



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING ACTION**

**AT**

**WEYBROOK PARK GOLF CLUB,  
ROOKSDOWN LANE, BASINGSTOKE,  
HAMPSHIRE**

**INTERIM REPORT**

**NGR: SU 60919 54221**

**SEPTEMBER 2018**



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<b>FIELDWORK</b>	September 2016 – January 2018
<b>REPORT ISSUED</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
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<b>JMHS Project No:</b>	3588
<b>Site Code:</b>	RDRL 16
<b>Archive Location</b>	The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Hampshire Cultural Trust





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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services is carrying out an archaeological recording action at Weybrook Park Golf Club, Rooksdown Lane, Basingstoke, during topsoil stripping prior to the remodelling of the golf course. So far the excavations have identified a ring-ditch of Iron Age date with two cremation burials in the central area. A possible penannular enclosure has also been identified, both features were in the south corner of the golf park. A further possible ring-ditch is located north-west of these features. The excavation has also revealed a series of ditches oriented north-west to south-east across the south-west border of the site. The ditches appeared to align both with a Roman ditch found during a previous evaluation and a linear feature identified by crop marks. The combined ditch would be potentially greater than 290m in length. A natural valley orientated south-west to north-east runs across the west of the site and a concentration of undated large pits and ditches have been identified on its north-western slope. Some of the ditches seemed to form the outline of possible enclosures or field boundaries. A number of further undated pits and ditches have been identified during the soil stripping across the south-west border of the site.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located north-west of Basingstoke, centered on NGR 60919 54221, to the north-west of Rooksdown Lane, in the civil parish of Rooksdown. The site lies in the fields of the golf course to the south of the Weybrook Club House.

The site lies at approximately 125m AOD. The underlying bedrock geology is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation. No superficial geology is recorded although there is evidence for occasional localised outcrops of Clay with Flints (TVAS 1991a: 3).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council granted planning permission for reconfiguration and realignment of the existing front nine holes at Weybrook Park Golf Club, Rooksdown Lane, Basingstoke, RG24 9NT, including realignment of tees, greens and fairways, earthworks and associated landscaping and planting (ref:15/02409/FUL). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring that extensive topsoil stripping was accompanied by a watching brief in the form of a strip, map and record exercise. This was in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan Review 1996-2011.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The proposal site lies in an area that is rich in archaeology. Prominent features within the vicinity of the site were identified on aerial photographs. This included three enclosures of banjo type, one of which is located towards the east corner of the site. Other features recorded are a trackway and linear features (TVAS 1991a).



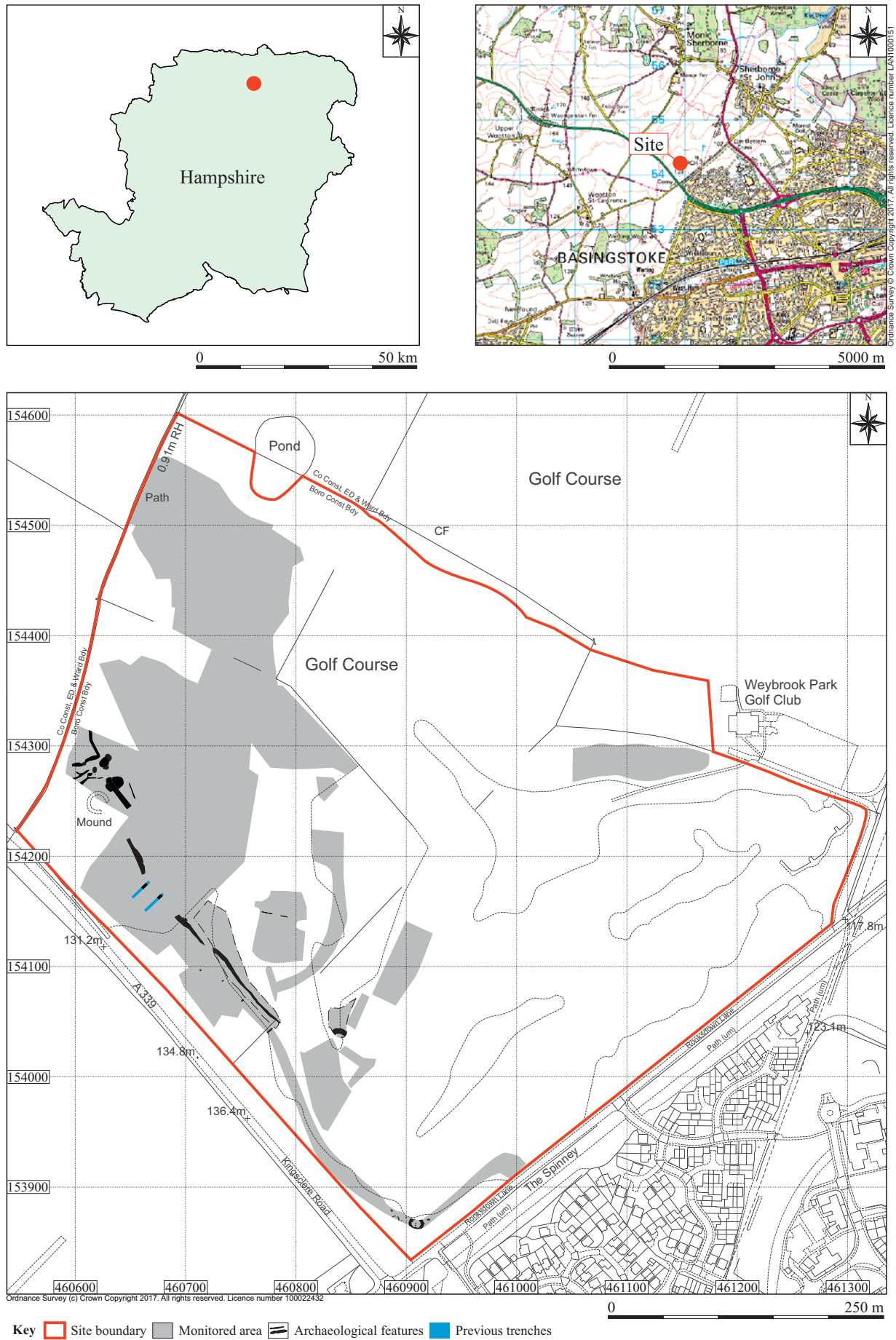


Figure 1: Site location



A levelled mound in the west corner of the site is probably the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow. The line of the Roman road from Silchester to Winchester crosses the eastern side of the site (TVAS 1991a).

Much of the previous archaeological work and the archaeology of the surrounding area has been discussed in a previous archaeological assessment (URS Scott Wilson 2011). The report concluded there is a moderate potential for encountering buried Iron Age and Romano-British archaeological remains with a low potential for Bronze Age, early medieval, medieval and post-medieval remains. The author of the report, whilst correctly identifying the location of features, appeared to demonstrate no understanding of archaeology in the field. One ditch found during a previous evaluation (TVAS 1991c) was described in this later report as if it was located within the topsoil rather than underneath it and that it had been removed by the removal of the topsoil. Also the Roman finds recovered from the ditch fill during the evaluation were not mentioned in this later archaeological assessment report. It is thus considered that the potential for surviving archaeological remains may have been underestimated.

## **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 or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the known Iron Age and Romano British remains in the area

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services is carrying out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Hampshire County Council Archaeological Team, the archaeological advisors to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

The recording is being carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist has been present to monitor the stripped areas stripped of topsoil ahead of the remodelling of the golf course. Where archaeological horizons were revealed by the soil stripping but would not be impacted on further by the works they have been recorded in plan only. Where archaeological horizons were encountered that would be impacted upon by the excavations they were cleaned by hand and



excavated appropriately. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

## 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features are being assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

Excavations were begun near to the south-eastern boundary of the site during the excavation of a haul road for the works. The excavations revealed natural chalk geology at a depth of approximately 0.3m or less below the pre-existing ground level. In the south corner of the site the excavations identified a ring-ditch or circular enclosure 05 which was partially revealed by the excavations (Fig. 2; Plate 1). The ditch was 0.8m deep with convex edges and a rounded base. The ditch contained three fills, the uppermost fill was considered to be a slumped deposit or perhaps related to later levelling of the feature. The ditch was between 2 and 2.5m wide and the diameter of internal area of the feature was approximately 8.5m; no finds were recovered from any of the ditch fills.



Plate 1. Ring-ditch 05. ENE view.

Within the centre of the feature were two small pits each of which contained a cremation burial (Fig. 2). The most northerly of the two pits, 08, contained a cremation vessel which was fully intact in the ground (Plate 2). The cremation pit 15 further south was more fragmentary and contained no intact vessel. It was though possible to identify the fill of the cremation 15 from surrounding backfill and a fragment of pottery found within may have been the remains of the original vessel.

More features were identified further towards the northwest along the haul road excavation (Fig. 2). None of these features were excavated as the excavations were not planned to impact further on these features. There were a number of pits and



ditches identified although some of these may have been modern. The overburden in the area of the site was shallow and it is possible some of the pits may have been related to tree planting in the area. There were a number of ditches that were on the same NE-SW alignment and they may have been for the purpose of land drainage. These linear features were not further revealed when the areas of excavation to the north and south were expanded, which suggest that these areas previously had been over excavated and also that these features may have been relatively shallow.



Plate 2. Cremation burial 08. NW view.

There were two ditches, 11 and 21 located on the southern edge of the haul road near to the south corner of the site which appeared to form the entrance to a penannular enclosure although the full shape in plan was hidden by limit of excavation to the south (Fig. 2; Plate 3).



Plate 3. Possible Penannular Enclosure. Ditches 11 and 21. SSE view.

Ditch 36 was identified at the NW extent of the haul road. It was orientated SE to NW and its north-westerly extent had either been truncated or covered by landscaping of the natural chalk. A further ditch appeared to branch off from it towards the north-east but was not identified when the area was further excavated to the north.

An area adjacent to the haul road was excavated and revealed the line of Ditch 66 that appeared to be the continuation of Ditch 36 (Fig. 2; Plate 4). The ditch was orientated in a NW-SE direction for a length of 90.27m. It was 1.55m deep and 4.3m wide and



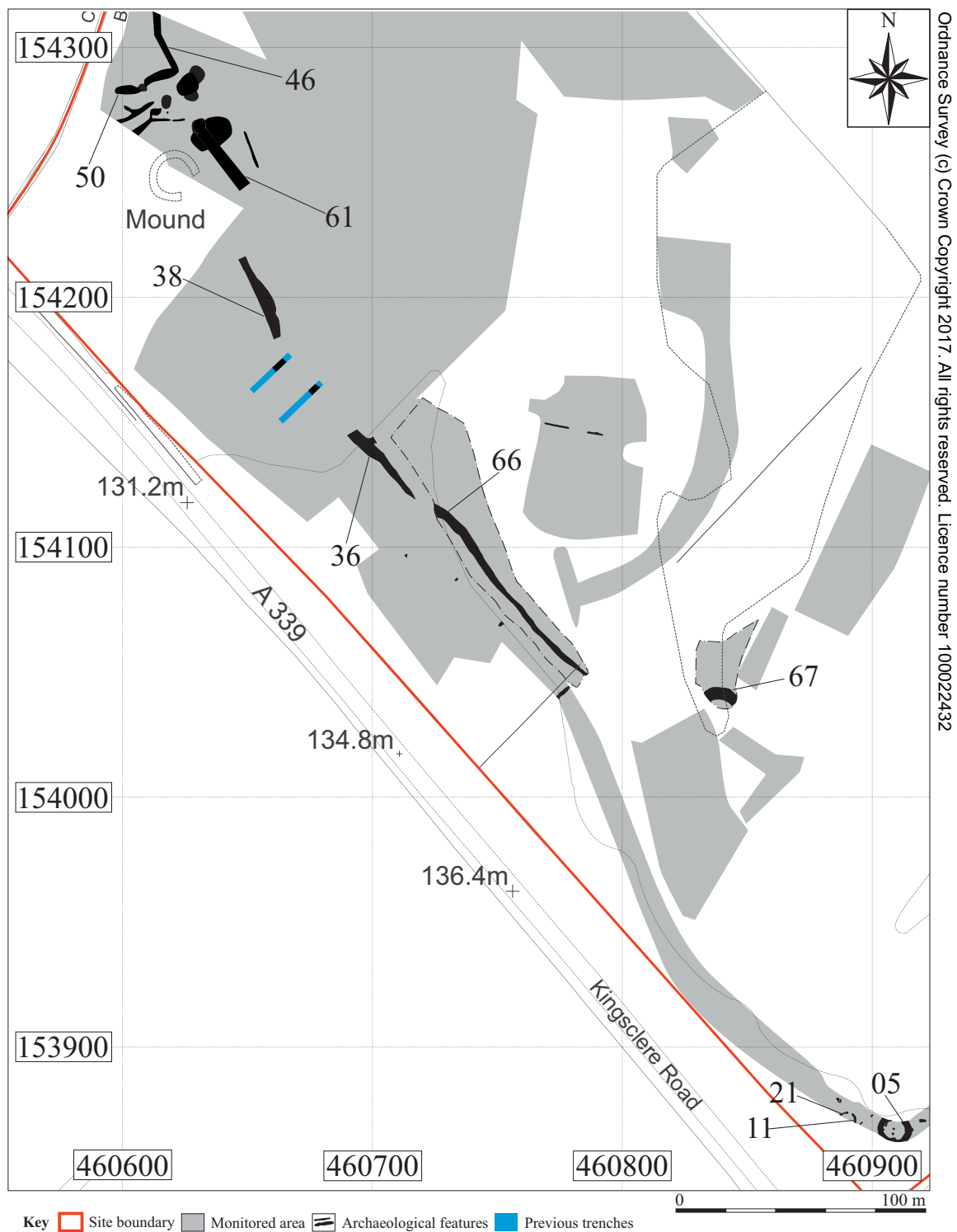


Figure 2: Archaeological Site Plan





Figure 4. Ditch 66. WNW view.

contained three fills. The lowest contained an iron nail and the upper fill contained ceramic material that may have derived from brick or tile.

The possible continuation of Ditch 66 was identified further to the east of Ditch 66 where the ditch may have continued as Ditch 67 (Fig. 2). It curved in an arch towards the north extending east to west for greater than 11.1m beyond the eastern limit of excavation. The possible relationship of the ditch 66 and 67 was hypothesised on their positions in relation to the identified crop marks of a long linear feature but its appearance suggests that it may be the remains of a ring-ditch or other curvilinear feature.

A further possible ditch, 38, was identified orientated NNW-SSE in the west of the site (Fig. 2). It was greater than 35m long and between 2.5m and 4m wide. At its NNW end the ditch disappeared into the colluvium that was settled in the valley basin, and towards the SSE it disappeared into the area of chalk landscaping. The edges of the feature were not clear and it may have been formed by backfill into an incline created by landscaping, or it may have been colluvium within a natural dip, however, fragments of fired clay or daub were recovered from upper part of the fill (37) and it did roughly align with the position of cropmarks.

The combined ditches of 36, 66 and possibly 67 appear to align with a large linear feature identified from aerial photographs (URS Scot Wilson 2011, P. 40, Fig. 2). Ditch 38 was also possibly a continuation of the same linear feature identified through cropmarks. The feature crosses two modern fields and it is considered to be the same feature identified as a ditch of Roman date found during the evaluation (TVAS 1991c; URS Scot Wilson 2011, P. 40). This Roman ditch orientated SE-NW found during the evaluation (TVAS 1991c) in the west of the site was not revealed during the



excavation, as would have been expected. It was considered that this area of the site had been subjected to previously deep excavation which had removed the feature, whereas the area closer to the end of the haul road was closer to the original ground level allowing for the survival of this feature here. It is also possible though that the ditch had been covered by a mound of redeposited chalk that was located within the approximate area of the ditch.

