

**Land to the rear of the Black Head Inn,
Station Road, Bletchington, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Morgan Construction Ltd**

by AndrewMundin
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices
Ltd

SiteCodeBSB11/32

April 2011

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of the Black Head Inn, Station Road, Bletchington, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 5018 1763

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 11th - 12th April 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: BSB 11/32

Area of site: c. 350sq m

Summary of results: Excavations of a new house and garage footings, within an enclosed area of land to the south of the pub, identified stone foundations for two separate structures. One of these contained a cellar and dates from no earlier than the start of the 18th century and is depicted on 19th and early 20th century Ordnance Survey maps. The other structure is also of post-medieval date but may have been demolished and replaced in the 19th century. A few sherds of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery were also recovered from post-medieval made ground.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 20.04.11
	Steve Preston ✓ 20.04.11

Land to the rear of The Black Head Inn, Station Road, Bletchington, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 11/32

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land to the rear of the Black Head Inn, Station Road, Bletchington, Oxfordshire, OX5 3DA (SSP 5018 1763) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Morgan of Morgan Construction, The Lone Barn, Stoke Lyne, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX27 8SD.

Planning consent (08/00784/F) has been gained from Cherwell District Council for the construction of a new dwelling and associated garage on land within a boundary wall which, before demolition prior to archaeological works commencing, contained W. C. Draper and Sons Builders steel-framed workshop and store. This consent was subject to a condition (11) relating to archaeology, which required a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This was in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), which has now been superseded by the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5 2010), and is in line with the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service, and based on a brief prepared by him (Oram 2010). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin on 11th and 12th April 2011 and the site code is BSB 11/32. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within a walled area at the southern end of the rear car-park of the Black Head Inn west of The Green, on the southern side of Station Road, Bletchington (Fig. 2). The interior of this walled area has been cleared of standing structures and undergrowth, to leave a generally levelled site, which lies at c. 99m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is 4th Terrace River Gravels, with the village on a rise on the eastern side of the Cherwell River Valley (BGS 1982). A deep reddish brown silty sandy clay with occasional sub-angular gravel inclusions was noted at the limit of excavation.

Archaeological background

A brief prepared by the County Archaeology Service has highlighted the archaeological potential for this site (Oram 2010). In summary, the site, on the western edge of The Green, is thought to be within the post-medieval historic core of the village with many late 16th- to 18th-century standing buildings, mostly Grade II listed, surrounding The Green. There is thought to be a possibly Saxon or Medieval core to the village, but this may be centred in the vicinity of the parish church (St Giles) to the east of The Green. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as '*Bilcestone*' owned by Robert d'Oilly (William and Martin 2002). A Saxon (late 6th/7th century) Kentish-style, garnet inlaid, disc-brooch has been found near the village (Tiller and Darke 2010, 50; CDC 2003). The slightly irregular shape to the village is thought to have been caused by the development of Bletchington Park, to the north and north-east of The Green, from the 16th century onwards. Two Grade II Listed Buildings of late 17th century origin lay adjacent to the development site (CDC 2008). The Black Head Inn also has late 18th- and 19th-century additions (VCH 1959). Glendale is also thought to have late 17th-century origins (CDC 2008). Both are built of coarse limestone rubble with lime mortar. Planned development also occurred on this side of The Green, during expansion of the village after 1945 (VCH 1959), creating the housing estate west of the site.

Cartographic evidence

A series of historic maps covering The Green at Bletchington were consulted for signs of structural remains within the development area (Figs 3, 4 and 5). All three Ordnance Survey editions (beginning in 1875, Fig. 4) clearly identify the building as a public house and two name it 'Black's Head Inn'. All three maps also note buildings forming a courtyard to the south of the pub. The Ordnance Survey map of 1900–6 (Fig. 4) notes standing buildings to the rear of the pub to the south, forming an L-shape, though in less detail than the earlier map. The 1937–9 map (Fig. 5), better defines the shape of Glendale to the east, which is seen to fit its current shape. There is a suggestion that a small extension was added to this building between 1875 and 1937. In conclusion, there is a high potential of at least four structures from the west and south side of this courtyard existing in the development area as well as possible courtyard surfaces.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular monitoring of the excavation of foundation and service trenches and other deeply invasive features such as soakaways.

Results

A brief description of all identified features and layers is noted in Appendix 1. All new footing trenches were 0.8m wide and were viewed under constant archaeological supervision.

New House footings

The site was mostly covered by a layer of modern overburden which was a mix of ballast and demolition rubble up to 0.7m deep. Beneath the overburden, a deep layer of made ground (54) was initially identified. On the northern side the made ground extended to a depth of 1.13m below the base of the excavation. It was a dark brown clayey sand with pottery, brick and tile, glass, animal bone and clay pipe, a sample of which was retained. Some of the pottery recovered is no earlier than 18th century in date. To the south-east two additional layers were noted locally on top of the made ground. They consisted of a thin mortar and stone deposit (59) above a chalk and brown sand layer (60) (Figs 6 and 7, s 4).

The northern footing trench was dug across the end of a stone-built structure which included a cellar (Pl. 2). The cellar was defined by walls 52, 53 and 55 with wall 53 being partially exposed due to a collapse of the trench sides. The walls were 0.6m wide and their construction trenches had cut the made ground layer (54). At the base of the cellar at a depth of 1.7m, the cellar floor (58) was partially exposed. This floor was a bitumen covered lime mortar only 0.06m thick with the natural geology beneath. The cellar had been backfilled with (53) contained stone, brickwork, 19th century china, metal pieces, etc in a dark brown clayey sand matrix.

Wall 55 continued to the north east (Figs 6 and 7, s2), cutting the made ground (54) from a depth of 0.45m in section and into the natural geology. It was 0.77m wide and 1.03m.

New garage footing

This footing was dug at the rear (south-west) of the walled area, on the part of the site which had previously contained the steel-framed workshop (Fig. 6). It was a 6m long trench, 1.1m wide and 0.87m deep. A concrete foundation cut natural geology at the exposed surface of the new excavation, with the concrete slab removed over the south-west corner of the site.

The trench had been located across the end of a second stone-built building with two, possibly three wall foundations identified which cut into the natural geology (Figs 6 and 7). Wall (57) traversed the north western end of the trench with a right angled return (50) mostly forming the north eastern side of the trench (Pl. 1). A second right angled return appears to have been largely obliterated by more recent construction/demolition. Wall 57 in construction cut 4 was made of stone rubble and was 0.7m wide, reaching a depth of 0.87m. Wall 50 was also a rubble stone construction, with some roughly flat rectangular blocks. The backfill (51) of its construction cut (1) contained post-medieval pottery no earlier than mid 16th century date.

Well

A capped well lay to the south-west of the new house footing (Fig.6). Prior to backfilling this with concrete, a record of the top was made. The top was 0.8m in diameter with its interior structure made of limestone rubble. Water was noted at the bottom, at a depth of over 3m.

Finds

Though large quantities of fragments of stone, tile, red brick, rough-hewn stone blocks, metal, china and glass were noted from the cellar backfill (53) none were retained. A small sample of pottery, glass and clay pipe material recovered from made ground layer (54) was retained as was material from construction cut 1. Brick and stone tile fragments were not retained.

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

Pottery was recovered from two contexts, the construction cut backfill for wall 50 (51) and the made ground (54). The pottery assemblage comprised 10 sherds with a total weight of 389g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200–1600. 1 sherd, 32g.

OXFH: Border wares, 1550–1700. 1 sherd, 53g.

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550 onwards. 2 sherds, 70g.

OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613–1800. 2 sherds, 88g.

OXEST: English stoneware. c. 1680 onwards. 3 sherds, 69g.

OXBEW: Staffordshire manganese wares. c. 1700-1800. 1 sherd, 77g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The bulk of the assemblage was of post-medieval date, although a fragment of a base from a late medieval Brill/Boarstall drinking jug occurred in context 54. The post-medieval assemblage appears largely domestic, with most sherds from large bowls apart from the Tin-Glazed Earthenware. One sherd is from a chamber-pot, a fairly typical product of the tradition, but the other is from a drug-jar, and has part of a painted inscription on the front, with the first two letters, 'CO', surviving. It almost certainly refers to the contents, and a number of interpretations are possible. Such vessels are generally rare at rural settlements.

Glass

One piece of glass was recovered from made ground layer (54). It was a small shard from a thick-necked bottle, weight 16g. The glass was opaque, but did not have spalled surfaces. This find is

Clay pipe

Two pieces of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from the made ground (54). One is a 45mm length of thick pipe stem with a 3mm bore, and the other is a plain, broken bowl front and complete spur at the base of the bowl, with the makers-mark 'C' and 'E' clearly visible on either side of the spur. There are several known makers with those initials: Charles Elliot of Lambeth, Charles Eves and Charles Ellis both of Bristol, could all could feasibly be the maker (Oswald 1975). A more remote possibility is a Charles Evans who produced pipes in Dublin (Oswald 1975). There is also a possibility it could be as yet unknown local producer. All of the named makers were active from the 1840s.

Conclusion

The watching brief has identified post-medieval structural remains within the development area. One building which included a backfilled cellar was constructed no earlier than the start of the 18th century and which corresponds well with a building depicted on historic Ordnance Survey maps from 1875–1939. At some point after this time the building was demolished and the cellar backfilled.

A second structure on the south-west part of the site is no earlier than the mid 16th century but could well be much later, as the pottery recovered from the construction cut has a long currency of use. Again, a building depicted on the historic maps from 1875–1939 stood on this portion of the site, but appears to be larger than that

indicated by the foundations observed. It is possible therefore that the foundations observed represent an earlier building in this location. No trace of the larger building on the Ordnance Survey maps was noted, and this may well have been fully removed prior to construction of the 20th century workshop.

References

- BGS, 1982, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 236, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- CDC, 2008, Bletchingdon Conservation Appraisal: July 2008, Cherwell District Council's Planning, Housing and Economy, http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/media/pdf/3/m/Final_Appraisal_-_lr.pdf. Date accessed: 11th April 2011
- Mellor, M, 1984 A summary of the key assemblages, a study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century', in T G Hassall, C E Halpin and M Mellor, 'Excavations at St Ebbe's , Oxford, 1967-1976: Part II: Post-medieval domestic tenements and the Post-Dissolution site of the Greyfriars', *Oxoniensia* **49**, 181-211
- Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region ' *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich
- Oswald, A, 1975, *Clay pipes for the Archaeologist*, BAR **14**, London
- VCH, 1959, Parishes: Bletchingdon, A history of the county of Oxford: Vol. 6, 56–71,
URL:<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=63725>. Date accessed: 11th April 2011
- Tiller, K and Darke, G (ed), 2010, *An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire*, Oxfordshire Records Soc vol **67**, Oxford
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, Penguin Books, London

APPENDIX 1: Feature details

Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	50 (wall) 51 (construction backfill)	Rubble-stone foundation	Mid 16th century or later	Pottery
2	53 (demolition backfill) 52 (wall) 58 (cellar floor) 56 (construction backfill)	Rubble-stone cellar	Post-18th	-
3	55 (wall)	Rubble-stone foundation	Post-18th	-
4	57 (wall)	Rubble-stone foundation	Post-18th	-
-	54	Made Ground	Early 18th Century or later	Pottery, clay pipe
-	59	Ground disturbance	Post-19th century	-
-	60	Ground disturbance	Post-19th century	-

APPENDIX 2: Pottery catalogue

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>OXAM</i>		<i>OXDR</i>		<i>OXFH</i>		<i>OXCE</i>		<i>OXBEW</i>		<i>OXEST</i>	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt</i>
1	51	-	-	1	65	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	69
-	54	1	32	1	5	1	53	2	88	1	77	-	-
	Total	1	32	2	70	1	53	2	88	1	77	3	69