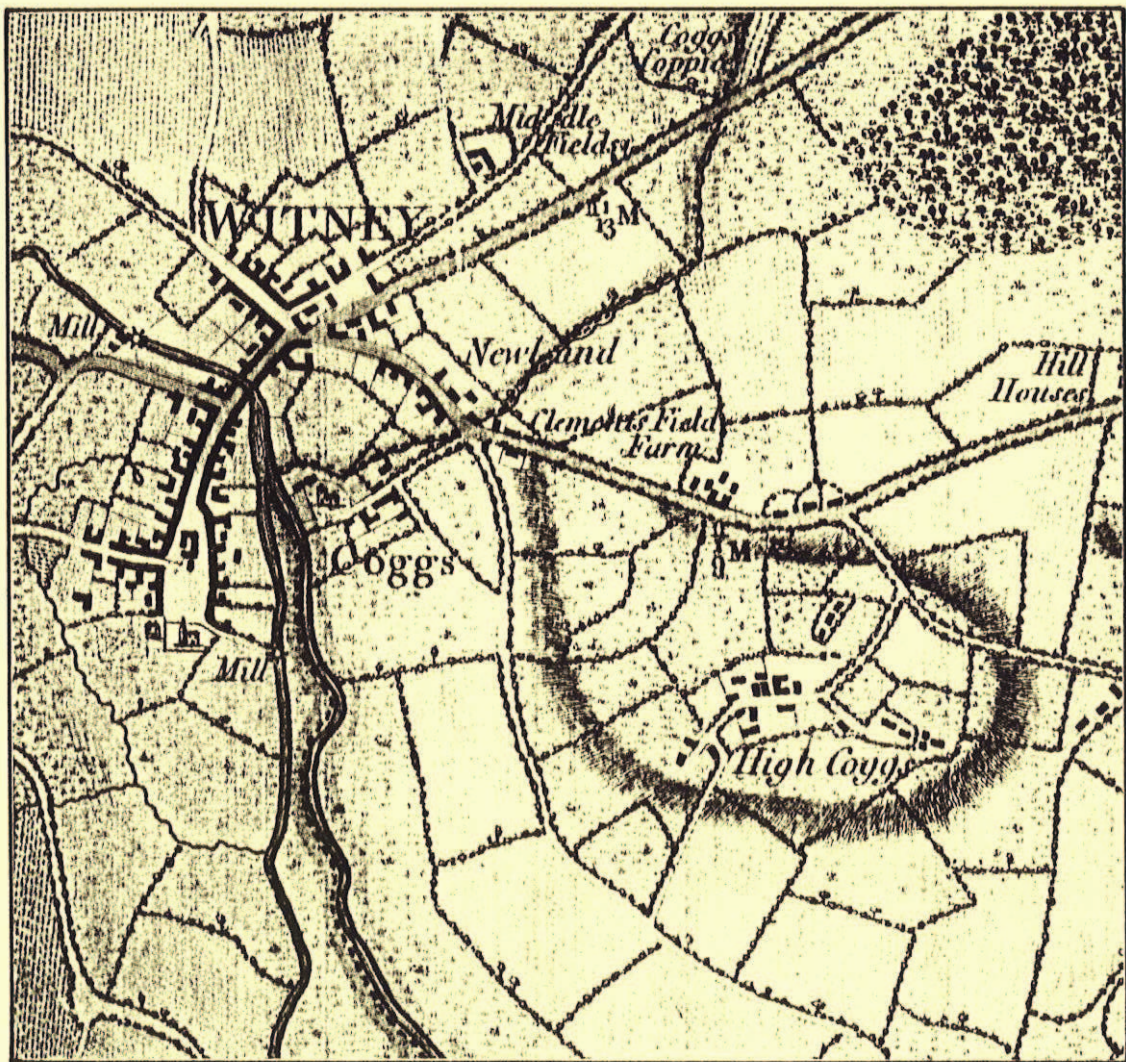


## Witney-Cogges Link Road: Stage 2

### Archaeological Monitoring of Geotechnical Test-pits



Oxfordshire County Council

# **Witney-Cogges Link Road, Stage 2**

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Oxford Archaeological Unit  
September 1994

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## Witney-Cogges Link Road: Stage 2

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#### SUMMARY

*A series of six geotechnical test-pits was dug along the line of the proposed Witney - Cogges Link Road on the 13th September 1994. No archaeological features were encountered in any of the excavated test-pits though the presence of a single Iron Age sherd and a possible worked flint flake within the topsoil of test-pit 5 supports existing evidence for late prehistoric activity in the immediate area.*

#### 1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council (following advice from the County Archaeological Officer) to monitor the excavation of six geotechnical test-pits along the line of the proposed Witney - Cogges Link Road, Oxon. The excavation of the pits was undertaken by Geotechnics Limited on 13th September 1994, and was observed by OAU staff throughout.

