

SOUTH EAST LONDON ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

(The S.E. London section of the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit)

LAG 005/0124

STATION APPROACH, ORPINGTON,
BROMLEY (1993)

LAG 5/

31 Harvest Bank Road
West Wickham
Kent BR9 9DL ✓

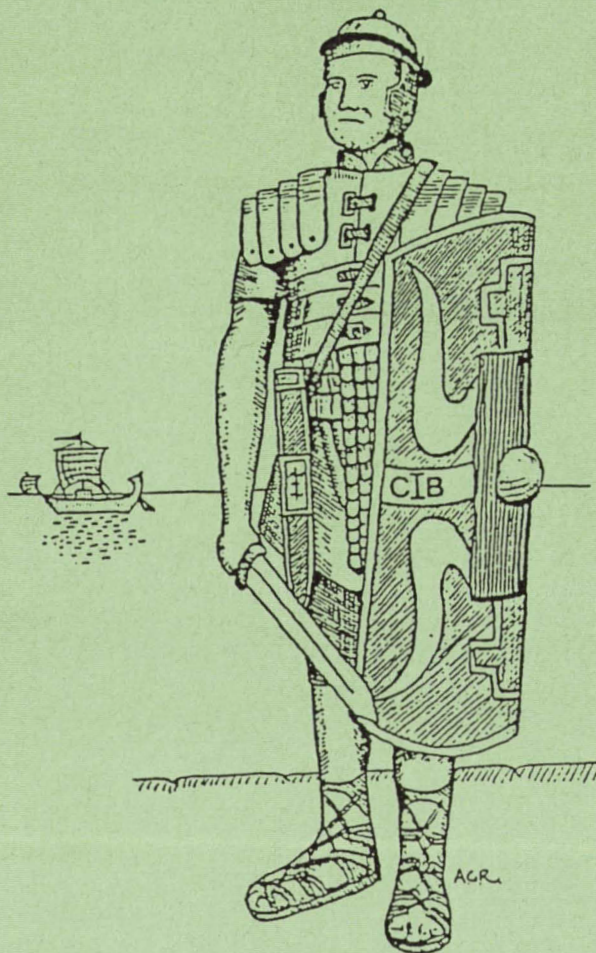
Tel: 081 462 4737

TQ 4560 6577

SMR: 071243-6

event 10: elo 5661
source 10: slo 74097

An Outline Report on an Archaeological Evaluation Excavation



by BRIAN PHILP
A.C.I.S., M.B.I.M.,
F.S.A., M.I.F.A.,
SEPTEMBER 1993

CIB

The Unit is a registered charity (No 273581) and was established in 1971 to survey, excavate, record and publish threatened sites. It is affiliated to the Council of Kentish Archaeology and works in close co-operation with the West Kent Archaeological Group, based in Bromley. The Unit provides the fulltime professional coverage for Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham.

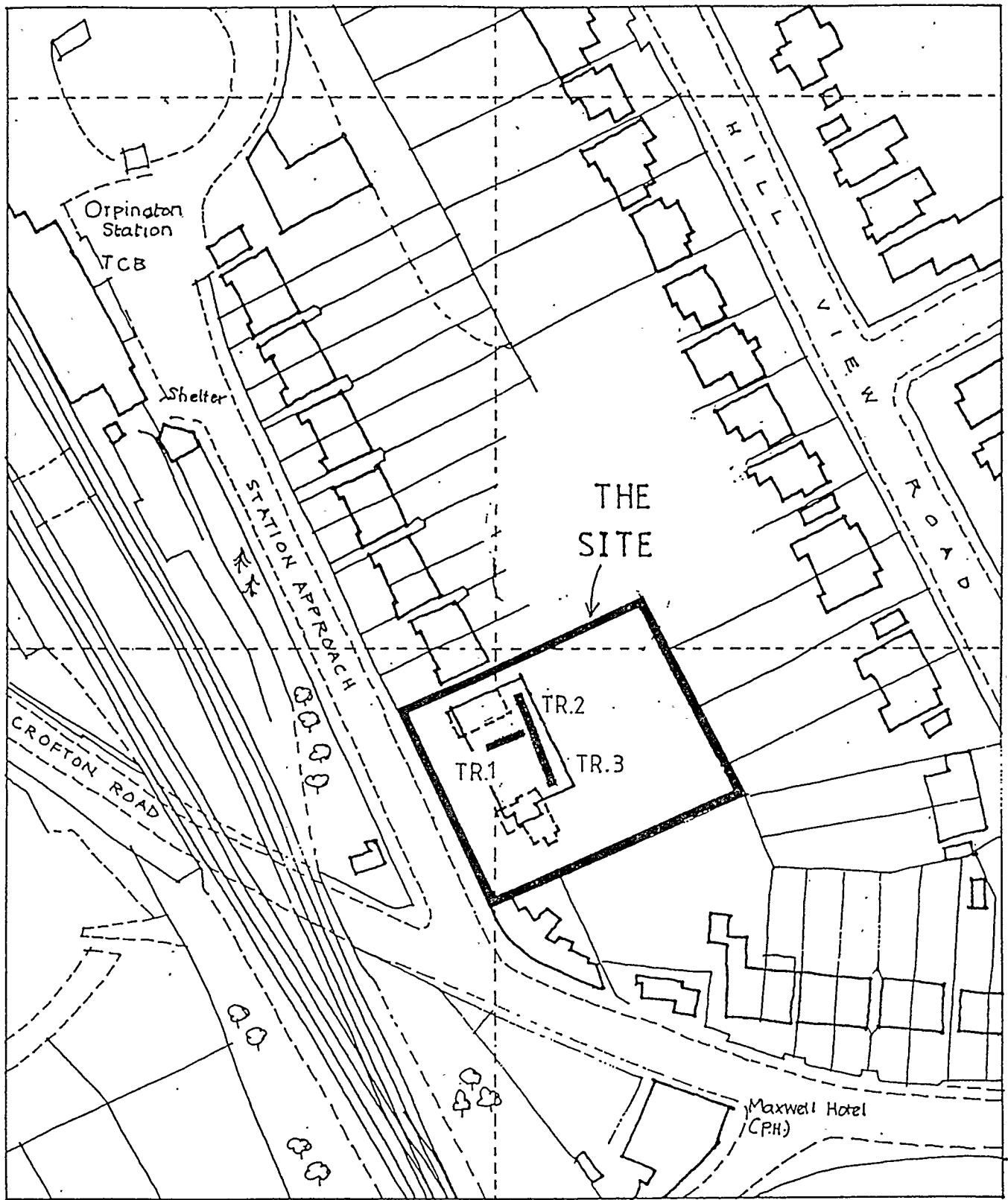
1. INTRODUCTION

The site of this development (93.0293) lies on a raised parcel of land on the east of Station Approach, Orpington. It lies within the London Borough of Bromley, at an elevation of about 90.00m. O.D. (Fig.1).

Early in 1993 an application was made to the Bromley Borough for the construction of a large, new religious meeting-house on the site. This included associated parking and consent was later granted with a series of conditions which included one (No.7), that prior archaeological investigation must take place.

The site lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential in that it is situated within the front environs of the Crofton Roman Villa, situated only about 150m to the west. This major Roman site consists of a main range of rooms (the Villa-house) now open to the public and it would have had ancillary buildings and very many minor features scattered across several acres, mainly in front of the building. Some of these features could survive on the application site and if so these may be damaged or destroyed by the development. The main Villa-house was fully excavated by the Kent Unit in 1988-89, under the direction of the writer, when its broad similarity to the Keston Villa was established. The Keston Villa was excavated jointly by the Kent Unit and Bromley and West Kent Groups from 1967-92 and was substantially published in 1991.

Accordingly, the SELAU was requested in August, 1993 to prepare a detailed Specification for a Programme of Archaeological Work. This was completed in five days and submitted to the Bromley planning department immediately for approval. This was promptly given following close consultation with Kevin Morris and Alan Tyler, both of Bromley Council.



SCALE 1:1250

Fig.1

SITE LOCATION MAP

This enabled the work to be carried out and completed from the 17th - 20th August, 1993 both within the agreed timing and costs. All Archaeological features were selectively excavated and recorded in plan and section.

The site was backfilled on completion of the work and vegetation cleared. This Outline Report, as required by the specification, gives the results of this work and also recommendations. It had to be completed in just three weeks from the end of the excavation.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Unit wishes to acknowledge the co-operation and support of The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints, throughout the project. In particular Mr M P Tilley, Assistant Area Architect, kindly advised on the scheme as did Mr M P Richardson of Button Richardson (Chartered Architects) of Westerham, Kent.

The Unit also wishes to thank the helpful and positive response of Mr Kevin Morris and Dr Alan Tyler. Thanks are also due to Mr Derek Garrod for supervising the work and to Mr Gerry Geradine, Mr Andrew Richardson and Mr Maurice Chenery for their hard work on the site. Mr Chenery has also prepared the drawings for this report.

Lawn area

limit of development

KEY

— K.A.R.U. excavations

- - - Area to be excavated

- - - Contour line

limit of development

Area reserved for car parking

Area to be excavated

contour line
18.50m

retaining wall

DITCH F2

ANIMAL BURIAL F8

Outline of proposed MEETING HOUSE

HOLLOW F4

TR. 2

FLINT+TILE F6

PIT F5

TR. 3

BRICK TANK F7

Outline of demolished house

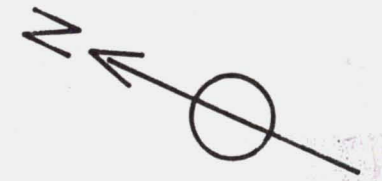
DITCH F3

TR. 1

Outline of demolished house

DITCH F1

fence



fence

Spire

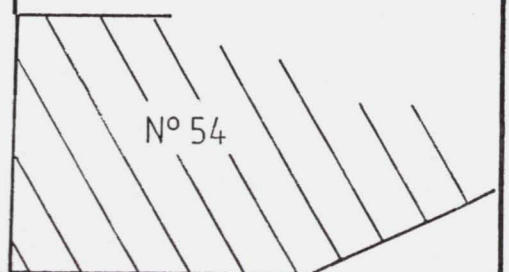
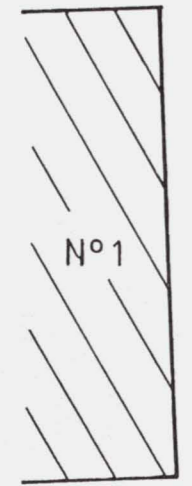
Area to be excavated

contour line
11.05m

Low boundary wall

Pavement

STATION APPROACH



step

3. THE EXCAVATION (Fig.2)

Three linear trenches were dug on the site, as suggested by the specification. However, the original scheme to dig three parallel trenches across the long axis of the proposed building, could not be undertaken. This was due to the survival of substantial foundations and floor-slabs of two earlier houses largely masked by dense vegetation. Accordingly, it was only possible to excavate the planned trench (Trench 1) across the centre of the site, but two more joining trenches (Trenches 2 and 3) were excavated along the eastern side of the building to replace those intended elsewhere.

TRENCH 1

This was 9m. by 1.60m. and lay on a broadly east-west axis across the centre of the proposed building. It was generally 0.50m. deep, but had a maximum depth of about 1.45m. The orange-brown natural clay was cut by three large features (F1, F3, and F4), see below.

F1 DITCH

A substantial ditch (Fig 3) was found running roughly S.E. - N.W. across the site. Only the northern half of this was located and its filling consisted of two deposits of clay loam which contained seven fragments of Roman tile and four potsherds, of first or second century date.

F3 DITCH

Another substantial ditch was found crossing this trench on a roughly N.E. - S.W. axis. It was about 1.40m. wide and deeper than 75cm. It contained three fragments of Roman tile and two non-descript potsherds.

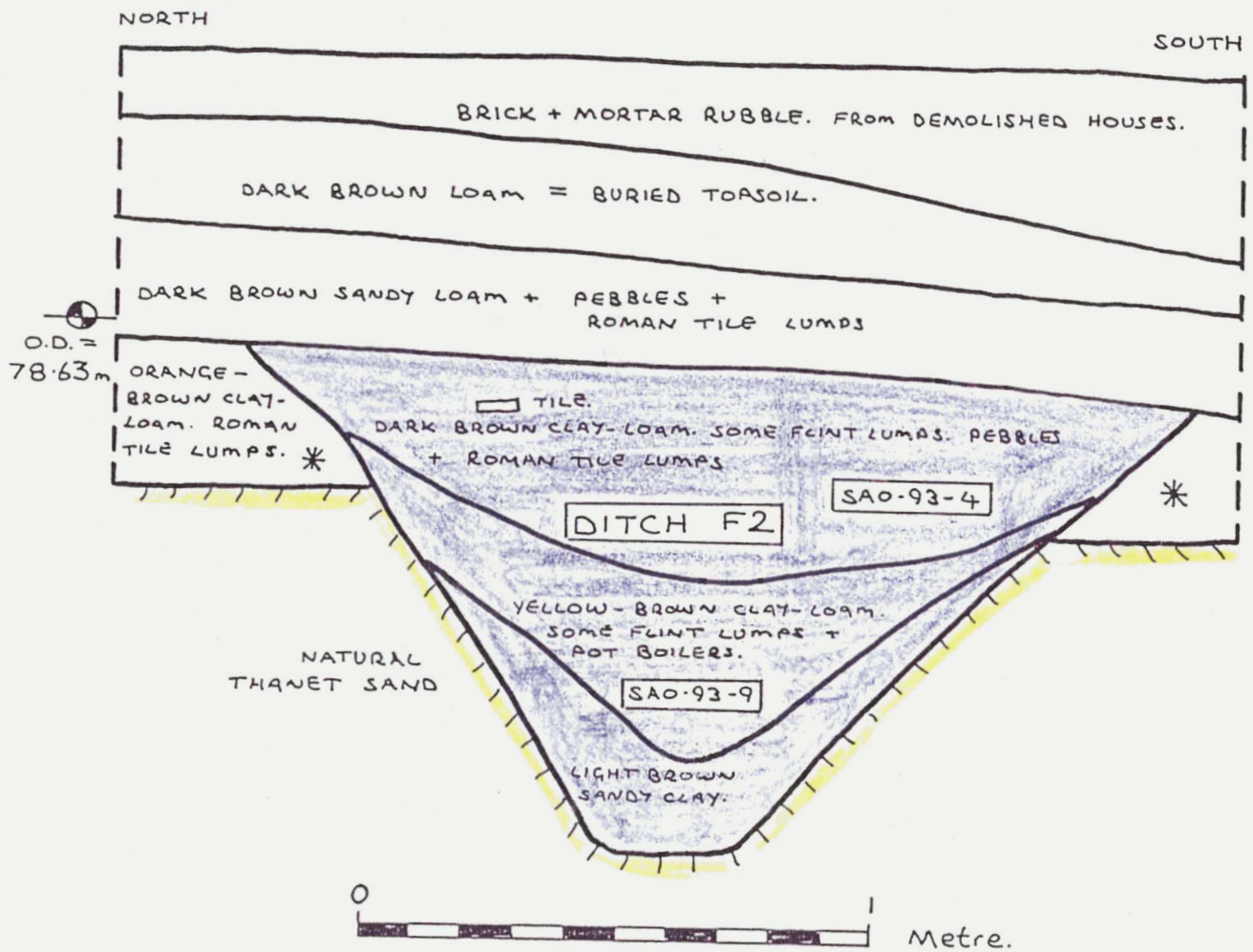
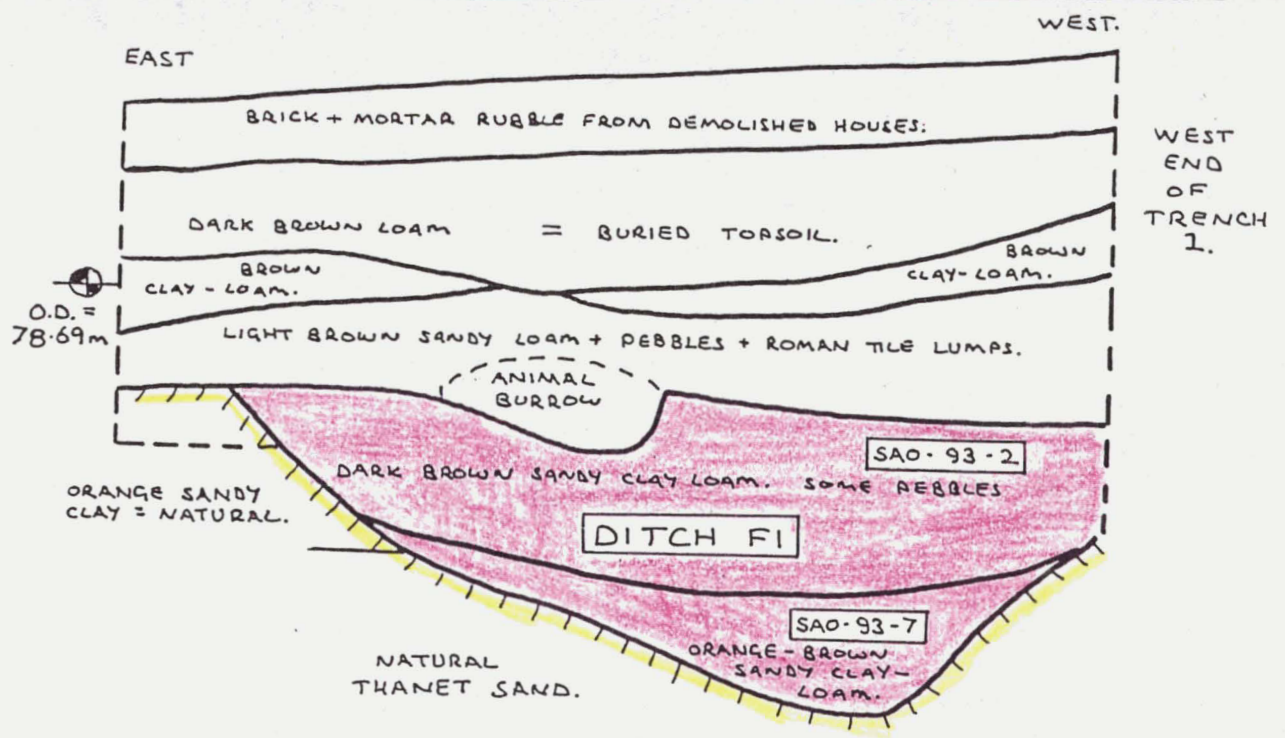


