

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**MARLOW SPORTS CLUB, POUND LANE, MARLOW,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING ACTION**

*On behalf of*

*Marlow Sports Club*

**July 2011**

<b>REPORT FOR</b>	Marlow Sports Club c/o Boddingtons CPL Ltd 31 Shirburn Lane Watlington Oxfordshire OX49 5BU
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<b>FIELDWORK</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2011 to 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2011
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<b>JMHS Project No:</b>	2303
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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction in advance of a new artificial turf area with landscaping, floodlighting, fencing and car parking at Marlow Sports Club, Lower Pound Lane, Marlow (09/05171/FUL). A total of six site visits were made intermittently over the period from 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011 to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to finished levels across the area of the new sports field. The surface of the natural geology was seen across the centre of the field and no archaeological features or finds were present. All other areas of the new pitch were made up in ground level (after initial topsoil stripping) to get a level finish. Drainage trenches and services trenches were monitored around the perimeter of the field and six floodlight bases were monitored, none of which produced any archaeological features or finds.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located to the west of Marlow (NGR 8454 8595) on the gravel river terrace deposits of the River Thames.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) produced a Brief for the work. The Brief stated that

*Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Archaeology and Planning) (DoE, 1990) states that where a planning authority has decided to permit a development which would destroy archaeological remains it may satisfy itself before granting planning permission that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for archaeological excavation, recording and the publication of the results. Requirements for excavation are normally secured by means of a "negative condition" (or, more rarely, through a legal agreement) and must be specified in a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by the County Archaeological Service and approved by the local planning authority prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise this brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design. Archaeological planning conditions will not be discharged until all fieldwork and post-excavation work has been completed, the archive has been deposited and publication secured.*

Following the issue of the Brief from BCAS, John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2010), which outlined the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Prehistoric settlement remains have been recorded close to the River Thames. The proposed development area is located 500m to the north of a late Neolithic/Early



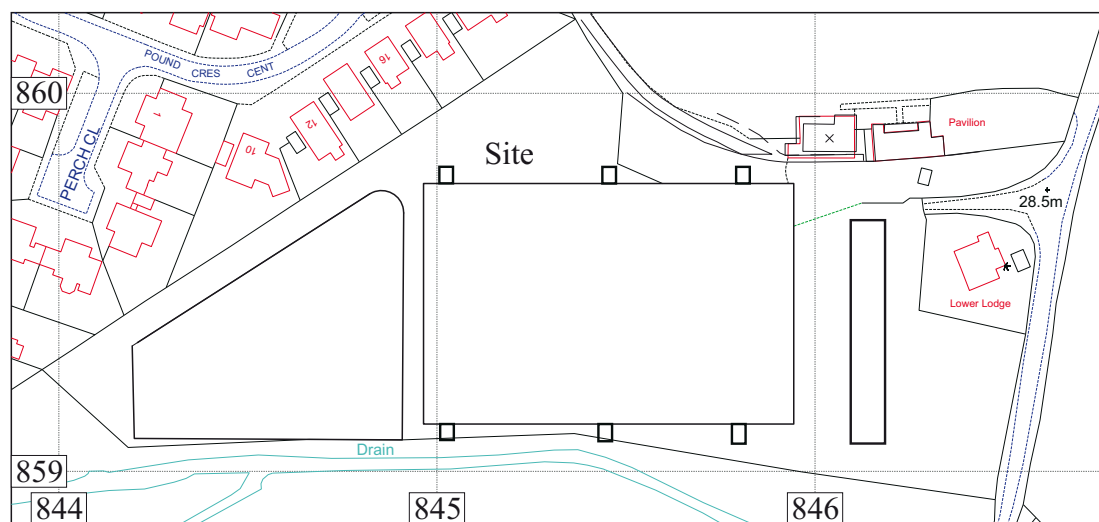
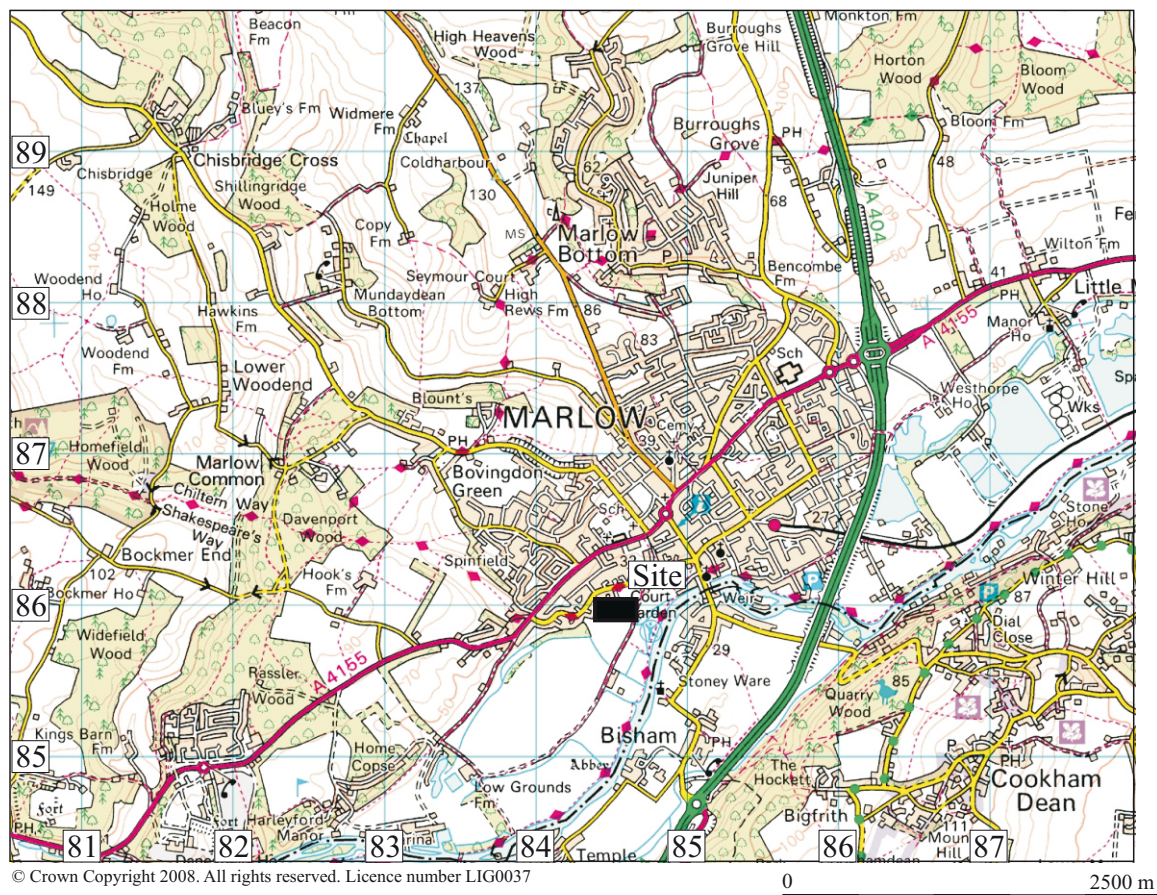


Figure 1. Site location

Bronze Age barrow cemetery (Historic Environment Record Number 01161) and a ring ditch cropmark (HER 02236). An evaluation carried out 400m to the south in 2005 identified Neolithic settlement associated with gravel islands and braided channels close to the Thames. A geophysical survey has already been carried out on the proposed development area (Wessex Archaeology 2008).

The earliest finds from the area include a Mesolithic flint tranchet axehead (HER 0212200000 SU 846 864). No settlement activity has been identified with this activity, but Marlow does lie at the eastern entrance to the Goring Gap, where the Chilterns extend to the River Thames.

Cropmarks were identified in 1999 to the southwest of Marlow at Lower Pound Lane; 500m from the site, adjacent to the site, subsequently field work was carried out across the site of these features. Fieldwalking took place in 1999, 2000, 2001, a resistivity survey in 2000, trial trenching in 2001, an auger survey in 2002, a further geophysical survey in 2003, excavations in 2004, and a magnetometry survey in 2005. This determined that the cropmarks were ring ditches that belonged to a late Neolithic to early Bronze Age barrow cemetery and that there was also a possible associated settlement (AS 2006; MAS 2005; MAS 2007a; MAS 2007b; OA 2005; OA 2006; WYAS 2005).

A middle Bronze Age spearhead was dredged from the Thames (HER 011540000 SU 84770 85540). Ritual deposition of metal objects has been recognised along the length of the Thames (Bradley 1990). An evaluation carried out in West Street produced a number of struck flint and a sherd of Bronze Age pottery (HER 061890000 SU 84731 86367).

Surveys carried out on the site of Marlow Sports Centre (WA 2008a; WA 2008b) have identified the remains of archaeological features, which include 3 ring ditches and a number of enclosures. This would seem to be a continuation of the cemetery and settlement site already noted to the south of the site.

The name Marlow is first recorded c. 1015 as Merelafan, mere-lāf, and that the name referred to the northern edge of a lake (Mawer and Stenton, 1925, 186-90). This gives us an indication of the environment that surrounded the town of Great Marlow in the early medieval period and presumably back into prehistory. The local place-name Bomoor, recorded *Bomere* in 1295, and Widmere, *Withemere* in 1233, both refer to a lake and may contain the earlier names of the lake.

The Domesday Book records four manors with the name Marlow in 1086 (Morris 1978, 4.1, 23.4, 28.2, 52.1). A borough was established at Marlow in the middle ages (VCH 1925, 69-70), but no texts survive to indicate when this was established. There are only later references to the town. The original focus of the medieval settlement is considered to be located in the vicinity of the church. The church lies near the bank of the River Thames; the High Street extended to the churchyard, the course of the road was altered to accommodate the present crossing of the river. Smaller roads leave the High Street, Duke Lane to the East and Pound Lane to the west. Geophysical survey work across the area produced evidence of a carriage way (HER 0963500000 SU 84521 85986). This formation is shown on earlier plans of the village, for example the map of church lands of 1801 (BRO PR140/6/4). A map of 1792 (BRO Q/H/7) shows

the proposed alterations of the course of Pound Lane, though from the present road design it is probable that this was never carried out.

The Court Gardens adjacent to the site on the east. To the north of the barn an area is marked Goblins Pits, further roads and buildings are marked on the plan between the Goblin Pits and the High Street. One of these buildings is identified as a further barn, while the other is a Farm Kiln. The term Goblin Pits is of interest as it is probably a gravel pit, but the use of the term goblin is perhaps indicative of a place with traditions or associations that are not understood. This may be associated with the remains of archaeological material of an unknown origin.

The town of Marlow has a number of listed buildings (DOE 1974, 25-58), a number of them fall into the 500m radius of the site. These include buildings in Oxford Road, Portlands Alley, Pound Lane, Saint Peter's Street, The Deanery, and West Street, the latter has some 59 listed buildings.

The tithe map (BRO 259) of 1843 and the inclosure map of Great Marlow c. 1860 (BRO IR/86R) call the field in which the Sports Centre is located Aldermar. The name is unusual and in so late a form it is difficult to correctly assess the etymology of the name. It is possible that the last part of the name refers to a mere or mære, perhaps the wet area to the south of the field.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the work as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were:

To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development.

In particular to:

- Establish whether there is evidence for Neolithic or Bronze Age settlement or ritual activity on this site
- Establish the character and date of the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey
- Establish whether there are any remains from other periods surviving on the site

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994), the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service prepared *Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2010).

An archaeologist maintained a continuous presence on site during the course of all excavations that potentially would disturb or destroy archaeological remains. The main works that involved archaeological monitoring were:

- a) The artificial pitch and car park – stripped under archaeological supervision to the archaeological horizon in areas reduced up to 300mm in depth. Areas around the perimeter of the playing field were made up in level.
- b) Drainage ditches – Inspected intermittently
- c) Service trenches – Inspected continuously

### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground reduction connected to the new all weather sports pitch. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket and a flat blade attached to a bulldozer.

Before any of the major ground work commenced it was decided that the depth of the archaeological horizon should be established beneath current ground level. A c. 5m wide corridor was excavated down to the surface of the natural along the eastern side of the new playing field (Plate 1). No archaeological features were observed but a good point of reference was made for impact levels of the playing field on potential archaeology.

The actual level of needed ground reduction changed from day to day at the outset of the project but after consultations between McArdle and the on site contractor WPH Projects a higher level was agreed upon. This meant that the centre of the site was reduced to the uppermost surface of natural and the rest of the new playing field was raised in the lower lying areas to achieve a level finish (Plate 2).

Any ground reduction over the centre of the site, which impacted the uppermost surface of the natural clay was undertaken with a tracked excavator with a ditching bucket (Plate 3). Other areas where levels were being raised were achieved with the bulldozer (Plate 4)

A journal, recorded on specially designed record sheets, was maintained which detailed times and durations of site visits as well as notes on areas monitored by the archaeologist. Deposits (overburden) were recorded on context recording sheets. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive to be submitted to the Buckinghamshire Museum Service.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Field Results (Fig 2)**

Individual context numbers were assigned on site to deposits encountered during the ground reduction. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material.

The lowest geological horizon attained was natural alluvium. The natural consisted of light brown orange clay silt with frequent gravels (03). The depth at which this horizon was attained varied slightly across the site but was generally around c. 0.30m from the current ground surface (28.05m AOD)





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Overlying the natural was a layer of mid grey brown silty clay subsoil with numerous small rounded gravels of varying sizes, chalk flecks, charcoal flecks and occasional sub-angular stones and coal flecks (02). This deposit did not contain any significant archaeological material.

The topsoil (01) was friable dark grey-brown silty loam. This was highly compacted in places with disturbance covering a large area of modern waste. No finds of archaeological interest were collected or retained from this deposit, except one struck flint.

Cut through the subsoil was a previous temporary compound, which truncated the previous ground level to natural. A geotextile membrane was laid down directly onto the natural. A 0.20m thick deposit of hardcore was then laid down on top of the membrane (04). A previous haul road leading to this compound was also noted and marked on the plan of the area. A service trench was present running NW-SE across the eastern part of the site.

