

**Oxford Bus Company Depot,
Cowley Road, Oxford**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd**

by Erlend Hindmarch
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GAG 00/32

October 2002

Summary

Site name: Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5380 0500

Site activity: Evaluation (Stage 1)

Date and duration of project: 17th–21st October

Project manager: Erlend Hindmarch

Site supervisor: Erlend Hindmarch

Site code: GAG 00/32

Area of site: 1.58ha (1ha to be developed)

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were located. A few sherds of Roman and medieval pottery were recovered from unstratified or disturbed contexts

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the complete archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service, given that permission is received to deposit the artefacts.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 30.10.02
	Steve Preston✓ 31.10.02

Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley, Oxford An Archaeological Evaluation- stage 1

by Erlend Hindmarch

Report 00/32b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford (SP 5380 0500) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jon Neville, Regional Planning Manager, Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Limited, Berkeley House, Abingdon Science Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3NB.

Oxford City Council has granted planning permission (00/02326/NOY) for the demolition of existing structures on the site and redevelopment for housing. This planning consent includes a condition (31), which relates to archaeology. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the City's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Brian Durham, Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

Redevelopment is to take place in two phases, with the site of the former playing fields to comprise phase 1 and the remainder of the bus depot phase 2. The agreed scheme for evaluation is to examine areas in both phases of redevelopment. Only the phase 1 playing field areas were accessible for purposes of the present report. The evaluation therefore has been subdivided into stage 1, reported here, and stage 2 to take place when the remainder of the depot becomes available. The fieldwork was undertaken by Erlend Hindmarch and Pam Jenkins between 17th and 21st October 2002 and the site code is GAG 00/32. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site under investigation lies behind the current bus depot and is currently covered by unkempt grassland and small bushes. It slopes gently to the south-west and lies at a height of approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology as mapped is Oxford clay (West Walton formation, dark grey silty mudstone) (BGS 1994).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desktop study of the area (Hall 2000). It concluded that the site lies within an area where a number of Roman finds provide evidence for occupation and for pottery production. The site lies 2km to the west of the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road and in an area known for substantial pottery production dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. Following this period of industrial activity, the area remained largely undeveloped until the 19th century. The main use of the area at this time appears to be as a cricket ground for various Oxford colleges up until the 1920s when a bus depot was first built on part of the site, with the land at the rear being kept as playing fields. There is no record of archaeological deposits being made during the construction of the bus depot.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. A total of twelve trenches were dug over the site (Fig. 2) by a 360° type mechanical excavator to remove over burden, using a toothless 1.6m ditching bucket. All machine digging was carried out under the direct supervision of a qualified and experienced archaeologist. The overburden was removed until archaeologically significant deposits or the natural geology was reached. If significant deposits were reached then these were cleaned, sampled and recorded by hand in order to meet the objectives of the brief.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1

Results (Fig. 3)

The twelve trenches dug varied in length from between 22.3m to 18.8m. The depth of the trenches varied over the site, with the western trenches approximately 0.5m deep while to the east, Trench 12 reached a maximum of 1.3m. Although the topsoil (50) and subsoil (51) remained the same throughout the site it was apparent that again differences occurred toward the east with a shallow secondary subsoil (52) appearing above the natural clay. This layer showed no archaeological deposits and contained no finds of any kind. Further variation between east and west could be seen in the natural itself. Although the natural Oxford clay was seen over the whole site in the eastern trenches bands of sandy gravel were observed. These are probably a result of fluvial action.

None of the trenches contained archaeologically significant deposits. However, finds of pottery were made within the topsoil and subsoil (see Finds).

Finds

Pottery by Steve Ford

Six sherds of pottery were recovered from topsoil, subsoil or modern contexts. These comprised four sherds of Roman date, one sherd of medieval date and one of late post-medieval date.

Catalogue

Trench	Context	Description	Date
5	Modern Land drain	Rim sherd, brown, sandy fabric.	Roman
5	Modern Land drain	Body sherd, buff coloured, fine sandy fabric with mottled dark green glaze with a thin slightly raised ridge decorated with dots	medieval
6	Topsoil (50)	Body sherd of <i>mortarium</i> in buff-coloured fabric	Roman
7	Subsoil(51)	Body sherd in orange, gritless fabric.	Roman
10	Topsoil (50)	Body sherd of <i>mortarium</i> in brown/buff-coloured fabric	Roman
10	Topsoil (50)	Handle sherd, white glazed china.	19th/20th century

Conclusion

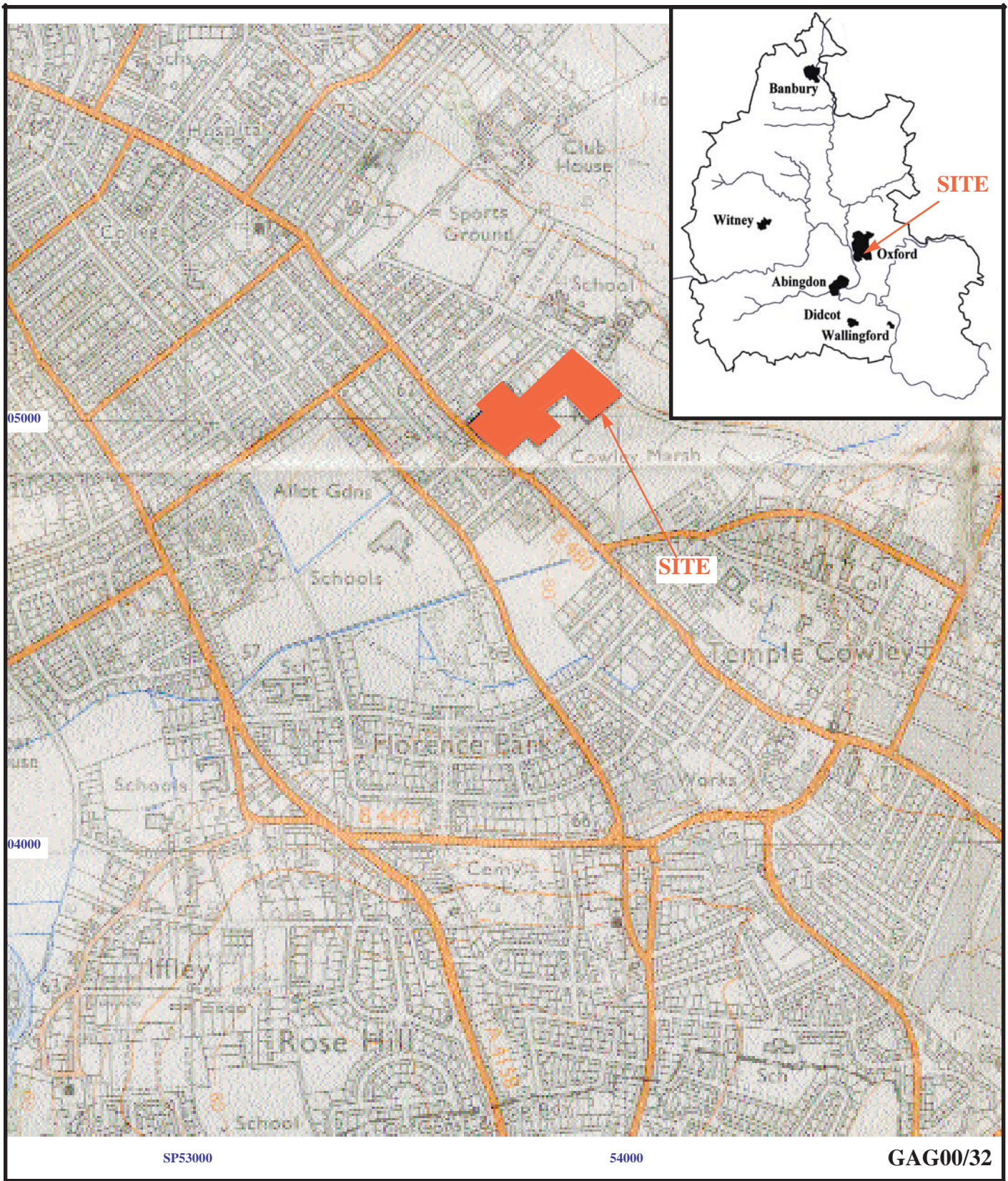
No archaeology was found in any of the trenches. Finds of Roman and medieval date were retrieved from both topsoil and subsoil but these are likely to be residual in nature as they were found in conjunction with modern pottery deposits. The thickening of the subsoil to the east of the site may be a result of a levelling process when the cricket pitch was constructed during the 19th century.

