

17 Winterbrook, Wallingford, South Oxfordshire

National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 60614 88589

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief



Figure 1: No 17 Winterbrook, left.

Graham Keevill
Keevill Heritage Ltd
April 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Keevill Heritage Ltd carried out an archaeological watching brief at 17 Winterbrook, Wallingford, in April 2022 on behalf of the owners. Excavation of all foundation trenches for a new glazed extension were observed. No archaeological features were observed. The natural sand and gravel were found at the bottom of all the trenches, with thick layers of agricultural soil or made ground above this. No finds pre-dating the 18th/19th century were present. The watching brief therefore provided a negative archaeological result.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission (ref P21/S0067/HH) for construction of a single-storey glass rear extension at 17 Winterbrook, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 9DX on 26 March 2021. The site had the potential to contain archaeological features: Conditions 4 and 5 of the planning permission required that an archaeological watching brief was maintained during the development:

4: The applicant, or their agents or successors in title, shall be responsible for organising and implementing an archaeological watching brief, to be maintained during the period of construction/during any groundworks taking place on the site. The watching brief shall be carried out by a professional archaeological organisation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation that has first been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains in accordance with Policy ENV9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

5: Following the approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 4, no development shall commence on site without the appointed archaeologist being present. Once the watching brief has been completed its findings shall be reported to the Local Planning Authority, as agreed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, including all processing, research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication which shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within two years of the completion of the archaeological fieldwork.

Reason: To enable an appropriate level of archaeological investigation of the area including excavation and recording, post excavation analysis and the publication of results in accordance with Policy ENV9 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

Oxfordshire County Council's planning archaeologist agreed that a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) could be prepared without the need for a design brief. Our approved WSI described the aims and methods to be used for the work (Keevill 2022). This comprised a programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operations on site that might disturb/destroy archaeological deposits. The foundation trenches were the only excavations to fall within this definition.

1.2 THE SITE

No 17 is located on the east side of Winterbrook, the main road southwards out of the historic core of Wallingford. The site is c 440m south of the Anglo-Saxon burghal defences, in an area which

gradually grew to some suburban importance, mainly from the later 19th century onwards. No 17 is an early/mid 20th-century property, believed to date to the mid-1930s. The property is within the Winterbrook Conservation Area.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The historic town of Wallingford has been the subject of extensive archaeological fieldwork and research over many years. This includes the recent *Burh to Borough* project. Keevill Heritage Ltd has carried out several watching briefs in the town in recent years, eg on Wood Street, St John's Road and Crispin Close, and have ongoing work at 12 Castle Street. Our WSI for this project should be referred to for a detailed assessment of the archaeological background to and potential of the 17 Winterbrook site, which is only summarised here.

No 17 lies on the east side of Winterbrook, with the ground surface at approximately 46m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The bedrock geology comprises sandstone of the Glauconitic Marl Member overlain by superficial quaternary sand and gravel deposits of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member. The site is currently in use as a domestic dwelling with associated garden to the rear.

A few archaeological sites lie within 250m of 17 Winterbrook. These are of later prehistoric (Bronze and Iron Age), Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date. Most relevant to this project is the recovery of c 200 medieval pottery sherds from a test pit (TP86) c 60m to the west of the site as part of the Wallingford Garden Archaeology Project. The sherds were mainly 11th to 14th century in date, but included one of Anglo-Saxon date, suggesting long-lived occupation in the immediate vicinity. The wider area to the south of Wallingford is known to be of considerable archaeological potential, especially for prehistoric remains.

1.4 PROJECT AIMS, METHODS AND TIMING

The aim of the watching brief was to mitigate potential development impacts through permanent supervision of any operations that might disturb or destroy archaeological deposits, especially but not restricted to medieval remains. If archaeological remains were present (of any type/period), the aim was to assess their age, extent, character and significance.

All excavations requiring the archaeological watching brief were completed across three days, 4-6 April 2022. The weather was generally fair but with some showers, and occasionally heavy rain. This did not affect the watching brief. Graham Keevill carried out all the fieldwork, being on site all day on 4 April when virtually all the foundations were excavated, and intermittently as needed on the other days. Plant was supplied by the client's building contractor. A small 360^o tracked mechanical excavator was used to dig the foundation trenches. They were 0.65m-0.7m wide and 0.95m-1m deep throughout. The natural sand and gravel were found at a depth of 0.75m-0.8m below ground in the north (side) and east trenches but slightly deeper (0.85m-0.9m) on the south side. The trenches along the sides of the extension were 4.6m long running east from the rear wall of the house; the trench along the front was 5.4m long (see Figure 3).

The 'oversite' excavation to establish the necessary floor depth inside the extensions did not need to exceed 0.4m in depth from the existing ground surface. It thus stopped well above the level of the natural sand and gravel as seen in the foundation excavations. Nothing of any archaeological interest had been exposed in the top 0.4m of the foundation trenches. All servicing of the new extensions

was within the same depth and taken directly from the existing building. These operations therefore did not need to be monitored.