#### **4.2 Drainage and Service trench (Fig 2)**

A service/drainage trench around all except the northern side of the sports pitch was monitored intermittently for any archaeological features or finds. The trench was inspected and revealed a simple sequence of natural clay (03) overlain by subsoil (02) and topsoil (01).

The drainage and service trenches impacted upon the surface of the natural geology in some areas. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the service trenches.

#### **4.3 Flood light Bases (Fig 2)**

A total of six flood light bases were monitored around the perimeter of the Sports Playing Field. None of the flood light bases revealed any archaeology but notes were made of the varying natural ground.

Flood light base 1 (FLB 1) revealed dense gravels directly beneath the subsoil (02). The gravels were interpreted as a gravel island also recorded in previous archaeological evaluations in the immediate area.

On the northern side of the Sports Pitch in FLB 5 beneath a layer of clay were further gravels interspersed with layers of sand indicating successive periods of flooding during prehistory (Plates 5 & 6).

The other flood light base excavations revealed thick clay deposits thought to be alluvium deposited between the gravel islands. These areas would have been marshy and not good for settlement.

#### **4.4 Reliability of Results**

The watching brief was carried out in summer conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks.

The methodology employed during groundworks was the 'best case scenario' which could be achieved from the time and resources available from the on site contractors.

Following the topsoil removal by bulldozer, a 13 tonne 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket was used to strip the subsoil to the very surface of the natural ground across the centre of the playing field (c. 10m-15m wide corridor). This enabled proper inspection of the natural horizon across the centre of the new playing field. The other areas of the site were made up in ground level (after initial topsoil stripping) so any features were preserved *in situ* beneath the subsoil.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Finds**

One struck flint of prehistoric date was recovered from topsoil.

### **5.2 Environmental Remains**

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The archaeological work at Marlow Sports Club, Lower Pound Lane, Marlow was successful in proving that no archaeological features or finds existed at the site. The natural clay geology was seen across the central area and no archaeological features were seen cut into it. The only visible features were modern services seen orientated across the field in a north-west, south-east alignment shown on the gradiometer survey (Wessex Archaeology 2008).

The topsoil and subsoil had been badly truncated by a modern compound and haul road. The exact date this was instated was not known but it would have been recent.

The prehistoric barrow cemetery investigated by The Marlow Archaeology Society to the southwest of Marlow at Lower Pound Lane; 500m from the site, did not extend as far as the sports field.

During monitoring of the flood light bases close inspection of the natural ground within the excavations revealed different natural ground across the playing field area. In particular a suspected gravel 'island' was noted in the south eastern corner of the site. This is consistent with the similar gravel islands recorded by Wessex Archaeology in 2008 south of the site. The gravel islands would have been the more likely occupied areas of the marshland during the prehistoric period. Perhaps any prehistoric occupation lies to the immediate south east of the site.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

### **Archive Contents**

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

The drawn records

The project report

The primary site records

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Service under accession number 2011.144.

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<b>Site Name:</b> Marlow Sports Club, Lower Pound Lane, Marlow	
<b>Site Address:</b> MARLOW SPORTS CLUB PAVILION GROUND, Pound Lane, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2AE	
<b>Summary:</b> <i>A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction in advance of a new artificial turf area with landscaping, floodlighting, fencing and car parking at Marlow Sports Club, Lower Pound Lane, Marlow (09/05171/FUL). A total of six site visits were made intermittently over the period from 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011 to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to finished levels across the area of the new sports field. The surface of the natural geology was seen across the centre of the field and no archaeological features or finds were present. All other areas of the new pitch were made up in ground level (after initial topsoil stripping) to get a level finish. Drainage trenches and services trenches were monitored around the perimeter of the field and six floodlight bases were monitored, none of which produced any archaeological features or finds.</i>	
<b>District/Unitary:</b> Buckinghamshire	<b>Parish:</b>
<b>Period(s):</b> Modern	
<b>NGR (centre of site: 8 figures):</b> 8454 8595	
<b>Type of archaeological work:</b> WATCHING BRIEF	
<b>Date of Recording:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2011 to 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> JMHS	
<b>Geology:</b>	
<b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b>  Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA (Hons) Arch AIFA	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>  No archaeological features or finds.	
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b>	
<b>Contact at Unit: :</b> Paul Riccoboni <a href="mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk">info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a>	<b>Date:</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2011





Plate 1: Stripped area on eastern side of site to surface of natural ground



Plate 2: Showing height of raised ground



Plate 3: Showing centre of site reduced with ditching bucket





Plate 4: Showing bulldozer raising the ground level across the low lying area.



Plate 5: FLB 4; showing clay



Plate 6: FLB 5 showing gravels and sands