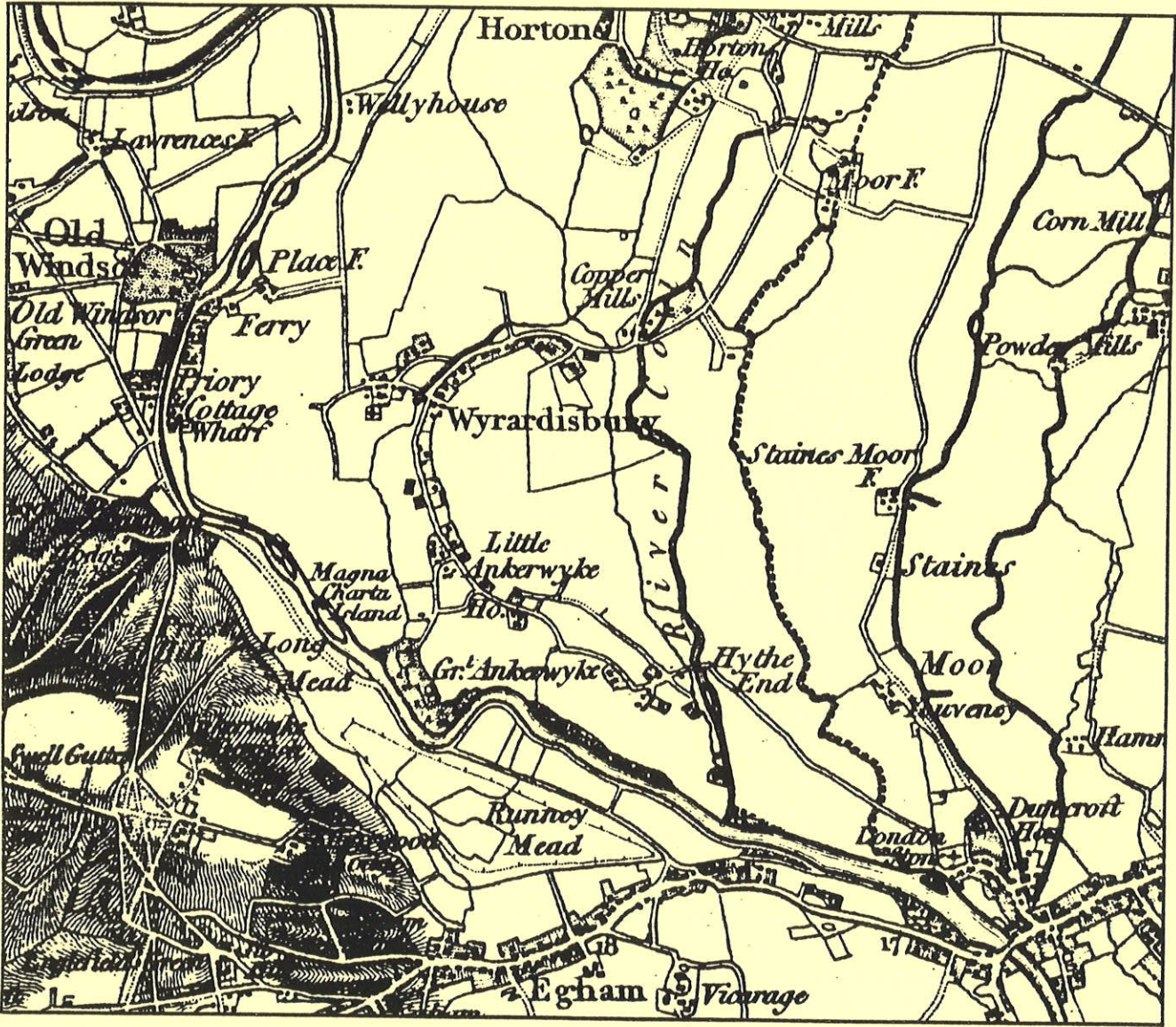


Waylands Nursery, Welley Road, Wraysbury, Berkshire

NGR TQ 002 744

Archaeological Evaluation Report



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1994

**WAYLANDS NURSERY, WELLEY ROAD, WRAYSBURY,
BERKSHIRE**

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TQ 002 744**

INTRODUCTION

Between 10th and 25th of July 1994 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological evaluation at Waylands Nursery, Wraysbury, for The Ketley Partnership acting on behalf of Persimmon Homes. Planning application 47516 submitted to Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, proposed to build 23 detached homes with associated infrastructure.

