

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

EYNHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL,

BEECHES RD,

EYNHAM, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 4358 0977

On behalf of

Mouchel

OCTOBER 2010

REPORT FOR	Mouchel Stratton Court Kimber Road Abingdon Oxon. OX14 1SG
PREPARED BY	Stephen Yeates with a contribution from Paul Booth
ILLUSTRATION BY	Eoin Fitzsimon
FIELD WORK	13 th April-30 th July 2010
REPORT ISSUED	27 th October 2010
ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
JMHS Project No:	2225
Site Code	EYBR 10
Accession number	Oxfordshire Museums Service 2010.12

CONTENTS

	Page
Summary	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	4
3.1 Research Design	4
3.2 Methodology	4
4 RESULTS	4
4.1 Iron Age	4
4.2 Post-Medieval or Modern	6
4.3 Reliability of Techniques and Results	6
5 FINDS	6
5.1 Pottery	6
5.2 Ceramic Building Material	6
5.3 Baked Clay	7
5.4 Flint	7
5.5 Burnt Stone	7
6 DISCUSSION	7
7 ARCHIVE	7
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
 FIGURES	
Figure 1 Location	2
Figure 2 Plan and Sections	5

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief on three days from 13th to the 30th July, 2010, at Eynsham Primary School for Oxfordshire County Council. The remains of a linear ditch were noted cut into the natural that was probably of a late prehistoric date. There were also two other rammed limestone features that may also have been linear features, perhaps some type of slight foundation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at Eynsham Primary School on Beech Road in Eynsham (NGR SP 4358 0977). The site lies between 65-68m OD. The underlying geology is Second Terrace Gravel.

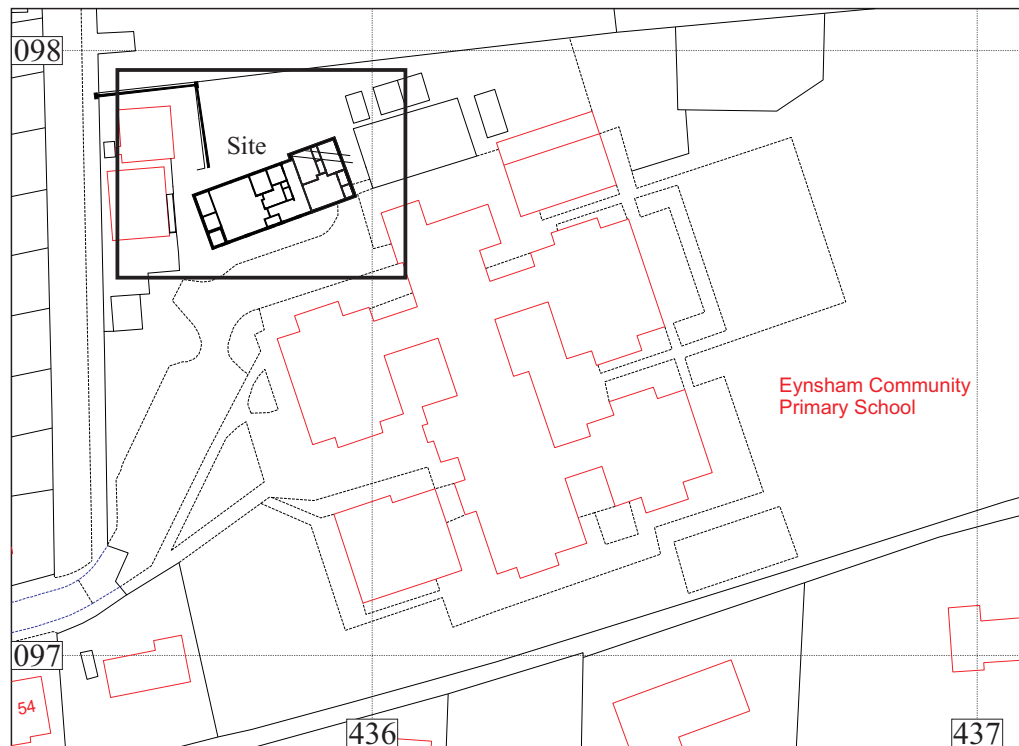
1.2 Planning Background

Oxfordshire County Council granted planning permission for the erection of a new build. Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations on the site. This was in line with PPG 16 (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The village of Eynsham and the immediate surrounding area has seen much archaeological work that has demonstrated that the gravel terrace on which the village stands has extensive human occupation deposits. The remains of a Middle to Late Bronze Age settlement (1300-900 BC) was located under the later site of Eynsham Abbey (Barclay, Boyle and Keevil 2001, 105-162), to the south of the development site. This contained a large central enclosed space constructed in a later phase over an earlier open settlement. To the east of Eynsham a Late-Bronze to Early Iron-Age settlement (900-700 BC) has been excavated at Mead Lane covering an area of 7ha, located on a gravel terrace island, with a further additional 3.2ha of settlement (Hey 2002).

