Abbey House, Mill Lane,
Hurley, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Mr & Mrs Tappenden

by Stephen Hammond
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code AHH00/23

November 2000
Summary

Site name: Abbey House, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire

Site code: AHH00/23

Grid reference: SU 8284 8399

Site activity: Watching brief

Date and duration of project: 20th October 2000

Area of site: 3.90m x 3.85m

Summary of results: One rimsherd of flanged bowl Roman pottery (3rd–4th century) and one piece of burnt flint were found, although no archaeological features were noted.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR, but will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course (Accn no. REDMG 2000.45).

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Melanie Hall✓ 3.11.00
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on the building of a new conservatory at Abbey House, Mill Lane, Hurley, Berkshire (SU 8284 8399) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Patrick Mackrory of Architectural, Planning and Surveying Services, 17 Bissley Drive, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3UX, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Tappenden. Planning permission has been granted (application no. 99/34367) for the addition of a conservatory to the existing house, subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief during ground disturbance associated with the construction of the new extension and associated services. An application for Scheduled Monument Consent has also been applied for as the groundworks may disturb or damage archaeological deposits relating to the use of the nearby medieval Priory.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Policy and Planning Guidance Note, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990) and the Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr R Bourn, Senior Archaeologist for Babtie, who act as advisors on archaeological matters to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond on the 20th October 2000 and the site code is AHH00/23.

Location, topography and geology

The site consists of a rectangular plot on the northern side of Mill Lane and to the east of the High Street, Hurley (Fig. 2). Geological maps indicate that the site lies on the border between
alluvium and flood plain terrace, the underlying geology being river gravel (BGS 1990). The site lies at c. 25m above Ordnance Datum.

**Archaeological background**

The site is situated within the boundary of part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hurley Benedictine Priory (SAM 19020), which was founded in 1086 by Geoffrey de Mandeville and under the control of the Abbey of Westminster until its suppression in 1536, when the land passed into lay hands (Ford 1987). An archaeological watching brief carried out on the foundations and associated services of Abbey House itself (Huscroft 1999) failed to reveal any archaeological deposits, as, too, did an archaeological watching brief at Warren House, which lies close by (Ford 1996). However, another watching brief at Monks Garden, Mill Lane (Pine 1999), which lies approximately 60m to the west of the site, located a probable large ditch containing pottery dating to the mid 12th and 13th centuries. Two pits were also located, one of which was dated to the early 12th to late 13th century.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and fully record any archaeological deposits present and to establish dating and phasing for any features present on the site. This would involve the monitoring of the digging of foundation trenches and the inspection of spoilheaps for artefacts. Should archaeological deposits be present, an attempt would be made, where possible, to provide information on the local economy and environment and to identify functional areas of the site.
Results

The foundation trenches (Fig. 3) were 0.58m deep and 0.50m wide and enclosed an area of 3.90m x 3.85m. The stratigraphy observed in the trenches typically consisted of 0.14m of dark brown silty clay topsoil over 0.16m of dark grey/brown clay silt, which in turn lay over 0.26m of mid brown silty clay. The natural geology was not revealed as the trenches were not dug deep enough. One rimsherd of Roman flanged bowl was found in the upper subsoil, together with a piece of burnt flint, although no archaeological features were observed within the areas of disturbance.

The finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

A single rimsherd was recovered from the subsoil during the watching brief. This comes from a flanged bowl in a grey-black, fine, sandy micaceous ware. The form is typical of the later Roman period (3rd–4th century).

Conclusion

From observations made during the watching brief, it has been concluded that groundworks for the construction of the new conservatory have not damaged or destroyed any archaeological features or deposits. Finding the sherd of Roman pottery is a curiosity since only medieval features, deposits or finds were expected. This sherd, however, could simply have been re-deposited from elsewhere or be an isolated find within the site.

References


Huscroft, L, 1999, Abbey House, Mill Lane, Hurley, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 99/36, Reading

Pine, J 1999, Monks Garden, Mill Lane, Hurley, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 98/83, Reading

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Figure 1. Location of site within Hurley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site.
Figure 3. Foundations monitored during watching brief.