



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

BRUERN GRANGE,

OXFORDSHIRE

(NGR SP 2575 1875 centred)

On behalf of

The Environment Agency

JUNE 2010

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the groundwork for a new drainage system at Bruern Grange, Oxfordshire. A possible medieval pond bank was located in the western part of the investigation area, but nothing no other archaeological features were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

Buern Grange is located in the western part of Oxfordshire, in the rural region of Cotswold. The site is approximately 3 miles NW the old city of Burford (NGR SP 2575 1875 centred). The underlying geology is Quaternary deposits of glacial sand and gravel.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services had advised that due to the potential of the site to contain buried archaeological remains, a condition be attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of ground works. This is in line with Planning Policy Statement 5. OCAS have not issued a *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, but have been consulted. The Written Scheme of Investigation outlines the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site is of interest because of the proposed development areas very close proximity to the medieval dam and fishponds (PRN 13968) associated with Bruern Abbey (PRN 3273/5921) to the north. The abbey was previously a wealthy monastic establishment belonging to the Cistercians and the pond is an important remnant from the former abbey. The pond was probably dried out after the Reformation in the 16th century, but earthworks and terraces from potential former buildings can still be seen on top of the bank west and south of the former pond. The ground works dealt with in this report did not however affect these earthworks.

The nearby Bruern Grange farmhouse is probably late C17th with later additions, built of rubble and stone with a slate roof (PRN 5920). The OS 1:10,560 map of 1885 shows the area as a field very similar to that of the present.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development.

- In particular to record the potential for medieval features relating to the grange.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation submitted by the applicant. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout the investigation, 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 for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist maintained on site during the course of all excavations that had a potential to disturb or destroy archaeological remains. This included the observation of all drainage works and any ground reduction. The drainage work was carried out down to the natural geological horizons with a 360° type tracked excavator. In total seven trenches were opened up during the investigation. The first was a 150 m long main trench, which was dug across the former pond. Later six shorter trenches were dug in a 45° angle from the main trench. All trenches were 0.5 m wide and 0.5 m deep.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

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 the features themselves.

4.1 Results of Fieldwork

In total seven trenches were opened up inside the investigation area. A 150 m long main trench was dug from the stream in the western part of the area right across the former pond in the east. Six shorter trenches were later opened up in a 45° angle from the main trench in order to spread the water from the stream to the rest of the pond.

In all trenches a fibercloth was put down before they were backfilled with a 0.4 m thick layer of gravel. This was done in order to lead the water from the stream into and across the former pond. Lastly the grass turf was put back on top of each trench in order to restore the ground surface.

The only archaeological feature present was the pond bank in the western part of the main trench (figure 2). This pond bank could be of medieval origin, however no material to date the bank was found during the investigation.

The bank was constructed with a 0.3 m thick layer of gravel and sand (02), which partly seems to have been cut (04) into the natural geological deposits (03). On top of the gravel was also a 0.2 m thick layer of topsoil (01), giving the bank a total height of about 0.96 m in the west. The gravel of the bank (02) was mixed with sand and firmly packed together. The bank was approximately 2 m wide.

Banks that were very similar to the bank in the west, as well as potential terraces for former buildings, were also visible in the southern part of the investigation area. None of these features were however affected by the ground works.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability is considered good. The watching brief was carried out in dry weather, with moisture deeper down in the ground making it easy to identify any potential archaeological feature.

5 FINDS

A few fragments of modern roof tiles were seen within the topsoil, but these were not retained.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The only archaeological feature present was a potential medieval pond bank in the western part of the main trench. The bank was situated between the stream in the west and the former pond in the east and consisted of packed gravel mixed with sand. The fill could however not be dated with any certainty since no finds were found in the feature.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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