

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE GLEBE, BOXFORD,

WEST BERKSHIRE

NGR SU 429 716

On behalf of

AH & MA Baylis Discretionary Trust

NOVEMBER 2010

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Williams, A., & Martin, G.H. 1992 *Domesday Book* London Penguin

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Site Code BDCG 10
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Museum.

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of footings for a new build. No archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the west side of the road from Boxford to Leckhampstead at NGR SU 429 716 (centred) (Figure 1) at a height of 94.5m OD. The underlying solid geology is chalk capped by gravel and clay. The site was previously in use as a dwelling, which had been demolished prior to the archaeological monitoring of the excavation of footings for the new build.

1.2 Planning Background

West Berkshire Council granted planning permission (09/02540/FUL) for the demolition of the existing bungalow and construction of a new dwelling and construction of detached double garage. Due to the site's potential to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the permission for a programme of archaeological work to be carried out during groundworks. The Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council issued guidance in a memo dated 15/1/2010 indicating the extent of the work.

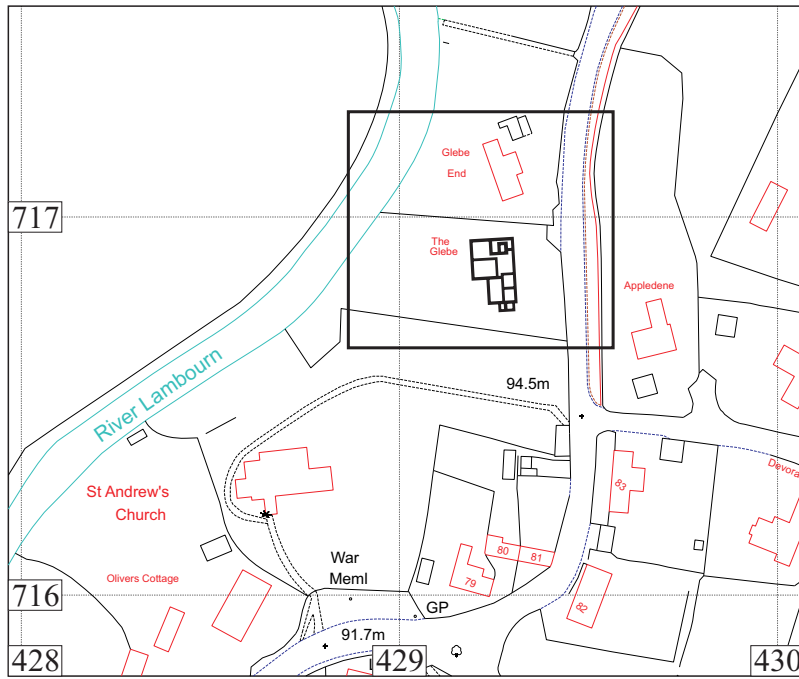
No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by The Historic Environment Consultancy and agreed with the Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council outlining the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance. John Moore Heritage Services undertook to comply with the WSI.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The archaeological record indicates that there has been activity in the Boxford area since the prehistoric period.

There has been a settlement at Boxford from at least AD 821, when the earliest known written record of the settlement of 'Boxora' was made. This is followed by a record of 'Boxorann' in AD 958. Entries in Domesday AD 1086 indicate that the parish was divided between Rowbury and Kintbury hundreds. The site lies within the former hundred. At Domesday the manor was held by Abingdon Abbey (Williams and Martin 1992, 142), when it is called 'Bovsore' and 'Bochesorne'. Other variations of the name 'Boxford' are 'Boxhora' (1167), 'Boxhole' (1180), 'Bockesore' (1198), 'Boxforth' (1517) and 'Boxworth' (1535). The name means 'slope or shore overgrown with box' (Ekwall 1960).



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Figure 1. Site location

It is suggested that long and short quoins characteristic of the Saxon Period are present at Boxford Church however the quoins are not of the classic Saxon form (see Plate 4 & Plate 5). But it is recognised that most parish churches and villages originate in the Saxon Period. (Arnold and Wardle, 1981)

A search of the West Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record was commissioned on a 1km radius around The Glebe. The results are appended, and a summary is as follows: Crop marks indicating probable prehistoric features including Bronze Age round barrows and linear ditches are situated c.700m - 1km north and northeast of the site. Prehistoric worked flints were found during fieldwork in the 1970s c. 1km southeast of the site. Further examples are noted from Westbrook Farm, c. 730m WNW of the site. A number of further finds of worked flints are known from the Boxford area, although their specific locations are unknown. A Bronze Age urn was excavated prior to 1931 in the churchyard, immediately south of the site. 285m ESE of the site, a circular earthwork was observed, interpreted as a round barrow or possible windmill mound. In the same field, a linear feature was noted, possibly a medieval hollow way.

A possible prehistoric/Roman field system is located c. 850m northeast of The Glebe, covering an area approximating 1km square. Further earthworks and cropmarks c. 800m south of the site are interpreted as field boundaries. Cropmarks representing a pair of intersecting ditches c. 675m WSW of the site are interpreted as the sides of an undated possible rectilinear enclosure. There is evidence for Roman activity in the Boxford area including a Roman coin, found at an uncertain location in Boxford and a Roman sword or dagger, again unspecific in its location. In the late 19th century, a number of Roman coins and pottery sherds were located during the construction of Boxford House, c. 280m south of the site.

Approximately 540m northeast of the site, a probable Saxon cemetery is located, the evidence of which primarily comes from a large number of metal detecting finds including coins and brooch fragments. The site is heavily damaged through ploughing. A Saxon spearhead was exhibited in Newbury Museum, labelled 'From Boxford'. No further location detail is known. A number of finds of medieval pottery have been recorded in the village, including 13th century fragments c. 430m west of The Glebe and 12th-13th century sherds from the 'old primary school site' c. 110m southeast of the site. Medieval earthworks relating to a hollow way and house platforms are located c.260m south of the site.

Two probable post-medieval lynchets are located c. 950m west of the site.

Between the years of 1898 and 1973, the Lambourn Valley Railway (from Newbury to Lambourn) ran through Boxford. The railway ran west of the river, with Boxford Station located c. 450m west of The Glebe. The station waiting room is preserved as a bus shelter c. 620m southwest of the site.

Previous archaeological work in the area includes a scheme of excavation, field walking and trial excavation along the 100ft (30.5m) wide cut of the Southern Feeder Gas Pipeline in 1976. This exercise led to the discovery of a significant portion of the finds mentioned above.

A number of historic buildings, listed and not listed, are located in the Boxford area, commented on by records in the SMR. An extensive survey of farmsteads was carried

out by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England. This did not affect The Glebe.

Much of the above background is drawn directly from the WSI prepared by Dr Peter Wardle of The Historic Environment Consultancy.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To determine whether any archaeological remains exist on the development area
- To record and report on any archaeological remains revealed during the groundworks of the proposed building

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

West Berkshire Council Archaeological Officer issued guidance for the work. Dr Peter Wardle of The Historic Environment Consultancy prepared a WSI which John Moore Heritage Services carried out.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

Excavation of the footings was carried out with a 7.5-tonne excavator by the same contractor, who had previously grubbed out the footings of the previous structure. Excavation of the footings was carried out to a depth of *c.*1000mm (Fig. 1). Terracing of the site had been carried at the time of the construction of the previous building (Figs. 2-4). As a consequence of this the potential for archaeological remains was much reduced.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Figs. 2 - 5)

The watching brief carried out at The Glebe, Boxford, revealed compact pale grey-yellow clay silt and gravel (3) in the base of the footings trenches, which was at least 400mm deep (Fig 5). This was a natural gravel deposit. This was overlain by brown-yellow slightly silty clay with some flint *c.*2% (2), which was between 150mm and 300mm deep from south to north. This subsoil probably represents a former topsoil or cultivation horizon, although was archaeologically sterile. Sealing the subsoil was a layer of overburden (1) comprising redeposited topsoil mixed with brick and lumps of



Figure 2. Site looking southwest, showing extent of previous terracing



Figure 3. Site looking northwest, showing previous terracing and slope to River Lambourne



Figure 4. Site looking east, showing terracing into slope



Figure 5. Sequence of natural deposits overlaid by redeposited topsoil in footings trench looking southwest

concrete from the dwelling which previously occupied the site. No finds were recovered from any of the deposits.

As the site was terraced, particularly heavily to the south and the east, for the construction of the previous dwelling, it is not surprising that there was no evidence for any activity. Although The Glebe had been used for a previous dwelling, no evidence for other activities was observed.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out during good weather with excellent co-operation from the contractors carrying out the groundworks and the results are felt to be entirely representative of the site.

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were present to warrant environmental sampling.

6 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief

The project report

Written Scheme of Investigation

The primary site records

The photographic and drawn records

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

West Berkshire Museum The Wharf Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AS

No accession number has been assigned yet.

7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed no evidence for archaeology in this part of the church glebeland. No pottery or flint was found in either the topsoil or spoil. Extensive terracing had been carried out on the east side of the site, but this is not felt to be overly significant in respect of the lack of archaeological remains. The site is quite liminal to the village and the steep descent from the Leckford to Boxford road to the River Lambourne probably means that this site was never intensively used in the past.