

# Land to the Rear of The Old Forge, Weston- on-the-Green, Oxfordshire



**Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report**

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*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Robin Bashford*

*with contributions from John Cotter and illustrated by Markus Dylewski*

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## Summary

*Between December 2015 and January 2016, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a watching brief at The Old Forge, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire (SP 5323 1870). The watching brief monitored the excavation of strip foundation trenches for an extension to the rear of the property, and revealed natural geology comprising loose brownish yellow gravelly sand with small-large sub-rounded pebbles of sandy limestone. Although the British Geological Survey maps the geology of the area of the site as Peterborough Member Mudstone, it seems likely that the gravel deposit derives from an outcrop of the band of Kellaway Sands shown to the north of the site on the same survey, and may account for the influx of ground water encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.*

*The natural geology had been truncated by a series of pits which produced predominantly late 19th - early 20th century artefactual material, possibly associated with the use of the forge by the Kirtland family throughout the 19th century.*

*A possible east-west aligned ditch, with limestone rubble along its southern edge, probably represented an earlier version of the existing property boundary. The limestone rubble may have represented a demolished wall or a rudimentary revetment along the edge of the feature.*

*The remaining deposits encountered comprised garden soils reflecting the current use of the site.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Mr Richard Hobbs to undertake an archaeological Watching Brief of the site of a proposed residential dwelling on land to the rear of The Old Forge, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in relation to a condition on the Planning Consent (14/01255/F). A brief was set by Richard Oram (Oram 2015), Planning Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process; and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced outlining how OA would implement those requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work will be undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located in the centre of Weston-on-the-Green (Fig 1: SP 5322 1869) and lies at approximately 71m OD. The area of proposed development currently consists of residential dwellings. The proposed site lies 20m south of the Old Forge, which is a grade II listed building that retains many of its original features including flagstone floors, fireplace and exposed wooden beams.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as Peterborough Member Mudstone (British Geological Survey website <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following background is reproduced from the WSI.

#### ***Prehistoric to Roman period***

1.3.2 There has been little evidence for prehistoric activity within the village of Weston on the Green, however there have been a few finds of iron age pottery from the land surrounding the village.

1.3.3 The Roman road of 'Akeman Street' lies two miles to the north of the village of Weston-on-the-Green, and finds of coins with a Roman date have been recovered from this area.

1.3.4 An excavation 30m south east of this proposal site recorded a series of pits, ditches and gullies mainly dated to the medieval periods but one ditch contained 5/6th Century Saxon pottery.

#### ***Medieval to Post-medieval period***

1.3.5 The village of Weston-on-the-Green is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. However, the name West tun suggests the village has Saxon origins. At the end of the 11th Century, Robert d'Oilly, likely the main landowner in Weston at the time, gave the church at Weston and two tithes of the land of the Manor, toward the foundation of St George's Chapel built at Oxford Castle. In 1227 Henry d'Oilly gave the Manor at Weston to the Osney Abbey in Oxford. It remained in the possession of the Abbey until 1539 when, with the dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII took possession of it. A year later, Henry gave the Manor to Lord John Williams of Thame (Moore, 2007).

1.3.6 Many fields surrounding the village display evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation in the medieval period. In the 1820's the Manor House at Weston-on-the-Green was built in a Tudor style, concealing a 16th century front which itself was a remodelling of the earlier medieval building (Sherwood & Pevsner, 1974). A medieval moat surrounding the manor survives as an earthwork to the north, west and south sides of the manor.

1.3.7 An archaeological evaluation immediately to the east of the proposed site recorded a number of medieval features in the form of ditches, rubbish pits and one posthole, with artefacts suggesting occupation spanning several centuries.

1.3.8 The Old village Forge itself, 20m south of this proposal is dated to the C17 and it is also possible that archaeological deposits related to this dwelling, in particular the remains of rubbish pits, may also survive on the site.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to:

- establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area,
- determine and confirm the character of any remains present,
- determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- characterise any underlying archaeological strata down to undisturbed geology,
- determine the palaeo-environmental potential of archaeological deposits

## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the WSI. Standard methodologies for geomatics and survey, environmental evidence, artefactual evidence and burials can also be found in the appendices to that document (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).
- 2.2.2 The watching brief monitored the excavation of the strip foundation trenches for the new build, the location and layout of which is shown on Figure 2. The trenches were an average of 1m deep and varied in width from 0.45m to 0.85m.
- 2.2.3 Given that the maximum impact depth of the associated drainage trenches was at a higher elevation than the archaeological horizon encountered within the strip foundations (see below), the excavation of the service trenches was not monitored.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Presentation of Results

