

**Johnson Matthey Technology Centre,
Blount's Court, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Johnson Matthey Plc

by Andy Taylor and Pamela

Jenkins

Thames Valley Archaeological

Services Ltd

Site Code BCSC 02/20

February 2004

Summary

Site name: Johnson Matthey Technology Centre, Blount's Court, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 71350 80570

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th – 18th February 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: BCSC 02/20

Area of site: c.705 sqm

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were observed.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course with accession number OXCMS:2002.122.

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Johnson Matthey Technology Centre, Blount's Court, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor and Pamela Jenkins

Report 02/20

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Johnson Matthey Technology Centre, Blount's Court, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire (SU 71350 80570) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Neil Mackley of Halson Mackley Partnership, 4 Alexandra Road, Reading, RG1 5PD on behalf of Johnson Matthey Technology Centre, Blount's Court, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire.

A planning consent (PO1/S1083) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of additional car parking on the site. As a condition on the granting of planning a watching brief has been requested.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the district council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council, who advise the district on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Pamela Jenkins between the 12th and 18th February 2004. The site code is BCSC 02/20.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course; the accession code is OXCMS:2002.122.

Location, topography and geology

The site is a roughly rectangular plot of land, approximately 705sq m, located along the south side of Blount's Court Road, at Blount's Court, Sonning Common and is adjacent to an existing tennis court, east of Widmore Pond. The underlying geology is on the border between Plateau Gravel and Clay with flints and Loam (BGS 1971) and lies at a height of approximately 96m above Ordnance Datum on a slight slope.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area was highlighted in a brief by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council. This states the area to the east of Widmore Pond has reputedly produced finds of Bronze Age and Roman remains although the precise location of these is presently unknown. The same or other

Roman pottery collected at Sonning Common suggests the presence of a kiln somewhere in the near vicinity (Henig and Booth 2000).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the new car park. This was to involve the examination of areas of stripped topsoil/overburden and excavation of service trenches. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

The topsoil stripping of the area of the car park was observed. During this process only 0.40m of the topsoil was removed down to the formation level of the car park and the natural clay was only visible in small isolated patches. This meant, even if archaeology had been present in this area it was not visible during the archaeological observations. Two soakaways (A and B) were also observed (Fig. 2). The first measured approximately 3 sq. m was 2.00m deep and consisted of 0.70m of topsoil overlying 0.40m of brown clayey subsoil overlying clay natural (Fig 3). The second soakaway measured 3 sq. m was 2.0m deep and consisted of 0.10m of topsoil above 0.60m of gravel which overlay 0.60m of made ground. Below the made ground was 0.70m of subsoil overlying clay natural. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Drainage trenches were also excavated to a depth of approximately 0.70m. These consisted of 0.30 – 0.40m of dark orange brown fine clayey sand topsoil overlying 0.10m of mid orangey brown clayey sand (subsoil or horizon) containing a moderate amount of sub rounded gravel overlying the natural, which varied between mid yellowish orange clay and clayey sand.

Finds

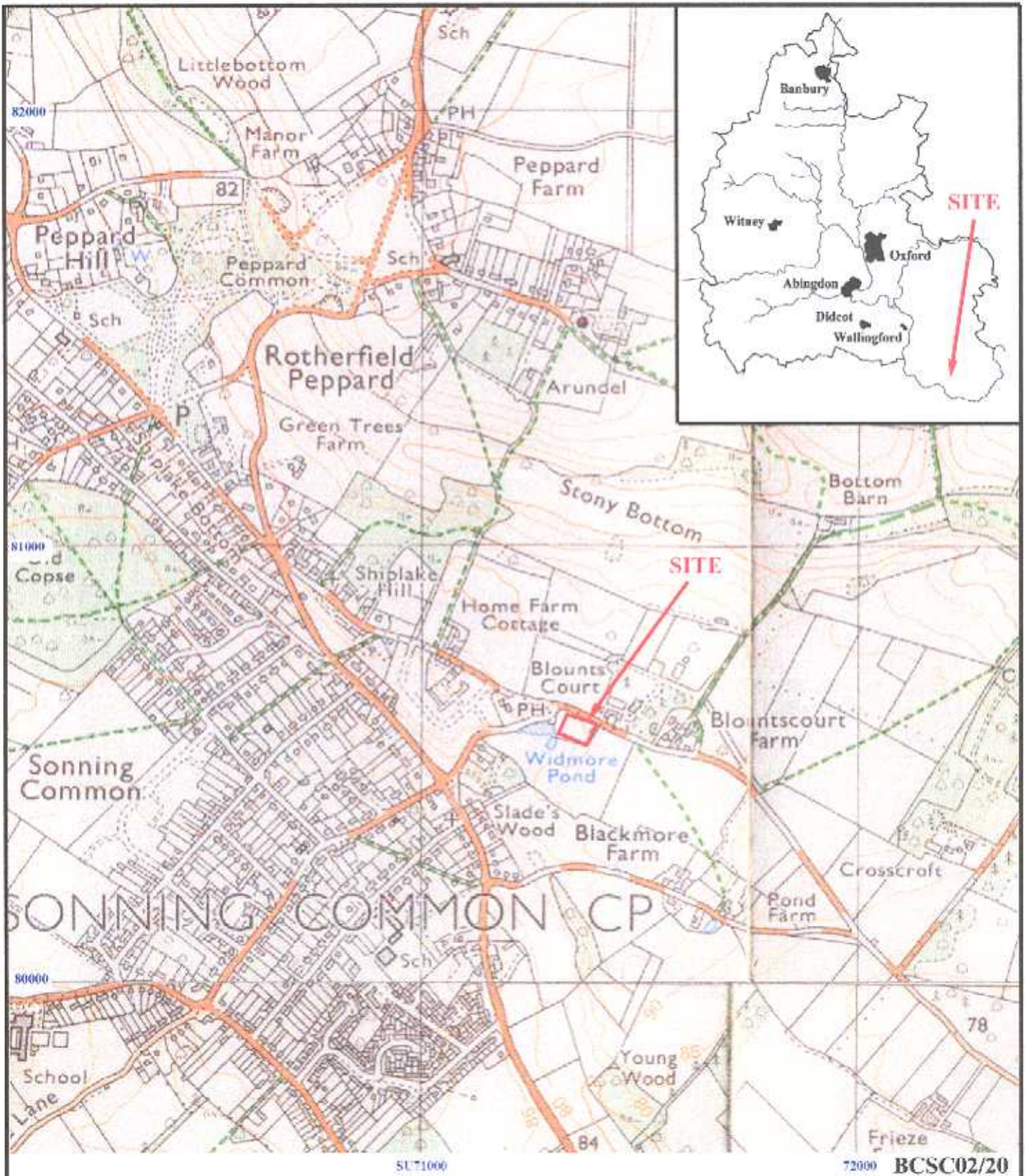
No finds were recovered.

Conclusion

The watching brief did not locate any deposits or finds of archaeological interest.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Henig, M and Booth, P, 2000, *Roman Oxfordshire*, Gloucestershire
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO



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Figure 1. Location of site within Sonning Common and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Sonning Common

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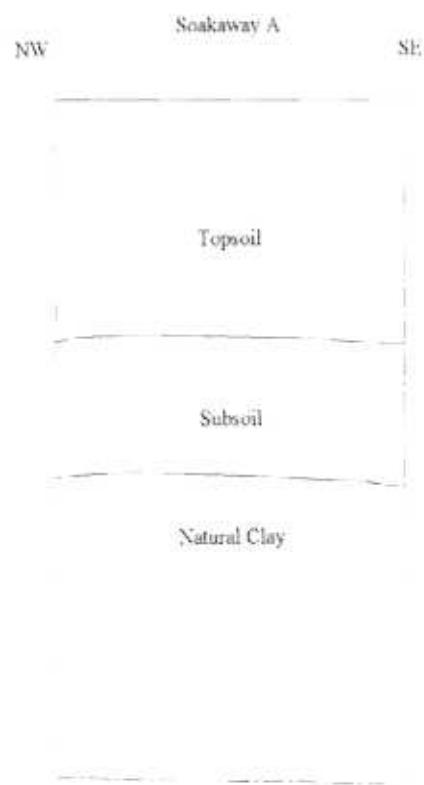


Figure 3 Representative Section