ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT PARK PLACE
REMENHAM
BERKSHIRE
(REPC25)
V1.1

Work Undertaken For
Beau Bespoke

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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological trenching evaluation was undertaken on Project Conway at Park Place, Remenham, Berkshire. Park Place is a late 18th century Grade II Registered Park and Garden that contains a number of Listed Buildings, including the Grade II Listed mansion (also referred to as Park Place). Previous investigations in the proposed development areas identified evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation, though the extents of these remains are unknown.*

The evaluation revealed Iron Age and Roman occupation evidence in two of the 24 trenches and in one stripped area. The location and nature of the features revealed align well with previous excavations at the site, being Iron Age ditches and pits with evidence of occupation detritus, but no direct settlement evidence. One Roman infant burial was found and this lay about 100m southwest of a known Roman settlement site.

Artefacts retrieved included 107 sherds of middle-late Iron Age pottery and 71 sherds of Late Iron Age to early Roman pottery. Other finds include a fragment of a loom weight, a small quantity of fired clay and animal bone which could not be securely dated, and a tiny amount of post-medieval pottery and brick.

Of the four planning application areas that the trenches targeted, it is only the Main House area (213587) which contained any significant potential for further archaeological finds, as it is here that the two trenches with evidence of Iron Age occupation detritus are located.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of an Evaluation

An archaeological evaluation is defined as *'a programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which seeks to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts. It may form a single or final phase of work within a defined area or site on land, in an inter-tidal zone or under water'* (CIfA 2023).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Beau Bespoke to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development, which was carried out over 36 days between 9th December 2024 and 12th February 2025, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Archaeological Project Services and approved by the Archaeological Office for Berkshire Archaeology.

Fourteen trenches were targeted on areas affected by four related planning applications: The main house 213587; a gate house 213588; an estate management complex 213610; and staff accommodation buildings 240847 (Figure 2). The first three of these had planning conditions requiring archaeological whereas the last did not. In addition, 13 trenches were targeted on new roads at the estate. A final area of new road where an Iron Age settlement has previously been identified was stripped and monitored, although the area actually stripped was less than that planned in the WSI as the road scheme was revised to make more use of existing roads on the site.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Remenham is located 12km northeast of Reading and 12km west of Maidenhead in the administrative district of Wokingham, Berkshire. The proposed development site lies in

Remenham parish, within the Park Place estate, situated *c*.2km southeast of Remenham village, a little south of Remenham Hill and c. 200m south of the A4130, White Hill, at National Grid Reference SU 7833 8245 (Fig 1).

The Park Place estate is towards the southern end of the Chiltern Hills within a loop of the River Thames. The northern part of the site itself is on a plateau with the land at a height of 98-95m OD. Towards the south of the site, this declines to 55m-40m OD towards the River Thames.

Local soils at the site are of the Frilsham Association, typically argillic brown earths. These soils overlie a solid geology of Cretaceous Upper Chalk although outcrops of Older River Gravels above clay with flints occur to the north (BGS 2025).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

The Park Place estate has been subject of a number of archaeological investigations and assessment reports, including archaeological desk-based assessment (APS 2004), geophysical survey (Stratascan 2005), archaeological evaluation (APS 2005, 2011, 2016), strip, map and sample excavation (APS 2012, and archaeological monitoring and recording (APS 2012, 2016 and 2017).

Park Place is a late 18th century Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. A number of Listed Buildings lie within the Park, including the Grade II Listed Mansion and gardens.

Previous archaeological investigations in the area of the current Project Conway identified evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation. Pits and post holes of Iron Age date were revealed to the immediate southeast of the former Strowdes House. Evidence of grain storage and malting was also discovered in this area. Further evidence of the continuation north of the Iron Age/Romano-British settlement was uncovered during the strip for the haul road over the footprint of the main building (APS 2012). Prehistoric flint was recovered from within the proposed building footprint (APS 2005). As yet, the extent of the settlement area is unclear and may lie within the footprint of the proposed service tunnel and estate management buildings.

Along the line of the new road at the south end of the estate, pervious trial trenching revealed significant archaeological deposits including a pit containing worked flints of Neolithic date (APS 2012).

Undated post holes and a ditched enclosure were recorded during trial trench evaluation of Mansion Avenue leading between the main Strowdes house and the proposed gatehouse. A late medieval or early post medieval trackway was also identified (APS 2012).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the work was to gather further information to enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeological remains on the proposed development to be made, and the impact which any development will have on them, and to allow the formulation of a policy for the management of the archaeological resources present on the site.

The objectives were to:
Establish the type of archaeological activity that may be present within the site.

- Determine the likely extent of archaeological activity present within the site.
- Determine the date and function of the archaeological features present on the site.
- Determine the state of preservation of the archaeological features present on the site.
- Determine the spatial arrangement of the archaeological features present within the site.
- Determine the extent to which the surrounding archaeological features extend into the application area.
- Establish the way in which the archaeological features identified fit into the pattern of occupation and land-use in the surrounding landscape.
- Understanding of the geomorphological evidence at the site in order to situate the development area into its landscape context and to determine areas that may have not provided areas for occupation, as opposed to those that did.

4. METHODS

27 trenches, each 30m long and 2m wide (Fig. 2), were excavated by mechanical excavator to the surface of archaeological deposits or the underlying natural geology, as appropriate. Three trenches could not be completed, reducing the number dug to 24. In addition, an area 100mx5m (Area 28) was stripped and recorded.

Removal of topsoil and other overburden was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. The exposed surfaces of the trenches were then cleaned by hand and inspected for archaeological remains.

Each deposit exposed during the evaluation was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their interpretations appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was also compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and plans at 1:20. Recording of deposits encountered was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

The location of the excavated trenches was recorded with a survey grade GPS.

Following excavation, the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced.

5. RESULTS

The results of the archaeological evaluation are discussed in trench order. Archaeological contexts are described below. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field. A full description of every context is in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figure 11, Section 9)
Trench 1 contained no archaeological features. The natural (1005) was a loose light orangey brown clayey sand, which was 0.5m beneath the surface. This was covered by a friable mid orangey brown sandy clay subsoil (1004) and the topsoil. Three modern features were noted in the trench; a trackway [1008], an area of hardstanding and a modern plastic perforated land drain [1009].

Trench 2 (Figure 11, Section 17)
Trench 2 contained no archaeological features. The natural (2003) was a light orangey brown clay, which was encountered 0.6m below the surface. This was covered by a friable mid orangey brown clayey sand subsoil (2002). Three isolated features where excavated;

two areas of bioturbation [2004], [2006] and a glacial scar [2008]. All three were filled by deposits similar to the subsoil.

Trench 3 (Figure 11, Section 18; Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 3 was entirely set within an infilled water course of considerable size. The feature was dug to a depth of 1.75m by machine and recorded. The deposits were of a unique character on site and were graded from large flints to a fine sand clay suggesting a water-based deposition. The lowest deposit observed (3004), was a friable light yellowish brown sandy clay, at least 0.57 deep. This was covered by (3003), a friable mid orangey brown sandy clay 0.72m deep. Subsoil (3002) and topsoil (3001) sealed the channel.

Plate 1. General shot of Trench 3, looking east.

Plate 2. Representative section of Trench 3. Looking west.

Trench 4 (Figure 12, Section 22)
Trench 4 contained no archaeological features. The natural (4003) was a yellowish brown silty clay, which was encountered at a depth of 0.8m. This was covered by a mid orangey brown silty clay subsoil (4002) and topsoil. Four features were excavated; [4004], [4006] and [4007] were considered to be treeboles, and a linear feature [4010] was determined to likely be a natural water course, with a basal fill of pebbles similar to that observed in Trench 3.

Trench 5
Not excavated due to an existing roadway in this location.

Trench 6 (Figure 12, Section 23)
Trench 6 contained no archaeological features. The natural (6005) was a mid brownish yellow clay, which was encountered at a depth of 0.68m. This was covered by a mid brown silty clay subsoil (6002) and topsoil (6001). The trench contained one linear feature, [6003] (Figure 12, Section 36; Plate 3), which was considered to be a natural creek, although the fill (6003), a mid orangey brown silty clay 0.28m deep, contained fragments of charred bone and heat-affected clay.

Plate 3. Naturally gully [6003], looking north.

