



Perrybrook, Shurdington Road, Brockworth, Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

November 2020

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Paul Murray

*With contributions from John Cotter and illustrations by
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Summary

Oxford Archaeology were appointed by Charterhouse Strategic Land to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Perrybrook, Shurdington Road, Brockworth, Gloucestershire, in support of a planning application.

The site is known to be the location of one of 32 Second World War barrage balloons sites located to the east of Gloucester, placed to protect the Gloster Aircraft Company (GAC) manufacturing complex and factory at Brockworth Aerodrome.

The evaluation identified an anchoring point and two tethering points for a barrage balloon. The points had been broken out sometime after the end of the war to at least ground level, when the land was returned to agricultural use, and survive as fragmented concrete and bricks within shallow pits. No other archaeological features were identified during the works.

The evaluation was conducted over the course of three days, from the 21st-23rd October 2020.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Charterhouse Strategic Land for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Toby Catchpole, Heritage Team Leader for Gloucestershire County Council who monitored the work.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Paul Murray, who was supported by Francesca Gordon. Survey and digitising was carried out by Mathew Bradley, Marjaana Kohtamaki and Magdalena Wachnik. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Leigh Allen, and 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 Charterhouse Strategic Land to undertake a trial trench evaluation at Perrybrook, Shurdington Road, Brockworth, Gloucestershire.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken in support of a Planning Application (planning ref. 20/00608/FUL). Discussions between Oxford Archaeology and Toby Catchpole, Heritage Team Leader for Gloucestershire County Council established the scope of work required. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies on the eastern edge of Brockworth, Gloucestershire, approximately 1km from the town centre (Fig. 1; NGR: SO 9033 1671). The site covers an area of approximately 2.1ha and is bounded to the south by the A46 Shurdington Road, to the north and east by the A417 and to the west by agricultural fields.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of an arable field and a small area of scrubland. The topography of the field is variable, gently descending from approximately 74m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the west, to approximately 70m aOD in the east.

1.2.3 The geology of the site is mapped as Lias Group, mudstone, siltstone, limestone, and sandstone which is a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 172 to 204 million years ago in the Jurassic and Triassic periods. There are superficial deposits of Cheltenham Sand and Gravel located along the eastern and western edges of the site. These deposits were formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary 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 (DBA; OA 2019) and will not be reproduced here. The following summary is provided to place these works in context.

Prehistoric period

1.3.2 There are no known heritage assets dating to the Prehistoric period within the site. However, a number of later prehistoric settlements and evidence of Bronze Age funerary activity is known within the wider landscape.

1.3.3 Several isolated prehistoric finds spots are recorded in the vicinity of the site including a stone axe 900m to the east and scatters of worked flints to the south-west and south-east.

1.3.4 Ring ditches of probable Bronze Age date are recorded approximately 800-950m to the north-west of the site, and confirmed round barrows are known approximately

600m to the north-west. Three round barrows are also recorded to the south-west of the site.

- 1.3.5 Iron Age settlement activity has been identified through archaeological evaluation c. 800m to the north-west of the site. A number of pits, postholes, ditches and round houses were recorded, with pottery recovered from the feature dating to the Iron Age.

Roman Period

- 1.3.6 The projected route of Ermine Street Roman road passes approximately 800m to the south-west of the site. A number of Roman sites are known to have been situated along the line of the road including Hucclecote Roman Villa, 2.6km north-west of the site, and Great Witcombe Roman Villa, 2.4km south of the site. However, evidence for Roman activity within the immediate vicinity of the site is limited; and there are no heritage assets of Roman date recorded within the site itself. Features of Roman date including enclosures, field systems, a driveway, pits and postholes, were identified through evaluation trenching along-side the Iron Age features discussed above (1.3.5).

