Common Barn, Remenham Hill, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr and Mrs P Nicoll

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CBR 08/27

January 2009
Summary

Site name: Common Barn, Remenham Hill, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7794 8316

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 23rd May – 3rd July 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jamie Lewis

Site code: CBR 08/27

Area of site: 0.2ha

Summary of results: No archaeological finds nor deposits were identified

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

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Report 08/27b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Common Barn, Remenham Hill, Berkshire (SU 7794 8316) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned Mr Khalid Seydo of Christopher Smallwood Architects, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Paddy Nicoll, The Coach House, 16 Thameside, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1BH.

Planning consent (appln no. F/2007/3088) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for a number of alterations to the existing house, including two new extensions, and for the refurbishment of the barn. Other groundworks will include the sinking of three water tanks and construction of a ha-ha to the east of the house. The consent is subject to a condition which requires an archaeological recording action to mitigate the effects of the development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O’Donoghue of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to Wokingham Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Lewis, Andrew Mundin and Simon Cass between 23rd May and 3rd July 2008 and the site code is CBR 08/27.

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Location, topography and geology

The whole site, including the house, barn and outbuildings, is shown as Common Barn on the Ordnance Survey. It is situated on the south side of a bend in the river Thames, about 2km east of Henley-on-Thames. The site is c. 300m north of Remenham Hill village, which has developed along the main road to Henley-on-Thames (A4130). According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of sand and gravel of the 7th (Harefield) Terrace (BGS 1980). The site is situated on a relatively flat piece of ground, near the summit of Remenham Hill, at a height of approximately 98m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 2).
Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Berkshire Archaeology from information in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record (O’Donoghue 2008). In summary, the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide range of sites and finds recorded (Ford 1987; Gates 1975). The barn was subject to a building recording as part of the development of this site (Wallis 2008). The route of a nearby gas pipeline to the north located a range of deposits including a Neolithic pit (Holgate and Start 1985) and subsequent evaluation at Aspect Park, located Iron Age deposits and an undated earthwork is recorded to woodland to the west. However a recent watching brief to the south-east revealed nothing of archaeological interest (Lewis 2007).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, including the removal of topsoil/overburden along the line of a drainage pipe, the area covered by the basement extension and the area for new water tanks.

Results

All observations on the site occurred after demolition (Fig. 3).

The basement

A large basement excavation was observed to the rear (north) of the house for part of the new house extension and annexe. This area was 5m long by 5.2m wide. Its section revealed partial remains of topsoil and demolition rubble from the existing house, over a light brown silt subsoil to a depth of c.1m. The ground below the subsoil was undisturbed natural geology, down to the base of excavation at c.3m (Fig. 4). Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered.

Footing trench

Part of a new footing trench was also observed, and was dug to a depth of 0.9m. This showed the same stratigraphy as the basement and revealed an undisturbed profile that had not been truncated during or prior to the house’s construction.

Drainage trench
A portion of a drainage trench was also observed during excavation, to the north of the house (Fig. 3). This was located away from any recent disturbance from demolition and again showed undisturbed stratification. The base of the pipe excavation was c.2m deep and uncovered natural geology from 0.6m to the base of excavation.

Other groundworks observed did not penetrate below topsoil. No archaeological finds nor deposit were observed.

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits were disturbed by the groundworks that occurred on this site, and no finds were recovered.

References

Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Counc Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
Holgate, R and Start, D, 1985, ‘A Neolithic pit at Remenham, near Henley on Thames, Berkshire’, *Berkshire Archaeol J* 72, 1-8
Lewis, J, 2007, ‘Kition, White Hill, Remenham Hill, Berkshire; an archaeological watching brief’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 07/111, Reading
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Figure 1. Location of site within Remenham Hill and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site at Common Barn.

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Figure 3. Location of areas observed during watching brief.
Figure 4. Representative section for basement.

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Brown silt (topsoil and demolition rubble)

Light brown silt (subsoil)

Light brown clay with occasional flint gravel (natural geology)

Further extended 2m into natural geology