

RM.CHS.501 (89) 3 - BICESTER 'HAPPY EATER' FORTE DEVELOPMENT
WATCHING BRIEF
NGR SP 5722
COUNTY: OXON

A watching brief was maintained by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at the above site during March 1994. The development involves construction of a Happy Eater restaurant, car park, petrol station and access roads.

Background

The area of development lies near the junction of the A421 Oxford Road and the Bicester By-Pass, to the south of Bicester. The site lies at 69 m O.D. and comprises 0.38 hectares. In recent years it has been in arable cultivation. Fine loam soil supports the current grass crop, the soil overlies sandy clay and Jurassic Cornbrash limestone.

The development area lies close to the line of the Alchester-Towcester Roman road and recent fieldwork 500 m to the east identified Romano-British occupation evidence. The extra-mural suburbs of the Roman walled town of Alchester lie c. 1 km to the south, near which evidence of Iron Age occupation was also discovered. Crop marks suggestive of ditches or trackways (PRNs 5632, 112114), of uncertain date, lie to the west of the development area.

Results

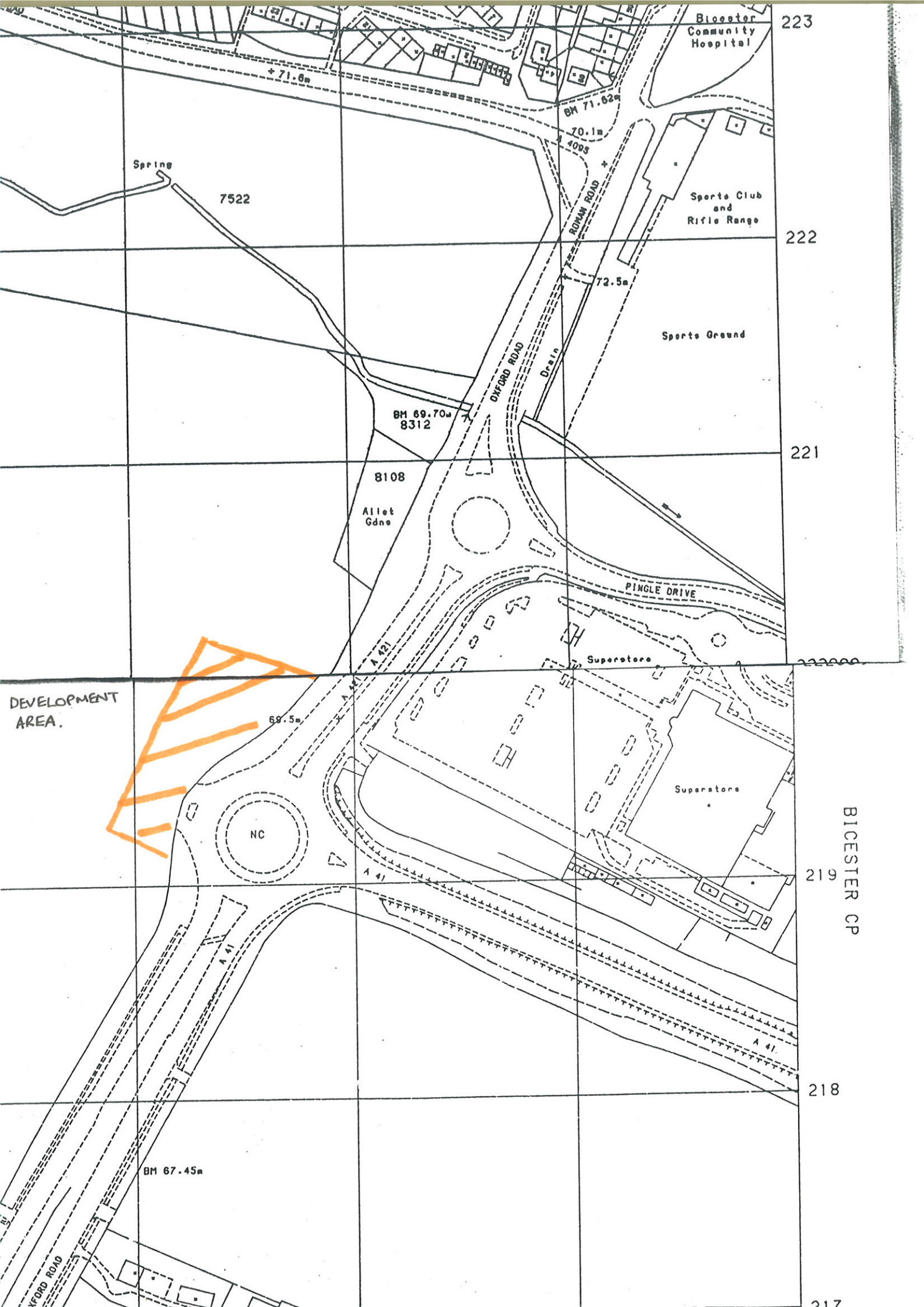
Stripping of c. 0.30 m of topsoil onto the interface between a former ploughsoil and natural clay and cornbrash was monitored on 3.3.94. No features were observed. Foundation trenches for the restaurant were cut by a JCB to a depth of 0.90 m through natural subsoil and cornbrash. No features were seen in the trench sections, and these were immediately filled with foundation material. Careful monitoring of the spoil heaps produced mostly modern finds. These amounted to three fragments of pottery and five of tile. A single sherd of Roman pottery, of colour-coated ware from an unknown (non-Oxfordshire) source, was recovered. This was probably of 3rd-4th century date.

The site was also examined informally by a member of the Oxford Metal Detector Society. Material collected by this individual was submitted to the OAU for examination. It consisted of 21 sherds of pottery (6 possibly Roman - 1 reduced and 5 oxidised coarse ware fragments; 2 medieval and 13 post-medieval), 18 pieces of brick and tile (all post-medieval) and 43 metal items. These last included a single Roman coin (GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 standards) dated c AD 330-335) and a very worn and pierced hammered coin, possibly of Elizabeth I. The remainder of this material consisted of three tokens and miscellaneous copper alloy and lead objects and fragments of post-medieval date. These finds amplify the range of material noted in the watching brief, but indicate precisely the same minimal level of Roman activity and a concentration of unstratified post-medieval objects.

Comments

No features were encountered in the stripped area. The very limited Roman finds confirm the nearby presence of Roman occupation, though not specifically on this site.

Jonathan Hiller
Oxford Archaeological Unit
March, 1994



Blosser
Community
Hospital

223

7522

Spring

Sports Club
and
Rifle Range

222

Sports Ground

BM 69.70
8312

BM 71.62

221

8108

Allot
Gdno

PINGLE DRIVE

Superstore

222000

DEVELOPMENT
AREA.

69.5m

NC

Superstore

BICESTER CP

219

218

BM 67.45m

217