

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT OXFORD GOLF CLUB,
HILLTOP ROAD, OX4 1PF**

NGR: SP53880563

On behalf of

Oxford Golf Club

(formerly Southfield Golf Club)

March 2012

REPORT FOR Oxford Golf Club
Hilltop Road,
Oxford
OX4 1PF

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction in advance of the installation of three new ponds (1-3) with connecting footbridge (Planning Reference: 11/03076/FUL) at Oxford Golf Club, Oxford (SP53880563), formerly known as Southfields Golf Club. A total of four site visits were made over consecutive days from 28th February – 2nd March 2012. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to the uppermost surface of the archaeology or natural sand of Pond 1. The western side of the site (Ponds 2 & 3) were not monitored for archaeology as they had clearly been reduced in the past to produce upcast sand to landscape the area around the final 18th putting green.

The archaeological features comprised a number of discrete features considered to be prehistoric or early Roman in origin, related to a possible nearby settlement with an iron working industrial zone. A large pit was excavated towards the south-eastern end of the site and contained hammerscale within its fill. Close by was another pit with flue and associated with postholes and stakeholes. The burnt stones found in the flue indicate this pit also had a possible industrial iron working function. Other postholes were recorded across the general area of the new pond but formed no discernable shape or patterns which could be assigned with confidence to any individual structures. The postholes probably represent the only surviving remains of a prehistoric fence line or building. The small area available for excavation and a lack of dating evidence means we cannot postulate further. Any future ground works on the golf course should be closely monitored in order to attempt to further understand the nature of any prehistoric settlement on this hilltop.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and topography (Figure 1)

The site is at Southfield Golf Course, Hill Top Road, Oxford (NGR SP53880563) situated on the edge of a scarp slope with an initial gradual slope southwards before becoming steeper into the valley. Over the area of the eastern side of the new pond and beyond the ground level can be seen to gently rise. It has not been heavily landscaped; as is evident over other areas of the course. This would indicate the potential for surviving below ground archaeological features and/or deposits is good across this general area. On the western side of the pond heavy landscaping is clearly apparent with deep sumps originally excavated to raise the ground level over the area of the 18th putting green. These large sumps are to be incorporated into the design of the new pond. The site has good views of the City of Oxford viewed looking south. The underlying geology is Beckley Sand Member (BGS sheet 237) and the site is approximately at a height of 90m AOD.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted by Oxford City Council for the installation of three ponds around the 18th green with connecting water course and erection of wooden footbridge at Oxford Golf Club (formerly Southfields Golf Club).

