The Firs, Church Road, 
Sunningdale, Ascot, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Sir David and Lady Latham

by Richard Oram and Lisa-Maree Hardy

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TFS01/39

August 2001
Summary

Site name: The Firs, Church Road, Sunningdale, Ascot, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9527 6743

Site activity: Watching brief

Date and duration of project: July 2001

Area of site: -

Site code: TFS 01/39

Summary of results: The watching brief did not reveal any deposits or finds of archaeological interest.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford 10/08/01
Steve Preston 10/08/01
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Firs, Church Road, Sunningdale, Ascot, Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Hessey, of Edgington Spink and Hyne, Chartered Architects, Riding Court, Riding Court Road, Datchet, Berkshire, SL3 9LE, on behalf of Sir David and Lady Latham, of The Firs.

Planning permission (01/80486) has been granted for the development of the site for a single-storey rear extension to the existing dwelling, subject to a condition relating to archaeology for a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the Royal Borough’s policies on archaeology.

The development was to consist of the digging of foundation trenches and service runs as necessary. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr K Beachus, of Babtie, archaeological adviser to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Oram on 12th July 2001. The site code is TFS01/39.

Location, topography and geology

The village of Sunningdale is located south-east of South Ascot and north of Broomhall. The development site is located on the south side of Church Road, at the rear of the dwelling known as The Firs. The Firs is located at a height of between 45m and 50m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 2). The geology of the site is Bracklesham Beds, but close to deposits of valley and plateau gravel (BGS 1981).

Archaeological background

The site is very close to the line of the Roman Road from Silchester from London (the Devil’s Highway), which runs to the south (Margary route 4a: 1955, 76–79) and there is therefore a possibility of the presence of Roman roadside settlement in the vicinity. Other such settlements are recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record to the north-east and the south-west (Ford 1987). This close proximity to both the Devil’s Highway and possible
Roman settlements highlights the archaeological potential of the area, and suggests the possibility of Roman features and deposits being encountered.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record all archaeological deposits within areas of ground disturbance associated with construction of the new extension. Observations were made of the excavated foundation footings.

**Results**

The foundation trenches observed were between 0.69m and 0.75m deep and 0.65m wide in the areas designated for load-bearing walls (Fig. 3). The majority of the footing trenches cut through natural silty sand. Two pipe trenches were seen in section. A feature believed to be an old soakaway associated with the previous extension was also observed in section. This soakaway was filled with rubble and sand. No archaeological features were observed.

**Conclusion**

The watching brief did not locate any archaeological deposits on the site and no finds predating the modern period were observed.

**References**

The Firs, Church Road, Sunningdale, Ascot, Berkshire, 2001

Figure 1. Location of site within Sunningdale and Berkshire.

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Figure 2: Location of site within Sunningdale.
Figure 3. Trenches observed during watching brief

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