



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

KING OF PRUSSIA, ROSE HILL,

OXFORD

(NGR SP 5358 0365)

On behalf of

Midcounties Co-Operative Society Ltd

September 2008

REPORT FOR Midcounties Co-operative Society Ltd
C/o Gould Singleton Architects
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site on 20th and 21st August 2008. Three trenches, totalling approximately 70 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology.

A sequence of at least five ditches re-cut on roughly the same alignment were located. All appear to date from the Early to Middle Iron Age, with perhaps the last ditch of a Late Iron Age date.

There is limited later Roman activity in the 2nd – 4th centuries AD on the site, which is probably associated with the local pottery production centre.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies on the west side of Rose Hill, Oxford approximately 40m north of the junction with Courtland Road and south of Villiers Lane (NGR SP 5358 0365). The site was formerly that of the King of Prussia public house, which has been demolished following a fire. The site lies on Corallian Formation Littlemore Member, marl and limestone.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted for the erection of a two storey building to accommodate four retail units at ground floor and eight flats at first floor, and the provision of 20 car parking places to rear and nine spaces and service area to front. Due to the presence of known archaeological remains Oxford City Council has advised that a predetermination field evaluation is required. This is in line with PPG16 and Local Plan Policy.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Palaeolithic implements have been found *c.* 500m to the west (PRN 3655; SP 53150370), while two Palaeolithic hand axes were recovered 400m to the southwest (PRN 12905; SP 533033). A Palaeolithic lithic scatter, including 25 hand axes and 5 flakes is known *c.* 850m to the west-southwest (PRN 15451; SP 528033). A prehistoric arrowhead has been recovered 550m to the south (PRN 3658; SP 53500306), a Neolithic flint flake from 120m northwest (PRN 16627; SP 53450371), and a sherd of early Iron Age pottery has been found *c.* 200m north-west of the site (PRN 3648; SP 53430381).

From the same location as the early Iron Age pottery, a Romano British settlement site is known. The finds included pits, huts, inhumations, a pottery kiln and coins (PRN 3646, 3647 & 3649; SP 53430381, SP 53470373, SP 53580384). Approximately 140m to the north of this application site a 2nd century Romano British



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beaker was found (PRN 6159; SP 53600380), while an undated burial was reported to the police 450m to the northwest (PRN 6633; SP 53230393). Further Roman pottery kilns are known from 650m to the south (PRN 3656; SP 53490298 – 53430305 - 53560308). Possible human bones, flint flakes and a scraper were also recovered. Further Roman pottery has been located 750m to the south (PRN 6191; SP 534029) although this must be associated with the previous site.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To determine as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered.

In particular:

- To determine whether any Iron Age activity is present
- To determine whether any activity associated with the Roman pottery industry is present

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to the Oxford City Council's (OCC) request a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with OCC and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of trial 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 (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of three trenches: two 30m in length with an additional one 10m in length that was requested by the City Archaeologist after an initial site visit.

All trenches were 1.6 m wide and were excavated by a JCB Sitemaster excavator 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.

A watching brief was carried out during the excavation of Geo-technical pits.

Mr David Radford of OCC monitored the work.

4 RESULTS

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

4.1 Excavation Results

The lowest deposit recorded was the natural light greyish-yellow to orange-brown clay with small limestone fragments (1/04), (2/03) and (3/03). Trench 2 revealed this layer of clay to be about 0.5m thick with an underlying layer of compressed orange-yellow sand (2/07).

Trench 1 (Figure 2)

At the northern end of the trench was an area at least 7.5m wide of multiple ditches that appeared to be for the most part re-cuts along the same roughly NW-SE alignment. These ditches were not fully excavated. At least 6 different fills could be seen in plan and at least two were cut into the natural (1/04).

One of the earliest recognisable cuts [1/11] had 45° sides and was over 0.25m deep, it was filled with a mid red-brown clay-silt (1/12) flecked with charcoal. This was cut by a later ditch [1/13] that also had 45° sides and was over 0.25m deep. It may have only been about 0.7m wide and appears to have cut a more southerly ditch whose fill was recorded as a mid brown-cream silty-clay (1/17) flecked with charcoal and containing some small stones. It was over 0.15m thick and at least 0.7m wide.

Next to (1/17) was a fill of another ditch this was a mixed greenish-brown sandy-silt (1/15) with limestone pea-grit, which was at least 2m wide. Parallel to this, another fill was noted of a dark red-grey silt with sand (1/19) and charcoal flecks. It was at least 0.8m wide. An oval patch (1/20) was noted possibly within this deposit that was lighter in hue and contained large quantities of limestone pea-grit. This might represent a truncated pit, although it could be part of (1/16). It measured 0.7m by 0.3m in plan. The most southerly deposit in this area was a mid reddish-grey sandy-silt (1/16) with small limestone fragments. It was at least 1.5m wide. The cut [1/18] that marked the southerly edge of this fill appeared to be aligned E-W. A slope in the natural at this junction may also be due to this cut, although this was uncertain during excavation. These were unexcavated leaving their relationships unknown.

Cut into the top of deposits (1/15) and (1/17) were two later inter-cutting pits. The first [1/06] was oval measuring at least 0.9m by 0.7m with shallow sloping sides 0.03m deep. It was filled with a dark red-brown clay-silt (1/05). The second [1/08] was also oval 1m by 0.4m in plan and 0.05m deep with shallow sides. It was also filled with a dark red-brown clay-silt (1/07).

Although the two pits obviously inter-cut one another it was impossible to distinguish which was the earlier of the two. The shallow depth of these two pits may indicate that some modern truncation has occurred in the area.

To the south of [1/18] and cut into the natural that sloped up in this area was a circular pit [1/09]. It was 1.7m in diameter, 0.24m deep with a shallow U-shaped profile and filled with a mid orange-brown silty-sand (1/10).

Sealing all of these features was a layer of mid orange-brown clay (1/03) flecked with charcoal with some small stones that was up to 0.4m thick. Above this was a layer of dark grey-brown clay (1/02) with charcoal and stone up to 0.15m thick

The southern end of the trench showed considerable modern disturbance, a tree throw and heavy root action. The uppermost layer was a 0.2m thick blackish-brown clay loam (1/01).

Trench 2 (Figure 2)

Near the centre of the trench was a series of inter-cutting or re-cut ditches spanning at least 6.5m in width. All ditches were cut into the natural clay (2/03) but none penetrated more than a few centimetres into the sand layer (2/07).

Separate cuts and fills for the ditches could not be distinguished in plan; the area appeared as one homogeneous deposit. However, in section at least 5 separate ditches could be distinguished. These appeared to have been cut on a similar alignment roughly E-W.

The earliest recognisable ditch [2/11] is situated to the north of the sequence with later ditches apparently being dug in a succession each slightly more southerly than the previous one.

The first ditch [2/11] was over 0.6m wide and 0.4m deep with a rounded V-shaped profile. It was filled with a mottled grey clay (2/12) with quantities of lime stone fragments and flecks of charcoal.

It was cut by a second ditch [2/04] that was at least 2.2m wide and 0.5m deep, with shallow sloping sides at approximately 30° and a flat base. This was filled with a mid brown-grey silty-clay (2/05) flecked with charcoal, with a lens of limestone fragments that curved up towards the south.

Apparent by an island of clay (2/03) remaining about the sand (2/07) and by the truncation of the stone lens with (2/05) was a third ditch [2/13] that was at least 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep with a northern edge predicted at a roughly 45° slope and an irregular base. It was filled with a mid brown-grey silty-clay (2/14) flecked with

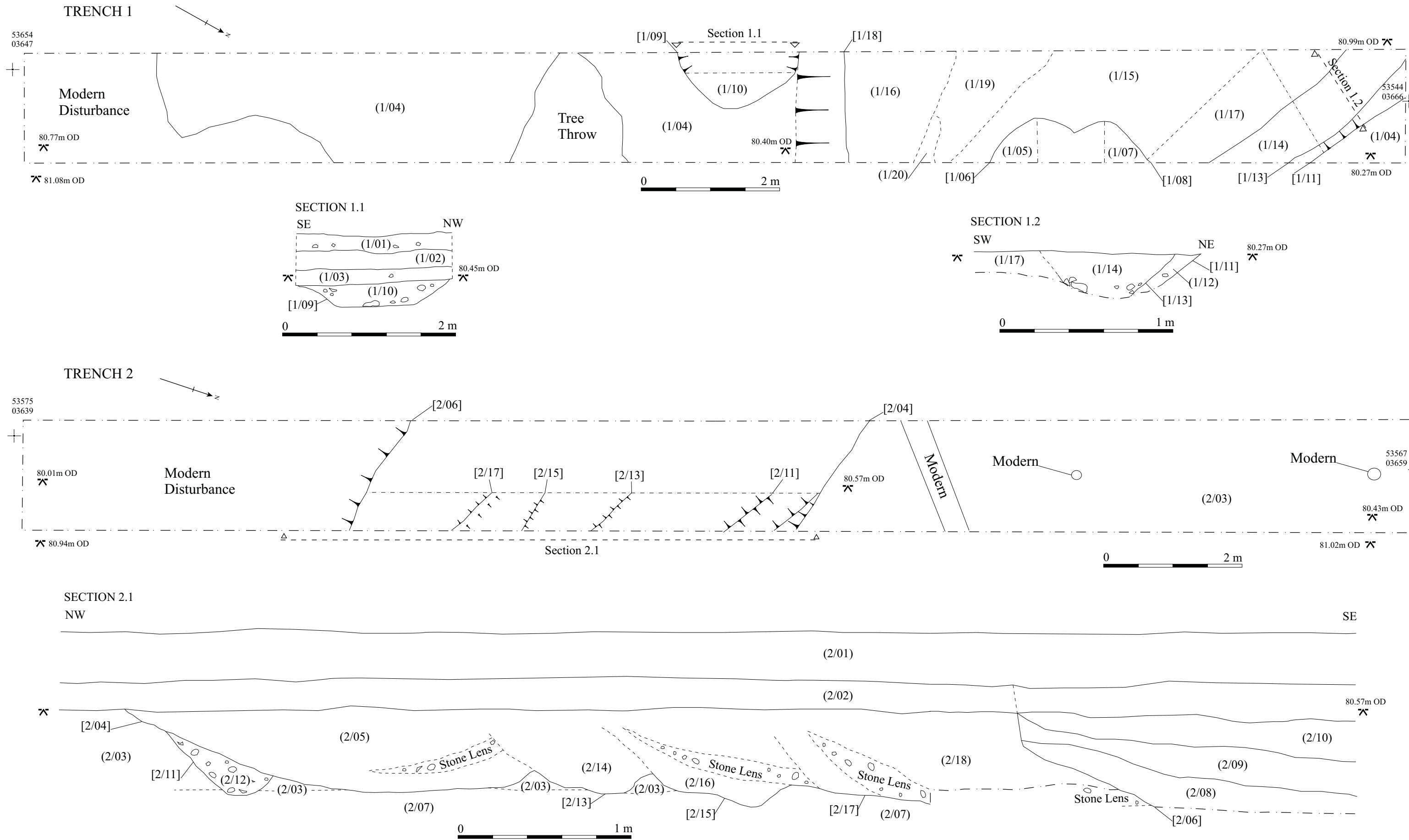


Figure 2. Plans and Sections Trenches 1 and 2

charcoal that was virtually indistinguishable from (2/05). This ditch appears to cut ditch [2/04], and was cut by a later ditch [2/15].

A fourth ditch [2/15] was identified again by an island of cut clay (2/03) and a second stone lens within its fill. This ditch was at least 0.9m wide and 0.6m deep. Its edge is predicted at a roughly 45° slope and an irregular base, which may have been caused by an earlier ditch. It was filled with a mid brown-grey silty-clay (2/16) flecked with charcoal and containing a lens of limestone fragments that curved up towards the north. Again this fill was virtually indistinguishable from (2/05) or (2/14). This ditch appears to cut ditch [2/13] and was cut by a later ditch [2/17].

The latest recognisable ditch [2/17] in the sequence and the most southerly one was at least 1.6m wide and 0.5m deep. Noticeably it truncated the stone lens within (2/16). Its northern edge appears to be at roughly 45° and the base although not fully excavated appeared flat. It was filled with a mid brown-grey silty-clay (2/18) flecked with charcoal and containing a lens of limestone fragments that curved up towards the north. Again this fill was virtually indistinguishable from (2/05), (2/14) or (2/16).

This sequence of ditches was truncated to the south by a modern cut [2/06]. The initial edge was near vertical, which then sloped down at roughly 30°. This was not fully excavated, but the lowest fill revealed was a loose yellow sand (2/08) over 0.2m thick. Above this was a red-brown sandy-clay (2/09) 0.2m thick, that contained 20th century pottery. The uppermost fill was a grey-brown sandy-clay (2/10) flecked with charcoal that was almost indistinguishable from the layer above (2/02).

Sealing all of these features was a 0.2m thick layer of grey-brown sandy-clay (2/02) flecked with charcoal containing fragments of modern bricks.

Located at the northern end of the trench where two modern postholes that still displayed remnants of wooden posts within their fills and to the south of these was a modern service. The uppermost layer across the entire trench was a dark grey-black brown sandy loam (2/01) that contained patches of stone rubble and was up to 0.3m thick.

Trench 3 (Figure 3)

Two modern services and a pit were noted in the trench as well as two pits containing 19th century pottery. The first [3/04] was circular and 0.4m in diameter. It was not fully excavated but contained a dark brown sandy clay with charcoal. The second was oval measuring at least 1.2m by 0.6m in plan. It was also not fully excavated and it too contained a dark brown sandy clay with charcoal.

Lying directly above the natural (3/03) was a 0.2m thick layer of grey-brown sandy-clay (2/02) flecked with charcoal containing fragments of modern bricks. The uppermost layer was a dark grey-black brown sandy loam (3/01) that contained patches of stone rubble and was up to 0.25m thick.

TRENCH 3

+ 53573
03656

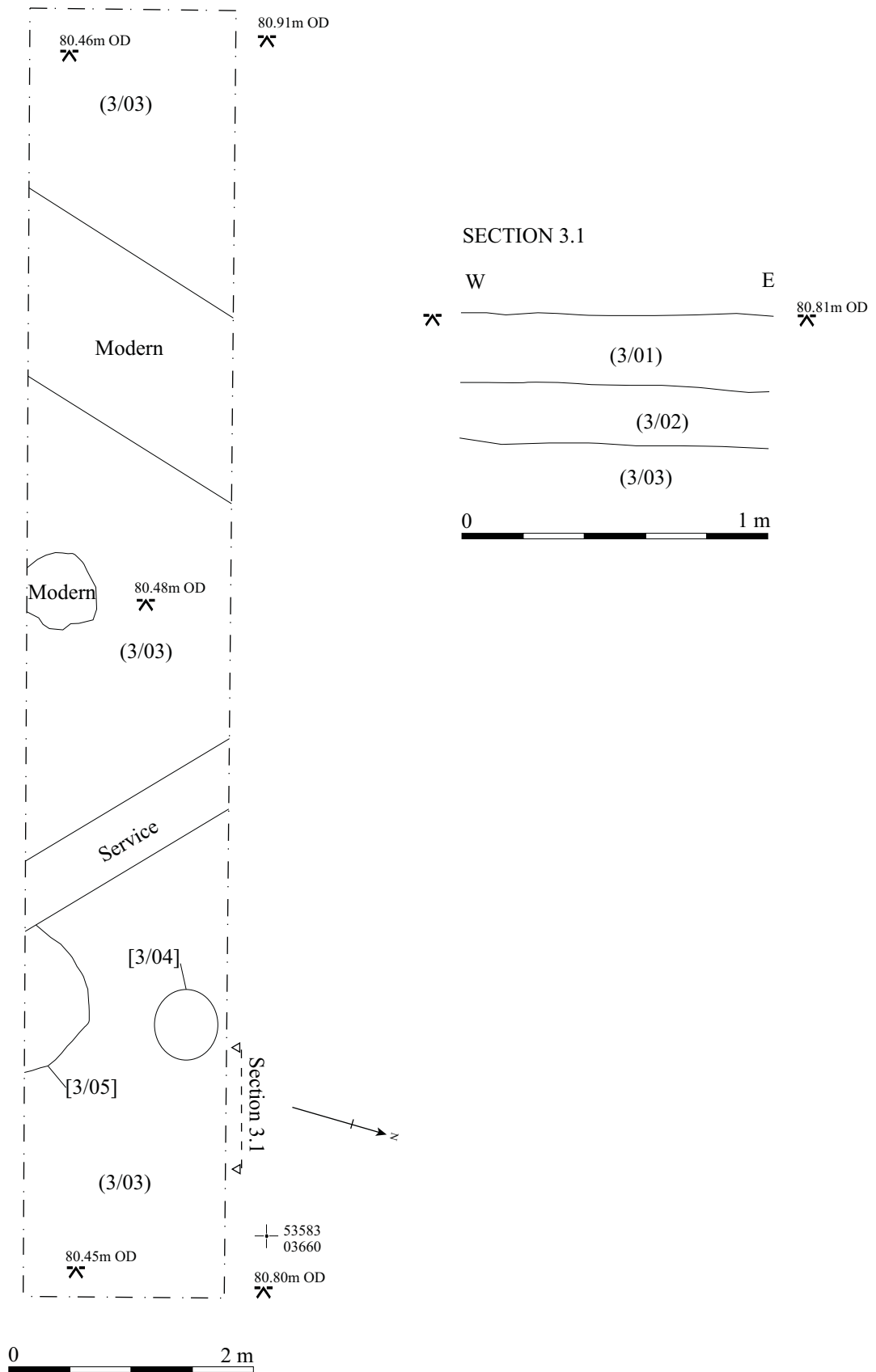


Figure 3. Trench 3

4.2 Watching Brief of Geo-technical Pits (Figure 1)

Trial Pit 1

A 0.05m thick dark grey-black topsoil sat directly over a 4m+ thick deposit of greyish-yellow sand.

Trial Pit 2

This displayed a soil sequence similar to that seen within Trench1 a modern pit was noted, to the south of the Trial Pit, in section that contained pottery; massed produced industrial white ware (WHEW - Mellor 1984; 1994).

Trial Pit 3

This displayed a soil sequence similar to that seen within the northern end of Trench 2. No archaeological features were noted.

Trial Pit 4

This displayed a soil sequence similar to that seen within the northern end of Trench1. No archaeological features were noted.

Trial Pit 5

This displayed a soil sequence similar to that seen within the southern end of Trench 2. It appeared to be within cut [2/06]. No other archaeological features were noted.

Trial Pit 6

This pit was not monitored.

4.3 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The excavation of the trenches took place during periods of good weather. The multiple fills within the ditches of Trench 2 were impossible to distinguish in plan, only excavation revealed the individual cuts in section and some could only be inferred by stone lenses within the fill itself.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

5.1.1 Prehistoric & Roman Pottery (By Paul Booth)

The evaluation produced 86 sherds (1224 g) of Iron Age and Roman pottery. This was scanned rapidly and recorded using codes in the Oxford Archaeology later prehistoric and Roman pottery recording system. Quantification was by sherd count and weight, with quantification of vessels by rim count and EVEs (the full records are in archive). The sherds were in variable condition in terms of size, but mostly in fairly good

condition with regard to erosion/abrasion of surfaces well-preserved. The pottery is summarised by context group below.

Oxford Rose Hill: pottery quantities (no. sherds/weight) by context and period

Context	Iron Age	Roman	Context (ceramic) date	Fabrics etc/comment (vessel types represented by rims in brackets)
1/1		1/118	Roman	R90
1/2		6/51	2-4C	W12, O10, R10, R30
1/7		2/15	2-3C?	O10 (jar rim), R20
1/14	73/1001		MIA	A, C and S fabrics, 3 rims
1/17	4/39		MIA	L and S fabrics
TOTAL	77/1040	9/184		

Iron Age

The majority of the pottery was of Iron Age date. The fabrics were defined in terms of combinations of inclusion type, as follows

A	quartz sand	N	none significant
C	calcareous 'grit'	P	clay pellets
G	grog	S	shell
L	limestone	V	organic

These inclusions were used in different combinations in at least eight different fabrics - qualified by a numeric indicator of coarseness - (AN3, AS4, AVP3, AVS3, CGA4, LA4, SA4 and SA5) most of which were present only as body sherds. Three small rim sherds (from two vessels) occurred in shell/sand-tempered fabrics (AS4 and SA5). The majority of the pottery (approximately 58 sherds, 887 g) was from a single vessel in context 14. This was a large jar with a slight shoulder and short upright rim in fabric AVP3. Typologically this vessel should be of Middle Iron Age date. The remaining material is of broadly comparable character.

Roman

The Roman pottery is all in fabrics associated with the local Oxford pottery industry, as follows:

- W12. Oxford parchment ware. 1 sherd.
- O10. Fine oxidised 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products. 4 sherds.
- R10. Fine reduced 'coarse' wares, mostly Oxford products. 1 sherds.
- R20. Sandy reduced coarse wares. 1 sherd.
- R30. Moderately sandy reduced coarse wares. 1 sherds
- R90. Coarse grog-tempered 'storage jar' fabric. 1 sherd.

