Archaeological strip map record and excavation at Matching Green AGI, Essex

Excavation Report

February 2013

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Archaeological strip map record and excavation at Matching Green AGI, Essex

By James Fairbairn

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Report Number: 1270
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Client Name: Mouchel for National Grid
Client Ref: 
Planning Ref: 
Grid Ref: Essex (TL 532 117)
Site Code: XEXMAG10
Finance Code: XEXMAG10
Receiving Body: Epping Forest District Museum
Accession No: 
Prepared by: James Fairbairn
Position: Supervisor
Date: February 2013
Checked by: James Drummond-Murray
Position: Manager
Date: February 2013
Signed: 

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Summary

A strip, map and record exercise was carried out by Oxford Archaeology East during April and May 2011 on three separate areas of improvement and expansion on the National Grid AGI site at Matching Green Essex (TL 532 117). In total three areas were stripped of top soil but only two areas 1 and 3 were reduced enough to encounter sub-soils and natural geology. A large curvilinear ditch, pits and further smaller curvilinear features were found. These are thought to date to the latter Prehistoric and the Romano-British periods.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 An archaeological Strip, map, record and excavation was conducted at The National Grid AGI complex at Downhall road, Matching Green, Essex (TL 532 117) The gas installation is located west of Downhall Road, approximately 300m north of Matching Green village.

1.1.2 This archaeological excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Adam Garwood of Essex County Council.

1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by Essex County Council, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology is London Clay (British Geological Survey 1:625,000 Solid Geology). The area has good quality soils mainly consisting of boulder clay with areas of glacial loams. A relatively flat landscape lying at approximately 75m OAD surrounds the site, comprising of farmland, hedgerows agricultural pathways, streams and small patches of woodland. A drainage ditch, located to the west of the site, flows in a northerly direction.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields within the study area. There are 41 listed structures and one Conservation Area within the study area.

1.3.2 There are very few examples of prehistoric archaeology within the study area. They are limited to a Bronze Age sword found to the north-west of the site. There is also a cropmark enclosure to the west of the site which was originally thought to be a Neolithic causewayed enclosure; however upon further assessment this theory was later discounted as unlikely.

1.3.3 Roman remains are absent from the study area, as are any physical remains dating to the Anglo-Saxon period. Place-name evidence does however suggest that there was a presence in the area during the Anglo-Saxon period as the name Matching is believed to have derived from the Saxon people of Moecca (Match) with the suffix ‘-ing’ denoting an area of open land. The hamlet of Matching, to the north west of the site is believed to date to around AD 700 when the Saxons first invaded and settled in England.

1.3.4 During the medieval period the isolated rural parish of Matching contained a number of manors. In 1086 there were four manors called Matching and two called Ovesham (Housham). Matching Green lay within Waterman’s Manor. There were open fields in
Matching during the medieval period and records suggest that arable farming predominated since the 13th century.

1.3.5 Downhall Road, to the east of the site, was in existence in the 13th century when it is mentioned as part of the highway from Chipping Ongar to Bishop’s Stortford. Matching Green has one of the largest village greens in England and it is bounded by buildings dated to the 14th century. The earliest of these is a hall house, Lascelles [33793], a type of dwelling which consisted of a large public room or hall with private living quarters attached at the side. A 15th century hall house, Martin’s Cottage [33797] also survives next to the green.

1.3.6 One of the major archaeological features of the landscape is the presence of a number of moats, on and around which medieval settlement established themselves. Moated sites were a significant development during the medieval period and several of these can be found within the study area.

1.3.7 By the 18th century Matching Green was the largest settlement in the parish, which in 1778, had approximately 450 inhabitants. Many of the listed buildings within the study area date to this period. The population did decline during the 19th and 20th centuries with a number of buildings being destroyed during the Second World War.

1.4 Acknowledgements
1.4.1 The author would like to thank Chris Meadows of Parsons Brinckerhoff for his help and assistance, Adam Garwood of Essex County Council and Sally Hales of Mouchel PLC for monitoring the work and visiting the site. James Drummond-Murray managed the project. James Fairbairn supervised the on site work assisted by Kate Clover and Lindsey Kemp.
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims
2.1.1 The objective of this strip, map, record and excavation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology
2.2.1 The Method Statement required that the access road and compound area should be stripped using a mechanical tracked excavator using a toothless bucket and under continual archaeological supervision. Stripping should cease at the top of the first archaeological layers or at the level of the natural geology, whichever comes first. In the construction area the removal of topsoil will be monitored by a fully qualified archaeologist. This will commence following the clearing of all vegetation from the site.

2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

2.2.5 Site conditions ranged from hot, dry, sunny days to overcast with drizzle.
3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The results will be discussed by area in numerical order.

