

Spring Cottage English Bicknor Gloucestershire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

September 2005

Client: Mrs E Holt

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: JN 2893

Planning Ref N^o: DF7060/E

NGR: SO 582 157

Client Name: Mrs E Holt

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Spring Cottage, English Bicknor, Gloucestershire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: NGR SO 582 157

Planning Reference: DF7060/E

OA Job Number: JN 2893

Site Code: ENBISC05 2005.43

Invoice Code: ENBISCWB

Receiving Museum: Dean Heritage Museum

Museum Accession No: 2005.43

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Document File Location H:\PROJECTS\Gloucestershire GLA\Forest of Dean
FD\6330 Spring Cottage WB\Spring Cottage REP.doc
Graphics File Location Servergo:/oaupubl-A-H*ENBISC05*Spring Cottage,
English Bicknor, Gloucs*27.9.05
Illustrated by Georgina Slater

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Spring Cottage, English Bicknor Gloucestershire

NGR SO 582 157

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Spring Cottage, English Bicknor, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 582 157). The work was commissioned by landowner Mrs E Holt in advance of the topsoil stripping of a new menage to the north of the cottage. The watching brief revealed natural sandy silt sealed by a probable ploughsoil, in turn covered by the topsoil. Ridge and furrow was noted in the field where excavations took place. No archaeological features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Spring Cottage, English Bicknor, Gloucestershire (Fig.1).
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by landowner Mrs E Holt in respect of a planning application to the Forest of Dean District Council for the construction of a new menage at the property (Planning Application No. DF7060/E).
- 1.1.3 An archaeological watching brief on groundworks at the site was recommended by Jan Wills, Archaeological Officer for Gloucestershire CC, as the site lies within an area of archaeological potential.
- 1.1.4 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005). The watching brief was undertaken in line with PPG 16 and the District Local Plan.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on Upper Westphalian Clay at c 141 m OD. The site is situated in the north-east corner of the paddock to the rear of Spring Cottage and measured an area of c 23.5 m by 22 m. The excavation area was on a gently sloping east-facing field (Fig.2).
- 1.2.2 Spring Cottage itself is located on the north-east side of the village, c 150 m to the east of the parish Church of St. Mary at NGR SO 582 157.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A brief archaeological background for the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2005) and is included below, with additions from the Victoria County History, Vol. V.
- 1.3.2 The village of English Bicknor grew up around a Norman motte-and-bailey castle in the centre of the parish. The medieval parish church lies in the castle's outer bailey,

which dates from the reign of Stephen. The church of St. Mary itself dates from the 12th century with 14th century additions (Pevsner and Sherwood, 1974, 182-3).

1.3.3 To the north-east in the barbican of the castle is the former rectory house and to the south-west are school buildings dating from the 1830s. South-east of the church a small cluster of buildings date to the late-18th century including an inn and the parish/church house (known from 1548).

1.3.4 Later buildings in the village include an almshouse (dated 1858) in place of the inn by the churchyard (VCH, Vol. V).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to Mrs Holt for providing plans of the development area. OA's Mike Sims carried out the Watching Brief.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of any archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Topsoil and subsoil stripping was undertaken using a small Kubota machine and was carried out under close archaeological supervision.

2.2.2 A plan was made of the site and sample sections made of the stratigraphy exposed. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 At the base of the excavation area (Fig. 3 - section) was a layer of light red/brown clay silt with occasional sandstone fragments (3); no archaeological features were observed cut into this horizon, which was interpreted as the natural geology.

3.1.2 The natural was overlain by a 0.25 m thick layer of red/brown clay silt with occasional stones (2), probably a ploughsoil, that was covered by topsoil (1) comprising a dark grey/brown silt loam.

3.1.3 Traces of ridge and furrow were observed crossing the field on an east-west alignment and the earthwork platform of a possible building was noted elsewhere in the field.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 A few sherds of 19th century pottery and undiagnostic ceramic building materials were noted in the topsoil. Iron slag was also seen within this layer. These items were evaluated on site but were not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were observed within the excavation area.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 Despite the presence a potential structure/building platform elsewhere in the field of the excavation, no archaeological remains were observed in the area of the watching brief.

4.1.2 Evidence of ridge and furrow in the field indicates ploughing of uncertain date and may account for the stony nature of the soil layer beneath the topsoil.

4.1.3 Occasional pieces of iron slag in the topsoil suggest industrial processes in the vicinity and some ceramic building material was also observed, although again it is impossible to date these.

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	0.25 m	-	-	Topsoil	Iron Slag, ceramic building materials
2	Layer	0.25 m	-	-	Subsoil	-
3	Layer	0.1>	-	-	Natural	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson, First Edition, August 1992)

OA 2005 Spring Cottage, English Bicknor, Gloucestershire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief.

VCH 1996 English Bicknor, A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 5: Bledisloe Hundred, St. Briavels Hundred, The Forest of Dean (1996), pp. 101-17.

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Spring Cottage, English Bicknor, Gloucestershire

Site code: ENBISC 05

Grid reference: SU 582 157

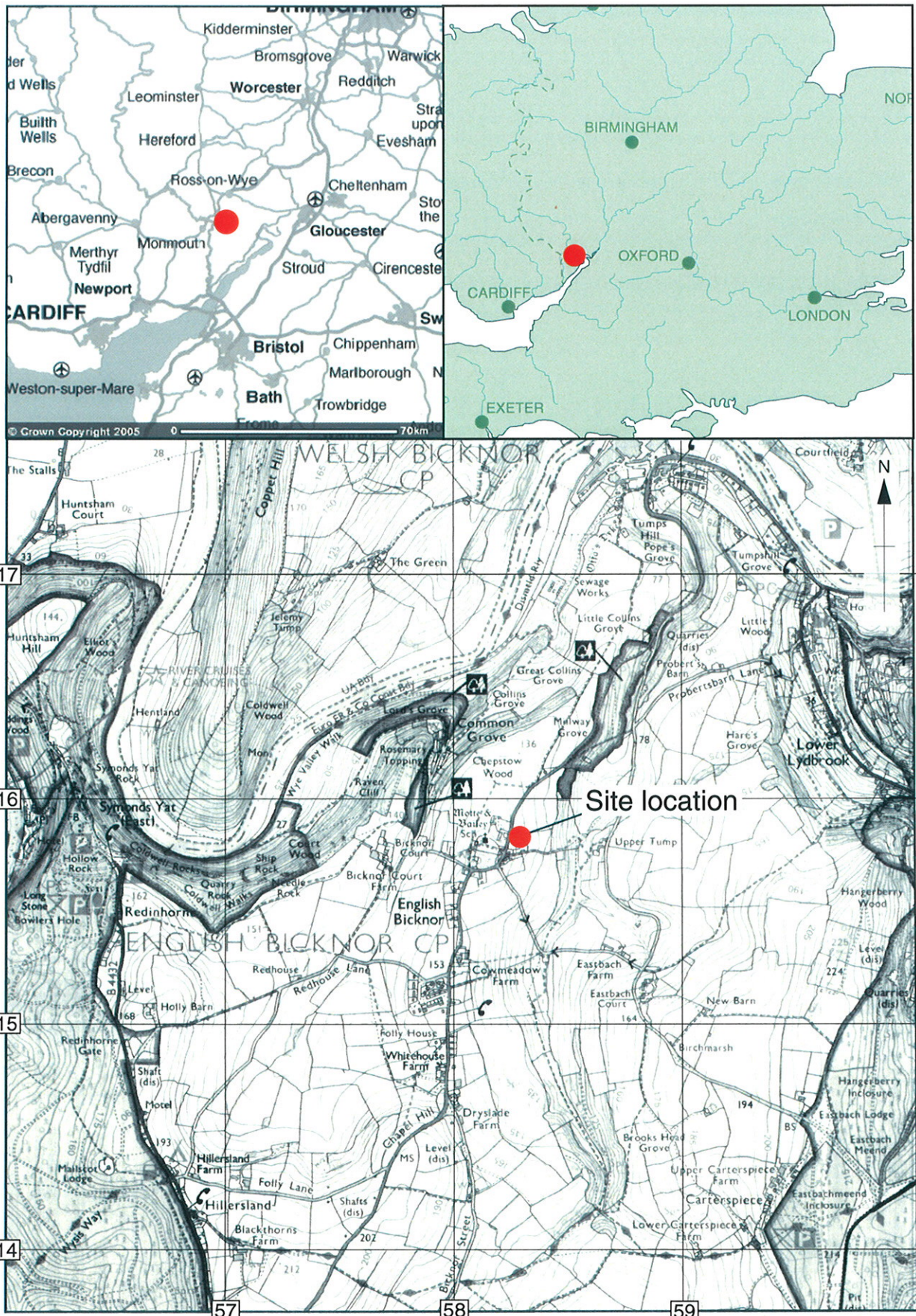
Type of watching brief: Monitoring of topsoil/subsoil strip

Date and duration of project: 3 visits, 12th-14th September 2005

Area of site: 20 m x 22 m

Summary of results: Natural sandy silt was overlain by a possible undated ploughsoil, sealed by topsoil. No features were observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Dean Heritage Trust in due course, under the following accession number: SOYDH 2005.43



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Figure 1: Site location

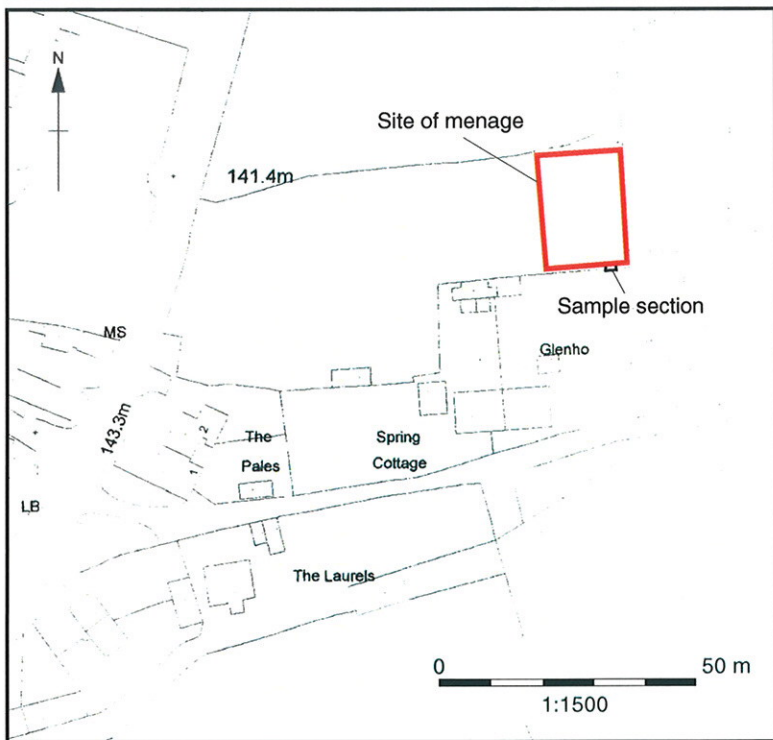
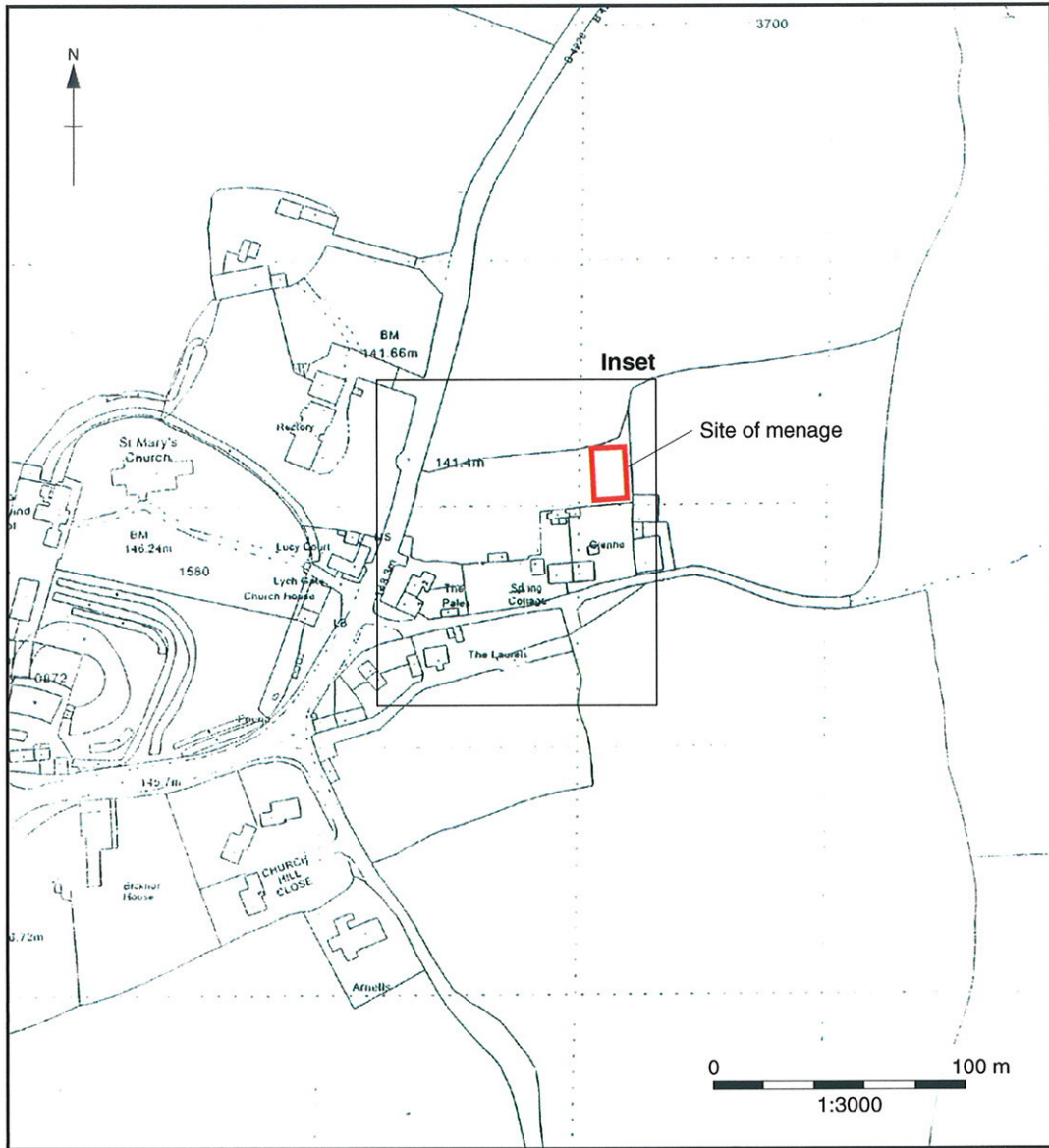


Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area

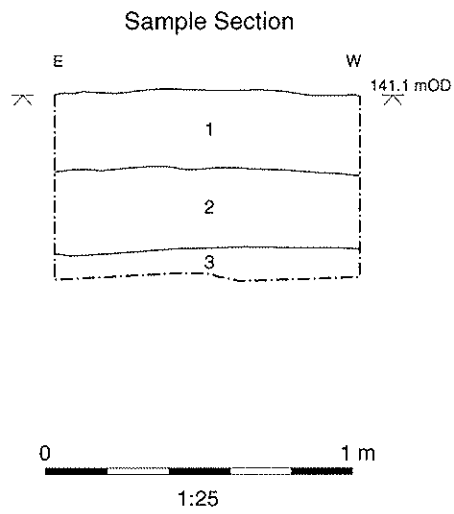


Figure 3: Sample section of soil profile



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