LAND AT THE OLD RECTORY
CHURCH ROAD SOUTH, PORTISHEAD
NORTH SOMERSET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CA PROJECT: 1864
CA REPORT: 04192

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Approved: Cliff Bateman
Signed: ..............................................
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SUMMARY

Site Name: Land at the Old Rectory, Church Road South
Location: Portishead, North Somerset
NGR: ST 4667 7589
Type: Evaluation
Date: 3-5 November 2004
Location of Archive: To be deposited with Weston-Super-Mare Museum
Site Code: RPB 04

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2004 at the request of Redcliffe Homes Ltd, on land at The Old Rectory, Portishead. In compliance with an approved WSI (CA 2004), three trenches were excavated within the proposed development area.

Despite the wholesale demolition of the Old Rectory building in the 1960s, and the subsequent construction of the existing rectory, substantial foundations representing several phases of the original building survive. At least three separate phases of construction were identified and these included probable parts of the original medieval, post-medieval extensions, and part of a possible Victorian porch.

The identified walls provide an indication of the ground floor plan, including both external and internal walls, of what is in all likelihood the northeastern section of the previous house. It also appears that large parts of a cellar survive, backfilled with material resulting from the demolition process. A stone-built well, and stone cesspit or soakaway were also uncovered, although no dating evidence was retrieved from these features. No archaeological features or deposits unrelated to the Old Rectory building were identified during the course of the evaluation.

The evaluation has characterised the archaeological potential of the site, and has indicated that structural elements relating to the Old Rectory building survive at an average depth of 0.3m below the modern ground surface.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2004 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Redcliffe Homes Ltd, on land at The Old Rectory, Portishead. (centred on NGR: ST 4667 7589; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken prior to determination of planning consent for development of the site.

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief for archaeological recording issued by Vince Russet, North Somerset Planning and Environment Directorate (NSPED 2004), the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and with a subsequent detailed WSI produced by CA (2004) that was approved by Vince Russett. The fieldwork also followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999), and the Management of Archaeological Projects II (EH 1991). It was monitored by Vince Russett, including site visits on 4 and 5 November 2004.

The site

1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 3250m² and comprises part of the grounds of The Rectory, a 1960s building occupying the central part of the site. The proposed development is bounded to the north by Church Road South, from which runs a tarmac driveway, and to the remaining sides by residential properties. A substantial stone built wall forms the western boundary, whilst the northeastern parts of the site are occupied by large trees and shrubbery. The rear of The Rectory forms part of the now overgrown garden.

1.4 The site lies at approximately 9.6m AOD, gently sloping northwards down to Church Road South. The underlying geology of the area is mapped as Keuper Marl of the Triassic era (BGS 1962).

Archaeological background

1.5 Archaeological interest in the site arises from its location within the medieval core of Portishead. This settlement is known to be of Saxon date or earlier, with evidence of Roman find spots also being recorded from the immediate area. The site itself
lies within the grounds of the Old Rectory, which was demolished in the 1960s. Photographic records taken at the time of the demolition indicate that elements of a late medieval structure were incorporated within the more substantial post-medieval building.

1.6 Archaeological evaluation undertaken to the rear of the former Rectory buildings in 2000 indicated that the former grounds had been subject to significant landscaping in the 19th century. Nonetheless, a probable medieval ditch or gully and post-medieval features were revealed (Broomhead 2000).

**Archaeological objectives**

1.7 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**

1.8 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of three trenches, each 1.8m wide and of varying lengths (Fig. 2). The location of the trenches was altered, with the approval of Vince Russett (Archaeological Officer, NSPED), from those agreed in the WSI due to the presence buried services and large trees and shrubs.

1.9 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).

1.10 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential and, where appropriate, sampled and processed in accordance with the CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other samples from Archaeological Sites* (2003). No deposits were deemed suitable for sampling during the course of the evaluation. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance

1.11 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 Weston-super-Mare Museum.

2. RESULTS

2.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

*Trench 1 (Fig. 3)*

2.2 Natural marl substrate 106 was identified at an average depth of 0.4m below the present ground level. It was sealed by 0.18m of mixed levelling/demolition deposit 102, and subsequently by modern hardcore and tarmac.

2.3 Excepting modern services a single feature, well 107, was identified in this trench cut into the natural substrate. Parts of the well were identified as little as 0.2m below the current ground level. The well was sandstone-built with all interior stones being dressed to form the circular shape. The exterior of the wall, between the main stonework and construction cut 103, was consolidated with small stone wedges. It is postulated that the well is approximately 1.6m in diameter, although less than half was visible within the confines of the trench.

2.4 No dateable material was retrieved from the fill of the construction cut, however, pottery retrieved from the infilling of the well indicates it was redundant by the 19th century.

2.5 The upper part of the well had been further disturbed to the south during the construction of a modern drainage pipe, during which time an attempt had been made to further backfill the well and to partially cap it with concrete.
**Trench 2 (Fig. 3)**

2.6 Natural substrate 220, identified only in limited areas within trench 2, was revealed at an average depth of 0.3m below the present ground level. This, and the archaeological deposits within the trench, were immediately sealed by modern hardcore and tarmac. The trench was also heavily disturbed by modern services in the western and southern parts of the trench.

2.7 Several walls were identified in trench 2, all relating to different phases of what was presumably the Old Rectory building. The earliest structure was wall 219, aligned north/south, constructed from large pieces of yellow and red sandstone. The majority of the stone did not appear dressed, although the presence of only one course suggests these were foundation blocks rather than elements which would have been visible.

2.8 The wall measured approximately 1.4m wide with large stones set to either side with smaller ‘rubble infill’ between. Some of the stones to the east were burnt red or black. No construction cut was visible and it is presumed that the wall was founded directly on the natural substrate. In some areas a reddish brown sandy soil was noted between the stones, which may have acted as bedding material for the upper courses of the wall, although no mortar was present.

2.9 Covering wall 219 to the south were a number of dressed stones, 213, which may represent the first ‘true’ course of the wall. However, the small amount uncovered within the trench precludes further analysis. Although no artefacts were retrieved from either sections of walling, a late medieval date would seem probable for this phase.

2.10 Stone wall 215 abutted wall 219, and was constructed perpendicular to it, suggesting this wall was still in existence at the time of 215’s construction. The stone wall was generally hidden by mortar, however, at the western end a dressed stone may indicate the limits of the wall in this direction. Demolition rubble also obscured evidence of any returns both to the north and south.

2.11 Excavation against the northern face of the wall revealed in excess of seven courses, and auguring suggested that the wall continued for at least a further metre below ground suggesting the presence of a cellar. The wall appeared to be cut into
the natural substrate on the southern side although no actual foundation cut could be seen.

2.12 A possible return to wall 215 was noted built into the western side of wall 219. This was wall 222, which appeared to be of the same construction as wall 215.

2.13 Brick wall 216 was also recorded perpendicular to wall 215. Excavation indicated that it continued as deep as wall 215 and perhaps formed an internal partition within the cellar. Filling the area defined by 215 and 216 was deposit 217/221. This deposit appeared to originate from the demolition of the Old Rectory and contained quantities of ceramic tile, brick and stonework, as well as fragments of plaster, mortar and other debris.

2.14 A further section of stone walling, 207, was revealed at the eastern end of the trench. This was on the same east/west alignment and is therefore presumed to be another phase of the same building. The ashy mortar would seem typical of the Victorian period, although no dating was retrieved from the fill of construction cut 206. The wall measured approximately 0.5m in width and at least three courses survived. A return, 223, was also noted on the western end and could be seen to be of contemporary build.

2.15 This latest identified phase of building was also covered in a rubble deposit, 205, consisting mainly of ceramic tiles, small fragments of stone, and ash. In all likelihood this dates to the same period as deposit 217/221 – the demolition of the Old Rectory building.

_Trench 3 (Fig. 3)_

2.16 The natural substrate in trench 3 was identified between 0.4m and 0.6m below the present ground level. The southern end of the trench contained a sequence of deposits identical to trench 1; however, the northern end contained a deeper sequence. Here, the natural substrate was overlain by dark soil, 303, mixed with demolition material. This was subsequently covered by demolition deposit 302 which was similar in appearance to that identified in trench 2 as deposit 221.

2.17 Part of stone feature 309 was uncovered beneath the deposits described above. This comprised a rubble stone wall orientated northeast/southwest set within a
reddish brown sandy matrix. Pottery dating to the 17th or 18th centuries was retrieved from the fill, and the sandy nature of the deposit would suggest it to be a cesspit or soakaway. This function is further suggested by modern soakaway or inspection chamber, 304, immediately to the north. A pipe trench runs from the modern example into feature 309, and may suggest the cesspit or soakaway to have been used until recent times.

The Finds

2.18 Few dateable artefacts were retrieved during the course of the evaluation, and these mainly derived from the demolition and levelling deposits formed during the construction of the extant 1960s rectory.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The evaluation has indicated that walls associated with the Old Rectory building exist beneath the current driveway. The site is heavily truncated with many of the walls existing only 0.3m below the present ground level. This is in all likelihood due to ground reduction during the construction of the current upstanding building.

3.2 No archaeological features or deposits were found in the western end of trench 1, suggesting that either the Old Rectory did not extend that far west, or that all traces of it were removed during its demolition. The lack of dating for well 107 means that it could be contemporary with any phase of the building.

3.3 Stratigraphically wall 219 was the earliest feature found during the course of the fieldwork, and may well represent the medieval core to the Old Rectory building. The wall continued both northwards and southwards beyond the confines of the trench, and its size would suggest a substantial external wall.

3.4 Walls 215 and 222, however, are more typical of internal partitions, and may have been inserted as part of a post-medieval extension/rebuild, during which time the construction of cellars occurred. This addition does not appear to extend further westwards than indicated within the trench, although modern drainage has disturbed
this area. Partitions within these cellars appear to have occurred at a later date with brick wall 216 probably belonging to the 19th century. The cellars were filled with demolition material and it is likely that the previous building was collapsed into these voids.

3.5 The latest structural element in trench 2 was wall 207 and associated return 223, which may relate to the Victorian extensions to the Old Rectory. Specifically they may form part of a porch or entranceway into the house, which would explain the apparent disassociation from the rest of the walls identified within the trench.

3.6 In conclusion it appears that substantial elements of the Old Rectory building exist within the proposed development area despite its wholesale demolition in the 1960s, and in all likelihood the front of the building, which may include the foundations of the original medieval core, survives just beneath the current ground level.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Kate Cullen, assisted by Jon Webster. The report was written by Kate Cullen. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive has been compiled by Kate Cullen, and prepared for deposition by Ed McSloy. The project was managed for CA by Cliff Bateman.
5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 1962 *Bristol District, Parts of Sheets 250, 251, 264, 265, 280, 281* 1 inch:1 mile

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2004 *The Old Rectory, Portishead, North Somerset: Written Scheme of investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

NSPED 2004 *Land at the Old Rectory, Church Road South, Portishead: Brief for Archaeological Mitigation*
## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

### Trench 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Tarmac. 0.07m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Hardcore. 0.2m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Levelling deposit. Red and orange lenses, silty clay and sandy clay. 0.18m thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Circular cut for well. Near vertical sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Backfill of well. Ashy, with quantities of stone from the well. &gt;0.4m deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Modern backfill of well, including concrete. 0.2m deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Natural substrate. Pinkish red marl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Dressed stone forming well. Not mortared. 1.6m approximate diameter. &gt;0.4m deep. Each stone was approximately 0.4m long and 0.15m deep and formed a wall approximately 0.35m thick.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trench 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>Tarmac. 0.07m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Topsoil/turf. Mid reddish grey silty sand. 0.21m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Hardcore. 0.2m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Subsoil. Mid orange brown silty sand. 0.24m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>Rubble deposit. Light brownish red silty and, tile fragments throughout. 0.3m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>Construction cut for wall 207. 0.58m wide, vertical sides, not excavated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>E-W wall, ash mortar, stone built. 0.51m wide, &gt;0.21m deep. At least 3 courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>Fill of 206. Mid brownish grey silty sand, charcoal/ash. Backfill of construction cut around wall 207.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>Modern service trench cut. &gt;0.48m wide, &gt;0.2m deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>Fill of 209. Light yellowish grey gravel mixed with clay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Modern service trench cut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>Fill of 211. Light orange grey silty clay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td>Probable first dressed/faced course of medieval wall. No mortar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>Redeposited natural. Mid orange red sandy clay. 0.48m wide, 0.13m deep. Probably deposited during construction of cellars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>Wall 215. E-W aligned. 4m length of stone wall, 0.35m wide, &gt;1.35m deep. Pinkish white mortar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>Brick wall. N-S aligned. Cellar partition. &gt;0.9m long, 0.25m wide, &gt;1.35m deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>Cellar backfill. Mid brownish grey silty sand. &gt;0.45m deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>Modern rubble/demolition deposit. Disturbed ground. 0.2m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>Natural red marl substrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>Rubble layer, probably same as 217, demolition deposit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>Return to wall 207. N-S aligned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trench 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Tarmac. 0.07m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301</td>
<td>Hardcore. 0.33m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302</td>
<td>Rubble deposit. 0.2m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303</td>
<td>Dark brown sandy clay mixed with rubble deposit. 0.2m thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>304</td>
<td>Brick inspection chamber/soakaway, circular 1m approximate diameter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305</td>
<td>Backfill of 304. Ash, brick, rubble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>306</td>
<td>Service trench cut. 0.6m wide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>307</td>
<td>Fill of 306. Dark reddish brown sandy clay with sandstone fragments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>308</td>
<td>Cess pit/soakaway cut. Stepped then vertical. &gt;2.6m long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>309</td>
<td>Fill of 308. Rubble stone wall in red brown sand matrix with green mottles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310</td>
<td>Natural red marl substrate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: THE FINDS By Sam Inder

Small quantities of pottery and clay pipe were recovered during excavations. The pottery is all post-medieval or modern in date, comprising glazed red earthenware and white china. Due to their relatively recent date the finds are deemed to be non-archaeologically significant and have been discarded.

Finds Concordance

104  2 sherds of pottery (20g); china
    1 clay pipe bowl (14g)
    Spot-date: 19th century+

309  2 sherds of pottery (59g); glazed red earthenware
    Spot-date: post-medieval
The Rectory, Portishead, North Somerset

Trench location plan

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The Rectory, Portishead, North Somerset

Trench location plan, showing archaeological features