92 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Mr Herb Everest

by Stephen Hammond
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CRGC 05/78

September 2005
Summary

Site name: 92 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 7PB

Grid reference: SU 9929 8798

Site activity: Archaeological Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 8th August 2005

Project manager: Helen Moore

Site supervisor: Stephen Hammond

Site code: CRGC 05/78

Area of site: c. 1800 sq m

Summary of results: The damage caused by a slot being dug out of part of Bulstrode Camp, an Iron Age hillfort, was investigated and recorded. An area around the damage was also hand cleaned in order to look for other possible features. No further features were identified. A slight difference between the Ordnance Survey map and the topography recorded in a site survey was also identified.

Monuments identified: Iron Age Hillfort

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

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Report edited/checked by: Helen Moore 12.09.05
                          Steve Preston 07.09.05
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at 92 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 7PB (SU 9929 8798) (Fig. 1). Mr Herb Everest, the homeowner at this address, commissioned the work in response to damage caused to part of Bulstrode Camp hillfort, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bucks SAM 11) which runs on an east-west alignment through the rear garden of the property. This damage was caused when a rectangular machine slot was excavated through the inner bank of the rampart and further damage was caused when the area over the rampart was stripped of topsoil. A programme of archaeological recording was requested. This recording action was to include an archaeological earthwork survey and salvage recording exercise. Requirements for survey and excavation in this in instance were secured under the provisions of the 1979 *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act*.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service following his initial brief (Radford 2005) on behalf of English Heritage. Mr Chris Welch Inspector of Ancient Monuments for English Heritage monitored the fieldwork. Scheduled Ancient Monument consent was issued by Miss A R Middleton of the Department of Media, Culture and Sport on behalf of the Secretary of State (Ref: HSD 9/2/7421) on the 26th July 2005. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond with the assistance of Simon Cass on the 8th August 2005 and the site code is CRGC 05/78.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western edge of Bulstrode Camp, an Iron Age hillfort on the western side of Gerrards Cross (Fig. 1). The site itself lies partially within the ditch on the edge of the hillfort (Fig. 2), at a height of 80m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology according to maps is glacial sand and gravel (BGS 1990). A gravelly sand natural was noted during the recording exercise.
Archaeological background

Bulstrode Camp is a large, bivallate hillfort enclosing an area c. 8.5 ha of the hilltop with the ramparts following the contours of the hill producing an oval ground plan. The defences consist of a double rampart for most of its circumference, and there is at least one entrance. It is the largest monument of its kind in the country. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bucks SAM 11). The hillfort is considered to date from the Iron Age period although no detailed fieldwork has been carried out on the site to prove this. Similarly the duration of occupation and the nature of activity within it are also unknown. Small scale fieldwork in 1924 recovered a few fragments of early Iron Age pottery and a hearth (Fox and Clark 1925) and recent geophysical survey suggests the presence of internal features such as hut circles and possibly monuments of earlier date, in particular a possible long barrow. Some hillforts in Southern England such as Danebury (Cunliffe and Poole 1991) are known to have been densely occupied over a considerable period of time. Others however were much less intensively used such as Winklebury and are thought to have been used primarily as fortified stock enclosures. The rear garden of the site plot encompasses part of the earthwork bank that forms the hillfort. Small watching briefs at 90 Camp Road immediately to the south did not reveal any deposits of archaeological interest (Taylor 2002; Anthony 2002) although it was noted that part of the new building work had truncated a bank, thought to be part of the hillfort.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the recording action was to record any archaeological deposits and the stratigraphy exposed in the sections of the ramparts and the stripped area. It was not intended to excavate any archaeological deposits which would not otherwise be affected by further groundworks.

An area measuring 3m to the east and 2m to the south, west and north around the machine excavated slot was designated to be hand cleaned to check for potential features that might have been uncovered during the topsoil strip. Any spoilheaps resulting from the machine damage would be checked for finds.

