JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

CONNEMARA PONY STUD,

EPWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 34975 40517

JUNE 2018

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation at the site of the consented scheme for Connemara pony stud, Church Lane, Epwell, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 34975 40517). The site showed signs of previous truncation from recent agricultural use and the dumping of agricultural materials. The only features within the area of impact were a cut from a modern water pipe and a modern rubbish pit, which contained modern tools and general waste, including plastic and other modern building materials. No evidence associated with the Roman Road from Finmere to Droitwich (Margary Road 56a), nor any prehistoric activity was seen within the site.

RESULTS

Across the whole of the research area, the earliest horizon encountered was the natural superficial geology - (1/03) in TR1 and (2/03) in TR2 - which manifest as a mid-reddish yellow silty sand with varying amounts of gravel throughout.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned N-S and was 20m long by 1.8m wide. It was machined to a maximum depth of 0.51m below the current ground surface. The natural sandy geology (1/03) was immediately present under the overgrowth to the south end of Trench 1, where the area had visibly been truncated by actions associated with the agricultural use of the land. A trackway had truncated the area to the east of the test area, and lead down to an area which had been levelled off for the construction of the extant barn structure and as a turning area for large farm equipment. This area had been reduced by machine (indicated by the vertical cuts into the surrounding embankment) by over 1.5m below the natural fall of the surrounding field levels. It was surrounded by wooden fencing, seemingly as erosion prevention due to the sandy geology, this was likely done at the time the barn was raised.

Above the natural in Trench 1 was a plough soil (1/02) which was visible at approximately 5m from the southern end of the trench where the truncation tapered off. This layer was filled with a spread of modern waste including black plastic bin bags mixed in with brick rubble and other 20th century pottery and glass.

A modern pit cut was located in the NE section of TR1, cut into the plough soil. It was filled by (1/04) which was a mid-greyish brown, friable, silty sand. Within it were 20th-21st century garden tools with rubber hand grips embedded in the trench bulk.

Above this fill and across the whole trench was the topsoil (2/01) which was 0.14m thick and was comprised of a mid-reddish brown, loose, sandy silt, held together by the roots of the overgrowth and grass.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned E-W and was 30m long by 1.8m wide. It was machined to a maximum depth of 0.63m below the current surface. The natural sandy geology (2/03) was present from a depth of 0.45m below the ground surface and was seen to be >0.08m thick.

Above the natural in Trench 2 was a plough soil (2/02) which was a friable, mid-greyish brown silty sand with occasional gravel inclusions of <0.02m in diameter.

FINDS

All material encountered was modern or mixed in with modern plastics and glass. The bulk of the material observed was from TR1 in the plough soil or rubbish spread (1/02), which contained brick and pottery along with black plastic bin bags, glass and modern metal from agricultural equipment.

The modern pit, 1/05 also contained modern gardening tools and plastics which were likely late 20th or early 21st century in origin.

These materials were not retained and were redeposited back into the trenches during backfilling.

DISCUSSION

Testing in the study area showed evidence of the agricultural activities for which the land has been and is currently in use. There was evidence of substantial truncation to the south, near the extant barn, and hardstanding and trackways for the use and storage of farm equipment. There was no evidence associated with the Roman Road from Finmere to Droitwich (Margary Road 56a) nor any sign of Roman activities in the area of impact.