Appendix CH.A04

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Heyford Park
Upper Heyford
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Client: Trench Farrow

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

Heyford Park, Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

Between the 19th and 20th February 2007 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Heyford Park, Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR: SP 504 270) on behalf of Tim Lamacraft of Trench Farrow. The evaluation revealed overall deposits of modern made ground sealing an earlier ploughsoil. In the two northernmost trenches evidence for probable Iron Age ring ditches were exposed below this ploughsoil cut into the underlying natural. There was a good match between the magnetometer anomaly readings from a previous geo-physical survey and features observed within the trenches. However the anomalies were evenly spilt between modern services and archaeological features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 19th and 20th of February 2007, OA carried out a field evaluation at Heyford Park, Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire (Centred on NGR: SP 504 270) on behalf of Tim Lamacraft of Trench Farrow as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be submitted with the planning application to Cherwell District Council. The planning application will relate to the proposals to develop part of the site as new residential accommodation and associated planting and landscaping.

1.1.2 A brief was set by Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS) requesting that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken as part of the EIA (OCAS, 2006).

1.1.3 OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would undertake the required evaluation (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated 18 km north of Oxford and lies within the western edge of the former RAF Upper Heyford Airfield. The development area is currently a mixture of open grassland and concrete/tarmac hardstanding with a small amount of tree planting along the western edge of the perimeter. The site lies at approximately 134 m above OD and the underlying geology is Great Oolitic Limestone (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was prepared for the WSI (OA. 2006) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The site is in an area of archaeological potential. The Roman Road of the *Portway* forms the western edge of the proposal area and the proposed planting is located immediately east of a series of cropmark enclosures known from aerial photographs.

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The area around the far west of the runway was the subject of a field evaluation by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants which located two undated linear features. The area of proposed planting has also been the subject of a geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Limited 2006), which found that some areas of the site recorded modern magnetic disturbance, but other areas appear to contain possible archaeological features.

1.3.3 Aves Ditch, a possible Roman or Early Medieval Road crosses the site towards the eastern side of the airbase and an Anglo Saxon inhumation was recorded within the airfield and along Aves Ditch, although its exact location is uncertain. A probable prehistoric enclosure complex is also known from cropmarks to the immediate north of the site.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 To determine the extent, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of the archaeological remains surviving on the site.

2.1.2 To assess the impact of the development on any significant archaeological remains and assess the need for further mitigation before and/or during construction.

2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The location of the trenches was determined using the available geophysical evidence and the trenches were sited in order to investigate areas of magnetic disturbance (Fig. 2).

3.1.2 The evaluation consisted of three trenches measuring a total of 110 m in length. Trenches 1 and 2 each measured 30 m in length by 2 m wide and Trench 3 measured 50 m in length and was also 2 m wide. The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 2 m wide toothless grading bucket. Excavation proceeded in spits down to undisturbed natural or to the first significant archaeological layer, whichever was encountered first.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The trenches were cleaned by hand, and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve dating evidence. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All trenches and features were photographed using colour

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slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No samples for palaeo-environmental analysis were taken at this stage of the investigation.

3.5 Presentation of results

3.5.1 The results of the evaluation will be detailed on a trench by trench basis followed by an overall discussion and interpretation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located on saturated clay silts resulting in very sticky working conditions. Groundwater was not encountered in any of the trenches.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 Significant archaeological evidence was only encountered within Trenches 2 and 3, at the northern end of the evaluated area.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1

5.1.1 This trench measured 30 m in length by 2 m wide and was aligned north-south. It was sited in order to investigate a magnetic disturbance located during the geophysical survey.

5.1.2 The underlying natural, the weathered top of the Oolitic limestone deposit (13) was encountered at a depth of 0.4 m to 0.5 m below the current ground level (Fig 3, Sections 10 and 11). This was overlaid in areas by lenses of a reddish brown silt clay (14), a natural clay measuring up to 0.1 m in depth. Visible in the surface of 13 were plough marks, probably the result of modern deep ploughing.

5.1.3 Cutting both layer 13 and deposit 14 was an east-west aligned feature measuring 1.2 m across by 0.18 m deep (15) (Section 11). In the form of a shallow wide "V" its profile suggests a probable plough furrow. Filling this feature and sealing the natural

within the remainder of the trench was a layer of dark orange brown clay loam (12) up to 0.35 m deep. This layer contained some charcoal flecking suggesting that it was a layer of ploughsoil. Towards the northern end of the trench this layer had been disturbed by a later intrusion which had also cut into the surface of layer 13. Composed of a dark grey-brown silt clay (16), this deposit measured up to 1.5 m in width and up to 0.25 m in depth and produced much evidence of burning together with modern iron artefacts suggesting that was a modern disturbance.

5.1.4 Overlying 12 and 16 was a layer of grey-brown silt clay (11), measuring between 0.18 m and 0.22 m deep. This layer contained some gravel inclusions and produced fragments of concrete suggesting that it was a layer of modern made ground.

5.1.5 This was overlain by a 0.15 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown clay loam (10), the present day topsoil and turf.

Trench 2

5.1.6 This trench measured 30 m in length by 2 m wide and was aligned north-south. As in Trench 1 it was sited to investigate a positive linear anomaly shown on Area 3 of the geophysical survey. During the course of the excavation two services were encountered running across the trench and the underlying natural was not exposed within these areas.

5.1.7 The top of the underlying natural, composed of weathered Oolitic limestone (23) was encountered at a depth of 0.65 m below the current ground level (Fig. 4, Sections 20 and 21). Cut into this layer were 2 curvilinear features, 25 and 27. Feature 25 measured 0.6 m wide by 0.35 m deep and had steeply sloping sides. It was filled by a brown clay silt (24) which filled it completely and produced 2 fragments of limestone tempered pottery, probably Iron Age in date.

5.1.8 Located approximately 6 m to the north was Feature 27. This measured 0.6 m wide by 0.28 m deep and also had steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled by a brown clay silt (26). When planned these features appear to be part of a circular feature of approximately 6.5 m diameter, possibly a ring ditch.

5.1.9 Sealing these features was a layer of dark brown clay loam (22), 0.3 m deep, containing charcoal flecking. This is a buried soil horizon, probably ploughsoil, and was overlain by a 0.2 m deep layer of grey-brown clay silt made ground (21), containing many lenses of gravel and fragments of limestone. This was overlaid by a layer of dark yellow brown clay loam (20), the present day topsoil and turf.

Trench 3

5.1.10 This trench measured 50 m in length by 2 m wide and was aligned east-west. As in the previous 2 trenches it was sited to investigate a magnetic disturbance. During the course of the excavation a water main and a foul water drain were encountered running across the trench and the underlying natural was not exposed within the vicinity of these services.

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5.1.11 The weathered surface of the underlying Oolitic limestone bedrock (33) was encountered at a depth of 0.3 m below the current ground level at the eastern end of the trench, rising to 0.2 m depth at the western end of the trench. A sondage was dug at the western end of the trench, to determine if this layer was redeposited but the sondage showed it to be a natural deposit in excess of 0.5 m depth.

5.1.12 In approximately the centre of the trench this deposit was cut by a curvilinear feature measuring 0.7 m wide by 0.2 m deep (35), this ran in from the northern bulk of the trench and ran under the area left unexcavated due to the foul water drain. Projection of this feature suggests it was a circular feature of approximately 12 m diameter, probably a ring ditch. This was filled by a light grey-brown clay silt (34) containing fragments of limestone but no dating evidence.

5.1.13 Sealing this feature was a layer of brown clay loam (32) measuring between 0.2 m and 0.3 m in depth. Containing some charcoal flecking this represents an old soil horizon, probably a ploughsoil. Overlying this was a layer of grey-brown silt clay (31) measuring between 0.08 m and 0.12 m in depth. This layer produced many fragments of modern brick suggesting that this is a layer of modern made ground. This was overlain by a layer of grey brown clay loam (30) 0.18 m deep, the present day topsoil and turf.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 Few finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation. Obvious modern finds from the layers of modern made ground were recorded but not retained, whilst only a fragment of modern pottery was recovered from layer 12, a modern iron peg from lens 16 and 2 fragments of Iron Age pottery from fill 24.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 There was a close correspondence between anomalies recorded on the geo-physical survey and features observed within the trenches, suggesting that the results of the survey can be applied to those areas not investigated.

6.1.2 All the trenches came down onto the top layer of weathered bedrock showing that there was no further archaeology sealed below colluviums or alluviums.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 Trench 1 displayed evidence of ridge and furrow sealed by post-medieval disturbances and a layer of made ground, these are probably associated with levelling and landscaping of the airfield.

6.2.2 Within Trench 2 two sides of a ring ditch corresponding with a circular anomaly observed during the geophysical survey were exposed. These produced evidence suggesting an Iron Age date. A negative linear anomaly also observed during the

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geophysical survey corresponded with the location of a service (water) trench. No other archaeological features were encountered. As in Trench 1 a layer of made ground associated with the levelling and landscaping of the airfield was observed.

6.2.3 One side of a probable ring ditch was exposed within Trench 3, this feature was not observed during the geophysical survey, however it is within a region of magnetic debris which may have obscured the feature. A south-west to north-east running linear was also noted during the geophysical survey but was not encountered during the investigation. However when plotted the location of this feature corresponds with an area only partially excavated to the presence of a foul water drain and it is possible that this feature is present in the bedrock below the unexcavated area. As in the previous 2 trenches a layer of made ground associated with the levelling and landscaping of the airfield was observed.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Within the northern extent of the investigated areas significant archaeological features were encountered. Should any further work be undertaken it is recommended that at a minimum a watching brief be undertaken within this area.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench	*Ctxt No*	*Type*	*Width (m)*	*Thick. (m)*	*Comment*	*Finds*	*Date*
1							
	10	Layer	-	0.18 m	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
	11	Layer	-	0.2 m	Modern made ground	-	C20th
	12	Layer	-	0.12 m - 0.35 m	Buried soil horizon, old ploughsoil	Pottery	C20th
	13	Layer	-	> 0.25 m	Natural limestone	-	-
	14	Layer	-	0.1 m	Lenses of natural clay	-	-
	15	Cut	1.2 m	0.25 m	Base of old plough furrow	-	C20th
	16	Layer	2 m	0.25 m	Area of modern disturbance	Iron object	C20th
2							
	20	Layer	-	0.22 m	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
	21	Layer	-	0.2 m	Modern made ground	-	C20th
	22	Layer	-	0.3 m	Buried soil horizon, old ploughsoil	-	C20th
	23	Layer	-	> 0.35 m	Natural limestone	-	-
	24	Fill	0.55 m	0.3 m	Fill of ditch	Pottery	Iron Age
	25	Cut	0.55 m	0.3 m	Southern side of probable ring ditch	-	Iron Age
	26	Fill	0.65 m	0.3 m	Fill of ditch	-	Iron Age
	27	Cut	0.65 m	0.28 m	Northern side of probable ring ditch	-	Iron Age
3							
	30	Layer	-	0.18 m	Modern topsoil and turf	-	C20th
	31	Layer	-	0.12 m	Modern made ground	Brick	C20th
	32	Layer	-	0.15 m	Buried soil horizon, old ploughsoil	-	C20th
	33	Layer	-	>0.5 m	Natural limestone	-	-
	34	Fill	0.7 m	0.22 m	Fill of ditch	-	Iron Age
	35	Cut	0.7 m	0.22 m	Probable ring ditch	-	Iron Age

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APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Archaeological Surveys Limited, December 2006
Geophysical Survey at Heyford Park, Upper Heyford. Client Report for Oxford Archaeology.

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological evaluations*

Oxfordshire Archaeological Service, December 2006
Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation at Heyford Park

OA, 2000 *Oxford Archaeology Environmental Sampling Guidelines*

OA, 2005 *Former RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Plan*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Heyford Park, Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire
Site code: UPHE 07
Grid reference: Centred on SP 504 270
Type of evaluation: 3 machine dug trenches 110 m in total length
Date and duration of project: 19th and 20th February 2007, 2 days
Area of site: 0.24 hectare
Summary of results: All trenches showed evidence of modern made ground and earlier ploughing. The northernmost trenches produced evidence for 2 probable Iron Age ring ditches.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2007.15

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