Pinnocks Wood Equestrian Centre, Burchett’s Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr David Eyles

by Andrew Mundin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code POB 08/69

December 2008
**Summary**

**Site name:** Pinnocks Wood Equestrian Centre, Burchett’s Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 8392 8100

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 26th September – 21st October 2008

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Joanna Pine, Andrew Mundin

**Site code:** POB 08/69

**Area of site:** c.1.3ha

**Summary of results:** No archaeologically relevant material was uncovered or disturbed.

**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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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Pinnocks Wood Equestrian Centre, Burchett’s Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8392 8100) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Chris Lawson, of McBains Cooper, Rafts Court, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, SL4 6RF on behalf of Mr David Eyles, 17 Majestic Apartments, King Edwards Road, Onchan, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM3 2BD.

A planning consent (06/02897) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to construct a new building to replace the existing centre, and extensively landscape the surrounding grounds following the centre’s demolition. The consent is subject to a condition (7) requiring a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeologist of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters pertaining to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Joanna Pine, Simon Cass and Andrew Mundin between 26th September and 21st October 2008. The site code is POB 08/69.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south of Burchett’s Green, on an area of ground associated with the Pinnocks Wood Equestrian Centre (Fig. 1). The whole of the grounds including the construction of a new centre covered c.1.3ha, and was to be extensive landscaped directly to the south of the existing centre, and to the west around the eastern and south extent of Pinnocks Wood. The site is bounded by Burchett’s Green Road at its western extent (Fig. 2). The ground is generally flat to the north, on the site of the previous centre, which was demolished prior to work commencing. It is located at between 65-70m above Ordnance Datum, with slightly undulating ground to the south rising to a slight plateau in the north. The underlying geology is mapped as mainly silty clay with beds of
sand and some gravel, of the Reading and Upnor formations of the Lambeth Group, with Seaford and Newhaven formation chalk, an Upper Cretaceous deposit, in the south-eastern corner of the site (BGS 2005). Where observed on the site, the geology was an orange clay/silt with some sand.

**Archaeological background**

The site’s archaeological potential has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Berkshire Archaeology (Macdonald 2008). In summary, there is considered to be high potential for prehistoric remains, with a number of sites identified in the vicinity (Ford 1987; Gates 1975). Fieldwalking on arable land to the south of the site revealed dense scatters of Bronze Age flintwork, which also included a possible burnt mound. This site to the south-west has been interpreted from the amount of identifiable burnt and fire-cracked flint recovered (Ford 1987, fig. 19), to be a site of Bronze Age occupation or funerary activity. The Iron Age site of Robin Hood’s Arbour lies c.1km to the east of Burchett’s Green. Roman deposits have been identified at Boundary Elms to the south-east, with finds and features suggesting a possible occupation site (Macdonald 2008).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of deep truncation from footings or basement excavation, and also examination for finds during topsoil removal. A pond was excavated with a toothless grading bucket to a natural deposit level supervised by the site archaeologist to a point were remains could be identified, recorded and then truncated when appropriately sampled. The general research aims of this project were to:

- Produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site.
- Establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.
- Produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

The project was designed to address the following research questions:

- When was the site first occupied?
- When was the site abandoned?
- What activities were taking place on the site?
- Is there any Roman occupation on the site?
Is there any prehistoric occupation on the site?

What use was made of floral and faunal resources and can these be identified and assessed from a programme of environmental sampling?

What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the sites during, before and after their use?

Results

A programme of monitoring was established to view various areas of groundworks and any truncation of topsoil, and/or, subsoil over natural geology. The large scale of the groundworks and landscaping (Fig. 3) meant the monitoring progressed in stages, as the potential for remains was considered for each process.

New building

Monitoring for the new building was carried out after demolition. Rubble crush 0.4m deep was recorded directly over natural geology, to the deepest level of excavation for the new basement at a depth of 1.05m. This included 0.6m of orange brown silty clay over chalk marl. No archaeological deposits were uncovered during these groundworks.

Landscaping

Areas for topsoil bunding were first stripped of topsoil in the western side of the site. Just c.0.2m of soil was removed, and this did not uncover natural geology. No finds were recovered from the topsoil in this strip. An area to the east was also stripped, typically only to 0.1m depth, which also did not reach the natural geology and did not uncover any material of archaeological interest. This area was levelled with crush and then established as hardstanding as a compound area for the site contractors.

The topsoil stripping did reveal natural geology towards the north end of the site, directly south of the existing building: orange brown clay was uncovered at a typical depth of 0.3m. No finds or features of archaeological relevance were uncovered. Stripping to the south did not uncover archaeological finds, but natural geology was not uncovered.

Pond

Within an existing natural hollow, a large area was excavated for a pond. The entire area had already been stripped of topsoil. An outer zone was graded to level it; no deposits or finds of archaeological interest were present. An inner area was then excavated under archaeological supervision to a depth of c. 1.0–1.2m, through a
maximum of 0.29m of subsoil (probably colluvium) and well into the natural geology, which was then to be reduced by a further metre into natural deposits; this latter operation was not observed. No archaeological deposits were uncovered during groundworks for the pond, and although the subsoil varied in depth, no obvious subsoil truncation had occurred prior to the pond excavation.

**Service trench**

A 0.65m wide trench for a water pipe was excavated to a depth of 0.60m, entirely within the natural geology (topsoil having already been removed). No features or finds of interest were noted.

**Finds**

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the groundworks. Very occasional ceramic building material of relatively recent date was identified during topsoil removal but was retained on site.

**Conclusion**

No finds nor deposits of any archaeological significance were recorded during the monitoring process of the groundworks and landscaping associated with the redevelopment of the Equestrian Centre.

**References**


Ford, S, 1987, ‘East Berkshire Archaeological Survey’, Berkshire County Councl Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading

Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley, an archaeological survey of the river gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn 1, Reading

Macdonald, F, 2008, *Pinnocks Wood Equestrian Centre, Burchetts Green, Maidenhead: brief for an archaeological watching brief*, Berkshire Archaeology, Reading

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Archaeological watching brief

Figure 1. Location of site within Burchett’s Green and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of areas observed during watching brief.