

An Archaeological Evaluation at Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire

NGR TQ 0090 8160 (Centered)

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**ASE Project no. 2838
Site Code: LPH 07**

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East (a division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire (centred NGR TQ 0090 8160) in advance of redevelopment. The fieldwork was carried out between 12th and 14th March 2007.

The archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches across the area of the proposed development, each measuring 10.0m by 1.8m. Natural river terrace gravels were encountered between 35.38m OD and 35.68m OD across the site. .

Archaeological remains observed on the site were almost entirely restricted to the southernmost of the trenches. Here, remains of an east-west brick wall, thought to represent the remains of a cellar, a brick built culvert and in isolated pit and posthole were all seen to be cut into the surviving subsoil of the site. Brick fragments recovered from the wall, culvert and pit all indicate a late 16th-early 18th century date, though in all cases the brick was either residual or reused and the construction of the potential cellar wall is thought to date to the latter half of the 18th century when Langley Park House and its grounds were extensively remodelled.

All these features were sealed by a sequence of made ground, in turn sealed by tarmac and hardcore of the current car park that occupies the site. A thin layer of metalling was observed beneath the tarmac and hardcore of the current car park towards the centre of the site and this is thought to represent a precursor to the current surfacing.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), (a division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire (centred NGR TQ 0090 8160) in advance of redevelopment (Figure 1). The fieldwork was carried out between 12th and 14th March 2007.
- 1.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) outlining the requirements of the evaluation was prepared by Jon Sygrave of ASE in response to a *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation* prepared by Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs 2007a) and following consultation with South Buckinghamshire District Council's archaeological advisor. The WSI was submitted and duly approved by David Radford, Buckinghamshire County Council's (BCC's) Archaeological Officer prior to the archaeological works taking place.
- 1.3 The site lies immediately to the north of Langley Park House itself and is currently in use as a car park. The underlying geology consists of Lynch Hill Gravels, a River Thames Terrace Deposit, overlying London Clay.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The preceding Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs 2007b) identified the study site to have archaeological potential for the prehistoric and Roman periods due to favourable geological horizons and the likely preservation of relict landscapes within Langley Park
- 2.2 The site is also considered to have good archaeological potential for the medieval and post-medieval period due to the unknown whereabouts of earlier phases of the Mansion at Langley Park.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 The general objective is to determine as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains likely to be threatened by the proposed new development.
- 3.2 The more specific Aims and Objectives of the evaluation were laid out in the Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation (CgMs 2007a) and are reproduced below with due acknowledgement:
- To establish the presence or otherwise of any Medieval and Post-Medieval and/or any earlier or later activity, and to define the date and nature of such activity, paying specific regard to the potential for evidence of pottery manufacture.
 - To establish the environmental context of any Medieval and Post-Medieval and/or earlier or later activity.
 - Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and development.
 - Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.
- 3.3 The fieldwork aimed to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and any surviving structures of archaeological significance.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 A total of four trenches measuring 10.0m by 2.0m, totalling some 40.0m of trenching, were excavated across the development site (Fig. 2). The proposed trench layout was agreed by CgMs and the Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) Archaeological Officer and was designed to provide a representative sample of the redevelopment area. Some modifications to the suggested trench positions were necessary due to existing site constraints such as services. These were agreed in advance with Duncan Hawkins of CgMs.
- 4.2 The trial trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were cut by a 13 ton tracked excavator, fitted with a 1.90m wide toothless ditching bucket.
- 4.3 The excavations were taken down to the top of the underlying geology or to the surface of any significant archaeological deposit; whichever was higher. Only undifferentiated topsoil, subsoil and overburden of recent origin were removed by machine. The excavations were taken, in spits of no more than 0.25m, down to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the top of the underlying 'natural', whichever was uppermost. Revealed surfaces were manually cleaned in an attempt to identify individual archaeological features. The sections of the trenches were selectively cleaned to observe and record their stratigraphy. The removed spoil was scanned for the presence of any stray, unstratified artefacts.
- 4.4 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards in accordance with the approved ASE Written Scheme of Investigation using pro-forma context record sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:50. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 4.5 A full photographic record of the work was kept (monochrome prints, colour slides and digital) and will form part of the site archive. The archive (including the finds) is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Ditching, and will in due course be offered to a suitable local museum.
- 4.6 All archaeological deposits were levelled in relation to Ordnance Datum, using a spot height of 35.94m OD situated on a drain cover at the northern end of the car park.
- 4.7 No contexts were suitable for environmental sampling.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length (m)	Max. Width (m)	Max. Depth (m)
1/001	Layer	Tarmac	Tr.	Tr.	0.45
1/002	Layer	Made Ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.73
1/003	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.30
1/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A
1/005	Deposit	Demolition	0.85	0.80	0.12
1/006	Masonry	Foundation	1.10	0.80	0.12
1/007	Cut	Construction cut	1.10	0.90	0.12
1/008	Cut	Modern pipe trench	2.00	0.96	0.80
1/009	Fill	Fill of 1/010	0.22	0.17	0.16
1/010	Cut	Posthole	0.22	0.17	0.16
1/011	Fill	Backfill of 1/013	2.00	1.30	0.53m min
1/012	Masonry	Brick culvert	2.00	0.52	u/k
1/013	Cut	Construction cut	2.00	1.30	0.53
1/014	Fill	Fill of 1/015	0.94	0.54	0.47
1/015	Cut	Pit cut	0.94	0.54	0.47
1/016	Fill	Backfill of 1/008	2.00	0.96	0.80

Table 1: Trench 1- List of recorded contexts

Summary

Natural geology, comprising loose mid brownish yellow gravel with frequent rooting (1/004) was encountered between 35.38m OD and 35.40m OD. This deposit was sealed by a layer of mid brown clay containing frequent pebbles and roots (1/003) that has been interpreted as the surviving subsoil horizon on the site.

A total of four archaeological features were cut from the level of this subsoil horizon, including a pit, a posthole a brick drain and the potential remains of a brick cellar.

Pit [1/015] lay towards the western end of the trench and consisted of a sub-circular pit cut filled with a deposit of mid brown sandy clay with frequent pebbles (1/014). Two fragments of brick retrieved from this feature have been dated to the late 16th – early 18th centuries. Immediately to the east of pit [1/015] lay brick drain or culvert [1/012]. This was constructed of red unfrogged brick bonded with a hard lime mortar within a large construction cut [1/013] that was backfilled with mid grey silty gravel (1/011), clearly derived from the underlying natural gravel (1/003). Fragments of peg tile recovered from this backfill have been dated to the late 16th –early 18th century.

Posthole [1/010] was situated towards the eastern end of the trench and comprised a small sub-circular cut with rounded profile and fill of dark grey sandy clay (1/009).

At the far eastern end of the trench lay the partial remains of a potential brick cellar. This comprised a shallow truncated construction cut [1/007] with an east-west brick foundation 1/006 built against the northern side of the cut. This foundation was constructed in a somewhat haphazard fashion of fragments of red unfrogged brick with no clear bonding material. Indeed, the remnants of sandy mortar found to be adhering to some of the bricks, as well as the presence of a tapered brick that may be derived from a window head, shows that they have been reused in this construction. Samples of these bricks have been dated to the late 16th – early 18th centuries. A layer of loose demolition material, consisting largely of mortar and fragments of brick and tile (1/005) that abutted the southern face of brick wall 1/006 attests to the demolition and infilling of this possible cellar structure.

All the archaeological features described above were sealed by a substantial layer of made ground, consisting of mid greyish brown sandy clay containing frequent fragments of brick, tile and concrete (1/002). This layer was in turn sealed by the modern tarmac surfacing of the current car park and its associated make up (1/001).

5.2 Trench 2

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length (m)	Max. Width (m)	Max. Depth (m)
2/001	Layer	Tarmac	Tr.	Tr.	0.45
2/002	Layer	Metalling	Tr.	Tr.	0.10
2/003	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.10
2/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A

Table 2: Trench 2 - List of recorded contexts

Natural mid brownish yellow gravel was encountered between 35.68m OD at the western end of the trench, falling away gently to 35.46m OD to the east. This was overlain by a deposit of subsoil comprising mid brown clay with frequent pebbles (2/003) that only survived at the eastern and western extremities of the trench.

Elsewhere in the trench the subsoil had been entirely removed during levelling works associated with the construction of a thin metallated surface composed of rammed gravel (2/002). This metalling appears to constitute a precursor to the current car park and was directly sealed by the tarmac and make up of the car park (2/001).

5.3 Trench 3

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length (m)	Max. Width (m)	Max. Depth (m)
3/001	Layer	Tarmac	Tr.	Tr.	0.40
3/002	Layer	Metalling	Tr.	Tr.	0.10
3/003	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.15
3/004	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A

Table 3: Trench 3 - List of recorded contexts

Summary

Natural mid yellow gravel (3/004) was encountered between 35.53m OD and 35.44m OD. This was overlain by a layer of mid brown clay subsoil (3/003) containing frequent pebbles, in turn overlain by a thin layer of metalling (3/002) that may be equated to surface (2/002) observed in Trench 2. As with the sequence observed in Trench 2, this surface was directly overlain by the tarmac and make up of the present car park (3/001)

5.4 Trench 4

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Max. Depth
4/001	Layer	Tarmac	Tr.	Tr.	0.30
4/002	Layer	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.15
4/003	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	N/A

Table 4: Trench 4 - List of recorded contexts

Summary

Natural mid yellow gravel (4/003) was encountered at 35.50m OD across the trench. This was overlain by a mid brown clay subsoil with frequent pebbles (4/002), in turn sealed by the tarmac and make up of the present car park.

6.0 THE FINDS

By Elke Raemen

- 6.1 The evaluation produced only a small assemblage of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) from three different contexts. These finds are summarised in Table 5.

Context	CBM (no.)	Weight (g)
1/006	4	3198
1/011	3	636
1/014	2	1462

Table 5: Quantification of the finds

Context No.	Context Type	Spot Date
[1/006]	Foundation wall	Late 16 th to early 18 th century
[1/011]	Backfill of drain	Late 16 th to early 18 th century
[1/014]	Pit fill	Late 16 th to early 18 th century

Table 6: Context Spot Dates

- 6.2 The ceramic building material all dates to the late 16th to early 18th century (see Table 6). Two roof tile fragments were recovered from drain backfill deposit [1/011]. These are crudely made, very thick (14–15mm) and low fired. Both are abundant fine sand-tempered, one showing iron oxide-inclusions to 2mm.
- 6.3 All of the bricks are crude and handmade. Wall foundation [1/006] contains three medium fired brick fragments. They are moderate fine to medium sand-tempered with rare flint inclusions to 2mm, occasional chalk inclusions to 1mm and occasional iron-oxide inclusions to 2mm. A tapered brick was also recovered, possibly from the head of a window. The fabric is similar to the other bricks of the same context and the piece shows traces of a buff sandy mortar. Measurements could be taken on three bricks. The widths range from 109 to 115mm, while the heights range from 52 to 55mm. Context [1/011] contains one low fired brick fragment with abundant fine sand-tempering and occasional chalk inclusions to 1 mm and iron-oxide inclusions to 2 mm. The height of the brick measures 54mm. Two brick fragments of a similar fabric to the fragments from [1/006] were recovered from pit fill [1/014]. Their width ranges from 100 to 101mm and the height ranges from 57 to 60mm.
- 6.4 The assemblage does not hold any potential for further analysis. However, if finds are recovered from any further works at the site, these should be studied in conjunction with the current assemblage.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Archaeological deposits on the site are restricted to Trench 1, to the south of the area of the proposed development and include a brick culvert and possible cellar structure, as well as a small isolated posthole and pit.
- 7.2 The potential cellar structure is of some interest, given its proximity to Langley Park House and it is likely that it represents a structure associated with the house, though its exact form and function remains difficult to determine. Brick samples retrieved from the structure indicate a late 16th-early 18th century date that would be contemporary with the original Langley Park House. Given the somewhat shoddy construction of wall 1/006, however, it is highly unlikely that the structure represents the remains of the house itself and if the structure is indeed of this date it is perhaps more likely to comprise the remains of an outbuilding associated with Langley Park House.
- 7.3 In this respect one should note that bricks in this structure show signs of reuse and it is thus conceivable that the construction of wall 1/006 is significantly later in date than the bricks of which it is built. Indeed, given the haphazard construction of wall 1/006, utilizing only fragments of brick, it is conceivable that the structure was built of material retrieved from the demolished remains of the original house during the construction of the present Langley Park House and the associated remodelling of the estate during the latter half of the 18th century (CgMs 2007b, 11). If this premise is to be believed, then it is possible to view the structure represented by wall 1/006 as an outbuilding associated with the present house.
- 7.4 Of the small pit and posthole recorded in Trench 1, little may be said with any certainty. Once again, bricks recovered from the fill of pit [1/015] suggest a late 16th-early 18th century date but again the possibly residual nature of this material must be stressed. It is certainly possible that these represent the remains of garden features within the landscaped grounds of Langley Park House but, in isolation, it is difficult to be sure. It is perhaps worth noting that, the absence of any other such features elsewhere on the site tends to suggest that these features do not form part of a wider, planned landscape.
- 7.5 The metalling observed in Trenches 2 and 3 is probably best seen as a precursor to the current tarmac surfacing of the car park, as the hardcore of the current tarmac was seen to directly seal the metalling and is considered to be relatively modern in date.

8.0 REFERENCES

CgMs Consulting (2007a). *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation: Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire*

CgMs Consulting (2007b). *An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire*

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The co-operation and assistance of David Radford of Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting Ltd is gratefully acknowledged.

APPENDIX 1: SMR Summary Form

Site Code	LPH 07					
Identification Name and Address	Langley Park House, Buckinghamshire					
County, District &/or Borough	South Bucks District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 0090 8160					
Geology	Lynch Hill Gravels, overlying London Clay.					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2838					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other (Parks and Gardens) ✓		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 12-14.03.07	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting					
Project Manager	Diccon Hart					
Project Supervisor	Diccon Hart					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		

100 Word Summary.

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