



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

ON

LAND ADJACENT TO BLACKLANDS ROAD,

BENSON, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 6222 9208

On behalf of

Brim Developments

APRIL 2013

REPORT FOR Brim Developments
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SUMMARY

This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land adjacent to Blacklands Road in Benson, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 6222 9208). This reveals that the settlement at Benson or Bensington as it was alternatively known as until recently is a settlement with a high potential for archaeology. Sporadic archaeological material has been recognised throughout the area of the settlement for prehistoric activity of a Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age date. That such material should be found is not surprising as a major Neolithic cursus has been recognised to the south of the proposal site at Benson Airfield. Ditmas describes banks either side of the brook in the vicinity of the church and around Cuckoo Pen to the south of the brook. Ditmas states that these banks were recently flattened. Both areas have been indicated from other sources as areas of intensive settlement though not fully understood. The nature of the hinterland of these monuments and even the very nature of the monuments are not known. The settlement of Benson also contains evidence of significant Roman activity, and it has been suggested in academic papers by Blair (see below), that the area of the proposal site lies in a probable area of extensive Roman settlement. Much of the information here is imprecise but it is likely that this means that some archaeology may exist on the site, though again the information of the settlement and its hinterland are obscure. The name Blacklands is a significant place-name that identifies areas of intensive settlement or other activity, which results in an organically richer and, therefore, a significantly darker soil. The site lies adjacent to this area, which saw development in 1967, but which is an area that has produced indications of a Roman cemetery and on earlier aerial photographs appears to show the remains of an enclosure of a sub-square shape measuring between 50-70m across. Benson is recorded at an early date as an early medieval town or centre; we are unaware exactly what this information entails, but it is likely that Benson was a royal centre with significant residence and probably a high status church. It was only later that this church became attached to the abbey at Dorchester. What the early medieval hinterland of Benson looked like is not known, but it is evident that the proposal site lies within this area and that early medieval artefacts have been recovered from the line of Brook Street to the south. Later medieval and earlier post-medieval settlement probably crystallised around the line of the major roads in Benson, of which Brook Street to the south would have been one of them. The parish of Benson was enclosed at a late date and the maps indicate that some of the field system was narrow and presumably derived from earlier ridge and furrow. If this is the case then in the medieval and earlier post-medieval and imperial and Regency periods the site was probably dominated by ridge and furrow.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Report

Nik Lyzba, of JPPC, requested the report on behalf of Brim Developments. The report has been prepared and is intended to inform any proposal under consideration within the defined area.

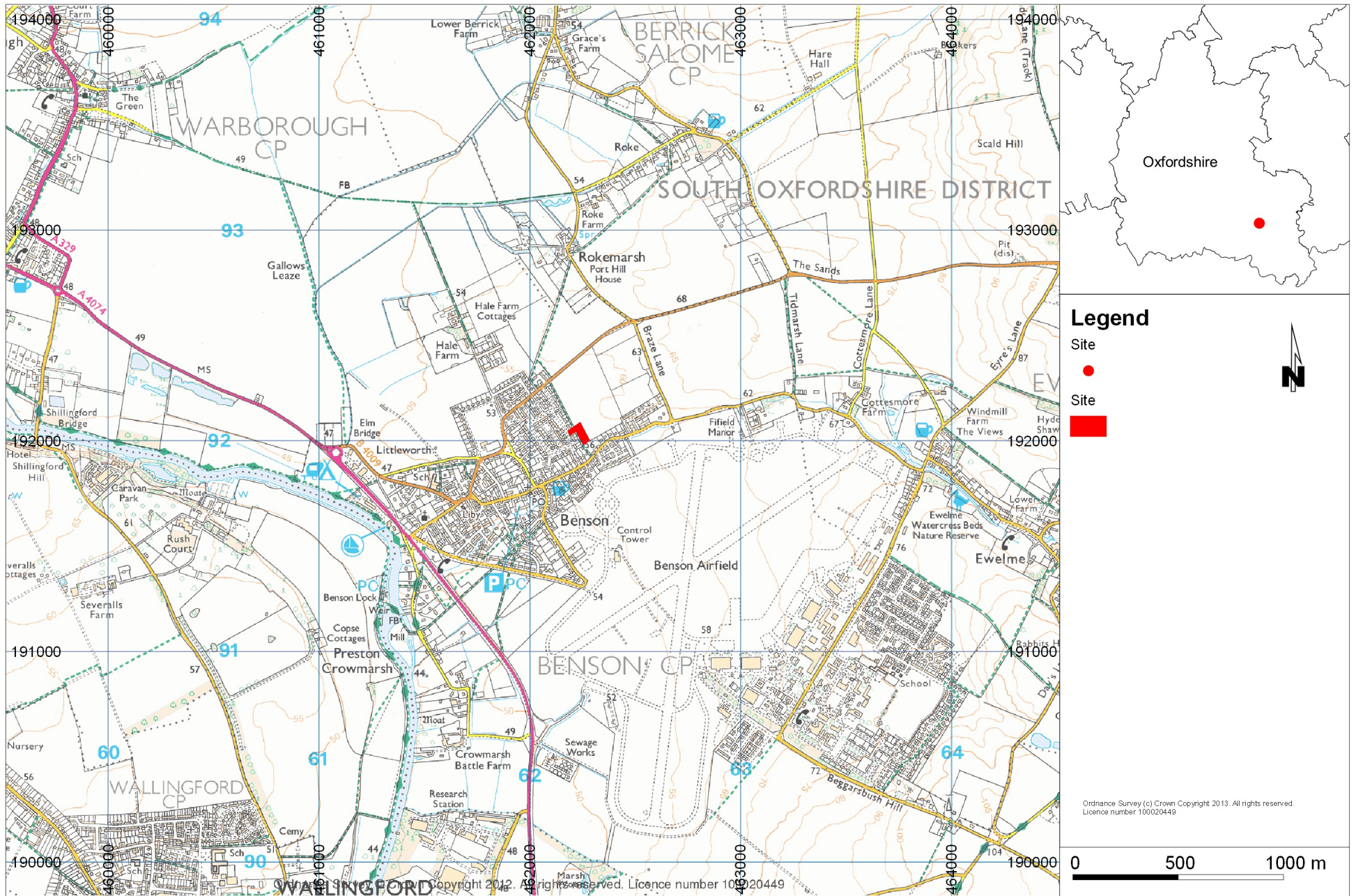


Figure 1. Site location

1.2 Planning Guidelines and Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) provides guidance related to archaeology within the planning process. The following Policy points are key to this development:

128. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

129. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

1.3 Desk-Based Assessment Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the desk-based assessment is to provide a professional appraisal of the archaeological potential of the site. This follows the Government guidance in *NPPF* (2012) by presenting a synthetic account of the available archaeological and historical data and its significance at an early stage in the planning process.

In accordance with *NPPF* (2012), the report presents a desk-based evaluation of existing information. It additionally follows the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard* definition of a desk-based assessment (IFA 2008). In brief, it seeks to identify and assess the known and potential archaeological resource within a specified area ('the site'), collating existing written and graphic information and taking full account of the likely character, extent, quantity and worth of that resource in a local, regional and national context. It also aims to define and comment on the likely impact of the proposed development scheme on the surviving archaeological resource.

The Institute for Archaeologists *Standard* states that the purpose of a desk-based assessment is to inform appropriate responses, which may consist of one or more of the following:

- The formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- The formulation of a project design for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research

In accordance with *NPPF* (2012), the desk-based assessment forms the first stage in the planning process as regards archaeology as a material consideration and also an assessment of the impact on the historical character of the area. It is intended to contribute to the formulation of an informed and appropriate mitigation strategy.

1.4 Desk-Based Assessment Methodology

The format and contents of this section of the report are an adaptation of the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' guidance paper for desk-based assessments (IFA 2008). The work has involved the consultation of the available documentary evidence, including records of previous discoveries and historical maps, and has been supplemented with a site walkover. The format of the report is adapted from an Institute for Archaeologists *Standard Guidance* paper (IFA 2008).

In summary, the work has involved:

- Identifying the client's objectives
- Identifying the cartographic and documentary sources available for consultation
- Assembling, consulting and examining those sources
- Identifying and collating the results of recent fieldwork
- Site walkover

The principal sources consulted in assessing this site were:

- The Oxfordshire County Historic Environment Record
- The National Monuments Record, Swindon
- The Oxfordshire Centre for Historic Research

The National Monuments Record, Swindon and Oxfordshire County Historic Environment Record, hold details of known archaeological and historical sites in the vicinity of the proposal site.

There has been no archaeological work carried out at the proposal site. The assessment of its potential has, therefore, relied on predictive modelling based on the known distribution of remains within 500 metres of the centre of the site (from a central grid reference of SU 6222 9208, shown on figure 1). The information about standing historical and listed buildings within the same radius of the proposal area has also been collated.

The available evidence is derived from casual finds, archaeological investigations, standing buildings and historical records. It should be stressed that the distribution represents the extent of current knowledge and is the product of chance and investigation. For this reason, apparently blank zones should not be automatically regarded as being devoid of remains.

The assessment of the likely condition of any potential archaeological remains has relied upon a study of the available historical maps and observations made during the site walkover, which provide evidence for the impact of previous land-use on the site.

There have been no restrictions on reporting or access to the relevant records. The copyright to the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record belongs to Buckinghamshire County Council (Figures 1).

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the east side of the Blacklands Road in the village of Benson, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 6222 9208). Historically Benson is an ancient parish, but the church at various times was described as a chapel of Dorchester, implying that it previously belonged to that parish. Historically Benson was located in the Benson Half-Hundred and later Ewelme Hundred (Gelling 1953, 115), but is now located in South Oxfordshire District Council.

2.2 Description (Figure 1)

The site is a small piece of rectangular land that lies to the rear of houses fronting onto Blacklands Road in Benson. There is a small public foot path that runs between these gardens and the proposal site on the east. To the south the area borders back gardens from properties facing onto Brook Road. On the north and east the proposal site overlooks fields. The boundaries of the property are old hedge lines that have been let grow and become misshaped; they are probably well established. Blacklands Road is a modern development of the later 20th century. Two bungalows on that road are proposed to be demolished to allow access to the main site.

2.3 Geology and Topography

Topographically the village of Benson is located on a small tributary of the Thames. The site lies on the valley base between 55-60m ordnance datum.

The underlying geology is Upper Greensand formation of siltstone and sandstone formed 94-112 million years ago in the Cretaceous. In the area of the site this is capped by the drift material of the Summertown – Radley Sand and Gravel members formed in the Quaternary some 2 million years ago.

3 PROPOSED SCHEME (Figure 1)

The proposal is for the development of the site that will consist of the demolition of two bungalows at 22 and 24 Blacklands Road, followed by the construction of nine further units.

4 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The Historical Development of Benson

The site of Benson is mentioned in early medieval sources, but it is apparent that its origin as a settlement goes back further than this from the archaeological finds. A map produced for Blair (1994, 26) showed that Iron Age material had come from Littleworth and the Old Bypass, and that Roman material had come from a settlement located near the Old Bypass and Brook Street / Blacklands Road, and that early and late 'Saxon' finds had come from similar locations. This information refers to information gleaned by the recovery of archaeological material (see below), but it sets the scene for the later historical interpretations and development of Benson.

The earliest historical account of Benson is contained in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles when it is listed as one of four foci that were taken in battle in 571 AD (Blair 1994, 27, 38-9, 49). The full significance and trustworthy nature of this statement is not known. The other sites mentioned at that time include Limbury, Aylesbury and Eynsham; the latter two are known to have earlier Bronze-Age or Iron Age fortifications which were reused in the early medieval period.

The name Benson is first recorded *c.* 900 or slightly later in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for events that allegedly took place in AD 577. This has left the form *Bænesingtun* (*c.* 900), and *Bensingtūn* (*c.* 1000). The name has been given the etymology of **Benesa's Farm* (Gelling 1953, 116), where *ingtūn* is used in the final component. The name is, however, not well attested and is constructed only from assumed place-name evidence. There is also the possibility, though not overly apparent with the forms available, that the name could use *ingas* and *tūn* and contain the name of a folk-group. Only one form of 1316 AD as *Bensington* gives any indication of any further lettering. If this was the case then the first part of the name may be an old river-name. The stream is now called the Ewelme, derived from Old English *æw(i)elm*, a spring source of river (Gelling 1953, 126-7), and is thus not a proper river-name.

In 661 AD Wulphere of Mercia captures Benson.

Charter evidence indicates that in 730 AD Æthilbald of Mercia had a royal vill at Benson (Edwards 1988).

In 779 Offa is known to have fought at Benson and defeated the West Saxon forces, it is presumed that he took the estate from Cynewulf at this time (VCH 1939, 429-56; Blair 1955, 55). A tradition arising from these historical references is that Offa had a royal palace at Benson (Ditmas 1983, 20-1)

The royal estate at Benson or Bensington is mentioned in two early medieval charters, the first is dated to 887 by Dux Æthelred, with the permission of King Alfred, to the Bishop of Worcester (Gelling 1979, no.266). Here six *mansiones* at Brightwell Baldwin and eight at Watlington, along with six men,

who formerly belonged to the royal estate of Bensington (Benson), along with their descendants, were to belong to the church of Readenoran (later Pyrton). Later traditions indicate that Benson was a chapel of Dorchester, but this association implies that Benson as a royal estate had earlier ties.

The second grant at Bensington was in 996 when Æthelred granted two mansae to three men Eadric, Eadwig and Ealdred, which was to be free of the three common dues (Gelling 1979, no.286).

Benson's significance at the writing of the Book of Winchester is emphasised by the earliest accounts when it is catalogued as the first of the king's manors (Morris 1978, 1.1). The situation appears to have been the same in 1066. The records of 1086 state that the site contained 32 villagers, 29 smallholders, 5 slaves, and 2 mills along with meadows, pastures, fisheries and woodlands. It is stated that the jurisdiction of four and a half hundreds belonged to the manor (Langtree, Binfield, Pyrton, Lewknor, and Ewelme the five Chiltern Hundreds), thus implying that the site had a level of status second in importance to that of a county town, and way above that of normal manors. The account mentions church tax, but does not specifically mention a church at that time. Interestingly there are two other references to the manor of Benson which at that time had two officials of the king that held parts of the manor of Benson (Morris 1978, 58.14, 58.19). The first recorded that William held one hide from the king, but that the manor lay in the jurisdiction of Benson and the king. The other account is that Theodoric the Goldsmith who held two hides. Of the latter estate Seawold had held it in 1066.

The descent of the manor from 1086 to the beginning of the 17th century is one of royal patronage, either being held by the reigning monarch or being granted to a favourite of the monarch. The manor became attached to the Honour of Wallingford and a title associated with the Earldom of Cornwall, a title of the heir apparent to the throne.

1142-52 was the time of the Civil war between Stephen and Matilda. It has been suggested, though not demonstrated, that Stephen was based at Benson during this time, while Matilda was at Wallingford (Ditmas 1983, 35). Later textual sources refer to a lost Kingsbury from 1275, when it is stated that the site was given to Osney Abbey some forty years previously (Gelling 1953, 117). This reference implies that there was a fortification at Benson that was used by the king.

The manor of Benson, along with Henley, was granted in 1189 by King John to Robert de Harcourt (Holmes 1999, 52). The long reign of Henry III is known to have seen the manor granted on a number of occasions, the first was to John de Harcourt a mercenary of King John (Ditmas 1983, 39). After this it was granted to Engelard de Cyognae, who is known to have exorted heavy taxes from the inhabitants. Engelard died in 1244, when the manor resorted to the crown, only later being granted to Richard, earl of Cornwall. This grant brought together the honour of Wallingford and manor of Benson with that of the Earldom of Cornwall, to which they were going to be connected for some time to come. In 1257 Richard Cornwall (d. 1272) granted Bensington to 25

tenants, but the earl retained the toll of the mill, fisheries, and the revenue of the Chiltern woods and from the vill of Henley (Ditmas 1983, 40). From 1272 to 1300 the manor was bestowed on Earl Edmund.

An account of the manor of Bensington was made in 1279 in the reign of Edward I (Ditmas 1983, 40). The village of Ewelme with the hamlets of the King's Demesne covered Henley, Nettlebed, Hunterscombe, Wyfold, Preston Crowmarsh, Warborough, Shillingford and Holcombe. In 1300 the manor of Benson reverted to the crown.

Edward II in 1307 granted the honour of Wallingford with the manor of Benson and the Earldom of Cornwall to his friend (and claimed lover) Piers Gaveston (Ditmas 1983, 41). This caused uproar with the barons due to the apparent associations with the earldom and the crown. Gaveston was beheaded in Warwickshire in 1312. The manor of Benson and the honour of Wallingford passed at this time to Queen Isabella the estranged wife of Edward II and Roger Mortimer. Edward III bestowed Wallingford, Benson, and Cornwall on his son Edward, later known as the Black Prince, who spent very little time at Benson and died in 1376 (Ditmas 1983, 42-3). After Edward's death Joan, Fourth Countess of Kent and Edward's wife, spent time at Wallingford castle and Watlington.

The Poll Tax figures for Benson and Nettlebed in 1377 returned a figure of 206 people over the age of 14, and for Warborough and Shillingford some 152 men over 14 (Ditmas 1983, 43). The figures are considered to be low due to the Black Death. From 1399 the honour of Wallingford and manor of Benson was associated with Thomas Chaucer, constables of the castle (Ditmas 1983, 44, VCH 1923, 517-31). In 1438 Benson Manor was reduced to less than £24 value due to the ruined mill. On Thomas' death the position of constable of the honour of Wallingford and manor of Benson was to pass to William de la Pole (Duke of Suffolk). However, William was imprisoned. From c. 1450 the stewardship of the honour of Wallingford was with Alice, who died in 1475 (Ditmas 1983, 44-5). The position of constable eventually came to John de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk (VCH 1923, 517-31). In 1482 the offices in Wallingford Castle concerning the honour of Wallingford and Saint Valery were transferred to Sir Richard Grey, in 1487 they reverted back to John de la Pole and then to his son (Ditmas 1983, 45).

The Earldom of Cornwall and honour of Wallingford, along with vill of Benson, was granted to Arthur, Prince of Wales in 1490 (VCH 1923, 517-31). In 1536/7 Henry Norres became Lord of Benson Manor (Ditmas 1983, 47). In 1540 the honour of Wallingford was separated from that of the Earldom of Cornwall, with Benson becoming a parcel of land of Cornwall at this time. The manor of Benson was held at this time by Sir Francis Brian. In 1551 Sir Francis Knollys of Rotherfield Greys became lord of Benson, who was a protestant (Ditmas 1983, 48).

Benson's links to the Crown ends in 1628 when Charles I sold it to a London land speculator and it became part of Verney estate (Ditmas 1983, 50) On the

3rd November 1642 Charles held court in Benson (Ditmas 1983, 51); the Verney family recover their lands at Benson in 1653.

The bishopric of Dorchester was established in 634 AD by Birinus who made him a gift of Dorchester (VCH 1962, 39-64). In the late 7th century this see was moved to Winchester, and in the 9th century Dorchester became a seat of a Mercian bishopric. The see moved to Lincoln in the 11th century. Tradition has it that Birinus founded a church at Benson around AD 636, which was replaced by a stone church dedicated to Saint Helena in about 779 AD by Offa (Pine and Ford 2003, 133). There is no confirmation of this tradition although it could be derived from folk-memory or academic speculation concerning the saint's name. In 1146 Dorchester is recorded as having six chapels, five of which may be original: Chiselhampton, Clifton Hampden, Drayton, Studhampton and Toot Baldon, while the other, Benson, had been presented to Dorchester by the Empress Maud (VCH 1962, 39-64). In 1163 there are four other chapels mentioned of which Marsh Baldon and Pishill are added as chapels of Dorchester, while Nettlebed and Warborough are catalogued as chapels of Benson. With the indications in the early medieval charters it is apparent that there was an association with Pyrton minster previously, and it would seem the case that Warborough and Nettlebed along with Benson and even Pishill are far better suited to be part of an earlier ecclesiastical-royal estate with a church at Pyrton and a royal lay church at Benson. Benson church is still recorded as a chapel of the church at Dorchester in 1526 (VCH 1907, 1-63). There is a statement in the VCH that Benson due to its proximity was treated as a chapel rather than an appropriated church. This implies that Benson church had a different origin to most of the chapels. The association with the Bishopric of Dorchester and later Lincoln is of interest in a further respect as some 500m to the west of the proposal site is Fifield Manor. This manor is considered to have been possessed by the bishop of Dorchester at an early date (VCH 1907, 1-63). No date is known, but logically the date at which the church of Bensington was granted to the church at Dorchester is probably the most feasible date. If this is so it would imply that Fifield Manor was originally created out of land attached to Bensington Church. During the reformation the church of Bensington was granted to Christ Church at Oxford (Ditmas 1983, 47).

The manor of Benson is known to have taken tolls from the salt trade along the River Thames in 1279 (Blair 1994, 86).

The Inclosure Act was passed in Benson in 1852 after two earlier failed attempts (ORO 16Vic C.3 (1852) PG), and was implemented as late as 1863 (ORO QS/D/A book 8).

4.2 Known Archaeological Sites (Figures 2-5)

Archaeological activity in the Benson area is relatively intensive and the village is known to be historically important. A search radius was carried out on the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) of a 500m radius centred round the co-ordinate SU 6222 9208. The National Monuments Record (NMR) appears to show a number of features and events located

beyond this distance and it is possible that a wider search area was employed or that due to linear co-ordinates or imprecise locations other sites were also included in the list.

Archaeological activity (Fig. 2) in the area pushes known human activity in the Benson area back to the Palaeolithic period (pre-11,000 BC). From this period an Acheulean hand-axe (**JMHS 1**, PRN 12882-MOX7047: SU 617 917) has been recovered dating from around 400,000 years BP. There were also the remains of two Palaeolithic hand axes recorded from an imprecise location in the Benson area (**JMHS 2**, NMR SU69SW100: EH 1151132: SU 61350 91500?). Other prehistoric tools have been found in the study area including what have been described as scrapers (**JMHS 3**, PRN 8040-MOX7001: SU 6236 9200), and prehistoric flints from Brook Street (**JMHS 4**, PRN 4493-MOX7018: SU 6269 9210). The NMR also contains a record of the recovery of late Mesolithic and Neolithic flints (**JMHS 5**, EH 1570683: SU 615 920). These latter finds are probably more recent in their origins but are poorly dated.

Neolithic activity has been identified to the southeast on the airfield in the form of cropmarks (Fig. 2). These sites include prehistoric enclosures (**JMHS 6**, PRN 15385.04-MOX11006: SU 6267 9157) and prehistoric linear features (**JMHS 7**, PRN 15385.06-MOX11008: EH 917294: SU 6268 9150). The linear site is known as the Benson Cursus complex, of which a general outline was published in 1974 (Benson and Miles 1974, 72-3 Map 41), and which lies to the south of the proposal site. Other Neolithic monuments possibly associated with the ritual landscape of the cursus include a long barrow with two parallel ditches and a pit (**JMHS 8**, NMR SU69SW74: EH 1072789: SU6246 9146); a further possible Neolithic long barrow (**JMHS 9**, NMR SU69SW76: EH 1072915: SU 6262 9152); and a possible mortuary enclosure (**JMHS 10**, NMR SU69SW77: 1072916: SU 6252 9152). A number of objects of a Neolithic or later prehistoric date have also come from the area of Benson village, but are imprecisely dated, and include an unpolished flint chisel (**JMHS 11**, EH 242049: SU 6150 9100), a polished greenstone axe (**JMHS 12**, NMR SU69SW24: EH 242050: SU 6136 9150), a flint pick identified from the wear (**JMHS 13**, NMR SU69SW25: EH 242057: SU 6135 9120), and two ground stone axes (**JMHS 14**, NMR SU69SW43: EH 242085: SU 6135 9145). Excavations on Saint Helen's Avenue found evidence of Neolithic (**JMHS 15**, EH 1333591: SU 6159 9155) and Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age settlement, besides a broad number of features that could only be described as being of a broad prehistoric date (Pine and Ford 2003, 135-9). The Neolithic material is focussed to the south of the site and many of the finds reportedly coming from the River Thames.

The Bronze Age (Fig. 2) finds include a battle axe and spear (**JMHS 16**, NMR SU69SW8: EH 242030: SU 6241 9117), while the features include a late Bronze Age ditch (**JMHS 17**, EH 1570682: SU 615 920). There is also an undated feature but treated as a probable prehistoric enclosure or round barrow (**JMHS 18**, NMR SU69SW83: EH 1073002: SU 6228 91110). These lie to the south of the site.

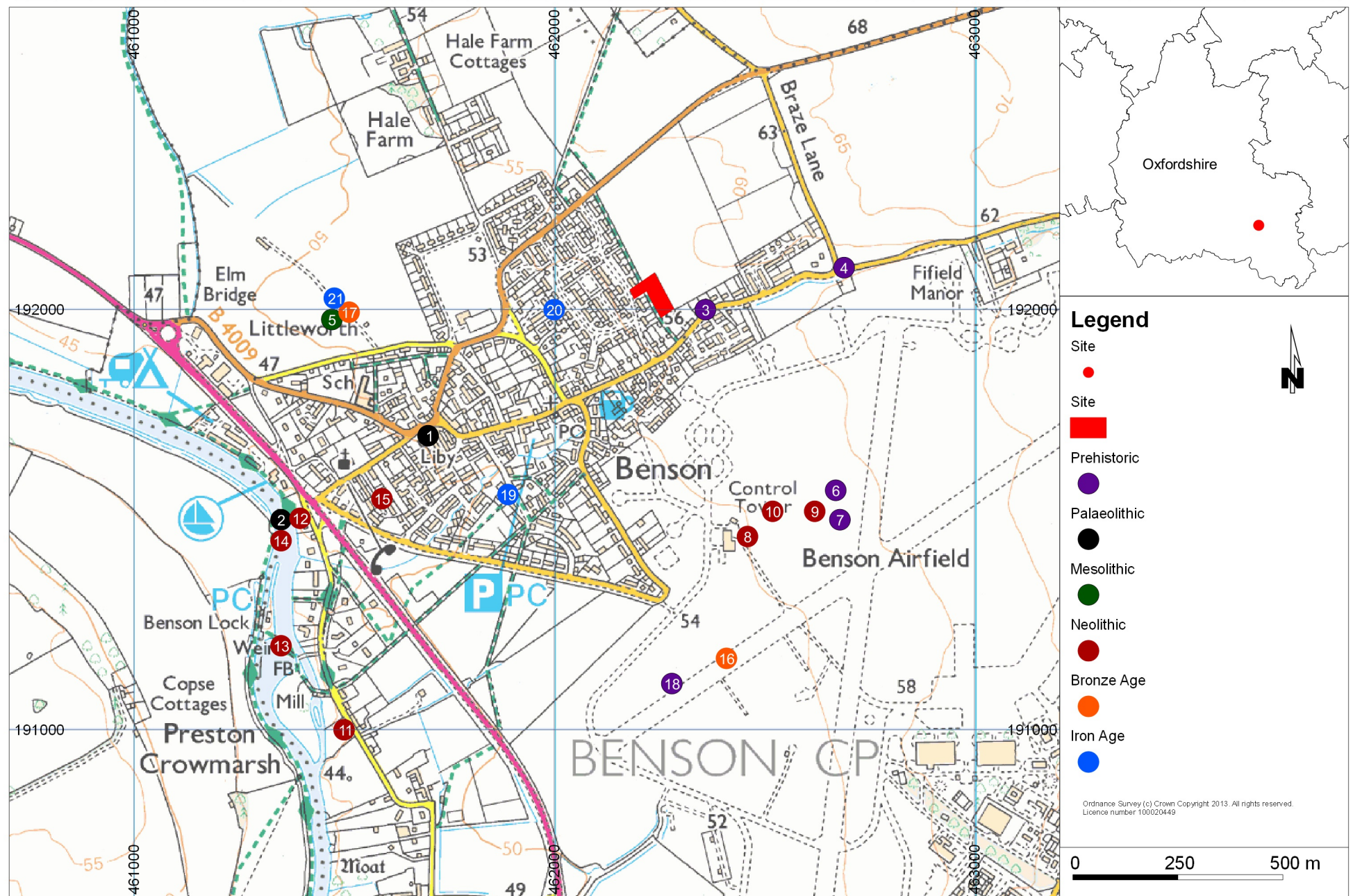


Figure 2. Prehistoric, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age sites

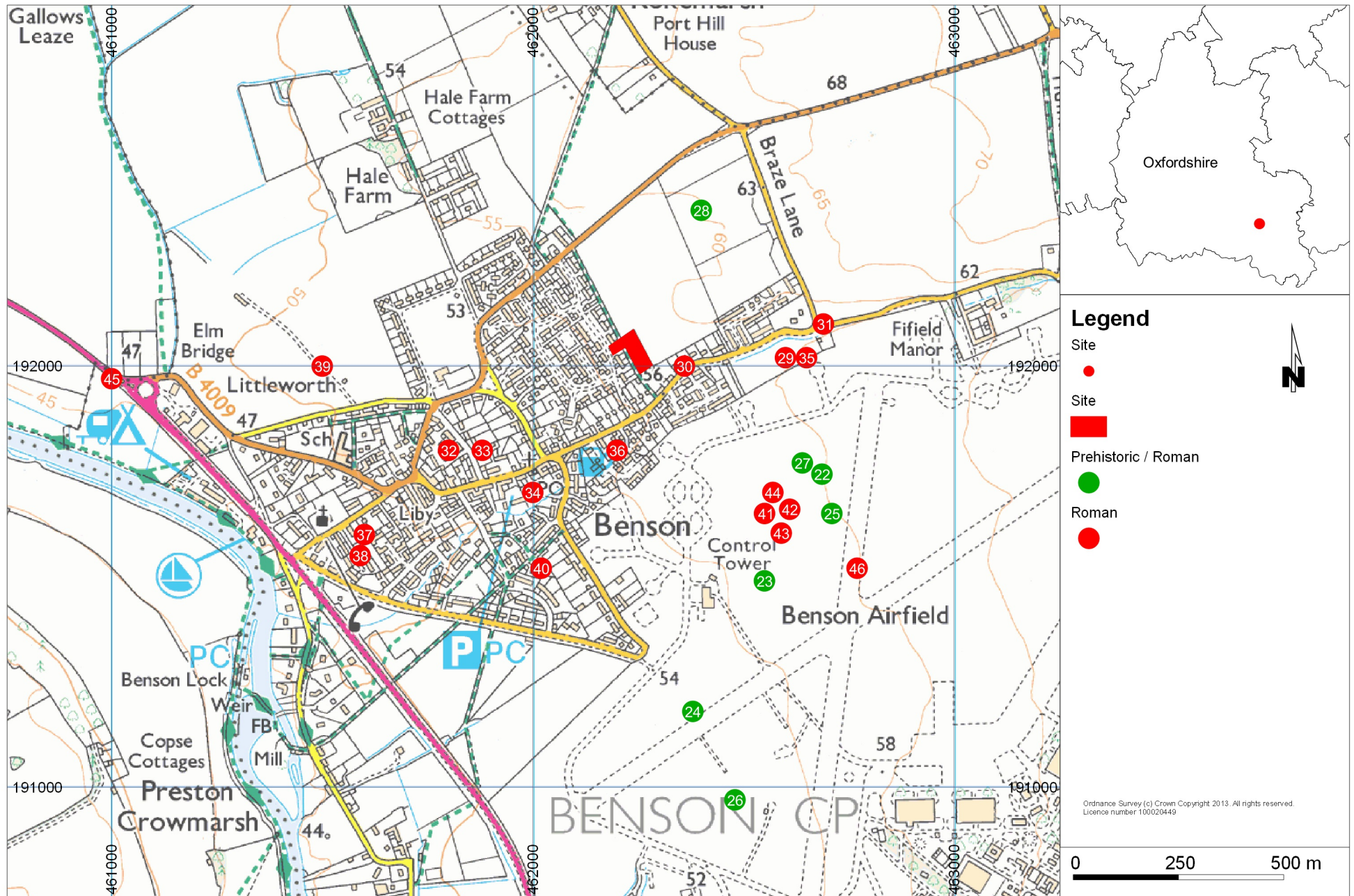


Figure 3. Prehistoric or Roman and Roman sites

Increasingly there is evidence of intensive activity in the Benson area from the later Iron Age (Fig. 2), through the Roman period (Fig. 3), and into the early medieval period. Blair (1994, 26), using a map produced by C J Balkwill, started to indicate where settlement from these three periods were located and inserted two shaded areas that were indicated as areas of Roman period settlement. One of these was located to the south of the brook some way to the southwest of the site and south of the village centre, while the other spread along Brook Street from somewhere near the end of Blacklands into the Fifield Manor estates. The later area covered the site.

The NMR has the following indications of late Iron Age activity in the Benson area (Fig. 2). The first was identified in the area to the south of the brook (southwest of the proposal site), here a V-shaped ditch, along with 1st century AD pottery and a coin of Addedomaros were recovered all during fence erecting (**JMHS 19**, NMR SU69SW57: EH 917257: SU 6189 9156). A bronze coin of an Iron Age date was recovered from a more loosely located excavation in 1977 (**JMHS 20**, NMR SU69SW60: EH 917601: SU 62 92). The features include a recognised Iron Age ditch (**JMHS 21**, EH 1570682: SU 615 920).

The following features are undated, but are considered to be round barrows either of a prehistoric or Roman date (Fig. 3): three possible (**JMHS 22**, NMR SU69SW78: EH 1072972: SU 6267 9175), a possible one (**JMHS 23**, NMR SU69SW79: EH 1072979: SU 6255 9149), and a further possible site (**JMHS 24**, NMR SU69SW80: EH 1072982: SU 6238 9118). These are all located to the south of the site in the vicinity of the airfield. There is an undated linear feature 390m long and up to 4m wide (**JMHS 25**, NMR SU69SW81: EH 1072997: SU 6271 9165 – SU 6293 9134), which is possibly prehistoric or Roman. A further undated field boundary of a prehistoric or Roman date follows the south line of the cursus (**JMHS 26**, NMR SU69SW84: EH 1073006: SU 6248 9097). Also with this ambiguous period are round houses and field boundaries (**JMHS 27**, NMR SU69SW86: EH 1073051: SU 6264 9177). These further features are again to the south and occur across the airfield. The remains of an undated rectangular enclosure with a 100m length have been claimed adjacent to the site with a ditch parallel on the south side (**JMHS 28**, NMR SU69SW67: EH 1072233: SU 6240 9237). It is likely to be prehistoric or Roman in date.

The following records are Roman sites recorded on the HER for Blair's Roman Brook Street area (Fig. 3), including Roman coins and pottery (**JMHS 29**, PRN 2106-MOX6959: SU 6260 9202), further Roman pottery recovered in 1977 (**JMHS 30**, PRN 8040-MOX7001: SU 6236 9200), and Roman pottery from Brook Street (**JMHS 31**, PRN 4493-MOX7018: SU 6269 9210). These sites are adjacent and to the south of the proposal site.

The name Blacklands is first recorded as a place-name in 1606-7 as *Blackelandes* (Gelling 1953, 118). This name is invariably used to refer to areas of extensive Iron Age, Roman or early medieval settlement. The fields that use this name are located on the south side of the Watlington Road and cover an area of 300m x 200m. The name may have been far more widely

used in the past. The following sites have not necessarily been recovered from the Blacklands but have been recovered from sites adjacent to it (Fig. 3). There was possibly Roman pottery found (**JMHS 32**, PRN 9952-MOX7028: SU 618 918), and a Roman pottery sherd (**JMHS 33**, PRN 16705-MOX12453: SU 6188 9180), along with a Roman denarius (coin) recovered from Chestnut Villa (**JMHS 34**, PRN 26497-MOX2340: SU 620 917). A Roman coin is catalogued on the NMR (**JMHS 35**, NMR SU69SW9: EH 242031: SU 6265 9202). On the site of Blacklands there are records of a human skull from a possible Roman inhumation cemetery (**JMHS 36**, PRN 11980-MOX7044: EH 242081: SU 622 918). The skull was interpreted as that of a negroid facial form. Blacklands lies adjacent to and to the northwest of the site (see Fig. 6).

The NMR records two further locations that lie on the edge of the study area, but which are highly important if we are to properly grasp the development of the settlement at Benson (Fig. 3). The first are the remains of an extensive Roman settlement that was identified about 1897 in gravel pits being excavated to the east of Benson church (**JMHS 37**, NMR SU69SW40: EH 242082: SU 616 916). The site has been described as a settlement dating from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD, though most of the evidence was considered to be of a later 3rd-4th centuries in date. There were many pits containing pottery. The pottery types described included Sandford ware, imitation Samian, 4th century storage jars, and coins of Gallienus to Gratian, old horse shoes, a bone needle, querns and pre-Roman pottery. This description is of interest when the map information is assessed later (see below) as it is highly likely that a relic enclosure may have been preserved in the road and field outlines in an area to the southeast of the church. Excavations south of the church at Saint Helen's Avenue identified Roman material (**JMHS 38**, EH 1333591: SU 6159 9155) and probable features (Pine and Ford 2003, 139). There is a further Roman feature recorded in the Littleworth area of the village (**JMHS 39**, EH 1570682: SU 615 920).

