

Castle Barn, Wasing Park, Aldermaston, West Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Wasing 1975 Settlement**

by James Lewis and Sean Wallis
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WCB 07/65

January 2008

Summary

Site name: Castle Barn, Wasing Park, Aldermaston, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5750 6433

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 27th October to 4th December 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James Lewis

Site code: WCB 07/65

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or features were recorded during the watching brief.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report 07/65b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Wasing Castle Barn, Wasing Park, Aldermaston, West Berkshire (SU 5750 6433) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Chris Burnell of PSP Consultants, Home Farm Court, Shalford Hill, Aldermaston, Reading, RG7 4NB on behalf of the Wasing 1975 Settlement.

Planning consent (app no 07/00158/FUL) and listed building consent (app no 07/00158/LB) have been gained from West Berkshire Council to convert and extend two barns for use as a wedding venue. Conditions of the consent requires a programme of building recording to be carried out before conversion works and an archaeological watching brief during groundworks. This report is concerned with the watching brief component of the project.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council.

Prior to the commencement of work on the barn extension, building recording was carried out (Ford 2007). The fieldwork was carried out by Natasha Bennett and James Lewis between 27th October and 4th December 2007 and the site code is WCB07/65. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies within the complex of buildings at Wasing, towards the centre of Wasing Park. The parish church of St Nicholas stands just to the south-east with Wasing Place and other outbuildings to the east. The site lies on the margins of the Kennet Valley. The land slopes gently to the north towards the river (Fig. 1). The site lies at approximately 93m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Plateau Gravel, and this was confirmed during the watching brief (BGS 1946).

Archaeological Background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley. A wide range of sites and finds are recorded for this stretch of the valley, (Lobb and Rose 1996) and the projected course of the Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester passes to the north. The church at Wasing is of medieval origins and the settlement was a manorial centre but it is not mentioned in Domesday Book (Lobb and Rose 1996, fig 19).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This involves the examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services as necessary.

Results

The monitoring work carried out during the watching brief was chiefly concerned with various groundworks to the immediate west of Castle Barn and north of Wood Barn (Figs. 2 and 3). Refurbishment work to Wood Barn was generally superficial in terms of groundworks and the groundworks for the extension to Castle Barn largely lay alongside existing garden walls and therefore in zones subject to disturbance.

Two test pits were excavated next to Castle Barn, each measuring 1m x 2m. Test Pit 1 was 1.3m deep and the stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.9m of topsoil onto the natural reddish brown sand and gravels (Fig. 4). The stratigraphy recorded in Test Pit 2, which was 1.1m deep, was almost identical apart from the fact that the topsoil here was only 0.7m thick.

Test pit 3 was smaller, c. 0.3m x 0.3m and was located on the east side of Castle Barn and only dug deep enough to expose the existing foundations c. 0.3m

A soakaway, 2.8m deep and measuring 1.7m square, was also recorded to the west of Castle Barn, along with approximately 45m of associated pipe trench (0.80m wide). The stratigraphy noted in the soakaway consisted of approximately 0.25m of topsoil, above a layer of compact grey stony gravel which was about 0.4m thick. The compaction of this deposit suggests that it may represent an earlier area of hard standing, which subsequently went out of use. This deposit lay directly above the light yellowish brown sand and gravels. A similar stratigraphic sequence was recorded along the various sections of pipe trench, which varied in depth

between 1.1m and 1.2m (Fig. 4). The only feature noted was a modern pit, which was observed in the pipe trench close to the western wall of the barn.

Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

No finds or features of archaeological interest were recorded during the watching brief. Apart from a modern pit, the only other feature noted was the possible area of hard standing recorded to the west of the barn. It seems likely that this surface became overgrown, or was deliberately buried under topsoil, when the barn went out of agricultural use.

References

- BGS, 1946, British Geological Survey, 1:63,360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Ford S, 2007, Castle Barn, Wasing, West Berkshire, Building Recording, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report no 07/65, Reading
Lobb, S.J and Rose, P.G. 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 9, Salisbury
PPG 16, 1990, Archaeology and Planning, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO