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## **Southampton Archaeology Unit**

Report 1268

### **Archaeological Watching Brief on repairs to the Rollesbrook culvert in Wilton Avenue, Southampton SOU 1698**

Dr AD Russel BA PhD MCIfA  
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Client: Southampton City Council



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Front cover; excavation in progress looking north.

### Summary Sheet

Site name/address: Wilton Avenue. Southampton.
SOU site code: SOU 1698
Contractor site code: SOU 1698
HET consultation number 7885
Planning application number: N/A
Grid reference of centre of site: 441360 112840.
Fieldwork dates: 20/11/15 to 8/2/16
Type of fieldwork: Watching Brief
Name of contracting unit: Southampton Archaeology
Report author: Peter Girdwood, Andrew D Russel
SCC Accession Number 2016.6
Name of client: SCC
<p>Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit carried out a watching brief on sewer and culvert repairs in Wilton Avenue between 20 November 2015 and 8 February 2016. The work was commissioned by Southampton City Council. The conditions to observe deposits were not ideal; the site was wet and muddy and the sides of some trenches were hidden by close shuttering. The site was in the valley of the Rollesbrook and included the west end of Wilton Avenue and land to the south. The site centre was at 441360 112840. The 1846 Royal Engineers map shows a footpath from Hill Lane to Bedford Place crossing the Rollesbrook stream by bridge (or ford). The site of the bridge is now close to the garage at 115 Wilton Avenue. Groundworks exposed natural deposits, deposits of uncertain date, and 19th and 20th century deposits. The oldest deposit was clay with sandy lenses of the Wittering Formation. A layer of River Terrace Deposits clay and silt (known as brickearth) probably had slipped down the side of the valley. Redeposited Wittering Formation clay overlay the brickearth and contained a burnt flint and a fragment of West Country slate. Layers of clay soil contained early modern and modern concrete, bricks, pottery, and glass. No significant artefacts or features were observed but their presence may have been obscured by site conditions.</p>

## **Archaeological Watching Brief on repairs to the Rollesbrook culvert in Wilton Avenue, Southampton SOU 1698**

Site code	SOU 1698
Archaeology Unit report	1268
Ordnance Survey NGR	441360 112840
HET Reference	7885

### **1. Summary**

Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit carried out a watching brief on sewer and culvert repairs in Wilton Avenue between 20 November 2015 and 8 February 2016. The work was commissioned by Southampton City Council. The site was in the valley of the Rollesbrook and included the west end of Wilton Avenue and land to the south. The 1846 Royal Engineers map shows a footpath from Hill Lane to Bedford Place crossing the Rollesbrook stream by bridge (or ford). The site of the bridge is to the north of the area where the work took place. The 19<sup>th</sup> century course of the Rollesbrook was diverted into a culvert and the new culvert was dug to the west of the original line of the stream, being dug through the deposits on the valley side and into the natural beneath. The conditions to observe deposits were not ideal; the site was wet and muddy and close trench shuttering was used. The groundworks exposed natural deposits, deposits of uncertain date, and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century deposits. The oldest deposit was clay with sandy lenses of the Wittering Formation. A layer of River Terrace Deposits clay and silt (known as brickearth) probably had slipped down the side of the valley. Redeposited Wittering Formation clay overlay the brickearth and contained a burnt flint and a fragment of West Country slate. Layers of clay soil on the valley side contained early modern and modern concrete, bricks, pottery, and glass. No significant artefacts or features were observed but their presence may have been obscured by site conditions.

### **2. Introduction**

2.1. The sewer at the west end of Wilton Avenue collapsed in 2015. During investigation works it was discovered that the culvert for the Rollesbrook stream was also damaged. Southampton City Council arranged for repair works to the sewer and the culvert. The Historic Environment Team in the Planning Department requested an archaeological watching brief on the trenching.

2.2 The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. (CIfA 2015).

2.3 On completion of the work the archive will be stored by Southampton Museums under accession number 2016.6.

### 3. Site Location, description, and geology

3.1 The site lies in the valley of the Rollesbrook and included the west end of Wilton Avenue and land to the south (fig 1). The site centre was at 441360 112840.



