

# Central Service Station Temple End High Wycombe Buckinghamshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology**

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Signed.....

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## Central Service Station, Temple End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In April and May 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Central Service Station, Temple End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 865 945). The work was commissioned by PSS Construction in advance of the construction of a three-storey building of 27 dwelling units. The watching brief revealed that no archaeological deposits survived the late 19th century and later development on the site. 19th century garden soils and three brick lined wells from this time or later were recorded.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April and May 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Central Service Station, Temple End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by PSS Construction in respect of a planning application for the construction of a three-storey building comprising 27 dwelling units (Planning Application No. 00/05589/FUL)

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Julia Wise of the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on white chalk with flints, which on the west side of the site, was overlain by alluvium at 70 m above OD.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2002) and is reproduced below.

#### 1.4 Neolithic

1.4.1 Very few prehistoric remains have been recorded in the immediate area around the site. To the north of the site on scrubland toward the hilltop, two probable Neolithic flint flakes were found in 1986. In the 1940s a flint scraper which may also be Neolithic in date was found in Roberts Road to the north-east of the site.

#### 1.5 Iron Age

1.5.1 There is a circular Iron Age earthwork to the east of the site, 300 yards north of Castle Hill, this was known as Mawtrim's or Mamuck's well and then called Malmer's Well. There are entrances on the north and south sides and is the supposed site of a camp (Parker, 1878). To the east of the site at Wycombe cemetery a large

Iron Age or Belgic pit was discovered in 1863, which may have been a cremation pit (Parker, 1878).

## 1.6 Roman

1.6.1 Castle Hill, to the east of the site, is a mound which has been interpreted as a Roman camp where “a giant-like man in perfect shape” was discovered “but on touching it, it mouldered into dust, the bones only remaining; some of which for their size were carried to Oxford...” (Parker, 1878). To the south-east of the site a track way has been observed linking the Icknield Way to the Thames which may be Roman or earlier (Ashford, 1880). A well was discovered, in what is now Castle Street, and a tessellated pavement, at the site of the nearby Wesley Chapel a portion of Roman Walling was also discovered (Parker 1878).

## 1.7 Saxon

1.7.1 During the construction of a late 16th century/ early 17th century wing of the Parish Church a number of disturbed human skeletons were found which may have been Saxon or Roman in date (Bucks Free Press, 1940). A gold pendant of Saxon origin has also been found in the area, which could have originally been part of a sword (British Museum Quarterly 15, 1952).

## 1.8 Medieval

1.8.1 Wycombe ‘*Wicumbe*’ is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 with a sizeable amount of woodland, six mills and thirty ploughs. At this date the whole of Wycombe was attached to the fief of Robert de Oilgi (Doyley), which, united with that of Miles Crispin, became later known as the Honour of Wallingford (VCH 3, 117). The Honour included the manors of Bassets Bury and Temple Wycombe, and various minor estates. Evaluation trenching and subsequent excavation carried out by Cambridge University in 1996-7 in advance of the Safeway development at Temple End failed to locate any remains of the medieval manorial complex, although residual sherds of medieval pottery were retrieved (Regan 1996 and 1997). Castle Hill to the east is probably the remains of a Medieval castle with the possible remains of a bailey ditch on the east side (SLIAM, 1960). All Saints Parish Church in the centre of town was constructed in *c* 1275, which may have been constructed on the site of a 12th century church (RCHM Bucks 1).

## 1.9 Post-Medieval

1.9.1 As recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 there were six water corn-mills attached to High Wycombe manor, the last of these appeared to be attached to Temple Wycombe Manor before it was passed to William Martin in 1637-8 and was lost after he died (VCH Bucks 3).

1.9.2 Evaluation trenching carried out by John Moore Heritage Services in 2001, at the rear of the properties on the west side of Frogmoor identified deposits dating from the 16th century, but any traces of medieval occupation or remains of the borough

boundary ditch were thought to have been destroyed by post-medieval activity. The Cambridge University excavation of Temple end in 1997 did reveal three successive phases of farm buildings and associated structures, dating from the late 16th century (Regan 2001).

- 1.9.3 From the 19th century the site had been developed extensively with a factory, a semi-detached house and row of cottages backing on to the railway, which ran along the southern edge of the site. In the mid 20th century a small petrol station was built on the site of the factory, which in turn was replaced by a larger petrol station that occupied the whole of the site until this latest development.

## 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 Initially five engineer's test pits were excavated around the site to evaluate ground conditions and the depth of the natural (Fig. 2). The foundations for the new buildings were excavated by a 360° machine with a 1 m wide bucket.
- 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. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

### 3.2 Test pits

- 3.2.1 Five test pits were excavated with a JCB. Test pits 2 & 5 were not recorded as 2 was in the site of the old garage fuel tanks and 5 had been disturbed by a number of deep service trenches running alongside the road (Fig. 2).
- 3.2.2 Test pit 1 was rectangular and measured 1.5 x 1.4 x 1.8m. It was cut through a 0.8-9 m thick layer of 20th century garage construction and demolition material (1). This overlay a 0.4-7 m thick layer of cultivated soil comprising dark greyish silty clay (2) from the cottage gardens, which overlay the natural (3) - (Fig. 4, section 3).
- 3.2.3 Test pit 3 was rectangular, measuring 1.3 x 1.7 x 2 m. A 1.1 m thick layer of demolition and construction material (1) overlay a layer of disturbed soil of dark brown silty clay (5), which was above the natural (3) - (Fig. 4, section 4).

3.2.4 Test pit 4 was a rectangular pit measuring 1 x 1.7 x 2 m, cutting through a 0.6 m thick layer of disturbed soil of dark greyish brown silty clay loam (6), overlying a layer of cultivated soil of dark greyish brown silty clay (7). This sealed the natural alluvium (4) that was 0.9 m thick overlying a layer of chalk (3) - (Fig. 4, section 5).

### 3.3 Foundation trenches

3.3.1 The trenches were 0.9 m wide and no deeper than 1.9 m from the surface. They cut through a number layers similar to those seen in the test pits. These consisted of demolition layers (10, 20 & 21) over layers of ground make up (23, 26 & 27) and garden soil (16, 22 & 28), which overlay natural (17).

3.3.2 Three 19th century or later brick lined wells (structures 15, 19 & 25 - Figs 3 & 4, sections 1, 2 and 6) at the back of the row of cottages were located.

3.3.3 Also observed was a large rectangular hole that once held the main petrol tanks under the forecourt of the first petrol station.

3.3.4 The watching brief was suspended after a site monitoring visit by Sandy Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer for Buckinghamshire.

### 3.4 Finds

3.4.1 No finds were found and recovered from the site.

### 3.5 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.5.1 No environmental samples were taken from the site.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching showed that the site has been extensively disturbed by the 19th century construction of cottages and other buildings. Two service stations were built on the site from the mid-20th century causing extensive ground disturbance. The final petrol station saw the site being cleared and levelled prior to its construction.

4.1.2 The only early surviving features were three brick lined wells at the back of the row of the cottages, which are of 19th century or later date. Cultivated soils observed in the test pits relate to garden soils from the gardens belonging to them cottages.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer				Demolition layer	None
2	Layer				Garden soil	None
3	Natural				Chalk	
4	Natural				Alluvium with flint	
5	Layer				Disturbed soil	None
6	Layer				Garden soil	None
7	Layer				Ground make up	None
8					NOT USED	
9					NOT USED	
10	Layer				Demolition layer	None
11					NOT USED	
12	Cut	0.6 m			Landscaping for cottages or service station	
13	Fill				Fill of cut	None
14	Cut	1.9 m	1 m Ø		Cut for well	
15	Structure		1m Ø		Brick lining of well	
16	Layer				Disturbed alluvium	
17	Natural				Alluvium and flint	
18	Cut	1.7 m	1 m Ø		Cut for well	
19	Structure		1 m Ø		Brick lining of well	
20	Layer				Demolition layer	None
21	Layer				Demolition layer	None
22	Layer				Garden soil	None
23	Layer				Ground make up	None
24	Layer				Disturbed soil/subsoil over natural	None
25	Structure		1 m Ø		Well with brick lining	
26	Layer				Ground make up	None
27	Layer				Ground make up	None
28	Layer				Disturbed soil/subsoil over natural	None



## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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- R M Regan 2001, *Excavation of a 16th-19th Century Farmhouse at Temple End High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire*
- Scheduling Lists of Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Sept 1960
- VCH 3
- Moore Heritage Service 2001 *An Archaeological Evaluation at the Courtyard, Frogmoor, High Wycombe*
- OA 2002, *Central Service Station, Temple End, High Wycombe* Written Scheme of Investigation

**APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**

**Site name:** Central Service Station, Temple End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

**Site code:** HWTE 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SU 865 945

**Type of watching brief:** Monitoring of engineer's Test Pits and excavation of foundation trenches for construction of 27 dwelling units.

