

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF
AT
BRIONNE WAY, LONGLEVENS,
GLOUCESTER

James Goad BA AIFA

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Worcestershire County Council

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Project 2373
Report 1262

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Background information

<i>Client</i>	Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd
<i>Site address</i>	Brionne Way, Longlevens, Gloucester Gloucestershire
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 384943 220552
<i>Planning authority</i>	Gloucester City Council
<i>reference</i>	02/01133/FUL
<i>Brief</i>	GCCAU 2003a
<i>Project design</i>	HEAS 2003
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999

Previous archaeological work on the site

There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken on site.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

There have been a number of archaeological investigations just south of the study area, with varying results. A possible prehistoric hearth was located during a watching brief on the site of the Hawthorns School (SO 8465 2023), although the period is unconfirmed due to a lack of dating evidence. There have been a number of pottery sherds found at Little Normans (SO 8504 2020) during a full excavation, with Roman and prehistoric pot found within a ploughsoil horizon, but no significant features (GCCAU 2003b). Unstratified pottery was found during a watching brief at Longford School (SO 8469 2017, GCCAU 2003b) but no features or artefacts recovered from a watching brief at Alders Green (SO 8459 2037, GCCAU 2003b). A scrap from a possible ammunition forge was found in Longlevens (exact location not given in source), of English Civil War date. This is believed to date from the time of the siege of Gloucester and if from that event would be rare, as little artefactual material from the siege has survived (Atkin and Laughlin 1992).

Historical background

The site lies approximately two miles north of the historic core of the city of Gloucester.

The parish of Longlevens is a 20th century creation. The area is made up of the former parishes of Holy Trinity, Wotton St Mary Without (“Without” denoted the parish lay outside the ancient city boundary) and land belonging to the ancient city parishes of St Mary de Lode and St Catherine, which had extensive territory beyond the city boundary. This ancient parish land existed in fragments and intermixed areas and were associated with local hamlets that had grown up on or near main roads. Longlevens was made up mostly from Wotton St Mary but also Longford St Mary and of Wotton and Longford St Catherine (Christmas 1997).

Longlevens seems to have been composed predominantly of arable land prior to 20th century housing development. The site under development at Brionne Way still had extant ridge and furrow in areas, prior to the housing development. Usage of the land for agricultural purposes can thus be dated roughly from the late medieval to early post-medieval periods. The land existed in large open fields sub-divided into strips for tenants and labourers to cultivate. The name is derived from “Long Elevens”, a field name in the locality, which was recorded in a survey of Cathedral land in 1750 (Christmas 1997). Both the 1799 Enclosure Map and the 1883 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3) show the area to be dominated by agricultural land. Market and nursery gardens in the parish catered for Gloucester’s growing population in the 19th century (VCH IV, 416).

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for watching brief	CAS 1995
Sources consulted	SMR Sources cited by the SMR Tithe Map 1840 Ordnance Survey 1886 1:2500 Ordnance Survey 1916 1:2500
Date(s) of fieldwork	20 th November 2003 to 6 th May 2004
Area of deposits observed	Indicated on Figure 2

Access to or visibility of structure

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified. Selected areas were cleaned by hand. Access to deep trenches were not made for safety reasons.

The initial service trenching was extensively observed, but owing to negative results, it was decided that future visits to various areas of the site was unlikely to yield any significant archaeology.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved

Context descriptions

Context	Description	Interpretation	Depth (depth below ground level)
100	Friable mid brown silty sand	Topsoil	0.0-0.25m (after partial topsoil strip)
101	Friable light brown silty sand with bands of light grey sand. Occasional small rounded stone inclusions	Subsoil	0.25-0.45m
102	Sticky blue grey clay	Natural	0.45m-
103	Light grey sandy gravels	Natural	0.44-0.90m
104	Light yellowish brown clay	Natural	0.26m-
105	Friable mid brown silty sand	Material from ridge of extant ridge and furrow agriculture	0.0-0.30m
106	Friable mid brown sandy silt	Material from furrows of extant	0.0-0.30m

		ridge and furrow agriculture	
107	Friable dark brown sandy clay. Occasional brick rubble, mixed stone assemblage and fragments of wood were included in the layer.	Re-deposited overburden on east side of site, adjacent to existing modern housing development. In section of culvert trench	0.0-2.20m
108	Mid brown sandy clay	Dumped layer, although less inclusions than layer 107 above it – present in culvert trench	1.50-3.00m
109	Sticky light brown natural clay	Cut by stream and sealed by layers of dumped overburden – culvert trench	3.00m-
110	Sticky light brown silty clay with occasional brick fragment inclusions	Layer of dumping at lip of stream bank	0.0-1.00m

Discussion

The site was inspected on a regular basis and all the major service trenching was recorded, in addition to some of the house footings. Most of the major ground works on the site were for services, which were to be located under the roads within the housing development. The pipe trenches opened were quite substantial in size and afforded a good view of the deposits across the site. The vast majority of the ground disturbance took place in the western and central portions of the site where most of the houses were to be built. However, some trenching took place at the far eastern side of the site in the form of a culvert for a storm drain. These ground works enabled a clear picture of soil horizons and natural ground across the site to be established.

The site didn't produce many artefacts. There were some isolated sherds of 20th century china recovered from the topsoil and surfaces across the site. These sherds were classified as unstratified. The only finds recovered from a context were taken from a furrow. There were two areas of extant ridge and furrow agriculture on the site, with the artefacts taken from the ones located centrally in the development area.

Although there were a variety of soil horizons visible within the ground works, no significant archaeological features or layers were noticed apart from the ridge and furrow.

The ridge and furrow was removed within the development area, so no trace of it exists within the area.

Conclusions

The large scale of the ground works enabled a large proportion of the site to be inspected for archaeological features. None of any significance were found. The only features of significance were the areas of extant ridge and furrow. These probably date from the late medieval to the early post-medieval period.

The site doesn't seem to have been directly settled on at any time, probably being used purely as agricultural land from populations of nearby settlements. The earliest date of agricultural usage is unknown, but the presence of Roman pottery nearby as well as a possible prehistoric hearth might suggest possible usage in those periods, although there is absolutely no evidence on the site to suggest such activity.

The area seems to have a low potential for significant archaeological activity. The site appears to have been agricultural land existing in between small settlements.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd at Brionne Way, Longlevens, Gloucester (NGR SO 384943 220552).

The watching brief observed all the extensive service trenching that occurred on the site. During the course of these ground works no significant archaeology was found other than the already noted extant ridge and furrow. The site did not show any evidence of having been directly settled on before. The area seems to have existed as agricultural land until 20th century housing development and the ring road to the north isolated the site, with the land becoming fallow.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	14
Photographic records AS3	14
Abbreviated context record	1
Digital photographs	88
Drawings	11

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Gloucester City Museum and Art
Gallery
Brunswick Road
Gloucester
GL1 1HP

telephone 01452 396131

Acknowledgements

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