

RIVER PINN FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF SUMMARY REPORT

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 *The following report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology on 11th May 2006 at Hatch End playing fields, Uxbridge Road, Harrow, (NGR TQ 1351 9114), on behalf of High Ground Accord.*

The watching brief was carried out on the excavation of seven geotechnical test pits each measuring approximately 1.15m x 1.90m at the top. Trenches were excavated to the respective depths required by the geotechnical team. The test pits revealed that the ground had been built up in places by dumping to create a level playing field. No archaeological features were observed.

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 1351 9114 (Figure 1), adjacent to the Harrow Arts Centre and swimming baths. The land is currently used as a playing field. To the south the site is bounded by National Railways west coast main line and to the north by Uxbridge Road.
- 2.2 The proposed works on the site are for a flood alleviation scheme for the River Pinn.

Scope of Works

- 2.3 The Watching Brief was conducted upon seven geotechnical test pits excavated in pre-determined locations.
- 2.4 All the test pits were approximately the same size, with variations in depth as determined by the geotechnical engineer.

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The site lies upon London Clay tertiary geology with drift remnants of Stanmore gravels approximately 0.5 mile to the northeast and Woolwich and Reading Beds 0.5 mile to the southwest.
- 3.2 The site itself lies on flat ground at the bottom of the River Pinn valley and is subject to frequent flooding during times of peak flow.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Prior to commencing the work a unique code for the project **UBG06** was obtained.
- 4.2 All excavations were carried out under the constant supervision and observation of an experienced archaeologist.
- 4.3 Seven n⁰ trenches were excavated for geotechnical analysis and samples.
- 4.4 Excavation continued until the geotechnical engineer reached the required depth.
- 4.5 No trench went deeper than 2.50m from present ground surface.

- 4.6 As no archaeologically significant deposits were encountered, there was no excavation by hand other than for examination and recording.
- 4.7 The watching brief was undertaken by Ken Bazley under the overall project management of Ron Humphrey for AOC Archaeology.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 5.1 Trench 1 was located alongside the Uxbridge Road site boundary and was excavated to a depth of 2.00m.

0.00-0.30m (1/001) Turf and topsoil
0.30-0.68m (1/002) Stiff yellow grey clay. Modern inclusions
0.68-0.78m (1/003) Degraded blacktop
0.78-1.06m (1/004) Friable reddish brown sandy silt
1.06-2.00m (1/005) Bluish grey fluvial gravel
NFE

- 5.2 The earliest deposits were fluvial gravels (1/005). These were overlain by reddish brown silt (1/004) which yielded two small fragments pieces of post-medieval ceramic building material (CBM). This was overlain by a thin layer of degraded blacktop containing CBM fragments (1/003) which may represent a former car park or road surface. Overlying this was a thick dumped layer of stiff clay (1/002) which had been deposited to raise ground level. Sealing the trench was a layer of topsoil and turf (1/001).

Trench 2

- 5.3 Trench 2 was located to the northwest of the building housing the swimming baths. It was excavated to a depth of 1.70m.

0.00-0.30m (2/001) Turf and topsoil
0.30-0.45m (2/002) Yellowish brown subsoil
0.45-1.70m (2/003) Greyish yellow silty clay
1.70m NFE (2/004) Bluish grey fluvial gravel

- 5.4 Fluvial gravels (2/004) were overlain by greyish yellow silty clay (2/003), which was interpreted as natural brickearth. This was overlain by a yellowish mid brown naturally formed subsoil (2/002). Overlying this was a layer of topsoil and turf (2/001) which sealed the trench.

Trench 3

- 5.5 Trench 3 was located to the west of the building housing the swimming baths. It was excavated to a depth of 2.50m.

0.00-0.17m (3/001) Turf and topsoil
0.17-0.37m (3/002) Stiff yellow grey clay. Modern inclusions
0.37-0.94m (3/003) Greyish yellowish brown subsoil
0.94-2.14m (3/004) Greyish yellow silty clay
2.14-2.50m (3/005) Stiff whitish yellow clay
NFE

- 5.6 Stiff whitish yellow calcareous clay (3/005) was observed at the bottom of Trench 3 which was interpreted as weathered London Clay. Overlying this was natural brickearth (3/004) as observed in Trench 2. This was overlain by greyish yellowish brown naturally formed subsoil (3/003), which was in turn overlain by a dumped layer of stiff yellow clay (3/002). Overlying this was a layer of topsoil and turf (3/001) which sealed the trench.

Trench 4

- 5.7 Trench 4 was located to the southwest of the building housing the swimming baths. It was excavated to a depth of 1.80m.

0.00-0.30m (4/001) Turf and topsoil
0.30-0.90m (4/002) Greyish yellowish brown subsoil
0.90-1.20m (4/003) Plastic reddish brown sandy silt
1.20-1.80m (4/004) Dark brown sandy clay
NFE

- 5.8 The earliest deposit observed in Trench 4 was dark brown sandy clay (4/004) which was markedly different to any of the earliest deposits in the other trenches. It did not yield any finds, so was considered to be natural. Overlying this was reddish brown sandy silt (4/003) similar to the one seen in Trench 1. Again, this did not yield any archaeological evidence so was interpreted as being natural. Naturally formed subsoil (4/002) was present overlying the reddish brown sandy silt, and this in turn was overlain by topsoil and turf (4/001).

Trench 5

- 5.9 Trench 5 was located the furthest south of the swimming baths. It was excavated to a depth of 1.94m.

0.00-0.23m (5/001) Turf and topsoil

0.23-0.53m (5/002) Greyish yellowish brown clayey loam
0.53-0.94m (5/003) Dumped gravels
0.94-1.94m (5/004) Greyish yellow silty clay
NFE

- 5.10 Natural brickearth (5/004) was observed at the bottom of Trench 5 and was sealed by a layer of gravels (5/003) dumped to aid drainage. These were in a waterlogged condition at the time of excavation. The dumped gravels were subsequently overlain by a layer of re-deposited subsoil (5/002) which was a land-levelling dump. Trench 5 was sealed by a topsoil and turf layer (5/001).

Trench 6

- 5.11 Trench 6 was located in the playing field directly south of the Harrow Arts Centre. It was excavated to a depth of 2.00m.

0.00-0.40m (6/001) Turf and topsoil
0.40-0.60m (6/002) Stiff yellow grey clay. Modern inclusions
0.60-1.80m (6/003) Greyish yellow silty clay
1.80m NFE (6/004) Bluish grey fluvial gravels.

- 5.12 The earliest deposits observable in Trench 6 were fluvial gravels (6/004). These were overlain by natural brickearth (6/003) as observed in Trenches 2, 3 and 5. The brickearth was overlain by a dumped layer of stiff clay (6/002) which had been deposited to raise ground level. Sealing the trench was a layer of topsoil and turf (6/001).

Trench 7

- 5.11 Trench 7 was located in the playing field directly south of the Harrow Arts Centre. It was excavated to a depth of 1.40m.

0.00-0.33m (7/001) Turf and topsoil
0.33-0.53m (7/002) Stiff yellow grey clay. Modern inclusions
0.53-1.40m (7/003) Greyish yellow silty clay
1.40m NFE (7/004) Bluish grey fluvial gravels.

- 5.12 The stratigraphy in Trench 7 was identical to that of Trench 6. Fluvial gravels (7/004) were overlain by natural brickearth (7/003), which was in turn overlain by a dumped layer of stiff clay (7/002). Topsoil and turf (7/001) sealed the trench.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The geotechnical excavations revealed made ground dumps overlying natural brickearth in the areas surrounding Trenches 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7. It is presumed that these dumps were used to create a level surface on the playing field. At the southern end of the site in Trench 5, fluvial gravels had been re-deposited before ground-raising action, in order to aid drainage.
- 6.2 Trenches 2 and 4 were the only trenches where dumped deposits were not observed. A naturally formed soil profile was evident at these locations.
- 6.3 At the base of Trenches 1, 2, 6 and 7, bluish grey gravels of fluvial origin were observed. It is possible that they are part of either the Stanmore gravels or Woolwich and Reading Beds which are present close by, but equally possible they could represent the remains of Pleistocene palaeochannels cut into the tertiary geology.
- 6.4 Reddish brown sandy silt (1/004) in Trench 1 yielded two small fragments of post-medieval ceramic building material. These may have been pressed in from the above layer of degraded blacktop. A deposit similar to (1/004) was also observed in Trench 4 (4/003) but this did not yield any finds.
- 6.5 Natural brickearth was observed in all trenches, except Trenches 1 and Trench 4. In these trenches a mottled clayey gravel ((1/004) and (4/003)) was present at a similar depth. It is possible that this is an outlier of Woolwich and Reading Beds drift geology.
- 6.6 There was no obvious sign of major truncation of the natural soil profile in any of the trenches, although some landscaping work has taken place on the site in the recent past. Some local variations in the natural deposits were encountered.

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