

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT FOSCOTT OLD CHURCH,

FOSCOTT,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NGR SP 7168 3576

On behalf of

Mr. A. Roberts

JANUARY 2010

REPORT FOR Mr. A. Roberts
Foscott Old Church
Foscott
Buckinghamshire MK18 6AE

PREPARED BY Gwilym Williams

ILLUSTRATION BY Eoin Fitzsimons & Gilym Williams

FIELDWORK 13th January, 2010

REPORT ISSUED 14th January, 2010

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ
Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code FOFC 09
JMHS Project No: 2156
Archive Location The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire
County Museum under the Accession Code 2009: 260.

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of an area for a slab foundation and access. No archaeological remains earlier than a late 20th century dump of clay with building material were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the north side of Fosco Lane at NGR SP 7168 3576 (centred) (Figure 1) at a height of 102.5m OD. The underlying solid geology is Glaciofluvial deposits (sand and gravel) over Cornbrash. The site is currently in use as a garden that was formerly the parish churchyard.

1.2 Planning Background

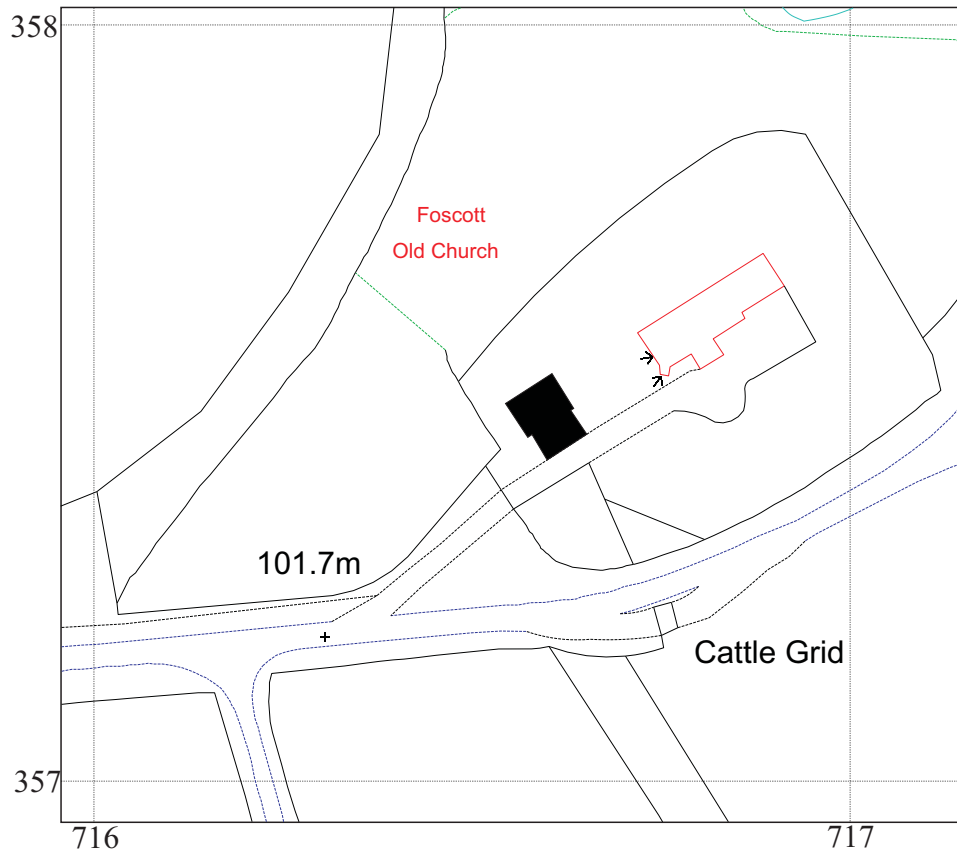
Aylesbury Vale District Council granted planning permission (09/01825/APP) for the construction of a garage/log store and the extension of the existing driveway. Due to the site's potential to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the permission for a programme of archaeological work to be carried out during groundworks. This is in line with Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Archaeology and Planning) (DoE 1990). Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and agreed with BCAS outlining the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Foscott, *Foxescotte* in Domesday Book, is derived from the Old English 'foxes' cottage' or perhaps 'burrow' (Ekwall 1960; Reaney 1964). Leithr, a thegn of King Edward, held and could sell the manor of Foscott before the Conquest. At the date of the Survey it was assessed at 6 hides, with 4 ploughs and woodland for 30 pigs, with a value of £3; it belonged to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (VCH 1927; Williams & Martin 1992).

St. Leonard's Church was apparently built in the middle of the 12th century. About 1350 the chancel was enlarged and the chancel arch rebuilt. The walling is of rubble and the roofs are tiled. There was formerly a small wooden bell-turret at the west end (VCH 1927). It has an early 14th century chancel arch and a 15th century porch. The building was restored in 1887 and converted in to a house in the late 1970s (Pevsner & Williamson 1994). The Church is aligned northeast to southwest and is Listed Grade II*.

The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies holds the Parish Burial Registers. The earliest on record here is from 3rd June 1752, although there is reference to a register starting in 1664 (VCH 1927). The last recorded burial was 31st October 1968. The register from 1813 – 1968 records 206 burials indicating that the cemetery was not in heavy use.



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Figure 1. Site location

The County Museum Archaeology Group recorded 30 standing monuments in the churchyard in 1976. The majority of these were pairs of headstones and footstones indicating the graves were aligned on the same axis as the Church. Also present were 8 unspecified rectangular monuments. These could have been chest tomb type structures or simple graves with curbstone surrounds. A triangular area approximately 10m across is recorded to the southeast of the church and is marked as a vault for the Hall family.

The boundary of the Church has changed little since the Tithe Map of 1840. An area the shape of a quarter-circle, to the southwest of the Church, and south of the main access way was originally part of the cemetery, but now lies outside the property's boundaries. Four graves were recorded in this area (Williams, undated).

Approximately 100m to the northeast of the churchyard are the remains of the deserted medieval village of Foscott (SMR 0077001000). Earthworks can be seen from aerial photographs. The Rectory is 150m to the southwest of the church and records show a kiln in the area during the 17th century (SMR 0077005001)

Relevant documents and maps held by the Buckinghamshire County Record Office have been consulted. It was agreed with Ruth Beckley of BCAS that in this case the Buckinghamshire Historic Environmental Record (HER) did not need to be consulted, as the archaeological work is so site specific to the former use as a churchyard.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To identify and record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development

In particular

- to record and arrange preservation of any buried human remains
- To make public the results of the investigations.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with BCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority, Aylesbury Vale District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008).



Figure 2. Barn area, looking west



Figure 3. Clay dump (2)



Figure 4. Barn area and access, looking northeast

3.2 Methodology

Removal of the topsoil was carried out with a 1.5-tonne mini-excavator by the building contractor. Excavation of the footprint of the barn was carried out to a depth of 300mm, and that of the access to a depth of 200mm (Fig. 1).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results (Figs. 2, 3 & 4)

The barn was excavated to a deposit of brown clay silt (3), which probably represents the interface of the original topsoil and the subsoil (Fig 2); this surface was at 102.1m OD. No finds were recovered from this deposit. This interface deposit, which represents a reduced, or stripped, level probably associated with earlier groundworks, was sealed by 200mm of dumped yellow clay (2) (Fig. 3) containing modern ceramic building material and a penny dating from 1980. The penny was not retained. The access area to the south of the barn was excavated to a depth of 200mm and so did not go through the clay dump (2) (Fig. 4), which can be seen to the bottom of the photograph. The area was sealed by topsoil (1), which measured 100mm thick.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out during light snow with excellent co-operation from the contractors carrying out the groundworks and the results are felt to be entirely representative of the site.

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

No finds were retained during the watching brief.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

6 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records	

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury
HP22 5PJ under accession number 2009.260

7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed no evidence for burials in this part of the churchyard; no other archaeological remains were present at this level. However, given the very limited reduced level and the overlying deposit of late 20th century dumped clay this is entirely to be expected. The present landowner, Andrew Roberts, did draw attention to the fact that the headstones recorded in the late 1970s did not extend as far west as the site of the new barn.

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