Cowley Garage, Cowley, Uxbridge London Borough of Hillingdon: An Archaeological Investigation Report

National Grid Reference Number: TQ 05150 82223

AOC Project No: 33317

Site Code: IVR16 Date: August 2016





Cowley Garage, Cowley, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon: **An Archaeological Investigation Report**

On Behalf of: **VINCI Facilities**

> **Newton Mews Hewell Road** Redditch **B97 6AY**

National Grid Reference (NGR): TQ 05150 82223

AOC Project No: 33317

10th - 11th August 2016 Date of Fieldwork:

Prepared by: **Andy Tynan**

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Date: August 2016

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Summary

An Archaeological Investigation was carried out on the remains of a demolished World War II pillbox, located on the edge of Iver Road, Cowley, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon (National Grid Reference TQ 05150 82223).

The pillbox remains, subject of this investigation and report, had been uncovered during resurfacing works by Vinci for their client Canal and River Trust. The base of the concrete walling and some broken out floor slab were found to be extant. The interior of the structure appears to have been backfilled with the demolition rubble. No finds were recovered from within its footprint.

The investigation involved the cleaning and recording of the remains, background research and surveying. Hexagonal in plan and constructed in reinforced concrete, the structure has been identified as a Type 22 pillbox dating from World War II.

No further building recording is recommended. The results will be disseminated through the Archaeology Data Service website, with copies of the report being made available at the local studies library.

1 Introduction

1.1 This document presents the results of a programme of an archaeological investigation, carried out in order to record the uncovered structural elements identified as a potential Second World War pillbox (Figure 1). The site is currently used as a car park and bound to the north and east by a large industrial estate, to the south by Iver Road and the Malt Shovel Public House and to the west by the Grand Union Canal. The site is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 05150 82223 (Figure 2).

2 **Planning Background**

- 2.1 The remains of this World War II pillbox were uncovered during the removal of the tarmac road surface, currently used as a car park, which is being refurbished. Accordingly the archaeological advisor at Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS). Historic England and the Canal and River Trust's Senior Heritage Adviser (covering London waterways), were contacted and a proposal for an archaeological investigation was agreed. This report is the result of that investigation.
- 2.2 In order to move the refurbishment project forward, a Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by AOC (AOC 2016), which specified the methodology for the works. This was designed from an archaeological perspective, indicating the requirement for archaeological investigations and reporting (including documentary studies, measured recording and interpretation) of the collapsed and standing remains.
- 2.3 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Hillingdon. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Sandy Kidd, Archaeological Advisors for the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS).
- 2.4 The archaeological investigation was also carried out in accordance with current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines:
 - Department for Communities and Local Government National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2012).
 - Historic England Management of Archaeological Projects (HE 2015).
 - Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014).

3 **Geology and Topography**

3.1 The British Geological Survey (2016) indicates that the site is located in an area of solid geology within the vicinity of the site, consisting of London Clay deposits of clay silts and sands, overlain by either alluvium, formed of clay, silt, sand and gravel indicative of a local environment previously dominated by rivers, or Langley Silt formed of clay and silt.

4 **Historical Background**

The following information is drawn from the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC, 2016).

The Prehistoric Periods (Palaeolithic c. 500,000 – 10000 BC; Mesolithic c. 10000 to 4000 BC; Neolithic c. 4000-2200 BC; Bronze Age c. 2200-700 BC and Iron Age c. 700 BC - AD 43)

4.1 The site at Iver Lane lies within the London Borough of Hillingdon's Colne Valley Archaeological Priority Zone, which identifies the high archaeological potential for prehistoric remains along the valley. Numerous sites of hunter-gatherer (Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic) activity have been recorded along the valley in Surrey, Buckinghamshire and Hillingdon. Many of these sites are well

