



Beaconsfield Farm Manège, Great Tew, Oxfordshire Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Beaconsfield Farm Manège, Great Tew, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In late November 2019, Oxford Archaeology excavated two trial trenches within the footprint of a proposed development at the proposed site of Beaconsfield Farm Manège, Great Tew, Oxfordshire. The trenches were positioned to ground-truth the results of a geophysical survey. Both trenches were devoid of archaeology. A targeted geophysical anomaly was determined to be a variation in the underlying natural geology. No artefactual or environmental evidence was recovered.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Edgars Limited for commissioning this project on behalf of Finchatton. Thanks are also extended to Hugh Coddington who monitored the work on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Ashley Strutt. Survey and digitising was carried out by Ashley Strutt and Matt Bradley. Thanks are also extended to the team of OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Edgars Ltd on behalf of Finchatton to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the proposed site of Beaconsfield Farm Manège, Great Tew, Oxfordshire. The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a submission of a Planning Application. A written scheme of investigation was produced by OA (OA 2019a) outlining the scope of works to be undertaken and was agreed with Hugh Coddington, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies in the Cotswold Hills, 1.5km to the south-east of Great Tew, Oxfordshire, and 8.5km east of Chipping Norton (Fig. 1; NGR: SP 40477 27698). The area of proposed development measures approximately 1334m² and lies within an arable field. The site is surrounded by arable fields divided by hedgerows.

1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as Chipping Norton Limestone Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 166 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS Online).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (OA 2018), and is summarised below.

Prehistoric period

1.3.2 Prehistoric lithic scatters have been recorded within the agricultural land to the east of the site. These remains were recorded during a fieldwalking survey of the area and include early Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, other arrowheads, scrapers, knives and a fragment of a polished axe.

1.3.3 A Bronze Age barrow (located 800m to the west of the site) and two ring ditches (750m east of the site) have also been recorded in the study area. The ring ditches are located in close proximity to a prehistoric lithic scatter.

1.3.4 Other prehistoric remains within the study area include a Bronze Age pit, located 130m to the south-west of the site within the area of a scheduled Roman villa, a late prehistoric or possibly Roman period field system (within the site), and a scatter of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery found at the Beaconsfield Roman villa site (75m to the south-west of the site).

Romano-British period

1.3.5 The site of the scheduled Beaconsfield Farm Roman villa lies 100m to the south of the site. The villa site, discovered in 1810 and partially excavated in 1827, 1950, 1951 and 1965, contains a large elaborate villa with a courtyard and a bath house which was decorated with painted wall plaster, detached columns and geometrically patterned

tessellated pavements. Excavations carried out at the villa site recorded several phases of construction and occupation between the 2nd and 4th centuries. The HER records cropmark remains of a Roman or later prehistoric field system passing through the site, to the north of the Roman villa.

- 1.3.6 Further to the north of the villa, running west-east through the northern part of the study area, is the Oxford Ridgeway, which follows the course of the Ledwell Road. The road is described in several Saxon Charters and was probably in use during the Roman period.

Medieval period

- 1.3.7 A 7th-century inhumation, originally covered by a stone cairn (situated 133m to the south of the site), has been recorded on the periphery of the scheduled Roman villa site. The burial was found in association with metal artefacts during a rescue excavation carried out at the villa in 1985. The only other Saxon activity to be recorded within the study area are some sherds of grass-tempered pottery which were found during a fieldwalking exercise undertaken in 1972 (400m east of the site).
- 1.3.8 The closest Saxon settlement to the site was located in the area of the present day village of Great Tew. At this time the settlement was known as Ciric Tiwa, or Church Tew (Great Tew Estate).
- 1.3.9 Following the Norman conquest, Alnod's lands at Great Tew were seized and given to Bishop Odo of Bayeaux. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records Great Tew as a large settlement of 53 households including 31 villagers, 8 small holders and 14 slaves. The settlement as associated with 26 ploughlands, 288 acres of meadow and 101 acres of pasture.
- 1.3.10 During the 13th century the land surrounding Great Tew was divided into four fields (North Field, East Field, West Field and South Field) which were divided for two-course cultivation. North Field was situated to the north of the village and included arable land on Horse Hill, Chescombe Hill and Round Hill. East Field was probably situated in the area of Great Tew Park; West Field was probably situated west of the village extending to the parish boundary with Little Tew; while South Field was situated on the arable land to the south of the Oxford to Banbury road. The site appears to have been situated in South Field and was probably under ridge and furrow cultivation throughout the medieval period.

Previous works

- 1.3.11 A geophysical survey of the area surrounding a recently installed access road to the east of the site was undertaken by Magnitude Surveys in October 2018. While the majority of the area was characterised by anomalies of natural and agricultural origins, a dense concentration of archaeological activity was focused within the southernmost 225m of the survey area (Fig. 3). It was noted that this area of archaeological activity correlates and expands on cropmarks previously interpreted as an Iron Age/Roman field system. This field system is believed to extend northwards from Beaconsfield Roman villa, which lies immediately south of the survey area (MS 2018).

1.3.12 Following the geophysical survey, a trial trench evaluation was undertaken within the area of archaeological activity identified at the southern end of the access road, approximately 80m to the east of the proposed development area. The exposed archaeological remains correlated with the results of the geophysical survey. The remains represented numerous rectangular enclosures and associated features. Although not all dated, artefactual evidence suggests the enclosures are contemporary with the Roman villa that lies to the south of the site (OA 2019a).

Geophysical survey

1.3.13 A geophysical survey of the area of the proposed ménage was undertaken by Magnitude Surveys in August 2019. The survey identified the remains of a possible late prehistoric or Roman field system and double-ditched enclosure. Other double-ditched enclosures and several short segments of ditch of uncertain origins and anomalies relating to historical agriculture were also detected. The results of the survey suggest a concentration of archaeological remains along the southern and western limits of the area (MS 2019).

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the evaluation were to record the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and features, and to report on the findings to inform the planning process.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To ground-truth the results of the geophysics.
- iii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iv. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- v. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- vi. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- vii. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- viii. To determine the potential of the site to provide paleoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- ix. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to the economy, status, utility and social activity of or at the site.
- x. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- xi. To disseminate the results of the evaluation through the production of a fieldwork report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Two trial trenches were excavated within the proposed development area as shown in Figure 2. The trenches were laid out using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy and represent a c 2% sample of the proposed development area.

2.2.2 The trenches were excavated using an 8tn 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges.

2.2.3 Machining continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology.

2.2.4 The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains, none of which were identified.

2.2.5 Digital photos were taken of trenches and the evaluation work in general.

2.2.6 The trench and sample sections were located using a GPS unit.

2.2.7 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with the Local Planning Archaeologist, the trenches were backfilled with the arising in reverse order of excavation.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the two trenches differed slightly.

3.2.2 In Trench 1 (Plate 1) the natural geology of sandy clay with a limestone outcrop was overlain by a silty clay subsoil, which in turn was overlain by topsoil.

3.2.3 In Trench 2 (Plate 2) the natural geology of clayey sand with limestone was overlain directly by topsoil.

3.2.4 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeology was identified in either Trench 1 or Trench 2.

3.3.2 Trench 1 (Plate 1) was not targeted and did not reveal any archaeology.

3.3.3 Trench 2 (Plate 2) was targeted on a geophysical anomaly but this was revealed to be a variation in the natural.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The weather and ground conditions were relatively stable, while the geology was easily identifiable and therefore did not hinder the identification of any potential archaeology. Thus the results of the evaluation are considered to be reliable.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation determined that there were no archaeological remains surviving within the excavated trenches. The evaluation demonstrated that the targeted geophysical anomaly was a variation in the geology.

4.2.2 There was no artefactual evidence or complex horizontal or vertical stratigraphy encountered, consequently there was also nothing to relate to the wider historic landscape and no palaeo-environmental samples were taken.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The results of the trenching works support those of the geophysical survey and suggest that the known archaeological remains located to the south and the east of the site do not continue into the proposed development area. The accuracy of geophysical survey within the area is supported by the results of the previous work completed to the east of the site. The results of trial trenching demonstrated a good correlation between the interpreted geophysical survey results and the archaeological remains present (OA 2019b).

4.3.2 No signs of human activity were recorded suggesting that the development area has been subject to no more than pasture and arable farming activity for many centuries.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 The results demonstrate that there is a low potential for archaeological remains to be present within the area of the proposed development.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of sandy clay with limestone.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.60
					Avg. depth (m)	0.54
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.24	Topsoil: Mid grey brown silty loam	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.58	Subsoil: Mid brown silty clay	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural Orangey brown sandy clay.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	SE-NW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying natural geology of clay sand with limestone.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.31
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.31	Topsoil: Mid grey brown silty loam,	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Natural: Mid-light brownish yellow clayey sand.	-	-

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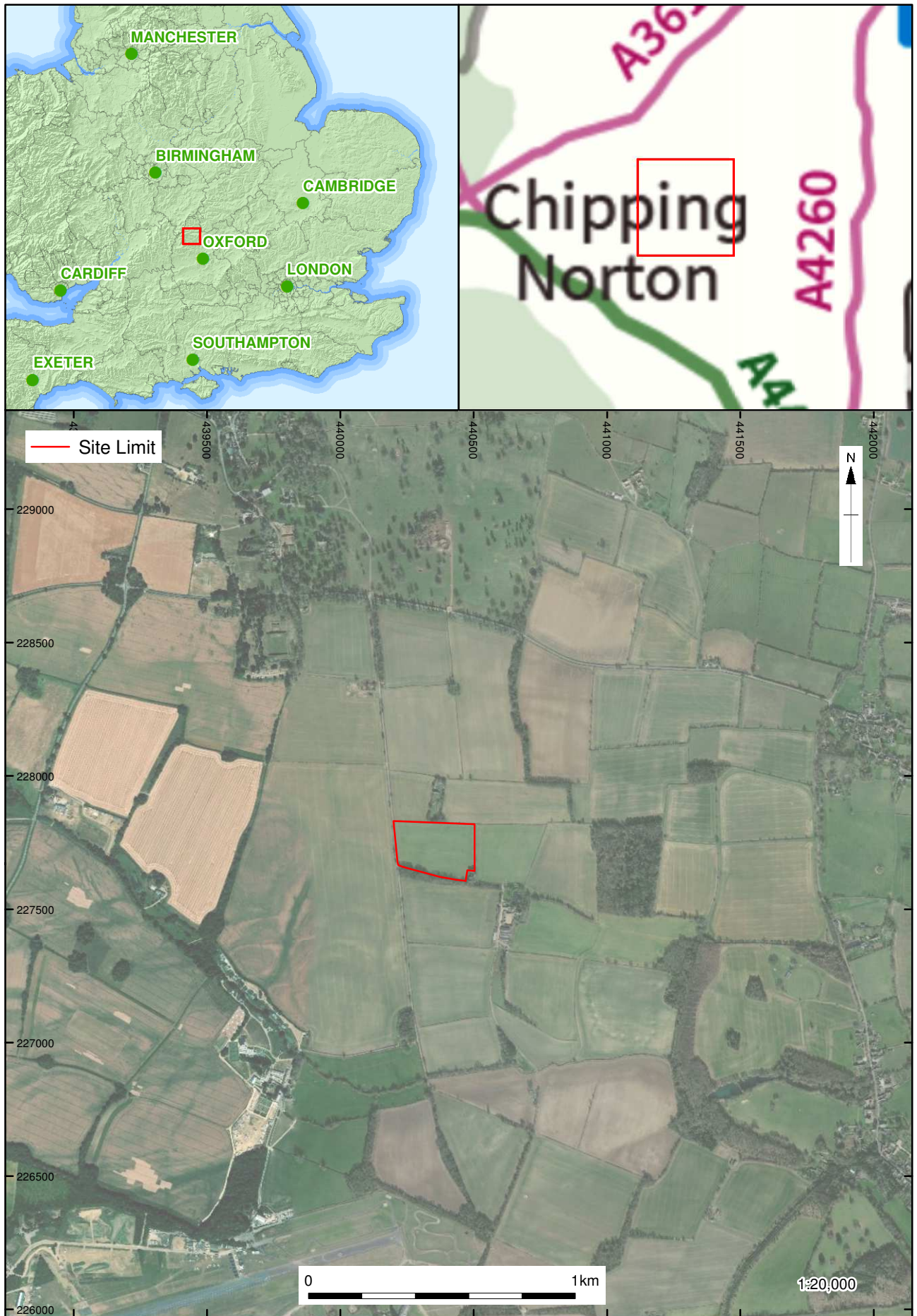
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OA, 2019a Beaconsfield Farm Manége, Great Tew, Oxfordshire, Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation, Oxford Archaeology.

OA, 2019b Land North of Beaconsfield Farm, Great Tew, Oxfordshire, Archaeological Evaluation report, Oxford Archaeology.

APPENDIX B**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM**

Site name:	Beaconsfield Farm Manège, Great Tew, Oxfordshire
Site code:	GTBFM19
Grid Reference	SP 40477 27698
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	22/11/2019
Area of Site	1334m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.
Summary of Results:	In late November 2019, Oxford Archaeology excavated two trial trenches within the footprint of a proposed development. The trenches were positioned to ground-truth the result a geophysical survey. Both trenches were devoid of archaeology. A targeted geophysical anomaly was determined to be a variation in the underlying natural geology. No artefactual or environmental data was recovered.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site location



Archaeology Probable (Strong)	Agricultural (Weak)	Undetermined (Strong)	Agricultural (Trend)
Archaeology Probable (Weak)	Natural (Spread)	Undetermined (Weak)	Undetermined (Trend)
Archaeology Possible (Strong)	Natural (Strong)	Industrial/Modern	Service
Archaeology Possible (Weak)	Natural (Weak)	Magnetic Disturbance	Ridge and Furrow (Trend)
Agricultural (Strong)	Open	Debris (Spread)	Ferrous point
		Archaeology Possible (Trend)	

Figure 2: Geophysical survey results and trench locations



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