New garage, 1 Dukes Wood, Crowthorne, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mrs Gilly Wigs

by Andrew Mundin and Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DWC 08/41

May 2008
Summary

Site name: New garage, 1 Dukes Wood, Crowthorne, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8386 6430

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 22nd April 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: DWC 08/41

Area of site: c. 26 sq m for the garage

Summary of results: Footings for a new garage were the only groundworks observed for the watching brief. They uncovered no archaeological finds or deposits.

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 edited/checked by: Jennifer Lowe ✓ 19.05.08
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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 1 Dukes Wood, Crowthorne, Berkshire (SU 8385 6430) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Alan Miller, Architect, on behalf of Mrs Gilly Wigs, of 1 Dukes Wood, Crowthorne, Berkshire.

Planning permission (app no F2008/0156 and 08/00042) has been granted by Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Borough Councils (the boundary passes through the site) for the construction of a new detached garage at the side of the existing dwelling. The consents are subject to conditions relating to archaeology which require a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks and any extant earthworks to be surveyed.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough Councils’ policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O’Donoghue, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to both Borough Councils in matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford on 22nd April 2008, and the site code is DWC 08/41. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the northern side of Dukes Wood (Fig. 2), in a residential area within Crowthorne. The new garage is to be situated in the garden at the west side of the property. The underlying geology is complicated, on the boundary of outcrops of Plateau gravel, Bagshot Beds and Bracklesham Beds (BGS 1981): in the footing trenches here, sand was observed, presumed to be the Bagshot Beds, although the plateau gravel would also include pockets of sand. The site lies at a height of approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site comes from its location on the plotted course of the Devil’s Highway, the main Silchester to London Roman Road (Margary 1973). Here, the administrative boundary follows the line of the road (which can be reasonably securely established) and runs across the site of the new garage. Hence,
remains of the Roman road could exist on site and a study of its condition could be possible, although it was clear that no above ground earthworks survived on site. Evaluation has investigated the condition of the road nearby recently, and though its existence running through Bracknell Forest is certain, its condition is poor and greatly truncated by recent reinstatement over its course (Colls 2006). Even if the projected course is not precisely as expected, there is still the possibility that Roman roadside settlement or burial deposits may be present in such a zone, as at Rapley Farm (Ford 1987). Settlement like this can, on occasion, be set back some distance from the road as at Wickham Bushes to the east of Crowthorne (Corney and Gaffney 1983a; 1983b; 1985).

Recently work in and around Crowthorne has typically been negative: no archaeological deposits were found in an evaluation at 78-84 Waterloo Road (Cass 2007), 7 Brookers Corner (Pine and Hammond 2006), while evaluation at Lane End, found no Roman pottery or features by the Roman Road, but did locate medieval pottery in a linear feature dating to 12th to 14th century (Moore 2003).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological remains that would be affected by the new construction. This would involve all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction and digging of trenches for foundations and services.

**Results**

Though a site visit was made before the footing was dug, no earthwork was visible in the immediate area for the road course. This is probably due to levelling of the surrounding ground during the construction of the housing estate.

The area for the footings was cleared of vegetation and hard standing before the digging of the trenches (Fig. 3). All trenching was 0.45m wide and dug with a small 360° mini excavator. The topsoil was fully visible at the top of section, dug to a depth of 0.6m. This upper deposit was a dark greyey brown sandy silt soil with some evidence of mixed modern building material, presumably mostly from the construction of the surrounding housing.

At the base of trenching a whitish grey orange sand was uncovered which was interpreted as natural geology (Fig. 4). This was not uncovered until a depth of 0.7m in the southern footings, due to the undulating
depth of the upper deposit. Along with the rooty nature of the topsoil, it was thought that this ground had been
greatly disturbed by tree rooting, and had, prior to the building of the housing estate, had dense tree coverage.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were uncovered during groundworks.

Conclusion

Despite its location on the proposed course of the Roman road, no remains of the Roman or any other period
were recovered. The state of the underlying geology seems to suggest this site was probably under tree cover
before the building of the housing estate.

References

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Figure 1. Location of sites within Crowthorne and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Dukes Wood.

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