

**KELSEY PARK & LAND ADJACENT TO NORTH DRIVE, BECKENHAM**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING**  
**ON BEHALF OF THAMES WATER UTILITIES**  
**(OVERBURY AVENUE SEWER & FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME)**

February 2006



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ARCHAEOLOGY

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Project 337

## ***Abstract***

*Archaeological observation and recording took place between October 2005 and January 2006 in the vicinity of Kelsey Park, Beckenham. The programme was carried out during groundworks for a Thames Water sewer and flood alleviation scheme, and in response to recommendations made by English Heritage. Nearly 190m of pipe trench excavation was monitored on the eastern side of Park, between the Lake and Wickham Road. Preliminary observations were made during topsoil stripping for a site compound located to the south, on open land adjacent to North Drive.*

*This area has potential for a range of archaeological remains. Both site areas lie close to the projected line of a Roman road, the so-called London-Lewes Way, although the route is not conclusively established here. It was also hoped that there might be evidence for development of the Kelsey Park, possibly from the 15<sup>th</sup> century but particularly in relation to the formal gardens that are shown to the east of the Lake on Rocque's survey of 1746. Moreover, the new pipe trench lay roughly with and fairly close to an historic stream course, parts of which are shown by the Ordnance Survey as late as 1953.*

*Th fieldwork did not reveal any significant archaeological remains, and there were only occasional post-medieval finds. In the main area of excavation in the Park there was a fairly consistent sequence of topsoil and subsoil over weathered natural, although truncated by 20<sup>th</sup> century activity to the east. The principal natural deposit was a light brown sand/silt mix with occasional pebbles, becoming much more clayey with depth. This is identified by the Geological Survey (Sheet 270) as part of the Harwich Formation.*

*The reworked soil horizons produced occasional fragments of roof tile and brick plus a few sherds of modern pottery and one of probable pre-1700 Surrey/Hampshire Border ware. Within the compound area metal detecting recovered a number of objects, the earliest represented by a musket ball and a ?George I halfpenny.*

*There was no sign of Roman activity or of features that could be associated with the postulated road. Nor was there any sign of the historic stream course or palaeo-environmental evidence in the Park. Historically it appears that both areas of investigation formed open land, which may only have been utilised for pasture or meadow.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Groundworks for a part of a Thames Water sewer and flood alleviation scheme in the vicinity of Kelsey Park, Beckenham, were archaeologically monitored between late October 2005 and mid January 2006.

The works comprised preliminary topsoil stripping of land adjacent to North Drive in preparation for the site compound. This was followed by the main contract works, including excavation of a pipe trench some 300m to the north to replace an existing service on the eastern side of Kelsey Park (Figures 1 & 4).

The project was carried out in response to recommendations made by English Heritage, and reflected the archaeological potential of this area for a range of finds or remains from Roman to post-medieval date. Palaeo-environmental remains were also possible from an original watercourse that may have flowed across the Park roughly on the line of the existing pipe.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

The archaeological programme was commissioned by Mr Nick Clark, Biodiversity and Heritage Advisor, Environment & Conservation, Thames Water Utilities Limited.

Assistance during the project was also given by representatives of the on-site contractor, Morrisons, including the site manager Felix Ameche.

The archaeological measures on this site were supported by Mark Stevenson (English Heritage, Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service).

## **3. Location and topography**

**3.1** The plot to be stripped for the site compound occupied an open area of some 32m by 50m between South Eden Park Road and North Drive, approximately centred at TQ 37955 68415 (Figure 1). The land surface here was fairly level, although falling slightly to the southwest from about 50.8m to 50.1m OD.

**3.2** The new pipe trench was located on the eastern side of Kelsey Park, covering a distance of nearly 190m from a point just east of the Lake to the edge of Wickham Road (Figure 4; centred at National Grid Reference TQ 37860 68725).

The land covered by the groundworks also rose markedly to the east, from a surface level of about 41.3m OD at the western end of the trench to *c* 46.6m at Wickham Road. This reflects the site's location on the eastern side of the valley of the Beck river (historically *Beckenham River* or *Hawk's Brook*). Within the Kelsey Park itself past damming of the river has created two sizeable and adjoining lakes.

The pipe trench (and its predecessor) also lay within a slight east-west dip in the landscape, which historically marks to the line of a stream that flowed westward under Wickham Road and into the Beck river (Tookey 1975, 2). The Ordnance Survey maps of 1909 and 1953 still show a partly-open watercourse and a small pond on this line and within the Park.

**3.3** The natural ground surface in both areas of groundworks is recorded as Harwich Formation, described as sand and flint pebble beds, overlying London Clay (BGS 1998).

## **4. Archaeology and history**

- 4.1** This area has some potential for remains of prehistoric to medieval date. In particular, the site lies close to the projected line of a Roman road running southwards from Watling Street towards the South Downs, the so-called London-Lewes Way (Davis 1935, 61-3; Graham 1941, 98; Margary 1965, 127-31). There is no definite evidence for the road line at this point, although it may well have followed the higher and more level ground above the river valley.

There is no other evidence for early activity in the site areas although it is likely that parts were cultivated or grazed at least from the medieval period.

- 4.2** The name Kelsey probably originated in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century from the name of the contemporary leaseholder. The first Kelsey House may have been of Elizabethan date, although the earliest record is a map of 1623 (Tookey 1975, 2-3).

The estate is subsequently recorded in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century by Rocque's survey (Rocque 1746): this shows a very different layout to that of the present day, with the old house to the northwest and an extensive formal garden layout on both sides of a rectangular lake. However, it is uncertain if the lake has since been widened or whether the gardens extended into the area of the present site, and the area closer to Wickham Road is simply shown as an open field.

- 4.3** The Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (published 1819) indicates that the formal gardens had been replaced by naturalised parkland, in line with contemporary fashion. A new house was also built around 1770 to the south of its previous location (*ibid* 18).

- 4.4** The Beckenham Tithe map and Apportionment of 1838-40 show both parts of the site as open land, with the groundworks in Kelsey Park very largely contained by a single meadow (*plot* 722). The same general field layout is shown on the OS 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 25 inch maps of 1863 and 1897. Subsequent maps show the break up and partial development of the estate, although the land to be occupied by the site compound appears to remain open.

The area of the site compound is shown as open land by Rocque and by the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS and subsequent maps, and does not appear to have been previously developed.

## **5. Archaeological research questions**

The project presented an opportunity to address several research questions, as defined in the preliminary *Specification*:

- Is there any evidence for prehistoric to medieval activity, and what is the nature of this?
- Is there any evidence for early post-medieval activity and/or land use?
- Is there any evidence for the formal garden layout shown by Rocque on the eastern side of the lake? This might include internal features such as paths and a boundary to the east.
- What evidence is there for later land development and usage?



## **6. Methodology**

**6.1** A *Specification for a Programme of Archaeological Observation and Recording* was agreed prior to commencement of the fieldwork (Compass Archaeology, Oct. 2005). The programme was also carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by English Heritage and by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

**6.2** The basic elements of the groundworks were as follows:

- Creation of a site compound of approximately 0.16 hectare (*c* 32m x 50 m) off North Drive, involving preliminary removal of vegetation and topsoil strip prior to hardcore surfacing.
- Upgrading of the existing pipe in Kelsey Park, requiring an open-cut trench approximately 190m long by an average of 3m to 4m wide. The trench was generally stepped down, with initial excavation to 0.6m to 0.9m plus a deeper central slot *c* 1.2m wide and dug to an overall depth of 2.5m (up to 3.6m at the eastern extremity). There were also a series of inspection chambers requiring excavation to 5m wide.

**6.3** The preliminary topsoil strip for the compound was observed and exposed deposits were examined for finds and/or buried features, including a metal detector survey of the exposed area.

The subsequent pipe trench excavation was monitored from west to east and representative areas were recorded and photographed in greater detail. Individual elements were described on drawings but did not produce any significant finds and were therefore not separately contexted. Levels were derived from an OSBM located on the base of a decorative brick and flint plinth at the junction of Hayes Lane and Wickham Way, value 49.82m OD.

The groundworks and recorded sections were located onto an overall site plan by taped measurement: this was in turn related as a 'best fit' to the Ordnance Survey grid as derived from the 1:1250 map (Figures 1 & 4).

**6.4** The records from the evaluation have been allocated the site code: KYP05 by the Museum of London Archaeological Archive. An ordered and indexed site archive will be compiled in line with the MoL *Guidelines* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archive.

## **7. The archaeological fieldwork**

For descriptive purposes the groundworks can be divided into two separate phases: the initial topsoil strip of the site compound, and the subsequent excavation of the new pipe trench from west to east across Kelsey Park.

### **7.1 The site compound topsoil strip (*Figures 1 to 3*)**

Clearance and topsoil stripping for the proposed site compound to the south and west of North Drive took place over a period of two days in October 2005. This area previously comprised open rough grassland that was may well have been grazed in the past.

The exposed ground was quite firm and consequently the topsoil strip was very shallow, typically 60mm to 120mm in depth. This removed a dark sandy silt topsoil and some subsoil, generally exposing a mid to light brown silty sand with pebbles (*cf.* Figure 2). In some areas (particularly to the south) there was a much more gravely horizon that may represent the top of the underlying natural deposit. Elsewhere there were patches of darker more humic material reflecting root action and also some localised areas of disturbance or infill, including some shallow layers of ashy or burnt material near the southern boundary.

The topsoil strip revealed no significant features or deposits, and no evidence for past cultivation by deeper ploughing. The reduced surface was fairly level, dropping slightly northeast to southwest from a height of about 50.7m to 50.0m OD (*cf.* spot heights on Figure 1).

There were no obvious finds apart from a few fragments of recent pottery and glass, occasional ceramic building material (brick, tile and occasional pipe) and two pieces of burnt flint, all of which were derived from the reworked soil horizon. However, a metal detector survey of the reduced area did produce some further post-medieval items. Not all of these were retained but the more interesting and/or dateable included one 18<sup>th</sup> century coin, one ?early 20<sup>th</sup> century Fire Service button, and one composite copper alloy artefact of uncertain function (Figure 3). A more detailed description is given below in Appendix I.

### **7.2 The pipe trench excavation (*Figures 4 to 9*)**

The subsequent excavation of the replacement pipe trench across Kelsey Park took place over an approximate a five-week period from early December 2005. The works joined up with an existing pipe to the west and to the east were continued by further groundworks along the line of Wickham Road. As already noted, the trench was generally about 3m to 4m wide, with the sides stepped at slightly less than 1m to a final central depth of at least 2.5m. The excavation ground level also rose by just over 5m from west to east (*cf.* spot heights on Figure 4).

The sequence of deposits was fairly straightforward, and there were no significant features or other remains. There was however some variation between the eastern and western parts of the site in the nature of the subsoil and weathered natural horizons. Deposits in the eastern half of the trench was also disturbed by modern activity, relating to the development of Kelsey Park since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly to the present tarmac path. Moreover, excavation of this section was close to or directly over the line of the previous pipe trench.

The main natural horizon throughout the excavated area comprised a fairly consistent light brown sandy silt to silty sand with occasional medium to fine pebbles. In most areas the deposit was noted to become slightly more sandy with depth, and then (except near the eastern limit of excavation) firmer and much more clayey (Figures 4-9). This sequence presumably represents the top of the Harwich Formation as described by the Geological Survey, *Sheet 270* (BGS 1998).

In general the natural sand/silt was overlain by a mid to darker brown silty sand with variable amounts of pebbles, which in some places became more frequent with depth (*cf.* Figure 6). This horizon appears to represent a weathered natural grading upwards to reworked subsoil, and was of fairly uniform depth, generally about 400mm to 650mm. At the eastern end of the pipe trench and close to Wickham Road the sequence was somewhat different, in that the layer was clearly divided into a distinct band of gravel in a firm silty matrix overlain by sandy silt with few pebbles (Figure 9). In the central part of the trench the layer was also significantly disturbed and truncated by modern activity (*cf.* Figure 7).

The upper, subsoil, element of the deposit described above produced very occasional ceramic finds, mainly small fragments and flecks of red brick and/or roof tile. Near the western end of excavation there was also one abraded and residual sherd of post-medieval whiteware (weight 5gms; possibly Surrey/Hampshire Border ware, *c.* 1550-1700). However, there was no other dateable material and no evidence for earlier features.

The overlying topsoil comprised a dark brown silty sand with occasional mainly fine pebbles, some 200mm to 300mm thick. This layer produced a few finds, including ceramic building material similar to that noted above and a couple of quite recent potsherds (plain earthenware and transfer printed ware). However, none of this material was associated with discrete features or deposits.

Within the eastern half of the trench the topsoil horizon had been disturbed and frequently removed by modern activity, including the previous pipe trench. To the east the truncated surface was also overlain by an increasing depth of made ground, up to about 900mm in the vicinity of the path onto Wickham Road and below the adjacent pavement (*cf.* Figure 9).

## 8. Assessment of the results

The archaeological fieldwork provided an opportunity to address the site-specific objectives that were defined within the preliminary *Written Scheme* (5. above). The responses are outlined below:

- *Is there any evidence for prehistoric to medieval activity, and what is the nature of this?*

There was no evidence for any prehistoric to medieval activity, nor were any residual artefacts recovered. In particular, there were no features that might indicate the presence of the projected Roman road alignment.

- *Is there any evidence for early post-medieval activity and/or land use?*

There was no evidence for any early post-medieval occupation or activity. It is possible that there was some land use in these areas, although only as pasture. The investigation only produced three discrete finds of 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier date, two from the compound area and one – a small abraded potsherd – from Kelsey Park itself.

- *Is there any evidence for the formal garden layout shown by Rocque on the eastern side of the lake? This might include internal features such as paths and a boundary to the east?*

There was no evidence for 18<sup>th</sup> century garden features. The levels taken across the Kelsey Park excavation show a considerable rise to the east, and it is possible that any superficial evidence has been lost in subsequent landscaping. Also the extent of the earlier gardens is not certain: these are shown in relation to the contemporary lake, but it is possible that this has since been widened as well as lengthened. In this case the 18<sup>th</sup> century boundary may lie to the west of the recent groundworks.

- *What evidence is there for later land development and usage?*

The only general evidence for land use was provided by occasional finds from the reworked soil horizons, principally small fragments of brick and tile plus a few sherds of later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery, and in the compound area some metal artefacts.

Within the eastern part of Kelsey Park there were also some features and deposits that are assumed to relate to earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century development, including made ground horizons in the vicinity of Wickham Road and a probable gravel path a short distance to the west.

## 9. Conclusion

The archaeological observation and fieldwork did not reveal any significant features or finds. There were occasional finds within the reworked soil horizons, where datable mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century or later, and some evidence for the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of Kelsey Park in the area adjacent to Wickham Road.

There was no sign of any Roman activity, or of features that could be associated with the postulated road line. Similarly there was no palaeo-environmental evidence, despite the proximity of an earlier watercourse to the north of the new pipe trench. Historically it appears that both areas of investigation formed open land, which may only have been utilised for pasture or meadow.

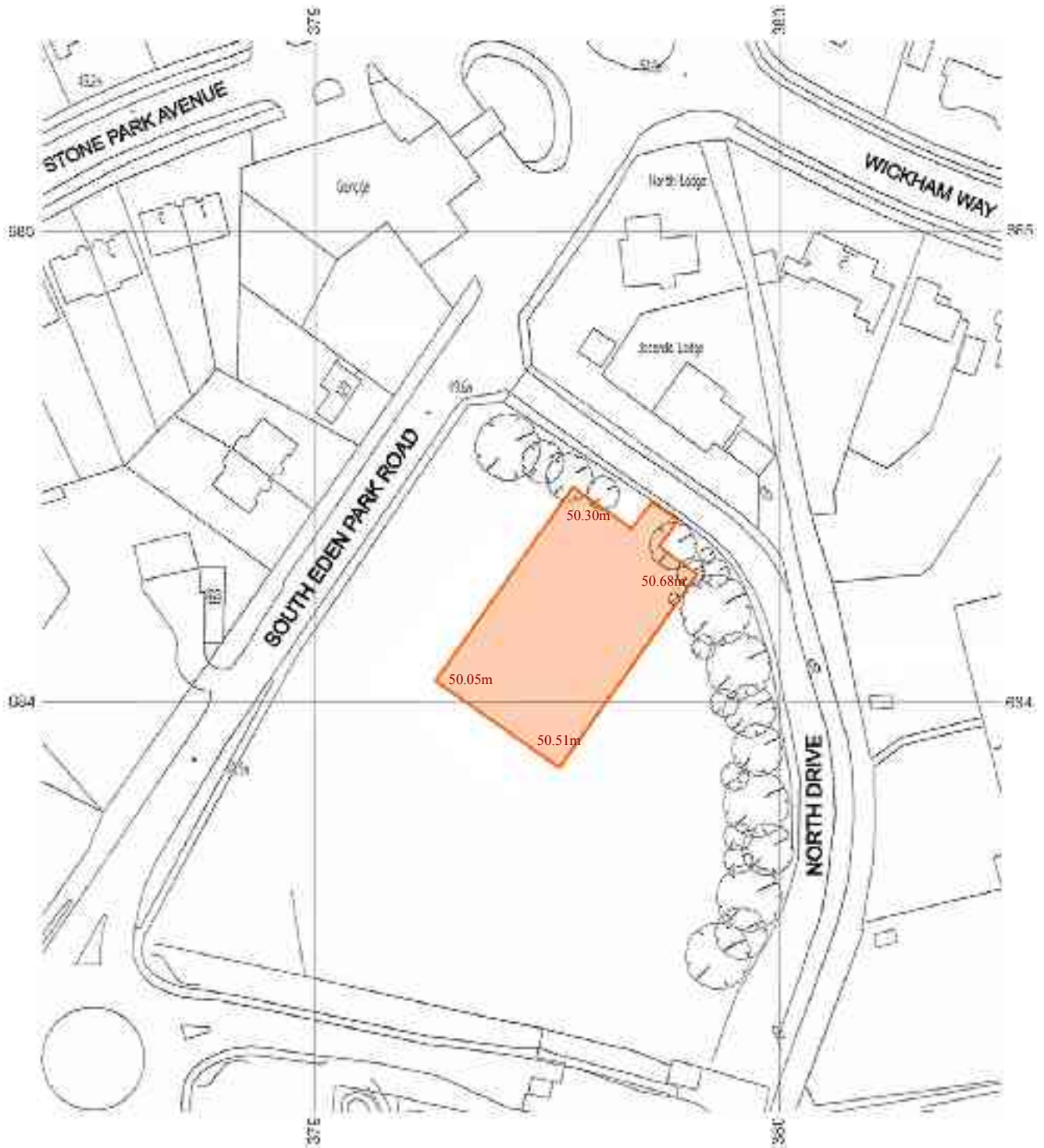


Fig 1 The area of the site compound in relation to the 1:1250 Ordnance Survey map, including spot heights on the reduced surface

*Map base from original supplied by Thames Water*



Fig 2 View towards South Eden Park Road across the northern part of the area stripped for the site compound



Fig 3 Decorated copper alloy object found during metal detecting in the area of the site compound. *Shown actual size: see Appendix I <4>*





Fig 4 1:1250 plan showing the route of the pipe trench excavation across Kelsey Park, plus views of work in progress and location of detailed sections (Figs 5 to 9) overleaf





Fig 5 Detail of exposed section and general view towards the western end of the pipe trench excavation in Kelsey Park, looking south /southeast (for location see Fig 4)



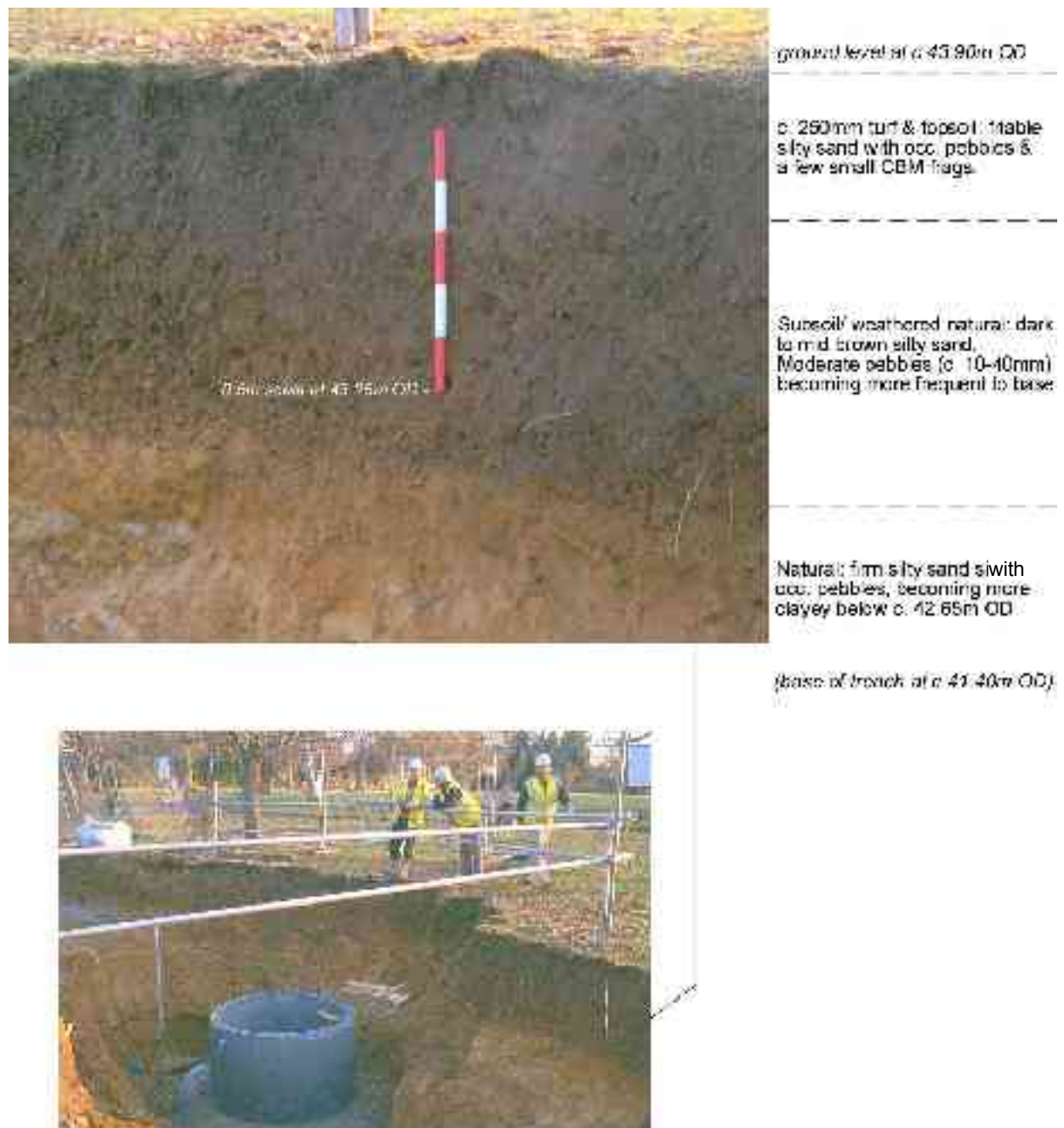


Fig 6 Detail of exposed section and general view of pipe trench and adjacent inspection chamber excavation, looking southeast (*for location see Fig 4*)



Fig 7 Detail of exposed section and general view of pipe trench cutting the pedestrian path at the approximate mid-point of the excavation, looking south and east (*for location see Fig 4*)



Fig 8 Detail of exposed section and general view of pipe trench and adjacent inspection chamber excavation, looking north and northwest (*for location see Fig 4*)



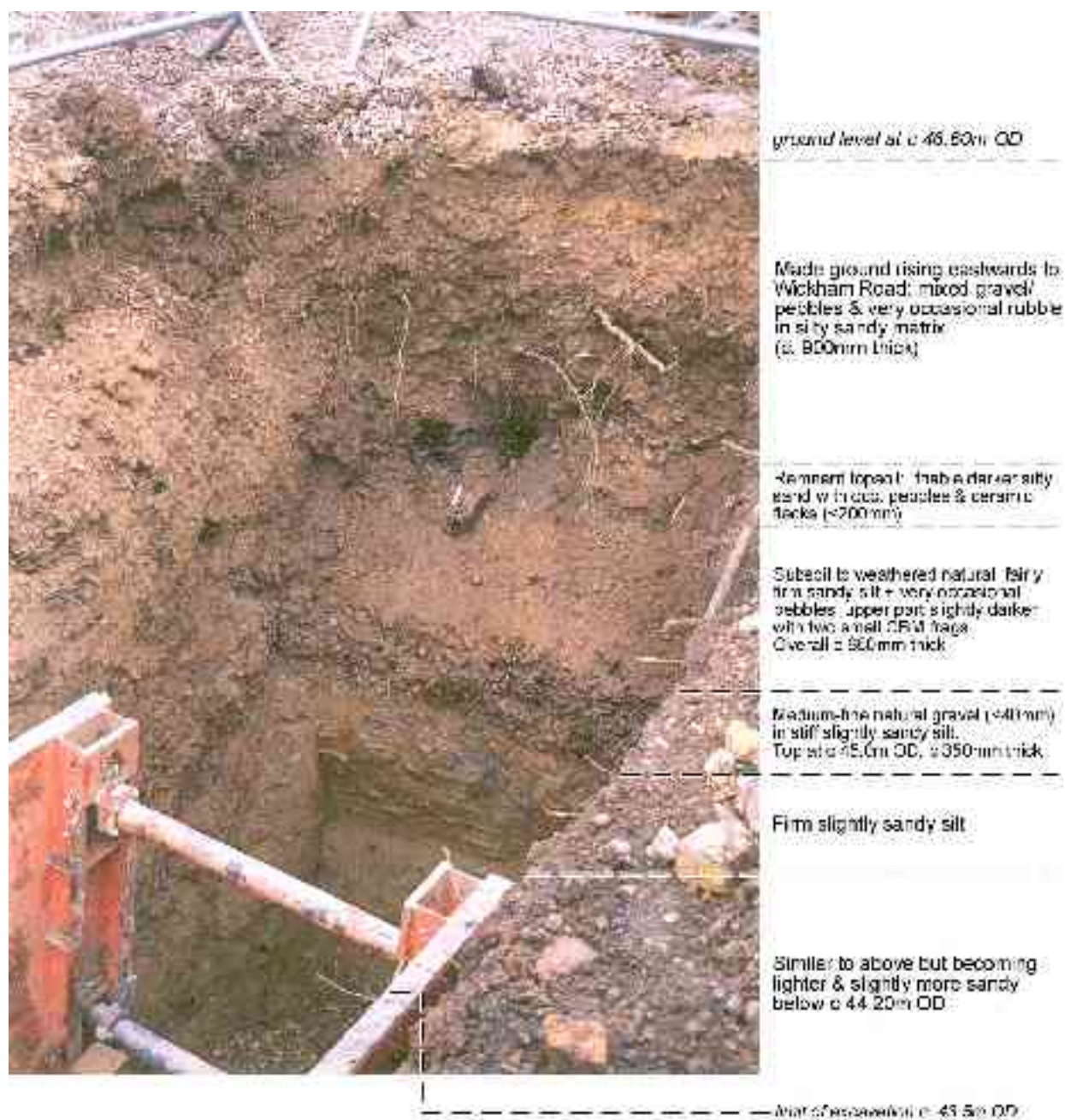


Fig 9 Detail of exposed section of the pipe trench on the eastern side of Kelsey Park, looking northeast (*for location see Fig 4*)

## Appendix I. The metal finds

A number of post-medieval metal finds were recovered by detector following the topsoil strip of the site compound area. These are described as follows, numbered in approximate chronological order:

- <1> Lead musket ball: *c* 12.5mm diam., weight 10gms.
- <2> Cu alloy coin, 25mm diam. Heavily worn/corroded: halfpenny of ?George I (1714-27); reverse almost illegible but could be Britannia.
- <3> Fire Service brass button, 25mm diam: corroded but the front element clearly embossed with the word *BRITANNIA*. Maker's name just visible on rear. Probably early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- <4> Two thin sheets of copper alloy held together by a rivet, either side of what appears to be a piece of card, *c* 69.5mm x 45mm x 3.5mm thick. The metal is thin and fragmentary but both sides bear an identical embossed design (*see Figure 3*). One end is lost but it is likely that this would have mirrored the extant end, to give an overall length of 72mm plus a further rivet.  
  
Function is unknown but this could relate to something like the handle for a large bookmark or a fan. General form & condition (including the surviving card) would suggest a fairly recent date, perhaps 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- <5> Copper alloy disc, *c* 35mm diam.: thin & badly distorted but has an embossed design at the centre of which is a bird sitting on a branch. Function unknown but form and condition suggest a quite recent date, perhaps part of a lid to a scent bottle or similar.
- <6> Brass surround for keyhole, height 22mm: originally inset on a drawer front or other furniture.
- <7> Bronze fragment of shrapnel showing screw thread at base of nose, weight 6gms.
- <8> Brass .303 cartridge case
- <9> Circular brass key tag or similar, 26mm diam, stamped with the figure 50.

### **Appendix III. London Archaeologist publication summary**

**Kelsey Park & land adjacent to North Drive, Beckenham.** NGR: TQ 37860 68725 & TQ 37955 68415 (centres). CA (Geoff Potter). Watching brief. Oct. 2005 to Jan. 2006. Thames Water Utilities. KYP05

#### **Summary**

Observations during topsoil stripping adjacent to North Drive and c 190m of pipe trench excavation within Kelsey Park did not reveal any significant remains. The trench works exposed a fairly consistent sequence of topsoil and subsoil over weathered natural, truncated by 20<sup>th</sup> century activity to the east. The natural was a light brown sand/silt mix that became more clayey with depth, identified by the Geological Survey as part of the Harwich Formation.

The reworked soil horizons produced occasional fragments of ceramic building material and a few modern potsherds, plus one of probable pre-1700 whiteware. Within the compound area metal detecting recovered several artefacts, the earliest a musket ball and a ?George I halfpenny. Historically it is likely that both areas of investigation formed open land, perhaps only utilised for pasture or meadow.

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