References

- BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
Hall, M, 2000, 'Go Ahead Bus Garage, Cowley Road, Oxford, An Archaeological desk based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/32, Reading
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at south or west end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	21	1.6	0.59	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.3m Subsoil (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.25m Natural-Grey blue clay with bands of sandy gravel
2	20.7	1.6	0.56	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.2m Subsoil (51)- Orange brown silt/clay 0.26m Natural-Grey blue clay with bands of sandy gravel
3	20.5	1.6	0.53	Topsoil (50)- Black clay/silt plus turf 0.3m Subsoil (51)-Orange brown sit/clay 0.15m Natural-Grey blue clay with bands of sandy gravel
4	21.3	1.6	0.7	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.24m Subsoil (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.21m Natural-Grey blue clay with patches of sandy gravel
5	22.3	1.6	0.79 N 0.65 E	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.3m Subsoil (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.4m Natural-Grey blue clay
6	20.2	1.6	0.5	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.23m Subsoil 1 (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.2m Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.8m Natural-Grey blue clay with patches of gravel
7	19.4	1.6	0.8	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.25m Subsoil 1 (51)-Orange brown clay/silt 0.6m Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.1m Natural-Grey blue clay
8	18.8	1.6	0.7 W 0.8 E	Topsoil (50)- Black clay/silt plus turf 0.34m Subsoil (51)-Orange brown clay/silt 0.3m Natural-Grey blue clay
9	19.4	1.6	0.8	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.3m Subsoil 1(51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.4m Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.1m Natural-Grey blue clay
10	19.4	1.6	0.77 S 0.41 N	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.25m South, 0.16m North Subsoil 1 (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.4m South, 0.21m North Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.12m south, 0.05m North Natural-Grey blue clay
11	18.9	1.6	0.96 W 1.2 E	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt plus turf 0.34m Subsoil 1 (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.46m Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.1m Natural-Grey blue clay
12	19.8	1.6	0.57 SW 1.3 NE	Topsoil (50)-Black clay/silt 0.25m south-west, 0.5m north-east Subsoil 1 (51)-Orange brown silt/clay 0.25m south-west, 0.7m north-east Subsoil 2 (52)-Brown clay 0.1m Natural-Grey blue clay



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Oxford 2002. Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Cowley and
Oxfordshire.

