

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION AT THE  
FORMER SUNALLIANCE  
SPORTS GROUND, FAIRWAY,  
RAYNES PARK, SW20,  
LONDON BOROUGH OF  
MERTON**



**FEBRUARY 2008**

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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FORMER SUNALLIANCE SPORTS GROUND, FAIRWAY,  
RAYNES PARK, LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

Type of project

EVALUATION

Quality Control

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Text Prepared by:	Alexander Pullen		25/1/08
Graphics Prepared by:	Hayley Baxter		1/2/08
Graphics Checked by:	Peter Moore	<i>Peter Moore</i>	4/2/08
Project Manager Sign-off:	Peter Moore	<i>Peter Moore</i>	5/2/08

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Unit 54  
Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
London  
SE4 2PD

**An Archaeological Evaluation at the Former Royal Sun Alliance Sports Ground, Fairway, Raynes Park, SW20, London Borough of Merton.**

**Site Code: RSA 08**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 2300 6890**

**Alexander Pullen  
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, February 2008**

**Project Manager: Peter Moore**

**Commissioning Client: F&C Property Asset Management plc**

**Contractor: Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  
Unit 54 Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
Brockley  
London  
SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925**

**Fax: 020 7639 9588**

**Email: [pmoore@pre-construct.com](mailto:pmoore@pre-construct.com)**

**Website: [www.pre-construct.com](http://www.pre-construct.com)**

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## 1. ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation at the Former Royal SunAlliance Sports Ground, Fairway, Raynes Park undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of F&C Property Asset Management plc. The project was managed by Peter Moore and supervised by Alexander Pullen, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd., and monitored by Diane Walls of English Heritage (GLAAS) on behalf of Merton Borough Council.
- 1.2 Four trenches were opened during the evaluation, Trenches 1 and 3 measuring 40m x 1.65m at base, Trench 2 was 33m x 1.65m at base, and Trench 4 was shorter at 5m x 1.65m. The planned location of trenches detailed in the Method Statement<sup>1</sup> was adjusted to account for extremely wet ground conditions and to avoid a clean water main sewer.
- 1.3 In all four trenches clay natural was overlain by subsoil and then topsoil. Trench 2 contained no archaeological features. At the eastern end of Trenches 1 and 3 two large linear Late Bronze Age ditches were observed. Trench 4 was located to expose the continuation of the ditch in Trench 3. A later feature (undated) was visible in the south facing section of Trench 1 truncating the upper fills of the ditch.

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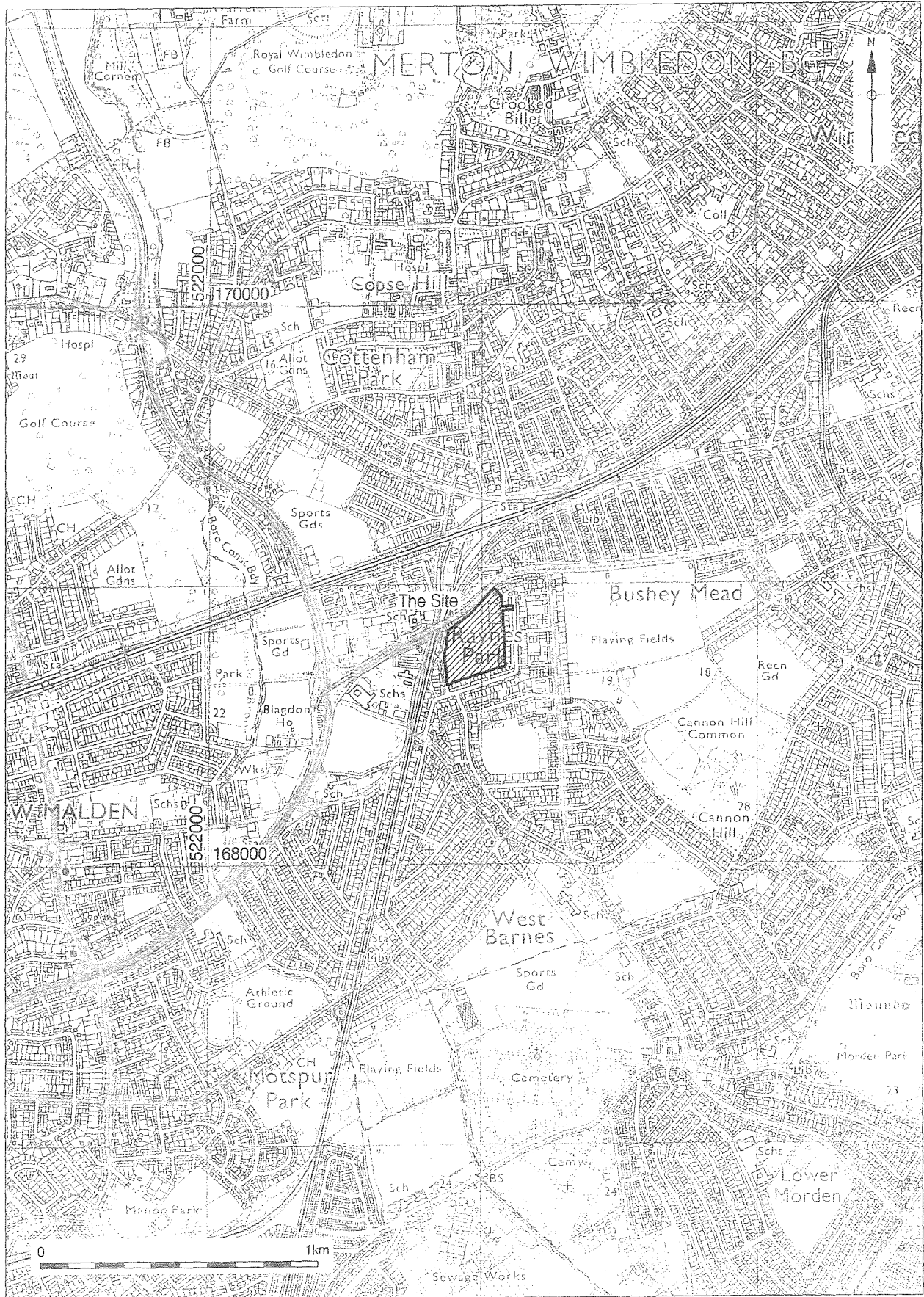
<sup>1</sup> Moore, P. (2008). "Method Statement for an Archaeological Evaluation at the Former Royal SunAlliance Sports Ground, Fairway, Raynes Park, SW20, London Borough of Merton", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on land at the Former Royal SunAlliance Sports Ground, Fairway, Raynes Park, SW20 London Borough of Merton, in advance of proposed residential redevelopment. It followed on from the production of a desk-based assessment report on the site.<sup>2</sup> The evaluation was conducted between 14th and 21st January 2008 on behalf of F&C Property Asset Management plc.
- 2.2 The site is bounded by Westway Close to the west, the gardens of houses fronting onto Linkway to the south and Fairway to the east, and by Bushey Road to the north. The proposed residential development is concentrated in the northeast corner of the site.
- 2.3 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 2300 6890.
- 2.4 The site was given the code RSA 08
- 2.5 The project was monitored by Diane Walls of English Heritage, project managed by Peter Moore and supervised by the author.

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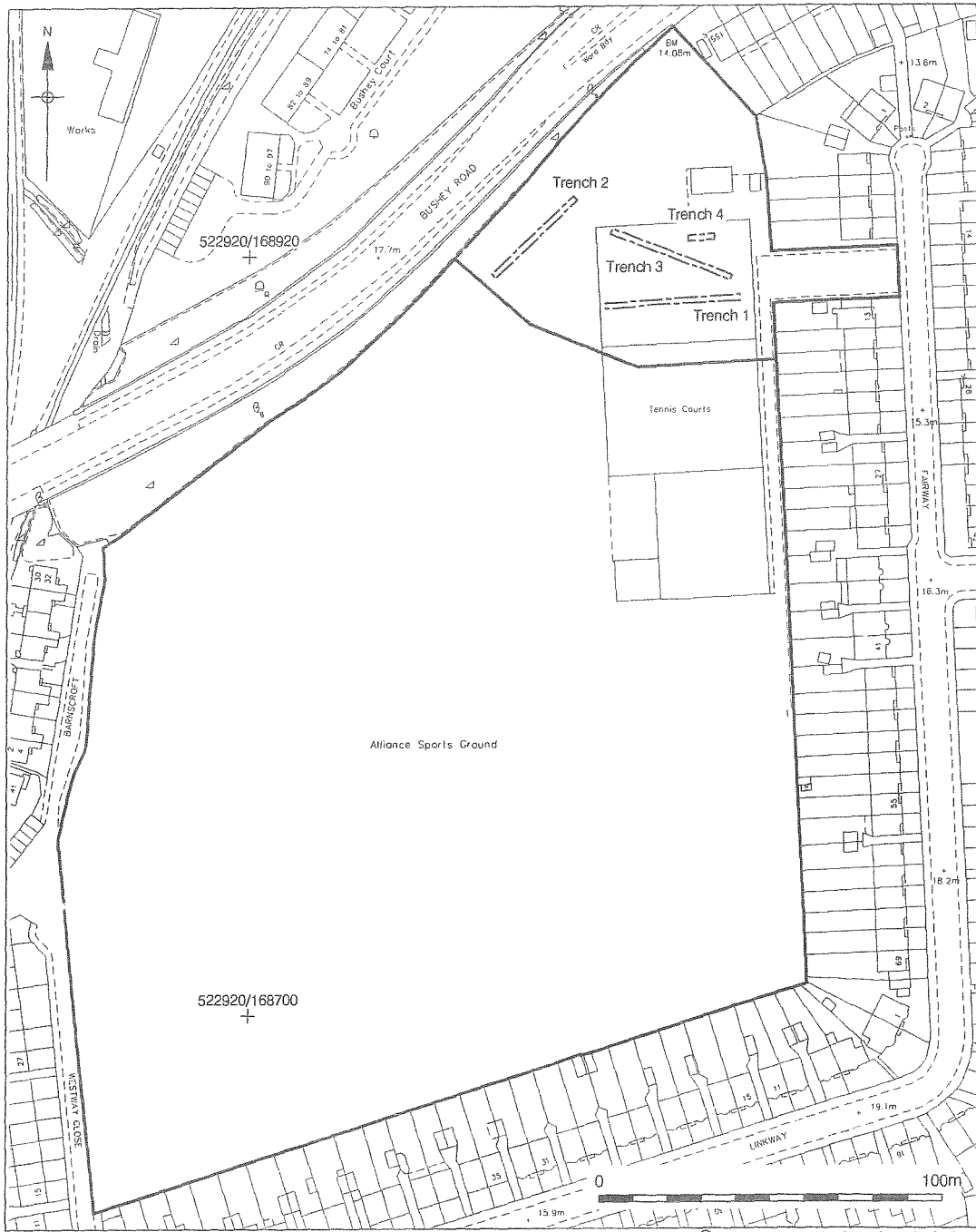
<sup>2</sup> Holden, S. (2007), "Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the former Royal SunAlliance Sports Ground, Raynes Park SW20", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report.



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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4



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□ Evaluation Site Boundary

Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:2,000 at A4



### 3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) "Archaeology and Planning", providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.

3.2 In short, government policies provide a framework which:

- Protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Protect the settings of these sites
- Protect nationally important un-scheduled ancient monuments
- Has a presumption in favour of in situ preservation
- In appropriate circumstances, requires adequate information (from field evaluation) to enable informed decisions
- Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not important enough to merit *in situ* preservation

3.3 In considering any proposal for development, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, of existing development plan policy and of other material considerations. This evaluation aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Merton, which fully recognise the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The London Borough of Merton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 2003 contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource. The proposed development of the site is subject to the Council Archaeology Policies:

4.55 Archaeological remains contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They constitute the principal surviving evidence of many aspects of our past and are a finite and non-renewable resource, which is fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. They give us a sense of both national and local identity, and are valuable not only for their own sake, but also for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

4.56 Known archaeological sites can be divided into Scheduled Ancient Monuments, other nationally important sites, and locally important sites. Merton contains three Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Merton Priory; Caesar's Camp; and Morden Park Mound.

**4.57** The Ancient Monuments Acts and Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG 16 'Archaeology and Planning' set out Government policy regarding archaeological remains. Some relevant material is also found in PPG 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.

**Policy BE.13:** Archaeological Protection and Preservation.

The council will encourage early consultation on development proposals affecting sites of archaeological importance and their settings. (1) There will be a general presumption in favour of the permanent physical preservation of all scheduled ancient monuments and other nationally important archaeological sites and their settings. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would adversely affect such monuments and sites, involve significant alteration to them or would have a harmful impact on their settings. (2) Locally important archaeological remains should preferably also be preserved in situ. They will be preserved by record through an appropriate programme of archaeological work by a recognized archaeological organization before development begins, in accordance with a project design approved by the council. Such provision shall also include the subsequent publication of the results.

