

**BLACKGROUNDS FARM**

**CHIPPING WARDEN**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**NGR SP 505 482**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

February 1997

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*Summary*

*An archaeological watching brief at Blackgrounds Farm, Chipping Warden, revealed no archaeological features. Finds recovered from the topsoil included Neolithic flint, Roman pottery and tile and a middle Saxon pottery sherd, indicating the proximity or former existence of multiperiod activity.*

**Introduction**

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological Watching Brief at Blackgrounds Farm, Chipping Warden, near Banbury (NGR SP 505482), on 16th October 1996 during the excavation of a horse exercise ring. The work was carried out on behalf of A J and L C Taylor of Blackgrounds Farm.

**The Site**

The exercise ring consisted of a track 3.1 m wide forming an elliptical shape c 18 m by 40 m long with the long axis running east to west. The depth of excavation for the track was 0.3 m. The ploughsoil was machined off directly exposing the natural subsoil. No cut features or deposits predating the modern ploughsoil were seen, however a relatively large quantity of finds, containing a high proportion of Roman material, were retrieved from the ploughsoil. A sample section of the deposits was recorded but no other detailed records were made.

**The Finds**

The small quantity of finds from this site, all from the ploughsoil (layer 1), included two flint flakes, Roman pottery and tile, a Saxon pottery sherd and a variety of post-medieval to modern materials. Undated animal bone fragments were also present.

Flint

The two flints were both quite long blade-like flakes, one possibly serrated. These characteristics suggest an earlier Neolithic date. A fragment of burnt flint was also recovered.

Roman pottery and tile

Thirty-four sherds of Roman pottery were recovered and recorded using codes established in the OAU Roman pottery recording system. They included single sherds of Central Gaulish samian ware (fabric S30) and Nene Valley colour-coated ware (F52), four sherds of Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (F51) and one of parchment ware (W11), two sherds of black-

burnished ware (only one of Dorset BB1 - fabric B11, the other B30), an uncertain coarse sandy white ware (W20) and oxidised and reduced coarse wares (O80 and O81). The former consisted principally of sherds of large storage jars in pink grogged ware (O81), with a source in the Milton Keynes/Towcester area. The reduced wares were all in undiagnostic, hard-fired, fine (R10) or slightly sandy (R30) fabrics. These cannot be assigned with confidence to any particular source, although they could have originated in the Oxford industry or more locally.

Few closely datable vessel forms were present. Vessels represented by rims were a possible beaker in fabric W20, a medium-mouthed jar and a jar/bowl in R10, a large storage jar in fabric O80 and straight-sided dishes in each of the black-burnished ware fabrics B11 and B30.

The range of fabrics and forms, although limited, indicates a later Roman date for the assemblage as a whole. None of the material need have been of 2nd century date except the samian ware sherd, and such pieces occur commonly in 3rd-4th century assemblages. A 3rd-4th century date seems certain, and it is possible that the entire group belongs to the later 3rd-4th centuries.

Two fragments of Roman tile were identified, one with combing, from a box-flue tile.

#### Anglo-Saxon

The most interesting individual find from the site was a single fairly substantial sherd of Ipswich Ware. This was from the neck of a large jar of fabric group 2 (Paul Blinkhorn pers comm) and can be dated to the 8th century AD.

