

An Archaeological Watching

Brief at Old Palace School,

Old Palace Road, London

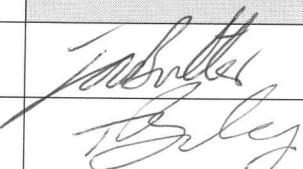

Borough of Croydon

April 2005

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

OLD PALACE SCHOOL, CROYDON
WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Control

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Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Palace School, Old Palace
Road, Croydon, London Borough of Croydon**

Site Code: OPE 05

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3199 6547

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April 2005**

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CONTENTS

1	ABSTRACT	3
2	INTRODUCTION.....	4
3	PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	7
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	9
5	METHODOLOGY.....	11
6	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY.....	12
7	ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE	13
8	CONCLUSIONS.....	14
9	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	15
10	BIBLIOGRAPHY	16

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION	5
FIGURE 2: TRENCH LOCATION	6

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	17
APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM	18

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at Old Palace School, Old Palace Road, London Borough of Croydon.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was implemented in advance of a proposed under floor heating system within the Great Hall, which is a Grade 1 Listed Building and formerly a part of the manor of the Archbishop of Canterbury, built in the mid-15th century.
- 1.3 Two test pits were excavated by hand and revealed a sequence of late-nineteenth and twentieth century makeup for the floor surface which currently consists of parquet timber blocks.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on the site of Old Palace School, Old Palace Road, Croydon, London Borough of Croydon (Figure 1), in advance of a proposed under-floor heating system.
- 2.2 The watching brief was conducted on the 6th April 2005 and commissioned by The Whitgift Foundation.
- 2.3 The project consisted of the hand excavation of two test pits, under archaeological supervision, within the Great Hall that is positioned close to Old Palace Road (Figure 2). Excavation continued to a depth within which the proposed heating system and associated works would be installed.
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 3199 6547.
- 2.5 The site was given the unique code OPE 05.
- 2.6 The watching brief was undertaken by Stuart Holden and the project managed by Tim Bradley for Pre-Construct Archaeology.