Trench 7 (Figure 12, Section 24)
Trench 7 contained no archaeological features. The natural (7003) was a mid orangey brown clay, encountered at a depth of 0.7m. This was overlain by a mid orangey brown silty clay subsoil (7002) and topsoil. Two irregular features, considered to be natural, were noted; [7004] was a shallow northwest-southeast orientated linear feature with a highly undulating base and [7006] was subcircular feature with an undercut on the south side, over 0.5m deep. Both had subsoil-like fills.

Trench 8 (Figure 11, Sections 15 and 16)
The earliest deposit in Trench 8 was the natural (8008), a mid orangey brown clay, encountered at a depth of 0.46m. This was cut by feature [8001] which had an unknown shape in plan and extended beyond the southeast end of the trench. It was at least 5m long, at least 2m wide and at least 1.3m deep, with moderately steep sides. Given the large size of the feature, it has been interpreted as a pond. No pond is shown in this location on the 1878, Ordnance Survey map, or subsequent maps. However, the trench is through the centre of what was Kenton's Farm, so an unmapped yard feature is considered likely. The pond was sequentially filled by a five layers (8002 to 8006), some of which contained bricks. It is not apparent if these represent a deliberate backfill.

Trench 9 (Figure 11, Sections 21)
Trench 9 contained no features. The natural (9003) was a light orangey brown clay, encountered at a depth of 0.33m. Towards the southwest there were patches of mid orangey brown sandy clay subsoil (9002). Both were covered by topsoil.

Trench 10 (Figure 11, Section 14, Plate 4)
Trench 10 contained a brick-built structure. The natural was a light yellowish orange clayey sand (10005), encountered at 0.68m deep. This was covered by 0.26m of subsoil (10004) and 0.19m topsoil (10003). All of these were cut by a brick lined pit (10007), 0.59m deep, which was filled with a light greyish substance thought to be lime (10006). This feature was interpreted as a lime pit. The trench is located within the site of Kenton's Farm and historical maps show there was a wall in this location in the 19th century and a building in the 20th century. Potentially this feature was related to their construction, or else the operations at the farm. Over the pit and former topsoil was a layer of hardcore containing bricks (10002) and then a modern topsoil (10001).

Plate 4. The lime pit (10007). Looking north.

Trench 11 (Figure 12, Sections 41 and 43)
Trench 11 contained no archaeological features. The natural (11003) was a light orangey brown chalky clay, encountered at a depth of 0.7m. This was overlain by a mid orangey brown sandy clay subsoil (11002) and topsoil. Three irregular features, considered to be natural gullies, were noted; these being [11005], [11007] and [11009]. All three were roughly north-south orientated and shallow.

Trench 12 (Figure 13, Section 61 and Figure D Sections 74-75)
This contained one pit, thought to be middle Iron Age in date. The lowest deposit exposed was a light orangey brown chalky clay, encountered at a depth of 0.58m. The oval pit [12010] was cut into this, measuring over 1m long, 0.57m wide and 0.34m deep (Plate 5). The lowest fill was an orangey brown silty clay that contained charcoal and heat affected clay (12011). This had been recut [12018] and followed by a deposit of dark greyish black silty clay (12012), which contained several sherds of middle Iron Age pottery. It was in turn covered by mid greyish orange silty clay (12015). A second recut [12017] is towards the top

of the feature, with a final fill of mid greyish orange silty clay with frequent heat affected clay (12016). This feature was interpreted as a possible firepit that had been reused repeatedly. It was truncated to the west by a modern trench for a copper water pipe [12013].

Plate 5. Possible fire pit, [12010]

Also excavated in this trench were three features interpreted as natural: [12005] was an irregular patch of rooting disturbance; [21006] was an irregular shallow linear feature; and [12008] and irregular but substantial linear feature, measuring 1.51m wide and 0.5m deep. All had subsoil-like fills. The subsoil in this trench was a mid orangey brown sandy clay, 0.2m deep. The depth and width of linear feature [12008] might alternatively suggest a human-made origin, but it did not contain any cultural material, not even fragments of charcoal.

Trench 13 (Figure 11, Section 6 and Figure 14, Section 80)
Trench 13 contained no archaeological features. The natural was a light orangey brown clay (13003) that was encountered at a depth of 0.6m. This was covered by subsoil (13002) and then topsoil (13001). One feature was excavated in the trench, a north-south orientated irregular linear feature [13004], at least 1.3m long, 0.41 m wide and 0.11 m deep, which was interpreted as a glacial scar.

