

LAND NORTH-WEST OF DUNMORE ROAD, ABINGDON, OXON
TILSLEY PARK SPORTS AND LEISURE COMPLEX
NGR SU 4945 9930

1. SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) maintained a watching brief during the construction of a new sports and leisure complex, on the outskirts of Abingdon, during 1995. No archaeological features or finds were discovered.

2. INTRODUCTION

The development area is located between Dunmore Road and the A 34 on the north-west side of Abingdon. The total area under development is approximately 16.2 hectares. Currently the land is used for floodholding and is an open area of grassland. Before 1993 the land was used for agriculture.

In September 1994 a planning application to develop the land for sporting/recreational use was submitted to the Vale of the White Horse District Council by that body. In accordance with PPG16, a condition was attached to the granted permission for an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the works. The main site contractors were Bolton Construction Ltd. of Buxton.

Site visits were made upon consultation with the contractors, and timed to coincide with the groundwork.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A cremation pit of unknown prehistoric date was discovered c 400 m N of the proposed development on the W edge of a pipeline easement in 1991. Medieval and Roman pottery scatters were also found during the pipeline construction, on the eastern margin of the proposed development area. During the early part of 1995 the OAU excavated a multi-period site c 1.5 km to the SW of the present development (Abingdon Business Park, Wyndyke Furlong). Significant pre-historic, Roman And Saxon remains were discovered. The continuity of activity on that site suggests that it was a significant focal point in the landscape.

The site lies on the junction of Kimmeridge Clay and Corallian beds. The underlying geology is cornbrash limestone and 1st terrace gravels. The geological horizon lies at approximately 65 m O.D.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE

The proposed development consists of a sports running track and grandstand, two synthetic football pitches, one grassed football pitch, a bowling green, an indoor rink and a car park for 200 cars and 8 coaches.

The car park area of the site was reduced from the present ground level by a maximum

of 0.95 m. Roads on the site generally were set at a depth of not more than 0.25 m below the present ground level. The running track and grandstand were set on a raised, landscaped bund of earth, c. 1.75 m above the general ground level. A bowling green surface is to be constructed on a geo-textile base, with no reduction in the ground level.

The area of land affected by the development had been previously landscaped, and its surface was not level. Dumping was probably carried out at the time of the construction of a nearby housing estate in the late 1980's.

5. RESULTS

Stripping of topsoil and overburden was carried out with 360° Hymac excavators.

The stripped area of the car park was monitored on two occasions. The conditions were generally good, although damp underfoot, and enough of the site was visible to determine the presence/absence of features and finds. A drawn record was made of a section of the side of the excavation area. No archaeological features were observed on the ground or in the sections of the excavation area. A large modern field drain was exposed by the contractors, and was made secure by the contractors by encasing it with concrete blocks.

Topsoil stripping for the 2 football pitches situated to the west of the car-park area was monitored on three occasions. Weather conditions were good. The stripping occasionally exposed patches of natural subsoil [layer 2], however no features or finds were observed. The depth of the topsoil was generally 0.25 m.

Where exposed the natural [layer 1] lay 0.72 m below the present ground level. The natural consisted of grey-white sandy gravel, with occasional outcrops of limestone cornbrash. Thereafter a similar series of silty clay layers [see table] had accumulated. Topsoil [5] was a loose, crumbly silty loam.

Access road depths only impinged on the topsoil. The running track was located in a part of the site where the natural [layer 1] was overlaid by a considerable depth of silty clay layers (observed in the cutting at the edge of the car park area - see above) and lies c. 3 m above the natural.

6. CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features were noted and no finds of any period were recovered.

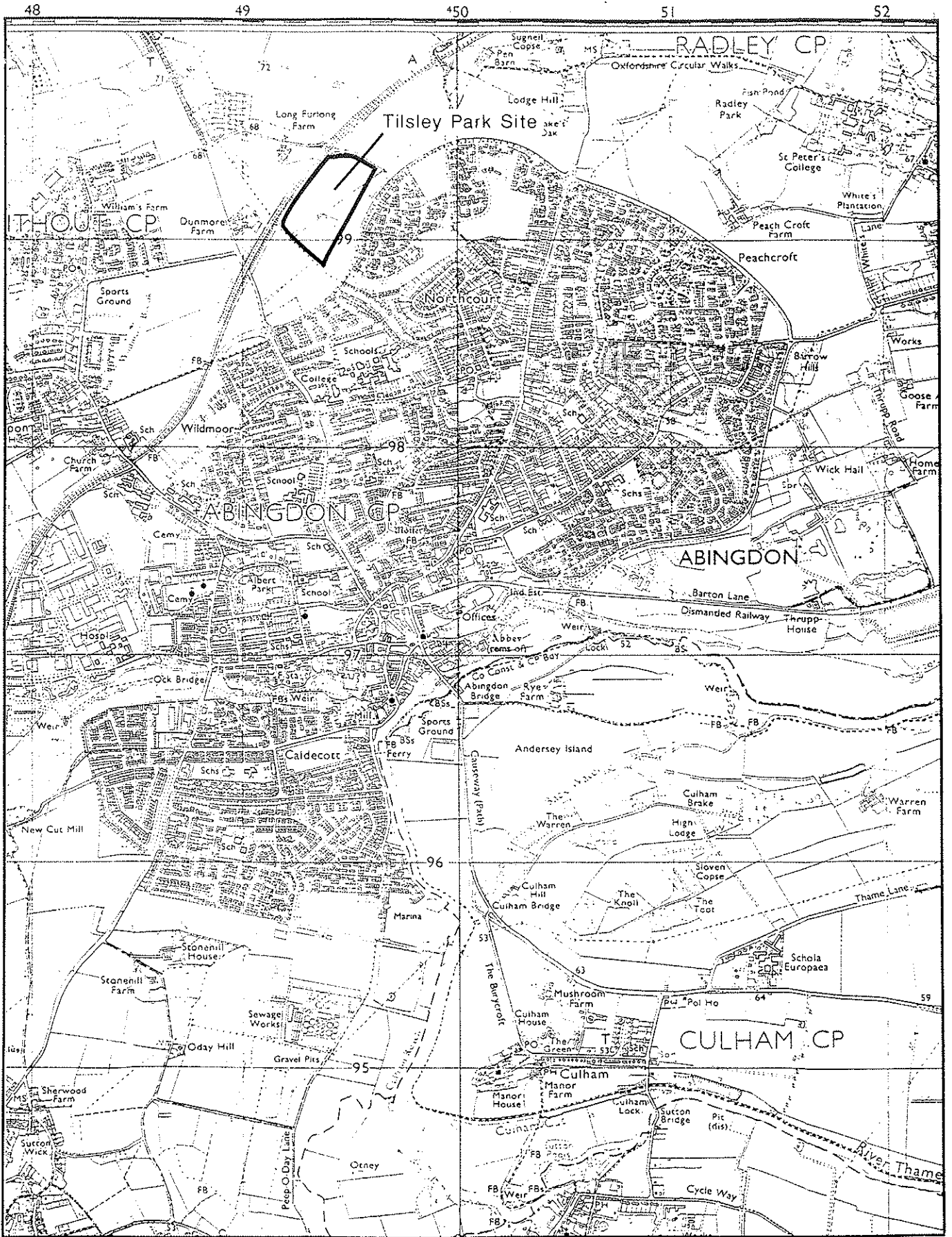
The silty clay layers [2, 3] present on the site are colluvial deposits, probably derived from hillwash into a natural hollow.

The site had clearly been recently landscaped. This probably consisted only of superficial dumping with no archaeological implications. The current development would in part have destroyed archaeological deposits had these been present, but there is no evidence that this was the case. Elsewhere, eg in the running track area, any existing deposits will have been sealed and preserved in situ.

TABLE OF CONTEXT INFORMATION

CONTEXT	TYPE	COMMENTS
1	LAYER	NATURAL, GRAVEL/LIMESTONE CORNBRASS, UNDER 2
2	LAYER	YELLOW-BROWN SILTY CLAY AND GRAVEL-SUBSOIL, UNDER 3
3	LAYER	TENACIOUS YELLOW-BROWN SILTY CLAY, COLLUVIUM, UNDER 4
4	LAYER	GREY-BROWN SILTY CLAY, COLLUVIUM, UNDER 5
5	LAYER	TOPSOIL, OVERLIES 4

J. Hiller
OAU
April 1995



Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:25000 map of 1992 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright