



**Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at Warren Cottage, St.  
George's Hill, Weybridge, Surrey**

June 2010

**NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

***This document sets out the results from an archaeological evaluation carried out by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. at Warren Cottage, St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Surrey. The site lies within an Iron Age hillfort, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 23001). The evaluation was carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010. No archaeological features or artefacts were revealed. This result adds to the growing body of evidence to suggest that the hillfort was sparsely occupied in the Iron Age.***

## BACKGROUND

### Topographical Background

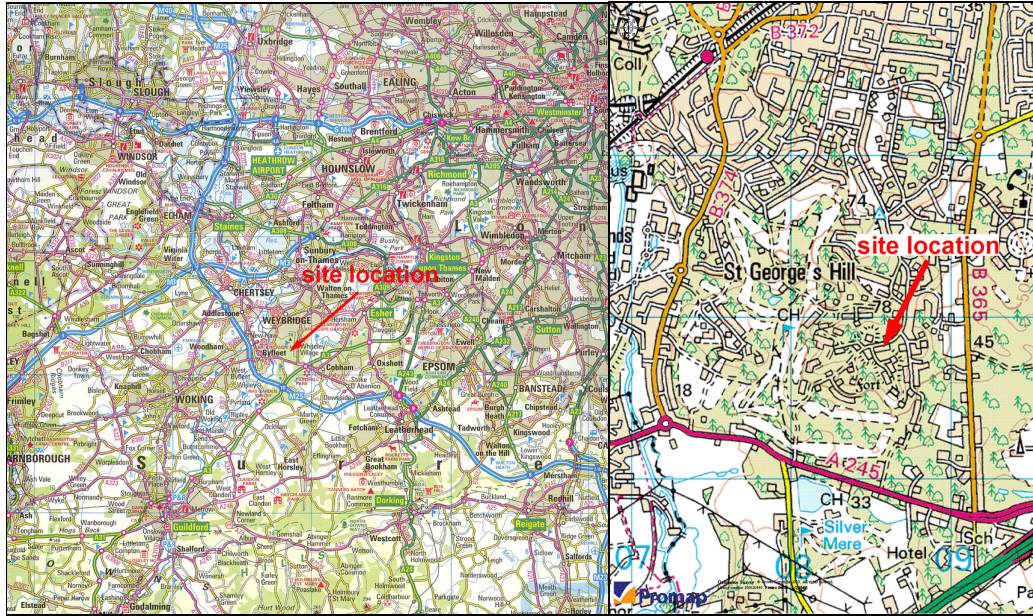


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

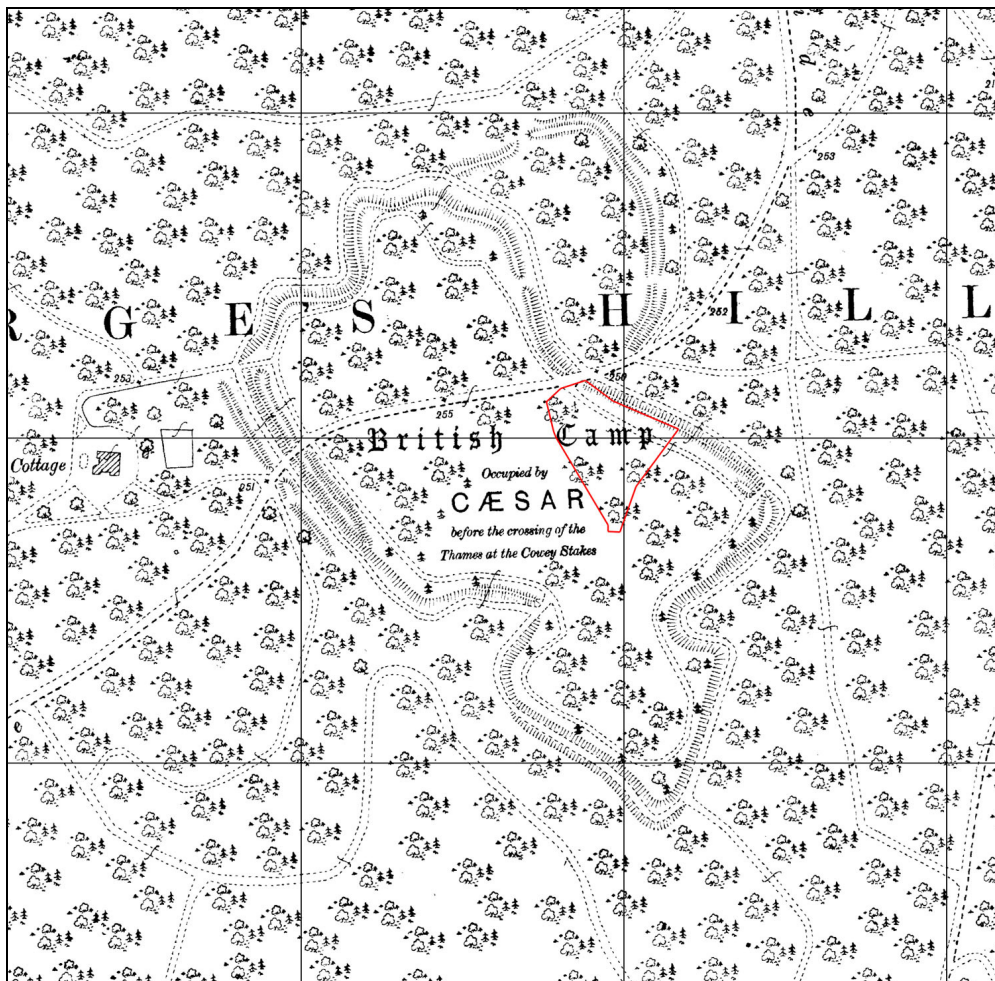
1. Warren Cottage lies within the St. George's Hill private estate in Weybridge, Surrey (Fig.1). The site lies at 78m aOD and is centred at OS grid reference TQ 0858 6180. The underlying geology of the site is Plateau Gravel. The Iron Age hillfort, within which the site is located, sits upon a promontory of land between the rivers Mole and Wey.

### Project Background

1. Since Warren Cottage sits within a large multivallate hillfort on St. George's Hill, which is a scheduled ancient monument (SAM no. 23001), scheduled monument consent will be required, in addition to planning permission, before any development work may progress. This archaeological evaluation has been undertaken under class consent in order to inform an application for scheduled monument consent relating to the proposed development.
2. A Method Statement, drawn up by WSA (WSA 2010), set out the methodology used for this archaeological evaluation. This report details the results of the archaeological evaluation, which was carried out on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010 by George Anelay of West Sussex Archaeology Ltd.
3. The owner of Warren Cottage, Mr Adam Barclay-White, had already obtained planning permission (no: 2009/2249) from Elmbridge Borough Council for the erection of a detached two storey house with basement

and integral garage following the demolition of the existing house. Condition 5 of that planning permission states that: “no development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work on the site in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the borough council.” This report, together with the Method Statement which preceded it (WSA 2010), has been written in order to fulfil the terms of this condition.

## Historical Background



**Figure 2** 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of the hillfort on St. George's Hill before the estate was built. The future plot of Warren Cottage is outlined in red.

1. The hillfort on St. George's hill consists of a single bank and ditch following the 75m contour and enclosing an area of c.5.5ha, except for on parts of its western side where an additional two banks and one ditch exist. A “D” shaped enclosure on its north-eastern side, again surrounded by a single bank and ditch, encloses a further c.06ha, supposedly protecting a water source. Warren Cottage lies on the



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eastern side of the hillfort, at a point immediately south of the “D” shaped enclosure. The surviving rampart of the hillfort forms the eastern boundary of the property.

2. A number of previous archaeological excavations have taken place within the hillfort from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Initial investigations by E. Gardener, published in 1911, confirmed the identification of the site as an Iron Age hillfort, rather than a Roman fort, on the basis of the surviving earthworks.
3. In 1950 A. W. G. Lowther published details of some pottery said to be found on the site by a workman involved in the creation of the St. George's Hill estate. It is worth quoting Lowther in full: *“The following note arises from the presentation to this Society, by Mr. Tarrant, of a small collection of potsherds found, some years ago, during building operations at the above site. (Mr. Tarrant informs me that this pottery was recovered by his father and that the pieces presented are all that now remains of a more extensive collection). With the pottery here described were a few pieces of Roman ware (large jars, with combed-lattice ornamentation bands), but as the latter is still labelled “Found 1 ft. 6 in. below ground. Close to Keeper's Cottage,” it is clear that this Roman pottery is from a separate site (the Keeper's Cottage in question being about half a mile away from the camp) and has nothing to do with the main group. The Roman ware consists of pieces of Late Antonine jars (of about AD200) similar to vessels found at Farnham, in which area they were most likely made. The pottery from the site of the camp appears to have been found between 1912 and 1914, and it seems likely that it was discovered during, or just prior to, the erection of one or other of the two houses erected inside the camp (in its south-west area) before the latter became a scheduled site. With the pottery were several pieces of iron-stone cinder, evidence of iron-working such as is common to Iron Age sites, and as that found in the earliest and subsequent levels at Purberry Shot, Ewell (S.A.C, L).”* (Lowther 1950).
4. At least fifteen subsequent investigations at numerous locations within the hillfort have failed to produce any further evidence for occupation. The largest scale of these was a watching brief carried out in 1999 by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit at “Hevestta” within the northern part of the hillfort, which covered 24% of its total area. No artefacts or features were revealed (SCAU 1999).
5. This previous archaeological work within the hillfort included a watching brief carried out by David Bird of Surrey County Council in the grounds of Warren Cottage during the construction of an extension at the eastern end of the house in 1989. No archaeological features or artefacts were found.

RESULTS

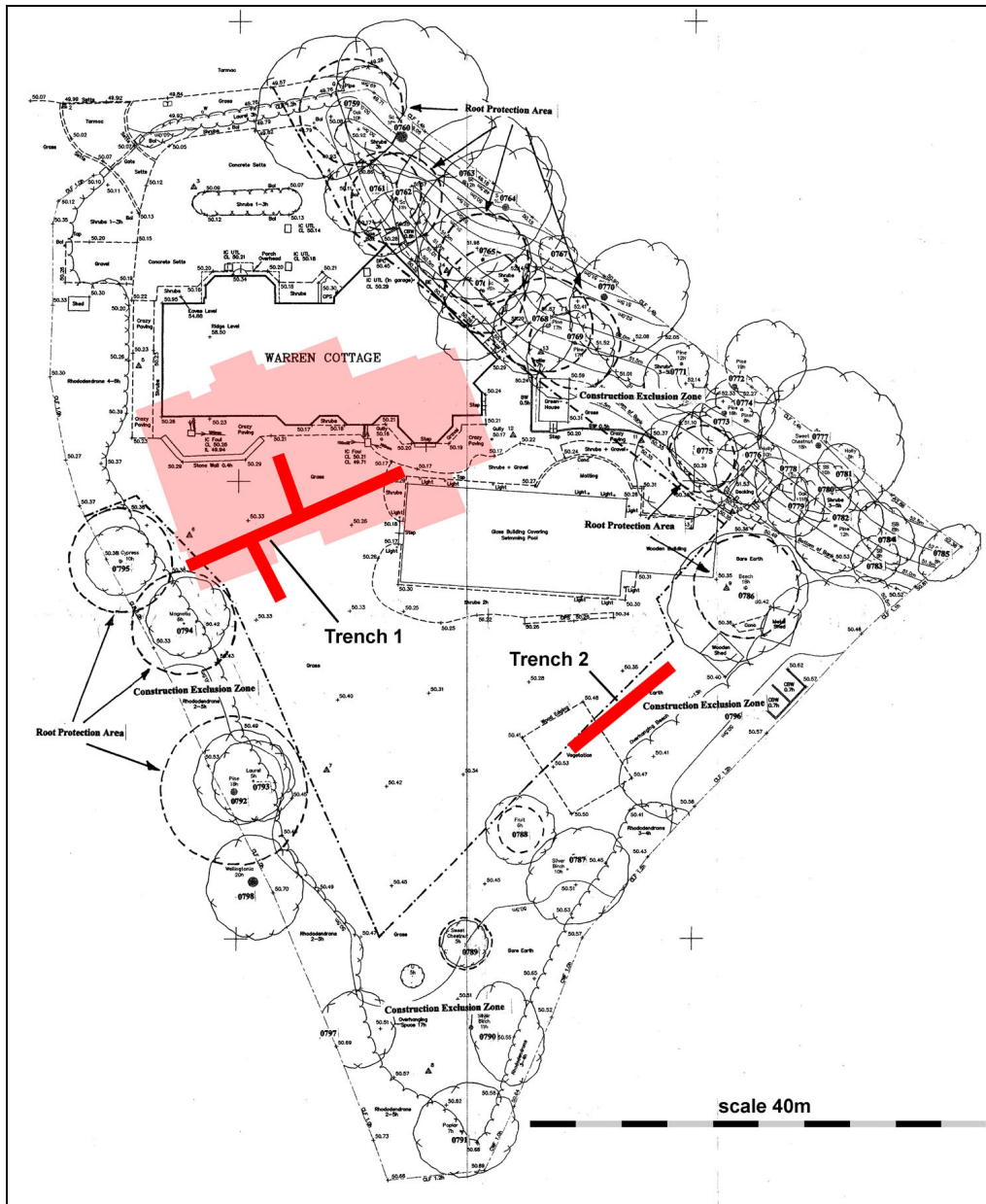


Figure 3 Trench location plan. North is to the top of the image.

1. Two trenches were excavated within the plot of Warren Cottage. Trench 1 was over the site of the proposed new dwelling, while Trench 2 was located in the area of a proposed swimming pool. Trench 1 was 20.5m long, with two extensions, one to the north, 5m in length, and one to the south, 5.5m in length. Trench 2 was 11.5m long. All trenches were 1m wide. Trench 1 was 4.5m shorter, due to the presence of a concreted stone patio at its eastern end, and slightly further to the south than originally planned, while Trench 2 was 1.5m longer.

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2. No archaeological artefacts or features were revealed in either trench, with the same sequence of deposits being recorded in both, although at varying depths. A layer of modern topsoil was found throughout, 0.1m - 0.12m in depth. Underlying this was a grey sandy subsoil, with occasional to frequent gravel inclusions, 0.22m – 0.28m deep in Trench 1 and 0.45m – 0.56m deep in Trench 2. There was no obvious explanation for this increase in depth between the two trenches, although it may partially be accounted for by a slope in the underlying geology of 0.22m from the western end of Trench 1 to the eastern end of Trench 2.
3. Below this topsoil and subsoil the underlying geology was encountered, which varied from a yellow/orange sand to a yellow/orange gravel. In the northern extension to Trench 1 the sand was found to overlie the gravel to a depth of 0.67m. Between these geological layers and the overlying subsoil a varying band of a dark grey/black podsol (0.5m – 0.2m thick) was encountered, typical of such quartz rich sandy soils.



**Figure 4** The sample section in the northern extension to Trench 1, showing the tree hole to the right. Looking east. The scale is 1m.

4. A sample section in the northern extension of Trench 1 recorded the probable throw or root hole of a tree or large shrub. This hole was cut from a point below the topsoil but above the subsoil. It is probable that the tree or shrub was removed as part of the woodland clearance required for the creation of the St. George's Hill estate in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This would demonstrate that the grey subsoil had reached its present depth before this event.
5. Both trenches were excavated to a depth sufficient to demonstrate the absence of any archaeological deposits. This varied from 0.5m – 0.75m in Trench 1 and from 0.8m – 0.85m in Trench 2, depending upon the depth of the undisturbed geological deposits.

## SURVIVAL OF DEPOSITS

1. This evaluation has added to the growing list of archaeological fieldwork within the hillfort to have found no artefacts or features relating to its use or occupation. There are few areas of its interior which have not now had some form of investigation. Indeed the only plots not to have been examined in modern times (since 1970) are those two against the western ramparts from which Lowther claimed Iron Age artefacts had been recovered between 1912 and 1914.
2. Since Lowther's article provides the only evidence for occupation within the hillfort it is worth examining his assertions more closely. First it should be highlighted that the artefacts he mentions were not found by him, but instead by the father of the man who brought them to Lowther. Second Lowther appears not to be certain of their exact derivation; the only artefacts specifically mentioned as being marked with a findspot are from a plot over ½ mile away. Thirdly the two houses suggested by Lowther as the findspot do not appear on the 1919-1920 Ordnance Survey 1:10560 mapping and therefore are unlikely to have been built between 1912 and 1914, which is the date of discovery of the artefacts.
3. In the light of the lack of corroborative evidence from archaeological fieldwork within the hillfort carried out since Lowther's article, together with the uncertainties listed above in that article, it would seem increasingly probable that few or no Iron Age artefacts or features exist within its ramparts. Why this should be is a matter for further debate, but it would place this earthwork firmly within the category of sparsely occupied hillforts.
4. It is to be hoped that an opportunity will present itself to carry out some archaeological fieldwork within the two plots identified by Lowther in his article, in order to test his assertion that these are areas of occupation within the hillfort. However the evidence presented above suggests that it will prove, once again, negative.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lowther, A.W..G. 1950. *Iron Age Pottery From St. George's Hill Camp, Weybridge*. Surrey Archaeological Collections 51 (1950), p.144-7.

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