Summary

**Site name:** Charters, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire.

**Grid reference:** SU 9415 6730

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 20th–25th October 2005

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Richard Oram

**Site code:** CSB 05/105

**Area of site:** c.10.8ha

**Summary of results:** A pit and a gully or rut of late 19th or 20th century date were investigated but no deposits of archaeological interest were recorded and no finds retrieved

**Monuments identified:** None

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

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out Charters, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire (SU 9415 6730) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stuart Meyrick-Brook of Galliford Try, Cowley Business Park, Cowley, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2AL.

Planning permission has been granted by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the demolition of some existing structures on the site and replacement by new buildings and access roads. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires the site to be investigated during groundworks in two phases with field evaluation followed by a watching brief. This report documents the evaluation phase of the project.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead’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 Richard Oram and Natasha Bennett in October 2005, and the site code is CSB05/105. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

A desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by Pre Construct Archaeology and summarized in a written scheme of archaeological investigation prepared by Broadway Malyan (Aldsworth 2005). It concluded that the area proposed for building B and its associated access drive, to the north of the 1930s building (Fig. 2), is less likely to have been disturbed and that an ‘appropriate response to the perceived threat to any potential archaeology that might exist would be by evaluation trenches in the grassed area between the trees, immediately to the west of the former sports recreational building, and across the line of the new approach road to the listed building’ (Aldsworth 2005).

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the west of Sunningdale immediately south of the Reading–London Waterloo railway line and north of the A30. It comprises an irregular parcel of land of approximately 10 ha. The site slopes moderately
down from the north to the south and is currently occupied by a number of houses and a large landscaped garden. The underlying geology is Bracklesham Beds (BGS 1981), which was recorded on site, and the site lies at approximately 50m to 80m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Broadway Malyan (Aldsworth 2005) drawing on the results of an earlier desk-based assessment (Carew 2005). In summary, the site lies within an area with a modest range of recorded archaeological deposits (Ford 1987), perhaps as a result of relatively few opportunities for the discovery of archaeology material in this former heathland-dominated landscape. A number of Bronze Age round barrows are recorded and contemporary occupation must also be present but is as yet unlocated. Roman archaeology is also known with the road from Silchester to London passing to the south and with at least one villa-type site discovered during construction of the railway where it intersected the Roman road (Hughes 1890). There is a possibility of further Roman deposits in the environs.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims are to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site and to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

Four trenches were excavated, two at 12m long and two at 9m long, all 1.6 m wide. Two trenches were located within the footprint of the proposed new building plot the other two located across the route of the proposed access road (Fig. 3). They were dug with a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision to expose the natural geology. The spoil heaps were then metal detected and checked for other finds. Only two possible features were noted and these were hand-cleaned before excavation.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.
Results

Trench 1
This trench aligned east-west was excavated across the access road in the grassy area, immediately north of the listed building (Fig. 2). It was dug through 0.4m of topsoil onto white/grey silty sand 0.25m thick, that sat upon the orange yellow silty sand natural. It is possible that the white/grey sand is a podzol, a leached deposit, and this might indicate that the ground beneath the topsoil has not been disturbed for some time. A possible pit [1] was at visible 6.3m from the west-end once the subsoil had been removed. This shallow sloping-sided pit, 0.61m in diameter and 0.18m deep, with a concave base proved to contain modern brick and tile fragments (not retained), in yellow brown silty sand (Figs. 3 and 4). No other features were noted within this trench and no finds were recovered from the spoilheap.

Trench 2 (Plate 1)
This trench was dug parallel to trench 1 approximately 10m south of it, closer to the existing listed building. It was excavated through 0.2m of topsoil and 0.4m of a fine white/yellow clayey sand to a depth of 0.65m. This revealed red -yellow sandy silt natural. One feature, a thin gully [2], 0.3m wide and 0.06m deep, was noted in this trench, 3.2m from the west-end and aligned roughly north-south (Figs 3 and 4). The gully had an irregular base and fairly steep sides and its red brown silty sand fill produced modern brick and tile fragments (not retained). This feature is likely to represent a rut or some other modern disturbance rather than the deliberate digging of a gully such as to define a boundary.

Trench 3
This trench was aligned north-south across part of the new access road (Fig. 2). It was excavated through 0.35m of topsoil and 0.45m of white/grey silty sand onto red/brown silty sand 0.2m thick. This in turn overlay the orange/yellow silty sand natural. The natural was heavily disturbed by roots. No archaeological deposits were noted in this trench.

Trench 4 (Plate 2)
This trench was excavated parallel to Trench 3 but approximately 20m to the south. It was excavated through 0.35m of topsoil and 0.33m of pink-grey sandy silt subsoil onto an orange-white clayey sand natural. Root action and tree boles heavily disturbed this natural. No archaeological deposits were noted within this trench.
Conclusion

Trenches 1 and 2, opened through the grassy area immediately north of the listed building, uncovered a deep topsoil and a possible podzol or leached soil layer. This could suggest that the area lay undisturbed for some time. This area is within the formal gardens of Charters House and therefore suffered little in recent years from agricultural or construction damage. The two features noted in these trenches were both found to contain a quantity of modern brick fragments that might well relate to an earlier demolition phase such as in the early 1930s, as highlighted by the written scheme of investigation (Aldsworth 2005).

Trenches 3 and 4, opened across the proposed new building plots to the north of the site, were much shallower and disturbed by root action. These two trenches were within the area disturbed on the surface by the demolition of the former sports building that stood on the site previously. Neither of these trenches uncovered any archaeological deposits or features.

Given the site’s former use and the undisturbed nature of the grounds, any possible archaeology that might have been present should have survived well with little or no truncation. As the only two features noted during the works were both related to the more modern use of the area it is likely that there is little or no surviving archaeology on this part of the site.

References

Aldsworth, F, 2005, ‘Written Scheme of Investigation for Charters, Sunningdale, Berkshire’, Broadway Malyan, Weybridge
Ford, S, 1987, East Berkshire Archaeological Survey, Berkshire County Coune Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
Hughes G M, 1890, History of Windsor Forest and Sunninghill and the Great Park
APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench No.</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<td>8.48</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Topsoil 0-0.40m, onto Subsoil 0.40-0.62m, white yellow silty sand, onto natural 0.62m+ red yellow silty sand</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Topsoil 0-0.20m, onto Subsoil 0.20-0.63m, white yellow silty sand, onto natural 0.63m+ red yellow silty sand [Plate 2]</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>Topsoil 0-0.24m, onto Subsoil 0.24-0.57m, Pink grey silty sand, onto natural 0.57-0.59m+ orange white silty sand</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Topsoil 0-0.35m, onto Subsoil 0.35-0.45m, white grey silty sand, onto Subsoil 0.40-0.65m, red brown silty sand, onto natural 0.65-0.68m+ orange yellow silty sand [Plate 1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX 2: Feature details

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<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
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<th>Fill (s)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Dating evidence</th>
</tr>
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<td>Topsoil</td>
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<td>Modern</td>
<td>B+T</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td>Subsoil</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>B+T</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pit</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Brick Fragments (not retained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gully</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Brick Fragments (not retained)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charters, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire, 2005
Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Sunningdale and Berkshire.

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Figure 3. Plan of trenches with modern features 1 and 2.
Figure 4. Sections of features 1 and 2, with representative section of Trench 1
Plate 1. Trench 2 looking east. Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 2. Trench 4 looking north. Scales: 2m and 1m.