

Watching Brief at Viking Way, Rainham.
London Borough of Havering.

RA - VW 96.

TQ 5208 8232

Supervisor: M. Beasley.
Project Manager: M. Turner.

08.07.1996.

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1. Abstract.

1.1. The watching brief found evidence of Prehistoric activity on the site, with later 19th. century and 20th. century activity.

2. Introduction.

2.1. A watching brief was conducted on land adjoining Viking Way, Rainham (*Fig. 1a, b*), on 8th. July 1996, by the Newham Museum Service. The watching brief was commissioned by R.O.Y.A.L.S. in advance of development of the site as a community and youth centre by Churley and Associates acting for ROYALS. The strategy was outlined in the English Heritage document "Brief for a Watching Brief on Geotechnical test pits at Viking Way Rainham" (Pontin 1996) to fulfil an archaeological condition on planning application PO213.96. The watching brief was funded Churley and Associates for R.O.Y.A.L.S., directed by Mark Turner for the Museum, and supervised by the author.

2.2. The Museum and the author wish to thank R.O.Y.A.L.S. for funding the site and allowing access, Dr. P. Greenwood for the pottery analysis, and Graham Reed for the illustrations.

3. Archaeological Background.

- 3.1. Rainham village is a known settlement area from the Bronze Age to the present. Significant Bronze Age and Roman deposits have been revealed in excavations in the immediate vicinity of the site, and these findings have been re-inforced by other sites in the surroundings of the village. The most significant of these to the Viking Way watching brief are the Rainham Tesco (RA - BR 89) excavations of 1989 conducted by the Museum in advance of the construction of the superstore (Meddens and Beasley, 1990), only 30m. to the south-west of the Viking Way site.
- 3.2. These deposits included probable Bronze Age ditches and pits, wooden fence structures and a brushwood trackway of Bronze Age date, Roman features including posts and a possible palisade, and Medieval stock enclosures and ditches. These remains represent a settlement in the area on the interface of the marsh and the gravel island upon which the present village is built. This pattern is repeated to the south of the village, notably at the Brookway site in 1992 (RA - BA 92) where Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement deposits were revealed on the interface between gravel and marshland (Waltho, forthcoming).
- 3.3. The Medieval core of the village is the church and the manors of Rainham, Lauanders, Berwick and South Hall, first mentioned in 1086. The location of Rainham manor is uncertain, but is likely to have been near the present location of the church; Gilbert de Vere being licensed around 1180 by the Abbot of Lesnes to build a chapel and hold services in it. Rainham Bridge, to the North of the site, is first mentioned in 1234 (*VCH*).

4. Archaeological Methodology.

- 4.1. The watching brief consisted of five machine excavated trenches in pre-determined locations (*Fig. 2*). Two of these were designed to cover the footprint of the proposed building with three additional trenches located in the proposed car park. All trenches measured 2m. x 2m. with a maximum depth of 2m. Measured sketches were made of the sections of all trenches, and the sections were photographed. The trench locations were recorded at a scale of 1:200.
- 4.2. The methodology was based on the archaeological brief and conformed to standards set out in Guidance Paper No. 3 (Standard Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, No. 5 Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation Reports), and relevant Health and Safety Regulations.

5. Description of Results.

- 5.1. Trench 1 showed the deepest stratigraphy of the five trenches. It was located at the west of the site, and was the closest to the 1989 excavations. After removing vegetation and topsoil down to a depth of 0.3m., a layer of mid orange brown sandy clay silt was revealed to a depth of 1.0m. This overlay a layer of orange brown sandy clay with gravel to a depth of 1.8m., where mid grey gravel and sand was encountered.
- 5.2. Trench 2 was located to the east of Trench 1. Topsoil at 0.40m. depth overlay mid grey brown clayey sandy silt to a depth of 0.90m. This overlay mid orange brown sandy clay with gravel to a depth of 1.10m. where orange brown sand and gravel was encountered. The excavation of the trench was halted in natural gravel at 1.5m.
- 5.3. Trench 3 was to the south of Trench 2. A 20th. century dump of refuse overlay topsoil at 0.50m. depth. This topsoil extended to 0.70m., where it overlay a layer of mid brown orange sandy clay silt. This layer was cut by a possible linear ditch. The fill of this cut contained finds of possible prehistoric date, including pottery and flint (*Fig 3*). The layer extended to a depth of 1.10m. where it overlay mid orange sandy gravel. The excavation of the trench was halted in natural gravel at 1.2m.
- 5.4. Trench 4 was situated in the north-east corner of the site. A stone make-up level for the car park was recorded. This overlay topsoil at a depth of 0.15m. The topsoil extended to a depth of 0.45m. where it overlay mid orange brown sandy clay. At 0.75m. orange yellow sand and gravel was encountered. The excavation of the trench was halted in natural gravel at 1.10m.
- 5.5. Trench 5 was located to the south of Trench 4. Stone and rubble make-up extended to a depth of 0.30m. This overlay a thick layer of dark grey humic sandy silt to a depth of 1.3m. This in turn overlay yellow orange sand and gravel. The trench was stopped in natural gravel at 1.60m.

6. Interpretations and Conclusions.

- 6.1. The subsurface geology of the site consists of gravel overlain by alluvial deposits, which increase in depth from south to north away from the village. This corresponds to the results in RA - BR 89. The comparative depth of deposits in Trenches 1 and 4 suggests that the edge of the gravel outcrop runs further to the north and east than the northernmost extent of the site boundary.
- 6.2. Trench 3 appears to be fairly high on the gravel terrace, and contained evidence for a Prehistoric, possibly linear ditch. This suggests that the Prehistoric archaeology revealed on the 1989 excavation (under the present petrol station) extends further to the east onto this site. Although no archaeological features were discovered in Trench 4 the stratigraphy is identical to that in Trench 3. To the south of this it appears that the brickearth revealed has been removed, either for brick-making or as a rubbish pit. The dating for this is uncertain, but it is suggested that this happened during the 19th. or early 20th. century. This activity would have removed any surviving prehistoric deposits in that area.
- 6.3. The subsoil in all five trenches was surprisingly sterile, suggesting prolonged disuse of the land. This is probably explained by the proximity to the marsh; the site having been at the back of the properties lining the road. This certainly appears to be true of the 20th. century, and even during the 19th century there is no apparent evidence of garden activity.
- 6.4. There was no evidence of structural remains from either the Medieval or Post Medieval occupation. This probably suggests that property boundaries have remained static, at least for the last millennium.
- 6.5. Although no Medieval deposits were observed on the site, stratified Prehistoric deposits were observed in one trench at a depth of 0.7m. The sequence of deposits was repeated in at least one other trench, and at the same depth. These are potentially a continuation of those deposits found in 1989, indicating a larger Prehistoric settlement than previously thought, perhaps occupying the same position as the current Rainham Village.
- 6.6. It is recommended that further archaeological assessment be carried out on the site. The site cannot be viewed in isolation, considering its' proximity to major Prehistoric deposits. Its location suggests a continuity with deposits revealed in RA - BA 89, and recent excavations by Hertford Archaeological Trust at Dovers Corner (Pontin Pers. Comm.) to the north suggest a widespread pattern of development during the Bronze Age period, based not just on the gravel terrace of Rainham Village, but extending either side of the River Ingreborne.
- 6.7. The depth of the observed archaeological deposits has implications for the development. Even in the proposed car park area, a depth of 0.7m. means that deposits will be disturbed even by drainage runs. The foundations of the building will certainly significantly truncate the archaeology. This depth will be reduced by any grading work to eliminate the gradient on the site at present.

6.8. It is suggested that evaluation trenches be excavated to further assess the extent and quality of the Prehistoric deposits observed during the watching brief. These would need to be located in the area of Trenches 3 and 4, where the stratigraphic potential has been demonstrated. A plan of these proposed locations is included (*Fig. 4*).

7. Bibliography.

Meddens and M. Beasley, 1990, "Wetland Use In Rainham, Essex. "London Archaeologist. Winter 1990.Vol.6 No.9.

Pontin, L, 1996, "Brief for a Watching Brief on Geotechnical test pits at Viking Way Rainham.", English Heritage Guidance Brief.

Victoria County History, vol VII, pp129-130.

Appendix A

Finds List.

★	2	x	body sherds	possible Neolithic - Bronze Age
	2	x	burnt flint	undated
	1	x	waste flake	undated

APPENDIX B

GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1. TYPE OF RECORDING.

Evaluation ~~_____~~ Excavation ~~_____~~ Watching brief

Other (please specify)

2. LOCATION.

Borough: LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING

Site address: VIKING WAY, RAINHAM

Site name: VIKING WAY

Site code: RA - VW 96

Nat. Grid Refs: Centre of site: TQ 5208 8232

Limits of site: a) N/A b)

c) d)

3. ORGANISATION.

Name of archaeological unit/ company/ society:

Address: NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE
31, STOCK STREET
PLAISTOW
LONDON
E13 OBX

Site director/ supervisor: M. BEASLEY

Project manager: M. TURNER

Funded by: R.O.Y.A.L.S. 20, Ingreborne Road, Rainham, Essex.

4. DURATION.

Date fieldwork started: 08.07.1996

Date finished: 08.07.1996

Field work previously notified?

~~YES~~/ NO

Fieldwork will continue?

~~YES/NO~~/ NOT KNOWN

5. PERIODS REPRESENTED.

Palaeolithic	Roman
Mesolithic	Saxon (pre-AD 1066)
Neolithic	Medieval (AD 1066 -1485)
Bronze Age ✓	Post-Medieval ✓
Iron Age	Unknown

6. PERIOD SUMMARIES. Use headings for each period (Roman; Medieval; etc.), and continue on additional sheets as necessary.

Bronze Age:
 Linear feature of uncertain purpose. Fill contained pottery and burnt flint.

Post-Medieval:
 Probable brick or rubbish pit of 19th. century date.

7. NATURAL. (state if not observed; please DO NOT LEAVE BLANK)

Type: GRAVEL

Height above Ordnance Datum: A.O.D. NOT KNOWN

8. LOCATION OF ARCHIVES.

a) Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes _____ Plans _____ Photos _____ Negatives _____

Slides _____ Correspondence _____ Manuscripts (unpub. reports etc.) _____

b) All/ some records have been/ will be deposited in the following museum/ records office etc. :

NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,
 31, STOCK STREET,
 PLAISTOW,
 LONDON E13 OBX.

c) Approximate year of transfer: 1996

d) Location of any copies:
 NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,

31, STOCK STREET,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON E13 OBX.

e) Has a security copy of the archive been made? ~~YES~~/ NO

If not, do you wish RCHME to consider microfilming? ~~YES~~/ NO

9. LOCATION OF FINDS.

a) In your possession? ~~ALL~~/~~SOME~~/ NONE

b) All/ some finds have been/ will be deposited with the following museum/ other body:

NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,
31, STOCK STREET,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON.
E13 OBX.

c) Approximate year of transfer: 1996

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beasley, M, 1996, "Watching Brief at Viking Way, Rainham. London Borough of Havering." Unpublished Report, Newham Museum Service.

SIGNED:



DATE: 09.07.1996

NAME (Block capitals) M. BEASLEY

Please return completed form to The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record,
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