The Close, Burcot, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief (Phase 2)

For Lawrence Baker Limited

by Jennifer Lowe and Jo Pine
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TCB04/103b

November 2005
Summary

Site name: The Close, Burcot, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5630 9595

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 1st to 11th November 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jennifer Lowe

Site code: TCB 04/103b

Area of site: c.600 sq. m (this phase; whole site c.1200 sq m))

Summary of results: No archaeology 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 Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✔ 16.11.05
                                Steve Preston ✔ 16.11.05
Introduction

This report documents the results of the second phase of 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.

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 advisers to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jennifer Lowe, Pamela Jenkins, Richard Oram and Sean Wallis between 1st November and 11th of November 2005 and the site code is TCB04/103.

The development took place in two phases and this document reports on the second phase of works with the results of the first phase of watching brief having already been dealt with in an earlier report (Oram 2005). The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

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). An extension was being added to the south-west of the existing nursing home (Fig. 3). This phase of the watching brief was concerned with the building of the northern part of the extension. The site lies at 50m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is terrace gravels with alluvium (BGS 1980), which was observed in the foundation trenches.
**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).

The earlier phase of watching brief only located a shallow gully and a pit, both of modern date (Oram 2005).

**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 excavations for foundation trenches and services as necessary.

**Results**

An existing building was demolished prior to construction of this part of the redevelopment, and this phase of the extension complex was built over its former footprint. The foundation trenches excavated were between 0.70m and 1.70m wide and varied in depth between 1.30m and 4.50m (Fig. 2).

The majority of the foundation trenches showed modern demolition rubble measuring between 0.20m–0.55m deep directly overlying an orange brown sandy silt which was between 0.20m and 0.40m deep. This is probably an alluvial deposit. It overlay gravel and sand and this geology was excavated to a depth of between 1.30m and 4m below the present ground surface.

Some of the foundation trenches were excavated in an area of backfilled basement, which was associated with the previous building on the site. These trenches were prone to collapse but showed a stratigraphy of demolition rubble between 0.90m and 2.00m deep onto to the sand and gravel geology.
No archaeological features were observed in any of the trenches excavated and no artefacts of archaeological interest were recovered.

**Conclusion**

No deposits of an archaeological nature were observed during the course of this phase of the watching brief and no finds of archaeological interest were recovered. No areas of *in-situ* buried topsoil and subsoil were identified in any of the trenches. It seems that any archaeological deposits which may have been present in this area of the site, would have been truncated to a greater or lesser extent by the previous building, which was demolished to make way for this part of the extension.

**References**

The Close, Burcot, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, 2005
An Archaeological Watching Brief
Phase 2

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

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

Scale 1:400
Figure 4. Representative sections of foundation trenches.