

**COVERED OCCASIONS MARQUEES,
HIGH STREET,
AVEBURY**

NGR: SU 0989 6986

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
HSA00**

April 2000
Report No. 118
Author: T. Michaels



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

1st Floor, Shaftesbury Centre, Percy Street, Swindon, Wilts. SN2 2AZ Tel: 01793 525993 Email: admin@foundations.co.uk

CONTENTS

Summary

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 WATCHING BRIEF EVALUATION
- 3 CONCLUSIONS
- 4 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

- | | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Figure 1 | Site Location |
| Figure 2 | Site Area |
| Figure 3 | Areas of Disturbance |

HSA00

Covered Occasions Marquees, Avebury: Archaeological Watching Brief

SUMMARY

On the 13th March 2000 a programme of archaeological work was undertaken on land at the bottom of the High Street, Avebury, Wiltshire, (NGR: SU 0989 6986) on behalf of J P D Sumbler of Covered Occasion Marquees. The archaeological works consisted of a watching brief evaluation for the topsoil stripping of an area of land for a new entrance to the site and a narrow foundation trench for the construction of a wall.

No archaeological finds or features were identified during the course of the project.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 13th March 2000 at Covered Occasion Marquees, High Street, Avebury, Wiltshire at NGR: SU 0989 6986. The programme of archaeological works was undertaken in accordance with the principles of Planning Policy note 16, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) as the site lies within an area defined as a World Heritage Site and significant archaeological deposits may reasonably have been expected to be present.
- 1.2 The watching brief evaluation was undertaken in response to the proposal to the construction of a new entrance and frontage wall to facilitate access to the site.
- 1.3 The watching brief evaluation was undertaken to specifications agreed with the Wiltshire County Archaeologist. The project itself was prepared and carried out in accordance with *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IFA 1994) and *Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire* (County Archaeological Service 1995).
- 1.4 The study area is located approximately 150m to the west of the henge, in the centre of the village of Avebury. It is bounded to the northeast by the graveyard of St James' church, to the north by Avebury Manor, to the east by the High Street itself and to the east by the 'Old Bakery' cottage and its grounds. The site is approximately triangular in plan. It also lies on the likely route of the newly discovered Beckhampton avenue. As such, the site had the potential to add significantly to the understanding of the prehistoric record of the Avebury World Heritage site. The site also lies at the southern end of the Saxon/medieval High Street of Avebury, and so also had potential to further knowledge of the study of that period.
- 1.5 A watching brief was previously undertaken by Foundations Archaeology at The Old Bakery site in November 1999, c. 40m to the north. No archaeological deposits were recovered during the course of that project and artefacts were restricted to two sherds of 13th-14th century Minety-type coarseware.
- 1.6 The objective of the watching brief evaluation was to monitor the excavation of the foundation trench and ground works for possible archaeologically sensitive deposits located on the site of the proposed entrance and wall. The underlying solid geology comprises Cretaceous chalk.
- 1.7 Avebury village lies at the core of the World Heritage Site. The area holds this status due to the recognised value of the prehistoric monuments in and around the village. It is possible that an avenue of stones ran past the henge to the west towards Beckhampton, where its line has been discovered. If it extends into the village, this would probably have passed along the line of the present High Street in close proximity to the study area. Avebury may also have formed an important

Saxon centre. Excavations to the south of the village have identified early Saxon settlement and it has been suggested that in the Middle Saxon period the village may have formed a *burh*. By the late Saxon period the church had become a Minster and the status of the village had risen considerably.

- 1.8 The archive will be deposited with the Alexander Keillor Museum and a summary report published in the Transactions of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History society.

2 WATCHING BRIEF EVALUATION

- 2.1 The project specifications required that any excavation relating to the proposed development of the study area be monitored by a qualified archaeologist. The wall foundation trench and the driveway were machine excavated, into the top of the upper chalk substrate at an average depth of 600mm. The chalk was overlaid by a mixed subsoil deposit containing occasional lumps of stone, probably from the foundations of cottages that previously existed on the site and were demolished during the 1940's. The area of topsoil that was stripped contained modern cuts for a large drainage pipe and an electricity cable. There were also two modern cuts that contained the stumps of telegraph poles, earlier versions of the existing pole.
- 2.2 The line of the wall trench followed closely the line of the original wall, stopping short to allow wider access to the site. This meant that the cut for the earlier wall had severely disturbed the trench, as had the earlier tarmac for the car park. The worst disturbance was in the area of the earlier gateposts, which had been concreted in to avoid destruction by the lorries using the gate. The section on the Avebury Marquees side was therefore substantially disturbed. On the field side, the section showed disturbance in the subsoil, with three pieces of sarsen stone around 0.25m in diameter, of the type commonly used for foundations in this area. Local people reported that there had been cottages on the site 'until the 1940s'.
- 2.3 No archaeological finds or deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 No archaeological finds or features were identified during the course of the watching brief, although evidence for previous site usage was identified in the form of rough stone blocks, probably resulting from the demolition during the 1940's of cottages previously present on the site. There had been substantial previous disturbance to the area in the form of drainage, electricity cables and telegraph poles.

Covered Occasions Marquees, Avebury: Archaeological Watching Brief

- 3.2 Despite the high potential of the study area it is likely that post-medieval/modern disturbance had removed all traces of archaeological deposits which might otherwise have survived within the area of the present works. The absence of archaeological material from the study area may, however, be due in part to the nature of 'watching briefs' whereby the groundworks are undertaken only under archaeological supervision, rather than through archaeological excavation.

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Foundations Archaeology 2000a Covered Occasion Marquees, High Street, Avebury: Project Design

Foundations Archaeology 2000b Old Bakery, High Street, Avebury: Archaeological Watching Brief, unpublished typescript report No 103.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank John Sumbler of Covered Occasion Marquees and Duncan Coe of Wiltshire County Council for their assistance in the smooth running of the project: