

The Coach, Worldsend, Beedon, West Berkshire

National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 4877 7669

Report on an archaeological watching brief

West Berkshire Council planning reference 19/01690/FULD



Figure 1: The Coach public house seen from the south-west, with excavation of the foundation trenches for a new house to its south under way on 29 October 2020.

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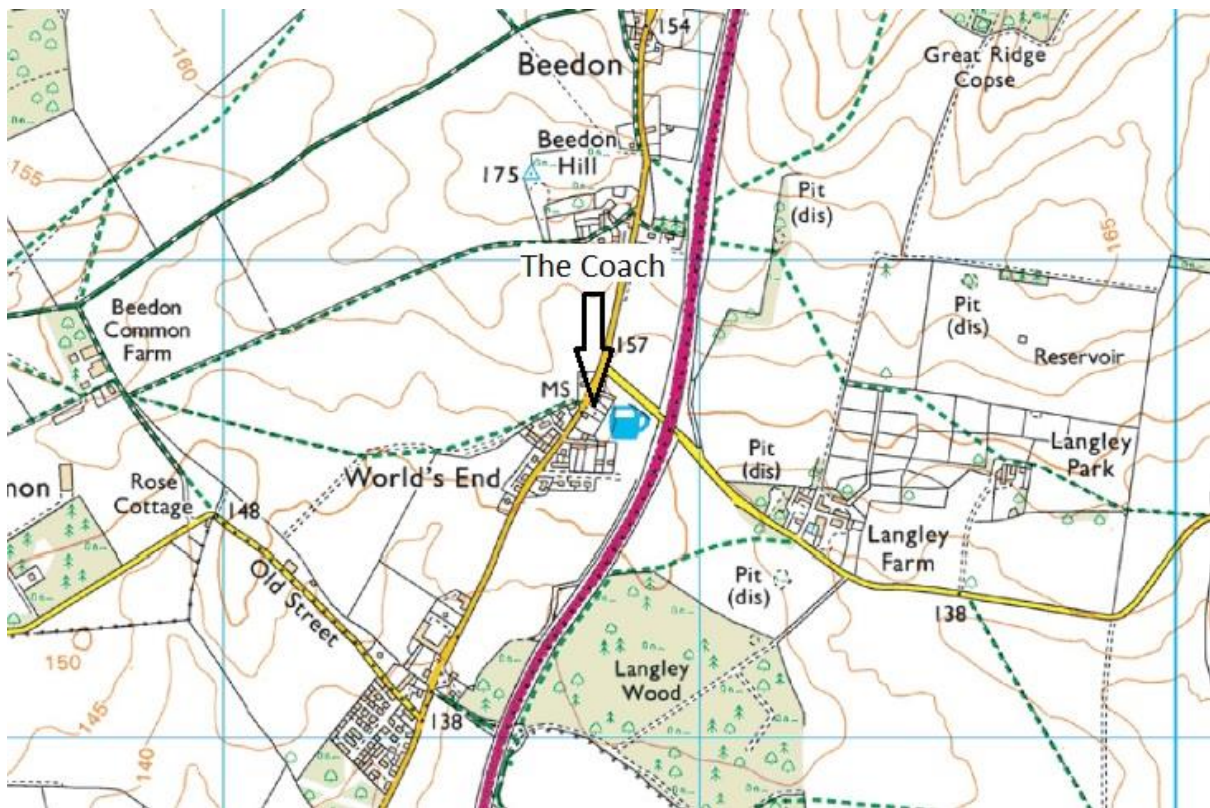


Figure 2: Site location plan. Ordnance Survey data Crown Copyright 2020. All rights reserved. Licence number 100051221.

Executive summary

Keevill Heritage Ltd carried out an archaeological watching brief during foundation excavations for a new house immediately to the south of The Coach, a public house in the village of Words End, Beedon, West Berkshire. A post-medieval cottage is known to have existed within the development site, but the new house is set well back from the street frontage and therefore the old cottage (if any trace of it survives) was unaffected by the foundation excavations. These only exposed the site's natural geology and two modern features – a soakaway and a rubbish pit. No archaeological remains or artefacts of pre-modern date were found during the work, which was completed in a single day (29 October 2020).

1 Introduction

1.1 Earley Builders Ltd commissioned Keevill Heritage Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief during building work for a new dwelling on a site immediately to the south of The Coach, a public house in the small hamlet of Worldsend, under West Berkshire Council planning consent 19/01690/FULD. We had previously prepared a Heritage Statement and Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment of the site in support of the planning application (Keevill 2019), and subsequently prepared a written scheme of investigation for the watching brief (Keevill 2020) as required by Condition 15 of the planning permission. This stated that

No development or site works shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall incorporate and be undertaken in accordance with the approved statement.

