

Summary of a Watching Brief conducted at Manor Farm Stables, Manor Farm, Ruislip, London Borough of Hillingdon

Between late October and late November 2011 an Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken during underpinning and drainage works associated with the conversion of Manor Farm Stables, Manor Farm, Ruislip, HA4 7QL. The work was commissioned by Francis Construction Limited. Map evidence suggests that the stables were constructed some time between the mid 1860s and 1890s - the earlier plan showing a building located slightly further to the south.

A total of 4 underpinning pits were observed, along with trenching for the laying down of electrical cabling along the west side and water pipes around the north, east and southern perimeter of the stable block respectively.

The underpinning pits measured between 1.85m - 2m long by 0.95m wide and up to 1.5m in depth, straddling the existing walls on either side of the central door in the southern face of the stables and either side of the window in the opposing, northern wall.

The southern pits revealed earlier surfaces beneath the existing tarmac path, (externally), and brick and concrete floors, (internally). *See figures 1 and 2.*

The external portion of the pits revealed natural, solid brown clay, geology approximately 650-700mm below the present ground surface overlain by up to 150mm of made ground deposits consisting of orange-brown clayey gravels and dark-grey-brown clayey-gravels containing the odd fragment of ceramic building material, (CBM). Most of this material dated top between 1480-1700, which was earlier than perhaps expected. Over this made ground was laid a surface of flint cobbles, made up of a course of smaller flints under larger nodules to create a yard surface probably associated with the earlier stable. This was also present within a 4m stretch at the western end of trenching observed on the 30th November, see fig.7. The surface had been truncated 0.32m south from the stable wall due to the insertion of a concrete plinth at the base of the stable wall, perhaps to provide further structural stability. There was evidence of repair to the flint yard surface after this event by the presence of two red bricks at the northern edge of the interface between the cobbles and the concrete. This would suggest that this yard surface was still in use for some time after the concrete was added. Later this yard was buried by a layer of mixed soils and brick rubble between 80-180mm thick prior to the laying on the present tarmac pathway over a bed of concrete.

The internal portion of the pits revealed the same natural geology at 690mm below present floor level, overlain by a heavily mixed grey-brown clay with frequent CBM inclusions 350mm thick. Over this was a 130mm thick layer of flint and brick rubble onto which a floor of yellow stock bricks had been lain. This floor was later superseded by the current floor of concrete, 100mm thick. Brick samples taken from the earlier floor were dated to between 1770-1940AD.

The northern pits revealed somewhat simpler stratigraphy. Externally natural geology was observed 700mm below the ground surface overlain by 250-300mm of mid-grey-brown friable silty-clay containing occasional rounded pebbles, almost certainly representing some form of truncated / buried soil horizon. This, in turn, was overlain by a pale-brown dirty clay, 190-250mm in thickness, containing fragments of CBM.

This layer could be redeposited natural disturbed upon construction of the stables. Over the abovementioned layer was an imported mid-grey-brown sandy-silt forming the new subsoil in the base of which was a scattering of mixed peg-tile and mortar probably representing detritus after an episode of building work associated with the stables, more than likely the insertion of the concrete plinth as observed in the southern pits. This subsoil was overlain by the present grass and topsoil which was up to 100mm thick.

Internally the northern pits revealed further evidence of the earlier brick floor of the stables, although here it was partly constructed of highly fired blue pavers, so-called 'engineering' bricks, these would have assisted with drainage within the stables. They were dated to around 1830-1950, much later than many of the other bricks.

See figures 3 and 4.

A total of c.70m of trenching was observed between the 25th – 30th November which revealed similar stratigraphy as exposed in the underpinning process. The trenching was up to 0.45m wide and up to 0.70m deep. Stratigraphy on the northern side of the stables constituted natural compacted brown clay 650mm below the present ground surface, overlain by a grey-brown buried soil horizon, 300mm thick and modern imported subsoil containing building debris overlain by topsoil. *See figures 5 and 6.*

Trenching on the southern side of the stables revealed made ground 300mm below the level of the path, very-dark grey in colour and sterile, overlain by a rubble rich silty-clay containing frequent crushed brick and tile, below the existing tarmac surface. This sequence was largely homogenous except in the far western 4m of trenching opposite the far door to the stables and stairs leading down to the tea-rooms. Here the flint cobbled yard surface observed in the southern underpinning pits was preserved in plan, however it was truncated to the south and east by the retaining wall built along the bank facing into the farm courtyard. *See figures 7 and 8.*

It is clear that previous stabilisation works to the walls, and hard landscaping to the south, has taken place in the recent past around the stables, therefore it is not surprising that evidence of earlier buildings and land surfaces has been so heavily disturbed. In consequence little of archaeological significance was observed during monitoring works.

COMPASS ARCHAEOLOGY

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Fig.1: External shot of Pit 2. East facing section.



Fig.2: Internal shot of Pit 2. West facing section.



Fig.3: External shot of Pit 3. West facing section.



Fig.4: Internal shot of Pit 3. East facing section.



Fig.5: Trenching on northern side of stables. Facing East.



Fig.6: South facing section through trenching on Northern side of stables. Buried soil horizon in base of trench.



Fig.7: Flint yard surface in west end of trenching, southern side of stables. Facing east.



Fig.8: South facing section above cobbled surface.

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Project details

Project name	Watching Brief at Manor Farm Stables, Ruislip
Short description of the project	Between late October and late November 2011 a watching brief was conducted during underpinning and drainage works during the conversion of the Stables, Manor Farm, Ruislip, HA4 7QL. 4 underpinning pits measuring between 1.85-2m long x 0.95m wide and up to 1.5m deep were observed as was approximately 70m of trenching measuring 0.4m wide by up to 0.7m deep around the perimeter of the stable block. Natural geology of compact, sterile, pale-brown clay was recorded from 650mm below present ground surface. Made ground, 150mm thick, sealed the natural in the southern pits, atop which was a former cobbled surface of large flint nodules, part of which was observed and recorded in plan in the westernmost 4m of trenching to the south of the stables. This yard surface was later buried beneath a further made ground, 180mm thick, and then sealed by the present tarmac pathway. The northern pits and trenching revealed similar natural geology sealed by a buried soil horizon 300mm thick which represented the ground surface prior to an episode of construction and landscaping around the stable block. The buried soil was sealed beneath a redeposited natural containing CBM and mortar from this episode, and a subsequent imported subsoil and modern topsoil. All deposits were associated with the construction of the original 19th century stable block, and with the repair and hard landscaping of the area in the 20th century. No other, earlier, archaeology was observed.
Project dates	Start: 31-10-2011 End: 30-11-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	MAN11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	COURTYARD SURFACE Post Medieval
Monument type	STABLE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

Prompt Recommendation by English Heritage

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HILLINGDON RUISLIP Manor Farm Stables, Manor Farm
Postcode	HA4 7QL
Study area	0.10 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 089 877 51.5771492983 -0.428272820810 51 34 37 N 000 25 41 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.60m Max: 0.70m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Compass Archaeology
Project supervisor	James Aaronson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Francis Construction Limited

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive

Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Map','Notebook - Excavation','Research',' General Notes','Plan','Survey ','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Summary of a Watching Brief conducted at Manor Farm Stables, Manor Farm, Ruislip, London Borough of Hillingdon
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Aaronson, J
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Description	A brief summary of archaeological observations during the watching brief at Manor Farm Stables. Contains brief description of work locations, dimensions, context descriptions and some pictures illustrating main points.
Entered by	James Aaronson (james.aaronson@gmail.com)
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