**Figure 1. Location of the site, marked by a red star.**

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3.2 The natural topography of the area was shaped by the Rollesbrook and the land rises steeply to the east and west. The Rollesbrook flows to the south. Spot-heights on Wilton Avenue are 11.6m OD near the site, 16.2m OD to the west (at the junction with Milton Road), and 17.1m to the east (at the junction with Harborough Road).

3.3 The Rollesbrook is a stream that rises near Cutthorn Mound on the north boundary of the medieval borough of Southampton (Burgess 1982, 7-8). After crossing the Common in a north-westerly direction it ran south to the River Test, forming the boundary between the borough and the parish of Millbrook to the west.

3.4 In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the course of the Rollesbrook was culverted and No 98 Wilton Avenue was later built over the top of it. The new culvert that was subject to the watching brief was therefore dug to the west of the original line of the stream, being excavated through the deposits on the valley side and into the natural beneath.

3.5 The geology map (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>) shows that the deposits in the area of the site are River Terrace Deposits 3 (sand and gravel) above the Wittering Formation (sand, silt and clay). In the bottom of the valley the Rollesbrook has removed the River Terrace Deposits, exposing the Wittering formation.

### 4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1. The site lies in Area 7 (Bannister's Park) of the Local Areas of Archaeological Potential (LAAP) as defined in the City of Southampton Core Strategy 2010. Prehistoric and Roman occupation evidence has been found in several places and a



possible Roman cemetery was discovered in Sandhurst Road (200m south of the present site) in 1969 (SOU 386). Area 7 includes the medieval farm of Bannister's Park, the medieval village of Hill, and the Rollesbrook valley. Also in the area are remains of the medieval conduit from Conduit Head to Conduit House (in Commercial Road) and on to the medieval town of Southampton. Conduit Head is a Scheduled Monument and is situated on the west side of the valley about 275m south of the present site.

4.2 The area of the site was agricultural land until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1846 Royal Engineers map shows a footpath from Hill Lane to Bedford Place crossing the Rollesbrook stream by bridge (or ford) (fig 2). This footpath is on the line of what became the west end of Milton Road then continued east alongside a field boundary that survives as the footpath between and parallel with Milton Road and Wilton Avenue. The site of the bridge is now close to the garage at 115 Wilton Avenue. The footpath and bridge were still shown on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map. It is possible that the conduit from Conduit Head followed the contours and crossed the stream at the bridge but it is more likely that it followed a more direct route to Conduit House and crossed the stream much further south.



**Fig 2. Extract from the 1846 Royal Engineers Map overlaid with the approximate extent of the excavation observed.**

4.3 The 1896/7 Ordnance Survey map shows all of Milton Road laid out (with the west end named Bedford Road). To the south of the road was a north–south cutting excavated in 1881/2 for the never completed Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway.

4.4 The east end of Wilton Avenue and its houses were constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the west end was not developed until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The railway

cutting and the valley of the Rollesbrook were partly filled to allow the construction of the road and houses. The Dell football ground, to the north of Milton Road, was also constructed on the infilled valley. The Rollesbrook was diverted into a culvert that lay to the west of its original line (fig 3).

## **5. Aims of the Investigation**

5.1 The watching brief aimed to make a record of any archaeology disturbed by the works and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, and date of any archaeological remains encountered, as dictated by current best practice.

5.2 An additional aim was to identify and record the nature, dimensions, and relationship of natural deposits on the site.

## **6. Methodology**

6.1 The methodology followed that specified in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Southampton Archaeology 2015). The works consisted of the digging of trenches and manholes. The south part of the excavation consisted of the regrading of the stream bed. This was carried out before the watching brief began. After the watching brief started liaison with the team on site proved difficult and the archaeologists were told to turn up on days when no excavation was taking place, and were not told when excavation was taking place. The northernmost manhole was fully excavated before the archaeologists were told to attend. This resulted in four lengths of trench being observed to varying degrees over a period of four months (fig 3).