Medieval period

- 1.3.7 Evidence of early medieval activity within the vicinity of the site is limited to the recovery of a sherd of Saxon pottery from a ditch 600m to the west of the site and the recovery of a number of pottery sherds of early medieval date during fieldwalking 1.2km to the south of the site.
- 1.3.8 During the later medieval period the site and the surrounding area appears to have been a largely rural landscape populated with dispersed hamlets. At least two manor sites are known in the vicinity of the site, Bentham Manor and Hunt Court, and two mill sites Brockworth Mill and Badgeworth Mill.
- 1.3.9 The site itself is suspected to have been part of the open fields associated with either the sites at Badgeworth or Brockworth. LiDAR data indicates the presence of ridge-and-furrow earthworks immediately to the south of the site, and geophysical survey has identified ploughed out ridge-and-furrow to the west.
- 1.3.10 During the post-medieval period the site remained in agricultural use. The 1838 Tithe map of Badgeworth and Shurdington shows the site located across three land parcels. By 1884 field boundaries in the area had been removed, and the site formed part of a much larger field, although a smaller triangular field within the southern part of the site as indicated on the Tithe map is still present.
- 1.3.11 During the first half of the 20th Century the landscape around the site changed dramatically with the establishment of numerous military sites, including, but not limited to, a First World War training airfield, a Second World War anti-aircraft battery and a three Second World War military camps. Mapped within the site itself is the anchorage point for one of 32 barrage balloons located to the east of Gloucester that were in place to protect the Gloster Aircraft Company (GAC) manufacturing complex and factory at Brockworth Aerodrome.
- 1.3.12 By the mid-20th Century the field boundaries of the small field had disappeared and the site is shown in its present form, with the construction of the A417 in 1995.

1.4 Geophysical Survey

- 1.4.1 In September 2020 a geophysical survey was undertaken within the area of the proposed development (MS 2020). The survey comprised a fluxgate gradiometer survey and encompassed 1.85ha of the proposed development area, although two small areas could not be surveyed due to the overgrown vegetation. The survey identified ridge-and-furrow cultivation and anomalies of undetermined origin (Fig. 2). No anomalies indicative of significant archaeological activity were identified.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

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

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- x. To ground truth the results of the geophysical survey.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of eight trenches measuring 30m by 1.8m within the proposed development area (Fig. 2). This equated to a 2% sample of the area of impact. All work was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by OA and approved by Toby Catchpole (OA 2020), and in accordance with the CIfA 'Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation' (CIfA 2014 revised 2020).

2.3.2 The trenches were laid out in accordance with the WSI as shown in Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy. To enable greater investigation of exposed archaeological features, a small section of Trench 7 was extended to the west by 3m and the east by 6m (see Fig. 2).

2.3.3 The trenches were excavated using JCB 3CX fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges.

2.3.4 Machining continue in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. Once archaeological deposits have been exposed, further excavation proceeded by hand.

- 2.3.5 The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains.
- 2.3.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA field manual. Bulk finds were collected by context.
- 2.3.7 Digital photos were taken of any archaeological features, deposits, trenches and evaluation work in general.
- 2.3.8 Plans were produced at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100). Sections of features were drawn at scale 1:20. All section drawings will be located on the plan/s. The absolute height (m OD) of all principal strata and features, and the section datum lines, shall be calculated and indicated on the drawings.
- 2.3.9 Upon completion of the works and in agreement with Gloucestershire County Council's Heritage Team Leader, 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 and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits is tabulated in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are presented in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of mottled grey clay was overlain by a ploughsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were only present in Trench 7.

3.4 Trench 7

3.4.1 The geological horizon was established at a depth of 0.26m below ground level (73.5m aOD). Four features (703, 705, 708 and 710) were identified cutting the geological horizon (Fig. 3).

3.4.2 A large roughly circular feature, 708, was identified within a western extension to the trench, measuring 2.5m x 2.2m. It was filled with a tenacious, mid grey clay (709) containing around 20% fragmented concrete and 10% whole and broken bricks.

3.4.3 Just 0.25 m to the northeast of 708 a probable post-hole was recorded (710). This measured 0.5m in diameter and was filled with 711, a loose, fragmented and granular reddish concrete deposit containing brick fragments.

3.4.4 Five meters to the NNW of 708 an irregular sub-rectangular pit, 703, was investigated. The pit had a flat base and vertical sides and measured 1.8m x 1m and was 0.2m deep (Fig. 4). It contained two fills (702 and 706). The lowest fill, 706, comprised a loose, mid yellow-brown sandy gravel, 0.2m thick, probably representing a bedding layer for a concrete structure. Overlying 706 was a 0.2m thick deposit of tenacious grey clay (702) with 30% irregular, fragmented concrete pieces and broken bricks.

3.4.5 Five meters to the SSW of 708, a further irregular sub-rectangular pit (705) was recorded. This measured 1.7m x 0.9m. It was filled with a tenacious, mid grey clay with 20% irregular, fragmented concrete pieces and occasional brick fragments.

