

Skimmingdish Lane  
Bicester  
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report**



**Oxford Archaeology**

June 2004

**Client: LBH Wembley**

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## SUMMARY

*In May 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 593 242). The work was commissioned by LBH Wembley in advance of test pits prior to development on the site. The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits within the test pits.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In May 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by LBH Wembley in respect of test pits prior to development on the site.
- 1.1.2 A watching brief was requested by Hannah Fluck, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, due to presence of archaeology on the site.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at approximately 80 m OD and is 0.4 hectares in area. The geology is Cornbrash although close to the junction with the Oxford Clays. The site currently is an area of open waste ground.

### 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 An evaluation by TVAS in 2000 revealed that much of the site had been truncated by construction of the sewage works that previously occupied some of the site. The area in the north-east corner of the site revealed evidence of surviving features dating to the early Roman period. These features were characterised by a number of ditches and a series of pits, post-holes and gullies and may be the remains of a Late Iron Age enclosure settlement that had continued in use into the early Roman period.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The test pits were spread out across the site to test soil conditions and three were for soil drainage. The pits were excavated using a JCB with a 1 m wide toothless bucket. The works were carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Test pits 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 3 (Fig. 2)*

- 3.1.1 These test pits were excavated in the north-west corner of the site and measured between 3 m - 3.6 m long, 1 m wide and between 1.65 m - 1.2 m in depth. The test pits cut into the natural (4) of blue clay with gravel, overlying the limestone brash. Sealing this was a 0.2 m thick layer of dark yellowish brown silty clay sub soil (5). This was sealed below a 0.10 - 0.15 m thick layer of dark brown silty sand topsoil (3) (Fig. 3, section 2).

#### *Test pits 6, 7, 8 and 2 (Fig. 2)*

- 3.1.2 These were in the south-west corner of the site and measured between 3.5 m - 3m in length, 1 m wide and between 2 m - 1.45 m in depth. Only test pits 6 and 7 cut into the natural (4), with test pits 8 and 2 exposing the concrete base of the filter beds from the old sewage works. In test pit 7 this was overlain by sub soil (5), which was sealed below a demolition layer (6) from the old sewage works, which was observed in all of the test pits. The demolition layer was sealed below a 0.2 m thick of modern very dark grey brown silty sand topsoil (1).

#### *Test Pits 1, 4 and 5 (Fig. 2)*

- 3.1.3 These three test pits were in the north-east corner of the site. Test pit 1 was larger than the others as it was used for a water test on site. It measured 2.8 m x 3 m x 1.8 m and the other two test pits measured 3.5 m long x 1 m wide and 1.45 in depth. The test pits all cut into the natural (4), which was sealed below a 0.25 m thick very dark brown silty sand old topsoil (3). Overlying this topsoil layer was a 0.45m 0.5 m thick layer of light brown silty sand with a large number of limestone fragments (2). This was interpreted as re-deposited material, possibly from excavations to the west of the site. Layer 2 was sealed below a 0.2 m thick layer of modern very dark grey brown silty sand topsoil (1) (Fig. 3, section 1).

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

### 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 test pits did not reveal any archaeological deposits or features within the test pits, but did expose the buried topsoil along the north-east corner of the site. Also the thick layer of material from the old sewage works in the south-east corner of the site after it had been demolished and levelled out over the area of the sewage works. The area to the north-east of the site had been levelled out (using material taken from the hollow) for the flood relief and overflow from the new road and housing estates to the south and west of the site.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.20 m			Modern topsoil	
2	Layer	0.45 m			Rubble spread	
3	Layer	0.25 m			Old topsoil	
4	Natural				Cornbrash	
5	Layer	0.20 m			Sub soil	
6	Layer				demolition layer	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2004 *Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire* Written Scheme of Investigation

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

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** BISKIM 04

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 593 242

**Type of watching brief:** Monitoring of test pits.

**Date and duration of project:** One visit on the 19th May 2004.

**Area of site:** 120 m x 160 m

**Summary of results:** The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits within the test pits.

**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 2004.63





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Figure 1: Site location



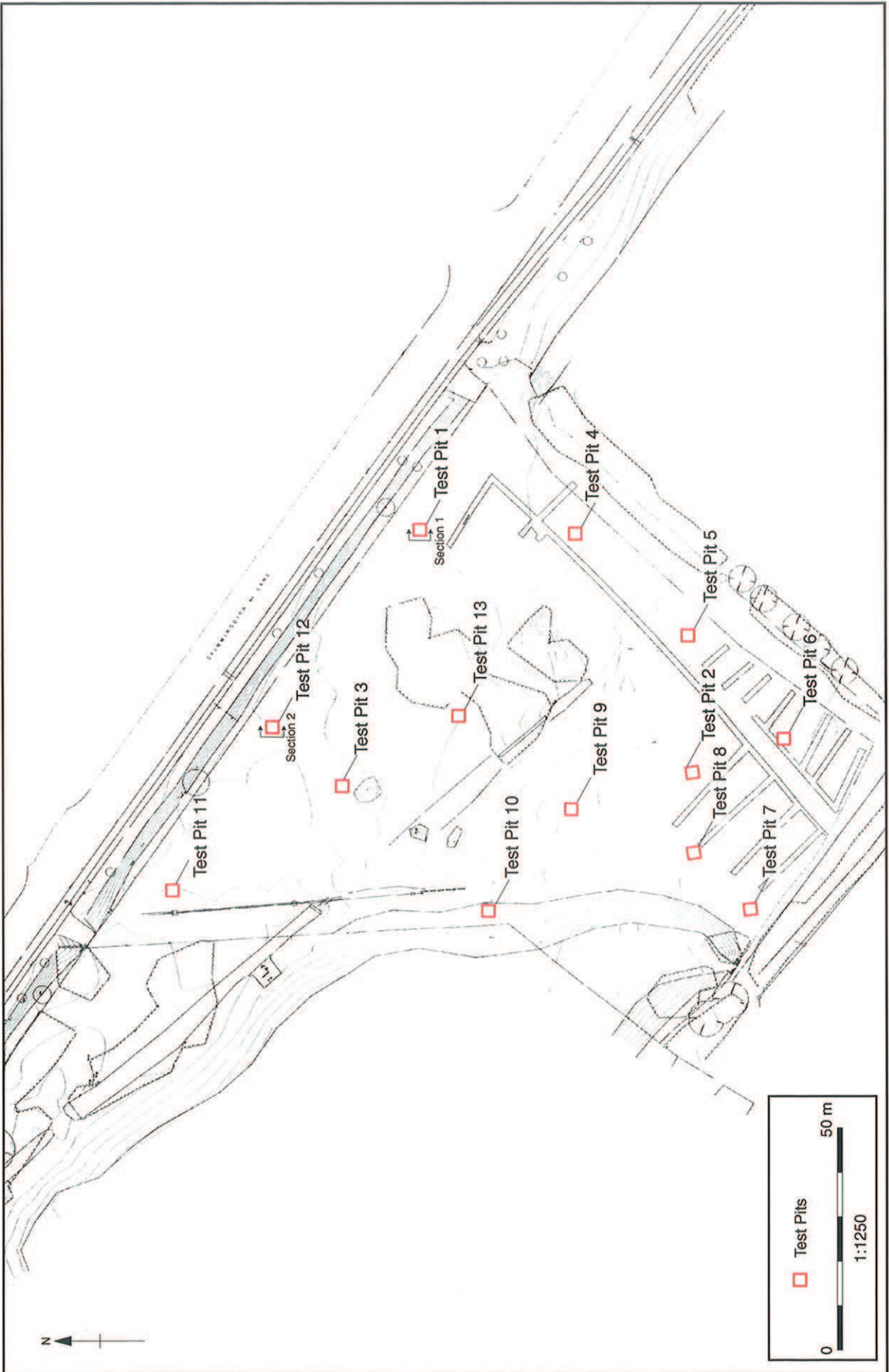


Figure 2: Site Plan of Test Pits

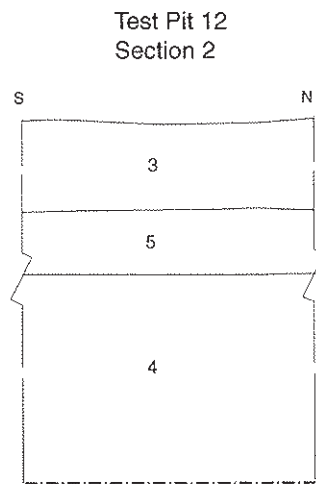
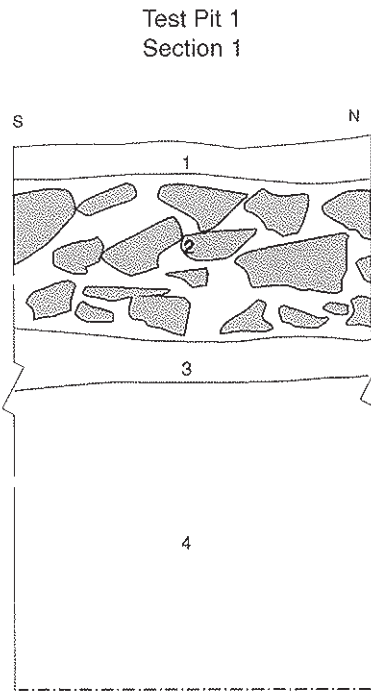


Figure 3: Sections



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