A secondary aim was to identify and record any modern landscaping/terracing phases that might aid future management of this plot. An earthwork survey completed to RCHME Level 2 standard (RCHME 1999) comprising a measured plan of the back garden from the break of slope directly adjacent to the rear of the house continuing to the rear garden boundary was carried out using an Electronic Total Station, plotting the differing contours.
Results

Before any cleaning up or archaeological recording work commenced on site, a series of photographs was taken to show the extent of the damage (Pl. 1). After this the south facing section through the damaged bank was hand cleaned and recorded, removing part of the slumped material which had collected since the bank was initially disturbed. From the evidence noted in section (Fig. 4 and Pl. 2) it could be seen that the earthwork bank consisted of three different deposits (50–52) overlying a slightly gravelly sand natural (53). 52, the earliest deposit, consisted of compacted mid orange/yellow slightly silty sandy gravel 0.55m thick. This was covered by a very compact and very light grey/white silty sandy gravel (51) measured to be a maximum of 0.44m in depth. Sealing these deposits and completing the section was 50, a compact light brown/yellow silty sandy gravel noted to be a maximum of 0.89m thick. It was unclear however without causing further damage whether the earthwork bank continued westwards towards the house and beyond the machine damage as a distinction could not be made between the earliest deposit (52) and the ground below the slot to determine if this was either a continuation of the deposit or a band of sandy gravel natural. Topsoil was known to have been stripped over this area during the works that damaged the earthwork and was therefore not seen in the section.

Hand cleaning around the machine excavated slot by means of trowelling failed to reveal any new features to complement the information previously revealed about the earthwork either through earlier investigations or from the recently exposed section.

The results from the topographic survey shows that the earthwork bank disturbed by machining differs from that suggested by the Ordnance Survey map (2002). There is no ridge as expected on the inner bank and instead the bank remains relatively flat to the eastern limit of the garden, similar to that recorded at 90 Camp Road to the south. Also, the outer bank appears to be located slightly further west than previously depicted and continues further south before changing direction westwards.

Finds

No finds were uncovered during the recording exercise.

Conclusion

From the recording action it was possible to ascertain that no previously undiscovered features had been disturbed beyond the limit of the machine damage. It was also apparent from the investigation that the earthwork bank was made up from three different deposits, as shown from the section recording. However, the extent of the
disturbed bank remains ambiguous towards the west. The results of the topographic survey of the earthwork also
differ from that shown on the Ordnance Survey map. The expected ridge of the bank disturbed by machining did
not appear in the site. Instead, the top of the earthwork bank remained relatively flat, consistent with the
topography shown at 90 Camp Road. It would also appear that the outer earthwork bank noted to the west is
located further west than expected and continued further southwards than previously recorded. Whether these
variations from the Ordnance Survey map are due in part to recent landscaping remains unclear.

References

Anthony, S, 2001, ‘Woodside, 90 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, An Archaeological Watching
Brief,’ Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report 01/55b
the site, CBA Res Rep 73
Watching Brief,’ Thames Valley Archaeological Services Report 01/55
Radford, D, 2005, ‘Brief for an Archaeological Earthwork Survey and Salvage Recording’ Buckinghamshire
County Archaeological Service
RCHME, 1999 Recording Archaeological Field Monuments: A descriptive Specification
92 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, 2005
Archaeological Recording Action

Figure 1. Location of site within Gerrards Cross and Buckinghamshire.

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Figure 2. Site location based on Ordnance Survey map before damage to earthwork.
Figure 3. Detailed view of site after surveying including monument damage.
Figure 4. South facing section

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Root disturbance

Limit of machine damage

Continuation of fill below limit of section?

Natural

0 2m
Plate 1. Damage to earthwork prior to investigation looking NW. Horizontal scale 2m, vertical scale 1m.

Plate 2. South facing section of damaged inner bank. Horizontal scales 0.5m and 1m. Vertical scale 2m.