

# Community Hospital Newbury West Berkshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

November 2002

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**Community Hospital, Newbury, West Berkshire*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT***

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## SUMMARY

*In October 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the new Community Hospital site near Newbury, West Berkshire (NGR SU 4970 6770). The work was commissioned by Jarvis Construction Ltd. The watching brief was maintained during topsoil stripping and groundworks for new roads and car parking and followed two previous strip and record exercises by OA on the site of the development. These had revealed a late Iron Age/early Roman enclosure site. The watching brief revealed a number of linear features dating to the early Roman and post-medieval period. In general formation levels were above the level of archaeological preservation and few features were identified.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In October 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the site of the new Community Hospital, Newbury, West Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Jarvis Construction Ltd in respect of a planning application for construction of new Hospital (Planning Application No. 145254), and followed two prior strip and record exercises on the site by OA.

1.1.2 An evaluation of the hospital site was undertaken in 2000 and revealed archaeological features of early Roman date (OAU 2000). Following discussions between West Berkshire Heritage Services' Archaeological representative, Jarvis Construction proposed that a Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) investigation be undertaken prior to construction. The Phase 1 of the SMS was undertaken in August and September 2001, over an area of approximately 0.44 ha. This revealed evidence for a Romano-British field system, together with a trackway, pits and two cremation burials (OA 2001).

1.1.3 Consequent to these discoveries a further 0.33 ha was stripped and sampled in February 2002, which revealed a continuation of the field system and trackway identified in the first phase of excavation and a number of pit features. All of these features date to the late Iron Age/early Roman period, the first and second centuries AD (OA 2002a).

1.1.4 Agreement was reached between all parties that a watching brief be undertaken across the site during the early phases of construction work, to record any additional archaeological features exposed during landscaping for car parking and access areas.

1.1.5 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2002b).

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on the northern gravel terrace of the River Kennet and is bounded by the Turnpike Road to the north, London Road to the south and Fir Tree lane to the west. The land slopes from 84 m OD from the north to around 74 m OD to the south.

1.2.2 The geology comprises river and valley gravel to the south and clay and sand Reading beds to the north (BGS 267).

### 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, 2002b) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The previous phases of investigation revealed part of a late Iron Age/ early Romano-British ditched field system and trackway, along with two cremations and a scattering of pits.

1.3.3 Phase 2 uncovered a northward continuation of these features and also confirmed that the trackway, and probably the field system, had two phases. The flanking drainage ditches of the trackway were dug as part of a single integrated system with the field boundaries.

1.3.4 These ditched boundaries were probably laid out around the middle of the first century AD; at about the same time as the two cremation burials were made. The ditches had silted up by the early second century.

## 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, in addition to the areas already observed and recorded.

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The watching brief was focussed on access roads, car parking and landscaping areas. Firstly the whole of the perimeter of the site was stripped of topsoil, which was heaped up in places for use during later landscaping. This operation was carried out by 360" machines and a D8 bulldozer. The car park areas and roadways were then excavated by 360" machines.

2.2.2 The majority of areas were only stripped to a depth of c. 200 mm below ground level, and thus were 200-300 mm above the archaeological features as indicated by the Phase 1 and 2 investigations. All of the areas that were stripped to gravel were observed.

2.2.3 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film and a general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Areas of gravel were exposed in the north-west and south parts of the site. Upon removal of topsoil (303) and an underlying soil layer (304) of reddish brown silt loam, a number of linear features were exposed cutting the natural gravel.
- 3.1.2 At the south end of the site was a ditch (301) that measured 12 m x 0.9 m x 0.23 m (Fig. 2, Fig. 3 - section 1). It had a concave profile cutting into the natural with a fill of dark red-brown silty sand (302) from which three sherds of 1<sup>st</sup> century Late Iron Age/ early Roman pottery were recovered. The ditch was aligned north-south and had a rounded terminal at its north end (Figs 2 & 3, section 1).
- 3.1.3 Two further ditches (306 and 307) just to the west of ditch 301 were observed. These measured between 30 to 40 m in length and were both 1 m wide. They ran parallel to each other on a north-south alignment. The northern extents are unknown as they extended beneath an area of the site that was not exposed. Ditches 306, 307 and 301 are probably part of the trackway seen in Phases 1 and 2.
- 3.1.4 In the area stripped to the north-west for a car park and a new building (the Energy Centre), a ditch (309) aligned north-south was recorded and is probably part of the post-medieval ditch recorded in the Phase 2 stripping exercise. A total length of 180 m was observed and it was also recorded in section. It had a concave profile and was 0.7 m wide and 0.25 m in depth and filled by a dark brown silty clay (310) (Figs 2 & 3, section 2). This ditch is probably part of the Late Iron Age/Romano-British enclosures seen in Phases 1 and 2.
- 3.1.5 In the south-west corner of the site near the rear of the properties on London Road, a 6 m long by 2.5 m wide ditch (308) was uncovered (Fig. 2). It was also aligned north-south with a dark reddish brown silty sand fill, but contained no dating evidence. This ditch is likely to be the same feature as a post-medieval boundary seen in Phase 1.

#### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Three pottery sherds from ditch fill (302) date from the 1<sup>st</sup> century Late Iron Age/ early Roman period. These were local wares of body sherds and part of a base and are of similar date to the pottery from features forming the enclosure.
- 3.2.2 From soil layer (304) a fragment of Mesolithic Teltiay blade was recovered. It had been soft hammer struck leaving platform edge abrasions and dorsal blade scars (Hugo Lamdin Whymark OA, *pers comm*).

#### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental samples were observed during the watching brief.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results from the watching brief uncovered more of the Late Iron Age and Roman field system and a probable continuation of the previously seen post-medieval boundary ditch.
- 4.1.2 The watching brief added little in terms of the detail or the extent of the enclosure system and no new cremation burials were identified. The majority of the works did not penetrate deep enough to expose archaeological features.
- 4.1.3 No further archaeological investigations are planned as part of the development. A rapid analysis of the collected data will be undertaken with publication of the results in an appropriate journal.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
301	Cut	0.23 m	0.9 m	12 m	Boundary ditch	
302	Fill				Fill of ditch	Pottery
303	Layer	0.2-3 m			Topsoil/Overburden	None
304	Layer	0.2-5 m			Subsoil	Flint
305	Layer				Natural	
306	Cut	40 m	1 m		Boundary ditch	None
307	Cut	30 m	1 m		Boundary ditch	None
308	Cut	0.25 m	1 m	180 m	Boundary ditch	None
309	Cut	0.25 m	0.7 m		Post Medieval Boundary ditch	
310	Fill				Fill of ditch	None

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual (First Edition August 1992)*

OAU 2000 *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury. Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OAU, 2001 *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury Phase 1 Archaeological Mitigation Strip, Map and Sample Investigation Interim Report*

OA, 2002a *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury, Berkshire Phase 2 Archaeological Mitigation, strip, Map and Sample Investigation Interim Report*

OA 2002b *Community Hospital, Turnpike Road, Newbury. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** New Community Hospital, Newbury, West Berkshire

**Site code:** NEHOS 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SU 4970 6770

**Type of watching brief:** Topsoil strip and ground reduction prior to construction.

**Date and duration of project:** A total of nine site visits were made from the 28/8/2002 to the 25/10/2002.

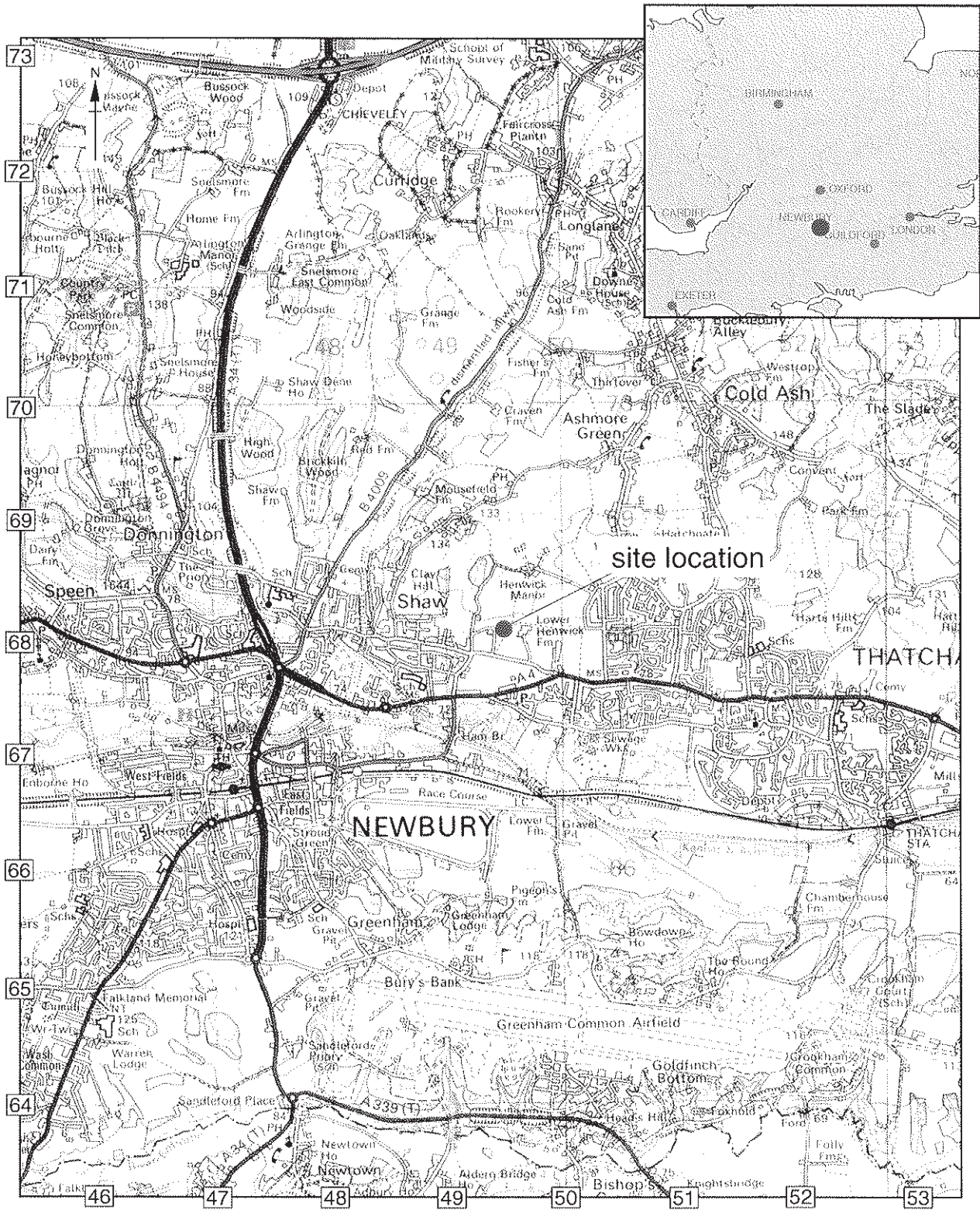
**Area of site:** 700 m x 1000 m

**Summary of results:** A number of linear features were exposed where the subsoil was removed. The features date to the Roman and post-medieval periods.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with West Berks. Heritage Service, The Wharf, Newbury, Berks, RG14 5AS in due course, under the following accession number: NEBYM: 2001.11



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Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

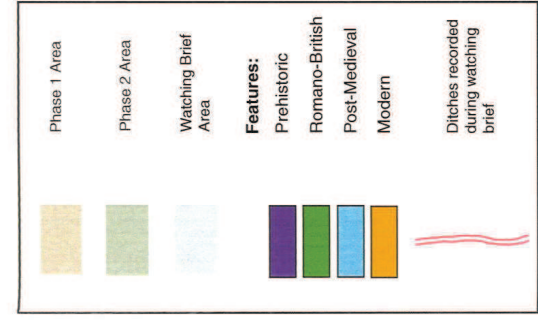


Figure 2: Site Plan showing features and site plan from Phase 2





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