20 Battery End, Wash Common, Newbury, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Donnington New Homes

by Jo Pine and Clare Challis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BWC06/15

February 2006
Summary

Site name: 20 Battery End, Wash Common, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4570 6475

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 13th–14th February 2006

Project manager: Jo Pine

Site supervisor: Clare Challis

Site code: BWC06/15

Area of site: c. 900 sq m

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were observed.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✔ 20.02.06
                          Steve Preston✔ 20.02/06
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 20 Battery End, Wash Common, Newbury, West Berkshire (SU 4570 6475) (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Mr Luke Hastings of Donnington New Homes, Love Lane, Berkshire, RG14 2DZ.

Planning consent (04/02935/FULD) has been granted by West Berkshire Council for demolition of an existing bungalow and construction of two new semi-detached houses. The consent 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 Council’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Heritage Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Clare Challis on 13th and 14th February 2006 and the site code is BWC 06/15.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the south side of Battery End to the west of Andover Road on the south-western fringes of Newbury (Fig. 2). The site lies on level ground at the top of a hill, at a height of c. 125m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology consists of plateau gravel (BGS 1947). This was observed during the groundworks.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area is derived from its location close to a round barrow cemetery consisting originally of five mounds. The barrow cemetery is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (BK12075). The monuments are most probably burial mounds of Early Bronze Age date but could have originated in the Neolithic or could have been constructed or reused in Saxon times. It is likely that contemporary occupation sites are present in the vicinity. However the few small-scale watching briefs which have taken place in the environs of the barrow cemetery have so far produced only negative results (Durden 1995; Coles and Ford 2002; Ford 2005).
The site also lies within the general area of the first Civil War battle of Newbury in 1643, the Parliamentarians holding Round Hill, while Wash Common was the scene of one of Prince Rupert’s more successful cavalry attacks.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which would be damaged or destroyed by the new groundworks. This was to involve examination of ground reduction and the digging of foundations and soakaways.

**Results**

Foundation trenches excavated for the new houses were c.0.70m deep and 0.6m wide (Figs 3 and 4). The stratigraphy revealed in these showed topsoil 0.30m deep overlying a brownish orange clayey gravel subsoil 0.25m thick over orange gravel.

Two soakaways were also excavated, being 1.20m by 1.30m and between 2.00 and 2.20m deep (Figs 3 and 4). The stratigraphy of these was topsoil and demolition rubble 0.60m deep onto orange clayey gravel which was 0.45m deep onto a light orange gravel.

No archaeological deposits were seen in the sections of the house foundation trenches nor soakaways.

**Finds**

No finds of archaeological interest were noted.

**Conclusion**

The observed groundworks did not encounter any archaeological deposits or finds, despite the site’s proximity to areas of known prehistoric occupation, nor were any finds relating to the Civil War period present.

**References**


Ford, S, 2005, ‘New Cricket Pavilion, Falkland Cricket Club, Enborne Street, Newbury, West Berkshire: an archaeological watching brief’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 05/06, Reading

20 Battery End, Wash Common, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2006
An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Battery End. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping. Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

Scale 1:1250
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An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 3. Areas observed in watching brief.

Scale 1:200
Figure 3. Representative sections of trenches and soakaways.