

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
CHOLSEY BRADFORD'S BROOK, 1991
WALLINGFORD BY-PASS**

NGR SU 595 885

*Oxford Archaeological Unit
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Introduction

An evaluation of the archaeological deposits for the road corridor of the Wallingford by-pass in field OS no.5255 (NGR SU 595 885) between Bradford's Brook and the former Great Western Railway was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit. The work was commissioned by Oxford County Council and was jointly funded by OCC and HBMC as part of the overall research design for the Wallingford By-pass.

Topography

The tract of land under evaluation is a corridor between 30 and 40m in width. The evaluation site is situated on valley gravels and alluvium. The alluvium is either side of the Bradford's Brook expanding to the W of the area under examination. The area between Wallingford and Cholsey is one of gently undulating land around 50m OD which slopes down towards the Brook. The field was under arable cultivation.

Archaeological background

The site was located by a preliminary fieldwalking survey which was undertaken by the Wallingford Archaeological and Historical Society during the autumns of 1985 and 1986. A 'corridor' 90 metres wide was examined which followed the proposed midline of the road through arable fields. Nine sherds of black coarse ware pottery identified as Iron Age and two early Roman sherds were retrieved indicating the presence of activity.

Known archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity include the linear dyke Grims Ditch, which appear to cut off a loop in the Thames between Wallingford and Henley, a Late Bronze Age island settlement on the west bank of the Thames, and a possible prehistoric site on the east bank.

Methodology

Nine trenches were machine excavated using a toothless ditching bucket, along the road corridor. Each trench was excavated to its archaeological horizon or to the underlying natural. Further hand excavation was carried out on features revealed in order to characterise stratigraphy and to obtain information on the state of preservation, dating and find density.

Results

Trenches 7 and 8 were 20m in length, all the others were 30m. Trenches 7, 8 and 9 were aligned NE-SW, all others were orientated NW-SE. Trenches 5, 7 and 8 contained no archaeological features.

Soils

Consistent upper deposits were revealed in all nine trenches. The Modern ploughsoil consisted of a clay loam and was c 0.25m in thickness. Underlying this modern cultivation deposit was a layer of clay or clay loam with varying percentages of gravel. This has been interpreted as a previous ploughing horizon; 0.1 and 0.3m in thickness and was found in only trenches 2, 3, 4, and 6. Possible deposits of alluvium occurred in trenches 1, 8 and 9. Natural gravel occurred at approximately 0.4m below the modern ground surface, composed of a mixture of gravels, sand, chalk and clay.

Archaeological features (fig 1)

(A summary of features can be found in tables 1-9; this includes dimensions and profile descriptions).

There are two or three periods represented by the ditches, gullies pits and post holes. In trench 1 closest to the brook, there is a lot of activity (ditches, gullies and probable pits), indicating a probable settlement and field system. The pottery retrieved from a variety of features was predominately late Bronze Age. The flint implements, including a scraper and flakes would also suggest a Bronze Age date. The features in trench 1 extend into trench 2, but only two flint flakes and two sherds of pottery (one possible Late Bronze Age or Iron Age) were recovered.

The two ditches in Trench 4 contained large quantities of Romano-British pottery mainly dating to the Late C3rd and C4th. The amount of pottery therefore would suggest a significant amount of Romano-British activity in the neighbourhood, perhaps a settlement and associated field system. Several sherds from the upper fills of 4/4 were of early Anglo Saxon date and indicate activity of that date in the vicinity before the Roman ditches had completely silted up. The ditches in trench 6 are undated.

Conclusions

The evidence suggests two settlements or areas of activity in the vicinity with associated field systems, one late Bronze Age and the other middle to late Romano-British. There is the possibility of Anglo Saxon activity in the area on a smaller scale.

Summary of trenches

Trench 1: 30m NW-SE

This was the nearest trench to Bradford Brook. Several features were located and are summarised in table 1.

Feature 1/6 was a shallow gully orientated NNW-SSE which tapers out towards the southern end of the trench. It was filled with sandy clay and was overlaid by 1/2 (possibly alluvial or a mature soil). The relationship of 1/6 with 1/7 is uncertain though it is likely that 1/7 cuts 1/6. The extent of 1/7 was not determined due to the limits of the trench. Its known dimensions (fig.00) indicate a pit, or less likely a ditch terminal. Its five fills show an even silting process. Layer 1/7/3 contained numerous snails within its matrix, and a bovine skull was retrieved too. The ditch (1/7) was bottomed by machine; its primary layer/deposit containing a cylindrical loomweight and fragments of wood. Another ditch, 1/9, was aligned NE-SW and contained late Bronze Age pottery. It was at a right angle to gully 1/6. Ditch 1/10 parallels 1/9 and cuts the broader ditch 1/11 which is also cut by 1/9. Feature 1/8 consisted of 'dirty gravel' interpreted as a possible old ground surface remaining in a hollow: it was similar to 1/4. An indeterminate feature, 1/12, was located in the eastern edge of the trench containing a piece of burnt flint.

Trench 2: 30m NW-SE

was orientated NW-SE sloping downwards towards the Brook. The three features discovered were all overlaid by 2/2, a clay loam 30% gravel. A steep sided ditch (2/4) was aligned N-S with a single sandy clay and gravel fill. Ditch 2/5 was shallow and was aligned E-W. This ditch cut an earlier feature, 2/6, the true nature of which was not established due to the limits of the trench; possibly a posthole or gully.

Trench 3: 30m NW-SE

was also aligned NW-SE sloping towards the Brook. Only one feature was revealed after stripping, an ovoid posthole containing one large burnt quartzite pebble.

Trench 4: 30m NW-SE

contained two ditches overlaid by 4/2, an earlier ploughsoil. Ditch 4/4 was situated in the extreme N end of the trench aligned E-W. Machine excavation of the ditch for finds revealed a quantity of Roman pottery. Though not fully excavated, the layers revealed indicated an even silting process. These layers were predominantly clay based. The second ditch, 4/5, orientated NNE-SSW was not fully excavated but Roman pottery was retrieved from its upper fill. These two ditches may meet c5m SE of the trench to form the corner of an enclosure or field.

Trench 5: 30m NW SE

revealed no archaeological features. It contained only one layer of modern ploughsoil overlying natural at 0.25m below ground level.

Trench 6: 30m NW-SE

Two gullies were located. Gully 6/4 in the northern end of the trench was overlaid by 6/1 the modern ploughsoil. Seven metres to the south was a similarly orientated gully (6/5).

Trench 7: 20m NE-SW

Only a tree hole was located in the side of the trench, overlaid by the modern ploughsoil 7/1.

Trench 8: 20m NE-SW

No archaeological features were revealed in this trench. The modern ploughsoil 8/1 overlay 8/2 a clay deposit with 5% gravel - possibly alluvial.

Trench 9: 30m NE-SW

Underlying 9/2, the ?alluvial deposit was a shallow posthole filled with clay loam but containing no finds. A probable shallow gully (9/4) only 0.05m deep was revealed. It was orientated E-W, curving to the south. However, its fill was so similar to 9/2 that this may merely be a depression in the natural.

APPENDIX

Summary of deposits

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
1/1	ploughsoil	-	0.25m	-	modern
1/2	?alluvial	-	0.19-32	flint flakes	
1/3	ploughwash	-	0.35	pottery, bone, burnt flint & flakes	Poss L.Br Age & L.Ir Age / E.Rom
1/4	layer	-	0.05	flint flakes	
1/5	natural	-	-	-	
1/6	gully	0.55	0.13	-	shallow U profile,
1/7	?ditch or pit	3.4	1.7	bovine skull loomweight wood, pott. flint flakes	ditch terminal or pit. U- profile. LBA?
1/8	layer	c1.3	0.09	bone, flint flakes	old ground surface?
1/9	ditch	2.5	0.8	pottery	cuts 1/11. Irreg U- profile ?LBA
1/10	gully	0.65	0.3	pottery, burnt & flint flakes	cuts 1/11. U-profile. ?LBA
1/11	ditch	0.75+	0.75m	pottery, bone, flint flakes	steep sided, flat base. ?LBA or later.
1/12	?feature	1.7	0.5+	burnt flint	poss pit

table 1: deposits in trench 1 (see figure 00)

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
2/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.25m	-	
2/2	ploughsoil	-	0.09- 0.2	-	

2/3	natural	-	-	-	
2/4	ditch	2.0	0.7	flint flakes pottery	steep sided, flattish base. ?LBA or Ir.A
2/5	ditch	0.9	0.2	-	shallow U profile
2/6	gully/post hole	0.4+	0.12	-	cut by 2/5. Shallow sided, flat bottom.

table 2: deposits in trench 2

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
3/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.28m		clay loam
3/2	old ploughsoil	-	0.12		clay. Poss hillwash
3/3	natural	-	-		
3/4	posthole	0.4	0.16	bone & burnt pebble	broad U profile

table 3: deposits in trench 3

cxt	type	width	depth	Finds	comments
4/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.24	pottery	Medieval
4/2	old ploughsoil	-	0.08- 0.17		
4/3	natural	-	-		
4/4	ditch	3.0+	0.75+	pottery, CBM, flint flakes, bone	Mainly Rom, 5 sherds E Ang Sax
4/5	ditch	2.2	-	pottery, CBM	freq charcoal. Late C3-4 Rom Brit.

table 4: deposits in trench 4

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
5/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.25	-	
5/2	natural	-	-	-	

table 5: deposits in trench 5

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
6/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.25	-	
6/2	?old ploughsoil	-	0.04-0.07	-	
6/3	natural	-	-	-	
6/4	ditch	0.7	0.15	-	
6/5	ditch	0.4	0.05	-	

table 6: deposits in trench 6

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
7/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.26	-	
7/2	natural	-	-	-	
7/3	tree hole	1.25	0.17	-	

table 7: deposits in trench 7

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
8/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.3	pottery, flint flake	post med
8/2	?alluvium	-	0.04-0.09	-	
8/3	natural	-	-	-	

table 8: deposits in trench 8

cxt	type	width	depth	finds	comments
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9/1	modern ploughsoil	-	0.28	-	
9/2	?alluvium	-	0.05- 0.14	-	
9/3	posthole	0.26	0.04	-	
9/4	?gully	0.3	0.05	-	poss 9/2

table 9: deposits in trench 9