Spencers, The Pound, 
Cookham, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Greene King

by Andrew Mundin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code SCB 08/93

October 2008
Summary

Site name: Spencers, The Pound, Cookham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8905 8525

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 28th August – 2nd September 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: SCB 08/93

Area of site: 175 sq m

Summary of results: This watching brief recorded cut features of early/mid Saxon and late Saxon dates along with a prehistoric struck flint and pottery comprising Late Neolithic Grooved Ware.

Monuments Identified: Saxon occupation site

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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Steve Preston ✓ 23.10.08
Spencers, The Pound, Cookham, Berkshire
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Mundin

Report 08/93

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out to the rear of Spencers, The Pound, Cookham, Berkshire, SL6 9QE (SU 8905 8525) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Lee Bradley, of Architect CT, 21 Ralli Courts, West Riverside, Manchester, M3 5FT, on behalf of Greene King Pub Partners.

A planning consent (08/01077) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to carry out alternations to the existing property, which will include the construction of a single storey kitchen and dining extension, along with a new entrance and car parking. The consent is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in this case a watching brief to take place 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, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Mundin and Jennifer Lowe between the 28th August and the 2nd September 2008 and the site code is SCB08/93.

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 on the north side of The Pound, adjacent to Poundside which stands on its junction with Terrys Lane (Fig. 2). The road is slightly sunken from the houses on this side of The Pound, with the site itself showing signs of a slight slope at the front of the building, which is set off the road. The rear of the property has a gradual slope to the north. The top height of the garden here was 27-28m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The general area is built up, and the underlying geology is situated on the edge of the Taplow Gravel with the floodplain terrace to the east (BGS, 2004). Gravel geology was uncovered in the footing trenches excavated down through the reduced ground level as noted in Figure 3.
Archaeological background

Cookham is situated on the road linking High Wycombe and Maidenhead, and developed as a medieval settlement and ferry crossing point for the Thames, until a bridging point was built in the 13th century at Maidenhead. Dredging of the river Thames especially has produced a large range of prehistoric and historic tools and weapons of stone, flint, bronze and iron (Ford 1987). Numerous rich sites of many periods with the Thames Valley have been located in the area from the air (Gates 1975), the closest of which include leveled Bronze Age round barrows. To the north-west of Cookham a cropmark complex probably indicates the presence of an Iron Age/Roman enclosure (Gates 1975, map 26).

Cookham, meaning either ‘village of the cook(s)’ or ‘village by the hill’ is thought to have early Saxon origins, associated with the ‘Seven Hundreds of Cookham and Bray’ representing a 7th century foundation of a possible settlement by the Thames (Astill 1978, 23). Cookham is mentioned in Domesday Book, and is noted to have had a minster from the 8th century, thought likely to be sited near to the surviving 12th-century church. The Burghal Hidage lists a fort at ‘Sceafeseg’ (Astill 1978, 23), thought to be situated on Sashes Island, within the Thames to the north-east of the town. The upcast from a lock-cut though the island in 1830 was spread over most the island, so probably masks any surviving earthworks. The ‘burh’ (defended settlement) here did not develop into an urban centre, due it its proximity to larger settlements, and what seems to be a separation between a domestic settlement and the possible fortified site.

In relation to physical evidence, very little immediate remains have been recorded within the medieval centre of Cookham of this date. Funeral remains, in the form of inhumations at Noah’s Ark, and burial mounds noted on Cock Marsh are thought to be indicators of the early origins of the settlement. Investigations of these features were all carried out in the 19th century.

At the end of the 10th century, Cookham developed as a centre of a royal estate with a religious focus at the minster and a market (Astill, 1978, 23). The first mention of the Borough is in 1225. The manor remained in royal hands until 1818, so detailed records have been made of the Medieval development of the town. The town itself is a concentrated block of burgage plots on the High Street, centred close to the river crossing, road junctions and minster. The west extension of the town from the High Street in the later medieval and post-medieval period expanded on the west side of Cookham Moor (The Pound), as it was liable to frequent flooding. At the Fleet Ditch, a causeway and bridge link this area and the older town.

