Amey Hall Complex, Abingdon School
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Abingdon School

by Sian Anthony
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ASA 02/48

December 2002
Summary

Site name: Amey Hall Complex, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4945 9732

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th November – 2nd December 2002

Project manager: Erlend Hindmarch

Site supervisor: Stephen Hammond

Site code: ASA 02/48

Area of site: -

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or features were found.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course.

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford 20.12.02
                        Steve Preston 20.12.02
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Amey Hall Complex, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (SU 4945 9732) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Declan Fallon, of Barnsley, Hewett and Mallinson, 1 White Hart Lane, London, SW13 0RA on behalf of the school.

Planning consent (ABG/2362/22) has been granted by the Vale of the White Horse District Council for the construction of extensions to the existing Amey Hall Arts Complex on the site of the Abingdon School. This consent is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological works during groundworks as a result of the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits.

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 Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Erlend Hindmarch and Stephen Hammond from the 12th November to 2nd December 2002 and the site code is ASA 02/48.

Location, topography and geology

Abingdon lies south-east of Oxford in the valley of the river Thames. The site lies north-west of the historic core of Abingdon and north-west of the River Thames. The River Ock flows east to west, south of the site. Geology is mapped as second terrace gravels overlying Kimmeridge clay (BGS 1971). Observations on site confirmed this, recording natural orange sandy clay and gravels. The site is 57m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies close to the historic medieval core of Abingdon. The core of the town has produced significant archaeological finds dating from the prehistoric period onwards, including important Roman and medieval settlement evidence. Recent extensive excavations in Ock Street, just to the south, have demonstrated complex deposits representing medieval occupation and industrial activity (Hull, 2001; Roberts; Taylor, in prep.). The current site produced considerable evidence of Roman date including pits, ditches and rubble, during the original
construction of the Amey Hall Complex. Close to the site other observations have produced walls, pottery and an infant human burial indicating Roman occupation in the area.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological features affected by the construction of the new extensions, topsoil/overburden stripping and excavation of service trenches. Features disturbed by the works were to be recorded and excavated but features that would not be disturbed were to be mapped and recorded but not excavated. Foundation and service trenches would be recorded and spoilheaps monitored for finds.

Results

Ground reduction by the boiler house from 1.1m to 0.2m revealed only grey sandy clays onto natural orange sand. Service trenches close to this revealed the same stratigraphy but with a layer of black/brown loam topsoil onto the grey sandy clay.

Building footings (Fig.2) were dug into the natural sand and gravel and although flooded at the base, no archaeology was seen in the trench walls. Outer foundation walls were 1.5m wide, small internal walls only 0.45m to 0.6m wide. Stratigraphy was similar throughout the foundations, with 0.1m of made ground onto 0.3m of dark grey/black silty clay onto 0.5m grey/brown silty clay onto natural orange sand with occasional gravel. Demolition of part of the south side of the building and reduction of the ground level revealed only made ground. One piece of late post-medieval pottery (not retained) was recovered from the foundation trenches on the south building.

Conclusion

All areas disturbed by groundworks involving excavation or topsoil stripping were observed. No archaeological deposits were revealed, and only one piece of post-medieval pottery was observed.

References

Taylor, K, in prep, ‘Excavation of medieval occupation at the former Morland Brewery site, Ock Street, Abingdon’ (for *Oxoniensia*)
Amey Hall Complex, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, 2002

Figure 1. Location of site within Abingdon and Oxfordshire.
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:10000 Landplan
Ordnance Survey Licence AL52324A0001
Amey Hall Complex, Abingdon School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, 2002

Figure 2. Location of site within Abingdon School.
Figure 3. Detailed plan of site and areas observed.