

Kingsdown Gallops  
Upper Lambourn  
West Berkshire  
Phase II



**Archaeological Watching Brief**



**Oxford Archaeology**

10th December 2002

**Client Name: Mountgrange Farms  
and Stables Ltd**

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Front cover plate: View of grave from the east

## SUMMARY

*In July and November 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Kingsdown Gallops, Upper Lambourn, West Berkshire (NGR SU 3025 8120). The work was commissioned by Mountgrange Farms and Stables Ltd in advance of the construction of a new maintenance shed, which was a later phase of the construction of the new gallops. Also covered in this phase of work was the chance discovery of a burial on the side of the gallops. The watching brief on the site of the equipment shed revealed no archaeological features or deposits.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In July and November 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Kingsdown Gallops, Upper Lambourn, West Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mountgrange Farms and Stables Ltd in respect of Phase II of planning application for new gallops (Planning Application No.01/02402/FUL).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was discussed between Mountgrange Farms and Stables Ltd and Veronica Fiorato of West Berkshire Heritage Service, and with Oxford Archaeology (OA).
- 1.1.3 OA operated under Phase I Written Scheme of Investigation (OA, 2002 A) the that detailed how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology is solid chalk and the site lies at c. 175 m OD. The site of the maintenance shed is situated to the north of the gallop in woodland (Figs 1 & 2).

#### 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, 2002 A) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The Lambourn Downs are rich in archaeological remains of the prehistoric period. Some 20 barrows are known at "Seven Barrows" to the northeast of this development site and further north lie the renowned Neolithic and Iron Age sites of Wayland's Smithy and Uffington Castle.
- 1.3.3 A Bronze Age site with Romano-British activity at Ashbury Tower Hill was partly excavated in 1993 by Oxford Archaeology (formerly Oxford Archaeological Unit, OAU). Work at a similar gallops site at East Ilsley in 1994 revealed Bronze Age pits.
- 1.3.4 In 1990 OAU carried out an evaluation at Weathercock House, Upper Lambourn that revealed prehistoric flints and demonstrated that a mound in the garden of the

property was of 14th century date. In 1994 OAU carried out a watching brief at Trabb's Farm, Seven Barrows though no archaeological features were observed.

- 1.3.5 Phase I of the watching brief (OA, 2002 B) identified two archaeological features, a posthole and a late Neolithic pit. Also Roman pottery from farming activity in that period was recovered from the culluvium layer on the valley floor.

## 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 excavation and removal of the burial was carried out during the final landscaping of the new gallop track. The construction of the maintenance shed, consisted of clearing a number of trees, and reducing the ground level into the side of the slope. The make up for the trackway to the shed was laid straight onto the topsoil (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 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. 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

#### *Human Burial*

- 3.1.1 This burial was uncovered during the final landscaping of the gallop. The track cut through a slight rise on the slope and the edge was graded to remove the step. The burial was in a sub rectangular cut (10) with near vertical sides rounding to an uneven base. It was aligned east - west and cut into the chalk, measuring 1.83 m x 0.70 m x 0.30 m. In its base facing east was the skeleton (11) of a male aged about 16 years. He had been laid on his back with his head propped up by two small sarson stones (Fig. 4). The skeleton had been covered by a mid brown silty clay loam (12), which was sealed below a layer of sarson stone fragments and fill of dark brown silty clay loam (13) (Fig. 4). This upper fill was sealed by the topsoil and badly truncated by later ploughing.

### *Maintenance Shed*

- 3.1.2 The area of the new maintenance shed revealed no archaeological features and exposed chalk natural (3) sealed below a thin 0.1-2 m thick layer of reddish brown silty clay subsoil (14), which had been disturbed by tree roots. Overlying 14 was topsoil of dark grey brown silty clay loam (1) measuring 0.3 m in depth. A large number of sarson boulders were noted in the wood, but appear to be placed there from clearing of the fields (Fig. 3).

## **4 THE HUMAN SKELETON REPORT BY ANGELA BOYLE**

- 4.1.1 The poorly preserved skeleton of a young adult male was found in an isolated grave. He appeared to have been weighted down by a number of sarson boulders. Age was estimated at approximately 16 years and stature was calculated at 1.62 m or 5 feet 4 inches.
- 4.1.2 Unusually, it is possible to suggest what the cause of death might have been in this case. Although the frontal area of the skull did not survive the vault was extremely small; the sagittal suture had fused and was almost completely obliterated. This is likely to have occurred due to a condition known as premature synostosis. At birth the skull is made up of a number of separate bones which grow in size and gradually fuse together through adolescence and young adulthood. Where fusion occurs before the individual bones are fully grown this results in a very small head and ultimately compression of the brain. The latter would almost certainly have caused symptoms of mental illness and the boy would have had a very odd appearance; all the other bones were of normal size and he was of average height. The condition would ultimately be fatal.
- 4.1.3 The etiology of the condition could be under genetic control although the manner of transmission is not yet known, nor is the exact prevalence, although it appears to be more common in males than females. Few examples have been described in the palaeopathological literature (Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martin 1998, 52).
- 4.1.4 It is tempting to suggest that when he died the community to which he belonged decided to bury him in isolation perhaps because of his strange appearance and odd behaviour. The sarson boulders in the grave may have been an additional measure to ensure that he did not rise.

