Manor Farm, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Chris Crabb and Tim Dawson

Site Code: VET13/17

(SU 9685 4924)
Summary

Site name: Manor Farm, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey.

Grid reference: SU 9685 4924

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 13th March and 25th April 2013.

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: VET 13/17

Area of site:

Summary of results: No finds or features of archaeological interest were recorded in any of the trial trenches or test pits excavated on the two sites.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Guildford Museum.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 03.05.13
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Manor Farm, Guildford, Surrey (SU 9685 4924) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Igor Rukuts of Northcroft, 1 Procter Street, London, WC1V 6DW on behalf of the University of Surrey, Guildford, GU2 7XH.

Planning consent is to be sought from Guildford Borough Council for the construction of a new animal management centre at Manor Farm. The pre-application works include the excavation of a series of geotechnical test pits which were also subject to an archaeological watching brief.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) and the Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification prepared by Terrance O’Rourke Ltd (TOR 2013). The fieldwork was undertaken by Christopher Crabb and Tim Dawson on 13th March and 25th April 2013 and the site code is VET 13/17.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Guildford Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the western limit of the town of Guildford, and lies to the immediate south of Francis Crick Road, which bounds the current University properties at Manor Park. The site itself is divided between two areas of investigation: VS2 to the south at Manor Farm and VS3 to the north, west of the Manor Park campus. VS2 is occupied by the buildings which make up Manor Farm. Although the house and its neighbouring stable block are boarded up, the outbuildings, a workshop and two barns, are still used by the University’s grounds staff. The buildings are linked by metallled trackways with a larger concreted storage area to the west but the rest of the ground is covered by patchy grass (Fig. 2). The northern site, VS3, is an area of land cleared of scrub with dumps of modern rubble and topsoil, bounded by Manor Copse to the west. In general the site slopes from 120m above Ordnance Datum in the south to 85m at Francis Crick Road in the north. The underlying geology transitions from Upper Chalk in the south through Reading Beds in the Manor Farm area to London Clay in the VS3 area (BGS 1976).
Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within a royal park of Henry II and adjacent to a medieval hunting lodge surviving as a moated site (Crocker 2003). The moat itself is a scheduled monument (12763). Extensive fieldwork in adjacent areas has revealed a range of deposits of Bronze Age and Iron Age date with some Saxon activity present and medieval deposits to the east of the moat complex (Pine 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and record any deposits affected by geotechnical investigations. These investigations consisted of several soakaway test pits, CBR (California Bearing Ratio) test pits and trial trenches. These were all dug to their relevant depths by a JCB backhoe using a variety of bucket widths and types. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds and, where the excavated pits were not over 1.2m deep possible archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned.

Results

VS2 (Fig. 3)

Three 1.80m long soakaway test pits (SA1-3) were excavated in the area to the southeast of the farm buildings using a 0.50m wide bucket to a depth of over 3.00m. The stratigraphy exposed in all three consisted of c.0.20m topsoil mixed with fragments of brick and c.0.25m of mid orange-brown subsoil with brick and mortar fragments overlying the natural mid orange-brown sandy clay. Chalk was exposed in the lower levels of the southern-most soakaway test pit, SA1. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

Four CBR pits (CBR1-4), all c.0.50m × 0.50m and c.0.15m deep were dug with the first three adjacent to the soakaway pits and an extra one to the south of the site. Due to their shallow depth only the topsoil was exposed and no finds or features of archaeological interest were recorded.

A series of four trial trenches (TR1-4) were excavated across the Manor Farm area. All were dug using a 1.50m wide ditching bucket down to the top of the natural geology. TR1 in the south of the site was 4.0m long and 0.57m deep and was dug through 0.27m of topsoil mixed with modern rubble and 0.30m of subsoil with less dense patches of brick and tile fragments to exposed the natural mid orange-brown sandy clay natural with flint inclusions (Fig. 5). TR2 was located in the centre of the site and measured 4.0m long and 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.15m of heavily churned and rutted topsoil, a 0.17m thick layer of orange-
grey clay mixed with brick and mortar rubble and 0.32m of dark brown sandy-clay subsoil, again with brick, tile and chalk rubble, all overlying the mid orange-brown sandy clay with very frequent flint inclusions natural geology. The third trench, TR3, was excavated in an area of levelled ground to the rear of the workshop building. It measured 3.50m in length and 0.83m in depth and was dug through 0.33m of dark topsoil mixed with frequent brick and mortar rubble and roots and 0.37m of chalk mixed with a flinty mid orange-brown clay, exposing the natural light orange-yellow sandy clay with chalk and flint patches in the base (Plate 1). TR4 was positioned to the southwest of the farm complex adjacent to a modern concrete-built storage area. The trench, measuring 4.0m long and 0.75m deep, was cut through 0.15m of concrete slab, 0.17m of mixed soil, rubble and hardcore, 0.16m of compacted chalk with flints, and 0.27m of dark orange-grey clay with flint inclusions. The natural geology exposed at the base of the trench consisted of a lighter yellow-brown sandy clay with flint inclusions.

No archaeological finds or deposits were identified in any of the test pits dug in the VS2 area.

VS3 (Fig. 4)

A series of five CBR test pits (CBR1-5) were excavated parallel to a track that links Francis Crick Road to the north with Manor Farm to the south. Each pit was dug through the topsoil at a size of 2.00m × 2.00m before being stepped in to 1.00m × 1.00m for the remainder of the depth. CBR1 (1.30m deep), CBR 2 (1.00m deep) and CBR3 (1.00m deep) were all cut through mixed made ground, which included modern bricks and Tarmac, before exposing the mid yellow-brown sandy clay natural geology. Further to the south CBR4 (1.20m deep) uncovered a 0.30m thick layer of yellow clay which sealed the made ground beneath (Fig. 5, Plate 2) and CBR5 revealed a dark brown loose silty clay with occasional chalk fragments which overlaid the mid brown clay and flint natural geology.

An attempt was made to excavate a trial trench (TR1) at the northern end of the area but after digging through 5.00m of loose made ground, presumably a spoil heap from previous construction in the area, the natural geology was not exposed and the trench became unstable.

Finds

No finds of archaeological significance were identified during the excavations.
Conclusion

Despite the site’s close proximity to previously identified archaeological remains and a scheduled monument, no finds or features of archaeological interest were recorded during the watching brief on the geotechnical test pits and trial trenches. In VS2 to the south it is apparent that the construction of Manor Farm and the landscaping of its surrounding area may have had a detrimental affect on the preservation of archaeologically sensitive levels as in most cases made ground was observed directly overlying the natural geology. A similar interpretation can be made of the land at VS3 although in this case it is unclear what the cause of the truncation may be.

References

NPPF 2012, National Planning Policy Framework, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
TOR 2013, ‘University of Surrey Veterinary School geotechnical site investigations’, Brief to monitor geotechnical site investigations, Terence O’Rourke Ltd, Bournemouth.
Figure 1. Location of site within Guildford and Surrey.
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Manor Farm.

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Figure 3. VS2 excavations.
Figure 4. VS3 excavations.

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Figure 4. VS3 excavations.
Figure 5. Representative sections.

VS2 trial trench TR1

W 91.6m aOD  E

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Dark topsoil with scattered rubble

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Mid orange-brown subsoil/made ground

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Base of trench

Mid orange-brown sandy clay (natural geology)

VS3 trench CBR4

W  E

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Plastic yellow clay

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Dark grey made ground

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Base of trench

Mid brown clay (natural geology)
Plate 1. VS2 trial trench TR3, looking west, Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 2. VS3 CBR test pit 4, looking west, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.
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