

**Dryleaze Farm, Siddington, Gloucestershire
Extraction Phases 8 and 9A**

**Archaeological Excavation
for Hills UK Ltd**

By Jo Pine
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Site Code DFG 08/123

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Dryleaze Farm, Extraction Phase 8 and 9A, Siddington, Gloucestershire Archaeological excavation

By Jo Pine

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Report 08/123e

Summary

Excavations of two open areas (extraction phases 8 and 9A) prior to mineral extraction, revealed a landscape occupied from the early prehistoric through to the post-medieval period. The earliest occupation took the form of a small number of pits with flintwork of possible earlier Neolithic date. An early Bronze Age ring ditch was recorded together with cenotaph burials. An urn pit containing two urns and an inhumation burial are likely to be of a similar date. There was limited Iron Age activity. The Roman occupation included a field system and a trackway. It is considered this part of the trackway is part of the northern element of a route way previously identified in Area 7. Other elements of this trackway were identified in Areas 1 and 5 to the south and to the east, and it appears to have been used from Roman times throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. In the latter period was known as Black Pitts Road and was present on the early enclosure maps.

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out at Dryleaze Farm, Siddington, Gloucestershire (SU 0330 9850) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Liddle, of Hills Quarry Products Ltd, Wiltshire House, County Business Park, Shrivenham Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 2NR.

Planning permission (CT/2150/F) has been gained from Gloucestershire County Council to extract gravel from a c. 55ha parcel of land at Dryleaze Farm. The consent has been gained with a condition (38) which requires a programme of archaeological works to excavate and record archaeological deposits prior to extraction or other damage. This report relates to extraction areas (phases) 8 and 9 within the ongoing programme of works, comprising c. 6ha (Phase 8) and c.1.9ha (Phase 9) (Fig 2).

The excavations were carried out to specifications approved by Mr Charles Parry, Senior Archaeological Officer with Gloucestershire County Council and were carried out between 31st May 2013 and 16th May 2016. The fieldwork was supervised by Jo Pine who also managed the post-excavation work. The field team comprised Natasha Bennett, Nick Dawson, Tim Dawson, David Platt, Tom Stewart and Ben Tebbit. The site

code is DFG08/123 and this is the fifth report relating to this site-code; reports on earlier work on the overall quarry site used sitecode DFG07/101. The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR and will be deposited at Corinium Museum in due course.

Topography and geology

The site lies close to the boundary between Wiltshire and Gloucestershire in the Upper Thames Valley. It is located *c.* 1km north-west of the village of South Cerney, and *c.* 2.5km to the south of Cirencester. It lies to the west of the A419 which follows the path of Ermin Street (the Roman road from Silchester to Gloucester) and the River Churn flows approximately 400m to the east (Fig. 1). The areas discussed in this report comprise two open areas (8 and 9A) (Fig. 2), to the west of previous extraction areas 5 and 7. The excavation areas are located on sand and gravel deposits of the First Terrace (BGS 1974), which is found on a north-south alignment associated with an old tributary of the River Thames. The gravels of the Upper Thames Valley are the result of the deposition of largely calcareous material, derived from the northern limestone outcrops washed down by post-glacial rivers. The gravel was observed throughout the excavation area and the site lies at a height of approximately 97m above Ordnance Datum with a slight slope down from north and east where it reaches 100m AOD.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in desk-based assessments (OAU 2001; Wallis 2008), geophysical survey (Smalley 2009) and trench evaluation (OAU 2002; Milbank and Pine 2009). In summary the site lies in a general area of considerable archaeological potential, with a wide range of prehistoric and Roman sites, sometimes extensive and complex, present in and around the study area. Significant archaeological research has been undertaken nearby at Ashton Keynes, Somerford Keynes, Fairford, Kempsford, Latton, Eysey and Marston Meysey (Coe *et al.* 1991; Barclay *et al.* 1995; Miles *et al.* 2007; Powell *et al.* 2008; Powell *et al.* 2010; Pine 2008; Pine *et al.* 2016; Cass *et al.* 2015).

At Dryleaze Farm there have already been large scale archaeological excavations (extraction areas [Phases] 1 to 7) (Bray and Pine 2012; Bray and Lewis 2013; Milbank *et al.* 2011a and b, Bray and Pine 2015). The phase 1 deposits were of Iron Age date and comprised a trackway and occupation complex towards the centre west of the site (Milbank *et al.* 2011a). The phase 2 extraction area revealed further Iron Age deposits, several of which could be regarded as part of the same complex as the deposits revealed in phase 1, and also revealed a series of

'burnt mounds', along the line of a palaeo-stream channel. radiocarbon dated to the early to middle Bronze Age. A post-built roundhouse and fence may also be of Bronze Age date (Milbank *et al.* 2011a).

The phase 4 extraction area revealed a modest volume of archaeology comprising a probable roundhouse and a further small burnt mound (Milbank *et al.* 2011b). However, the fieldwork for the phase 3 extraction area to the east revealed little of interest (Bray and Pine 2012). Phase 5 revealed another Middle Bronze Age burnt mound and associated trough and other features, and post-medieval deposits; including a trackway recorded on the conveyor strip for Area 5 (Bray and Lewis 2013). The phase 6 area contained Late Neolithic occupation, a Middle Bronze Age burnt mound, an Iron Age pit alignment, and a Roman trackway. Area 7 contained Iron Age pits, Roman field systems and a trackway which appears to have been used from Roman times throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods and in the latter period was known as Black Pitts Road and was present on the early enclosure maps (Bray and Pine 2015).

