

# **Land at Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust**

by Simon Cass and David Platt  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HHA 04/123

**September 2008**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 9150 6866

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 8th February 2008

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Platt

**Site code:** HHA 04/123

**Summary of results:** No finds or deposits of archaeological relevance were noted during this watching brief.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, with the accession code REDMG:2005.51

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	Steve Preston ✓ 5.09.08

# Land at Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Simon Cass and David Platt

**Report 04/123b**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land at Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berkshire (SU 9150 6866) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Graham High of Ansell Bailey, 24–32 Stephenson Way, London, NW1 2HD on behalf of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust.

Planning permission has been gained (App no 04/00708) from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for development of the site for new staff accommodation and facilities. The site has been highlighted as having archaeological potential by the archaeological adviser to the Royal Borough and therefore further archaeological information was required from a field evaluation to inform the process of mitigation of any potential impact on archaeological deposits (Hammond 2004). This report relates to an archaeological watching brief carried out on an area inaccessible during a previous phase of evaluation in 2004 in advance of planning permission.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological adviser to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt on the 8th February 2008 and the site code is HHA04/123. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, with the accession code REDMG: 2005.51.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on the south side of Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot on an irregular parcel of land (Fig. 1). The overall site is approximately 1.6ha in size with c. 0.6ha being occupied by existing structures that are to be retained as part of the development. This report particularly refers to a small area lying approximately east of the House, used as the contractor's compound during the previous evaluation and as a tennis court prior to that (Fig. 2). The underlying geology according (BGS 1981) is Plateau Gravel near to a boundary with Bagshot Beds and

Bracklesham Beds. Sandy gravel with clay patches were observed during the evaluation. The land lies at an approximate height of 94m AOD and slopes fairly steeply down beyond the hospital to the south.

### **Archaeological background**

The site lies in an area adjacent to the sites of several round barrows (Bronze Age burial mounds) and four mounds were recorded in 1789. One of these survives within the hospital complex a short distance to the north of the site and has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Partial excavation of the barrow provided important palaeoenvironmental information about use of the area for cereal farming in the Bronze Age before increasing acidification saw arable use stop and the heathland flora now predominate (Bradley and Keith-Lucas 1975; Ford 1987, 71). A second barrow within the application area at Bowledge Hill survived until the late 19th century. Further sites are said to have been destroyed by the construction of hospital and ancillary buildings. An archaeological field evaluation carried out in 2004 around this area failed to reveal any deposits of archaeological relevance (Hammond 2004).

### **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits encountered in an area that was unavailable for evaluation in the previous phase of investigation (Fig. 3). This comprised an area 11.0m long by 13.0m wide that was dug out by machine. Unfortunately due to a large pile of rubble to the north-west of the existing cellar block, the entire block could not be removed.

### **Results**

The majority of the area observed consisted of a backfilled cellar block. This was removed to a depth of c. 0.8m. Unfortunately, due to water ingress and demolition dust obscuring the sides, it was not possible to see natural geology in this area or to record a stratigraphy for most of it. A small area of clean soil was observed on the eastern side of the hole, where the stratigraphy encountered consisted of 0.2m of dark brown/grey clayey silt topsoil, sealing a layer 0.3m thick consisting of a grey clayey silt subsoil. This overlay a brown/yellow clayey sand which continued down as far as visible, interpreted as undisturbed natural geology

### **Finds**

No archaeological finds were discovered during the course of this watching brief.

## **Conclusion**

In common with the previous phase of evaluation, this watching brief seems to indicate an area of deep truncation, and no surviving traces of archaeological activity. Taken together with the results from the evaluation it would appear that any potential archaeology has been significantly truncated during previous building activities.

## **References**

- BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 269, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Bradley, R J, and Keith-Lucas, M, 1975, 'Excavation and pollen analysis of a bell barrow at Ascot, Berks', *J Archaeol Sci* **2**, 95-108
- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept. of Planning, occasional paper 1, Reading.
- Hammond, S, 2004, 'Land at Heatherwood hospital, Ascot, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 04/123, Reading
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO





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Figure 1. Location of site within Ascot and Berkshire.

