



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

ON LAND OFF MILTON ROAD,

SUTTON COURTENAY, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU49719304

On behalf of

CgMs Consulting Ltd

MARCH 2013

REPORT FOR CgMs Consulting Ltd
Burlington House
Lypiatt Road
Cheltenham
GL50 2SY

PREPARED BY Gwilym Williams

ILLUSTRATION BY Andrej Čelovský

FIELDWORK 6th & 7th March 2013

REPORT ISSUED 19th March 2013

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ

Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code SCMR 13
JMHS Project No: 2787
Archive Location The archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire County
Museum Service following the receipt of an accession
number.

CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	5
4.1 Field Results	5
4.2 Reliability of results and methodology	7
5 FINDS	7
5.1 Pottery <i>by Paul Blinkhorn</i>	7
5.2 Ceramic building materials	7
5.3 Environmental Remains	8
6 DISCUSSION	8
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
APPENDIX 1: Context Inventory	11
ILLUSTRATIONS	
Figure 1 Site Location	2
Figure 2 Trench 2	4
Plate 1 Posthole 206	6
Plate 2 Gully 219	6

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation comprising ten trenches on land to the rear of Milton Road and High Street, Sutton Courtenay. Eight of the trenches revealed evidence of ridge and furrow; one was blank; and a further one trench, located in the southwest corner of the proposal area, revealed a dense concentration of undated postholes, pits and gullies masked by a cultivation horizon associated with the ploughed out ridge and furrow, in the field. A rim of Saxo-Norman pottery was recovered from the base of this deposit.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site location (Figure 1)

The area of proposed development is located on the north side of Milton Road in Sutton Courtenay (NGR SU 49719304). The area lies between approximately 56.3m and 53.5m OD. The geology comprises head deposits on the west side and central part of the proposal area with Northmoor Gravel on the east, all overlying Gault formation mudstone. The current land use is agricultural and the site is approximately 2.72ha in area.

1.2 Planning Background

The area is under consideration for development. As part of a screening opinion request (P13/V0391/SCR) the Vale of White Horse District Council has required a Desk-Based Assessment and a field evaluation to be initiated to assess whether there are any archaeological constraints.

This archaeological evaluation has been requested as a supplement to a desk based assessment carried out by CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs 2012) and a geophysical survey carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2012). Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) issued a Design Brief for the first stage of investigation comprising an evaluation.

A *Written Scheme of Investigation*, which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, was submitted to and agreed with CgMs Consulting Ltd and accepted by OCAS. This is in line with NPPF and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the proposed development area (CgMs 2012) has shown that, whilst it contains no known archaeology (other than ridge and furrow), the surrounding landscape contains an abundance of prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains.

Approximately 1km to the north-west there is a large multi-period site which includes the southern end of a Neolithic cursus, a group of Bronze Age ring ditches, and a major Anglo-Saxon settlement. At a similar distance to the west there is another area of Anglo-Saxon settlement, with an associated cemetery. About 400m to the south,

