



BERKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN

President: Professor Michael Fulford CBE FBA FSA

An Update on the Archaeological work at Hall Farm, Arborfield.

February 2022

Introduction

This document is to update and the intended future plans of The Berkshire Archaeological Society in relation to the work on Arborfield Hall Farm to The Arborfield Parish Council.

We, The Berkshire Archaeological Society, have had an interest in the Hall Farm area since 2017. This work is an extension from the historical information gained from The Arborfield local History Society. The background work, from that society being the basis for an archaeological investigation on the historical facts found by them and pursuing them in an archaeological context.

We know that the area within Hall Farm has had some archaeological significance by the founding church records dating back to 1222 and Arborfield Hall residents from 1331 (Bullock family), these are documented evidence of residence and occupation within the area.

What we know that survives today is that there is a mill (now derelict), a church (now derelict) a working farm in a small area alongside a river. Also, evidence of small buildings probably associated with the mill close by to the mill building. These factors indicate some form of local community within this small area.

The other historical information that we have is Christopher Saxton's map of 1574/9. Which shows a possible dwelling on the Shinfield side of the River Loddon.

The buildings and historical facts that are available and the supportive document evidence does support a strong theory that there was a medieval site in this area around the River Loddon.

In 2017 we, The Berkshire Archaeological Society, were permitted to carry out a geophysical survey around the old Arborfield Hall premises (now Aberleigh house) to try and find the footprint of the old hall foundations, this survey revealed that nothing remains of the original building below ground level.

In 2019 we surveyed 5 areas (that were not pre-ploughed) within the Hall Farm area. One of these areas just over the river bridge, on the Shinfield side, revealed some interesting anomalies, which we plan to pursue later this year.

Both of the above surveys were carried out by using a resistivity survey technique, the kind of which can determine buried solid objects, walls, rubble, and solid surfaces with a ground penetration distance of 0.5 metre. It is a non-invasive or destructive method of determining structures below ground level.

Our Plans for 2022

THE MILL AREA

1) To investigate the ground area, between the 2 rivers to find any evidence of buildings, structures, and to record anything of a historical and archaeological interest and photograph any evidence and record it. Also, to record any recent workings, above ground, related to the extraction of water from the borehole sunk in 1933, by Guthrie Alsebrook.

2) To record any evidence of the old mill building footprint, the present mill size is much smaller than it was in 1836 when it was extended to produce paper. This is important because a lot of recent documented plans show a much smaller building.

3) This work, is conducted with the permission, guidance and assistance from Thames Water, and will take place on 22nd,23rd and 24th March 2022.

THE MILL

THE AREA ON THE SHINFIELD SIDE OF THE RIVER LODDON

1. To survey the south area of the trackway that leads through the farmland and towards the Shinfield area.
2. This survey is to determine the extent of the anomalies found on the northside of the trackway, found in the 2019 survey and to determine if the two survey results are related in the form of a complete building structure.
3. This survey will take place in September 2022, along with the required guidelines and cooperation from Reading Universities CEDAR facilities management



Map showing Areas of Intended Archaeological Investigation

- A. Intended Survey of Mill Area.
- B. Area surveyed in 2019.
- C. Proposed area to be survey in 2022.

Summary

Since 2017 we have been involved in the archaeological investigation of the Hall Farm area, starting with some field walking in 2017 with The Berkshire Archaeological Research Group, to determine any visible ground surface remnants of the buildings or evidence of past structures.

In 2019 we conducted a geophysics study within the Hall Farm area.

Now with both the documented evidence and the remains of some buildings, the mill, farm, church, and the Hall we can and hope with some more investigation work can find more evidence that this was an earlier settlement, probably medieval.

We have collaborated with both Reading university and Thames Water throughout our intended investigations and have had their approval and cooperation to conduct our work within their set timeframes and assistance for which we are most grateful.

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