## **5 PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS**

- 5.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The watching brief for the construction of the equipment shed revealed no archaeological features. The site had been undisturbed land until the wood was planted for game cover in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The site was used for the collection point for sarson boulders cleared from the fields for ploughing.
- 6.1.2 The burial appears to be an individual burial placed on the side of the down just below a small noticeable rise. The burial appears to be that of a Christian burial laid east to west, and dates possibly to the late Roman period. The date is tentative as there is often a lack of grave goods found with Saxon period graves and a medieval burial would probably be in the parish church graveyard. Also Roman pottery was found in the valley bottom suggesting a nearby farmstead or community in that period.



## 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>	<i>Phase</i>
1	Layer				Topsoil		I & II
2	Layer				Culluivum in valley base	Pottery and Fired Clay	I
3	Natural				Chalk with Flint		I & II
4	Cut	0.17 m	0.90 m	1.20 m	Rubbish Pit		I
5	Fill				Upper Fill	Flint, Bone and fragment of Stone	I
6	Fill				Lower Fill		I
7	Cut	0.09 m	0.34 m Ø		Post Hole		I
8	Fill				Fill		I
9	Layer				Sub soil top of Down		I
10	Cut	0.30 m	0.70 m	1.80 m	Grave Cut		II
11	Skeleton				Skeleton		II
12	Fill				Primary Fill		II
13	Fill				Main Fill		II
14	Layer				Subsoil in Woods		II

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2002 A, *Kingsdown Gallops, Upper Lambourn, West Berkshire*. Written Scheme of Investigation

D Wilkinson, 1992, *OAU Fieldwork Manual*.

OA, 2002 B, *Kingsdown Gallops, Upper Lambourn, West Berkshire*. Archaeological Watching Brief

Aufderheide, A C and Rodríguez-Martin, C 1998 *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Human Palaeopathology*, Cambridge University Press.

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Kingsdown Gallop, Upper Lambourne, West Berkshire, Phase II

**Site code:** LAUCK 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SU 3025 8120

**Type of watching brief:** Construction of new maintenance shed and recording of chance discovery of burial along side gallop.

**Date and duration of project:** Three visits on the 24 & 25/07/2002 and 29/11/2002.

**Area of site:**

**Summary of results:** No archaeological features or deposits on the site of the equipment shed. Also the chance discovery of a single grave next to the new gallop.



**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.

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Figure 1: Site location





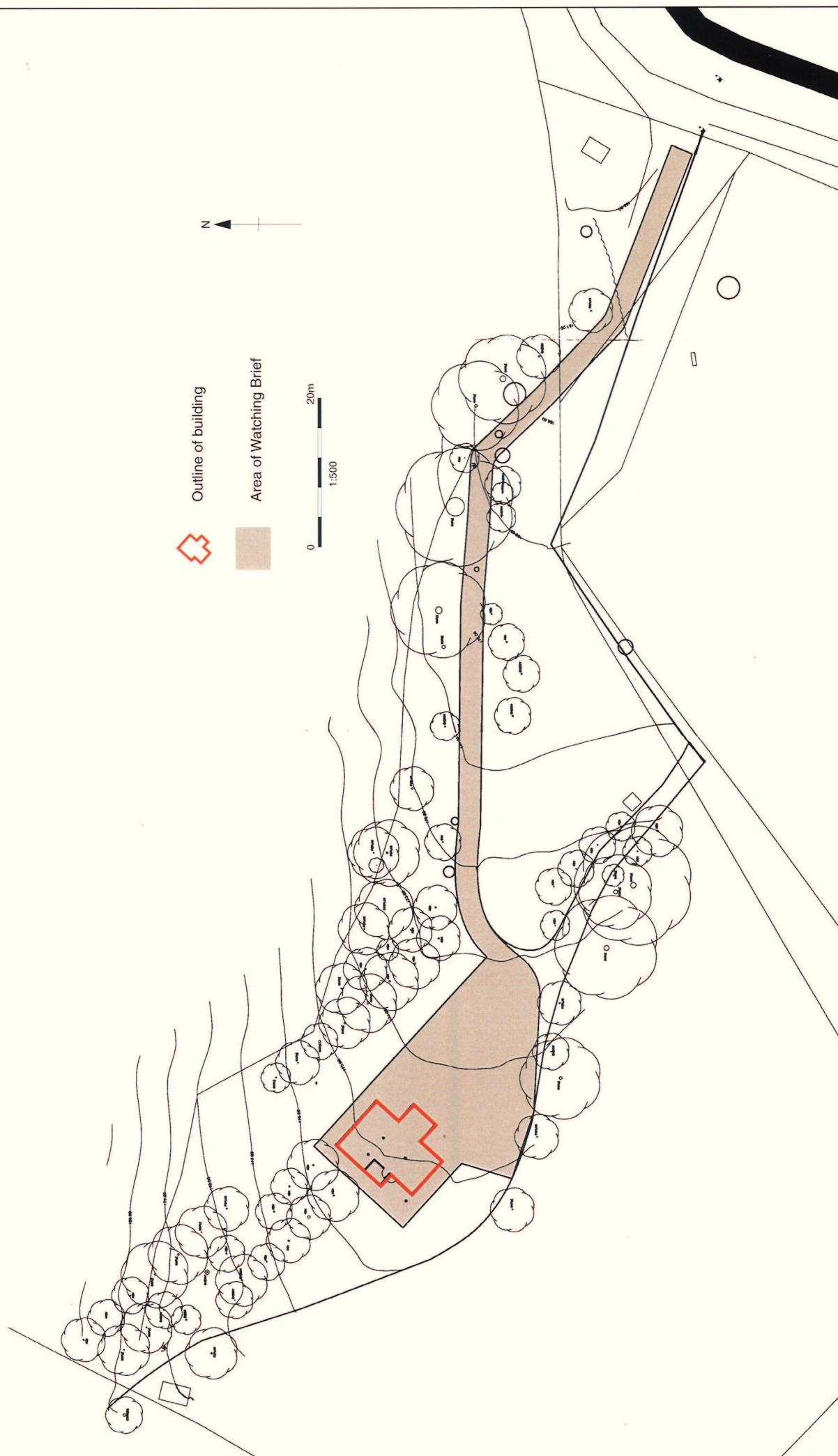


Figure 3: Plan of equipment shed and access track



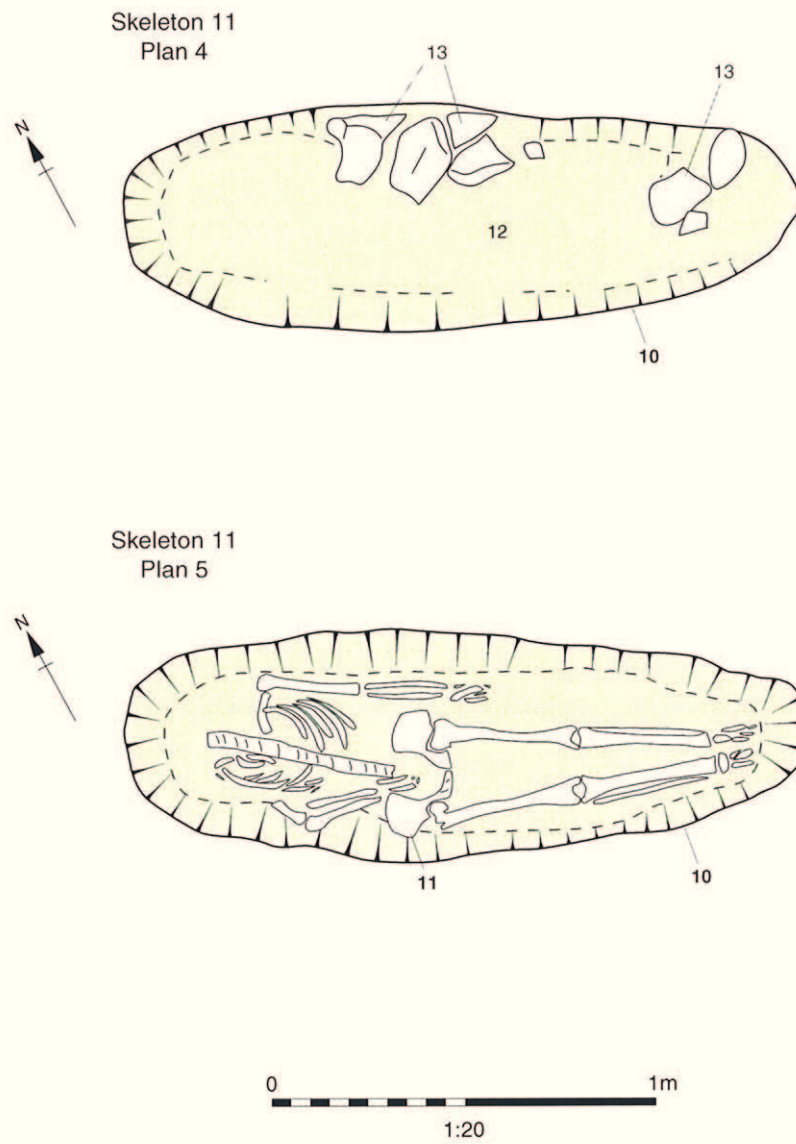


Figure 4: Grave



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