Most of the listed buildings on the High Street in Cookham seem to date from the 15th and 16th centuries, with houses on The Pound dated to the 18th century.
Recent archaeological work in Cookham has mainly been small scale, as watching briefs carried out during ground works for small extensions to existing buildings. For example, one was carried out in the medieval centre of Cookham on School Lane at Thyme Cottage. This work uncovered one pit of possible prehistoric date which contained a single struck flint flake (Ford 2005). Another was by the Lulle Brook, at The Coach House, Mill Lane. No archaeological material was recovered from the groundworks (Hammond 2003).

**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 excavation during level reduction which was undertaken with a small 360° mechanical excavator, noting the archaeological significance of each soil horizons truncated during machining. If natural geology was not reached during the reduction, the footing trenches would be monitored during excavation and the area at the base of the ground reduction would be properly investigated for archaeological remains before further disturbance after machine could occur.

**Results** (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1–3)

All the groundworks during the ground reduction were viewed. The area affected by the ground reduction was roughly 175 sq m, northwards away from the existing structure into the rear garden. This levelling reduced most of the ground by 0.91m, with just a small area to the north reduced by 0.77m from the original ground level. The level was approximately 26.7m above OD. A list of the features investigated is provided as Appendix 1.

A standard stratigraphy was garden topsoil over a brown clayey silt made ground (51) of late 19th-century date, over a buried soil (52) at 0.77m below the modern ground surface (Pl. 3). A small cluster of Grooved Ware pottery sherds noted in the northern part of the strip within this layer (Fig. 3), can be dated to the later Neolithic period. Areas of Victorian and modern truncation reach from the top of layer 51 (Fig. 3). A stamped glass bottle was recovered from layer 51, making this contemporary with, or later than, the construction of Spencers, in the late 18th or 19th century.

Beneath layer 52 to the north was pit 5, which also contained two sherds Neolithic pottery in its upper fill (58) but also a single sherd of pottery that is probably dated to the 11th to 12th century AD. It is possible this latter sherd derives from layer 52 above, and that the pit is Neolithic, but this is uncertain. All three sherds are tiny, and it may be safer to accept the later date. This pit was not fully investigated as it was not to be further truncated by the footings. Two fills were noted in the upper part of this feature. Fill 58 towards the top of the
feature was a moderate yellow grey clayey silt with occasional charcoal inclusions. The lower fill (59) was a mottled yellow-brown, grey clayey silt with moderate to frequent charcoal flecking throughout.

In the main stripped area, part of this buried soil (52) was removed to the reduced depth and this uncovered more features. Some higher truncation was evident at this level (Fig. 3), but most of a linear feature (2) extended SW–NE across the stripped area. This feature was 0.35m wide and was filled with a soft slightly mottled orange, brown sandy silt (55). Two sherds of early to mid Saxon pottery were recovered from its fill. Sieving of sample 1 taken from this feature, did not yield anything further.

Along with the gully, three other features were recorded at this level. Pit 3 (Pl. 1) was investigated by hand, with a slot 0.86m wide dug to a depth of 0.52m. It uncovered four layers (56, 60, 61, 62), though the base of the feature was not reached. Pottery of early-mid Saxon date was mostly found in this feature though the latest pottery from this feature dated to the 10th or 11th century. No finds were noted in the lower fills and the base of this feature was not reached as the lower extents were not to be truncated by further machining. Fill 60 is of particular note in this pit as this was charcoal-rich and also contained, on the interface with layer 56, burnt bone fragments. More fragments were recovered from the bulk sample 2, taken from the base of fill 56. These upper fills seem to be domestic rubbish disposal. The lower fills, 61 and 62, were both sterile of finds and charcoal. Fill 61 was a brown-grey clayey silt. The lower fill, is probably a primary or a secondary fill and was an orangey silty clay.

Pit 4 (Pl. 2) also contained early to middle Saxon pottery. This feature contained a single grey clayey silt fill (57), with a bowl-shaped profile. This section was recorded after the lower machined footing had been created, but was hand defined during machining. A small amount of bone was also recovered from this feature.

The remaining feature, pit 1, was not excavated: post-medieval pottery and clay pipe were recovered from its surface. It was also not in an area of further truncation.

Finds

Pottery by Alan Vince
A small collection of pottery and fired clay was recovered from the watching brief (Appendix 2). The finds range from the Neolithic period to the late 19th or 20th century and include sherds of early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery whose condition suggests that they come from occupation nearby.