Ditmas (1983, 72-4) records further interesting data about the site that Blair identified to the south of the stream, a roughly circular area some 200m in diameter with Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence, and also that to the north of the stream previously described above and related to English Heritage records. Ditmas' statement is that there were banks either side of the stream that have been levelled, and refers to circular earthworks or entrenchments. It is presumably a reference to the remains of probable prehistoric enclosures, possibly of a significant size. The area to the south of the stream was called Cuckoo Pen, which Ditmas recognised as a name often used to refer to a pagan past or prehistoric site. Roman finds (Fig. 3) have been recorded from Jubilee Villa, 21 Moorlands Road, including a Drove Road, rubbish pits, an enclosure and animal bones (**JMHS 40**, EH 1334697, 1398658: SU 6202 9152).

The other important site recorded on the NMR is on the south of Brook Street. Here there are the remains of an enclosure 18m x 18m with a single ditch (**JMHS 41**, NMR SU69SW85: EH 1073011: SU 6258 9165). The site is possibly double ditched. The area has adjacent to it several interrupted parallel

linear features some 50m long (**JMHS 42**, SU 6261 9166; **JMHS 43**, SU 6260 9161), which are indicative of these being further boundaries and part of other enclosures. There are also 44 small 1-4m diameter pits in a random pattern (**JMHS 44**, SU 6257 9170). This area that lies to the south of Brook Street could potentially be an area of intensive occupation.

The remains of Roman roads are also believed to run from the Benson area (Fig. 3). The Roman road from Dorchester to Henley and then onto Wargrave runs through Benson (**JMHS 45**, EH 984982: SU 6130 9143). There was a ditch noted as part of a conjectured line of the Dorchester to Silchester Road (**JMHS 46**, NMR SU69SW87: EH 1073062: SU 6277 9152 – SU 6294 9140).

To synthesise this data, it is apparent that Benson from archaeological and place-name evidence should be considered the location of two probable prehistoric enclosures and a Roman small town. The enclosures would have been located on both sides of the stream and would have been in a strategically key location in the plain between the Thames to the west and the wooded Chiltern Hills. The enclosure to the north of the stream was probably the larger of the two and there are indications of Roman settlement activity spreading along both Brook Road and Watlington Road. This would imply that there are probable archaeological remains in the vicinity of the proposal site of a Roman date. To the north of Benson is Port Hill, the name Port in place-names is usually of a Latin origin and is a reference to a town.

Historically it is during the early medieval period (Fig. 4) that Benson is first recognised, but from the archaeological remains and references the reason for early medieval activity is based in its earlier Roman and Iron Age settlement. The site of the battle of Benson between Offa and Cynewolf is imprecisely located (**JMHS 47**, NMR SU69SW124: EH 1553354: SU 62095 91912). The church of Saint Helena (**JMHS 48**, NMR SU69SW104: EH 1321001: SU 615 916) can be recognised structurally and historically to have a 12th century date, but it is apparent that the location may be far older as claimed by tradition. A watching brief has identified the remains of earlier walls around the tower (**JMHS 49**, EH 1332038: SU 6151 9164). Ditmas (1983, 71, 101) stated that Medlers Bank was traditionally identified as the location of Offa's palace; which is placed between the church and the river and is later called the Castle site. The reason for placing Benson Castle is derived from Hearne (**JMHS 50**, NMR SU69SW2: EH 242024: SU 61 91). Though there is almost certainly an earlier church and there was probably an earlier royal residence of sorts, our current archaeological information on these sites is not definitive. What is known from early medieval archaeological finds in the area is that a knife and pottery have been found in Chapel Lane (**JMHS 51**, PRN 9952-MOX7028: EH 242047: SU 618 918), and that early medieval pottery has come from outside the main area of settlement (**JMHS 52**, PRN 16705-MOX12453: SU 6188 9180), and from a further location (**JMHS 53**, EH 1570682: SU 615 920). These finds, although not conclusive, are indicative of there being some activity to the west of Crown Lane area, this site lies to the southwest of the proposal site, much of it over some 300m away.

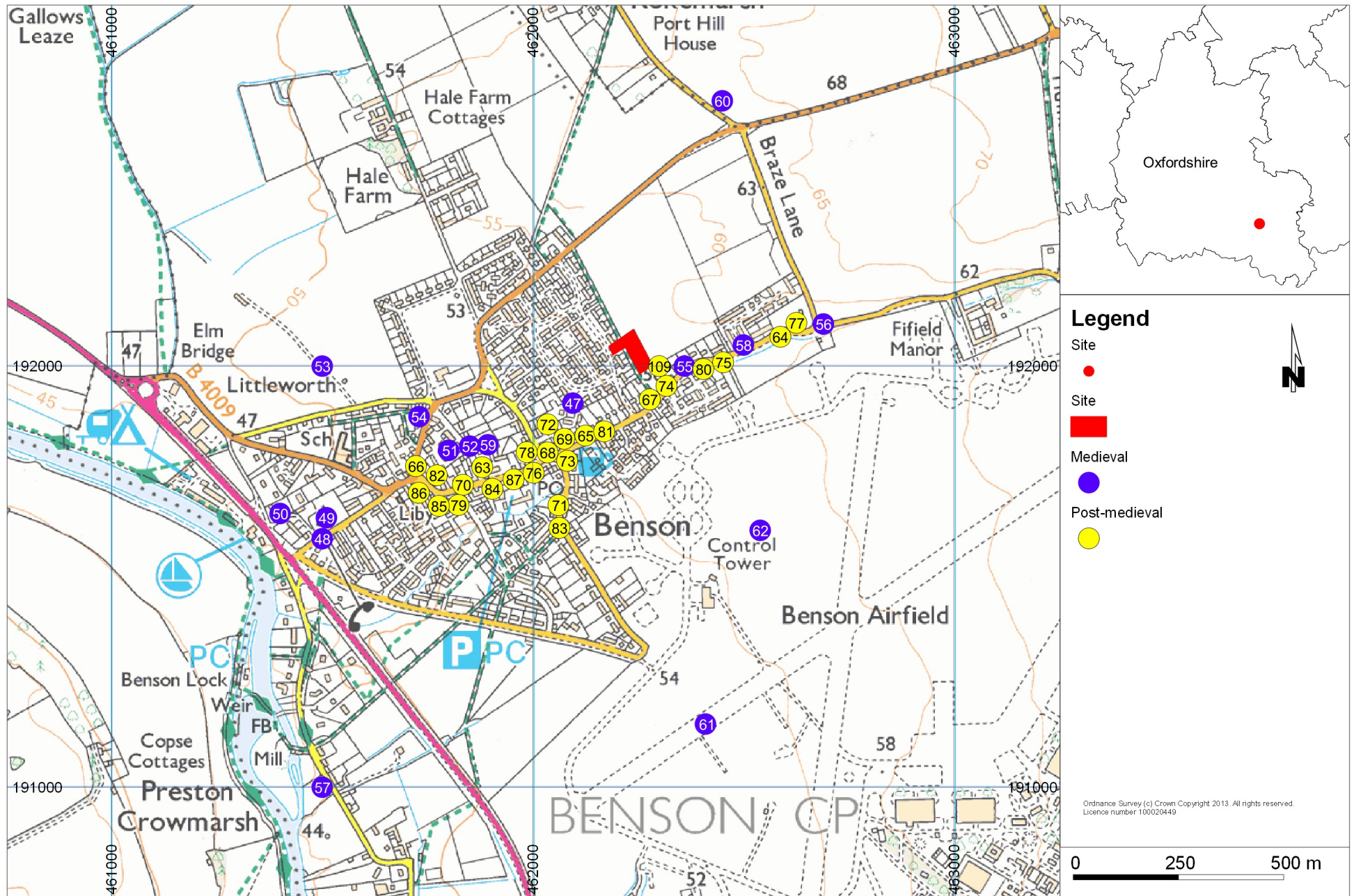


Figure 4. Medieval and Post-medieval sites

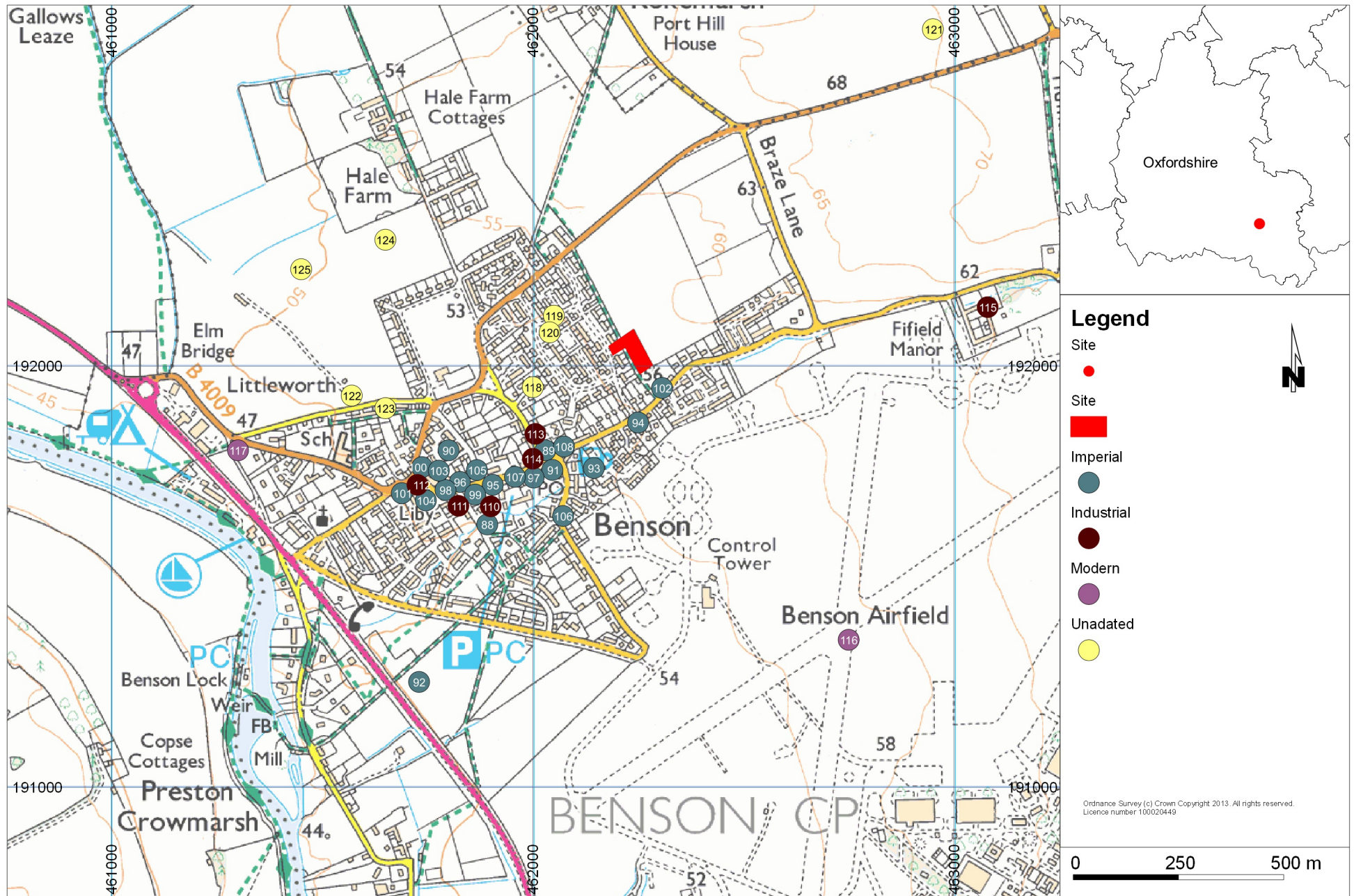


Figure 5. Imperial, Industrial, Modern and Undated sites

The location of a large medieval boundary ditch of the 12th to 14th centuries along with a large pit of a similar date was identified at 19 Watlington Road (JMHS 54, PRN 15832-MOX7061: EH 1133652: SU 6173 9188). The site is in the area of Littleworth, which is a place-name that refers to a small enclosure, and it is possible that this substantial ditch may mark the outline of this enclosure. Fill deposits do not always indicate the date of excavation so there is a possibility that the ditch could be older with a high medieval reuse and re-excavation. Other sites have produced medieval finds including medieval pottery (**JMHS 55**, PRN 8040-MOX7001: SU 6236 9200; **JMHS 56**, PRN 4493-MOX7018: SU 6269 9210; **JMHS 57**, NMR SU69SW22: EH 242048: SU 6150 9100), 15th century pottery (**JMHS 58**, PRN 9894-MOX7024: SU 6250 9205), and medieval pottery from outside the main area of settlement (**JMHS 59**, PRN 16705-MOX12453: SU 6188 9180). The main medieval settlement has so far been located to the southwest of the site (Fig. 4).

There are a number of sites that are considered to be medieval or later in date (Fig. 4). These include a field boundary running for some 700m (**JMHS 60**, NMR SU69SW68: EH 1072525: SU 6245 9263 – SU 6257 9298), and two gravel pits (NMR SU 69SW82: EH 1072999: **JMHS 61**, SU 6241 9115 and **JMHS 62**, SU 6254 9161).

The only standing structure with component parts recognised as dating before the 16th century is the church of Saint Helena. From the 16th century there is evidence of building of a domestic nature (Fig. 4). The building known as 2 College Farmhouse is a structure with two storeys and two window ranges of the 16th century with 18th century additions and 19th century alterations (**JMHS 63**, PRN 11948-MOX7036: SU 6188 9176). A 16th century building of two storeys and two windows is at 16 Brook Cottage with 18th century additions and 19th century alterations (**JMHS 64**, PRN 16221-MOX7068: SU 62616 92106), this structure has seen recording work (EOX529). 27 Brook Street is a 16th century house with single storey and attic (**JMHS 65**, PRN 20536-MOX15999: SU 62125 91835). These listed buildings, and the later listed buildings of the 17th and 18th centuries are normally discreet features and none of them are likely to indicate that there is settlement of that date on the proposal site.

There are a large number of 17th century buildings in the area (Fig. 4): at 15 / 17 Castle Inn, Castle Square, a late 17th century building with an 18th century front with coursed limestone rubble and brick dressing (**JMHS 66**, PRN 11949-MOX7037: EH 542879: SU 61749 91736); a late 17th century building at 65 / 69 Brook Street of coursed limestone rubble (**JMHS 67**, PRN 11963-MOX7043: SU 62291 91931); the remains of a 17th century building at 1 Brook Street with a front of 1708 with stone and flint bands (**JMHS 68**, PRN 20533-MOX17397: SU 62035 91795). The building 17 Brook Street is a 17th century timber framed structure with 19th century alterations of limestone with brick dressing (**JMHS 69**, PRN 20535-MOX17719: SU 62078 91811). At 8 / 10 High Street there is a late 17th century structure with 18th century alterations (**JMHS 70**, PRN 20572-MOX17722: SU 61844 91705). At 20 Old London Road there is a 17th century building with 18th century alterations

render over brick (**JMHS 71**, PRN 20581-MOX17761: SU 62074 91650). 29 Brook Street is a 17th century structure with 19th century additions of painted stone rubble (**JMHS 72**, PRN 20537-MOX17890: SU 62136 91855). 2 / 4 Brook Street is a 17th century building with 19th century additions, a structure of rendered limestone rubble (**JMHS 73**, PRN 20542-MOX17891: SU 62075 91785). 73 Brook Street is a late 17th century structure with 20th century alterations of painted uncoursed limestone with brick dressing (**JMHS 74**, PRN 20540-MOX17968: SU 62304 91963). 74 / 76 Brook Street is a 17th century structure with 19th century alterations of rendered limestone rubble (**JMHS 75**, PRN 20546-MOX18289: SU 62452 92009). 42 High Street is a 17th century building with 18th century front and 19th century alterations of grey brick with red brick dressing (**JMHS 76**, PRN 20577-MOX18292: SU 61982 91740). Brookside at 113 Brook Street is a 17th century structure with 19th century alterations of limestone rubble with brick dressing (**JMHS 77**, PRN 20541-MOX18425: SU 62616 92106). 1 Crown Lane is a structure of the late 17th century with render probably on brick (**JMHS 78**, PRN 20565-MOX16227: SU 62012 91789). The Old Red Lion 2 to 6 High Street is a 17th century building or row of houses with early 18th century additions built of grey brick with red brick dressing (**JMHS 79**, PRN 20571-MOX16230: SU 61820 91690). 66 / 68 Brook Street is a 17th century structure constructed of bonded flint and limestone of two storeys with three window bays (**JMHS 80**, PRN 20545-MOX16592: SU 62405 91993). 31 / 33 Brook Street is a 17th century structure of render on brick on the ground floor and roughcast over timber framing above (**JMHS 81**, PRN 20538-MOX16686: SU 62143 91845). 19 Castle Cottages is a 17th century building with mid 18th century additions of grey brick with red brick dressing of three storeys with a two window range (**JMHS 82**, PRN 20551-MOX16900: SU 61759 91734). 16 Rose Cottage is a late 17th century structure of painted limestone rubble with brick dressing (**JMHS 83**, PRN 20583-MOX16902: SU 62073 91629). 26 / 32 High Street is a late 17th century building of render on brick of two storeys and 8 windows (**JMHS 84**, PRN 20575-MOX16969: SU 61924 91725). 1 / 3 High Street is a late 17th century building with 20th century alterations of rendered rubble stone with a two unit lobby entrance plan (**JMHS 85**, PRN 20567-MOX17060: SU 61780 91711). Laurel Cottage at 16 Castle Square is a 17th century building with 18th century alterations of red brick with grey brick headers (**JMHS 86**, PRN 20557-MOX17096: SU 61759 91686). 34 to 40 High Street is a 17th century building of limestone rubble with brick dressing (**JMHS 87**, PRN 20576-MOX17205: SU 61961 91731).

Maps show the remains of an 18th century structures (Fig. 5) including a watermill (**JMHS 88**, PRN 2308-MOX6977: EH 1567019: SU 61892 91624); the mill is marked on maps dated 1768 and 1829. There are further buildings of at least an 18th century date: one at Peter Aldridge Motors in Crown Square is dated 1747 and is a two storey structure with banded stone (**JMHS 89**, PRN 9830-MOX7015: SU 6203 9180); an independent chapel pre-1800 presumed from the name Chapel Street and the fact that it is the only structure to resemble a chapel (**JMHS 90**, PRN 10336-MOX7033: SU 618 918); the Crown Hotel with its date stone of 1709 (**JMHS 91**, PRN 11950-MOX7038: SU 6202 9177). The Round House in Castle Square is dated to the 18th century (**JMHS 92**, PRN 11952-MOX7040: SU 6173 9125). The Paddock

House at 8 Brook Street is an 18th century structure (**JMHS 93**, PRN 20543-MOX17291: SU 62145 91758). At 34 / 36 Brook Street is the remains of an early 18th century building (**JMHS 94**, PRN 20544-MOX17292: SU 62250 91866). The building at 20 / 22 High Street is an 18th century building (**JMHS 95**, PRN 20574-MOX17760: SU 61895 91718). 11 to 15 High Street contains three houses dated to 1704 (**JMHS 96**, PRN 20569-MOX18060: SU 61827 91725). 48 High Street is an 18th century structure with 19th century alteration (**JMHS 97**, PRN 20579-MOX18061: SU 62002 91755). 7 High Street is an 18th century structure (**JMHS 98**, PRN 20568-MOX18104: SU 61806 91719). 12 High Street an 18th century structure (**JMHS 99**, PRN 20573-MOX18208: SU 61853 91705). The Castle Inn's free standing sign is a late 18th century feature (**JMHS 100**, PRN 20550-MOX18428: SU 61737 91737). 4 / 8 Castle Square is a late 18th century structure with 19th century additions (**JMHS 101**, PRN 20555-MOX15993: SU 61722 91718). A barn of the late 18th century (**JMHS 102**, PRN 20539-MOX16000: SU 62307 91948). 25 / 27 Castle Square contain 2 cottages of the mid 18th century (**JMHS 103**, PRN 20553-MOX16222: SU 61757 91722). 21 / 23 Castle Square is an early 18th century building (**JMHS 104**, PRN 20552-MOX16694: SU 61756 91724). Ivy House is an early 18th century building (**JMHS 105**, PRN 20570-MOX16901: SU 61864 91730). 18 Old London Road has a date stone of 1701 with 19th and 20th extensions (**JMHS 106**, PRN 20582-MOX16970: SU 62072 91644). Mulberry Cottage at 44 High Street was constructed in 1708 (**JMHS 107**, PRN 20578-MOX17206: SU 61994 91747). 15 Brook Street is an early 18th century building with a 19th century extension (**JMHS 108**, PRN 20534-MOX17207: SU 62074 91809).

An evaluation on Brook Street identified a gully and postholes, pits, and a well interpreted as of a post-medieval date and suggested that later evidence had removed earlier activity (**JMHS 109**, EOX240: SU 623 920). The earlier activity included finds of a prehistoric, Roman and early medieval date (Fig. 4).

Of the 19th century structures in the search area there are fewer features that are treated as being of note (Fig. 5). Kingsford House. 14 / 16 High Street, is a structure of the early 19th century constructed of grey brick with red brick dressing (**JMHS 110**, PRN 11954-MOX7041: SU 61867 91700). 1 to 5 Mill Lane is a structure dated 1820 (**JMHS 111**, PRN 20580-MOX17975: SU 61840 91698). 10 Castle Square are 19th century cottages (**JMHS 112**, PRN 20556-MOX16508: SU 61726 91718). The Crown Lane is 19th century (**JMHS 113**, PRN 20564-MOX16695: SU 62006 91839). In the High Street there is an Undenominational Free Church of 1879 with a gabled front of vitrified bricks (**JMHS 114**, PRN 11957-MOX7042: SU 6200 9178). Investigation at Fifield Manor to the east of the site recovered only 19th century finds (**JMHS 115**, EH 1385569: SU 6308 9214).

Sites catalogued within the search area from the 20th century (Fig. 5) include the military airfield constructed 1937-9 (**JMHS 116**, NMR SU69SW109: EH 1384486: SU 6275 9135), and a World War II pill box (**JMHS 117**, NMR SU69SW118: EH 1426208: SU 6130 9180).

A Desk Based Assessment was carried out on an area of 7ha along Watlington Road, which suggested that there was much potential in the area (EOX 2613: SU 6217 9225). Archaeological investigation at 6 Chapel Lane failed to find any features but retrieved Roman, early medieval and later medieval pottery (EOX 1082: SU 6187 9180). While 10 evaluation trenches on the Watlington Road also failed to identify any features (EOX231: SU 62050 92300).

4.3 Cartographic Research (Figures 6-20)

There are a number of antiquarian maps that cover the area of Benson or Bensington, most of which appear to be county maps. The earliest maps date to the late 18th century. The earliest map identified was that of Thomas Jeffreys of 1766-7 (Fig. 6). Here the proposal site is shown as a piece of open field. The map of Patterson is a road map of 1771 (Fig. 7), which also shows the proposal site as an open field. A map by Andrews and Dury in 1777 (Fig. 8) also shows this situation of the land being open fields. Richard Davis has produced two maps at the end of the 18th century the first of 1788 (Figs. 9-10) showed the open field system of Benson. There are two versions of this map both of the same date; the one held in the Oxford History Centre (ORO PAR28/17/M/1), which shows minimal activity at the centre of the village, and shows the proposal site as an open area. The other version is an Exeter College version. Both of these maps label the area as part of the Port Hill Field, and mark part of that field adjacent to the site as the Black Lands, which as stated above is a common name associated with Roman period settlements and refers to the darker coloured soils brought about through human occupation and residue. The second map of Davis of 1797 (Fig. 11) shows the proposal site as an area of open field systems, and shows the direction of the ridge and furrow running parallel to Brook Street.

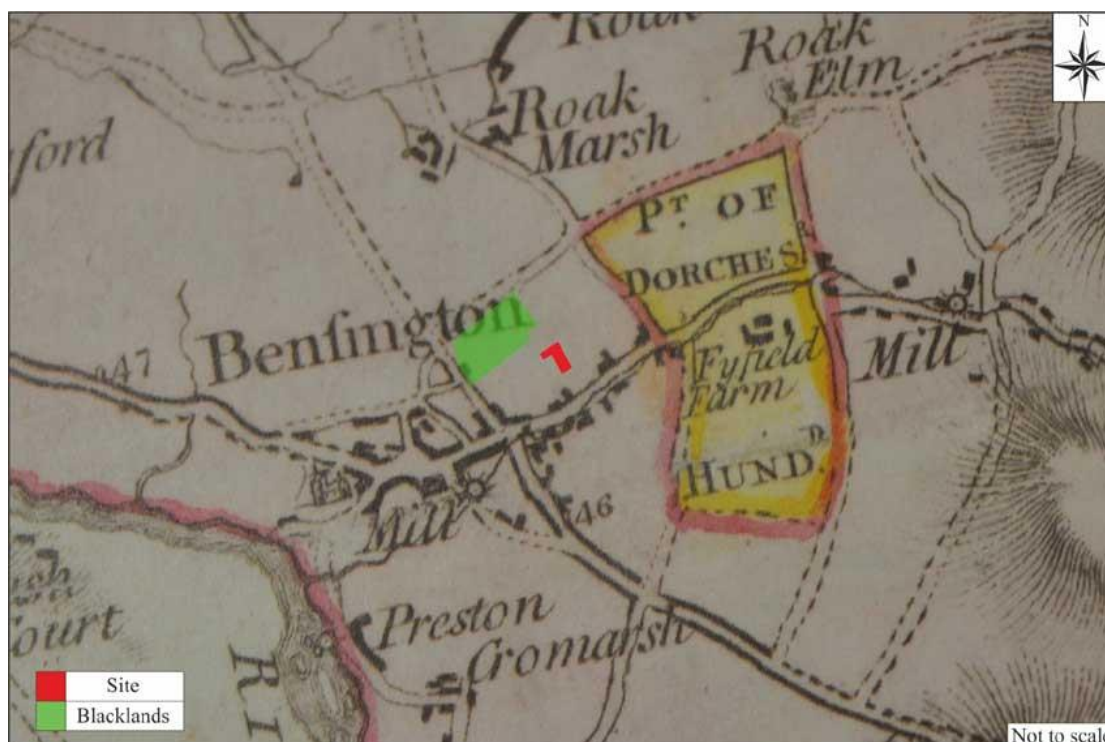


Figure 6: 1767 Jeffreys' Map



Figure 7: 1771 Patterson's map



Figure 8: 1777 Andrews-Dury's map



Figure 9: 1788 Davis' map

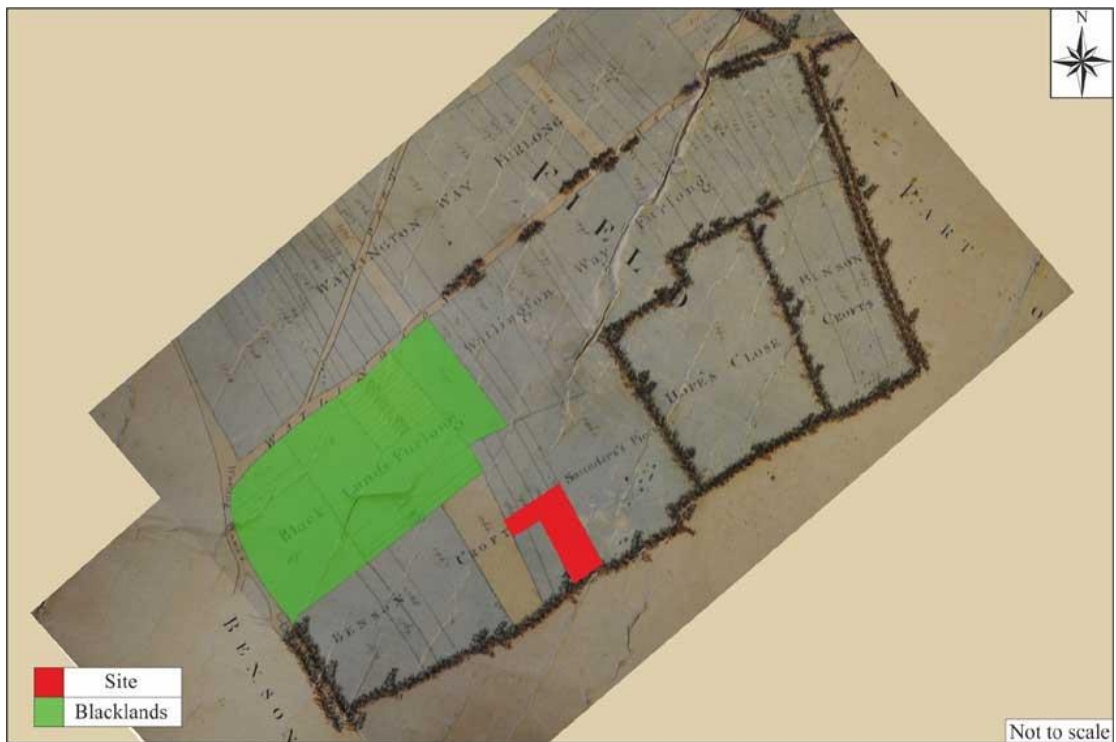


Figure 10: 1788 Davis' map (ORO PAR 28/17/M/1)



Figure 11: 1797 Davis' map

There are a number of maps of Benson dated to the early part of the 19th century with Andrew Bryant's map of 1823-4 one (Figs.12-13). This map shows the area as an open field, but it also shows for the first time buildings butting up to the hedge-line on the south boundary. It is possible but unlikely, therefore, that there are late structures that lie on the south side of the site. The next map is the Ordnance Survey map of 1830 (Fig. 14) showing the area as



Figure 12: 1823 Bryant's map

open fields.

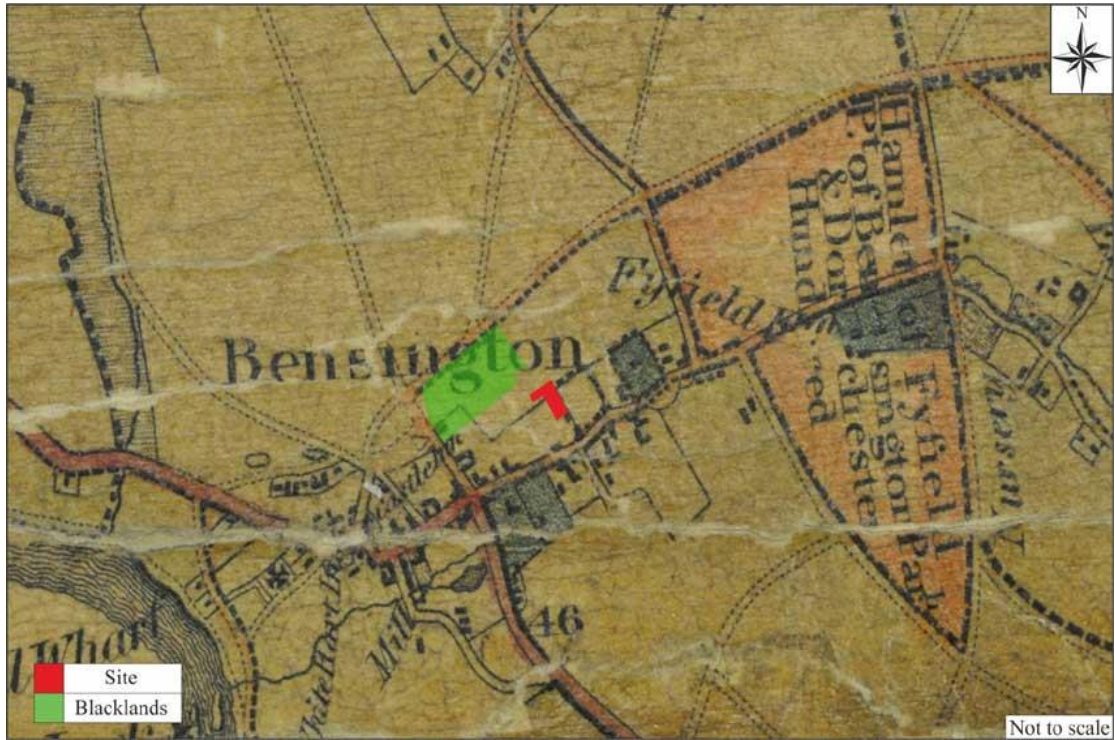


Figure 13: 1824 Bryants' map second version



Figure 14: 1830 Ordnance Survey map



Figure 15: 1842 Tithe Map (ORO 38/M)

The Tithe map was produced in 1842 (ORO 38/M), it shows the area as an open field (Fig. 15). The Tithe award has an incredible number of names that are specifically references to sites that have important archaeological significance in the parish (ORO 38/A). These include the Rood King's Ditch (field 812), and the King's Ditch furlong (fields 805, 806, 807, 811, 813, 814, 815), this name is probably not a reference to the King's Burh. A further significant name is that of Blacklands (fields 179, 182, 224, 462, 463, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473). The name is significant in that it is a name that refers to darker soils derived from human occupation usually Roman but sometimes of an Iron Age or early medieval date. The name is significant because it appears to tie in with Blacklands Lane, however, the road name is a recent naming and was earlier called Braze Lane. Most of these fields lie in a block but three (fields 179, 182, 224) are more isolated. There are three names of which are listed under Fifield Farm (462, 468, 471). There are other names of note such as China Piece (field 1644) presumably referring to pottery scatters; the name Burnt Bake Piece (fields 1654, 1655) presumably refers to areas of previous burning. The name Furze Ground (field 1685) may be significant in that the name Furze in Warwickshire has been shown to be associated with Iron Age hill-forts. The names Lower Gravel Pit (fields 1302, 1303) and Upper Gravel Pit (field 1288) and Gravel Pit (field 1291) evidently refer to areas of gravel extraction, some of which are located around the village. The name Big Pit (field 690) also invariably refers to an area of gravel quarrying. The names Castle Inn and building (field 1546), Castles Close (field 1665), and Chapel Close (field 1498, 1499) all have archaeological significance. There are also the names Land Fallow Churchyard (field 104) and Churchyard Furlong (fields 1312, 1313, 1314, 1316, 1318, 1320) that may refer to a previously once more extensive burial ground or that they are areas adjacent to the present burial ground. These names are in many cases self

explanatory, but there are two further names in the area that may also have some significance that is less evident. The name Hunts Hades (fields 601, 602, 604, 605, 607, 608, 609, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 622, 623, 628, 630, 631, 632, 634, 635, 637, 642, 643, 644, 645, 647, 649, 650) covers an extensive area and is peculiar in its form. It is possible that this may be a reference to a ceremonial hunting area, a nemeton or later haga. The reference to Hades (sometime written Hudes) is also peculiar. The other name that is of interest is Durhams (fields 1499, 1500 and others) takes on the form of a settlement name (for example Durham, County Durham, and Dyrham, Gloucestershire). The name could be related to a family name derived from one of the above locations, but there is no evidence for this. The place is located in the vicinity of the proposal site and is presumably a name used for the northern part of the Fifield Estate. The Dyrham, Gloucestershire, example of this name is significant in that it was claimed as the location of an early West Saxon battle and victory in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, but the reference to this is now seen by Patrick Sims-Williams as a forgery in an early attempt of the West Saxon kings to lay claim to territories in the Severn Valley. The possibilities for this reference arising are numerous, but one of them is that the battle was fought at a different Durham and has been relocated textually.



Figure 16: 1863 Inclosure map (ORO QS/D/A book 8)

The Inclosure map (Fig. 16) of Benson shows this area as an area of open fields in 1863 (ORO QS/D/A book 8).

The remaining maps are those of the Ordnance Survey; the first series that was produced in 1877 (Fig. 17) shows the area as fields. This is the same on the second series map of 1898 (Fig. 18) and the third series map of 1912 (Fig. 19).

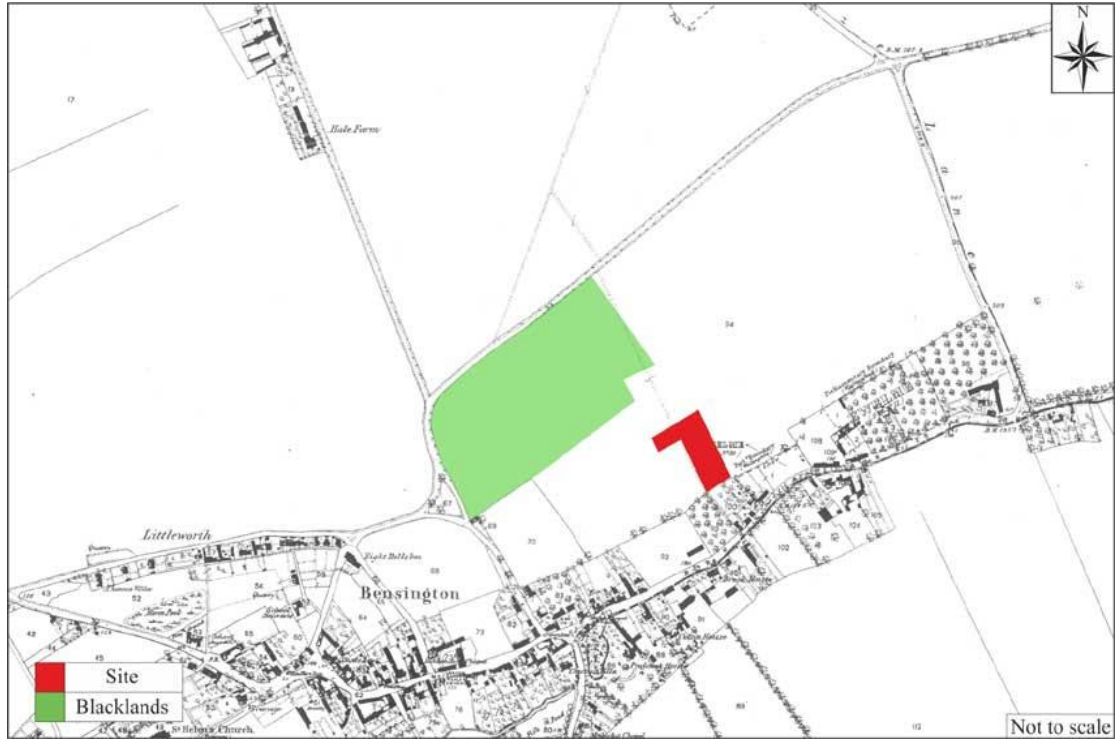


Figure 17: 1877 First Series Ordnance Survey

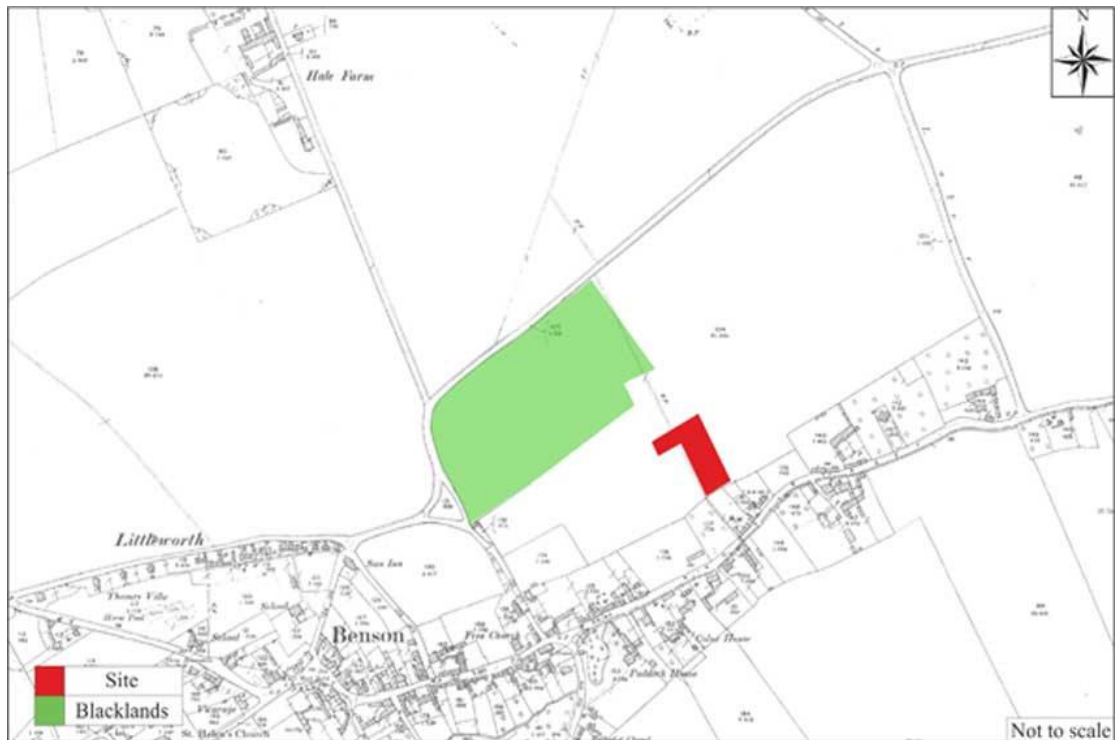


Figure 18: 1898 Second Series Ordnance Survey

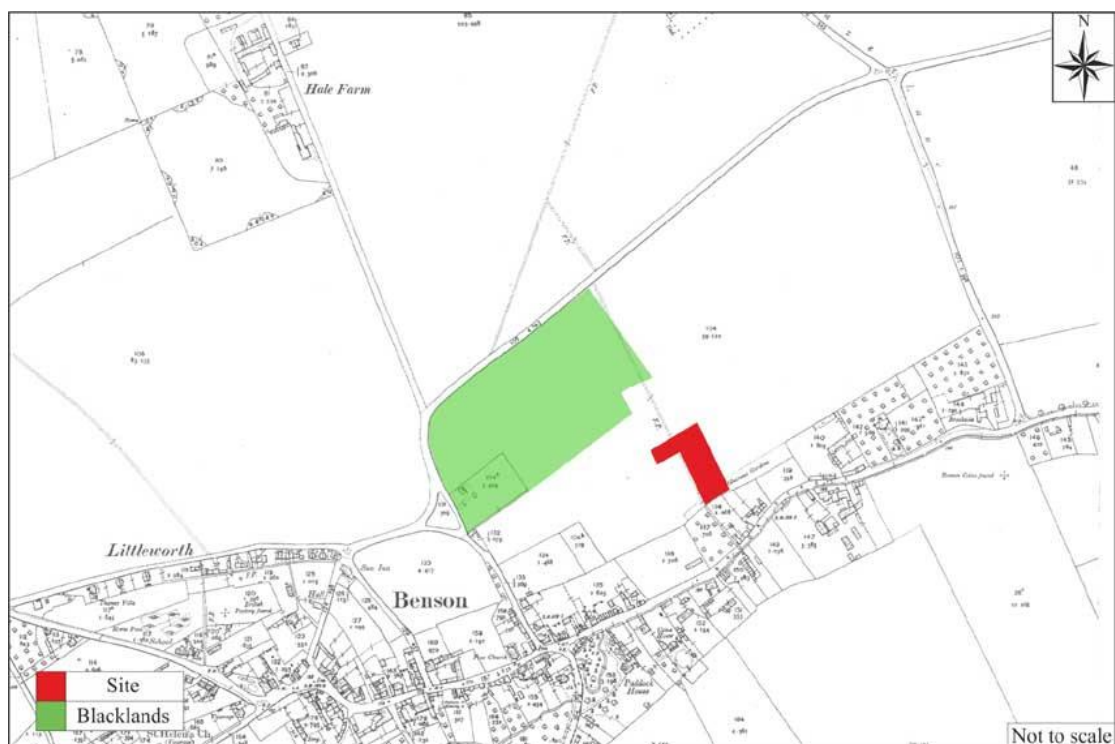


Figure 19: 1912 Third Series Ordnance Survey

4.4 Air Photographs

Investigation of the 177 aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record identified a number of features in the vicinity of Benson. Though the search radius clipped the top of Benson Airfield, this site has not been discussed here due to the concentration of features and for the reason that this area has already seen significant plotting in past research (Benson and Miles 1974, 69, 72-3, map 41), which shows the cursus, other linear features and enclosures.

To the north of Benson there are a number of features that show up on the aerial photographs although some seem to be more significant than others, all of these features are undated and some of them may be relatively recent (fig. 5). Many of the aerial photographs (RAF/106G/UK/1408 3120, US/7PHGP/LOC104 8079, 8080, 8081 and numerous other photographs) show the remains of a linear feature that actually runs across the site, and which has a partial enclosure at the east end (**JMHS 118**, SU 6200 9195 – SU 6250 92150). The feature may be some type of modern field boundary, but this does not seem to fully explain why the linear feature aligns through the proposal site which clearly remains as an isolated field. There are circular features on a further aerial photograph that show as circular grass marks (EA/AF/92C/511 7071: SU 6245 9211); small features of this type carry on to the south across the air field. At present it is considered that these features to be the result of vegetation rather than cropmarks.

There are also potentially two overlapping enclosures in the fields called the Blacklands (SU 6205 9210). One may be a small sub-square enclosure measuring about 50-70m (**JMHS 119**, RAF/58/4646 457), while the other

appears to be a far larger enclosure (**JMHS 120**, RAF/58/4646 456, 457). That these features lie in Blacklands field is indicative of them or at least one of them being of a Roman date, which would tie in with the recognised area of a settlement across this field. These features lie adjacent to the proposal site.

To the north of the proposal site in the area of Port Hill the aerial photographs show further features, one possibly a curving boundary of a field or enclosure (**JMHS 121**, RAF/CPE/UK/1953 3054: SU 6295 9280), while the other looks as though it could be the agger of a road or a linear bank (RAF/CPE/UK/1953 3054: **JMHS 60** SU 6245 9260 – SU 6260 9340). Though these may not be close to the site it should be noticed that if this is a road and it stays on this projection its line heads towards that of the proposal site.

A further photograph shows the remains of two possible curving banks or negative features in the vicinity of Littleworth (RAF/106G/UK/1396 3048, 3099), (**JMHS 122**, SU 6157 9193 – SU 6148 9212), and (**JMHS 123**, SU 6165 9190 – SU 6155 9205). These could be undated linear banks, part of an enclosure, or perhaps water courses. They may be associated with the large medieval ditch identified in the vicinity of Littleworth; see the archaeological section above.

There are also two other areas of cropmarks on photographs (MAL/71119 94, RAF/106G/UK/1396 3048). (**JMHS 124**, SU 6165 9230) and (**JMHS 125**, SU 6145 9223). These cropmarks may represent the remains of field boundaries, but it is also possible that it could be fragmentary parts of a land drainage system. The second group of cropmarks could contain the remains of fragmentary linears that are similar or the same as those above, but there is also what would appear to be an oval enclosure.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The Archaeological Potential of the Site (Figure 6)

The settlement of Benson has a significant history and archaeology. The proposal site lies on the periphery of this settlement, and it is reasonable to consider that there may be activity related to any phase on the site. More significantly Blair has suggested that the proposal site lies in an area of Roman settlement. The implication here is that archaeology should be expected on the site. Roman material and cropmarks are evident in the Blacklands adjacent to the site and also Iron Age to early medieval finds along the line of Brook Street also adjacent to the site.

The remains of a linear feature can be seen on a number of aerial photographs as crossing the site, the feature is not readily explainable but could be old or just as likely modern.

There is possibly the line of a linear feature or a road crossing Port Hill, which if it is one of these features and continues south on the same projection would head towards the proposal site.

It is likely from the above information that archaeology is to be found on the proposal site. There is also the possibility that the proposed settlement by Blair could be incorrect and that the settlement is more closely located along Brook Street.

5.2 The Impact of Previous Development on Potential Archaeological Remains

Recent impact on any potential archaeology on the site has probably been minimised to agricultural activity in the High medieval period to the modern day. From the High medieval period to 1863 the area formed part of the open field systems which contained ridge and furrow, and this system due to late Inclosure probably continued into the 19th century. Any structures built on the site were modern timber structures of a 19th or 20th century date.

5.3 The Impact of the Proposal Area on Potential Archaeological Remains

The proposal is for the construction of a number of dwellings, an access road and services. These will have an adverse affect on any archaeology that is believed to be on the site. As Blair considers this area to be part of a Roman settlement, then the potential archaeology could be significant and the potential impact require some form of mitigation. An evaluation of the area would perhaps indicate if Blair's hypothesis is correct and if the known adjacent archaeology at Blacklands and in Brook Street do extend onto the proposal site. Consideration was given to carrying out an evaluation but access is only via a footpath and the site is densely covered in brambles and other vegetation. It has been agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services that an evaluation is impractical at this stage.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The settlement of Benson or Bensington, as it was alternatively known as until recently, is a settlement with a high potential for archaeology. Sporadic archaeological material has been recognised throughout the area of the settlement from the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. That such material should be found is not surprising as a major Neolithic cursus has been recognised to the south of the proposal site at Benson Airfield. Ditmas described banks either side of the brook in the vicinity of the church and around Cuckoo Pen to the south of the brook. Ditmas states that these banks were recently flattened. Both areas have been indicated from other sources as areas of intensive settlement though not fully understood. These sites lie some 500m to the west, but their nature may mean that they were significant. The nature of the hinterland of these monuments and even the very nature of the monuments are not known. The settlement of Benson also contains evidence of significant Roman activity, and it has been suggested in academic papers by Blair (see above), that the area of the proposal site lies in a probable area of extensive Roman settlement. Much of the information here is imprecise but it is likely that this means that some archaeology probably exists on the site, though again the information of the settlement and its hinterland are obscure. The name Blacklands is a significant place-name that identifies areas of intensive settlement or other activity, which results in an organically richer

and, therefore, a significantly darker soil. The site lies adjacent to the proposal site, further adjacent to development in 1967, and which is an area that has produced indications of a Roman cemetery and on aerial photographs appears to show the remains of an enclosure of a sub-square shape measuring between 50-70m across and a further possible enclosure. Benson is recorded at an early date as an early medieval town or estate centre; it is not known exactly what this information means, but it is likely that Benson was a royal centre with significant residence and probably a high status church, both considered to be located near the west end of the settlement. It was only later that this church became attached to the abbey at Dorchester. What the early medieval hinterland of Benson looked like is not known, but it is evident that the proposal site lies within the hinterland and that early medieval artefacts have been recovered from the line of Brook Street to the south. Later medieval and earlier post-medieval settlement probably crystallised around the line of the major roads in Benson, of which Brook Street to the south would have been one of them. The parish of Benson was enclosed at a late date and the maps indicate that some of the field system was narrow and presumably are derived from earlier ridge and furrow. If this is the case then in the medieval and earlier post-medieval and Imperial and Regency periods the site was probably dominated by ridge and furrow.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

7.1 Books and Documents

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7.2 Historic Maps

ORO 16Vic C.3 (1852) PG – 1852 – Inclosure Act

ORO 38/A – 1842 – Tithe Award

ORO 38/M – 1842 – Tithe Map

ORO PAR28/17/M/1 – 1788 – Richard Davis map

ORO QS/D/A book 8 – 1863 – Inclosure Award and Map

OS maps 1:25,000 – first series (1877) – second series (1898) – third series (1912)

ID	Period	Identifying Number	X coordinate	Y coordinate	Description
1	Palaeolithic	PRN 12882-MOX7047	461700	191700	Acheulean hand-axe
2	Palaeolithic	EH 1151132	461350	191500	Two palaeolithic hand-axes
3	Prehistoric	PRN 8040-MOX7001	462360	192000	Prehistoric scrapers
4	Prehistoric	PRN 4493-MOX2018	462690	192100	Brook Street: Prehistoric flints
5	Mesolithic / Neolithic	EH 1570683	461500	192000	Mesolithic and Neolithic flints
6	Prehistoric	PRN 15385.04-MOX11006	462670	191570	Prehistoric enclosure
7	Prehistoric	PRN 15385.06-MOX11008	462680	191500	Prehistoric linear features: Benson cursus
8	Neolithic	EH 1072789	462460	191460	Neolithic long barrow, two side ditches and a pit
9	Neolithic	EH 1072915	462620	191520	Possible Neolithic long barrow
10	Neolithic	EH 1072916	462520	191520	Possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure
11	Neolithic	EH 242049	461500	191000	Neolithic unpolished flint chisel
12	Neolithic	EH 242050	461360	191500	Neolithic polished greenstone axe
13	Neolithic	EH 242057	461350	191200	Flint pick axe
14	Neolithic	EH 242085	461350	191450	Neolithic two ground axes
15	Neolithic	EH 1333591	461590	191550	Saint Helen's Avenue: Neolithic activity
16	Bronze Age	EH 242030	462410	191170	Bronze Age battle axe and spear
17	Bronze Age	EH 1570682	461500	192000	Late Bronze Age ditch
18	Prehistoric	EH 1073002	462280	191110	Prehistoric enclosure or round barrow
19	Iron Age	EH 917257	461890	191560	A ditch associated with 1st century AD pottery and a coin of Addedomaros
20	Iron Age	EH 917601	462000	192000	Iron Age bronze coin excavated in 1977
21	Iron Age	EH 1570682	461500	192000	Iron Age ditch
22	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1072972	462670	191750	Three possible round barrows
23	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1072979	462550	191490	A possible round barrow
24	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1072982	462380	191180	A possible round barrow
25	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1072997	462710	191650	Undated linear feature
26	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1073006	462480	190970	Undated linear feature
27	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1073051	462640	191770	Undated round houses and field boundaries

28	Prehistoric / Roman	EH 1072233	462400	192370	Undated rectangular enclosure 100m long with an 85m ditch adjacent on the south side
29	Roman	PRN 2106-MOX7001	462600	192020	Brook Street: Roman pottery and coins
30	Roman	PRN 8040-MOX7001	462360	192000	Roman pottery recovered in 1977
31	Roman	PRN 4493-MOX7018	462690	192100	Brook Street: Roman pottery
32	Roman	PRN 9952-MOX7028	461800	191800	Roman pottery
33	Roman	PRN 16705-MOX12453	461880	191800	Roman sherd
34	Roman	PRN 26497-MOX2340	462000	191700	Chestnut Villa: Roman denarius
35	Roman	EH 242031	462650	192020	Roman coin
36	Roman	EH 242081	462200	191800	Blacklands: Roman inhumation centre
37	Roman	EH 242082	461600	191600	Roman settlement dated 1st to the 4th centuries AD
38	Roman	EH 1333591	461590	191550	Saint Helen's Avenue: Roman material
39	Roman	EH 1570682	461500	192000	Littleworth: Roman features
40	Roman	EH 1334697 / 1398658	462020	191520	21 Moorlands Road: Drove road, pits, and enclosure, associated with animal bones and Roman material
41	Roman	EH 1073011	462580	191650	South of Brook Street: Roman enclosure 18m square
42	Roman	EH 1073011	462610	191660	South of Brook Street: Linear feature
43	Roman	EH 1073011	462580	191610	South of Brook Street: Linear feature
44	Roman	EH 1073011	462570	191700	South of Brook Street: 44 small 1-4m pits
45	Roman	EH 984982	461000	191970	Dorchester to Wargrave Roman road
46	Roman	EH 1073062	462770	191520	Dorchester to Silchester Roman road
47	Early Medieval	EH 1553354	462095	191912	Presumed location of battle of Benson 779
48	Early Medieval / Medieval	EH 1321001	461500	191600	Saint Helena: 12th century church with probable earlier origins
49	Medieval	EH 1332038	461510	191640	Saint Helena: Earlier walls in the vicinity of the tower
50	Early Medieval / Medieval	EH 242024	461400	191650	Presumed location of Benson Castle
51	Early Medieval	PRN 9952-MOX7028	461800	191800	Chapel Lane: Knife and pottery
52	Early Medieval	PRN 16705-MOX12453	461880	191800	Early medieval pottery
53	Early Medieval	EH 1570682	461500	192000	Early medieval pottery

54	Medieval	PRN 15832-MOX7061	461730	191880	19 Watlington Road: Large pit of 12th-14th centuries
55	Medieval	PRN 8040-MOX7001	462360	192000	Medieval pottery
56	Medieval	PRN 4493-MOX7018	462690	192100	Medieval pottery
57	Medieval	EH 242048	461500	191000	Medieval pottery
58	Medieval	PRN 9894-MOX7024	462500	192050	15th century pottery
59	Medieval	PRN 16705-MOX12453	461880	191800	Medieval pottery
60	Medieval or later	EH 1072525	462450	192630	Linear boundary
61	Medieval or later	EH 1072999	462410	191150	Quarry pit
62	Medieval or later	EH 1072999	462540	191610	Quarry pit
63	Post-medieval	PRN 11948-MOX7036	461880	191760	2 College Farmhouse: 16th century structure
64	Post-medieval	PRN 16221-MOX7068	462616	192106	16 Brook Cottage: 16th century structure
65	Post-medieval	PRN 20536-MOX15999	462125	191835	27 Brook Street: 16th century structure
66	Post-medieval	PRN 11949-MOX7037	461749	191736	Castle Inn: 17th century structure
67	Post-medieval	PRN 11963-MOX7043	462291	191931	65 / 69 Brook Street: 17th century structure
68	Post-medieval	PRN 20533-MOX17397	462035	191795	1 Brook Street: 17th century building
69	Post-medieval	PRN 20535-MOX17719	462078	191811	17 Brook Street: 17th century structure
70	Post-medieval	PRN 20572-MOX17722	461844	191705	8 / 10 High Street: 17th century structure
71	Post-medieval	PRN 20581-MOX17761	462074	191650	20 Old London Road: 17th century structure
72	Post-medieval	PRN 20537-MOX17890	462075	191855	29 Brook Street: 17th century structure
73	Post-medieval	PRN 20542-MOX17891	462075	191785	2 / 4 Brook Street: 17th century structure
74	Post-medieval	PRN 20540-MOX17968	462304	191963	73 Brook Street: 17th century structure
75	Post-medieval	PRN 20546-MOX18289	462452	192009	74 / 76 Brook Street: 17th century structure
76	Post-medieval	PRN 20577-MOX18292	461982	191740	42 High Street: 17th century structure
77	Post-medieval	PRN 20541-MOX18425	462616	192106	113 Brook Street: 17th century structure
78	Post-medieval	PRN 20565-MOX16227	462012	191789	1 Crown Lane: 17th century structure
79	Post-medieval	PRN 20571-MOX16230	461820	191690	Old Red Lion: 17th century structure
80	Post-medieval	PRN 20545-MOX16592	462405	191993	66 / 68 Brook Street: 17th century structure
81	Post-medieval	PRN 20538-MOX16686	462143	191845	31 / 33 Brook Street: 17th century structure

82	Post-medieval	PRN 20551-MOX16900	461759	191734	19 Castle Cottages: 17th century structure
83	Post-medieval	PRN 20583-MOX16902	462073	191629	16 Rose Cottage: 17th century structure
84	Post-medieval	PRN 20575-MOX16969	461924	191725	26 / 32 High Street: 17th century structure
85	Post-medieval	PRN 20567-MOX17060	461780	191711	1 / 3 High Street: 17th century structure
86	Post-medieval	PRN 20557-MOX17096	461759	191686	Laurel Cottage: 17th century structure
87	Post-medieval	PRN 20576-MOX17205	461961	191731	34 to 40 High Street: 17th century structure
88	Imperial	PRN 2308-MOX6977	461892	191624	18th century watermill
89	Imperial	PRN 9830-MOX7015	462030	191800	Aldridge Motors: 18th century structure
90	Imperial	PRN 10336-MOX7033	461800	191800	Chapel Street: Independent chapel 18th century
91	Imperial	PRN 11950-MOX7038	462020	191770	Crown Hotel: 18th century structure
92	Imperial	PRN 11952-MOX7040	461730	191250	Round House: 18th century structure
93	Imperial	PRN 20543-MOX17291	462145	191758	Paddock House: 18th century structure
94	Imperial	PRN 20544-MOX17292	462250	191866	34 / 36 Brook Street: 18th century structure
95	Imperial	PRN 20574-MOX17760	461895	191718	20/ 22 High Street: 18th century structure
96	Imperial	PRN 20569-MOX18060	461827	191725	11 to 15 High Street: 18th century structure
97	Imperial	PRN 20579-MOX18061	462002	191755	48 High Street: 18th century structure
98	Imperial	PRN 20568-MOX18104	461806	191719	7 High Street: 18th century
99	Imperial	PRN 20573-MOX18208	461853	191705	12 High Street: 18th century structure
100	Imperial	PRN 20550-MOX18428	461737	191737	Castle Inn sign: 18th century structure
101	Imperial	PRN 20555-MOX15993	461722	191718	4 / 8 castle Square: 18th century structure
102	Imperial	PRN 20539-MOX16000	462307	191948	Barn: 18th century structure
103	Imperial	PRN 20553-MOX16222	461757	191722	25 / 27 Castle Square: 18th century structure
104	Imperial	PRN 20552-MOX16694	461756	191724	21 / 23 Castle Square: 18th century structure
105	Imperial	PRN 20570-MOX16901`	461864	191730	Ivy House: 18th century structure
106	Imperial	PRN 20582-MOX16970	462072	191644	18 Old London Road: 18th century structure
107	Imperial	PRN 20578-MOX17206	461994	191747	Mulberry Cottage: 18th century structure
108	Imperial	PRN 20534-MOX17207	462074	191809	15 Brook Street: 18th century structure
109	Post-medieval	EOX240	462300	192000	Brook Street: Gully, postholes, pits and a well

110	Industrial	PRN 11954-MOX7041	461867	191700	14 / 16 High Street: 19th century structure
111	Industrial	PRN 20580-MOX17975	461840	191698	1 to 5 Mill Lane: 19th century structure
112	Industrial	PRN 20556-MOX16508	461726	191718	10 Castle Street: 19th century structure
113	Industrial - Imperial	PRN 20564-MOX16695	462006	191839	10 Crown Lane: 18th /19th century structure
114	Industrial	PRN 11957-MOX7042	462000	191780	High Street: Undenominational Free Church 1879
115	Industrial	EH 1385569	463080	192140	Fifield Manor: 19th century deposits
116	Modern	EH 1384486	462750	191350	Benson Airfield: Airfield constructed 1937-9
117	Modern	EH 1426208	461300	191800	World War II pill box
118	Undated	-	462000	191950	Linear feature that runs across the site probably of modern origin
119	Undated	-	462050	192100	Undated enclosure on Blacklands field possibly Roman, overlapping
120	Undated	-	462050	192100	Undated enclosure on Blacklands field possibly Roman, overlapping
121	Undated	-	462950	192800	Undated curving cropmark
122	Undated	-	461570	191930	Littleworth: Undated bank
123	Undated	-	461650	191900	Littleworth: Undated bank
124	Undated	-	461650	192300	Undated cropmarks, possibly land-drains or field boundaries
125	Undated	-	461450	192230	Undated cropmarks, possibly land drains or field boundaries, with a circular feature