

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**NURSES COTTAGE, LANSDOWN,**

**BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER**

**SP 16133 20967**

*On behalf of*

*Ms J Russell & Mr T.G. Baddeley*

**FEBRUARY 2008**

**REPORT FOR** Ms J Russell & Mr T.G. Baddeley  
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Lansdown  
Bourton-on-the-Water  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services concluded an archaeological investigation on – February 2008. This involved the inspection of foundation trenches for a new extension to the existing property.*

*Three pits were recorded and although undated are thought to be relatively modern in date. 25 sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the topsoil and a further 7 sherds from the spoilheap.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

Bourton-on-the-Water is located in the Windrush Valley in eastern Gloucestershire off the A429 Fosse Way, five miles to the southwest of Stow-on-the-Wold. The site itself is situated on the western side of Bourton-on-the-Water close to the junction between the B4068 and the A429, near Bourton Bridge. The site lies at a height of approximately 133m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is on a boundary between river gravels of the Quaternary period and Lower Lias undifferentiated clays containing argillaceous limestone bands of Jurassic period. A sandy gravel was observed during the Watching Brief.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Cotswold District Council has granted planning permission for the erection of a two-storey extension to Nurses Cottage, Bourton-on-the-Water (CDC/06/03129/FUL). The application site is archaeologically sensitive, since it is located within the Lansdown area of Bourton-on-the-Water, where extensive remains of Roman settlement and activity have been found. Therefore, due to the possibility of archaeological deposits being damaged or destroyed during the build, a condition of the planning consent required that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the course of groundworks.

### **1.3 Archaeological background**

The site lies within an area of extensive prehistoric and Roman settlement, which spreads north and west from the confluence of the River Windrush and the River Eye.

The archaeological activity in the area can be surmised as follows:

