

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Harland First School, Brangwyn
Crescent, Colliers Wood**

Site Code: HAA 05

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 2650 6990

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, May 2005**

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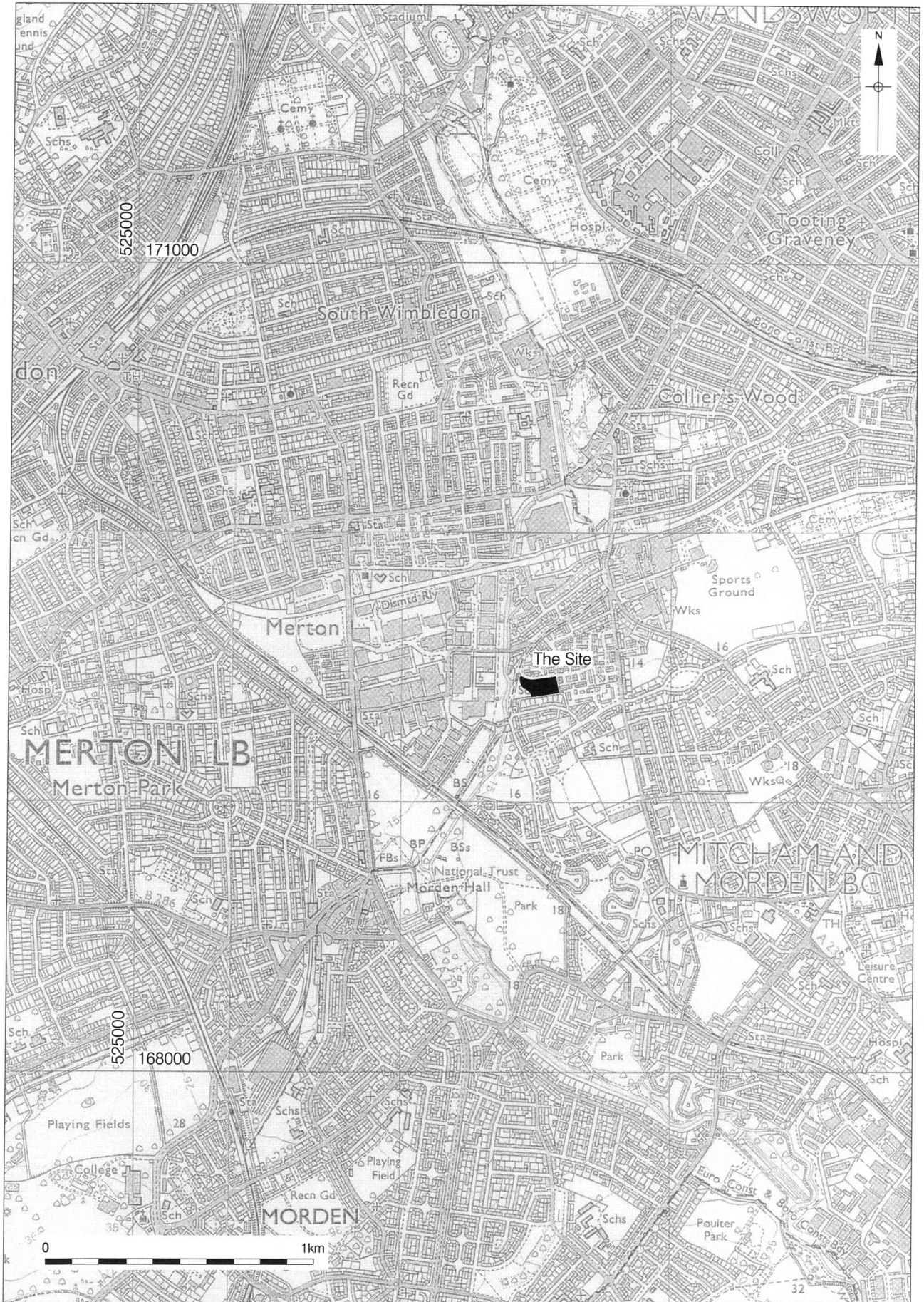
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at Harland First School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was implemented in advance of proposed new-build homes, on the site of the former school, and previously the site of 19th century paint and lacquer works.
- 1.3 Major ground works consisted of bulk removal of contaminated materials associated with an historic pond located on the site of paint and lacquer works. The area of the pond was stripped down to c.1 – 1.4m below ground level, and then the more clearly defined contaminated materials were excavated and removed by machine.
- 1.4 No archaeological features except for the historic pond and an associated brick drain were encountered. Sub-soil exposed along the flanks of the pond after removal of demolition layers yielded no artefactual evidence and contained no natural features of interest.