3.5 Finds summary

3.5.1 A single brick was recovered from the fill (702) of pit 703. A photographic record was made of a further two bricks from the same context. The three bricks represent the typology of bricks observed during the works.

3.5.2 The bricks are all 20th century Fletton-type bricks with frogs. One is stamped LBC for the London Brick Company. The second is partially damaged but is possibly stamped with HORPRES (see Appendix B.1.). The third brick was unstamped.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was conducted in generally dry condition and the trenches did not incur any flooding. The features were well defined against the underlying geology.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation successfully determined the presence and date of remains relating to a Second World War barrage anchorage point.

4.2.2 The geophysical survey identified numerous amorphous signals in the vicinity of Trench 7, described as undetermined strong and weak signals. Three features were recorded in Trench 7, all of which were filled with fragmented concrete and bricks. It appears that ploughing had truncated the surface of these features creating a spread of ceramic building material and concrete, which almost certainly accounts for the amorphous signals.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The evaluation identified an anchoring point and two tethering points for a Second World War barrage balloon. A small post-hole adjacent to the anchoring point was also recorded.

4.3.2 The concrete blocks appear to have been set into relatively shallow holes, with the majority of each block being above ground. Sometime after they went out of use the concrete blocks appear to have been broken out, at least to ground level, presumably to return the land to agricultural use. It is difficult to define the function of the post-hole adjacent to the anchoring point, but this may relate to its construction or a winching system.

4.3.3 The Heritage Environment Record (HER 48343) describes a main anchorage point with 24 secondary concrete blocks (tethering points) set into the ground in a concentric circle. The tethering points would be used when the balloon was lowered allowing it to be securely fixed for maintenance, refuelling and during adverse weather.

4.3.4 The site is one of 32 barrage balloon sites located to the east of Gloucester that were in place to protect the Gloster Aircraft Company (GAC) manufacturing complex and factory at Brockworth Aerodrome.

4.3.5 In 1938 the British Balloon Command was established to protect cities and key targets such as industrial areas, ports and harbours. Balloons were intended to defend against dive bombers flying at heights up to 5,000 feet (1,500 m), forcing them to fly higher and into the range of concentrated anti-aircraft fire. By the middle of 1940 there were 1,400 balloons in use, a third of them over the London area.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of ploughsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of ploughsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of ploughsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of ploughsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.26

Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
501	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 6

General description				Orientation	E-W	
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of ploughsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.				Length (m)	30	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Avg. depth (m)	0.26	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

Trench 7

General description				Orientation	N-S	
Trench recorded a 2 nd World War barrage balloon central fixing point and two tethering points overlain by the ploughsoil.				Length (m)	30	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Avg. depth (m)	0.26	
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
701	Void	-	-		-	-
702	Fill	-	-	Fill of 703. Clay with fragmented brick and concrete.	Brick	20 th C
703	Cut	1.8	0.2	2 nd World War barrage balloon tethering point.	-	-
704	Fill	-	-	Fill of 705. Clay with fragmented concrete and bricks.	-	-
705	Cut	1.7	-	2 nd World War barrage balloon tethering point.	-	-
706	Fill	0.88	0.16	Fill of 703. Loose sandy gravel.	-	-
707	Void					
708	Cut	2.5	-	2 nd World War barrage balloon fixing point.		
709	Fill	2.5	-	Fill of 708. Grey clay with fragmented concrete and bricks.		
710	Cut	0.5	-	Post-hole.		
711	Fill	0.5	-	Fill of 710. Loose, crushed concrete and brick fragments.		
712	Layer	-	-	Geology		

Trench 8

General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying geology of mottled clay.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.6
					Avg. depth (m)	0.40
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
800	Layer	-	0.26	Ploughsoil	-	-
801	Layer	-	-	Geology	-	-

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Ceramic Building Material

By Paul Murray and identification by John Cotter

Introduction

- B.1.1 A single brick was recovered from context 702, weighing 1606g. A photographic record was made of a further two bricks.