Five sherds of pottery are identified here as being of Grooved Ware dating to the Late Neolithic period (NEOGROG in catalogue, Appendix 2). The sherds all have a similar fabric but probably come from four
separate vessels. The fabric is soft and contains sparse rounded quartz, angular flint and grog inclusions. All the sherds have a dark core. The sherds all come from vessels of similar wall thickness and curvature, apparently cylindrical. Two vessels (three sherds) are decorated with shallow, u-sectioned grooves. In one case these appear to be associated with raised cordons and are diagonal to the cordon and in the other they are widely spaced parallel lines. All the sherds are abraded, some quite heavily.

Eight sherds of early to mid Anglo-Saxon pottery were recovered. All have a similar fabric and come from a vessel or vessels with similar wall thicknesses and curvature. The fabric contains moderate burnt-out organic inclusions and abundant rounded quartz grains, some of which are polished and probably originated in Lower Cretaceous deposits. The vessel(s) were probably enclosed and have a rough scratched exterior surface and a scraped interior surface. The latter is particularly characteristic of 6th- to 9th-century pottery in the Thames valley. The pottery is probably similar to that recovered from the nearby site of Wexham Road East (Ford 2008), which is dated to the later 6th or 7th centuries through radiocarbon dating of the associated ground-level post-built structures.

Sherds of two wares were identified as being probably of 11th to 12th century date. One of these contains abundant grog fragments (EMGROG) and comes from a handmade jar. Similar vessels occur in very small numbers in the City of London in 12th-century deposits (Vince and Jenner 1991). The other ware is tempered with abundant, fine sand (grains mainly c. 0.2mm across) with probably some angular flint of similar size. Eight sherds from a single vessel were recovered. This vessel was a small jar with a flat base and rounded body. Prominent horizontal finger marks are present on the interior and the exterior shows faint vertical lines, which may be traces of decoration which was more prominent on the upper half of the body or simply part of the finishing process. The fabric has been classified as M40 ware (a product of the Chilterns, including production sites at Denham), based on the possible vertical decoration, but pottery production took place at Camley Gardens, Maidenhead, which is another possible source.

Six sherds of pottery of types dating to the mid 18th century or later were recovered. The majority are of types present in the mid 18th to very early 19th centuries. They consist of a sherd from a white stoneware plate (SWSG), produced in the mid 18th century; Pearlware vessels with industrial slip and mocha decoration (PEAR) and a transfer-printed plate (TPW). The sixth sherd, however, comes from a Derbyshire stoneware bottle which is stamped. This stamp includes the patent date of 1870, which gives a terminus post quem for the production of this vessel. Derbyshire stoneware bottles of this size were often made as containers for blackleading (graphite).
The earliest sherds from the site may date to the late Neolithic period. However, the identification of these is tentative. The sherds come mainly from the subsoil, context 52, together with two sherds from the fill of pit 5, which, however, is probably of early medieval date.

The early to mid Anglo-Saxon sherds are less heavily abraded than the Neolithic sherds and all come from the fills of features 2, 3 and 4. Of these, 2 and 4 contain no later finds and might be of early to mid Anglo-Saxon date. Similar sherds were present at Wexham Road East, Slough, where they were dated to the later 6th to 7th centuries, and the sherds are similar to those from the mill at Old Windsor, excavated by Brian Hope-Taylor and dated to the 7th century by dendrochronology. There are hints that this part of the country (especially further up-river, in Oxfordshire) became aceramic in the mid Saxon period, although chaff-tempered pottery of broadly-similar character is present in mid Saxon deposits in Lundewic, but it may be more common in the earlier part of the settlement’s occupation, in the late 7th and early 8th centuries (Blackmore 2003). The sherds, however, are all quite small and do not have the appearance of freshly broken vessels. It is possible, therefore, that they are residual in all three features. Nevertheless, they would not have survived for long in a ploughed or garden soil and must indicate occupation on or very near to the site, probably in the 6th or 7th centuries.

The Saxo-Norman sherds include eight from the same vessel, all looking fresh, from the fill of feature 3. They probably date the filling of this feature to the 11th to mid 12th centuries and are the first definite evidence for occupation on the site itself.

The early modern finds come from two contexts. Context 53 is the fill of feature 1 and the sherds form a small group probably to be dated to the late 18th or very early 19th century. The other context, 51, produced the sherd of Derbyshire stoneware which is clearly of late 19th century or later date.