Trench 14 (Figure 11 Section 11 and Figure 14 Sections 81-83)
No archaeological features were present in this trench. The natural was a light orangey brown clay (14003) which was encountered at a depth of 0.65m. Three features were excavated: a modern pipe trench [14004], a broad, irregular linear feature interpreted as having a natural origin [14006] and an irregular oval pit [14008] considered to be bioturbation. All three were filled with subsoil-like deposits. The subsoil was a mid orangey brown sandy clay (14002), which was covered by the topsoil (14001).

Trench 15 (Figure 11 Section 10 and Figure 14, Sections 84 and 86)
There were no archaeological features in this trench. The natural was a mid orangey brown clay (15003) which was encountered at a depth of 0.5m. Two natural features were excavated: [15005] is a shallow linear feature with an undulating base suggesting a small creek; and [15006] is a shallow linear feature with an uneven base and is likely also a small creek. The features were covered by subsoil (15002) and then topsoil (15001).

Trench 16 (Figure 11 Section 2-5)
Two natural deposits were noted in this trench. Towards the northeast end it was a light orangey brown clay with frequent chalk (16004) and to the southwest a mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent flint (16006). Both were encountered at a depth of 0.5m, dropping off towards the south, to a maximum depth of 1.2m. Into (16004) was cut a northwest-southeast orientated linear feature, with steep sides and a v-shaped base [16010] (Figure 14, section 87; Plate 6). This was over 2m long, 1.98 m wide and 0.56 m deep. It was filled by a mid brown clayey silt (16009), which contained 9 sherds of middle or late Iron Age pottery. This feature is interpreted as an Iron Age ditch, but the function of the ditch is not apparent.

Also cut into the natural was an irregular sub-circular feature [16007], interpreted as bioturbation (Figure 14, Section 85). This was covered with subsoil (16002), into which was cut a modern trackway [16005] filled with hardcore (16003). Both the trackway and subsoil were covered by topsoil (16001).

Plate 6. Ditch [16010]. Looking southeast.

Trench 17
Not excavated

Trench 18
Not excavated

Trench 19 (Figure 12, Section 38)
There were no features recorded in this trench. The natural was encountered at a depth of 0.75m and comprised a light yellowish white sandy chalk with lot of modern tree root disturbance. Subsoil (19002) and then topsoil (19001) covered the natural.

Trench 20 (Figure 14, Section 79)
There were no features recorded in this trench. The natural was encountered at a depth of 0.35m and comprised a light yellowish white sandy chalk with lot of modern tree root disturbance. Subsoil was present (20002), but was particularly thin, being only 0.07m thick, and this was covered by topsoil (20001).

Trench 21 (Figure 14, Section 77)
There were no features recorded in this trench. The natural was encountered at a depth of 0.27m and comprised a light yellowish white sandy chalk with lot of modern tree root disturbance. Over the natural was 0.1m of subsoil (21002) and then topsoil (21001).

Trench 22 (Figure 14, Section 78)
There were no features recorded in this trench. The natural was encountered at a depth of 0.45m and comprised a light yellowish white sandy chalk with lot of modern tree root disturbance. Over the natural was 0.25m of subsoil (21002) and then topsoil (21001).

Trench 23 (Figure 13, Section 56)
In order to reach the natural geology in this trench, it had to be stepped out to safely take it to a depth of 1.88m. The earliest deposit was a light yellowish white silty sand (23012). This was covered by a deep deposit of mid orange silty clay, 0.65m thick. Over this was mid orange brown silty clay, 0.35m thick (23011). There were patches of redeposited natural in this layer. Over this was a mid orangey brown sandy clay (23013) 0.20m thick. These three layers are all considered subsoil, for a total depth of 1.2m of subsoil (Plate 7).

Cut into the natural was an irregular oval feature [23019] (Figure 13, Section 60), interpreted as a patch of rooting.

Two structures were exposed by the trench. The first was the foundations of a red brick wall (23015) on a northwest-southeast orientation (Figure 13, Section 57; Plate 8). A wall is shown in this location on late 19th century maps and was only recently demolished. A modern breezeblock wall was encountered in the north of the trench (23009), which sat in a substantial foundation cut [23008] with several layers of rubble-rich fill (23002-7) (Figure 13, Section 57).

Plate 7. Representative section of Trench 23, showing the very deep subsoil deposits. Looking northwest.

Plate 8. Foundations of garden wall (23015). Looking northwest.

Trench 24 (Figure 12, Section 45)
Trench 24 contained no archaeological features. The natural was a mid orangey brown sandy clay (24003) which was encountered at a depth of 0.8m. This was covered by a mid yellowish brown clayey sand (24002) subsoil. Cut into the subsoil was a rectangular, vertically sided soakaway [24004], filled with dark orangey brown silty flint (24005). Topsoil sealed the trench.

Trench 25 (Figure 13, Section 54)
This trench did not contain any archaeological features. The natural was a light whitish yellow sandy chalk with lenses of sand (25005), exposed at a depth of 1.7m, which required the trench to be stepped to safely access. Cut into the natural were two irregular features which were excavated, but were considered to be natural disturbances [25007] and [25009]. Above the natural features was a deep sequence of subsoils (25004 and 25003), a possible levelling layer from landscaping (25002) and then topsoil (25001).

Trench 26 (Figure 12, Section 44)
The earliest deposit exposed in this trench was (26003), at a depth of 0.94m, which was not described in the field. From photographs it appears to be a mid brown silt, but it is not apparent if this was an undisturbed natural or a layer of subsoil. Cut into (26003) where two possible furrows [26004] and [26007]. The first was a northwest-southeast orientated linear feature with straight sides and a flat base, over 2m long, 0.75 m wide and 0.13 m deep (Figure 13, Section 47, Plate 9). This was filled by mid brownish grey silty clay (26005). The second was very similar, but shallower at only 0.08m deep, and it shallowed out towards the northwest (Figure 13, Section 49, Plate 10). The fill was a little lighter, being a light brown sandy clay (26006). The two features were on parallel lines separated by approximately 6m. There were no finds in either feature, but the form suggests medieval or post-medieval furrows.

Additionally, cut into (26003) were two shallow irregular features thought to be tree throws [26009 and 26011].

Over all the features was a mid brown silty clay subsoil (26002), 0.73 m deep. This was then covered by topsoil (26001).

Plate 9. Possible furrow [26004]. Looking southeast.

Plate 10. Possible furrow [26007]. Looking southeast.

Trench 27 (Figure 12, Section 26)
There were no archaeological features in this trench. The earliest deposit exposed was mid orangey brown clayey chalk natural (27003), encountered at a depth of 0.6m. Cut into this were two treeboles [27006 and 27010] and a burrow [27008]. These were covered by subsoil (27002), which in turn was covered by topsoil (27004).

Also in this trench was a substantial modern ditch [27005]. It is not recorded if the feature cut the subsoil or topsoil; Section 25 implies the fill (27001) blended into topsoil (27004), which was very similar, both being described as blackish brown clayey sand.

Area 28 (Figure 13, Section 62)
Area 28 was an open strip measuring approximately 100m by 5m. It held the largest concentration of archaeological features on the site, containing five linear features and two pit-like features, notably one of which contained the remains of an infant. No relationships were visible between the features. The majority of these features produced dateable artefacts suggesting occupation from the middle Iron Age, through the late Iron Age and into the first century of the Roman period.

The earliest deposit was a mid yellowish white clayey chalk natural (28003), encountered at a depth of 0.42m. All the features were cut into this.

Natural features
The area contained three features which were considered to be natural and had not subsequently been altered or filled by human action. Three of these are broad, shallow linear features in the western half of the area, all on a northwest to southeast orientation. These are [28004], [28005] and [28011]. Although an interpretation of furrows was considered, the irregular bases and spacing of these features argues against this. Additionally, in the eastern part of the trench a feature was observed in section [28021] that was considered to be natural, but had been almost entirely truncated by [28018]. All these features had fills which were very similar or indistinguishable from the subsoil. They probably reflect localised depressions in the natural geology rather than distinct events.

Middle Iron Age
In the centre of the area, [28008] is an irregular oval feature, 2.17m long, 1.43m wide and 0.27m deep (Figure 13, Section 64 and Plate 11). It had two fills, the lowest fill was (28009), a mid orangey brown silty clay 0.21m deep. This was very similar to the subsoil. Above this was (28010), a dark fill with evidence of burning, including heat affected flint. It contained barrel-shaped pottery from the middle Iron Age. The feature has the appearance of a natural pit, repurposed later as a fire pit, although this interpretation is tentative.

