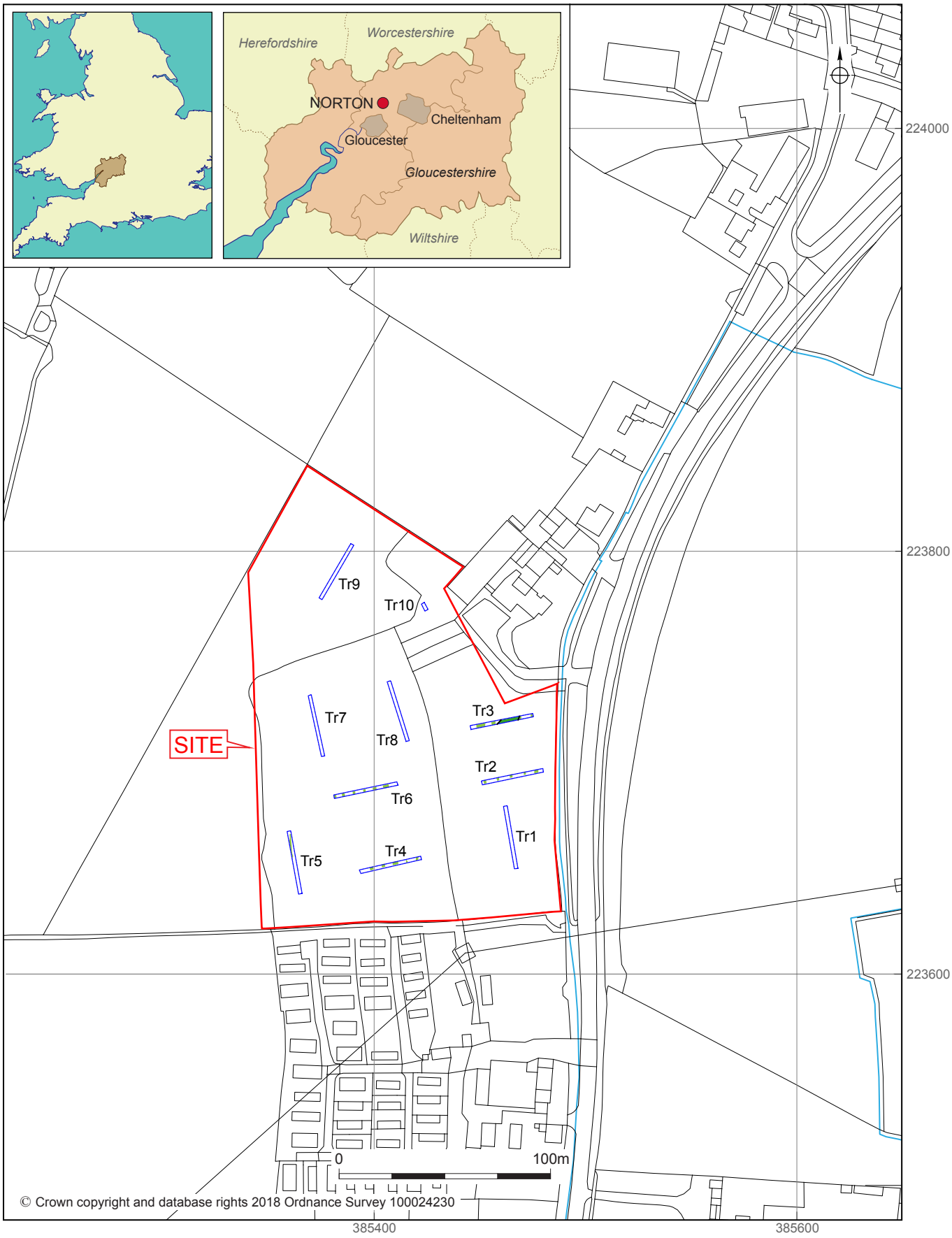
Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1

Plan of trenches *Figure 2*

Plates

Plate 1 Trench 2 showing medieval furrows, facing west

Plate 2 South facing section of Trench 2

Plate 3 Trench 5, facing north

Plate 4 East facing section of Trench 5

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	With occasional sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.24m	Moderately Compact greyish brown clay silt
101	Subsoil	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.38m	Compact greyish brown silty clay
102	Natural	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and abundant manganese flecking		Compact brownish grey silty clay

Trench 2

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	With occasional sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.32m	Moderately Compact greyish brown clay silt
201	Subsoil	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.1m	Compact greyish brown silty clay
202	Natural	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and abundant manganese flecking		Compact brownish grey silty clay

Trench 3

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	With occasional sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.35m	Moderately Compact greyish brown clay silt
301	Subsoil	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.15m	Compact greyish brown silty clay
302	Natural	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and abundant manganese flecking		Compact brownish grey silty clay
303	Layer	Layer	Spread of post-medieval to modern material, possibly in hollow or cut feature, containing mixed charcoal rich clays with fragmented cbm	un ex	Compact blackish brown clay silt

Trench 4

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	With occasional sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.33m	Moderately Compact greyish brown clay silt
401	Subsoil	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecks and	0.15m	Compact greyish brown silty clay
402	Natural	Layer	With frequent sub-angular stones and abundant manganese flecking		Compact brownish grey silty clay

Trench 5

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Modern Layer	Layer	Buried 20th century rubbish/ made ground under turf layer- comprising of mixed silts and naturals and waste building and farm materials	0.28m	Loose blackish grey clay
501	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil formed from cultivation of made ground layer above, with occasional sub-angular brash, occasional CBM and moderate charcoal flakes and fragments	0.2m	Moderately Compact orangey brown clay silt
502	Topsoil	Layer	Buried topsoil containing rare sub-angular to sub-rounded stones and moderate charcoal fragments	0.23m	Moderately Compact brownish grey clay silt
503	Subsoil	Layer	With occasional angular mudstone brash	0.32m	Compact greyish green silty clay
504	Natural	Layer	Charmouth mudstone brash in a light brownish grey clay matrix with patches of mid to dark blue clays and abundant manganese		Compact brownish grey clay

Trench 6

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
600	Topsoil	Layer	With rare sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecking	0.38m	Soft greyish brown clay
601	Subsoil	Layer	With occasional sub-angular stones and gravels and rare charcoal flecking	0.23m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
602	Natural	Layer	Clay matrix containing abundant Charmouth Mudstone brash fragments and frequent manganese		Compact greyish yellow silty clay

Trench 7

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
700	Topsoil	Layer	With rare sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecking	0.44m	Soft greyish brown clay
701	Subsoil	Layer	Clay matrix containing abundant Charmouth Mudstone brash fragments and frequent manganese	0.3m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
702	Natural	Layer	Clay matrix containing abundant Charmouth Mudstone brash fragments with lenses/ patches of mid to dark blue clays and frequent manganese flecking		Compact greenish brown silty clay

Trench 8

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
800	Topsoil	Layer	With rare sub-angular stones and occasional charcoal flecking	0.24m	Soft greyish brown clay
801	Subsoil	Layer	Clay matrix containing abundant Charmouth mudstone brash fragments and frequent manganese	0.32m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
802	Natural	Layer	Clay matrix containing abundant Charmouth Mudstone brash fragments with lenses/ patches of mid to dark blue clays and frequent manganese flecking		Compact greenish brown silty clay

Trench 9

Length: 30m Width: 30m Orientation: North-east to south-

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
900	Topsoil	Layer	With rare sub-angular stones, and modern CBM/ building stone mixed in at	0.43m	Moderately Compact greyish brown clay silt
901	Subsidence	Layer	With rare sub-angular stones and frequent gravels	0.33m	Compact greenish grey silty clay
902	Natural	Layer	With abundant Charmouth Mudstone brash and frequent manganese		Compact yellowish brown silty clay

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

1 Field progress reports AS2

1 Photographic records AS3

25 Digital photographs

10 Trench record sheets AS41

1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Clarence Street

Cheltenham

GL50 3JT

Tel (01242) 237431

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Monuments Record (NMR) as appropriate.