Uplands, Upper Lambourn,
Lambourn, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Uplands Racing Ltd

by Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code UUL01/74

August 2001
Summary

Site name: Uplands, Upper Lambourn, Lambourn, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 3212 7995–3210 7989–3215 7985

Site activity: Watching brief

Date and duration of project: 2nd August 2001

Site code: UUL01/74

Area of site: -

Summary of results: Three archaeological features were observed in a pipe trench. These comprise three pits (or possibly ditch terminals) of which one is undated, one is medieval (12th century), and one is possibly of late Saxon (10th-century) date.

Monuments identified: Three pits (or possibly ditch terminals)

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 West Berkshire Museum.
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Report 01/74

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the digging of a pipe trench in the course of the creation of a new stable block at Uplands, off Drain Hill, on the south-eastern outskirts of Upper Lambourn (SU 3210 7990) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr A Taylor of Uplands, Upper Lambourn, Hungerford, Berkshire, RG17 8QJ.

Planning permission was given for the work by West Berkshire Council but this permission included a condition relating to archaeology which was to comprise a watching brief to take place during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) and West Berkshire Council’s policy on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Veronica Fiorato, Principal Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Heritage Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford on 2nd August 2001 and the site code is UUL01/74.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of the valley of the river Lambourn. The northern section of the trench runs down the moderately steep slope of the valley side whereas the southern section follows a more gentle slope along the margins of the valley floor (Figs 1 and 2). This topographic setting accounts for the differing geology encountered along the trench (cf, BGS 1947). The northern section (A–C) is cut through (middle) chalk with clay patches. The southern section (C–E) lies on the valley floor and is founded on a fine chalky gravel.

Archaeological background

The hamlet of Upper Lambourn lies within an archaeologically rich part of the country with a high density and wide range of monuments, landscape features and findspots from prehistoric and Roman times (Richards 1978; Gaffney and Tingle 1989). Saxon material is rather less well evidenced but a few finds of early or middle Saxon date are recorded from Lambourn and Saxon burials are found further down the valley. The site lies on the margins of the hamlet of Upper Lambourn, which was documented in the Domesday Book of 1086. Apart from
this, little is known of the hamlet archaeologically and the topography of the late Saxon and medieval settlement is unknown (Richards 1978).

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe and record any archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks associated with the new development. The footprint of the proposed new stable block could not be examined and this watching brief is concerned solely with the excavation of a trench for a surface water drain.

**Results**

The groundwork comprised the digging of a pipe trench 120m long from the corner of the new stable block to a soakaway location to the south-east of the buildings complex on the valley floor. An additional 10m of pipe trench joined the main trench near the northern end (Fig. 2). The pipe trench was 0.4m wide at the base and 0.75–0.8m deep. At the northern end of the trench beneath 0.2m of turf and topsoil, a calcareous silty clay subsoil to a depth of 0.45m overlay the chalk/clay natural. For the southern section of the pipe trench (section D–E), 0.2m of topsoil overlay a very dark (humic) silty clay subsoil to a depth of 0.7m over the chalky gravel.

Three features were observed. Feature 1 was located in section B1–C and was 1.6m across and at least 0.3m deep below the subsoil. The feature was shallower and narrower on the western side of the pipe trench, suggesting that this was a pit or ditch terminal rather than a segment of ditch. The base of the feature was not exposed. The feature contained 14 sherds of medieval pottery of 12th-century date along with a single piece of animal bone. Feature 2, in section C–D, was also probably a pit or ditch terminal, clearly occupying only the northern part of the base of the trench and being much shallower in the southern side of the trench. It was 1.3m wide and at least 0.4m deep but was not fully excavated. It contained two fills (51 and 52). The lower fill (52) contained two pieces of animal bone and two pottery sherds, both of which could be contemporary and in use in the 10th century (late Saxon times). However, the certain late Saxon sherd is very small and there is a possibility of this material’s being redeposited. The third feature (3) was also found in section C–D and was probably a pit or possibly a ditch terminal. It was 0.6m across and 0.3m deep. It was not dated; with only a single fragment of fired clay being recovered.

A further 12 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the spoilheaps at various locations along the pipe trench (Table 1).
Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 28 sherds with a total weight of 239g. All the pottery is of Saxo-Norman or earlier medieval date, with a single context possibly dating to the pre-conquest period. Most of the pottery is of types which are well known in the area, apart from a single sherd of late Saxon/Saxo-Norman St Neots ware. The latter ware is well known in the south-east Midlands and north and the city of Oxford, but finds of the material are extremely rare from Berkshire.

Fabric

The following fabric types were present:

St Neots Ware type T1(1): c. AD 900–1100 (Denham 1985). Fabric moderate to dense finely crushed fossil shell, with varying quantities of quartz and/or ironstone. Usually purplish-black, black or grey, with fairly fine, dense inclusions. Main forms small jars with sagging bases, although a few lamps are known. 1 sherd, 1g.

Cotswolds-type ware: c. late 9th–early 13th century (Mellor 1994). Slow-wheel made. Fairly hard, dark blue-grey fabric with moderate sub-rounded white pink and grey quartzite up to 1mm. Sparse to moderate calcareous material, including ooliths, up to 2mm. Rare haematite up to 1mm. Mainly ‘barrel’ jars with triangular rims or more shouldered examples with high everted rims, bases usually sagging. Probably manufactured at a number of sources in the Cotswolds region. 1 sherd, 6g.

Newbury ‘A’ ware: 10th–late 12th century (Mepham 1997, 46–50). A range of sand- and flint-tempered wares. Fine clay matrix, clear, milky and red quartz up to 0.5mm, angular grey and white flint up to 2mm, rare red and black ironstone and chalk. Mainly jars, but bowls dishes and lamps are also known. 12 sherds, 91g.

Newbury ‘B’ ware: Late 12th–late 14th century (Mepham 1997, 51–2). A range of sand-, flint- and limestone-tempered wares. Sparse to moderate limestone up to 2mm, rounded white or clear quartz up to 0.5mm, angular fragments of white, grey or black flint. Jars, bowls and pitchers. 13 sherds, 136g.

Newbury ‘C’ ware: Late 11th–late 14th century (Mepham 1997, 51–2). A range of medium-grain quartz tempered wares. Jars, bowls, tripod pitchers and slipped and glazed jugs. 1 sherd, 5g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1 (below). Each date should be regarded as a terminus post quem.
Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (g) of sherds per context by fabric type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St Neots</th>
<th>Cotswolds</th>
<th>Newbury 'A'</th>
<th>Newbury 'B'</th>
<th>Newbury 'C'</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U/S</td>
<td>B-B1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>U/S</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>U/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U/S</td>
<td>D-E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12thC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10thC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Struck flint by Steve Ford

Two struck flints were found. One of these, from section D–E, is prehistoric, but is not chronologically distinctive and only a broad Neolithic/Bronze Age date can be attributed. The other flake is very fresh and unpatinated and may be an accidental product from medieval or later times. It was found on spoil adjacent to feature 2 and is likely to have come from this feature.

Faunal remains by Sian Anthony

Three animal bones were recovered from two of the cut features. From feature 1 (50) came a sheep-sized tibia and an unidentified fragment. From feature 2 (52) came a sheep-sized femur. The bones are in very good condition.

Conclusion

The watching brief has been particularly successful in the discovery of archaeological deposits, considering the necessarily limited scale of this type of fieldwork. The watching brief has led to the recording of three pits, two of which are dated to late Saxon and medieval times, with further medieval pottery from elsewhere along the pipe trench.

This fieldwork has provided a little information with which to document the topography and development of the settlement. If the dating for feature 2 can be relied upon, then a focus of late Saxon occupation has been identified in addition to later, 12th-century medieval occupation. It is interesting to note that these observations are made in an area at the south-eastern extreme of the hamlet and may indicate that subsequent medieval occupation developed north-westwards towards the modern day centre of Upper Lambourn.
References

Uplands, Upper Lambourn, West Berkshire, 2001

Figure 1. Location of site within Upper Lambourn and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site and pipe trench monitored during watching brief showing locations of trench sections and features identified