Fig. 3

DITCHES F1 + F2

F4 HOLLOW

This trench also revealed the west side of a large hollow that was not examined in detail. It extended into Trenches 2 and 3 where partial examination was possible.

TRENCH 2

This was 9m. by 1.60m. and lay on a broadly north-south axis, forming a continuation of Trench 3. It was generally 0.60m. deep, but had a maximum depth of 1.10m. The orange-brown natural clay was cut by four substantial features (F2, F4, F6 and F7), see below.

F2 DITCH

A substantial ditch (Fig.3), roughly N.E. - S.W., is probably the continuation of ditch F3 in Trench 1. It had a V-shaped profile and a flat base and contained three deposits of loam and some pebble. These contained two fragments of Roman tile and fifteen fragments of pottery, mostly Patch Grove ware of second century date.

It was about 1.20m. wide and about 65cm. deep with the base at about 1.10m. beneath present ground-level.

F4 HOLLOW

The hollow found in Trench 1 continued into Trench 2, but was not examined here in detail.

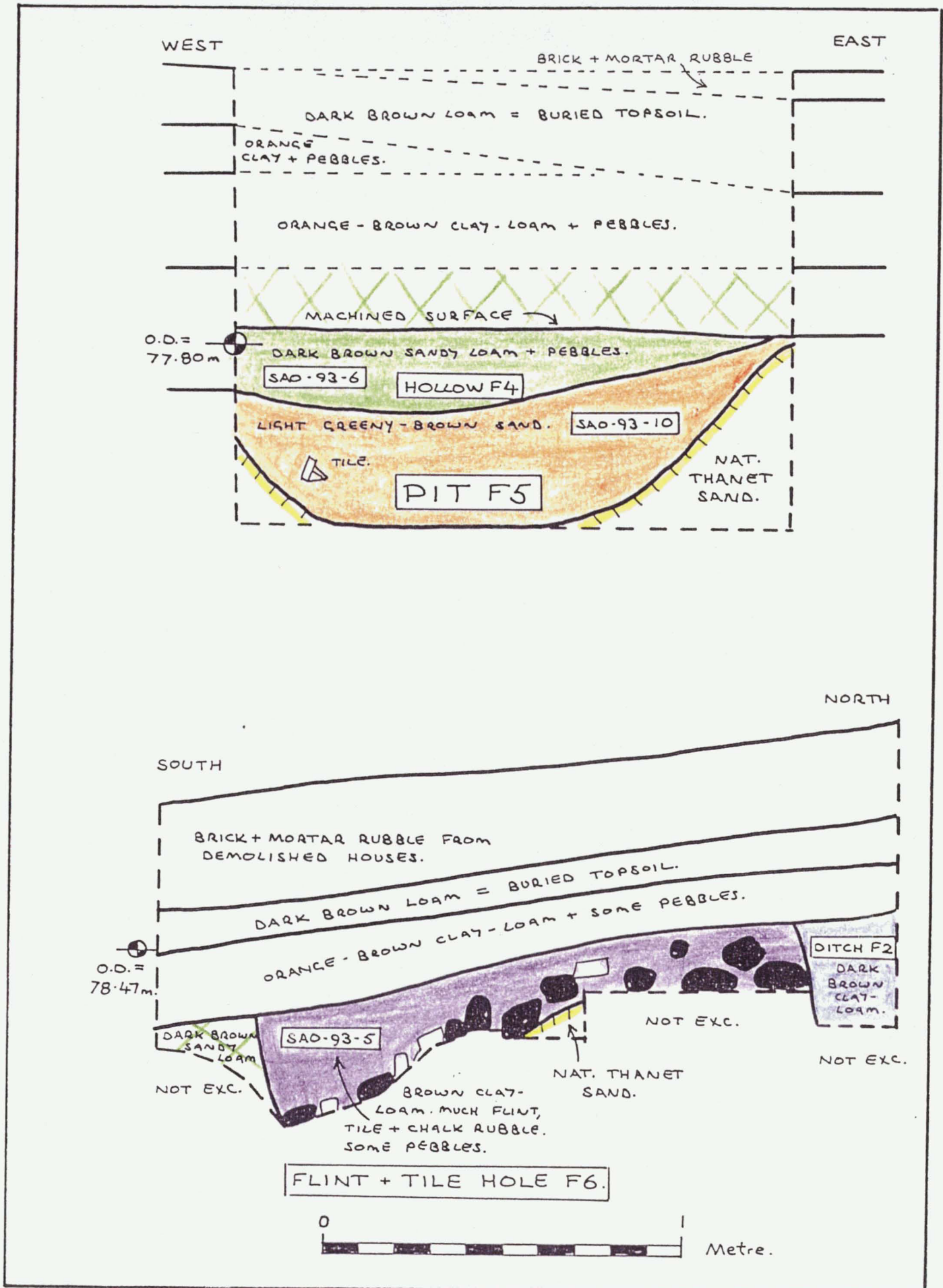


Fig. 4 HOLLOW F4, PIT F5
+ FLINT AND TILE HOLE F6

F6 FLINT AND TILE FEATURE

The edge of a substantial feature was found projecting from under the west side of the trench (Fig.4). This was about 1.70m. in length and wider than 0.40m. It contained a compact mass of flint and Roman tile, mostly touching and clearly part of a deliberate fill. It was not examined in depth and no datable objects were recovered, though it is virtually certain this is a Roman feature.

F7 BRICK TANK

The dome of a mortared brick-built tank was found at the junction of Trenches 1 and 2. This feature was circular in plan, but of unknown depth, though it seems likely to have been a 19th century soak-away or cess-tank.

TRENCH 3

This was 10m. by 1.60m., had a maximum depth of 0.90m. and lay on a broadly north-south axis. It joined Trench 2. It contained three features (F4, F5 and F8), see below.

F4 HOLLOW

This feature (Fig.4) also appeared in Trenches 1 and 2. It appears to have been circular, or oval, in plan with a north-south length of about 6.20m. and an east-west width of 4.80m. (minimum). It seems to have had sloping sides and a flat base and a depth of about 0.43m. It contained five Roman tile fragments and nine sherds of Roman pottery, including a late-first century bead-rim cooking-pot of Patch Grove ware.

F5. PIT

A shallow pit (or just possibly a small ditch) was found beneath the large hollow (F4) and was only examined in one narrow cut (Fig.4). This suggests it lies on a roughly N.E. by S.W. axis and had been about 0.53m. deep. Its green-brown sand filling contained four fragments of Roman tile and a sherd of a first century shell-loaded cooking-pot

F8 ANIMAL BURIAL

A shallow hollow in the natural clay, about 0.94m. in length and only 0.14m. deep contained the highly decayed long bones of an articulated animal skeleton. This was not disturbed during the excavation, but a Roman date seems probable.

4. DISCUSSION

The evaluation excavation proved highly successful and produced the information required. It was completed within the time and costs agreed.

The work showed that the area within the site of the proposed meeting-house contained at least eight significant features, six of which are almost certainly Roman. Two of these (F2 and F3) seem to be part of a substantial ditch more than 9.00m. in length and continuing in both directions. Another ditch (F1) at least 2.00m. long, also extends in both directions and probably crosses much of the site. A substantial Hollow (F4) on the east side of the site, at least 6.00m. by 5.00m. may be a small quarry. A pit (F5) had been cut by the excavation of the hollow. Another feature (F6) filled with flints and Roman tile, had been cut into the top of the Hollow. All of these features contained Roman material and the pottery recovered from most has been provisionally dated to the first and second centuries A.D.

Two other features, one a shallow pit containing an animal skeleton (F8), and a brick-lined tank (F7), were also found. The density of Roman features within these limited trenches was in fact predicted in the Specification (para.2) for the site lay within the front environs of the Crofton Roman Villa, situated only about 150m. to the west. The general absence of building materials, other than tiles, suggests that no secondary masonry building exists on, or very near, this site. The features are largely typical of those found within the immediate environs of a major Villa.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The three trenches covered an area of some 42 sq. mts., which represents about 8% of the area to be directly effected by the foundations, or ground reduction. This is thus an acceptable sample of the site.

It is now clear from the disposition of the features discovered that the central part of the site contains buried archaeology. This may, or may not, extend over part of the rest of the site. It also seems likely that any features which may have existed on the sites of the two demolished houses will have been substantially damaged or destroyed during the construction. This reduces the area of main concern, but clearly the rest of the site needs consideration.

Apart from the likely disposition of known, or implied, features the controlling factors are likely to be the quality of what survives and also the extent to which features will be damaged during the building programme.

Such damage is likely to occur in two main respects:

- a. The excavation for the strip-foundations and for the retaining wall.
- b. The general site-reduction for part of the main building and for some of the related parking, mostly across the northern sector of the site. Indeed it seems likely that the horizontal reduction will be uphill of the proposed 78.50m. contour and roughly at that level. This reduction might have a maximum depth of 1.00m.

It is important that any archaeological features in this uphill zone should be located, recorded and excavated ahead of the building works. Accordingly the following programme is recommended:

1. That the area of the general reduction, covering about 300 sq. mts. and above the 78.50m. level as shown on Fig.2 as a dotted outline, be excavated archaeologically to the precise formation-level and full records made.
2. That the foundation-trenches for both the main building and the retaining-wall be dug under close archaeological control, to an agreed watching-brief, so that again any features revealed can be fully excavated and recorded.
3. That any service-trenches to be dug across the site, or any further soil reduction required, should also be subject to an agreed watching-brief.
4. That an Outline Report on 1-3 above, should be prepared for publication.

BRIAN PHILP
Unit Director
3rd September, 1993

FEATURE	CODE	POTTERY	TILE	FLINT	BONE	OTHER	TOTAL
1	SAO-93 2 and 7	4	7	2	-	-	13
2	4 and 9	15	2	2	2	-	21
3	8	2	3	-	-	-	5
4	3 and 6	9	5	1	-	1 BRONZE	16
5	10	1	4	-	-	-	5
6	5	-	3	-	-	-	3
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		31	24	5	2	1	63

TABLE OF FINDS FROM THE FEATURES ON THE SITE