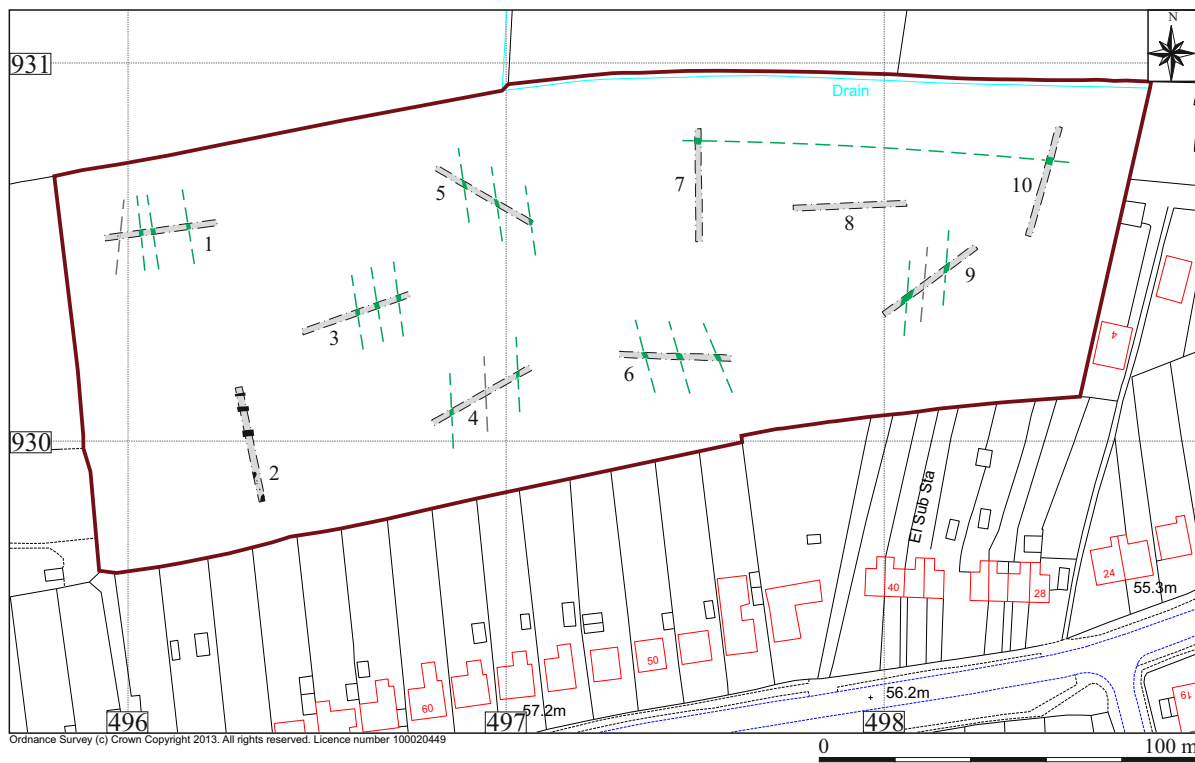
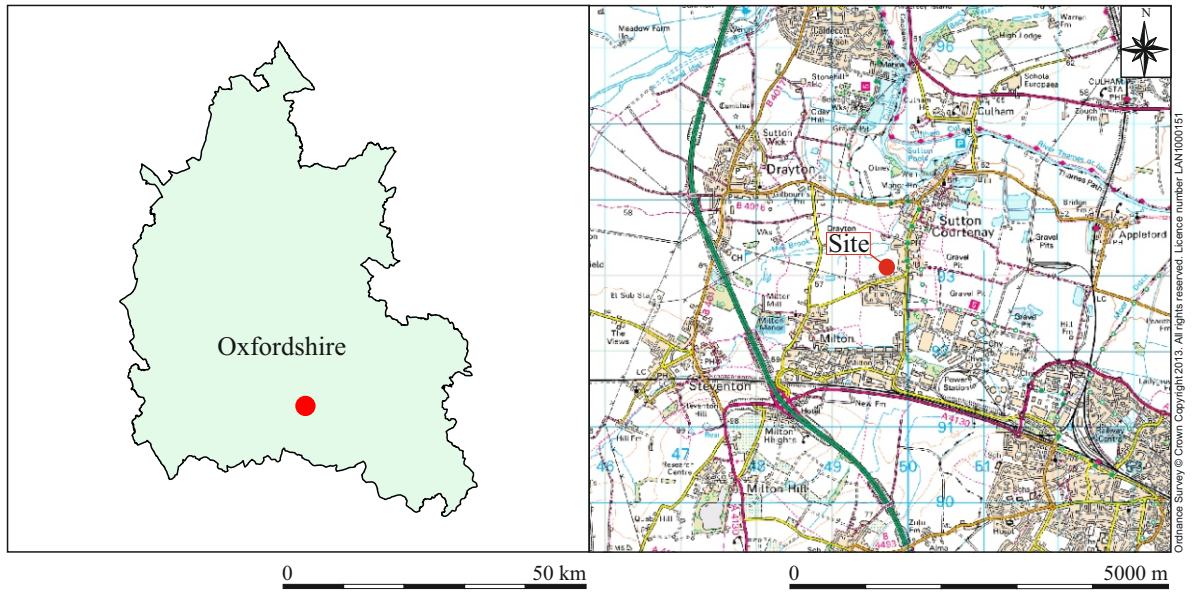


