Southampton Archaeology Unit

Report 904

Archaeological watching brief at Cosham Transport Interchange, Roebuck Close, Cosham, Portsmouth 2008/6

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Client: Portsmouth Housing Association

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Front cover: View across the site from the east, showing sections of railway track recovered from the south-west corner.

Figure 1. Site location.

Report on the archaeological watching brief at Cosham Transport Interchange, Roebuck Close, Cosham, Portsmouth

By PR Cottrell BA

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1. Summary

A watching brief was carried out by Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit on groundworks for the construction of flats at the site of Cosham Transport Interchange, Roebuck Close, Cosham, Portsmouth. No deposits of archaeological significance were found but remains of the infrastructure of the former Portsdown and Horndean Light Railway were exposed.

2. Introduction

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an archaeological watching brief at the site of Cosham Transport Interchange, Roebuck Close, Cosham, Portsmouth, (fig 1) on behalf of Portsmouth Housing Association. The observations were made by G Dall and E McDonald between 27/2/2008 and 26/6/2008. The project was managed by PR Cottrell. The report was edited by Dr AD Russel MIFA. The maps and plans were prepared by PR Cottrell.

3. Aims of the investigation

The aim of the investigation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within the area of groundworks. Any such remains were to be recorded and artefacts recovered.

4. Watching brief methodology

The methodology followed that specified in the Scheme of Investigation. The archaeological work on site consisted of observation of the machine excavation of the groundworks.

All archaeological records were made using the Southampton City Council archaeological recording system. The colours of deposits were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart and these are used in this report (Munsell Color 1975). The archive is stored on Portsmouth City Museums' premises.

5. Site location and topography

The site is located in Cosham, at Roebuck Close, west of Portsmouth Road and south of the railway line (fig 2).

