LAND TO THE EAST OF SHRIVENHAM HUNDRED BUSINESS PARK, WATCHFIELD, OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

In February 2001 Cotswold Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation on land to the east of Shrivenham Hundred Business Park, Watchfield, Oxfordshire.

Three trenches were excavated, revealing evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation and a pit/ditch terminus of a linear ditch, as well as a single tree-bole pit. Although dating evidence was very sparse, it is likely that the pit/ditch terminus is of twelfth to fourteenth-century date and the furrows represent a ridge and furrow cultivation system of similar date.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In February 2001, Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) was commissioned by Mr A Twine to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the east of Shrivenham Hundred Business Park, Watchfield, Oxfordshire. The site is centred on NGR SU 2480 9070 (Fig.1).

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken following an approach to the current landowner regarding the possible sale of the study area for the purposes of extending the adjacent Business Park.

1.2 The Study Area

1.2.1 The site is situated on the northern outskirts of Watchfield and comprises a single field currently under pasture. It is bounded to the east by a further field, to the south by Majors Road, to the west by the Shrivenham Hundred Business Park and to the north by the A420 bypass road. The site comprises a total area of approximately 0.70ha.

1.3 Geology and Topography

1.3.1 The underlying geology of the study area is mapped by the Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) (Sheet 253) as clay and limestone of the Jurassic period.

1.3.2 The site slopes slightly from the east, west and north, towards the central southern part of the site and stands at an approximate height of 105m AOD.
1.4 archaeological and historical background

1.4.1 The site lies immediately to the west of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Watchfield Anglo Saxon Cemetery (SAM 20602). The cemetery consists of Anglo Saxon extended and cremation burials. Archaeological excavation immediately prior to the construction of the bypass in 1983 revealed 43 inhumations and two complete urned burials. Associated grave goods were dated to the late fifth and sixth centuries. Geophysical survey undertaken in 1985 indicated the site was part of a large complex of archaeological features extending over at least 3ha (Scull 1990).

1.4.2 Geophysical survey, evaluation and subsequent excavation undertaken to the south of the scheduled monument between 1997 and 1998 identified no further evidence of the Anglo Saxon cemetery. An early and middle Iron Age enclosure was identified, associated with pits, postholes and Iron Age graves. Further to the east a late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement has been identified (Scull 1990).

1.5 methodology

1.5.1 A detailed project design was prepared by Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT 2000) and approved by Mr H Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Council.

1.5.2 A total of three trenches was mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision in the locations agreed by Mr Coddington (see Fig.2). The trenches were all 30m in length and 1.5m wide.

1.5.3 The main objective of the project was to investigate the presence/absence, nature, extent, character, date and preservation of any buried archaeological remains and to make an assessment of their importance.
1.5.4 The work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1994). All identified deposits were recorded in accordance with the CAT Technical Manual 1 *Field Recording Manual* (1996). A full written, drawn and photographic record of the evaluation was compiled and all artefactual material was bagged and numbered with unique numbers relating to the context record. This was done in accordance with the CAT Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (1995).

1.5.5 A monitoring visit was made by Mr Coddington on 16th February 2001.

1.5.6 The completed site archive and the finds, with the legal landowners’ consent, will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service (Accession No. 2001.12).

2. EVALUATION RESULTS

2.1 General

2.1.1 Each trench exhibited a similar stratigraphical sequence; natural clay overlain by a cultivation soil, in turn overlain by topsoil. A series of furrows, indicative of ridge and furrow cultivation, were identified in each trench, cutting the natural substrate.

*Trench 1*

2.1.2 In Trench 1, natural substrate (103) comprising light orange/yellow clay was identified at a general depth of 0.35m below present ground level. It was cut by an irregularly shaped pit [104], containing sterile deposit (105) of orange-brown clay. This feature is interpreted as a tree-bole pit.

2.1.3 In addition, a series of furrows, aligned approximately north/south was identified throughout the trench. Overlying the natural clay substrate and
filling the furrows was a homogeneous deposit of orange-brown clay (102), varying in depth from 0.15m to 0.40m in the base of the furrows, and interpreted as a previous cultivation soil. It was overlain by a mid brown humic loam topsoil, up to 0.20m in depth.

**Trench 2**

2.1.4 In Trench 2, the natural substrate (203) consisted of very light green clay, identified at a depth of 0.50m-0.70m below present ground level. Again, a pattern of furrows was identified throughout the trench cutting the natural clay, however in this trench these were aligned north-east/south-west.

2.1.5 As in trench 1, the furrows were filled, and the natural clay overlain, by the cultivation soil layer as described above. It was noticeable that in this trench, this deposit was substantially deeper than the analogous deposit in Trench 1, with a maximum depth of over 0.75m. As in Trench 1, it produced no dating evidence. It was overlain by a topsoil layer (201), similar to that in Trench 1, however here it contained many large limestone fragments, as well as pieces of tarmac and concrete.

