Gowers Yard, 114a, 116 and land to rear of 114a
High Street, Eton, Berkshire

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

for Eton College

by Jennifer Lowe
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GYE03/90

September 2003
Summary

Site name: Gowers Yard, 114a, 116 and land to rear of 114a High Street, Eton

Grid reference: SU 9660 7750

Site activity: Desk-based assessment

Date and duration of project: 10th-26th September 2003

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jennifer Lowe

Site code: GYE 03/90

Area of site: 0.38ha

Summary of results: The site is located within the historic medieval core of Eton

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 26.09.03
                               Steve Preston✓ 29.09.03
Introduction

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of a roughly rectangular plot of land located at Gowers Yard, 114a, 116 and the land to the rear of 114a High Street, Eton (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Philip H Tilbury of Herbert J Stribling & Partners, Chartered Architects, 115a High Street, Eton, Berkshire, SL4 6AN on behalf of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 6DJ, and comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

Site description, location and geology

The site is located within the historic core of the town, lying immediately to the south of St John’s church. The site is a roughly L-shaped plot, with access to the site via an alley way which runs below 115 High Street. A building, 114a High Street, is set back from the High Street and immediately adjacent to this is a small garden area associated with the neighbouring plot. Presently the buildings on site appear to be in use as commercial properties, and in addition there are several garages located within the site’s boundaries. The majority of the site is covered with Tarmac and is relatively level. According to plans supplied by the client, a culvert is thought to cross the site, from north to south. The development area covers an area of approximately 0.38ha centred on SU 9660 7750, and is located on flood plain gravels (BGS 1981) at a height of approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum.

Planning background and development proposals

A planning application (02/82700) has been submitted to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, which proposes the erection of two 3-bed houses, twelve 3-bed apartments, as well as office accommodation and a retail unit, with associated parking areas. There is also provision for a basement to be used for underground parking.

Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16 1990) provides guidance relating to archaeology within the planning process. It points out that where a desk-based assessment has shown that there is a strong possibility of
significant archaeological deposits in a development area it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be devised:

Paragraph 21 states:

‘Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out...’

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed further guidance is provided. Archaeology and Planning stresses preservation in situ of archaeological deposits as a first consideration as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

‘...Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation...’

Paragraph 18 states:

‘The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...’

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e., fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:

‘Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.’

The Berkshire Structure Plan 1991–2006 provides further guidance on this:

Policy EN6 states:

‘Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the most important non-scheduled remains, together with their settings, will be protected and managed to ensure that they are not damaged or destroyed. Where a lack of information precludes the proper assessment of a site or sites with archaeological potential, this information will have to be provided in advance of any decision to affect that site or area. Where preservation is not possible local planning authorities should be satisfied before granting planning permission that appropriate arrangements have been made for excavation and recording to take place prior to development’.

Similarly policy Arch 2 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan, Deposit Draft 1994 also states:
The Borough Council will normally require the protection of unscheduled sites of archaeological importance or potential archaeological interest and their settings from harmful development. In cases where development is proposed, the Borough Council will consult the County Archaeologist on the type and extent of archaeological importance of any site. An archaeological assessment will normally be required before an application can be determined. If development is acceptable permission may be granted provided that:—

1) The amenity value of the site is preserved
2) Adequate provision is made for the protection of archaeological features

**Methodology**

The assessment of the site was carried out by the examination of pre-existing information from a number of sources recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists paper ‘Standards in British Archaeology’ covering desk-based studies. These sources include historic and modern maps, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Sites and Monuments Record, geological maps and any relevant publications or reports.

**Archaeological background**

*General background*

The Middle Thames Valley is known to have a high density of prehistoric activity (Gates 1975), and further work in the area such as at Eton Rowing Lake, Windsor and the Maidenhead Flood Alleviation Scheme (Allen and Welch 1998; Foreman et al. 2002), has demonstrated that the floodplain river gravels in particular have a high concentration of sites of all periods from Mesolithic to Saxon. Also to the north-west of the site at Eton Wick, a complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments have been identified (Ford 1993).

Roman activity is noted around the site, although it does appear limited. Roman finds have been retrieved from Manor Farm, Eton Wick, to the north-west of the site (Lowe 2003), and in addition a Roman urn was dug up from Willowbrook, and a vase from Timbralls playing field (Balance 1983).

The town is thought to have Saxon origins, with a settlement developing some time between the 7th and 10th centuries as a result of a ford across the Thames at this point (Balance 1983). It is in the medieval period however that the town began to develop further. The town is recorded in Domesday Book as Ettone meaning ‘farmstead by the river’ (Mills 1998). At this time it was assessed at 12 hides with land for 8 ploughs, there is also mention of 2 mills and a fishery in Eton (Williams and Martin 2002, 415). The manor had been held by Queen Edith before the Conquest.

The medieval town developed along the High Street which was part of the main (land) thoroughfare from London to Windsor (VCH 1925). Little is known of Eton before the 13th century, and although sources are limited it does appear that the town began to develop shortly after the construction of Windsor Castle in 1070.
(Blinkhorn and Pugh 1997). An evaluation and subsequent excavation carried out close to High Street, at King Stable Street, supports this hypothesis of growth in the medieval period. The evaluation revealed that the site had been utilized from the 11th century onwards, with the site becoming more densely occupied into the late medieval period (Weaver 1997). The excavation revealed what appears to be a working area for properties fronting the approach to what is now the High Street, as well as timber revetment constructed along the water front. In addition later medieval and post-medieval activity was also observed. (Blinkhorn and Pugh 1997). The excavators suggested that the focus of activity for the settlement appeared to shift from the waterside to along the High Street in the 15th century

Monitoring of test pits carried out on the High street, at 89–90 and 92a, revealed layers of made ground which overlay deposits containing 16th- to 17th-century pottery recorded at 2.50m depth, and in another a deposit containing 13th- to 15th-century pottery, 2.70m in depth (Ford 1995).

In contrast a watching brief carried out at 39 High Street failed to identify any deposits or finds of archaeological significance. However, the trenches observed did not reach the natural geology, and therefore any archaeological deposits present may not have been encountered (Hammond 2003)

Sites and Monuments Record

A search of the Windsor and Maidenhead Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) was made on the 23rd September 2003 for a radius of 250m around the site. This revealed only 14 entries, none of which were located on the site. The results of this search have summarized in Appendix 1 and illustrated in figure 1.

There are no entries which pre-date the medieval period.

Medieval

The SMR records the presence of a small jetty or pier which lead from Romney Island towards Windsor Bridge [Fig 1; 1]. The structure is recorded in medieval records and is also shown on some early views of Windsor Castle; it was finally demolished in 1999. Fieldwork carried out to the south of the site, at Kings Stable Street, revealed that the site had been in use from around the 12th century onwards and probably functioned as a working area for properties fronting the river [2]. The site appears to have gone into decline into the later medieval and post medieval periods. A watching brief carried out at 89–90 & 92a High Street revealed some medieval deposits, however it also revealed layers of made ground later in date [3]. Documentary sources indicate that by late 13th century the town encompassed an area from Baldwin’s Bridge in the north to Windsor Bridge in the south. There is also an SMR entry for the mention of Eton in Domesday Book [6]. The bridge,
which links the town with the college, is mentioned as having medieval origins, and marks the northern extent of the medieval town [7]. A church is noted as being contained within the Eton College site, the building was demolished after 1475 [4]. A Grade II* Listed building, 15th century in date, is noted at 47–9 High Street [8].

Post-Medieval

Clay pipe was retrieved from the rear of 88 High Street [3]. Two listed buildings are recorded in the SMR, one at 20 High Street [4], and the other Tangier Mill House located on Tangier Lane [5]. Fieldwork carried out at 122/123 High Street only revealed deposits post-medieval in date [6]. There is also an entry for the Windsor railway station located on the opposite bank of the Thames [9].

There are, in addition to those mentioned, several Listed Buildings not included on the SMR (see below).

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the site.

Listed buildings

There are no listed buildings located within the boundaries of the site, however there are numerous listed buildings located along High Street, including numbers 114 and 117 which are both Grade II Listed and lie in the plots adjacent to the site. Changes which affect these buildings, or their settings, may be a consideration in the planning process.

Registered Parks and Gardens; Registered Battlefields

There are no registered Parks and Gardens or registered Battlefields located within the site boundaries.

Cartographic and documentary sources

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Buckinghamshire Record Office in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the site’s later history and whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area (see Appendix 2).

The earliest map available of the area is Saxton’s map of Berkshire, 1574 (Fig. 2) which shows the town labelled as Eaton. A church is marked on this map but there is no further detail for the site. Similarly Blaeu’s map of Buckinghamshire from 1645 (Fig. 3) shows the area much as the previous map with the town being represented by a church symbol, this is probably on the College site. According to Warburton’s map of
Middlesex, 1749 (Fig. 4) the town is shown more clearly developed, with buildings lining the main thoroughfare, presumably the present High Street. The town is still noted as Eaton, and to the north of the settlement lies Eaton Colledge (sic).

Rocque’s map of Berkshire of 1761 (Fig. 5) shows the area in more detail, with the town now named as Eton. By this time buildings still line the main route through the town with several smaller roads branching off from this. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact location of the site but it is possible that there are buildings present along its boundary with the High Street. The majority of the properties along this route have undeveloped parcels of land, most likely gardens, to the rear. Jeffrey’s map of Buckinghamshire, 1770, does not show the site in any more detail (not illustrated).

A Plan of Eton parish, 1797 (Fig. 6) is a more detailed map showing each building lining the High Street in more detail. At this time the site appears to be occupied by several buildings. There are buildings along the street frontage, as well as a few set back from the High Street. The majority of the plot is still undeveloped at this time. The tithe map for Eton cum Stockdale and Colenorton, 1843 (Fig. 7) illustrates the buildings along the High Street in more detail and shows that the site is occupied by several structures, which are mostly clustered toward the eastern edge of the plot. A few additional buildings are located along the southern boundary also and, a circular structure is located to the western edge of the site. A stream delineates the western boundary of the plot.

According to an Ordnance Survey Plan showing the Eton estate of W D Stuart, 1870 (Fig. 8) St John’s Church has now been built to the north of the site replacing the previous chapel. The buildings located along the street frontage and the southern boundary have remained largely unchanged. A large building with formal gardens occupies the land to the rear, and the presence of a summer house is noted close to the western boundary of the plot, in the location of the circular building noted on the previous map. Several smaller structures, perhaps garden sheds or greenhouses, are also present.

The 1912 Edition Ordnance Survey (Fig. 9) shows only minor changes to the site. The buildings on the High Street are still present, as is the larger property to the rear, however if the formal gardens are present they are not shown in detail on this map; at least one greenhouse is distinguished. Two additional structures are now located in the area of the formal gardens, and the small circular summerhouse is still noted. The 1932 Edition Ordnance Survey (Fig. 10) shows no significant changes from the previous edition; a greenhouse has been removed. By the 1957 Edition Ordnance Survey (Fig 11) the site has seen limited development. Three additional
buildings and a new greenhouse are located towards the south western edge of the site and the circular building present on the previous maps has now gone.

**Discussion**

In considering the archaeological potential of the study area, various factors must be taken into account, including previously recorded archaeological sites, previous land-use and disturbance and future land-use including the proposed development.

The site is located within the historical core of the town of Eton, and the archaeological and historical sources indicate that the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential. Although there were only a few entries in the SMR this possibly indicates a lack of archaeological work carried out in the town, and indeed very little is know of the town prior to the medieval period. The medieval town is known to have extended from Windsor Bridge, in the south, to Baldwin Bridge in the north, which incorporates this site on the High Street.

The cartographic sources indicate that the site has undergone limited development in its more recent history. From at least the late 18th century onwards the site has seen some level of development mostly along the High Street. Several other buildings have appeared to the rear of those fronting the High Street but development in this area appears to have been limited, and for a large portion it appears to have been a formal garden associated with the building, which is now 114a. As a result the site has probably undergone limited truncation, and any archaeological deposits which are present on the plot could be well preserved.

Although there are no listed buildings located within the boundaries of the site, there are Grade II listed buildings located either side of the plot. Any development proposals will need to consider the effects of their construction on the setting of this structure.

The future development has provisions for a basement, which would undoubtedly impact severely upon any below ground deposits. This factor combined with the site’s positioning and the lack of archaeological information about Eton would suggest that further work is warranted on this plot of land. The initial approach for this would be to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching across the site to ascertain the extent of any archaeological remains, if present.

The evaluation should be carried out by a competent archaeological contractor according to a written scheme of investigation approved by the archaeological adviser to the Local Planning Authority. The information provided by the fieldwork can be used to draw up a mitigation strategy to minimize the effects of development on any archaeological deposits present.
References


Blinkhorn and Pugh 1997, Excavation of the medieval waterfront at King Stable Street, Eton, Berkshire, Oxford Archaeological Unit, Occasional; Paper Number 7, Oxford


Ford, S, 1995, ‘89-90 and 92a High Street, Eton, An archaeological watching brief’, Report 95/02, Reading

Foreman, S, Hiller, J and Petts, D, 2002, Gathering the people and settling the land, the archaeology of a middle Thames landscape, Anglo-Saxon to post-medieval, Oxford Archaeology, monograph 14, Oxford

Gates, T, 1975, The Middle Thames Valley. An archaeological survey of the river gravels, Berkshire Archaeol Comm, Publ 1


Mills, A, D, 1998 Dictionary of English Place Names, Oxford


Weaver, S, D G 1997, King Stable Street, Eton, Berkshire, An Archaeological Evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Report 97/65, Reading

### APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Records within a 250 m search radius of the development site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>SMR Ref</th>
<th>Grid Ref (SU)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6526</td>
<td>968 773</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>Timber jetty or pier leading from Romney Island to Windsor Bridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RW15566</td>
<td>967 773</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>Excavations at King Stable Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>06474</td>
<td>966 773</td>
<td>Find spot</td>
<td>Post medieval</td>
<td>Clay pipes retrieved from rear of 88 High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>151.08</td>
<td>966 773</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Medieval-modern</td>
<td>Made ground encountered during watching brief at 89-90/92a High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>151.08.001</td>
<td>966 773</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Undated</td>
<td>Layer of peat encountered in test pit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>151.03</td>
<td>966 775</td>
<td>Documentary evidence</td>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RW15663</td>
<td>966 775</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>?Post medieval</td>
<td>20 High Street, Eton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RW15664</td>
<td>968 776</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>?Post medieval</td>
<td>Tangier Mill House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>RW15572</td>
<td>966 776</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Post medieval</td>
<td>Evaluation at 122/123 Eton High Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>151.01</td>
<td>966 776</td>
<td>Documentary evidence</td>
<td>Medieval/post medieval</td>
<td>Entry for town of Eton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>151.04</td>
<td>966 777</td>
<td>Documentary evidence/Structure</td>
<td>Medieval/Post medieval</td>
<td>Barnes Pool Bridge record as being present in 1273. Present bridge erected in 1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>151.06</td>
<td>967 774</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>Grade II listed building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5057.08.100</td>
<td>968 772</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Post medieval</td>
<td>Railway station</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted

1574  Saxton’s map of Berkshire (Fig. 2)
1645  Blaeu’s map of Buckinghamshire (Fig. 3)
1749  Warburton’s map of Middlesex (Fig. 4)
1761  Rocque’s map of Berkshire (Fig. 5)
1770  Jeffrey’s map of Buckinghamshire
1797  A plan of Eton Parish (Fig. 6)
1843  Tithe map of Eton cum Stockdale and Colenorton (Fig. 7)
1870  Ordnance Survey Plan of the Eton estate of W D Stuart (Fig. 8)
1912  Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 9)
1937  Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 10)
1957  Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 11)
114a, 116 and land to rear of 114a High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 1. Location of site within Eton and Berkshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 1173 SU87/97 at 1:12500
Ordnance Survey Licence AL52324A0001
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 2. Saxton’s map of 1574
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 3. Blaeu’s map of Buckinghamshire, 1645
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 4. Warburton’s map of Midlesex, 1749
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 5. Rocque’s map of Berkshire, 1761
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 6. A plan of Eton Parish, 1797
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 7. Tithe map of Eton cum Stockdale and Colenorton, 1843
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 8. Ordnance Survey Plan of the Eton estate of W D Stuart, 1870
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 9. 1912 Edition Ordnance Survey
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 10. 1932 Edition Ordnance Survey map
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 11. 1957 Edition Ordnance Survey map
114A, 116 and land to rear of 114A High Street, Eton, Berkshire, 2003

Figure 12. Development proposal