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Gatehampton Fuchsia's

Gatehampton Farm, Goring on Thames, Oxfordshire

NGR SU 6075 7985

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

September 1999

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Summary

In August 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Gatehampton Farm, Goring on Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 6075 7985). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

1 Introduction

The development proposal comprised the construction of a new greenhouse with dimensions of 36.5 m in length by 12.1 m in width with a concrete raft foundation. An archaeological watching brief was required by South Oxfordshire District Council in accordance with PPG16, as the development site is located within an area of proven archaeological significance. The development was for agricultural purposes and as such was covered by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The watching brief was commissioned by the applicant and landowner Mr Robin Cloke on behalf of Gatehampton Fuchsia's. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the County Archaeological Officer.

2 Archaeological Background (Fig. 1)

The site is located in an area of high archaeological potential, immediately to the south and east of known archaeological sites. Small scale excavations undertaken by the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group since 1993 have revealed the presence of extensive Romano-British occupation in the form of a villa complex (SOAG Bulletin 1996, 1997). Finds from these excavations include building materials, pottery, domestic refuse and a votive vessel, indicating the possibility of a religious element to the site. Cropmarks plotted from aerial photographs taken in the 1970s indicate the presence of ring-ditches within 50 m of the site. Gatehampton Manor, which lies just to the south of the site, is recorded in Domesday and it is thought likely that there is a Late Saxon focus in the immediate vicinity.

A further eleven barrows are known to lie within the area (four c. 250 m to the north-west and seven 350 m to the south-west). Some of these were investigated by the Oxford Archaeological Unit between 1985 and 1995 (Allen 1995). These investigations also revealed a late Pleistocene river channel, Mesolithic activity, Neolithic activity including a ?causewayed enclosure ditch, Roman enclosures, a trackway, cobbled yard and corndrier, a Saxon *Grubenhäus* and midden deposit.

3 Location, Topography and Geology

The development site lies immediately to the west of the existing Gatehampton Farm buildings, south of Goring and on the north bank of the River Thames (SU 6075 7985). The Reading to Didcot railway line lies c. 250 m to the west. The development site comprised uncultivated agricultural land, used as an extension to the farmyard when ground conditions permitted, and occasionally subjected to traffic consisting of heavy agricultural machinery and four-wheel drive vehicles. The site lies at approximately 43 m AOD and the geology is terrace river gravels with a calcareous matrix, bounded to the east by chalk of the Chilterns scarp.

4 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

5 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of one inspection visit. Groundworks were undertaken using a Kubota mini-digger driven by the landowner Mr Cloke. Excavations commenced with the removal of a line of tree stumps within the footprint of the new greenhouse. Sockets for the metal stanchions were then dug at all four corners before the site was levelled prior to concreting. Inspection took place both during and after excavation.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

6 Results

The uniformity of deposits seen allows for a description across the site, as opposed to describing individual areas. An undisturbed natural subsoil (2), consisting of a mid brown dry sandy clay loam was sealed by topsoil (1) across the site. The topsoil (1) was at its thickest at the northern corner of the site, 0.60 m at its thickest point, and thinnest at the southern corner, being slightly less than 0.10 m at this point. This deposit was heavily disturbed, containing both redundant and live services, brick, tile and flowerpot fragments, pieces of agricultural metalwork, bottle glass fragments, shredded plastic and polystyrene and several spent shotgun cartridges. Neither archaeological deposits nor features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

7 Finds

No finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief.

8 Environmental results

Due to the absence of any significant archaeology, no environmental soil samples were taken.

9 Discussion

The watching brief has provided negative evidence which would appear to confirm the weight of present evidence, which suggests that the villa complex extends to the north and west of Gatehampton Farm.

References.

