Kingfisher, Ham Island, Old Windsor, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Mr. Gordon Spice

by Erlend Hindmarch

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KHI 01/79

December 2001
Summary

Site name: Kingfisher, Ham Island, Old Windsor, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9910 7529

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 9th and 10th October 2001

Project manager: Erlend Hindmarch

Site supervisor: Erlend Hindmarch

Site code: KHI 01/79

Area of site: 20m x 4m

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were found.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the complete archive will be deposited with Reading Museum.

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Kingfisher, Ham Island, Old Windsor, Berkshire (SU 9910 7529) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr G Spice, Bear Shack, Ham Island, Old Windsor, Berks, SL4 2JT.

Planning permission (01/80497) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a mooring and the repair of the river bank at the site. The work was to involve the placement of sheet piles and the cutting back of the river bank along a 25m strip of river frontage to create the mooring. The planning permission is subject to a condition (2) relating to archaeology requiring a watching brief to be carried out during the ground works. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus, Archaeologist, of Babtie Environmental, School Green, Shinfield, Reading, RG2 9HL, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Erlend Hindmarch, on the 9th and 10th October 2001 and the site code is KHI 01/79.

Location, topography and geology

Ham Island is located a few miles south-east of Windsor, within a meander of the river Thames. The river Thames lies to the north, south and east of the island with ‘New Cut’ along the west side (Fig. 2). The topography of the island is relatively flat and lies approximately 16m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology of the site is flood plain gravel (BGS 1981).

Archaeological background

Ham Island contains the 11th-century palace of Edward the Confessor (Scheduled Ancient Monument BK 79). Cropmarks have been identified from aerial photography and are likely to represent enclosures, paddocks and field systems ranging from prehistoric to Roman dates. Archaeological deposits have been recorded during previous watching briefs (Saunders 1995; Hull 1996). Two ditches, which formed part of the features visible
from the air, were discovered during the digging of a water pipe trench (Saunders 1995) although no dating evidence was recovered.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record all archaeological deposits within the areas of ground disturbance associated with the construction of the new mooring.

On arrival at the site work had commenced with the cutting back of the bank. A section of the bank had been cut away approximately 3.5m in from the river bank stretching c. 15m along the frontage of the plot (Fig. 3). The depth of the excavation at this stage was 1.3m and the removed deposits had formed part of a levee created when ‘New Cut’ was built to act as flood defences. The deposit was made from flood plain gravel.

Further excavation continued in this area together with the removal of a large tree-root stump. Excavation was observed to a depth of 4m from the top of the original surface at which point the level of the river was reached. During this time spoil from the excavation was monitored for finds.

**Results**

No archaeological deposits were observed during the watching brief. The section of the excavation showed that below the made up bank of flood defences were layers made from alternating clay silts and gravel. No finds were retrieved from the site.

**Conclusion**

No deposits of archaeological interest were observed. The only man made deposits were those of the levee made when the New Cut was dug.

**References**

Saunders, M J, 1995, ‘Ham Island, Old Windsor, Archaeological watching brief’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 95/18 Reading
Kingfisher, Ham Island, Old Windsor, Berkshire, 2001

Figure 1. Location of site within Ham Island and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Ham Island.
Figure 3: Location of area observed during watching brief.