

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**The Cloisters, High Street,
Hurley, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Jacqueline Pitt

Site Code: CHB12/87

(SU 8261 8409)

The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Alan Green

By Jacqueline Pitt
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code CHB12/87

July 2012

Summary

Site name: The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8261 8409

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th–26th June 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jacqueline Pitt

Site code: CHB12/87

Summary of results: Part of the chapter house wall was observed in a trial trench in the location anticipated based on the 1930s excavations; post-medieval and some possibly medieval building materials were recovered from a made ground layer.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum 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 All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: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✓ 09.06.2012 Steve Preston✓ 06.06.2012
---------------------------	---

The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Jacqueline Pitt

Report 12/87

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire, SU 8261 8409 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Dr David Hickie of Heritage Matters, Arlington House, 7 Hunters Walk, Witherley, Atherstone, Warwickshire on behalf of Mr Alan Green, The Cloister, High Street, Hurley, SL6 5NB.

Planning consent (app no 12/00262/FUL) and Listed Building Consent (12/00623/LBC) have been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Scheduled Monument Consent (S00034039) gained in accordance with *the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* from the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for the construction of a new extension. As a consequence of the possibility of exposure of archaeological deposits during groundworks, the Scheduled Monument Consent includes a condition (b) relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out during groundworks, as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology.

The watching brief took place in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Dr Chris Welch of English Heritage advising the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jacqueline Pitt between 12th and 26th June 2012 and the site code is CHB 12/87.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies to the rear of the property known as the Cloisters (Fig. 2), which is located in a courtyard just off the High Street within the village of Hurley, a village on the Thames between Reading and Maidenhead. The river Thames flows in several braids about 100m to the north of the site. The underlying geology is mapped as flood plain terrace gravel (BGS 1990) and the site lies at an elevation of *c.*30m above Ordnance Datum. The house includes an extension added in the 1970s, set on a terrace of the same period, and the area investigated here was immediately east of the extension, within the terrace.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the historic core of Hurley which was the site of a Benedictine Priory founded in or around AD 1086 (VCH 1907, 73) and suppressed in 1536. The remains of the Priory are a scheduled monument (SAM 19020). A number of components of the complex are still extant such as the fishponds and moat. Now a house, the Cloisters itself is a listed building (Grade II*) and was originally part of the refectory of the Benedictine priory. Built in the 12th century, it also comprises 14th, 16th, 19th and 20th century elements. Investigations at the Priory were undertaken by the owner, Colonel C N Rivers-Moore in the 1930s (Rivers Moore 1934, 1938), and indeed earlier by Rev F T Wethered, although records of the earlier excavations have been lost. Rivers-Moore established a large part of the plan, and conjectured more, including especially the original cloisters (at the time of these investigations, The Cloisters was apparently known as Paradise). Rivers-Moore planned a Tudor mansion from parchmarks in the lawn to the east, and subsequently excavated in this area, revealing foundations both Tudor and medieval, mainly well-preserved, including a remarkable series of medieval floor tiles (Ward-Perkins and Williams-Hunt). The area of the new extension coincides with Rivers-Moore's location of the Chapter House and the watching brief provides an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of his results and projections. He recorded medieval floor levels at 2'6" (0.76m) below the turf line of his day, Tudor floors some 0.30m or so higher, but beneath the floor of 'Paradise' walls and pillars survived for a height of some 3 feet (1m).

Various fieldwork projects both within and beyond the scheduled area have revealed further deposits of archaeological interest such as at Monks Garden (Pine 1999), and Tuckenhay (Ford 2004) where large features that were presumably pits were dated to the Medieval period. At a more general level the site is located in the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a range of sites recorded (Ford 1987; Gates 1975).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks, involving examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks for the new extension, in particular topsoil and overburden removal. Ground reduction for the slab foundation and two test trenches (replacing originally intended boreholes) measuring 600mm by 1.0m were to be excavated by a small tracked machine to minimize risk to archaeological deposits beneath the lawn. These were to be located away from the known sites of

archaeological building remains. If archaeological deposits were encountered this was to be recorded and the trench carefully backfilled and relocated.

Results

Within the lawn area only one test trench was eventually excavated as this was all that was required for the purposes of the soil investigation. The trench measured 0.65m x 1.20m x 1.40m deep and was located in the rear garden c.9.0m to the east of the terrace (Fig. 3, Pl. 1). The stratigraphy comprised 0.27m of topsoil, above 0.47m of made-ground (sandy silt containing large unworked nodules of chalk and limestone). Below this 0.66m of grey-brown sandy silt subsoil overlay the natural geology of a grey sandy gravel which was dug to a depth of 0.25m. No archaeological features were recorded.

Within the area of the proposed extension a second trench 0.65m x 1.20m x 0.68m deep was excavated adjacent to the eastern wall of the 1970s extension, within the 1970s raised terrace, to establish the depth of the existing foundations (Fig. 3). Beneath 0.14m of topsoil was 0.39m of the terrace deposit, (sandy silt with tile, brick and flint nodules). A small portion of the original Chapter House wall (53) was encountered in the north-east corner of the trench at a depth of 0.55m below ground level. It was truncated to the west by the foundations of the 1970s extension but the foundations for the proposed extension lie above the level of the Chapter House walls. As observed, the wall construction cut was 0.76m long (east-west) and 0.36m north-south, and the structure (53) was formed of light yellow-brown sandy mortar with nodules of daub, but it was not excavated.

The rest of the area was reduced by a maximum depth of 0.55m with raised areas c.0.35m below ground level to accommodate the slab foundation (Fig. 3, Pl. 2). The stratigraphy comprised 0.14m of topsoil above made ground. Remains of a path (54) consisting of compact light yellow-brown sandy cement was observed for 2.60m north-south and was 0.94m wide, in the north-east corner of the reduced area, at a depth of 0.50m. This appears to be on the line of part of the Tudor mansion revealed by Rivers-Moore, which may have re-used the medieval foundations, and although it is also not far off the line of, and no more than 0.05m higher than, the Chapter House wall recorded in the test pit, it is in fact visible as a surface feature in a photograph taken prior to the construction of the 1970s extension, probably in the 1940s or 50s (landowner, *pers. comm.*)

An architectural stone fragment and ceramic building material were recovered from the made ground.

Finds

Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank

Seven fragments of ceramic building material were recovered during the watching brief, all from one context (the made deposit encountered during ground reduction) with a total weight of 858g. Of these, one was brick and the remainder tile.

The brick fragment is a piece of pinkish grey frogged modern brick, with sharp arrises and an evenly fired, homogenous fabric.

The tile fragments are all broadly post medieval, with two (flat, probably peg tile) which could be medieval. These are in an evenly-fired slightly sandy orange fabric, with a slightly uneven form, and the fragments are 11–13mm thick.

The assemblage also includes two pieces of an angled tile with smooth surfaces and a semi-glazed finish. The fabric is very hard and evenly fired, with small well-sorted inclusions. It is a mottled dark red and purple-black (possibly manganese). These are 11mm thick, one with a cutaway corner and the other is angled, suggesting they were made to fit at eaves or around guttering. They appear to be mid 19th-century at the earliest.

Stone by Danielle Milbank

A piece of carved stone was also recovered from the made ground layer. This is an off-white fine-grained sandstone piece weighing 1.046kg, with a smooth moulded side in a ogee form and a smooth return, and a more roughly-faced side which was presumably not intended to be visible. It is likely to have formed part of a door jamb, or a decorative moulding at a window or eaves. It is not possible to date this piece but it is entirely conceivable that it derived from the Priory.

Conclusion

Observation of the borehole within the new extension, which was taken to greater depth than the footings required, confirmed the location of a small part of the Chapter House wall recorded in the 1930s, 0.55m below modern ground level. The small portion seen does unfortunately suggest some truncation by the extension built in the 1970s, although it is also possible the 1930s excavations may have removed this. Elsewhere the groundworks did not reach the relevant depth; another linear feature recorded at 0.50m deep, further east, was a garden path still in use in the 20th-century.

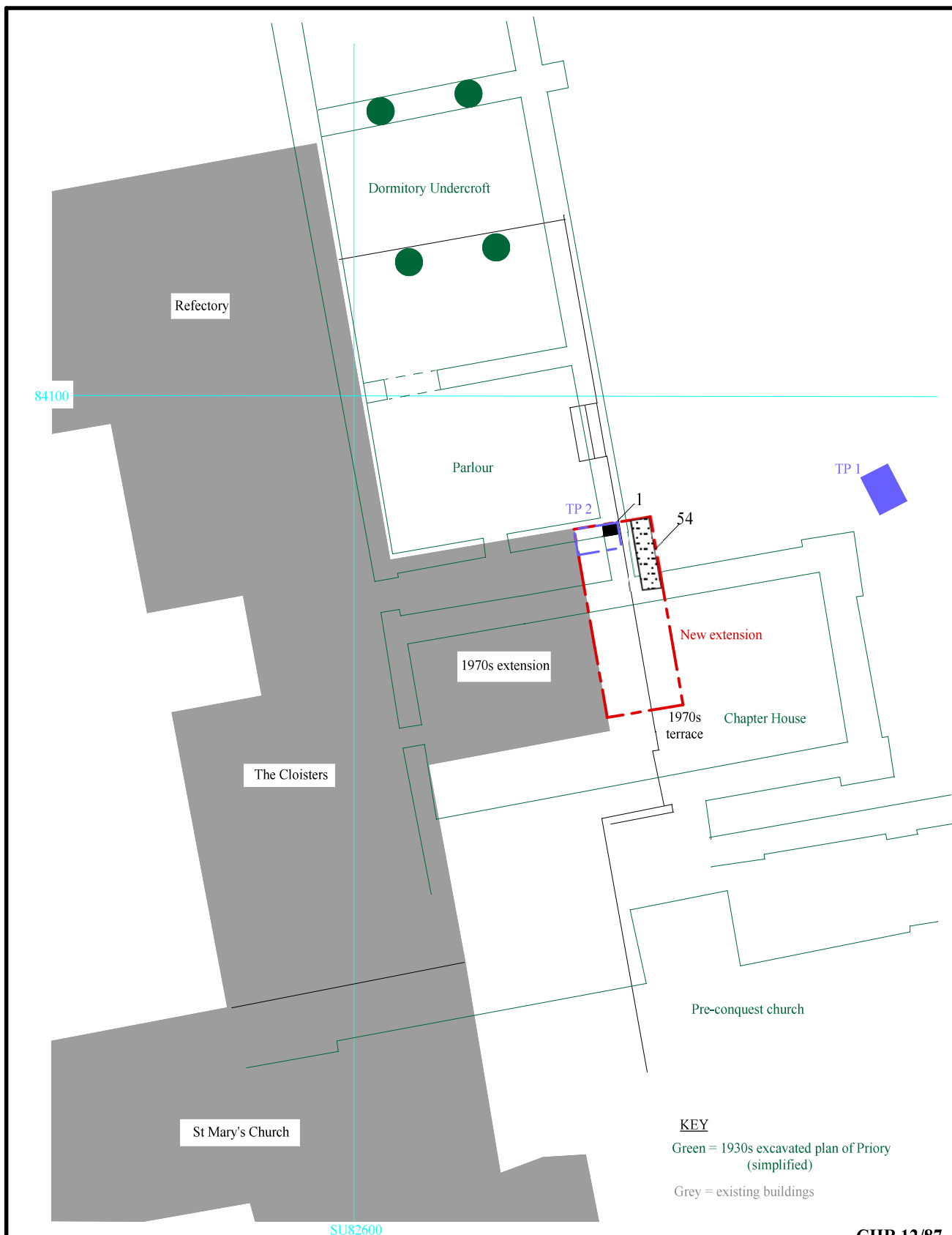
A small collection of potentially medieval tiles, along with post-medieval tiles and undated masonry adds to the artefactual evidence from this Scheduled Monument.

References

- BGS, 1990, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap **1**, Reading
- Ford, S, 2004, 'Tuckenhay, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/66, Reading
- Pine, J, 1999, 'Monks Garden, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 98/83, Reading
- Rivers-Moore, C N, 1934, 'Recent discoveries at St. Mary's Priory, Hurley. Second Report', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **38**, 7–17
- Rivers-Moore, C N, 1938, 'Excavations at St. Mary's Priory, Hurley', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **42**, 23–30
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
- VCH, 1907, *Victoria History of the Counties of England: Berkshire*, **ii**, London
- Ward-Perkins, J B and Williams-Hunt, P D R, 1939, 'Medieval floor-tiles at St. Mary's Priory, Hurley, Berks.'m *Berkshire Archaeol J* **43**, 117–32

APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	53	Cut for Chapter House Wall	13th century	Known from previous excavation
	54	Path	Modern	Photograph



CHB 12/87



The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire, 2012 Archaeological watching brief

Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 1. Test pit 2 (location of borehole 1), looking west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Strip over new extension, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

CHB 12/87

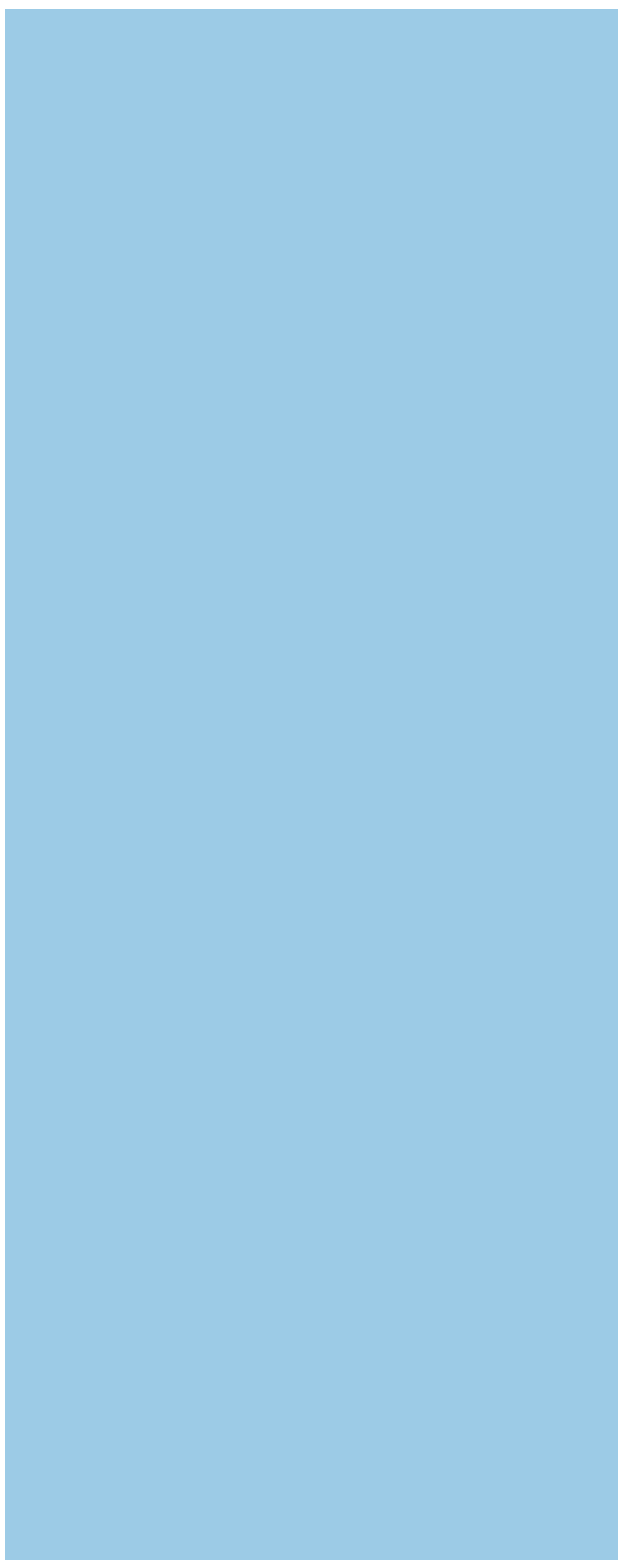
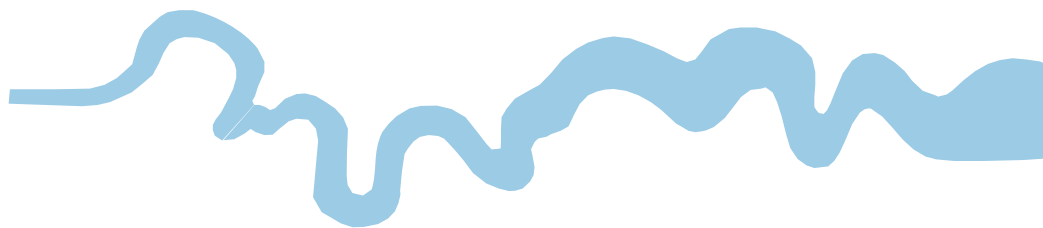
The Cloisters, High Street, Hurley, Berkshire, 2012
Archaeological watching brief

Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL
 SERVICES

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC
↓	↓



**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**