



# The Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust

## *A Safe pair of hands*

### **Report of watching brief in Otford Archbishops' Palace field. Maypole base installation 18/04/2023 (v2)**

#### **1. Introduction**

An archaeological Watching Brief was held by Dr CD Shee on the occasion of the installation of a maypole base within the outer courtyard of the Archbishops' Palace, Otford. Scheduled monument consent had been received 11 November 2022 for Scheduled Monument No: SM KE 9, HA 1005197, ref S00243499 (see Appendix 1). This maypole base was to be used for public benefit annually at a Mayday celebration. After use, the maypole itself will be removed and the base capped and covered with turf until used the following year.

#### **2. Procedure**

A recent high-resolution resistivity survey suggested there might be a building structure adjacent to the originally approved site of the maypole base. An earlier resistivity survey had not shown this possible structure. Therefore, after approval, the site for the maypole was moved further to the east (Fig 1).



*Figure 1: New position of maypole base*

On 18 April 2023 using an auger with diameter 30 cm a core of soil was removed to a depth of 90 cm. The top layer was turf and top soil. There was *no* metalling or other surface to this courtyard below the turf. Examination of the stratigraphy of the exposed sides of the pit showed no obvious difference in soil colour.



*Figure 2: The excavated hole, showing no evident signs of stratification*

The relevant observations were that there were scattered fragments of CBM (ceramic building material) concentrated in the top 2-25 cm of soil, and that there was a water level at 88 cm depth.

A hollow metal base for the maypole was inserted and fixed in place with cement mortar. The turf was replaced. The photograph (fig 3) shows the temporary maypole in place.



*Figure 3: Maypole festivities 1 May 2023 showing temporary maypole in east of palace Field, Otford. After the maypole is removed the hollow metal cylinder base is capped and invisible beneath the turf.*

### **3. Analysis of finds.**

Contents of the removed soil sample were manually examined and all relevant specimens retained for analysis after washing and cleaning. There were no pottery sherds found. Similarly, no bone, shell, metal or organic specimens were seen.



From the top 25 cm, 25 sherds of CBM were identified, all of which were tile (fig4). Collectively these sherds weighed 925g (average weight 37g). The CBM samples were reviewed on 26/05/23 by Cynthia Poole, an expert on tile and brick.



*Figure 4: Some tile fragments from the maypole site*

Poole thought the other tiles were all examples of roof tile (at least 2 with peg holes). She said the majority were pre-Tudor. She described most tiles as being very crude, rough, irregular and undulating- all suggestive of an early date, ie medieval (figs 4 and 5).



*Figure 5: Roof tiles seen edge on. The irregular undulating surface and the crude construction with fabric inclusions are suggestive of medieval manufacture*

One tile fragment was of particular interest. This showed an unusual linear strike fault (fig 6). The “strike” is the wooden implement used for smoothing the tile before drying. Cynthia Poole mentioned she had seen a similar strike fault on roof tiles found at the medieval Eynsford Castle (in the Darent Valley to the north of Otford).



*Figure 6: Roof tile showing strike-fault*

#### **4. Summary**

This removed sample has not obviously damaged any underlying structure. There was no evidence here of the Tudor courtyard having had a solid surface. The scatter of roof tile fragments found in the upper layer of the sample are more likely to be of medieval rather than Tudor origin. This scatter could have come from the demolished medieval moated palace to the south of the Tudor courtyard, or from another as yet unknown nearby pre-Tudor structure demolished sometime before or at the time of the levelling of the Tudor courtyard.

Dr CD Shee June 2023

## **Appendix A Scheduled Monument Consent S00243499**

Dear Mr Rushby

**Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); Section 2 control of works**

**Application for Scheduled Monument Consent**

**OTFORD PALACE**

**Scheduled Monument No: SM KE 9, HA 1005197**

**Our ref: S00243499**

**Application on behalf of The Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to advise you of the decision regarding your application for Scheduled Monument Consent received 11 November 2022 in respect of proposed works at the above scheduled monument concerning installation of a maypole base within the outer courtyard of the palace in order to host annual May Festivals. The base will consist of a steel tube set into concrete, requiring a hole to be hand dug measuring 30x30cm and 100cm deep. The tube will be set into the ground by 10cm which will allow it to be capped off and turfed when not in use. The works will be undertaken under archaeological observation and recording. The works were detailed in the following documentation submitted by you:

Application Form

Statement of Archaeological Significance

Location Plan for Maypole Base

2. In accordance with paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 1 to the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State is obliged to afford you, and any other person to whom it appears to the Secretary of State expedient to afford it, an opportunity of appearing before and being heard by a person appointed for that purpose. This opportunity was offered to you by Historic England and you have declined it.

