



# Saberton Farm, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

January 2019

**Client: SF Planning Limited on behalf of DA  
Cook Buildings**

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## Saberton Farm, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

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*With contributions from Ian Scott and illustrations by  
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## Summary

Between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Saberton Farm, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire, (NGR SO 9958 3606). The site was previously used as plant nursery and it is proposed to convert the area into a yard for a construction company. A total of seven trenches were excavated, targeted on the impacts of the proposed development.

There were no archaeological features identified in any of the trenches excavated, suggesting there is limited or no potential for archaeological remains to be present within the development area.

## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank SF Planning Limited for commissioning this project. Thanks is also extended to Charles Parry who monitored the work on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. The fieldwork was directed by Victoria Green. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Victoria Green. Thanks is also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Leigh Allen, and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by SF Planning Limited on behalf of DA Cook Builders to undertake a trial trench evaluation in advance of the conversion of a plant nursery into a builder's yard with several new industrial units. The majority of the site is located in Gloucestershire but the north-western part is located in Worcestershire. As such, planning applications have been submitted to both local authorities. No archaeological works were requested by the Worcestershire Planning Authority and therefore, this document details the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken within part of the site that lies within Gloucestershire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in support of a planning application (planning ref. 18/00770/FUL). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Charles Parry, Planning Archaeologist for Gloucestershire County Council, established the scope of work required. A written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (OA 2018). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The site lies 1.9km west of the village of Dumbleton in Gloucestershire (NGR SO9958 3606). It is bounded to the north by the Beckford Road, to the west by the A46 and to the south and east by arable fields (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of the proposed development consists of a horticultural nursery with rows of mature trees and several industrial sheds.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 183 to 199 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Superficial deposits of head (clay, silt, sand and gravel) overlies the bedrock geology of the site. These head deposits were formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS Online Viewer).

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 There is limited evidence of earlier prehistoric activity in the wider area around the site.
- 1.3.2 There are three Iron Age-Roman sites located within 2.5km of the site including an enclosure complex 900m north-west of the site, a Roman rural farmstead 2.5km northeast of the site and an Iron Age-Roman and later Roman enclosure site located 2km east of the site. This indicates that the site may have been part of the Iron Age to Roman agricultural landscape.
- 1.3.3 The settlement of Dumbleton was established by the late Saxon period as it is listed in the Domesday Book as having 27 householders (Palmer 2018).

- 1.3.4 The site is located 900m north of the deserted medieval village of Didcot (HER 2042) and this village was in existence by the 11th century and largely abandoned by the 15th century. A number of earthworks, field systems and building platforms are associated with this village. It is possible that the site may have been in use as agricultural fields associated with this settlement during the medieval period.
- 1.3.5 The 1:2500 OS map of 1884 indicates that the site was an open field and located east and south of two roads which remain in existence to the present day. A complex named as Saberton was located within the south-eastern part of the site and this is likely the extant farmhouse located within the site. The subsequent OS maps show no changes to the site apart from the rearrangement of some of the buildings associated with Saberton Farm.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- iv. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- vi. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- vii. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status utility and social activity.
- viii. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- ix. To assess the impacts of the previous development and future developments on any potential archaeological remains.

### 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The trenches were laid out as shown in Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-25mm accuracy. Due to on-site obstructions several of the trenches locations had to be adjusted. Trench 4 was moved to the east and shortened to avoid a large coniferous hedge, and Trench 7 was moved to the west of the hedge so it could be opened to its full length. Trench 5 was shortened and re-orientated to a roughly north-south alignment to avoid greenhouses and a live water pipe. Due to material storage, trench 6 was moved from the eastern side of the site access road to the west.

2.2.2 The trenches were excavated using an 13t tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the constant archaeological supervision. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges. Trenches and the upcast spoil were visually checked for finds.

2.2.3 Machining continued in spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. The exposed surface was sufficiently clean to establish the absence of archaeological remains.

2.2.4 Upon agreement with Charles Parry, Planning Archaeologist for Gloucester City Council, the trenches were backfilled.

2.2.5 All deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA Field Manual. Digital photos were taken of deposits, areas, trenches and works in general. Trench locations and sample sections were located using a GPS unit.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Introduction and presentation of results**

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.1.2 Context numbers reflect the trench numbers unless otherwise stated e.g. layer 101 is subsoil within Trench 1, while layer 301 is subsoil within Trench 3.

#### **3.2 General soils and ground conditions**

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence between all trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology of silty sand with angular limestone inclusions was overlain by a sandy silt subsoil, a buried former ploughsoil. This in turn was overlain by topsoil (Plates 1-4). In Trenches 1 and 6 however, there was a layer of made ground overlying the topsoil (Plate 5).
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout.

#### **3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits**

- 3.3.1 All trenches were devoid of archaeological features.

#### **3.4 Finds summary**

- 3.4.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered during the works, except a horseshoe. Recovered from subsoil 701 in Trench 7, the horseshoe is suspected to date to the 19th, although it may be as early as 18th century.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Reliability of field investigation**

4.1.1 The fieldwork was undertaken during dry and bright conditions over a period of three working days. Archaeological features, although not present, would have been easy to identify against the underlying natural geology. Although trench locations were varied due to on-site constraints, the trenches still target the key areas of impact associated with the proposed development. Therefore, it can be considered too provided a reliable assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.

### **4.2 Evaluation objectives and results**

4.2.1 The aims of the evaluation works were to assess the presence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area and the impacts associated with the development upon those remains. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the evaluation works. This is supported by a lack of artefactual evidence suggesting that the site is has little or no archaeological potential.

## APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with angular limestone fragments.					Length (m)	29.5
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.43
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.17	Made ground layer from the allotments previously on the site	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.26	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.23
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.06	Topsoil (not present over the whole trench)	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.17	Subsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.36
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.09	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.27	Subsoil	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.22
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.10	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.12	Subsoil	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	23
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.57
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.20	Made ground layer / demolition layer from the greenhouses that previously stood on the site.	-	-
501	Layer	-	0.37	Subsoil	-	-
502	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.31
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.08	Topsoil	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.23	Subsoil	-	-
602	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 7						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of silty sand with many angular limestone inclusions.					Length (m)	28
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.46
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
700	Layer	-	0.16	Topsoil	-	-
701	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	Horseshoe	
702	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

## APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

### B.1 Metals

*By Ian Scott*

B.1.1 There is single horseshoe of 18th- or more probably 19th-century date from context 701.

#### *Catalogue*

Context 701	(1) <b>Horseshoe</b> with toe clip and with quite narrow branches of even width. No clear nails or nail holes. L: 135mm; W: 165mm. Possibly later 18th- but more likely to be 19th-century in date.
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## APPENDIX C      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX D****SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

<b>Site name:</b>	Saberton Farm, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire
<b>Site code:</b>	OADUMB18
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SO 9958 3606
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	13/12/2018 – 17/12/2018 (three working days)
<b>Area of Site</b>	2.8ha
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with The Wilson museum in due course, under the following accession number: TBC.
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	<p>Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation at Saberton Farm, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire, (NGR SO 9958 3606). The site was previously used as plant nursery and it is proposed to convert the area into a yard for a construction company. A total of seven trenches were excavated, targeted on the impacts of the proposed development.</p> <p>There were no archaeological features identified in any of the trenches excavated, suggesting there is limited or no potential for archaeological remains to be present within the development area.</p>



Figure 1: Site location

X:\Dumbleton\_Saberton Farm\010\Geomatics\03 GIS Projects\OADUMBEV\Fig2\_2019-01-07.mxd\conan.parsons\07/01/2019



Figure 2: Trench location plan

0 1:1,250 @ A4 50 m



Plate 1: Trench 2, view to S



Plate 2: Trench 4, view to W



Plate 3: Trench 7, view to NW

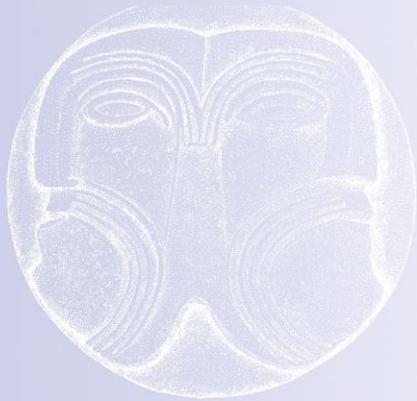


Plate 4: Trench 4 deposit sequence, view to N



Plate 5: Trench 1 deposit sequence, view to SE





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