Churchill Farm, Kingham Road
Churchill, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr P and R Crudge

by Erlend Hindmarch
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CFC 02/61

July 2002
Summary

Site name: Churchill Farm, Kingham Road, Churchill, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 2815 2420

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 25–26th June 2002

Project manager: Erlend Hindmarch

Site supervisor: Erlend Hindmarch

Site code: CFC02/61

Area of site: 0.23ha

Summary of results: Only one trench contained any significant archaeological deposits. This consisted of a possible Saxon Grubenhaus with associated stake and postholes.

Monuments identified: Saxon Grubenhaus

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the complete archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service, given that permission is received to deposit the artefacts.

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Churchill Farm, Kingham Road, Churchill, Oxfordshire (SP 2815 2420) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Fowler Architects, The Studio, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 3BY on behalf of Mr P Crudge, Windyridge, Churchill, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 6NE.

Planning permission (app no(01/1768) is being sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to construct four dwellings on the site. It has been requested that a field evaluation should take place on the site to provide information for a mitigation strategy which will minimize the effect of groundworks on any significant archaeological remains that may be damaged or destroyed by any groundworks associated with the development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the District policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Cuddington, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. The fieldwork was undertaken by Erlend Hindmarch and Julie Cassidy on the 25th and 26th June and the site code is CFC 02/61. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the south side of Kingham Road to the west of the junction with the B4450 (Fig 2). The site is relatively flat is partially occupied by an orchard to the west with the rest of the area showing signs of recent demolition work. The underlying geology as shown on maps (BGS 1968), is Great Oolite Limestone, which was seen in all the trenches. The site lies at a height of c. 163m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

No desktop survey was carried out for the site but it is known that it lies on the margins of the historic core of the village of Churchill. Medieval finds have been recovered from the vicinity of the site and structures were recorded on the Davis map of the area dated 1797 on or close to the site.
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 with specific regard to Saxon and Medieval deposits which may continue in use through to the post-medieval era. To achieve these aims, four trenches were dug using a JCB-type digger fitted with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 3). All four trenches were to be 15m long. The mechanical digger was only used to remove modern overburden until such a point as the underlying natural was reached, or until archaeological deposits were revealed. Where such deposits were reached the machine was halted and the deposits were cleaned, excavated, sampled and recorded by hand in order to satisfy the aims the brief. All machining was carried out under the direct supervision of an experienced and qualified archaeologist. All spoil heaps were monitored for stray finds.

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

Results

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)
This trench was located approximately east to west along the northern edge of the proposal site. It was dug to a maximum depth of 0.69m where the natural geology was encountered. The first 5m of the trench was cut through turf and topsoil to a depth of 0.45m. The rest of the trench (10-15m) showed no topsoil but contained instead much rubble and would appear to be made ground. The made ground had a depth of 0.6m and came down directly onto the natural limestone. It is likely that the ground has been truncated in this area and that any archaeological deposits in this area have been partially or wholly removed.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)
Trench 2 was placed south-west to north-east through an area of old orchard. It had topsoil to a depth of 0.5m, beneath which was observed natural limestone. No archaeology was seen in this trench and no finds recovered.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)
The location of this trench was parallel to the south edge of the development site. It had similarities with Trench 1 in that half was made up from undisturbed ground whilst half contained building rubble. Also like Trench 1 the disturbed ground was at the eastern end and the undisturbed ground toward the west. Unlike Trench 1 this trench
contained deposits of significant archaeological interest. Natural was seen in the trench base at a depth of 0.5m below the topsoil to a point 5m from the west end. Beyond this point a mid brown clay silt (52) was seen in the base of the trench and continued for a distance of 4.5m at which point the natural became apparent beneath the disturbed ground in this area. It was also noted that the natural continued along the southern side of the feature for a short distance in the west. It was decided to excavate the section across to this area to determine if a feature terminus or corner was visible (Figs 4 and 5).

The section showed that the feature consisted of a near vertical cut [1] penetrating the natural to a depth of 0.45m, along the western and eastern edges with a corner to the south and a flat base. The feature lay beneath the topsoil (50) and a layer of subsoil (52) and was filled with a dark brown clay silt (53). A large quantity of bone was recovered from this fill along with a small amount of pottery (see Finds). Along the face of the section very close to the western edge of the depression a small post hole [5] was observed. This posthole was excavated to show that it was vertically sided with a flat bottom with a diameter of 0.24m. It was filled with a dark brown clay silt (54) not unlike the fill of the main feature. No finds were recovered from this fill.

In line with the eastern edge of [1] within the section floor, cutting in to the natural, were three small stake holes [14, 15 and 16]. These were circular in plan with a diameter of between 0.04-0.05m. Excavation showed them to be in excess of 0.08m deep with steep sides that tapered inwards giving a narrowing effect. The fills of these features [57] were the similar to [54] but again no finds were recovered.

The extreme western edge of the trench had a modern flexible water pipe running across the bottom. This occupied a cut (17) that had its origins in the present surface and cut the natural. Initially it was thought that this was a modern feature but closer inspection may suggest that this is sitting directly on top of a feature similar to [1].

