

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

70 GREET ROAD, WINCHCOMBE,

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

NGR SP 02500 21258

On behalf of

Mr. B. Sutton

AUGUST 2012

REPORT FOR

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 70 Greet Road at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire (NGR SP 02500 29258). This was after the demolition of a bungalow but during the insertion of foundations. The remains of a number of Roman ditches were noted besides later disturbance from the 20th century construction. The ditches were roughly dated to the Roman period, by poorly diagnostic sherds, but tied up with various features previously noted in the area in previous archaeological monitoring: an evaluation and excavation to the west and an evaluation to the north. The features identified represent early Roman ditches probably filled in by the 2nd century AD and then a second phase of Roman activity represented by two roadside ditches and the beamslots and posthole of a structure lying adjacent to the ditched road. Less significantly the remains of a post-medieval roadside ditch were noted and also the remains of structures dated to the 20th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at 70 Greet Road in Winchcombe in the county of Gloucestershire (NGR SP 02500 29258). Topographically the site is located on the east slopes of Langley Hill between 93-95m OD. The underlying geology is Charmouth Mudstone.

1.2 Planning Background

Tewkesbury Borough Council granted planning permission for the demolition of an existing bungalow and the construction of a new semi-detached dwelling (ref. 11/00148/FUL, 11/01063/FUL, 12/00037/CONDIS, and 12/00056/CONDIS). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site (ref. 11/01063/FUL). This was in line with PPS 5 (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Historic Environment

The site is located on the north side of the historic town of Winchcome, a site perhaps recognised for its significant medieval archaeology, but also increasingly being noted for later prehistoric and Roman finds.

An evaluation (JMHS 2009) to the north of the site revealed that the area to the north of the site had seen activity since the early Neolithic.

Bronze-Age artefacts have been recovered from the Winchcombe area although some over a 1km from the site; these include a winged axe from near Sudeley (Clifford 1938), a copper object from the Sudeley Quarries (Dent 1877, 9), a low-flanged palstave from Spoonley Wood (HER 6963), and a celt from Cleeve Hill (Dent 1877, 9).

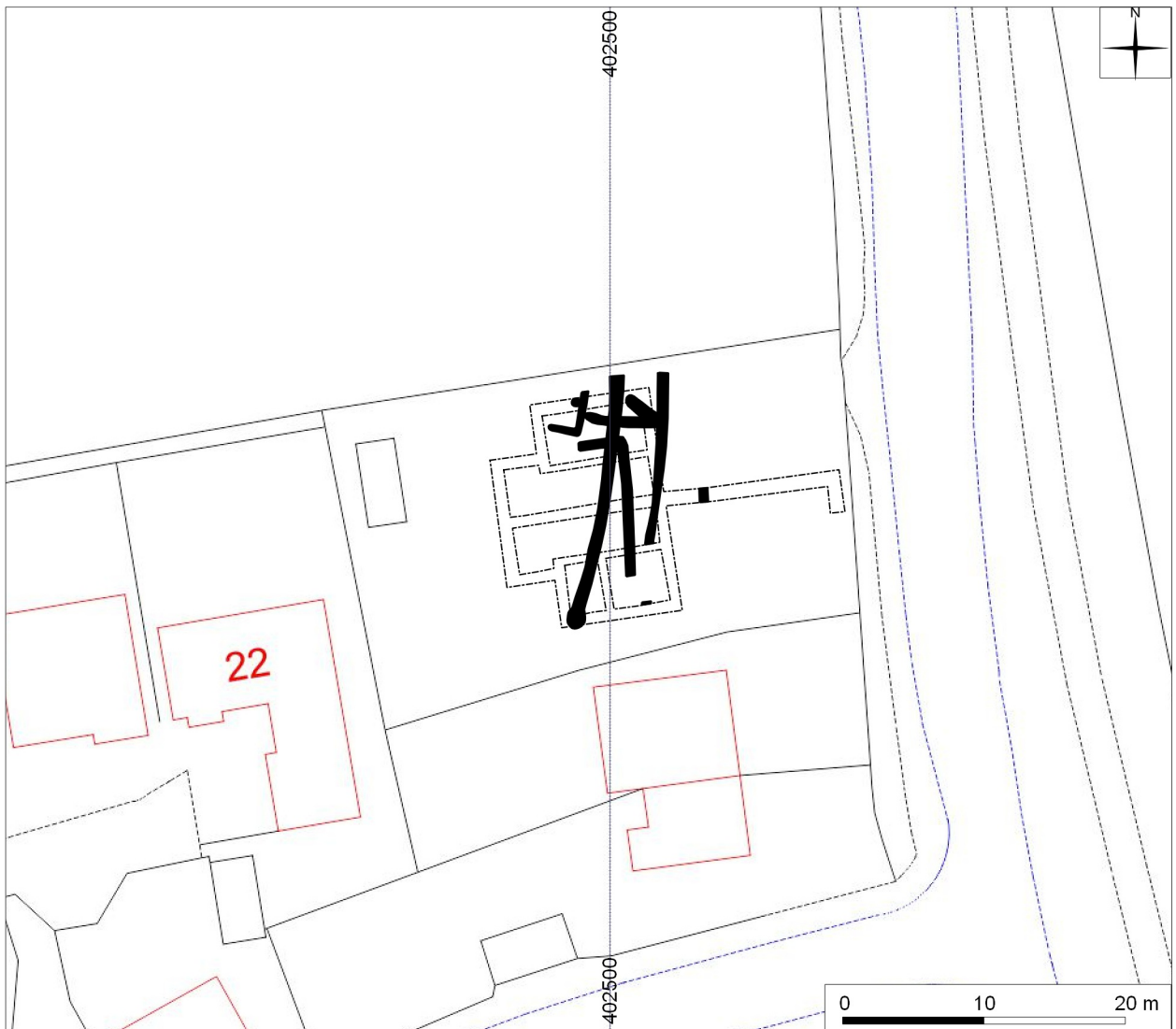
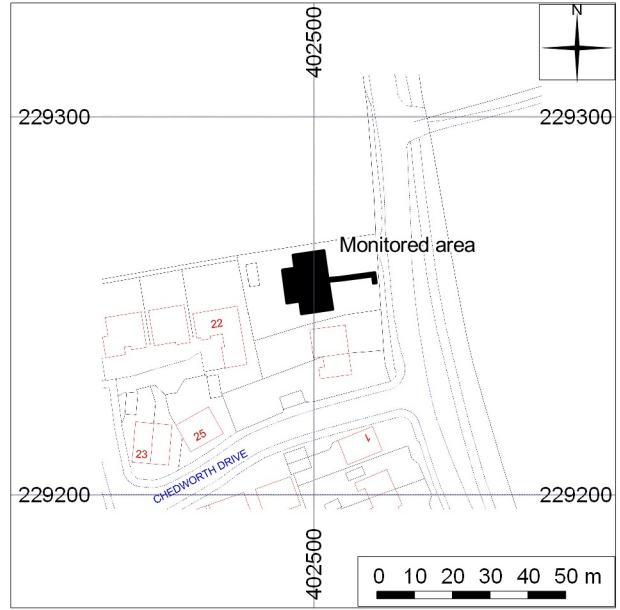
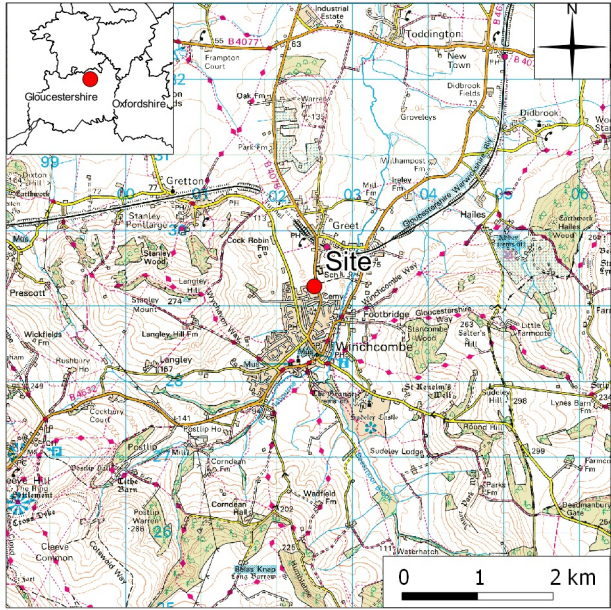


Figure 1. Site location

A number of significant large enclosures (over 1ha) of a later prehistoric date have been located in the Isbourne valley around Winchcombe, their proximity to the site varies. These include Langley Hill, first noted on Cardew's Map of 1898 (Yeates 2006, iii.1312-3), and described by Burrow (1924, 131). The Royal Commission disputed the site (1976, xxxiv, 130), but it has later been suggested that good profiles of the ditches exist but that they are much mutilated (HER 38). The site dominates Langley Hill, the site lies on the lower slope of this hill. To the east descriptions of an enclosure, a hill-fort on a pointed spur or beak, exist at Beckbury commenced in 1803 (Rudge 1803, i.50), and continued through the 19th century (Yeates 2006, iii.1313). A synthesis of the site was given by the RCHME (1976, 117), and geophysical survey was carried out in 2002 (Wills 2003, 285). To the south of Winchcombe there is a hill-fort at Roel Gate first described in 1875 (Playne 1875, 209 no.10). A synthesis of the site was given by the RCHME (1976, 112), with geophysical survey work being carried out in 1982 (Rawes 1984, 223-232), 1995 (Rawes and Wills 1996, 163-185), and 2001 (Wills 2002, 254). There was a further fortification to the north of the site on Toddington Hill called the Warren, first described in 1880 (Witts 1880, 207; 1883, 48), with fieldwork being carried out in 1885 (Rawes 1986, 231-247), the camp is oval measuring 230m x 170m (HER 2290), and a synthesis (Yeates 2006, ii.361). To the west on Nottingham and Cleeve Hills further large encampments can be identified. Cockbury on Nottingham Hill is first mentioned in an early medieval charter 769-85 (Smith 1964, ii.90), and was described as bivallate promontory hill-fort (RCHME 1976, 59). Bronze-Age weaponry has previously been recovered from this site (Fowler and Miles 1972, 12-65). The Cleeve Hill site has been noted from 1779 (Rudder 1779, 369), with a synthesis of the bivallate site (RCHME 1976, 106).

A further prehistoric camp has been identified at Hailes Wood initially described in 1803 (Rudge 1803, i.50), and provided with a later synthesis (HER 68). The site is multivallate and covered an area of 0.8ha. The site is considered to have been reused and fortified in the 12th century. Hailes camp and its landscape location could provide parallels of the combination of landscape and settlement that are now being witnessed at Winchcombe. Hailes Camp lies below the hill-fort at Beckbury, both of which lie on spurs above the Hailes Brook. In the lower reaches of the Hailes Brook there is evidence of extensive settlement of Iron Age and Roman date.

Evaluation (JMHS 2009; Wills and Hoyle 2009, 321; 2010, 246-7) immediately adjacent to the west and the north confirmed that a large enclosed middle-late Iron Age settlement existed. The enclosure ditch was over 4m wide and over 2m deep. Thus drawing parallels to the camp at Hailes. The extramural activity to the Greet Road Camp extended for several hundred metres to the north. There is also evidence of an earlier enclosure, undated, located under central Winchcombe at the Nursery School where one of the 3 defensive ditches belonged to a feature probably earlier than the 10th century burh (Wills 2002, 255). Leland described the remains of a defensive area to the south of the church, which is undated (Lewis 1845, iv.581), while antiquarian accounts describe wells containing British pottery under Winchcombe (Brock 1876, 454). That an earlier enclosure probably existed under modern Winchcombe should not be doubted as one would be expected in the landscape of the early minster and royal centre. The parallels between the Hailes Camp and the Greet Road Camp should perhaps make us consider whether the Greet Road contained the remains of a nucleated or long linear ribbon settlement of a later Iron Age and Roman settlement.

Roman material has been recovered from in and around Winchcombe. Residual pottery was recovered from the early medieval rampart in Cowl Lane (RCHME 1976, 130). A coin which was reported was poorly located but found within the town (Fowler and Drinkwater 1968, 17). Roman occupation has come from North Street (Saville 1985, 101-139). A sarcophagus of that date has been found in the cellar of a 15th-16th century building (McCarthy and Moore-Scott 2000, 59-60), and Iron Age and Roman occupation has been found at Almsbury Farm. Further residual Roman pottery has been recovered from 26/32 North Street (Wills 2005, 173).

Trial trench evaluation, conducted by CgMs Consulting and 110 Archaeology in February 2007 at the rear of 56-70 Greet Road (SMR 29076), and subsequent excavation, conducted by Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service (GCCAS) in November 2007 to March 2008, has revealed further significant evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British occupation and settlement (SMR 33089 to 33096) immediately adjacent to the southeast corner of the proposed development site. The earliest occupation was represented by several phases of mid-late Iron Age activity characterised by a series of linear features, including a possible large defensive ditch with entranceway and rectangular enclosures, as well as pits and postholes (GCCAS 1998; Wills and Hoyle 2008, 191; Wills and Hoyle, 321). The recorded evidence suggests the presence of several phases of settlement, possibly including a farmstead that was focussed around a large ditched enclosure.

To the north of the site a geophysical survey identified a number of anomalies. Towards the middle of the second century an area or areas within the eastern side of the site were terraced and much of the area built up into “platforms”. These were then used to construct a series of buildings or a building complex, thought to represent a villa. These structures were built of stone, decorated with painted plaster and they had well-constructed *Opus Signinum* floors. Unfortunately the man-made platforms appear not to have been compact or stable enough to support these structures and subsidence appears to have occurred requiring a major phase of rebuilding. Evidence for a post-pad may indicate that a lot of this second phase was constructed in wood. To the north of the villa complex was a series of contemporary enclosed areas, possibly fields and animal pens. Track-ways appear to have existed between these and possibly linked them to the buildings. The site appears to have been abandoned towards the end of the 3rd century. While it is likely that the site represents domestic occupation and associated agricultural activity, there is some evidence for the possibility of ritual and religious structures and practices from the Iron Age into the Roman period (JMHS 2009; Wills and Hoyle 2010, 246-7). This is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (NMR 1520795).

Subsequently a Roman pottery sherd was recovered from a layer at Abbey Terrace (Wills and Hoyle 2010, 246-7), and a further sherd of pottery from Cowl Lane (Wills and Hoyle 2011, 259).

The nature of the site under Winchcombe and indeed its very status is important, and could have profound implications of how the larger landscape in the vicinity of Winchcombe is perceived. The Roman material is increasing and subsequently should alter our perceptions, rather we should perhaps perceive this occupation not as a series of isolated farmsteads, villas and temples, but consider it feasible that this was a Roman nucleated settlement. The term *vicus* is not clearly used in place-name evidence in Winchcombe, one can recognise *Magno Vico* (the High Street in the 13th

century) and *Vici extendentis a Molendino* (Mill Street in 1304), but these names refer to Winchcombe as a medieval settlement (Smith 1964, ii.30-31). Perhaps of more interest is the un-located name referred to in 1575 *Blacke felde* (Smith 1964, 38), here we have a recognised term referring to intense occupation from the Iron Age, Roman or early medieval periods. The scatter of Roman material could suggest that there was some form of settlement along Greet Road and North Street extending north from whatever feature the early monastic centre would have been constructed within. The intensity of settlement at the north of the Greet Road has been shown to be quite substantial, the degree elsewhere has not been confirmed and may have been considerably damaged by later construction.

A number of Roman nucleated settlements, probably *vici*, are known in the Isbourne valley, and the adjacent Severn Valley. The nearest of these recognised sites is at Millhampost, where Iron-Age and Roman occupation debris has been identified of a settlement covering 34ha (Yeates 2006, iii.1310-1311). The site is located to the northeast of the site across the river Isbourne, near Hailes. The site lies below that of Hailes Camp, which in turn lies below that of Beckbury Camp. The remains of a significant road side settlement have also been located to the north at Hinton-on-the-Green (WHER 2704, 4024, 4030, 5494, 7206, 10125; Yeates 2006, iii.1196-1197). Here the outline of a T-junction and an extensive road-side settlement has been identified on aerial photographs. The Hinton site also appears to contain a large enclosure the design of which has been compared to other known ritual sites in Britain. To the west in the Severn valley a small town has been recognised at Tewkesbury (Hannan 1993, 21-75; Yeates 2006, iii.1239-1241), and also at Tredington Rise, Stoke Orchard (Fowler, Bennet et al. 1976, 47-91).

The significance of whether Winchcombe is the location of a Roman nucleated settlement or not is a key issue as landscape studies have suggested that there are key settlement types running from the later Bronze Age through to the 11th century which are indicative of long term folk or community settlement, and that a series of monuments located in an area (that later developed into an Anglo-Saxon *parochia*) are replicated in neighbouring territories (Yeates 2006, i.57-66; 2008, 59-89; 2010, 78-93). If Winchcombe is identified as a further nucleated settlement then it will inevitably lead to a shuffling of the material and a reconfiguration to suit the newly available evidence.

The place-name Winchcombe (spelt sometimes without the final e) is first recorded historically 796-819 as *Wincelcumbe*, and also as *Vallis Winclea* at a slightly later date (Smith 1964, 29-30). The etymology of the name is wincel cumb, a valley with a bend in it, which refers to the Isbourne valley running towards Postlip.

The town is known to have been a royal vill 796 x 821 (Finberg 1972, no.235). By the early 11th century Winchcombe is known to have been the centre of burh town, from which the county of Winchcombe was administered (Finberg 1972, 228-230). The *Liber Wigorniensis* specifically refers to the hundreds of *Chiltenham*, *Teoboldestan*, *Grestane*, *Salesmanesberie* and *Wacrescymbe* as being located in the shire (Whybra 1990, 16-21). A reconstruction of the shire indicates that the territory was located in northeast Gloucestershire and also lands previously in Gloucestershire but subsequently transferred to Warwickshire (which lie to the south and west of the Warwick Avon and Stour). By 1086 the county had been dismantled and had been established as one of the four *ferdings* of Gloucestershire (Finberg 1972, 232). Other

Gloucestershire *ferdings* (a fourth division) were focussed on Gloucester and Cirencester, known Roman centres.

In 1086 Winchcombe was in Greston Hundred but is known to have been in the 12th and 13th century in Winchcombe Hundred, and is thus recorded in the years 1202, 1227, 1233, 1251, 1402 and 1535 (Smith 1964, ii.1-2). The hundred was later merged with that of Greston and Holford to form Lower Kiftsgate Hundred before Lower and Upper Kiftsgate Hundred were merged. The meeting place of this hundred has not been located but Greet has previously been claimed as a meeting location for Greston Hundred. The name Greston referred to the Great Stone.

There are some 15 references in the Domesday Book covering Gloucestershire. The most significant reference is to the town as one of the two recognised boroughs (Morgan 1982, B, EvK 116), which gives payments but few settlement details in the official version. The inclusion of the town in this location reflects its previous position as a shire town. The Evesham MS contains details for composition of the main document referring to 60 burgesses of the king, 40 of the abbot of Winchcombe, 2 to the abbot of Evesham and an unspecified amount to the bishop of Hereford, 2 to Deerhurst, 3 to Longborough, with another 34 to individual persons. The majority of the references in the Domesday Book proper referred to burgesses attached to the town (Morgan 1982, 1.25, 43, 3.5, 4.1, 12.4, 20.1, 34.3, 8, 39.6, 41.1, 47.1, 59.1, 78.10), which included 3 attached to Oxenton, a burgess to Alderton, a burgess to Withington, a burgess to Prestbury, a burgess to Broadwell, 2 burgesses attached to Deerhurst, a burgess to Lower Clopton, 2 burgesses attached to Guiting Power, 3 attached to Temple Guiting, 10 attached to Hampnett, a burgess at Childswickham, 2 burgesses attached to Lechlade, and a burgess at Pinnock. These presumably are the individually owned burgesses and that at Prestbury is probably that of the Bishop of Hereford. This implies that the town had 140 domestic dwellings. There is also an account that the church of Evesham held 56 hides at Winchcombe (Morgan 1982, 12.10). The Evesham MS also refers to a mill held by Thurstan of Cormeilles and 2 by Harold (Morgan 1982, EvK 116).

Medieval archaeology has been detected in Winchcombe including the burh defences in Back Lane (Wills and Hoyle 2008, 191), and more recently deposits in North Street (Wills 2004, 191), 26/32 North Street, 48 Chandos Street, a medieval ditch in Back Lane (Wills 2005, 173), 11th and 12th century deposits in Back Lane (Wills 2010, 246-7), pits of the 12th-13th century at 55 North Street (Wills and Hoyle 259), and 12th-14th century material from Cowl Lane (Wills and Hoyle 2011, 259).

A reference to a church at Winchcombe is made in the 11th century texts for 811 in the form *æcclesia Wincelcumbæ* (Smith 1964, 29). The church is regarded as an early minster foundation established or re-established in 811 by Coenwulf (Finberg 1972, no.56). A further fragmentary charter concerning Alderton indicates that the church took a rent from that place of 4 oxen or cows and 4 vessels of honey, which was handed over at the royal vill (Finberg 1972, no.235). In the ninth century was recognised as the depository of the royal Mercian archives, which were largely destroyed by fire in the reign of King Stephen (Finberg 1972, 11). In 1086 a riding man is accounted at Alderton, Dixton and Hentage (Morgan 1982, 1.43), a person concerned with the distribution of tithes and must be an echo of the earlier reference to dues from Alderton.

Churches apparently tied to a mother church at Winchcombe have been noted and included Saint Nicholas' at Winchcombe, Alderton, Charlton Abbots, Dixton, Greet, Gretton, Hailes, Hawling, Postlip, Prescott, Stanley Pontlarge, Saint Kenelm at Sudeley, Saint Mary at Sudeley, Toddington, and Saint Pancras at Winchcombe (Yeates 2006, iii.1316-1320). However, a monastery is identified at Stanway (Morgan 1982, 1.27) and ties are suspected here between Toddington and that church, besides others.

The abbey, believed to lie over the minster, is a scheduled site, geophysical survey work has been carried out on the site (Wills and Hoyle 2007, 366), and recent investigations in the area have noted archaeological remains including a limestone surface at the Primary School (Wills and Hoyle 2011, 259).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To investigate and record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development and in particular any Iron Age or Roman remains associated with nearby activity.
- To take samples of any significant palaeo-environmental remains that may add to the understanding of the site and locality.
- To provide a report on the results of the watching brief.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) the archaeological advisors to Tewkesbury Borough Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The site was to be monitored by an archaeologist during ground work involving topsoil stripping and foundation and service trench cutting.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

Though John Moore Heritage Services should have been informed of all ground stripping and foundation and trench digging, we were not informed for the earliest removals from the site. On arrival the area in the back part of the new build had been removed, which included the topsoil, subsoil and the top of the natural. Any features there had already been removed. Stripping had also occurred across the front of the site, topsoil and subsoil removed with rubble hardcore dumped across this part of the site to obscure any features. Across the middle of the site some stripping had occurred, and some was still in the process of being stripped. This area of the site was mainly having only the topsoil and subsoil removed and as a consequence numerous features were noted. There were three main periods of activity on the site broadly placed into the category of Roman, Post-medieval and Modern (Fig. 2). The Roman period, due to the way the ditches truncated each other must have had at least three phases. There was also a further feature of an undeterminable date that stratigraphically came between the Roman and modern material. Of the Roman pottery discovered much of it was un-diagnostic other than it could be roughly placed within the Roman period.

The earliest recognisable deposit (3) was a highly compact blue yellow clay. This was interpreted by the natural. The phase 1a deposits truncated this layer.

4.1 Phase 1a: Roman

Cut 17 was a linear feature surviving to a depth of 0.05m and measuring 0.7m across, with a profile with gentle sides and a flat base. Fill (16) was a compact grey brown clay. The relationship of this feature (cut 17) with cut 23 was not fully ascertained but it was probably the case that it predated that ditch (cut 23). Fill deposit (16) contained a fragment of either pot or ceramic building material that was undiagnostic and a further fragment of ceramic building material.

Cut 23 was a linear ditch measuring 0.25m deep and 0.7m wide. Fill (22) was a compact dark grey clay with burnt limestone inclusions. The deposit yielded one sherd of a 2nd to 4th century date. Cut 13 was part of a linear ditch 0.25m deep and 0.6m wide with gently sloping sides and a rounded base. Fill (12) was a compact black grey clay. These two features are part of the same linear feature that would appear to be truncated by the roadside ditches of Phase 1b.

Excavations to the west of the current site identified a series of ditches running east to west that were of a mixed Iron Age and Roman date and it would appear to be the case that these ditches may be a continuation or further ditches that continue on a similar alignment.

4.2 Phase 1b: Roman

Cut 15 was a linear ditch measuring 0.25m deep and 0.7m wide (Fig. 2, Section 2), a surviving profile in the edge of the cut area would indicate that the ditch depth was probably 0.35-0.45m in depth and that up to 0.2m had been truncated in places across the centre of the site prior to a request to observe. Fill (14) was a compact grey brown clay with burnt limestone inclusions. The deposit contained a piece of iron slag. No datable finds could be clearly distinguished in this feature, but it is possible that some

of the sherds placed in subsoil context (2) could have originated from this deposit. Cut 21 was a linear feature measuring 0.25m deep and 0.6m across with gentle sides and a rounded base (Fig. 2, Section 3). Fill (20) was a compact dark grey clay with burnt limestone inclusions. The finds included four sherds of an Oxfordshire fine grey ware of a late Roman date. These two ditches run parallel to each other and are presumably the remains of two roadside ditches. They are evidently the continuation of two features that showed up on the geophysical survey of land to the north, which indicates that there was a roadway formerly running adjacent to the Greet Road and must be a forerunner of that road, which may have become fixed in its current alignment at sometime in the medieval period.

Cut 5 was that of an oval pit that truncated the ditch, measuring 0.2m deep and 1.2m x 1.5m. The sides are gentle and the base almost flat. This pit truncated the roadside ditch. Fill (4) was a compact grey black clay containing burnt limestone. The fill contained a very abraded piece of ceramic building material.

Cut 9 consisted of two linear features at a right angle. Each measured approximately 0.05-0.1m deep and 0.3m across and was 2m in length, thus surviving to an overall size of 2m x 2m. The surviving profiles of the cut were gentle with a flat base (Fig. 2, Section 1). Fill (8) was a compact light grey brown clay with burnt limestone inclusions. Posthole cut 11 was circular measuring 0.45m across and 0.15m deep, with steep sides and a rounded base. Fill (10) was a compact black brown clay. This deposit contained a piece of very abraded ceramic building material. This group of features from plan form would appear to be part of a structure with beam-slot walls containing sill beams and also an internal posthole located internally to one of these walls. It is difficult to speculate on the nature of the building as when witnessed so little of the structure remained. What it is possible to state is that the parts of the structure that did survive respected the line of the road, and would appear to be the remains of a road-side structure.

Cut 19 was a circular post or stakehole 0.1m deep x 0.2m in diameter. Fill (18) was a compact tenacious black brown silt clay with burnt limestone. This feature could indicate that there is a fence line at right angles to the road or that there were previously other structures alongside the road which were removed during ground reduction. The deposit contained a sherd of oxidised fine sandy ware of a possible Roman date.

4.3 Phase 1c: Roman probably but undated

Cut 29 was a linear feature measuring 0.6m wide and 0.45m deep with moderately steep sides and a rounded base. Fill (28) was a compact yellow grey silt clay that survived to a depth of 0.4-0.45m in depth and 0.6m wide. The relationship and even the phasing of this ditch is difficult to determine on the available information. Cut 29 could be a continuation of cut 17, although the depth of the feature is far greater, and therefore, this suggestion may not be feasible. The ditch could also be an earlier or later roadside ditch. Though no dating evidence was obtained it was apparent from the nature of the feature and of the fills from later activity that it probably belonged to the earliest phasing on the site.

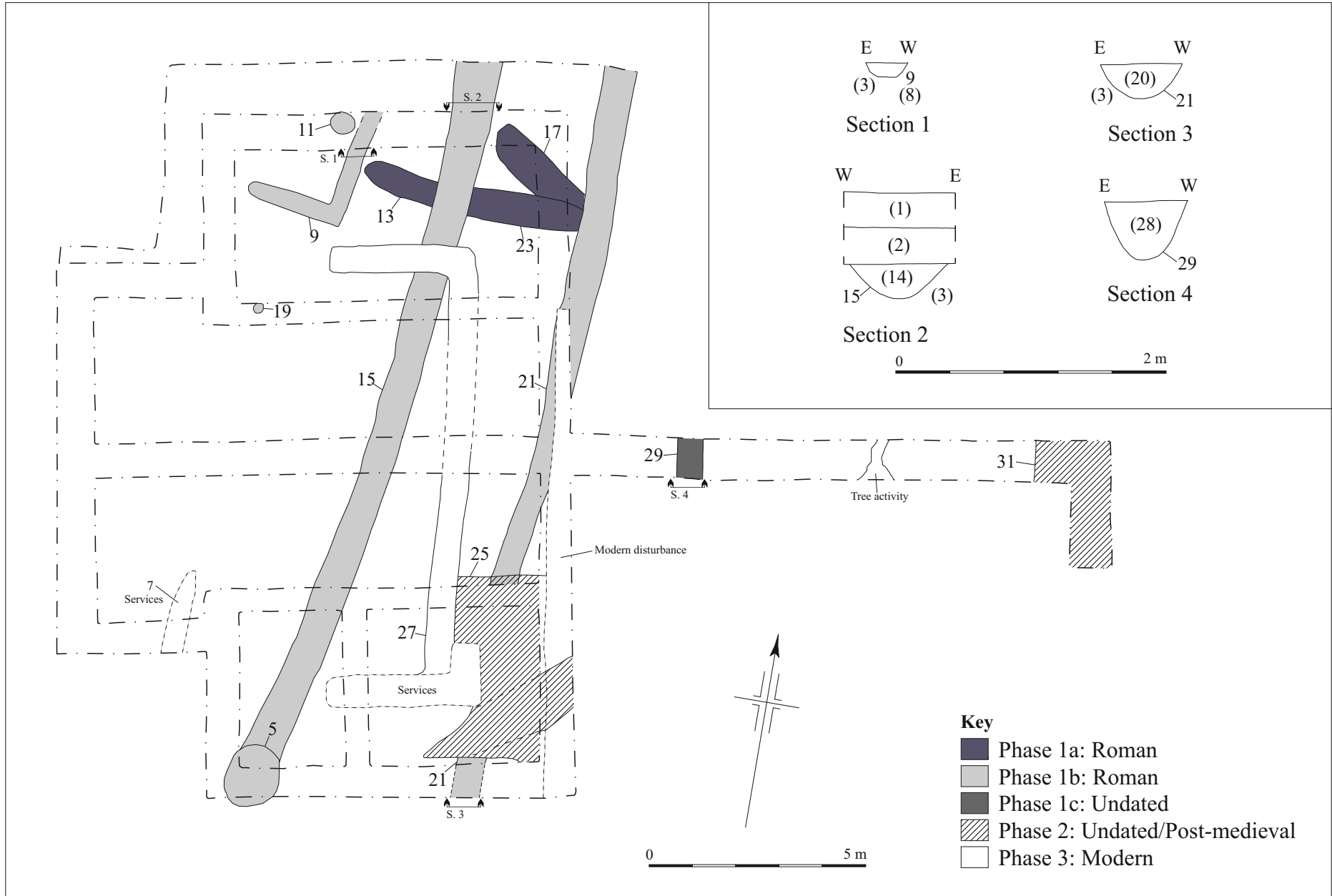


Figure 2. Plan and sections

4.4 Phase 2a: Undated

Cut 25 was a large irregular cut with a roughly rectangular shape measuring 4.1m x 2.5m and 0.5m deep. The feature truncates one of the Roman roadside ditches. Fill (24) was a moderately compact light yellow grey clay with stone inclusions, the lower part of the fill is an orange grey fill similar to the subsoil deposit (2). The nature of the fill and the steep sides of the cut would indicate that this is probably a relatively recent cut into which the subsoil was rapidly deposited, though no artefacts were recovered to confirm this.

4.5 Phase 2b: Post-medieval

Cut 31 was a linear ditch measured over 0.8m deep and 1.4m wide with gently sloping sides and a rounded lower profile. Fill (30) was a moderately compact black silt clay with much organic root activity. The date of this ditch was not ascertained from finds, but has been given a general post-medieval date and is treated as if it was cut through the topsoil. If the road is considered to have obtained this alignment in the medieval period it is possible that the ditches may have originated in this period. There was a requirement for a transport connection between the settlement of Winchcombe and its hamlet of Greet. The line of the road would almost certainly have been formalised by the time that the parish of Winchcombe went through enclosure.

4.6 Phase 3: Modern

It is difficult to determine where these modern features were cut from, but one can assume that as the standing bungalow was demolished, it is likely that the modern features were cut through the topsoil. Subsoil layer (2) was a compact orange grey brown clay 0.3m deep. This contained four sherds of pottery, for one of which no date could be given, while the others were loosely dated from the 2nd to 4th century AD. A number of the sherds were recovered from in line with fill (14) and it is potential that they may have originated from this deposit. Deposit (1) was a moderately compact dark grey brown clay measuring up to 0.3m deep. This deposit was interpreted as a topsoil.

Cut 27 consisted of 3 linear cuts and a square area, the cut features survived in a very shallow form and probably originally had vertical sides and a flat base. Fill (26) was a silt ash with rammed rubble stone and brick infill. A further linear of modern foundations was also detected running along the line of one of the new foundation cuts at the front of the new build.

Service cut 7 was a linear 0.45m wide and survived after stripping to a depth of 0.05m deep. The cut would have been far deeper and would have had vertical sides and a flat base. Fill (6) was a moderately compact grey clay with stone inclusions. This was part of a service trench and the fill contained plastic flowerpot.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (by Jane Timby)

Introduction

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 14 sherds of pottery and ceramic building material weighing 106 g dating to the Roman and post-medieval/modern periods.

Pottery was recovered from five defined contexts with two additional unstratified pieces, thus the incidence of sherds per deposit is very low. This combined with few featured sherds means that dating can only be approximate.

The material is poorly preserved with generally small abraded pieces. The average fragment size of just 7.6 g is typical of redeposited material or disturbed soil such as a ploughsoil or garden soil.

For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess the likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data is summarised in Table 1.

Description of wares

At least eight, possibly ten sherds are of Roman date. These pieces came from contexts 2, 18, 20, 22 and unstratified.

The assemblage mainly comprises grey wares typical of the Oxfordshire industry and oxidised Severn Valley wares. With the exception of a handle fragment from context (18) the pieces are all unfeatured bodysherds. The handle might suggest a jug or flagon as Young (2000) type R9 which is broadly dated to the 4th century.

The remaining sherds are not closely datable other than Roman.

Pieces of modern red earthenware flower-pot came from context (2) and the unstratified finds

Of the remaining two pieces, one is a small fragment of much abraded ceramic building material (CBM); the other is a tiny abraded oxidised fragment which may be pot or CBM. Neither piece can be reliably dated.

Context	Fabric	Description	No	Wt	Date
2	Unglazed red earthenware	Flower-pot	1	7	Pmed/mod
2	Severn Valley ware	bodysherds	3	51	C2-C4
2	Ceramic building material	Small fragment	1	2	No date
16	Pot or cbm	Abraded fragment, no surface	1	1	No date
18	Oxidised fine sandy	bodysherd	1	1	?Roman
20	Oxfordshire fine grey ware	Bodysherd and handle possibly flagon Young (2000) type R9	4	25	Late Roman
22	Oxfordshire fine grey ware	Bodysherd	1	5	C2-C4
us	Unglazed red earthenware	Flower-pot	1	11	Pmed/mod
us	Oxidised fine sandy	bodysherd	1	3	?Roman
TOTAL			14	106	

Table 1

Further work

Greet Road, Winchcombe has previously produced a range of Iron Age, Roman and later pottery indicating fairly intense archaeological activity over a wide span of time (Timby 2009). The presence of Roman sherds here thus accords no surprise in this particular assemblage. However, this group is too small and lacking in diagnostic material to warrant further work perhaps suggesting it is more peripheral to other documented archaeological activity or that there are less surviving deposits.

5.2 Building material

Besides the fragments of brick and tile mentioned above in the pottery report there were three other fragments of ceramic building material recovered, none of which retained any surfaces so could have represented brick or tile of an unknown date. Of the three fragments that from context (4) was the largest weighing 53g with a pale orange fabric with large inclusions. The fragment from context (10) weighed below a gram and was of a mid orange fabric with no large inclusions. The fragment from context (16) weighed 2g and had a similar mid-orange fabric.

5.3 Iron Slag

One fragment of iron slag was recovered from context (14) a lump weighing 5g.

6 DISCUSSION

The site and the settlement

Iron Age and Roman material had until *c.* 2000 been only sporadic in the archaeological record of the settlement of Winchcombe. This included what was interpreted as British pottery from pits or wells, a sarcophagus and finds. These finds were located in North Street, in Abbey Terrace and the Back Lane, with a farmstead suggested in the neighbourhood at Almsbury. From about 2005 a number of major finds have been detected on the north side of Winchcombe along the Greet Road. This included an enclosure with ditches over 4m wide and 2m deep, features which one would expect on a defended Iron Age site, with extramural settlement activity. This site lay on a side spur of Langley Mount on which a larger defended centre lay on the summit. Geophysical survey and evaluation revealed an intensively occupied landscape to the north with a possible complex of Roman stone buildings and probably more ephemeral timber structures.

Much of the overburden had already been stripped away when we were finally advised to visit the site at 70 Greet Road. This identified a series of ditches, of which the earlier ditches ran west to east and may be part of field systems extending from the Iron Age enclosure. These field systems were probably maintained into the 2nd century. In the mid to later part of the 2nd century, or perhaps even slightly later, it is probable that a trackway was inserted and that this had timber structures fronting on to it. Though only very small amount of a building was noted, it is suggestive that there were later timber-framed Roman structures set along the line of the Greet Road. The features are indicative of the site containing elements of this type of settlement, what we have problems with are the extent of the settlement. The line of the road was detected by geophysical survey running to the north, it is likely that the settlement may extend to the north, Finds from North Street and Abbey Terrace may indicate

that settlement continued towards the centre of Winchcombe, but the nature and the extent of this settlement is far from clear.

The landscape context

Understanding the nature of the settlement is essential if the site is to be fully appreciated in its wider landscape perspective. The long durée approach of landscape settlement patterns has been considered in respect to this area of Gloucestershire and southern Worcestershire (Yeates 2006, i.57-66; 2008, 59-89; 2010, 78-93). Analysis here suggested that a series of territories could be identified through the study of archaeology from the later Bronze Age through to the Domesday Book. Each area would have a central nucleated or linear settlement which formed a series of shifting central settlements from the Bronze Age through to the early medieval period. The most significant of these was the Roman nucleated settlement. Each of these settlements could have covered some 10ha or more. In each of the territories it was possible to recognise other key components, such as Iron Age hill-forts, temple sites and minster churches, each of which would have formed a specific function. Work on such projects continues at various levels.

If there is a nucleated Roman settlement under northern Winchcombe then it would imply that previous discussions on this subject would probably have to be reconfigured. This, however, is not the place to present this fully here, however, the author recognises how this could be done.

A building in the land to the north has been variously described as a villa, building complex, and there is also a suggestion that certain aspects of that site indicate that there was a religious focus. If this is a temple site then its location has to be explained in a landscape context. Is this an urban or rural landscape? If rural what is the focus and can this be explained in a topographical manner. The possibility of an urban temple relies ultimately on the resolution of the nature of the site which will hopefully become apparent over time.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Cheltenham Museum.

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