



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

WATCHING BRIEF: WILLOW HOUSE LITTLE BRICKHILL, MILTON KEYNES

on behalf of Mr K. Green



Nigel Wilson HND AIFA

May 2004

ASC: 572/LBW/01

Letchworth House
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall,
Milton Keynes MK6 1NE
Tel: 01908 608989 Fax: 01908 605700
Email: office@archaeological-services.co.uk
Website: www.archaeological-services.co.uk



Site Data

ASC site code:	LBW	Project no:	572
SMR reference / Event No:	890		
Date of fieldwork	14 - 17 th May 2004		
County:	Buckinghamshire		
District:	Milton Keynes		
Village/Town:	Little Brickhill		
Parish:	Little Brickhill		
NGR:	SP 90833 32641		
Present land use:	Lean-to shelter and garden		
Planning proposal:	Two storied extension		
Extent of development:	65 sq m		
Client:	Mr K. Green Willow House Watling Street Little Brickhill Milton Keynes MK17 9LS		
Contact name:	Mr K. Green		
Telephone	n/a	Fax:	n/a

Internal Quality Check

Primary Author:	Nigel Wilson	Date:	25/5/2004
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	
Revisions:		Date:	
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

© Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

No part of this document is to be copied in any way without prior written consent.

Every effort is made to provide detailed and accurate information. However, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies within this report.

© Ordnance Survey maps reproduced with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

ASC Licence No. AL 100015154

CONTENTS

Summary 4

1. Introduction 4

2. Aims & Methods 8

3. Results. 9

4. Conclusions 11

5. Acknowledgements 12

6. Archive 12

7. References 13

Appendices:

1. Monitoring Shets 14

2. Tandard Method Statement 16

Figures:

1. General location 3

2. Site plan 6

3. General Layout of the Footings 7

Plates:

Cover: Willow House

1. Detail view of the footing trench..... 10

2. General view of the development area 10

3. Looking northwards from Willow House..... 10



Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During May 2004 ASC Ltd undertook a watching brief at Willow House, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes. The watching brief was required to fulfil a planning condition relating to the building of an extension, to the southeastern end of the house. Observations were made on the footing trenches, and other areas stripped of topsoil. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.

1 Introduction

1.1 During May 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site at Willow House, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes (NGR SP 90833 32641: Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr K. Green the owner of the house. In the absence of a brief from the Milton Keynes Council Archaeologist (MKCA) the work was done according to a standard ASC method statement (Appendix 2).

1.2 Reason for Work

Under current planning legislation archaeology can be a material factor in planning decisions. Planning Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) deals specifically with archaeology. When Mr Green submitted plans to Milton Keynes Council to build a two storied extension to Willow House the MKCA recommended that a watching brief condition should be imposed. This recommendation was accepted and a condition requiring a watching brief was included in the granting of the planning permission.

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 Little Brickhill is situated on the Greensand Ridge, about two miles to the southeast of Fenny Stratford, and two and a half miles west of Woburn in Bedfordshire. Willow House is situated in its own grounds towards the western end of the village and lies c.75m to the north of the main village street, the Roman road known as *Watling Street*.

1.3.2 The soils have been mapped by the Soil Survey as belonging to the Frilford association, described as *Deep well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils. Some ferruginous sandy and some coarse loamy soils affected by groundwater. Risk of water erosion.* Towards the base of the trenches the underlying Flint association was exposed described as *Reddish fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some fine loamy soils and some slowly permeable seasonal waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils.* The site stands at c.135mOD on a slight ridge above the village overlooking the Ouzel Valley and Milton Keynes to the north.

1.3.3 The site is accessed by a driveway off the north side of Watling Street. Willow House is a brick built house constructed in the late 1940's. The house stands roughly central in its grounds. Against the southeastern wall of the house there was a lean-to shelter, which was demolished prior to the start of the

construction of the extension. This lean-to had a concrete base and was built on shallow footings. Various drains run under the slab.

