2 Newbury Street, Lambourn, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mrs J Vodnik

by Sean Wallis
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code 2NSL 03/79

September 2003
Summary

Site name: 2 Newbury Street, Lambourn, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 3273 7888

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 28th and 29th August 2003

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: 2NSL 03/79

Area of site: c.300 sq m

Summary of results: Two possible medieval pits and one large early post-medieval pit were found

Monuments identified: Pits

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum, Newbury in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:  Steve Ford✓ 10.09.03
                           Steve Preston✓ 10.09.03
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 2 Newbury Street, Lambourn, Berkshire (SU 3273 7888) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs J Vodnik of 2 Newbury Street, Lambourn, Berkshire.

Planning permission (01/02452/HOUSE) has been granted by West Berkshire District Council to demolish an existing kitchen/ utility room and garage and to erect a replacement garage, kitchen with bedroom over and a conservatory. This is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the District’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Veronica Fiorato, Principal Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis on 28th and 29th August 2003 and the site code is 2NSL03/79.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum, Newbury in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the centre of Lambourn, approximately 130m south-east of the parish church and around 100m south-west of the River Lambourn. (Figs 1 and 2). The underlying geology of the site is on the boundary between the river and valley gravels of the River Lambourn and the surrounding middle chalk (BGS 1971). Middle chalk was observed in all foundation trenches. The site lies at a height of c.127m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the historic core of the town, which is thought to have originated as a Saxon royal estate before developing into a town during the medieval period. The site lies on the eastern edge of what is thought to be the Saxon core of the town centred on the parish church and oval street pattern. The parish church of St
Michael and All Angels which has a late 12th-century tower and nave and is thought to be located on the site of the original late Saxon church (Astill 1978, 37 and fig.13).

An evaluation and subsequent watching brief on the site of the former Red Lion Hotel, on the corner of Newbury Street and Oxford Street, revealed evidence of early–middle Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity in the form of surfaces, pits, postholes and ditches (King 1999a and b). An evaluation at Bourne House Stables, Oxford Road uncovered a well shaft of possible Roman date together with linear features of Saxon date (King 2000). A watching brief to the south-east of the site at 18–20 High Street recorded a number of pits ranging in date from medieval through the 16th century to the 19th century (Hindmarch and Ford 2003).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This was to involve the examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services.

**Results**

The foundation trench for the kitchen measured 0.6m wide and 0.9m in depth (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy observed in the sections of the trench consisted of 0.6m – 0.9m of disturbed topsoil over the natural chalk. Two possible medieval pits were observed, cut into the natural chalk (Fig. 4). The first pit [1] was about 0.6m wide and at least 0.6m long (it could be seen to continue in the south facing section). The fill (50) consisted of dark brownish grey clayey silt, approximately 0.25m thick, from which two sherds of medieval pottery and one small piece of animal bone were recovered. Only half of the second pit [2] could be seen in the base of the trench, but could be seen in the south facing section. The fill (51) also consisted of dark brownish grey clayey silt, approximately 0.15m thick, from which three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered.

Digging of the east part of this foundation trench had to cease when a backfilled well was encountered. The well was lined with large chalk blocks but no dating evidence was recovered as this part of the trench was unsafe to enter. The area to the east of the well consisted of at least 2m of made ground over the chalk natural.

The trench for the conservatory measured 0.6m wide and 0.6m in depth. No archaeology was observed in this trench and the stratigraphy in the sections consisted of 0.4m of disturbed topsoil onto chalk.

The foundation trenches for the garage measured 0.6m wide and was approximately 0.8m deep. A feature observed in the western trench was interpreted as a large pit [3] as it did not continue into the eastern trench. It
was not possible to fully excavate the pit due to the depth of the trench, but it was at least 1.0m deep, with steep sides cut into the natural chalk. At least two different fills were identified on the basis of finds recovered, although it was hard to distinguish between them visually due to the depth of the trench and the fact that they both consisted of dark brownish grey clayey silt. Finds from the upper fill (53) included late 15th-century pottery, animal bone, tile, glass and iron objects. It is possible that some of these finds were intrusive as the ground above was quite disturbed. The lower fill [52] also contained pottery of 15th century date, animal bone, oyster shell and several iron objects, together with fragments of a probable copper alloy colander. The stratigraphy in the remaining sections of the trenches consisted of 0.5m of disturbed topsoil onto the natural chalk.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 9 sherds with a total weight of 253g. The assemblage was entirely medieval, and despite the small size, the range of ware types present indicates that there was activity at the site throughout the period. The ware-types present are typical of pottery of the period in the region, and have been noted at sites in Newbury (Mepham 1997).

The following wares were noted:

*Newbury ‘A’ ware* (Mepham 1997, 46–51). 11th – early 13th century. Handmade, with finished upper bodies. Sand fabric with moderate angular white flint up to 2mm, rare rounded calcareous material up to 2mm. 2 sherds, 30g.

*Newbury ‘B’ ware*: Late 12th – late 14th century (Mepham 1997, 51–2). A range of sand-, flint- and limestone-tempered wares. Sparse to moderate limestone up to 2mm, rounded white or clear quartz up to 0.5mm, angular fragments of white, grey or black flint. Jars, bowls and pitchers. 1 sherd, 6g.

*Newbury ‘C’ ware*: Late 11th – late 14th century (Mepham 1997, 51–2). A range of medium-grain quartz tempered wares. Jars, bowls, tripod pitchers and slipped and glazed jugs. 1 sherd, 2g.

*Kingston Ware* (Pearce and Vince 1988). c. 1250–1450. White fabric with abundant, well sorted iron-stained, pink, white and clear quartz, sparse to moderate red and black ironstone. Mainly jugs with a rich copper-green glaze, often highly decorated with incised and applied decoration and iron-rich slip. 1 sherd, 53g.

*Late Medieval Transitional Earthenware*: ?15th century? Pale orange fabric with moderate fine quartz less than 0.5mm and sparse rounded red ironstone up to 1mm. One sherd has a thin, glossy green glaze on the outer surface, and a base of a cup/tyg had a thick orange-brown glaze on both surfaces, perhaps an imitation of Cistercian-types wares. Similar to Newbury fabric 27, dated to the late 15th century (Mepham 1997, 63). 4 sherds, 162g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 1.
Animal Bone by Sean Wallis

Fourteen fragments of animal bone were recovered from pit [3] (53) weighing a total of 195g. These included bones from cattle and sheep together with one possible chicken bone. One small fragment of bone, weighing 1g was recovered from pit [1] (50).

Oyster Shell by Sean Wallis

One oyster (Ostrea edulis) shell weighing 10g was recovered from pit [3] (52), and several others were noted in the section of the pit.

Metalwork by Sean Wallis

Seven iron objects weighing 210g were recovered from pit [3]. These included several nails, a bracket and a possible fragment of a knife blade. Three fragments of a possible copper alloy colander were found in pit [3] (52), weighing a total of 34g.

Glass by Sean Wallis

One piece of clear bottle glass weighing 18g was recovered from pit [3] (53), although it is possible that this was intrusive.

Tile by Sean Wallis

One fragment of red roof tile weighing 278g was recovered from pit [3] (53).

Conclusion

The watching brief at 2 Newbury Street, Lambourn revealed two medieval pits and one early post-medieval pit, in the foundations for the extension and new garage. It is likely that pits [1] and [2] were broadly contemporary, due to their close proximity to one another and the fact that the pottery found in them is of a similar 11th – 12th century date. Pit [3] however, is later in date and seems to be a late 15th-century rubbish pit.

Although no structures were found on site, the three pits do suggest some medieval activity on the site and it is likely that the remains of any earlier buildings would be along the front of the street, underneath the present house. The use of the rear of residential plots for rubbish disposal was common practice in medieval settlements.
References
Hindmarch, E and Ford, S, ‘18-20 High Street, Lambourn, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report 02/35, Reading
APPENDIX 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

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Total 2 30 1 6 1 2 1 53 4 162
2 Newbury Street, Lambourn, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 1. Location of site within Lambourn and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site on Newbury Street.

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Figure 3. Location of features observed with trenches.
Figure 4. Sections.