In summary this trench seemed to have revealed three sides of a well defined sunken structure measuring 0.4m across with a depth of 0.45m containing within it at least one post hole and a number of stake holes. The trench also gave hints that a similar structure may lie to the west. As Trench 4 was slightly short it was decided to excavate an extra trench (5) just to the north of Trench 3 in order to see if any further extent of [1] could be detected.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)
The area along the eastern edge of the site where this trench was situated was seen to have been heavily disturbed by modern activity. The excavation of the trench confirmed this with building rubble ground seen
along the length of the trench. At the north end of the trench this was seen to be 0.6m deep. The depth of the made ground increased toward the south reaching a maximum of 1m. The made ground was directly on top of the natural geology and the same truncation can be posited here as in Trench 1. This trench was only 12m long due to constraints of the size of the machine and the location of a new road.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4)
Trench 5 was an extra trench to provide further information about the deposits found in Trench 3. It was placed 2m to the north of, and perpendicular to Trench 3. Excavation by machine showed that this trench might contain the northern edge of feature [1]. Natural was reach at a depth of 0.4m from the present day surface and this was seen stretching from a point 2m from the south end of the trench to the extreme north end. The area south of the point where the natural was located revealed a dark brown clay silt (55) which was defined by cut [2]. A section was placed through this deposit along the western edge of the trench. This section showed that deposit (55) lay beneath the present topsoil and directly above a second layer (56) also defined by cut [2]. Fill (56) was similar to (53) seen in Trench 3. It contained a large amount of bone and a small number of pot sherds. Pottery was also recovered from the interface between the topsoil and (55). Located in the base of the section cutting in to the natural were stake holes [5-13], similar to those seen in [1] of Trench 3. These totalled 8 in number and although seemingly randomly placed further excavation may show some sort of pattern.

Finds

Pottery (identified by Cathy Underwood-Keevil)
Pottery totalling 16 sherds was recovered from Trenches 3 and 5 as detailed in appendix 2. Four of the sherds came from Trench 3 with three of these sherds dating to the Roman Period (2nd to 4th century) and one large sherd dating from the Saxon era (7th century). The Saxon sherd derived from a long-necked shouldered jar.

The pottery from Trench 5 can be divided up into two distinct categories. That from the interface of the topsoil (50) and the upper fill of [2] dates to the early medieval period and includes sherds of OXBB and OXBR type with the one possible form being a jug. The rest of the material was located directly on the base of [2] beneath (55) and would all appear to be Saxon.

The limestone calcareous types according to Berisford/Shakenoak are supposed to be earlier than the 5th century and the fine sandy wares occur early in the sequence. The gravel tempered ware fabric is unique to this area and may be a local product.
**Metal**

One badly corroded ferrous object was found in Trench 3 (53). The object was ‘U’ shaped with the tips being slightly bent outwards. The ends of the object had also been flattened out with the metal having a greater thickness than height at this point. Towards the centre of the object this profile changed with the height being greater than the width. The dimensions of the object as a whole are 85mm x 60mm and weighs 18g. At present this object is unidentified but given its context, could well be of Saxon origin.

**Worked Bone**

Two pieces of worked bone were recovered from the fills of the sunken feature (Appendix 3). The first of these found within (53) trench 3 has been identified as a bone pin. It has a length of 84mm although it appears to have been broken. It is oval in section cumulating in a bluntish point. It has a polished sheen. The bone from which the pin has been made has not been identified.

The second object also damaged was identified as a bone pinbeater. This is a larger object, being 93mm long. It is oval in section and also has a slight curve to it. It would appear that it was carved from a sheep metapodial. Pinbeaters are recognisable by having a point at each end and are associated with weaving. Although the pinbeater from this site only has one point there is a slight narrowing from the thickest part of the bone towards the broken end which suggests that this end cumulated in a point also. Pinbeaters are common from Saxon sites from 7th century onwards but the pottery from this context suggests this feature belongs earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period. Pinbeaters have been found on sites from this period such as West Stow, Walton and Abingdon (West 1985; Leeds 1923; Avery and Brown 1972)

**Animal Bone by Sian Anthony**

A total of 470 bones were found in only three contexts from this site. All bone pieces were in excellent condition giving a good representation of butchery marks. Species represented include cattle, sheep/goats, pigs, domestic fowl and other larger birds and one dog (Appendix 4). Five examples of butchery marks were found on cattle- and sheep-size bones and three pieces showed evidence of burning. Domestic fowl and other larger birds, probably goose are also present although there are no butchery marks upon these bones. Forty bones have the possibility of being aged either by epiphyseal fusion methods or tooth eruption indicating a small percentage available for assessing utilisation patterns.
There seem to be equal amounts of cattle and sheep although this may be a result of amalgamation of sheep and pig-size animals. The presence of some pig elements emphasizes the mixed farming economy that seems to be represented in the assemblage. No wild animals were represented which seems unusual in a rural site although this may be caused by retrieval methods or other biases. A mandible is the only bone that represents the dog and this shows that the dog is of a young age. This assessment shows that there is high potential for further analysis, ageing and metrical information to be retrieved from this assemblage of these bones.

Conclusion

This evaluation has clearly shown that part of the proposal site has archaeological potential. The eastern area of the site has been badly disturbed by modern activity whilst the western area, and in particular the south-west corner, has a high potential for significant and important archaeological remains most probably representing Saxon occupation. Trenches 3 and 5 revealed the extents a sub-rectangular feature measuring approximately 4.5m x 5.5m with a depth of 0.45m. Within this feature was one posthole. The pottery associated with the structure places the date of construction to the Saxon period with a fill containing residual pottery from the Roman era. Early medieval pottery was found between the upper levels and the sealing to topsoil.

The date and form of the feature would suggest that the evaluation has revealed the location of a Saxon sunken-featured building or Grubenhaus. It is not unusual for Roman pottery to be found within this type of context. There is also the possibility that a further such feature lies just on the western edge of Trench 3. The stake holes found within the confines of the hut may be associated with the use of looms and other such structures. Weaving activity is also suggested by the recovery of a bone pin beater (Trench 5, (56)). This agrees well with current interpretations of these structures as working areas or ancillary buildings (Blair, 1994, 18). Further domestic activity can be assumed with the presence of a bone pin or awl (trench3 (53)) One aspect of note is the quantity and state of preservation of animal bone from this feature.

References

Avery, M and Brown, D 1972, ‘Saxon features at Abingdon’ Oxoniensia 37, 66-81
Blair, J, 1994, Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire, Oxford
West, S E, 1985, West Stow, The Anglo-Saxon Village, East Anglian Archaeology 24 Gressenhall
**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at south or west end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench No.</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1          | 15.5       | 1.6         | 0.69      | 0.0m to 5.5m  
Topsoil 0.5m  
Natural limestone  
5.5m to 15.5m  
Modern rubble up to 0.69m  
Natural limestone |
| 2          | 15         | 1.6         | 0.5       | Topsoil 0.3m-0.4m  
Natural limestone |
| 3          | 15.3       | 1.6         | 0.5       | 0.0m to 9m  
Topsoil 0.45m  
Subsoil (52) 0.1m. seen from 4m to 8m  
[01] Cut of grub hut. Same as [02] trench 5  
(53) Fill of [01]. Same as (56) trench 5, 0.45mSaxon  
[03] Cut of post hole  
(54) Fill of [03]  
[14, 15 and 16] Cut of stake holes  
(59) fill of stake holes  
Natural limestone  
9m to 15.3m  
Modern rubble (made ground) 0.5m  
Natural limestone |
| 4          | 12         | 1.6         | 1.0       | Modern rubble (made ground)  
Natural limestone  
Trench also contained modern rubble fill pits, unexcavated |
| 5          | 4.5        | 1.6         | 0.3       | Topsoil 0.3m  
(55) Subsoil 0.15  
[02] Cut of grub hut. Same as [01] trench 3  
(56) Fill of [02]. Same as (53) trench 3, 0.5m  
[5 to13] Cut of stake holes  
(57) Fill of stake holes |
### APPENDIX 2: Pottery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>No. of sherds</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[1] (53)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Roman grey ware</td>
<td>C2-C4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[1] (53)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Roman grog temper</td>
<td>C3-C4</td>
<td>&gt;2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[1] (53)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gravel tempered ware</td>
<td>Long necked shouldered jar</td>
<td>Possible Saxon C7</td>
<td>52g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(50)/(55)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Splashed glaze Minety type/Glos. type OXBB</td>
<td>Jug</td>
<td>C13-C15 Medieval</td>
<td>16g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(50)/(55)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>OXBR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early Medieval</td>
<td>&gt;2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(50)/(55)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fine Shelly fabric</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>&gt;2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(50)/(55)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fine sandy fabric</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>&gt;2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fine limestone tempered</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>4g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gravel tempered ware</td>
<td>Body-Sherd</td>
<td>Saxon</td>
<td>2g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rough-sandy tempered</td>
<td>Neck sherd</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fine sandy burnished fabric</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>10g</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**APPENDIX 3: Worked bone**

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<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Length 85mm. Broken Oval cross section. Single point</td>
<td>Pin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Length 93mm Broken. Oval cross section. Slightly curved. Single point but broken end narrowing suggesting a second pointed end.</td>
<td>Pinbeater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: Animal bone

Figure 1. Species represented by contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>Cow size</th>
<th>Sheep/goats</th>
<th>Sheep size</th>
<th>Pig</th>
<th>Bird</th>
<th>Dog</th>
<th>Unidentified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/53</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/56</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50/55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Figure 1. Location of site within Churchill and Oxfordshire.
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Churchill Farm, Churchill, Oxfordshire, 2002
Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 2. Location of site within Churchill.
Figure 3. Location of trenches.
Figure 4. Plan of feature in trenches 3 and 5.

Churchill Farm, Churchill, Oxfordshire, 2002
Figure 5: Section of feature in trench 3.