**Trench 3**

2.1.6 The natural substrate in Trench 3 was identical to that in Trench 1. It was identified at 0.25m below present ground level at the north-western end of the trench, dropping to 0.60m at the south-eastern end. Once more, a series of furrows was identified throughout the trench, cutting the natural clay on a north-east/south-west alignment.

2.1.7 A rectangular pit/ditch terminus [304] was identified at the base of a furrow towards the centre of the trench, extending beyond the north-eastern limit of excavation. It contained a single clay fill (305) from which a single sherd of twelfth-fourteenth-century pottery, as well as a small iron nail were retrieved.
2.1.8 As in trenches 1 and 2, the furrows were filled, and the natural clay overlain, by the cultivation soil layer (302), up to 0.50m deep. Two sherds of twelfth to fourteenth-century pottery were recovered from this material, which was in turn overlain by a topsoil layer (301).

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 General

3.1.1 No evidence of the Anglo Saxon cemetery previously identified to the east of the site was identified within the proposed development area. Indeed, the archaeological recording undertaken in 1985 would appear to have identified the western limit of the cemetery approximately 70m east of the current study area (Scull 1990, 51).

3.1.2 Similarly, no evidence for the concentration of probable prehistoric features previously identified by geophysical survey to the east of the site were identified.

3.1.3 The function of pit/ditch [304] remains undetermined. Furthermore, its relationship with the identified ridge and furrow cultivation remains undetermined, with twelfth to fourteenth-century pottery being retrieved from the feature and the overlying cultivation soil. It therefore remains unresolved whether pit/ditch pre or post dates the ridge and furrow cultivation.

4. PROJECT TEAM AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The fieldwork was carried out by Mark Brett and Gail Stoten. This report was prepared by Mark Brett, with illustrations by Peter Moore. The project was managed for CAT by Clifford Bateman.
Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr H Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Council and Mr A Twine for their assistance during the course of this project.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

CAT, 2001  
*Land to the east of Shrivenham Hundred Business Park, Watchfield, Oxfordshire: Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation*

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) (Solid & Drift) 1:63,560
Sheet 253 Abingdon, 1971

IFA, 1994  
*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

Scull, C, 1990  
Fig.1  Location plan
Fig. 2  Trench location plan, showing recorded features
### APPENDIX

#### Context descriptions

**Trench 1**  Present ground level = 103.92m-103.97m AOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context No.</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(101)</td>
<td>&lt;0.20m</td>
<td>Topsoil. Mid brown clay loam with occasional stones. Friable. Modern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>0.20m-0.40m</td>
<td>Mid orange-brown silty clay with very occasional stones and natural flint pieces. Homogeneous. Friable. Contained no dating evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Natural substrate. Light yellow/orange clay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>&lt;0.40m</td>
<td>Irregular pit cut. 1.70m long x &gt;1.15m wide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(105)</td>
<td>&lt;0.40m</td>
<td>Single fill of [104]. Orange-brown clay with occasional organic matter, very occasional lenses of grey clay and natural flint nodules. Friable. Contained no dating evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trench 2**  Present ground level = 104.78m-105.22m AOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context No.</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(201)</td>
<td>&lt;0.25m</td>
<td>Topsoil. Dark brown humic silty clay. Contains very frequent roots and large limestone pieces, and occasional charcoal flecks. Friable. Modern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202)</td>
<td>&gt;0.75m</td>
<td>Mid orange-brown silty clay with very occasional stones and natural flint pieces. Homogeneous. Friable. Contained no dating evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Natural substrate. Very light green clay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trench 3**  Present ground level = 103.68m-104.79m AOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context No.</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(301)</td>
<td>&lt;0.30m</td>
<td>Topsoil. Dark brown humic silty clay. Contains very frequent roots and large limestone pieces, and occasional charcoal flecks. Friable. Modern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(302)</td>
<td>0.25m-0.50m</td>
<td>Mid orange-brown silty clay with very occasional stones and natural flint pieces. Homogeneous. Friable. Contained two sherds of C12th-14th pottery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(303)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Natural substrate. Light yellow/orange clay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(304)</td>
<td>&lt;0.17m</td>
<td>Sub-rectangular feature extending beyond limit of excavation. &gt;1m long x 0.75m wide. Slightly rounded terminus at western end. Gently sloping uniform concave sides. Concave base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(305)</td>
<td>&lt;0.17m</td>
<td>Single fill of [304]. Mid orange-brown clay with occasional stones. Friable. Contained single sherd of C12th-14th pottery and single small iron nail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 2  Trench location plan, showing recorded features
Fig. 1 Location plan
Fig. 2  Trench location plan, showing recorded features