**4.58** The Council considers it is important to prevent potentially valuable archaeological remains and data from being destroyed without record when sites are developed. Merton has been the location of settlement from prehistoric times on and of important industrial developments from early modern times. Consequently, it is likely that there are a number of unexcavated sites across the Borough and past archaeological discoveries and documentary sources can be used to indicate where further evidence may lie buried. The Proposals Map identifies areas of particular archaeological interest which were identified by the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, English Heritage in consultation with local archaeological groups. These are known as Archaeological Priority Zones and a list of such zones is included in Schedule 5 of the Plan. This list may change as new information becomes available. All sites on the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) are also a material consideration in the planning process. The Council will consider the use of Article 4 Directions, subject to the Secretary of State's approval, to bring activities that benefit from permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 within the scope of Planning Control in the interests of protecting archaeological remains.

**4.59** In the case of sites with archaeological significance or potential, where permanent preservation in situ is not justified, provision shall be made by the developer for an appropriate level of archaeological assessment, investigation and analysis. This should be undertaken by a recognised archaeological organisation before development begins, in accordance with a project design approved by the Council. Such provision shall also include the subsequent publication of the results of the excavation.

**4.60** It is probable, however, that there are other sites of archaeological importance outside these defined Zones. Each case will be treated on its merits and planning conditions and legal agreements will be applied to ensure evaluations and excavations are carried out to a satisfactory standard and archaeological remains area protected.

**4.61** Merton has been the location of prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval settlements and it is likely that there are a number of unexcavated sites across the Borough. The Council considers it is important to prevent potentially valuable archaeological remains and data from being destroyed without record when sites are developed. Developers will be expected to abide by The British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group 'Code of Practice'. The Proposals Map identifies areas of particular archaeological interest which were identified by the Museum of London in consultation with local archaeological groups. It is possible that there could be other sites of archaeological importance outside these defined boundaries. PPG16

"Archaeology and Planning" sets out Government policy regarding archaeological remains. Each case will be treated on its merits and planning conditions and legal agreements will be applied to ensure that excavations are carried out to a satisfactory standard and archaeological remains protected.

**Policy BE.14: Archeological Evaluation**

Before development commences on site, reference should be made to the council's supplementary planning guidance note on archaeology. Where development is proposed within an Archaeological Priority Zone, as shown on the proposals map, the council may require a preliminary archaeological assessment before proposals are considered. This requirement may also be applied to sites outside the Archaeological Priority Zones especially where they are over 0.6 ha. or where there is a proven or known archaeological potential.

**Justification**

**4.62** The purpose of such evaluation will be to determine the nature and extent of archaeological remains on the development site and thus to aid the process of decision-making.

- 3.4 The site does not currently lie within a designated Archaeological Priority Zone.
- 3.5 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the development site.

## **4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **4.1 Geology**

4.1.1 The 1:50,000 scale British Geological Survey (sheet 270) indicates the study site to be predominantly on Kempton Park Gravel with London Clay outcropping towards the southeast corner. No borehole data from on, or near to, the site was available for analysis.

### **4.2 Topography**

4.2.1 The site is located on a generally flat area of land that slopes gently up from c.14mOD in the north to c.16mOD in the southeast. To the southeast the land forms a low peak known as Cannons Hill with a maximum height of 32mOD. The site is located some 800m to the east of Beverly Brook, a tributary flowing north into the River Thames. This, in turn, is fed by Pyl Brook that flows in northwesterly direction, passing the subject site c.300m to the southwest, to join Beverly Brook at a point to the west of the site.

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

5.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been set out in detail in the desk-based assessment report<sup>3</sup> which, on existing information, predicted that “the archaeological potential for the recovery of prehistoric material is low-to-moderate. The potential for encountering Roman deposits is low, the potential for encountering Saxon remains is low, the potential for encountering medieval remains is low and the potential for encountering post-medieval remains is low.”

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<sup>3</sup> Holden, S. (2007), “Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the former Royal SunAlliance Sports Ground, Raynes Park SW20”, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report.

## 6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The fieldwork was designed to assess the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains, which may require further mitigation.
- 6.2 The excavation of four evaluation trenches was agreed with English Heritage (GLAAS) though their locations and dimensions had to vary because of the extremely wet ground conditions.
- 6.3 Under archaeological supervision, a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket was used to remove unproductive soils down to the natural clay. The features identified within the trenches were then cleaned and investigated by hand. Investigation was limited to identifying the extent and nature of the deposits and to recover dating evidence. Trench 2 was opened and no archaeological deposits seen, apart from the topsoil, subsoil and natural clay, prior to the trench being inundated with water.
- 6.4 All archaeological features (stratigraphical layers, cuts, fills, structures) were recorded as necessary in plan and in section using standard recording methods. A photographic record using 35mm colour transparencies, black and white print film mediums was also made as appropriate.
- 6.5 The work was undertaken to standards of English Heritage (GLAAS) and of the Institute of Field Archaeology.
- 6.6 Following the completion of the archaeological investigation, Trenches 1, 3 and 4 were backfilled using the excavated material. Trench 2 could not be reached and backfilled because of the waterlogged ground.

## **7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION**

### **7.1. Phase 1: Natural Clay**

7.1.1 The lowest archaeological deposit [3] within Trenches 1-4 was a mid yellowish clay with occasional pockets of sand and gravel. The upper 0.2 – 0.3 m of this deposit is less 'clean' than underlying material. This is probably the result of in situ weathering of the upper part of this layer. The top of this deposit was between 14.09m OD and 14.19m OD.

### **7.2. Phase 2: Sub-Soil**

7.2.1 Overlying the weathered clay natural is a soft mid to light brown silty clay sub-soil [2]. It is thought that the prehistoric archaeological features [4],[10],[12],[17] described below cut through this layer. It is however difficult to be certain in this respect as the upper fills of these prehistoric features bear close resemblance to the sub-soil in character and may themselves have experienced certain in situ-soil development being close to the modern ground surface. The top of the subsoil is between 14.19m OD and 14.29mOD.

### **7.3. Phase 3: Late Bronze Age**

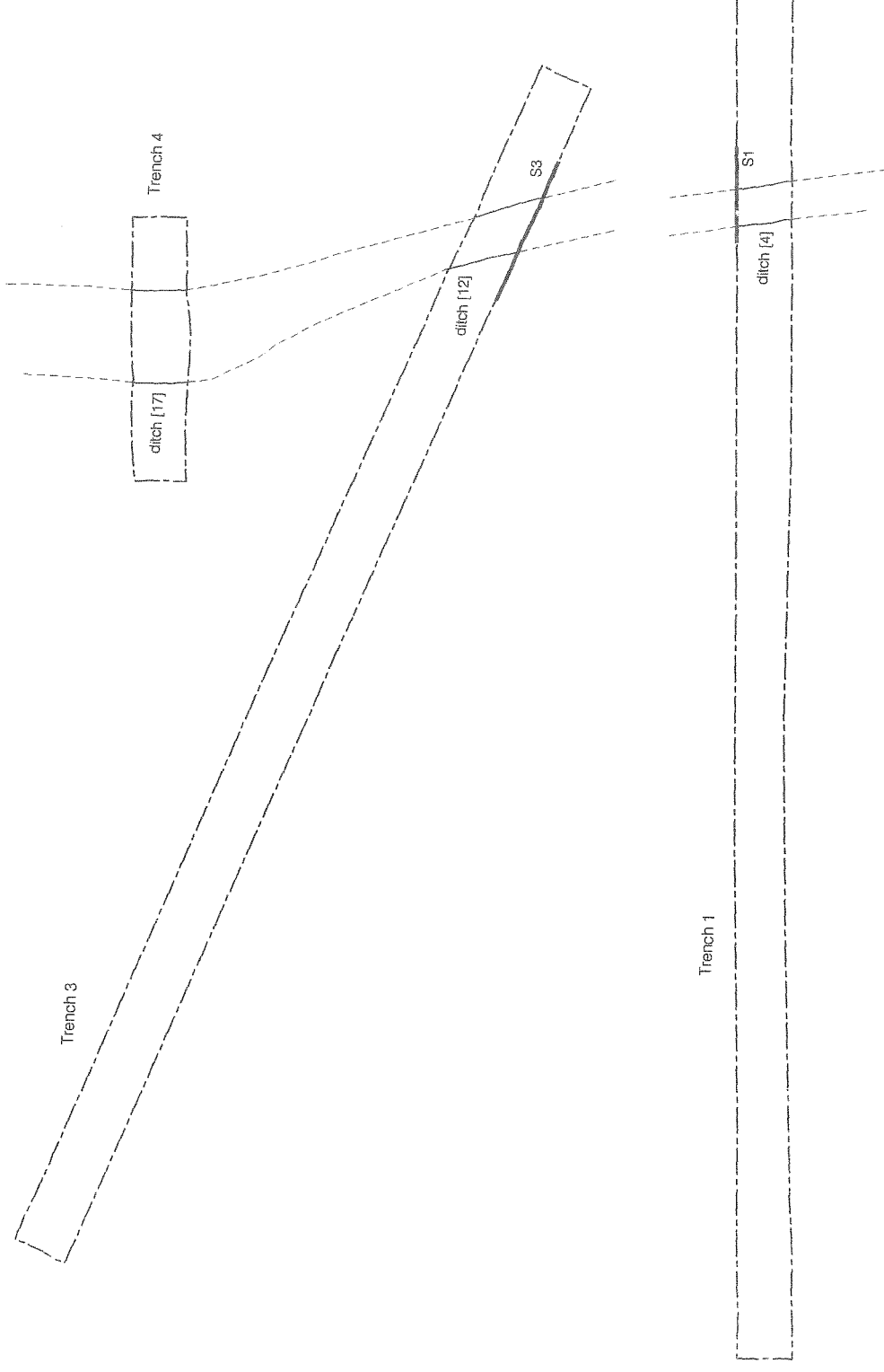
7.3.1. In Trenches 1, 3 and 4 there was evidence for Late Bronze Age activity in the form of two large ditches. In Trench 1, ditch [4] (measuring 2.30m long x 1.65m wide x 1.35m deep) with a northwest-southeast orientation contained fragments of Late Bronze Age pottery, burnt flint and worked flint debitage. It was cut from 14.29m OD and its lowest level was 12.95m OD. This feature was initially filled by deposits [5],[6] and [7], all reddish to brown yellow silty clays. These were then sealed by layer [8] from which all the finds were retrieved, and was characterized by its brownish grey appearance with charcoal flecking. The ditch was finally filled by layer [9], mid brown sandy clay, almost indistinguishable from the subsoil (see Fig 4, Section 1). A small later but undated pit-like feature [10], filled by brown silty clay [11], truncated the upper fills of ditch [4], but was only seen in section. It was cut from 14.39m OD, its basal height being 13.90m OD.

7.3.2. In Trench 3 ditch [12] (measuring 2.66m long x 1.65m wide x 1.30m deep), while in a similar northwest-southeast alignment does not link up with ditch [12] if the orientation of the ditch edges, as found, are extrapolated. Again this feature produced Late Bronze Age pottery fragments, burnt and worked flint. These finds were concentrated on the northern side of this feature in fill [14], a greyish brown charcoal flecked clayey silt, at approximately 13.57m OD (Section 3). Again there were reddish yellow silty clays [13]

and [15] as initial ditch fills, but the final ditch fill [16] was a greyish brown sandy clay with charcoal flecking. The continuation of this feature to the northwest was extrapolated and found in Trench 4 where the cut of this ditch was been numbered [17], filled by [18], which while not excavated looked similar to ditch fill [16].

#### **7.4 Phase 4: Topsoil**

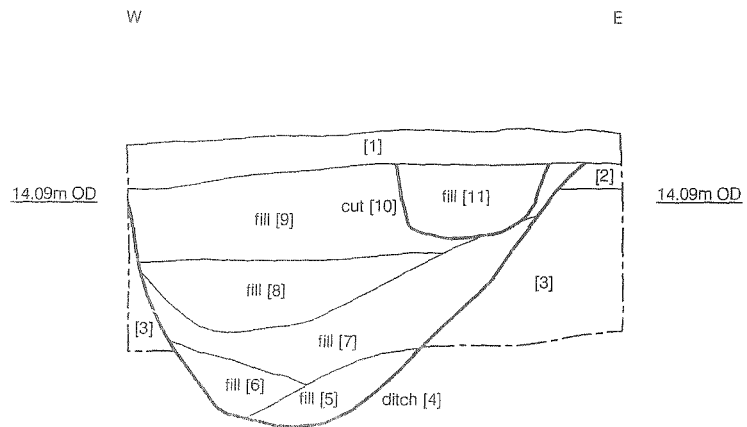
- 7.4.1 A dark greyish brown loamy topsoil was the stratigraphically highest deposit sloping gradually to the north at approximately 14.48 to 14.30m O.D. There was some evidence that the ground had been consolidated in certain places in order to provide a firmer surface for the Royal SunAlliance Sports Field.



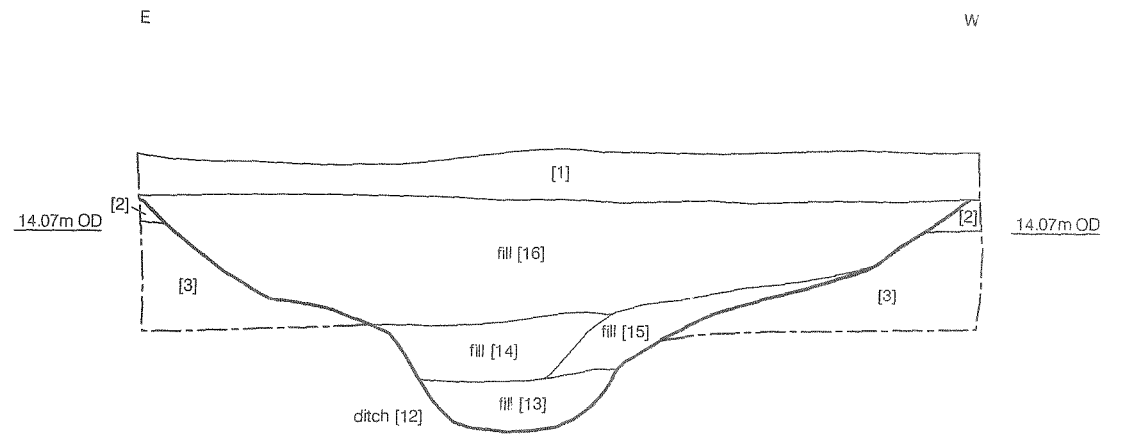
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Figure 3  
Trenches 1, 3 & 4  
1:200 at A4





Section 1  
South facing  
Trench 1



Section 3  
North facing  
Trench 3



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Figure 4  
Sections 1 & 3  
1:40 at A4

## 8 INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The only finds of a Bronze Age date (which were actually Neolithic/Bronze Age in date) in the area were found 800m away and may have arrived there by hydraulic action. There is therefore a total lack of any background to the Late Bronze Age archaeology found on this site.
- 8.2 It is not clear whether two ditches, or one very irregular, were observed in three of the trenches. However what is clear from the relatively large number of artifacts recovered is that there is settlement activity in the immediate vicinity, probably to the east. The ditches seem to have suffered initial erosion, then an episode of human occupation then a final backfilling by erosion, which suggests a short lived use of the site for occupation.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

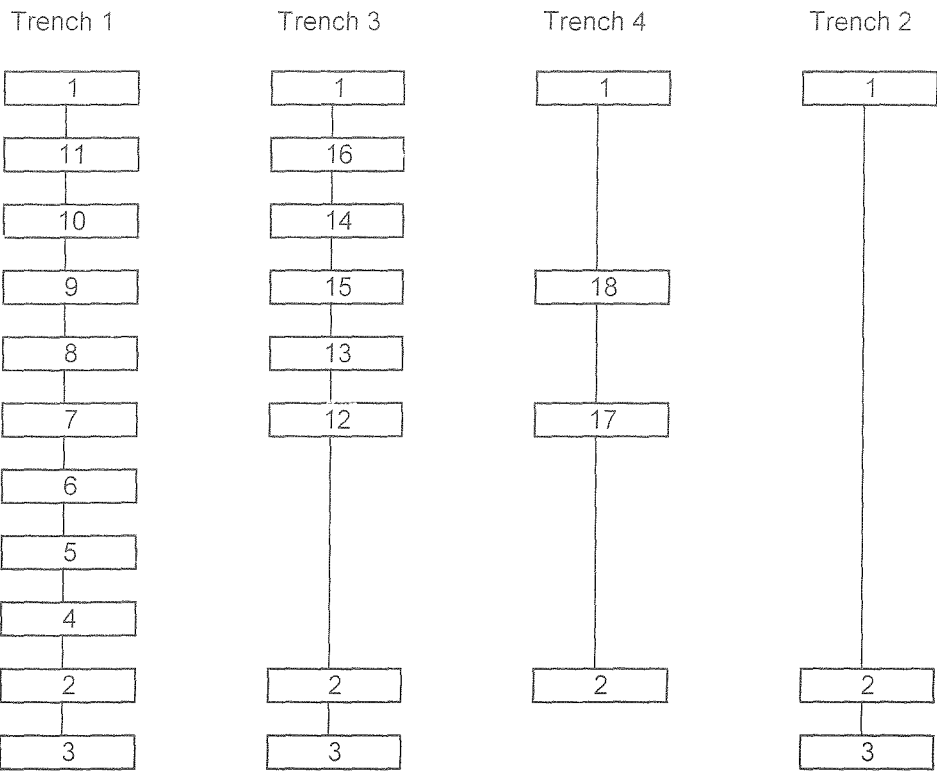
- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank F&C Property Asset Management plc, and especially Philip Dobson, for funding the work and arranging access. The author would like to thank Rick Archer in particular for his hard work in wet and difficult circumstances, and Rob Nicholson and Jem Rogers for their logistics and surveying help. Thanks also to Hayley Baxter for the illustrations, Clair Rainer for identifying and dating the pottery and Peter Moore for project management and editing.

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Trench	Description
1	Layer	1-4	Topsoil
2	Layer	1-4	Subsoil
3	Layer	1-3	Natural clay
4	Cut	1	Ditch cut
5	Fill	1	Fill of ditch 4
6	Fill	1	Fill of ditch 4
7	Fill	1	Fill of ditch 4
8	Fill	1	Fill of ditch 4
9	Fill	1	Fill of ditch 4
10	Cut	1	Pit? Cut
11	Fill	1	Fill of feature 10
12	Cut	3	Ditch cut
13	Fill	3	Fill of ditch 12
14	Fill	3	Fill of ditch 12
15	Fill	3	Fill of ditch 12
16	Fill	3	Fill of ditch 12
17	Cut	4	Ditch cut
18	Fill	4	Fill of ditch 12

## APPENDIX 2 – SITE MATRICES

FORMER SUNALLIANCE SPORTS GROUND, RAYNES PARK, MERTON  
SITE MATRICES  
SITE CODE: RSA 08



## APPENDIX 3 – OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

### OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: ENGLAND

[List of Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

#### 4.2.1 Printable version

OASIS ID: preconst1-37313

##### Project details

Project name	Former SunAliance Sports Ground, Raynes Park, Merton
Short description of the project	Archaeological evaluation in advance of residential development.
Project dates	Start: 14-01-2008 End: 21-01-2008
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RSA 08 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	DITCHES Late Bronze Age
Significant Finds	POTTERY Late Bronze Age
Significant Finds	FLINT Late Bronze Age
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON MERTON RAYNES PARK Former SunAlliance Sports Ground

Postcode SW20

Study area 6650.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 2300 6880 51.4043667892 -0.231456780468 51 24 15 N 000 13 53 W Point

Height OD Min: 14.09m Max: 14.19m

Project creation

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator GLAAS

Project design originator Peter Moore

Project director/manager Peter Moore

Project supervisor Alexander Pullen

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body F&C Property Asset Management plc



Physical Contents

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Physical Contents 'Animal Bones', 'Ceramics', 'Worked stone/lithics'

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents 'Animal Bones', 'Ceramics', 'Worked stone/lithics'

Digital Media available 'Spreadsheets', 'Survey', 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Matrices', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section', 'Unpublished Text'

Project Bibliography

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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## APPENDIX 4 – FINDS LIST

Context	Trench	Type	Quantity	Description
8	1	Pottery	1	Late Bronze Age flint tempered vessel rim sherd
8	1	Pottery	18	Late Bronze Age flint Tempered vessel body sherds
8	1	Struck flint	7	Debitage
8	1	Burnt flint	5	Large pieces
14	3	Pottery	1	Late Bronze Age flint tempered vessel rim sherd
14	3	Pottery	15	Late Bronze Age flint Tempered vessel body sherds
14	3	Bone		Fragment
14	3	Struck Flint	2	Flakes with retouched edges
14	3	Struck Flint	21	Debitage
14	3	Burnt Flint	2	Large pieces