Land East of Burtons Farm Dymock Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Land East of Burtons Farms, near Dymock, Gloucestershire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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and illustrated by Julia Collins

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Summary

In July 2012 Oxford Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching on the site of a proposed new dwelling on land to the east of Burtons Farm, Dymock, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 7104 3232). These trenches were located close to, and over, an area of banks and ditches that had previously been interpreted as a possible moated site.

The evaluation recorded no evidence for occupation of the site, and given the location of the earthworks in an agricultural landscape, it is now thought likely that the ditches with external banks, internal ponds and an open access to a natural water source, form an enclosure for livestock rather than settlement or defence.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of a proposed new dwelling with associated landscaping, on land to the east of Burtons Farm, Dymock, Gloucestershire.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a Planning Application decision (planning reference: P/1687/11/FUL). A specification was set by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2012) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI) showing how it would meet these requirements (OA 2012).

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site is situated to the east of Burtons Farm, Knights Green, Dymock, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 71042 32322) and currently comprises a single field (Fig. 1).

1.2.2 The field is mostly an east-facing slope and lies at approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum (OD) to the west, and fall to *c* 50m OD in the east. It is bounded by open fields to the north and south, a stream and open fields to the east and a single-lane track road to the west.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is Raglan Mudstone Formation comprising siltstones and mudstones with a band of sandstone along the eastern edge of the site (British Geological Survey, Sheet 216).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in both a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) and the specification produced by CgMs and will not be reproduced (CgMs 2011, CgMs 2012). The specification should be read in conjunction with this document.

Potential

1.3.2 The site contains a number of currently undated banks and ditches that in the past have been interpreted as a moated site. Ridge and furrow is also recorded in the field immediately to the north.

1.3.3 Recent interpretation suggests that, given the location of the earthworks in an agricultural landscape, it is now thought likely that the ditches with external banks, internal ponds and an open access (to the south) to a natural water source, form an enclosure for livestock rather than settlement or defence.

1.3.4 In February 2012, a gradiometer survey identified several weak area anomalies, which may represent ploughed out earthworks, or embankments, as well as the extant earthworks and ditches. The survey also detected a small number of positive anomalies, possibly representing cut features in the western half of the site.

2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.2 General

2.2.1 The aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

- determine, as far as reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features encountered;
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits;

2.3 Specific aims and objectives

2.3.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

(i) confirm whether the anomalies that lie within the footprint of the building or access are archaeological in nature;

(ii) establish the date of the earthworks;

(iii) establish the function of the earthworks.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of four trenches, three measuring 15m in length and a fourth 30m in length. All the trenches measured approximately 1.8m in width. The trenches were targeted upon anomalies identified in geophysical survey and extant earthworks (Fig. 2).

2.4.2 The trenches were set out using a GPS system according to Ordnance Survey coordinates prior to their excavation. The topsoil and any modern overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a toothless grading bucket. The overburden was removed in 0.1m spits under archaeological supervision until either the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural was encountered.

2.4.3 All excavated material was examined for archaeological material.

2.4.4 Where archaeological features could be identified, these were excavated and recorded sufficiently to characterise and date them wherever possible. In trenches devoid of archaeological features samples of the prevailing stratigraphy were recorded.

2.4.5 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record were taken of all excavations, general settings and archaeological sections.

2.4.6 A site plan showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections was maintained (Fig. 2). Trench plans were normally recorded at a scale of 1:50 and any section drawings of features and sample sections of trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3).

3 Results

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The observations within each trench will be described separately followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Soil conditions during the excavations were reasonable with the ground firm. The water table was not encountered, but some surface water which had accumulated from recent heavy rain encroached into Trench 4 during the excavation.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Within three of the Trenches (1, 2 and 3), stratigraphy consistent with agricultural practises was observed. Archaeological features were only encountered within the south-eastern end of Trench 4.

3.4 Trenches 1 and 2 (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, sections 100 and 200)

3.4.1 These two trenches each measured 15m in length and were located within the footprint of the proposed access road running across an open, roughly level, field.

3.4.2 The stratigraphy observed within these two trenches was similar and will be described together. The underlying natural, a light reddish brown silty clay (102 and 202) was encountered at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.48m below current ground level. Overlying this was a layer of reddish brown silty clay (101 and 201) measuring between 0.12m and 0.18m in depth. Above this was the present day ploughsoil, a layer of dark reddish brown clayey silt loam (100 and 200) 0.28m in depth.

3.5 Trench 3 (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, sections 300 and 301)

3.5.1 This trench measured 30m in length and was located in open ground within the centre of the area bounded by banks and ditches.

3.5.2 The natural geology (302) was encountered at a depth of 0.4m below the current ground level. This was composed of weathered green sandstone fragments within a light reddish brown clay matrix, with the percentage of weathered stone decreasing and the clay matrix being more prominent at either end of the trench.

3.5.3 Overlying 302 was a 0.12m deep layer of reddish brown silty clay (301). Above 301 was a layer of humic dark reddish silty clay loam (300), up to 0.32m in depth.

3.6 Trench 4 (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, section 400)

3.6.1 This trench measured 15m in length and was located perpendicular to the eastern bank and ditch.

3.6.2 The natural light reddish brown silty clay (400) was encountered throughout the length of the trench at an average depth of 0.28m below the current ground level.

3.6.3 At the south-western end of the trench the natural was cut by a parallel sided linear feature measuring approximately 4m wide and up to 0.5m in depth. This feature had gently sloping sides with a flat base and was aligned roughly north-south following (or forming) an existing fields western boundary.

3.6.4 Filling this linear was a mid greyish brown silty clay with reddish brown clay mottling (402).

3.6.5 Forming a continuous layer over the fill of the feature and the natural on either side was a dark greyish red brown silty clay (403) measuring between 0.25m and 0.35m in depth. This deposit increased in depth slightly on the south-western side of the cut forming a shallow ridge or bank. There was no corresponding increase on the north-eastern side of the feature.

3.7 Finds summary

3.7.1 No dating evidence, or evidence of activity such as occupation, was recovered from any of the trenches. The topsoil was scanned during and after machine excavation and no finds were observed.