Tuckenhay, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Colin Ames

by Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code THB04/66

August 2004
Summary

Site name: Tuckenhay, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire

Site code: THB04/66

Grid reference: SU 82800 84080

Site activity: Watching brief

Date and duration of project: 26-27th June 2004

Project Manager: Steve Ford

Summary of results: Two early medieval features, both probably large pits; a single residual sherd of Roman pottery.

Monuments identified: Pits

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston 04.08.04
Jennifer Lowe 04.08.04
Tuckenhay, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire
An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Steve Ford

Report 04/66

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the construction of extensions at Tuckenhay, Mill Street, Hurley, Berkshire (SU 8280 8408) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Colin Ames of Tuckenhay, Mill Street, Hurley, Berkshire, SL6 5ND.

A planning consent (03/41117) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to erect two extensions to the existing house. The planning consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks. The site lies within the boundaries of Hurley Priory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 19020) and consent has been granted (HSD/9/2/6186) by Ms A R Middleton on behalf of the Secretary of State for Media, Culture and Sport for the works. This is in accordance with the Ancient Monuments and Scheduled Areas Act (1979) 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 Mr. Mike Hall, the acting archaeological adviser to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Mr Rob Perrin of English Heritage advising the Secretary of State.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford between 26th and 27th of July 2004 and the site code is THB04/66. The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR, but will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies on the western side of Mill Lane on the eastern margins of Hurley within the former grounds of the Priory. The extensions were built on the south-west and south-east corners of the house (Fig. 2). Geological maps indicate that the site lies on alluvium (BGS 1974) though gravel, sand and a silty clay material that might be alluvium were observed in the watching brief. The site lies at c. 25m above Ordnance Datum.
**Archaeological background**

The site is situated within the eastern margins of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hurley Benedictine Priory (SAM 19020), which was founded in 1086 by Geoffrey de Mandeville and was under the control of the Abbey of Westminster until its suppression in 1536, when the land passed into lay hands (Ford 1987). A number of archaeological watching briefs have been carried out in the near vicinity. At Monks Garden, Mill Lane, a large ditch containing pottery dating to the mid 12th and 13th centuries was recorded. Two pits were also located; one of which was dated to the early 12th to late 13th century (Pine 1999). Archaeological watching briefs carried out on the foundations and associated services of Abbey House, Mill Lane and foundation trenches for a new conservatory at that property failed to reveal any archaeological features though a sherd of Roman pottery was recovered (Huscroft 1999; Hammond 2000). Archaeological watching briefs at Warren House, Lovelace Close (Ford 1996) and Ladye Place Boathouse, Mill Lane (Pine 1999) did not record any archaeological deposits. whereas a watching brief at Florence House, on the High Street just to the west of the scheduled area located a large medieval pit (Pine 2004).

The boundary of the priory was defined by a moat and this ditch lies within the boundary of Tuckenhay just to the east of the watching brief area (Fig. 2).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and fully record any archaeological deposits present and to establish dating and phasing for any features present on the site. This would involve the monitoring of the digging of foundation trenches for the new extensions and the inspection of a soakaway pit.

**Results**

The foundation trenches for the main (south-west) extension were 0.60m wide and were 1.20m deep. The stratigraphy observed in these trenches typically consisted of a concrete and scalpins patio base onto an old topsoil to a depth of 0.45m. This overlay a brown clayey sand subsoil to a depth of 0.7m. This in turn overlay either a pale yellow sand or fine, loose gravel. The gravel was observed to slope down towards the north-east (Fig. 4, upper) and may mark the edge of the terrace, beyond which was the alluvium-covered floodplain or an clay filled palaeochannel.
Two large pits (1 and 2) were located in this foundation trench. Pit 1 had a diameter of 2m below the weathering cone and was at least 1.2m deep with steep sides (Fig. 4). The foundation trench did not expose the full profile of the pit and a sondage failed to reach the bottom. The pit contained at least five fills (51–55) with a lower fill (54) being charcoal-rich and apparently deliberately buried by clean upcast sand (52). Medieval pottery and animal bone was recovered from the pit.

Pit 2 also had a diameter of 2m but with a more bowl-shaped profile at least for the upper levels. It was at least 1.1m deep and again the foundation trench did not expose the full profile of the pit and a sondage failed to reach the bottom. The pit contained at least three fills (56–58) and also contained medieval pottery and animal bone.

The front (south-east) extension trench was 0.55m wide and was also 1.20m deep. It revealed a different stratigraphy with the ‘bedrock’ comprising a brown silty clay without stones. This deposit may be what was anticipated from the geological survey and appears to indicate that the house lies on the junction of the terrace and floodplain of the river. It is possible, however, that this deposit is a clay-filled palaeochannel as observed elsewhere near Hurley (Torrance and Ford 1991). Concrete and made ground to a depth of 0.5m overlay the alluvium. No finds or deposits were recovered from this extension trench.

The soakaway was 1.2m by 1.1m and 1.1m deep and was located 9m to the south-west of the house (5m beyond the extension) (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy comprised turf onto brown sandy subsoil onto sand present at a depth of 0.6m. No finds or archaeological deposits were observed.

The pipe trench joining the soakaway with the south-west extension was relatively shallow and set within the subsoil.

The finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 28 sherds with a total weight of 345g. The pottery was all early medieval in date, apart from a single sherd (4g) of residual Roman material. The range of medieval fabrics is typical of that known from 11th – 12th century sites in the region.

The following medieval fabrics were noted:

F1: Sparse shell platelets up to 2mm, sparse subrounded grey quartz up to 1mm, rare angular red ironstone up to 1 mm. 11th–12th century? 4 sherds, 11g.
F2: Dense sub-rounded white and clear quartz up to 0.5 mm. Local ware? 11th–12th century? Glazed and unglazed. 21 sherds, 203g.
F3: Sandy glazed ware of similar type to many of the industries found throughout the south midlands, such as Medieval Oxford ware (Mellor 1994). Hard grey sandy fabric with moderate to dense sub-rounded clear, black and red quartz up to 1mm. 1 sherd, 21g.

F4: Ashampstead type. 12th–14th century (Mepham and Heaton, 1995). Sandy ware, the main products of the kiln being jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs. 1 sherd, 6g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 1.

The range of pottery types is typical of those found at contemporary sites in this area of the Thames Valley, comprising mainly undecorated sandy wares, probably from a number of sources. This was certainly the case at King’s Stable Street, Eton (Blinkhorn 2000), and also at Dorney near Maidenhead (Whittingham 2002).

Most of the medieval assemblage comprised unglazed bodysherds, of which one had combed decoration, a trait typical of the medieval coarsewares of the region. Only two glazed sherds were noted at this site, one of which was from an Oxford-type tripod pitcher with applied and incised decoration. It therefore seems probable that all the activity was limited to the early medieval period ie the later 11th–12th century.

Animal Bone by Sian Anthony

Nine pieces of animal bone weighing 188g were recovered from the fieldwork (Appendix 2). Preservation was excellent with no cortical exfoliation or root damage. Species identified varied from cattle to sheep, pig and cat, all expected domesticated species for the period. A sheep horncore and skull contained 11 cuts around the base of the horn indicating removal for hornworking. One fragment of bone was burnt black.

Conclusion

The watching brief has successfully located two features which have been dated to the early medieval period, probably the 11th–12th century. Due to the limitations of work within the foundation trenches it was not possible to clarify the true character of the features either in plan nor their full depth but they clearly reflect pit digging activity and presumably occupation in the near vicinity and confirm early medieval activity within the grounds of the Priory.

References

Ford, S., 1987, East Berkshire Archaeological Survey, Dept Highways and Planning, Berkshire County Council Occas Pap 1, Reading
Hammond, S., 2000, ‘Abbey House, Mill Lane, Hurley, an archaeological watching brief’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/23, Reading
Whittingham, L. 2002, ‘Early Medieval Pottery’ in S Foreman, J Hiller and D Pets Petts Gathering the People, settling the land. The Archaeology of a Middle Thames Landscape, Oxford Archaeol, Thames Valley Landscapes Monogr 14, 87–90 and CD-ROM
APPENDIX 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

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<th>F4</th>
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1 21 1 6
**APPENDIX 2: Animal Bone occurrence by number per context by species type**

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<th>Fill</th>
<th>Depths</th>
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<th>Csz</th>
<th>S/G</th>
<th>Ssz</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Pig</th>
<th>Cat</th>
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**Detailed description**

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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>s/g left tibia, mid-distal, modern damage</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>ssz mandible body only, no teeth</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>sheep left horn core and attached skull. 62g 11+ cuts at base of hc, to detach the horn for working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>u/s</td>
<td>cat humerus, m1/3 to distal, adult, s/g tooth, incisor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>csz epicondyle (hum or femur) burnt blac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>pig metapodial shaft</td>
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Figure 1. Location of site within Hurley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site on Mill Lane, Hurley.

Scale 1:2500
Figure 3. Location of watching brief on extension trenches and pits 1 and 2.
Figure 4: Sections of pits 1 and 2.