Figure 1. Site location

there are cropmarks suggesting the presence of extensive Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon remains. A Roman villa lies about 850m to the north. As well as these sites, there are many others, often represented by poorly dated cropmarks.

The geophysical survey identified north/south oriented ridge and furrow across most of the site, with some possible east/west ridge and furrow on the northeast side, parallel with the northern boundary. This may be masking earlier features. An area of intense magnetic disturbance was identified in the south-east corner of the site which corresponds with a marked dip in the ground surface that could possibly suggest the site of a former old gravel pit (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012); a second area of disturbance was identified in the southwest corner, associated with builder's rubbish and debris.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits

In particular

- To establish whether features are masked by the ridge and furrow

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* from OCAS a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and submitted to and agreed with CgMs Consulting Ltd and accepted by OCAS.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The evaluation involved the mechanical excavation of ten 30m long trenches each 1.6m wide, supplemented by limited hand investigation of archaeological deposits. Excavation of the trenches was carried out by a 7-tonne excavator with a toothless

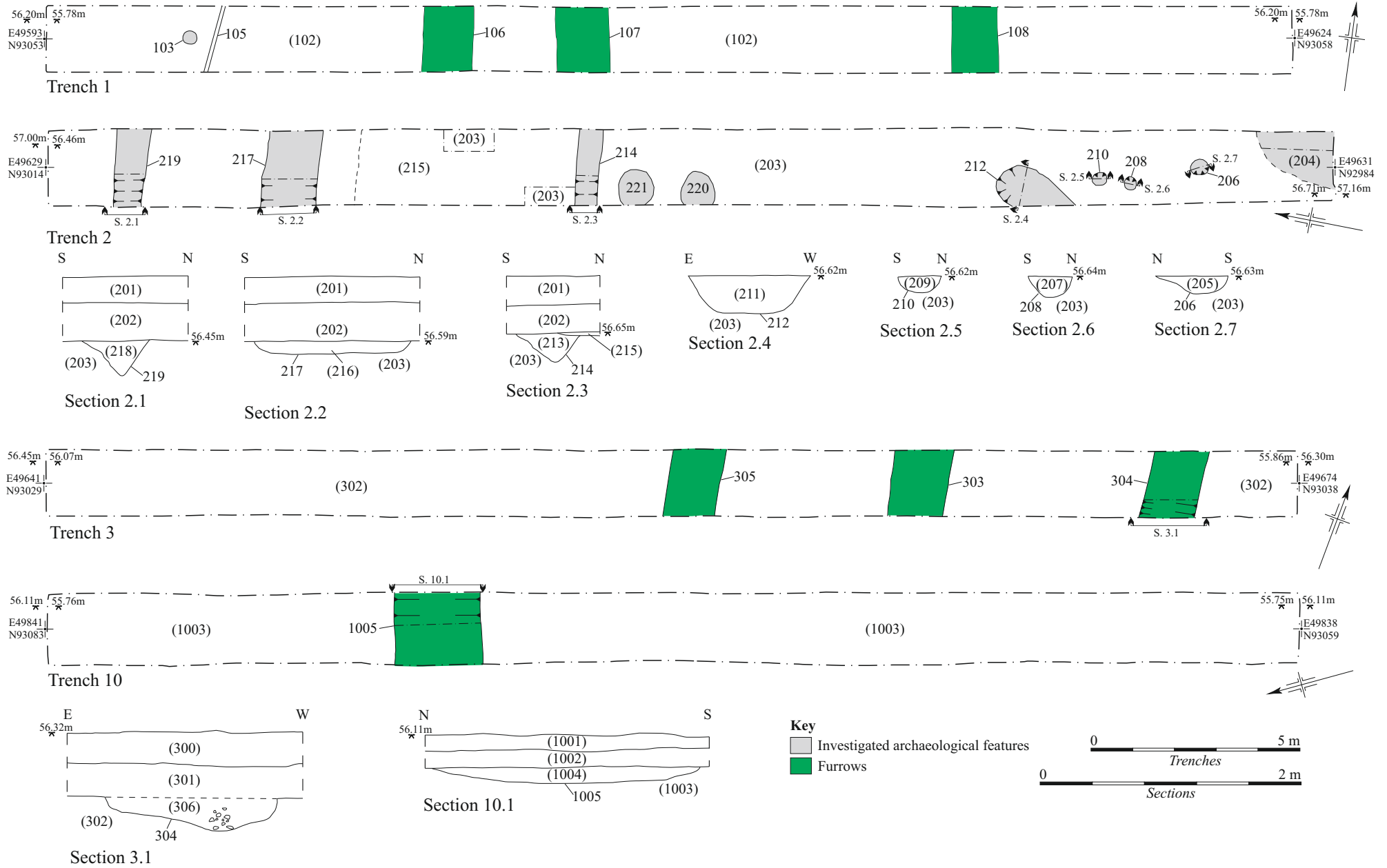


Figure 2. Plans and sections of Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 10

bucket under archaeological control (Fig. 1).

Due to flooding and overhead power-lines, the position of two trenches was moved slightly on site. Trench 5 was moved south and the south end of Trench 10 was moved west.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers indicate features i.e. cuts that were investigated during the evaluation; while numbers in parentheses - () - show feature fills or deposits of material, some of which were investigated, while others were characterised by analogy with previously excavated deposits. All measurements are given in metres. A general description of the features and fills, or deposits, observed is given in Appendix 1: Context Description at the rear of the report.

