83 The Vineyard
Abingdon
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

for
Twin City Developments Ltd
Planning Ref: P15/V1643/FUL
CA Project: 770286
CA Report: 17038
January 2017
83 The Vineyard
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 3PG

Archaeological Watching Brief

CA Project: 770286
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</tr>
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</table>
SUMMARY

Project Name: 83 The Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX143PG
Location: Abingdon, Oxfordshire
NGR: SP 49987 97509
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 11-24 January 2017
Planning Reference: P15/V1643/FUL
Location of Archive: Oxfordshire Museum Service
Site Code: VNA17

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundwork associated with a part conversion, part new build residential development of 7 apartments with associated external works at 83 The Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Twin City Developments Ltd at 83 The Vineyard (centred on NGR: SU 4998 9750; Figure 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the change of use of the site from commercial to residential with a redevelopment in the form of a part conversion, part new build residential development of 7 apartments with associated external works (Planning ref: P15/V1643/FUL).

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with Condition 9 (CA 2015) set by Hugh Coddington, Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Service (OCCAS), the archaeological advisors to the Vale of White Horse District Council, and with a subsequent detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (CA 2015) and approved by the WWHDC acting on the advice of Hugh Coddington. The fieldwork also followed Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief (ClfA 2014).

The site

1.3 The proposed development area was approximately 0.12ha, and comprised commercial buildings. The site is on a north-west, south-east alignment and is bounded by the A4183 to the north and further commercial buildings to the west south and east (Figure 2). The site lies at approximately 58.40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), sloping gently down to the south-east.

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as the Ampthill Clay Formation and mudstone of Kimmeridge Clay Formation (undifferentiated). Sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 151 to 161 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. The superficial deposits are sands and gravels of Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member. Superficial deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS 2015).
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A brief summary of the historical and archaeological background provided below is based on a high-level survey of the information provided at the Heritage Gateway, which incorporates the Oxfordshire HER records.

2.2 The site is located within an area of archaeological potential, represented by known archaeological features dating from the later prehistoric to the post-medieval period. The area to the south was subject to archaeological investigations which revealed Civil War defences, medieval features and Romano-British burials.

2.3 The location of Abingdon at the confluence of the river Thames and the river Ock is likely to have been the most significant factor in the establishment of a substantial middle Iron Age settlement, a late Iron Age to early Romano-British oppidum or proto-town, and eventually a medieval abbey town. In the late Iron Age coin finds suggest that this water course was also utilized as a political boundary, forming the division between the lands of the Catuvellauni (to the east), the Atrebates (to the south), and the Dobunni (to the west).

2.4 Archaeological investigations in Abingdon suggest that it has been occupied intensively since at least the Early Iron Age, with earlier prehistoric activity indicated through finds of flint and pottery. A densely populated settlement in the Middle Iron Age was indicated by the discovery of more than a dozen house sites beneath the Abbey House and its car park. Previous excavations at sites along The Vineyard have shown that before the Roman period, Abingdon was already a thriving riverside market centre. It was defined by two or three extensive ditches to the north and west, and the river Thames to the south and east.

2.5 Roman Abingdon existed within the extent of the Iron Age boundary ditches as a densely occupied settlement. It had a rectilinear layout and produced high-status finds, including fineware pottery. Three Roman masonry buildings have been identified in Abingdon, one in East St Helen’s Street, parts of one or more under the Railway Inn and a third under Abbey House and its gardens. By the early 2nd century AD some of the defensive ditches had been deliberately backfilled as the town expanded. The investigated Roman ditches, pits, ovens, and graves date from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. These included an inhumation and a cremation found during excavations at 56-86 The Vineyard, and Roman burials recorded
during excavations at the British Gas Site, The Vineyard. During the excavation of trenches across the abbey, in 1922, Roman finds were recovered throughout the abbey gardens, suggesting that Roman occupation extended over the whole area. Roman ditches were also found immediately south of the abbey gardens, in Checker Walk.

2.6 The Romano-British settlement continued into the post-Roman period. Excavations undertaken at The Vineyard in 1987 to 1989 to the south of the site revealed evidence of a boundary ditch and a sunken-floor building dating to the Early Saxon period. The nature of early Saxon settlement, however, is not well understood, but its main focus is thought to have been in the western part of the town. There is little archaeological evidence for the mid- or late Saxon period in Abingdon. It is believed, however, that it was a high-status site of an early minster located probably on the site of the present St Helen’s Church. The Abingdon Abbey was founded in 955 on land granted by King Eadred to St Æthelwold, c. 500m north-east of St Helen’s Church. This decision seems to have had the effect of shifting the focus of settlement north-eastwards.

2.7 Archaeological evidence for occupation at Abingdon from the later 11th and 12th centuries onwards is more abundant. The line of one of the Late Iron Age/early Roman oppidum ditches may be preserved in the medieval references to the ‘town ditches’ and in the post-medieval Shitebourne ditch. This single ditch may be all that remains of a system of multiple defences. Extensive excavation undertaken at the British Gas Site and Penions, The Vineyard revealed a number of intercutting medieval quarry/rubbish pits, which contained finds associated with low-status settlement along with possible tenement boundary ditches. There was limited evidence for industrial activity, which may have involved leather-working and animal processing. Excavations undertaken in 1987-89 on the corner of The Vineyard and Stert Street revealed 13th-century pits and a succession of floor and occupation surfaces. A large, well-preserved oven with stone walls and flue survived in one backyard.

2.8 During the Civil War, Abingdon was a Parliamentary garrison (although it was originally a Royalist town), and was regularly attacked by the Royalists of Oxford. Extensive evidence of the Civil War defences has been revealed during excavations in the vicinity of the British Gas Site, Penions and The Vineyard.
3. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;

- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. **METHODOLOGY**

4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2015). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks including the excavation of foundations and service trenches that could have an impact on any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the site (Figure 2).

4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual.*

4.3 The archive from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the site archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire HER. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. **RESULTS (FIGURES 2-8)**

5.1 The excavations did not reach the depth of the natural geological substrate. Layers of made ground, which contained modern waste and rubble material, were revealed across the site to a maximum depth of 1.4m below present ground level. These individual layers are listed in Appendix A.
5.2 No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed during groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

6. **DISCUSSION**

6.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area, the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits may indicate that structural remains associated with the 13th-century occupation either did not extend into the site, were not exposed by the development, or may have been removed during previous development of the commercial buildings.

7. **CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Whelan and Jeremy Clutterbuck. The report was written by Andrew Whelan. The illustrations were prepared by Rosanna Price. The archive has been compiled by Andrew Donald, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O’Neill. The project was managed for CA by Ray Kennedy.
8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 Geology of Britain Viewer
http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html Accessed 20 January 2017

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015, 83 The Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief

www.heritagegateway.org.uk
### APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

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<th>Trench No.</th>
<th>Context No.</th>
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APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS

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<th>83 The Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire</th>
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PROJECT CREATORS

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<td><strong>Project Brief originator</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Project Manager</strong></td>
<td>Ray Kennedy</td>
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<td><strong>Project Supervisor</strong></td>
<td>Andrew Whelan, Jeremy Clutterbuck</td>
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MONUMENT TYPE

None

SIGNIFICANT FINDS

Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)

PROJECT ARCHIVES

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017, 83 The Vineyard, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching brief. CA typescript report 17038
3  Working shot, looking south-east (2m scales)
4 Working shot, looking south-east (1m scale)
5 Working shot, looking south-east (1m scale)
6 Working shot
Working shot

Dunmore Road, Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Photograph
8 Working shot
Andover Office
Stanley House
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5LH

Phone: 01264 347630

Cirencester Office
Building 11
Kemble Enterprise Park
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 6BQ

Phone: 01285 771022

Exeter Office
Unit 53
Basepoint Business Centre
Yeadon Way
Marsh Barton Trading Estate
Exeter
EX2 8LB

Phone: 01392 826185

Milton Keynes Office
41 Burners Lane South
Kiln Farm
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK11 3HA

Phone: 01908 564660

Email: enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk