MANOR FARM
URCHFONT, DEVIZES
WILTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 1482
CA REPORT: 02139

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Signed: ..........................................................

Issue: 01 Date: 21 JANUARY 2003

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SUMMARY

Site Name: Manor Farm
Location: Urchfont, Devizes, Wiltshire
NGR: SU 0408 5715
Type: Evaluation
Date: 16-19 December 2002
Planning Reference: K/042640
Location of Archive: Museum of Wiltshire, Devizes
Site Code: UFM 02

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in December 2002 at the request of Charles Church Western at Manor Farm, Urchfont, Devizes, Wiltshire. In compliance with an approved project design, a total of 3 trenches were excavated across the development area.

The natural substrate was revealed at approximately 117m AOD. The evaluation demonstrated that the land within the central courtyard of Manor Farm is heavily contaminated due to intensive livestock farming. No archaeology was present in this area.

Two ditches and a gully were located in the trench excavated to the east of the farm buildings. These features produced a small assemblage of late Neolithic or Bronze Age worked flint.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 In December 2002 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation and building recording for Charles Church, Western, at Manor Farm, Urchfont, Devizes, Wiltshire (centred on NGR: SU 0408 5715; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for a programme of housing development and partial demolition of the existing farm buildings.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an archaeological brief for archaeological evaluation (Wiltshire County Council 2002) prepared by Ms Sue Farr (Assistant Archaeologist, Libraries and Heritage, Wiltshire County Council), the archaeological advisors to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and with a subsequent detailed project specification produced by CA (2002) approved by Ms Sue Farr. The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire (WCC 1995). Fieldwork was monitored by Sue Farr, including a site visit on 19 December 2002.

The site

1.3 Urchfont is located to the south-east of Devizes, just off the A342, with Manor Farm centrally located within the village (Fig. 2). The site lies at approximately 117.5m AOD. The land to the south and the east is considerably lower, with Manor Farm sitting on a plateau.

1.4 The underlying geology of the area is mapped as Upper Greensand of the Cretaceous era (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 282: Devizes 1959).

1.5 Currently the majority of the farm buildings and the courtyard are either derelict or used for storage. The large building at the southern end of the site is still used as a large corn dryer.

1.6 The farm and farm buildings represent an increasingly rare example of a farm within a village setting and a ‘low level’ building survey (RCHME Level 1-2) was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology and Richard Morriss Associates to record all
main elements of the buildings prior to any demolition, the results are compiled in a separate report (C.A & Morriss 2002).

**Archaeological background**

1.7 Archaeological interest in the site arises from its location in an area of the village that may represent part of the original medieval core. The site lies to the south of the medieval parish church and to the south-west of a farmstead with medieval origins. A record in the Doomsday book (1086) of the settlement at Urchfont suggest the village has late Saxon or earlier origins. Chance finds of prehistoric, Romano- British and medieval date have all been found in the vicinity of the site.

**Archaeological objectives**

1.8 The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the character, quality, date, significance and extent of any archaeological remains or deposits surviving within the site. This information will assist the Local Planning Authority in making an informed judgement on the likely impact upon the archaeological resource by the proposed development.

**Methodology**

1.9 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 3 trenches (1.6m in width). The locations of all the trenches had to be altered from the approved WSI due to current land use and the need for access to working buildings (Fig 2). The changes were undertaken with the approval of Ms Farr. A total of 60m of linear trench was excavated.

1.10 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 1: *Excavation Recording Manual* (1996).

1.11 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential and, where appropriate, sampled and processed in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking of Samples for Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Analysis from*
Archaeological Sites (1994). All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately After Excavation (1995).

1.12 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive (including artefacts) will be deposited with the Museum of Wiltshire, Devizes.

2. RESULTS

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and the finds are to be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix 3.

Trench 1

2.2 The natural Greensand substrate was encountered at a depth of 0.4m below the existing ground surface. This was overlain by topsoil.

2.3 Gully 103 and ditch 105 were located towards the southern end of the trench, both orientated east-west. Gully 103 contained one fill 104 which was cut by the larger ditch 105, which also contained one fill 106. Several pieces of worked flint dated to the late Neolithic or Bronze Age were recovered from both features.

2.4 A large ditch 107 was located towards the centre of the trench running north-east to south-west. The ditch was fully excavated to a depth of 1.5m after the west section of the trench was stepped. One fill 108 was excavated producing several flint flakes and a flint core dating to the late Neolithic or Bronze Age (Appendix 2).

2.5 Environmental samples were taken from fill 108 towards the base of the ditch, but on processing were found to be sterile.

2.6 A sheep skeleton was identified lying within a shallow pit 109 cutting into the top of ditch fill 108. This was only partially excavated as post-Medieval pottery was recovered from the pit fill 110.
**Trenches 2 and 3**

2.7 The natural substrate was revealed at a depth of 0.20m below existing ground level. This was overlain by 0.10m of hardcore followed by 0.10m of concrete.

2.8 The natural Greensand 203 was heavily contaminated due to intensive livestock activities during the recent past and was subsequently removed. The Greensand was grey in colour with areas of heavy staining. The contamination decreased with greater depth. Uncontaminated natural 204 was encountered at a depth of 0.85m below existing ground level.

2.9 No archaeological features were present in these trenches.

**The Finds**

2.10 Artefactual material from the site consists of small quantities of pottery, worked flint and animal bone.

2.11 Worked flint was recovered from the fills of the three linear ditches. No tools or other truly diagnostic pieces were recovered, however on the basis of observed technological traits a late Neolithic or Bronze Age date is likely. The condition and quantity of the worked flint suggest it is re-deposited.

3. **DISCUSSION**

3.1 The interpretation of the features recorded during the course of this evaluation is difficult due to the nature of the artefactual evidence recovered.

3.2 The late Neolithic or early Bronze Age worked flint recovered from ditches 104, 106, and 107 appears to have been redeposited, but in the absence of other dated material these features have been tentatively attributed to the prehistoric period.
3.3 The assemblage recovered from this evaluation coupled with several other chance finds of prehistoric flint artefacts found in the nearby vicinity could indicate that a prehistoric flint working/occupation site exists within the local area, although not necessarily contemporary with the ditch features found in trench 1.

3.4 The function of these ditches located in trench 1 is unknown, although all the features appear run towards the steep valleys, which surround the site on the south and east. The features may have functioned simply as drainage ditches although 107 and 105 are both substantial features and may have had significance as territorial boundary ditches or even for defensive purposes.

3.5 The contamination encountered in trenches 2 and 3 would have severely effect any archaeological remains that are present within the central courtyard of Manor Farm.

**Conclusions**

3.6 The evaluation has shown that archaeological remains survive to the east of the farm buildings at a depth of 0.40m below the existing ground level.

3.7 The flint artefacts from the features in trench 1 suggest the ditches are prehistoric in date and could lie in the vicinity of an occupation/flint working site.

3.8 The trenches within the courtyard has demonstrated that no archaeological remains are likely to be present due to the shallowness of the deposits above the natural substrate and the high concentrations of contamination.

4. **CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Young and Kevin Colls, assisted by John Webster. The report was written Kevin Colls. The illustrations were prepared by Peter Moore. The archive has been compiled by Kevin Colls, and prepared for deposition by Ed McSloy. The project was managed for CA by Mary Alexander.
5. REFERENCES

CA 2002 Manor Farm, Urchfont, Devizes: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief


WCC 2002 Manor Farm, Urchfont, Devizes: Archaeological Brief for Field Evaluation
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Topsoil deposit. Dark grey-brown silty clay with modern inclusions. 0.40m in thickness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Natural Greensand. Yellow-green clay sand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Gully cut. East-west orientation. 0.40m in depth. One fill identified. Cut by ditch 105.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Fill of gully 103. Green-grey clay sand. High in bio turbation and iron staining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Ditch cut. East-west orientation. 0.80m in depth. One fill identified. Cuts 103.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Fill of ditch 105. Green-grey clay sand. Similar to 104.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Ditch cut. North-east south-west orientation. 1.50m in depth. One fill identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Pit cut. Irregular in shape. Depth of 0.16m. One fill identified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trench 2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>Concrete. 0.10m in thickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Hardcore. Sandy gravel. 0.10m in thickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Contaminated natural Greensand. Grey in colour. Depth on average 0.85m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Natural Greensand. Yellow-green clay sand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: THE FINDS

Artefactual material from site UFM02 consists of small quantities of pottery, worked flint and animal bone.

Concordance of finds

104 1 flint core fragment
     8 fragments worked flint (36g)

106 2 pieces worked flint: ?retouched flake and flake (burnt)
     4 fragments animal bone (47g)

108 6 pieces worked flint: 1 core; 5 flakes or fragments
     26 fragments animal bone (131g)

110 1 sherd medieval pottery (8g): coarse limestone/quartz/flint temp. – prob. ‘Newbury B’ type
     2 fragments post-medieval pottery (6g): glazed earthenware and tin-glazed earthenware
     14 fragments animal bone (306g)
     Spot date: post-medieval – LC17-C18

Worked flint was recovered from fills of three (linear) features. No tools or other truly diagnostic pieces were recovered, however on the basis of observed technological traits a late Neolithic or Bronze Age date is likely. The condition and quantity of the worked flint would suggest secondary deposition.

Pottery was recovered from a single context, pit fill 110. A residual medieval body sherd of limestone/quartz/flint tempered ‘Newbury B’ fabric is present. The most likely source for this pottery type is the Wiltshire Kennet Valley and a twelfth to thirteenth century date probable. A post-medieval date for this context is indicated by other material, which includes a tin-glazed sherd
APPENDIX 3 LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES

Levels are expressed as metres above Ordnance Datum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trench 1</th>
<th>Trench 2</th>
<th>Trench 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current ground level</td>
<td>117.4 to 117.6</td>
<td>117.1 to 117.5</td>
<td>117.3 to 117.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural substrate</td>
<td>116.9</td>
<td>116.9</td>
<td>116.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit of excavation</td>
<td>115.6</td>
<td>116.1</td>
<td>116.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are metres AOD.
Fig. 2 Location of trenches and archaeological features
Fig. 3  East facing section of trench 1