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# Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation  
Interim Report

Ref: 70090.03  
August 2013



**Newbury Racecourse  
Newbury, West Berkshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

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# Newbury Racecourse Newbury, West Berkshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report

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**Front cover:** South-west facing section of ditch 2104

**Back cover:** Trench 2, view from south-east



# **Newbury Racecourse Newbury, West Berkshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by David Wilson Homes to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land south of Newbury racetrack at Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire, in advance of construction associated with a proposed golf course. The Site was centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 449055 165910 (**Figure 1**).

The Site was identified as a known habitat for greater crested newts and this meant that only two of the planned trenches could be excavated during this phase.

The evaluation revealed three ditches, one gully and one pit. One of the ditches contained pottery dated on fabric grounds to the Early Iron Age though the remaining features were undated.

The results of the evaluation suggest the presence of low level later prehistoric activity within the immediate area but did not produce any evidence to suggest the presence of any significant archaeological remains.

The fieldwork was carried out between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2013.



# **Newbury Racecourse Newbury, West Berkshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by David Wilson Homes and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Daniel Pavely in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Sarah Orr (West Berkshire HER).

The fieldwork was carried out by Piotr Orczewski and Eleanor Stevens. The report was compiled by Oliver Good and Naomi Brennan with specialist reports by Lorraine Mephram (finds) and illustrations by Liz James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Caroline Budd.



# **Newbury Racecourse Newbury, West Berkshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Project background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by David Wilson Homes (The Client) to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land south of Newbury racetrack at Newbury Racecourse, Newbury, West Berkshire, in advance of construction associated with a proposed golf course (hereafter 'the Site'). The Site was centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 449055 165910 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The planned evaluation consisted of twelve 30m long trenches however due to ecology issues only two of the proposed trenches were excavated during this phase of work. The fieldwork was carried out between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2013.

#### **1.2 The Site**

- 1.2.1 The Site is situated to the south of Newbury race track and comprises an area of open fields laid to pasture (**Figure 1**). It is bounded to the north by Newbury race track, to the west by Young Copse, to the south by Pigeons Farm Road and the east by open fields.
- 1.2.2 The Site occupies a sub-rectangular parcel of land measuring 18ha and lies at approximately 115m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.3 The underlying natural geology of the Site lies on the boundary between River and Valley Gravel and Reading Beds (Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 267).

### **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 A brief search for archaeological and historic sites within a 1km radius ('the Study Area') of the Site via the Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>) indicates the presence of several sites, predominantly of prehistoric or Romano-British date, while the remainder relates to the historic usage of the area as indicated by agricultural field boundaries and trackways. No Scheduled Monuments are recorded within the boundaries of the Site.
- 2.1.2 Finds spots recorded within a search radius of 1km centred on the Site include a Palaeolithic hand axe, several long blades, fragments of Iron Age pottery and a Roman coin.
- 2.1.3 Wessex Archaeology previously carried out an archaeological watching brief at Newbury Racecourse (WA 1991) and an archaeological excavation on the land to the east of the Site, at Lower Farm, Greenham, West Berkshire (WA 1990).



- 2.1.4 The Lower Farm excavations identified the remains of a Bronze Age round barrow (WA 1990).
- 2.1.5 Previous studies undertaken on aerial photography of the area have identified ditches, enclosures, trackways and medieval or later field systems.
- 2.1.6 Several Post-medieval structures are recorded within the search area including the Church of St Mary (1875) and Greenham Lodge (1879-1883).

## **2.2 Recent works**

- 2.2.1 An archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA), carried out in preparation of the Environmental Statement that will accompany the planning application for the proposed scheme, was recently undertaken by Terence O'Rourke (Terence O'Rourke, 2007). The DBA identified the Site as lying within an area of known archaeological potential due to its situation on the floodplain of the River Kennet and its close proximity to the historic core of Newbury, whose origins date to around the time of the Norman Conquest. The DBA identifies the potential of the Site as being predominantly for prehistoric and Romano-British remains. However, it does also indicate that the Site may have been previously disturbed, during the large scale construction of the racecourse, which may have left little or no below ground archaeological remains intact.
- 2.2.2 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2008) on the basis of the results of the DBA. Within the 15 trial trenches excavated around the racecourse car parking area the evaluation identified evidence of prehistoric agricultural activity in conjunction with the post-medieval remains of a house identified as Round Oak. The remains of the house were later the subject of an archaeological excavation (WA 2010).

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Aims and objectives**

- 3.1.1 The specific aims of the programme of archaeological works was to:
- *clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site;*
  - *identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site;*
  - *assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits; and*
  - *produce a report which will present the results of the trial trenching in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential.*

### **3.2 Fieldwork methodology**

- 3.2.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2011), and is summarised below.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were excavated using a 6.5 ton 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a wide toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation continued in spits through topsoil and subsoil down to either the uppermost archaeological features or natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. Topsoil was separated from

subsoil and any other arisings and stored at a minimum of 1m from the trench edge. The spoil from the trenches was scanned for artefacts. The trenches were back-filled with the excavated spoil, topsoil last in order to preserve the soil stratigraphy.

- 3.2.3 All trench locations were scanned before and during the excavation with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) to verify the absence of any live underground services.
- 3.2.4 Where archaeological features were encountered they were investigated by hand, with a sufficient sample of each layer/feature type excavated in order to establish, as may be possible, their date, nature, character, extent and condition.
- 3.2.5 Any archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20, including both plans and sections, these were referred to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels were calculated. A representative section of each trench was recorded showing the depth of the overburden deposits.
- 3.2.6 A photographic record was compiled utilising dated digital images. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features and the site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.
- 3.2.7 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system.
- 3.2.8 A unique site code **70090** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

### **3.3 Health and Safety**

- 3.3.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices will override archaeological considerations at all times.
- 3.3.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

### **3.4 Best practice**

- 3.4.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features are retained in the project archive. Summaries of the excavated sequences and details of the archaeological features can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- 4.1.2 A total of two trenches were excavated measuring approximately 30m long and 1.60m wide. The trenches were between 0.65 and 0.68m in depth.

## 4.2 Stratigraphic Sequence

- 4.2.1 Both trenches contained a mid grey silty clay loam topsoil (0.25-0.28m in depth) and a mid to light brownish grey subsoil (0.55-0.60m in depth) the natural geology which was found to be a mid-reddish brown sand.

## 4.3 Trenches (Figure 1)

- 4.3.1 **Trench 21** contained two ditches (**2104**, **2108**) and one possible gully (**2110**).
- 4.3.2 Ditch **2104** was identified in the western end of the trench on a south-west – north-east alignment and contained three fills; a tertiary fill (**2105**, south-west facing section only, see **front cover**) and two secondary fills (**2106** and **2107**) (**Figure 2, Plate 1 and Section 1**). Early Iron Age pottery was recovered from the upper secondary fill **2106** while burnt flint was recovered from the lower secondary fill **2107**, along with a sherd of modern pottery through to be intrusive.
- 4.3.3 Some 12m to the south-east of ditch **2104** and on a similar alignment was ditch **2108**. This ditch, which contained a single secondary fill **2109**, was found to cut a south-east – north-west aligned gully **2110** (**Figure 2, Plate 2**). This possible gully **2110**, which contained a single gravel rich fill **2111**, was very shallow and irregular in profile and may be natural feature. Both features were undated.
- 4.3.4 **Trench 22** contained a single ditch (**2204**) and a large pit (**2208**).
- 4.3.5 In the northern end of the trench was a substantial pit **2208** (**Figure 3, Plate 3 and Section 2**). This contained a lower primary fill **2211** and two secondary fills (**2209** and **2210**), burnt flint and fired clay was recovered from the upper secondary fill **2210**, which may suggest a prehistoric date. The pit was truncated by a modern north-south aligned land drain **2206**.
- 4.3.6 Ditch **2204** was located in the southern end of the trench on a south-west – north-east alignment. Both its alignment and profile are broadly similar to the ditches located in **Trench 21** to the south-west (**Figure 3, Plate 4**). The ditch contained a single secondary fill **2205** and was undated.

## 5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

- 5.1.1 The evaluation produced a very small quantity of finds, deriving from three contexts (all stratified feature fills) within the two trenches excavated. Quantities of finds by context are given in **Table 1**.
- 5.1.2 Datable material is confined to eight sherds of pottery. The seven sherds from secondary fill **2106** (ditch **2104**) are all in a similar fabric, fine and silty and containing sparse organic inclusions. The sherds are undiagnostic, but on fabric grounds can be fairly confidently dated as Early Iron Age.
- 5.1.3 The single sherd from secondary fill **2107** (also in ditch **2104**) is a modern refined whiteware; it may be intrusive in this context.

- 5.1.4 Other finds recovered (from ditch **2104** and pit **2208**) comprise some small, abraded and undiagnostic fragments of fired clay, and a small quantity of burnt, unworked flint. Neither of these material types is of known date or origin.

Context	Burnt Flint	Fired Clay	Pottery
2106		2/11	7/20
2107	21/494		1/1
2209	21/928	3/8	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42/1422</b>	<b>5/19</b>	<b>8/21</b>

**Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)**

- 5.1.5 Following nationally recommended guidelines on the selection and retention of archaeological finds (SMA 1993), the burnt flint has been discarded as unlikely to repay any further analysis. Other finds have been retained, and will be added to finds already recovered from the Site (project codes 70091, 70092).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1.1 The results of the evaluation show that the north-western part of the Site contains small amounts of low level prehistoric activity. Most of the small number of features encountered were undated, but pottery recovered from one of the ditches suggest an Early Iron Age date.

## **7 STORAGE AND CURATION**

- 7.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the fieldwork be deposited with the West Berkshire Museum, Newbury. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, currently under the project code **70090**. Deposition of the finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.
- 7.1.2 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records and graphics, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by West Berkshire Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (Walker 1990; SMA 1995; Richards and Robinson 2000; Brown 2011).
- 7.1.3 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the GHER. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

### **7.2 Copyright**

- 7.2.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms with the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

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### 7.3 Security Copy

- 7.3.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of a pdf/a file, which will form part of the project archive.

## 8 REFERENCES

British Geological Survey data available at:

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/digmap50wms.html>

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## 9 APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix 1: Trench Summaries

bgl = below ground level

TRENCH 21			
Dimensions: 29.1x1.55m		Max. depth: 0.68m	Ground level: 85.81-86.25m aOD
Easting: 448861		Northing: 165996	
Context	Description		Depth (m)
2101	Topsoil	Modern topsoil. Mid greyish silty loam with sparse gravel and flint pebbles. Slightly diffuse interface with 2102.	0.00-0.28 bgl
2102	Subsoil	Modern subsoil. Light greyish brown sand with very common gravel. Slightly diffuse interface with 2103.	0.28-0.60 bgl
2103	Natural	Mid reddish brown sand with common gravel patches of light grey gravel.	0.60+ bgl
<b>2104</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of NE-SW aligned ditch, filled with 2105, 2106 and 2107. Straight, moderate sides. Concave base. 0.9m wide. Cuts 2103.</b>	<b>0.45 deep</b>
2105	Fill	Tertiary fill of ditch <b>2104</b> , seen in south facing section only. Mid grey-brown sand. Abundant gravel. Fairly homogenous. Overlies 2106.	0.22 deep
2106	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch <b>2104</b> containing Iron Age pottery. Mid blue-grey sandy clay with mid orange mottling. Rare gravel. Overlies 2107.	0.15 deep
2107	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch <b>2104</b> containing burnt flint. Mid blue-grey sand. Abundant gravel. Fairly homogeneous. Overlies <b>2104</b> .	0.40 deep
<b>2108</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of NE-SW aligned ditch, filled with 2109. Straight, moderate sides. Concave base. 0.64m wide. Cuts 2111.</b>	<b>0.24 deep</b>
2109	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch <b>2108</b> . Mid blue-grey sand. Common gravel. Fairly homogeneous. Overlies <b>2108</b> .	0.24 deep
<b>2110</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of NW- SE aligned gully or natural feature filled with 2111. Irregular, shallow sides. Irregular base. 0.90m wide. Cuts 2103.</b>	<b>0.05 deep</b>
2111	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch <b>2110</b> . Pale white-grey sand. Abundant gravel. Fairly homogeneous. Overlies <b>2110</b> .	0.05 deep

TRENCH 22			
Dimensions: 28.8x1.55m		Max. depth: 0.65m	Ground level: 84.60-85.83m aOD
Easting: 448900		Northing: 166017	
Context	Description		Depth (m)
2201	Topsoil	Modern topsoil. Mid greyish silty loam with moderate gravel inclusions. Slightly diffuse interface with 2202.	0.00-0.25 bgl
2202	Subsoil	Modern subsoil. Mid to light brownish grey sand with very common gravel. Slightly diffuse interface with 2203.	0.25-0.55 bgl
2203	Natural	Mid reddish brown sand with common gravel patches of light grey gravel with patches of light grey sand.	0.55+ bgl
<b>2204</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of NE-SW aligned ditch filled with 2205. Concave, moderate sides. Concave base. 0.82m wide. Cuts 2203.</b>	<b>0.35 deep</b>
2205	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch <b>2204</b> . Pale grey sand. Common gravel. Very rare charcoal flecks. Fairly homogeneous. Overlies <b>2204</b> .	0.35 deep
<b>2206</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of modern land drain. Straight, near vertical sides. Cuts 2209.</b>	<b>0.78 deep</b>
2207	Fill	Fill of modern land drain <b>2206</b> .	0.78 deep
<b>2208</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Cut of sub-oval pit filled with 2209, 2210 and 2211. Straight, moderate sides. Concave base. 1.2m wide, 2.5m long. Cuts 2203.</b>	<b>0.77 deep</b>
2209	Fill	Secondary fill of pit <b>2208</b> containing fired clay and burnt flint. Dark brown grey sand. Very common gravel. Fairly homogenous. Overlies 2210.	0.37 deep



2210	Fill	Secondary fill of pit <b>2208</b> . Mid grey-brown sand. Very common gravel. Fairly homogeneous. Overlies 2211.	0.25 deep
2211	Fill	Primary fill of pit <b>2208</b> . Pale grey sand. Very common gravel. Fairly homogenous. Overlies <b>2208</b> .	0.08 deep



Figure 1



Plate 1: North-east facing section of ditch 2104

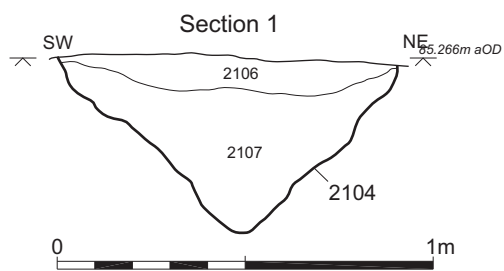


Plate 2: South facing section of features 2108 and 2110


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Figure 2



Plate 3: South facing section of pit 2208 and land drain 2206

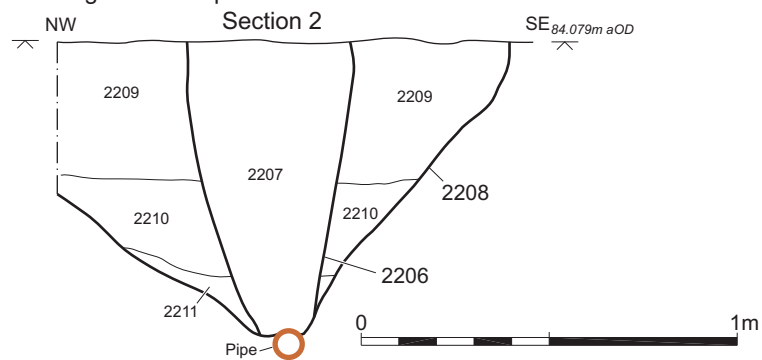



Plate 4: South-west facing section of ditch 2204

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