

CHESTERTON, GREEN LANE, OXON**SP 5590 2125****INTRODUCTION**

In May 1993 the Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief for Barrett Construction. The development, at SP 5590 2125, consisted of 12 new houses in an area of approximately 1.8ha.

The site was located at the E end of Chesterton immediately opposite a row of houses known as 'The Green'. The southern boundary is formed by the major Roman road of Akeman Street, running from Verulamium (St. Albans) to Cirencester. The nearest Roman town being the site of Alchester two kilometres to the SE.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND: AKEMAN STREET

Akeman Street had been observed in 1937 by D B Harden at Chesterton Road just W of Alchester. A partial section recorded a single layer of 'large limestone slabs' 19ft (5.79m) wide and 12-14ins. (0.30-0.35m) thick. The road overlaid the natural subsoil.

More recently a watching brief on the M40 by R A Chambers exposed the road during the construction of a bridge abutment at Chesterton Lane. The road sealed a buried soil, the road itself being made up of three layers which were seen in a longitudinal section.

RESULTS

The area of houses being constructed was examined. The topsoil had been stripped but the construction work was too far advanced to make any useful observations. Post-Medieval brick and tile was seen at the far SE corner of the site.

A trench 3.8m wide and over 2m deep was being dug by a 360° excavator to accommodate pipes for a sewer and storm drain. The trench ran E to W up Green Lane and turned N into the site so that a section through the road was seen at SP 55939 21204. The road was located under the verge and hedge on the N side of Green Lane such that the S edge of Akeman Street was below the N edge of Green Lane.

The road was 0.63m below the present ground level, 6.50m in width and up to 0.51m thick. A buried soil (6) was sealed by the road. On the S side it appeared to be cut away by a shallow ditch. On the N side the buried soil extended approximately 2m beyond the edge of the road before petering out. A very small pottery sherd, consistent with a late Iron Age date, was recovered from layer (6).

The soil was overlain by local limestone (4) & (5), mostly laid on their flat sides. Finer limestone layers (2) & (3) had been compacted onto the N & S sides. Overlying these two layers was a 'dirty' weathered limestone (1), which capped the top. Layer (1) could be a

SUMMARY OF CONTEXTS FOR CHESTERTON GREEN LANE CGL 93

Context	Type	Description	Depth
1	Road surface?	Sub-angular limestone (up to 0.03m x 0.01m x 0.006m). Average size 0.14m	0.07-0.15
2	Road make-up	Limestone (up to 0.04m x 0.03m x 0.02m) Average size 0.012m	0.22
3	Road make-up	Limestone (up to 0.07m x 0.06m x 0.03m). Average size 0.01	0.28
4	Road make-up	Limestone average size 0.12m x 0.03m x 0.16m	0.20
5	Road make-up	Limestone average size 0.12m x 0.010m x 0.02m	0.12
6	Buried soil	Dark reddish brown sandy silt	0.48

surviving portion of the road surface.

A possible ditch filled with light brown sandy silt was observed on the S side. At its deepest it was 0.22m below the bottom of Akeman Street cutting away the buried soil (6). Some fine 'powdery' limestone had accumulated in the bottom of the ditch. No corresponding ditch was observed on the N side.

REFERENCES

R A Chambers 'The Archaeology of the M40 through Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, 1988-91' *Oxoniensia LVII* (1992) pp. 43-54.

D B Harden 'Excavations at Chesterton Lane, Alchester, 1937' Oxfordshire Archaeological Society Report of 1937. pp 23-32.

A Parkinson
OAU
July 1993