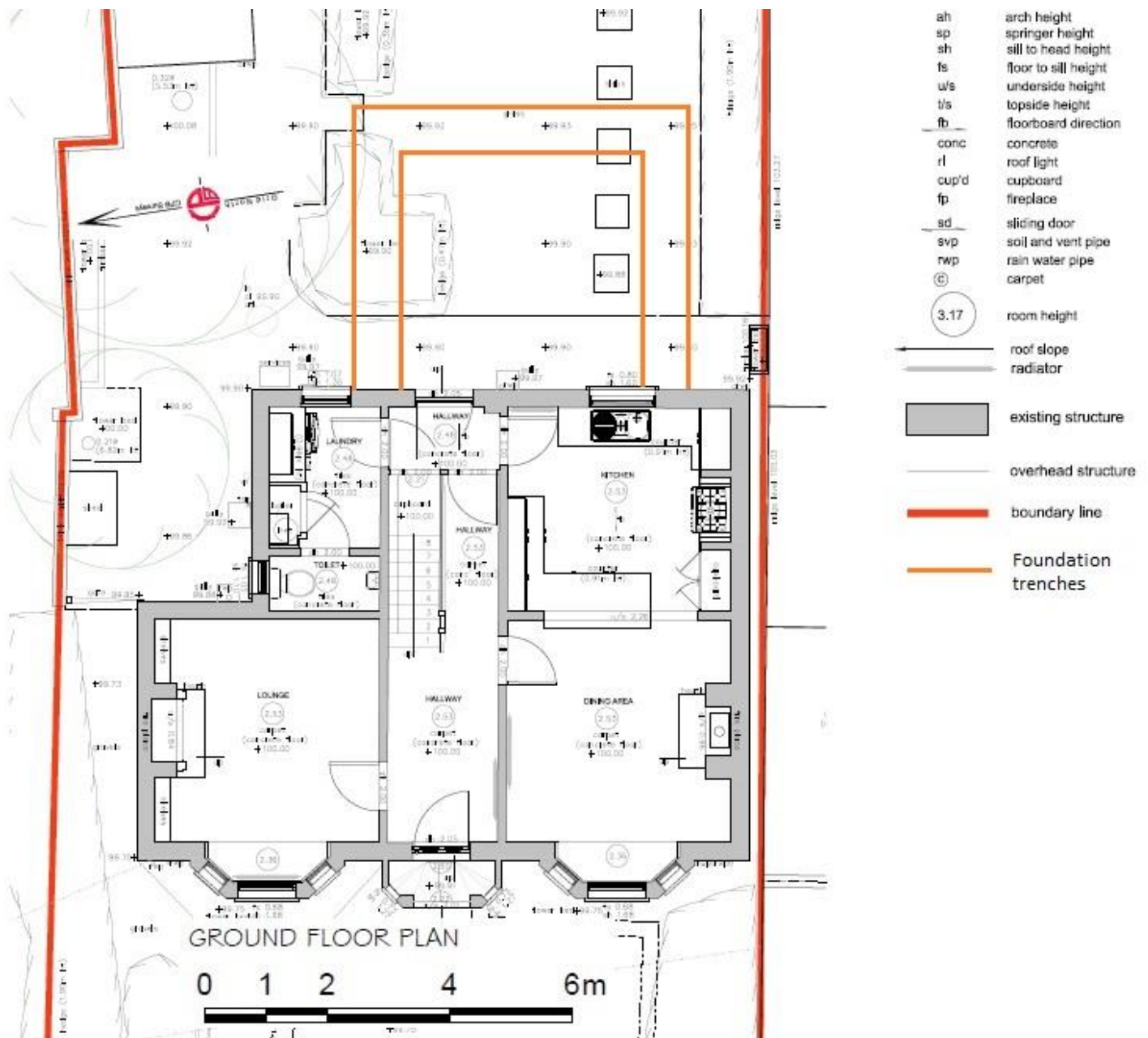


Figure 3: Detailed trench plan, based on Marble Air drawing MA20-004 PL200, scale 1:100. The levels are to an arbitrary site datum, not Ordnance Datum. The straight line running north-south just to the east of the rear wall marked the edge of a paved area – drain 6/8 was exactly under this.

The soil layers above the natural sand and gravel only contained modern artefacts (pottery, brick, tile etc). These were noted on site but discarded in line with the finds collection policy set out in the WSI. No pre-modern archaeological features and no finds pre-dating the 18th/19th century were present, and no contexts displaying any potential for palaeo-environmental archaeology were noted. Therefore minimal site recording was necessary (a 1:100 site plan was used to locate the foundation trenches, but no detailed plans or section drawings were needed), and no soil samples were taken. Notes were taken describing the results of the watching brief, and these provided the basis for section 2 of this report. These notes, the 1:100 plan and the digital photographs taken during the fieldwork form the primary archive of the project.

2 DESCRIPTION

The stratigraphic sequence was largely the same in all three foundation trenches. Yellow sand/gravel (3) was found in all the trenches, occupying the bottom 150mm-200mm. This was the Northmoor Member, the expected superficial geology on the site. The excavations were much too shallow to expose the bedrock beneath this.

In the south trench, the sand/gravel was directly overlain by mid-brown silty clay subsoil (2), which extended almost to the base of the trench, with a maximum thickness of 0.7m. Brick, tile and slate were common in the upper and middle part of the subsoil, but much rarer at the bottom. A small amount of white, cream and transfer-printed ware of late 18th/19th-century date was noted as well, but not retained.



Figure 4: The south foundation trench looking west to the house, with context numbers shown. The 'soil' in front of drain 6 is trample at the base of the trench.

In the north trench, a layer of orange-brown sandy clay (4, maximum thickness 0.15m) was found in the centre of the northern foundation trench but was not present in other areas. This may have been a buried soil, or (perhaps less likely) a localised remnant of alluvium. Unfortunately no artefacts were present, and no charcoal or carbonised material to suggest an agricultural use. Layer 4 was sealed by the same silty clay subsoil (2) seen in the south trench, but here only c 0.25m thick. A few pieces of unglazed red earthenware and transfer-printed ware of 18th to mid- 19th century date were recovered here. The same layer was also present along the east trench, hence establishing that it was the same context throughout. The scarcity of coarse rubble in the east trench, dwindling to its complete absence in the northern one, marked the only variation around the excavations. The same dark grey-brown silty clay loam topsoil (1) was present in all the trenches, varying from 0.2m-0.25m (south trench) to 0.4m thick (east and north trenches).



Figure 5: The north foundation trench, also looking west towards the house.

No archaeological features were encountered in any of the trenches. The foundations of the existing early/mid-20th-century house were exposed (**5** in the south trench and **7** in the north). The brick rear wall of the house continued for a further four courses (0.4m), onto a single offset brick course 50mm wide and 70mm deep. This rested on the concrete footing itself, 0.3m wide from the wall plane (or 0.25m from the offset) and 0.25m deep. The base of the foundations was therefore 0.65m below the current ground level. Elements of the house's drainage system were also found in the southern and northern foundation trenches, in both cases 1.15m-1.2m out from the rear wall of the property. A concrete-encased drain (**6**) was present in the south trench, with drains entering it from downspouts at the south end and in the middle of the building. A CCTV survey had shown that the main drain did not extend to or under the boundary wall between the garden of No 17 and the neighbours to the south. It had evidently been inserted as a 'closed' system draining to the north. This must date to the inter-wars construction of the house. The main pipe itself was completely encased in brick and concrete (which extended almost to the base of the trench), so that its depth below ground could not be seen. The same drain line was also found in the north trench, but here it was a modern plastic pipe (**8**), with its top only 0.3m below ground. The concrete pipe was not present, but it is not clear whether it had been removed or had never continued this far (it might have drained into a soakaway between the two trenches). This drain has a fall to the north, where a circular access cover marks its continuation (this can be seen on the site survey – see Figure 3).

3 CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features were observed. The natural sand and gravel were found at the bottom of all the trenches, with thick layers of agricultural soil or made ground above this. The site seems to have been part of a nursery in the early 20th century, with glasshouses to the north and orchards to the east. Part of the north boundary wall of No 17 is probably a survival from this business, but no other buildings seem to survive. The rubble in the southern trench (layer 2) perhaps derived from demolition of some of the nursery buildings, and the thick topsoil/subsoil layers throughout would be consistent with market garden/cultivation of this sort. The absence of any pre-modern features, or finds pre-dating the 18th/19th century, suggests that the site had not been in anything other than agricultural use for centuries before this. The watching brief therefore provided a negative archaeological result.



Figure 6: Extract from the 1912 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map with the approximate extent of No 17 (house and garden) shown in orange. Most of what is now The Murren was a Nursery at this time.

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25 April 2022

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Steven Weaver (Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service) for his help throughout this project, including approval of the WSI and monitoring the fieldwork. We also thank the owner and her architect for commissioning the project.

APPENDIX 1: OASIS SUMMARY RECORD

OASIS ID (UID) keevillh1-506267

Project Name Watching Brief at 17 Winterbrook, Wallingford

Activity type Watching Brief Project Identifier(s) WAWN 22 WB

Planning Id P21/S0067/HH

Reason For Investigation - Planning: Post determination

Organisation Responsible for work - Keevill Heritage Consultancy

Project Dates 04-Apr-2022 - 06-Apr-2022

Location 17 Winterbrook, Wallingford NGR: SU 60610 88580

Administrative Areas - Country: England; County: Oxfordshire; District: South Oxfordshire; Parish: Wallingford

Project Methodology - Watching brief during foundation excavations for small glazed extension to rear of existing house.

Project Results - No archaeological features were found. Artefacts were restricted to late post-medieval and modern ceramics plus building rubble. These may derive from its use as part of a horticultural Nursery in the early 20th century.

Person Responsible for work - Graham Keevill