

**Proposed new staff houses, Marlborough College,
Barton Dene, Marlborough, Wiltshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Marlborough College

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BDM 06/151

March 2007

Summary

Site name: Proposed new staff houses, Marlborough College, Barton Dene, Marlborough, Wiltshire

Grid reference: SU 18140 69045

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th January -7th February 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: BDM 06/151

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or features were encountered during this watching brief. However the site does appear to have undergone some disturbance which may have impacted upon any archaeological deposits if they were formerly present.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

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Proposed new staff houses, Marlborough College, Barton Dene, Marlborough, Wiltshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 06/151

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Marlborough College, Barton Dene, Marlborough, Wiltshire (SU 18140 69045) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Vanessa Tanfield of Michael Fowler Architects, 19 High Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire, SN9 5AF, on behalf of Marlborough College.

Planning consent (K/53180/F) has been granted by Kennet District Council to build 6 new houses on land at Barton Dene, off College Fields, Marlborough, Wiltshire. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sue Farr, Assistant Archaeologist with Wiltshire County Archaeological Service, adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Natasha Bennett, Sean Wallis and Andrew Weale, between 12th January and 7th February 2007, and the site code is BDM 06/151.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Devizes Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located a Kilometre west of the centre of Marlborough, and about 400m north-west of the main buildings of Marlborough College (Fig. 2). The area which was investigated during the watching brief is at the bottom of a valley, Barton Dene, and rises quite significantly to the west. Just beyond the eastern boundary of the site the ground rises even more sharply towards Marlborough Common. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Valley Gravels and Middle Chalk (BGS 1974). However, chalk was only encountered during the excavation of part of the drainage trench. Across the remainder of the site an orange brown clayey silt was encountered. The site lies at a height of approximately 133m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Sue Farr of Wiltshire County Archaeological Service. In summary, the site lies within an area from which a range of finds of various periods are present. The prehistoric period is represented by the finding of a single polished stone axe of Neolithic date. Roman material is represented by the finding of a Roman coin and pottery, whilst over 500 sherds of Saxon pottery were found during the construction of a tennis court. Medieval pottery is recorded to the south and at a slightly greater distance is a motte (castle).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new development. This is to involve examination of any areas of topsoil removal, ground reduction and the creation of haul roads

Two separate house plots were excavated on the site, house plot 1 and house plot 2-6, a drainage trench was also observed.

Results

Initially topsoil was removed from the development area under archaeological supervision. Between 0.10-0.30m of topsoil was removed across the site to reveal a layer of made ground. A test pit was excavated in the south-east corner of the site which revealed that below 0.30m of topsoil and made ground, was approximately 0.20m of subsoil which overlay the natural geology, an orange brown clayey silt with frequent gravel and flint.

House plot 1

House plot 1 was located close to the southern boundary of the site (Fig. 3). The foundation trenches were 0.60m wide and varied in depth from 0.70m at the northern end of the plot to 1.35m at the southern end (Fig. 4). The stratigraphy comprised made ground, containing moderate chalk fragments, ceramic building material and charcoal, which directly overlay the natural geology which was an orange brown clayey silt. The made ground varied in depth from 0.08m at the southern end of the plot to 0.70m at the northern end. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in this area.

House plot 2-6

The foundations in this area were approximately 0.60m wide and between 0.60-0.90m deep. At the north eastern end of the site in plot 6 (SA6) the trench was excavated to depth of 0.80m and the stratigraphy comprised 0.12m

of a dark reddish brown silty clay subsoil overlying 0.17m clean light reddish brown silty clay with frequent flints. This in turn sealed a layer of mid greyish brown loam, approximately 0.10m thick, which contained fragments of ceramic building material. Below this was a layer of made ground, 0.30m thick, which comprised a mid grey brown silty clay containing chalk fragments, brick and tile fragments and sherds of late post medieval/modern pottery (not retained). This lay above the natural geology which was a light reddish brown silty clay; this was encountered at 0.64m from the top of the foundation trench.

Stratigraphically plot 4 (SA4) and 5 (SA5) were very similar although a layer of crushed chalk 0.10m thick was encountered in plot 5 below the subsoil and above the layer of made ground. The natural geology was encountered at 0.52m in plot 5 and 0.82m in plot 4.

Plots 2 and 3 comprised 0.12m of made ground above clean mid reddish brown silty clay which was excavated to a depth of 0.93m.

Drainage

A trench was excavated for drainage purposes which crossed the site roughly east to west. The segment of drainage trench located towards the rear of plot 1, between manholes A-B, was excavated to a depth of approximately 1m and the stratigraphy comprised 0.30m of made ground over natural orange brown clayey silt. The stretch of drain closest to the southern boundary of the plot, connecting manhole B to D was excavated to a depth of 1m and comprised 0.06m of orange brown clay silt over chalk. The stratigraphy in the final stretch of trench, which connected manhole D to Barton Dene, comprised 0.04m of topsoil, over 0.60m of orange brown silty clay which in turn sealed the natural chalk which was excavated to a depth of 0.80m.

Finds

The only finds recovered during the course of the watching brief were late post medieval/modern sherds of pottery, bottles, brick and tile fragments, these were not retained.

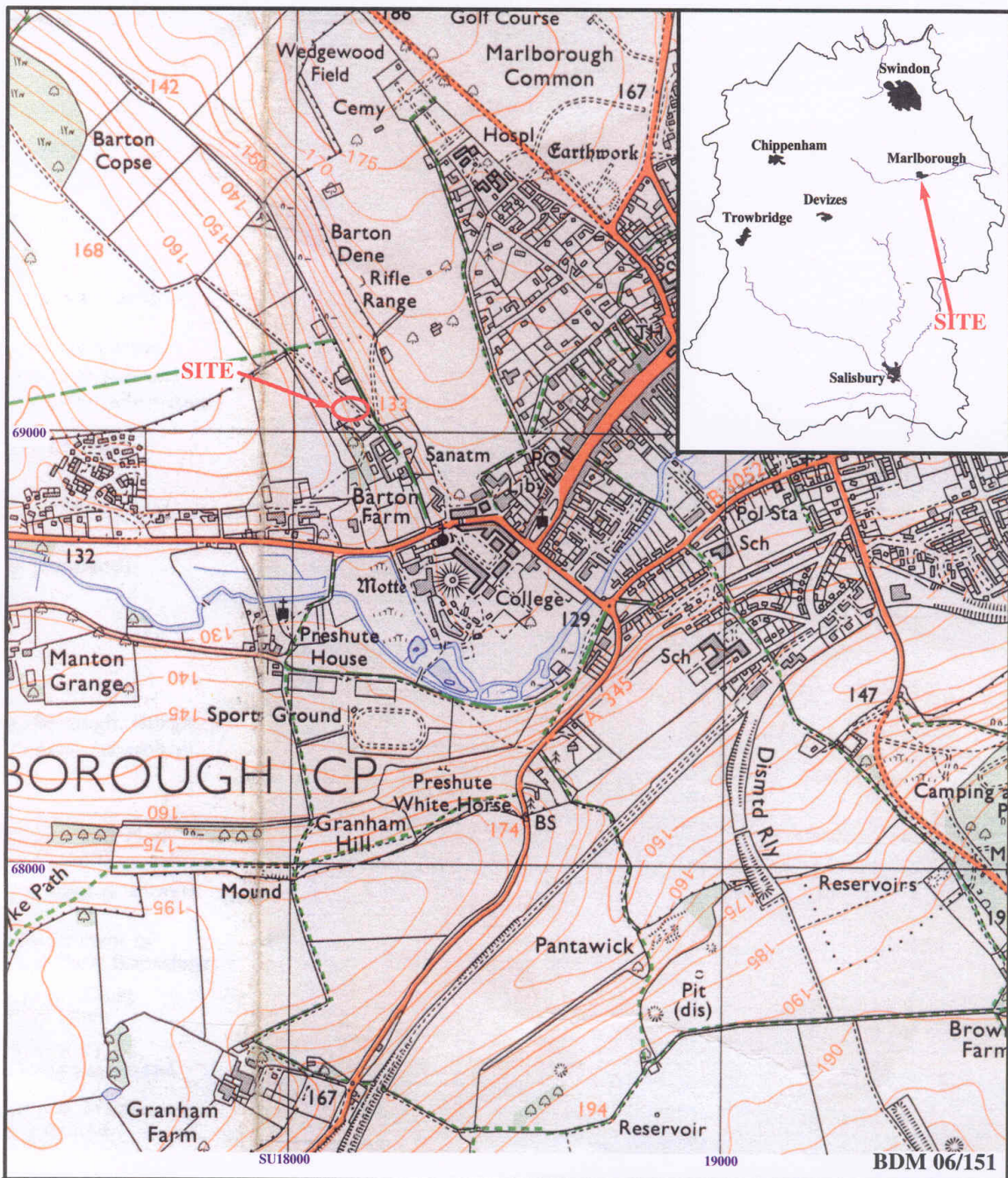
Conclusion

The watching brief has failed to identify any archaeological finds or features. A deposit of made ground, of varying thickness, was recorded across the site, which in most cases appeared to seal the natural geology. This suggests that some degree of disturbance has occurred on the site which may have resulted in the truncation of the natural geology, and as a result the truncation of any archaeological deposits were they to exist on the site.

References

BGS, 1974, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 266, Drift Edition, Keyworth

PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO



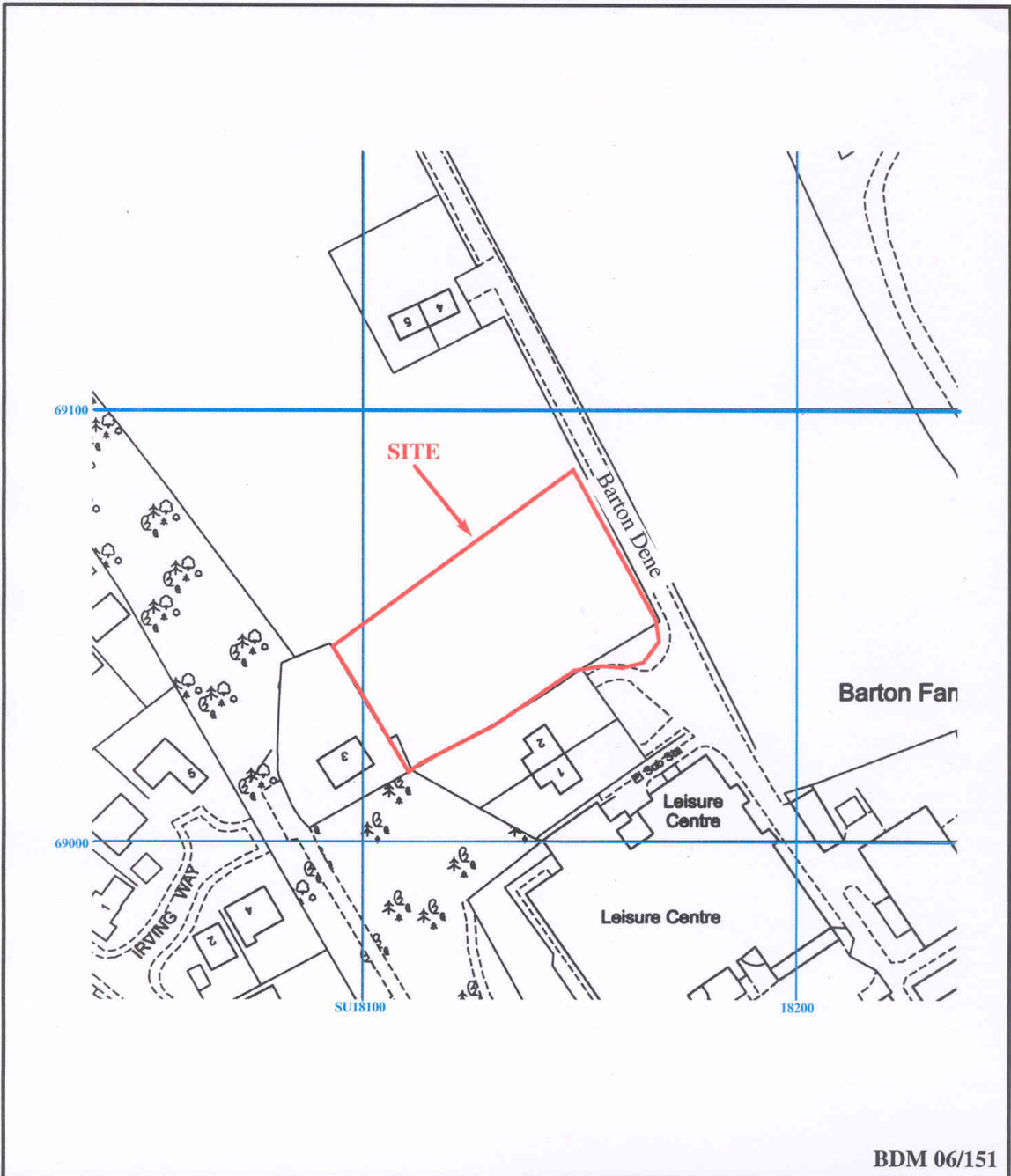
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Figure 1. Location of site within Marlborough and
 Wiltshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Barton Dene.

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Figure 3. Areas observed during watching brief.

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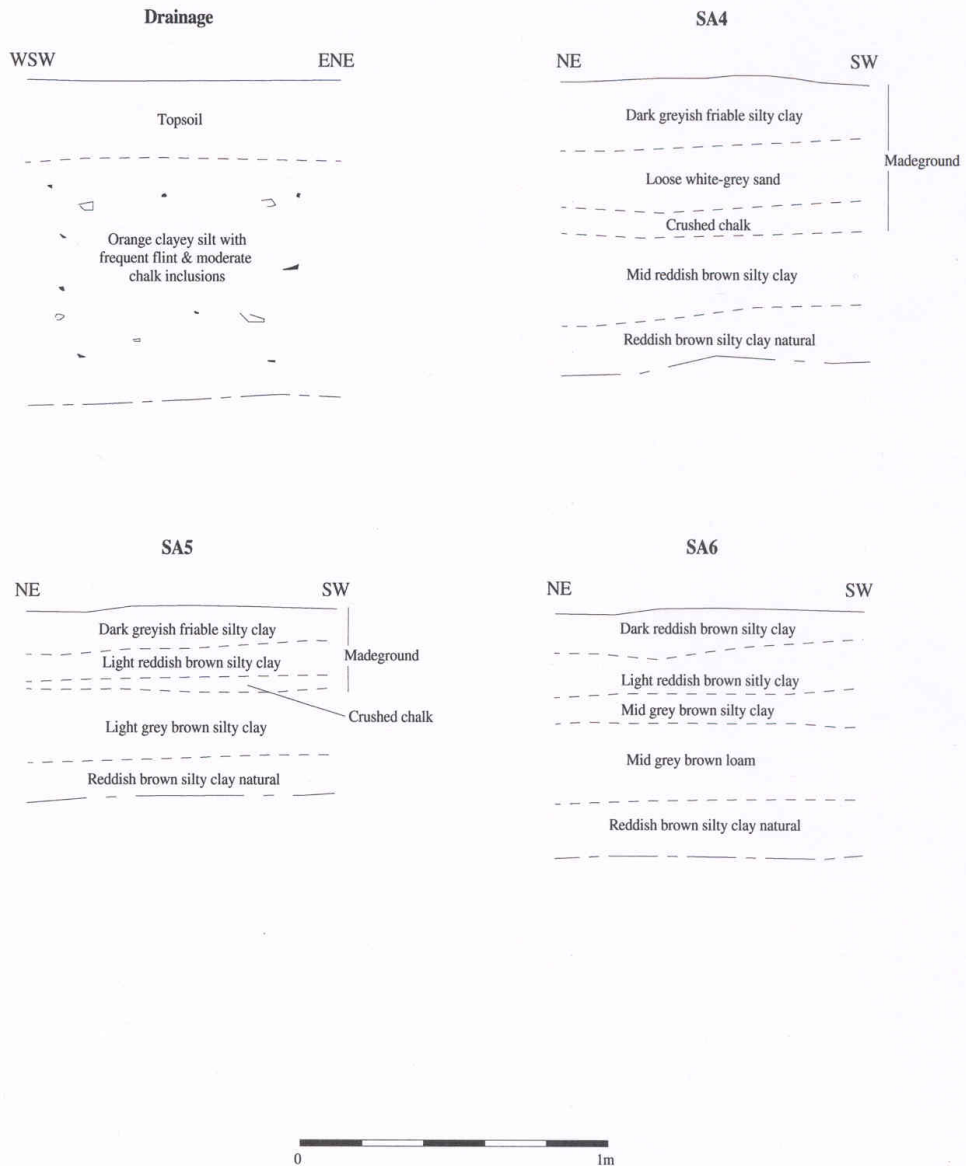


Figure 4. Representative sections.

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