Fuel Storage Facility, Castrol Technology Centre
Whitchurch Hill, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Stephens and Company

by Sian Anthony
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code CWH 03/21

July 2003
Summary

Site name: Fuel Storage Facility, Castrol Technology Centre, Whitchurch Hill, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU6385 7825

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 14th –21st July 2003

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sian Anthony

Site code: CWH03/21

Area of site: -

Summary of results: No archaeology was located.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Castrol Technology Centre, Whitchurch Hill, near Pangbourne, Oxfordshire (SU 6385 7825) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Robert Cole, Stephens and Company, 14 Charlotte Street, Bath BA1 2JP, on behalf of The Castrol Technology Centre, Whitchurch Hill, near Pangbourne, Oxfordshire.

A planning consent (PO2/SO154) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new fuel storage facility at the Centre, which involves excavation of a new pump room and fuel tank storage area with construction of a new pipeline. This was subject to a condition (6) which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological works.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sian Anthony between the 14th –21st July and the site code is CWH03/21. The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeology Services, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on Whitchurch Hill, a hill on the northern side of the Thames Valley at c. 130m above Ordnance Datum. The site has been extensively landscaped to be level and currently is part of the entrance and car parking areas of the Centre. The underlying geology is Plateau Gravel above Chalk (BGS 1946), the natural levels observed in the groundworks consisted of an orange brown clay mixture with frequent gravel inclusions.

Archaeological background

The Centre lies to the west of Bozedown Camp, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Oxon 190) which is a large hilltop enclosure of some 28.5 hectares. Previous investigations of the site in 1953 produced Iron Age pottery, a fragment of shale bracelet, medieval pottery and a 16th century iron blade (Wood 1954). More recent
excavations in 1995 suggested the presence of a Bronze Age ditch close to the hillfort which shows earlier activity (Howell 1995). Evaluation in 1996 (Pine 1996) just to the west of the hillfort located only one ephemeral feature with no dating evidence, it was noted that landscaping may have truncated any potential archaeological deposits close to the hillfort. An earlier watching brief was carried out during topsoil stripping for a car park located to the south of the current proposal area. This located some Neolithic or Bronze Age struck flints, Roman/medieval pottery, and a small, undated but probably prehistoric pit backfilled with fire cracked flint (Torrance 1992).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any potential archaeological deposits in the areas being disturbed for groundworks and any associated disturbance. Relatively large areas were stripped on the site for the replacement fuel tanks and pump room, also areas to the south of the tanks. A small area of new pipeline was also observed that continues from the tank area to the Technology Centre. Spoilheaps were to be monitored and any potential archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned and investigated.

**Results**

An area to the south of the main replacement tank area was stripped of topsoil (0.1m deep) and a thin soil horizon of mid brown silty clay (0.25 m deep) with occasional modern rubble fragments and natural flints. The natural (a mid orange-brown silty clay with gravel inclusions) was occasionally visible. This area totalled approximately 200 square metres.

The new tank and pump room area was stripped deeper: a layer of topsoil (0.15m) and thin brown silty clay (0.12m) lay over the natural levels of orange brown clay which was observed to a depth of 0.44m. No archaeology was observed and no finds were located.

A small area of new pipeline connecting the tanks to the Technology Centre was also observed. Where it crossed the road, this was dug to a depth of c. 0.8m and it was noted that here, the majority of the section was made ground which lay onto natural orange brown clay at a depth of 0.5m: no archaeology was observed.

**Finds**

No finds were recovered.
Conclusion

The areas observed contained no archaeological deposits or finds. The car parking areas immediately to the south of the tank and pump rooms were stripped to a minimal level which did not fully expose the archaeologically relevant horizon. The tank area had been substantially affected by previous landscaping work associated with the construction of the car parking areas and this may have destroyed any shallow archaeological deposits prior to this watching brief.

References
Howell, L, 1996, ‘The excavation of a Bronze Age Ditch at the Field Test Centre at Castrol Technology Centre, Pangbourne, Oxfordshire’, Oxoniensia, 61, 35-9
Torrance, L, 1992, Castrol Technology Centre, Pangbourne, Archaeological watching brief, Thames Valley Archaeological Services, report, 92/25, Reading
Fuel Storage Facility, Castrol Technology Centre, Whitchurch Hill, Oxfordshire, 2003, Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 1. Location of site within Whitchurch Hill and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in relation to Bozedown Camp and previous archaeological work.
Figure 3. Areas observed during watching brief CWH03/21

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Areas observed

Tank area and pump room

Car Park

Pipeline continues through existing service runs