

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief between the 7th-13th October 2009 under a condition attached to planning permission for an extension at The Old Rectory, The Street, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford. The watching brief appeared to show that the site area investigated has been subject to late post-medieval as well modern disturbance. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered although these are likely to have been redeposited. However, as the footings examined were not continuous, to allow the formation of an overall picture for all the deposits encountered, this pottery could conceivably be part of an archaeological horizon.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located off the north side of The Street to the rear of St Mary Magdalene's Church (NGR SU 61455 89340). The underlying geology is First (Floodplain) Terrace Deposits and the site lies at approximately 47m OD. The area to developed was formerly an open space between the kitchen/utility rooms of the existing house, and the southern wall of a double garage to the north. When excavations were carried out on the adjacent Jethro Tull Gardens development, fine sandy gravel bedrock was found at 600mm below modern ground level at the eastern perimeter of the site.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission under planning application number 05/W0130 for the construction of a ground floor rear conservatory extension linking the main house with the garage/annex. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition (Number 6) was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and South Oxfordshire Local Plan policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Stone foundations have been observed in the rear garden of the Old Rectory. About 500mm below the modern ground level, a wall faced with stone blocks and with a rubble core was seen to run up to 8m on a north-south orientation (Oxon HER 16454). This may be associated with an earlier building (possibly related to the medieval occupation nearby), but may also represent the remains of a north-south boundary wall shown on the OS 1st edition map.

The site also lies immediately north of the parish church of St Mary Magdalene which was founded in the 11/12th century. Thames Valley Archaeological Services investigated the Jethro Tull Gardens estate immediately to the west prior to development in 1993. A high density of well preserved domestic settlement features including postholes, ditches, gullies and pits were found that dated to the 13/14th

Figure 1. Site location

centuries (Oxon HER 14342).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of investigation were:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence of sub-surface remains relating to the known medieval occupation in the area.
- The results of the investigations will be made public.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the excavation of for new foundation trenches for the conservatory link building. Excavation of the new foundation trenches was carried out by both a 360° type tracked excavator and by hand.

Any potential archaeological features revealed were hand cleaned before being investigated. Any archaeological features or other remains i.e. concentrations of artefacts, were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. All artefacts were collected except for 20th century pottery and concentrations of building material. These were noted but not retained.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material. Those without brackets refer to features themselves.

Figure 2. Plan and sections.

4.1 Results (Figure 2)

The earliest deposit observed in the footing trench which joined the house with the garage was composed of a mixed mid brown silty sand and mid brown grey clayey loam (12) thought to be the original subsoil. This was at least 0.10m thick and continued below the depth of the trench. Overlaying this was a mid grey-brown clayey loam with occasional pieces of brick and tile, occasional flecks of charcoal and moderate gravel inclusions (11) measuring 0.60m in thickness.

Cutting deposit (11) was either part of large pit or an area of disturbance 10 (Fig. 2, Section 3). The earliest fill observed in this pit/disturbance was a light grey clayey loam containing occasional charcoal flecking, occasional pieces of tile and moderate chalk inclusions (09) that was at least 0.12m thick as seen. This was covered by fill (08) composed of a mid grey clayey loam with occasional gravel inclusions 0.64m thick. Overlaying this feature was evidence of disturbed ground, and modern service trenches.

Towards the southern part of the site, the earliest deposit encountered was a mid green-grey clayey loam with moderate chalk flecking and occasional pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) and noticeable fragments of tile (06). This is possibly the same as deposit (09) and was at least 0.22m thick and continued below the depth of the trench. Two sherds of pottery dating from the period of the late 11th to mid 14th century were recovered from this fill, but these are likely to have been redeposited, if this deposit is the same as deposit (09) within large pit/disturbance 10. Overlying this, as seen in the middle foundation pad close to the boundary wall was a lens of decayed chalk (07) 0.08m thick. This was sealed by a light brown-grey silty loam with moderate chalk flecking, and occasional inclusions of coal fragments, charcoal flecking and large pieces of chalk (05), probably the same as deposit (08), with a maximum thickness of 0.74m. Seven sherds of pottery dating the deposit to the mid 18th century to early 19th century were recovered from this fill.

Deposit (05) was found to have been cut by construction cut 04 containing stepped E-W wall (03). This wall joined into the current boundary wall of the property and was constructed from unfrosted bricks 100mm x 224mm x 72mm in size forming an old English bond, of which only the three lowest courses remained. The lowest course was 0.33m wide whilst the two above were 0.23m wide. This remains of this wall finished before it joined to the house, probably leaving enough room for a gateway.

Overlaying this wall close to the southern part of the development was a disturbed dark brown-grey clayey loam with frequent charcoal inclusions and moderate CBM and gravel inclusions (02) 0.24m thick which had been cut by various services to the house and a soakaway. Several sherds of mass produced 20th century pottery were noted from within this layer.

Overlying deposit (02) but typically physically overlying (05) across this part of the site and completing the stratigraphic sequence was topsoil (01) composed of dark grey-brown clayey loam with occasional fragments of CBM 0.24m thick.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The results are considered to be good. However, as the footings were not continuous, it is possible that the site could be more complex than perceived. The work took place during periods of sunshine and occasional cloud.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 9 sherds with a total weight of 268g. It comprised a mixture of medieval and later wares which indicate that there was activity at the site during the late 11th – 12th century, and again in the mid 16th – 17th century. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

| | |
|-------|---|
| OXY: | Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 1 sherd, 3g. |
| OXAG: | Abingdon ware, mid/late 11 th – mid 14 th century. 1 sherd, 3g. |
| OXST: | Rhenish Stoneware, AD1480 – 1700. 1 sherd, 37g. |
| OXDR: | Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 5 sherds, 222g. |
| CRM: | Creamware, mid 18th - early 19th C. 1 sherd, 3g. |

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. All the fabric types are well-known in the region. The sherd of Rhenish Stoneware is of Frechen/Cologne type, probably from a *Bartmann* bottle, and dateable to the mid 16th – 17th century.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

| Cntxt | OXY | | OXAG | | OXST | | OXDR | | CRM | | Date |
|-------|-----|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|-----|----|--------|
| | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | |
| 5 | | | | | 1 | 37 | 5 | 222 | 1 | 3 | M18thC |
| 6 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | | | | | | | L11thC |
| Total | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 37 | 5 | 222 | 1 | 3 | |

6 DISCUSSION

From observations made during the watching brief, it would appear that the site area investigated has been subject to fairly recent activity including some modern disturbance. Should large pit/disturbance 10 revealed in the footing between the house and the garage be indicative of the site as a whole then the earliest deposits encountered are likely to be late post-medieval. This being the case then the two sherds of medieval pottery recovered from deposit (6) are likely to have been subject to redeposition, rather than be from a medieval horizon. Nonetheless, as the footings were not continuous, to allow the formation of an overall picture, this assumption might not be correct, and the medieval pottery revealed in deposit (6) could conceivably be from an archaeological horizon possibly connected to the settlement

features to the west.. No obvious medieval and early post-medieval features were revealed however and no further evidence was noted of a continuation of the 13th/14th century settlement excavated immediately to the west of the site at the Jethro Tull Gardens estate.

The pottery recovered suggests that site vicinity as a whole has been subject to phases of activity during the late 11th-14th century and the mid 16-17th century prior to later post-medieval activity even if no such features were clearly evident.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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