1997

Thames Valley Drainage Partnership

Old Windsor Flood Alleviation Scheme

NGR SU 9916 7430

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit
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(NGR SU 9916 7430)
Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

In late 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief on the Old Windsor Flood Alleviation Scheme (NGR SU 9916 7430). No archaeological features were seen; finds were retrieved from the topsoil at various points along that portion of the pipe corridor immediately south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (Berks 79).

1 Introduction

The development proposal comprised combined sewer and land drainage works at Old Windsor in Berkshire with a total length of approximately 1000 m. New drainage pipes were laid from Burfield Road to the Thames, with a spur running northwards from this line. Substantial parts of the pipeline corridor lay on the periphery of three areas of undeveloped land, the last (easternmost) section of the corridor running across the southern boundary of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Berks SAM 79). Archaeological observation of the pipeline works was required in all of these areas, though not in the sections where pipelaying was to be carried out in existing streets. The total length of pipeline to be observed was thus some 825 m.

The watching brief was commissioned by Thames Valley Drainage Partnership on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and was required under the terms of PPG 16 owing to the presence of known sites of archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity of the proposed works. Scheduled Monument Consent was also required before the start of works. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a brief set by and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) agreed with Babtie Public Services Division on behalf of Berkshire County Council, and English Heritage.

2 Background

The area affected by the pipeline work lies on river terrace gravels and alluvial clays, entirely within the present settlement of Old Windsor.

Old Windsor lies close to the River Thames, 3 km south of Windsor itself. The centre of the modern village lies approximately 1 km to the west of the historic centre, as represented by the site of the church and the manor house, which was the subject of an archaeological evaluation by the OAU in 1992 (OAU 1992). The Manor is mentioned

in Domesday Book, where it was assessed at 20 hides, equal in size to the royal manors at Cookham and Lambourn, and laid claim to over 40 acres of woodland and pasture. Attached to the King's estate were twenty-two villagers and two smallholders, with enough land for ten ploughs between them. The town itself contained ninety-five houses or closes.

The archaeological background to this watching brief has been the subject of a separate desk study (OAU 1996), the principal findings of which are summarised below.

The area to be affected by the pipeline itself has produced limited archaeological evidence but there are several known sites with archaeological finds adjacent to the development site. The Scheduled Ancient Monument (Berks 79) was the site of a series of excavations by Dr Hope-Taylor between 1953 and 1958. The site has never been fully published but an interim report (Wilson and Hurst 1958) indicates that there was prehistoric and Roman activity under a Saxon and medieval royal complex. The easternmost section of the pipe corridor runs along the southern boundary of the scheduled area. The SAM was rescheduled on 9th March 1990, reducing its southern extent. The new southern boundary marks the transition between developed and undeveloped areas.

This area of the SAM has suffered some damage in recent times. Development plans supplied by the Thames Valley Drainage Partnership (Drawing 3512/103) indicates that the most easterly 165 m of pipe is to be laid on the line of an existing Highway Drain, which it will replace. The remaining length across the monument site crosses beneath an existing foul sewer pumping main and a gravity foul sewer, both of which run north-west/south-east across the bottom south-west corner of the monument. These can also be expected to have damaged any archaeological deposits within this section of the site.

In addition, the southern boundary of the monument would appear to have been affected by flood prevention measures carried out in advance of the construction of the housing development at Saxon Way. Adjacent to the pipe corridor there are two cropmark ring ditches which are thought to be the only visible remains of two Bronze Age barrows.

Two other areas of undeveloped land on the route lie at Crimps Hill (at the western end) and the Recreation Ground (in the central section). Medieval earthworks lie close to Crimps Hill and it was thought possible that pipelaying might affect any remains associated with these earthworks. No archaeological deposits are known in the vicinity of the Recreation Ground but, given the general density of archaeological sites in the vicinity, it is not impossible that there are unrecorded archaeological deposits and/or features which may be affected by the works.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure the preservation by record of any aspects of the archaeological resource

whose presence and nature could not be established in advance of pipeline construction.