#### 2 Archaeological Background

- 2.1 A search of the Oxfordshire County SMR revealed a number of relevant areas of known archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity of the proposed route. These are listed in Appendix A and plotted relative to the test-pit locations on figure 1.
- 2.2 Of particular interest to the current programme of work is the incidence of Iron Age pottery finds in conjunction with daub, limestone and a single struck flint within a linear feature (OAU no.2) exposed during groundwork for housing development at Cogges Hill Road. These finds would appear to indicate later prehistoric activity in the area, though the nature and extent of such activity is not known. Iron Age pottery was also recovered from the line of the Witney bypass (OAU no.3). Test-pits 2 and 6 were thus identified as the areas of maximum archaeological potential.

#### 3 Strategy

- 3.1 The aims of monitoring were as follows:
  - (i) to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains along the line of the proposed route.

- (ii) to establish the character and date of any archaeological remains exposed.
- (iii) to obtain sufficient information to determine a further strategy for evaluation of any archaeological remains exposed.

3.2 The test-pits were machine dug by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with 12" toothed (test-pit 6) and 18" toothless ditching buckets (test-pits 1-5). The test-pits were closely monitored for archaeological features as excavation progressed, and subsequently excavated soil was sifted for artefacts.

## 4 Test-pit Descriptions

### 4.1 *Test-pit 1*

Dimensions: 1.85m x 0.45m x 3.30m deep (maximum)

- 4.1.1 0.25m of mid brown clay loam topsoil (1/1), becoming paler and more clayey with depth and supporting dense grass was removed and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (1/2). The natural was a mid brown silty clay with extensive orange-brown mottling. Below c. 2.00m, lenses of very organic silt were noted with lenses of bright yellow silty sand and occasional ironstone inclusions.
- 4.1.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit and no finds were recovered from the resulting spoil.

### 4.2 *Test-pit 2*

Dimensions: 2.00m x 0.40m x 3.00m deep (maximum)

- 4.2.1 0.25m of mid brown silty clay loam ploughsoil (2/1) was removed and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (2/2). The natural was mid grey-brown clay with extensive orange-brown mottling. Below c. 2.50m large selenite crystal inclusions were noted.
- 4.2.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit and no finds were recovered from the resulting spoil. Surface collection in the immediate area of the pit yielded one Medieval rim-sherd and a fragment of modern land drain.

### 4.3 *Test-pit 3*

Dimensions: 1.90m x 0.50m x 3.00m deep (maximum)

- 4.3.1 0.25m of mid grey-brown silty clay ploughsoil with orange silty sand lenses and 5-

10% fine/medium gravel and flint inclusions (3/1) was removed and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (3/2). The natural was mid grey slightly silty clay with extensive orange-brown mottling and orange silty sand lenses. Below c. 2.50m the natural became dark grey very tenacious clay with frequent small shell inclusions.

- 4.3.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit, while sifting of the spoil from the higher levels yielded a single sherd of Medieval pottery.

#### 4.4 *Test-pit 4*

Dimensions: 1.70m x 0.60m x 3.20m deep (maximum)

- 4.4.1 0.24m of mid orange-brown silty clay topsoil with 10% medium gravel and flint inclusions (4/1) supporting grass was removed and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (4/2). The natural was pale/mid grey tenacious silty clay with extensive orange-brown mottling and orange silty sand lenses, becoming increasingly uniform dark grey-brown with depth. The lower levels of exposed natural were a rich brown organic clayey silt, lamina in nature and containing numerous small shell fossils and occasional large selenite crystal inclusions.
- 4.4.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit, while sifting of spoil from the higher levels yielded a single medieval course base sherd.

#### 4.5 *Test-pit 5*

Dimensions: 2.00m x 0.62m x 3.00m deep (maximum)

- 4.5.1 0.32m of mid orange-brown silty clay topsoil with 15% coarse gravel and flint inclusions (5/1) supporting grass was removed, and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (5/2). The natural was mid grey tenacious silty clay with extensive orange-brown mottling, red-orange silty sand lenses and occasional small ironstone inclusions.
- 4.5.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit. Sifting of the spoil from the higher levels of the pit yielded a single sherd of Iron Age pottery along with a possible struck flint flake, one sherd of Post-Medieval pottery and a small fragment of clay pipe stem.

#### 4.6 *Test-pit 6*

Dimensions: 2.00m x 0.40m x 3.00m deep (maximum)

- 4.6.1 0.30m of pale/mid orange-brown silty clay topsoil with 10-15% coarse gravel and

flint inclusions (6/1) supporting grass was removed, and was found to directly overlie undisturbed natural (6/2). The natural was mid grey tenacious silty clay with extensive orange-brown mottling, orange sandy lenses and occasional small ironstone inclusions. With depth the clay became more friable and increasingly uniform grey in colour. Below c. 2.50m numerous large selenite crystal inclusions were noted.

- 4.6.2 No archaeological features were identified during the excavation of the test-pit, while sifting of spoil from the higher levels yielded a single sherd of Post-Medieval pottery.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The presence within test-pit 5 of a single sherd of Iron Age pottery along with a possible struck flint flake, taken in conjunction with the known Iron Age activity in the area (see 2.2 above) indicates that the northern section of the proposed Witney-Cogges link road route passes through an area of late prehistoric activity. To define the extent and nature of this activity is not within the scope of the current programme of ground investigations.
- 5.2 The low density Medieval and Post-Medieval background pottery scatter is consistent with manuring debris and as such does not constitute a significant factor to be considered within a further programme of archaeological evaluation.

Ric Tyler  
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 15th September 1994

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## Appendix A

### Gazetteer of known archaeological activity in vicinity of test-pits

OAU no.	SMR PRN	Grid Reference	Brief Description
1	11415	SP 3675 0970	Medieval seal: iron coated with bronze - found during clearance for housing development.
2	11547	SP 3675 0970	A 3.5m section of linear ditch yielded pottery of Iron Age date in conjunction with animal bone, burnt daub, limestone and a single flint scraper.
3	4487	SP 3690 0897	Several sherds of very abraded Iron Age courseware pottery - recovered on the line of the Witney bypass.
4	4488	SP 3690 0897	Several sherds of abraded Medieval pottery - recovered on the line of the Witney bypass.



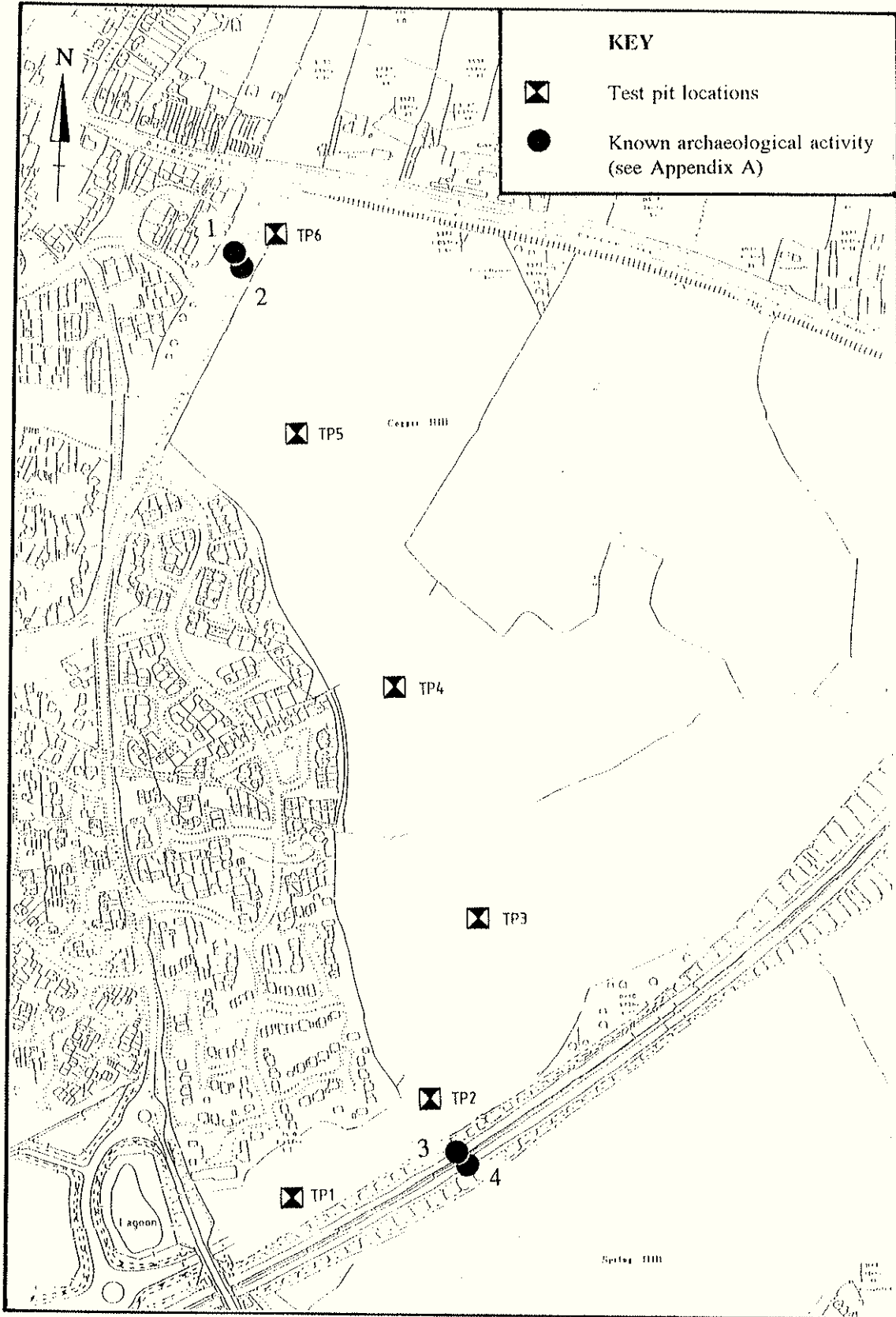


Fig. 1: Location of Geotechnical Test-pits and known archaeological activity

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