GEOLOGY

The underlying geology of the site consists of terrace deposits of coarse flint gravel within the Thames floodplain.

LOCATION (see fig. 1)

The site is located in the northern part of Wraysbury, Berkshire, 800m E of the River Thames centred at NGR TQ 002 744. The entrance to the site is from Welley Road. To the N and E the site is bound by a water filled gravel pit. Wraysbury County Combined School forms the southern boundary of the site.

The area evaluated is approximately 2ha and is situated within an area of extensive gravel extraction at about 17.50m above Ordnance Datum (OD). Previous land use has been as a horticultural nursery, although much of the site is now overgrown. An area to the W has had road scrapings deposited on it to facilitate a Sunday market. A number of lorry containers also occupy the site on the W side and a large spoil heap, 80m in length, runs along part of the northern boundary.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Neolithic to late Bronze Age flint, pottery and pits were located at Manor Farm, Wraysbury (SMR 43.00), 300m S of Wayland Nursery.

A number of unstratified finds have come to light during gravel extraction in the Wraysbury area. In 1979 the Halls Aggregates Pit produced a skull and bronze Ewart Park type Bronze Age sword found on a pile of gravel. The same pit produced another sword - a slightly earlier Wilburton type Burgess Class IIIb in 1980 (Berks Arch Journal 1981-82).

The area is noted for the density of Saxon and early medieval settlement. In 1980 an area around the parish church of St. Andrews was excavated by Dr. G Astill and S Lobb of the Trust for Wessex Archaeology. The work was carried out in

advance of housing development and revealed 8th and 9th century to 1200 AD medieval settlement (Berks Arch Journal 1981-82). After 1200 the medieval village is thought to have moved to the area around the High Street next to The Green.

In 1984 a foundation trench along the S side of the swimming pool at Wraysbury County Combined School, immediately south of Waylands Nursery, revealed three skeletons (SMR 36.05). Two of the skeletons were orientated N-S and a third E-W. A scramasax knife in the fill of one of the N-S graves indicates a Saxon date. These skeletons were interpreted as part of a graveyard for the Saxon settlement (see above) prior to the establishment of the present parish church, founded in 1000 AD.

One kilometre to the S of Wraysbury lies the site of Ankerwycke Priory, a Benedictine nunnery founded in the 12th century. Opposite the priory lies Runnymede field and Magna Carta (or Charta) Island.

Bibliography

Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

Notes - *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 71 1981-82

Hugh Carter and Leslie Cram 'Human skeletons found at Wraysbury County Combined School' *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 72 1983-85

STRATEGY

The evaluation consisted of 12 trenches, representing a 2% sample of the development area. The trenches were excavated with a mechanical JCB equipped with a 5 foot toothless ditching bucket. Nine of the trenches were 30m in length and the three remaining trenches were 20m, 15m, and 10m in length. The trenches were spaced evenly on the national grid. Some areas of the site were inaccessible due to large spoil heaps, although this did not significantly alter the trench layout.

The positioning of the trenches was designed to establish the presence and extent or absence of archaeological remains within the development area.

The trenches were first excavated down to the first archaeologically significant horizon. Features revealed in the trench were then hand excavated to establish their condition, character, quality and to recover material to date the archaeological remains present.

SUMMARY (see fig. 1)

Two areas of archaeology were located:

1. TRENCH 1

An isolated pit or utilized tree throw hole was located at the E end of Trench 1. The pit contained late Bronze Age pottery and flint flakes. No other associated features were located in trench 1 or in nearby trenches.

2. TRENCH 6 and 7

In the area of Trench 6 and 7 there were three N-S gullies and four postholes. The postholes were all located in Trench 7. Both gullies and postholes contained late Bronze Age pottery. Forty sherds of later prehistoric pottery were recovered, mostly small body sherds.

The results suggest an area of archaeological features [approx. 50m x 30m] centred on Trench 7 (NGR TQ 00145 74380).

RESULTS - LATE BRONZE AGE FEATURES (Trenches 1, 6, 7 and 10)

TRENCH 1 (see fig. 2)

Orientated: E-W

Length: 30m

Width: 1.55m

Depth: 0.98m

The earliest stratified feature, 1/7, was curved in plan although not fully exposed in the trench. It measured at least 3m in length and when excavated was 0.40m in depth with 45° sides and a flat bottom. It was cut into the natural silt subsoil, the sides of the feature were well defined although there was some irregular disturbance to the W. The bottom of the feature corresponded to the level of natural gravel; the primary fill, 1/6, consisted of a mottled mid and light brown sandy silt. The appearance of the fill was of a 'clean' deposit similar to the natural subsoil. The latest fill, 1/5, in contrast to 1/6 was a dark grey brown sandy silt. Fill 1/5 was virtually gravel free with the occasional manganese staining. Pottery recovered from 1/5 consisted of a large flint tempered sherd dated to the late Bronze Age. A flint flake and flint chip were also recovered from fill 1/5.

A stratified sequence of four layers, 0.98m in depth, was seen above feature 1/7. The sequence of layers was fairly typical of the site as a whole. Fill 1/5 was overlaid by layer 1/4 a mid brown to reddish brown sandy silt. An area 2m x 1.56m was hand excavated to sample for finds, but only produced a small flint chip.

Layer 1/4 was overlaid by a layer of reddish brown sandy silt, 1/3, which contained 10%-25% gravel. The gravel inclusions could not have been brought up from the layer 1/4 below so the gravel had originated from elsewhere indicating a ploughsoil. No finds were recovered from this layer.

Layer 1/3 was overlaid by a dark grey silt loam, 1/2, which contained 15%-20% gravel. This layer formed a distinct dark horizon within the trench and was seen throughout the site and corresponds to the former horticultural nursery soil. Finds from this layer include glass and red roof tile fragments.

The old nursery soil 1/2 was overlaid by a light mixed layer of silt loam gravel and builders' rubble, 1/1. This layer had clearly been spread across the site recently as grass was mixed into the layer. This dumped/levelled layer also occurred in Trenches 2, 3, and 9, confined to the eastern 50m of the site probably indicating the levelling of a bund. A large bund of spoil can still be seen along the northern boundary.

Interpretation Trench 1

The feature 1/7 was regular and well defined in shape suggesting a pit, although some irregular disturbance to the W indicate the possibility of the pit being the result of a tree throw pit which may have been subsequently utilized. The pottery indicates a late Bronze Age date for feature 1/7.

The layer 1/4 which sealed feature 1/7 did not give the appearance of a ploughsoil although it could represent a cultivation soil which may have subsequently reverted to a stable grassland.

The layer above, 1/3, clearly represented heavy ploughing which had ploughed gravel from the S.

The ploughsoil 1/3 was overlaid by the old nursery soil 1/2 which was overlaid by recent levelling of boundary bunds.

TRENCH 6 (see fig. 3)

Orientated: E-W

Length: 31m

Width: 1.55

Depth: 0.40m

In Trench 6 three N-S ditches/gullies were identified running parallel to each other:

Summary of features in Trench 6				
Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Findings
6/5	Gully	0.46	0.36	
6/9	Gully	0.51	0.41	Fill 6/11 contained: Fragments of LBA pottery. 1 flint flake, 1 end scraper and 10 pieces of burnt flint
6/13	Gully	0.60	0.28	

LBA = late Bronze Age EIA = early Iron Age

The gullies were cut into a rather mixed mottled natural layer of sandy silt 6/3 which was also seen in Trenches 4 and 5 and 8.

The gullies were similar in character with U-shaped profiles and each contained three fills which can be described collectively.

The primary fills (6/6, 6/9 and 6/14) consisted of a mottled yellow and light brown sandy silt, similar in character to the natural subsoil. Above the primary fills was a mid brown sandy silt with 5%-10% gravel (6/7, 6/11, and 6/15).

The latest fills ranged from a reddish brown to dark brown sandy silt with 10%-15% gravel.

All the gullies were truncated by a gravelly ploughsoil, 6/2. This ploughsoil produced a single sherd of flint and sand tempered pottery probably late Bronze Age in date, as well as a single flint flake and four pieces of burnt unworked flint. The ploughsoil 6/2 was overlaid by the former nursery soil 6/1.

TRENCH 7 (see fig. 3)

Orientated: E-W
 Length: 20m
 Width: 1.55m
 Depth: 0.35

Three parallel N-S gullies were located in Trench 7. Due to their character, alignment and spacing, it seems almost certain that they represent a continuation of the same three gullies seen in Trench 6:

Trench 7				
Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Finds
7/6	Gully (same as 6/9)	0.80	0.35	1 sherd flint tempered LBA, 2 sherds LBA-EIA?, 1 bone (from 7/3)
7/9	Gully (same as 6/5)	0.60	0.30	1 sherd RB, 16 scraps LBA? (from 7/7)
7/14	Gully (same as 6/13)	0.60	0.20	12 LBA, 3 EIA? (from 7/12)

LBA = late Bronze Age EIA = early Iron Age

Gully 7/6 contained three fills; the primary fill, 7/5, consisted of a light yellowish brown sandy silt which was very similar to the natural silt. Above this the fill 7/4 was a light brown sandy silt with 1%-5% gravel. The latest fill, 7/3, was a mid to dark brown sandy silt with 3%-5% gravel.

Gully 7/9 contained two fills; the primary fill, 7/8, a light brown sandy silt, similar to the natural silt. Above 7/8 was fill 7/7, a grey brown sandy silt with 80% coarse flint gravel. To the W 7/9 cut a feature 7/18 which appeared as an irregular spread of gravel running parallel to 7/9. It did not appear to be a dug feature but it could indicate a hedge line along the W side of the gully.

Gully 7/14 contained two fills, the primary fill, 7/13, a reddish brown sandy silt. Above 7/13 was mid brown sandy silt, 7/12, which contained 1%-5% gravel.

In addition to the gullies Trench 7 contained four postholes; two of which were excavated:

Trench 7				
Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Findings
7/11	Posthole	0.20	0.20	1 sherd LBA
7/16	Posthole	0.25	0.20	1 sherd LBA, 1LBA-EIA?
7/20	Posthole	0.20	Unexcavated	
7/21	Posthole	0.22	Unexcavated	

LBA = late Bronze Age EIA = early Iron Age

The fill of the postholes consisted of a grey brown sandy silt which showed up well in plan. A further two postholes were left unexcavated 7/20 and 7/21, both had similar fills to the excavated postholes.

At the W end of the trench a feature 7/22 was left unexcavated, overlaid by ploughsoil 7/2, it could have been another gully although disturbance from tree clearance was a possibility.

Interpretation Trench 6 & 7

The gullies in Trench 7 confirmed the orientation of those located in Trench 6. The continuation of the linear features to the S suggest linear boundaries of a field system or possibly defining a trackway. The geology of Trench 7 differed from Trench 6 only 20m to the N. The natural subsoil in Trench 7 consisted of a patches of gravel and sand which seems to have led to slightly better preservation of the features. The depth from the present ground surface to the top of the natural gravel and sand was 0.34m (compared with 0.40m in Trench 6 and 0.70m-0.76m in Trench 10)

There was no intercutting between the gullies and postholes so it was not clear if they were contemporary, although it seems likely they represent separate phases. While three of the postholes appear to be in line no comment on this can be given due to the limited area exposed. Settlement activity in the immediate vicinity is indicated by the quantity of pottery recovered.

The size of the features (despite later truncation), gradual accumulation of fills and the lack of any recutting, suggest the features probably represent a short period of activity.

The features in Trenches 6 and 7 would appear to have been truncated by ploughing which is confirmed by the occurrence of pottery flint flakes and burnt flint in the ploughsoil 6/2.

TRENCH 10

Orientated: E-W

Length: 10m

Width: 1.55m

Depth: E end 0.70m, W end 0.76m

Trench 10 was positioned to test whether the gullies in Trenches 6 and 7 continued to the S. The stratified sequence of three layers was typical of the site with the old nursery soil overlaying an earlier ploughsoil which overlaid a cultivation soil. The gullies/ditches were not located in Trench 10 and the depth of earlier ploughsoil suggest they would have been ploughed out if they had continued to the S. The total depth to natural in Trench 10 was 0.70m-0.76m (compared to Trench 7 which was 0.34m in depth). The top of the natural silt was located at 16.24m OD. This probably indicates the survival of the gullies is spatially variable due to higher areas of gravel sand and silt as seen in Trench 7.

RESULTS - FROM REMAINING TRENCHES (Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 12)

TRENCH 2

Orientated: N-S

Length: 31m

Width: 1.55m

Depth: N end 0.90m, S end 1.30m

Trench 2 revealed the same stratified sequence of four layers as recorded in Trench 1. An irregular feature 2/6 cut the natural subsoil and was sealed by the earliest layer 2/4. The fill was not as distinctive as feature 1/7 in Trench 1 and the exact nature of this feature was unclear and it could have resulted from tree clearance or be due to a geological anomaly.

TRENCH 3

Orientated: E-W

Length: 15m

Width: 1.55m

Depth: W end 0.90m, E end 0.85m

Trench 3 contained a stratified sequence of four layers although it lacked any early possible cultivation soil, which is probably due to the occurrence of natural gravel in the trench preventing any deep ploughing. Trench 3 contained no

archaeological features and at the E end a deep modern feature had been recently dug into the natural gravel and undulating ground suggest the modern disturbance probably extended up to the eastern boundary.

TRENCH 4

Orientated: N-S
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: S end 0.65, N end 0.52m

Trench 4 contained three layers, the earliest 4/3 corresponds to the possible cultivation layer 1/4 seen in Trench 1. Layer 4/3 was cut by an irregular feature 4/7. The latest fill 4/5 was stained black by burning. Feature 4/7 probably represents tree clearance prior to ploughing, similar features were seen in Trenches 11 and 12. A gravelly ploughsoil, 4/2, truncated the top of feature 4/7. The ploughsoil was in turn overlaid by the former nursery soil 4/1.

TRENCH 5

Orientated: E-W
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: E end 0.72, W end 0.68

A stratified sequence of three layers was revealed, the former nursery soil overlaid an earlier ploughsoil which overlaid a possible cultivation soil. No archaeological features were present.

TRENCH 8

Orientated: N-S
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: N end 0.65m, S end 0.85m

A stratified sequence of three layers was revealed, the former nursery soil overlaid an earlier ploughsoil which overlaid a possible cultivation soil. No archaeological features were located in Trench 8.

TRENCH 9

Orientated: N-S
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: N end 0.80, S end 0.50m

The stratified sequence of layers was the same as in Trench 1, although the possible early cultivation layer was only 0.09m in depth and petered out to the N. Trench 9 contained no archaeological features although at the northern end there was an extensive area of recent disturbance similar to that seen in Trench 3. The disturbance 9/7, cut into the natural gravel and exceeded 7m in length; it was filled with gravel and builders rubble.

TRENCH 11

Orientated: E-W
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: 1.00m-1.20m

A stratified sequence of two layers was seen which represented the former nursery soil and an earlier ploughsoil. Trench 11 revealed a layer of 'dirty' natural gravel in contrast to the more silty natural subsoil in the central areas of the site. The eastern end of the trench was much disturbed by tree clearance which was similar to that encountered in Trench 4 (4/7) and it probably represents clearance prior to ploughing.

TRENCH 12

Orientated: E-W
Length: 30m
Width: 1.55m
Depth: 0.60m-1.00m

The stratified sequence of three layers was typical of the site with the old nursery soil overlaying an earlier ploughsoil which overlaid a possible cultivation soil.

Trench 12 revealed tree clearance, 12/4 which cut the earliest layer 12/5 and is probably contemporary with the tree disturbance seen in Trenches 11 and 4. It contained no finds. A feature at the W end, 12/9 probably represented a geological anomaly. Remains of a brick structure were also seen mid way along the trench.

POTTERY ASSESSMENT by Alistair Bradley (OAU)

The evaluation produced c.40 sherds of later prehistoric pottery. All the pottery, except for a rim with slashed decoration in context 7/10, consisted of small body sherds. The pottery particularly the flint tempered sherds is likely to be late Bronze Age in date (1200-700 cal BC). The sherds with sand or sand and flint temper could be late Bronze Age/early Iron Age or early Iron Age.

A Roman sherd was recovered from context 7/7.

FLINT ASSESSMENT by Philippa Bradley (OAU)

Flint recovered from the site included 2 flint chips, 3 flint flakes, 1 flint end scraper and 14 pieces of burnt unworked flint.

All of the flint above would not be out of place in a late Bronze Age context (ie contemporary with the ceramic evidence) except for the end scraper in context 6/11. The end scraper is on a blade-like flake and has been soft-hammer struck. The left hand side and part of the right hand side have been used. This piece is probably Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date. The burnt flint is all heavily calcined.

CONCLUSIONS

The results from Trench 6 and 7 suggest an area of late Bronze Age activity [approx. 50m N-S x 30m E-W] centred on Trench 7. The gullies could well continue further N-S across the site. The full extent to the N and W was somewhat unclear as a large bund of spoil ran along the N side of the site just N of trench 6. Various lorry containers were parked to the W and a large spoil heap of road scrapings was located immediately S of Trench 7.

The occurrence of the 'higher' gravel and sand areas (in and around Trench 7) was not indicated in the present topography and it was not possible to predict other areas of gravel although it is possible the gravel continues further to the W and SW of Trench 6 and 7.

The three parallel gullies/ditches were probably contemporary or near contemporary in date. The occurrence of late Bronze Age pottery in the postholes and Roman sherd from the top fill of one of the gullies/ditches means although the Roman sherd is probably intrusive they cannot be firmly ascribed to the late Bronze Age. The gullies/ditches suggest a linear boundary of a field system or possibly defining a trackway. Occasional features such as in Trench 1, away from the main activity areas is not unusual for sites of this date (J Moore pers. comm.)

The results from the evaluation indicate activity which could represent a further element of the late Bronze Age activity located at Manor Farm (SMR 43.00).

CONSIDERATION OF RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY

Due to the spacing of the trenches and 2% sample the strategy would be expected to locate any linear features such as those in Trenches 6 and 7. In addition what appears to be a discrete area of postholes were located in Trench 7. The shallow overburden and exposure of the natural gravel appears to indicate better preserved features in Trench 7. This combined with the deeper soils identified elsewhere, suggest survival of the features is spatially variable. Consequently this could have slightly reduced the reliability of the sample although the deeper ploughing indicates the survival of shallow features is unlikely.

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