At the eastern end of the area was a shallow linear feature on a northwest-southeast orientation [28013] (Figure 14, Section 67 and Plate 12). This measured over 6m long, 0.73m wide and 0.17 m deep. At its northwest end it intersects with [28018], but the deposits are so shallow that no relationship was visible. However, based on finds, [28013] is considered to be the earlier feature. The feature had two fills, the lower a mid orangey brown clayey silt (28014) and the upper a dark grey silt (28015). Both contained considerable evidence of burning with heat affected flint and charcoal throughout, but particularly concentrated in the upper fill (28015). Both contained middle Iron Age pottery and bone. The feature has tentatively been interpreted as a gully filled with occupation detritus and fire waste.

Plate 11. Middle Iron Age pit [28008]. Looking west.

Plate 12. Section through middle Iron Age gully [28013]. Looking northwest.

Late Iron Age

Intersecting with [28013] is a linear feature on a north-south alignment, [28018] (Figure 14, Section 68 and 69; Plate 13). This was over 5m long, 1.4m wide and 0.3m deep. To the west of this, 1.5m away, is a linear feature which appears to be on the same orientation [28016]. This was over 5m long, 1.19 m wide and 0.22 m deep. The two features share similar fills (28017 and 28019), dark brown silty clays. Given their parallel alignment and similar fills, they should probably be considered as related. Only (28019), the fill of [28018], produced dateable finds. This was a mixture of middle and late Iron Age pottery. The middle Iron Age material was probably residual, overall suggesting a date from the 1st century BC. These two linear features might define a track or a double ditched boundary.

Plate 13. Possible late Iron Age track or double ditch [28016 and 28018]. Looking north.

Plate 14. Late Iron Age ditch [28030]/[28028]. Looking west.

Nearby is a linear feature on a northeast to southwest alignment [28030] (Figure 14, Section 73 and Plate 14). This was over 2.5m long, 0.61 m wide and 0.34m deep, filled with a mid brownish orange silty clay (28029). This was considered to be a natural feature by the excavator, possibly a stream channel. However, the feature had been deliberately recut to a depth of 0.2m [28028] and the subsequent fill was a dark grey silty clay (28027). The fill produced six sherds of a bead-rim jar, a form of pottery in use between the 1st century BC to 1st century AD.

[28030] shallows out and is lost towards the northeast. However, it may continue as [28022], which is on the edge of the area, 2.5m away. This feature is filled by dark orangey brown clayey silt (28023), which is similar to (28029) (Figure D, Section 71).

Roman period

The western half of the area had a linear feature, [28006], which was over 5.4m long, 1.3m wide and 0.49m deep, with straight sides and a v-shaped base (Figure 14, Section 66 and Plate 15). This had two fills, the lowest being dark orangey brown silty clay, 0.33m thick (28012) and the upper dark orangey brown silty clay 0.21m thick (28007). The upper fill contained a significant quantity of pottery and bone, suggestive of occupation detritus. The pottery dates to the first century Roman period. The excavator interpreted this feature as a natural gully with later occupation deposits. However, the regular sides and plan of the feature suggest a human made feature, probably a small boundary ditch.

Plate 15. Roman ditch [28006]. Looking southwest.

Nearby is an irregular sub-circular feature which was 3.32m long, 1.15m wide and 0.23m deep [28024] (Figure 14, Section 72 and Plate 16). The lowest fill was a mid brown silty clay (28025) with a thin upper fill of dark brown silty clay (28026). The lower fill contained a single Roman hob nail and several leg bones from a perinatal human. These were not recognised as human or articulated by the excavator (as is frequently the case with infant remains; Gowland *et al*. 2014) and so it is possible the remaining bones are in the unexcavated half of the feature. The feature is almost certainly a naturally occurring treethrow, which has been used as a grave for an infant in the Roman period.

Plate 16. Treethrow [28024], reused as a Roman infant burial pit. Looking southwest.

6. DISCUSSION

Planning applications
With regards to the planning application areas, it is only the area belonging to the main house 213587, which has yielded any significant archaeological remains and it is likely that further Iron Age remains, possibly settlement evidence, might be encountered during any groundworks in this area.

