Salters Lane
Winchester
Hampshire

Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

Oxford Archaeology
18th November 2003

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: View along boundary ditch.
SUMMARY

From September to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Salters Lane, Winchester, Hampshire (NGR SU 4610 3100). The work was commissioned by Banner Homes in advance of new housing development. The watching brief revealed one boundary ditch and plough marks in the chalk.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 From September to November 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Salters Lane, Winchester, Hampshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Banner Homes in respect of a planning application for new housing development (Planning Application No. 03/00033/FUL).

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Winchester Museums Service through its representative, Tracy Matthews after the conclusions from a archaeological desk-based assessment (OA 2002) of the archaeological potential of the development site.

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 c. 90 m above OD and is situated on the slope of a spur of the chalk downlands; an area of high ground. The underlying geology is upper Cretaceous Chalk. The chalk downlands fall away to the east towards a valley, within which the floodplain of the River Itchen and City of Winchester are located. The site is bounded by Salters Lane to the west and residential housing to the north, south and east.

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 2003) and is reproduced below. The site lies approximately 1 km to the north-west of the historic core of Winchester.

1.3.2 The first evidence of activity within the vicinity of the development site dates to the Neolithic (4500-2400 BC) and comprises a flint end scraper and flint flake found c. 750 m to the south of the site. A Bronze Age beaker inhumation burial has been located c. 550 m north-east of the site and Bronze Age ring ditches lie c. 400 – 800 m south-west of the site. Possible Bronze Age ‘Celtic’ field systems and trackways are known c. 400 m south-west of the site and on Teg Down, c. 1.2 km south of the site. A Bronze Age hoard and a Bronze Age socketed axe were discovered near the site.

1.3.3 During the Middle Iron Age a hillfort was constructed over the Early Iron Age unfortified settlement on St. Catherine’s Hill, c. 3.7 km to the south-east of the site (SAM No. 31165). Oram’s Arbour, one of the largest defended enclosures in the
south of England, was also established situated c. 1.7 km south-east of the
development site.

1.3.4 In the Roman Period (43BC - AD410) the foundation of Venta Belgarum (meaning
the market place of the Belgae) represents the first proper urban settlement at
Winchester that eventually grew to become the fifth largest town in Roman Britain,
being a cantonal capital. A large cinerary urn & 4 small vases have been found c. 1.1
km to the south-east of the site, possibly associated with a roadside cemetery. A
complex of possible field boundaries and/or lynchets lie c 750 m to the south of the
site, most likely associated with Scheduled remains of the Iron Age / Romano-British
farmstead on Teg Down. A Roman Road passes just north of the development site.

1.3.5 This development site lies within the historic parish of Weeke, which is first recorded
in the early 7th century when it is granted to the church of Winchester by King
Cingilis of Wessex. Winchester's growing importance was confirmed during the 9th
and 10th centuries when Alfred made Winchester the first capital of England. A new
street grid was designed orientated on the gates leading into the Roman town.

1.3.6 Nearby is the church of St. Matthew, which contains fabric from the 12th century.
The proposed development site lies outside the focus of the medieval town, which
remained concentrated around the area of the Roman and Saxon city.

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 first stripped and a haw road built. Then the site was stripped of topsoil
and subsoil onto the chalk. Once this was undertaken, the foundations were
excavated and poured with concrete. This was carried out with a 360° machine with a
ditching and toothed bucket. The works were carried out under archaeological
observation (Fig. 2).

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
3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The ground works exposed the natural of solid chalk with flint nodules (1). This had been cut by a series of plough marks and a linear feature (2). This feature (2) was an old field boundary ditch with a shallow concave profile and measured 30 m x 2.9 m x 0.6 m. It was filled with a dark reddish brown silty clay (3) (Figs 3 and 4, section 1). This was sealed below a subsoil/plough soil of a 0.15 m thick light reddish brown silty clay loam (4). This also sealed a number of tree root holes filled by a light yellowish brown silty clay with chalk fragments. This was sealed below a 0.17 m very dark grey brown silty clay loam (5) topsoil.

Roadway Improvements

3.1.2 The improvement to Salters Lane consisted of widening the roadway by 1.8 m and cutting 0.15 m into the road surface and grading the bank back. This cut into the natural chalk (1), which was sealed below a 0.6 m thick light brown silty clay with a lot of chalk (4). This layer was heavily disturbed by tree roots and was sealed below a 0.17 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty clay loam (5) topsoil.

3.1.3 Where the 0.4 m deep trenches for the kerbs of the new entrance way were excavated, a 0.22 m thick layer of compact chalk with patches of mid brown silty clay (6) was observed, which was sealed below a 0.12 m thick layer of stone chippings (7) and 0.08 m tarmac (8) (Figs 3 and 4, section 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 only revealed a field boundary ditch of unknown date crossing east to west. A series of plough marks were also observed cutting into the chalk, again undated, which were cut by a series of tree root holes from when the site was an open area. The limited depth of ground works along Salters Lane and the Stockbridge Road for the new entrance way improvements did not reveal any archaeological deposits relating to the nearby Roman road or any later road improvements.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1  ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

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APPENDIX 2  BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES


OA 2002 Land at Salter, Stockbridge Road, Winchester Desktop Assessment

OA 2003 Land at Salter, Stockbridge Road, Winchester, Hampshire Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3  SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Salter Lane, Winchester, Hampshire
Site code: WINCM AY 167
Grid reference: NGR SU 4610 3100
Type of watching brief: Ground works for new housing development.
Date and duration of project: A total of 10 site visits from the 1/9/2003 to the 5/11/2003.
Area of site: 150 m x 150 m
Summary of results: The watching brief revealed one undated boundary ditch and plough marks in the chalk.
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Winchester Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: WINCM AY 167