Reason: To ensure that any significant archaeological remains that are found are adequately recorded. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), Policy CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026).

1.2 The assessment suggested that the proposed new house partly coincided with the site of a small building, probably domestic, shown on early Ordnance Survey maps, and therefore present by the mid-19th century. It was demolished in the mid-20th century. It also confirmed that a site of late Iron Age to early Roman date were found during an evaluation (archaeological trial trenching) nearby in 1997. The new house, as approved, is set well back from the street frontage. The building shown on the old OS maps was therefore unaffected by the foundation excavations and new services.

1.3 The bedrock geology of the site is shown as the Seaford Chalk Formation, formed c 84-90 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period, in a local environment dominated by warm chalk seas. No superficial (drift) geology is recorded (information from the British Geological Survey).

2 Aims and methods

2.1 The specific aims of this project were to

- Identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks, paying particular regard to the potential for late prehistoric/Roman remains, as well as the possible survival of elements of the mid-19th-century cottages.

- Identify and record any significant structural features, relationships or materials revealed by the building work.

2.2 The watching brief was carried out on a single day, 29 October 2020, during which all of the foundation trenches were excavated. These were mostly 0.6m wide (two of the lateral trenches only needed to be 0.45m wide), and 1m deep. Excavation had to continue to c 1.5m at the north-west corner of the new house, however, because a modern pit backfilled with rubble and ceramic debris represented a problematic soft spot at an important location in the foundations. The trenches were all dug by machine, using a small 360° tracked excavator. The weather was overcast with occasional rain showers or persistent drizzle, but this did not affect the watching brief results.



Figure 3: Detailed site location plan showing the positions of the foundation trenches dug on 29 October 2020. Measurements taken on site confirmed the accuracy of this plan, based on Colony Architects drawing 651 02-11. Scale 1:400 (original drawing 1:200).

3 Results

3.1 An oversite strip to remove the existing tarmac surface for the public house car park had been carried out by agreement during the previous week (w/s 19 October 2020). This had reduced levels by c 250mm across the whole area, but c 100mm of modern made ground remained in situ when the trenching started on 29 October 2020. This was a dark grey-brown silty clay containing frogged bricks, ceramic drainpipe fragments and pieces of concrete, and was found in all the foundation trenches (see

Figure 3). Yellow-brown silt and sand subsoil was found immediately beneath this, and was between 0.5m-0.8m thick. No superficial/drift geology is noted on the site by the British Geological Survey (see paragraph 1.3) but this material appeared to be naturally/geologically derived. No pottery, flint or other artefacts were present, and very few inclusions (eg stone) were noted. The layer may represent an alluvial deposit. This overlay bright yellow natural clay or loose sand in the lower part of the trench (the bottom 100mm-200mm over north and central area, 300mm-400mm to the south). The sand was mixed with gravel in the central area. These are certainly natural/geological deposits.



Figure 4: The foundation trench across the front of the building was the first one to be excavated. The sequence of tarmac (on a hoggin sub-base), made ground, subsoil and natural clay is clearly apparent in section, along with the modern soakaway at the near end of the trench. The modern pit was at the far end, but is mostly hidden in this view.

3.2 Two modern features were noted at the north-west end of the new house site, both within the foundation trench across its front. The edge of a brick-filled soakaway was found at the south-west end of the trench, while a large pit filled with stone and brick rubble along with 19th-century white, cream and transfer-printed wares was encountered at the north-east end. Both features cut the subsoil layer but were sealed by the modern made ground. Presumably they both related to the former building close to the street frontage shown on the early Ordnance Survey maps. No features, structures or finds of an earlier date were located in all the remaining excavations.

3.3 The negative results meant that minimal recording was required. Notes were taken on site, and digital photographs were taken to show the progress of the work and (lack of) results. No plans or sections needed to be drawn, and no context numbers were allocated. The project archive is thus very largely digital.



Figure 5: Views of the excavation nearing completion looking south-east (top), and finished looking north-west.

4 Conclusions

4.1 The watching brief only revealed two modern features. Nothing of archaeological importance was found. Superficial/drift geology was encountered in all the trenches, in contrast to expectations based on the British Geological Survey. Chalk bedrock was not encountered.

No physical archive was created for this project. All site records (notes and photographs) were digital and will be archived with the Archaeology Data Service. A project OASIS summary has been created by Keevill Heritage Ltd under the reference keevillh1-408351.

Bibliography/sources

Keevill G D 2019, *The Coach, Worldsend, Beedon, West Berkshire - Heritage Statement and Desk-based Archaeological Assessment of Development Proposals*

Keevill G D 2020, *The Coach, Worldsend, Beedon, West Berkshire - Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief*

Appendix 1: Data from the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record

A search for archaeological and other sites within 500m of The Coach on the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record returned information on three archaeological projects ('Events', with the prefix EWB) and 19 finds/sites ('Monuments', prefix MWB). Several of these records are cross-related, with two of the Events also having several entries as Monuments. The full list is provided in the table below, while the following paragraphs provide a contextual summary of the data by period.

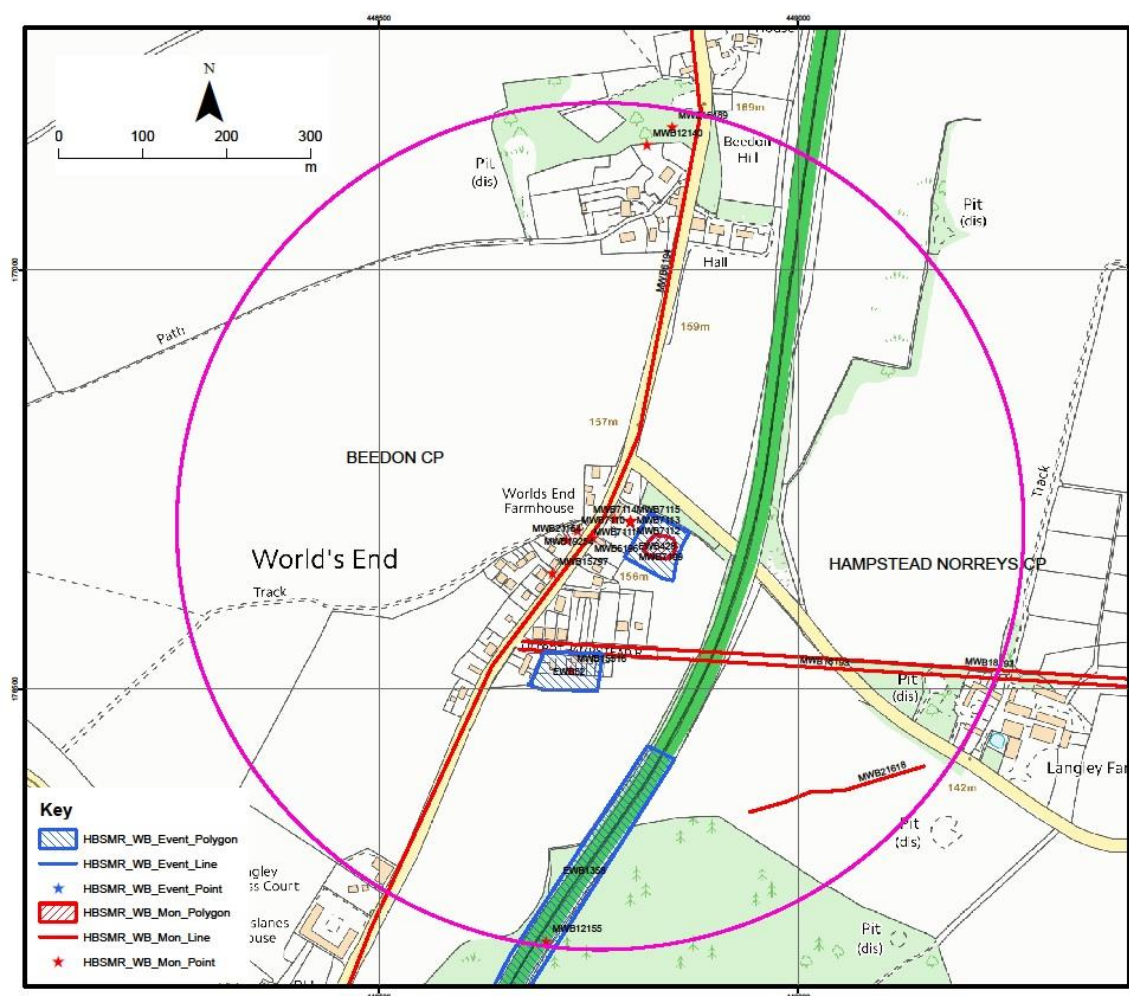


Figure 1: Sites and finds within 500m of The Coach recorded on the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record.

There is no definite record of early to middle prehistoric activity in the 500m study area. Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) or Neolithic (New Stone Age) tools might be among the 95 worked flints found on the line of the A34 Beedon bypass in 1977-8 (EWB1358; MWB12155), but there is no specific information about the flints in the HER entry. A pit containing a large amount of burnt flint found in a trial trench on the south side of the Old Bothampstead Road c 165m to the south of The Coach may also be of prehistoric date, but this is not certain (EWB52; MWB15516). The excavation of trial trenches on land immediately to the east of The Coach's garden provided clearer evidence for prehistoric activity (EWB428, MWB7109-7115): four sherds of late Bronze or early Iron Age pottery were found in one ditch (MWB7111), and two very worn sherds of late Iron Age pottery were found in a pit (MWB7113). Probable Roman activity was also identified, with mid to late 1st century AD pottery from another ditch. This also contained blocks of dressed flint, perhaps building

debris from a nearby settlement (MWB7114-5). It was suggested that this settlement was probably to the east of the evaluation site, perhaps between it and the A34 (EWB428, MWB7109). Roman pottery, animal bone, a bronze ring and other debris have been recorded from the Beedon Hill Brickworks site (MWB12140), just on the northern edge of the 500m study radius. No Anglo-Saxon or medieval remains, buildings or other sites are recorded in the study area on the HER.

Post-medieval and modern archaeology, buildings and other historic environment features form the remainder of the HER entries. Worlds End Farmhouse (MWB19254), dating from the 17th century, is probably the most important of these. It was the capital building of a substantial farmstead and as such was arguably the most important building complex at Worldsend during the post-medieval period (MWB21164). The Tithe Map and early Ordnance Survey editions clearly show the farm in its early, functional form. The line of a former drive or walk from Oxford Road east to Langley House, again clearly shown on the Tithe Map (eg as land parcels 503 and 503a), was a designed landscape feature probably of 18th century origin (MWB18193); some older trees still survive on its line within Langley Park, and the Old Bothampstead Road partly fossilises its alignment. An undated but post-medieval trackway to the south of the same road probably originated as a feature of the same Park (MWB21618); it still survives as a public right of way. Oxford Road was the Newbury to Abingdon turnpike (toll road – MWB6194). The Grade II listed milestone next to the Old Stores gives distances to Newbury, Ilsley, Abingdon and Oxford along this road (MWB6196). The milestone is dated to the 18th century, and the turnpike is of this date as well. The remaining post-medieval to modern sites are The Coach itself (MWB19254), the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel founded c 1850 and demolished in the late 20th century (MWB15797), and the late 19th century Beedon Hill Brickworks (MWB16489).

HER No	Location SU	Short description
Monuments (sites, buildings and find spots)		
MWB6194	47942 75840	Newbury to Abingdon Toll Road. Turnpike road running from Newbury via Donnington, Chieveley, Beedon and East Ilsley to Abingdon.
MWB6196	48754 76681	Milestone on Newbury to Oxford road, World's End, Beedon. Grade II Listed. UC (was A43); by wall of Old Stores Cottage, 10m S of Coach & Horses PH car park. In tarmac pavement with back to brick boundary wall. Design - Ilsley gable. No. 60 in Hart's survey. Rectangular with a ridge top and gives the mileage to Newbury (6), Ilsley (3), Abingdon (14) and Oxford (20).
MWB7109	48834 76669	Worlds End, Beedon. An evaluation in 1997 in advance of housing development revealed possible late Iron Age and early Roman features: two ditches and a pit. These suggest that there was an associated settlement in the vicinity probably to the east of the site near the A34
MWB7110	48800 76699	Worlds End, Beedon, ditch (part of MWB7109).
MWB7111	48800 76699	Worlds End, Beedon; four sherds of calcined flint tempered pottery from ditch fill, possibly late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date (1000 BC to 401 BC), from MWB7110.
MWB7112	48800 76699	Worldsend, Beedon. Sub-oval pit 1.40m long, 1.14m wide and 0.82m deep with near vertical sides. the pit had a single fill from which two heavily abraded sherds of possibly late iron age pottery were recovered. Part of MWB7109.
MWB7113	48800 76699	Worldsend, Beedon. Two heavily abraded sherds possibly of late iron age pottery were recovered from an excavated pit (MWB7112).
MWB7114	48800 76699	Ditch, 2.30m wide, 1.03m deep with a v-shaped profile. Top fill sterile except at interface with second fill, where both contained mid to late 1st century pottery and dressed flint blocks. The second fill was slumped against ditch's eastern side and base probably the result of rubbish being dumped from a site to the east. See MWB7109.
MWB7115	48800 76699	Building? (Late Iron Age to Roman - 1 AD to 409 AD): blocks of dressed flints recovered from fills of 1st century AD ditch probably building debris from an associated early roman settlement. See MWB7109.
MWB12140	48819 77150	Beedon Hill brickworks. From 1878 to 1960s Roman material was found at the brickworks, believed to be from a Roman rubbish pit (?); finds included pottery, animal bone, a bronze ring and other debris. Some material is in the Ashmolean and some in Newbury Museum. The Ordnance Survey Field Investigator noted in 1963 that small sherds were still to be found on the surface of this disused brickfield.

