Elm Tree Farm
Station Road
Blackthorn
Oxfordshire

Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

Oxford Archaeology
September 2003

Client: M.J. Brain Homes

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 1443
Planning Ref No: 01/00484/OUT
NGR: SP 6242 1952
Client Name: M.J. Brain Homes

Document Title: Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: NGR SP 6242 1952
Planning Reference: 01/00484/OUT
OA Job Number: 1443
Site Code: BIEM 02
Invoice Code: BIEMWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS 2002.172

Prepared by: James Mumford
Position: Supervisor
Date: 13th August 2003

Checked by: Jon Hiller
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 13th August 2003

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 4th September 2003

Document File Location: U:/OAU/wbREPORTS/Oxfordshire/BIEM.doc
Graphics File Location: Server10:/oaupubs 1/AtoH*BIEMWB*Elm Tree Farm, Blackthorn*AH*08.08.03
Illustrated by: Amy Tiffany Hemingway

Disclaimer:
This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any person other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2003
James House
Omney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (01865) 263800
t: (01865) 263801
f: (01865) 793496
c: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627
Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 1
1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Location and scope of work ................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Geology and topography ...................................................................................................... 1
  1.3 Archaeological and historical background ........................................................................... 1
2 Project Aims and Methodology .................................................................................................. 2
  2.1 Aims ..................................................................................................................................... 2
  2.2 Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 2
3 Results ....................................................................................................................................... 2
  3.1 Description of deposits ......................................................................................................... 2
  3.2 Finds .................................................................................................................................... 3
  3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains ............................................................................................. 3
4 Discussion and Conclusions ...................................................................................................... 3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory ........................................................................... 4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References .................................................................................... 4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details .......................................................................................... 4

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan showing development plots and ditch 15
Fig. 3 Plan of foundation trenches for plot 3 showing location of sections and features
Fig. 4 Sections 1 - 4

Cover Plate: General view of excavations of foundation trenches for plot 3
SUMMARY

From October 2002 to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 6242 1952). The work was commissioned by M.J. Brain Homes in advance of the construction of seven new dwellings and associated garages. The watching brief revealed two ponds relating to the farm buildings, and a number of undated boundary ditches.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 From October 2002 to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by M.J. Brain Homes in respect of a planning application for construction of seven new dwellings and associated garages (Planning Application No. 01/00484/OUT).

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeologist (OCAS 2002).

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on loamy soils over Lower Oxford Clay at 62 m above OD. The site is situtated on the east side of the village of Blackthorn and is 0.72 hectares in area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2002) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The development area is in the historic core of Blackthorn where early settlement is suggested by its place name ‘blace-porn’ or ‘pyrne’, thought to be of late Saxon origin. The site is adjacent to a historic village green, which was converted to arable fields in 1776. Part of a documented shrunken medieval and post-medieval settlement is known here. Davis’ historic map of 1797 depicts 4 houses north-east of the site of Elm Tree Farm.

1.3.3 Previous archaeological evaluation on the development site comprised 8 trenches, one of which contained medieval midden deposits over in-filled ditches, possibly of late Saxon date (TVAS 2001, Report No.01/66).
2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The site was built up with a 0.5 m thick layer of ground make up of crushed stone and rubble. The foundation trenches were then marked out and excavated with a mini excavator and poured with concrete. Archaeological observations were made on the exposed foundation trenches.

2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Plot 3

3.1.1 The ground works for the foundations consisted of 0.7 m wide trenches excavated to a depth of 1.2 m below the ground level. They cut into the undisturbed natural of a yellowish brown clay with patches of grey clay (9), which was sealed below a cultivated ploughsoil of dark brown silty clay (8). This layer of ploughsoil had been cut by a number of features, which consisted of two ditches and two ponds. The ditch (12) was exposed in the south-west foundation trench with steep sloping sides rounding to a base below impact level. It measured 7.8 m x 0.9 m x 0.7 m and contained two fills. The lower fill was a very dark grey brown silty clay (13) sitting up base of ditch, which was sealed below a light yellowish brown silty clay (14) (Figs 3 and 4, section 4).

3.1.2 The second ditch (10) had steep sloping sides and concave base. It measured 0.7 m x 2.5 x 0.8 m and was filled by a dark grey brown silty clay (11). This had been cut by a large sub circular pond (4) with a shallow concave profile. The pond measured 8 m x 12 m x 0.8 m and contained two fills. The lower fill was a dark brown silty clay (3), which was overlain by a light grey silty clay (2). Both these fills show that the pond had slowly silted up and was covered by a 0.2 m thick layer of very dark grevish brown silty clay loam topsoil (1). This had been cut by a later large pond (5) with steep sloping sides descending below impact level. It measured 14 m x 9.5 m x 0.9 m and was filled by a very dark grey silty clay loam (6). These were all sealed below a 0.5 m thick layer of ground make up (7) (Figs 3 and 4, sections 1, 2 and 3).
Plot 2

3.1.3 In the north corner of plot 2, a ditch (15) was aligned north-east to south-west. It measured 2 m x 0.9 m x 0.8 m, but the shape was hard to define as it was partly under water and had unstable sides. It cut into the plough soil (8) and was filled by a dark grey silty clay and sealed below the topsoil (1) (Fig. 2).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The watching brief revealed two ponds at the rear of the farmyard. The later pond being in filled prior to the development. A number of field boundary ditches were observed, but no dating evidence was recovered. These possibly relate to the ditches possibly of late Saxon date recorded in the earlier evaluation by TVAS. These were cut into an earlier plough soil.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1  ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Finds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.2 m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Topsoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.8 m</td>
<td>12 m</td>
<td>8 m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.9 m</td>
<td>9.5 m</td>
<td>14 m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.5 m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.4 m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Old plough soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Natural clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.8 m</td>
<td>2.5 m</td>
<td>0.7 m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cut</td>
<td>0.7 m</td>
<td>0.9 m</td>
<td>7.8 m</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of ditch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill of ditch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 2  BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES


TVAS 2001 Elm Tree Farm, Blackthorn, near Bicester, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Evaluation

OCAAS 2001 Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief

OA 2002 Elm Tree Farm, Station Road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3  SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Elm Tree Farm, Station road, Blackthorn, Oxfordshire
Site code: BIELM 02
Grid reference: NGR SP 6242 1952
Type of watching brief: Excavation of foundations for new dwellings.
Date and duration of project: A total of 5 visits from 3/10/2002 to 26/6/2003.
Area of site: 60 m x 110 m
Summary of results: Two ponds relating to the farm buildings were uncovered. Also a number of undated boundary ditches.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2002.172

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd. August 2003
Figure 3: Plan of foundation trenches for Plot 3 showing location of sections and features.
Key to Oxford Archaeology plans and sections