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# Shipton Oliffe Manor Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

WA ref: 85280.02  
September 2013



**Shipton Oliffe Manor,  
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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# Shipton Oliffe Manor, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### Contents

Summary.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Project background.....	1
1.2 Site location, topography and geology.....	1
1.3 Archaeological background.....	1
<b>2 AIMS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 General.....	2
<b>3 METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4 RESULTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1 Stratigraphic sequence.....	3
4.2 Features.....	3
4.3 Artefacts.....	3
4.4 Ecofacts.....	4
<b>5 DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6 REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7 APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
7.1 Appendix 1: Trench table.....	5

### Tables

Table 1: Pottery quantification.....	3
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### Figures

Figure 1:	Site location plan
Plate 1:	South-east facing section of trench
Plate 2:	North-east facing section of trench
Plate 3:	Post-excavation shot of trench, south-east end
Plate 4:	Post-excavation shot of trench, north-west end



# **Shipton Oliffe Manor, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Matt Beer of Yiangou Architects LLP, acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Bond to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the initial ground works associated with redevelopment at Shipton Oliffe Manor, Shipton Oliffe, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR 403782 218494). The archaeological mitigation was secured by means of planning conditions: condition 7 attached to 11/04683/FUL and condition 4 attached to 12/00518/FUL.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2012) detailing the methodology to be used during the archaeological watching brief and the final reporting was submitted to, and approved by, Cotswold District Council before the commencement of work. The watching brief was carried out intermittently between 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August and 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

Shipton Oliffe Manor House has an early/mid-17<sup>th</sup> century core with numerous 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations and extensions, the latter by the well-known architect Norman Jewson. Given the manor house's location in the heart of the village and its proximity to the Grade I listed 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Oswald 75m to the north-west, the Site had high potential for the presence of earlier medieval features.

The archaeological watching brief has revealed no significant archaeological remains, and identified large amounts of modern disturbance throughout the entire trench. Medieval pottery recovered from the watching brief, and in particular the basal subsoil overlying natural geology suggests medieval activity in the vicinity, though no archaeological remains were identified that might be associated with this activity. The level of modern disturbance encountered, and the depth to which it was recorded, suggests that had archaeological remains been present, they may have been wholly removed by more recent modern activity.



# **Shipton Oliffe Manor, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Yiangou Architects LLP, acting on behalf of Mr and Mrs Bond of Shipton Oliffe Manor; their assistance and support throughout, and particular that shown by Matt Beer of Yiangou, is very gratefully acknowledged. Wessex Archaeology would also like to express gratitude to principal contractors KJS Construction of Stroud, and in particular James Price and site foreman Billy Woods. The collaborative assistance of the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeologist Charles Parry was also very gratefully received.

The archaeological watching brief was carried out during August 2013 by Charles Hay and Ralph Collard. This report was written by Sian Reynolds, the pottery was examined by Lorraine Mephram and the illustrations produced by Ken Lymer. This project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Crockett.



# **Shipton Oliffe Manor House, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Project background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Matt Beer of Yiangou Architects LLP, acting on behalf of Mrs A. Bond (the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the initial ground works associated with redevelopment at Shipton Oliffe Manor, Shipton Oliffe, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (hereafter 'the Site'), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 403782 218494 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The archaeological mitigation was secured by means of planning conditions: condition 7 attached to 11/04683/FUL and condition 4 attached to 12/00518/FUL.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (WA 2012) detailing the methodology to be used during the archaeological watching brief and the final reporting was submitted to, and approved by, Cotswold District Council before the commencement of work.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was carried out intermittently between 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August and 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

#### **1.2 Site location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The Site is situated within the southern part of the small linear settlement of Shipton comprised of the two original parishes of Shipton Oliffe and Shipton Solers, five miles south-east of Cheltenham. It is bounded to the north by St Oswald's Church and other buildings fronting onto the main road running through Shipton Oliffe, and to the south by agricultural fields.
- 1.2.2 The Site currently consists of a large manor house and complex of associated buildings, set within extensive landscaped grounds. The proposed development will erect a porch onto one of the outbuildings located north-west of the manor house.
- 1.2.3 The topography of Shipton Oliffe demonstrates a gentle fall in height above Ordnance Datum (aOD) from c. 236m along the course of the A40 to the south of the settlement, to c. 170m to the north. As the area of the watching brief is associated with extant buildings the local topography is broadly level.
- 1.2.4 The underlying geology is inferior Oolitic Limestone (British Geological Survey Sheet 235).

#### **1.3 Archaeological background**

- 1.3.1 Evidence of prehistoric activity in the local area to the Site is limited, restricted to a number of burial mounds (round barrows) of probable Bronze Age date in the area of lower ground between Shipton and Andoversford, c. 1km to the north.



- 1.3.2 This area of the Cotswolds is dominated by archaeology dating to the Roman period. Major and minor roads radiate from the tribal capital of *Cornium* (Cirencester) 15km to the south, towards Gloucester, Bourton and an unknown destination to the north, potentially the military foundation at Alcester. The proposed Alcester route, that which runs c. 3km east of the Site served a chain of high status villas at Chedworth, Withington, Compton Grove, Wittington, Spoonley Wood, Wadfield and Milhampost.
- 1.3.3 A number of possible villa or building sites are indicated by aerial photographs and/or surface finds around Shipton, and a building with painted wall plaster and a tessellated pavement was found in the grounds of Shipton Oliffe Manor itself.
- 1.3.4 In addition to these rural settlements, a Roman 'small town' is known to have existed near the modern village of Andoversford at Wycomb, 2km to the north-west.
- 1.3.5 The individual parishes of Oliffe and Solers were both mentioned in *Domesday* (1086). Aerial photography and landscape analysis has revealed evidence of housing platforms, occupation plots, hollows and a moated site to the west of the Site, suggesting that the settlements were reasonably developed in the medieval period and suffered later contraction.
- 1.3.6 Shipton Oliffe Manor House itself has an early/mid-17<sup>th</sup> century core with numerous 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations and extensions, the latter by the well-known architect Norman Jewson. Given the manor house's location in the heart of the village and its proximity to the Grade I listed 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Oswald 75m to the north-west, the Site had high potential for the presence of earlier medieval features.

## 2 AIMS

### 2.1 General

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were:

- *to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and should remains be present, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
- *to confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
- *to determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains;*
- *to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains; and*
- *to prepare a report on the results of the Watching Brief.*

## 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the methodology as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2012) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (Revised 2008).
- 3.1.2 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts and features were located in relation to the Ordnance Survey national grid. All principal *strata* and features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum.





- 3.1.3 Relevant sections were drawn at an appropriate scale. A full photographic and graphic record was made of the excavated areas. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeology and the Site as a whole.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Stratigraphic sequence

- 4.1.1 The stratigraphic sequence across the area of excavation was broadly consistent, as demonstrated on **Plates 1–4**. The upper 0.50m comprised a number of made ground levelling layers of recent date (contexts 101-4), with moderate to abundant inclusions of charcoal and common post-medieval and modern pottery sherds.
- 4.1.2 The heavily disturbed upper layers overlay a number of contexts which appeared to represent episodes of dumping of subsoil-type material (contexts 105-7). These silty clays ranged in colour from light brown to mid-dark grey, suffered from significant root disturbance, and contained rare charcoal flecks and medieval pottery sherds. These contexts were recorded at depths between 0.45 and 1.45m below ground level (BGL).
- 4.1.3 The natural geology within the watching brief area was recorded to the north-west as mid-yellow brown clay sand with common flat and sub-angular limestone fragments (108), and to the south-east as light grey to dark blue sandy clay with rare gravel, becoming browner in colour and more compact towards the edge of the trench (110).

### 4.2 Features

- 4.2.1 A modern soak-away (109) 1.50 x 1.30m was recorded to a depth of at least 1.80m in the north-eastern section of the watching brief area.
- 4.2.2 A c. 0.30m diameter modern post hole (111) with charcoal-rich fill was seen to cut through redeposited subsoil 107. Following the removal of 107, two poorly defined shallow linear features (113) and (116), possibly representing the position of earlier hedgerows, were recorded cutting the natural to a depth of 1.55m BGL.

### 4.3 Artefacts

- 4.3.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief, consisting entirely of pottery, of medieval and post-medieval date. Sherds were recovered from three contexts (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1: Pottery quantification**

Context	Pottery	
	Number	Wt. (g)
102	4	57
104	2	64
107	4	49
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>170</b>

- 4.3.2 The four sherds from layer 107 are medieval coarsewares. Three are body sherds in oolitic fabrics, probably relatively locally produced, and the fourth a jar rim in non-local, igneous-tempered Malvernian ware, from the Worcestershire/Herefordshire border. The jar, with an expanded and thickened rim and a straight-sided body, is typical of the Malvernian ware range (e.g. Vince 1977, fig. 2, 4). Oolitic wares have a fairly lengthy



currency in the region from at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and the medieval Malvernian industry appears to have had its origins in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but it was in the 13<sup>th</sup> century that these wares became more common in Gloucester and the surrounding area (*ibid.*, 282–4).

- 4.3.3 Sherds from disturbed ground 102 and limestone spread 104 are post-medieval, and comprise three coarse redwares (all glazed), which cannot be more closely dated, and three modern (19<sup>th</sup>/ 20<sup>th</sup> century) refined whitewares.

#### **4.4 Ecofacts**

- 4.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during investigations.

### **5 DISCUSSION**

- 5.1.1 The archaeological watching brief has revealed no significant archaeological remains, and identified large amounts of modern disturbance throughout the entire trench. Medieval pottery recovered from the watching brief, and in particular the basal subsoil overlying natural geology suggests medieval activity in the vicinity, though no archaeological remains were identified that might be associated with this activity. The level of modern disturbance encountered, and the depth to which it was recorded, suggests that had archaeological remains been present, they may have been wholly removed by more recent modern activity.

### **6 REFERENCES**

- Vince, A, 1977, 'The medieval and post-medieval ceramic region of the Malvern region: the study of a ware and its distribution', in D P S Peacock (ed.), *Pottery and Early Commerce*, London: Academic Press, 257–305.
- Wessex Archaeology, 2012, *Shipton Oliffe Manor House, Gloucestershire, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief*, unpublished client report no. 85280.01



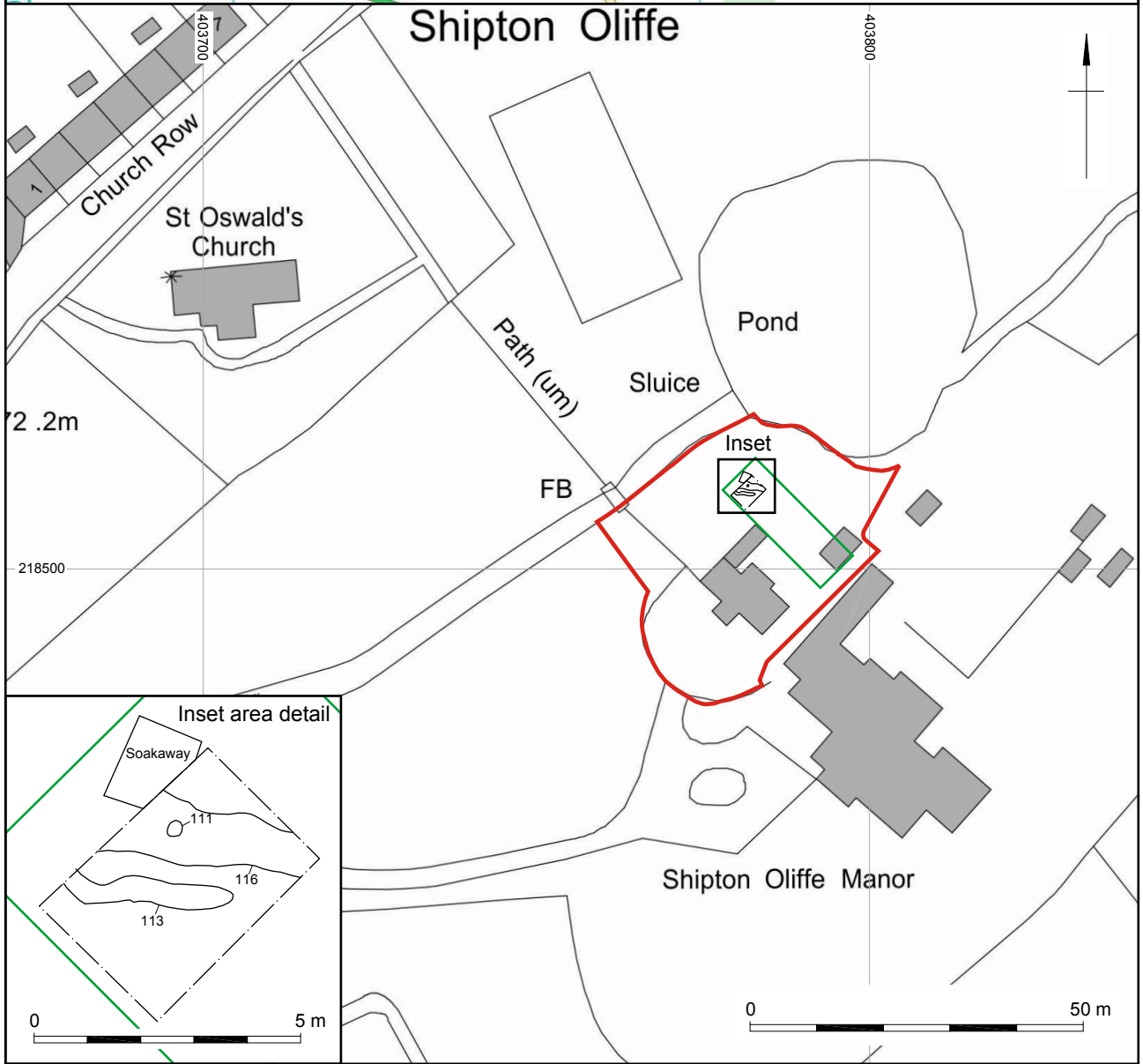
## 7 APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix 1: Trench table

<b>Trench 1</b>	<b>Dimensions:</b>	6m x 9m x 1.50m	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
101	Layer	Topsoil – Black friable clayey silt with moderate charcoal and small angular stone gravel c.15% <20mm.	0.00-0.15
102	Layer	Modern disturbed ground. Mixed loose dark grey silty clay and brick rubble with moderate mid-large stones. Abundant charcoal visible in all sections clearly mixed dumps and spreads containing 19th century and modern pottery.	0.12-0.31
103	Layer	Large charcoal spreads visible in NW and SE sections, and seen in plan as large modern spreads with pottery and root disturbance. Likely to be the same as <b>102</b> , truncated by soakaway <b>109</b> .	0.21-0.26
104	Layer	Limestone spread. Large stones and loose silty clay matrix with some degraded stones. Thin band of yellow white clayey sand 100mm thick running beneath stone sealing <b>105</b> below. Visible in NW and SE sections, peters out 2m from NW corner. Possible drainage stone spread across whole area, truncated by soak-away <b>109</b> .	0.31-0.46
105	Layer	Light brown silty clay with moderate (10%) charcoal flecks. Sparse small-med angular limestone. Moderate root disturbance. Similar to <b>106</b> but higher clay percentage and lighter in colour. Redeposited clays sealed by <b>104</b> .	0.45-0.65
106	Layer	Mid brown soft silty clay with heavy root disturbance and moderate charcoal. Sparse small-medium angular stones. Redeposited subsoil or clays sifted by rooting.	0.65-1.05
107	Layer	Soft mid-dark grey silty clay with abundant small sub-rounded gravels, moderate medium angular stone fragments, moderate charcoal flecks and very occasional pottery fragments. Dumped infilling or water-lain silting up of hollow formed in natural <b>108</b> .	1.05-1.45
108	Layer	Natural clayey sand. Mid yellow brown with sub-angular and flat stones. Sealed by <b>107</b> . Visible in NW corner of trench. Stone moderately compact.	1.45+
109	Soak-away	Large rectangular cut for modern soak-away feeding E-W piping. Contains bricks, concrete rubble and plastic sheeting. 1.50x1.30m. Still visible at 1.80m BGL.	0.15+
110	Layer	Light grey white clay sand and flat stone gravels. Visible in SW facing section. Becomes more clayey and blue coloured at 2m BGL, visible when sump slot was excavated. Natural clays and gravels. At the SE end of the trench the natural is more solid yellow brown clay.	1.05+
111	Post-hole	Circular post-hole with steep concave sides. 0.31 x 0.26 x 0.13m. Filled with <b>111</b> . Cuts <b>115</b> .	1.35-1.48



<b>Trench 1</b>	<b>Dimensions:</b>	6m x 9m x 1.50m	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
112	Fill	Dark grey black silty clay with abundant charcoal and degraded sandstone fragments. No evidence that the charcoal was produced in situ. Single fill of <b>111</b> .	-
113	Ditch?	Irregular, poorly defined, linear cut filled with <b>114</b> . E-W aligned, turning to NW. 0.41m wide, 0.11m deep.	1.48- 1.55
114	Fill	Mid brown grey soft silty clay with moderate charcoal inclusions. Single fill of <b>113</b> .	-
115	Layer	Dark grey soft silty clay with moderate charcoal flecks. 6.00 x 2.80 x 0.34m. Possible occupation layer or redeposited material. Same as <b>107</b> . Cut by post-hole <b>111</b> .	1.02- 1.28
116	Irregular Feature	Irregular cut feature seen at the same level as <b>114</b> . Possible rooting.	1.48+
117	Fill	Mid brown grey soft silty clay with moderate charcoal inclusions. Single fill of <b>116</b> .	-
118	Layer	Dark grey, very compact, sandy gravels. Probable leaching through natural causing discolouration.	2.01+



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Site location plan

Figure 1





Plate 1: South-east facing section of trench



Plate 2: North-east facing section of trench



Plate 3: Post-excitation shot of trench, south-east end



Plate 4: Post-excitation shot of trench, north-west end



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