Description (retained brick)

- B.1.2 **Context (702) Spot-date: c 1920/30-2000?** Description: 1 piece (1606g) equating to c. 2/3rds of a brick. A modern Fletton-type brick. Machine-made. The upper surface has a rectangular frog of sunken V-shaped cross-section. On the sloping sides of the frog is a partially surviving impressed maker's mark reading '(?) HORPRES` for Phorpres. Additionally, the letter `C` is on two of the sloping sides. Hard, granular reddish-brown fabric with patches of red paint.
- B.1.3 The early brick presses only applied two presses to the powdered clay in the brick moulds. The trade-name Phorpres (produced by the London Brick Company) came about because Fletton Bricks made in Bedfordshire are pressed twice in each direction so that they are literally 'four pressed' if the phrase is pronounced quickly it becomes Phorpres (Brocross.com). Bricks this type are particularly common from the 1920s.

Description (photographed bricks)

- B.1.4 **Context (702) Spot-date: c 1920/30-2000?** Description: Two incomplete modern Fletton-type, machine-made bricks. Both bricks have a rectangular frog of sunken V-shaped cross-section. On the sloping sides of the frog of one of the bricks is an impressed maker's mark 'LBC` for London Brick Company. This has a hard, granular reddish fabric. The second brick is unstamped with a hard, granular pinkish fabric.

Recommendations regarding the conservation, discard and retention of material

- B.1.5 The brick has very little potential for further research and has been discarded.

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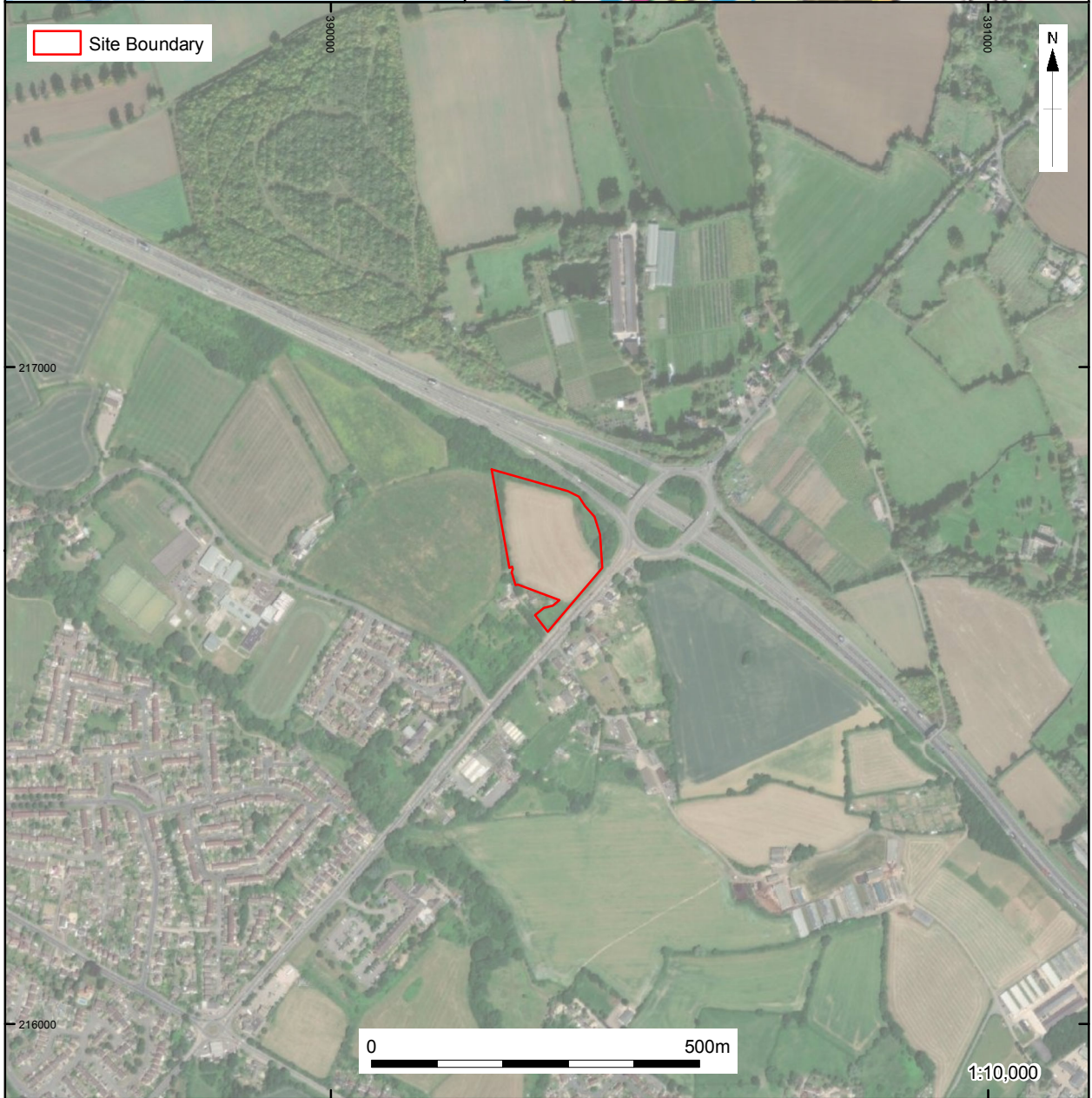
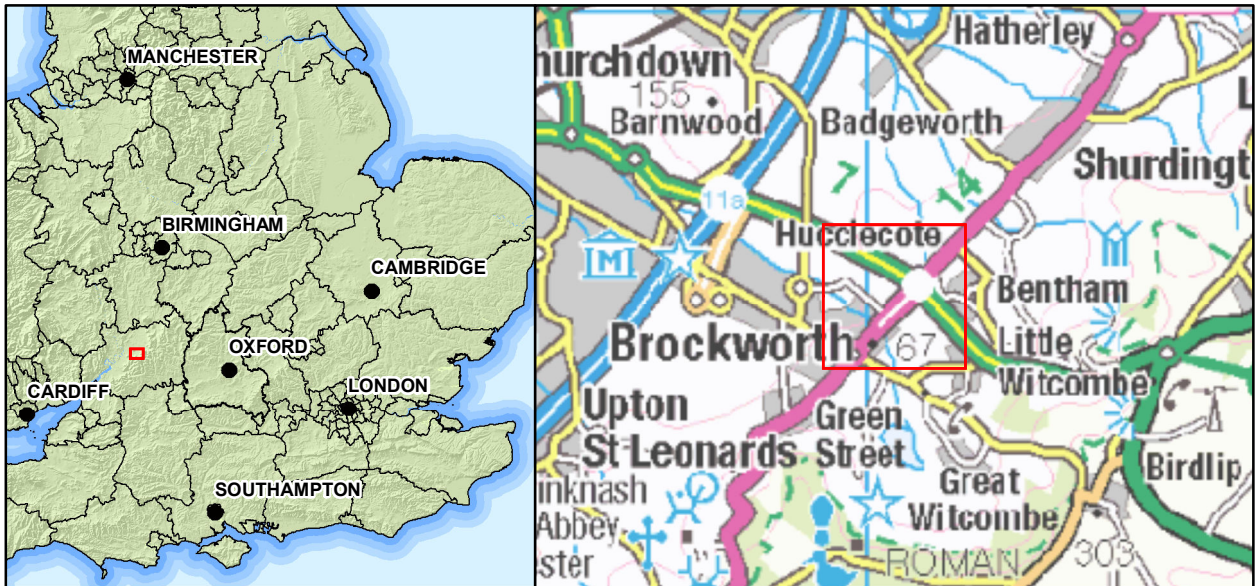
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APPENDIX D**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Perrybrook, Shurdington Road, Brockworth, Gloucestershire
Site code:	OABRSR-20
Grid Reference	SO 9033 1671
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	21st-23rd October 2020.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology and will be deposited with Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: TBC.
Summary of Results:	The site is known to be the location of one of 32 Second World War barrage balloons sites located to the east of Gloucester, placed to protect the Gloster Aircraft Company (GAC) manufacturing complex and factory at Brockworth Aerodrome. The evaluation identified an anchoring point and two tethering points for a barrage balloon.



