



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**OF**

**LITTLE MARSH PLAYING FIELDS, YARNTON LANE,  
YARNTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SP 4845 1233**

*On behalf of*

*Yarnton Parish Council  
c/o Mr. T. Morton*

**November 2006**

**REPORT FOR** Yarnton Parish Council  
C/o Mr. T. Morton  
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## **Summary**

*An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006. Three trenches, totalling 40 metres in length, were excavated to the natural geology. Archaeological deposits were limited to a single pit of late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located on the north side of Yarnton Lane between Woodstock Road to the west and the railway on the east (SP 4845 1233). The site is currently in use as a sports ground and is fairly flat. The southern end of the proposal area, where the work is to be undertaken, is occupied by a small pavilion and gravelled car parking surfaces. The pavilion is built on raised ground probably derived from the lowering of the ground for parking. The site lies at approximately 61m above OD and the underlying geology is Oxford Clay and Kellaway Beds with possible alluvial deposits.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

In September 2006 a planning application was submitted to Cherwell District Council for the demolition of the existing pavilion and the construction of a new pavilion and associated parking along with an extension to the garage / store. Due to the site's potential to contain archaeological remains an archaeological evaluation was required prior to the determination of the application. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies. The County Archaeological Services issued a Brief for the work.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential. An undated field system, identified from cropmarks visible on aerial photographs, is located 180m to the south east of the site (PRN 15098) (SP 4884 1209). Elements of this system can be seen to extend as far north as Knightsbridge Farm, immediately to the south of the proposal site. It is likely that this system of fields extends further than is visible on the photographs and could have extended into the area of development.

To the north of the site are a series of cropmarks relating to a Roman settlement (PRN 2622) (SP 4819 1291) and evidence for this was uncovered during quarrying works in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These cropmarks show a further field system, related stock enclosures and probable house enclosures. Although they do not appear to extend south into the proposal area this could be in part due to ridge and furrow being present in the field immediately between the field and the proposal site. This would mask any earlier buried features from being seen on aerial photographs. It was therefore possible that features and deposits relating to these two areas of cropmarks could be disturbed by any development.

This first edition OS map shows the site within a field with the same boundaries as today.

Figure 1. Site and trench location

## 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/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular:

- To determine whether features associated with the two cropmark sites are present.

## 3 STRATEGY

### 3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of a total of three trenches across the site (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MoRPHE (English Heritage 2006).

### 3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample was to be one 20m trench and two 10m trenches (Fig. 1). Due to the amount of land drains present an additional 5m length of trenching was excavated. All trenches were 1.6 m wide and were excavated by a Sitemaster JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

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

## 4 RESULTS (*Figure 2*)

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.

The uppermost deposit within all trenches was a dark grey-brown silty clay (1/01), (2/01) and (3/01) that varied between 0.2m and 0.25m thick. This lay directly above a subsoil of orange-brown silty clay (1/02), (2/03) and (3/02) that varied between 0.32m and 0.4m thick. Under the subsoil was the natural orange-brown clay (1/03), (2/04) and (3/03).

A pit [1/04] was recorded in Trench 1. It was roughly circular and 0.9m in diameter. It was filled with a grey silty clay (1/05) flecked with charcoal. The top of this pit was at 65.71m OD. It was not excavated due to the flooding of the trench.

In the northern end of Trench 2 the topsoil (2/01) had been removed and stone and gravel (2/02) replaced it as a car park surface. The make up of this car park surface lay within a cut into the subsoil (2/03).

Trench 3 was extended by 5m to the west to maintain the sample rate and not to disturb the land drains encountered in the southern end.

All trenches displayed one or more modern land drains. Some were gravel filled while other had a plastic pipe as well. These appeared to be laid out in a herring-bone pattern (Fig. 2).

Due to the very wet condition all trenches quickly filled with ground water, making excavation of features impossible.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Pottery**

#### Prehistoric (By Frances Raymond)

One sherd of late Bronze Age/earliest Iron Age to early Iron Age pottery (weighing 16 grams), with a likely date between 800 and 500/450 BC, came from context 1/05. This is from the neck of a vessel with an angled shoulder decorated with a single row of fingernail impressions. The sherd is in fresh condition and has smooth surfaces oxidised to a dark reddish brown. The fabric is soft and contains very common amounts of fine to coarse rounded quartz sand (0.125 to 1.0mm.) and rare rounded flint (up to 2.0 mm.) and shell (up to 2.0 mm.).

#### Post medieval

A single sherd of WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenware (19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> century) was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994). This came from the topsoil of Trench 3 and was not retained.

Figure 2. Plans and Sections of the Trenches



## 6 DISCUSSION

All trenches showed a very uniform soil sequence. Ridge and furrow is seen to the north of the site, but there was no evidence that this extended into this area.

The only archaeological feature to be located was a pit [1/04]; unfortunately due to rapidly rising ground water it was not excavated. However, visible within the fill near its upper limit were a single sherd of late Bronze or early Iron Age pottery and a fragment of antler.

There was no conclusive evidence for features associated with the two cropmark sites, or for similar features to continue into the area of the development. However, the sample size was very small and it is possible that other features could lie between the trenches.

It is possible that small features such as the pit located during this evaluation could be scattered across this area. The nature of the soil sequence would indicate that an excellent level of preservation could be expected.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX A – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b> Finds</b>	<b> Date</b>
<b>Trench 1</b>			0.6	1.6	20		
1/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
1/02	Layer	Orange-brown silty clay	0.4	Tr.	Tr.	-	
1/03	Natural	Orange-brown clay	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
1/04	Cut	Pit	-	0.9	0.45		
1/05	Fill	Grey silty clay	-	0.9	0.45	Pottery, Bone	Bronze/Iron Age
<b>Trench 2</b>			0.6	1.6	10		
2/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	Tr.	7.1	-	Modern
2/02	Layer	Gravel and stone	0.4	Tr.	2.9	-	Modern
2/03	Layer	Orange-brown silty clay	0.32	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/04	Natural	Orange-brown clay	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
<b>Trench 3</b>			0.65	1.6	10		
3/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.24	Tr.	Tr.	Pottery	Modern
3/02	Layer	Orange-brown silty clay	0.4	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/03	Natural	Orange-brown clay	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural