

Beechwood Flats Iffley Turn Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Beechwood Flats, Iffley Turn, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In December 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Beechwood Flats, Iffley Turn, Oxford (NRG SP 5323 0393). The work was commissioned by First Connect/McNicholas Plc after the unexpected discovery of disarticulated human skeletal remains during the excavation of gas service trenches. The watching brief revealed a series of layers consisting of made up ground and two service trenches.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In December 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Beechwood Flats, Iffley Turn, Oxford (NRG SP 5323 0393). The work was commissioned by First Connect/McNicholas Plc after the unexpected discovery of disarticulated human skeletal remains during the excavation of gas service trenches.

1.1.2 The contractors contacted the Thames Valley Police in the first instance and they brought the human remains to Oxford Archaeology (OA) where they were briefly examined by Angela Boyle (Head of Burial Archaeology). The bones were broken and abraded and thought to be of some antiquity. Brian Durham, City Archaeologist, visited the site and advised that subsequent work should be subject to archaeological monitoring.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on the geological boundary of the Littlemore member Corallian marl and limestone and the West Walton dark grey silty mudstone at 70 m above OD (BGS Sheet 237). Both geological horizons are drifts. The site is situated on either side of Anne Greenwood Close just before the turn off point to the nursing home (Figure 1).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 Human remains were discovered in the grounds of Denton House in the early 1980s at a depth of approximately 18" below ground. They comprised a femur, part of a pelvis and lower arm bones (OAU Notebook, PRN 6633). Their recorded location is immediately adjacent to Beechwood Flats.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

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

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The trenches were excavated by the contractors under archaeological supervision.

2.2.2 The north facing sections of both trenches were cleaned and drawn at scales of 1:20. The sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed the procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Trench one

Description of deposits

3.1.1 The stratigraphically earliest layer observed was a marbled reddish brown and light brown sandy layer containing sand stone fragments (6). This layer contained disarticulated human bones. The layer had been excavated to a depth of 0.68 m. A flat-based cut with vertical sides (4) was present in the eastern end of the trench. This was filled with a mottled reddish brown, dark brown and light brown silty sand (5). A service cable was also present in the base of the cut. A layer of mid brown clayey sand (2) was overlying the fill (5) of the service trench (4) and layer. The layer was 0.12 m thick. This layer appeared to have been truncated by a deposit of creamy white hard core (3) which was 0.2 m thick. In the western end of the trench, the hard core layer (3) and layer 6 had been cut by a large flat based, vertical sided cut (8). The cut was 1.0 m wide and 0.84 m deep and contained a mixed dark brown, reddish brown and light brown silty sand fill (9) which surrounded five cables of various sizes. The pipe trench was truncated by a 0.22 m thick layer of reddish pink hard core. The hardcore layers 3 and 10 and the fill of the service trench (8) were overlain by a 0.14 m thick layer of tarmac. In the eastern end of the trench, layer 2 and the hardcore (3) were overlain by dark brown, clayey sand topsoil (1). The topsoil (1) and the tarmac (7) were separated by a kerbstone (Figure 2).

3.2 Trench two

Description of deposits

3.2.1 The earliest deposit seen was layer 6 which was excavated to a depth of 0.38 m. Disarticulated human skeletal remains were present within the layer. A 0.12 m thick layer of reddish pink hard core (10) overlay this. A 0.28 m thick layer of tarmac (7) overlaid the hard core (Figure 2).

3.3 Human remains

3.3.1 Some of the human bones discovered during the excavation were briefly examined by Angela Boyle (Head of Burial Archaeology). It was established that the bones seen were from more than one adult individual and that the post-mortem breaks present were of some antiquity. Bones present were pelvis, skull, femora and tibiae. The disarticulated bones were therefore clearly disturbed and redeposited.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located on the southern side of the road and trench 2 was located on the northern side of the road at the bend of the road on the top of the hill. The deposits seen in the sections consisted of various layers and pipe trenches. All layers exposed related to the construction of the road and the pavement. The layer containing the disarticulated human bones comprised mixed natural and subsoil and was clearly disturbed at some time in the past. This disturbance is most likely to have taken place in more recent times during road construction and the excavation of modern service trenches.

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.22 m	-	-	Top soil	None
2	Layer	0.12 m	-	-	Sub soil	None
3	Layer	0.20 m	-	-	Hard core	None
4	Cut	0.38 m	0.34 m	-	Cut for service trench	None
5	Fill	0.38 m	0.34 m	-	Fill of service trench	None
6	Layer	0.68 m	-	-	Redeposited natural	Human bones
7	Layer	0.14 m		-	Tarmac	None
8	Cut	0.84 m	1.0 m	-	Cut for service trench	None
9	Fill	0.84 m	1.0 m	-	Fill of service trench	None
10	Layer	0.12 m	-	-	Hard core	None

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992, *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

British Geological Sheet 236

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Beechwood flats, Hffley Turn

Site code: OXITBF 02

Grid reference: SP 5323 0393

Type of watching brief: Two hand dug service trenches

Date and duration of project: 5/12/02, One day

Area of site: 0.6 m by 5 m

Summary of results: The trenches revealed a series of layers relating to the construction of the road and two service trenches. The layer in which the human remains were recovered from was disturbed, possibly by the construction of the road and other modern features.

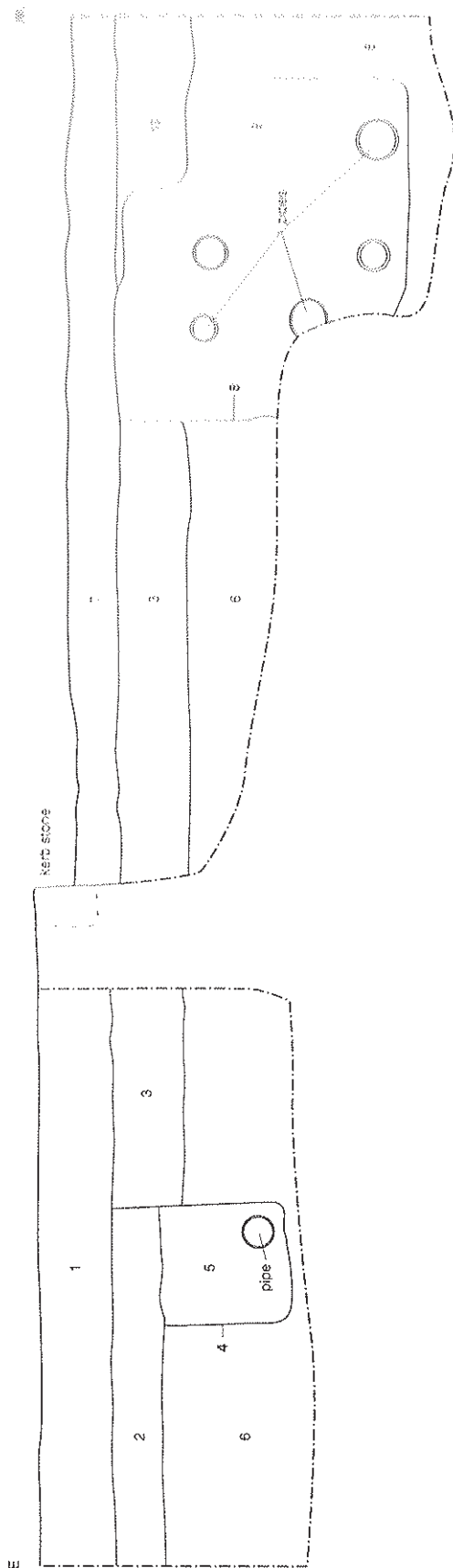
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.237.



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Figure 1: Site location.

Trench 1, Section 1



Trench 2, Section 2

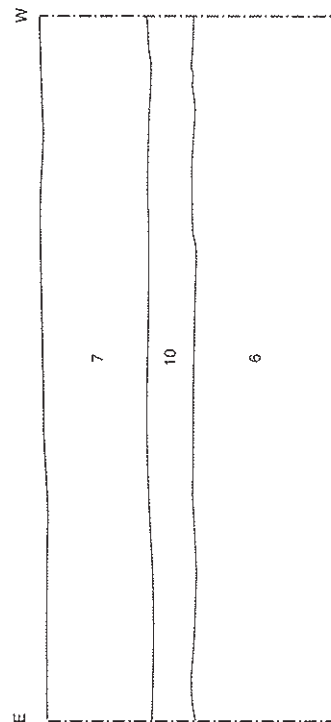


Figure 2: Sections 1 and 2.



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