The Close, Burcot, 
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Phase 1

For Lawrence Baker Limited

by Richard Oram

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

March 2005
Summary

Site name: The Close, Burcot, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5630 9595

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th November to 3rd December 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Richard Oram

Site code: TCB 04/103

Area of site: c1200 sq. m.

Summary of results: One shallow gully (drain) and one pit, both modern were observed.

Monuments identified: none

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

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Report 04/103

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Close, Burcot, Abingdon, Oxfordshire (SU 5630 9595) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr M. S. Cadden of DWA Architects Limited, Delacy House, 4 Park Street, Selby, North Yorkshire YO8 4PW on behalf of Lawrence Baker Limited, Pump House, Abingdon Road, Standlake, Oxfordshire, OX29 7QH.

Planning consent (P98/W0568) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council to enlarge the existing nursing home with a 2-storey extension to provide an additional 48 bedrooms. The consent is subject to a condition (9) relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out during the groundworks due to the possibility that operations may disturb or destroy archaeological deposits. The development is to take place in two phases and this document reports on the first phase only.

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 Ms Hannah Fluck, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, archaeological adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Oram and Sian Anthony between 25th November and 3rd December 2004 and the site code is TCB04/103.

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Location, topography and geology

The site is a nursing home located towards the centre of the village on the south side of the A415 and immediately north of the river Thames (Fig. 2). The extension is being added to the north-west of the existing nursing home. It is enclosed on the north and west by existing buildings (Fig. 3). The site lies at 50m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is terrace gravels with alluvium (BGS 1980), which was noted on site.
**Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted by a brief prepared by Ms Hannah Fluck of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Fluck 2003). In summary the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley (Briggs *et al.* 1986) close to the river itself. This is a topographic zone favored for settlement throughout most of prehistory. Recorded to the south of the site, on the other side of the Thames is a Mesolithic occupation site as well as a complex of Iron Age and Roman settlement and landscape features including a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Northfield Farm). To the east and south east, various Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial monuments have been excavated in advance of gravel extraction and road building. Also to the east of the site is the course of the Dorchester to Alcester Roman Road (Margary 1955, 119). A recent watching brief carried out very close to the site, however, did not reveal any archaeological deposits (Taylor and Challis 2001).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This was to involved examination of areas of topsoil removal and ground reduction as well as excavations for foundation trenches and services.

**Results**

The footprint of the phase 1 construction work was stripped of topsoil and subsoil down to a depth of c. 1m to the north (c. 51.0m AOD) and c. 1.5m to the south (48.2m) to expose the natural red/brown sandy silt (Fig. 3). All possible features were hand cleaned, excavated and recorded. The spoil was removed from site during excavation and was therefore not available to be check through for finds.

Only two features were noted on site, a pit (2) and a gully (1). Pit 2 was half-sectioned and found to be 0.7m in diameter and 0.5m deep with very straight sides. It has a single fill of grey brown sandy silt and occasional small sub rounded stones. One small fragment of modern brick was found within its fill, this was not retained.

Gully 1 was investigated by a 1m long slot 0.7m wide and 0.2 m deep. It was filled with a grey brown silty sand. There were no finds from the gully but it is likely that this is a modern field drain as it could be seen in section cutting from a high level just below the topsoil through the subsoil.
Conclusion

Both of the features noted during the investigation are likely to be of a modern date. The gully produced no finds but could be seen to cut through the subsoil against the limit of the excavation. Pit 2 contained a modern piece of brick. There were no other finds or deposits of archaeological interest encountered within the observed area.

References

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Oxfordshire, 2005
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Phase 1

Figure 1. Location of site within Burcot and Oxfordshire.
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Figure 2. Location of site within Burcot

Scale 1:2500
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Figure 3. Detailed location of area of watching brief observations

Scale 1:40