Further archaeological features have been recorded by evaluation trenching (OAU 2002) in as yet unextracted areas, with at least three prehistoric ring ditches, Iron Age settlement sites, a long sinuous Roman trackway, and probable medieval enclosure together with areas of undated features, palaeochannels and areas of small-scale quarrying. A watching brief in 2007 during enabling works for the project, consisting of small areas of topsoil stripping in advance of insertion of a road tunnel for a conveyor belt link, did not reveal any deposits of archaeological interest (no report).

Evaluations

An evaluation of 60 trenches took place in fields to the north of phases 1 and 2 extraction areas (known as Dryleaze Farm Northern Extension). This northern extension was to become quarry extraction areas 3, 6, 7 and 8 (Milbank and Pine 2009). Some 21 of these evaluation trenches (24-41, 43, 45 and 60) examined areas now within the phase 8 extraction area (Fig. 2). The trenches in this area contained mostly poorly dated ditches and gullies but likely represent Iron Age and Roman occupation and land allotment. A causewayed ring ditch was noted as a cropmark in and examined in trench 60 and was considered to be of Bronze Age date though no dating evidence was recovered (Milbank and Pine 2009).

An evaluation of 123 trenches took place in fields that were to and some have become extraction areas 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 11. Six of these trenches (42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 52) were within the phase 9A extraction area (Fig. 2). Three trenches (42-44) were blank whilst trenches 45, 46 contained undated pits and furrows, and in trench 52 undated ditches which may relate to the trackway were recorded (OAU 2002). Many features in both

evaluations were clearly tree throws and others which may have been pits turned out to be tree throws on excavation. Most of these are not numbered on the plans to avoid clutter. Similarly, several possible ditches in the trenches turned out to be furrows when larger areas were stripped.

The Excavation

To avoid confusion, from this point on, the extraction 'phases' will be referred to as 'Areas', thus the areas that are the subject of this report, known as 'Phases 8 and 9A' in planning and quarry management terms, are Areas 8 and 9A for archaeological purposes. 'Phase' will therefore refer solely to the chronological divisions of the site's development.

The excavation areas were stripped of topsoil and subsoil using 360° type machines fitted with toothless grading buckets under constant archaeological supervision. Linear features, including ditches and gullies, were encountered, together with a ring ditch discrete features (pits and postholes) and an isolated inhumation burial. Multiple phases of ridge and furrow were also identified (Figs 2 to 6).

The archaeological phasing scheme continues the numbering sequence adopted in previous areas, and uses the same phasing scheme although not all phases are represented in these areas. All the excavated features are summarized in Appendix 1.

Palaeochannel

The edge of a sand-filled palaeochannel was recorded in Area 8. It was likely formed when the gravels were laid down (Fig. 3).

Phase 1 Prehistoric

Phase 1a: earlier Neolithic

A small number of features clustered closely in the centre of Area 8 contained flintwork that hints at an earlier Neolithic date.

Pit 1902 (Figs 4 and 9)

This was ovoid, being 0.65m by 0.56m and 0.12m deep. It contained a single fill (2559) a mid reddish brown sandy silt. This contained 10 pieces of worked flint, seven of which were spalls, with two flakes and a serrated blade.

Pit 1905 (Figs 4 and 9) (Pl. 1)

This was also ovoid, being 0.73m by 0.68m and 0.24m deep. It contained two fills; the primary fill was a mid grey brown sandy silt (2589). Above this was deposit 2564, a mid reddish brown silty sand. The pit contained 1g of unidentifiable burnt bone, 8 worked flint items (including a narrow flake), burnt clay fragments and oak charcoal.

Tree bole 1904 which was recorded close to the above features also contained a flint flake and spall.

Tree throw 1946

This was recorded in the northern part of Area 8 (Fig. 3), some 100m north of the cluster of features noted above. This was irregular in shape with shallow sides and an irregular base with the natural geology in this area fire altered to a rich red colour. It contained a reddish brown silty clay (2660) in which contained 8 pieces of flint work (3 broken flakes, 3 spalls, 1 core and 1 scraper).

Phase 1b Early Bronze Age

Ring ditch 10150 (Figs 4, 5, 8 and 9; Pls 2 to 4)

This monument had been previously noted as a cropmark and ground truthed in evaluation trench 60 (Milbank and Pine 2008) (Pl. 2). This was a near-circular ditch which bowed slightly in the south east and had a causeway/entrance to the north-west. The ditch itself measured 16.40m in diameter from its internal edges or up to 19.60m externally. Any evidence of an internal mound had long since been ploughed away

It was fully excavated with a total of twenty-two slots (including those dug in the evaluation) (125-6, 2124-5, 2127-44) being dug across the ring ditch (Fig. 5, Pl. 4). The ditch measured between 1.10m and 1.78m wide and was between 0.38m and 0.68m deep (Figs 8 and 9, Pl 5). The slight irregularity in plan could be accounted for by unstable geology rather than a deliberate act. The excavated sections showed no evidence of tip lines. The details of the fill sequence varied considerably around the ditch with between two and nine fills recorded. The sections of the ring ditch with a more complex deposition history are in the western half of the monument, or next to the causeway. The fills of the ditch comprise layers of sandy silts and clayey silts interspersed with layers of sandy gravel deposits. Only two sherds of pottery were recovered from this monument (Slot 2124 (2863) and 2127 (2879)) which can only be given a non specific early prehistoric date. Both came from close to the causewayed entrance. The only other finds were three flint flakes, in slots 2135 (1) and 2142 (2), and spalls in slots 2128 and 2139 (one each).

In slots 2125, 2127 and 2128, in the north-western part of the monument, a charcoal rich deposit (2869, 2878 and 2886) was recorded which may relate to pyre or cremation activities (Fig. 8). An early Bronze Age

radiocarbon date of 1918-1734 cal BC was obtained from charcoal from one these deposits (2869 in slot 2125). Within slots 2124 (2864) and 2141 (2994) in the north-east of the monument a silty gravel deposit was recorded which too was charcoal rich and may relate to pyre or cremation activities.

Features in the interior (Figs. 5 and 8) (Pl. 5)

Six pits just inside the interior of the ring ditch in an arc in the western half of the ring ditch (Fig. 5) all containing at least some charcoal, and four of them with burnt bone, are interpreted as either very incomplete cremation burials or cenotaphs. All were circular. Approximately central to the ring ditch interior was pit 2147, and pit 2146 was the only feature in the eastern half. The two pits could perhaps also be considered cenotaphs though they did not contain charcoal or bone.

Cenotaph Burials

2041

This was 0.26m in diameter and 0.10m deep. It was filled with deposit 2783 which was a dark grey brown sandy silt. This contained oak and willow/poplar charcoal fragments and a flint spall. Only 1g of unidentifiable burnt/cremated bone was recovered from this feature.

2042

This was 0.39m in diameter and 0.18m deep. Its fill (2850) was a dark grey brown silty clay. This contained oak and willow/poplar charcoal fragments together with a flint spall. A total of 150g of cremated human bone was recovered from this feature. Analysis of the cremated bone suggests it comes from a child of 4 years (\pm 12 months).

2043

This was 0.36m in diameter and 0.16m deep. Its fill (2851) was a dark brown silty clay which was rich in oak charcoal. Six grams of unidentifiable burnt/cremated bone was recovered from this feature .

2044

This was 0.42m in diameter and 0.12m deep. It was filled with deposit 2852 which was a dark grey brown silty clay. Human cremated bone weighing 12g was recovered from this deposit, probably from a child of 3 years (\pm 12 months) of age at time of death. The fill also contained oak charcoal.

2045

This was 0.65m in diameter and 0.10m deep. It was filled with deposit 2852 which was a dark brown grey clayey silt. This contained oak charcoal from spit 4.

2145

This was 0.45m in diameter and 0.09m deep. It was filled with deposit 3053 which was a mid reddish brown sandy silt. This contained only a few fragments of oak charcoal and a flint spall.

Pits

2146

This was circular being 0.80m in diameter and 0.20m deep and had been partially truncated by a furrow. It was fully excavated and shown to be filled with deposit 3052 was a mid grey brown sandy silt but produced no finds, bone or charcoal.

2147

This was 1.20m by 1.10m and 0.29m deep and had been partially truncated by a furrow. It was fully excavated and filled with deposit 3058 a mid reddish brown sandy silt, which again was archaeologically sterile.

Other associated features

Gully 10151 (Figs 5 and 10)

A shallow segmented gully was recorded on a NW-SE axis for c.10m. It was between 0.40m and 0.85m wide and 0.04m and 0.15m deep. It respects the north edge of ring ditch 10150 and thus is either contemporary or later but must have been created with the earthwork (either the ditch itself or an internal mound) still visible in the landscape. Sixteen slots were excavated (17 if 2126 is part of this rather than an isolated small pit) but none contained any finds.

Other Early Prehistoric

A pit 1907 containing the remains of two cremation urns lay c.155m to the north of the ring ditch (Figs 4 and 7, Pl. 6). A specific date of the vessels could not be discerned and they could only be given an early prehistoric date. Close by was an undated inhumation burial (1906). It is possible both these features were contemporary with the ring ditch, or at least with one another, although the combination of rites so close together would be unusual the coincidence seems implausible if they were centuries (or more) apart.

Urned cremation pit 1907

This was a shallow near-circular pit, being 0.55m by 0.58m and 0.12m deep. It contained two cremation urns, (2567 and 2569). Urn 2567 comprised the base and lower body of a thick walled vessel placed upright in the pit. Only 0.02m of the wall sherds survived and the vessel had an internal diameter of 0.12m. It was made from

poorly consolidated clay (see Timby below). The vessel's internal fill (2565) contained 11g of cremated human bone, of undetermined age or sex. The fill (2565) also contained oak and willow/poplar charcoal.

Urn 2567 was slightly larger with an internal diameter of 0.19m with the again only base and lower walls surviving (to a height of 0.08m). It was also made of poorly consolidated clay and was a similar thick walled vessel and was placed upright in the pit. The internal fill (2570) contained 269g of cremated human bones. A broad age at death of "adult" could only be suggested and again sex could not be determined. The urn also contained fragments of willow/poplar charcoal and occasional oak.

Inhumation 1906

A badly preserved human burial was found in shallow grave cut 1906 which was just 0.50m to the north of pit 1907. The skeleton was lying supine and extended with the head to the west, facing north. It comprised less than 50% of the expected bones from a skeleton, and disintegrated further on exposure (Pl. 7). The individual was possibly an adult female. The poor preservation of the remains hindered all pathological examinations and more specific designation of age and sex. Given its location, well away from any other features, it is possibly contemporary with urn pit 1907.

Phase 2 Iron Age (Early or Middle)

Gullies 10155, 10159 and 10160, all towards the south of this area of the site, and possibly pit 2234 are assigned to this phase of site development (Figs 6 and 10).

Gullies 10155 and 10159

This was probably all a single ditch, surviving (and possibly originally dug) only intermittently, on a curving but essentially NE-SW alignment for c.135m before turning sharply at its southern end onto a NW-SE axis. Slot 2224 (3094) contained 3 sherds of Iron Age pottery weighing 4g. Ditch 10155 was cut at its northern end by gully 10158 which is of Roman date or later. Ditch 10159 is very probably a northwards continuation of 10155. This was recorded for c.25m, curving further to the west or north-west. The sharp turn to the east at the south end suggests this marks the edge of a field rather than, for example, a precursor of the later trackway, but if it did continue further east, it did not extend as far as Area 4, and it seems most likely that it lined up on ditch 10100 (Area 5, conveyor belt strip) which terminated just short of burnt mound H. This however, was earlier prehistoric, so the course of ditch 10155 south of Area 9 remains unclear.

Gully 10160

This tiny stretch of gully lay parallel to the north end of ditch 21055 and is dated by 10 sherds of Iron Age pottery weighing 21g recovered from slot 2217. It comprised a short stretch of gully c.5m, 0.76 wide and between 0.08m and 0.20 m deep. It also contained 30g of burnt limestone.

Pit 2234

This was ovoid being 4.20m by 4.00m and 1.30m deep. Its four fills contained no finds. It is dated here purely based on proximity to the above but could equally belong in the Roman phase.

Phase 3 Roman

The Roman phasing scheme for the previous areas (6 and 7) indicated three sub-phases based on stratigraphy. In areas 8 and 9A however there is no clear distinction. It appears that the majority of the Roman activity recorded in 8 and 9A relates to a trackway; previously recorded in Areas 6 and 7 and assigned to phase 3(ii), so that phasing has been adopted here. Much of the small assemblage of Roman pottery recovered from the trackway and associated features in areas 8 and 9A can only be given a broad Roman date but some has been given a 1st-2nd century date.

Phase 3ii

Trackway Ditches

An area of phase 8 was archaeologically stripped to the east of the conveyor strip for Area 7 and co-joining the southern part of Area 7 (Fig.4 and 10). Within this area were elements of a trackway represented by parallel ditches. The ditches joined to those previously recorded in the conveyor strip for Area 7 and areas 6 and 7 (Bray and Pine 2015). These ditches also correspond with cropmarks.

Eastern Trackway ditches

The continuation (2028) of the eastern side of the track (10135), previously recorded in the southern part of the conveyor strip for Area 7, was noted on a NE-SW axis for c.40m before turning sharply to the SE where it joined with ditch 1026, previously recorded in Area 6 (Figs 2 and 4).

North of and parallel to this was ditch 10143 which was previously recorded in area 6 as ditch 1029. This was on a NW-SE axis for c.20m before it turned sharply to the NE. This configuration of ditches appear to represent an eastern offshoot element of the trackway, linking the main north-south route with fields to the east (Fig. 2). The only finds in this area were 5 sherds of Roman pottery in slot 2031 (where it might be relevant that

this ditch was also crossed by some wheel ruts, so that the pottery could easily be intrusive: however, the ditch line is well enough dated elsewhere).

Ditch 10143 then continued on a NE alignment for c.100m. It joined to where it had been previously recorded on the northern part of the conveyor strip for Area 7. A further northern stretch of this eastern trackway ditch had been recorded in Area 7 as ditch 10145 with recut by 10146 (Fig.2 and 3) (Bray and Pine 2015). In the northern part of Area 8 a further c.40m of this ditch was excavated (slots 1832-5) (Fig.3).

Western Trackway ditches

The western trackway ditch 10138 (previously recorded in the conveyor strip for area 7) was observed in the area between the conveyor and Area 7 (Fig. 4), for c.130m and in this area contained seven sherds of Roman pottery from two slots. In this area it was redefined by later ditch 10137, which duplicated its line except at the south where it curved off more sharply to the west.

In the northern part of the conveyor strip for area 7 the western trackway ditches were recorded as ditches 10140, 10141 and 10144 (ditch 10140 being the latest in the sequence; which cut earlier linear features 10144 and 10141) (Bray and Pine 2015). Ditches 10140 and 10144 were seen to continue into area 8, ditch 10140 being recorded as 10164 and recorded for c.200m (Figs 2 and 3). This truncated earlier linear 10144 recorded as 10166. A short stretch of ditch (10163) was also recorded in area 8, c.40m, and appears to be a permutation of the western trackway ditch in this area of site. In this part of the site, the only find from any of these ditches was a single sherd of Iron Age pottery in ditch 10164 (slot 1937) which must be residual.

The trackway ditches in area 8 were c. 10m apart and within this gap was a shallow area of disturbance filled with a light grey silt (10142) and in some places this being truncated by wheel ruts (2000-1, 2006-7, 2009-11 and 2013), which also affected some of the ditches (2033-4).

The trackway described above was previously identified in Areas 1, the conveyor strips for Area 5 and 7 and Area 7. Study of the cartographic evidence suggests the ditches recorded in these areas, were in nearly the same plotted location as the mapped trackway called Black Pitts Road which is shown on the 1778 and 1779 inclosure maps (Fig. 11) and also recorded as cropmarks by aerial photography (Fig.12).

In Area 1, to the far south of the extraction area, the cropmark was ground truthed by excavation and it was considered this southern part had Iron Age origins and was in use during the Roman period. It is also considered the route was still in use into the medieval and post-medieval period as shown by stratigraphy and how some of the ridge and furrow field system respected this trackway (Milbank *et al.* 2011a). In Area 5 the

trackway was poorly dated with a single sherd of Roman pottery being recovered. Whilst in Areas 6 and 7 the trackway ditches were poorly dated in the conveyor strip but in Area 7 a large amount of Roman pottery was retrieved from the eastern trackway ditch 10145/6. This indicates this ditch appears to have been infilling in the Roman period but of course it could have had earlier origins. In this current phase of work Phase 8, and 9 again a small number of sherds of Roman pottery were recovered; from ditch 10143 five sherds whilst seven sherds were recovered from 10138 including sherds of possible 1st-2nd century date.

The trackway's depiction on the 1778 map suggests that the route way was still in existence in the post-medieval period. Thus we are discussing a route which was in use for well over a thousand years.

It appears that a small field/paddock in Area 9 may be contemporary with the Roman trackway although dating is slight (Fig. 6). The northern side of the field was marked by gully 10158 which was recorded on a NW-SE alignment for c.75m before it joined to trackway ditch 10137; recorded previously on the conveyor strip for Area 7 (Bray and Pine 2015). Gully 10158 truncated gully 10155 and contained a residual sherd of Iron Age pottery from the point where it did so (2208). at this point, it also appeared that 10158 was turning to head south, but in fact terminated. If it had continued south-west, it could have linked with ditch 10156 or, more probably, 10157. It is suggested the western side of the field was marked out by gully 10157. This was on a NE-SW alignment for c.50m where it terminated (slot 248). There was a small gap/entrance of c.8 before the gully continued for c.35m before exiting under the southern baulk. A sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from slot 2243. A posthole (2309) in the entrance also contained a sherd of Roman pottery.

Gully 10156 may be an earlier or later version of the western edge of the field, but contained no finds other than unidentifiable 'crumbs' of what might be prehistoric pottery: It may relate to Iron Age gully 10155 parallel to the east, and it might continue north as 10160/10159, but there is a gap of some 55m and this association could only be speculation.

Finally for this period, a large posthole or small pit (1820) containing 53 sherds of 1st-2nd century pottery was recorded in the northern part of Area 8 (Fig.3 and 9) It was 0.68m in diameter and 0.12m deep.

Phase 4 Saxon

No remains of this period were recorded in this part of the site.

Phase 5 Medieval/Post-medieval

Medieval and post medieval activity on the site is in the form of field boundaries, ridge and furrow and a trackway.

The trackway; discussed in detail above in the Roman section of the report, is depicted on the Inclosure maps of 1778 and 1779 as Black Pitts Road and joins to the north to Aston Keynes Road (Fig. 11). It is considered that this route way had much earlier origins (see above) and this trackway was in use from possibly the Iron Age and definitely the Roman period. No medieval or post-medieval finds were recorded from the ditches but given the trackway's depiction on the 1778 and 1779 map this track continued in use through the medieval and post-medieval periods. This is a considerable amount of time- perhaps as much as 2 millennia and thus must have been a useful route way through the landscape.

Archaeology suggests that stretches of the ditches of this trackway were nearly completely in-filled in its later history whilst other parts may have been redefined. It may be the most substantial marking of the trackway in its medieval and post-medieval lifetime was the hedge lines and the slight indentation of the hollow way.

Ditch 10162 is on the inclosure maps of 1778 and 1779 and respect the Black Pitts. By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1875 Black Pitts Road seems to have disappeared but the line of Black Pitts Road does seem to have survived, albeit moved slightly westward at its northern end, as a field boundary /hedge line.

Elements of ridge and furrow field system were identified Areas 8 and 9. These truncate parts of the trackway thought to be Black Pitts Road and thus post-date this. In Area 8 they also truncate the ring ditch 10150, gully 10151 and the field system in area 9.

Undated Features

Many individual pits/post holes contained no finds and cannot be dated. Ditch 10161 in the northern part of the site is also undated and bears no obvious relationship to any of the phases of landuse discussed here or in the other areas explored. It is possible it was aligned off the western side of the trackway/Black Pitts Road but even if so, that leaves its dating open to any period from the Roman onwards. It appeared to be cut by a furrow but even this was not entirely clear. Recorded as gullies, 10152 and 10153 are more probably very shallow furrow bases, matching much clearer furrows further east.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

This phase of work produced a very small assemblage of 143 sherds weighing 459g (Appendix 2). The pieces were exceptionally degraded with just a single rimsherd. The group included sherds of earlier prehistoric, Iron Age, early Roman and post-medieval date. The prehistoric assemblage was sorted into fabrics following the PCRG (1997) guidelines. Roman sherds were coded using the National Roman reference fabric codes (Tomber and Dore 1998), or where not classified, codes based on these. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight.

Within the earlier prehistoric group 48 sherds came from two vessels from pit 1907. The sherds were much degraded fragments of two thick-walled vessels, probably urns. Most of the fragments had no surviving surfaces and appear to be made from poorly consolidated clay. The exterior was oxidized and the interior reduced black. The fine textured clay contained fine void probably from decayed calcareous inclusions.