**Fired clay by Alan Vince**

Six abraded fragments of fired clay were recovered from the fill of feature 3. All have a similar fabric containing abundant rounded quartz, some polished, and sparse angular flint. The groundmass is silty and the overall texture is similar to the London brickearths. The similarity of the quartz/flint sand to that adhering to some of the finds as concretions suggests a very local origin. One of the fragments has a flat surface and all might be daub from a wattle and daub structure.

**Animal bone by Ceri Falys**

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from three separate contexts. A total of 56 fragments were present for analysis, weighing 450g (Appendix 4). Overall, the surface preservation of the remains was good,
although frequent fragmentation of all elements was noted, and some-what hindered the species identification. Initial analysis aimed at separating all fragments into generalized animal size-categories; more specific animal identifications were made, where possible. Refitted breaks were counted as one bone.

The minimum number of individual animals (MNI) present within the assemblage was calculated to be five, based primarily on the fragments in context 3 (56). One young cow was represented by several fragments of an unfused right proximal femur. Two pigs were identified based on the duplication of the right mandible. A single sheep/goat was also identified through the presence of a right mandibular fragment. Finally, one unidentifiable small-sized animal was also present, based on the presence of 9 small ribs and scapula fragments.

No evidence of butchery cut marks were observed, and no further information could be retrieved from these skeletal remains.

**Struck flint by Steve Ford**

Four pieces of struck flint were retained from three of the features (Appendix 3). One flake has been recovered from each of pits 4 and 5, and these are undiagnostic, even though pit 5 may be dated to the Neolithic period. A flake has also been recovered from gully 2, as has an awl. These are broadly of a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date, and seem to be further evidence, with the pottery in pit 5 of possible Neolithic activity in the immediate area.

**Other finds by Andrew Mundin**

One sherd of tile and four stems of clay pipe were recovered from pit 1. Neither of the items is of particular note and are both of 19th century origin. A glass bottle recovered from the made ground (51) over the buried soil was stamped with ‘Thompson & Walton of Maidenhead’, with ‘Chapmans of Birkenhead’ stamp on the opposite side. This is also probably of 19th century date.

**Conclusion**

A surprisingly large number of features were recorded on this watching brief. The presence of pits and a gully containing pottery and animal bone of Early or Middle Saxon date points to the presence of this location as an occupation site of this period. Less indicative is the presence of a single late Saxon or early medieval pit. Clearly, the finding of Saxon remains in Cookham is not unexpected in the context of the historical background (above), though the location of this site several hundred metres from the historic core of the village to the east is noteworthy.
The presence of late Neolithic pottery, struck flint and a possible pit of the same date is also noteworthy due to the extreme rarity of both identified sites and stratified deposits for this period (Ford 2007), although unfortunately none of the deposits containing this material here can be securely dated to the prehistoric period.

References
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Hammond, S, 2003, The Coach House, Mill Lane, Cookham, Berkshire: an archaeological watching brief, Thames Valley Archaeol Serv report 03/104, Reading
### APPENDIX 1: Feature index

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<td>Map</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Made ground</td>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
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<td>Buried soil</td>
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<td>Subsoil</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Gully</td>
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<td>Pottery</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Pit</td>
<td>Early-Mid Saxon</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td></td>
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## APPENDIX 2: Pottery table

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<td>DERBS</td>
<td>bottle</td>
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<td>Neolithic</td>
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<td>NEOGROG</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>bowl</td>
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APPENDIX 3: Flint catalogue

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APPENDIX 4: Animal bone catalogue

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LAR: Cattle, horse, etc  
SAR: Sheep/goat, pig, etc  
Small: Dog, cat, etc  
MNI: Minimum number of individuals
Archaeological watching brief

Figure 1. Location of site within Cookham and Berkshire.

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Spencers, The Pound, Cookham, Berkshire 2008
Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2. Detailed location of site in Cookham, off The Pound.

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Figure 3. Detail plan of features uncovered during watching brief.


- Late Neolithic grooved ware pottery cluster from 52 reduced by 0.77m
- Footings on reduced area after investigation reduced by 0.91m
- Ramp access
- Victorian and modern truncation

Site coordinates:
- SU89025
- SU89050
- 0 25m
- 25m

0 25m

SCB 08/93
Plate 1. Pit 3, looking north-east.; scale, horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.3m

Plate 2. Pit 4, looking north-east; scales, horizontal 1m, vertical 0.5m
Plate 3. Site view, looking north-north-east, pit 3 in foreground.