

Acknowledgements

The A419/A417 Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) contract was awarded to Road Management Services (Gloucester) Ltd (RMS) in January 1996 by the Secretary of State for Transport. The construction project was undertaken by RMS's sister company Road Management Group Construction Joint Venture (RMGJV), both companies are a consortium of four equal partners, AMEC, Alfred McAlpine, Brown and Root and Dragados. The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) were contracted by RMGJV's environmental and landscape consultants, Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to provide the total archaeological input. The Highways Agency's Department's Agent for the project was WSP Civils (formerly Frank Graham Consulting Engineers).

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Archaeologists for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire and with English Heritage.

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We are grateful to Bryn Walters for permission to reproduce his aerial photograph of Latton 'Roman Pond' (Plate 4.7).

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Bob Williams
Project Manager
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Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a series of excavations along the line of the Swindon to Gloucester DBFO road improvement in 1996 and 1997. The road ran between Nettleton in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds and Cricklade on the Thames. The work was undertaken on behalf of the construction consortium Road Management Group (RMG). The work was carried out according to specifications approved and monitored by the Highways Agency, and included a range of mitigation strategies selected as appropriate archaeological responses. In addition a scheme-wide watching brief was undertaken along the 25 km route. The sites examined included both those identified from previous surveys and evaluations, and new discoveries.

The work entailed the excavation of around thirty-five sites, or parts of sites, of differing types and periods. These included two adjoining Bronze Age ring ditches near Preston, middle Iron Age settlements at Highgate House, Preston and Ermin Farm, late Iron Age enclosures at Duntisbourne Grove and Middle Duntisbourne, a Roman settlement at Birdlip Quarry, and a medieval kitchen block at Street Farm, Latton. In addition there were a number of other discoveries

relating particularly to Roman Ermin Street. These included a probable roadside funerary monument and trackway at Field's Farm, Roman trackway ditches and quarries at Court Farm, Latton and part of a late Roman midden at Weavers Bridge. Ermin Street itself was examined with seven trenches through the Roman and later roads. Burford Road (Akeman Street) was examined in two sections with less significant results.

Important environmental evidence was obtained from work at Latton 'Roman Pond' (within a Scheduled Ancient Monument) and in the Churn Valley. A programme of radiocarbon dating was also undertaken, both in relation to the environmental sequences and the earlier prehistoric and Iron Age sites.

A consistent theme of fieldwork was the coincidental discovery of small numbers of prehistoric features as a result of stripping large areas (such as at Birdlip Quarry, Duntisbourne Grove and Trinity Farm). Less surprisingly, numbers of Roman, medieval and post-medieval field boundaries were recorded as well as traces of ridge-and-furrow cultivation. The evidence for earlier boundaries and agriculture has been presented along with other miscellaneous features in summary form.



Plate 1.1 Aerial view of route south-east of Cirencester with Cricklade in the distance. The route runs south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Latton. The excavations at Lower Street Furlong and Fosse Farm are in the foreground. Reproduced by permission of RCHME (ref. NMR 15425/36).