Wimpole Hall Oil Spill Remediation

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

November 2016

Client: National Trust

OA East Report No: 2009
OASIS No: oxfordar3-268403
NGR: TL 3355 5096
Wimpole Hall Oil Spill Remediation

Watching Brief

Site Code: WPLWSA 16
CHER No: ECB4839
Date of Works: 8th November 2016
Report No: 2009
Excavator: Michael Webster
Author: Michael Webster
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Project Manager: Matt Brudenell
Client: National Trust
Report Date: November 2016
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Summary

An oil spill on the south Apron gravel approach to the main (south) entrance to Wimpole Hall Cambridgeshire (TL 3355 5096) (Fig 1) required remediation work resulting in removal of contaminated surface materials. Due to the sensitive location of the oil spill an Archaeological Watching Brief was required. This watching brief was carried out on the 8th November 2016, by OA East. Removal of the contaminated gravels and underlying sub-base revealed the remains of a former stone paved surface. A full record was made of the exposed surface which was left in situ and re-instated with new clean sub-base and gravels.
1 GEOLGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

1.1.1 The geology and topography taken from Fairbairn. J. 2015.

1.1.2 The southern part of Wimpole Park lies on flattish ground over Gault clay, rising gently from the River Rhee towards Wimpole Hall. North of the hall, the land rises more steeply into a low but locally dominant ridge of Lower Chalk, which, at the northern edge of the park is capped by Boulder Clay. The site was located within the curtilage of Wimpole Hall.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The archaeological background is based on Thatcher 2016.

2.1.2 Wimpole Hall (Grade I Listed) is the largest house in Cambridgeshire. Over the centuries, many notable architects have worked on it, including its first owner, Thomas Chicheley (1640-1670), James Gibbs (1713-1730), James Thornhill (1721), Henry Flitcroft (c.1749), John Soane (1790s), and H.E. Kendall (1840s).

2.1.3 Before the present Wimpole Hall was built in c.1640, there was a moated manor house set in a small park of 81 hectares (200 acres). Situated to the north and south of this were three medieval villages: Bennall End, Thresham End and Green End. Wimpole Hall's grounds were laid out and modified by landscape designers such as George London and Henry Wise (1693–1705), Charles Bridgeman (1720s), Robert Greening (1740s), Capability Brown (1767) and Humphry Repton (1801–1809). The parkland as it exists today is an amalgamation of the work of these landscape designers and gardeners, and was completed under the ownership of Elsie and George Bambridge. Elsie, the daughter of Rudyard Kipling, reworked and revitalised the house.

2.1.4 Bridgeman's formal grand avenue sweeps away from the south front of the house for two and a half miles, in contrast with the remainder of the park which was "naturalised" by Capability Brown (Adshhead 2007). The North Park is particularly attractive, with its belts of woodland and gentle rolling hills with individual trees and clumps of trees. The central feature of the North Park is the Gothic Folly and the restored lakes in the valley below.

2.1.5 The Cambridgeshire HER records a number of known archaeological features and significant remains within the designated Wimpole Hall Park (CHER DCB 504). To the west are the remains of designated Deserted Medieval Villages (DCB 468, MCB 11405) and a possible Roman structure (MCB 11404). East of the area is the designated medieval moated site at Cobbs Wood (DCB 222) and undesignated moated site (MCB 14620) to the north.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to make a full record of any archaeological features exposed during remediation works associated with an oil spill at Wimpole Hall. To this end, and as far as possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits would be determined.

3.1.2 An oil spill on the South Apron in front of the south entrance to Wimpole Hall had contaminated surface gravel and the underlying sub-base. Remediation work involved the removal of these materials in an area of 14m² (Fig. 2) to a depth of 150mm using a tracked mechanical excavator. Clean materials were used to re-instate the modern surface. All works were monitored by an experienced archaeologist.
3.1.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

3.1.4 Site conditions were good, the weather was cold but dry and sunny.

4 RESULTS

4.1.1 The remains of a stone paved surface (3; Plates 2 and 3) was revealed across the entire extent of the excavated area. The paving comprised dressed pale grey stone setts laid in close jointed north to south aligned courses. The thickness of the individual setts was not exposed but their surface measurements were between 260mm (10") by 190mm (7½") and 200mm (8") by 140m (5½"). The surface continued beyond the edges of the excavated area in every direction and it was not possible to establish its full dimensions.

4.1.2 Overlying the paved surface was a layer of hoggin (mixed sand and gravel) approximately 80mm to 100mm thick (2) finished with a 70mm thick top dressing of fine gravel (1).

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1 The paving survives in good condition and had formed part of an earlier approach to the main entrance to the House from the south. The date that the paving was laid is unknown but the north to south alignment of its courses suggests it may have formed part of the main approach to the house from the south prior to the addition of the Apron as shown on the Johannes Kip map of 1707 (Fig. 3).

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1.1 The author would like to thank the National Trust who commissioned and funded the archaeological work and in particular Lee Fish. The site contractor Groupbridge and their machine operator M Nunn. The project was managed by Matthew Brudenell, site work by the author and site survey by David Brown, all from Oxford Archaeology East.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM
All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

**Project Details**

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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

| Prompt          | SMR enhancement |

**Please select all techniques used:**

- [ ] Field Observation (periodic visits)
- [x] Full Excavation (100%)
- [ ] Full Survey
- [ ] Geophysical Survey
- [x] Open-Area Excavation
- [ ] Part Excavation
- [ ] Part Survey
- [ ] Recorded Observation
- [ ] Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- [ ] Salvage Excavation
- [ ] Salvage Record
- [ ] Systematic Field Walking
- [ ] Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- [ ] Test Pit Survey
- [x] Watching Brief

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the **NMR Monument Type Thesaurus** and significant finds using the **MDA Object type Thesaurus** together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

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## Digital Media

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

## Paper Media

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey

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Notes:
Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Detail site location and area of Watching brief
Figure 3: View of Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire 1707. Johannes Kip. Courtesy of © National Trust
Plate 1: Pre-excavation showing oil spill, from north

Plate 2: Stone paving 3, from west
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