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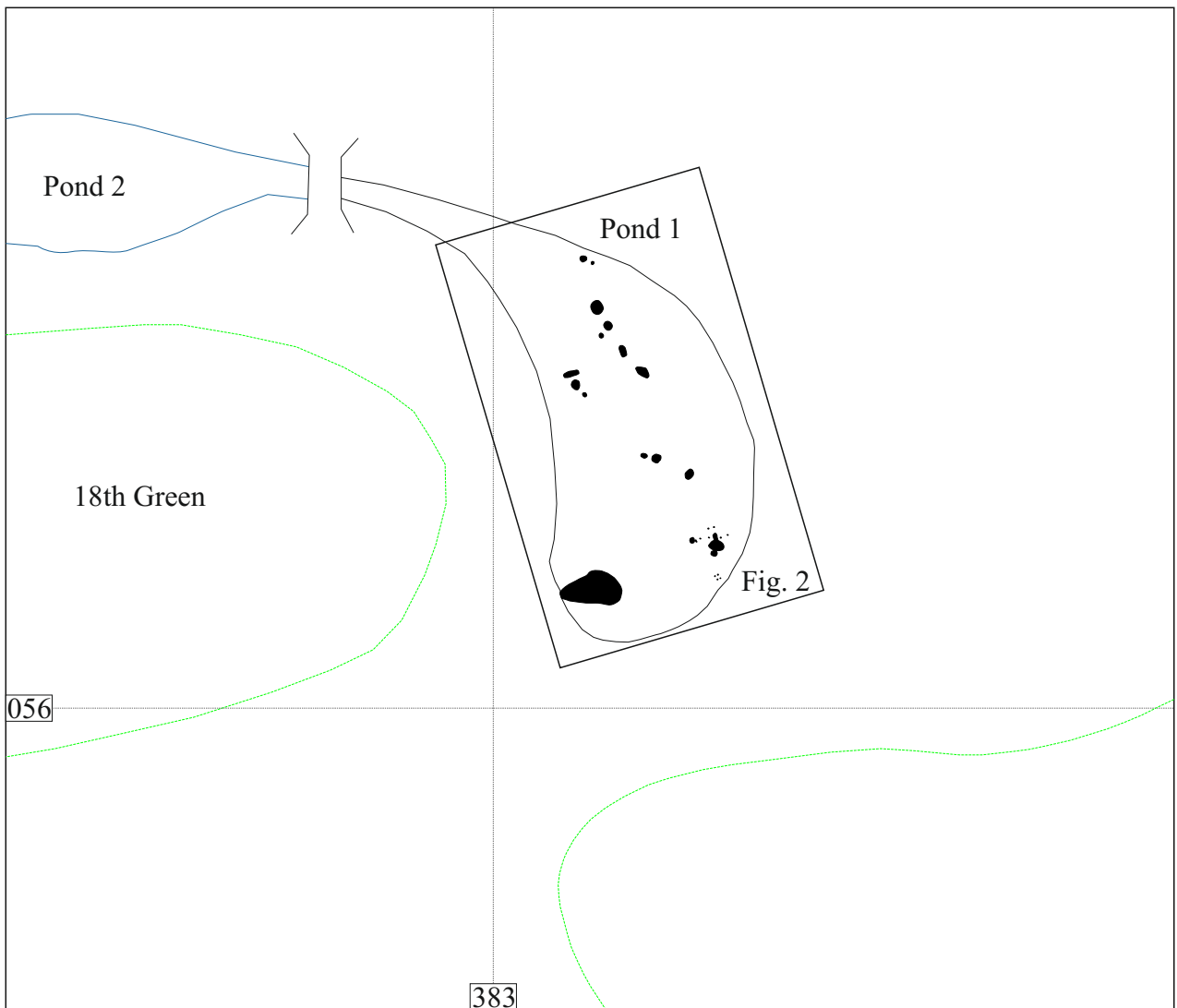
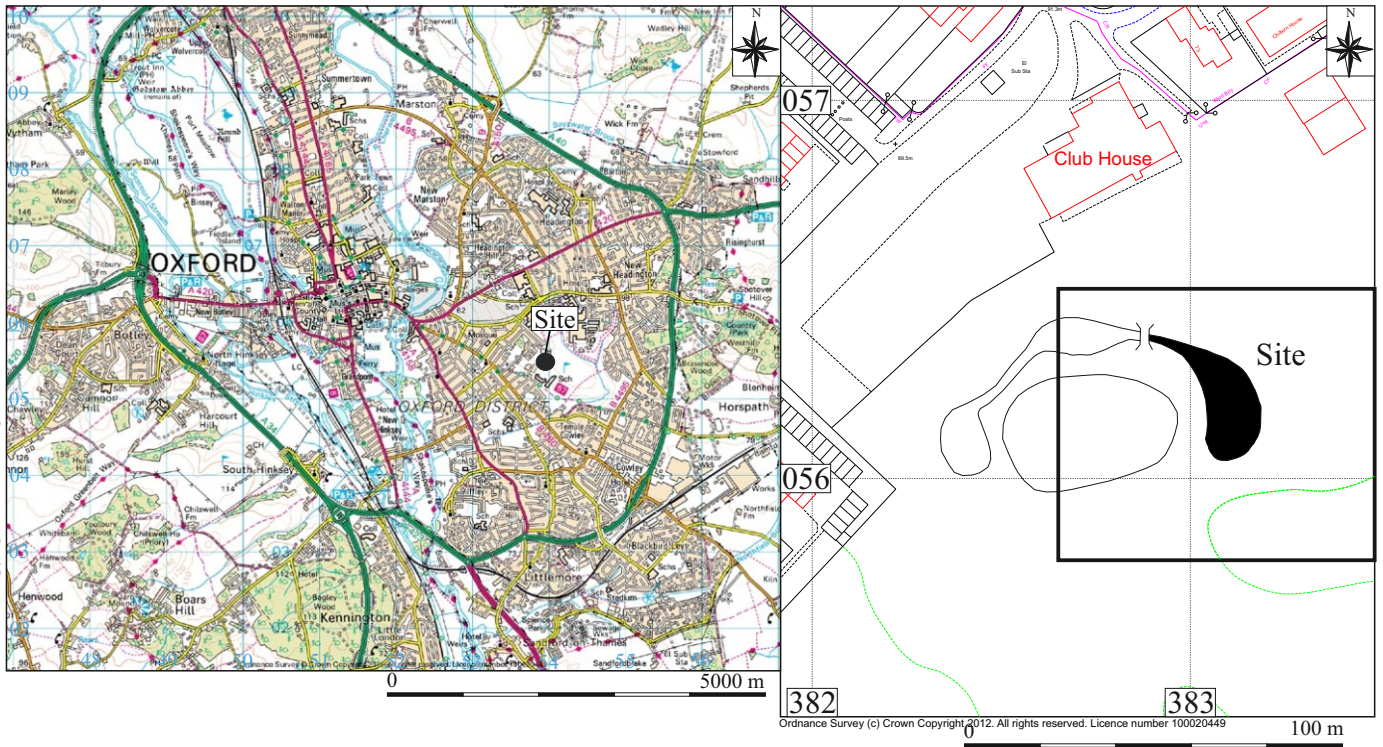


Figure 1. Site location

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A condition of the permission states that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the work.

The City Archaeologist for Oxford City Council (OCC) prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work. Based on the brief A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2012). This document outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

Planning Policy statements were highlighted in the Brief (OCC 2010) prepared by David Radford, archaeological officer for Oxford City.

- a. *PPS5 Policy HE12.3 states that where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.*
- b. *Watching briefs should be undertaken in accordance with a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise the brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design. The project will be completed only when all fieldwork and post-excavation work has been undertaken, and the archive has been deposited and any required publication secured.*

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site had the potential to contain prehistoric and Roman remains. Previously a notable assemblage of worked flints of Neolithic/Bronze suggesting in-situ flint working has been identified on the eastern fringe of the Golf Course (County Historic Environment Record No 6102). Roman kilns have been identified 300m to the south of this site (County HER No 3630) and 700m to the north-east at the Churchill Hospital (See below). The Historic Environment Record also records a World War II Heavy Anti-Aircraft Gunsite 100m to the north east of the pond site.

The Roman Pottery Industry

The Oxford pottery industry area of production stretches on a north-south alignment for almost the entire length of the Dorchester to Alchester Road and on an east-west alignment for almost five kilometres. A summary of the known pottery industry was produced in 1977 by Young providing an overview of the distribution and setting of the industry as well as a detailed gazetteer of Oxford wares. Young noted at least 30 kilns in the region, the majority of which were in the Oxford local authority area (Young 1977). The industry of the Oxford region appears to have begun as a cottage

industry in the 1st and 2nd centuries before rapidly expanding into a major regional and national industry in the later 3rd and 4th centuries (Young 1972a: 106; 2000: ii). The evidence suggests that the early development of the local industry (spurred by the introduction of white ware mortaria into the repertoire in the beginning of the 2nd century AD) lay in south-east Oxford (Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and St Luke's Road, Cowley and perhaps Rose Hill), with a southward extension of activity towards Dorchester. The later expansion of the industry in the 3rd century seems to have been northward towards Headington, with the Churchill hospital being the best studied site.

The Churchill Hospital Site

The potential for Roman kilns at the Churchill hospital site was first noted in the 19th century when several possible kiln sites were recorded during quarrying at Harry Bear's Pit. The evidence comprised several circular clay lined hollows of some 75cm in diameter with associated shallow flues and much pottery debris. Unfortunately the kilns were not subject to close examination or recording and were subsequently destroyed (Manning 1898: 19). In 1953 large quantities of Roman pottery were recovered from the hospital during building work for the Regional Blood Transfusion Unit (Case 1952-3: 224). Salvage excavations at the site revealed that one kiln had already been destroyed during building works. A second kiln was revealed and preserved *in situ*. The substantial pottery assemblage recovered from the salvage excavations included many examples of mortaria and indicated a period of use in the late 4th century (*ibid.*).

Between 1971-3 archaeological investigations took place in advance of extensive redevelopment of the excavated area extending to around 5000 square metres. Magnetometry and archaeological excavation were both used on the site and a series of interim reports were published throughout the 1970s. The first season of excavation in 1971 concentrated on a large area immediately to the north of those recorded in 1952, revealing evidence of two phases of pottery production as well as occupation activity (Young 1972b). The second season of work in 1972 recorded a pottery drying area, ancillary structures and a kiln of a comparable date to the second phase of activity. Area I was extended to the south (Areas III, IV) while two new areas to the southwest of Area I were also excavated (Areas IV, V). The evidence suggests that the organised layout and scale of the first phase continued into the 4th century to the south-west in Area VI (Young, 1973a). A third season concentrated on the area between Area I and Area VI and identified a possible first century potters' area, containing two kilns and a well (Area VIII), and of further working areas of the late 3rd and 4th centuries, including possible buildings, pottery dryers and one kiln in Area VII (Young 1974). A summary of the finds and a description of features related to the manufacturing process is provided by Young (1977; 2000).

The above information has been taken from the City Archaeological Officer's Brief and the John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation*.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

2.1 Project Objectives

In addition to this more specific objectives were outlined in the Brief (*ibid*) at the start of the project. These were summarised as follows:

- A description of the proposed works and an assessment of their archaeological impact with an accompanying plan.
- Details of the methodology for implementing the watching brief indicating those works which are to be observed, the frequency of observation (permanent/daily visits etc) and any archaeological control over the developer's operating procedures.
- An assessment of the potential for, and possible nature of, any "unexpected discoveries" with details of contingency arrangements for salvage recording.
- Procedures for project management (to follow the principles set out in Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP) (English Heritage, 1991)).

This report sets out to fulfil these highlighted objectives along with the following aims stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2010) which were to;

- Identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular regard to the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains.
- Record any remains associated with the WWII installations in this area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

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

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground reduction connected to undisturbed eastern side of the new pond. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket.

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 Oxfordshire County Museum Service.

All discrete features were initially half sectioned and recorded in profile. 100% (by number) were then fully excavated in an attempt to retrieve any further dating evidence.

4 RESULTS

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

4.1 Field Results (Figures 2-4)

The lowest geological horizon attained was Beckley Sand Member. The sand was light yellowish orange colour with low clay content (102). 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.

Overlying the natural was a layer of orange-brown sandy loam subsoil with numerous flecks of coal and occasional prehistoric and post-medieval pottery sherds (101). This deposit did not contain any significant archaeological material.

The topsoil (100) was *c.* 0.20m in thickness and consisted of a dark grey-brown silty loam, compacted in places with no finds of archaeological interest.

32 features were encountered during the process of ground reduction. Of these features; three were pits (one pit re-cut), 17 were postholes and 12 were stakeholes (Fig. 2).

Pits

One large pit was seen at the south western area of the new pond (1). The pit had been re-cut. The earliest pit 168 was 4.25m in length x 2.25m wide with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by *c.* 1m thick very soft light-mid yellow orange sandy silt with darker mottling (167) created as a result of bioturbation. There were no finds from within this fill (Fig. 4, S20).

The pit was re-cut; 142 was sub oval in shape *c.* 3m long x 1.70m wide and 1.40m deep (Fig. 4, S1 & 2). The earliest fill was mottled orange brown silty sand with large burnt stone inclusions and some areas of burnt sand and scorching (143). The latest fill was very soft mottled orange brown silty sand with small stone inclusions and no finds (141). Two environmental samples (40 litres from each fill) were taken to assess any carbonised remains (see results section).

Pit 110 was 1.15m wide and 0.15m deep with sharp concave sides and a flat base. It was filled by 0.15m thick mid orange brown silty sand (109) with one sherd of indiscernible late Iron Age or medieval pottery (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, S10).

Postholes

There were 17 postholes recorded across the excavation area ranging in diameter from 0.15- 0.85m and in depth from to 0.10-0.40m (see summary table 1). The postholes were nearly all filled with stone post packing.

Postholes around pit 110 (Figure 3)

Cutting the northern side of pit 110 was posthole 112, of 0.30m width and 0.10m depth. It was filled mid orange brown silty sand (111) with large stone (<150mm) wedged into one side of feature to act as post packing (Fig. 4, S12).