6.2 The area of excavation was very constrained and meant that the machine tracked across the area to be dug churning up the deposits to some depth before they were later excavated. The trench was dug to some 4m deep and this was carried out in short lengths, followed by the insertion of interlocking metal sheets, which meant the sections were not generally visible.

6.3 The observations were made by E. Anderson, A Russel, A. Fedorowicz and MF Garner between 20/11/2015 and 8/2/2016. The project was managed by Dr Andrew Russel BA PhD MCIfA.

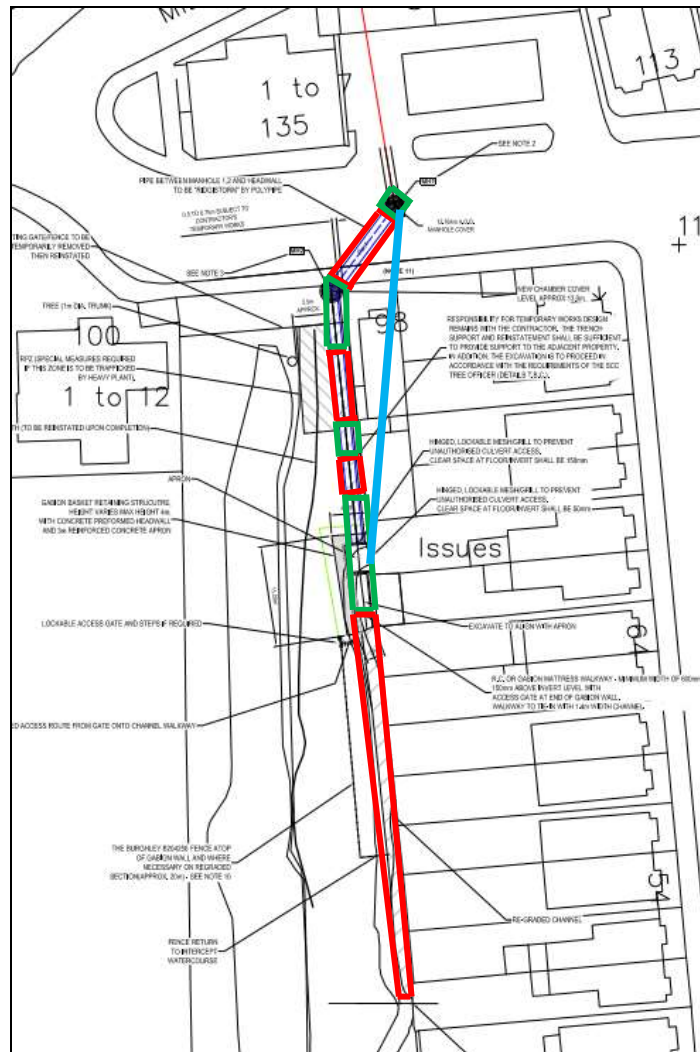
6.4 All contexts were recorded using the Southampton City Council Archaeological Recording System. The colours of deposits were recorded using the Munsell Soil Color Chart and these are used in this report (Munsell Color 2000). The contexts were numbered 1 to 7, no finds were retained.

## **7. Results of the watching brief**

A selection of photographs is included in Appendix 3.

### 7.1 Natural deposits

7.1.1 The natural, context 5, was the Wittering Formation. It lay between 2.1m and 2.7m below the ground level. It consisted of orange and grey mottled clay with sand lenses. It ranged from 10YR 6/6 to Gley 2 5BG 6/1. It was seen throughout the excavation (Plates 1 & 6). It was the only deposit observed in the manhole excavation in Wilton Avenue which was fully excavated to the natural before the archaeologists were informed (Plate 6).



**Figure 3. Plan of the works showing the trenches observed in green, dug to the west of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century culverted Rollesbrook, (approximate line marked in marked in light blue). Areas in red were not observed.**

7.1.2 Context 1 was a deposit of natural brickearth exposed in the valley side to the west of the stream (Plate 2). It may well have slipped down the side of the valley. It was exposed in the side of the access route made by the excavation team.

## 7.2 Post-medieval to early modern deposits

7.2.1 Context 2 was allocated to an exposure of redeposited Wittering Formation that lay above context 1 on the west side of the valley (Plate 2). It contained a burnt flint and a fragment of West County roof slate. It was probably post-medieval in date.

7.2.2 Context 4 was allocated to a deposit of dark grey (10YR3/1) sandy clay at the south end of the trench, overlying the natural 5. It was wet and odoriferous with fragments of wood and brick, and contained partially decayed twigs and branches. It continued north and was seen along the entire length of the excavation. It may relate to the tree cover seen on the 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. Context 7 was probably the same deposit of grey clay observed at the north end of the trench, just south of Wilton Avenue. It was between 3.5 and 4m below ground level and was below the water table. It contained numerous rotten roots. It may have been natural affected by tree roots, or redeposited natural (Plate 5).



### 7.3 Modern deposits

7.3.1 Overlying 4 was context 6, a deposit of sandy clay loam some 2m thick containing abundant brick fragments, glass bottles, china and concrete. Further north, and very similar, was context 3, a deposit of silty clay loam some 2m thick (Plate 3). It contained brick, concrete, fragments of wood, glass bottles (Plate 4), and roof slates and was also present throughout the excavation. Ordnance Survey maps suggest this deposit was dumped after 1908 and before 1931. The inclusion of a Coca-Cola contour bottle suggests after 1916, but more refuse may have been added in later years and churned in by the machine.

## **8. Conclusions**

8.1 The groundworks exposed natural deposits, deposits of post-medieval to early modern date, and late 19th and 20th century deposits.

8.2 The oldest deposit was clay with sandy lenses being part of the Wittering Formation, layer 5. Layer 7 may have been natural, but contained many tree roots so may have been re-deposited from higher up the valley side or contaminated by tree roots over the last few millennia.

8.3 The layer of natural brickearth, 1, probably had slipped down the side of the valley, at an unknown date. Redeposited Wittering Formation clay, 2, overlay the brickearth 1, and contained a burnt flint and a fragment of West Country slate, suggesting deposition in the post-medieval period.

8.4 The deposits of contexts 6 and 3 probably relate to the infilling of the railway cutting and the Rollesbrook valley in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and contained much late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century material including concrete, bricks, pottery, and glass bottles.

8.5 No significant artefacts or features were observed but their presence may have been obscured by site conditions.

## **9. Bibliography**

Burgess, LA, 1982 *The Streams and Watercourses of Southampton*.

Russel, A, 2015: *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief on Repairs to a collapsed Sewer in Wilton Avenue, Southampton*

**Appendix 1 Context list**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Colour</b>	<b>Texture</b>
1	Layer	Re-deposited brickearth	10YR 6/6	Silty clay loam
2	Layer	Re-deposited Wittering Formation	10YR 6/6	Silty clay
3	Layer	Mixed deposit with modern finds	10YR 4/3	Silty clay loam
4	Layer	Dark grey spoil with wood and brick fragments	10YR 3/1	Sandy clay
5	Layer	Wittering Formation	10YR 6/6	Clay with sand lenses
6	Layer	Re-deposited soil with brick, glass bottles, china, concrete	10YR 5/4	Sandy clay loam,
7	Layer	Grey clay with abundant roots	GLE Y1	Clay

**Appendix 2 Finds lists**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Finds</b>
2	Burnt flint and fragment of West Country slate
3	Glass bottles including Coca-Cola contour bottle and 'Aldridge Southampton' and brick fragments
4	Wood, brick fragments, branches and twigs
6	Bricks, glass bottles, china, concrete
7	Roots

No finds were retained.

### Appendix 3 Photographs



**Plate 1. Work in progress in November 2015 at the commencement of the watching brief. The southern part of the excavation has been completed and the sides lined with textile to prevent erosion. The natural Wittering Formation can be seen in the base and side of the excavation. The trench was not safe to enter.**



**Plate 2. Layers 1 and 2 exposed in the valley side to the west of the excavations.**





**Plate 3. Excavation of layer 3 in the central part of the trench.**





**Plate 4. Bottles from context 3.**



**Plate 5. Excavation of context 7.**





**Plate 6. Natural deposits in base of northern manhole.**