

CIRENCESTER BEFORE CORINIUM

EXCAVATIONS AT KINGSHILL NORTH, CIRENCESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE



by Edward Biddulph and Ken Welsh

Cirencester before Corinium

Excavations at Kingshill North, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

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Oxford Archaeology

Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph No. 34

2011

The publication of this volume was generously funded by Robert Hitchens Ltd

Published for Oxford Archaeology by Oxford University School of Archaeology as part of the Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph series

Designed by Oxford Archaeology Graphics Office

Edited by Ian Scott

This book is part of a series of monographs about the Thames Valley Landscapes which can be bought from all good bookshops and internet bookshops

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Front cover: Beaker from grave and ring-ditch group, 8454 (photograph and drawing by Magdalena Wachnik)

Back cover: Dog skeleton from Middle Iron Age pit 8851

ISBN 978-1-905905-22-5

Typeset by Production Line, Oxford

Printed in Great Britain by Information Press, Eynsham, Oxfordshire

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Summary

An excavation by Oxford Archaeology in 2008 at Kingshill North, to the north-east of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, uncovered evidence for prehistoric occupation. The earliest evidence comprised storage pits dating to the late Neolithic period. Some of the features contained Grooved Ware pottery decorated with exceptionally rare 'lattice lozenge' motifs, pig bones suggestive of feasting, bone pins and awls, worked flint imported from some distance, and fragments of Cornish axe heads. The pit groups point to a community able to mobilise a wide range of resources and dispose of them in a highly visible way. The fieldwork uncovered two Beaker burials, one enclosed by a ring-ditch. The isotopes from the individuals indicate that they were not local; one individual came from the chalklands of eastern or southern England, the other was from a more south-westerly chalkland region. As such they fit within an emerging picture of population mobility. Another inhumation grave, dated to the middle Bronze Age, was also recorded. More storage pits were dug during the middle Iron Age. These were filled with

domestic waste, but there was evidence of structured deposits in the form of crow or rook and dog burials. The late Iron Age settlement comprised a sequence of ditches which formed boundaries or enclosures and surrounded structures and pits. These were set within a pastoral landscape and areas of grassland and meadows. Three human burials, all interred in ditches, were also recorded. The settlement was within the territory of the Dobunni, whose centre was at nearby Bagendon, but the inhabitants of Kingshill North did not benefit materially from the proximity, and their focus remained local. The settlement was abandoned by the late 1st century AD, before or coincident with the establishment of the Roman town of Corinium Dobunorum, although agricultural activity continued to a limited extent through the Roman period, and there was a single cremation burial dated between the late 1st and mid 3rd century AD. The medieval and post-medieval periods were represented by an agricultural landscape of field boundaries and drainage features.

Acknowledgements

The authors are indebted to Robert Hitchens Ltd for funding the archaeological fieldwork, post-excavation programme and publication. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, and thanks are owed to Myk Flitcroft of CgMs for ensuring that the project proceeded smoothly. The authors are also grateful to Charles Parry and Jan Wills of Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service for their support.

The fieldwork was directed by Vix Hughes and was managed by Ken Welsh. The post-excavation project was managed by Edward Biddulph. Support was provided by Leigh Allen (finds management), Paul Backhouse and Sarah Lucas (graphics management), Matt Bradley (geomatics management), Louise Loe (burials management), Rebecca Nicholson (environmental management), Nicola Scott (archives management), and Alex Smith (project monitoring). Victoria Wilkinson digitised the site plans, and Mark Littlewood drafted the GIS-based report figures. Finds were drawn or photographed by Daniel Bashford, Sarah Lucas, Jane Timby and Magdalena Wachnik. Hannah Kennedy drafted additional drawings, with some preliminary work

by Georgina Slater, and prepared final versions of all the figures. The authors are grateful to Jane Randle for permission to reproduce the aerial photograph shown in Figure 3.

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank the following for their significant contribution to the project during and after fieldwork: Gary Baddeley, Robert Bailey, Robin Bashford, Claire Burke, Nathan Chichen, Liz Collinson, Martyn Cooper, Geraldine Crann, Jodie Ford, Andrew Frudd, Fiona Gordon, Anthony Haskins, Sarah Hopes, Nate Jepson, Trevor Jose, Mike Kershaw, Neil Lambert, Paul Leader, Robin Maggs, Ben McAndrew, Hefin Meara, Andrea Paylor, Kay Proctor, Chris Reese, Christopher Richardson, Jennifer Salter, Mark Sycamore, Rowena Tucker, Robert Tutt, Matthew Weightman, and Victoria Wilkinson. David Mullin is indebted to Ann Woodward for her expert guidance on the earlier prehistoric pottery. The report was edited for publication by Ian Scott. The authors are especially grateful to Charles Parry, Myk Flitcroft and Neil Holbrook for reading and commenting on the text. Any errors, however, remain the responsibility of the authors alone.