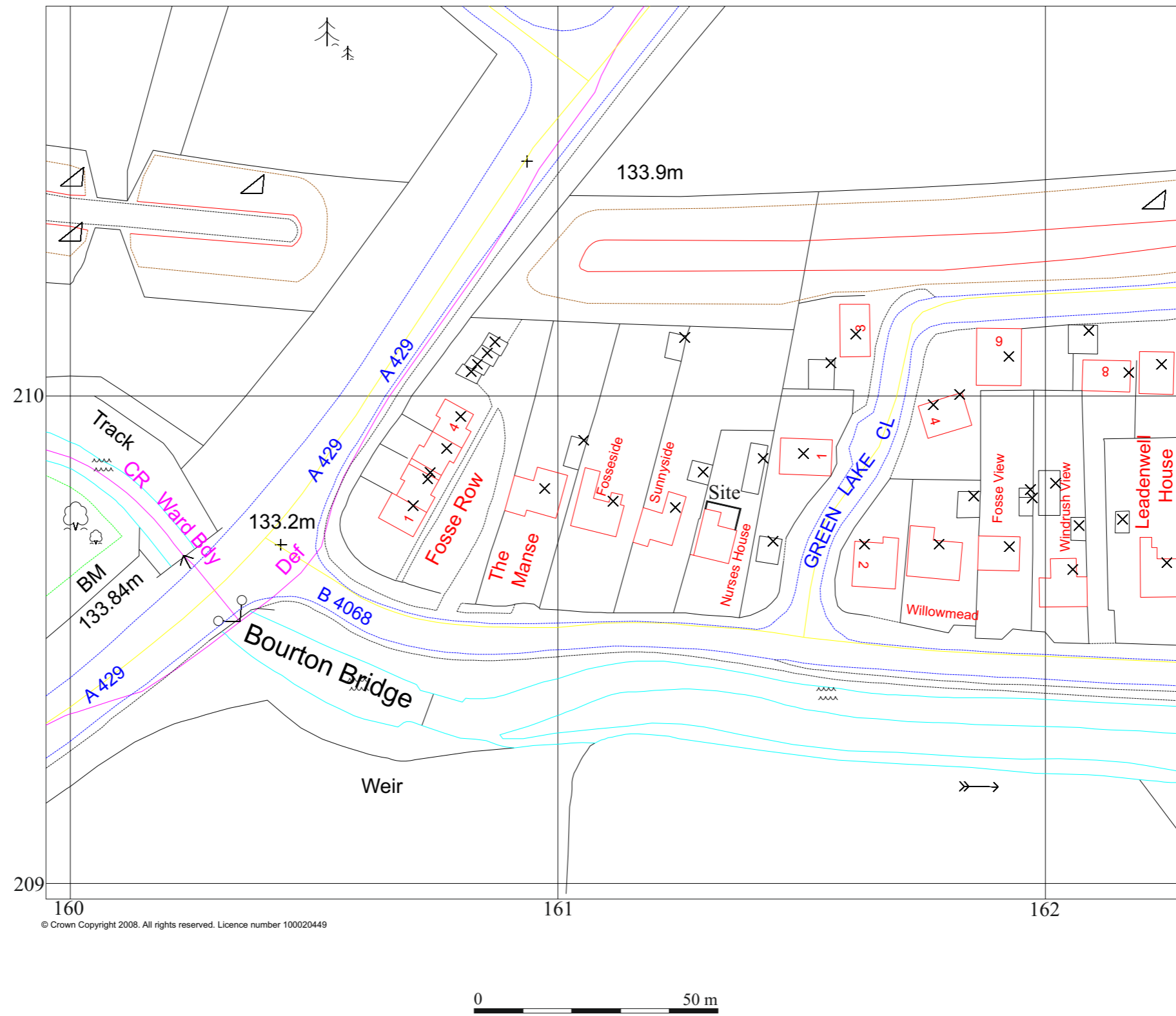


Figure 1. Site Location

## **Prehistoric**

To the north at Cox Howman's gravel pit, Bronze Age activity is evidenced by a hoard of socketed bronze axes, Bronze Age pottery spot-finds and a female Beaker burial. Further to this on the same site 'cooking pits' containing Neolithic pottery have also been recorded.

To the east of the site is the western limit of Salmonsbury Camp, a late Iron Age rectilinear bivallate enclosed settlement which acted as an important focus of Romano-British activity.

Excavations to the east of the site at the primary school recorded significant evidence of prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon activity. The earliest remains identified dated from the early Iron Age (- BC) and were interpreted as representing a sequence of timber structures, the exact plans of which could not be defined. Other features identified included field systems, ditches, pits, postholes, post pits and a burial. Several stone packed post holes and a shallow pit also revealed were thought to be Anglo-Saxon.

Immediately to the north of the primary school at the Cotswold School evaluation and excavation work revealed postholes some of which contained Bronze Age pottery although no Romano-British or Anglo Saxon pottery was recovered.

## **Roman**

Archaeological fieldwork has built up a picture of an extensive Romano-British settlement covering the area of the modern village of Bourton-on-the-Water. The settlement also lies at the point where the Fosse Way meets Ryknild Street and Buckle Street, which run off to the northwest.

Excavations carried out in the field bordering the east side of the Fosse Way south of the River Windrush revealed Roman stone buildings and other archaeological features of the 1st to 4th centuries. The southern extent of the settlement at Bourton Bridge is not known but findspots of Roman material continue southwards along Whiteshoots Hill for 500m from Bourton Bridge. Two coin hoards were also found 50m to the southwest of Whiteshoots Cottage.

An archaeological watching brief at Sunnyside, immediately to the east of Fosse View revealed evidence of Roman gravel extraction. Immediately east of Sunnyside, a probable Roman Villa of undetermined type was discovered during the construction of a house called "Leadenwell". Excavations revealed the building to be of four main periods commencing 120AD-270AD. The building was reoccupied in the mid 3rd century, repaired in 390AD and continued in use for an uncertain number of years.

An evaluation in the southwestern part of Green Lake Playing Field established the presence of a wall, three ditches and a deposit all of Roman date.

## **Anglo-Saxon**

Evidence of continued use of Salmonsbury Camp during the Anglo-Saxon period includes inhumations identified in or near the ramparts of the camp. *Sulmonnesburg* is

mentioned in a grant by Offa, King of the Mercians in AD 779. Several other burials dated to this period have also been identified in the vicinity. Anglo-Saxon *Grebanhaus* was also discovered 2km northeast of the site.

### **Medieval**

The medieval settlement was centred on the northern bank of the River Windrush. The parish church marked the northwestern limit of the settlement from the 12th to the 15th century.

The Manor House is located approximately 500m to the southeast of the site and was originally built around 1200 as the residence of the Abbots of Evesham. The remains of which cannot be seen above ground. The building was rebuilt in the 15th century and 1890 before finally being demolished in the 20th century. The stone was used to rebuild the Manor House on a new site.

### **Post-Medieval**

Bourton-on-the-Water contains an abundance of 16th to 18th century buildings, some of which have been added to and renovated in the 19th and 20th centuries. The nearest examples include an early to mid-17th century two storey mill house and a late 17th to early 18th century barn close to the south-east. A post-medieval pump house has been noted on the First edition Ordnance Survey Map (1880) to the southeast of the development area.

### **Cartographic evidence**

The Tithe map shows the development area as agricultural land within “Upper New Inclosure”.

The First (c.1880) Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the site within the same field as the 1839 Tithe map, but with a new railway to the north.

The Second (c.1900) Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the site within allotment gardens.

The Third (c.1925) Edition Ordnance Survey map shows housing to the east and the west, but none within the development area.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the Roman settlement

## **3 STRATEGY**

An archaeologist was present on site during the excavation for foundations.

Archaeological features were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. All artefacts were collected and retained except for modern material.

Site procedures followed IFA guidelines (1994). The work was carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by Charles Parry, Senior Archaeological Officer to Gloucestershire County Council.

## **4 RESULTS**

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

### **4.1 Foundation trench for new extension (*Figures 1 and 2*)**

A continuous archaeological presence was maintained during the digging of the foundation trench. From observations made of the section it could be seen that a mid orange/yellow sandy gravel natural (03) measured to be at least 0.30m thick and continuing beyond the depth of the trench was overlain by a compact light orange/brown slightly silty clay subsoil (02) 0.30m thick. Three pits, [04], [06] and [08] were observed cutting through this layer. Pits [06] and [08] were seen in section (Fig. 2) with their other sides just continuing across the trench to be seen in the opposing side.

Pit [08] was the furthest northwest of the three. This feature was 1.20m wide and 0.48m deep and was found to contain two fills. The primary fill (10) was a loose pale grey sandy silt with occasional gravel and charcoal flecking inclusions, 0.10m thick. The secondary fill was a loose dark brown/grey clayey sandy silt 0.38m thick. No finds were revealed in either fill.

Pit [06], observed between [04] and [08] was 1.20m wide and 0.50m deep. It contained a patchy mid grey/brown and mid yellow/brown fill (07) consisting of a fine clayey sandy silt containing very occasional gravel inclusions. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Pit [04], the feature furthest to the northeast was 1.40m wide, 0.60m deep and continued beyond the depth of the trench. Its fill (05) a loose dark grey/brown fine sandy clay/silt contained very occasional gravel inclusions but no dating evidence.



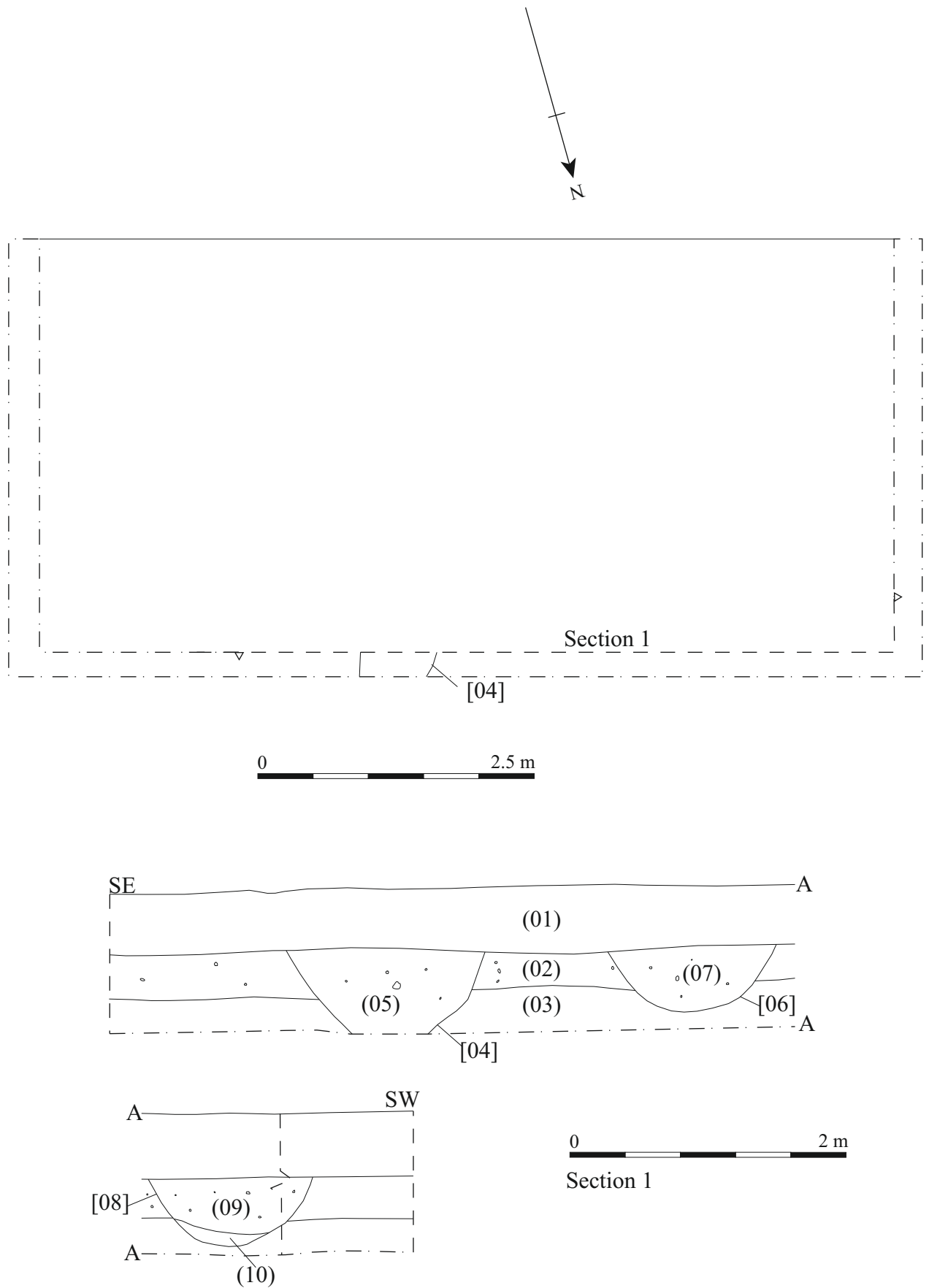


Figure 2. Plan and section

All of these features were sealed by a friable dark grey/brown loamy topsoil (01) noted to be 0.40m thick. This topsoil was found to contain 25 sherds of Roman pottery mainly towards the south eastern area of the trench.

The water table was reached near to the base of the trench.

## 4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological investigation work took place during dry and bright weather.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Booth

The watching brief produced some 32 sherds (481 g) of Roman pottery, 25 sherds (395 g) from context 1 and the rest unstratified. The sherds were recorded rapidly using fabric and other codes in the Oxford Archaeology Roman pottery recording system. The 'group' from context 1 is dated to the late 3rd-4th century but contains some sherds of 2nd century date. The unstratified material covers much the same range.

The fabrics noted are listed in Table 1.

*Table 1: Summary fabric descriptions and quantification*

Code	Short description	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Comment
S30	Central Gaulish samian ware	1	17	Drag 31 rim
F51	Oxford colour-coated ware	1	6	
F60	Brown slipped oxidised colour-coated ware	1	8	?Beaker, source uncertain
Q23	cf 'South-west white slipped ware', but coarser	1	13	
O10	Fine oxidised coarse ware	1	24	
O40	Severn Valley ware	2	106	Bowl rim
R30	Medium sandy reduced coarse wares	1	4	
R35	Medium/fine sandy fabrics cf North Wiltshire	4	32	
R90	Coarse tempered reduced wares	2	31	
R95	Savernake ware	1	9	
B11	Black-burnished ware (Dorset BB1)	7	81	Cooking pot, bowl and dish rims (1 each)
C11	Late Roman shell-tempered ware (Harrold?)	10	150	Cooking pot rim
Total		32	481	

The range of fabrics present is generally unremarkable, though it is notable that in terms of sherd count the two most common coarse ware fabrics are non-local ones,

black-burnished ware from Dorset and shell-tempered ware probably from Bedfordshire (Harrold). It is possible that the single sherd recorded as O10 was in fact a Severn Valley ware, in which case all the oxidised coarse wares were from this industry. Reduced coarse wares included a certain North Wiltshire product (fabric R95, Savernake ware) and a number of fine grained sand-tempered sherds (R35) which may have originated in the North Wiltshire industry. A very similar industry, however, is thought to have been based in West Oxfordshire, broadly in the Witney area (when specifically identified, it is defined as fabric R37), and it is quite possible that some if not all of the R35 sherds were in fact of fabric R37. One of these was an unusual body sherd from a beaker or small jar, hand modelled (on the wheel-thrown body) with slight vertical indentations which were then burnished overall.

The vessel just discussed is perhaps unlikely to have been later than 2nd century in date. The same would apply to the single samian ware sherd and to the Savernake ware and probably to the shoulder sherd in the unsourced fabric F60, which may have been from a cornice rim bag-shaped beaker. The black-burnished ware vessel forms suggest a principally late 2nd-3rd century date range (the simple dish rim could be as late as the 4th century) and the shell-tempered sherds are likely to be late 3rd-4th century in date, the same range as the single Oxford colour-coated ware sherd. Overall, however, the assemblage is too small for it to be possible to determine whether or not it indicates the continuation of activity on the site into the later part of the 4th century.

## **5.2 Environmental results**

No environmental samples were taken during the Watching Brief

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The watching brief was successful in locating three pits and a large quantity of Roman pottery. Although no dating evidence was recovered from these pits despite a thorough investigation, it is thought that these are likely to be relatively recent in date due to the fact they appear to be cutting through the subsoil.

The large quantity of Roman pottery discovered is further evidence of the scale of Roman activity in the area and could be indicative of further settlement activity very nearby. The number of non-local wares is also evidence of good economic trading links in the region.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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 Watching Briefs.*

**APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
01	Layer	Topsoil	0.4	Tr.	Tr.	Pottery	Modern
02	Layer	Paleish Orange/brown slightly silty clay	0.3	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
03	Natural	Mid orange/yellow sandy gravel	0.3+	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
04	Cut	Pit	0.6+	1.4	0.6+	-	-
05	Fill	Dark grey/brown sandy clay/silt	0.6	1.4	Tr.	-	-
06	Cut	Pit	0.5	1.2	Tr.	-	-
07	Fill	Mid yellow/brown mixed with mid grey/brown	0.5	1.2	Tr.	-	-
08	Cut	Pit	0.48	1.2	Tr.	-	-
09	Fill	Dark brown/grey clay/sand/silt	0.38	1.2	Tr.	-	-
10	Fill	Pale grey sandy silt	0.1	0.74	Tr.	-	-
11		Unstratified	-	-	-	Pottery	Roman