

Wheatlands Farm
Finchampstead
Berkshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Wheatlands Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire (SU: 7850 6422). The work was commissioned by Mr Greenwood in advance of the construction of a new farmhouse. The watching brief revealed evidence of earlier agricultural practises, but no other significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In July 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Wheatlands Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire (SU: 7850 6422). The work was commissioned by Mr Greenwood in respect of a planning application for construction of a new farmhouse (Planning Application No. F/2002/7825).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Fiona Macdonald, the Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology (BA), on behalf of Wokingham District Council (BA 2005).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located 1 km to the north-west of Finchampstead and is sited on the south-western edge of Wheatlands Farm. The development area is on a gentle north-west facing slope which fronts White Horse Lane (Fig. 1). The land was previously pasture before construction started, occupies an area of 500 m² and lies at approximately 70 m above OD. The underlying geology is Lower Bagshot Beds (British Geological Survey sheet No. 268).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The development is sited approximately 300 m north of the Roman Road known as "The Devil's Highway" and is close to a complex of buildings, dating to the Roman period, which lies astride the Roman Road (SAM 187).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impacted area.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The fieldwork was conducted as a site visit after completion of the groundwork. This comprised machine excavation of a building platform or terrace into the slope of the field, of up to 1.1 m in depth, which provided a level base for the setting out and excavation of the foundation trenches.

2.2.2 All exposed sections and surfaces were closely examined for evidence of archaeological features and deposits, while the spoil was examined for artefacts and dating evidence. A plan showing the extent of the excavations and location of any sections was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and the sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

2.2.3 A photographic record was made of any recorded sections and of the excavations using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The natural, a reddish orange sand (4), was reached at a depth of between 0.6 m and 0.7 m below ground level (Fig. 3, sections 1, 2 and 3). The upper boundary of this layer was disturbed by an intermittent, undulating deposit comprising of mixed silts and sand and which displayed many areas of manganese staining (3). The undulating nature of this deposit combined with the mixing suggests possible plough disturbance or less likely, animal (such as swine or fowl) activity.

3.1.2 Overlying layer 3 was a 0.25 m to 0.3 m thick layer of a very pale brown sandy silt (2). This layer was very clean apart from occasional small flint inclusions and represents a subsoil or an earlier ploughsoil.

3.1.3 Sealing layer 2 was a layer of brown sandy loam (1), of between 0.3 m and 0.45 m in depth. This layer contained many small sub-angular flints and occasional charcoal flecking, but no dating evidence and represents the present day topsoil.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No artefacts or other dating evidence were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The paucity of occupational evidence such as finds or features, and the scarcity of charcoal flecking within the soils all suggest that this area was outside any main areas of occupation. This combined with the thick deposits of the present day topsoil 1, and the underlying earlier worked soil 2 suggests that this area has always been predominately agricultural in nature.
- 4.1.2 The intrusion into the natural sand 4 of possible plough marks 3 may be evidence of an early phase of agriculture, possibly even Neolithic or Bronze age in origin although further work would be needed in the area to support this supposition.
- 4.1.3 No evidence linking this site to activity relating to the nearby Roman Road (the "Devil's Highway") was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.3 m	Present day topsoil	-	C19th - C20th
2	Layer	0.3 m	Subsoil, probably an earlier worked soil	-	-
3	Layer	0.15 m	Possible plough marks	-	-
4	Layer	> 3.5 m	Natural sand	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BA, 2004 *Wheatlands Farm, White Horse Lane, Finchampstead: Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2005 *Wheatlands Farm, Finchampstead, Berkshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Wheatlands Farm, White Horse lane, Finchampstead, Berkshire

Site code: FINWF 05

Grid reference: SU 7850 6422

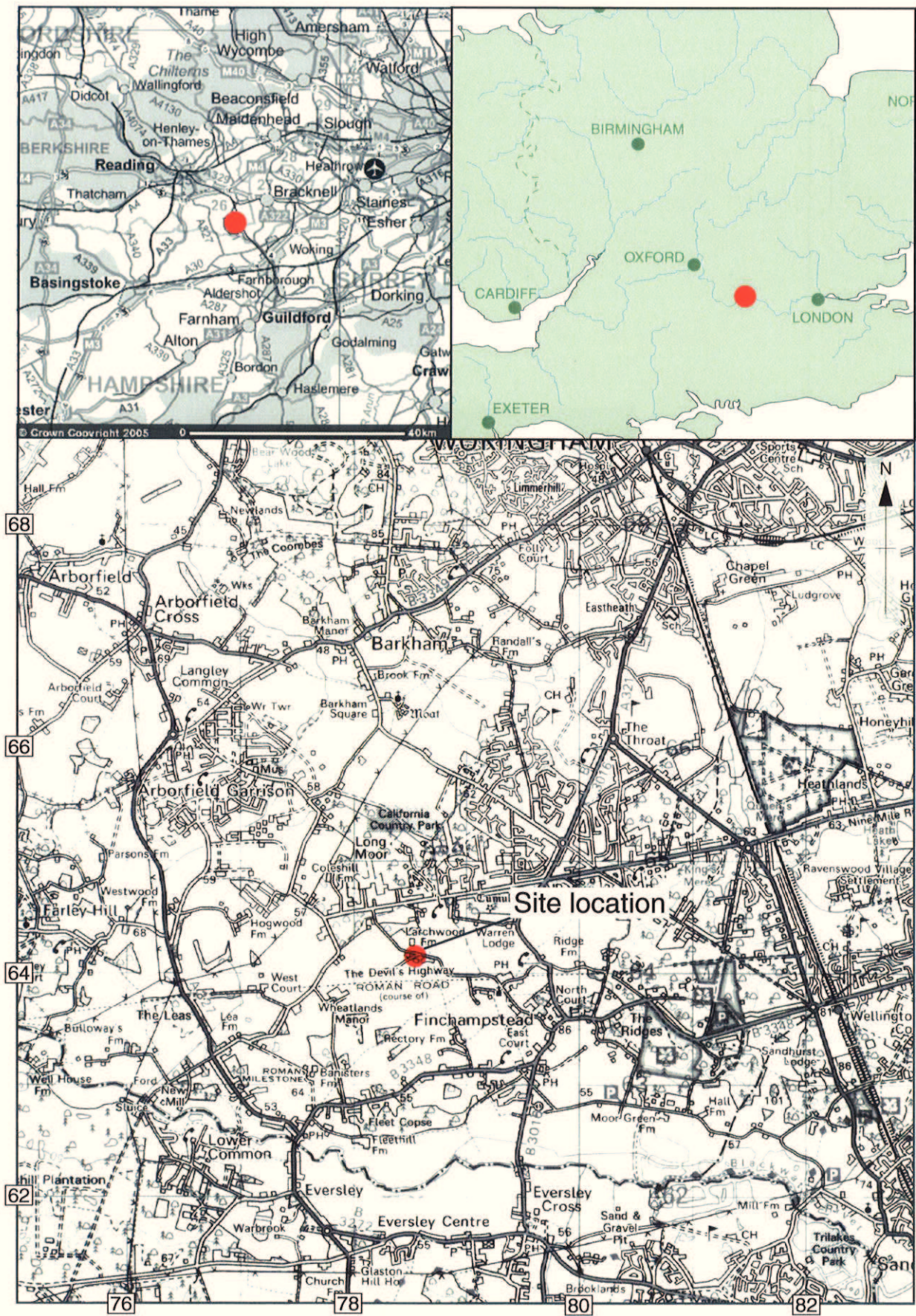
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of building foundations and service trenches

Date and duration of project: 28th July 2005

Area of site: 500 m²

Summary of results: Earlier agricultural practices but no evidence of any archaeological significance

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the West Berkshire Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

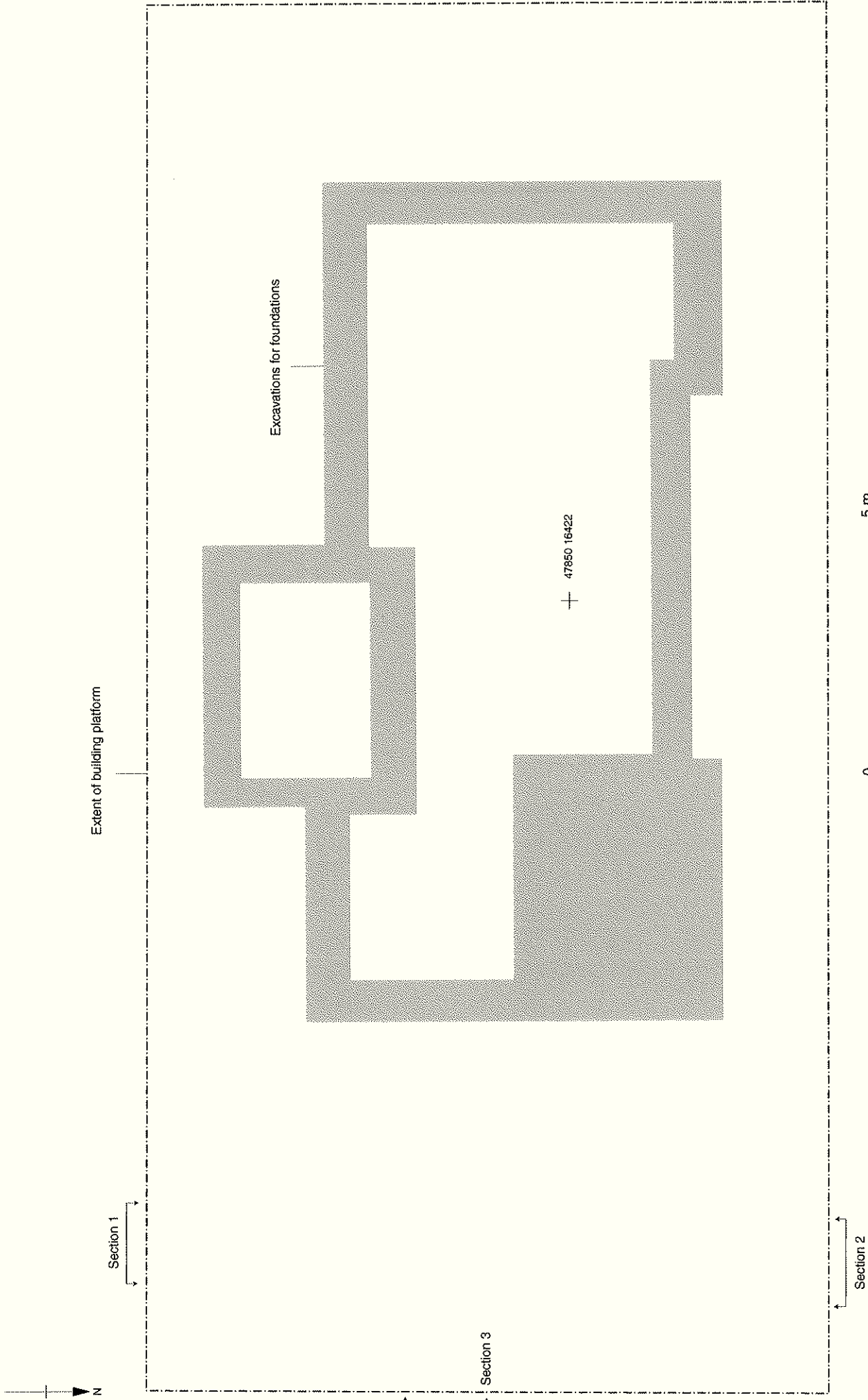


Figure 2: Site plan

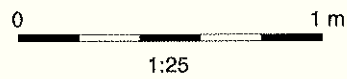
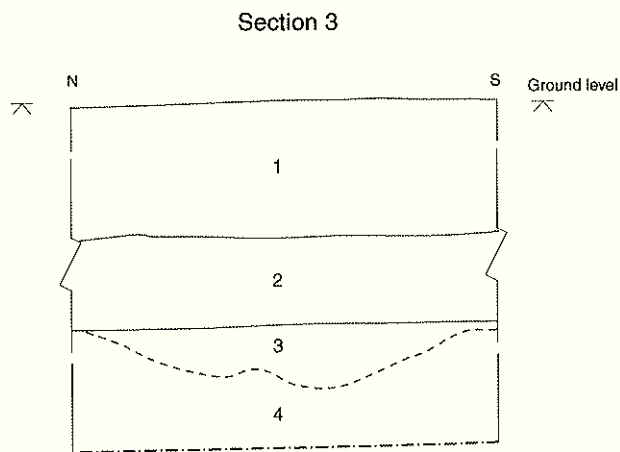
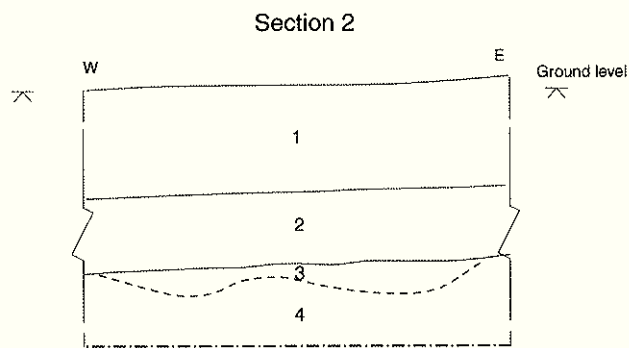
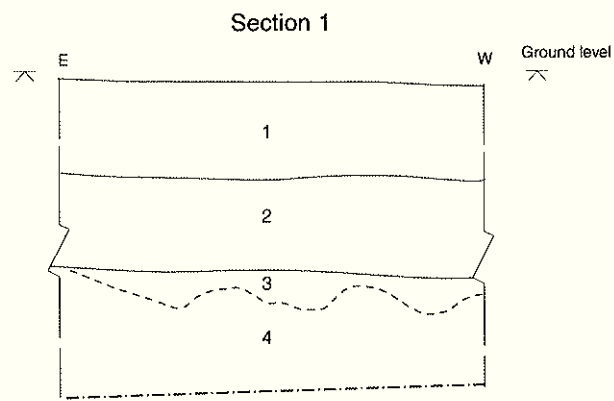


Figure 3: Sections



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