

Temporary Pond Works,
South of Wantage Road,
Great Western Park,
Didcot,
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological
Evaluation Report**



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**Temporary Pond Works, South of Wantage Road,
Great Western Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a temporary pond on land to the south of Wantage Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire. The single trench revealed no archaeological features or finds. A subsequent watching brief for the installation of the associated drainage pipe also failed to encounter any archaeological deposits.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological evaluation and watching brief on land to the south of Wantage Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was undertaken in response to, and ahead of, the construction of a temporary pond and pipe trench to facilitate drainage for the on-going Great Western Park development. Although not subject to a separate Written Scheme of Investigation, the works were completed following a briefing note issued by Rob Masefield (consultant) of RPS, acting upon behalf of their client, Taylor Wimpey. This followed discussions between RPS and Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Council, that established the requirement and scope of the work.
- 1.1.2 The evaluation comprised a single trench (Trench 1) located within the area of the proposed pond which was undertaken on 14th April 2014. The watching brief followed during 20th and 21st May 2014 which monitored the excavation of a pipe trench (Trench 2) that fed into the pond (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies between approximately 75 to 79 m aOD and gently slopes down from NW to SE. It largely occupies an irregular shaped field under arable cultivation located about 60m south of Wantage Road and on the western perimeter of Didcot. A small area under grass bounds the area between the field and the road. The site is bounded to the north-east, east and south-east by residential development. Further arable fields are located to the west.
- 1.2.2 The bedrock geology of the site consists of the Upper Greensand Formation of the Cretaceous. The bedrock is covered with superficial Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Recently, and subsequent to the field investigations undertaken for this report, the Archaeological mitigation strategy for infrastructure south of Wantage Road has been produced and issued by RPS (2014). This usefully summarises the results of the investigations completed to the north of Wantage Road and the works undertaken to date to the South of Wantage Road. This document covers the general archaeological and historical background of the whole project area and should be consulted for detailed background information.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The following general aims were applied to the investigation:

- (i) To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate date of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- (iii) To record any archaeological remains that may be exposed during to the course of the watching brief and to preserve any archaeological remains found by record.

2.2 Methodology

Evaluation

- 2.2.1 The evaluation comprised a single trench (Trench 1) measuring 40m x 2m that was placed centrally within the footprint of the proposed pond, located towards the SE end of the field. The trench equated to a 4% sample of the pond by area.
- 2.2.2 The trench was excavated under archaeological supervision using a 13 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to remove modern ploughsoil and non-archaeological subsoil. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of undisturbed geology, but avoided the unnecessary disturbance of two modern land drains, which were left *in situ*.
- 2.2.3 During machine excavation, the overburden was observed for the presence of artefacts. Removal of the overburden was undertaken in spits of not more than 100mm. In addition, the area of the pond was subject to a walkover to ascertain the presence or otherwise of any archaeological surface finds.
- 2.2.4 The excavated spoil was stockpiled adjacent to the trench edge. An approximate 1m wide area was left clear of spoil on both sides of the trenches. Ploughsoil and subsoil were excavated and stored separately on each side of the trench.
- 2.2.5 The trench remained open for viewing by Rob Masefield of RPS to confirm the presence/absence of archaeological features. Following this and the completion of all recording work, the trench was immediately backfilled in reverse order of excavation.

Watching Brief

- 2.2.6 The watching brief monitored the excavation of a NNW-SSE aligned trench for the drainage pipe leading from Wantage Road for a distance of 170m. For the remaining distance of 180m to the north side of the pond, the pipe was carried overground with no subsoil impact. There was a gap of 36m that was not excavated in the sub surface pipe run in order to provide a safe clearance area for an existing sewer. Consequently this area was not monitored.
- 2.2.7 The trench was mechanically excavated to the surface of the underlying geology under archaeological supervision following the same methodology as the evaluation trench outlined above. Following confirmation of the absence of archaeological deposits or features, excavation was permitted to the necessary construction depth where this was below the surface level of the geology.



Recording

- 2.2.8 Both trenches were recorded using standard OA methodologies and in accordance with the OA manual (OA 1992)
- 2.2.9 An appropriate and representative photographic record was made in both digital and monochrome formats.
- 2.2.10 Each trench was tied into the Ordnance Survey using a Total Station.

3 RESULTS

3.1 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.1.1 The evaluation and watching brief were both undertaken during dry weather and with good light. The definitions between the ploughsoil, subsoil and natural in both trenches were sufficiently defined to easily enable the recognition of any archaeological features and deposits, that may have been present.

3.2 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.2.1 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were found either during the evaluation or the watching brief. Both trenches revealed a number of modern field drains and a treehole was recorded in Trench 2.

3.3 Evaluation (Trench 1)

- 3.3.1 The trench was orientated NE-SW and measured 40m x 2m. Natural (3), was a stiff, light grey sandy clay, mottled with fractured sand/siltstone fragments that occurred at an average depth of 0.42m below the current ground level. It was cut by two brick-lined land drains that ran perpendicular to the trench, that were partially exposed and left *in situ*, otherwise there were no other features. Above the natural deposits was a 0.10m thick subsoil of mottled light grey silty clay sand (2) and the existing ploughsoil (3).

3.4 Watching brief (Trench 2)

- 3.4.1 The drainage pipe trench was orientated NNW-SSE and comprised two lengths, in order to avoid the area of an existing sewer. The northern part measured 25m x 1.8m and was 35m in length. Its southern continuation was 105m in length. Natural comprised a fairly hard and compact mid grey yellow silty clay (4) with frequent patches of sand/siltstone fragments and was encountered between 0.4m and 0.5m below the current ground level. It was cut by up to six of brick-lined land drains, otherwise no archaeological features were found. A small area of irregular staining of natural was investigated within the main southern length of the trench, but was found to be a probable treehole that did not contain any artefacts.

3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 Several fragments of red brick and other modern finds were noticed during the walkover of the area of the proposed pond, though none were retained. Otherwise no finds were encountered during the course of the works.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Given the site conditions, the results are considered to be reliable within the limited areas exposed.

4.2 Evaluation and watching brief objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The objectives of the evaluation and watching brief were fully met. The evaluation established that archaeological deposits were not present within area of the new pond. Similarly towards its northern side, the controlled nature of the pipe trench excavation has similarly shown that archaeological deposits were not present within the areas exposed.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 There is limited scope for interpretation suffice to say that archaeological deposits were not extant within the areas investigated. However, given the very limited area of site investigated, it is entirely possible that such deposits occur elsewhere within the immediate vicinity.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Evaluation Trench 1						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of sandy clay (Upper Greensand Formation), mottled with iron staining. Contained two field drains				Avg. depth (m)	0.42	
				Width (m)	2	
				Length (m)	40	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.32	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Pipe trench (Trench 2)						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of mid grey yellow silty clay with frequent patches of fractured sand/siltstone (Upper Greensand Formation). Contained six land drains and a treehole throw				Avg. depth (m)	0.45	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	130	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.18-0.26	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.21-0.30	Subsoil	-	-
4	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology, 1992 Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

RPS, 2014 Great Western Park, Didcot. Archaeological Mitigation Strategy For Infrastructure, Phase 2, 7 And 9 (partial) South Of Wantage Road.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

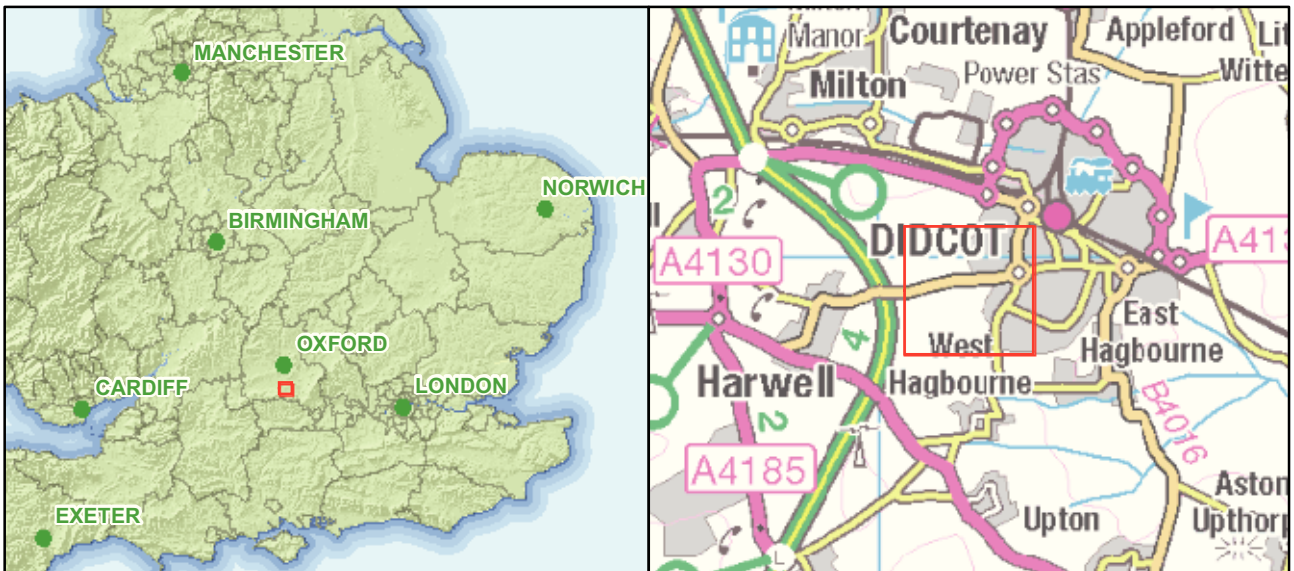
Site name:	Temporary Pond Works, South of Wantage Road, Great Western Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire
Site code:	DISWAN 14
Grid reference:	NGR: SU 5124 8949
Type:	Evaluation and Watching Brief
Date and duration:	14 April, 20th and 21st May 2014
Area of site:	Approx 0.7 hectares

Summary of results:

Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a temporary pond on land to the south of Wantage Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire. The single trench revealed no archaeological features or finds. A subsequent watching brief for the installation of the associated drainage pipe also failed to encounter any archaeological deposits.

Location of archive:

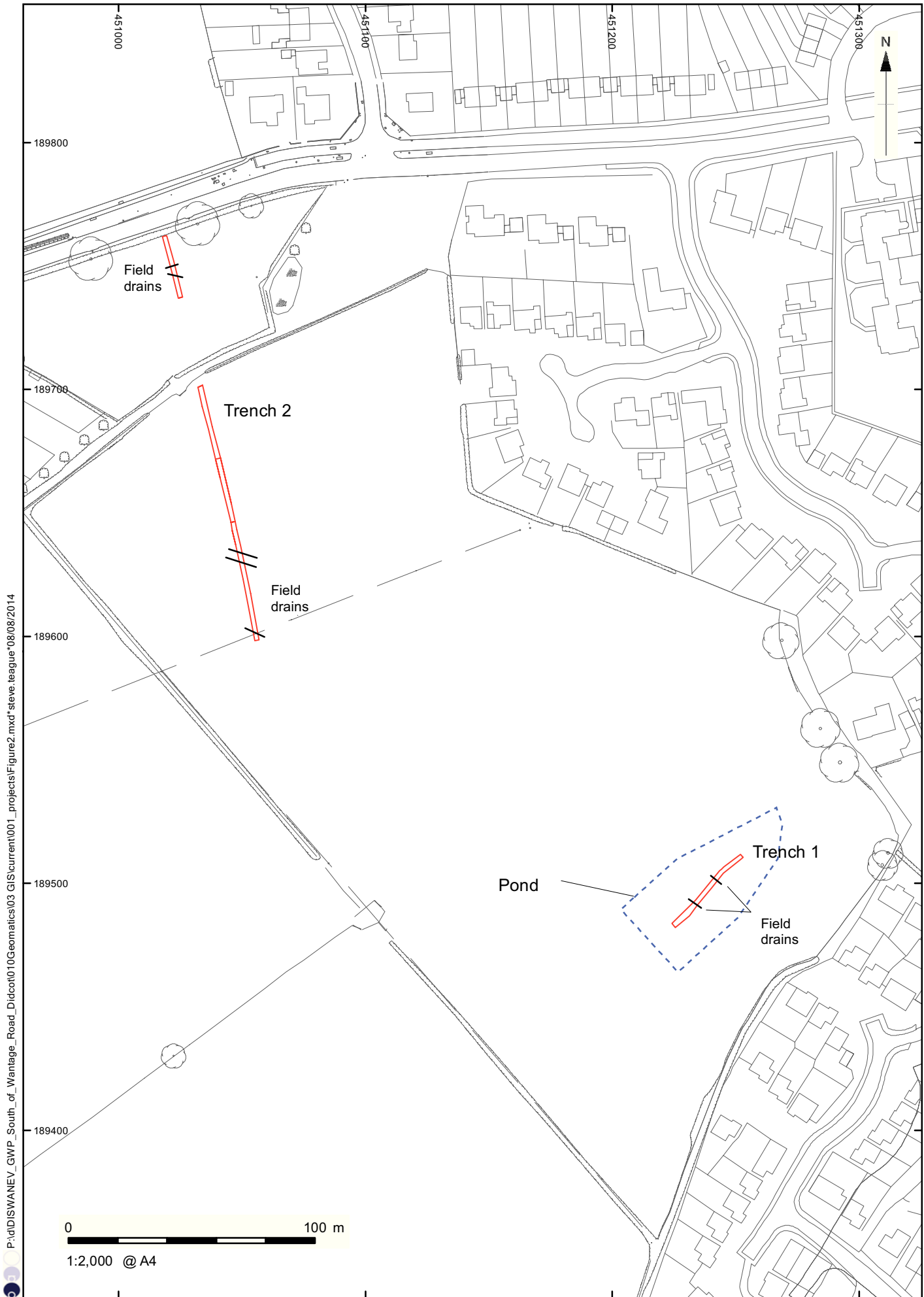
The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum in due course, under the accession number OXCMS:2014.92.



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Figure 1: Site location



P:\d\DISWANEV_GWP_South_of_Wantage_Road_Didcot\10\Geomatics\03 GIS\current\001_projects\Figure2.mxd*steve.teague*08/08/2014

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Figure 2: Trench location



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