Former District Hospital, Andover Road, Newbury, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Leadbitter Construction

by Pamela Jenkins

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ARN05/46

August 2005
Summary

Site name: Former District Hospital Andover Road, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4690 6640

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 6th–22nd July 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins

Site code: ARN 05/46

Area of site: Area A c.7400sq m; Area B c.1436sq m

Summary of results: Three undated features were observed in Area A: two ditches and a possible pit. Several modern features relating to the previous buildings were also recorded. No finds were recovered.

Monuments identified: Two ditches and a possible pit.

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

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the former District Hospital, Andover Road, Newbury, West Berkshire (SU4690 6640) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jon Fowler of Leadbitter Construction, Beaufort Court, Beaufort Park, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol, BS32 4ND.

West Berkshire Council has granted planning consent (03/02316) for the demolition and redevelopment of the former District Hospital. The consent is subject to a condition which requires an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during any groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and West Berkshire Council’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Heritage Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Cass, Leon Fern and Pamela Jenkins between the 6th and 22nd July 2005 and the site code is ARN 05/46.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located immediately to the south-west of the centre of Newbury on the south side of the river Kennet in a predominantly residential area, on the north-west (Area A) and south-east (Area B) sides of Andover Road (Fig. 2). The site was formerly occupied by a hospital. The underlying geology is river and valley gravels (BGS 1971) and it lies c. 85m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies on the margins of the historic town of Newbury. The archaeological potential of the site stems primarily from its location within an area of known Roman activity recorded during an extensive survey of this area (Lobb and Rose 1996). The Newbury area, being situated within the Kennet Valley, is an archaeologically
rich area with finds from all periods. Several prehistoric sites have been recorded within the Newbury stretch of
the valley and a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery is noted on higher ground to the south at Wash Common.
Roman activity is less well recorded, but a Roman cemetery is recorded on the south-eastern edge of Newbury.

The town is first mentioned in a grant of c. AD 1080 where it is recorded as Neuberie meaning ‘New
market town or borough’ (Mills 1998). It developed rapidly until by the late 18th- mid 19th centuries the town
had thriving industries including breweries and foundries (Astill 1978).

Several projects have been undertaken in the near vicinity of the site. Archaeological evaluations at
Oddfellows Road (Pine 1998); 93–99 Bartholomew Road (Saunders 1997) and a watching brief at land off
Enborne Road (Challis 2003) did not reveal any archaeological deposits or finds. These sites had either been
truncated by earlier building work or the new building work did not reach deep enough to disturb any
archaeologically relevant levels. An evaluation at Newbury Wharf revealed 18th- to 20th-century deposits
including an 18th-century canal basin and only a single sherd of Roman pottery (Hull 1997).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new
construction work. This was to involve examination of the removal of any existing footings during demolition
and areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and
services as necessary.

Results (Figs 3 and 4)

Demolition and ground reduction in Area A and Area B revealed no archaeological deposits. Large areas of the
site were heavily truncated by the earlier hospital buildings and disturbed by the demolition process.

Foundation trenches inspected in Area A were 0.80m wide and varied between 1m and 1.50m deep across
the site and revealed approximately 0.35m of either demolition rubble/made ground or a mid orange brown
gravelly subsoil above sandy gravel natural. Spoil was removed from site immediately by lorry and did not
therefore permit monitoring of spoilheaps. Ground beam construction in Area B revealed only made ground to a
depth of 0.80m.

Features 1–9 were 20th-century pits and truncation probably relating to the demolished hospital buildings.
Three features were however identified below the subsoil (62). These were two ditches (10 and 11) and a
possible pit (12) which cut the natural gravel. Ditch 10 was still visible in plan in the bottom of the footings and
therefore exceeded 1.10m in depth. It was 1m wide and visible for a distance of 1.60m. This was truncated along part of its north-east edge by a later ditch 11 which was 2.40m wide. Their fills (59) and (60) respectively appear of the same type, being a mid greyish brown sandy silt and gravel.

A further feature (12) was observed within the same footing. It was 1m deep and therefore not visible in plan in the bottom of the footings. It was 3.50m wide but its full length could not be established as it continued northwards beyond the limits of the groundworks. Its fill (61) was similar to that observed in the other features. No finds were recovered from any of these features.

**Finds**

No archaeological finds were recovered.

**Conclusion**

In Area A Several areas of modern truncation were identified. Three features were observed on the south-east edge of Area A adjacent to Andover Road but none of these were datable in the absence of finds. The two ditches (10 and 11) do not extend to the north west beyond the footings but ditch 10 does appear to extend towards Andover Road. The nature of feature 12 is uncertain but may be a large shallow pit or could simply be a tree bole.

In Area B, the groundworks did not exceed the depth of modern made ground and therefore no archaeological deposits were observed.

**References**

## APPENDIX 1: Feature details

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<td>Brick (not retained)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>20th century</td>
<td>Brick and tile; glass; pottery (not retained)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>20th century</td>
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<td>61</td>
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Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Plan Showing Layout of Former Hospital

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Figure 2. Plan Showing Layout of Former Hospital
Figure 3. Plan of Site Showing Areas Observed

Area A: Footings

Area B: Groundbeams

Section 1

Projected line of Ditch 10

Area of High Disturbance From Hospital Buildings

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Figure 3. Plan of Site Showing Areas Observed
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Figure 4: Section