**Date and duration of project:** Six site visits from 24/04/2002 to the 20/05/2002.

**Area of site:** 45m x 33 m

**Summary of results:** No archaeological deposits or features were observed due to the 19th century and later developments on the site. Three brick lined wells of this date or later were identified.

**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, HP22 5PJ in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.55

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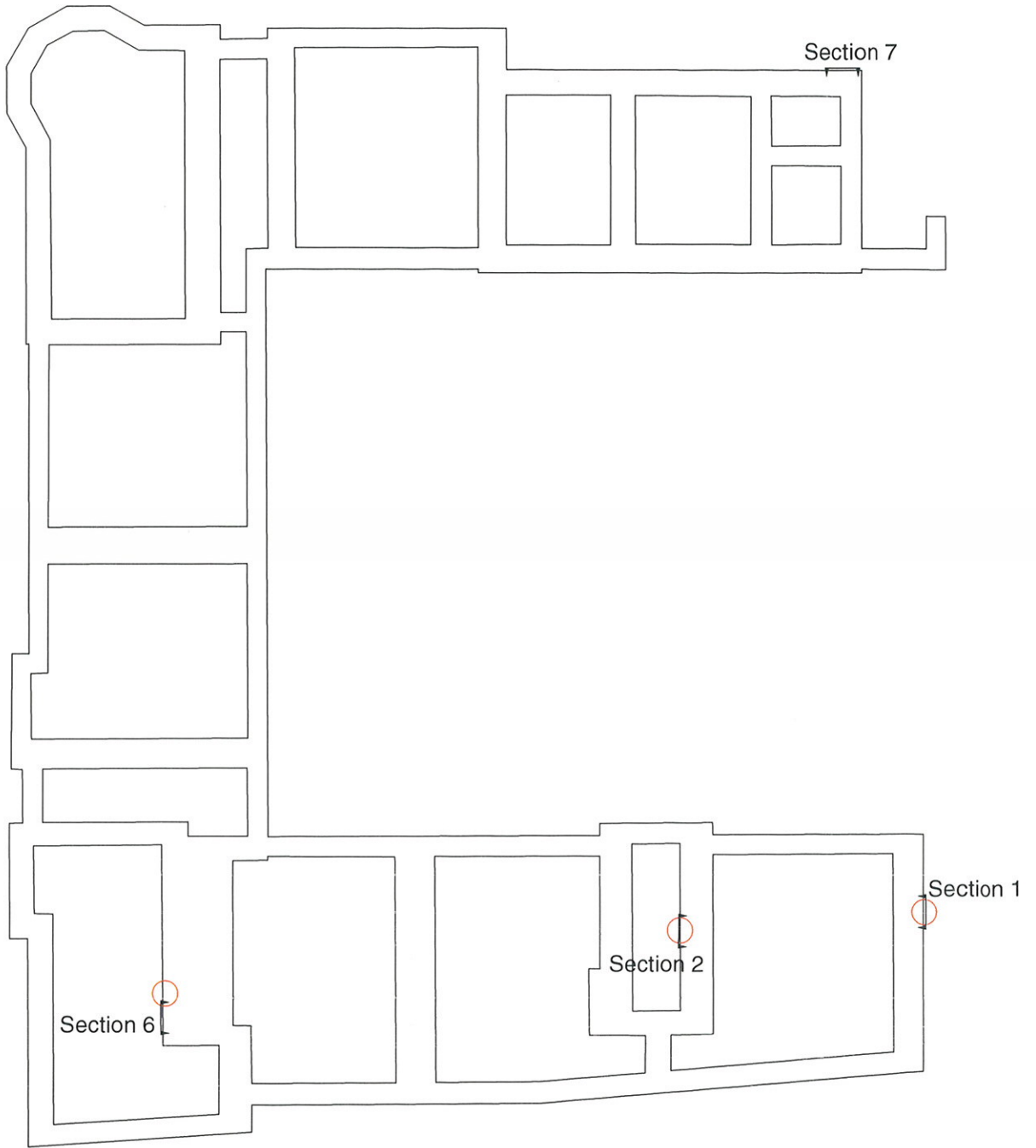


Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1 Site location.





-  Well
-  Section



Figure 3 Site Plan of foundations & sections 1-2 & 6-7





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