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

Figure 1: Site location

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

0 100m
1:2,000 @ A4

Figure 2: Trench layout

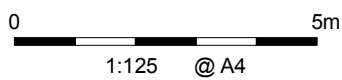
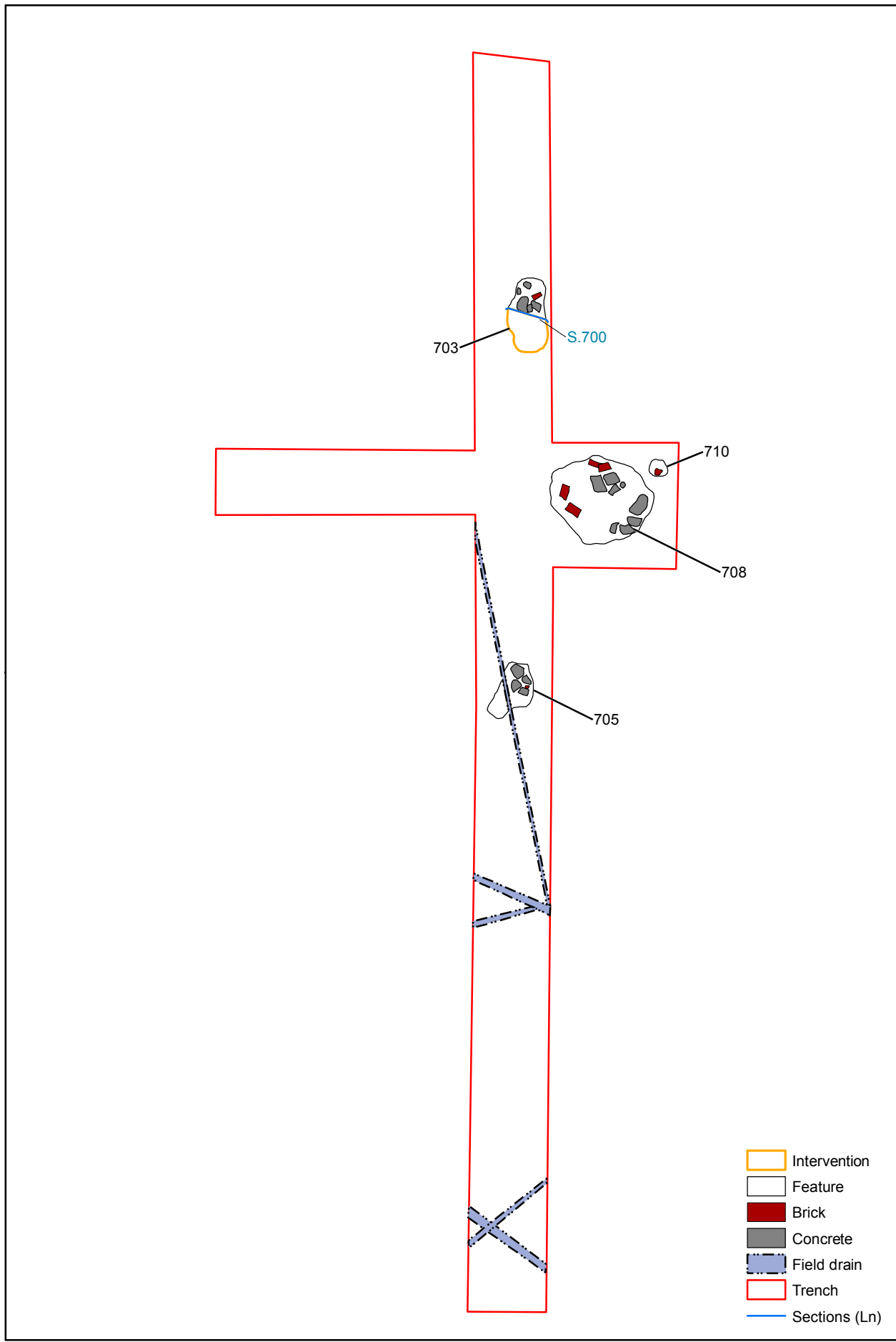


Figure 3: Plan of Trench 7

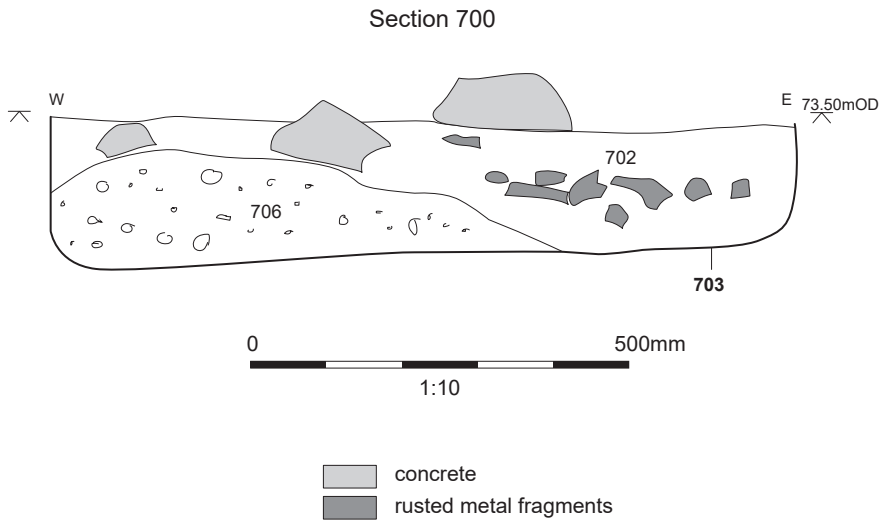


Figure 4: Section 700

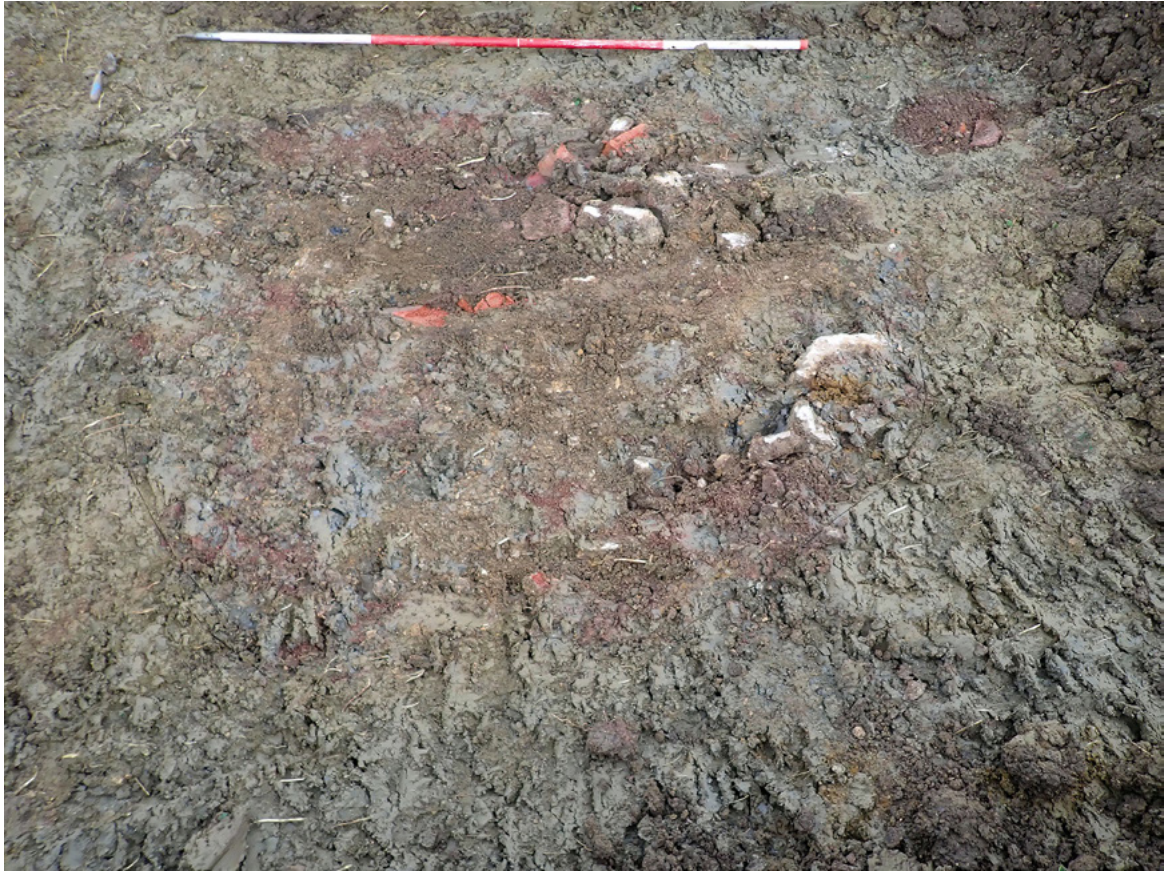


Plate 1: Anchoring point 708, view to north



Plate 2: Tethering point 703, section 700, view to NNE



Plate 3: Tethering point 705, view to east



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