Allen T G 1995 *Thames Valley Landscapes, Monograph No. 7.*

South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group 1996, 1997 *Bulletin*

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

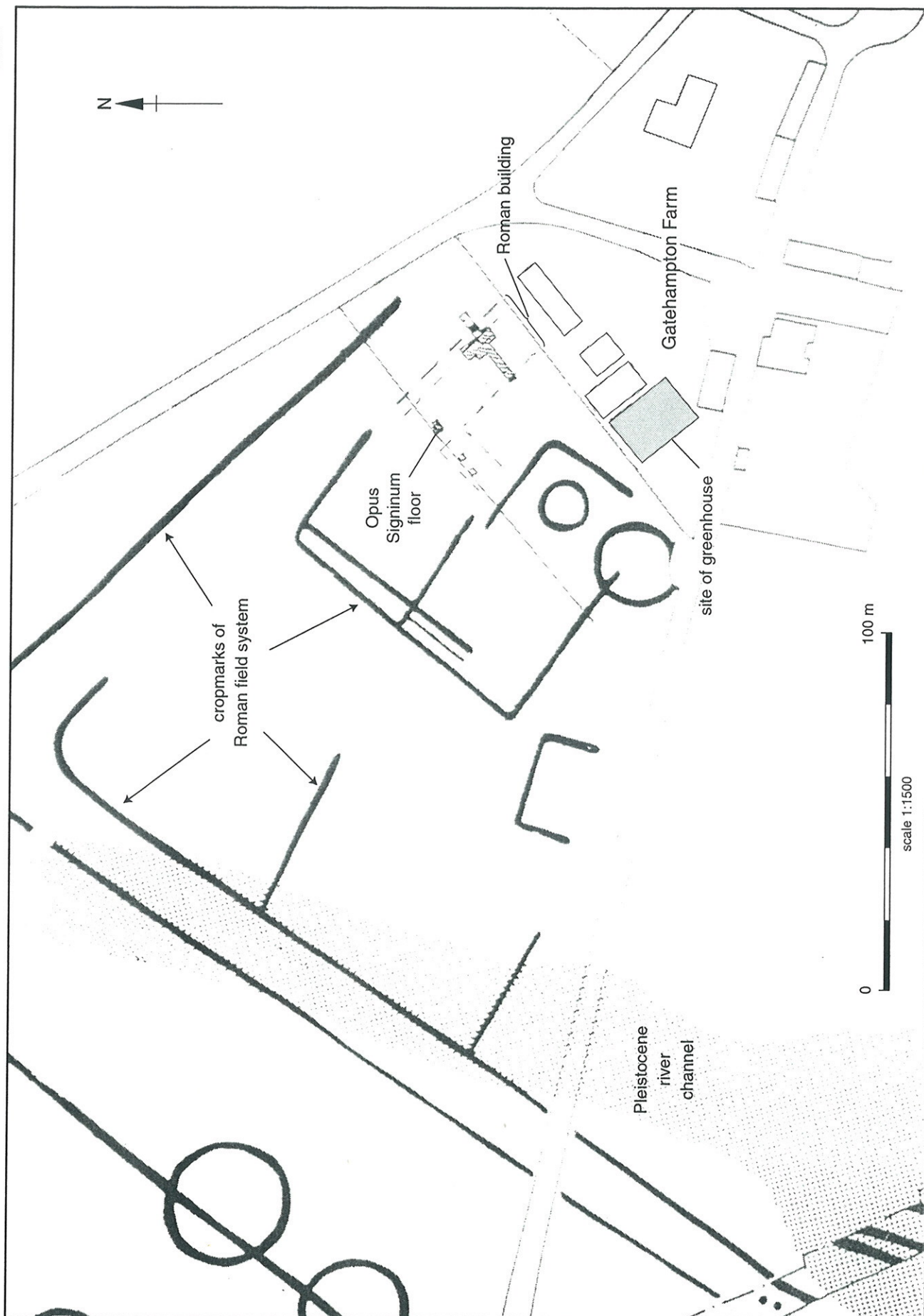


figure 1: site location



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