

Cedar Hall Farm Church Lane Aborfield Reading



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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**Cedar Hall Farm,
Church Lane, Aborfield, Reading, Berkshire**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: Stripping of site viewed from the south-east.

SUMMARY

In August and September 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Cedar Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire (NGR 7556 6861). The work was commissioned by ATSS in advance of the construction of new farm buildings and small containers for farm waste. An early Iron Age boundary ditch and a burnt out root hole were observed during the ground works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August and September 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Cedar Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by ATSS in respect of a planning application for the construction of new farm buildings and small containers for farm waste (Planning Application No. F/2004/1791).
- 1.1.2 A condition for a watching Brief has been attached to planning permission by Fiona Macdonald, the Principal Archaeologist for Wokingham District Council (WDC 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2004).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Cedar Hall Farm is located at Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, (NGR SU 75566861). Arborfield is located close to the south of Reading itself.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 50 m OD and the underlying geology bounds both the London Clay and Bagshot Beds (Institute of British Geological Sciences Ed. 1979, Sheet 268).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2004) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site is located in an area of some archaeological potential. Several prehistoric sites containing features relating to agriculture and settlement have been found nearby to the south-east, north-east and south-west of the proposed development. It is possible that the intrusive groundwork associated with the construction of the new structures could potentially disturb prehistoric features.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of the development.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site was reduced to a set level with a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The site was then filled with stone and compacted, and the trenches for the buildings foundations were excavated to depth. This was carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 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 excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Within the central and north-eastern area of the site the ground works cut through a natural ridge running north-west to south-east across the site. This was composed of clay mottled with light brown and orange sand (3). Within the centre of this area a thin linear (4) measuring 8.40 m long by 1.1 m wide and 0.26 m deep was exposed cutting into the natural (Fig. 2). This was aligned north-east/south-west and excavation showed that it had sloping sides and a concave base which tapered off at each end where it had been ploughed away (Fig. 3, Plan 3b and section 1). It was filled by a compact light reddish brown silty sand (5) containing charcoal and two fragments of pottery. To the north-east of the ditch a burnt out root hole (7) was exposed during the excavation of the foundation trenches, also cut into the top of the natural. It measured 0.7 m by 0.55 m by 0.26 m deep with an uneven concave profile (Fig. 3, plan 3b) and was filled by a light grey silty sand (7) with patches of charcoal and reddish sand. Sealing these features was a 0.28 m thick layer of very dark reddish brown silty sand loam (2), a layer of earlier plough soil. This was sealed below a 0.23 m deep layer of dark greyish brown silty sand loam (1), the present day topsoil.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 Two small fragments of pottery was recovered from ditch fill (5) and these were dated to the early Iron Age period.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed the remains of a field boundary ditch dating from the early Iron Age, but this had been badly truncated by modern ploughing across the site. The presence of a burnt out root hole suggests possible land clearance at some time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.23 m	-	-	Topsoil	-
2	Layer	0.28 m	-	-	Old plough soil	-
3	Natural	> 0.38 m	-	-	Natural	-
4	Cut	0.26 m	1.1 m	8.4 m	Probable early Iron Age boundary ditch	-
5	Fill	0.26 m	1.1 m	8.4 m	Fill of ditch	Pottery
6	Cut	0.38 m	0.55 m	0.7 m	Root hole	-
7	Fill	0.38 m	0.55 m	0.7 m	Fill of root hole	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2004 *Cedar Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire Written Scheme of Investigation*

WDC 2004 *Cedar Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading: Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Cedar Hall Farm, Church Lane, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire

Site code: ARBCH 04

Grid reference: NGR SU 7556 6861

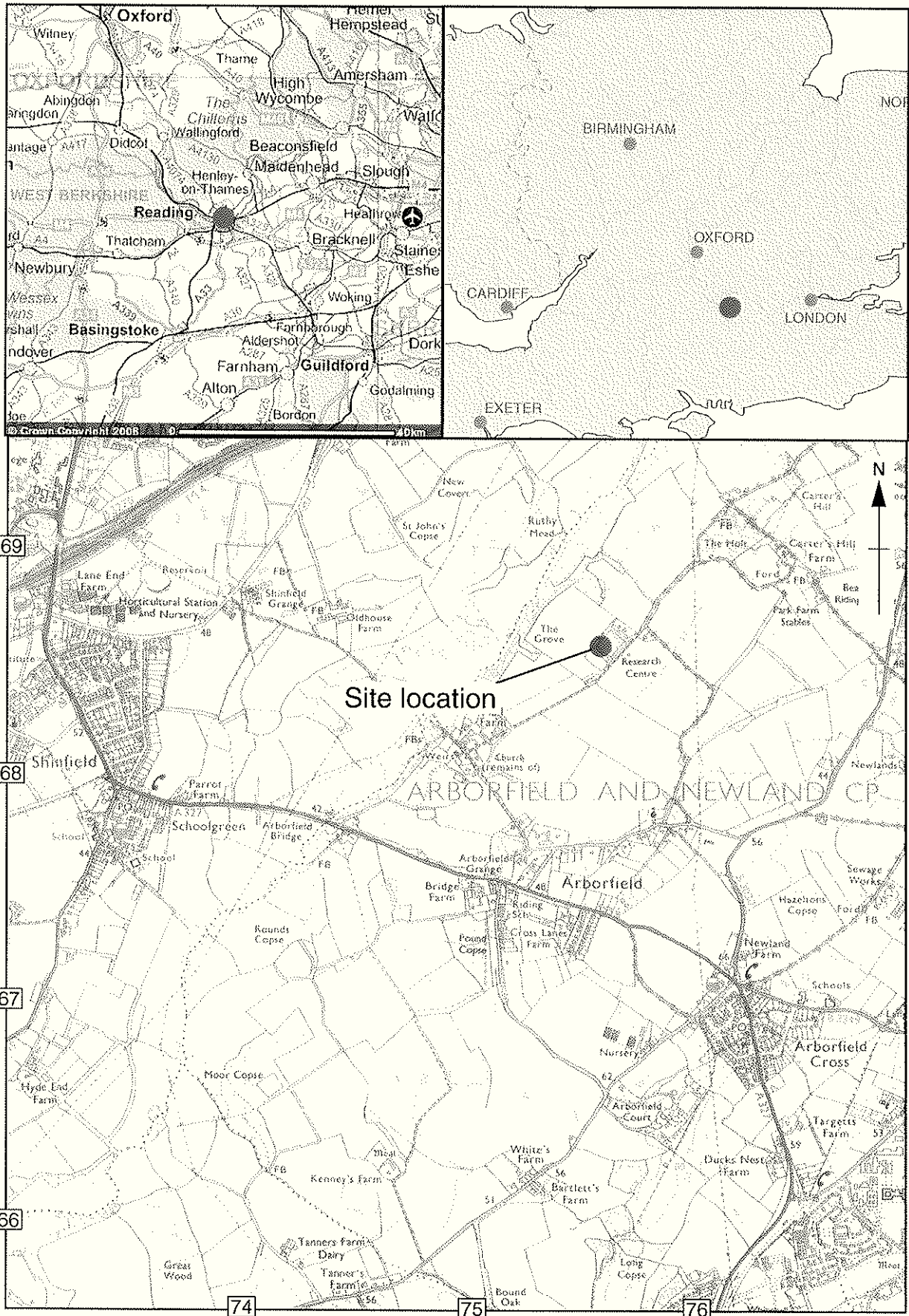
Type of watching brief: Ground works for new farm building and containers for farm waste.

Date and duration of project: Between 13.08.04 to 25.10.04, 8 site visits

Area of site: 170 m x 56 m

Summary of results: An early Iron Age boundary ditch and a burnt out root hole were observed during the ground works.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG 2004.69



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Location of area of new buildings

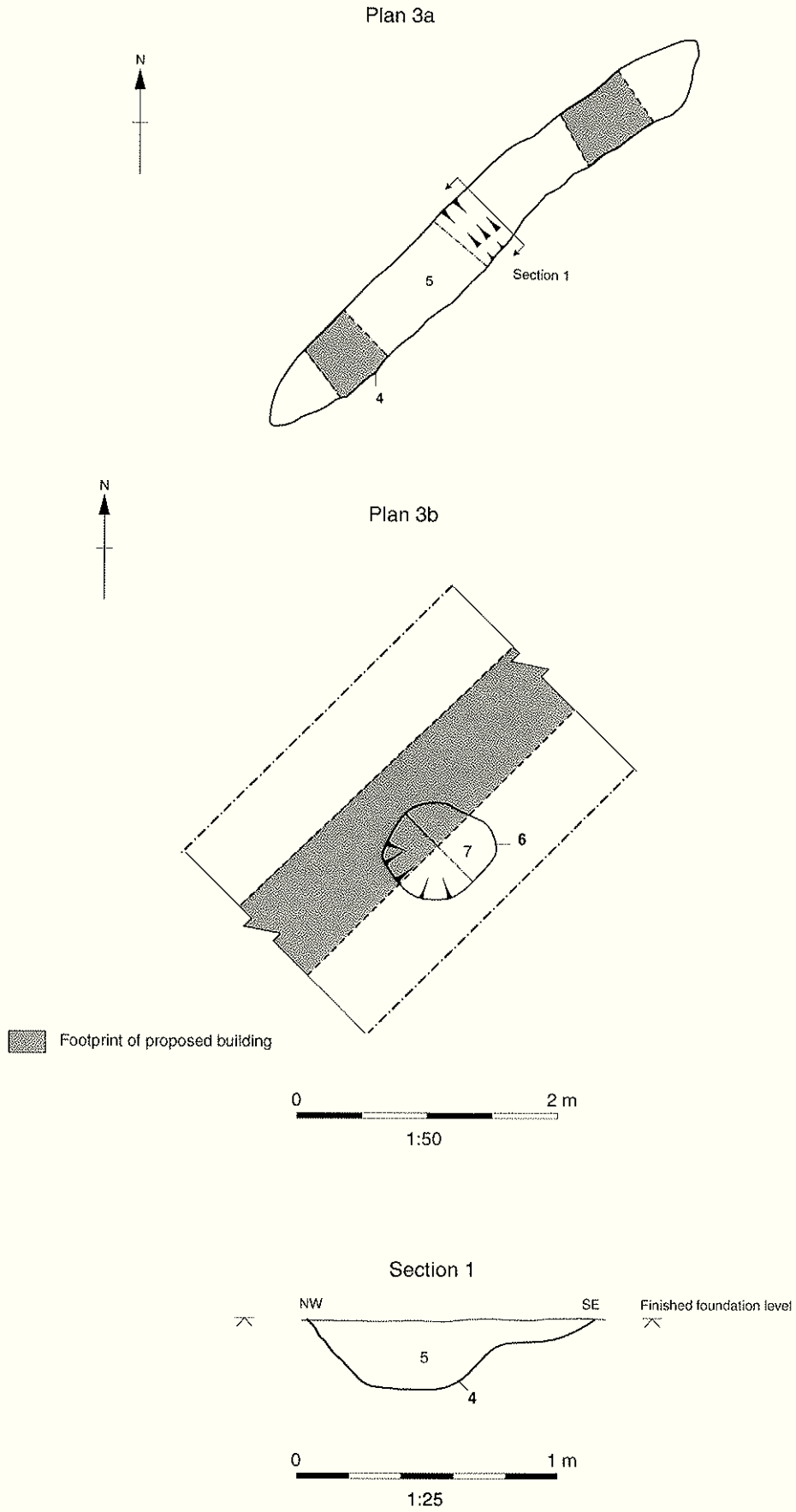


Figure 3: Feature plans and section



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