#### Other finds

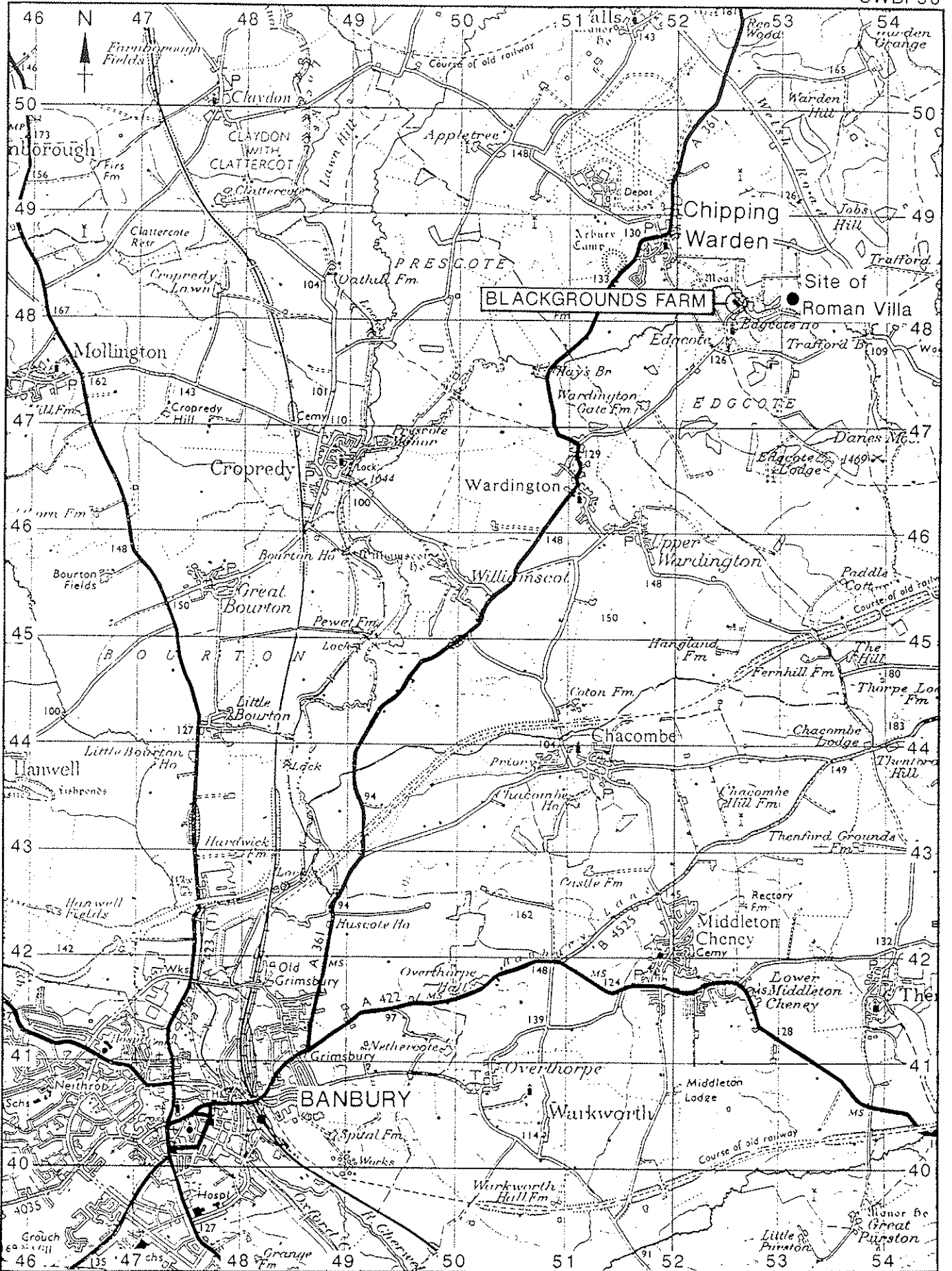
Post-medieval material consisted of small numbers of pottery, tile, slate, asbestos and glass fragments which do not require further comment. Seventeen fragments of animal bone were also recovered from layer 1 but could have been of any date from Roman to modern.

### Discussion

The finds covered a wide chronological range, from the earlier Neolithic to the present day. The field within which they were located has been extensively ploughed over a long period, but the condition of the finds was not consistent with repeated plough disturbance and redeposition. It is therefore likely that, if not deriving from dumped material originating elsewhere, the finds originate from a site or sites close by which have only recently begun to be disturbed by ploughing.

All the finds suggest significant archaeology. The Roman material, including as it does a piece of flue tile, may suggest the presence of a villa nearby. Such a site is known to the east at NGR SP 512482, but too far distant to be the source of this material. Another such site may be indicated. The Ipswich Ware sherd, though only a single piece, is potentially indicative of high status settlement of middle Saxon date.

John Dalton/Paul Booth  
OAU, February 1996

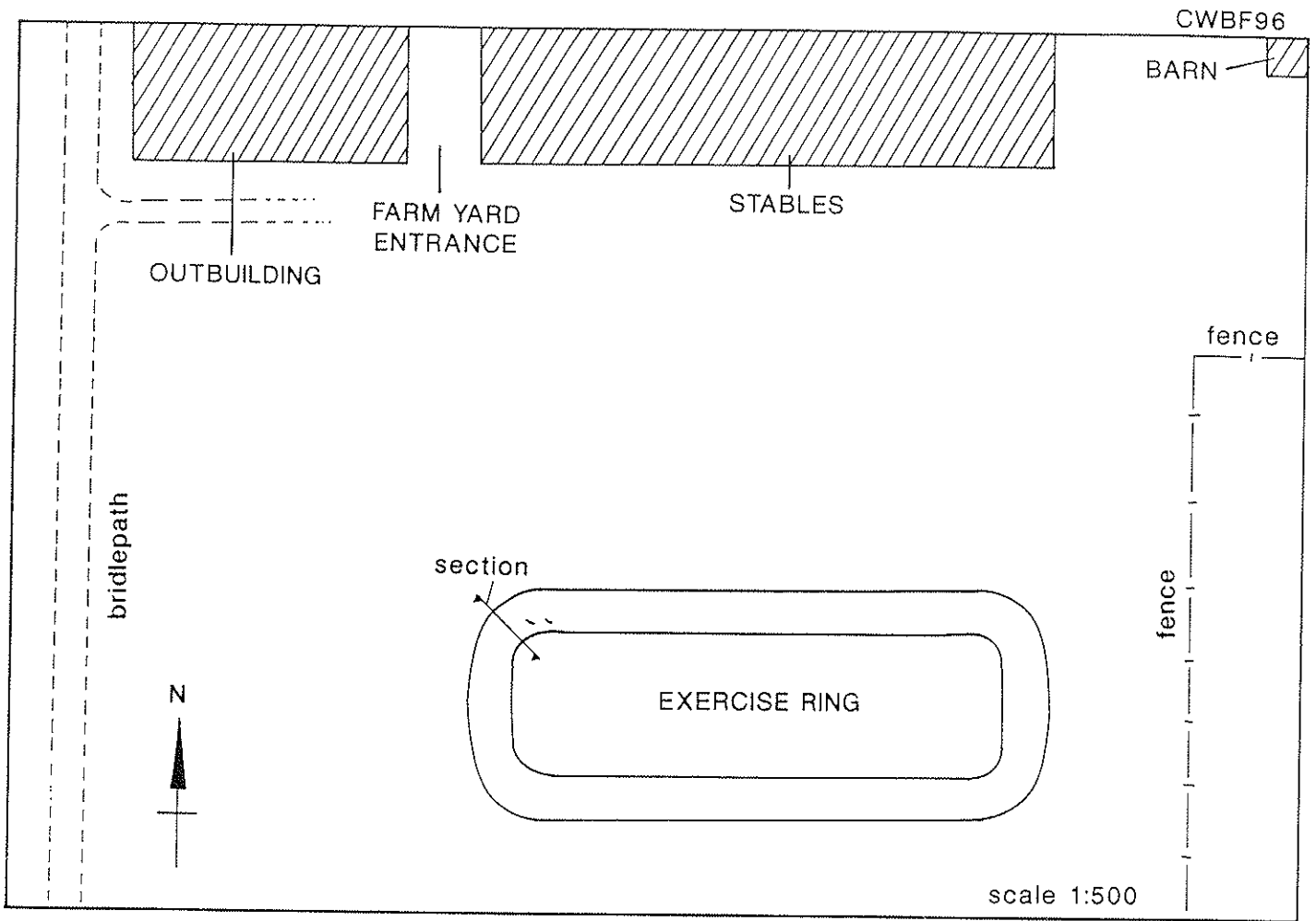


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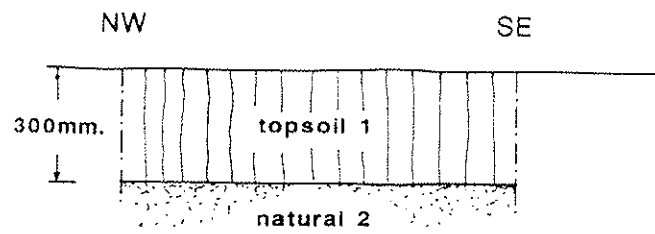
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Site Location

Figure 1



Site Plan



Section scale 1:20

Figure 2



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