STOCKWELL FARM, BIRDLIP,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

by
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for
Mrs A. Besterman

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STOCKWELL FARM, BIRDLIP, GLOUCESTERSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**Archaeology**
For the purposes of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains, from Prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set although AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

**CAT**
Cotswold Archaeological Trust.

**GCC**
Gloucestershire County Council

**Medieval**
Taken here as the period from the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) to cAD 1500.

**Mesolithic**
A chronological division within the post- Glacial prehistoric period in which hunter-gathering formed the basis of economy. Settlement patterns are not well understood but may have taken the form of intermittently occupied, perhaps seasonal, camping sites. The material culture is represented by a range of flint-work, particularly microliths, bone and antler work and organic materials. The period is dated between c10,000 BC and 3500 BC.

**Natural**
Defined in archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, eg. river terrace gravels, Lias clay, Upper Old Red Sandstone, etc.

**NGR**
National grid reference

**OD**
Ordnance Datum: used in the text to express a given height.

**Post-medieval**
The period following the medieval period. From cAD 1500 to the Industrial Revolution.

**Settlement**
An area of habitation, perhaps surrounded by associated closes, paddocks, approach ways and other features, together constituting a complex of earthworks or cropmarks distinct from fields.
SUMMARY

An evaluation excavation of six test-pits was carried out by Cotswold Archaeological Trust adjacent to farm buildings at Stockwell Farm during a two day period in December 1994. The work was on behalf of the landowner, Mrs A. Besterman, who had applied for planning permission to build a tennis court adjacent to the main farm buildings. The fieldwork follows a brief for archaeological evaluation supplied by the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council.

A desk-based archaeological assessment by GCC in 1993 identified that Stockwell Farm lies within the shrunken medieval hamlet of Stockwell, and adjacent to linear N-S running cropmarks and earthworks thought to relate to abandoned property divisions relating to the hamlet. Quarrying is also known in adjacent fields from at least the latter part of the 19th century to the early part of this century.

Two of the six test-pits produced features in the central area of the proposed tennis court at depths of c0.30m. Test-pit 3 produced a well preserved pitched stone surface and associated wall at a depth of 0.45m running N-S dating from at least the 12th-14th century overlain by a possible ploughsoil, with both surface and wall cut by later quarrying. Test-pit 4 located adjacent to test-pit 3 produced in section a large posthole with packing. Recovered sherds gave a similar date to material from above the stone surface and wall. Test-pit 1 comprised mainly quarry fill probably relating to a cut identified in test-pit 1.

Subsoil deposits containing a significant amount of 12-14th century medieval pottery were concentrated in test-pits 3, 4 and 6 within the central and south-eastern points of the proposed tennis court. Little of archaeological interest was found within the remaining test-pits 2 and 5. No trace of the known earthworks was observed within any of the test-pits.
1 INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Stockwell Farm, Birdlip, Gloucestershire, centred on NGR: SO 940 144 (Fig 1). The farm lies 2km west of Cowley and 1.5 km east of Birdlip. The work was carried out on the 21st -22nd December 1994 by Cotswold Archaeological Trust Ltd.

1.1.2 The evaluation was conducted in response to a brief supplied by the Archaeology Section of GCC. The brief followed a planning application for development of land adjacent to the main farm buildings into a tennis court. A recent desk-based archaeological assessment (Hoyle, 1993) had already detailed the archaeological background to the locality. This identified an archaeological potential within the application area requiring evaluation. A detailed specification was prepared by CAT in response to the brief, and this was approved by GCC as a sufficient response to the imposed condition prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

1.1.3 The area of the proposed tennis court tested by evaluation lies c 20m west of the main farm buildings within the angle of the farm buildings boundary fence and that of the southern fields (Fig 2a). The field in which the evaluation took place was under pasture with a relatively steep slope from north to south.

1.1.4 The underlying natural substrate encountered consisted of deposits of limestone and yellow clay of the inferior Oolite series.

1.1.5 During the course of the evaluation work, the site was visited by Mr J. Hunter of the Archaeology Section, GCC, on 21st December 1994.

1.2 Project brief and methodology

1.2.1 The project design (Appendix 3) outlined the principal aim of the evaluation as being to establish whether any archaeological deposits or remains lie within the proposed development area and to determine, if present, their extent, date, character and preservation. In particular the evaluation aimed to determine whether the known earthworks seen both north and south of the evaluation area existed within that area.

1.2.2 The evaluation results would form the basis of an informed decision on the impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains present.

1.2.3 In accordance with the specification a series of six 2m by 2m test-pits were excavated within the area of the proposed tennis court covering its full extent (Fig 2b). One test-pit was placed at each corner of the rectangular area (test-pits 1,2,5 and 6) and two test-pits spaced equally within the central area (test-pits 3 and 4).
1.2.4 Topsoil and other non-significant overburden was removed by a small tracked mechanical excavator with a 2m toothless ditching bucket to the top of the archaeological levels, or where these were absent, to the top of the natural substrate of clean limestone and yellow clay. Cleaning was carried out by hand to check for the presence of archaeological features.

1.2.5 The stratigraphy and any archaeological features were recorded using standard CAT pro-forma context sheets. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 for each of the test-pits. A photographic record was compiled, consisting of colour slides and black and white prints. Levels were taken at points both within and adjacent to each test-pit. Although the recorded bench mark could not be found, a contour height was obtained from level ground near to the house and was used to give reduced levels for all points.

1.2.6 All test-pits were backfilled with spoil upon completion of the excavation and following the site inspection.

1.2.7 Finds and the site archive from the evaluation site will, with the landowners consent, be deposited at the Corinium Museum, Cirencester

1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 The site of Stockwell Farm lies on an area of high ground thought to have been utilised since the late Mesolithic period (c6500 BC) (Saville, 1984) and the well known prehistoric settlement sites at both Crickley Hill and the Peak at Birdlip lie within 2km of the farm.

1.3.2 Fieldwalking and excavation within the immediate area during the building of the Birdlip bypass in 1983 and a survey in 1990 produced a great deal of evidence of settlements and crop marks and other features dating from the late Mesolithic, with heavy concentrations in particularly to the south and west of the farm. Documentary evidence points to the site of Stockwell Farm being within the shrunken Medieval hamlet of Stockwell and the earthworks and cropmarks identified adjacent to the farm have been interpreted as being the remains of property boundaries (Jurica, 1981).

1.3.3 The earthworks in the adjacent field to the south of the site of the evaluation were fully recorded in 1980 (Ellis, 1986) when a number of large quarry pits were also located.

2 EVALUATION RESULTS

2.1 Two of the six evaluation test-pits (test-pits 2 and 5) were devoid of archaeological features or deposits. Removal of topsoil revealed in test-pit 2 (at the highest point of the slope) the natural substrate at only 0.24m below the present ground surface (272.07m OD). A small area of this was removed to confirm that this limestone rich deposit was natural rather than a laid surface. Test-pit 5 (at the base of the slope) produced deeper stratigraphy similar to test-pit 6 with a thin silty clay subsoil (502) 0.20m deep below the topsoil overlying a clay subsoil (503) above natural. Depth of natural from the present ground surface was between 0.45-
0.50m (271.07m OD). Little archaeological material was recovered from either test-pit baring one sherd of late Medieval date from (502).

2.2 Test-pit 6, although stratigraphically similar to test-pit 5, produced a large spread of 42 13-14th century pottery sherds of both Malvernian and Oolitic limestone tempered wares, with some large and joining sherds. These were contained within a charcoal flecked clay (603) which overlay natural. No other archaeological features were located within the test-pit.

2.3 Test-pit 1 had only a thin covering of topsoil (less than 0.10m in depth) overlying a jumble of limestone fragments (102) of all sizes within a clay matrix. The deposit is identified as quarry fill. The test-pit was excavated to a depth of 0.74m below the present ground surface (272.53m OD) with no change in the deposit; at this point excavation ceased. No edge to a cut lay within the test-pit, and the fill produced no artefacts.

2.4 Test-pits 3 and 4 both produced archaeological features. Test-pit 4 produced a stratigraphic sequence below the topsoil of two grey silty clay subsoils with limestone fragments (402, 403) which overlaid a reddish brown plough soil (404) over natural. Cut from the top of 404, and located in section was a large post-hole (406)[407] c0.42m in diameter with a pitched limestone packing. Only one sherd was recovered from the feature (from which a soil sample was taken) dated 12-14th century. A spread of 34 sherds of a similar date and fabric were collected from (403).

2.5 Within Test-pit 3 the sequence below the topsoil comprised a thick loamy subsoil (303) sealing a well preserved pitched limestone surface (306) and unmortared north-south orientated limestone wall (304)[305]. The latter was cut by a quarry (302)[307] in the northern part of the test-pit. Limestone and yellow clay fill from the quarry had slumped down slope almost completely sealing (303) from the topsoil. Considering the close proximity of test-pits 1 and 3, the quarry fill (102) could well be within the same quarry cut [307] identified in the edge of test-pit 3. The pitched stone surface (306) and the wall of three courses (304)[305] were at a depth of c0.45m (271.73m OD and 271.76m OD respectively) below present ground level. Cleaning over the stone surface produced produced 23 pottery sherds of medieval pottery similar to those found in test-pits 4 and 6. Two pottery sherds of 18th-19th century date from the same level (303) were found very close to the quarry edge and can be discounted as intrusive.

3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The evaluation found no trace of the series of earthworks running through the area proposed for the tennis court which can be seen to the north and south of the evaluation field. The depth of stratigraphy observed for test-pits unaffected by quarrying was unsurprisingly dependent on position relative to the slope. Test-pit 2 at the top of the slope showed little build-up above the natural while those further down slope gave deeper stratified subsoil deposits with a few pockets of possible ploughsoil within the natural undulations of the ground surface.

3.2 Within the area of the evaluation the central and south-east corner (test-pits 3, 4 and 6) produced quantities of medieval domestic pottery dating to the 12th-14th century, with the
density increasing towards the direction of the present farm buildings.

3.3 A possible structure was located within test-pit 3 in the centre of the proposed tennis court consisting of a pitched limestone surface and wall. The full extent of both is unknown, although they had been cut by the modern quarry. Material from above the pitched stone surface is consistent with that found throughout the site and points to a possible structure in use within the mid to late Medieval period. Despite the relatively shallow depth of the remains they are comparatively well preserved.

3.4 Due to the slope within the proposed development area construction of the tennis court area would need extensive levelling. A solution which would successfully mitigate the effect of development would be for the level to be built up from ground level thus offering protection to the underlying remains, the extent of which are not fully known.

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Saville, A 1984 'Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Evidence from Gloucestershire', in A Saville (ed.) Archaeology in Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, 96


Ellis, P 1986 Stockwell Farm, Glevens 20, 47

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to thank the following individuals and companies for their assistance in the course of the project;

Mrs A. Besterman, Stockwell farm
Mr J Hunter, Archaeological Section, GCC
Dr J Timby, CAT
Dr K Wilkinson, CAT

CAT staff involvement
Fieldwork: Andy Manning, Mark Brett and John Matthews
Text: Andy Manning
Illustrations: Rick Morton
APPENDIX A

Pottery Report
Dr J Timby

The evaluation yielded a total of 117 sherds of pottery mainly of Medieval date accompanied by a smaller number of later pieces. The sherds were moderately well-preserved. The Medieval pottery comprised almost exclusively of cooking pots in two fabric types;

A Malvernian ware (equating with Gloucester type fabric 40)

Oolitic limestone tempered ware (Gloucester type fabric 41).

A few of the later sherds had a green glazed interior finish, otherwise sherds were undecorated. The majority of the sherds appeared to be handmade although a few wheelmade or wheel-thrown piece were also present indicating a date in the 13th-14th century.

APPENDIX B

Environmental report
Dr K Wilkinson

One soil sample of c10 litres was taken from the posthole feature within test-pit 4, fill (406). At present the sample is still undergo processing, and any significant results which may arise from the sample will be communicated at a later date.
APPENDIX C

CAT Specification
PROPOSED TENNIS COURT, STOCKWELL FARM, BIRDLIP
PROJECT DESIGN FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Cotswold Archaeological Trust

For

Mrs A. Besterman

DECEMBER 1994
1. Introduction

1.1 This document presents a project design for an Archaeological Evaluation at Stockwell Farm, Birdlip, Glos. It has been prepared in response to the brief prepared by the County Archaeological Officer (Planning and Development) dated 2nd December 1994.

1.2 The proposed development consists of the creation of a new tennis court adjacent to Stockwell Farm.

1.3 A desk-based assessment of the whole of the Stockwell Farm estate was prepared by Gloucestershire County Council in June 1993 (Hoyle 1993). The development site lies within the shrunken medieval hamlet of Stockwell, and a number of linear cropmarks occur in this area (Hoyle 1993, Fig. 3). These were until recently (c.1980) earthworks and were considered to be the remains of abandoned property divisions relating to the shrunken hamlet.

1.4 A field evaluation is required to ascertain if any features survive within the area of the proposed tennis court, and if so if they will be adversely affected by the proposed development.

1.5 This project design has also been guided in its composition by the 'Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations' issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

2. STAFF

2.1 This project will be managed by N. Holbrook, Archaeological Manager, Cotswold Archaeological Trust, and directed in the field by Mr A. Manning, Senior Site Assistant, CAT.

2.2 The field team will consist of a minimum of two officers (1 Project Officer; 1 Site Assistant) these may be supplemented by additional staff as required. The duration of fieldwork will depend upon the nature of the archaeological remains encountered, but is not expected to exceed two days.

2.3 Specialists who will be invited to advise and report on specific aspects of the project as necessary are:

   Dr Jane Timby: ceramics
   Mark Maltby (Bournemouth University): ecofacts
   Dr Keith Wilkinson (CAT): palaeoenvironmental remains.
   Dr Wilkinson will consult with other environmental specialists as required.

3. TIMETABLE

3.1 CAT intends to commence the project on Wednesday 21st December 1994.

4. FIELD EVALUATION: GENERAL APPROACH

4.1 The objective of the evaluation is to determine the nature, extent and preservation of any buried archaeological remains within the study area so that an informed opinion on their importance is possible. This information will clarify whether any remains are of sufficient importance to warrant preservation in situ, or if this is not the case permit a programme of further works to be devised which will mitigate any effects the development might have upon the buried archaeological resource.
4.2 The evaluation excavations will seek to provide the following:

(A) high quality archaeological data from the direct observation of buried features.

(B) the dimensions, physical characteristics, and an understanding of the process of deposition of the principal deposits encountered.

(C) the date, function and interpretation of features (if at all possible) so that an assessment can be made of their importance.

(D) an assessment of the state of survival of any structural remains encountered.

(E) the survival, importance and potential for further study of any artefactual, ecofactual and environmental evidence recovered. Preliminary examination of such material by relevant specialists is considered to fall within the scope of the evaluation.

4.3 The method chosen to fulfil these evaluation objectives will be the excavation of six 2m x 2m test-pits in the locations shown on the enclosed plan. Modern plough soil and other overburden will be removed by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket onto the surface of archaeological deposits or natural bedrock (whichever is encountered first).

4.4 All excavations will be carried out to professional standards. The location of the trenches will be accurately plotted onto the relevant 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps. All archaeological deposits within the trenches will be recorded by descriptive text, photographs, and drawn plans and sections at appropriate scales (see enclosed CAT Field Recording Manual for further details of site methodology). All finds will be related to their deposit of origin by appropriate coding. An appropriate scheme of ecofact/environmental sampling will be instigated.

4.5 Archaeological deposits and features discovered in the test-pits will be sampled by hand-excavation to fulfil the objectives set out in 4.2.

4.6 No inhumations will be lifted in the evaluation. Excavation of any grave fills will be undertaken, however, in order to assess the preservation of the skeletal material and if possible recover dating evidence.

4.7 Notification of the start of site works will be made to Mr J Hunter (Gloucestershire County Council) so that there will be opportunities to visit the site during the period of works and check on the quality and progress of the excavations.

4.8 A field evaluation report will be prepared at the end of fieldwork. Should no further archaeological work be required a full site archive will be prepared which will be deposited with the artefact collection, and a summary report submitted for publication within a year of the completion of the fieldwork.

4.9 Subject to agreement with the legal landowner Cotswold Archaeological Trust will make arrangements with an appropriate local museum (in this case Corinium Museum, Cirencester) for the deposition of the site archive and artefact collection. Arrangements will be made for conservation of any items requiring this treatment.

4.10 All fieldwork will be conducted to the standards laid down in the Draft CAT Health & Safety Statement.
Cotswold Archaeological Trust
15-12-94

Reference

Hoyle, J 1993 Proposed Community Woodland at Stockwell Farm, Birdlip, Glos: Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment, G.C.C.
Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Location plan

Figure 1
2a: Location of site in relation to earthworks

2b: Location of test pits

Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Location of test pits
Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Test pits 1-3 - sections
Test pit 4

Test pit 5

Test pit 6

0 1 metres

Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Test pits 4-6 - sections
Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Test pits 1-3 - plans

NB: All levels refer to metres OD

Figure 5
Test pit 4

Test pit 5

Test pit 6

NB: All levels refer to metres OD

Stockwell Farm, Birdlip
Archaeological evaluation

Test pits 4-6 - plans

Figure 6