Model Farm, Ditchley Park Estate
Spelsbury, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief
For the Trustees of the Ditchley Estate

by Erlend Hindmarch
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code MFD 02/39

July 2002
Summary

Site name: Model Farm, Ditchley Park Estate, Spelsbury, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 3809 2075

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 22 May - 5 July 2002

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Erlend Hindmarch

Site code: MFD 02/39

Area of site: 0.25ha

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were located

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 the Oxfordshire Museum Service, with accession code OXCMS2002:133.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 12.07.02
                     Steve Preston ✓ 12.07.02
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Model Farm, Ditchley Park Estate, Spelsbury, Oxfordshire (SP 3809 2075) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr P J Cooper of Laws and Fiennes, Warren Lodge, Broughton, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 5EF on behalf of the Ditchley Estate Trustees, Ditchley Park Estate, Spelsbury, Oxfordshire.

Planning permission (W2002/0258) has been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council for the erection of a Dutch barn and two lean-to structures at the above site. A condition has been attached to the permission, requiring an archaeological watching brief to take place. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond and Erlend Hindmarch on 22 May and 5 July, 2002, and the site code is MFD 02/39. The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited in due course with Oxfordshire Museums Service, with accession code OXCMS2002:133.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the area of farm buildings of Model Farm on the west side of side of Ditchley Park (Fig 1). The site is relatively flat and partly cultivated. The underlying geology is mapped as Great Oolite Limestone (BGS 1968) and this was observed during the watching brief. The site lies at a height of approximately 162m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The brief supplied by Mr Hugh Coddington highlighted the proximity of a Scheduled Ancient Monument known as Grim’s Ditch (SAM21846). This ditch survives to the north of the site (Fig. 2) and it is believed that it dates to the Iron Age. It is believed that this ditch (one of several of the same name), which would enclose an area of
around 80 sq km, forms the remains of a territorial boundary, though it has also been suggested as part of an
*oppidum* (Collis, 1984, 227) or a defensive system (Cunliffe 1991).

A watching brief (Pollinger 1998) carried out during the construction of a nearby barn located about 50m
east north east from the present development site located some stone footings. These were not datable at the
time.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to locate, excavate and record any archaeological deposits that would be
affected by the construction of the new buildings. This involved examination of areas stripped of overburden and
excavation of foundation trenches and also involved the monitoring of all spoil removed from the area. Any
archaeological deposits encountered would be cleaned and sampled by hand in order to satisfy the aims of the
brief.

The construction of the buildings involved stripping of topsoil and the digging of 39 holes each 1m x 1m
for the erection of concrete pillars that would make the framework of the new buildings. The overburden
(topsoil) was removed to a depth of 0.3m and the pillar holes dug to a depth of 0.7m from the top of the stripped
surface.

**Results**

Two visits were made to the site. The first monitored the stripping of the overburden. The total area stripped
covered approximately 39m x 29m and was stripped to a depth of 0.3m from the present ground surface (Fig. 3).
At this depth it was noted that only topsoil was removed. This was a mid-grey silty clay with frequent inclusions
of limestone. No subsoil was observed but the natural limestone was revealed though this was only seen in
patches through remaining topsoil. No archaeological deposits were seen.

The second visit monitored further stripping of the overburden alongside and to the east of the previously
stripped area with the same results as above. Also observed was the excavation of the holes for the pillars. These
were dug to a depth of 0.7m below the stripped surface through the remaining topsoil (where present) and natural
limestone. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

**Finds**

No finds of any kind were recovered from any of the excavations during the monitoring of the site.
Conclusion

The watching brief recorded no archaeological deposits or recovered any artefacts of archaeological interest.

References

Model Farm, Ditchley, Spelsbury, near Charlbury, Oxfordshire 2002

Figure 1. Location of site at Ditchley and Oxfordshire.
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Figure 2. Location of site within Model Farm.
Model Farm, Ditchley, Spelsbury, Oxfordshire, 2002

Area stripped to expose natural geology monitored during watching brief

Area not stripped sufficient to expose natural geology