18 Shipton Road, Ascott-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Empire Homes Ltd

by Sarah Coles and Clare Challis
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SRA03/37

May 2003
Summary

Site name: 18 Shipton Road, Shipton-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP2887 1861

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 27th-28th May 2003

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Clare Challis

Site code: SRA03/37

Area of site: c.0.22 ha

Summary of results: Five out of six trenches contained archaeological deposits containing a small collection of medieval pottery

Monuments identified: Medieval ditches and a pit

Location and reference of archive: The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 03.06.03
Steve Preston ✓ 04.06.03
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 18 Shipton Road, Ascott-Under-Wychwood (SP2887 1861) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Brendan O’Brien of Empire Homes Ltd, The Long Barn, Old Chalford, Chipping Norton, Oxon, OX7 5QR.

Planning permission was sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to demolish existing structures and construct fourteen dwellings and nine garages (02/1943). Due to the potential impact upon below ground archaeological features it was recommended that a field evaluation should be required if consent were to be granted. However that application was refused and the evaluation was not undertaken. The applicant is now considering an amended application. In the knowledge that an archaeological evaluation will be required, it is being undertaken prior to any permission being sought.

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 of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Clare Challis, Simon Cass and Sarah Coles on 27th and 28th May 2003 and the site code is SRA03/37. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The village of Ascott-Under-Wychwood is situated to the north-east of Burford in the Cotswolds. The site is located west of Shipton Road and south of both the river Evenlode and the Railway, and is a c.0.22ha L-shaped parcel of land (Fig. 1). The land is level at a height of c. 96m above Ordnance Datum. The geology is second terrace gravel overlying lower lias clay (BGS 1982).

Archaeological background

The site of the proposed development lies within the historic core of the part of the village historically known as Ascot Earl. Shipton Road was the main historic access route through the village. Ascott Earl was documented (as
Estcote) in Domesday Book of 1086 and therefore dates to at least the later Anglo Saxon period. To the south-west of the development site stands a motte and bailey castle, dating to the 12th century civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Maud. The nearby church dates to the 13th century.

A recent archaeological evaluation fronting onto Shipton Road, to the north-east of the site, revealed archaeological features of indeterminate date (H Coddington, pers. comm.). An evaluation undertaken east of the site at Corner Farm, Ascott-Under-Wychwood (Hammond 2003) found ditches dating to the 13th–15th century, medieval gullies, postholes and stakeholes. A subsequent watching brief on the same site (Anthony 2003) found additional features, five of which dated to the 11th century AD, significantly extending the date range of known early deposits in the village.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development in order to inform proposals for mitigation measures that might be required. This work was to be carried out in a manner that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Specific research aims of the project were:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site.

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present.

To determine if any deposits of late Saxon or Medieval date were present which reflect the early history of the village.

In order to fulfil these objectives five trenches were originally proposed, each 10m long and 1.6m wide. They were dug by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket operated under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were intended to be located as close as possible to the positions indicated in the project specification but in the event one trench had to be considerably shortened and an extra trench was dug to compensate for this. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds and a metal detector employed to enhance the recovery of metal finds as appropriate.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.
**Results** (Figs. 2–4)

Six trenches were dug, located as shown on Figure 2.

**Trench 1** (Plate 1)

This trench was 10.5m long and 0.53m deep. It located a single feature, ditch 1, which was aligned NW–SE. It was 1.25m wide, 0.38m deep with a single fill (Figs. 3 and 4) and produced a single sherd of medieval pottery.

**Trench 2** (Plate 2)

This trench was 10.7m long and 0.68m deep. It also located a single feature, ditch 2, which was aligned SW–NE. The ditch was 1.3m wide and 0.3m deep with a single fill (Figs. 3 and 4). It produced six sherds of medieval pottery.

**Trench 3**

This trench was 9.6m long and 0.93m deep. Some modern dumping had taken place in this area. Three modern pits were located (Fig. 2).

**Trench 4**

This trench was 10.6m long and 0.75m deep. It also located a single feature, a gully or ditch (5) which was aligned SW–NE. The ditch was 0.6m wide but was not excavated. The an unidentified burial of a dog or sheep-sized animal was located in the uppermost fill of the fill at the south-western end but was not excavated.

**Trench 5A**

This trench was 5.1m long and 0.75m deep. It located a single feature, ditch 3 which was aligned south west - north east. The western trench side was extended to examine the full profile of ditch 3. The ditch was 1.3m wide, 1.1m deep and 0.85m deep with two fills (52, 55) (Figs. 3 and 4). It produced 14 sherds of medieval pottery.

**Trench 5B**

This trench was 4.3m long and 0.47m deep. It located a single feature, pit 4, oval in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.97m. It was 0.2m deep with a single fill (Figs 3 and 4) which contained 4 sherds of medieval pottery.
Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 28 sherds with a total weight of 559g. All the pottery was of medieval date, and typical for the area. The majority of the material comprised fairly small sherds, although a large fragment of a jar was noted in feature 3 (52) in trench 5A.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 3 sherds, 23g.
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 2 sherds, 23g.
OXCX: Wychwood ware, late 12th – 15th century. 23 sherds, 513g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2. Each date should be regarded as a terminus post quem. Feature 3 (52) is dated to the 13th century on the presence of an glazed OXY jug sherd with slip stripe decoration. Mellor (1994, 66) notes this decoration as being a 13th century introduction.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed that archaeological deposits are certainly present on the site. A modest range of deposits were discovered, all certainly or probably of medieval date. The features comprised small ditches, presumably property boundaries or for stock control, along with a shallow pit. One ditch contained an undated animal burial (not excavated).

References

Anthony, S, 2003, Corner Farm, Ascott-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire, An Archaeological Watching Brief, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/02, Reading
Hammond, S, 2003, Corner Farm, Ascott-Under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire, An archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/02a, Reading
APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.24m of turf and topsoil above 0.27m of subsoil above orange/yellow clay with limestone fragments (natural) Ditch 1. [Plate 1]</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.30m of turf and topsoil above 0.36m of subsoil above orange/yellow clay with limestone fragments (natural) Ditch 2. [Plate 2]</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.46m of turf and topsoil above 0.16m of made ground above 0.23m of buried soil above limestone fragments (natural) Three modern pits</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.30m of turf and topsoil above 0.35m of subsoil above orange/yellow clay with limestone fragments (natural) Ditch 3 and animal burial</td>
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<tr>
<td>5A</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.35m of turf and topsoil above 0.38m of subsoil above orange/yellow clay with limestone fragments (natural) Ditch 3</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
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<td>0.30m of turf and topsoil above 0.26m of subsoil above orange/yellow clay with limestone fragments (natural) Pit 4</td>
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# APPENDIX 2: Feature details

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<td>Pottery</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Ditch</td>
<td>Medieval, Late 12th Century?</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>52, 55</td>
<td>Ditch</td>
<td>Medieval, 13th Century</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
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<tr>
<td>5B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Pit</td>
<td>Medieval, Late 12th Century?</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Gully and animal burial</td>
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APPENDIX 3: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

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<th>Trench</th>
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<td>No Wt</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>5A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>5B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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<td>23</td>
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Figure 1. Location of site within Ascott and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of trenches. SRA03/37
Figure 3. Plans of features in trenches.
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Figure 4. Sections of features.

Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 5A

Trench 5B

Trench 1 Trench 2 Trench 5A Trench 5B

49.17m 49.17m 49.54m 49.54m

0m 1m 0m 1m

50 51 52 53

49.01m AOD

0m 1m 0m 1m

50 51 52 53

49.01m AOD
Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north-east, scales 2m and 1m.

Plate 2. Trench 2, Feature 2, looking south west, scales 1m and 0.5m.