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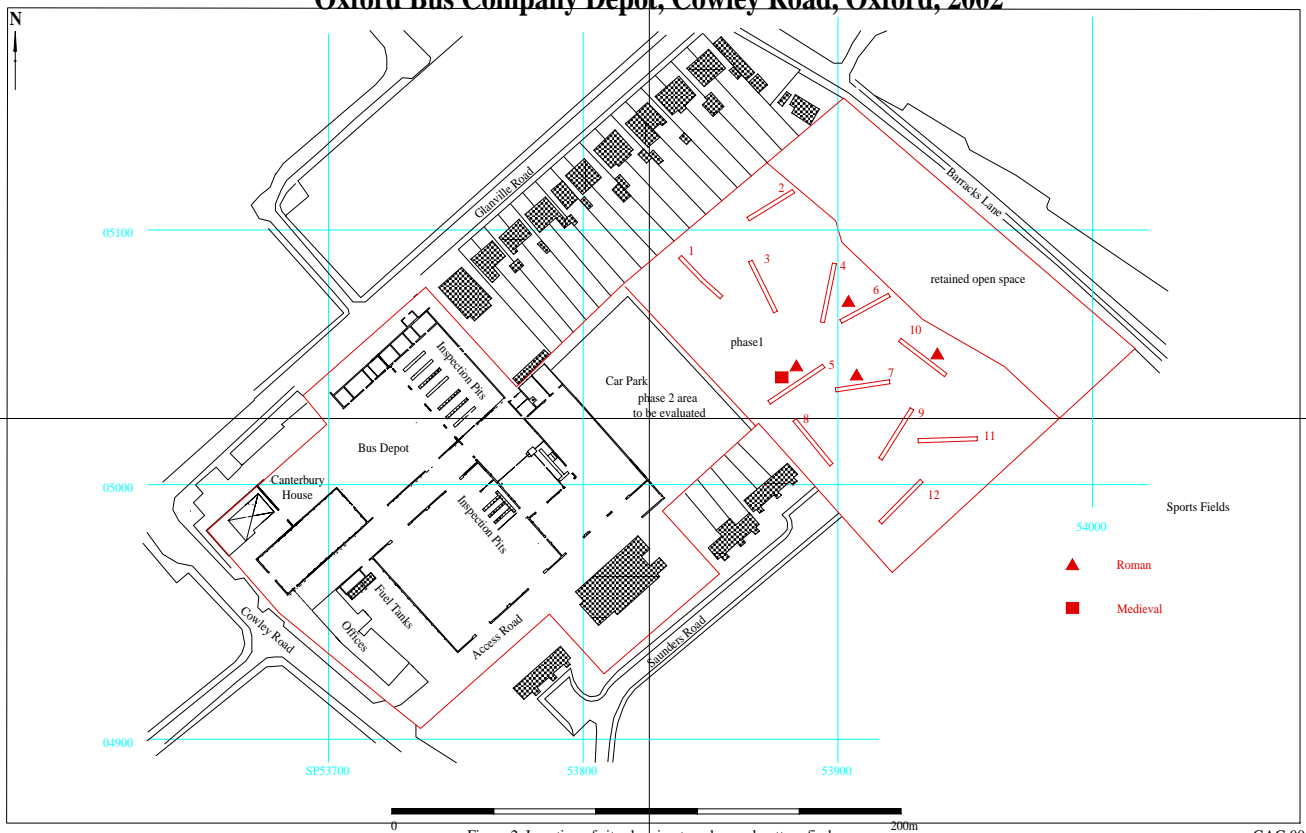


Figure 2. Location of site showing trenches and pottery finds.

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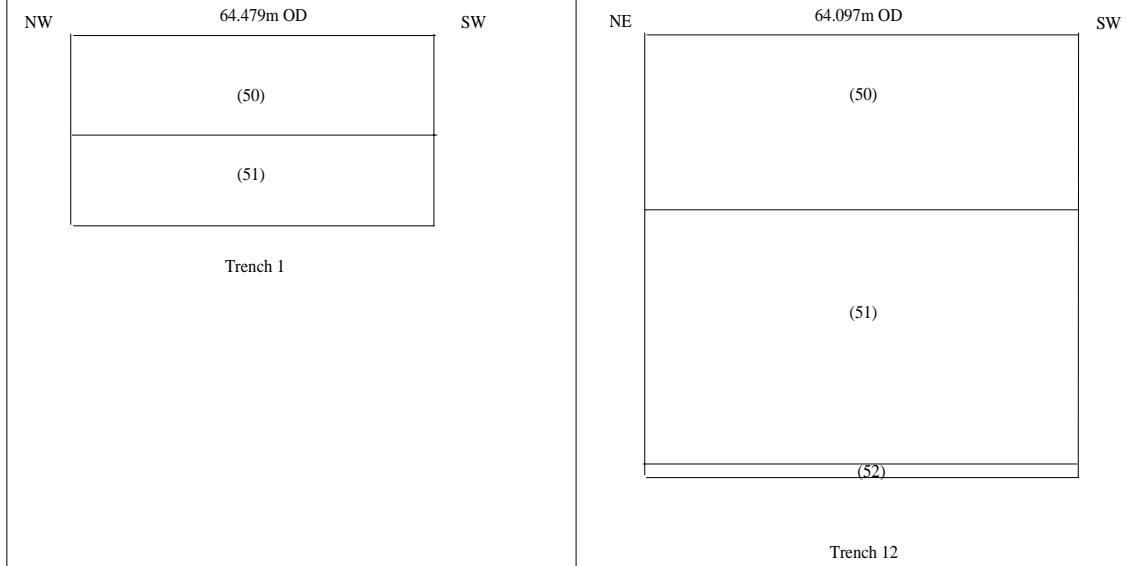


Figure 3. Representative sections



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south east. Scales: 1m and 0.5m



Plate 2. Trench 8 looking north west. Scales: 1m and 0.5m