

2 Saxon Way, Old Windsor, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mrs J. McGillicuddy

by Pamela Jenkins

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SWO 05/67

August 2005

Summary

Site name: 2 Saxon Way, Old Windsor, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9890 7430

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 8th July – 16th August 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins

Site code: SWO 05/67

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were observed and no finds were recovered from the digging of a test pit, soakaway and drain trench.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 24.08.05
	Steve Preston ✓ 24.08.05

2 Saxon Way, Old Windsor, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

By Pamela Jenkins

Report 05/67

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 2 Saxon Way, Old Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 2PT (SU 9890 7430) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Julie McGillicuddy of 2 Saxon Way, Old Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 2PT.

Planning consent (app no 05/00302) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to erect a new extension to the rear of the above property. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Pamela Jenkins between 8th July and 16th August 2005 and the site code is SWO 05/67.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is a rectangular parcel of land on the north side of a cul-de-sac called Saxon Way in the village of Old Windsor, which is approximately 100m west of the river Thames (Fig. 2). The site itself, as with the surrounding landscape, is flat at approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Flood Plain Gravel (BGS 1981) although this was not exposed during groundworks.

Archaeological background

Old Windsor was an important settlement in Saxon times, being the site of the late Saxon Royal palace of Edward the Confessor (Scheduled Ancient Monument 79), also maintained under the early Norman Kings and

documented as such between 1061 and 1107 (Astill 1978; Hindmarch and Ford 2005). Kings William I and Henry I both held courts in Windsor according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (Swanton 2000).

The archaeological potential of the site is derived from its location on the margins of the palace complex of Edward the Confessor. Excavations in the 1950s (Wilson 1958) located elements of the palace complex, including the presence of a water mill. Watching briefs along Church Road to the north have all revealed little (Pollinger 1997; Saunders 1998; Hull 1999; Hardy 2002; Coles 2003; Pine and Jenkins 2004) but an evaluation within the graveyard produced 22 sherds of unstratified medieval pottery (Ford 1993) and a watching brief at Priory Cottage also produced late Saxon/early medieval pottery sherds as well as an undated male skeleton in a shallow grave (Drewett 1972). Most notably, an evaluation and excavation c.500m north of the site in 'The Paddock' revealed significant medieval activity including ditches, gullies, pits, postholes and layers indicating medieval occupation, including iron working in the 12th century (Mudd 1987). Recent excavation at 'The Manor' to the north also revealed medieval and post-medieval occupation (Hindmarch and Ford 2005).

Objectives and methodology

The original aims of the watching brief were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs. However, the foundations for the extension were inadvertently constructed without archaeological observation and only the arisings were available for examination. This watching brief was therefore restricted to examination of a soakaway located 5m from the extension, the drain run from the house to the soakaway, and a test pit located against the new foundations (Fig. 2). All excavations were carried out by hand.

Results

The soakaway

The soakaway measured 1.20m x 1.10m and was 1.10m deep. The turf was removed to reveal two layers of modern made ground (Figs 2 and 3). The upper layer was a mid grey brown clayey sand with very frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded flint gravel 0.33m deep containing modern glass, plastic, brick and tile. Below this, to a depth of 0.60m was a dark greyish brown clayey sand with frequent flint gravel, modern brick and tile, coal and clinker and wood debris. This made up ground lay above an orangey brown clayey silt subsoil containing small

sub-rounded and sub-angular flint gravel, as well as post-medieval brick and tile fragments. The natural geology was not observed. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

The test pit

The test pit measured 1.10m x 0.50m and was dug to the same depth as the original footings i.e., 1.10m. The stratigraphy was the same as that observed in the soakaway (Figs 2 and 3). The natural geology was not observed. No deposits or finds of an archaeological interest were recovered.

The drainage trench

The drainage trench was 0.20m wide and 0.15m deep and lay only within modern made ground.

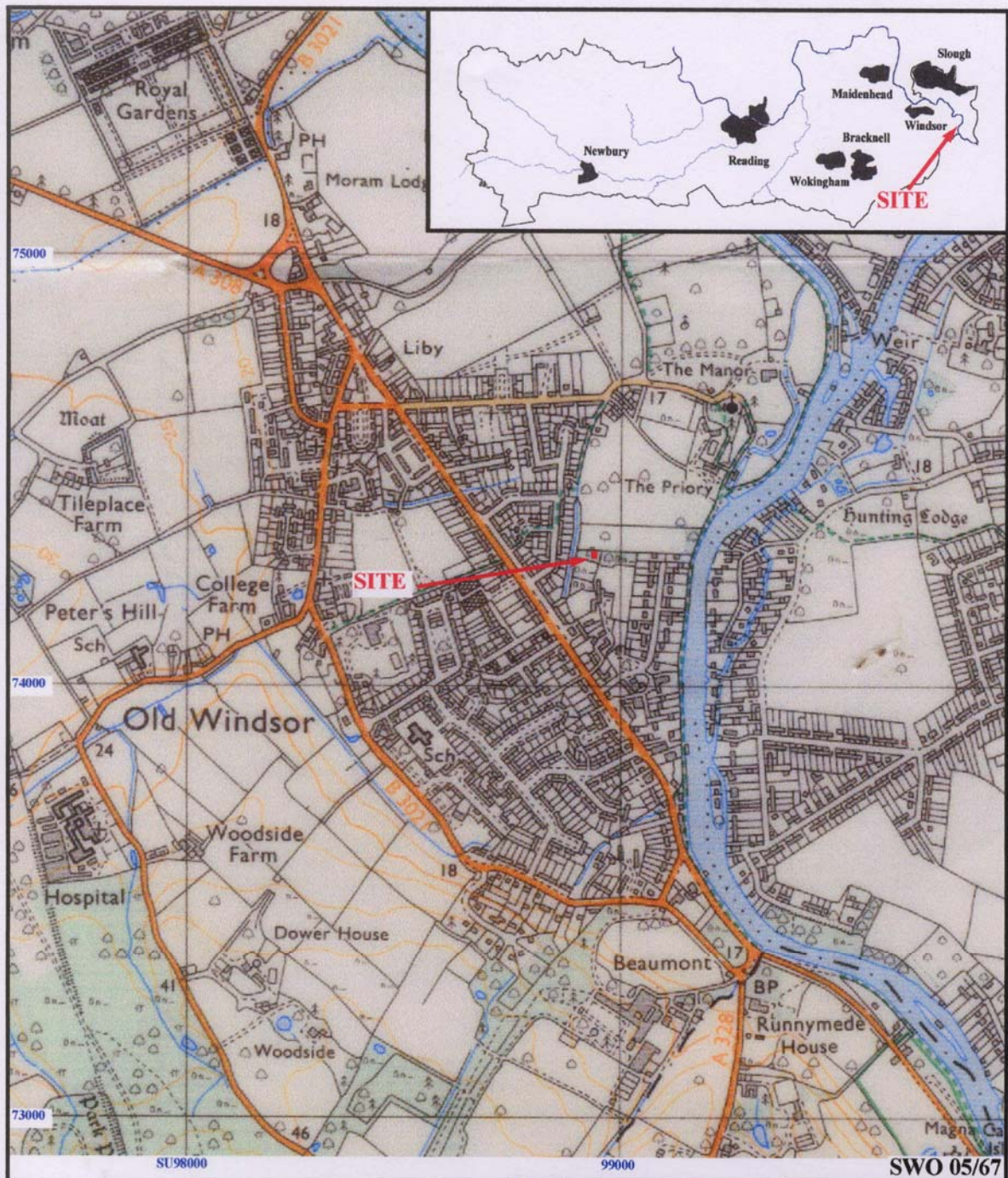
Conclusion

The existing property was built as part of a housing development in the early 1980s. The stratigraphy observed during the recent excavations in the back garden indicate that significant landscaping took place during this development, involving removal of all original topsoil and probably some subsoil up to 0.80m deep. Some subsoil has remained undisturbed. The excavations relating to the new extension, however, were not deep enough to go beyond this layer. The proximity of this property to the Scheduled Ancient Monument would suggest a high probability of related deposits, but no such deposits or finds were observed within the subsoil in the areas viewed. These areas were, however, small and isolated and did not involve the new footings, nor did they reach the natural geology. The existence of archaeological deposits relating to the Saxon palace or any other period, cannot therefore be ruled out, although it was not encountered here. It seems most probable that the digging of the footing trench, which could not be viewed as originally intended, would not have encountered the archaeologically relevant levels on this occasion.

References

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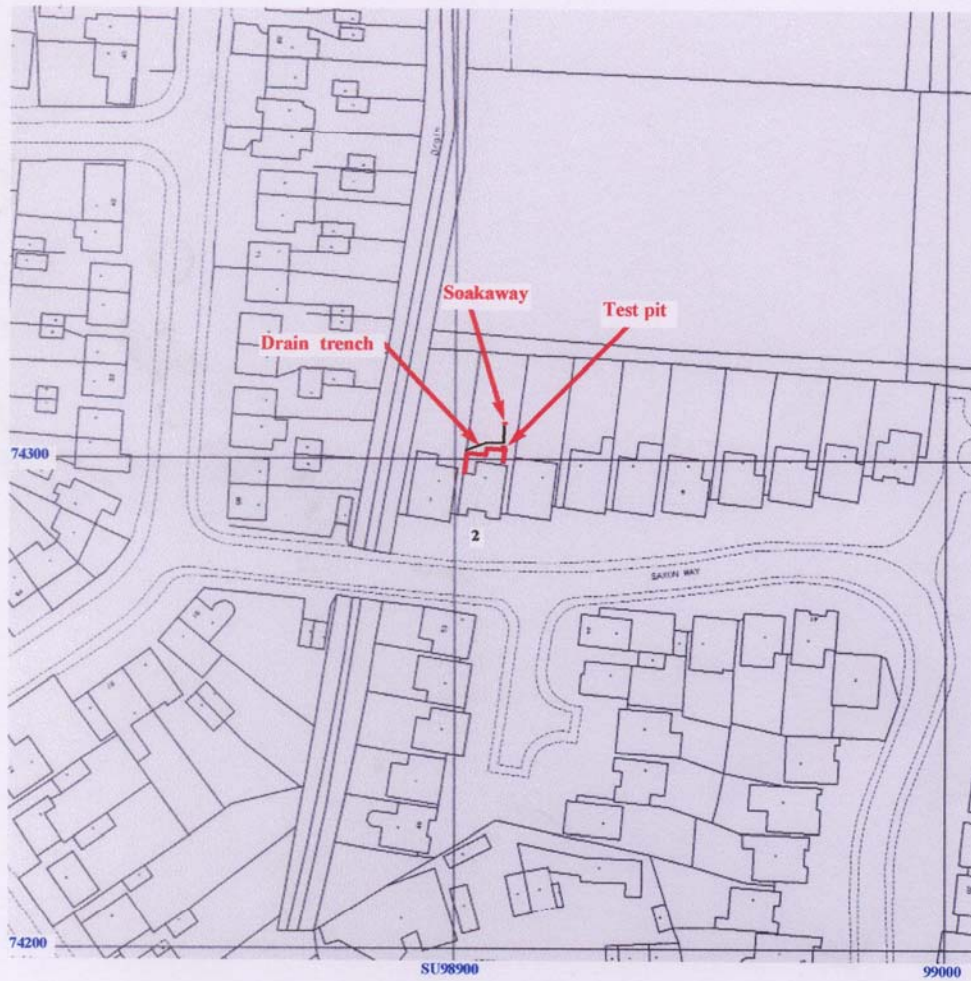


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Figure 1. Location of site within Old Windsor and Berkshire.

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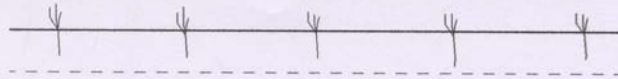
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Saxon Way and areas observed.

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Soakaway



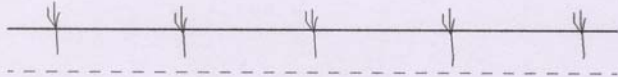
Made ground

Made ground

Subsoil
(orange brown silty clay with gravel
and fragments of coal, brick, etc)

Base of soakaway

Testpit



Made ground

Made ground

Subsoil
(orange brown silty clay with gravel)

Base of test pit



Figure 3. Sections of soakaway and test pit.

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