

Deerhurst House Deerhurst Gloucestershire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2006

Client: Mr Andrew Leeke

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Planning Ref N^o: 05/8142/0494/FUL
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On 14th and 15th November 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Deerhurst House, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 870 300). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Leeke in advance of the construction of a new outbuilding. The watching brief revealed a probable Romano-British boundary ditch and recut.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 14th and 15th November 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Deerhurst House, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 870 300). The work was commissioned by Mr. Andrew Leeke in respect of a planning application for a new outbuilding (Planning Application No. 05/8142/0494/FUL).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Charles Parry, the Senior Archaeological Officer with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC, 2005).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated on the northern edge of the village of Deerhurst on the floodplain adjoining the east bank of the River Severn (Fig. 1). The development area lies at approximately 15 m OD, occupies an area of 70 m² and was within the garden of a domestic residence. The underlying geology is alluvium over Lower Lias clays (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 216).

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, 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Deerhurst is remarkable for the survival of two nationally important Saxon buildings Deerhurst Priory church (later St Mary) and Odda's Chapel. Deerhurst church lies on the site of a known monastery, first recorded in 804, when Aethelric bequeathed lands to Deerhurst.
- 1.3.3 The earliest church must have been a nave and a chancel without any adjuncts, since neither the West porch or the two pairs of porticus are in bond with the main fabric. Pre-Viking additions included the west porch (firstly two and then three storeys), next the north and south porticus, each two storeyed.

- 1.3.4 Following the Viking invasions, the church was restored in the 10th century. The western porch was converted into a tower, the apsidal chancel was also rebuilt, with its stripwork panelling and sculptured ornament. At the same time, the presumably simple chancel arch was replaced by the present large and elaborate opening. Thus the building history provides an explanation of what is otherwise an illogical assortment of no less than thirty early and later Anglo-Saxon doorways and windows in a single building (Pevsner, 1970).
- 1.3.5 The full extent of the archaeology within the priory enclosure is unknown, it is hoped that the monitoring of the groundworks of this development will shed light on the date range of the remains.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits and features that the works may disturb or destroy.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as two site visits during works likely to disturb archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 The works included the excavation of foundation trenches and ground reduction. These were executed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.6 m wide toothless grading bucket.
- 2.2.3 A plan of the works was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All sections and 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 Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 A layer of light reddish brown silt clay (102), representing an alluvial deposit, was encountered at a depth of between 1.1 m and 1.2 m below ground level (Fig. 3, sections 1 and 2). A 1.1 m wide by 0.55 m deep linear feature with steeply sloping sides and a flat base (105) was observed to cut the surface of this deposit during the foundation excavations along the western edge of the new building (Fig. 3, Section

- 2). The feature was aligned south-west to north-east but could not be seen to continue within the excavations on the opposite side of the building. The cut was filled by a reddish brown sandy clay (106), 0.55 m deep. This deposit contained charcoal flecking, but no dating evidence.
- 3.1.2 The south-west edge of cut 105 was truncated by the north-east edge of a 1.6 m wide by 0.7 m deep linear feature (103) running on the same alignment. This was filled by a 0.7 m deep deposit of grey-brown sandy clay (104). This produced some charcoal flecking and fragments of roofing tile.
- 3.1.3 Both these features were sealed below a 0.8 m thick layer of dark orange-brown silt clay (101), a probable flood or alluvial deposit. This produced charcoal flecking and fragments of Romano-British dated pottery. This was overlaid by a 0.35 m deep layer of very dark grey-brown clay loam (100), the present day topsoil.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Fragments of Romano-British dated "Black Burnished" ware and fragments of similarly dated "Severn Valley" ware pottery were recovered from layers 100 and 101. Layer 104 produced fragments of roofing tile, possibly of a Romano-British origin. Fragments of 17th - 19th century glazed earthenware and modern tile were recovered from layer 100.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The dating evidence recovered from the fills suggest that Cut 105 was a Romano-British boundary or drainage ditch with the recut 103 truncating its south-west edge. These were sealed by a flood deposit (101), also of a probable Romano-British date. There is, however, the possibility that the finds were residual and that the features are of a later date. Layer 100 is a probable layer of modern plough or garden soil.
- 4.1.2 No evidence was encountered relating the Anglo-Saxon and Viking occupation of the area.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
100	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern topsoil	Pottery, tile, bone	C19th
101	Layer	0.8 m	-	Flood or alluvial deposit	Pottery	C1st - C4th
102	Layer	> 0.6 m	-	Alluvial clay	-	-
103	Cut	0.7 m	1.6 m	Recut of Ditch 105	-	C1st - C4th
104	Fill	0.7 m	1.6 m	Silting deposit	Tile	C1st - C4th
105	Cut	0.55 m	1.1 m	Romano-British boundary or drainage ditch	-	C1st - C4th
106	Fill	0.55 m	1.1 m	Silting deposit	-	C1st - C4th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

GCC 2005 *Deerhurst House, Deerhurst: proposed outbuilding. Brief for a programme of archaeological recording*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA 2005 *Deerhurst House, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Pevsner, N and Sherwood, J 1970 *The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire the Vale and Forest of Dean*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Deerhurst House, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire

Site code: DEERHO 05

Grid reference: SO 870 300

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of foundation trenches and ground reduction.

Date and duration of project: 14th and 15th November 2005, 2 days

Area of site: 70 m²

Summary of results: A probable Romano-British ditch and a recut were observed sealed by a similarly dated alluvial deposit.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

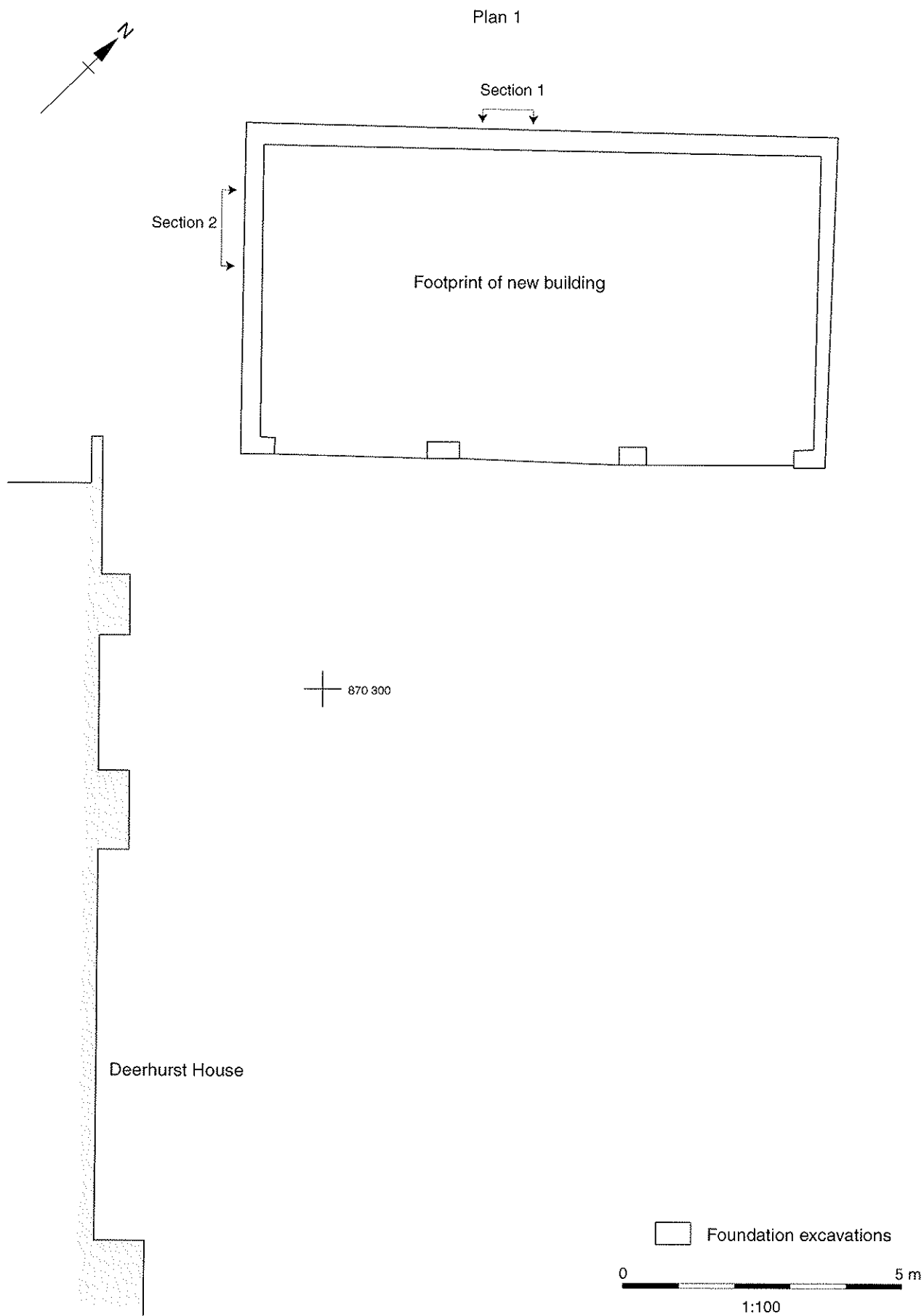
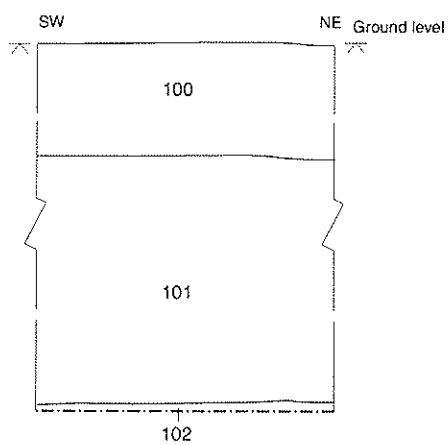


Figure 2: Site plan



Section 1



Section 2

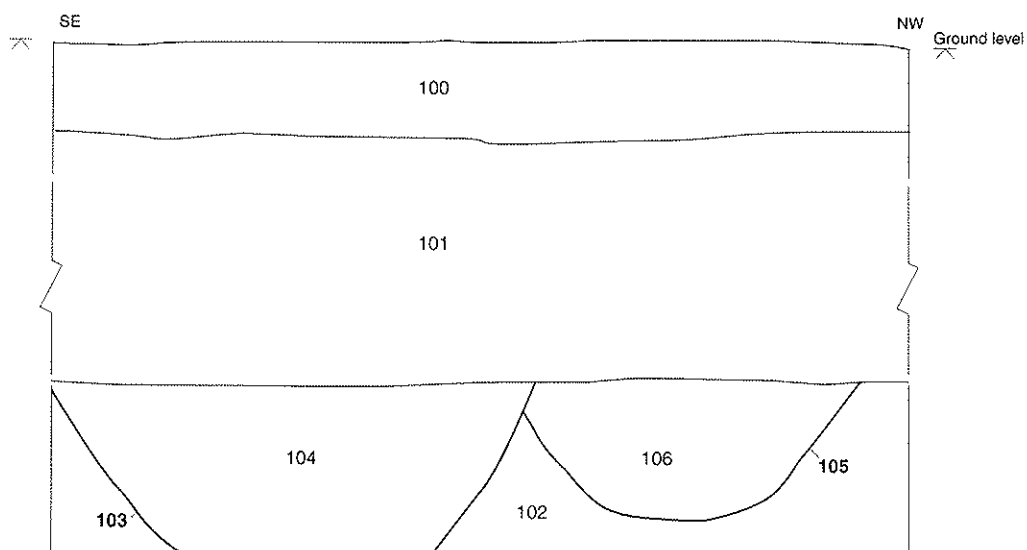


Figure 3: Sections



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