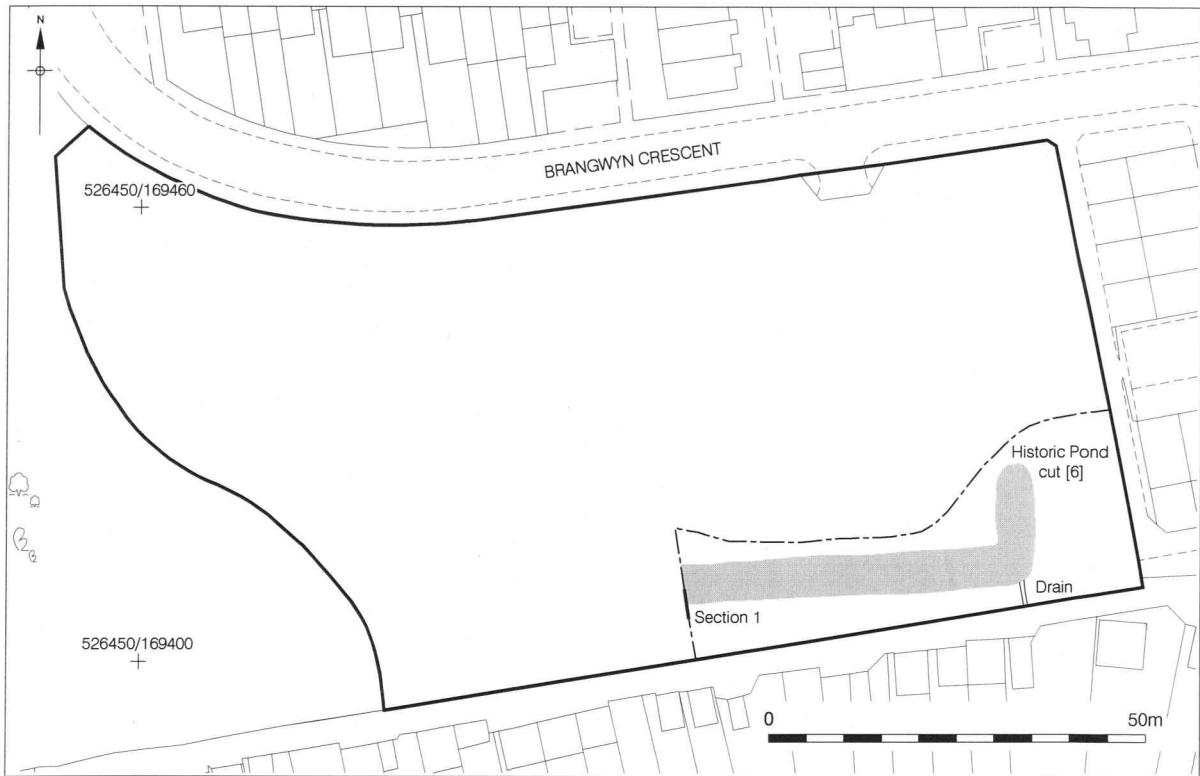
2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on the site of Harland First School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood, London Borough of Merton (Figure 1), in advance of the construction of new homes.
- 2.2 The watching brief was conducted from 20th April - 2nd May 2005 and commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Kings Oak Southern Counties.
- 2.3 The project consisted of the mechanical excavation of a c. 25m x 50m area containing contaminated materials, under archaeological supervision, in the southern part of the site (Figure 2). An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment produced by CgMs Consulting (Hawkins 2004) indicated an elongated pond in this area contemporary with the industrial phase of land use (paint and lacquer works). Ground testing by RSKENSR (RSKENSR, 2005) confirmed the presence of the pond and indicated severe contamination. Excavation continued until all contaminated material within the area of development had been extracted, with archaeological supervision continuing up to the point where contaminated industrial fills could be clearly defined and removed without significant disturbance of natural or anthropogenic layers. This point was reached at depth of 1 – 1.4m below ground level, extending no more than c. 5m beyond the edge of the pond as finally defined in plan.
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 2650 6990.
- 2.5 The site was given the unique code HAA 05.
- 2.6 The watching brief was undertaken by Dan Miller and the project managed by John Butler for Pre-Construct Archaeology. The Archaeological Consultant was Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:25,000. Crown Copyright 1988.

Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000



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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:1000

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.1 Planning background

3.1.1 The archaeological investigation aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Merton, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The relevant Development Plan Framework is provided by Merton Unitary Development Plan, Second Deposit 2000, and contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource (Policy BE18 – Archaeological Protection, Policy BE19 : Archaeological Evaluations).

3.1.2 Further details can be found in the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Hawkins, 2004), produced prior to works on this site.

3.2 Research Objectives

3.2.1 The Method Statement prepared by CgMs Consulting, under guidance and approved by English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service proposed that consideration should be given to all periods but specific remains on the site were not anticipated.

3.2.2 The Project Specification (Hawkins, 2005) gives the following Research Objectives:
-To provide a record of palaeotopography
-To record any evidence for earliest human activity and the sequence of occupation
-To record any significant archaeological deposits which may be affected by construction work.

3.2.3 A higher level of potential for the Roman Period was suggested in the Desk Based Assessment (Hawkins, 2004), based on the presence of Roman Burials some distance to the south of the site.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site and local area is discussed in detail in the Desk Based Assessment. The information therein is summarised below:

Period	Timescale	Local Evidence	Archaeological Potential on the Site
Palaeolithic	450,000 – 12,000 BC	Supposed finds of Struck Flint from the ‘Mitcham Gravels’	Low
Mesolithic	12,000 - 4,000 BC	Possible finds of Struck Flint from ‘near Merton Abbey’.	Low
Neolithic	4,000 – 1,800 BC	Three Handaxes found at Stainton Road.	Low
Bronze Age	1,800 – 600 BC	Stream Channels at Deen City Farm. Residual Pot Sherd at Batsworth Road	Low
Iron Age	600 – AD 43	Residual Pot Sherd at Batsworth Road	Low
Roman	AD 43 – 410	Large number of local finds. Ditches and Pits at Haslmere Avenue Ditches and Burials at Deen City Farm Ditch and possible inhumations at Phipps Bridge Road	Low to Moderate
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD 410 – 1066	No finds within 1km	Low
Medieval	AD 1066 – 1485	Site and local area believed to have been agricultural / horticultural land. Scatter of Pottery found at Phipps Bridge Road	Low
Post Medieval	AD 1485 – Present	Site developed as Japan (Lacquer) and Varnish Factory by 1875, with several phases of modification until area redeveloped in 1970’s as Harland First School. An elongated pond is indicated as having existed throughout the industrial phase.	Low (though related disturbance expected)

4.2 The Desk Based Assessment also listed a number of previous Archaeological Evaluations and Watching Briefs within the local area that have produced negative, or largely negative results.