Ring ditch 10150 yielded two very degraded sherds of probably early prehistoric date, one of which had a grog temper and the other possible traces of impressed decoration.

Typical shell and limestone-tempered Iron Age sherds were recovered from ditches 10155, 10160 and 10155, and 10164 (residual in the latter).

Roman sherds account for just over half the recovered assemblage and all comprise local wares broadly dating to the early Roman period. The only featured sherd is a rim from a ring-necked flagon in a fine oxidized ware from ditch 10157. This is likely to date from the later 1st or early 2nd centuries. The largest group of material, comprising some 54 sherds, came from pit 1820.

Struck Flint by Steve Ford

A small collection of 40 struck flints were recovered during the Area 8 excavations (Appendix 3). All except three flakes were recovered from excavated features, usually in ones or twos. Some of the pieces were patinated a light bluish white colour and others had been burnt.

Just six pieces, three flakes and three spalls were recovered from the ring ditch 10150. Pit 1902 produced the largest assemblage with just 10 pieces, seven of which were spalls with two flakes and a serrated blade. Burnt tree root 1946 also contained 8 items as did Pit (1905) with the latter including a narrow flake.

It is possible that the assemblages from pit 1902 and hearth 1905 were of earlier Neolithic date.

Fired Clay by Danielle Milbank

Fired clay weighing 3.306g (731 fragments) was recovered in the course of the excavation, both hand-collected and recovered from sieved soil samples, and was examined under x10 magnification. It was generally found in small quantities, with two deposits containing over 1kg, both of them infilling the possible hearth or pit feature 1905 (Appendix 4).

Typically, the fabric was slightly soft and frequently friable fine clay with occasional sandy inclusions, and an orange red colour, with very few grey or black areas indicating reducing (low oxygen) conditions. The assemblage recovered from the possible hearth or pit feature 1905 consisted of amorphous fragments, with occasional pieces bearing one flat surface. No indications of wooden wattles or other structural elements were identified, and further categories of fired clay object (such as loomweights) were identified.

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Milbank

Ceramic building material weighing 396g (7 fragments) was recorded in four contexts encountered during the excavation (Appendix 5). This material was encountered in fairly small quantities, with each context yielding fewer than 200g.

Roman material was identified in ditch 10146 (slot 1835) which comprised a single fairly abraded fine, slightly soft fabric in a pale red colour. This represents a small piece of *tegula* (flanged roof tile), which were typically used with curved imbrex tiles to form a tiled roof.

Two further very abraded fragments of a similar fabric were recovered from hollow way slot 1840, along with a fragment of plain tile 14mm thick of a coarse sandy fabric with a pale white orange and a possible medieval date.

Medieval material comprised a single piece of plain tile recovered from ditch 10138 (slot 2003, deposit 2680) which is of a fairly fine medium hard fabric with sparse groggy inclusions and a red colour, and a grey (reduced) core. The piece is 18mm thick, with a fairly uneven finish and a likely later medieval date.

Human bone by Ceri Falys

A single inhumation (2566) was recovered from grave cut 1906. The grave was notably shallow, resulting in the skeleton lying at the same approximate level of the top of the natural geology, and predisposing the skeletal remains to much damage and an overall poor preservation of the bone. SK2566 was orientated approximately

W(head)–E, and was found in a supine and extended position. The right arm was bent at the elbow with the hand placed on the chest. The left arm was acutely bent, allowing the hand to rest around the left shoulder area. The skull, upper spine, ribs and pelvis were not preserved.

Osteological analysis was undertaken following the guidelines of Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) and Brickley and McKinley (2004) to determine the extent of preservation and completeness of the individual, an assessment of the sex of the individual and their approximate age at death. Due to the inadequate preservation, it was possible to carry out a pathological examination. The preservation of the bone is poor and fragile to the touch, which is reflected in the high degree of fragmentation present. The cortical bone is absent leaving the surface of the bone eroded and weathered in appearance. The trabecular bone has not been preserved. The skeleton itself is less than 50% complete, and no elements were complete at the time of analysis. Fragments representing the following skeletal elements were present for analysis: the left and right clavicles and upper limbs (humeri, radii and ulnae), the articular facets of the lumbar vertebrae, small fragments of the right innominate, and both lower limbs (femora, tibiae, and fibulae). None of the small bones of the hands and feet were preserved.

The amount of retrievable demographic information was limited by the preservation of the remains. The aspects of the skull and pelvis that are heavily relied on in osteological analysis were not present. The sex of the individual could only be indicated by the overall gracile nature of the long bone shaft fragments, suggesting the individual was possibly female. Only a very broad age estimate of “adult” (i.e. 17+ years old) could be determined based on the thickness of bones of the cranial vault. No further information was able to be retrieved.

Burnt bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of burnt bone was recovered from ten separate contexts across the excavated area (Appendix 6). On site, each deposit of burnt bone was whole-earth recovered in spits, and was subsequently floated and wet-sieved to a 2mm mesh size in the post-excavation processing. The bone and all other associated residues separated for further analysis. The burnt bone from each context was sorted using a sieve stack consisting of 10mm, 5mm, and 2mm mesh sizes. For ease of sorting, the remains were considered in terms of those over the sizes of 10mm and 5mm, and those larger than 2mm.

The bone recovered from each sieve (10mm, 5mm and 2mm) was weighed, and the relative weights of each fragment size category were recorded, along with the maximum fragment size, and colour of the burnt bone for each deposit (Appendix 6). A total of 457g of bone was present for analysis. The maximum fragment sizes

ranged between 4.2 mm and 56.9mm in length. The majority of bone was smaller than 5mm in size, rendering the identification of the pieces impossible in many instances. This greatly decreased the amount of retrievable information from the remains.

Of the 457g of bone present for analysis, the majority (448g) comprised four contexts containing human bone (deposits 2565, 2570, 2850, 2852), 5g were non-human (from treehole 2563) of unidentifiable species, and the remaining 10g were single fragments of unidentifiable burnt bone spread across five pits, postholes or treeholes (2564, 2661, 2783, 2784, 2851). The preservation of the bone was generally poor. Although the surface preservation was fair, an overall fragile texture of the bone resulted in an exceptionally high degree of fragmentation.

The colour of burnt bone varied between contexts, from mixtures of blue-grey and a fully oxidized buff-white. Variations in colour reflect the efficiency of the burning process (i.e. the amount of time, temperature and amount of oxygen supplied to the bone), and the degree of oxidation of the organic compounds within bone. The small deposits of unidentifiable bone commonly displayed hues of grey (i.e. grey, grey-blue, grey-white), suggesting the fragments were not subjected to a less efficient burning process than the human bone, which were uniformly buff or fully oxidized white.

The smallest deposits of burnt bone were recovered from features such as pits, postholes and treeholes. Few in number and small in size, the fragments were not identifiable to species of origin. Although identifiable as non-human bone, an animal of origin could also not be suggested for the remains recovered from treehole (2563).

In contrast, the human bone recovered from four separate contexts displayed marginally less fragmentation than the unidentifiable contexts. The total weight of human bone in each deposit ranged from 12g to 269g. Maximum fragment sizes recorded between 10.8mm and 56.9mm, with the majority of fragments measuring less than 5mm (Appendix 6c). The degree of bone fragmentation can be inferred by the weight of bone in each category when compared to the fragment size.

All bone was subjected to osteological analysis following the procedures suggested by Brickley and McKinley (2004). Initial osteological analysis divided fragments into five main areas of the body: cranial, axial, upper limb, lower limb and long bone (unidentifiable to specific limb). A more detailed identification of fragments to specific skeletal element and side was also undertaken, where possible. The most frequently preserved fragments were portions of the cranial vault and developing tooth crowns, providing evidence of both

children and adult human remains were within the assemblage. Non-descript fragments of long bone shafts were also exceptionally common.

A minimum of one person was represented by the remains within each context, as summarized below.

1907 (2565)

A total of 11g of bone was present for analysis for deposit 2565. The bone was excavated in one spit from within urn 2567 in pit 1907. Identified elements included small pieces of long bone shafts and the distal end of a single metatarsal. It was not possible to determine whether this metatarsal head had fused to the shaft, and as a result, an age for this individual could not be suggested. The sex of the individual could not be determined either.

1907 (2570)

Deposit 2570 was excavated from within urn 2569 in a series of four 0.02m spits. This deposit contained the largest quantity of bone of the four human contexts, with 269g of buff-white present for analysis. Identified elements include cranial vault fragments, an infraorbital portion of zygomatic bone, a superior articular facet of a thoracic vertebra, and many long bone shaft fragments. A broad age at death of "adult" could only be suggested by the general thickness of the cranial bones, and moderate muscle attachments on the femoral shaft fragments could not be designated as male or female.

2042 (2850)

Deposit 2850 was excavated in a series of nine 0.02m thick spits. The pieces of bone were white in colour, highly fragmented, and weighed a total of 150g. The majority of bone pieces measured less than 5mm in length. Identified elements were primarily cranial in origin, which included developing adult dentition, and cranial vault fragments. The overall thinness of the pieces of vault suggested the individual was a child at the time of death, and this was supported by the developing crown of an adult canine, suggesting an age of 4 years (\pm 12 months) (van Beek 2002).

2044 (2852)

Very small amounts of bone were recovered from deposit 2852. Just 12g of bone was present for analysis. All fragments were non-descript and unidentifiable, with the exception of a single developing crown of a human first molar, suggesting an age of 3 years \pm 12 months (van Beek 2002). No further information could be retrieved from these deposits of burnt human remains.

In summary, the assemblage of burnt bone from this phase of Dryleaze Farm comprised five contexts of unidentifiable bone, one deposit containing non-human fragments, and four deposits containing human skeletal remains (two young children (under the age of 5 years), one adult of indeterminate sex, one individual of indeterminate age). It is acknowledged the quantities of bone recovered were significantly less than would be expected from an adult cremation. McKinley (1993) investigated the amount of burnt bone expected from the cremation of complete adult individuals using information gained from modern crematoria. These values were found to range between 1001.5g to 2442.5g, with an average of 1625.9g. It is, however, still suggested that some of these deposits do in fact represent human cremation burials, due to their internment within urns. It has been noted that a common archaeological practice was to deposit only some of the calcined bone from a cremated individual, representing a symbolic/token interment (McKinley 2006). It is likely this is a contributing factor to some, if not all, of these small deposits of burnt bone.

Animal Bone by Lizzie Lewins

A total of eighteen fragments of animal bone weighing 27g was recovered from two features (2104 (2784) and 2016 (2689) GN 10137) during the excavation. The bone was highly fragmented and denuded. The fragments were non descript and unable to be classified due to the poor state of preservation.

Charred plant remains by Rosalind McKenna

Seventy-six samples and numerous sub-samples were taken for recovery of palaeoenvironmental evidence. samples were wet sieved and processed using standard procedures (details of methodology are in the archive). A random selection of ideally 100 fragments of charcoal of varying sizes was made, which were then identified. Where samples did not contain 100 identifiable fragments, all fragments were studied and recorded. Identification was made using the wood identification guides of Schweingruber (1978) and Hather (2000).

Charred plant macrofossils were entirely absent from the samples.

Charcoal fragments, however, were present in almost all of the samples and sub-samples. The preservation of the charcoal fragments varied from poor to good. Most of the fragments were very brittle, and the material tended to crumble or break in uneven patterns making the identifying characteristics harder to distinguish and interpret. Fifteen of the samples (thirty of the sub-samples) from the prehistoric periods, but none of those from later periods, did contain material that was identifiable (Appendix 7).

The total range of taxa comprised of willow / poplar (*Salix / Populus*) and oak (*Quercus*). Oak is the most abundant species of the identified charcoal fragments, and it is possible that this was the preferred fuel wood obtained from a local environment containing a broader choice of species. Oak would have been chosen as it has dense heartwood and with good ventilation, burns slowly, maintaining an even temperature (Gale and Cutler 2000, 120, 205), giving a fire suitable for most purposes (Edlin 1949). Willow/Poplar are species that are ideal to use for kindling. They are anatomically less dense than oak and burn quickly at relatively high temperatures.

Radiocarbon dating

One sample of material for carbon dating (unidentified wood charcoal) were submitted to the Chrono Centre, Queens University Belfast for radiocarbon dating. Details of methodology and assessment of the reliability of the results are held in archive. The result is presented in Table 1 below. The result has been calibrated using

OxCal4.1.7 (Bronk Ramsey 2010 with data from Reimer *et al.* 2009). The calibrated date probability is expressed as the relative area under the curve at 2-sigma range (95.4% probability).

Table 1. Radiocarbon dating result.

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Lab No.</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Radiocarbon years</i>	<i>Date cal BC</i>	<i>Probability</i>
2125	2869	UBA-30803	Wood charcoal	3491 +/- 40	1918-1734 1718-1694	94.9% 5.1%

Conclusion

The excavations carried out for these phases of extraction at Dryleaze Farm have revealed a landscape exploited between the earlier Neolithic and post-medieval periods.

The earliest deposits were two pits (1902 and 1905) and two treeboles (1904 and 1949) with flint work of possible earlier Neolithic date. As discussed in depth from the results of Area 1 and 2 the archaeological record for this period within the region and beyond usually consists of little more than seemingly isolated pits and it is also not well represented by durable artefact scatters (Milbank *et al.* 2011a). Darvill (2006, 25) summarized that the Upper Thames Valley was rather poor in such remains, and drew attention to the particular paucity for the lower gravel terraces (on which our site lies), despite extensive area excavations. It is considered that the limited below-ground evidence for Neolithic activity here is representative of a mobile settlement pattern.

The early Bronze Age date is represented by a causewayed ring ditch (10150) and what appear to be cenotaph burials. A lower (but not primary) fill of the ring ditch has been dated by radiocarbon dating to 1918-1734 cal BC. Within the interior of the ditch were six cenotaph burials. An urn pit (1907) and inhumation burial (1906) may also (very tentatively) date to this period.

Early Bronze Age features have been excavated in the previous excavations with a roundhouse (912) in (Areas 2) and with a few sherds of pottery recorded (Milbank *et al.* 2011a). Three circular cropmarks; representing ring ditches have been recorded from the air, 750m to the south-west of ring ditch 10150 but still within the quarry complex (centred on NGR SU0275 9770: Fig. 10). The geophysical survey also produced anomalies, closely but not quite exactly matching the photographic interpretation plot. These ring ditches were investigated during an archaeological evaluation but did not produce any datable artefacts (Hey 2001; Kelly and Laws 2002), but likely represent the remains of early Bronze Age round barrows, levelled by ploughing

Middle Bronze age occupation of the surrounding area is attested to by the remains of nine burnt mounds (A-I) recorded in excavation areas 1-7. It is more than likely the ring ditch 10150 and accompanying mound was

still visible in the landscape and was still a site of social importance and it may be gully 10151 which respects ring ditch 10150 is of this date.

The Iron Age activity in Areas 8 and 9A was slight however a small, probable middle Iron Age, settlement has more recently been excavated in area 9B which co-joins the southern end of area 9, comprising three penannular gully roundhouses and associated pits and postholes (Pine forthcoming).

In the Roman period the occupation took the form the construction or redefining of parts of a trackway and a small field/paddock. Other elements of the trackway were previously identified in Areas 1, 5, 6 and 7 and with that recorded in area 8 means c.1.5km of this routeway has been archaeologically examined. It has been proposed this trackway had Iron Age origins and was in use during the Roman period. It is also considered the route was still in use into the medieval and post-medieval period (Milbank *et al.* 2011, Bray and Pine 2015) and the excavations of this phase of works does not contradict these hypothesis.

The trackway can be seen on the 1778 and 1779 inclosure maps, but fell out of use and was not shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875.

Multiple phases of ridge and furrow were recorded with some dated to the post-medieval period as they truncate the back filled trackway ditches.

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