Wash Common Water Tower, Newbury, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For CgMs Consulting

by Sarah Coles and Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WCT02/09

February 2002
Summary

Site name: Wash Common Water Tower, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU45390 64783

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 27th February 2002

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sarah Coles

Site code: WCT 02/09

Area of site: 12.5 sq m

Summary of results: No finds, no archaeology

Monuments identified: None

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Steve Preston✓ 28.02.02
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Wash Common Water Tower, West Berkshire (SU45390 64783) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting, 7th Floor, Newspaper House, 8–16 Great New Street, London EC4A 3BN.

The construction of a new cabinet to house telecommunications equipment has been granted planning permission by West Berkshire Council (reference 01/01581), subject to a standard condition relating to archaeology. This requires archaeological investigation in the form of a watching brief during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Veronica Fiorato, Principal Archaeological Officer to West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sarah Coles on 27th February 2002 and the site code is WCT02/09.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on level ground on a ridge between the valleys of the rivers Kennet and Enborne on the south-western margins of Newbury. The site lies at a height of 126m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is Plateau Gravel (BGS 1947).

Archaeological background

The site lies close to a round barrow cemetery consisting originally of five mounds, and still with two upstanding monuments 50m and 100m to the north and a levelled mound 70m to the east (Fig. 2). The barrow cemetery is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (BK12075). No modern archaeological excavations have taken place on the monuments and a very small scale watching brief to the east of this proposal site did not reveal any finds or deposits of archaeological interest (Durden 1995). The monuments, though, are probably burial mounds of Early Bronze Age date but could have originated in the Neolithic or could have been constructed or reused in Saxon times. Surrounding areas could also have been used for occupation or for burial, especially cremation burials in cemeteries unmarked by earthworks.
Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe, record and excavate any archaeological features that would be threatened by the construction work.

Results

The position of the footprint of the proposed new cabinet had to be moved to the west due to the finding of a high voltage power cable in the original proposed position (Fig. 3). This adjustment to location was carried out under the supervision of the contractors responsible for the construction work. The footprint of the proposed structure was excavated by a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket and the work was carried out under direct archaeological supervision. A trench measuring 5m x 2.5m was dug, which was slightly larger than the footprint of the proposed cabinet.

The stratigraphy of the trench revealed 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.4m of made ground. This in turn overlay the natural geology which comprised a yellow/grey mottled clay with flint pebbles. A test pit was dug at the northern end of the trench to a depth of 1.3m to confirm this stratigraphic sequence. No archaeological deposits were found cutting the natural geology.

Finds

No finds were recovered.

Conclusion

No archaeological finds nor artefacts were recorded and the proposed new cabinet will have no effect on archaeological deposits on the site. The presence of 0.4m of made ground beneath the topsoil suggests that any superficial activity relating to the use of the site, such as cable laying beneath the water tower to connect the cabinet to the aerials, will have no impact on the archaeologically relevant levels.
References
Wash Common Water Tower, Newbury
Berkshire, 2002

Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site at west end of Wash Common.
Figure 3. Detailed location of site.