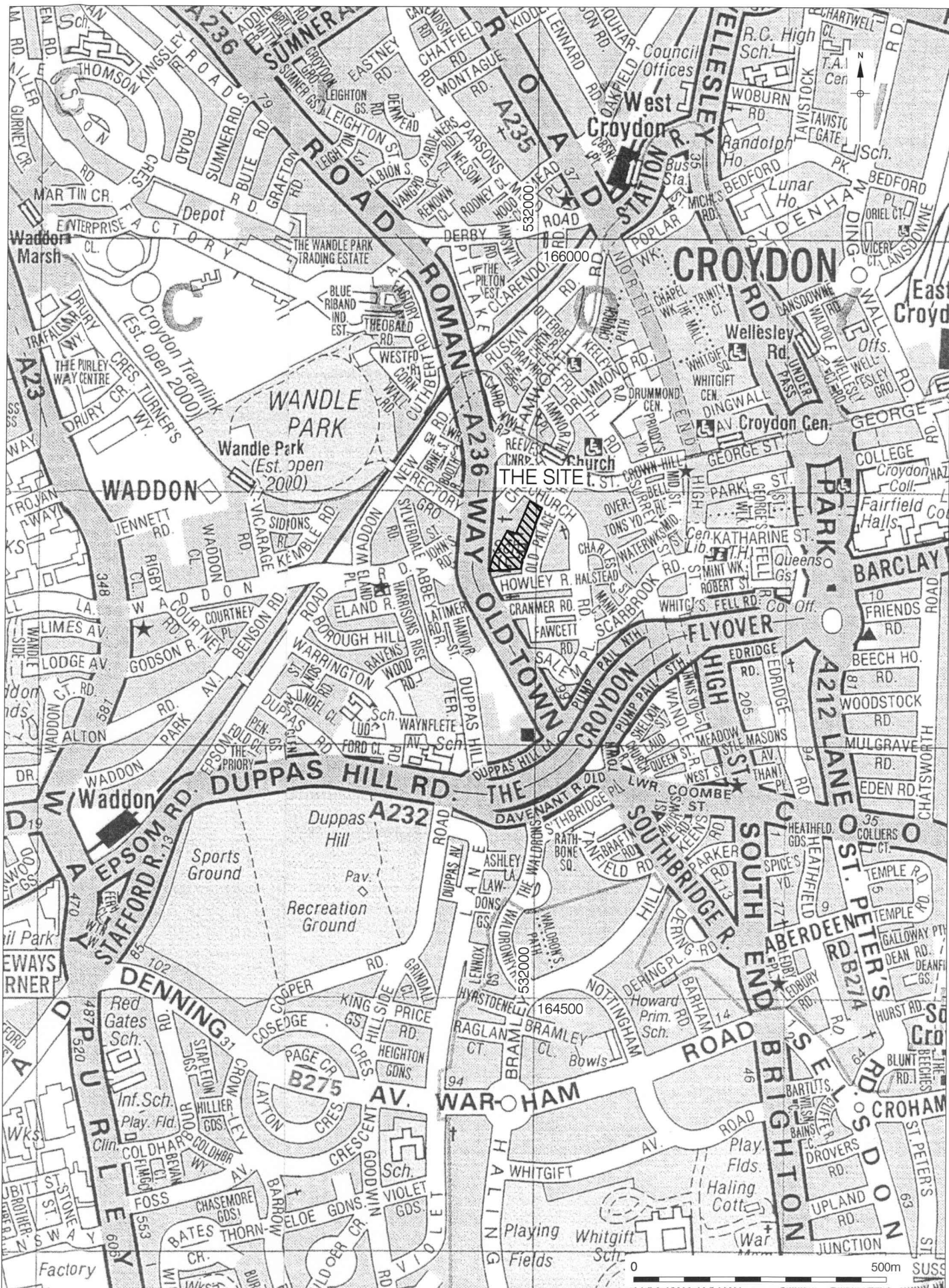


Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:10,000



Figure 2
 Test Pit Location
 1:500

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.1 Planning background

3.1.1 The study aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Croydon, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The council's deposited draft 'Croydon Unitary Development Plan', adopted in 1997, contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource.

3.1.2 The proposed development is subject to the Archaeology and Urban Conservation policies:

SP6 The Council will protect and enhance Croydon's archaeological heritage.

Minimising Disturbance

AR2 The siting and design of development should have regard to the desirability of minimising the disturbance of archaeological remains.

Preserving Important Remains

AR3 There will be a presumption against development which would harm archaeological remains of national importance. Decisions on development proposals affecting other remains will take account of the archaeological importance of those remains, the need for the development, the likely extent of any harm, and the prospects of the proposals successfully preserving by record the archaeological interest of the site.

Recording Other Remains

AR4 On sites where archaeological remains do not need to be preserved in situ, the Council will make sure that there is investigation, excavation, recording, analysis and publication to a specification agreed by the Council, secured where appropriate by the use of agreements.

SP4 The Council will seek to improve the quality of the Borough's environment. In particular the Council will aim to prevent any loss in the identity of different parts of the Borough by conserving and enhancing areas of townscape value and buildings of historic or architectural interest.

Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings

UC7 The Council will refuse consent for any internal or external alteration or extension to a listed building which would have a detrimental effect on the architectural or historic character of the building.

3.1.3 The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone, as defined within the UDP. The Old Palace is one of six Grade I Listed Buildings in the Borough of Croydon.

3.2 **Research Objectives**

- 3.2.1 The Method Statement prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology, under guidance and approved by English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, proposed that consideration should be given to all periods but highlights the likelihood of encountering remains relating to the Great Hall (built in the mid-15th century), for example earlier floor surfaces, or previous structures or remains.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The following is the result of research of the Pre-Construct archive and various websites listed in Section 10.
- 4.2 The name, Croydon, is of Saxon origin derived from 'crogdene', is thought to mean either 'crooked valley' or 'saffron valley'. In the fifth to sixth centuries, it was the site of an important pagan Saxon cemetery.
- 4.3 There is a record of a minster at Croydon as early as 809AD when King Coenwulf of Mercia held his witan there in the time of Archbishop Wulfred. Following the Norman invasion of 1066 it lay at the heart of a huge estate belonging to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop Lanfranc founded a manorial house on the site and a nucleus of settlement was formed around this and the church.
- 4.4 In 1276, the archbishop acquired a charter for a weekly market, and this probably marks the foundation of Croydon as a truly urban centre. The market place was laid out on the higher ground to the east of the site. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, if not earlier, the archbishops used the manor house as an occasional place of residence and by the sixteenth century a substantial palace had been built up, known at this time as Croydon Palace.
- 4.5 Croydon is the only residence owned by the medieval and Tudor archbishops to have survived with its Great Hall intact. The Great Hall at Croydon dates to around 1450 and still has its original oak roof. It is also unique in that it was used by the archbishops following the Restoration in 1600- Canterbury itself was not used by the archbishops as a residence between 1645 and 1900.
- 4.6 As the major landowners, the archbishops played an important role in the development of the town, and in the life of the local community. Archbishop John Whitgift was one of Croydon's greatest benefactors and founded schools and a hospital in the 16th century. In total, eleven Archbishops of Canterbury are buried throughout the borough.
- 4.7 The palace was sold in 1781 and Addington Palace bought in its place. The complex was used commercially, including as a laundry, for almost a hundred years before the Old Palace School was founded in 1889, having been presented to the Sisters of the

Church by the 7th Duke of Newcastle. Many of the buildings still in use by the school, including the Chapel, Great Hall and library, date back to the 15th century.

- 4.8 Two watching briefs were undertaken in 1992 (OPR92) and 1995 (OPC95). The former was undertaken within the Great Courtyard and provided further evidence that the courtyard had remained an open space for over 400 years: a gravel courtyard was replaced with grass in the late-18th century and returned to a hard surface during the mid-19th century. The latter revealed that below the modern courtyard lay 19th-c made-ground.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was implemented to gather any evidence of archaeologically sensitive remains that may be detrimentally affected by the proposed installation of an under floor heating system, which will involve ground reduction to circa 0.12m below finished floor level (K Woodhams, *pers comm.*)
- 5.2 Two test pits were excavated by hand following the removal of timber blocks forming a parquet floor surface across the Great Hall. Excavation was undertaken using a hammer and chisel, and by trowel to a maximum depth of 0.26m.
- 5.3 Following the recording work by the attendant archaeologist, the holes were left open for subsequent reinstatement.
- 5.4 The work was undertaken following English Heritage (GLAAS) guidelines (English Heritage 1998).

6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 6.1 The underlying geology is likely to be Haling Park or Mitcham River Terrace gravels belonging from the Pleistocene Period.
- 6.2 The town of Croydon is situated at the head of the River Wandle, just to the north of a significant gap in the North Downs. The course of the river through central Croydon was culverted in the late-1840's.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Summary

7.1.1 In both holes observed, a sequence of layers was recorded. These were of late-post-medieval and modern date.

7.2 Test Pit 1

7.2.1 This was located in the southwest corner of the hall and measured 0.30m by 0.30m. The hole was excavated to a depth of 0.26m.

7.2.2 The lowest level attained was a layer of mixed rubble, including chalk fragments, cbm fragments and flint [02]. A fragment of medieval peg roof tile was retrieved from the top of this context but no excavation was undertaken. Above this was a layer of moderately compacted light grey sandy mortar [01] 0.18m in thickness. This contained frequent fragments of chalk up to 40mm in diameter and occasional fragments of ceramic building material (cbm) including red brick and a fragment of floor tile. This measured 130mm x 110+mm x 40mm with chamfered rough edges and was made of a hard porous yellow fabric. The dimensions and lack of glazing indicate that it is post-1600 in date and the fabric suggesting that it is most likely to be post-1800. Completing the sequence was parquet flooring, made of timber blocks 0.30 x 0.75 x 0.75m laid on pitch.

7.3 Test Pit 2

7.3.1 This was positioned in the northeast corner of the hall and measured 0.30m by 0.30m. The hole was excavated to a depth of 0.18m.

7.3.2 The lowest level attained was a deposit of mid yellowish brown sand and flint gravel with occasional flecks of chalk [03]. This was excavated to a depth of 0.07m without reaching the bottom of the deposit. Above it was a 0.08m thick layer of modern concrete. Completing the sequence was parquet flooring, made of timber blocks 0.30 x 0.75 x 0.03m laid on pitch.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The earliest deposits recorded during the watching brief of the trial pits is the demolition or construction debris see at the base of Test Pit 1 that contained a fragment of medieval roof tile. Above this was a layer from which, a fragment of late-post-medieval floor tile was recovered. This is likely to be remnant of a previous floor surface, broken up and used as makeup for consolidation and levelling for the parquet flooring currently in place. Although the consistency of the deposits varies, this is likely to be contemporary with the sand and gravel deposit in Test Pit 2 and be of late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century date.
- 8.2 The concrete present in Test Pit 2 is modern in date and likely to have been laid down to compensate in the shortfall of thickness of the new parquet flooring block used following the dismantling of a stage from this end of the hall (Woodlands pers comm.).
- 8.3 The results of the watching brief show that there are layers of makeup beneath the present floor surface of relatively recent date. Although not of particular interest in themselves, the deposits are likely to have been emplaced to level the ground beneath that may include remnants of earlier structural elements relating to, or earlier than, the present building.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Ken Woodlams, for commissioning the work and The Whitgift Foundation for funding this project. The author would like to thank Ken Sabel for his comments on the ceramic building material, Josephine Brown for the drawings and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report

English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service 1998 *Archaeological Guidance Papers:*
1 Written Schemes of Investigation; 2 Desk-Based Assessments; 3 Standards and Practices in
Archaeological Fieldwork in London; Archaeological Reports; 5 Evaluations.

<http://www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk/index.htm>

<http://www.friendsofoldpalace.org/>

<http://www.molas.org.uk/pages/projects/molass.asp>

<http://www.croydononline.org/history>

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description	Location
1	Layer	Grey mortar and demolition material for ground make-up	TP 1
2	Layer	Demolition/construction debris	TP 1
3	Layer	Sand and flint gravel for ground make-up	TP 2

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-7666

Project details

Project name	Old Palace School
Short description of the project	A watching brief was undertaken on the excavation of 2 trial pits in advance of a proposed under floor heating system. Makeup layers dating to the 19th and 20th centuries were recorded.
Project dates	Start: 06-04-2005 End: 06-04-2005
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	OPE05 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	OPC95 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	OPR92 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CROYDON CROYDON Old Palace School
Postcode	CR0
National grid reference	TQ 3199 6507 Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley

Project supervisor	Stuart Holden
Sponsor or funding body	The Whitgift Foundation

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Media available	'Text'
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet'
Paper Archive Exists?	No

Project bibliography

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Old Palace School, Croydon
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Holden, S
Date	2005
Issuer or publisher	PCA Ltd
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	Unpublished report
Entered by	Stuart Holden (sholden@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	7 April 2005