3. The Secretary of State is also required by the Act to consult with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Historic England) before deciding whether or not to grant Scheduled Monument Consent. Historic England considers the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be minor. Minor ground works which would not alter the present condition and appearance of the monument. The location is based upon geophysics results which indicate an area which should have no underlying archaeologically significant remains. This means the harm should only be minor. Undertaking this work with archaeological observation and recording will ensure that harm does not occur to any possible archaeological remains.

Additionally, the suggested activities of the May festival fall within the appropriate setting of the Tudor Palace. This should bring funds to aid the continued conservation and management by the Trust and enhance the public's appreciation of the monument.

I can confirm that the Secretary of State is agreeable for the works to proceed providing the conditions set out below are adhered to, and that accordingly Scheduled Monument Consent is hereby granted under section 2 of the 1979 Act for the works described in paragraph 1 above, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The works to which this consent relates shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State, who will be advised by Historic England. At least 2 weeks' notice (or such shorter period as may be mutually agreed) in writing of the commencement of work shall be given to Liam Delaney (liam.delaney@historicengland.org.uk) in order that an Historic England representative can inspect and advise on the works and their effect in compliance with this consent.
- (b) The specification of work for which consent is granted shall be executed in full.
- (c) This consent may only be implemented by Mr Nick Rushby (Archbishop's Palace Conservation Trust).
- (d) No works shall take place until a WSI (for archaeological and historic building recording) has been submitted and approved in writing by Historic England. The works shall subsequently be undertaken in accordance with the approved details and in full, unless variations have been agreed in writing by Historic England.
- (e) If significant archaeological remains are revealed during groundworks, they will be preserved *in situ* by amending the design and location of the plans, unless approval to do otherwise is given by Historic England.
- (f) All those involved in the implementation of the works granted by this consent must be informed by the applicant that the land is designated as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); the extent of the scheduled monument as set out in both the scheduled monument description and map; and that the implications of this designation include the requirement to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent for any works to a scheduled monument from the Secretary of State prior to them being undertaken.
- (g) Equipment and/or machinery shall not be used or operated in the scheduled area in conditions or in a manner likely to result in damage to the monument nor ground disturbance other than that which is expressly authorised in this consent.
- (h) A report on the archaeological recording shall be sent to the Kent Historic Environment Record and to Liam Delaney (liam.delaney@historicengland.org.uk) at Historic England within 3 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).
- (i) The contractor shall complete and submit an entry on OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>) prior to project completion, and shall deposit any digital project report with the Archaeology Data Service, via the OASIS form, upon completion.

4. By virtue of section 4 of the 1979 Act, if no works to which this consent relates are executed or started within the period of five years beginning with the date on which this consent was granted (being the date of this letter), this consent shall cease to have effect at the end of that period (unless a shorter time period is set by a specific condition above).

5. This letter does not convey any approval or consent required under any enactment, bye law, order or regulation other than section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

6. Your attention is drawn to the provisions of section 55 of the 1979 Act under which any person who is aggrieved by the decision given in this letter may challenge its validity by an application made to the High Court within six weeks from the date when the decision is given. The grounds

upon which an application may be made to the Court are (1) that the decision is not within the powers of the Act (that is, the Secretary of State has exceeded the relevant powers) or (2) that any of the relevant requirements have not been complied with and the applicant's interests have been substantially prejudiced by the failure to comply. The "relevant requirements" are defined in section 55 of the 1979 Act: they are the requirements of that Act and the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 and the requirements of any regulations or rules made under those Acts.

Yours sincerely

**Liam Delaney**

Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments

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For and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport