



Thame Cricket Club

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report

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Thame Cricket Club

Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief Report

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Summary

On the 14th December 2017 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a trial trench evaluation on behalf of Thame Town Council on the site of a proposed new Cricket Pavilion. The site is located within the south-west part of Thame Cricket Club. A single evaluation trench along the footprint of the proposed pavilion contained no archaeological features. An earlier phase of work (5th June 2016) monitoring a single geotechnical test pit which also uncovered no archaeological deposits or features.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Thame Town Council for commissioning this project. Thanks is also extended to Hugh Coddington who monitored the work on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Gerry Thacker. The fieldwork was directed by Ashley Strutt. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Ashley Strutt, Matt Bradley and Charles Rousseaux. Thanks is also extended to the team of OA staff that prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Thame Town Council to undertake a watching brief on a geotechnical test pit followed by a trial trench evaluation at the site of Thame Cricket Club.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. P16/S1048/FUL). A specification was agreed with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and a written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the methodology to be used (OA 2016). This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site is located within the south-west of Thame Cricket Club, which is bounded to the east by Aylesbury Road, to the south by residences off Bell Close, to the west by the cemetery of St Mary's Church and Church Road, and to the north by Priest End.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of the practice nets and associated grassed areas of the Cricket Club.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Kimmeridge Clay Formation – Siltstone and Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 151 to 156 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (BGS Website). No superficial deposits are mapped within the area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site falls within the Thame designated Conservation Area in the vicinity of the Grade 1 listed St. Mary's Church and the Grade 2 listed Dovecote within the graveyard (Fig. 1).

1.3.2 The site is located in an area of archaeological potential within the medieval part of the settlement of Old Thame. The first mention of Thame appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles when in 675AD King Wulfhere of Mercia 'made the sign of the cross on the alter in Thame', indicating that it was one of the earliest Christian minster churches. This was most likely on the site of the present 12th century St. Mary's Church, with the oldest part of the settlement located near the river crossing, and associated with a medieval and Saxon cemetery. The site is located to the north-west of the site of the medieval manor of Bishop's Court House.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- iii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence;
- iv. To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of any proposed developments to be assessed;
- v. To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of any proposed development on surviving archaeological remains.
- vi. To disseminate the results through the production of a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Oxfordshire HER.

2.2 Methodology

Test pit monitoring

2.2.1 On the 5th June 2016 a single hand excavated test pit was monitored under archaeological watching brief. It was initially intended that an array of three test pits and a single window sample would be undertaken (see OA WSI 2016), but in actuality only a single test pit was excavated in the location of the proposed window sample, to examine the foundations of the existing pavilion building (Fig. 2). The test pit proved too narrow to be archaeologically useful, and revealed only the disturbed ground overlying the building foundations (Plate 1).

Trial trench evaluation

2.2.2 A single trench measuring 28m long by 1.8m wide was set out using a GPS with a sub 50mm accuracy as indicated on Figure 2.

2.2.3 The trench location was scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool both prior to and during the machine excavation.

2.2.4 A 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to open the trial trench. All mechanical excavation was undertaken under direct archaeological supervision.

2.2.5 All undifferentiated topsoil or overburden of recent origin was removed down to the natural geology, in successive, level spits.

2.2.6 Spoil heaps were monitored in order to recover artefacts to assist in the analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts. Modern artefacts were noted but not retained.

2.2.7 Once the trench had been opened a site meeting was arranged with Hugh Coddington of OCC, and the trench was backfilled using the arisings in reverse order of excavation. The test pit was not monitored by OCC.

2.2.8 A full written, drawn and photographic record was maintained. The photographic record also included working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological work.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trench. The full details of dimensions and depths of all deposits are tabulated in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The earliest deposit uncovered within the trench was the natural geology manifesting as a mid-brown to reddish-brown sandy clay with occasional patches of cherty gravel (103). This was overlain by a mid-brown silty clay layer probably representing a former ploughsoil (102), and which in turn was overlain by mid-brownish-grey clayey silt loam subsoil, or buried ploughsoil (101). This was sealed by the present topsoil (100). The sequence is illustrated on Figure 3, and also Plates 2 and 3.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, with only minor ingress of water.

3.2.3 The test pit was excavated through an area of hard standing adjacent to the current pavilion. Once the slab was removed, around 50mm of sub base was hand excavated, followed by 300mm of disturbed soils which overlay the current building's foundations.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeological features were found to be present within the trench.

3.4 Finds summary

3.4.1 No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the evaluation or test pit monitoring. No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were uncovered.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was carried out in good conditions which would have allowed for any archaeological remains, had they been present to be easily noted.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 In summary, the aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological features or deposits and, if present, determine their character, date range and significance. No archaeological remains were identified during the evaluation works.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 As discussed in above, the site lies within an area of known archaeological activity within the medieval period. The absence of archaeological features and artefacts recorded during the evaluation work suggest that this activity does not continue into the proposed development area. The presence of buried former ploughsoils suggests that this area of Thame has remained in agricultural use, possibly as far back as the early medieval period.

4.3.2 Given the lack of any significant features or deposits within the trial trench, the proposed new pavilion is unlikely to adversely impact any buried archaeological remains.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying a natural geology of sandy clay.					Length (m)	20
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.70
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.42	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	0.20	subsoil	-	-
103	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Test Pit 1						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Test pit devoid of archaeology. Consists of hard standing and disturbed ground.					Length (m)	0.2
					Width (m)	0.2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.45 +
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.1	Concrete slab	-	-
1001	Layer	-	0.05	Sub-base	-	-
1002	Layer	-	0.3+	Disturbed ground	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS Website. British Geological Survey
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

OA 2016 Thame Cricket Club. Written Scheme of Investigation Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief. Oxford Archaeology unpublished client document.

APPENDIX C**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Thame Cricket Club
Site code:	THCC16
Grid Reference	SP 70462 06219
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	14 th December 2017
Area of Site	275m ²
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2016.185.
Summary of Results:	On the 14th December 2017 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a trial trench evaluation on behalf of Thame Town Council on the site of a proposed new Cricket Pavilion. The site is located within the south-west part of Thame Cricket Club. A single evaluation trench along the footprint of the proposed pavilion contained no archaeological features. An earlier phase of work (5th June 2016) involved monitoring a single geotechnical test pit which also uncovered no archaeological deposits or features.



Figure 1: Site location



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 2: Archaeological evaluation trench and geotechnical investigation locations

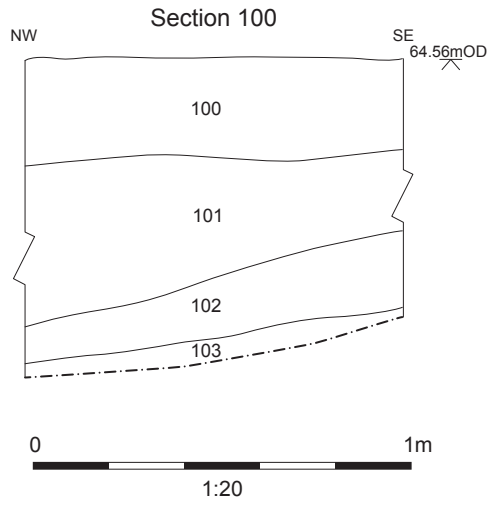


Figure 3: Section 100



Plate 1: Test pit 1



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Plate 2: Section 100



Plate 3: Trench 1 looking south-east



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