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## Watching brief at 'Ferndale', Chequers Lane, Fladbury (WSM 27102)

Anna Deeks (BA Hons)

25th June 1999

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<i>Client</i>	Mr. and Mrs P Turpitt
<i>Agent</i>	N/A
<i>Site address</i>	'Ferndale', Chequers Lane, Fladbury
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	SO 9956 4606
<i>County Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 27102
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>reference</i>	W98/0954
<i>Brief produced by</i>	Planning Advisory Section, County Archaeological Service
<i>on</i>	7/8/98
<i>Date(s) of fieldwork</i>	15-16th April 1999

### *Previous archaeological work on associated sites*

Although no previous archaeological work has been carried out on the site itself, several sites of interest are recorded in close proximity. Prehistoric activity has been represented by flints, possibly of Palaeolithic date, recorded at Fladbury Rectory (WSM 7823; Smith 1953) as well as pits of Beaker of early Bronze Age date and a large 'V' profile ditch at the Working Mens' Club (WSM 7822; Peacock 1967). Evidence of Roman activity comprises a vessel of the 2nd century AD found near the rectory (WSM 7822, Smith 1953) and ten Roman graves excavated adjacent to the Working Man's Club (Peacock 1967). Saxon finds are also recorded nearby, both as single finds such as a heavily worn 6th century Anglo-Saxon saucer brooch (WSM 7819; Bond 1975), and as structural remains including a sunken bread oven associated with a complex posthole structure, enclosing a *grubenhaus* (sunken floored building), radiocarbon dated to AD 851± 51 (WSM 7819). In addition an inhumation of probable Saxon date was revealed during building operations at the centre of the village (WSM 7303). Later periods of occupation are also represented by 17th and 18th century buildings such as the Manor House and barn (WSM 12974).

The watching brief follows the general specification for watching briefs (as described in County Archaeological Service (1995)).

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### **Aims**

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

### **Method**

The current development proposed building extensions to the south and east of a property known as 'Ferndale' (Fig 1). Groundworks comprised foundation trenches 0.60m in width and between 0.90 and 1.15m in depth within the footprint of the proposed extension as well as ground reduction over a

total area of 133m<sup>2</sup>, to both the south and east of the property. The removal of this material lowered the ground surface by 0.50-0.75 metres (Figs 2 and 3). All ground reduction was monitored, foundation trenches were observed, and sections cleaned for further inspection.

Features were observed mainly in section, and so most interpretations are based on the profiles and comparison of fills. The position at which these profiles were observed and recorded is noted on Figure 2, the upper edge of the feature being indicated by the arrows and corresponding cut numbers along the limit of excavation.

Artefacts were retrieved following Service guidelines (County Archaeological Service 1995, appendices 2 and 3). The pottery is classified by fabric type with reference to Hurst and Rees (1992).

#### Deposit description (Fig 2)

##### *Natural*

Natural deposits consisted of fine orange sand with occasional lenses of rounded gravel (4-8.5mm in size) and rare pockets of orange/yellow clay. They were observed at a depth of between 0.70 and 1.72 metres below original ground surface, visible only in the foundation trenches. A fall in the level of natural occurred from east to west across the site, as represented in Figure 3.

##### *Roman deposits*

The profiles of two adjacent ditches on a north-east to south-west alignment were observed (106 and 108; Fig 2). The fill of these two features was a very similar material, a dark brown sand with abundant gravel and occasional charcoal (107 and 109 respectively). The upper level of the fill of 106 (107) contained a large base sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware tankard (dated *circa* 2nd century AD, D Hurst pers comm). No finds were recovered from ditch 108, however its relationship to 106 suggests it is contemporary.

##### *Possible Roman deposits*

Although the precise dating of the features assigned to this phase is not possible (due to the absence of artefactual remains), similarity of alignments and fills indicated that these features are broadly contemporary with the Roman ditches. All were sealed by a

substantial layer of subsoil (102) associated with a late 18th century *terminus post quem* date.

There were several features with a similar profile, and which, accordingly, are likely to be related:

a) Cut 114 (0.85m in depth and 0.44m wide at the top and 0.16m wide at the base) contained a single fill (115) of dirty brown slightly clayey sand with occasional rounded gravel throughout.

b) Cut 116 (0.84m deep and 0.44m in width) was filled by a dirty brown slightly clayey material with occasional rounded gravel, similar to 115.

c) Cut 122 (0.80m in depth, 0.40m in width at the top and 0.15m at the base) contained a single fill (123) of compact and dark brown clayey fine sand with occasional medium rounded gravel.

d) Cut 124 (0.80m deep, 0.40m wide at the top and 0.15m wide at the base) contained a single fill (125) of dark clayey fine sand with occasional medium rounded gravel and rare charcoal flecks.

The similarity of these cuts (114, 116, 122, 124) suggests that they represent sections through the same south-east to north-west ditch, or sections through a series of similar features such as a line of post holes. This alignment is perpendicular to the two Roman ditches (106, 108), and so it is likely to be contemporary in date.

##### *Undated deposits*

The profile and base of feature 104 were observed and hand excavated in the main east to west running trench (Fig 2). The profile of this cut, visible in both north and south facing sections, had almost vertical sides falling to a regular flat base 0.68m in depth and 0.50m wide. Unlike all other features recorded on site the cut of the feature came above the base of the subsoil, cutting into the lower 50mm of the layer. The cut contained one fill (105) a compact grey brown clayey loam with occasional rounded and angular gravel and charcoal flecks. No artefacts were recovered.

In the main east to west running trench a rounded profile with gently sloped sides and

a rounded base 0.40m deep and 0.70m in width was observed and recorded (118). This cut contained a single fill of dirty brown/orange clayey sand containing charcoal flecks and occasional rounded gravel. Cut 120 may represent the northern extent of the same feature. The feature is visible in both south and west facing sections of the foundation trench. The profile has sloping sides in both south and west sections with a rounded base at 0.40m. The cut is filled by a dark brown clayey sand with occasional rounded gravel.

In the east facing section directly to the south of 'Ferndale' the profile of feature 112 was partly visible, however the western extent continued under the property. The cut had gently sloped sides falling to a fairly flat base 0.70m deep, and 1.2m wide at the top of the feature. This contained one fill (113) a dirty brown slightly clayey sand with occasional gravel throughout. There was no evidence of this profile in the facing section of the foundation trench.

Cut 110 (0.38m in depth and 0.50m wide at the top) contained a single fill (111) of dirty orange sand mottled with brown clayey sand and patches of gravel. No corresponding profile was visible in the opposite side of the foundation trench.

Several of the above features (ie 110, 112, 118, 120) are located at the same level of the stratigraphic sequence as the Roman deposits, and so they may be of the same period.

#### *Subsoil deposits*

A compact mid brown sandy loam with occasional rounded gravel and medium to rare pottery, tile, brick and bone fragments (101), was present to a considerable depth in all foundation trenches (0.26m increasing westwards across the site to 1.20m). This layer was present over the entire site and appeared to continue beneath the current property.

The artefactual assemblage from this layer comprises a fragment of iron horse shoe, 3 fragments of brick, 1 clay pipe stem, 2 sherds of post-medieval ceramic (circa late 18th century) and 1 sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware (circa 1st-2nd century AD).

#### *Topsoil deposit*

A dark brown loam (100) with frequent root disturbance, occasional small to medium rounded gravel and occasional to rare pottery, brick and tile fragments was present over the entire site to a depth of between 0.18 and 0.50m. A sample of material finds were recovered comprising, 5 fragments of post-medieval pottery, 1 clay pipe stem, 1 glass vessel fragment, fragments of tile and stone, 1 sherd of medieval cooking pottery, (fabric 55 dated to circa 13th-14th century, D Hurst pers comm), and 1 sherd of Roman Severn Valley ware (fabric 12).

#### **Discussion**

There was a downward slope at the top of the natural deposits of approximately 0.50m westwards across the site (Fig 3). This may be of geological origin, or it may represent some form of human activity such as sand extraction or terracing.

The presence of a 2nd century Severn Valley ware tankard within the fill of ditch 106 clearly demonstrates early Roman activity on the site. This may represent occupation contemporary to that revealed in excavation adjacent to the Working Mens' Club, situated 420m north of WSM 27102, which also produced material dating to the 2nd century AD (Peacock 1967). The orientation of the ditches (106 and 108) is at right angles to the projected alignment of 112, 114, 124 and 122 suggesting that these features are also contemporary.

The unusually deep subsoil on the west side of the site is unlikely to be as a result of agricultural activity. Equally it seems unlikely that the layer is the result of alluvial deposition as the site is situated on an elevated gravel terrace to the north of the low-lying flood plain. The associated artefacts indicate a late 18th century date for this deposit, which may have been intentionally placed on this plot in order to level and raise the ground surface, possibly associated with the construction of the present cottage on the site.

#### **Summary**

*A watching brief was undertaken at Ferndale, Chequers Lane, Fladbury (SO 9956 4606; WSM 27102) on behalf of Mr and Mrs P Turpitt. This produced evidence of*

*Roman activity comprising a ditch and associated 2nd century AD pottery. Other features (another ditch, pits and postholes) including a possible fence line are also likely to be broadly contemporary.*

*In addition a substantial build-up of subsoil ranging from 0.26m to 1.20m may represent some form of landscaping in the late 18th century.*

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intend to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The Client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

#### Acknowledgements

The Service would particularly like to thank Mr and Mrs P Turpitt for their kind co-operation.

The project manager and editor of this report was Derek Hurst. The project was undertaken by Anna Deeks with assistance on site from Derek Hurst. Finds identification was completed by Derek Hurst and all illustrations were prepared by Steve Rigby.

#### Archive

The archive consists of:

- 26 Context records AS1
- 2 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Computer disk

#### Bibliography

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Hurst, D, and Rees, H, 1992 Pottery fabrics; a multi-period series for the County of Hereford and Worcester, in S Woodiwiss

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**Table 1. Reduced levels represented in Figure 2**

Number of level	Description	Reduced level (m OD)
1	Base of 104	24.98
2	Top of 104	25.66
3	Top of 108 cuts	25.48
4	Base of 108	25.03
5	Reduced ground	25.97
6	Top of 106 and 108	25.43
7	Top of 107	25.04
8	Top of natural	25.09
9	Original ground	26.34
10	Original ground	26.63
11	Original ground	26.76
12	Top of natural	25.93
13	Top of natural	25.88
14	Top of natural	26.14
15	Top of natural	25.77
16	Bottom of 116	25.35
17	Reduced ground	26.15
18	Bottom of trench	25.16
19	Original ground	27.02
20	Original ground	27.06



Figure 1: Location of site

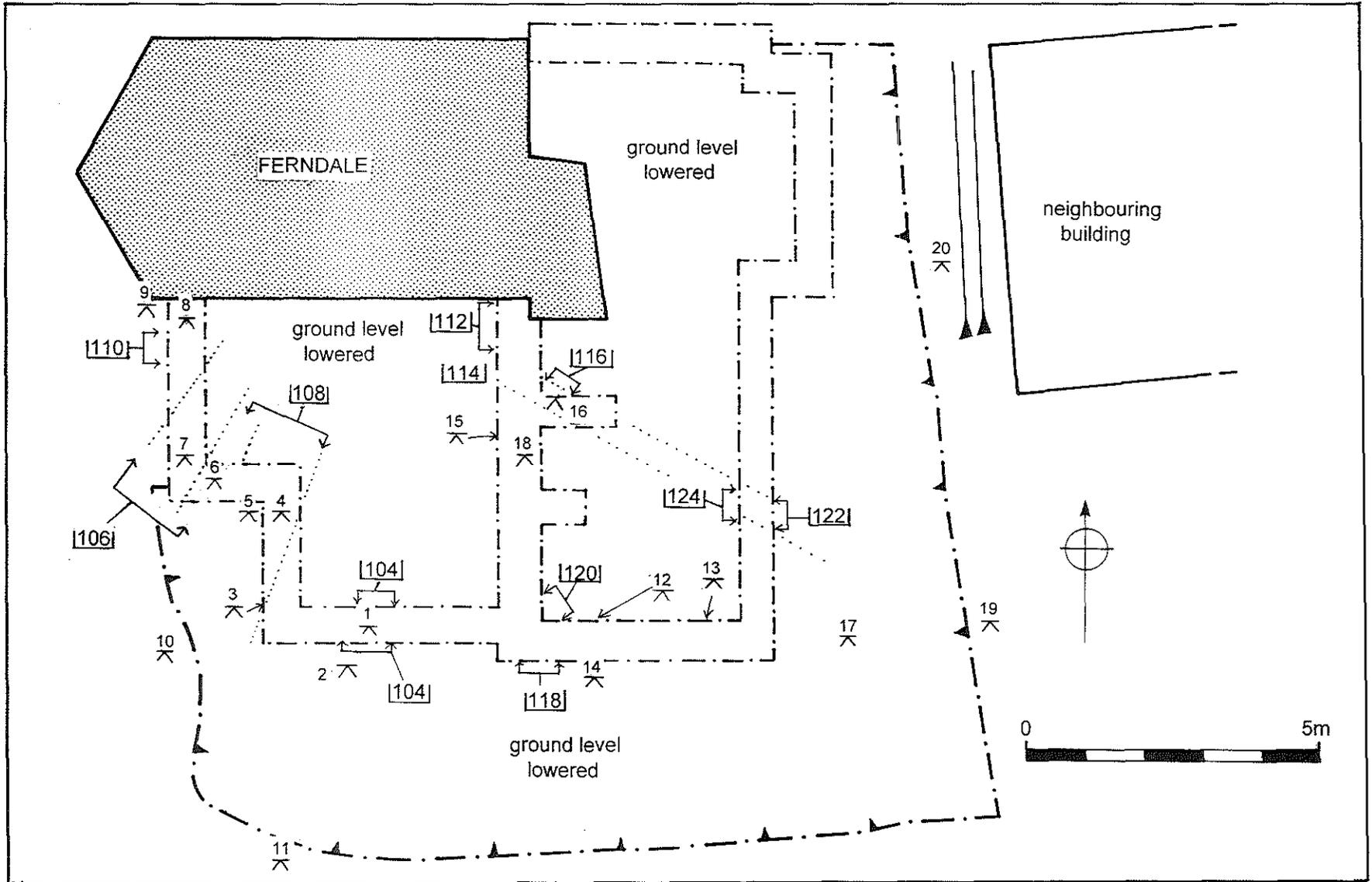


Figure 2: Plan of groundworks and location of features revealed in section

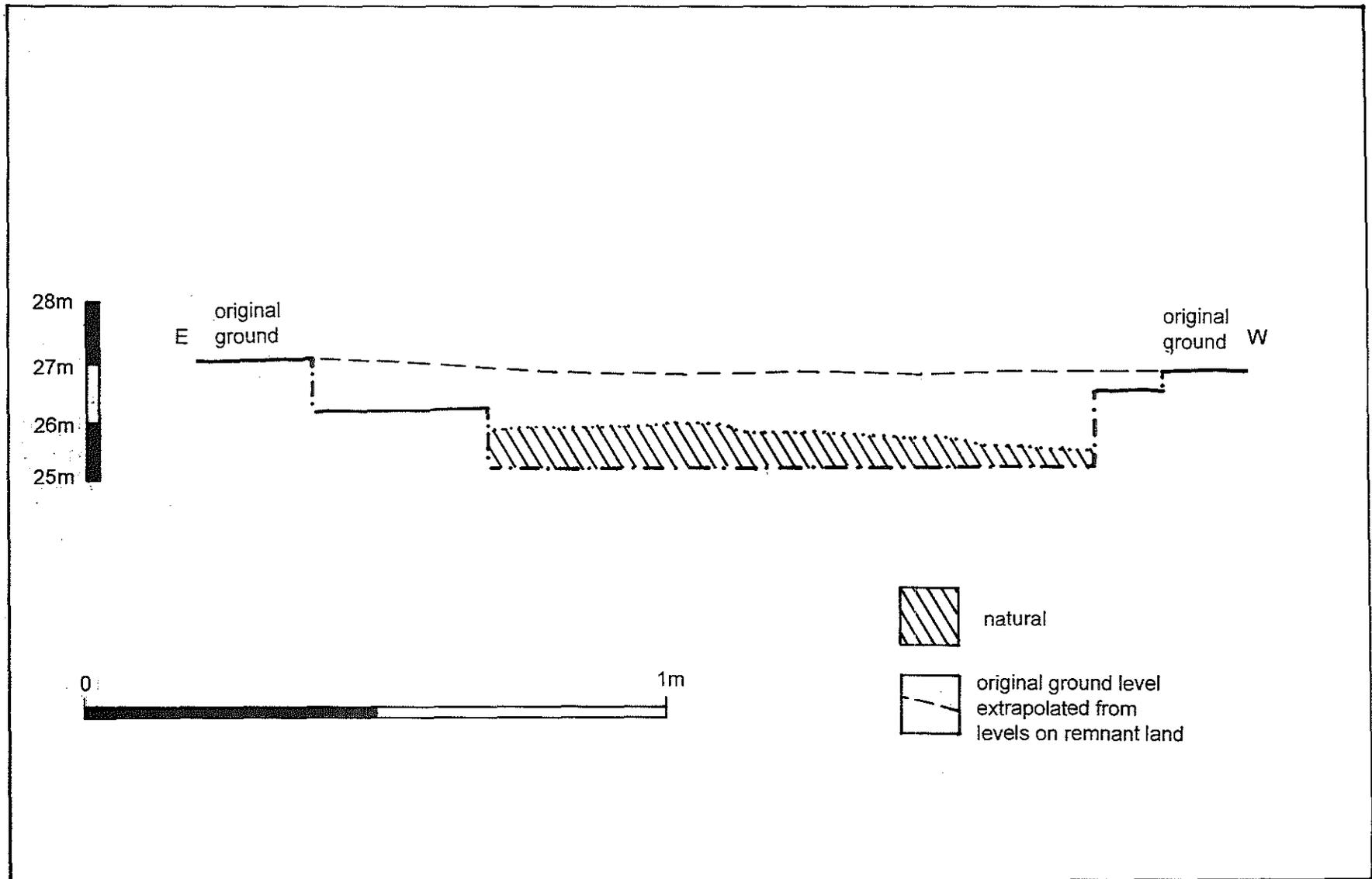


Figure 3: Section showing fall in level of natural across site