4 Methodology

A constant archaeological presence was maintained on site during topsoil stripping, trenching and pipelaying. The great majority of finds were encountered immediately south of the scheduled area, with only a very few retrieved from the last observed, westernmost stretch adjacent to College Farm. All finds were collected from the topsoil strip (ST) and their position noted on a site plan divided into 10 m collection units (this calibration commenced with the beginning of the topsoil strip, starting at the Thames and was only employed in the stretch immediately south of the scheduled area). The access road (A), running along the eastern side of the Recreation Ground, produced only one piece of pottery from its initial (northernmost) 10 m stretch. The storage area (SA), adjacent to the access road on its western side where it met the topsoil strip, was divided into four equal quarters for the same purpose, although very few finds were retrieved from these areas (see Fig. 1 & Appendix 1).

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results (Fig. 1)

Three main areas were observed during topsoil stripping and excavation of the pipe trench; all sections observed in all three stretches displayed a similar sequence. Two deposits overlying natural gravel were exposed and recorded during the course of the works.

(1) was the topsoil (also recorded as (100) on the final (western) part of the easement to be stripped); a loose mid brown loam with small flint inclusions (<0.05m). It also contained modern brick, tile, glass and metal with some sparse pottery finds and some possible struck flints. The great majority of this material was retrieved from the topsoil in the stretch immediately to the south of the scheduled area. This material was buried in the south-western corner of the easement by a dump of redeposited subsoil (2).

Layer (2) was a subsoil; a friable, mid greenish brown silty clay with some brick and tile and small flints (<0.05m). This deposit occurs towards the western end of the route where it appears not to have previously been disturbed as part of the prior flood alleviation measures.

The natural comprised river terrace sands and gravels, with various layers and lenses of sand and gravel, the upper 0.20m of which was somewhat dirty and appeared to be slightly mixed with the overlying soils.

No archaeological features were observed in any part of the areas observed. Surface finds were recovered principally from the easternmost length of the pipeline easement adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Further finds came from the short westernmost stretch of the route and from the storage area, with a single (prehistoric) pottery sherd from the access road. No finds were recovered from the central length of topsoil stripping adjacent to the storage area, however.

6 **Finds** by Kayt Smith

None of the finds were associated with archaeological features.

A small assemblage of pottery was recovered comprising 47 sherds and weighing 627 g. The material was briefly assessed and a basic quantification by sherd count and weight was undertaken. A single sherd of flint-tempered prehistoric pottery was recovered from the Access road (A 0-10) and can be assigned to the middle-late Bronze Age. Otherwise, apart from one sherd from the storage area (SA-NE) which can be dated to the early medieval period, the remainder of the material (45 sherds) is post-medieval in date and includes a complete rim and handle of a stoneware flagon.

Other finds comprised a small assemblage of ceramic building material. This material was fragmentary and was not examined in detail. It was mostly post-medieval in date but with a small component of Roman tile, including a diagnostic flange of a *tegula*, and three further possible *tegula* fragments. Two tile fragments displayed peg-holes indicative of medieval or later date, though on the basis of the fabrics and firing a post-medieval date is thought likely. A small amount of burnt flint was recovered as well as two struck flakes, one possibly retouched and Neolithic in date, both from the north-west sector of the storage area. A single fragment of post-medieval glass, several clay pipe stems and a single copper button were also retrieved.

The material retrieved from the final, westernmost stretch was catalogued and is tabulated in Appendix 1; nothing predating the 19th century was retrieved here.

None of the material merits further detailed analysis.

7 **Discussion**

The removal of topsoil along the pipe corridor was constantly monitored, as was all trenching activity. Cut features, had they been present, would have been identified. Their absence from the stripped areas would seem to imply low levels of activity for the areas concerned. Having said this, certain parts of the easement, particularly the southern boundary of the SAM, clearly had been disturbed in recent times, and it is possible that this activity may have removed any cut features present.

Prehistoric activity in the general area of the works may be indicated by a slight 'background noise' scatter of burnt flint, though this material is not intrinsically datable, and is demonstrated more securely by two struck flints and a small middle-late Bronze Age sherd. None of this material was associated with features, however.

In view of the proximity of probable Bronze Age ring ditches (see section 2 above) the presence of such material need occasion no surprise.

A small proportion of the tile recovered was of Roman date. Residual Roman finds and re-used Roman tiles were found to the north during Dr Hope-Taylor's excavations between 1953 and 1958. Their presence here may suggest a Roman settlement in the vicinity, possibly between the church and the river.

Later finds were sparse, except for post-medieval and modern material, and have shed no new light on the extent of the Saxon and medieval settlements. The distribution of all those finds recovered would appear to be entirely random and not indicative of any *in situ* activity along the easement.

References.

OAU 1992 *The Manor, Old Windsor. Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OAU 1996 *Old Windsor Proposed Sewer and Land Drainage Works. Desktop Study*

Wilkinson, D (ed), 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

Wilson, D M, and Hurst, J G, 1958 Medieval Britain in 1957, *Medieval Archaeology* **2** 1958, 183-185

Appendix 1: Tables of Finds

Table 1: General Summary of Finds

Context	Number of fragments	Weight (g.)	Material
Access Road:			
A 0-10	1	23	Pottery
Storage Area:			
SA-SE	2	73	Building material
	3	30	Pottery
SA-SW	1	15	Burnt flint
	2	187	Building material
	10	138	Pottery
SA-NE	1	25	Building material
	7	56	Pottery
SA-NW	2	23	Flint
	9	100	Pottery
Scheduled Area:			
ST 10-20	4	456	Building material
ST 20-30	3	449	Building material
ST 50-60	4	155	Building material
ST 60-70	4	233	Building material
ST 70-80	4	79	Burnt flint
	3	120	Building material
ST 80-90	7	290	Building material
	3	105	Burnt flint
ST 90-100	7	145	Burnt flint
ST 110-120	2	73	Burnt flint
	4	141	Building material
ST 140-150	10	311	Building material
	1	12	Pottery
ST 150-160	5	62	Building material
	1	17	Pottery
ST 180-190	5	153	Building material
	1	3	Clay pipe
	1	8	Pottery
ST 200-210	1	87	Burnt flint
	5	184	Building material
ST 230-240	3	44	Building material
	8	144	Pottery
ST 250-260	1	54	Burnt flint
	2	207	Building material
	1	2	Clay pipe
	1	8	Copper button
	2	13	Pottery
Final (Western) Stretch:			
100	6	22	Bone
	3	123	Building material
	2	7	Clay Pipe
	1	12	Glass
	4	86	Pottery

Table 2: Quantification of pottery by sherd number and weight:

Context	No. Sherds	Weight (g)	Date
Access Road:			
A 0-10	1	23	Middle-late Bronze Age
Storage Area:			
SA-SE	3	30	Post-medieval
SA-SW	10	138	Post-medieval
SA-NE	6	48	Post-medieval
	1	8	Medieval
SA-NW	9	100	Post-medieval
Scheduled Area:			
ST 140-150	1	12	Post-medieval
ST 150-160	1	17	Post-medieval
ST 180-190	1	8	Post-medieval
ST 230-240	8	144	Post-medieval
ST 250-260	2	13	Post-medieval
Final (Western) Stretch:			
100	4	86	Post-medieval
Total	**47**	**627**	

Table 3: Quantification of ceramic building material:

Context	No. fragments	Weight	Material
Storage Area:			
SA-SE	2	73	Post-medieval
SA-SW	2	187	?Post-medieval - 1 fragment with peg-hole
SA-NE	1	25	Post-medieval
Scheduled Area:			
ST 10-20	3	202	Post-medieval
	1	254	Roman – probable Tegula fragment
ST 20-30	2	321	Post-medieval
	1	128	Roman – flange of Tegula
ST 50-60	4	155	Post-medieval
ST 60-70	4	233	Post-medieval
ST 70-80	3	120	Post-medieval
ST 80-90	7	290	Post-medieval
ST 110-120	4	141	Post-medieval
ST 140-150	9	247	Post-medieval
	1	64	Roman – probable Tegula fragment
ST 150-160	5	62	Post-medieval
ST 180-190	5	153	Post-medieval
ST 200-210	4	74	Post-medieval
	1	110	Roman – probable Tegula fragment
ST 230-240	3	44	Post-medieval
ST 250-260	2	207	?Post-medieval - I fragment with peg-hole

Final (Western) Stretch:			
100	3	123	Post-medieval

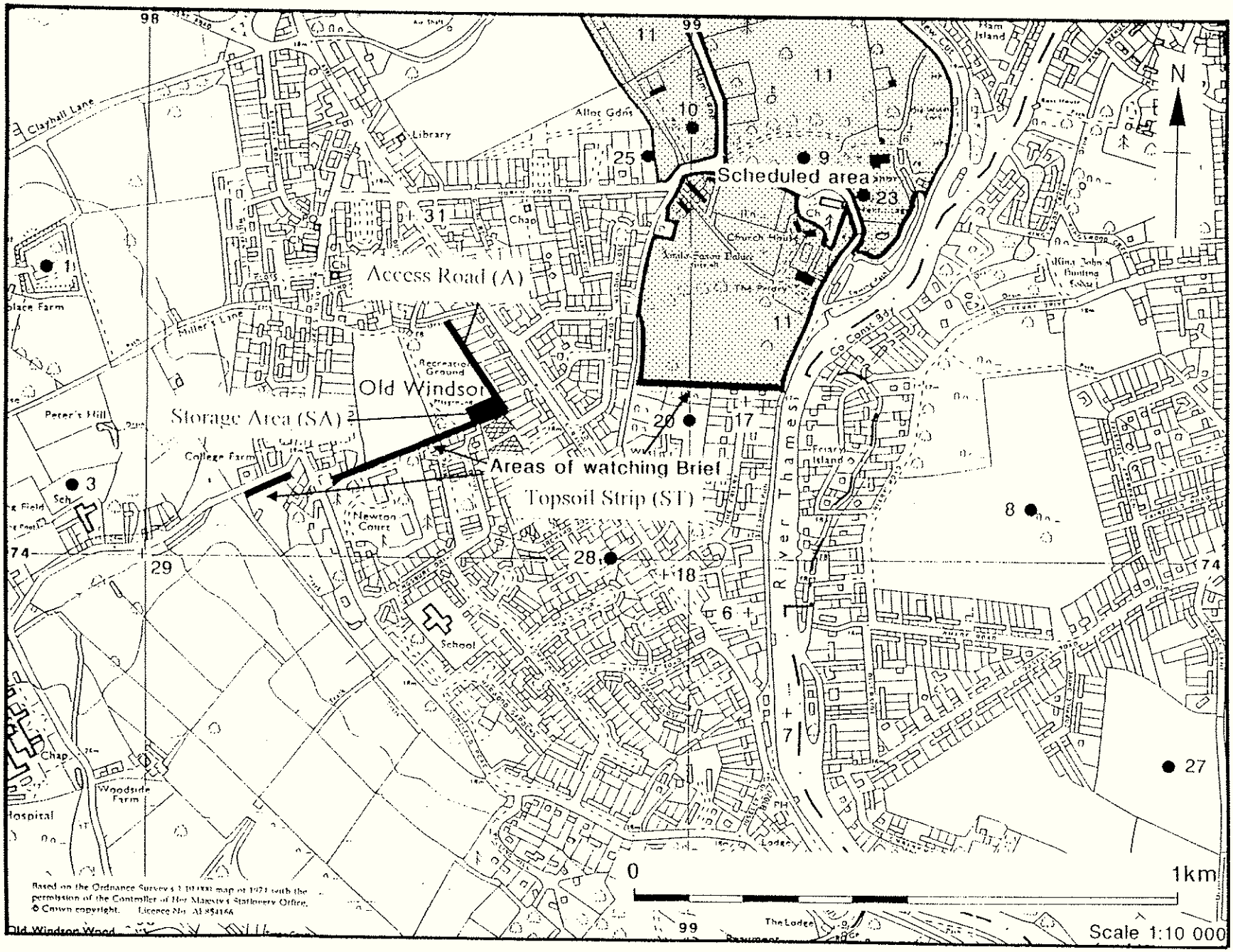

Figure 1: Site Location Plan