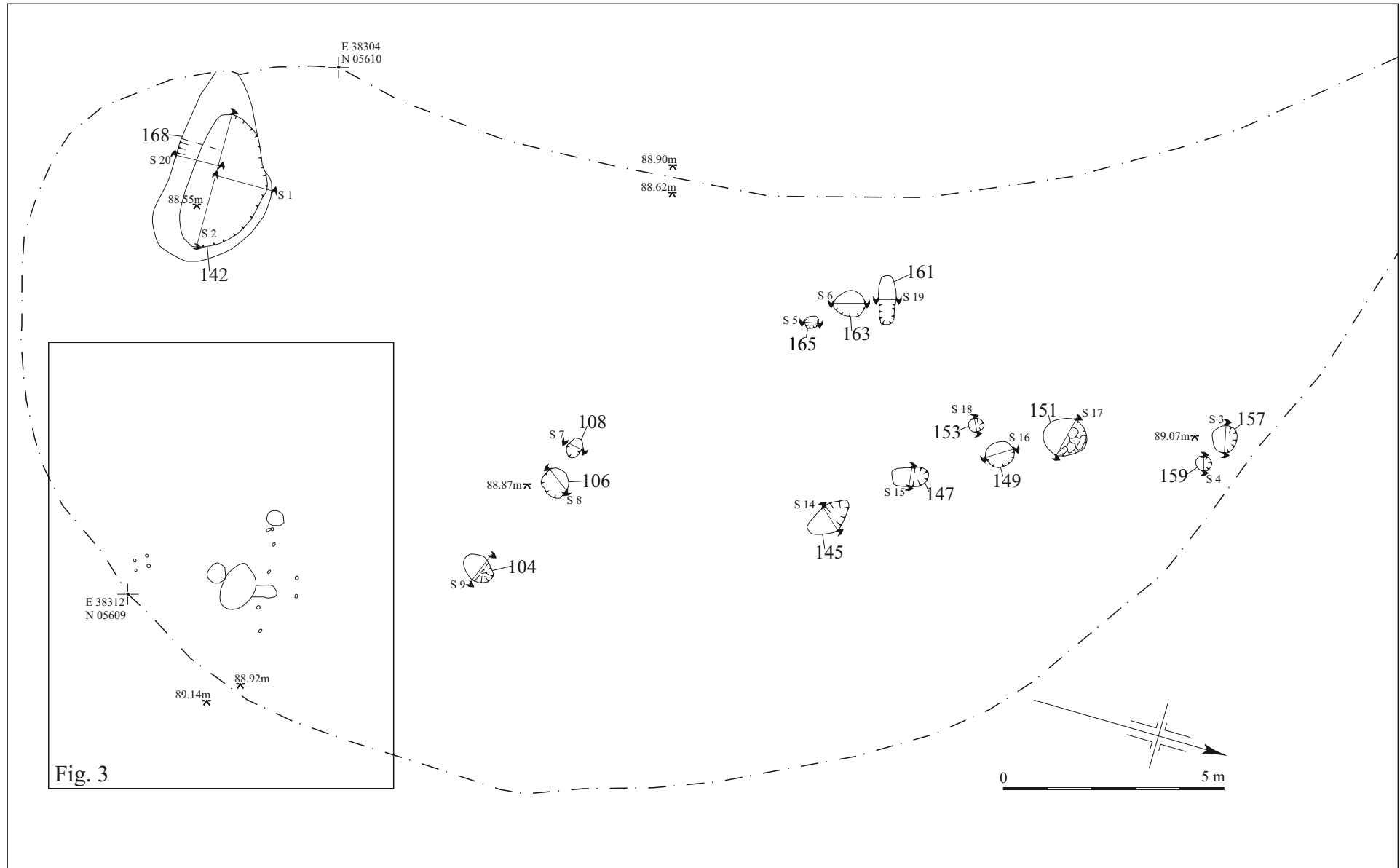


Figure 2. Plan

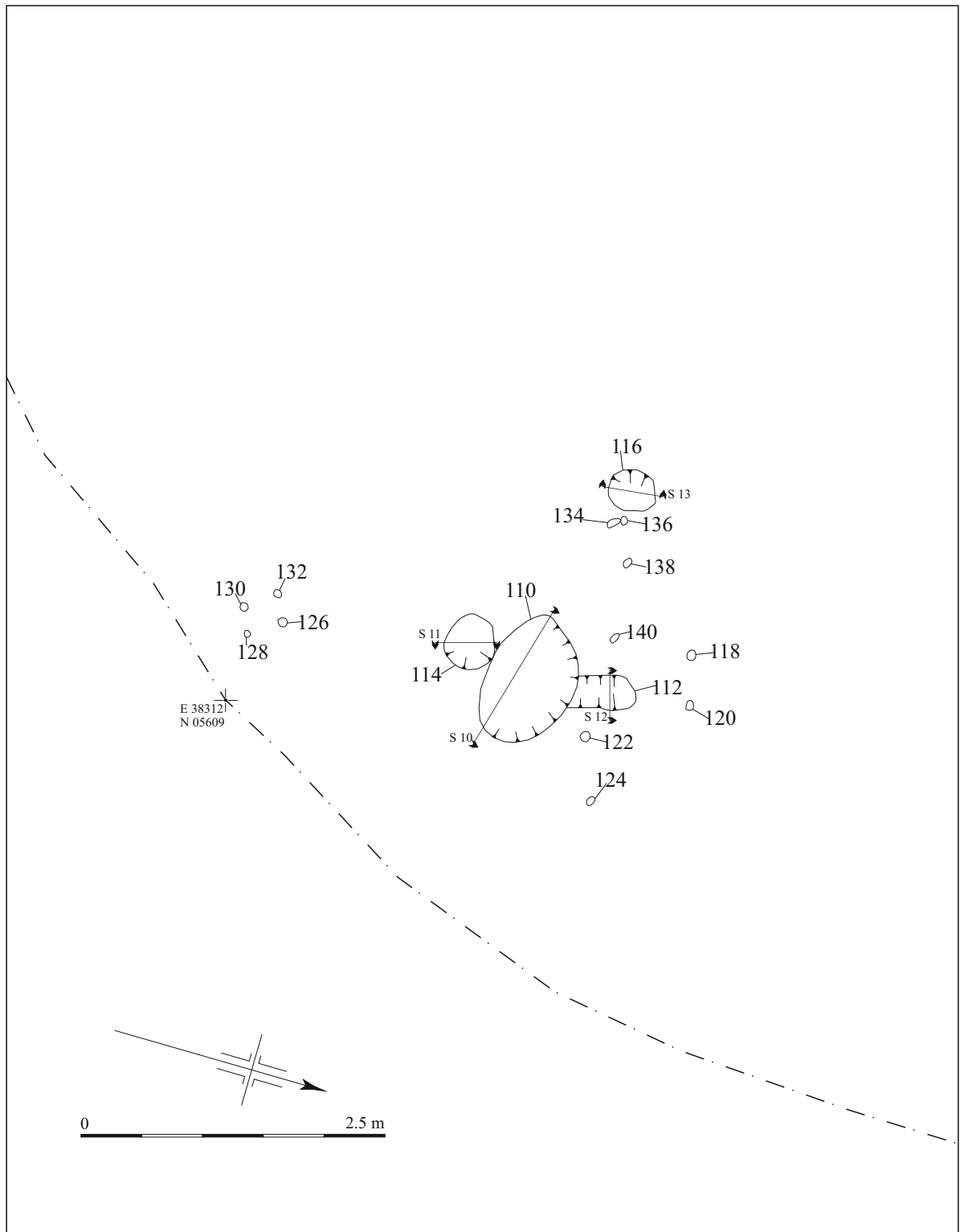


Figure 3. Close up plan

On the southern side of Pit 110 was a circular shaped posthole 114, 0.35m wide and 0.10m deep with curving concave sides and a gently rounded base (Fig. 4, S11). It was filled by very soft dark brown grey silty sand with stone inclusions throughout (113). The final posthole close to this pit was feature 116 with concave sides with a tapered rounded point base (Fig. 4, S13), filled by dark grey silty sand loam with stone packing (114).

Postholes at the northern end of the site (Figure 2)

The postholes across the northern area of the site were variable in size with no consistency in their shape or dimensions. Of particular note was feature 151 as it was the only feature, which contained very dense stone packing at its base, which was likely to have formed a post pad (Fig. 4; S 17)

Table 1; Summary of all postholes

<i>Context Number</i>	<i>Fill of</i>	<i>Filled by</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Diameter (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Pottery Date</i>
103	104		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.55	0.25	/
104		103	Posthole	0.55	0.25	
105	106		Dark grey brown silty sand loam	0.50	0.10	/
106		105	Posthole	0.50	0.10	
107	108		Dark grey brown silty sand loam	0.30	0.10	/
108		107	Posthole	0.30	0.10	
111	112		Mid orange brown silty sand loam	0.30	0.10	/
112		111	Posthole	0.30	0.10	
113	114		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.35	0.10	/
114		113	Posthole	0.35	0.10	
115	116		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.30	0.10	/
116		115	Posthole	0.30	0.10	
144	145		Dark black grey silty sand loam	0.60	0.20	/
145		144	Posthole	0.60	0.20	
146	147		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.30	0.15	/
147		146	Posthole	0.30	0.15	
148	149		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.40	0.20	/
149		148	Posthole	0.40	0.20	
150	151		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.85	0.12	/
151		150	Posthole	0.85	0.12	
152	153		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	0.15	0.10	/
153		152	Posthole	0.15	0.10	
154		155	Posthole	0.24	0.17	
155	154		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.24	0.17	/
156	157		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.54	0.17	/
157		156	Posthole	0.54	0.17	
158	159		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.20	0.10	/
159		158	Posthole	0.20	0.10	
160	161		Dark brown grey silty sand loam	0.25	0.40	/
161		160	Posthole	0.25	0.40	
162	163		Dark orange brown silty sand	0.75	0.19	/
163		162	Posthole	0.75	0.19	
164	165		Dark grey brown silty sand loam	0.24	0.12	/
165		164	Posthole	0.24	0.12	

Stakeholes (Figure 3)

12 stakeholes were recorded around the general area of pit 110. Most of these stakeholes did not form any particular definite structural pattern but are considered to have once held stakes to which a windbreak could be attached around the north side of the pit while it was in use. Four stakeholes to the south were in a rectangular arrangement.

Table 2; Summary of all Stakeholes

<i>Context Number</i>	<i>Fill of</i>	<i>Filled by</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Vertical Y (mm)</i>	<i>Horizontal X (mm)</i>	<i>Length along axis (mm)</i>
117	118		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	70	80	85
118		117	Stakehole	70	80	85
119	120		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	45	95	130
120		119	Stakehole	45	95	130
121	122		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	35	75	80
122		121	Stakehole	35	75	80
123	124		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	45	80	95
124		123	Stakehole	45	80	95
125	126		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	25	35	50
126		125	Stakehole	25	35	50
127	128		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	40	70	95
128		127	Stakehole	40	70	95
129	130		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	30	75	85
130		129	Stakehole	30	75	85
131	132		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	30	55	70
132		131	Stakehole	30	55	70
133	134		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	50	70	90
134		135	Stakehole	50	70	90
135	136		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	40	55	70
136		137	Stakehole	40	55	70
137	138		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	50	70	70
138		139	Stakehole	50	70	70
139	140		Mid grey brown silty sand loam	50	85	95
140		139	Stakehole	50	85	95

4.3 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in spring conditions with excellent co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks. The eastern area of the new pond (labelled Pond 3) was reduced to the surface of the natural sand or uppermost surface of the archaeology. This was the most efficient way to deal with the archaeological features before the ground was reduced further (1.8m) for the final levels of the new pond. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved within the time and resources available.

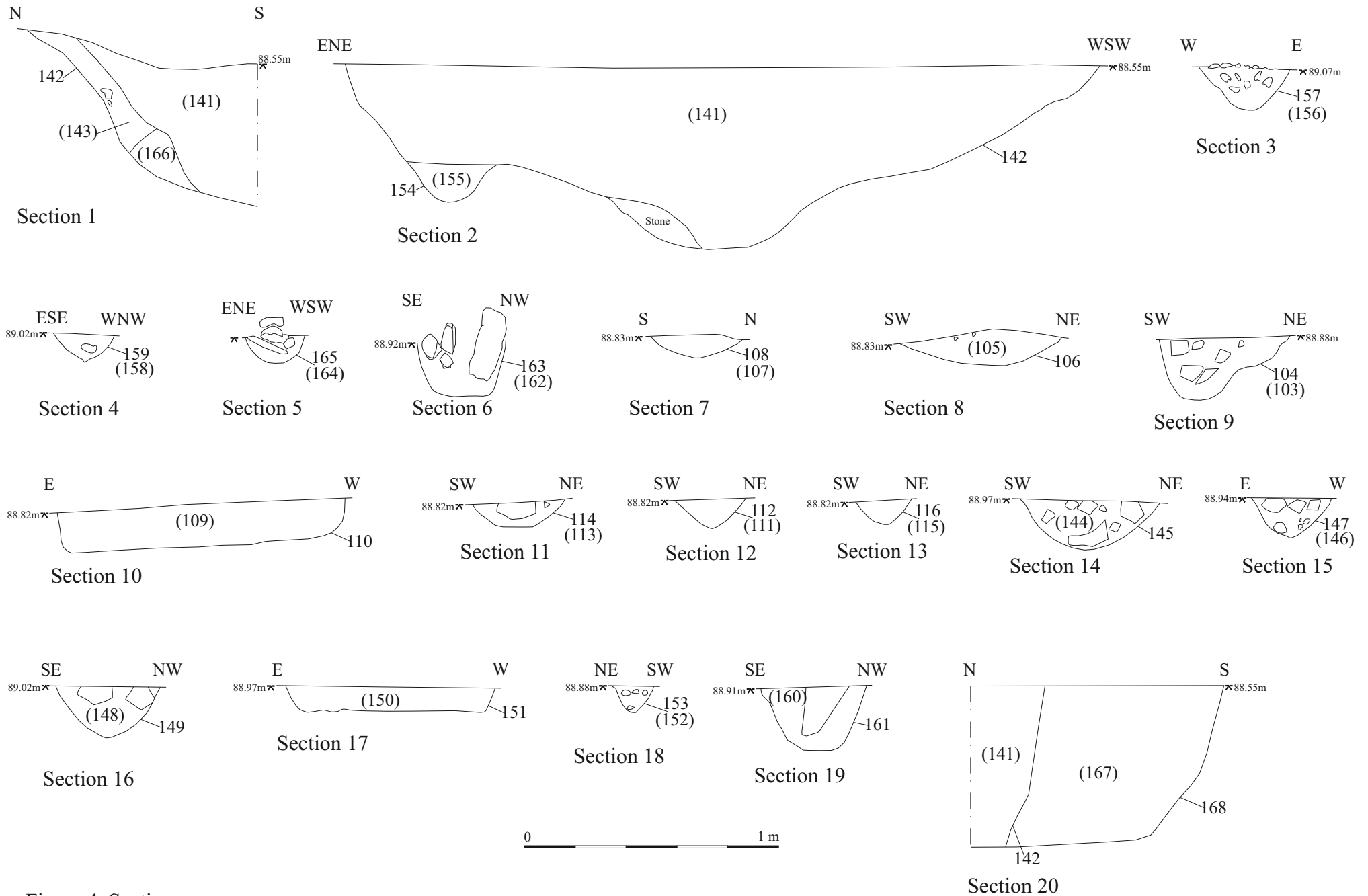


Figure 4. Sections

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

5.1 The Pottery by Jane Timby

5.1.1 Introduction

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a small collection of five sherds of pottery weighing 51g dating to the Roman or medieval and post-medieval periods.

The pottery came from just two contexts: (101) and (109).

The pieces were quite well-fragmented with an average shed weight of just 10 g and are in quite worn condition.

For the purposes of the assessment the sherds were scanned and quantified by count and weight. The resulting data with a likely spot date can be found in the catalogue below. No ancillary work has been carried out to consider other finds previously found in the area.

5.1.2 Description

Four sherds were recovered from the sub-soil, context (101). These comprised two post-medieval pieces; one sherd of later Iron Age or early Roman date and one rimsherd of mid or later Roman date.

A single small bodysherd was recovered from the fill (109) of a shallow pit 110. It is difficult to be absolutely sure about the date of such a small piece which is probably Roman but there is a possibility it might be medieval. It is a medium sandy grey ware with a moderately dense frequency of well-sorted grains. The exterior surface is orange and sooted from use.

5.1.3 Summary and potential

This is an exceptionally small collection of pottery, which demonstrates a possibly early Roman and later Roman presence in the area but is too small to draw further conclusions.

No further work is recommended. The collection is probably not worth retention.

5.1.4 Catalogue

Context (101)

1. Worn bodysherd. Handmade. Grog-tempered. Wt. 13 g. Date: LIA-early Roman.
2. Rimsherd from a plain-walled, flat bottomed dish. Local sandy grey ware (OXF RE). As Young (1977) form R53 dated to the 3rd-4th century. Wt. 24 g.
3. Bodysherd of unglazed red earthenware. Wt. 9 g. Date: post-medieval-modern.
4. Basesherd from an industrial white ware with blue and white transfer decoration. Wt. 2 g. Date: later 19th century onwards.

Context (109)

5. Small bodysherd, ?handmade closed form. Grey sandy ware with an oxidised surface. Sooted exterior. Wt. 3 g. Date: Roman or medieval.

5.2 Charred Plant Remains by Hayley McParland

Two bulk samples were taken from the fills of a single pit of possible prehistoric date, it is estimated that both samples combined only represent 2% of the total fill. The samples were processed for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoal, and were tested for presence of metallurgical indicators.

A proportion of the samples were processed for assessment purposes using a ‘Siraf’ style flotation tank by Gavin Davis, using meshes of 0.5mm aperture for both retention of the flot and the residue. Following air-drying the residue was sorted, weighed and discarded. The residue did not contain artefacts. The floated material was fractionated to 5mm, 2mm and 0.5mm, then sorted and assessed using a stereo zoom microscope.

Both flots contained modern root material, abundant earthworm cocoons and occasional modern Chenopodiaceae seeds, which are often intrusive in archaeological contexts, suggesting heavy bioturbation. Whilst anthropogenic burning is indicated within the feature due to the presence of coal/clinker and occasional small fragments of charcoal, the presence of hammerscale suggests that this may be the result of metalworking within close proximity to the site. Given the rate of bioturbation and the general lack of charred plant remains, no further work is recommended and the material has not been retained.

Table 3: CPR Assessment Data

Sample No.	Context	Sample Volume (litres)	Volume Processed (litres)	Flot Volume (ml)	Residue weight (g)	Comments
1	(141)	40	10	5	56	50% modern roots, frequent earthworm cocoons, modern Chenopodiaceae seeds. Occasional small undiagnostic fragments of charcoal present, coal/clinker more frequent. Hammerscale present.
2	(143)	40	20	50	320	50% modern roots, frequent earthworm cocoons and a modern millipede skeleton. Single modern Chenopodiaceae seed. Occasional small undiagnostic fragments of charcoal present, coal/clinker more frequent. Hammerscale present.

5.3 The Metallurgical Evidence by Gwilym Williams

A bulk sample was taken from each of fills (141) and (143) of pit 142, which was undated but possibly prehistoric in date. Hayley McParland (see above) has estimated that both samples combined only represent 2% of the total fill. The samples were processed primarily for the recovery and assessment of charred plant remains and charcoal. Details for sample processing are as for the environmental data, and are not

repeated here. During assessment it became clear that hammerscale from iron working was present in the sample.

Sample 1 from fill (141) comprised a total of 61g of residue and flot, and sample 2 from fill (143) weighed a total of 370g. The samples of hammerscale both weigh no more than 1g from each. In both cases the processed sample volume is no more than a quarter of the total sampled. The hammerscale recovered includes both flake and spheroidal; the former is produced by thermal or mechanical shock when iron is struck, whereas the latter is formed during hot working as small droplets of liquid slag are beaten out of the worked iron (Starley 1995, 1).

There was no metallurgical slag – i.e. plano-convex/smithing hearth bottoms or undiagnostic slag – or hearth-lining or other forms of vitrified technical ceramic apparently associated with the hammerscale. Some very small fragments of fuel ash slag were present in the samples, although some unstratified pieces were also recovered during machine-watching; these are produced by vitrification of charcoal with sand fluxes and other silicising elements and are characterised by the brittle body, which has low density and a high abundance of small round pores (Martín-Torres 2010, 51).

Burnt sand and burnt stone were, however, recovered from pit 142, primarily from deposit (143), which proportionally yielded the least hammerscale from residue and flot processed. Proportionally, significantly more was recovered from fill (141) the homogenous silty sand. Hammerscale, unlike larger metallurgical residues, such as slag does not travel far and is frequently found close to its production area; the source of the dump could not be ascertained, but is clearly secondary, rather than primary (McDonnell & Starley 2002, 1), and seems to represent the cleaning of a working area. The quantities in fill (141) are indicative of iron working: in particular the presence of both spheroidal and flake hammerscale is diagnostic of smithing, rather than smelting. This would accord with the absence of larger slags and indeed charcoal. The burnt sand and burnt stone from 142 are very reasonably part of a furnace. Although the second pit 110 and associated flue 112 were not sampled, their morphology is also indicative of a potential primitive furnace.

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief at Oxford Golf Club was useful in establishing the presence of potential prehistoric or Roman archaeology at this hilltop location. The prehistoric archaeology of Oxford and its immediate environs is patchy due to limited large scale excavation across the town. Prehistoric occupation is particularly evident on the hill slopes (Wilkinson 2003) and the Oxford area would have supported typical prehistoric settlement from the Neolithic through to Iron Age. Hill slope sites have been identified to the west of the city at Wytham Hill (Mytum 1986), at the top of Hinksey Hill (Myres 1930) and at Cumnor, Hurst Hill (Wallis 1983). It is considered that similar settlements existed on the east side of the city where this site is located (Wilkinson 2003 p.10). By the middle Iron Age the changes to the seasonal flood patterns around Oxford led to a shift in permanent settlement patterns to the higher ground east of Oxford (Beckley & Radford 2011a). The Oxford Golf Club site has particularly good views overlooking the town and would have been an ideal prehistoric or early Roman settlement option. The nature of the sandy geology creates very soft topsoil making ploughing easier with a wooden ard. During the late Iron Age

the Upper Thames Valley was a frontier zone between three different tribal groupings, the Dobunni to the west, the Atrebates to the south and the Catuvellani to the east. A number of 'valley forts' or 'enclosed oppida' appear at this time and seem to have been associated with the defence of the Thames tributaries such as the enclosure at Cassington on the Evenlode, Abingdon on the Ock and Dorchester Dyke Hills on the Thame. At Oxford evidence of an Iron Age defensive enclosure was uncovered at Berwood First School, North Way, Barton (Gilbert 2005) and another probable mid Iron Age defended enclosure was uncovered at the former King of Prussia Pub, Rose Hill (Gilbert 2008; Gilbert 2011). Both of these sites are on the eastern or south-eastern hillslopes of Oxford, similar locations to Oxford Golf Club. The postholes and pits discovered at the Oxford Golf Club could represent archaeological evidence of a prehistoric farmstead east of Oxford cited for defensive reasons with good soils for agricultural use.

Roman settlement at Oxford was peripheral to the major towns of this region. A Roman Road runs through the eastern edge of Roman Oxford connecting Alchester to the north with Dorchester on Thames to the south east. There is no direct evidence of a Roman town at Oxford. During the Roman period Oxford was the centre of a major pottery industry that spanned the entire Roman occupation of Britain (see section 1.3). Kilns and other pottery manufacturing sites have been located over an extensive area east of the modern city, which indicates the site of the Oxford Golf Club as prime pottery production territory.

The large pit found at the south western end of the site was deep with two distinct fills. The primary fill, which lined the base and edges of the feature contained large scorched stones and sands along with hammer scale, which provides direct evidence of iron working in the immediate vicinity of the site. Although no dating evidence was recovered from the pit it is considered that this feature was prehistoric or early Roman in origin and probably used for waste purposes associated with close by iron working. During the Iron Age metalwork objects such as the Minster Ditch dagger sheath, and the horse pits from Wytham just outside the Oxford City Council Local Authority Area, shine valued light on the quality of craftsmanship achieved by Iron Age metal smiths for specialist high status objects (Beckley & Radford 2011a). For most ordinary settlements metal working did not rise to more than blacksmithing to make or mend tools and other objects. A small amount of lining slag, hammer scale, fuel ash slag and a possible mould or crucible were recovered from the Middle Iron Age open settlement at Whitehouse Road (Salter 1993). During the Roman period small amounts of iron slag consistent with rural smithing were recovered from Stowford Road, Barton (Salter 2003). Small amounts of iron work have been recorded from sites in Oxford; the collections and are generally unexceptional (Beckley & Radford 2011b). At the Oxford Golf Club the hammerscale and burnt stones with scorched sand are indicative of iron working within the immediate vicinity of the site as such microscopic remains do not tend to travel far from the source of creation.

Pit 168 had been re-cut suggesting the same family group used or owned the pit over an extended time period. The posthole seen at the eastern end of the pit may indicate the pit location was once marked with a large post before being re-cut. The smaller pit 110 located approximately 7m east from the larger pit was associated with postholes and stakeholes which may have once supported a windbreak or frame, such as a gazebo, around the pit. A small flue was recorded on the northern side of the pit, which may indicate this pit was also used in the iron working process to feed hot

stones into the feature, which would have had a domed structure above it to contain the heat, a common feature of a primitive furnace.

Another explanation could be the pit was being used for general washing. The burnt stones found in the fill of the pit, may represent the remains of heated stones once used to boil water. This method for heating water was common on prehistoric sites and a windbreak or wooden frame of stakes, would have provided cover for people washing themselves. Large burnt mounds consisting of flints and stones usually represent regular washing or sauna areas on prehistoric sites (English Heritage 2011 p3). We do not have any such evidence here, but perhaps do have evidence for a wash pit only used for a very short time. A brief search of water springs for this area did not yield any results, but spring locations are known to move over time. The sandy geology of the site would not hold water for long as this type of soil drains quickly. If the pit was used for washing we might expect it to have been clay lined.

The postholes recorded across the central and northern part of the excavation area do not form any discernable shape and cannot be ascribed to a definite structure or number of structures. There are two vague linear arrangements of posts, indicating the possibility of a fence line or boundary across this area. All of the postholes have clear evidence of post packing in their fills using non-local (foreign) stone. A larger open area excavation would be needed to ascertain whether these postholes formed part of a larger settlement complex or were connected to an iron working site or other type of working farmstead. It is feasible that the site is on the periphery of settlement, which extended eastwards towards the slightly higher ground and was an industrial area used in the iron making industry of which little is known in the Oxford area.

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved from the watching brief.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	The Finds

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services.

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Figure 5; Showing pit 110 with flue and stakeholes



Figure 6 Showing pit 142 during excavation



Figure 7; Showing north facing section of pit 142



HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name: Oxford Golf Club	
Site Address: Oxford Golf Club, Hilltop Road, Oxford, OX4 1PF	
<p>Summary: <i>A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction in advance of the installation of three new ponds (1-3) with connecting footbridge (Planning Reference: 11/03076/FUL) at Oxford Golf Club, Oxford (SP53880563), formerly known as Southfields Golf Club. A total of four site visits were made over consecutive days from 28th February – 2nd March 2012. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to the uppermost surface of the archaeology or natural sand of Pond 1. The western side of the site (Ponds 2 & 3) were not monitored for archaeology as they had clearly been reduced in the past to produce upcast sand to landscape the area around the final 18th putting green.</i></p> <p><i>The archaeological features comprised a number of discrete features considered to be prehistoric or early Roman in origin, related to a possible nearby settlement with an iron working industrial zone. A large pit was excavated towards the south-eastern end of the site and contained hammerscale within its fill. Close by was another pit with flue and associated with postholes and stakeholes. The burnt stones found in the flue indicate this pit also had a possible industrial iron working function. Other postholes were recorded across the general area of the new pond but formed no discernable shape or patterns which could be assigned with confidence to any individual structures. The postholes probably represent the only surviving remains of a prehistoric fence line or building. The small area available for excavation and a lack of dating evidence means we cannot postulate further. Any future ground works on the golf course should be closely monitored in order to attempt to further understand the nature of any prehistoric settlement on this hilltop.</i></p>	
District/Unitary: Oxford City	Parish:
Period(s): Modern	
NGR (centre of site: 8 figures): SP53880563	
Type of archaeological work (delete) Watching Brief	
Date of Recording: 28 th Feb- 2 nd March 2012	
Unit undertaking recording: JMHS	
Geology: Beckley Sand Member	
Title and author of accompanying report: An Archaeological Watching Brief at Oxford Golf Club, Oxford Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA (Hons) Arch AIFA	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) Prehistoric features, perhaps relating to a settlement.	
Location of archive/finds:	
Contact at Unit: : Paul Riccoboni info@jmheritageservices.co.uk	Date: 8 th March 2012