By contrast, Trench 27 in the gatehouse 213588 area, had only two treeboles and no indication of further archaeology to be revealed. Trenches 8-11 in the estate management 213610 area, had features thought to be related to the 19th century farmstead, including a possible pond and a lime store. Trenches 23-26 in staff accommodation 240847 area revealed a combination of natural, 19th century, and modern features, with two probable medieval or post-medieval furrows identified.

Further development applications in other areas of the wider site are likely to require archaeological mitigation

Natural deposits
The northern area had a clay or clayey sand natural whereas the southern trenches had a chalk natural. The Trenches 23-26 in the walled garden area (in staff accommodation 240847) were inconsistent, and had very deep subsoil deposits, over 1m thick. However, medieval or post-medieval furrows appeared to be cut into the deposits above the chalk natural, suggesting the accumulation of soil is ancient.

Significant archaeology

The evaluation suggests an absence of archaeological features over much of the survey area. Only three of the 25 trenches revealed significant archaeological features; Trench 12, 16 and Area 28 are concentrated in the middle of the site, covering a north-south area of around 300m by 100m. Both Trench 12, 16 and 28 produced Iron Age finds within burnt pits and shallow linear features. These suggest the proximity of middle and late Iron Age settlement in the area, but do not suggest where any dwellings might have been located. Additionally, Area 28 had a Roman ditch, probably a field boundary, and a Roman infant burial in a natural treethrow.

These findings accord well with previous discoveries made on the site. A series of middle/late Iron Age finds have been made stretching north-south over much the same area as the positive trial trenching. These include finds of metal working debris, post holes with burnt daub, pits and land boundaries (APS 2005-2012). The evidence for Roman occupation is more focused, to an area 35m northeast of Area 28, where a geophysical survey has highlighted well defined boundary ditches (APS 2009), within which evidence for Roman metalworking, malting, postholes, floors, rubbish pits and boundary ditches have been revealed (APS 2005-2012).

In consideration of the infant burial, it is worth looking at what is typical in Roman Britian and considering why this burial might differ from it. While adults in the early Roman period were typically cremated and placed in a cemetery, infants (prior to their teeth erupting) were normally inhumed under their house, on a threshold, courtyard or otherwise close to the domestic space. This was an era of high infant mortality and documentary sources (admittedly from the Mediterranean rather than Britian) tell us babies were not given names in the first months of life, their deaths were not publicly mourned and abandonment of newborns which could not be cared for or that seemed unhealthy was common and socially acceptable. When a child was abandoned, they were placed 'outside/beyond,' '*expositio.'* It is ambiguous as to whether this was done with the expectation the child would be adopted by another family or perish (Gowland *et al.* 2014). In this light, the infant burial in a natural feature 100m outside of the settlement might well be an example of a newborn which was abandoned and removed from the domestic space. This is by no means a definitive identification of an abandoned infant and other explanations for the placement of the child are feasible.

Finds include 107 sherds of middle Iron Age pottery, 71 sherds of late Iron Age pottery, 6 sherds of Roman pottery, 31 fragments of bone, a Roman hobnail and a small quantity of CBM, burnt clay and post-medieval pottery. Partial remains of a human infant came from Area 28 and further remains may still be *in situ*.

Environmental samples were taken from several features but produced a very low density of diagnostic material and were not considered useful. Only (28015), the upper burnt fill of middle Iron Age pit [28013] produced charred grain, but limited to two seeds.

There are no obvious ways this research could contribute to the Regional Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014).

Registered Park and Garden

The Grade II* Listed park and garden of the Park Place Estate has its origin in the early 18th century. Many of the trenches lie within this park. However, they have not produced any archaeological evidence that might contribute to understanding of the park.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological trial trenching was undertaken as part of Project Conway at Park Place, Remenham. A small number of Iron age features were located close to where they have previously been found on the site and an outlying Roman ditch and infant burial were found approximately 100m from where Roman settlement is known.

Artefacts retrieved included a modest quantity of Iron Age pottery, a small quantity of Roman pottery and a small quantity of bone, CBM and burnt clay.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9. PERSONNEL

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

BGS British Geological Survey

CBM Ceramic Building Material

CIfA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists