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JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

KINGSTON HILL FARM

KINSTON BAGPUIZE, OXFORDSHIRE

On behalf of

Kigston Hill Farm

JULY 2000

PRN 10604

REPORT FOR	Kinston Hill Farm Kingston Bagpuize Oxfordshire OX13 5HY
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PRN 10604

Summary

A watching brief during ground reduction for a new dairy building uncovered evidence of former occupation of the site during several periods. Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered indicating that the extent of possible settlement of this date extends at least 120m further north than known. A cemetery associated with the Roman settlement, again further south, was identified. It is considered that at least 20 burials, both inhumations and cremations, were present within the area investigated. Ground conditions prevented the identification of grave cuts. Finds of domestic Anglo-Saxon material point to resettlement of the site in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period.

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Location

The site is located at Kinston Hill, to the north of the village of Kingston Bagpuize, on the east side of the road to Witney (A415). The site of new development was to the north of the current farm buildings on the east side of the north south track through the buildings. The site lies on the north side of a ridge of higher ground running east west. The farm buildings are situated on the ridge.

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application had been submitted to Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of new dairy buildings. An archaeological requirement for a watching brief was made a condition of planning permission. The watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services and monitored by the County Archaeological Services.

1.3 Archaeological Background

In 1975, during the excavation of a pipe trench artefactual evidence of a Romano-British settlement or possibly a high status farmstead was recovered (County Sites and Monuments Record PRN 10604). This included pottery and building debris including plaster, tesserae and roof tiles. There was also evidence of a mortar floor. Further evidence of the settlement was found during the excavation of a small exploratory trench (Parrington 1976) while pottery from the 1st – 5th centuries was recovered from drainage ditches (Cowell 1979). The site is centred on NGR SU408 999 to the south of the farm buildings.

An extended inhumation burial was found when the original water pipeline was dug (PRN 5923).

Evidence of Middle Iron Age activity, probably a settlement, has been found at SU 4084 9984 through a scatter of pottery covering c. 300m (PRN 13312).

The Roman occupation has been classified, under MPP, as a possible minor villa.

2. Aims of the Investigation

The aims of the work were:

- to make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course the site strip for foundations and ground slab.
- in particular to record any remains of Roman date relating to the settlement known to the south
- to make public the results of the investigation

3. Strategy

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a method verbally agreed with the County Archaeological Services. Lack of time between being commissioned and commencement of site work prevented the preparation of written specifications.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

A 360^0 mechanical excavator with a 1200mm toothless ditching bucket was employed to remove a rubble surface over the western part of the building footprint and topsoil and an earlier ploughsoil elsewhere down to formation levels. The external footing trench was excavated some 300-440mm deeper using a toothed 600mm wide bucket.

4. Results

In the southwest part of the footprint for the new building was a rubble surface (context 2) of modern date. Elsewhere topsoil (1) of 300-400mm overlaid a soft brown yellow slightly clayey sand. This was interpreted as an earlier ploughsoil that had a depth of 200-300mm (lower part of 1). The western 16m of the footprint was only excavated down into the top of the earlier ploughsoil. To the east, the majority of the earlier ploughsoil was excavated down to the top of the natural sand deposits. Along the north side of the footprint the land sloped away down to the north. The level formation horizon resulted in the lower part of the earlier ploughsoil being left *in situ*. The excavation for the new access on the north side of the new building also left the lower part of the ploughsoil.

The resulting surface contained fragments of bone. On examination of several it was realised that they resulted from the disturbance of human graves. It was not possible to identify edges of grave cuts due to the fact that the graves had been filled with

material identical to the natural sand. Ploughing had severely damaged the shallower graves. Examination of bone fragments towards the eastern edge of the new building footprint revealed part of a flexed leg (4). Elsewhere deeper graves appeared to have survived the ploughing. In two cases the tops of skulls were identifiable. These were not examined further as they were not to be disturbed by the building work. It was therefore not possible to identify the orientation of the graves. The plan of the findspots is included with the archive deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

Thirty-one find cases of single or collections of bone fragments were located. These included the two skulls, the flexed leg and associated other fragments, a further definite grave (5) in poor condition, and two probable cremations.

The findspots of bone covered the southern 21m of the eastern part of the footprint and extended from the eastern edge of the new build to the limit of the lower stripping (26m E/W). The findspots were less dense in the northern half of the footprint.

Various sherds of pottery were collected from the stripping and the surface of the new formation level. Several were found associated with the bone fragments including the flexed leg and poorly preserved inhumation (5).

Several other features were identified. These included four rectangular pits that had been excavated by machine with vertical sides. One was partially excavated until recent 20th century finds were found. These features were interpreted as animal burials; probably pigs from when the farm used to raise such animals. A further animal burial of a dog was found (3). The presence of fabric indicated a fairly recent date for this.

An irregular pit towards the western edge of the lower stripped part contained burnt wood and charcoal. Both the shape in plan and profile were irregular. The maximum dimensions were 110 x 98cm with a depth up to 18cm. This may represent a burnt out tree. No finds were associated with this feature.

5. Finds

The pottery **by Paul Booth**

Introduction

Some 50 sherds of pottery (632 g) ranging from the middle Iron Age to the post-medieval period were recovered, mostly from unstratified contexts. The material was scanned briefly and recorded by context using codes from the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) system for Iron Age and Roman pottery. The pottery was in moderate condition, though some of the sherds were quite small and undiagnostic. This hampered identification in some cases, particularly as it seems that both middle Iron Age and early Anglo-Saxon material, which can be very similar in terms of fabric and manufacture, were present on the site. A quantity of brick and tile was also recovered. This appeared to be entirely of post-medieval to modern date and was recorded simply in terms of fragment count and weight without further comment.

Pottery by context by period (no. sherds/weight g)

CONTEXT	IRON AGE	ROMAN	ANGLO-SAXON	MEDIEVAL	POST-MEDIEVAL	BRICK/ TILE	CONTEXT DATE
Topsoil		6/40		1/8	7/54	40/17773	Modern
1	3/16	6/57					?3-4C
1A			?1/3				?Anglo-Saxon
1B		2/139	2/131			1/35	Modern
1D	1/10?	1/6				1/25	Modern
1E	2/13?					4/290	Modern
1F	5/17	8/102				2/35	Modern
3	1/ 4	1/1					?late 3-4C
4		1/22					2C
5			?2/9				?Anglo-Saxon
TOTAL	12/60	25/367	?5/143	1/8	7/54	48/2158	

Iron Age

Sherds assigned to the middle Iron Age were generally small and often slightly abraded. Apart from a single shell-tempered sherd (8 g) they were all in sand-tempered fabrics. In some cases organic temper or voids were also present. Such fabrics are characteristic of the middle Iron Age of the Upper Thames Valley, but are also very similar to sand and 'grass'-tempered fabrics of Anglo-Saxon date. The size of some of these sherds precluded confident attribution to period. Uncertainties are indicated in the table above.

Two small rim sherds, both with simple upturned or slightly outturned tips, may have been from barrel shaped or more globular jars, but were too small to allow certain identification of form. Such general types are characteristic of the middle Iron Age in the region, however.

Roman

Fabrics present were:

F51. Oxford red brown colour-coated ware (Young 1977, 123). 5 sherds.
M22. Oxford white ware mortarium (ibid., 56). 1 sherd.
W20. Oxford sandy white fabrics (ibid., fabric 2). 1 sherd.
E. 'Belgic type' fabrics (as Thompson 1982, 4) unspecified. 2 sherds.
E60. Flint-tempered 'Belgic type' fabric? 1 sherd.
E 80. Gorg-tempered 'Belgic type' fabrics. 3 sherds.
R30. Medium sandy reduced coarse wares (Young 1977, fabric 3). 10 sherds.
R90. Very coarse (usually grog-) tempered reduced fabrics (ibid., fabric 1). 1 sherd.
R95. Savernake ware (Swan 1975, 42). 1 sherd.

The fabrics are unremarkable except for E60, the identification of which is a little uncertain, though similar late Iron Age flint-tempered fabrics are known at Abingdon. Apart from a single sherd probably of Savenake ware (R95) all the material is likely to derive from the Oxford industry or perhaps even more local sources. The date range indicated by the pottery covers the whole of the Roman period, though there were no chronologically diagnostic form sherds. Two base sherds from 'context' 1B (in fabrics F51 and R30) were respectively chipped and worn at their broken edges, suggesting reuse (see below).

Anglo-Saxon
Two large handmade sherds, one sand-tempered and one with sand and organic inclusions, were found together in 'context' 1B, where they were associated only with two apparently trimmed Roman base sherds (see above). Such an association is noted at a number of sites in the region in the early Anglo-Saxon period and strengthens the interpretation of the two handmade sherds as Anglo-Saxon rather than as middle Iron Age, which is just about possible on the grounds of fabric. The identification of further Anglo-Saxon sherds was complicated, however, by the mixed nature of the assemblage and the generally small size of handmade sherds. Three further sherds, weighing 12 g, were tentatively identified as Anglo-Saxon, but this identification is rather less secure than that of the two large sherds and it is possible that the small pieces were of Iron Age date.

Medieval and post-medieval
The single medieval sherd from the site was a stabbed handle fragment in a white fabric with green glaze. The miscellaneous post-medieval fragments were probably all of 19th-20th century date.

Discussion
The small assemblage is chronologically mixed and generally unremarkable. The only significant aspect is the association of two reused Roman base sherds with probable early Anglo-Saxon sherds. These sherds almost certainly derive from an early Anglo-Saxon domestic context, perhaps originally from a Grubenhaus. The identification of this group of material was undoubtedly aided by the recovery of the pottery in localised collection units. Had all the material from layer 1 been bagged together the significance of the association would have been much less clear.

6. Conclusion

A cemetery of the Roman period is present on the site. This has suffered from plough damage with only the deeper burials being unaffected. The cemetery is obviously associated with the settlement evidence found to the south. Both are sited on the ridge of higher ground that runs east west with the cemetery lying on the north edge.

A minimum of four inhumations and one cremation are present although up to 31 inhumations and two cremations could be present. Other deeper burials probably were not identified for reasons given above. It is considered by the author that the cemetery contains at least 20 burials within the area examined and that the cemetery

extends to the south and east of the footprint and under the western part of the new building where the formation level was higher.

The middle Iron Age material complements the material found c. 120m further south.

The Roman pottery again confirms the long length of occupation of during this period. Although dating of individual graves is difficult due to the ploughing, the flexed leg was associated with 2nd century material. However a sherd of possible Anglo-Saxon pottery was found in association with grave 5 although the grave is considered to be of Roman date. The Anglo-Saxon material appears to be domestic and is of the earlier period and suggests reuse of the site in this period. This is known at other sites in the area e.g. Barton Court Farm, Abingdon.

7. Bibliography

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Ordnance Survey

Siteplan

1:1250 Scale

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Part or all of this Siteplan is enlarged from mapping produced at one or more of the following scales 1:1250, 1:2500, 1:10000.

Due to the resolution of this image, the depiction of a solid line within dashed lines does not necessarily constitute an obstruction at ground level.

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20 0 20 40 60 80
Metres

Centre coordinates : 440838mE 199984mN

National Grid sheet reference at centre of this Siteplan: SU4099NE.

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Siteplan

Symbols and depiction

Boundary Information

County/Region Island Boundary	
District/London Borough Boundary	
Parish/Community Boundary	
Electoral Division/Ward Boundary	
Parliamentary Constituency or Euro Const Boundary	
Boundary Mereing Change Symbol	
Boundary Post, Boundary Stone (BP, BS)	

Vegetation

Non-Coniferous Trees	Nc
Non-Coniferous Trees (Scattered)	Nc (scat)
Non-Coniferous Trees (Positioned)	
Coniferous Trees	C
Coniferous Trees (Scattered)	C (scat)
Coniferous Trees (Positioned)	
Orchard	Orch
Coppice/Osiers	Cop
Rough Grass	RG
Heath	Heath
Scrub	Sc
Saltings/Marsh/ Reeds	Marsh
Vegetation Limits	

Areas (Rural survey mapping only)

Areas Parcel No (published)	4226

Buildings

Roofed Structure/ Glasshouse	K
Upper Level of Communication	UL

Others

Spot Height	+
Bench Mark	←
Triangulation Station	△
Pylon/Flare Stack/ Lighting Tower	⊠
Flow Arrow	
Mean High Water	
Mean Low Water	
General Detail	
Underground Detail	
Overhead Detail	
Tramway/ Narrow Gauge Railway	
Standard Gauge Railway	
Point Fixture (e.g. Letterbox)	
Water Feature	Pond
Water	Water
Archway	
Non-Roman Antiquity	Mottle

Ornament

Rock	Rock
Inland Rock (Scattered)	Rock (scat)
Shingle	Shingle
Mud	Mud
Inland Boulders	Bo
Inland Boulders (Scattered)	Bo(scat)
Coastal Boulders	Boulders
Sand	Sand
Slope	Slope
Coastal Slope	Coastal Slope
Cliff	Cliff
Scree	Scree

Common Abbreviations

Boundaries Information

ED Boundary.....Electoral Division
Ward Boundary.....Ward
Boro Const Bdy.....Constituency
Euro Const Bdy.....(County Borough or European)
Und.....Undefined
CB.....Centre of Bank
CD.....Centre of Ditch
CR.....Centre of Road
CS.....Centre of Stream
Def.....Defaced
FF.....Face of Fence
FW.....Face of Wall
SR.....Side of River
TB.....Top of Bank
TkH.....Track of Hedge
RH.....Root of Hedge

Other Information

Chy.....Chimney
El P.....Electricity Pillar or Pole
ETL.....Electricity Transmission Line
FB.....Foot bridge
FS.....Flagstaff
GP.....Guide Post
GVC.....Gas Valve Compound
LB.....Letter Box
Meml.....Memorial
MHW.....Mean High Water
MLW.....Mean Low Water
NTL.....Normal Tidal Limit
P.....Post or Pole
PC.....Public Convenience
PH.....Public House
PO.....Post Office
PW.....Place of Worship
TCB.....Telephone Call Box
Tk.....Tank or Track
(um).....Unmade
W.....Well

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