

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT  
FERNHAM FIELDS,  
COXWELL ROAD, FARINGDON,  
OXFORDSHIRE  
NGR SU 28193 94219 centred**

*On behalf of  
CgMs Consulting*

**FEBRUARY 2013**

**REPORT FOR** CgMs Consulting  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a four-trench evaluation at Fernham Fields on to the east of Coxwell Road, Faringdon. No archaeological remains earlier than the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were present; this comprised a single field boundary ditch first visible on OS 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1899) and removed by the late 1970s OS (1980).*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located on land immediately east of Coxwell Road, Faringdon (SU 28193 94219 centred). It lies in a field on the east side of a ridge, but forms part of a gentle south-southwest slope that falls from approximately 130m AOD in the northeast to approximately 120m AOD in the south. The proposed site area is approximately 7.1 hectares and is pasture. The underlying geology of the site is mudstones of Amptill Clay (BGS 1971, Sheet 253).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

The site was being considered for development and the undertaking of an archaeological field evaluation was advised, in line with Para 128 of the NPPF to ascertain whether features from an identified site on the other side of Coxwell Road (Weaver *et al.* 2004; Cook *et al.* 2004) extend eastwards into this site. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a brief outlining their requirements for the evaluation. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* proposed a method to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, which was agreed with the client and OCAS.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Recent archaeological investigation on the west side of Coxwell Road has revealed an extensive Iron Age and Romano British settlement (Weaver S *et al.* 2004; Cook J *et al.* 2004). This was excavated prior to the housing development but its full south eastern extent has not defined. A further evaluation to the rear of Coxwell House did not reveal any archaeological features. Fuller details are given in a desk based assessment undertaken for this site (Pugh & Gidman 2012).

The above information has been obtained from the OCAS Design Brief.

## **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

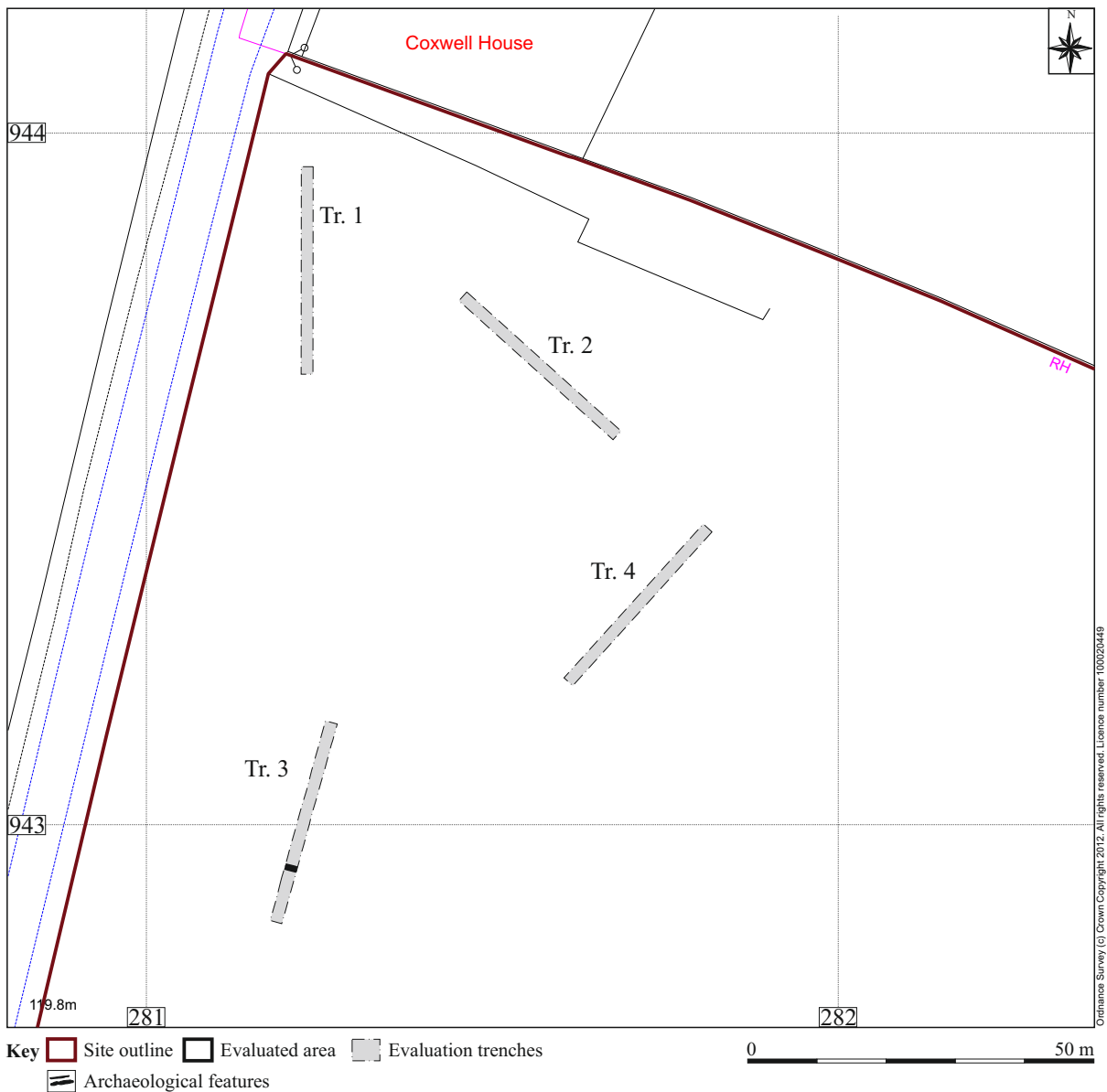
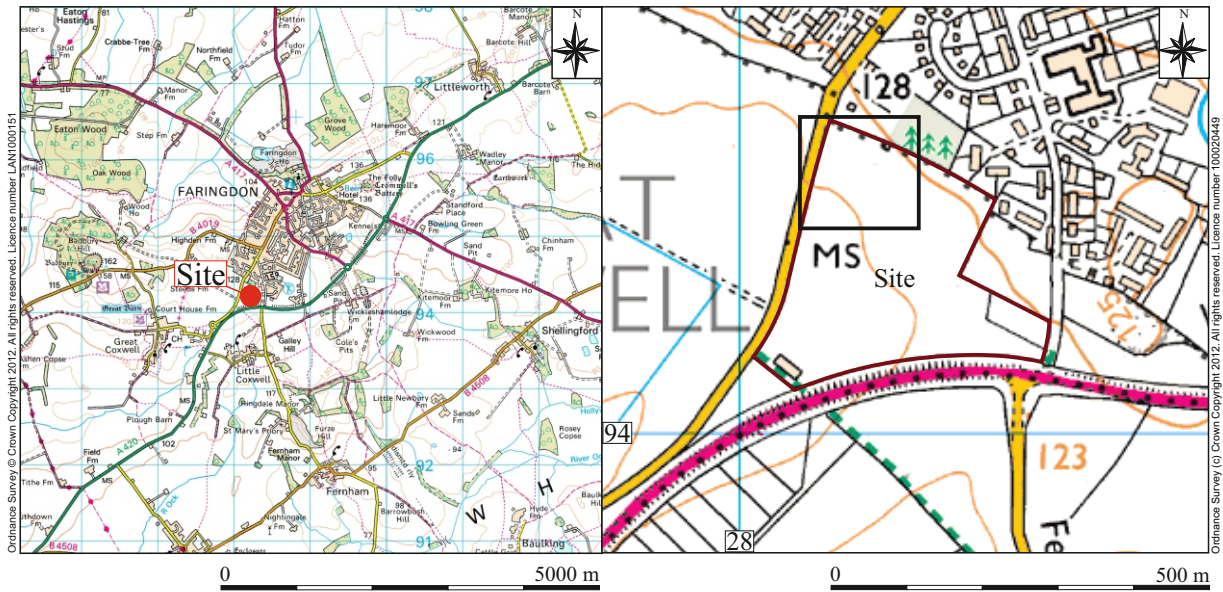


Figure 1. Site location

- assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits

In particular

- o to establish whether the Iron Age and Roman settlement site extends into this area

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

In response to a brief issued by OCAS, JMHS carried out the work, on behalf of CgMs Consulting to establish whether the known site west of Coxwell Road extended into this area.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in JMHS's *WSI* agreed with the County Archaeological Officer.

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of four trenches (Fig. 1) each measuring 30m × 1.6m by a 10-tonne excavator equipped with a ditching bucket, supplemented by hand investigation of the revealed deposits.

Site procedures carried out followed IfA guidelines. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Field Results (Figs. 1-3)**

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material. All contexts numbers are preceded by trench number and /. Details of individual context numbers are in Appendix 1 – the context inventory – at the rear of report.

All trenches were excavated to the natural clay (Tr#/03). This was overlain by a former cultivation soil (Tr#/02). In Trench 3 this deposit was cut by the east/west oriented ditch 3/04, which was filled with grey sandy silt (3/05). Topsoil (Tr#/01) sealed the fill (3/05) of the ditch 3/04.

#### **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological evaluation took place in clement conditions. The work was monitored by High Coddington, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Officer, for Vale of White Horse District

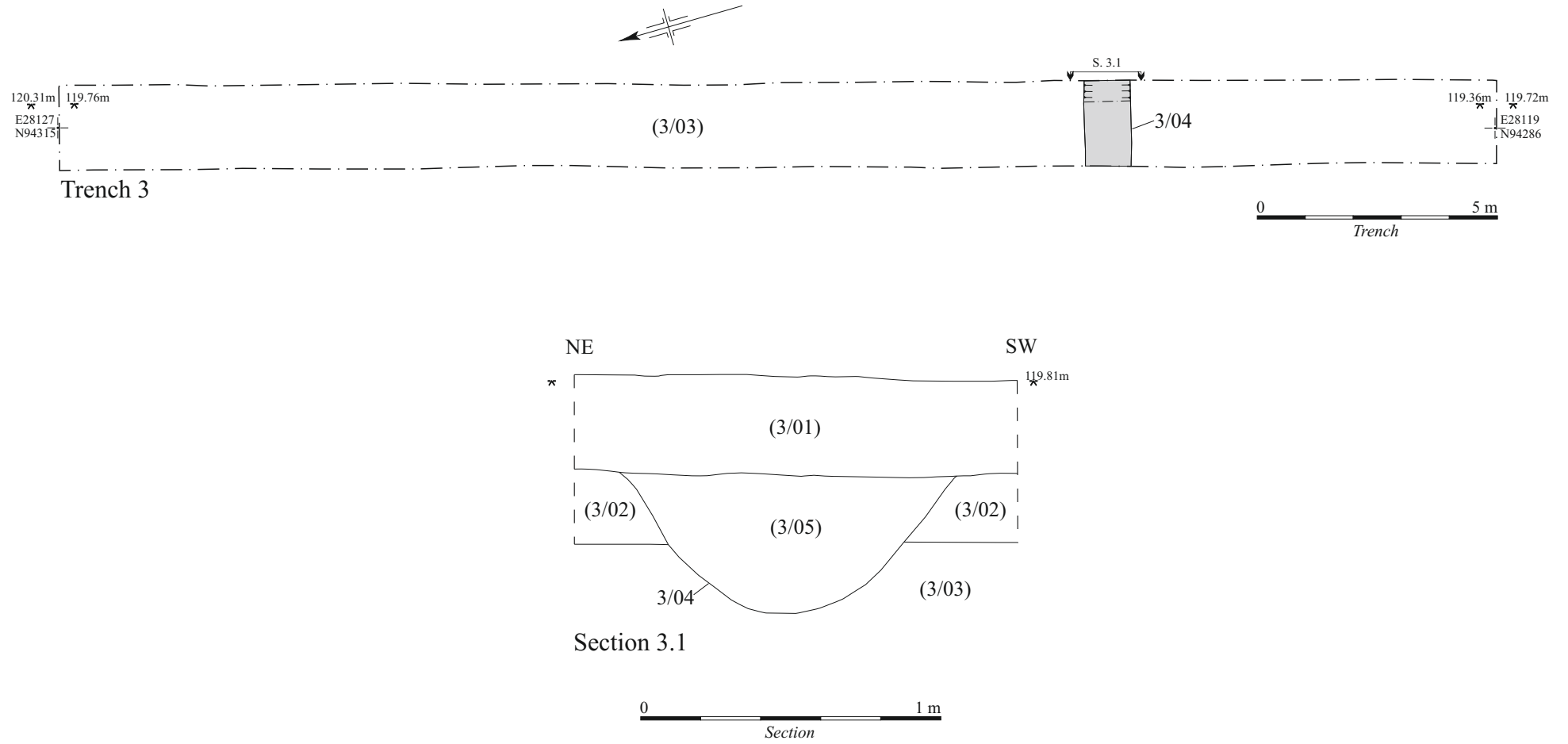


Figure 2. Plan and section of Trench 3

Council, and Greg Pugh on behalf of CgMs Consulting.

## **5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS**

### **5.1 Finds**

No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

### **5.2 Environmental Remains**

No environmental samples were taken as the potential of the deposits was not felt to be sufficient to warrant sampling.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The evaluation at Fernham Fields to the east of Coxwell Road, Faringdon revealed that the potential for Iron Age activity investigated previously (Weaver & Ford, 2004; Cook *et al* 2004) did not extend into the field on the east side of the road. The eastern extent of the Iron Age activity appears to have lain beneath the present Coxwell Road.

The sole archaeological feature present was the field boundary ditch which was first noted on the 1899 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. OS map (1:2500). This is shown on subsequent editions until the 1980 OS map, where it is absent. The previous OS map was published in 1960. The field in which the evaluation was carried out had clear evidence for other backfilled field boundary ditches: these too were recorded on OS maps.

The potential for Iron Age activity in the evaluated area was shown to be non-existent.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

Due to the negative results of the evaluation it has been agreed with the County Archaeological Services that an archive is not necessary for this site.

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Cook, J., Guttman, E.B.A., & Mudd, A., 2004 'Excavations of an Iron Age site at Coxwell Road, Faringdon' *Oxoniensia* **69**, 180-287

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

Pugh, G, & Gidman, J, 2012 *Desk Based Assessment. Land East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon, Oxfordshire*. Unpublished client report



Weaver, S.D.G., and Ford, S., 2004 'An Early Iron Age occupation site, a Roman shrine and other prehistoric activity at Coxwell Road, Faringdon' *Oxoniensia* **69**, 119-180

**Appendix 1: Archaeological Context Inventory**

Ctxt	Type	Description	L (m)	B (m)	D(m)	Findings	Date	Interpretation	
<b>Trench 1</b>									
	(1/01)	Layer	Mid dark brown sandy clay loam	>30	>1.6	0.3	No	Modern	Topsoil
	(1/02)	Layer	Light brown yellow sandy clay	>30	>1.6	0.16	No	19 <sup>th</sup> C	Former cultivation soil
	(1/03)	Layer	Yellow/yellow-green clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	No	Natural	Natural
<b>Trench 2</b>									
	(2/01)	Layer	Mid dark brown sandy clay loam	>30	>1.6	0.3	No	Modern	Topsoil
	(2/02)	Layer	Light brown yellow sandy clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	No	19 <sup>th</sup> C	Former cultivation soil
	(2/03)	Layer	Yellow/yellow-green clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	No	Natural	Natural
<b>Trench 3</b>									
	(1/01)	Layer	Mid dark brown sandy clay loam	>30	>1.6	0.3	No	Modern	Topsoil
	(1/02)	Layer	Light brown yellow sandy clay	>30	>1.6	0.2	No	19 <sup>th</sup> C	Former cultivation soil
	(1/03)	Layer	Yellow/yellow-green clay	>30	>1.6	Unk.	No	Natural	Natural
<b>Trench 4</b>									
	(2/01)	Layer	Friable dark grey brown silty loam with chalk fragments	>30	>1.6	0.2	No	Modern	Topsoil
	(2/02)	Layer	Firm light grey chalky silty loam with chalk fragments	>30	>1.6	0.3	No	19 <sup>th</sup> C	Former cultivation soil
	(2/03)	Layer	Solid light grey chalk marl	>30	>1.6	Unk.	No	Natural	Natural
	2/04	Cut	Linear, east/west oriented cut	>1.6	1.1	0.45	-		Ditch
	(2/05)	Fill	Dark grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal	>1.6	1.1	0.45	No	Modern	Ditch fill