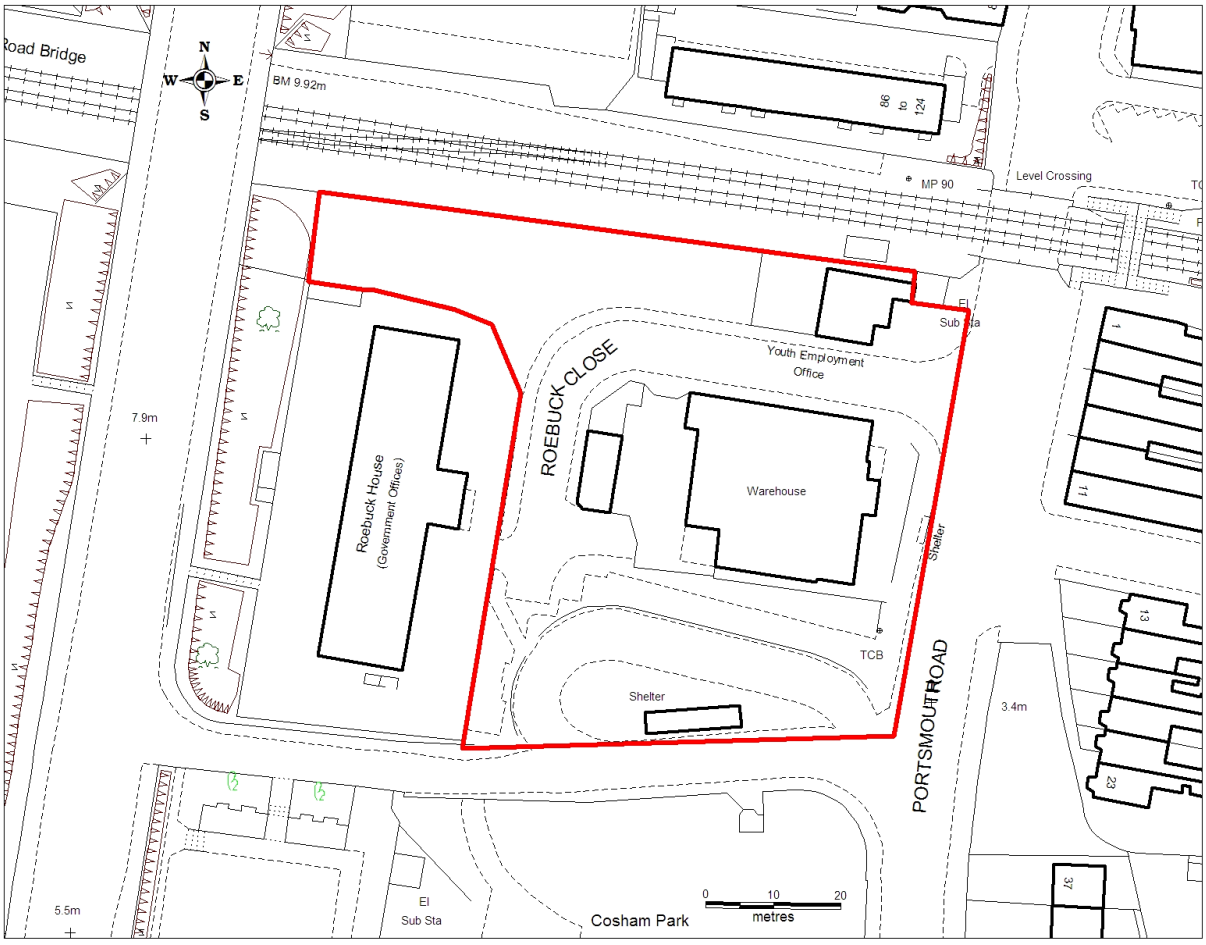

Figure 2. The site prior to redevelopment.

The natural topography has been obscured by modern urban development but the area of the site is generally level and the modern ground surface is at about 3.5m – 3.8m OD. The surface geological deposits in the area of the site are Aeolian deposits (brickearth), overlying chalk (British Geological Survey, 1987, Sheet 316).

6. Historical and archaeological background

The site lies immediately south of Local Area of Archaeological Importance 17 and immediately east of Local Area of Archaeological Importance 18. Area 17 covers the area of the medieval settlement of Cosham. The Domesday manor had a population of 25 and by the late 17th century it was a sizeable settlement aligned north – south along the main road from Portsmouth to London. The area is defined principally as one of importance for medieval and post-medieval archaeology. Area 18 covers the area of the old shoreline around the north edge of Portsmouth Harbour. Prehistoric flints have been found along the foreshore, together with remains of Iron Age and Roman salt production. The Wymering 11th century saltern probably lay in this area. The area is defined principally as one of importance for prehistoric archaeology.

A few archaeological investigations have been carried out in the area. Watching briefs at 72 and 74-76 High St, Cosham showed that the earliest buildings on the sites had been built between 1910 and 1932. Documentary research suggested that until the early 20th century, the area had been farmland that may have once been part of a medieval open field system serving the contemporary settlement at Cosham. Medieval pottery was found at a site in Havant Road, Cosham.

The present site appears as a field on the Ordnance survey map of 1870, as allotments on the 1898 edition and as a nursery on the 1910 edition.

An electric tramway, the Portsdown and Horndean Light Railway, opened in 1903, formerly crossed the main-line railway by a bridge located near the north-west corner of the site (fig 3). It was approached by an embankment located in the west part of the site. The tramway closed in 1935. The bridge and embankment still appear on Ordnance Survey maps dated 1938 and 1952.

The site was developed in the second half of the 20th century, partly as offices and partly as a bus interchange.

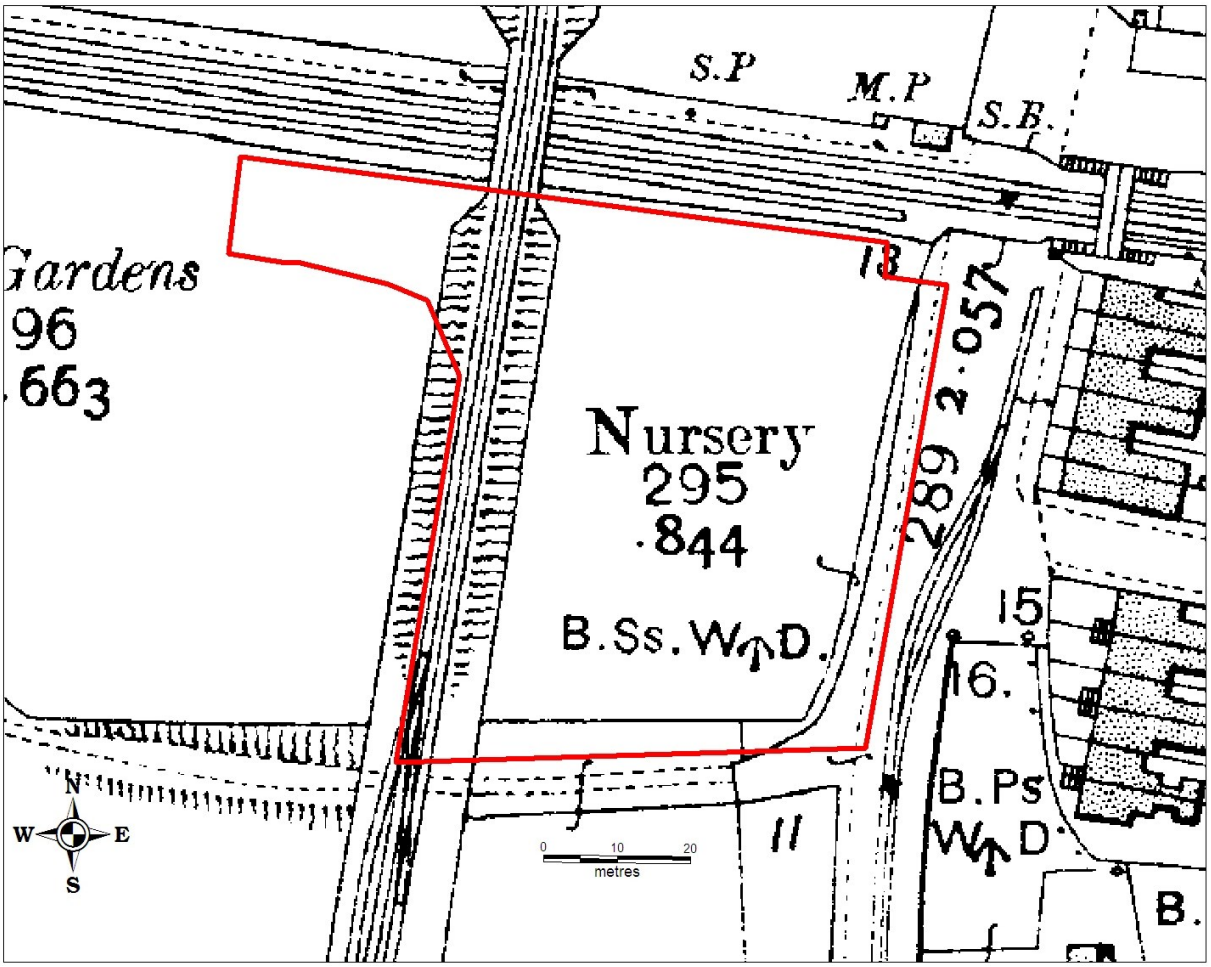

Figure 3. The site in 1910, showing the bridge and embankment of the Portsdown and Horndean Light Railway.

7. Results of the watching brief

7.1. Introduction

Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were drainage trenches dug in the south-east part of the site. They were 750mm wide and 1m deep. Trench 1 was 30m long, trench 2 was 15m long and trench 3 was 4m long. Trench 4 was a sewer diversion in the west part of the site, 27m long, 4m wide and 3.8m deep. Trench 5 was a roughly triangular area 40m long and 60mm deep levelled for a new road. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were sited within it. Trench 6 was a sewer diversion 30m long, 2m wide and 2.2m deep that

continued north from trench 4. Trench 7 was also a sewer diversion, parallel to trench 6. Trench 8 was a test pit 6m long, 2m wide and 700mm deep at the north side of the site. Trench 9 was a large L-shaped level reduction *c*600mm deep for the new building in the central part of the site. Trench 10 was a level reduction 14m long, 14m wide and 1.5m deep. It was sited within trench 11, a level reduction 28m long, 14m wide and 400mm deep in the north-west part of the site. Trench 12 was a foundation trench 18m long, 5m wide and 1.5m deep dug within trench 11. The locations of the trenches are shown on figure 4.

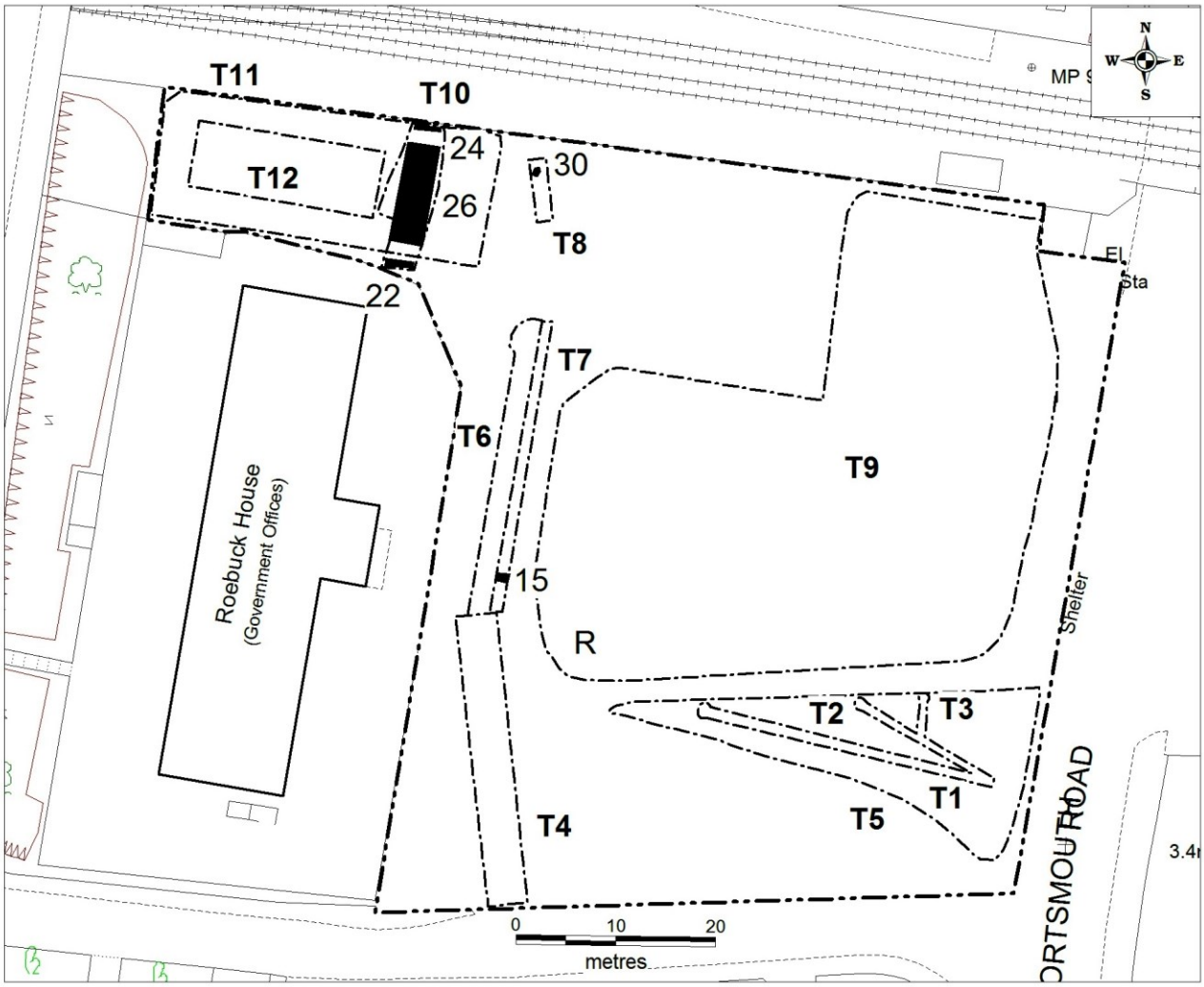

Figure 4. Site plan showing trenches and features.

7.2. Natural deposits

The earliest deposits exposed were contexts 9 and 10. Context 9 was very slightly stony, yellowish brown, silty clay observed in trenches 4 and 10. The top was *c*1.5m – 2m below the surface and it was at least 1.8m thick. Context 10, exposed in trench 6, was slightly stony, yellowish brown, silty clay loam mixed with fragments of chalk. It was interpreted as part of the interface between the natural brickearth and the underlying chalk. These deposits were overlaid by context 5, very slightly stony, dark yellowish brown, silty clay loam. This was also observed over much of the site and was interpreted as the natural brickearth.

7.3. Uncertain date

Context 7, observed in trenches 1, 2 and 3, was very stony, dark greyish brown, silty clay loam 150mm thick. It overlaid the brickearth, 5, and was overlaid by a modern deposit, context 4. Context 12, exposed in trench 6, was very dark greyish brown soil 150mm thick containing fragments of brick and wood. It was overlaid by context 11. Context 28, exposed in trenches 8 and 12, was slightly stony, dark brown, clay loam *c*500mm thick overlying the brickearth, 5. It was overlaid by context 20. These layers probably represent buried soils that existed prior to the construction of the embankment for the light railway.

7.4. Modern

A series of features in the north-west part of the site were identified as relating to the former light railway bridge over the main line and its embanked approach. A low mound at the north edge of the site coincided with the location of the former bridge. It was allocated context number 17. Trenches 8 and 10 were excavated in this area.

Feature 22 at the south end of trench 10 was a construction trench over 1m long, over 1m wide and 1.5m deep. It contained a brick and concrete foundation, context 23. Feature 24 at the north end of trench 10 was a construction trench over 2m long, 1.5m wide and over 1m deep containing a brick and concrete foundation, context 25. The bricks measured 234mm x 70mm x 109mm. Between these was feature 26, a construction trench 14m long and 4m wide containing context 27, a concrete base or

platform. Feature 30 in trench 8 contained context 29, a brick foundation over 690mm long and over 520mm wide. These were interpreted as remains of the foundations for the bridge. They were overlaid by context 18.

Context 11 was recorded in trenches 6 and 7, below layer 1 and overlying layer 12 and the brickearth, 5. It was slightly stony, yellowish brown, mixed soil with common chalk fragments. It was probably material deposited to create the embankment. Context 18 in trench 8 was a layer of slightly stony, greyish brown, clay loam *c*600mm thick containing fragments of brick. This was probably material from the embankment redeposited over the remnants of the demolished bridge. It was overlaid by modern topsoil, context 19. Context 20 in trench 8 was a layer *c*1m thick of very stony, greyish brown silty clay loam mixed with chalk. It overlaid context 28 and may have been redeposited material from the embankment.

Context 4 was a mixed deposit up to 750mm thick of very dark greyish brown to black soils with lenses of redeposited brickearth, concrete and gravel and abundant inclusions of ash and cinders. It was observed over much of the site and overlaid the brickearth, 5, and the buried soils, 7 and 12.

Context 15 was a large pit exposed in the southern part of trench 7. It cut layer 11 and was over 3m long, over 2m wide and 1.1m deep with steep sides. The fill, 16, was moderately stony, dark grey, clay loam with fragments of brick and chalk.

Various modern services were observed. Layer 4 was cut by a manhole, feature 8, at the convergence of trenches 1 and 2. A drain trench, 13, cut layer 11 in trench 6.

Context 2, recorded below the modern surfaces in various parts of the site, was a layer of stone block paving laid on context 6, very dark greyish brown soil overlying context 4. The modern surface, context 1, consisted mainly of tarmac with areas of concrete. Context 21 lay between layers 1 and 2 in trench 9. It was very stony, black, sandy loam over 600mm thick containing concrete fragments and bricks. Several lengths of worn flat-bottomed rail including sections of pointwork were found within this layer at the south-west corner of trench 9. They were some distance from the main-line but were near the line of the former light railway close to the location of

points shown on the 1910 OS map. It is likely that these were dumped here when the light railway track was lifted, although the date is unclear.

8. Conclusions

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were found. Remains of the infrastructure of the former Portsdown and Horndean Light Railway were observed. These comprised parts of the foundations of the rail overbridge, material used to construct the approach embankment and sections of railway track.

Appendix 1. Context List

Number/letter codes (eg 10YR 3/1) = Munsell soil colour codes.

sa = stone abundance – 0 = virtually stone free; 5 = gravel

Context	Type	Colour	Texture	SA	Description
1	layer				Modern surface, tarmac, concrete etc
2	layer				Cobble stones.
3	fill				Chalky soil, fill of 8.
4	layer				Mixed soils, modern make-up.
5	layer	10YR 4/4	silty clay loam	1	Natural brickearth.
6	layer				Bedding for cobbles 2.
7	layer				Buried soil.
8	feature				Cut for manhole.
9			silty clay loam	1	Natural clay.
10		10YR 5/4	silty clay loam	2	Mixed chalk and brickearth, natural.
11	layer	10YR 5/4		2	Mixed chalky soil.
12		2.5Y 3/1			Buried soil.
13	feature				Drain trench.
14	fill				Mixed chalky soil, fill of 13.
15	feature				Large pit.
16	fill	10YR 4/1	clay loam	3	Fill of pit 15.
17	feature				Bank, in north west corner of site.
18	fill	10YR 5/2	clay loam	2	Soil of bank 17.
19	layer	10YR 3/1	clay loam	3	Top soil over 18
20	layer	10YR 5/2	silty clay loam	4	Modern chalky soil and flint.
21	layer	10YR 2/1	sandy loam	4	Modern dark soil layer.
22	feature				Construction trench for bridge foundations.

23	fill			Brick and concrete foundation, fill of 22.
24				Construction trench for bridge foundations.
25	fill			Brick and concrete foundation, fill of 24.
26	feature			Foundation trench for large concrete base.
27	fill			Large concrete base, fill of 26.
28	layer	7.5YR 4/2 clay loam	2	Buried soil.
29	fill			Brick feature, fill of 30.
30	feature			Construction trench.

Bibliography

Munsell Color, 1975: *Munsell Soil Color Charts*, Baltimore.

British Geological Survey, 1987: *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) - drift*. Sheet 316.