

# Summerfield Children's Home Wootton Road, Abingdon

Archaeological Watching Brief

NGR SU 4935 9766

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

February 1995

**Summerfield Children's Home**

**Wootton Road, Abingdon**

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## SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a Watching Brief at the site of Summerfield Children Home, Wootton Road, Abingdon. There were no significant archaeological deposits, the site contained substantial modern disturbance due to construction of the adjacent college building.

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 1995 a Watching Brief was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Walkplace Ltd, in respect of construction of a Children's Respite Centre. The site lies to the North of Abingdon, at grid reference SU 49359766.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig.1)

The site lies in an area which has proved to be rich in archaeological remains. In particular there is evidence of extensive prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity on the adjacent gravel terraces.

Directly to the West of the proposed development are various archaeological features that have been identified as cropmarks through aerial photography (Benson and Miles, 1974). Although no field work has been undertaken they appear to be circular enclosures/barrows and probably of Bronze Age origin.

Abingdon town centre to the E overlies a Late Iron Age oppidum or defended market. The defensive bank and ditch of the settlement were slighted and a Roman villa was built on the E edge of the settlement. Roman material has also been found under Abingdon school to the W of the defences (T.G. Allen pers.comm). A small Roman cemetery has been located 200m S of Ashville Trading Estate.

Abingdon has Early Saxon cemeteries and settlements around it. A Middle to Late Saxon settlement is known from the town centre. Saxon cemeteries lie to the N and S of the River Ock.

### Topography

The site lies on the West side of the Wootton Road at a height of 58 metres O.D. The current use is a Childrens Home with garden. The geology is second terrace gravel overlying Kimmeridge Clay.

## FIELD STRATEGY

The development took the form of topsoil stripping followed by the machining of foundation trenches. The field strategy was to identify and record significant deposits prior to machining.

The archaeological features encountered were sampled by hand to determine their nature and to recover artefacts in order to date the activity. The features were planned at 1:100 and their sections at a scale of 1:20.

## **RESULTS**

### **Archaeology (Fig 2.)**

The stripped area showed even stratigraphy across the site, which contained significant modern disturbance. A land drain running approximately N/S on the eastern edge of the site truncates the only archaeological feature present; a large flat bottomed ditch (1/12) aligned NE/SW some 4.0 metres wide. Large quantities of animal bone were recovered upon sampling.

The stratigraphy consisted of natural gravel overlain by a possible ploughsoil of a silty loam composition, which contained post-medieval pottery and tile. This was covered by modern dumping and sealed by a loam topsoil.

A large proportion of the site was covered in a large gravel dump, presumably construction debris from the erection of the college building adjacent to the site. The gravel was dumped directly onto the possible ploughsoil (1/4). The area beneath the mound was not uncovered, the foundations were placed through the gravel and subsequent soil horizon under archaeological supervision. The nature of the foundations meant that large features such as pits and ditches would have been identified, but discrete features such as post-holes may have been missed. The gravel was cut by numerous modern features including a gas pipe. Depth to natural was approximately 0.80 metres.

### **Finds**

Several sherds of Medieval pottery and tile were recovered. However, all but one piece of tile from 1/8 (interpreted as a tree hole), were found with post-medieval fabrics and therefore provide no indication of the date of the deposits. There were no finds recovered of pre-medieval fabrics.

### **Environmental**

Soil samples were not taken as there were no deposits which were deemed to be able to provide useful palaeoenvironmental data.

## **COMMENTS ON THE RESULTS**

### **Overall Interpretation**

Post Medieval deposits were recorded from directly below the topsoil and in the subsequent stratigraphic layers. However, due to the fact that the gravel mound was not excavated fully it is possible that discrete archaeological features remain.

### **Conclusions**

There were no significant archaeological deposits. Any possible features of interest have been disturbed by substantial post-medieval activity.

Duncan Wood  
17 February 1995

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benson and Miles 1974 THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY an archaeological survey of the River Gravels OAU

## APPENDICES

**TABLE 1**  
**CONTEXTS AND FINDS**

Trench	CTX	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Finds
1	1	topsoil		0.20	
1	2	dump		0.35	modern tile
1	3	sand lens		0.10	
1	4	soil horizon		0.25	post-med soil
1	5	natural subsoil			
1	6	cut	0.70	0.23	tree hole
1	7	cut	1.50	0.50	tree hole
1	8	fill	2.50	0.15	medieval tile
1	9	cut	2.50	0.15	tree hole
1	10	fill	4.0	0.24	med & post-med pot & animal bone
1	11	fill	3.0	0.26	animal bone
1	12	cut	4.0	0.50	flat bottomed ditch
1	13	finds reference			post-medieval pottery

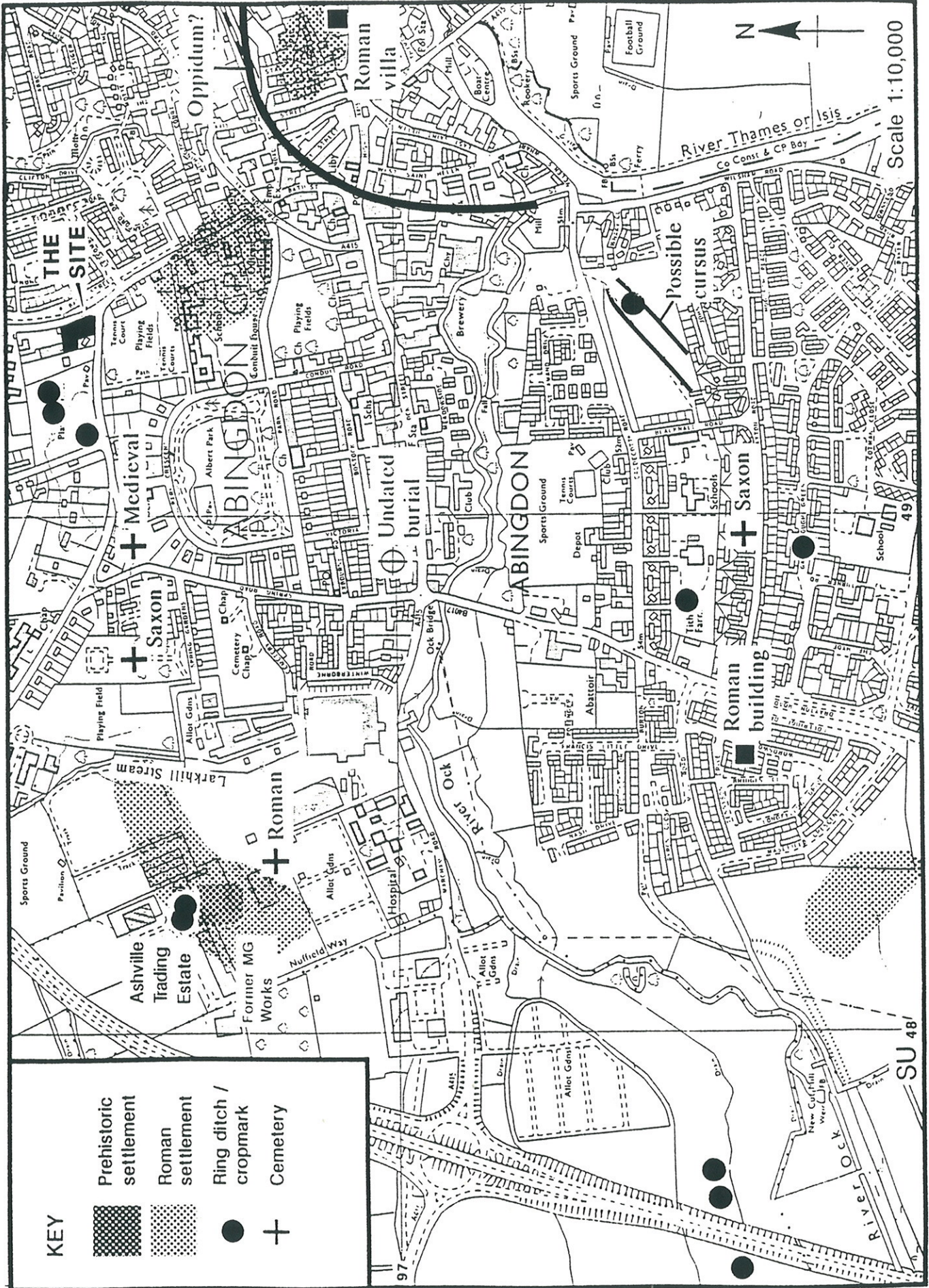
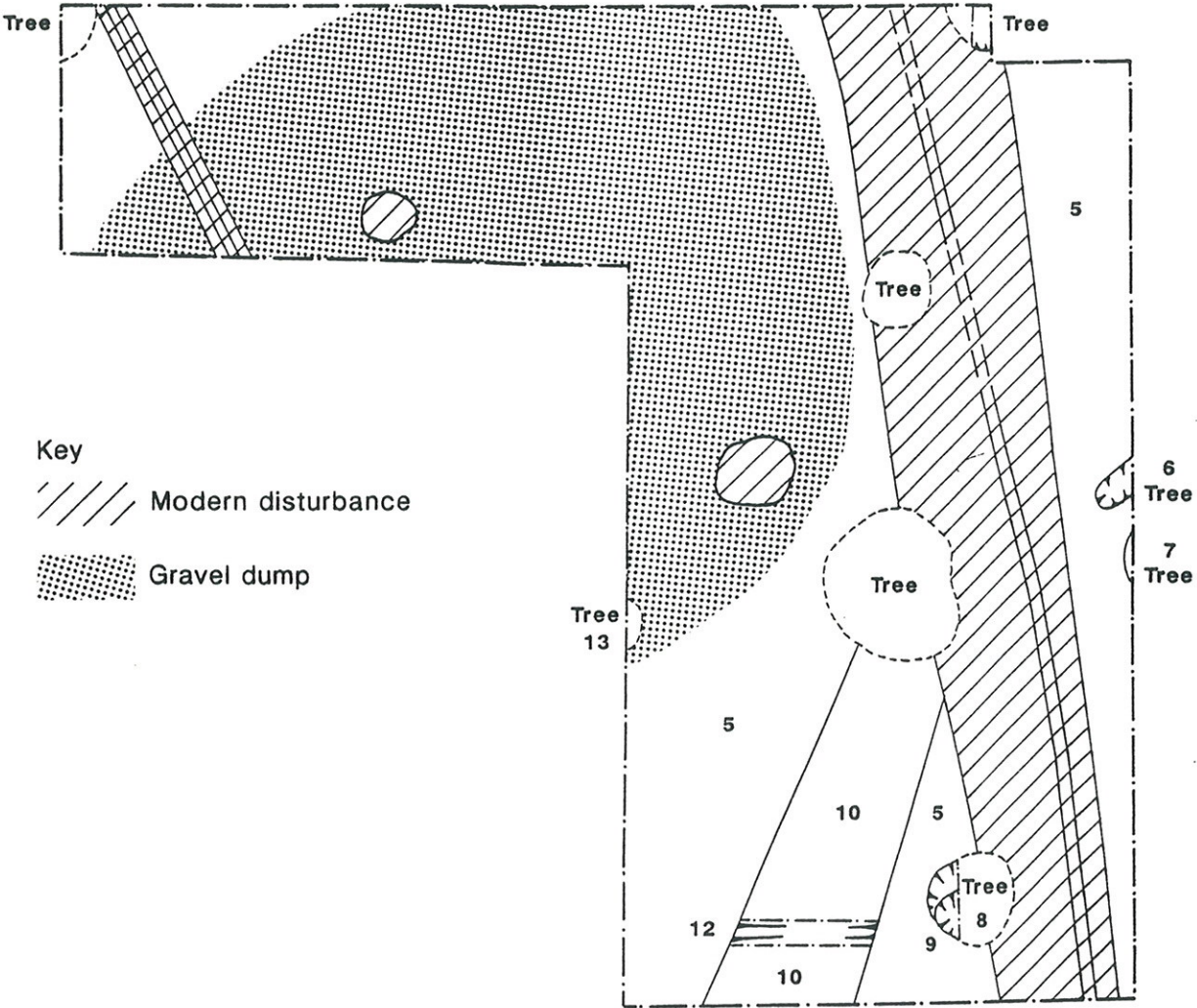


Figure 1



scale 1:200

Figure 2



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