The Chequers, Church Lane, Cassington, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Chequers Stone Homes Limited

by M J Saunders
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TCC00/04

August 2000
Summary

Site name: The Chequers, Church Lane, Cassington

Grid reference: SP 4539 1066

Site activity: Watching brief

Date of project: June 13th – August 1st, 2000

Site code: TCC00/04

Area of site: c. 0.3 hectares

Summary of results:

Monuments identified: Possible medieval pits although no dating evidence present. Previous evaluation located features of medieval date.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is at present held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.
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Report 00/04-2

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land previously occupied by
The Chequers public house adjacent to Church Lane and Eynsham Road, Cassington, Oxfordshire (SP 4539
1066). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Ibbitson of Chequers Stone Homes Limited, Quarry Court,
Bell Lane, Cassington, OX8 1DS (Fig. 1).

Planning permission has been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the
existing public house and redevelopment for housing including a new public house with cellar. A field
evaluation carried out in January 2000 (Ford 2000), as part of the planning application, located some medieval
archaeological deposits. As a condition on the planning permission an archaeological watching brief was
requested to take place during groundworks in order to mitigate the effects of development.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Policy and Planning Guidance Note
Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16 1990) and the District Council policies on archaeology. The watching brief
was carried out according to a design brief prepared by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County
Archaeology Service. The work was carried out by Sarah Coles and Steve Hammond between June 13th and 1st
August 2000. The site code is TCC00/04.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located within the centre of the historic core of Cassington, approximately 100m west of the church
(Fig. 1). The site occupies an irregular parcel of land (c. 0.3 hectares) fronting the two village streets and to the
rear of the village hall. The rear of the former public house is occupied by a car park, rough ground and a
garden. The site is at two levels with the rough grass and garden approximately 0.4m higher than the car park,
which is level with the road at a height of c. 60m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is indicated
by the British Geological Survey to be Terrace Gravels (BGS 1982).
Archeological Background

The site lies within the historic core of Cassington, a place first mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). It is relatively close to the medieval church and churchyard and a moated manor house at Reynolds Farm. It is possible that the medieval village had late Saxon origins. More generally, the site lies within an area of the Thames Valley gravels rich in prehistoric, Roman and Saxon remains (e.g. Chadwick-Hawkes 1986, fig. 9; Hey and Bell 1999, 85).

An archaeological evaluation (Ford 2000), consisting of five trenches, located a number of deposits comprising pits, postholes, scoops and a possible quarry pit, of medieval date (12th–15th century). One sherd of Roman and four sherds of Saxon pottery suggested additional activity in the area during these periods.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by construction of the new building. This involved examination of areas stripped of topsoil and subsoil, an area which was to be excavated for the new public house cellar, and trenches for foundations and service runs (Fig. 2). All archaeological deposits were to be excavated and fully recorded.

Results

The first area observed was the car parking area, which was stripped of topsoil and some subsoil. The stratigraphy in this area consisted of 0.30m of dark grey-brown, silty-clay topsoil over 0.18m of yellowish grey-brown, sandy, silty-clay subsoil with rounded flint inclusions. No archaeological features were observed and no finds were recovered from the spoil. It is probable that the stripping was not sufficiently deep to expose archaeological deposits.

The second area was in the south-western part of the site, where a tarmacadam car park was originally located. The stratigraphy in this area consisted of tarmac over made ground, onto subsoil. The stripping was carried out to a maximum depth of 0.30m. It was not possible to define where the suspected quarry pit located during the previous evaluation lay due to the shallow depth of topsoil stripping. Parts of the area observed were only stripped to the level of made ground whilst others were stripped to the very top of the subsoil. Further areas in the northern part of the site were also monitored but were already filled with rubble and tarmac. Again, no archaeology was present and no finds were recovered from the spoil.
The third site visit involved monitoring the first phase of excavation of the footing trenches. These were dug through the subsoil and into the natural gravel. Two possible archaeological features were visible in the sections, namely pit 101 and pit/ditch 100 (Fig. 3), although no artefacts were recovered. Pit 101 was 0.65m deep and 2.15m long. It was truncated at its northern end by modern disturbance. A further visit to monitor the second phase of excavation of the footings confirmed that feature 100 was indeed a pit. This was 0.25m deep and at least 0.72m across; only a part of it lay within the trench. A further pit (102/103) was cut by two of the footing trenches. The pit was 0.27m deep and probably in excess of 2.3m in diameter. A third phase of excavation of the footing trenches was also observed but no further features were identified and no finds were recovered.

Finally, the excavation of the cellar for the new public house was inspected but only modern material was present in the spoil.

**Conclusion**

The watching brief has successfully located three further pits, in addition to the medieval features (11th–15th century) discovered during the field evaluation. Unfortunately, none of the features discovered during this watching brief have been dated; the possibility remains that they, too, are medieval in date.

**References**

Ford, S, 2000, The Chequers, Church Lane, Cassington, Oxfordshire, archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/4, Reading
The Chequers Public House, Church Lane, Cassington, Oxfordshire, 2000

Figure 1. Location of site within Cassington and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of groundworks monitored during watching brief
Section 1

W  E

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topsoil

made ground

subsoil

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Section 2

N  S

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topsoil

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Section 3

W  E

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subsoil

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Figure 3 Section.

The Chequers Public House, Church Lane, Cassington, Oxfordshire, 2000