



A.P.A.C. Ltd.

Archaeological Perspectives Analysis Consultancy

REPORT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Planning Application No: P1507/12/FUL



Prepared for:

The ASHA Centre

By:

Dr N Phillips.



Summary

A planning application was submitted to Forest of Dean District Council (FDDC), to reinstate a derelict building for staff accommodation.

As the proposed building to be reinstated stands in relatively close proximity to two listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument, FDDC imposed a condition on the planning application requiring: a level II building survey and a watching brief.

The building survey has been completed and approved leaving only the watching brief to be undertaken.

This document therefore is the report on the watching brief required to complete the program of work.

The watching brief was able to confirm that the groundwork excavated for the reinstatement had no impact on any archaeological resources.

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Cover Photograph: DSC05048. Site at time of building recording survey, August 2013.



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Introduction

This Archaeological Watching Brief Report has been prepared by Dr Neil Phillips, A.P.A.C. Ltd, in response to conditions imposed on a 'proposed scheme of work to reinstate an outbuilding to provide occupational staff accommodation for use in conjunction with the ASHA Centre, fig 01.

The client: The ASHA Centre, having submitted a planning application P1507/12/FUL to Forest of Dean District Council (FDDC); through their agent Paul Thornton Building Design Ltd, was granted Approval of Planning Permission, with conditions, requiring a program of archaeological work involving a level II building recording survey and an archaeological watching brief.

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted and approved to in writing by the local planning authority.

P1507/12/FUL

The Written Scheme of Investigation was compiled, based on information provided by Paul Thornton Building Design Ltd and approved as fit for purpose in early 2013.

The level II building recording was undertaken in August 2013 and the completed report approved soon after.

This watching brief was undertaken on a single day 28.01/2014 and covered all ground disturbance on the proposed site.

Site Location and Description

The location of the site at NGR 367742 215993, can be easily gained from the A48, Chepstow to Gloucester Rd.

When travelling west from Westbury-on-Severn, take the second right turn to Flaxley and after 2 miles past a church on the right is a 'T' junction.

Proceed across the junction up Lower Spout Lane and the ASHA centre is first on the right at Gunn's Mill House, fig 01.

Geology and Topography

The underlying geology is one of Brownstone Formation: sandstone over which is a superficial deposit of Alluvium: clay, silt, sand and gravel.

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/>

The site is located just on the edge of scarp red sandstone that falls away steeply, north east, towards the road

Brief archaeological and historical background

Initial concern of the potential for archaeological resources to be impacted upon during work at the proposed site, was noted by the Gloucester City Council, senior archaeologist in his guidance to the applicant.

The application site is archaeologically sensitive, since it is located in close proximity to the Gunns Mill early industrial complex. The focus of the complex – an early ironworking furnace – is located a little south – east of the proposed development area, where a substantial building is preserved, and this is a scheduled ancient monument in recognition of its national importance (Monument number 479: Guns Mill Furnace). The date of function and origin of the building which is the subject of this planning application is uncertain.

(Parry, C., 2013).



A brief amount of research was undertaken into the site and its surroundings, as part of the building survey (BS/FLX/13)

The research conducted was able to suggest from cartographic sources that the building may have been recorded on the 1st series Ordnance Survey Map in 1831, which infers an association with the Gunn's Mill Complex.

The survey also recorded some simple phasing of the building suggesting earlier, possibly domestic use suggested by the finely dressed south east gable entry and quoins.

There was also evidence of faced and jointed re-used masonry within the fabric of the building which must have originated from a large building.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record, within the resources available, any archaeological deposits uncovered during groundwork.

The watching brief also ensured that: in the event of archaeological resources of significance, being discovered and requiring treatment beyond the remit of the watching brief, that steps would be implemented to ensure that their treatment would be undertaken within the standards recommended by the IFA.

Methodology

Groundwork at the site entailed a single period of excavation 28th January 2014 during which groundwork and required demolition to the existing dwelling were completed.

Initial work concentrated on removal of the debris and modern soil/plaster/rubbish from the interior of the building; Plate 01 taken at the time of the building recording shows an example

Removal of the accumulated rubbish and vegetation was undertaken prior to the commencement of the watching brief.

With the interior cleared work began, under watching brief conditions, to reduce the unstable walls and to locate a suitable ground surface from which to reconstruct.

Finally, the overgrown path to the south west was stripped to provide a suitable access route for materials.

All excavation was undertaken with a tracked mechanical digger.

During excavation, the stratigraphic record and initial contexts were noted, with a brief description given where appropriate.

Photographs were taken throughout the watching brief and recorded with a unique number in the appendix.

A full set of photographs are included in the archive and selected illustrative images appear in the plates accompanying this report.

There were no finds of any archaeological significance.

Data Presentation

Data referred to within the text is illustrated in Figures, and Plates with stratigraphic contexts identified in brackets [].

Appendix I presents a list and description of stratigraphic contexts revealed and recorded during the excavation.

Appendix II presents in spreadsheet format, details of all the photographs, including those not used in the text.



Watching Brief Results

Soils and ground conditions

The site conditions during the excavation were good but somewhat restricted by the site confines.

All ground surfaces within the building as well as to the south east externally, had been extensively re-deposited with various modern phases of tipping or storage events; of a variety of materials.

External to the site the ground was until recently, covered in dense undergrowth.

However, in hindsight, the shallow depth of soil on this outcrop of sandstone is not likely to have yielded much in the way of archaeological resources, anyway.

Description

Internal. (refer to fig 02) and appendices I & II

Work within the building began with a large amount of wall tumble, surface tipping and stored materials being removed prior to excavation.

This clearance work was discussed with the contractor and all was undertaken by agreement, prior to the watching brief.

As part of the discussion requirements, it was established that anything attached or unusual was to be left undisturbed.

As a result of the contractor's adherence to our discussion; on arrival at site, it was possible to record and confirm the presence of an original entrance in the south east gable, as suspected in the building survey (BS/FLX/13).

Careful clearance work had revealed the presence of the two steps and a pair of chamfered ashlar door jambs at the south east gable, Plates 01 & 02, (*It was suggested in the building recording survey (Phasing BS/FLX/13) that there may have been a central window or door.*)

Actual excavation within the building was to reveal nothing to distinguish any soil cover over the natural surface [102], Plate 03, once the overburden of modern deposit [103], Plate 04 had been removed.

At the rear of Plate 04, the higher level of ground is a relatively recent floor (*Gifford pers comm.*) of compacted soil [104] over coarse gravel [105] to a depth of $\leq 200\text{mm}$ before [102] was reached.

A defined boundary did exist suggesting that the new floor [104]/[105] had been added to rather than dug into the natural [102].

This was further confirmed when the concrete post shown in Plate 05 was removed to provide a section into the underlying natural, [102]. *No photograph was taken as the removal of the large mass of concreted was a non delicate operation resulting in an ill defined crater.*

The building's walls [109], where they were excavated, sit on the natural [102] and were originally dug through [101] to a depth of $\leq 600\text{mm}$.

Externally, the outer $\leq 300\text{mm}$ surface of soft brown deposit has accumulated within the lifetime of the building, Plate 06.

The width of the walls at foundation were $\leq 600\text{mm}$ reducing to $\leq 300\text{mm}$ at around original ground level, Plate 07.

External. (refer to fig 02) and appendices I & II

The only external excavation planned, was to produce a surface, to accommodate access to the site.



This was to be achieved by removing the very narrow muddy path to the south west and replacing it with compacted scalpings as a temporary measure, Plate 08.

It came as something of a surprise when the thin cover of topsoil [108] quickly revealed natural [102] just beneath the surface, Plates 09 & 10.

Finds

Apart from landfill materials of various metals, plastics and brick deposited in the last decade or so the site produced no finds.

Discussion and Interpretation

The stratigraphy of the site was very straightforward a sequence natural over which was a shallow depth of sandy soil.

On to this was built a masonry building which as changed in use over the years resulting in repairs or renovations of which this present proposed work is merely another example.

The watching brief provided no further information with which to date the building but it was able to confirm an earlier configuration of access.

The work covered by this watching brief had no impact on any archaeological resources.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andy for his careful and efficient handling of the work.

Staff

Dr. Neil Phillips, AIFA.

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Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials. 2013.

Parry C., 2012 FOD/P1507/12/FUL. Gunns Mill House, Spout Lane, Abenhall. Reinstatement of outbuilding to provide occupational staff accommodation for use in conjunction with the ASHA Centre. Archaeological Implications

2013 Brief for Archaeological Recording. Gunns Mill House, Spout Lane, Abenhall. Reinstatement of outbuilding to provide occupational staff accommodation for use in conjunction with the ASHA Centre.

Paul Thornton Building Design 2012 Gunns Mill House, Spout Lane, Flaxley, Glos, GL17 0EA. Reinstatement of outbuilding to provide occupational staff accommodation for use in conjunction with the ASHA Centre. Design and Access Statement Incorporating Heritage Assessment, Utilities statement & Landscape Appraisal.

Drawings: BR/01 The ASHA Centre, Gunn Mill House, Lower Spout Lane, Flaxley. New Staff Accommodation. Block Plan as Proposed.

BR/02 The ASHA Centre, Gunn Mill House, Lower Spout Lane, Flaxley. New Staff Accommodation. Building regulations Plans as Proposed.

BR/03 The ASHA Centre, Gunn Mill House, Lower Spout Lane, Flaxley. New Staff Accommodation. Elevations and Sections as Proposed.

S/01 The ASHA Centre, Gunn Mill House, Lower Spout Lane, Flaxley. Out building details as existing

The Society of Museum Archaeologists *Towards An Accessible Archive* (1995)



Fig 01: Location

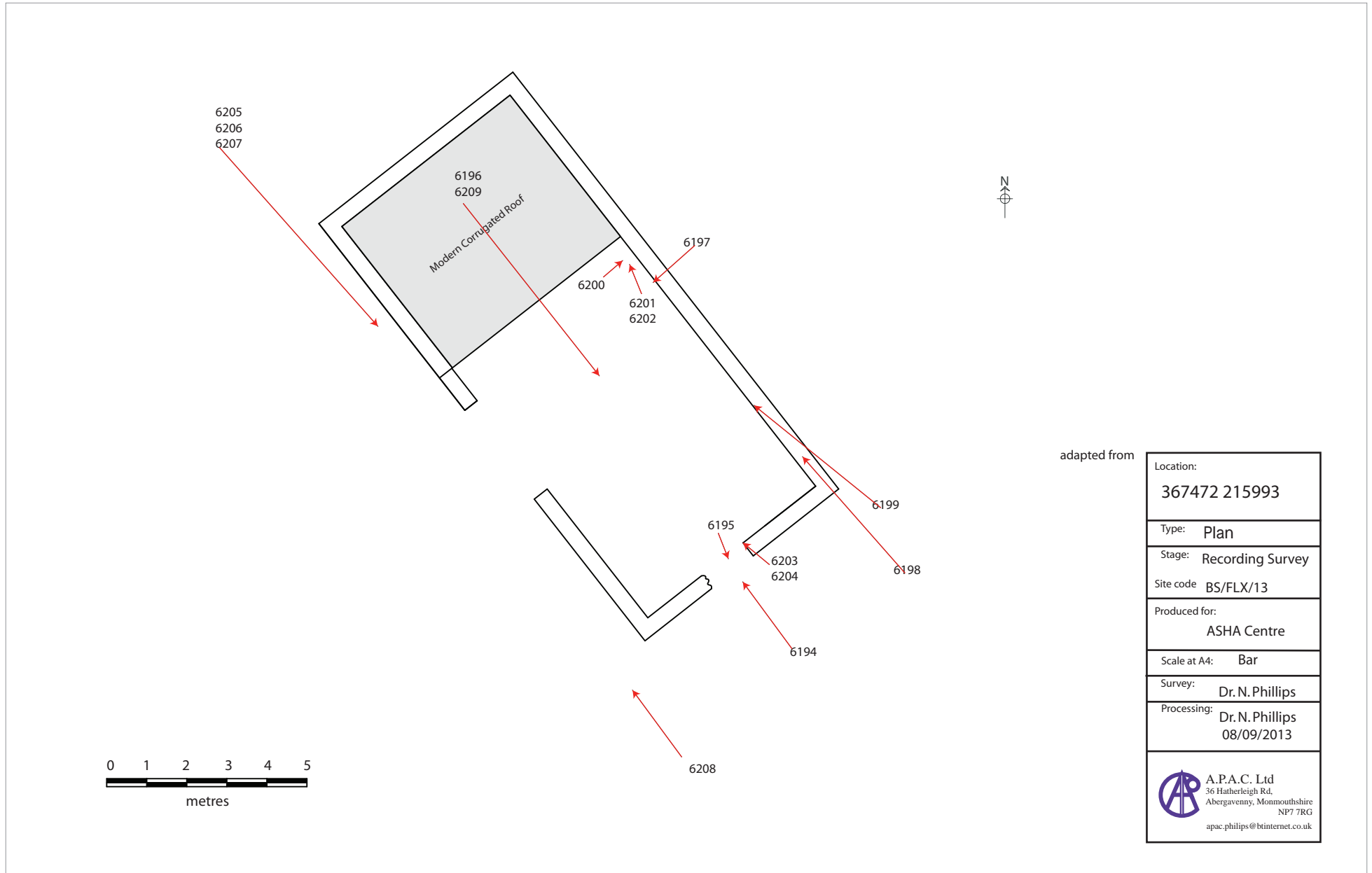


Figure 02 photograph positions and orientation on existing oor plan



Plate 01: Original steps to south east gable entrance, Two chamfered door jambs, either side



Plate 02: Vertical view of steps at original south east gable entrance



Plate 03: Inside of north east wall. Brown soil/debris removed to reveal red sandy soil on top of red sandstone bedding



Plate 04: View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external





Plate 05: View across site from covered north west end, Concrete post foundation in foreground (not a mill wheel)



Plate 06: Former north east wall section. Foundation to 860mm. External sequence [100] [101] [102]. Internal [103] [102]



Plate 07: View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external and depth of foundations



Plate 08: View along former access track to the south east during surface removal prior to path construction. 2



Plate 09: View along former access track to the south east during surface removal prior to path construction [102] exposed



Plate 10: View along former access track to the north west during surface removal prior to path construction

Site: Gunns Mill House, Flaxley		Grid Ref: 367472 215993	Site No: WB/FLX/13	Alternate No:	1
CONTEXT	AREA	FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	FINDS	PHOTOGRAPHS
100	NE/SE	Surface deposit	Grass covered, soft dark brown soil to east of building, High percentage of root depth \leq 300mm		06198, 06199, 06200, 06201, 06202
101	NE/SE	Sub surface deposit	Brown/red sandy soil with small to medium stone \leq 550mm		06194, 06195, 06198, 06199, 06200, 06201, 06202
102	Site	Natural	Red/orange sand stone bedding degraded and fractured at the interface		06197, 06198, 06199, 06205, 06206, 06207
103	Internal	Deposit	Internal deposit, building debris, plaster etc. modern		06194, 06196, 06198, 06203, 06204,
104	Internal Floor North west end	Surface	Compacted floor under cover \leq 120mm		06196, 06198, 06201, 06202,
105	Internal Floor North west end	surface	Course gravel bedding \leq 80mm		06196
106		Fill	Concrete post fill		06196
107	Internal Floor North west end	Cut	Concrete post fill		06196
108	SW	Path	Thin layer of soft dark brown soil similar to [100] \leq 200mm		06205, 06206, 06207, 06208
109	Site	Wall	Surviving walls		06194, 06195, 06196, 06196, 06197, 06198, 06199, 06200, 06201, 06202, 06205, 06206, 06207, 06209
110	Site	Cut	Cut for 109		
111	Site	Fill	Fill for 109		

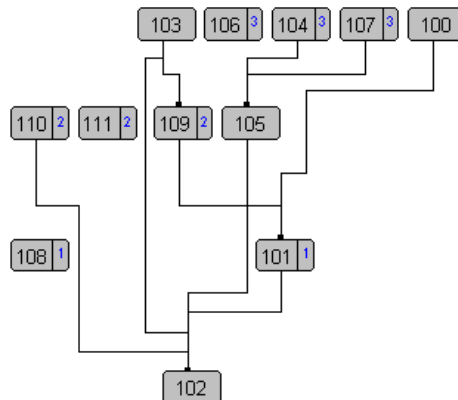


Photo no	Date	Camera	Size	View	Description	Plate
DSC05048	28/08/2013	DSC F828	3264x2448	SE	Debris and storage within the building. SE gable end at rear	Cover
DSC06194	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NW	Original steps to south east gable entrance, Two chamfered door jambs, either side	PI 01
DSC06195	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	V	Vertical view of steps at original south east gable entrance	PI 02
DSC06196	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	SE	View across site from covered north west end, Concrete post foundation in foreground (not a mill wheel)	PI 05
DSC06197	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	V	Inside of north east wall. Brown soil/debris removed to reveal red sandy soil on top of red sandstone bedding	PI 03
DSC06198	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NW	View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external	PI 04
DSC06199	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NW	View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external and depth of foundations	PI 07
DSC06200	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NE	Former north east wall section. Foundation to \leq 860mm. External sequence [100] [101] [102]. Internal [103] [102]	PI 06
DSC06201	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NW	View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external and depth of foundations. With scale	
DSC06202	28/01/2014	DSC F828	2448x3264	NW	View along north east wall showing debris removal internal and soil build up external and depth of foundations. With scale. 2	
DSC06203	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	V	Squared, isolated stone with cut recess. Displaced	
DSC06204	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448		Squared, isolated stone with cut recess detail view	
DSC06205	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	SE	View along former access track to the south east during surface removal prior to path construction.	
DSC06206	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	SE	View along former access track to the south east during surface removal prior to path construction. 2	PI 08
DSC06207	28/01/2014	DSC F828	2448x3264	SE	View along former access track to the south east during surface removal prior to path construction [102] exposed	PI 09
DSC06208	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	NW	View along former access track to the north west during surface removal prior to path construction	PI 10
DSC06209	28/01/2014	DSC F828	3264x2448	SE	View across site from covered north west end, Concrete post foundation in foreground (not a mill wheel)	



DSC06194.jpg



DSC06195.jpg



DSC06196.jpg



DSC06197.jpg



DSC06198.jpg



DSC06199.jpg



DSC06200.jpg



DSC06201.jpg



DSC06202.jpg



DSC06203.jpg



DSC06204.jpg



DSC06205.jpg



DSC06206.jpg



DSC06207.jpg



DSC06208.jpg



DSC06209.jpg