3.2 Area 1

3.2.1 Area 1 was located to the north – west of the existing AGI and abutted Downhall road (see fig 1) The area was to be used as a compound for site offices and parking. A top soil strip of the area was undertaken to remove the agricultural soil for later reinstatement. A curvilinear feature was uncovered which ran from the access road into the field at the north of the compound area for an approximate length of 43m. After consultation with Sally Randell of Mouchel and Adam Garwood of Essex County Council it was decided to hand excavate a section through the feature in order to date and characterise the feature. A 1m section was dug at a point where the clearest edges were visible. The feature was found to be a curvilinear ditch with at least one re-cut and probably two. Ditch 102 is thought to be the earliest feature on site and is truncated by a wider, deeper ditch 106, this in turn is truncated by a modern re-cut 104.

3.2.2 Ditch 102 (see fig 2 & plate 1)

Feature 102 consisted of a steep sided slightly concave nw-se orientated ditch. It had a maximum depth of 0.45m and a truncated width of 1.25m. This feature contained a single mid grey brown silty clay fill (101) that contained occasional small stones but no finds. 102 was cut on its eastern side by wider, deeper ditch 106 that had a gentle to steeply sloping eastern edge and a slightly uneven base. This feature contained two fills, the lower fill (107) consisted of a dark grey brown silty clay that had a maximum depth of 0.20m and a lighter mid brown silty sandy clay (105) that contained a few stones but no finds. Ditch 106 was itself truncated by a relatively modern ditch 104. This truncation occurred on the western edge of the ditch sequence and measured 3.60m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.75m. Only one fill was discernible, a browny grey clay silt (103) that was discoloured by a rotted fence post that had collapsed to the east. Barbed wire was noted at the foot of the post and this may give the greatest clue to the use of the latter phase of the ditch sequence. The width, depth and location of the fence suggest that the ditch was used as a stock control measure possibly overlying earlier ditches with the same use. The area was capped by a layer of light to mid brown silty sandy clay subsoil (100) that existed over most of area A.

3.3 Area 2 (see fig 2)

Area 2 was located east of the existing AGI and was cleared of top and sub-soil to an average depth of 0.35m. The area was to be used as a storage area for top soil and as a small compound for the practise of welding the gas pipes. Consequently the area was not stripped to a sufficient depth to expose anything of archaeological note.

3.4 Area 3 (see fig 2)

Area 3 was located immediately east of the existing AGI and was stripped of subsoil and topsoil to an average depth of 0.45m. The area revealed evidence of Roman occupation in the form of ditches and pits that contained animal bone and utilitarian pottery dating from the 1st to 4th centuries AD. These features seem most likely to be associated with a farmstead or small settlement close to the site of the AGI installation. Another interpretation could be that the ditches have some relationship with the
cropmark enclosure to the west although at present a date or use of the earthwork is uncertain. The ditches within Area 3 run for a considerable distance and may respect the feature within the field to the west.

3.4.1 **Ditch 117** (see fig 2)

This wide shallow curvilinear feature ran northwards to the edge of excavation and south converging with another curvilinear feature 119. Unfortunately the spot in which these ditches merge is truncated by an area of modern disturbance, so no relationship could be established. The profile of ditch 117 consisted of a wide shallow u shape with a slightly concave bottom and moderately sloping sides. It had a maximum width of 1.62m and a maximum depth of 0.50m. Its single dark grey brown clay silt fill (116) contained a single sherd of Romano-British pottery identified as belonging to a Flanged Rim Bowl dating to the middle third to fourth centuries AD.

3.4.2 **Ditch 119** (see fig 2)

Ditch 119 lay just to the west of 117 and had a similar profile of a wide shallow u shape with a slightly flatter base although it was somewhat narrower and measured 0.55m wide and had a depth of 0.38m (see sec 7). The fill of this ditch (118) consisted of a dark browny grey clay silt and contained a single sherd of Romano-British pottery again dating to the first to fourth centuries AD. Three further interventions were made in the ditch, 115, 113 123, all had a similar profiles and similar dimension but none provided any finds. Context 123 did truncate a small pit on its eastern side. This pit, 121 had a truncated diameter of 0.3m and a depth of 0.3m. Its single silty sandy clay fill (120) produced no finds.

3.4.3 **Ditch 125** (see fig 2)

Ditch 125 was noted within the edge of excavation and was cut high up in the subsoil layer. It had a width of 1.0m and a depth of 0.48m. It was steep sided with a concave base. Its single reddish grey sandy silty clay fill (124) contained no finds.

3.5 **Pits**

A group of four amorphous shaped pits were discovered just west of the curvilinear ditch 119. These pits were in a distinct group and had no clear function. Although pottery, bone and ceramic building material were found in all of the features, there was not enough present to suggest a usage as rubbish pits. The pits seem more likely to be tree bowls and the finds intrusive.