5 METHODOLOGY

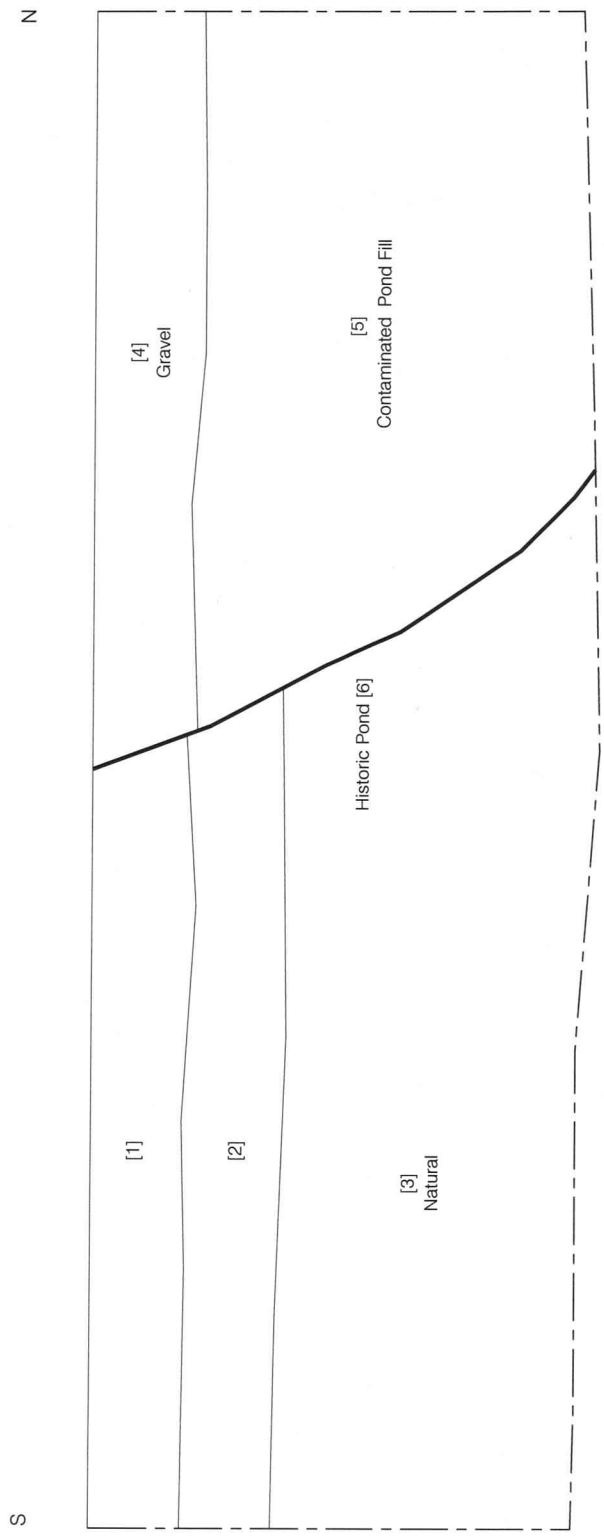
- 5.1 The fieldwork was implemented to gather any evidence of archaeologically sensitive remains that may be detrimentally affected by the bulk removal of contaminated materials by mechanical excavator.
- 5.2 The methodologies to be used, standards and practices to be maintained, and the procedures for archiving and submitting reports was specified in detail by CgMs Consulting. Full details can be found in the relevant document (Hawkins, 2005).
- 5.3 An area c. 25m x 50m was stripped down to c. 1 – 1.4 m below ground level, exposing the area of the historic pond and contaminated fills. Other anthropogenic or natural layers that were disturbed during these works were observed and recorded by the supervising archaeologist.
- 5.4 Archaeological supervision continued during bulk mechanical excavation, which removed demolition layers and some natural ground, exposing the contaminated fills of the pond more clearly. Once these fills could be clearly defined, extraction was restricted to those contaminated materials only, without removing any more of the undisturbed natural ground, or extending the area of excavation. Archaeological monitoring was suspended at this point since the contaminated material was of no archaeological value, and no further areas of potential archaeology were being disturbed.
- 5.5 The work was undertaken following English Heritage (GLAAS) guidelines (English Heritage 1998).

6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 6.1 The site is located on Thames 2nd terrace gravels overlain by sterile alluvial clays. Further spreads of gravels also occur across the surface of the clays, at the base of the Holocene soil profile.
- 6.2 The site is situated within a bend in the River Wandle, the modern course of which lies to the west of the site.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

- 7.1 No features other than the historic pond [6] were observed during the watching brief. A typical profile is given in Figure 3.
- 7.2 The area was stripped down on average 1.2m below ground level. At this depth the lowest part of the natural subsoil [3] was still present – this material was c.0.8m thick, and consisted of mid grey brown clay silt, with few stones, and some carbonate formations and black mineral staining in the lowest c.0.15m. No cultural material was observed.
- 7.3 Natural sub-soil [3] was overlain by a mixed modern layer [2], consisting of mid-dark brown/black silty clay loam with abundant brick and concrete rubble inclusions. This layer was c.0.25m thick, and probably relates to disturbance associated with the industrial phase of the site.
- 7.4 Layer [2] was approximately contemporary with the elongated historic pond [6], though intrusive disturbance, possible modifications and irregular filling may have obscured the stratigraphic relationship. The pond [6] is approximately 8m wide at the top, sloping quite steeply to a width of 6m at the base, at an approximate depth of 1.75m below ground level.
- 7.5 The fill of the pond [5] (c.1.5m thick) contained mixed modern rubbish, with large numbers of metal buckets, tins, 19th century bottles and glass, and various other items. Spills of paint and lacquer were obvious, and the material gave off a pungent malodour. The material was poorly consolidated and acted as perched water table, also attracting hydrocarbon accumulation. The predominately black, wet, inclusion rich fill was easily distinguished from the natural sub-soils once the overlying made-ground and disturbed soils had been removed. No finds were retained from the fill.
- 7.6 The fill of the pond [5] was overlain by modern made-ground [4] consisting predominately of gravel with brick fragments (c.0.25m thick). This material sealed the fills of pond [6], and is likely associated redevelopment in the latter industrial phase of the site, or prior to the construction of the school.
- 7.7 A modern topsoil [1] c.0.25m thick, consisting of loose black gritty loam with numerous modern inclusions, overlay layer [2] and partially overlay/interleaved with pond fill [5]. This material was the current ground surface, and is most likely associated with the 1970's school.



Approx. Site Ground Level 14.20m OD

Section 1
East Facing

Figure 3
Section 1
1:20

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The watching brief found no artefacts, features or other items of archaeological significance within the area affected by the removal of the contaminated pond material. Residual finds within soil layers were hard to monitor for due to large mechanical excavators used and the contaminated nature of the material. However, the negative results do fit the suggestion that the negative results of other archaeological exercises in the local area indicate prolonged agricultural use or 'wild-land' as an important feature of the site and local area throughout several periods.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work, Kings Oak Southern Counties for funding it , and staff of McCabe's for co-operation on site. The author would like to thank Laura Crossley of RSKENSR for providing photos, Josephine Brown for the drawings and Jon Butler for his project management and editing.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 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.*
- Hawkins, D. 2004 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Harland School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood, London CR4.* CgMs Consulting unpublished report.
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- RSKENSr. 2005 *Revised Remedial Action Plan : Harland First School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood, London. REPORT N.o. 21673RAP-2(00).* RSKENSr unpublished report.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description	Depth below ground level (m)
1	Layer	Topsoil with mixed modern inclusions	0 – 0.25
2	Layer	Mixed rubble and topsoil/loam	0.25 – 0.5
3	Layer	Mid grey brown clay silt, few stones, calcareous formations and black mineral staining in lower 0.15m of layer	0.5 – 0.85
4	Layer	Gravel based made ground sealing pond fills	0 – 0.25
5	Fill	Contaminated fills of [6], mixed modern inclusions, black in colour, unconsolidated and highly contaminated	0.25 – 1.75
6	Cut	Steep sided elongate / 'L' – shaped historic pond, c. 1.5m deep, 6m wide, over 50m long	0.25 – 1.75

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

10.2 OASIS ID: preconst1-8246

Project details

Project name An Archaeological Watching Brief at Harland First School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood

Short description of the project The archaeological work was implemented in advance of proposed new-build homes, on the site of the former school, and previously the site of 19th century paint and lacquer works. Major ground works consisted of bulk removal of contaminated materials associated with an historic pond located on the site of paint and lacquer works. The area of the pond was stripped down to c. 1 x 1.4m below ground level, and then the more clearly defined contaminated materials were excavated and removed by machine. No archaeological features except for the historic pond and an associated brick drain were encountered. Sub-soil exposed along the flanks of the pond after removal of demolition layers yielded no artefactual evidence and contained no natural features of interest.

Project dates Start: 20-04-2005 End: 02-05-2005

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes HAA 05 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Vacant Land 3 - Despoiled land (contaminated derelict and ?brownfield? sites)

Monument type POND Post Medieval

Monument type BRICK DRAIN Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country England England

Site location GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM Harland School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood

Study area 2000.00 Square metres

National grid reference TQ 2650 6990 Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service

Project design originator CgMs Consultants Ltd

Project director/manager Jon Butler

Project supervisor Dan Miller

Sponsor or funding body Kings Oak Southern Counties

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at Harland First School, Brangwyn Crescent, Colliers Wood

Author(s)/Editor(s) Miller, D.

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