

Land Adjacent to 2 Stratford Road Buckingham Buckinghamshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

28th November 2003

Client: Mr J. K. Holford

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 2066

NGR: SP 6985 3417

Client Name: Mr J.K.Holford

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Land Adjacent to 2 Stratford Road, Buckingham,
Buckinghamshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: NGR SP 6985 3417
Planning Reference:

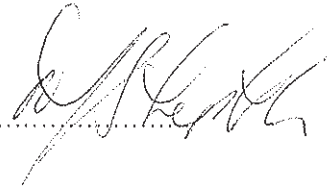
OA Job Number: 2066
Site Code: BA2SR 03
Invoice Code: BA2SRWB2
Receiving Museum: Buckinghamshire County Museum
Museum Accession No: AYBCM 2003.156

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Document File Location U:/OAU/wbREPORTS/BUCKS/BA2SRPIL.doc
Graphics File Location Server10:/oapubs1 AtoH/B BA2SRWB2/2 Stratford
Road,Buckingham*JM*24.11.03
Illustrated by Julia Moxham

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SUMMARY

In November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at land adjacent to 2 Stratford Rd, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 6985 3417). The work was commissioned by Mr J. K Halford in advance of the construction of a new dwelling on the site. The watching brief revealed two layers of cultivated soils, which had been cut by a 19th century foundation trench.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at land adjacent to 2 Stratford Rd, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Mr J.K.Halford in respect of a planning application for a new dwelling on the site.
- 1.1.2 This work was commissioned on the continuation of the request of David Radford of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16), and was part of the construction of a new driveway as part of the renovation of the property because a prior evaluation (OA 2002) had identified significant archaeological remains on the site dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 1.1.3 OA did not prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as the works would be covered under the requirements of the Written Scheme of Investigation for the development to the east of the site (OA 2002).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on river gravels overlain by alluvium at 80 m above OD. The site is situated on a currently derelict plot located on the south-west side of Stratford Road, with the river passing along the rear of the property.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared from the excavation report just to the east of the site (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Buckingham is sited on a defensive position within a meander of the Ouse on a ridge of well drained land and is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a double-burh, fortified with a ditch and bank.
- 1.3.3 The Anglo-Saxon chronicle for AD 914 states that 'King Edward went to Buckingham with his army, and stayed there for four weeks, and made both the boroughs on each side of the river, before he went away'. The town is also listed in the Burghal Hidage and by the 10th century there was also a mint. It was an important centre in the late Saxon period when it was the county town complete with

Minster church. A Viking iron spearhead is recorded near the site of the castle moat at the foot of castle hill.

- 1.3.4 The site of the excavation lies to the north-east of the defences of the Saxon burh established by Edward the Elder in 915 AD, and may therefore lie outside the limit of the original Saxon town. To the south-west is the hill where the Norman castle stood and where the present parish church now stands. The Victoria County History (VCH 3, 476) records that the Castle was 'seated in the middle of the town upon a great mound, of the very ruins of which scarce anything now remains'. The motte was flattened to create the present churchyard.
- 1.3.5 The status of the development site in the medieval and post-medieval period is unclear, as it may have lain outside the limit of the medieval town at this time. No buildings are depicted here on the maps of Speed (1610) and Jeffrey (1770), though there are structures nearby. The site lies within a close fronting onto the end of the market place that could, however, have been occupied in the medieval period and become deserted if as is suspected, the medieval town shrank (Sandy Kidd, *pers. comm*). During the 17th and 18th centuries this area, on the north-east edge of the historic town, was known as "North End" or "North East End".
- 1.3.6 In the immediate vicinity of Stratford House is the site of the post-medieval prison. A map of 1788 depicts a 'castle' in this location, presumably the present gaol building, which is a castellated structure with small towers at the angles. Nearby was the leper hospital of St. Lawrence founded in 1597, presumed to have been erected on the site of the ancient (medieval) hospital of St. Laurence.
- 1.3.7 A disused post-medieval cemetery is located west of the development site, and a number of notable post-medieval buildings can be seen in the north part of the town.
- 1.3.8 An evaluation excavation to the east of the development site carried out by OA in 2002 and 2003 revealed evidence of medieval occupation in the form of rubbish pits dating to the 11th-13th centuries. An apparent hiatus in occupation from the 14th-17th centuries was then followed by the construction of a boundary ditch and the digging of post-medieval pits containing domestic refuse.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The foundation trenches were excavated by a mini excavator with a 1 m wide bucket to a depth of 0.9 m and the area within the house footprint generally reduced by 0.4 m. Two internal beams were excavated across the centre, and were 0.6 m in width (Fig. 2).

- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The foundation trenches cut into compact orangey brown silty sand (10) cultivated soil, which was sealed by a greyish brown silty sand (11) cultivated made ground. This had been cut by a 19th century robbed out foundation trench (12) with vertical sides and flat base. It measured 70 m x 1.2 m x 0.85 m and was filled by a dark brown silty sand loam (13) with building debris. Sealing all this was modern garden soil (14) 0.25 m thick with a brick rubble hardcore surface compacted into its surface (Figs 2 and 3, section 1).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The results from the watching brief exposed two layers of cultivated soils, which had been cut by a 19th century foundation trench. These had all been sealed by modern topsoil with hardcore make up pressed into its surface.
- 4.1.2 The watching brief confirmed the results of the test pits observed previously and reported (OA 2003).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i>Finds</i> |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 10 | Layer | | | | Cultivated soil | |
| 11 | Layer | 0.40 - 50 m | | | Made ground | |
| 12 | Cut | 0.85 m | 1.2 m | 70 m | 19th century foundation trench | |
| 13 | Fill | | | | Fill of trench | |
| 14 | Layer | 0.20 - 30 m | | | modern garden soil/demolition | |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2003 *Stratford House, Stratford Road, Buckingham Archaeological Investigation Report*

OA, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (Ed. D Wilkinson)

OA, 2002 *Stratford House, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire. Archaeological Evaluation.*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 2 Stratford Road, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire

Site code: BA2SR 03

Grid reference: SP 6985 3417

Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundations for new house.

Date and duration of project: One visit on the 4/11/2003.

Area of site: 95 m x 60 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed two layers of cultivated soils, which had been cut by a 19th century foundation trench.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Rd, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PJ in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM 2003.156



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0 1000 m
1:25000

Figure 1: Site Location

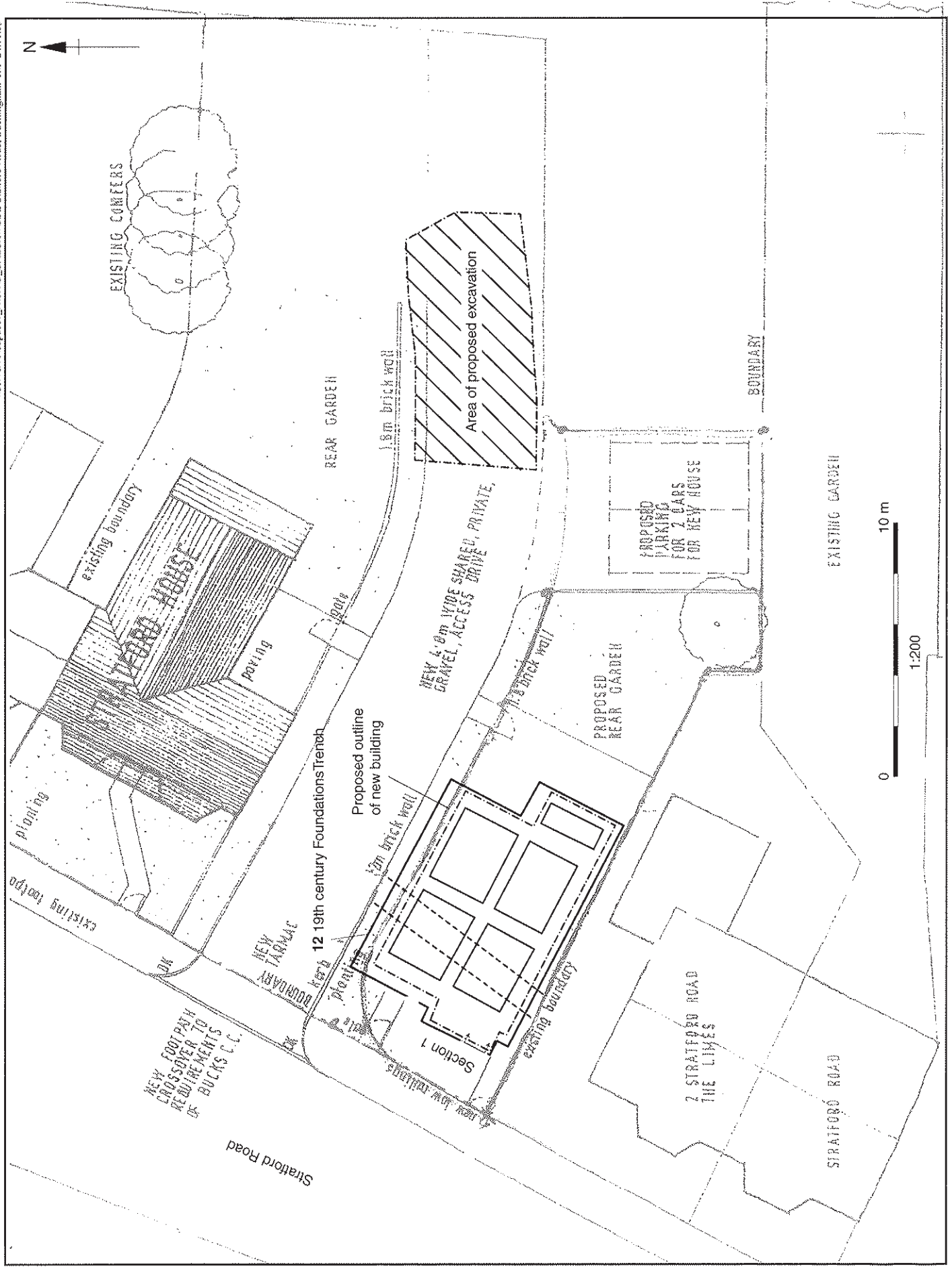


Figure 2: Site plan showing foundations of new building and area of excavation and section 1

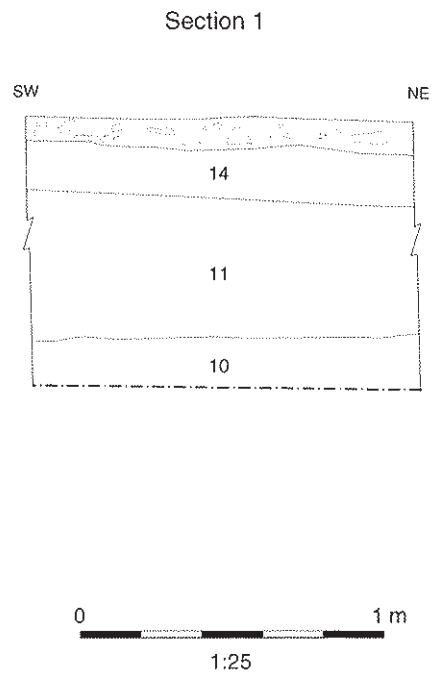
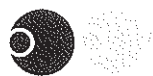


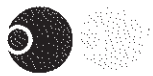
Figure 3: Section 1



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