4.1 Fieldwork (*Figures 1-2*)

All trenches were excavated to the natural head deposits of gravelly silt and clay silt. In Trench 1, this deposit was (102) and in Trenches 3-9, this deposit was (302), (402), (502), (602), (702), (802) and (902); in Trench 2 it was (203) and in Trench 10 (1003).

Trench 5 contained no archaeological features and the sequence was simply the natural head deposits (502), overlain by cultivation soil (501) and topsoil (500).

Trenches 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 evidenced north/south oriented furrows cut into the head deposits. In Trenches 7 and 10, a single east/west oriented furrow was present. The evaluation location of the furrows corresponded with the locations identified by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2012) during the geophysical investigations. All these furrows were filled with light grey brown to mid brown silty clay with occasional ceramic roof tile fragments. Sections excavated through them indicated a surviving depth of approximately 0.1m-0.25m. It was not possible to test the possible existence of a posthole in Trench 1 due to the trench being water inundated; this may well be associated with the remains to the south in Trench 2.

Trench 2 yielded a number of undated archaeological features. The trench was excavated to the top of the natural head deposits (203). At the south end of the trench a deposit of residual, possible cultivation soil (204) predating the creation of the ridge and furrow overlay the natural (203). Cut into the natural (203) to the north were a line of three postholes – 206 (Plate 1), 208 and 210. Postholes 206 and 208 were 1.65m apart and 208 and 210 were 0.75m apart. These may potentially represent the remains of a former structure or an internal division associated with such. Immediately adjacent was a possible pit or more likely tree-throw pit 212. Two small pits or large postholes – 220 and 221 – which were not sampled, lay to the north adjacent to the gully 214.



Plate 1. Posthole 206.

