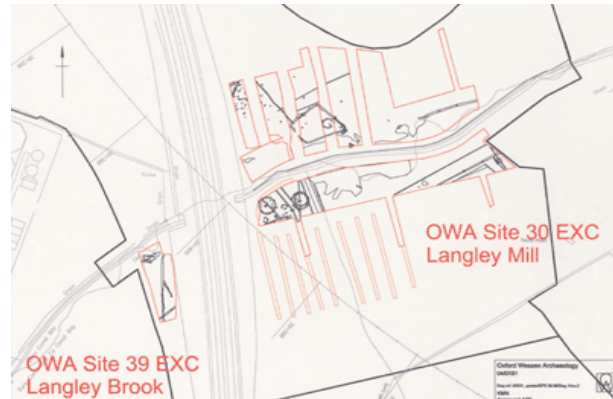


M6 Toll Archaeology, Langley Mill site



Date January 2004

Location Midlands

Client Main Contractor MEL
CAMMBA*

There were many archaeological finds at the M6 Toll. At the Langley Mill site, near Sutton Coldfield, two circular features and a mysterious wooden post added to the interest of the area.

The Construction of the UKs first toll road.

Principal Quantities

- 1,300,000 cubic metres of topsoil stripped
- 9,200,000 cubic metres of excavation (80,000 full double deckers)
- 63,000 cubic metres of structural concrete
- 9,613 tonnes of structural steel - roughly equivalent to the amount of steel used in the Eiffel Tower

Lessons learnt / Benefits

- Increased archaeological Awareness for the team
- Archaeological remains properly identified and protected

*CAMMBA - Carillion, Alfred McAlpine, Balfour Beatty and Amec.

The site under investigation consisted of two small circular features, clearly identified by the outline of former ditches that would have surrounded the original structures. Between these features were the waterlogged remains of a very large oak post. What purpose these circular enclosures served is not yet known.

Looking at archaeological works in an adjacent field on the opposite (northern) side of the Langley Brook have discovered a sub-rectangular enclosure or compound, initially identified by aerial photography. It is likely that this is the remains of a building, possibly the farmhouse.

The lack of any archaeological finds has made it difficult to provide an assessment of the age of the enclosure site and radiocarbon dates are not yet available. The character of the enclosure suggests that the enclosure may be of late prehistoric date.

However, the western ring ditch of the two circular features to the south of the Brook is probably

Bronze Age (2,400 BC to 700 BC) burial mound. This is based on its similarity to better-dated Bronze Age burial mounds elsewhere in the region

The archaeological sites to the north and south of Langley Brook were widely scattered with fragments of burnt stone, which are probably the remains of stone heated to boil water. These have been dated elsewhere in the area to between 1,500 and 1,000 BC, which is of Middle to Late Bronze Age.

Whilst the dating evidence for the site is as yet inconclusive, the archaeological discoveries to date suggest that the site is of middle to late Bronze Age. But what of the large oak post? Nothing like this has been discovered in the area before and dating methods, including dendrochronology have been unhelpful. Those involved with the project may have to resign themselves to fact that the purpose of this unusual piece of archaeology may never be understood.