- 3.1.1 As a consequence of the influx of groundwater within the initial excavation of the north-west corner of the strip foundation trenches, the trenches were excavated and concreted in 3 sections. These were designated as Trenches 1-3, although the descriptions below relate to the trenches in their entirety.
- 3.1.2 Detailed context descriptions are presented in the context inventory (Appendix B), and within the descriptive text in Section 4.2 below where they are integral to the interpretation of the deposit in question.
- 3.1.3 Finds reports are presented in Appendix C. A discussion and interpretation of the results can be found in Section 4.

### 3.2 Description of deposits

- 3.2.1 The natural geology encountered within the trenches comprised a loose brownish yellow gravelly sand with small-large sub-rounded pebbles of sandy limestone. This was encountered at an average of 0.7m below existing ground level.
- 3.2.2 The natural gravel had been truncated by a series of pits (4, 6, 8, 16, 18, 20 and 22). The fills (17, 19 and 23) of 3 of these pits (16, 20 and 22 respectively) produced 19th-20th century pottery, and the similarity in the composition of the fills of the remaining features possibly suggests that they were contemporary.
- 3.2.3 In addition to the pits, a possible linear feature was recorded in the northern arm of the strip foundations (10, 24). At the western end of the trench, a concentration of limestone rubble was present along the southern edge of the feature (10), although this did not appear to extend as far as the cut at the eastern end of the trench (24). The fill of the western end of the cut (11) produced pottery of a similar date to that recovered from the pit fills to the south.
- 3.2.4 Figure 2 shows the location and projected dimensions of these features, together with a sample section through 2 of the dated pits (16 and 18) and the eastern extent of the possible linear feature (24).
- 3.2.5 The fills of these features were overlain by a c0.45m thick, fairly homogeneous deposit of sandy silt (2) which was interpreted as a garden soil. Two further possible pits (12 and 14) were observed cutting the garden soil, and may have represented flower beds or other garden features.



- 3.2.6 The fills of the possible garden features and the garden soil were overlain by a c0.2m thick layer of topsoil.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 As the British Geological Survey maps the geology of the area of the site as Peterborough Member Mudstone, it seems likely that the gravel deposit encountered throughout the strip foundation trenches derives from an outcrop of the band of Kellaway Sands shown to the north of the site on the same survey (BGS Sheet 237). It is possible that this may account for the influx of ground water encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.
- 4.1.2 The original function of the pits encountered during the works was uncertain, although those from which datable material was recovered appeared to date from the mid19th-early 20th century. It is possible that they were originally excavated as quarry pits, utilising the gravel rich material in this area of the village, and that they have subsequently been used for the disposal of domestic refuse.
- 4.1.3 The ditch in the northern arm of the strip foundation trenches is likely to represent an earlier version of the existing property boundary, with the limestone rubble perhaps representing a collapsed wall or a rudimentary revetment along the southern edge of the feature.
- 4.1.4 A number of documentary sources refer to members of the Kirtland family as blacksmiths in Weston on the Green. The earliest documents consulted were researched by Brian Wilson and can be found online (Wilson, 2015). These listed payments in the Churchwardens Accounts made to Samuel Kirtland (1775-1838), and to his son George (1812-1890). They are also listed on the census returns throughout the 19th century and Kelly's directory lists a blacksmith operating in Weston on the Green as late as 1939 (VCH). Consequently, given the dating evidence recovered from a number of the features encountered during the watching brief, it seems likely that the pits and probable property boundary relate to the tenure of the Kirtland family as village blacksmiths, presumably operating from the Old Forge.

## APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context no	Type	Comment	Soil Description	Date
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Friable very dark grey/blackish slightly sandy silt	
2	Deposit	Garden soil	Dark grey sandy silt, few pebbles, rare tree roots	
3	Layer	Natural	Loose brownish yellow gravelly sand with small-large sub-rounded pebbles of sandy limestone	
4	Cut	Pit cut		
5	Fill	Fill of pit 4	Very dark grey/blackish gravelly sandy silt	
6	Cut	Pit cut		
7	Fill	Fill of pit 6	Very dark grey sandy, clayey silt, common pebbles	
8	Cut	Pit cut		
9	Fill	Fill of pit 8	Dark grey/blackish clayey, sandy gravelly silt	
10	Cut	Possible linear (?same as 24)		
11	Fill	Fill of ?ditch 10	Very dark grey clayey sandy silt with 20% stones and domestic refuse throughout	1850-1925
12	Cut	Pit cut		
13	Fill	Fill of pit 12	Grey silty sand with abundant brick/stone rubble	1860-1925
14	Cut	Pit cut		
15	Fill	Fill of pit 14	Very dark grey clayey sandy silt with stones throughout	
16	Cut	Pit cut		
17	Fill	Fill of pit 16	Mid brownish grey silty clay	1800-1900
18	Cut	Pit cut		
19	Fill	Fill of pit 18	Mid brownish grey silty clay	1820-1860
20	Cut	Pit cut		
21	Fill	Fill of pit 20	Dark grey sandy silt, few pebbles	
22	Cut	Pit cut		
23	Fill	Fill of pit 22	Dark grey sandy silt, few pebbles	1780-1840
24	Cut	Possible linear (?same as 10)		
25	Fill	Fill of ?ditch 24	Very dark grey clayey sandy silt with 20% stones and domestic refuse throughout	



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

British Geological Survey website <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>.

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## APPENDIX C. FINDS REPORTS

### C.1 Pottery

*By John Cotter*

Context	Descriptions	Date
11	3 sherds refined white ware (REFW), from marmalade jar and teacup, 42g	1850 – 1900
17	2 sherds post-medieval red ware (PMR) from single small jar or pot, 37g	1800 – 1900
19	1 sherd refined white ware (REFW), 2 sherds cream ware (CREA) teacup, 13g	1820 – 1860
23	1 sherd pearl ware (PEAR) fluted large tea cup with ghost of painted decoration, 9g	1780 – 1840

#### ***Discussion and recommendations***

C.1.1 The pottery assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

### C.2 CBM

*By John Cotter*

Context	Descriptions	Date
11	Almost complete but badly chipped, unfrogged machine-made red brick, 2781g	1880 – 1925+
13	Two thirds complete unfrogged brick, probably machine-made, very pale cream fabric, with thumbprint on one side, 2238g	1860 - 1925

#### ***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.2.1 The ceramic building material assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

### C.3 Glass

*By Ian Scott*

Context	Descriptions	Date
11	1 complete 'Low Sons and Cobbold Ltd' beer bottle with Riley's patent internal screw thread; 1 Hall's Oxford Brewery Ltd beer bottle, neck missing; 1 large vessel sherd, chamfered on inside; 1 Whisky bottle (Perth) base sherd; 1 small moulded cylindrical ?sauce bottle with top missing; 1 small early moulded sewing machine oil bottle 'The Singer Manfg. Co. Trade Mark', made in America. 1474 g total weight	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century     Late 1890s

#### ***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.3.1 The glass assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work, except perhaps the illustration by photograph of the Singer sewing machine oil bottle.



## C.4 Iron

*By Ian Scott*

<b>Context</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Date</b>
13	1 large strip of iron with pierced hole at one end, bolted to second broken piece at the other end. Possible cart or structural fitting	Not closely dateable.

### ***Discussion and recommendations.***

C.4.1 The iron assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.



## APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Land to the Rear of The Old Forge, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire
Site code:	WFORGE15
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 5323 1870
Type of watching brief:	Intermittent
Summary of results:	<p>Between December 2015 and January 2016, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a watching brief at The Old Forge, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire (SP 5323 1870). The watching brief monitored the excavation of strip foundation trenches for an extension to the rear of the property, and revealed natural geology comprising loose brownish yellow gravelly sand with small-large sub-rounded pebbles of sandy limestone. Although the British Geological Survey maps the geology of the area of the site as Peterborough Member Mudstone, it seems likely that the gravel deposit derives from an outcrop of the band of Kellaway Sands shown to the north of the site on the same survey, and may account for the influx of ground water encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.</p> <p>The natural geology had been truncated by a series of pits which produced predominantly late 19th - early 20th century artefactual material, possibly associated with the use of the forge by the Kirtland family throughout the 19th century.</p> <p>A possible east-west aligned ditch, with limestone rubble along its southern edge, probably represented an earlier version of the existing property boundary. The limestone rubble may have represented a demolished wall or a rudimentary revetment along the edge of the feature.</p> <p>The remaining deposits encountered comprised garden soils reflecting the current use of the site.</p>
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2015. TBC



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DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS

Figure 1: Site location

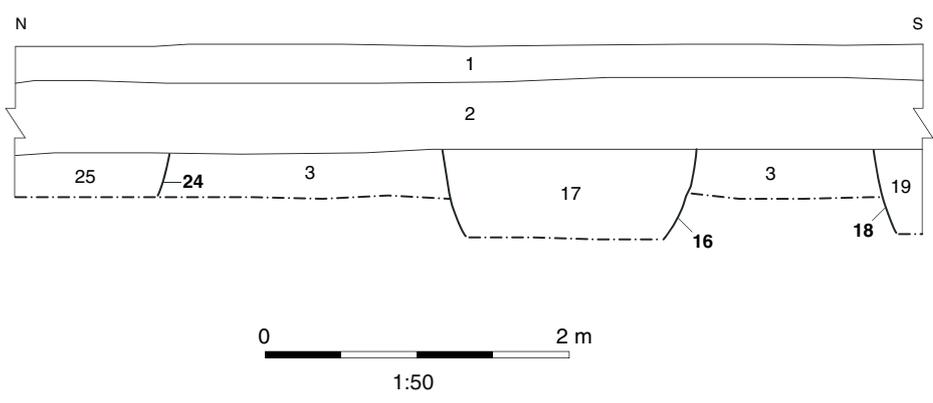
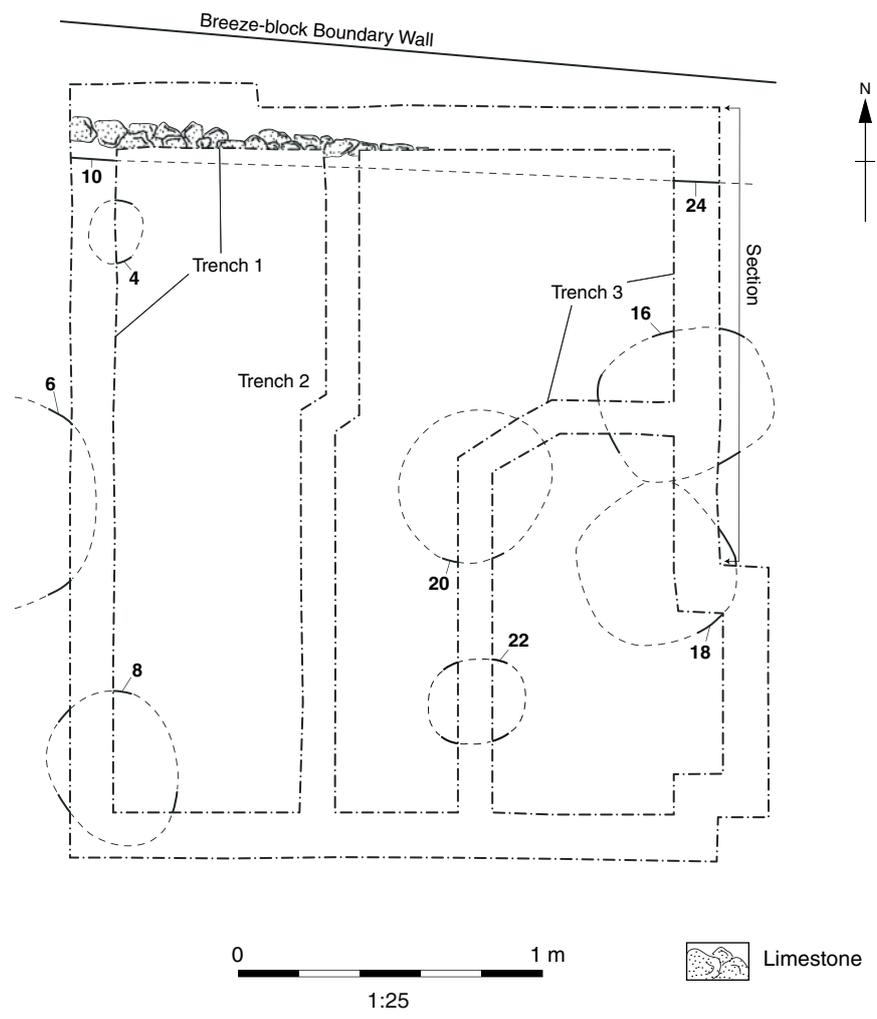


Figure 1 : Site plan showing strip foundation trenches and features, and west facing section



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