A number of other ditches and pits of unknown date or purpose were identified in the west of the site, on the north-western slope of the valley which cut through the west of the site in a north-east to south-west orientation. None of these features were excavated and no dateable material was recovered from them. A possible rectangular enclosure was formed by ditches 46 and 50. Ditch 61 had a very straight regular shape in plan and may have been modern. It may, however, have been the continuation of the proposed north-west to south-east orientated Roman ditch which extends across most of the south of the site. Other ditches in this area were more irregular and it is possible that they were related to tree planting or landscaping of the golf course, although their proximity near to the recorded site of a ploughed out barrow and the proximity of more regular features may indicate that they are older.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

The area of excavation showed some potential for the survival of archaeology. Archaeological survival was particularly concentrated in an area in the south of the site and in the area north-west of here along and adjacent to the excavation of the haul road. This area of the site was where previous landscaping excavations had been less deep. The cremations within the ring-ditch in the south corner of the site have been tentatively dated to the Iron Age based on the ceramic material and both the ring-ditch and the potential pennanular enclosure ditch may also be Iron Age in date.

A number of ditches, possible ditch terminuses and pits were identified across the south-western border of the site in the area of the haul road. The overburden in this area of the site was quite shallow and some of these features may have been related to tree planting in the area or for drainage. The ditches were all aligned north-east to south-west but the expansion of the excavated area to the north and south of these features did not reveal their continuation. This would suggest that these areas had been over excavated during stripping but would also suggest that these features may have been quite shallow. This would certainly be evidenced in the area of Ditch 66 where the excavations in this area would have been expected to reveal the continuation of ditches found south of Ditch 66, ditches which were aligned perpendicular to it but for which no evidence for their continuation was recorded.

The situation for survival was less easy to ascertain in the area towards the west corner of the site beyond the north-westerly end of the haul road. Some areas had appeared to be deeply excavated with the chalk from those areas having been pulled up into raised areas of landscaping. It was difficult to ascertain how deeply areas had been excavated during the previous construction phase and it was also difficult to distinguish the chalk made-ground from the natural chalk. The situation was further obscured by the presence of a natural valley in this area of the site which accentuated the depth of previous excavations. All the above factors made it difficult to interpret the original ground level and to interpret the potential level of truncation to the



underlying archaeology. Despite the obvious disturbance it is possible that some features or parts of features in this area may have been hidden by redeposited chalk. A likely continuous feature identified in this area of the site and extending towards the south-east was probably part of a continuing ditch that was identified by both the evaluation and from crop marks. Finds retrieved from the ditch during the evaluation provided a Roman date for the ditch and it is likely that the small amount of ceramic material recovered from later excavations of the ditch in the south-east is also from this period. The length of ditch found during the previous evaluation was not identified during the more recent works and may have been removed during the original construction of the golf course but it is also possible that this had length of ditch been covered by redeposited chalk.

The possible continuation of the Roman ditch was noted for ditch 67. The identification was based on the crop marks where the linear feature continuing towards the south-east turns towards the north-east before turning again towards the south-east. The curve on the Ditch 67, however, is very pronounced and it is likely that it is a ring-ditch or some other curvilinear feature. It is possible that the Roman ditch identified from cropmarks was diverted north-east to avoid an area of monuments passing around the north of the monument represented by Ditch 67 before returning towards the south-east.

The features identified on the north-west slope of the valley in the west of the site were not excavated and no dating evidence was recovered from these features. Some of the ditches were quite irregular and may have been related to more recent planting in the area. Nonetheless, there did appear to be a potential rectilinear enclosure, and the wider north-west to south-east orientated ditch in this area may have been a continuation of the Roman ditch which extends across most of the south of the site. No signs of the levelled round barrow referred to in the previous archaeological assessment (URS Scot Wilson 2011, P. 19), were identified in this part of the site, despite its location on the plan. The methodology for its location in the west corner of this site was to build up the ground in this area rather than to excavate and the apparent encroachment of the excavations in this area of the site may be due to the mislocation of the feature on the map for the area.

Excavations near to the location of an Iron Age banjo enclosure that had been identified by aerial photographs in the east of the site (URS Scot Wilson 2011) did not reveal any archaeology. The observed excavations did not encroach into the area of the enclosure and so the potential of archaeology here still exists.

Illustrations of cropmarks in the north-west of the site were mostly outside the area of excavation, however, the southern end of possible ditches did appear to enter the area of development. Excavations in this area, however, did not reveal any archaeology in this part of the site.

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