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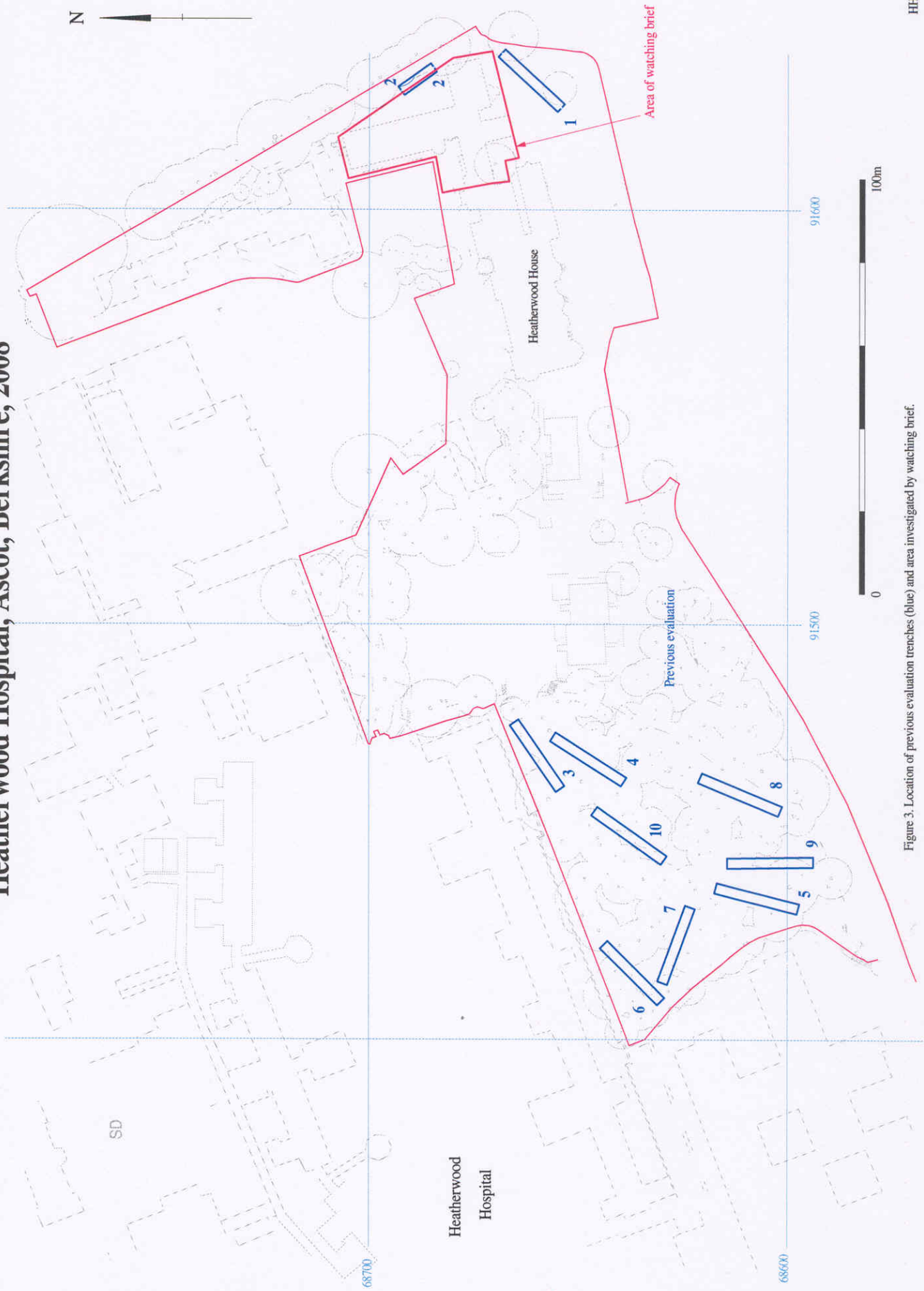


Figure 3. Location of previous evaluation trenches (blue) and area investigated by watching brief.