3.5.1 **Pit 108** (see fig 2)

Pit 108 was southernmost of the group of pits and circular in shape with a diameter of 2.1m and 0.38m Its single fill (109) consisted of an orangey yellow sandy silt and contained unidentified fragments of animal bone.

3.5.2 **Pit 111** (see fig 2)

Pit 111 was located 0.5m north west of pit 108 and was very similar in all aspects other than being slightly smaller in diameter and depth. The only fill was a browny yellow sandy silt (110) and the only find consisted of a heavily burned piece of flint. Although pits 108 and 111 were of a fairly regular size and shape they were located in a slight depression that may have suffered truncation during machining, so although the outward appearance may-be considered man-made it is very likely that these two pits are the lower points of a larger area of tree root disturbance.

3.5.3 **Pit 126** (see fig 2)
Pit 126 was the most westward of the group and sub circular in shape. It measured 4.2m x 2.8m and had a maximum depth of 0.68m. The sides ranged from gentle to steep and the base was irregular. The fill 127 consisted of a mid to firm brown silty clay that contained flint nodules, bone and sherds of a Romano-British Mortaria dating to the late 3rd or 4th century AD. The bone was identified as cattle mandible and was laid end to end. This was identified as being from the same animal but was not considered to be a deliberate placement. (Plate 2).

3.5.4 Pit 128 (see fig 2)

Pit 128 was amorphous in plan and had a maximum width of 2.3m and a depth of 0.70m. The sides were steep and the base was flatish. Its single grey orange silty sandy fill (129) contained unidentified animal bone and pottery identified as part of a storage jar and dating to the 1st to 4th centuries AD.

3.6 Finds Summary

3.6.1 The artefactual evidence suggests occupation in the vicinity from at least the later prehistoric. The small assemblage of flint, although not found within in a secure context, does provide evidence that people were either living in the immediate area or that the site lay on a migratory route.

3.6.2 The discovery of Romano-British pottery along with ceramic building material strongly suggests that a building existed on or near the site. Box flue heating and imbrex roof tile found in context 127 also give an indication that the building was of a fairly high status. A small amount of cattle bones was also noted in context 127, so a small farmstead seems to be a likely use of a building near the Matching Green site.
4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Conclusion
4.1.1 The series of ditches discovered at Matching Green give rise to two possibilities. Either that they may be of a prehistoric date and related to the copmark feature in the field to the west of the site or that they may be related to a nearby Romano-British farm. Although the six pieces of flint found in the pits does allude to some prehistoric activity on the site, it is more likely that the features relate to a small farmstead that stood on or close to the AGI complex. The ceramic building material which included roof tile and box flue suggests that the building was of a higher status and the ditches may be part of a field system or stock enclosure.

4.2 Significance
4.2.1 The results of the excavation at Matching Green AGI prove that Romano-British occupation existed on or close to the site and that the occupation in the area may be of even earlier date than previously thought.
APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

### Area 1

**General description**
Area 1 contained a single curvilinear ditch with a modern re-cut on its western edge

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### Area 2

**General description**
Area 2 was located to the west of the present AGI installation and was devoid of archaeology

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APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 The Romano-British Pottery

By Stephen Wadeson OA East

Introduction

B.1.1 A small assemblage of Romano-British pottery, totalling 11 sherds, weighing 0.438kg (EVE 0.58) were identified representing a maximum of seven vessels. Recovered from six contexts the pottery within the assemblage is moderately abraded with an average sherd weight of c. 40g.

Methodology

B.1.2 The assemblage was examined in accordance with the guidelines set down by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (Webster 1976; Darling 2004; Willis 2004). The total assemblage was studied and a preliminary catalogue was prepared. The sherds were examined using a magnifying lens (x10 magnification) and were divided into fabric groups defined on the basis of inclusion types present. The fabric codes are descriptive and abbreviated by the main letters of the title, vessel form was also recorded.

B.1.3 The site archive is currently held by OA North and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

Quantification

B.1.4 All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed to the nearest whole gram. Decoration and abrasion were also noted and a spot date has been provided for each individual sherd and context.

Assemblage

B.1.5 Context 109 produced a single abraded undiagnostic sherd of proto sandy grey ware. A single rim sherd from a flanged dish, dating from the mid 3rd to 4th century AD was recovered from context 116. Context 118 contained a single body from an unspecific shell tempered ware vessel, not closely datable only a broad date from the 1st to 4th centuries AD can be assigned to the sherd.

B.1.6 Five sherds from a single Oxfordshire type WC5 mortarium, (Tomber and Dore 1998, 176-7) were recovered from context 127. Produced in a red ware fabric, traces of a white colour coat can be identified on the vessels flange, the vessel itself dating from mid 3rd to early 4th century AD (Young 2000, 120-2).

B.1.7 A further three sherds of pottery were recovered from topsoil context 129. These include a single everted rim sherd from a globular beaker and a large fragment from a locally produced grog tempered storage jar.

Discussion

B.1.8 This is a small assemblage primarily consisting of locally produced utilitarian coarse wares supplemented by single mortarium from the Oxfordshire potteries. Domestic in nature, the small number of sherds recovered during excavation has made the assemblage difficult to assess beyond providing basic dating information.

B.1.9 Pottery from the early to late Roman period was recovered, the early material is most likely residual. The assemblage can be dated to the mid 3rd to 4th centuries AD. Low
levels of pottery such as this represents occupation or post depositional processes such as middening and/or manuring as part of the waste management during the Roman period and suggests there is an as yet unlocated Romano-British settlement or farmstead near to the area of excavation.

### Pottery Catalogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Fabric</th>
<th>Dsc</th>
<th>Vessel form</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Weight (Kg)</th>
<th>Fabric Date</th>
<th>Rim Dia (cm)</th>
<th>Rim EVE’s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>SGW (Proto)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>MC1-E/MC2</td>
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<td>RU</td>
<td>Flanged Rim Bowl</td>
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<td>127</td>
<td>OXWCC</td>
<td>RU</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>LC3-C4</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Beaker</td>
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**Total** 11 0.438 0.58

### Bibliography


Webster, P., 1996 Roman Samian Pottery in Britain. CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeology 13


APPENDIX C. ROMAN CBM AND FIRED CLAY/DAUB

By Rob Atkins

C.1 Results

C.1.1 A small collection of 19 Roman CBM fragments (1925g) and 11 fired clay/daub fragments (86g) were recovered from two contexts.

CBM

C.1.2 All the CBM was in an orange sandy fabric. Context 127 had 11 fragments (1450g) and these comprised seven box flue (594g), two flat tiles (478g) and two imbrex (378g). Context 129 produced eight fragments (475g) and these comprised one box flue (296g), two flat (101g) and five undiagnostic (78g).

Fired Clay

C.1.3 Context 127 had two fragments (24g) in an orange sandy fabric with one also had rare small flint inclusions up to 7mm in length. Both fragments had a withie impression c.5mm in diameter. Context 129 had nine undiagnostic fragments (62g) in a hard buff to orange red sandy fabric.
APPENDIX D. FAUNAL REMAINS

D.1 Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

D.1.1 Forty fragments of animal bone were recovered from the evaluation with 11 fragments identifiable to species. The total weight of the assemblage is 455 grams. Animal bone was recovered from two context with the largest amount both in terms of weight and number of fragments being context 127. This consisted of two adult cattle mandibles from the same individual. Tooth wear analysis indicates the animal was at least 6 years of age at death. Context 109 contained loose cattle teeth and unidentifiable large mammal long bone fragments.

References


APPENDIX E. FLINT

E.1 Flint

*By Anthony Haskins*

**Introduction**

E.1.1 A small assemblage of flint (6 flints, 0.41g) was assessed from the strip map and record at Matching Green.

**Methodology**

E.1.2 The material was rapidly assessed and assessed based on a simple classification to identify typological characters to assist dating.

**Quantification**

E.1.3 Of the material looked at 3 of the pieces were natural thermally fractured flint and not considered. One fragment from 110 was heavily burnt and the two remaining items were struck (see table 1).

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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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Table 1. Flint quantification

**Results and conclusion**

E.1.4 The two struck secondary flakes were of a mid greyish-brown translucent flint both with a rounded cortex derived from a secondary source. It was not possible to discern whether the material was soft or hard hammer struck. The poor form of the platform on both flakes and squat short size would suggest that they are of later prehistoric date, although this cannot be confirmed.


APPENDIX F. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

**Prompt**

Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

**Please select all techniques used:**

- [x] Field Observation (periodic visits)
- [ ] Full Excavation (100%)
- [x] Full Survey
- [x] Geophysical Survey
- [ ] Open-Area Excavation
- [ ] Part Excavation
- [ ] Part Survey
- [ ] Recorded Observation
- [ ] Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- [ ] Salvage Excavation
- [ ] Systematic Field Walking
- [ ] Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- [ ] Test Pit Survey
- [ ] Watching Brief

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus and significant finds using the MDA Object type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

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### Digital Media

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

### Paper Media

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey

### Notes:

[Blank space for notes]
Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Area and feature locations
Figure 3: Sections 1, 6 and 7
Plate 1: Ditch 102

Plate 2: Cattle mandible in pit 126
Plate 3: Ditch intervention 115