Kidwells Park,
Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief
For The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

by Andy Taylor
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KPM 05/13

April 2005
Summary

Site name: Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8875 8142

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th February 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: KPM 05/13

Summary of results: No archaeological features or finds were identified. A relatively modern gravelly layer corresponding with the earthwork within the park had led to the interpretation of this by 19th century Ordnance Surveyors that this was a Roman road.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 18.04.05
                          Steve Preston✓ 18.04.05
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8875 8142) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Deborah James, Landscape Officer for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1RF. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead planned to refurbish Kidwells Park, which involved new leisure facilities, the planting of new trees and the alteration of an existing path layout. The layout is considered to affect a possible Roman road whose projected line crosses the park.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, of Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor on the 25th February 2005 and the site code is KPM 05/13.

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Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the centre of Maidenhead just to the north of the town centre with the A4 (Bad Goodsberg Way) on its southern boundary and Cookham Road to the east (Fig. 2). The site consists of a park with associated facilities such as tennis courts. The underlying geology of the site consists of flood plain terrace river gravels (BGS 1990), although this was not encountered during works. The site lies at a height of c.25m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

In summary the archaeological potential of the site, as highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Fiona Macdonald of Berkshire Archaeology, is derived from the possible course of a Roman road indicated on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 and repeated in a map by Silver drawn in 1907 purporting to represent the town in 1830. The structure shows as a broad linear earthwork in the park aligned roughly north-south. The significance and destination of this road, if it exists, are unclear and it is not documented by Margary.
(1955; 1973) nor the Viatores (1964), nor is it shown in the Tabula Imperii Romani (TIR 1983) and the area of
the site is shown as arable farmland on Rocque’s map of 1760 (Fig. 3). None of these omissions is proof that
the road does not exist, but they do at least cast some doubt on it. The site lies within an area of East Berkshire
which is relatively rich in archaeological finds of prehistoric and Roman date (Ford 1987) although little is
recorded for the locality of the park itself.

Objectives and methodology
The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new
construction work for the new path. This is to involve examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping and
ground reduction.

Results
Monitoring of the new route of the footpath consisted of the removal of topsoil onto subsoil along the area of the
path closest to the projected course of the Roman Road and traversing the earthwork aligned north–south (Fig.
4). This stripping was done with a 360º type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The pathway was
dug to a depth of only 0.25m and measured 2.50m in width. The stratigraphy exposed consisted of topsoil onto a
gravelly layer containing modern china, glass, brick and tile above a clayey sand subsoil (Fig. 5). The natural
geology, (gravel or cover loam) was not unambiguously exposed.

Finds
No finds of an archaeological nature were retrieved.

Conclusion
The shallow depth of the groundworks did not remove the full depth of deposits above the natural geology and it
is therefore possible that archaeological deposits are still present beneath the subsoil on the site, especially so if
there are flanking ditches to the possible road. However, that the structure exists as an earthwork suggests that
any flanking ditches if present ought to have been visible at the level of the subsoil, but these were not seen. That
the nature of the material making up the earthwork includes modern objects suggests that this structure is of
relatively modern date and may be, for example, no more than a local farm track. As considered in the
archaeological background (above), the presence of a Roman road here is not considered by the leading
authorities on the subject and an examination of historic maps shows that the projected course of this route is across undefined arable land in the 18th century (Fig. 3). It appears to correspond with field boundaries by the late 19th century and this suggests that this is an over-enthusiastic interpretation of the historic landscape on the part of the Ordnance Survey surveyors at that time. The case for the presence of a Roman has not been proven.

References
Ford, S, 1987, East Berkshire Archaeological Survey, Berkshire County Counc Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
Margary, I D, 1955, Roman Roads in Britain, London
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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Kidwells Park.

Scale: 1:2500
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Figure 3. Rocque’s Map of Berkshire 1760
Figure 4. Detailed location of watching brief.
Figure 5. Representative section of trench dug for new path.

- Topsoil
- Gravel with modern china, brick and tile
- Base of trench (subsoil)