Summary

Site name: Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane, Enbourne, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4508 6530

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th July 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: RHE 07/89

Summary of results: No finds or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the watching brief and metal detecting survey.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by: Jennifer Lowe 28.08.07
Steve Preston 28.08.07
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane, Enbourne, West Berkshire (SU 4508 6530) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Brown of John Brown and Company, 11 Silverglades, Yateley, Hampshire, GU46 6DN on behalf of The Baer Property Trust.

Planning consent (App no 07/00431/House) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of an extension between the workshop outbuilding and the main house. This will comprise a footing for a new shower room and corridor access. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology requiring an archaeological 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 Council’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Mundin on 25th July 2007, and the site code is RHE 07/89.

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Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south-west of Newbury within Enbourne parish, on the western edge of Wash Common. (Fig. 1). Roundhill House stands just to the north-west of the top of the hill of the same name, at an approximate height of 121m above Ordnance Datum (OD) on the east side of Cope Hall Lane (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as plateau gravel, though it is close to the boundary with the Bagshot Beds and London Clay (BGS 1947). Sand and gravel was observed in the footing trenches, presumably plateau gravel.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of this site stems from its location overlooking the town of Newbury. Its position on the hill suggests a general potential for archaeological activity in the prehistoric (Neolithic/Bronze Age) and
Roman periods. A short way to the south-east a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery is recorded close to the water tower in Wash Common (Lobb and Rose 1996). It is thought that this cemetery consisted of five mounds though evidence of only two upstanding mounds remain. In addition to this general evidence, there also exists the potential of remains relating directly to a specific historical event.

On 20th September 1643, during the English Civil War, a battle was fought here between an army led by King Charles and a larger Parliamentary army led by the Earl of Essex. It is not clear, as with most battlefield sites, where exact positions of deployments and engagements were located, but it is thought that the Round Hill was occupied by the Parliamentary force, including artillery, during the First Battle of Newbury and it lies within the registered battlefield area. It is thought there could be remains of defensive earthworks for an artillery emplacement, but even if not, most civil war sites retain remains of temporary earthworks and stray finds such as musket and cannon balls, along with other ordnance (Smuthwaite 1984, 150–1). Recent archaeological work at a previous extension to Roundhill House failed to uncover any Civil War remains or metalwork (Cass 2007), and recent work in Wash Common and here has not uncovered any other remains of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval activity (Challis and Pine 2006; Coles and Ford 2002).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by intrusive excavation during groundworks. In general, this was to include examining areas of excavation for footing and service trenching, and where appropriate any ground reduction or landscaping. A specific objective of this project was to recover, via metal detecting, artefacts relating to the civil war battlefield.

Results

The proposed extension incorporated an existing garden wall, which already linked the outhouse building to the main house, to the south of the footing which was excavated (Fig. 3). The footing was excavated with a toothed bucketed 360° mini digger, which was 0.6m wide and 1.1m deep. This revealed a general stratigraphy which showed light subsurface disturbance from services (electric and drainage) to a depth of 0.5m just off the corner of the main house. This disturbance extended no more than 3m away from the building. Once the Tarmac and hoggin were removed to a depth of 0.44m, a grey brown sandy silt was uncovered. This seems to be an undisturbed subsoil layer which did not contain any mixing of post-medieval or modern building material and did not contain any metalwork (scanned with a metal detector). From a depth of 0.44m to the base of excavation,
a light orangey brown sandy gravel natural was uncovered generally to a depth of 1.1m, though in places an orange grey silty sand rose slightly from the base of excavation to a depth of c.1m. The potential for any archaeology seems to lie within this top 0.44m of ground but no archaeological finds or deposits were uncovered during the footing trench excavation.

A trench measuring 0.55m in depth was excavated from the footings to a manhole cover to the north (Fig. 3). This trench did not penetrate to the natural geology and uncovered made ground similar to the material observed in the footing. This did contain some light subsurface disturbance, however most material was modern in date. No finds of archaeological interest were uncovered during this service trench excavation.

Conclusion
In conclusion, no deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were uncovered during this watching brief and specifically, no finds or remains which might have related to the civil war battle.

References
Smurthwaite, D, 1984, The complete guide to the Battlefields of Britain, Harmondsworth
Roundhill House, Cope Hall Lane, Enborne, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2007
Archaeological watching brief

Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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An archaeological watching brief

Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Cope Hall Lane.

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Figure 3. Areas observed during watching brief

Roundhill House, Cope Hall Road, Enbourne, Newbury, West Berkshire, 2007

Round Hill House existing wall

Workshops

previous area subject to watching brief (Cass 2007)

drainage for shower

new bathroom and access

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Figure 4. Representative section of footing trench.

Tarmac

Hoggin

Light grey brown sandy silt with occasional rounded flint Subsoil?

Light orangey grey brown sandy gravel natural

Orangey grey clayey silt natural