In the northern part of the trench, 9m north of the tree-throw pit 212, were two apparently parallel gullies – 214 and 219 – and the shallow potential gully, 217. The possible gully 217 was flat-based and may well represent a natural undulation in the natural (203); the narrow gullies 214 and 219 (Plate 2) were V-shaped and probably represent either internal divisions within a plot, or potentially the eaves drip-gullies of a structure. The two gullies which have broadly similar profiles are approximately 10m distant from one another.



Plate 2. Gully 219

The possible relict cultivation soil (204) overlay the southernmost gully 214 as layer (215) here. A fragment of abraded possible medieval roof tile was recovered from this deposit.

Sealing all the archaeological deposits was the subsoil (202), which undoubtedly comprises material from the ploughed out ridge and furrow, yielding from the base of the deposit a rim of North-East Wiltshire ware, with a date-range from the mid 11th to 12th centuries. Although recovered from the overlying deposit of buried cultivation soil (202), the Saxo-Norman rim was recovered from the vicinity of the postholes. Sealing the subsoil was topsoil (201). The recovery of the pottery in Trench 2 may possibly have association with the cut features identified and potentially be an indicator of the period/date within such recorded activity occurred.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The evaluation took place during clement conditions on 6th and 7th March. The work was monitored by Richard Oram of OCAS for the Vale of White Horse District Council and Steven Weaver on behalf of CgMs Consulting Ltd.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd of pottery weighing 36g occurred in context 202. It is a jar rim in Oxfordshire County type-series fabric OXBF, North-East Wiltshire Ware, and probably dates to the mid 11th – 12th century (Mellor 1994, 52).

The fabric is a typical find in the region, and the sherd is in very good condition and appears reliably stratified.

5.2 Ceramic building materials by Gwilym Williams

There were 9 pieces of tile, weighing 369g, recovered during the evaluation, of which 5 fragments, weighing 168g, were recovered from Trench 2. A single quite rolled and abraded fragment, weighing 41g, from the subsoil (215) may well be medieval. Five fragments, weighing 197g, were dated as being late medieval or later, and three fragments, weighing 131g, were dated as being post-medieval (Table 2). Many of the tile fragments were broken into quite small sized pieces and were moderately abraded; this means that no more an accurate date than medieval or later can be attributed to that proportion of the assemblage.

The tile was examined by naked eye and the results entered onto an Excel spreadsheet.

The majority, 5 pieces weighing 168g, came from Trench 2. Three fragments came from buried soil horizons (204) and (215); the fragments from the layer (204) are probably late medieval – the larger fragment having a peghole with a diameter of 13mm cleanly punched through the tile and distinct evidence for having been pushed

out of a mould. The well-fired (possibly reduced fabric) fragment from layer (215) is feasibly medieval, but too abraded to comment extensively.

context	frags	wt (g)	comments
201	2	52	late med?
204	2	75	late med?
215	1	41	Med?
306	3	131	post-med?
401	1	70	late med?
Total	9	369	

Table 2. Tile by context and fragment count and weight

The three fragments from fill (306) of furrow 304 were unabraded and appeared to be later than the rest of the assemblage, although with such a small sample it is hard to be certain when making such an assertion.

The fragment from subsoil (401) is late medieval or later.

The medieval or later fragments were all very small and it is not possible to comment further on them.

It is not proposed to retain these pieces of tile.

5.3 Environmental Remains

No palaeoenvironmental samples were taken, as the potential was not felt to be sufficient.

6 DISCUSSION

The site largely consisted of ploughed out ridge and furrow aligned north/south for the most part although there was at least one furrow running east/west observed in Trenches 7 and 10. All this had been indicated by the geophysical survey carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2012). Dating from these indicates a late medieval date at the very earliest, and that they were most probably post-medieval in date.

Although it is generally accepted (CgMs 2012, 15) that the area where the excavation carried out by Leeds (1947), subsequently revisited by Helena Hamerow, Chris Hayden and Gill Hey (2007) and more recently by Time Team (Hall 2010), was the focus of the *vill* noted in Domesday (Williams & Martin 1992), there are at least two other potential manorial demesnes; that held by Alwig the priest (*ibid* 143) and a second held by Leofflæd TRE and at Domesday by Robert, as part of the farm of Sutton Courtenay (*ibid* 138). While it is clear that the remains recovered during the evaluation can be associated with the documentary sources, the presence of additional settlement foci as documented remains to be identified.

The remains present in Trench 2, the only apparent foci of activity recorded by the evaluation, comprised a line of three postholes oriented southeast/northwest which could feasibly represent evidence of a former timber fast longhouse type structure or an internal division associated with such. Examples of this are widespread during the Saxo-Norman period, it being a constructional form found on many Saxon and later high medieval sites, including Goltho (Beresford 1975), Wicken Bonhunt (Wade 1980) and Nevendon Washlands (Gilbert *et al forthcoming*); the high status timber hall of the Saxon period becoming the lower status post-fast farmhouse of the medieval period. Parallel gullies may well represent a pair of slots for constructional timbers, or possibly eaves drip-gullies, features evidenced at a range of sites from the mid Saxon period onwards such as Stamford, Lincs., (Mahany *et al* 1982), Raunds, Northants., (Windell *et al* 1990), and Yarnton, Oxon., (Hey 2004). The assertion that the recorded remains within Trench 2 may reflect such activity derives from the character of the features examined, but also from the late Saxon/early high Medieval period date of the pottery sherd recovered within the overlying subsoil. However, given the residual nature of the pottery recovered it is not possible within the constraints of the evaluation itself to be certain as to the precise nature or date of the occupation activity recorded.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beresford, G., 1975. *The Medieval Clay-Land Village: Excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount* The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series: **6**

CgMs Consulting Ltd 2012 *Archaeological and Heritage Assessment Land North of 28 to 72 Milton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire* Unpublished client report

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Gilbert, D.R., Moore, J., & Williams, G., *forthcoming* The Landscape is Changing.....Archaeological Excavation at Nevendon Washlands, Basildon, Essex. JMHS Monograph No. 2

Hall N., 2010 *Sutton Courtenay Oxfordshire Archaeological Excavation and Assessment of Results* Unpublished client report Wessex Archaeology

Hamerow, H., Hayden, C. and Hey, G., 2007 'Anglo-Saxon and Earlier Settlement near Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire' *Archaeological Journal* **164**, 109-96

Hey, G., 2004 *Yarnton Saxon and Medieval Settlement and Landscape* Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph **20**

Institute for Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*. Revised 2008

Leeds, E.T. 1947 *A Saxon Village at Sutton Courtenay* Society of Antiquaries of London

Mahany, C., Burchard, A., & Simpson, G., 1982 *Excavations in Stamford Lincolnshire 1963-1969* Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 9

Mellor, M, 1994 'Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region' *Oxoniensia* 59, 17-217

Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2012 *Archaeological geophysical survey of land off Milton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire*. Unpublished client report

Wade, K., 1980 'A settlement site at Bonhunt Farm, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex' in Bond 1980, 96-102

Williams, A., and Martin, G.H.M., 1992 *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* London Penguin

Windell, D., Chapman, A., & Woodiwiss, J., 1990 *From Barrow to Bypass Excavations at West Cotton Raunds Northamptonshire 1985-1989* English Heritage & Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctx	Type	Description	L (m)	B (m)	D (m)	Finds/ Date	Interpretation
Trench 1							
100	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
101	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.20	-	Subsoil
102	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
103	Cut	Sub-circular; unexcavated as under water	0.30	0.30	Unk.	-	?posthole
104	Layer	Dark grey brown silty clay; unexcavated as under water	0.30	0.30	Unk.	-	Posthole fill
105	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	0.2	Unk.	-	Drain
106	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.2	Unk.	-	Furrow
107	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.25	Unk.	-	Furrow
108	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.1	Unk.	-	Furrow
Trench 2							
201	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	Tile; ?late medieval	Topsoil
202	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.20	Pottery;	Subsoil
203	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
204	Layer	Compact yellow grey silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.1	Tile; ?late medieval	Interface between subsoil & natural
205	Fill	Mod compact light white grey clay	0.54	0.54	0.14	-	
206	Cut	Round	0.54	0.54	0.14	-	
207	Fill	Mod compact light white grey clay	0.33	0.33	0.16	-	
208	Cut	Round	0.33	0.33	0.16	-	
209	Fill	Mod compact light white grey clay	0.34	0.34	0.12	-	
210	Cut	Round	0.34	0.34	0.12	-	
211	Fill	Mod compact light white grey clay; charcoal flecks	0.9	0.9	0.28	-	
212	Cut		0.9	0.9	0.28	-	Pit; could be gully terminus
213	Fill	Compact mid yellow grey	>1.6	0.52	0.2	-	
214	Cut	Linear	>1.6	0.52	0.2	-	gully
215	Layer	Mod compact yellow grey soft clay				Tile; ?medieval	Interface between subsoil & natural
216	Fill	Compact yellow grey clay	>1.6	1.15	0.1	-	
217	Cut	Compact yellow grey	>1.6	1.15	0.1	-	

		clay					
218	Fill	Mod compact sandy clay	>1.6	0.5	0.24	-	
219	Cut		>1.6	0.5	0.24	-	
220	Feature	Yellow grey clay	0.8	0.8	Unk.	-	?pit/posthole
221	Feature	Yellow grey clay	0.8	0.8	Unk.	-	?pit/posthole
Trench 3							
300	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
301	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Subsoil
302	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
303	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.3	Unk.	-	Furrow
304	Cut	Gentle BoS @ top & base, concave sides, flat base; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.3	Unk.	-	Furrow
305	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.2	Unk.	-	Furrow
306	Feature	Mid brown silty clay	>1.6	1.3	Unk.	Tile; ?post-medieval	Fill of furrow
Trench 4							
400	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
401	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	Tile; ?late medieval	Subsoil
402	Layer	Light brown clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
403	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.25	Unk.	-	Furrow
404	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	0.2	Unk.	-	Drain
405	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1	Unk.	-	Furrow
Trench 5							
500	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
501	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.15	-	Subsoil
502	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
503	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.5	Unk.	-	Furrow
504	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.45	Unk.	-	Furrow
505	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.5	Unk.	-	Furrow
Trench 6							
600	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
601	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	-	Subsoil
602	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural

603	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.2	Unk.	-	Furrow
604	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.3	Unk.	-	Furrow
605	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>1.6	1.1	Unk.	-	Furrow
Trench 7							
700	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
701	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	-	Subsoil
702	Layer	Light brown gravelly clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
703	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; E/W oriented	>1.6	1.9	Unk.	-	Furrow; same as 1005
Trench 8							
800	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
801	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.15	-	Broken natural
803	Layer	Light brown clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
Trench 9							
900	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.25	-	Topsoil
901	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	-	Subsoil
902	Layer	Light brown clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
903	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>2.1	>2.6	Unk.	-	Furrow
904	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>2.1	>0.2	Unk.	-	Drain
905	Feature	Light grey brown silty clay; N/S oriented	>2.1	>1.4	Unk.	-	Furrow
Trench 10							
1001	Layer	Dark grey brown silty humus	>30	>1.6	0.15	-	Topsoil
1002	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay	>30	>1.6	0.1	-	Subsoil
1003	Layer	Light brown clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	-	Natural
1004	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay	>1.6	2	0.1	-	Fill of furrow
1005	Cut	Gentle BoS @ top & base, concave sides, flat base; E/W oriented	>1.6	2	0.1	-	Furrow