1.4 Historical Background

- 1.4.1 The prehistoric period is poorly represented in the Little Brickhill area though this is probably more a reflection on the amount of published work done in the area rather than a true indication of low density of sites.
- 1.4.2 Little Brickhill is not recognised as a Roman settlement though it has been speculated that there might be a signal station in the area (Brian Giggins *pers comm*). To the north of the village at the base of the hill lies the site of the small town of *Magiovinium* parts of which were excavated in 1977-78 in advance of road improvements (Neil 1987). Little Brickhill's main street follows the line of the Roman road now known as Watling Street. Until the Little Brickhill by-pass was built this was the main road to the northwest from London.
- 1.4.3 It seems likely that the village was founded sometime during the Saxon period. The name Little Brickhill is derived from two Saxon words firstly *brik* meaning top or summit and the second part *hyll* (hill). By the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) where the village is referred to as *Brichelle* (Morris 1978) a small community seems to have been well established.
- 1.4.4 Being situated on the main road north, Little Brickhill rapidly developed during the medieval period. In 1228 a charter to hold a market on Thursdays was granted to John de Gatesdon. The 1228 charter also granted the right to hold a fair on the festivals of St. Mary Magdalen (22nd July). Extra fairs were granted in 1267 at the festival of St Giles (1st September), 1391 the decollation of St John the Baptist (29th August) and in 1441 two fairs, one on the festival of St Philip and St James (1st May) the other on that of St Luke (18th October). The Little Brickhill market has long since been discontinued.
- 1.4.5 For many years the assizes were held in Little Brickhill. The last assizes were held in 1638, after which time the town seems to have gone in to rapid decline.
- 1.4.6 During the late 18th century the road was improved and became a turnpike (toll road) used by the stage coaches. However Little Brickhill did not benefit greatly from this traffic, being halfway between the major coaching towns of Dunstable and Stony Stratford.
- 1.4.7 In 1796 an Act of Parliament was passed allowing the land within Little Brickhill parish to be inclosed.

(<http://met.open.ac.uk/genuki/big/eng/BKM/LittleBrickhill/Index.html>)

To be inserted when available
Figure 2: Site plan (*scale 1:####*)

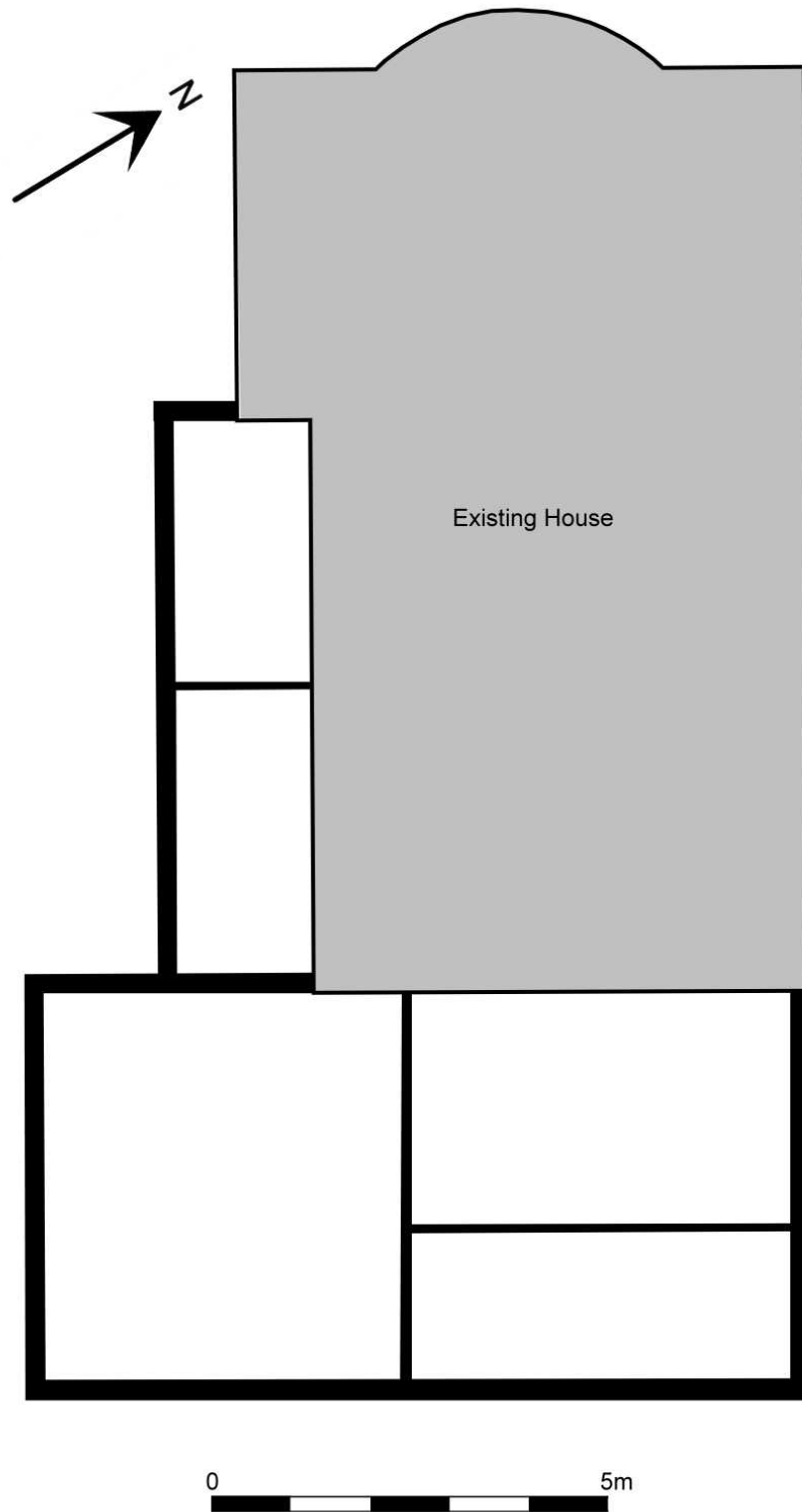


Figure 3: General layout of the footings (*scale as shown*)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the method statement the aims of the watching brief were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks.

2.2 Methods

The work was carried out according to the method statement, which required:

- a watching brief on groundworks.
- on completion of the watching brief, preparation of a report summarising and interpreting the results.

2.3 Standards

The work conforms to the method statement, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Results

- 3.1 The watching brief at Willow House was concerned with the observation and recording of any remains which were uncovered during the groundworks associated with the construction of the extension.
- 3.2 Prior to the start of the watching brief the lean-to structure had been removed from the southeastern gable wall of the house. The concrete base and the shallow footings associated with this structure had also removed, leaving a layer of clean undisturbed natural sand surface exposed. The footing trenches for the extension were cut through this natural deposit. The trenches against the front (southwestern) wall of the house were also cut through natural sand.
- 3.3 No evidence was revealed during the watching brief to indicate that the site had been occupied prior to the construction of Willow House in the late 1940's.



Plate 1: Detail view of the footing trench



Plate 2: General view of the development area



Plate 3: Looking northwards from Willow House

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Whilst there has been a human influence in the Little Brickhill area dating back at least as far as the Roman period it seems unlikely that a recognisable settlement came in to being before the Saxon period. During the medieval period Little Brickhill became a significant town especially after the granting of a market charter in 1228. From this date until the assizes stopped being held in Brickhill the town flourished. From the mid 17th century the town went into decline and has never regained its former status.
- 4.2 The watching brief on the groundworks at Willow House has produced no evidence to suggest that the town extended north of Watling Street this far from the centre of the village.

5. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr Green for commissioning ASC to undertake the work. Thanks also due to Mark White the site manager and his team for their cooperation during the watching brief. The project was under the overall management of Bob Zeepvat, and the two monitoring visits were made by Nigel Wilson.

6. Archive

6.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Initial Report
2. Clients site plans
3. Site Monitoring Sheets
4. List of digital photographs
5. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

6.2 The archive will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum under the accession No. AYBCM 2004.50

7. Bibliography

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Morris J. (ed) 1978 *The Domesday Book, Buckinghamshire*. History from the Sources. Phillimore

Neal D. 1987 Excavations at Magiovinium, Buckinghamshire, 1978-80. *Records of Buckinghamshire* 1987 **29**, 1-124

Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

Web Sites Consulted

<http://met.open.ac.uk/genuki/big/eng/BKM/LittleBrickhill/Index.html> 25th May 2004

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Willow House, Little Brickhill		Project No/Code: 572/LBW		Sheet: 1 of 2		
		Date of visit: 14/5/2004				
Client/Developer: Mr K. Green						
Contact: Mr K. Green				Phone:		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 9.30		Finish: 10.30		
Completed by: Nigel Wilson						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & sunny						
Observations: Work has started. Concrete slab and hardcore removed from SE gable end of house. Front (SW) of house topsoil stripped, Trenches have been begun. Site seems to be clean sand with modern services cut through						
Comments: Will do a further visit on Monday 17/5/04						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: Willow House, Little Brickhill		Project No/Code: 572/LBW		Sheet: 2 of 2		
		Date of visit: 17/5/2004				
Client/Developer: Mr K. Green						
Contact: Mr K. Green				Phone:		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 11.15		Finish: 12:10		
Completed by: Nigel Wilson						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & sunny						
Observations: Work continues. Main trenches opened it is clear that natural sand extends across the whole site. Some 1940's hardcore (construction debris) in the trench to the SW of the house above the sand.						
Comments: As the whole area has been stripped to natural and no archaeology is showing no further visits will be required						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2003

Appendix 2: Standard Method Statement

1 *Definition*

An archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons (IFA 1999, 2). It normally involves the monitoring by an experienced archaeologist of ground disturbance on a development (footing and service trenches, reduction of levels, landscaping).

2 *Standards*

All work will conform to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 1999), to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*, and to any specific requirements of the Planning Archaeologist (PA).

3 *General Methodology: Observation & Recording*

- 3.1 Archaeological observation and recording normally involves visits when groundworks are under way, and requires close co-operation and communication between contractor and archaeologist. In many cases, only regular, relatively brief visits are required (an *intermittent* watching brief). In certain circumstances (e.g. where archaeological features are known or strongly suspected to exist), the archaeologist's continuous presence may be required (an *intensive* watching brief). In the absence of specific instruction, professional judgement will be exercised to determine the level of monitoring.
- 3.2 Each site visit will be recorded on ASC's *Site Monitoring Sheet*. These sheets should record what is observed, including sketches where appropriate. A photographic record (B&W prints, colour slides) will also be maintained throughout the watching brief. Plans of the development provided by the client will normally form the basis for recording the location of archaeological features and finds.
- 3.3 Watching briefs will be undertaken by suitably experienced and qualified staff, normally of at least Project Officer grade, holding Associate membership of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 3.4 If significant archaeological remains are identified during the watching brief, a meeting will be arranged between ASC, the client, and the Planning Archaeologist in order to agree an appropriate investigation. Provision to cover this has been made in the project estimates. Detailed investigation will follow the methods set out in the following section.

4 **General Methodology: Investigation (if required)**

- 4.1 Excavation will be carried out by hand. Maximum depths of excavation will conform to current Health & Safety regulations.
- 4.2 At the start of fieldwork temporary bench marks will be established, to be tied in subsequently to an appropriate Ordnance Survey bench mark. All plans and section drawings will be annotated with relative heights derived from these benchmarks. Plans will be related to the OS National Grid. Overall site plans will normally be drawn to a scale of 1:100 or 1:50: detailed plans of specific areas or features may be drawn to 1:20 or 1:10: burials will always be drawn at the latter scale. Sections will be drawn at 1:20 or 1:10, depending upon size and complexity.
- 4.3 A detailed record of all archaeological contexts will be maintained on individual pro-forma record sheets, designed to meet current professional standards. Each context will be individually numbered in a single sequence, and will be described in terms of dimensions, shape, fill type and inclusions, artefact content, samples and interpretation. A register of contexts will be maintained, and context records will be cross-referenced to all other records.
- 4.4 A full photographic record in 35mm black & white print, colour slide and digital formats will be maintained, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots, to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological work. Digital photographs will be used to illustrate the report, and will be stored on CDROM in an appropriate digital format. All photographs and slides will be listed in detail on photographic record sheets.
- 4.5 All finds relating to the archaeological record of the site will be collected with reference to context and location. Finds of particular significance (small finds) will be recorded three-dimensionally on site, and described on individual pro-forma record sheets. A register will be kept of all finds. Finds processing may take place during or after fieldwork, and will entail cleaning, marking, packaging, quantification and initial classification. Conservation of artefacts will normally take place after processing, but primary conservation of delicate artefacts may be required on site.
- 4.6 Provision will be made for the sampling and analysis of environmental data by appropriate specialists. Sampling will be carried out in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (EH 2002). All samples will be recorded on individual pro-forma record sheets, and a register of samples will be maintained. Specialists will be required to submit copies of the base data from environmental analysis for inclusion in the site archive.
- 4.7 Any human remains encountered will normally be recorded and left *in situ*. The removal of human remains in consecrated ground requires a Home Office licence, and investigation or removal of remains must be agreed between ASC, the client, and other appropriate authorities. For the excavation and recording of human remains, current IFA guidelines will be followed (McKinley &

Roberts 1993). In general, due care and respect will be accorded to any human remains, and site staff are required not to discuss their discovery in public, so as not to attract undesirable interest.

- 4.8 Due concern will be given to the physical security of all archaeological features, deposits, artefacts and records, both on and off site. All reasonable measures will be taken to secure their protection before, during and after excavation.

5 **Reporting**

5.1 Upon completion of the watching brief, an initial report on its findings is normally prepared within four weeks. This will typically include:

- a concise non-technical summary of the results
- information relating to the circumstances of the project
- background information about the site
- a summary of the aims of the project and the methods used
- a description of the results, supported by appropriate illustrative material
- a conclusion, summarising the results and examining their significance
- the contents and location of the archive
- appendices (record sheets, specialist reports, reference works etc.)
- an SMR summary sheet, if required

5.2 Copies of the report will be provided as required to the client, to the PA, and to other bodies as required. Eight copies are normally produced: a charge may be made for providing any additional copies. Interim reports will be submitted to the relevant period and/or regional journals.

6 **Archive**

6.1 All archaeological projects generate a quantity of records and related material. Together, these constitute the *project archive*. While the report may describe the project's findings in some detail, the archive contains the evidence on which the report is based, and its importance cannot be too highly stressed. By its nature, archaeological fieldwork cannot normally be repeated, so the archive often constitutes the only surviving evidence for past activity on a site, and arrangements must therefore be made for its deposition and long-term storage.

6.2 At the start of a project, ASC will initiate arrangements for archive deposition. On completion of the reporting stages of the project, the archive will be prepared for long-term storage. If arrangements for deposition cannot be concluded, ASC will store the archive until deposition can be arranged.