None is closely dateable. Only a single vessels rim was present, from a narrow mouthed jar probably of 2nd-3rd century date.

Discussion

Although dominated by sherds of a single vessel the Iron Age assemblage includes a range of fabrics. These may all be of middle Iron Age date, although shell-tempered fabrics tend to be more common in the region in the early Iron Age. The group may therefore contain both early and middle Iron Age material, but this is far from certain. The large size of some of the middle Iron Age sherds is indicative of settlement activity in the immediate vicinity. The Roman sherds are intrinsically unremarkable, but all are products of the Oxford industry and presumably derive from the known production area of Rose Hill, one of the components of this important industry. They may indicate that elements of that area extend as far as the present site.

[*Authors note*] a single sherd of pottery very similar in fabric to the Iron Age material was found within the fill (2/14) of ditch [2/13]. This was unfortunately lost during the post-excavation process.

5.1.2 Post-medieval Pottery (*By Paul Blinkhorn*)

The post-medieval and early modern pottery assemblage comprised 13 sherds with a total weight of 79g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 3 sherds, 16g.

OXEST: London stoneware. c. 1680 plus. 1 sherd, 6g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th C. 9 sherds, 57g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Cntxt	OXDR		OXEST		WHEW		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	1	1	9	1	6	2	5	U/S
2	1	1	2			3	39	19thC
3	5	1	5			4	13	19thC
	Total	3	16	1	6	9	57	

[*Authors note*] sherds of WHEW were also recovered from [3/04]. These were unfortunately lost during the post-excavation process.

5.2 Environmental Remains

Due to the nature of the deposits encountered no environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

The alignments of ditch [1/18] and that of deposit (1/19) may indicate that ditch [1/18] is the earliest feature on the site and is associated with a completely different enclosure. It is certainly on a completely different alignment from that of the main sequence of ditches. The line of (1/19) would indicate that a cut has in fact truncated [1/18].

The pottery suggests a period of activity on the site beginning in the Early Iron Age. Ditch [2/11] displays a V-shaped profile often associated with Early Iron Age box-framed earth and timber ramparts. Although this is not always the case, it is possible that ditch [1/18] represents the Early Iron Age settlement with the main sequence of ditches representing an enlarged and relocated Middle Iron Age one, situated just to the north of the evaluation area.

The majority of the pottery recovered from the site was of Middle Iron Age date. There are at least four later re-cuttings of the ditch layout. Still used during this period in the region are timber revetment ramparts (Cunliffe 2005). The associated postholes for such structures would be internal to the circuit of the ditch. Presumably each new re-cutting of the ditch would take place on the out side of the earlier one to avoid cutting through the ramparts. As no remnants of rampart or postholes was present one can only assume that these have been removed by more recent activity reducing the level of the land.

It is possible that activity on the site continued into the Late Iron Age. Ditch [2/17] would appear to have been wide, well over 2m, and flat-bottomed. Fécamp defences consisted of a wide shallow flat-bottomed ditch in front of the ramparts and have been dated to the first century BC (Cunliffe 2005).

The contour map of the area shows the site to be situated on a small spur of land that juts out to the north of Rose Hill. Such a position would enhance the scale of any defences with the natural slope of the land.

Previous finds of Iron Age pottery from the area have been down-slope of the site, these may have arrived at their place of deposition by erosion but perhaps more likely by deliberate removal; throwing waste down the hillside.

A similar enclosed site dating from the early Iron Age and continuing into the late Iron Age was found at the site of the former Bernwood First School, North Way, Barton. This site, however, did not have recut ditches (JMHS 2005).

There is limited later Roman activity in the 2nd – 4th centuries AD on the site, which is probably associated with the local pottery production centre. One pit [1/08] contains 2nd – 3rd century pottery. It is uncertain if it cuts or is cut by another pit, but what is clear is that there is likely to be at least two phases of Roman activity in the area.

The shallow nature of many of the deposits coupled with noted modern disturbances in the area would suggest that a high degree of truncation has occurred to the features on this site. The lack of banks or postholes associated with the possible ramparts would seem to support this. The shallow nature of the ditches in Trench 2 could be

explained by the presence of the natural sand layer (2/07); this material being deemed to unstable to dig into or to be used for construction of ramparts.

The deep sand deposits seen in the south end of Trench 2, in TP 5 and within TP 1 are associated with the clearance of the former King of Prussia public house and the infilling of demolished cellars. As such a large area in the south-east part of the site has no archaeological potential.

The large numbers of trees to the north of the site may have disturbed any archaeological remains in this area. It is also unknown if the previous building in the north-east of the site had a cellar and what impact its demolition had.

Archaeological remains are 0.5m below present ground level in Trench 2 and those within the footprint of the new building may well be impacted upon. Services in this area would also have to be kept above this horizon.

The deposits to the west in Trench 1 are approximately 0.7m below present ground surface. Although the construction of the proposed car park in this area would be unlikely to impact upon them, any services would again have to be kept at a higher level and any soak-aways or drainage positioned carefully.

While there is no proposed construction work and there also appears to be little archaeological remains in the south-western corner of the site the underlying natural geology does rise in this area, therefore any landscaping could have a degree of impact.

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APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 1			0.75	1.6	30		
1/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.2	Tr	Tr	Pottery	Modern
1/02	Layer	Grey-brown clay	0.15	Tr	Tr	Pottery	Modern
1/03	Layer	Orange-brown clay	0.4	Tr	Tr		
1/04	Natural	Yellow-orange clay with stone	-	Tr	Tr		
1/05	Fill	Red-brown silty-clay	0.03	0.7	0.9		
1/06	Cut	Oval Pit	0.03	0.7	0.9		
1/07	Fill	Red-brown silty-clay	0.05	0.4	1	Pottery	Roman C2nd-3rd
1/08	Cut	Oval Pit	0.05	0.4	1		
1/09	Cut	Pit	0.24	1.7	1.7		
1/10	Fill	Orange-brown clay	0.24	1.7	1.7		
1/11	Cut	Ditch	-	0.3	Tr		
1/12	Fill	Red-brown silty-clay	-	0.3	Tr		
1/13	Cut	Ditch	-	0.8+	Tr		
1/14	Fill	Red-brown silty-clay	-	0.8+	Tr	Pottery	Middle Iron Age
1/15	Fill	Grey-brown clay	-	3	Tr		
1/16	Fill	Reddish grey clay	-	1.6	Tr		
1/17	Fill	Brown silty clay	-	1	Tr	Pottery	Middle Iron Age
1/18	Cut	Ditch	-	1.6	Tr		
1/19	Fill	Red-brown silty-clay	-	0.8	Tr		
1/20	Fill	Light grey silty clay	-	0.3	0.7		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 2			1.2	1.6	30		
2/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	Tr	Tr	CBM	Modern
2/02	Layer	Grey-brown clay	0.15	Tr	Tr	CBM	Modern
2/03	Natural	Grey-yellow clay with stone	-	Tr	Tr		
2/04	Cut	Ditch	0.5	2.2	Tr		
2/05	Fill	Brown-grey silty clay	0.5	2.2	Tr		
2/06	Cut	Pit	1.2+	5.5+	Tr		Modern
2/07	Natural	Yellow sand	-	Tr	Tr		
2/08	Fill	Pale yellow sand	0.3+	5.5+	Tr		
2/09	Fill	Red-brown sand clay	0.2	5.5+	Tr	CBM	Modern
2/10	Fill	Grey-brown sandy clay	0.2	5.5+	Tr	CBM	Modern
2/11	Cut	Ditch	0.4+	0.6+	Tr		
2/12	Fill	Pale grey clay with stone	0.4+	0.6+	Tr		
2/13	Cut	Ditch	0.5	0.7+	Tr		
2/14	Fill	Brown-grey silty clay	0.5	0.7+	Tr	Pottery	Iron Age
2/15	Cut	Ditch	0.6+	1.2+	Tr		
2/16	Fill	Brown-grey silty clay	0.6+	1.2+	Tr		
2/17	Cut	Ditch	0.5+	2+	Tr		
2/18	Fill	Brown-grey silty clay	0.5+	2+	Tr		

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
Trench 3							
3/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	Tr	Tr	CBM	Modern
3/02	Layer	Grey-brown clay	0.2	Tr	Tr	Pottery	Modern
3/03	Natural	grey-yellow clay with stone		Tr	Tr		
3/04	Cut/Fill	Pit - brown sandy clay		0.4	0.4	Pottery	C19th-20th
3/05	Cut/Fill	Pit - brown sandy clay		0.6	1.2	Pottery	C19th-20th