

RESA11/001



ROMANS END, ST ALBANS

Watching Brief

for Mr and Mrs Aherne

5/2010/1551

May 2011



HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY (UK) Ltd



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Scale 1:750 @ A4



0 40m

Illus 1
Site location

ROMANS END, ST ALBANS

Watching Brief

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd carried out a watching brief at 1 Romans End, St Albans in respect of a planning application to erect an extension to the rear of the property. No archaeological deposits were revealed.

1. INTRODUCTION

A watching brief was commissioned by the client in respect of a condition attached to planning permission (5/2010/1551) for a single storey rear extension at 1 Romans End following the demolition of an existing extension. The condition (no. 3) required the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation. This condition is in line with policy HE12.3 of PPS5: Planning for Historic Environment, which states that where appropriate Local Planning Authorities should require developers to ensure recording and advance understanding of the significance of heritage assets before they are lost.

1.1 Location

1 Romans End occupies a *cul-de-sac* position off King Harry Lane approximately 1km from the centre of modern St Albans. The site lies on a hilltop location (approximately 100m AOD) to the south of the Roman town of Verulamium.

1.2 Archaeological background

The bedrock geology of the area is Upper Chalk overlain by superficial deposits of glacial and river terrace gravels. The site lies immediately east of Watling Street and c.500m south of the southern wall of Verulamium. Although the site lies outside the walls of the Roman town, it is located within an area of high archaeological potential. Previous investigations along King Harry Lane indicate a well settled, well used stretch of land along a major Roman highway, immediately south of a major Roman town.

Excavations carried out in 1984 revealed a major Roman cemetery along King Harry Lane containing both cremations and inhumations (HER14155, HER6580 and HER4704). The current site is located within the known boundaries of the cemetery and it was believed that the ground-works may impact upon an area of the cemetery which hadn't previously been excavated.

2. METHOD

An archaeologist was present on site to monitor the excavation of all foundation trenches for the proposed extension. A tracked excavator with a 300mm grading bucket was used to open the trenches. Exposed trench sections and bases were cleaned and checked for archaeological deposits and all spoil was screened for archaeological material.

2.1 Recording

All recording followed IfA Standards and Guidance. Trench positions were tied into features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping. A plan of the excavated trenches was produced at a scale of 1:50 and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All contexts, photos and drawings were given a unique number and registers were maintained. 35mm black-and white and colour transparencies were taken of exposed sections. Digital photos were also taken for reporting purposes.

2.2 Samples and artefacts

No contexts suitable for sampling were encountered during the watching brief and no finds were observed.



Illus 2

Northern foundation trench, camera facing east



Illus 3

Western foundation trench, camera facing north-east

3. RESULTS

The day before the excavation of foundation trenches took place a concrete floor from the previous extension had been removed from the area and surrounding turf and topsoil cleared away.

Strip foundations with a width of 0.6m were excavated to the building footprint, which measured 9.8m by 5.4m. The new building was orientated north-east to south-west.

2 Trenches were initially excavated to a depth of 0.7m below the original ground level. However, a visit by the Council building inspector determined that excavations needed to be deeper. For the first 3m of the north-eastern trench abutting the existing building, excavations were carried out to a depth of 1.2m below the original ground level. The corresponding section of the south-eastern trench was excavated to a depth of 1.4m. The remainder of the trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.1m below the original ground level. A 5.8m section of the trench was widened to 1.1m to accommodate the foundations for a porch.

The uppermost deposit [100] related to the demolition of the previous extension earlier in the week. Below this was a dark topsoil [101] which clearly related to previous construction works, containing within it modern

brick and nylon ties. Re-deposited red clay and gravels [102] overlay a further layer of humic soil [107] which contained further evidence for the original construction of the property in the form of concrete fragments. All deposits sloped downwards from the north-west to the south-east (towards the existing property).

Undisturbed natural drift deposits [107] were encountered in the north-west of the excavated area at a depth of 0.2m below the original ground level.

4. CONCLUSION

No archaeological deposits were encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches. The nature of the deposits suggests that the site was previously stripped to the level of natural deposits (and beyond) and then subsequently remodelled with re-deposited material derived from the original development of the site. The level of stripping appeared to be greater close to the building, which explains the presence of natural drift geology at a higher level in the north-west of the site and the sloping of deposits to the south-east.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

Context register

Context no.	Description	Interpretation
100	Mixed demolition deposit	Derived from current works
101	Black silty clay with demolition rubble	Topsoil mixed with material from house construction
102	Red/orange silty clay with multiple flint nodules	Redeposited drift geology
103	Light grey clayey silt	Redeposited material
104	Dark brown fine clayey silt	Redeposited material
105	Mixed rubble and clay	Backfill over foul water pipes
106	Black silty clay layer containing concrete	Redeposited material from original house construction
107	Heavy red silty clay with multiple pebble/flint inclusions	Natural subsoil

Drawing register

Drawing no.	Scale	Description
1	1:50	Plan of foundation trenches
2	1:20	South-west facing section
3	1:20	South-east facing section
4	1:20	North-east facing section

3

Photographic register

Photo no.	Colour Slide	B&W	Digital	Direction facing	Description
01	–	–	01	S	Clay deposit with flint nodules [107]
02	–	–	02	SE	General site shots prior to excavation
03	–	–	03	SE	General site shots prior to excavation
04	534/1	540/1	–	–	ID Shot
05	534/2	540/2	04	NE	SW facing section of NE foundation trench
06	534/3	540/3	05	E	SW facing section of NE foundation trench
07	534/4	540/4	06	W	SE facing section of NW foundation trench
08	534/5	540/5	07	NW	SE facing section of NW foundation trench
09	534/6	540/6	08	SW	Sample section – long section
10	534/7	540/7	09	E	Northern corner of foundation trench
11	534/8	540/8	10	NE	Long section
12	534/9	540/9	11	E	NE trench – section
13	534/10	540/10	12	S	Southern leg of trench – exterior section
14	534/11	540/11	13	NW	Western trench corner



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