In the Iron Age the main areas of settlement moved to the gravel terraces on the north side of the river Evenlode around Cassington and Yarnton. The main focus of settlement in the Roman period is also in the Cassington area but extended along the Cassington Road into Eynsham. During this period the nature of the settlement in Eynsham is less intensive although material of these periods has been located. In 1935 a Roman coin hoard was found in the village of Eynsham (VCH 1939, 327-8). In 1937, on the adjacent Newland Street, the remains of a ditch were found associated with Roman pottery (Anon. 1938, 167). In the 1950s and 1960s in the Market Garden the remains of a tessellated pavement were dug up (Anon. ND, 1). This has been used to suggest that the village of Eynsham was the location of a villa or a temple complex, as the details described are too imprecise to be definitive. Isolated Roman finds have come from the Nursery Field (Gray and Clayton 1978, 100-122), the Shrubbery (Horne 1995, 51), besides pits and ditches in Eynsham village (Keevil 1995, 10).



Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449

0 50 m



0 25 m

Figure 1. Site location

Perhaps most significantly was the identification of a Roman settlement of an unknown size on the line of the Eynsham by-pass to the east of the primary school (Hassall 1983, 99-156). Some 100m were identified of this settlement near the line of the Eynsham-Cassington Road.

The later site of the village of Eynsham becomes the main focus of settlement in the area in the sub-Roman period of the fifth and sixth centuries AD. The settlement probably continued from that time period to the present day. Several sunken features were excavated in 1938 at Eynsham (Wilson 1976, 419). At New Wintels to the north of the village investigations in the 1950s to 1970s (Clayton 1973, 382-384) uncovered the remains of timber buildings, sunken houses, a shrine, and burials. In the village of Eynsham post-Roman buildings have been identified in Tanner's Lane (Chambers 1976, 355-6), the Shrubbery (Horne 1995, 51), and at Eynsham Abbey (Pike, 1990, 81; 1992, 46-47; 1993, 70).

Historically Eynsham is first referred to in AD 571, when the town is reportedly captured by the West Saxons (Batley 1986, 24). The name has been interpreted as meaning *Ægen's hamm*, a personal name as a pre-fix to a word with the etymology of a water meadow (Gelling 1954, 258-9). The church or minster at Eynsham is first identified in AD 864 when an annual payment of 30s was paid from the estate at Water Eaton to the church of Eynsham (Gelling 1979, no.265). Eynsham Church had its status transformed by decree into a Benedictine Priory in AD 1005 (Salter 1907, no.1). The archaeological evidence shows that the monastery was founded in the Bronze-Age enclosure that presumably acted as the minster's *monastic vallum* (Yeates 2006, 737-51). The archaeology also indicates that a town or village existed on the gravel terrace prior to the establishment of the church, but the settlement continued alongside the monastery. In 1086 the bishop of Lincoln held the estate at Eynsham and the monk Columban from him (Morris 1978, 6.6). Some 15 ½ hides were held by the church of that village, there were 18 ploughs there of which 3 were in lordship. The occupants included 3 men at arms, 34 villagers, and 33 smallholders. The estate contained a mill, 255 acres of meadowland, 100 acres of pasture, and woodland at 1 ½ leagues long. Through the medieval period the abbey would have dominated the development of the economy and subsequent morphology of the village.

The framework for the medieval and modern history of Eynsham is set out in the *Victoria County History* (VCH 1990, 98-115, 120-123, 127-142; Gelling 1954, 260). The town had an early centre around the abbey and market square (as indicated above). This was added to in 1215 with the establishment of a borough at Newland (along the Cassington Road on the east side of the village and to the south of the Primary School site). The village contained an open-field system that was mapped out in 1615. Initial inclosure occurred in 1781, but this was restricted and the majority of inclosure occurred 1800-2.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To identify and record any archaeological and historic remains exposed during the course of building operations or construction works on the site.

In particular:

- To identify evidence relating to the known Anglo-Saxon (early medieval features).
- To identify the remains of Roman occupation identified previously in Eynsham.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) the archaeological advisors to Oxfordshire County Council. 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 and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

A Watching Brief took place in which the remains of any features exposed were mapped and recorded and the associated artefacts collected to provide datable evidence.

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 (Figure 2)

On the site of the new build the topsoil and subsoil were removed to natural and the foundations cut into this. Where the service trenches were excavated, this was to a depth of 0.5m, which did not penetrate the subsoil.

4.1 Iron Age

The natural (103) was a compact orange-brown clay silt containing gravel inclusions at about 15%. The natural had been cut by a linear feature 105, a ditch c. 1.2m wide, of which 8m in length were revealed. The fill (104) was a moderately compact mid brown clay silt with gravel and charcoal inclusions. Pottery recovered from the top of the fill has been ascribed a date between 600 and 300 BC. This deposit was sealed by a layer (102) of moderately compact red-brown clay silt with gravel inclusions that was up to 0.3m deep, which formed the subsoil.

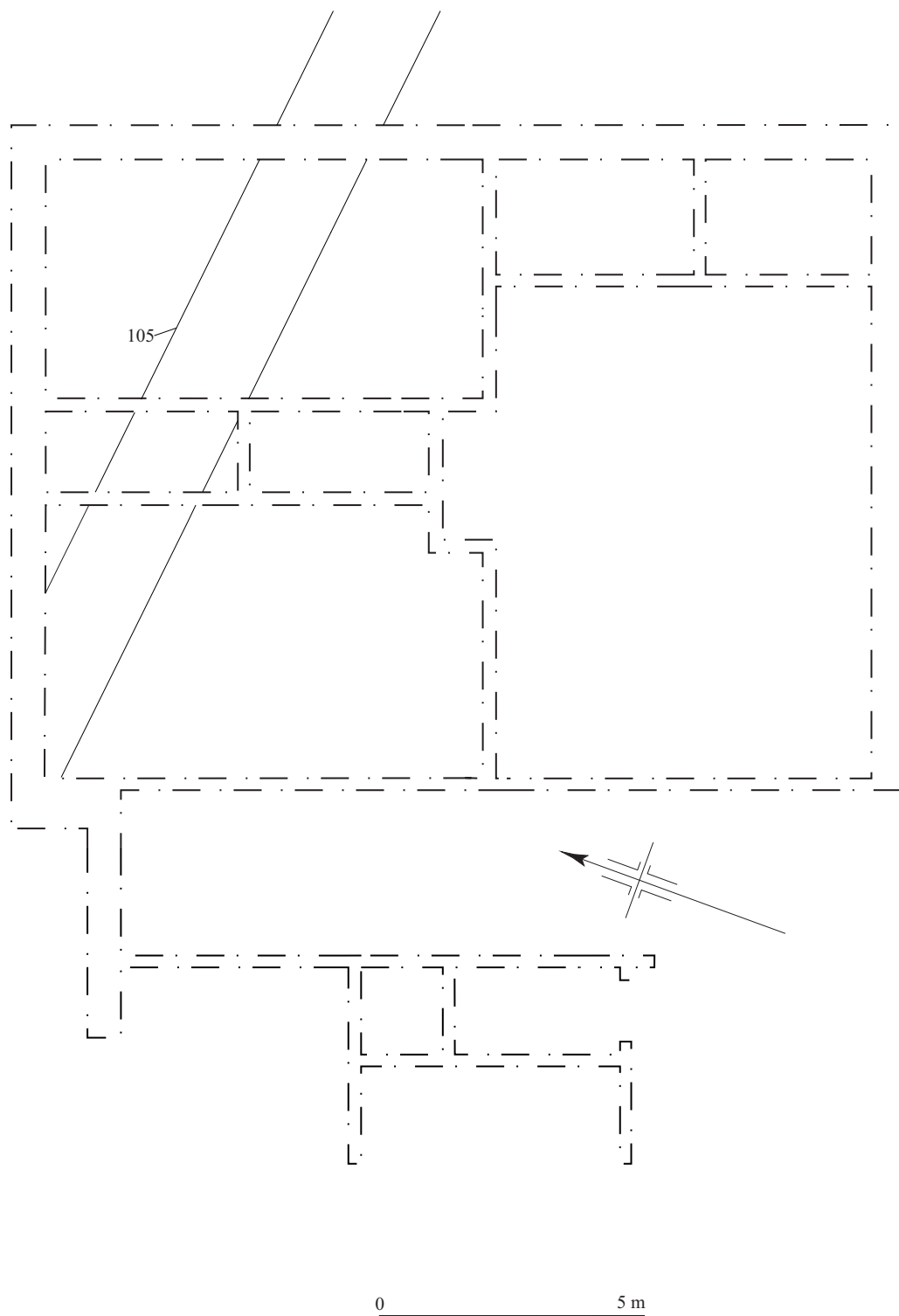


Figure 2. Plan

4.2 Post-Medieval or Modern

Above the subsoil where two deposits (106) and (107) which were similar in their composition comprising of angular limestone fragments measuring about 0.05m across. The features could have had cuts. Feature (106) measured 0.4m across and (107) some 0.6m across with a rough depth of 0.1m. The features only had 0.36m of their length exposed, but they may well be part of two linear deposits of compact stones that could have been stone filled land drains.

These stone features were sealed by a layer (101), a dark red-brown clay silt loam that over much of the site varied in depth from 0.3-0.4m, but in certain locations was only be 0.17m. The topsoil produced a range of ceramic building material and pottery.

4.3 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The excavation of a retaining wall was expected, but John Moore Heritage Services were not informed when this occurred or any change of the plan, hence the delay in the report.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (By Paul Booth)

Four sherds (20 g) of Iron Age pottery were recovered from a single context (104). The sherds were all in slightly different, fairly fine fabrics, but three were principally tempered with quartz sand while the fourth was tempered principally with shell. In this last case sand was the secondary inclusion type, while in two of the other sherds small voids represent leached out material which could have been shell or organic inclusions.

Two of the sand-tempered sherds are decorated, one with closely-spaced oblique fingertip impressions at the shoulder, and the other (weighing only 1 g) with linear incised decoration. Such decorative techniques are more common in the early Iron Age in the Upper Thames Valley, and while the emphasis on sand- rather than shell-tempered fabrics is more characteristic of the middle Iron Age the former did occur quite commonly, particularly as fine wares such as the incised-decorated fragment here. On balance, therefore, an early Iron Age date (perhaps 600-300 BC) may be preferred, but as this conclusion is based on a tiny group of material it can only be regarded as tentative. It should be noted that while the sherds are small they are in reasonable condition and presumably derive from activity of this period in the near vicinity, rather than having seen extensive redeposition.

5.2 Ceramic Building Material

Layer (101), the topsoil, contained 10 pieces of 19th-20th century ceramic building materials weighing 624g.

5.3 Baked Clay

Layer (101), the topsoil, contained 1 piece of burnt clay produced from the base of the deposit, with a total weight of 1g.

5.4 Flint

Deposit (104), ditch fill, produced 1 piece of flint sliver with a total weight of 1g, which could have been worked, but had been heavily damaged post deposition with all indications of working gone.

5.5 Burnt Stone

Layer (101), the topsoil, produced 1 piece of burnt stone with a total weight of 21g. Not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The fieldwork by John Moore Heritage Services recognised the remains of one linear ditch 1.2m wide that was part of a field system associated with one of the less well-represented settlement phases evident in and around the town of Eynsham. The collection of pottery although small is suggestive of a settlement or at least field system in use from 600-300 BC. The pottery sits in a time period between the occupation sites of the large Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age at Mead Lane settlement, 900-700 BC, and the larger Roman settlement located on the line of the Eynsham-Cassington road to the east of the Eynsham Primary School, 1st-4th centuries AD.

There is insufficient evidence to suggest how large or intensive this settlement may be, but it is possible that this feature, due to the complexity of settlements from other periods around Eynsham could be part of a previously unrecognised phase of that parish's settlement.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

Physical record

Findings

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number 2010.12.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anon. N/D *Notes on the History of Eynsham (bound typescript)* Oxford: Local Research Centre Library
- Anon. 1938 Archaeological notes, *Oxonensia* 3, 163-8
- Barclay, A, Boyle, A, and Keevil, G D 2001 A prehistoric enclosure at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, *Oxonensia* 66, 105-162
- Bately, J M 1986 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, volume 3, ms A*, Cambridge: D S Brewer
- Gelling, M 1954 *The place-names of Oxfordshire, part 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Gelling, M 1979 *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley*, Leicester: Leicester University Press
- Gray, M and Clayton, N 1978 Excavations on the site of Eynsham Abbey, 1971, *Oxonensia* 43, 100-122
- Hey, G 2002 *Mead Lane, Eynsham, Oxfordshire, desktop assessment*, Oxfordshire Archaeology Unpublished Report
- Hassall, T 1983 Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit 1982, *South Midlands Archaeology* 13, 99-156
- Horne, B 1995 A review: South Midlands Archaeology, *South Midlands Archaeology* 25, 1-81
- Keevil, G D 1995 *In Harvey's house and in God's house: Excavations at Eynsham Abbey 1991-3*, Oxford: Oxford Archaeological Unit
- Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs
- Morris, J 1978 *The Domesday Book: Oxfordshire*, Chichester: Phillimore
- Pike, A 1990 A review: South Midlands Archaeology, *South Midlands Archaeology* 20
- Pike, A 1992 A review: South Midlands Archaeology, *South Midlands Archaeology* 22, 4-76
- Pike, A 1993 A review: South Midlands Archaeology, *South Midlands Archaeology* 23, 3-88
- Salter, H E 1907 Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham, volume 1, *Oxford Historical Society* 49

VCH 1939 *A History of the County of Oxfordshire, volume 1*, Oxford: The Institute of British History/Oxford University Press

Wilson, D M 1976 *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, London: Methuen

Yeates, S J 2006 *Religion, Community and Territory: Defining Religion in the Severn Valley and adjacent hills from the Early Medieval Period, volume 2, Gazetteer A-G*, Oxford: British Archaeological Reports British Series 411 (ii)