

Oxfordshire Strategic Railfreight Interchange Ardley

Brief summary of the archaeological evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Over 575 30m trenches were excavated at Ardley. These have demonstrated that both the geophysical survey and the AP analysis were generally reliable indicators of the presence of archaeological remains on the site.

IRON AGE

Area 5

This area contained an Iron Age pit.

Area 9

Despite the overlying green waste, the irregular ovoid enclosure suggested in the northernmost extent of the field by the geophysical survey was proven as a 1.24m deep ditch which contained reasonable assemblage of material culture which included a thin sheet of rivetted copper alloy. Possible internal features not evident on the geophysical survey included a ditch and a small pit.

Two probable cremation burials possibly represent a larger cemetery to the south of the enclosure (Trench 26). They were mapped and left in-situ.

To the south-west of the enclosure, the AP analysis identified a north-east-south-west ditch with an annular ditch to the west of it. This feature was not found in the trenching or picked up on the geophysical survey.

Area 16

West of this area is Aves Ditch (MOX4830), a prehistoric trackway associated with multiple banjo shaped enclosures. In the north-western corner of Area 16, a

cropmark banjo enclosure (MOX23329), confirmed by the geophysical survey was targeted and pottery and animal bone were recovered from the enclosing ditch. A possibly contemporary internal posthole was also found.

Area 28

This area of geophysical anomalies included a complex of ditches which seem likely to represent several phases of activity.

ROMAN

Area 8

In the western corner of Area 8 a series of ditches were associated with the remains of a rubble surface or floor. Fine table wares, coins, brooches and a hair pin suggest an elevated status for the inhabitants. A cluster of nails associated with hobnails may have come from a wooden container which housed a cremation, although analysis of the fragments of burnt bone is inconclusive.

Area 13

Roman period cremations, an inhumation and finds were discovered at the southern end of Area 13 during the installation of a water main (MOX 4818). However, none of the trenches adjacent to the watermain exclusion zone found anything of significance.

Area 16

The AP analysis and geophysical survey both identified a large triangular enclosure with two sub-square internal enclosures along with a further linear extending south-east from the eastern corner of the triangular enclosure and a rectilinear enclosure to the north. These features were examined in the trial trenching and Roman period pottery was recovered from the ditches, together with a brooch and fragments of possible fire bar, possibly associated with a kiln. A residual flint arrowhead was also found.

Area 18

Stone footings for a Roman building were found in Area 18. The walls of the

rectangular building can be discerned on the geophysical survey, although the remains uncovered in the trenches were more complex than the geophysics suggested, with potential walls on differing alignments and a series of floor layers. It was associated with an abundance of roof tile. The pottery assemblage included coarse and fine-wares and a coin, a lump of slag, nails and a brooch were recovered.

The building sequence appears to sit within the northern half of a ditched enclosure which narrows to the south-east. The double ditches of the north-eastern and north-western sides of the enclosure were recorded along with other linear features and smaller enclosures suggested by the geophysical survey.

POST-MEDIEVAL

Area 17

The stone foundation of an agricultural building, visible on the Tithe Award of 1839, was found to the south of Area 17. It was not recorded on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1881), which suggests it was demolished during the intervening period.

UNDATED

Area 22

No features were recorded in the two trial trenches excavated in this area which lies south of an area where an undated ditch (possibly Saxon or Iron Age) and three undated postholes were recorded in 2007 (EOX2025). The ditch must lie to the east of the trenches.

Area 27

Some of the faint linear geophysical anomalies and ditches recorded on the AP analysis were proven as former field boundaries. Whilst several linear features not shown on the geophysical survey were found in Trench 525 and its extension. Area 27 was almost entirely devoid of finds; only two very small undiagnostic pottery sherds and an iron object were recovered.