HER No	Location SU	Short description
MWB12155	48699 76200	A34 Beedon bypass. Between 1977 and 1978 a strip the width of the road was evaluated along the route of the by-pass intersecting Langley Wood. 95 worked flints were recovered.
MWB15516	48729 76522	An evaluation (EWB52) found a single pit containing a large quantity of burnt flint.
MWB15797	48707 76638	A Wesleyan Methodist chapel is marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping and was still in existence at the time of the 5th Epoch. There is no record of a planning application to demolish the chapel. The Berkshire religious census dates the building to 1850.
MWB16489	48849 77170	Brickworks marked on First Edition Ordnance Survey map but buildings gone by mid 20 th century.
MWB18193	49090 76526	Line of former 18 th -century drive or walk towards Langlay Hall, traceable from documentary evidence, with a few surviving trees. Rocque's map shows a straight avenue of trees leading east from Long Lane (later the A34) to a large house at Langley. This possible carriageway crosses a more winding road between the two same locations, creating an X shape. By the early 19th century, the straight drive was only partially recorded; the two northerly elements of the crossing roads had gone out of use. However, the line of the former avenue could still be picked out as a road and in field boundaries from Worlds End to Langley Farm in the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping. The late 20th century construction of a dual carriageway replacing the A34 truncated the straight road (surviving as a cul de sac, Old Bothampstead Road). Within Langley Park some trees survive on the route of the avenue in the 21st century.
MWB19254	48737 76690	Grade II listed 17th century to Late 20th century farmhouse, house.
MWB20458	48781 76702	The Coach and Horses is shown on historic mapping from the OS First edition of 1877 (then called the Horse and Jockey) onwards. Historical pub research indicates that a public house with this name was in operation in 1864 (from Kelly's directory). ¹ It was then part of Hampstead Norreys parish.
MWB21164	48724 76677	World's End Farm is recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map although not named. It was therefore not initially identified in a 2005 survey of West Berkshire's historic farms. World's End Farmhouse is Grade II listed and described as 17th century in date; the two adjacent farm buildings shown on historic mapping were demolished by the late 20th century.
MWB21618	49046 76380	The Lambourn Downs National Mapping Programme recorded the remains of a trackway of probable post-medieval date seen in aerial photographs. It was aligned roughly east-west between SU 4896 7636 and SU 4915 7640 and is also marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch map as a track. The path originally led from the Oxford Road, skirting Langley Wood towards Langley Farm. It is a public right of way in the early 21st century, although its route was diverted when the A34 dual carriageway was constructed.
Events (fieldwork)		
EWB52	48722 76521	Old Bothampstead Road, World's End, Beedon. Evaluation of a 0.306ha site in 1998 consisting of 4 trenches revealed one undated pit containing a large quantity of burnt flint. Thames Valley Archaeological Services.
EWB428	48831 76669	World's End, Beedon. An evaluation in advance of a housing development in 1997 revealed possible Late Iron Age and Early Roman features; two ditches and a pit. These suggest that there was an associated settlement in the vicinity, probably to the east of the site near to the A34. Thames Valley Archaeological Services. See also MWB7109-7115.
EWB1358	48741 76273	The A34 Beedon By-pass - Langley Wood Evaluation. At some time between the summer of 1977 and May 1978 a strip along the route of the Beedon By-pass dissecting Langley Woods was excavated. A strip along the width of the road, 30-40 metres wide was cleared of trees and levelled, and a small amount of topsoil removed. 95 worked flints were recovered. Insufficient topsoil was removed to observe any features (if present). This event is possibly related to a series of watching briefs (EWB429) in the summer of 1977 during the construction of the A34 Beedon by-pass which identified a number of archaeological features (PRN 2800). The results of which are written up in the Berkshire Archaeological Journal. However the results from Langley Wood are not included within the Journal report which only summarises positive watching briefs. Berkshire Archaeological Unit

¹ This is incorrect or wrongly transcribed from the quoted website. The pub first appears in the 1887 Directory.