

Land at Caversham Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Between November and December 2004 Oxford Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a perimeter ditch at Caversham Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire (NGR: SU 7216 7632 to SU 7254 7652). The watching brief observed 18th and 19th century agricultural soils overlying natural deposits including colluviums. No evidence for any earlier activity was observed.

1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1.1 During November and December 2004 undertook an archaeological watching brief at Caversham Park near Reading, Berkshire (centred at NGR SU 7246 7618). As part of the security improvements a perimeter ditch approximately 350m long was dug along the north-west and north sides of the playing fields located to the north of Caversham Park House, parallel to Peppard Road and Lowfield Road (between SU 7216 7632 to SU 7254 7652). The underlying geology is Gravel and Reading Beds (Institute of British Geological Sciences, sheet no. 268).

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The work was undertaken using a tracked excavator fitted with a 0.6m wide bucket. The ditch measured approximately 2m wide and 1.4m deep and the excavated material was used to form a bank on the southern side of the ditch.
- 2.1.2 The watching brief was undertaken as a series of site visits during the period of groundworks which had the potential to disturb or destroy below ground archaeological remains.
- 2.1.3 During this time the excavations were examined for the presence of archaeological evidence including deposits, features and artefacts.
- 2.1.4 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established OA practices (OA, 1992). Bulk finds were collected by context. Black-and-white negative photographs and a digital photographic record was taken of all excavations, general settings and archaeological sections.
- 2.1.5 A site plan showing the location of any excavations and any recorded sections was maintained. Section drawings of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

3 DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITS

- 3.1.1 The stratigraphy observed was broadly similar throughout the length of the excavation and a generic description can be used.
- 3.1.2 The underlying natural, a pale yellowish brown silty clay with gravel inclusions was exposed within the base of the trench (Contexts 3, 6 and 11). Areas of greater concentrations of gravel were observed within the northernmost length of the trenching (Context 12) and of lesser concentration in the region of the tennis courts (Context 5).
- 3.1.3 Observed above these natural deposits was a patchy layer of clean yellowish brown silty clay (Contexts 4, 8 and 10).



- 3.1.4 Overlying these deposits and running the length of the excavation was a layer of reddish brown clay silt containing charcoal flecking and abraded brick fragments (Contexts 2, 7 and 9). These measured between 0.2m and 0.35m in depth.
- 3.1.5 Sealing this layer and also running the length of the excavation was a layer of dark greyish brown clayey loam (1), measuring up to 0.25m in depth. This deposit contained charcoal flecking, abraded bricks and fragments of clay pipe stem dating to the 19th century.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Contexts 3, 5, 6, 11 and 12 represent the underlying gravelly natural of the area. Contexts 4, 8 and 10 were very clean and also represent natural deposits, possibly colluviums giving the sloping nature of the ground to the north.
- 4.1.2 Deposits 2, 7 and 9 are indicative of worked soils, probably an earlier phase of ploughsoil. Although none of the brick fragments recovered from these deposits was diagnostic it was thought probable that they originated with the construction of either the standing building or one of the earlier phases of Caversam House.
- 4.1.3 Layer 1 is the present day topsoil and turf. The fragments of 19th century clay pipe stem recovered may have been deposited during the landscaping of the gardens in the 19th century.
- 4.1.4 All the dating evidence was evaluated on site but be not retained.
- 4.1.5 No deposits, features or artefacts earlier than the 18th century were observed.

5 REFERENCES

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| BSMR 2004 | Land at Caversham Park Drive, Reading , Berkshire: Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief |
| OA 1992 | Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992) |
| OA 2004 | Land at Caversham Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire: Written Scheme of Investigation |