- preserved beneath later peat and alluvium and some are considered of national importance. Significant palaeoenvironmental evidence and later prehistoric remains are also known.
- 4.2 Archaeological evidence suggests that early settlement was largely confined to the well-drained lighter soils and concentrated at Hillingdon and around Colham and Yiewsley in the extreme southwest of the parish (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971). The Hillingdon area is thought to have been attractive for early occupation given its 'commanding position' on an area of glacial gravels at about 190 ft above sea level (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971).
- 4.3 There is little evidence for early prehistoric settlement in close proximity to the site, although there is some evidence for later prehistoric activity. Excavation at the former Auto Diesels Site (ELO3035) in Cowley Business Park to the north of the development site, recorded three ditches / gullies (MLO64509) and minor concentrations of flint artefacts (MLO64510), thought to be of Neolithic or early Bronze Age date.
- 4.4 Excavations at 'Try's site' (MLO13969; ELO4750), to the north of the site, revealed ditches containing struck flint thought to represent a linear field boundary or trackway of Late Bronze Age date.
- 4.5 Outside the study area, significant in situ evidence of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic occupation has been recorded at Three Ways Wharf in the Colne Valley archaeological priority area, some 3km to the north of the site. Early Bronze Age to Early Iron Age activity (MLO76951) was located at Vine Street Station, c. 2.2km to the north-east of the site, during investigation by AOC Archaeology in 2000. One of the earliest features was an early Bronze Age cremation, which truncated an earlier gully. Several features were dated to the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age period; the most securely dated of these features was a ditch, thought to be a major boundary feature. Pottery from this period was also present in pits and a possible posthole. Additional undated features were also recorded, including two gullies postulated to be evidence for a roundhouse. A buried soil deposit, possibly a plough soil (MLO76952), sealed these prehistoric features. The formation of this deposit may have begun around 2000 years ago during the Iron Age (although later periods are also represented) (AOC Archaeology 2014).

The Roman Period (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 4.6 There is no evidence of Roman activity recorded surrounding Iver Lane.
- 4.7 Beyond the study area, there may have been a Roman settlement (MLO4532) in the vicinity of St Lawrence Church in the Cowley Archaeological Priority Area, c. 1km to the south-east of the site, although there is very limited evidence beyond some Roman material recorded in 1959.

The Early Medieval (Saxon) Period (AD 410-1066)

- 4.8 The name Uxbridge (MLO72253), means 'land of the tribe called the Wixan' (Mills 1991), indicating a Saxon origin. Although not mentioned by name in the Domesday survey of 1086, Uxbridge is thought to have been in existence by this time as it was already an important settlement when first mentioned in a charter of 1107. The Domesday Book records only two villeins and a cottar in Cowley manor, indicating it was a very small hamlet at this time (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971).
- 4.9 No evidence of early medieval activity is known within proximity to the Iver Lane site.

The Medieval Period (AD 1066-1500)

From medieval times Hillingdon, Uxbridge, and Cowley were for many purposes so closely related 4.10 that it is almost impossible to consider them apart (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971). The site itself

- appears to fall within an undeveloped area (shown on later 17th century mapping as moorland) outside these settlements.
- 4.11 As noted above, Uxbridge was first mentioned in a charter of 1107; another charter was granted during the 1180s when a market was awarded and a new town was set out, probably on open fields. It was surrounded by the borough ditch. By 1242, there was a manor of Uxbridge. By the end of the 14th century, Uxbridge had become the major settlement in the parish. The size and importance of the settlement grew until by 1600, Uxbridge was the principal corn market for West Middlesex and much of South Buckinghamshire (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971).
- 4.12 There are two entries of medieval date within proximity to the Iver Lane site. The first relates to the Crown Public House (MLO85054), a Grade II Listed Building of 16th century origin whilst archaeological evidence of medieval activity includes residual medieval pottery (MLO98197) in unstratified deposits at Brunel University (Isambard Close), to the east of the site.
- 4.13 St Lawrence Church (MLO85217), c. 1km to the south-east of the site, has medieval origins, with the main body of the church dating to the 12th century. The medieval village of Cowley (MLO68615) was centred around the church, although it has been suggested that it may not have been of any great size. The medieval manor house (MLO68654) at Cowley is also thought to have been near the church, although an alternative location at Manor Farm has also been suggested. Documentary sources refer to the 'hall of the manor' in 1357 but it was probably demolished in the later 14th century when the lords of the manor lived at Cowley Hall (AOC Archaeology 2014).
- 4.14 It is thought that a mill (MLO68651) on the Frays stream existed during the medieval period on Cowley Mill Lane, later named as Rabbs or Robbs Mill (later still Cowley Mill), mentioned by name in documentary sources from 1636 (Baker, Cockburn and Pugh 1971).

The Post-Medieval (AD 1500-1900) and Modern Period (post 1900)

- 4.15 Evidence from the post-medieval period and cartographic sources make this the best represented of all periods for this area and much of the evidence of for this period relates to built heritage. Many buildings survive from the post-medieval period including Listed Buildings.
- 4.16 There are 12 Grade II Listed Buildings within the south Uxbridge and Cowley area, most of which date to the post-medieval and modern periods, comprising:
- 4.17 Many of these Listed Buildings are grouped in a linear formation along Cowley Road / High Street, including:
 - A late 17th / early 18th century range, comprising a former stable and coachhouse building (DLO20042);
 - Old Vine Cottage (MLO85056), a late 16th century cottage with later additions;
 - Poplar Cottage (**MLO85266**), an 18th century house with 19th century alterations;
 - The Beeches (MLO85055), an 18th century house, and contemporary wall to the north of front garden of Beeches (MLO85142);
 - The Crown Public House (**MLO85054**), which, as previously mentioned, originated during the 16th century but also has 19th century additions; and;
 - The Old House (**MLO85141**), an 18th century house.
- 4.18 Cowley House (MLO85012; DLO19995), is another example of an 18th century Grade II Listed mansion that stands on the High Street. It is thought to be the Manor House recorded as a 'newly

built mansion house' in documentary sources of 1738 (Reynolds 1962). This house was originally set in an area of parkland (MLO104479) now partially covered by the recreation ground to the south of the Iver Lane site. The Grand Union Canal was built between 1791-1805 and divides the park from Cowley Lake to the south. The park has access to the canal towpath, which leads north to Cowley Lock (MLO73050), a 19th century Lock on the Grand Canal, c. 570m to the south of the site.

- 4.19 Four Grade II Listed Buildings are clustered around Cowley Lock and Iver Lane, including the Shovel Inn opposite the site (MLO85008), the Toll House (MLO85283); the bridge over the Grand Union Canal adjacent to the Shovel Inn (MLO85007); and a house at nos. 73-75 Iver Lane (MLO85156). These date to the early-mid 19th century. The closest of these to the proposed development site is the bridge, located some 420m to the south of the site.
- 4.20 The Cowley Grove Hotel (MLO7287) comprises an early-mid 18th century house but incorporates late 16th / early 17th century fabric, c. 615m to the northeast of the site. This building is not listed.
- 4.21 Archaeological remains of post-medieval activity within the 500m study radius are not as well represented as built heritage. Evaluation at Isambard Close (Brunel University) by AOC Archaeology, recorded an early post-medieval ditch (MLO98197), thought to be a boundary or drainage ditch and was dated by pottery to the early post medieval period.
- 4.22 The GLHER records a pillbox to the west of the site. This comprises the site of a Pillbox (MLO105818) recorded as part of the Defence of Britain project in Iver Lane, c. 100m to the west of the site at Cowley Garage. However, this is an estimated location and thus may be the possible one located within the site boundary.

5 Strategy

Aims of the Investigation

- The aims of the Investigation were defined as being: 5.1
 - To establish the presence/absence of further archaeological remains within the site.
 - To clean and excavate the remains of the possible pillbox.
 - To record and survey the location of the possible pillbox.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
 - To enable the archaeological advisor to the London Borough of Hillingdon to make an informed decision on the requirement of further work.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.
- 5.2 The final aim was to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

Investigation Methodology

- 5.3 The archaeological investigation was undertaken to excavate, clean and record the structure on site and identify its potential as a pillbox. The extent of the investigations were limited to the structural remains and its immediate area only.
- 5.4 The team was composed of a Project Supervisor and assistant archaeologist who completed the hand cleaning of the structure and excavated two small test pits to investigate the extent of the remaining structure. All spoil was checked for any artefacts associated with the structure. A record

- was made of the structure, including a written record, photographic record and drawn record. The location of the structure was plotted using a Trimble GPS. Spot heights were also taken.
- The recording work was carried out on 10th and 11th August 2016 and was supervised by Andy 5.5 Tynan under the management of Catherine Edwards, Project Manager and Phil Emery, Senior Heritage Adviser at the Canal and River Trust.

6 Results

6.1 The excavation indicated that the pillbox was hexagonal in plan and was constructed of reinforced concrete, with 6mm rebar through the structure (Plate A). The rebar located within in the walls does not appear to have any spatial pattern or areas of concentration, whereas the rebar observed in the concrete lying horizontal within the debris of the structure were quite evenly spread in a crossed pattern, east-west and north-south (Plate B). The concrete walling was formed using wooden plank shuttering, imprints of up to four courses of planking being visible on the interior face between 31.02mOD and 31.59mOD. The planks were between 0.16m and 0.18m wide. There were no signs of battening associated with this wooden shuttering (Plate C).



Plate A: Pillbox remains, looking southeast



Plate B: Rebar visible in base, looking southwest



Plate C: Wooden shuttering marks, looking west

6.2 As mentioned above, the structure was hexagonal in plan, measuring 4.40m east-west and 3.30m north-south. The well preserved sides of the structure measured roughly 2.30m to 2.40m long and between 0.30m and 0.40m thick. The northern end of the excavation was limited due to the presence of new kerbing, although it is likely that the walls would have been uniform in length. The eastern wall, which measured only 0.80m in plan, also contained the remains of a concrete ramp. The investigation revealed this to be a poured concrete (Plate D). It is unclear whether this indicates an opening to the pillbox or that the concrete is a later addition, perhaps to aid backfilling.



Plate D: Concrete ramp, looking northwest

- 6.3 The internal walls were exposed concrete with no covering or paint visible. The external walls were covered with a smooth light grey cementitious render, with no pattern, texturing or paint visible. The render was 7mm thick and finished at 30.80mOD, 0.12m above the level of the foundations.
- 6.4 A small test pit was excavated on the exterior of the structure to examine both the depth of the structure and any potential surface or cut. The base of the pillbox was not reached. At a depth of 30.92mOD, 0.88m below current ground level, a rough concrete deposit was encountered. This has

been interpreted at the foundations of the pillbox. A construction cut for the pillbox was seen in section in the test pit (Figure 3, Plate E).



Plate E: Construction cut, looking north

6.5 A second test pit was excavated to locate the corner of the truncated wall remains to the north, beyond the line of the new kerbing that had already been laid. At an upper height of 31.18mOD, a small section of possible wall with rebar was uncovered. It remains unclear whether this was the corner of the building or part of another section. (Plate F).



Plate F: Test pit to north, looking south

6.6 The interior of the pillbox was completely filled by densely packed crushed concrete, the likely remains of the walls, roof and possibly the floor. No formal floor surface was uncovered due to the

- level of debris. The concrete with the patterned rebar noted in section 6.1, maybe the remains of the ceiling, which had been brought down into the building or perhaps a broken section of the floor.
- 6.7 This type of pillbox would have had a central reinforced concrete blast screen, which would have been Y-shaped in plan. No evidence of this blast screen was present. Likewise due to the level of the truncation no loopholes or the associated shelves and supports remained.
- 6.8 The ground surrounding the pillbox had been reduced by approximately 0.50m to the east and 0.45m to the west. This ground was made up of a mid brown sandy silt with brick rubble and concrete building waste, industrial waste such as metal objects, resembling a door bolt, a vent fascia and a heavy O ring/gasket. There were also a few fragments of post-medieval, blue printed transfer ware pottery.

7 Discussion

- 7.1 Some of the following information is drawn from the Pillbox Study Group website (PSG 2016).
- 7.2 Research indicates that the structure recorded on site is a Type 22 pillbox, as designated by the Directorate of Fortifications and Works. The visible remains appear to form a hexagon in plan, which has east-west symmetry. The entrance was not visible, but there was a concrete ramp on the eastern side of this structure, possibly representing a doorway. This ramp was facing the downward slope of Iver Lane. Due to the truncation of the remains, none of the structure remained above ground level.
- 7.1 The concrete structures commonly referred to as pillboxes are more properly defined as 'British hardened field defences of World War II'. Over 18,000 of these small fortified structures were constructed in 1940 across the British Isles as part of British anti-invasion preparations to resist Hitler's proposed 'Operation Sealion' (PSG 2016).
- 7.2 During May 1940, the branch of the Directorate of Fortifications and Works at the War Office was set up. Its purpose was to provide specifications for pillbox designs that would be constructed throughout the country. This was carried out under the directorship of Major-General GBO Taylor. Seven basic designs of pillbox were issued during June and July of 1940. There would be localised changes, but most pillboxes fall into one of these designs. Most designs included some of the following:
 - Protection from bullets/ splinters
 - Blast walls to protect entrances
 - A polygonal shape with flat walls
 - No living accommodation
- 7.3 The use of seven common designs with standardised doors, loopholes and flat sides made mass production easy: pillboxes would be formed of concrete with wooden shuttering, although bricks were common.
- 7.4 The seven types of pillbox were identified as Types 22 to 28. A Type 22, as identified at this site, has typically six faces 2.40m in length with 0.30m-0.60m thick walls and an internal space measuring 3.00m. A 'Y' shaped blast screen would also be present in the structure (PSG 2016).
- 7.5 The Outer London Defence Ring was a defensive ring built around London to defend against attack in the early stages of World War II. This ring was made up of natural defence where possible, rivers and ditches, but artificial ditches were also built and large concrete blocks used as obstructions. Pillboxes made up part of this defence system (Figure 4). The Cowley pillbox does not appear to have been previously recorded, however one mile south along the canal, on Rockingham Road is another pillbox, abutting the Dolphin Bridge, with the embrasures facing down the canal. The bridge

was built in 1930 and the pillbox added after 1940 (Pearce, 2013). No research appears to have been done on this pillbox and its type and date have not been recorded (Plate G).



Plate G: Pillbox on Dolphin Bridge (Cousins, 2015)

- 7.6 There are six other recorded pillboxes (Figure 4) listed on the Defence of Britain website, within 4.5 miles of the Cowley remains, all of which were constructed from the same reinforced concrete, but none of which appear to be still standing. The closest is located just 150m west, across the Cowley bridge at the Cowely Bridge Works (\$0014148), another was recorded in the front garden of 28 Benbow Waye, Cowley (\$0014198), 500m south of the site. The current condition of these pillboxes is listed as unknown.
- 7.7 Four further pillboxes, listed as removed, are recorded on the same website. These are located on the eastern bank of the Grand Union Canal between Uxbridge and Harefield. The first (S0011794), was 3 miles north of the site, the second (S0011795) 4 miles north of the site and the third (S0011793) 4.4 miles north of the site. The fourth pillbox (S0011796), is recorded as being at Denham Deep Lock, 4.5 miles north of the site.
- 7.8 The Cowley pillbox is a slightly smaller than usual Type 22, its walls being between 2.30m and 2.40m. Its official designation is FW3/22, which has a hexagonal ground plan with six faces (Plate B).

8 **Conclusions**

- 8.1 The pillbox is a heavily truncated example of a mass-produced defensive structure, which was considered essential to the defence of Britain in the event of invasion in the 1940s. It is slightly smaller than the regulation Type 22 but still has the characteristic hexagon shape. No fixtures survive reflecting the extent of demolition.
- 8.2 There are six other pillboxes recorded on the Defence of Britain website within 4.5 miles of this pillbox, all of which are located on the eastern side of the Grand Union Canal, all built of the same reinforced concrete material, but not recorded further. This indicates that the Cowley pillbox is part of the much wider scheme of defensive structures across the landscape.
- 8.3 It is understood that the Canal and River Trust seeks to preserve the pillbox remains by laying a separation membrane and the sub-base for the new surface over the in situ concrete.

9 Archive Deposition and Publication

- 9.1 Due to the nature of the results at this stage of the archaeological investigation, publication is expected to be limited to a summary in the local round-up and publication via the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) and completion of the OASIS form (Appendix A).
- 9.2 On completion of the project, the archive, consisting of paper records, drawings, digital photographs, will be deposited with the LAARC
- 9.3 The archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990) and (Brown & AAF 2007).

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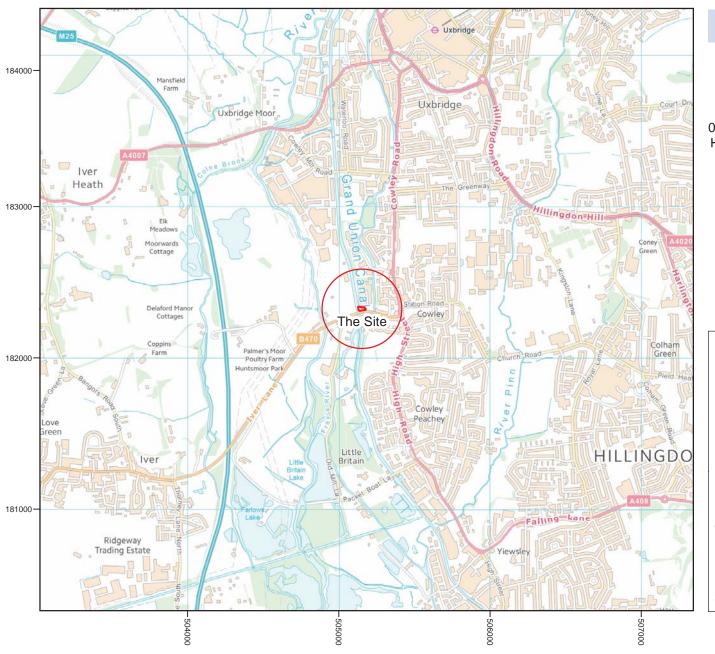
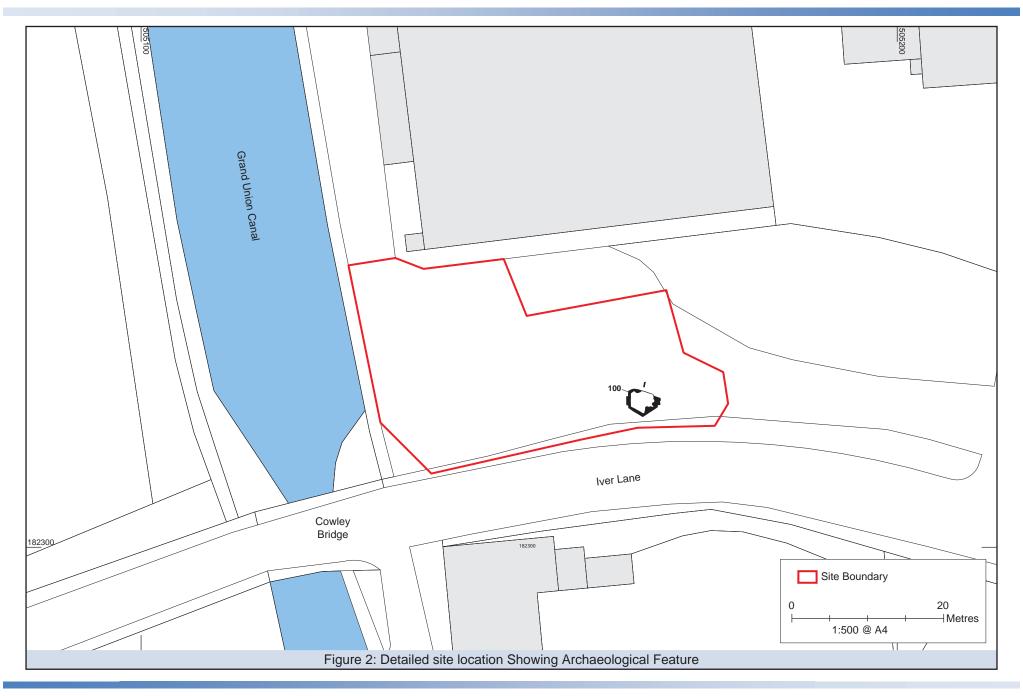


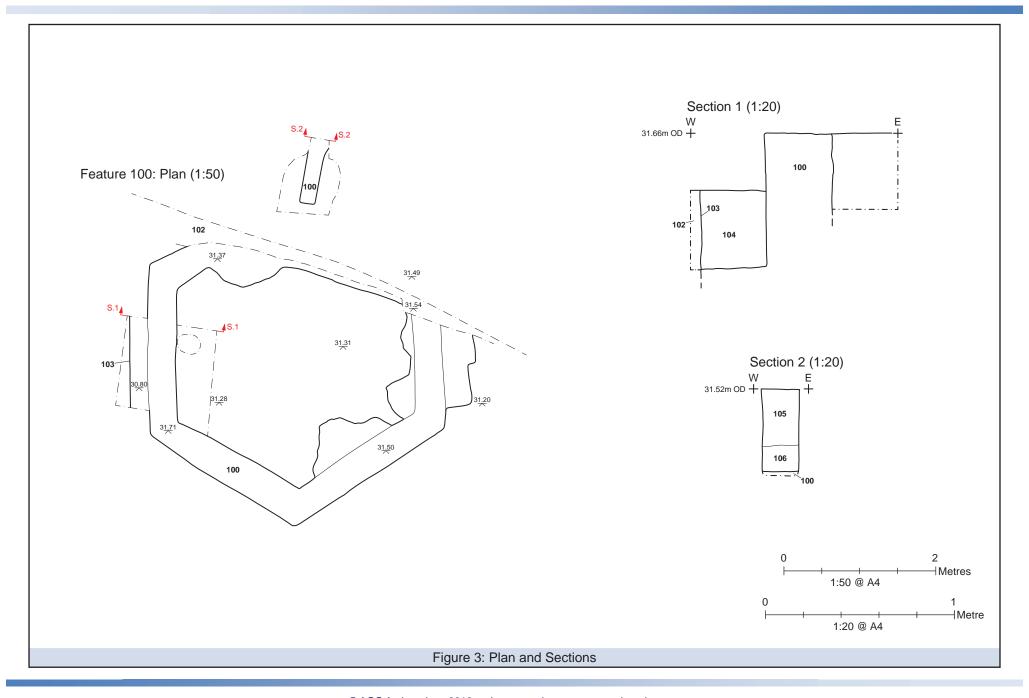
Figure 1: Site Location

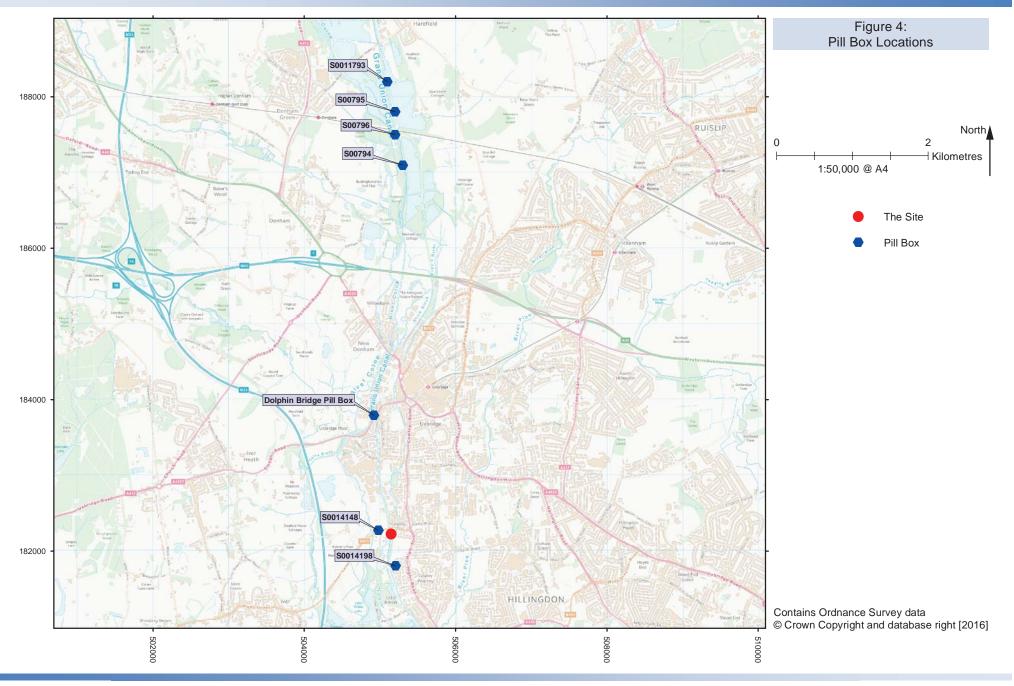


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Appendices

Appendix A – OASIS Form

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-259582

Project details

Project name Cowley Garage, Cowley

the project

Short description of An Archaeological Investigation was carried out on the remains of a World War II pillbox on Iver Road in, Cowley, Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon (National Grid Reference TQ 05150 82223). The pillbox, subject of this investigation and report, has been demolished, with only minimal walls remaining and some of the broken out floor slab. It appears to have been backfilled with the demolition rubble. No finds were recovered from within the footprint of this structure. The investigation on site involved the cleaning and recording of the remains, background research, and the geographical recording of the exact location of these remains. The evidence suggests that this hexagonal building was a Type 22 pillbox dating from the

Second World War, of reinforced concrete construction.

Project dates Start: 30-06-2016 End: 30-08-2016

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated 33317 - Contracting Unit No.

project reference

codes

Any associated IVR16 - Contracting Unit No.

project reference

codes

Type of project Recording project

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Other 12 - Verge Investigation type "Full excavation"

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON HILLINGDON UXBRIDGE Cowley Garage, Cowley

Postcode UB8 2JE

TQ 5158 82220 51.528611111111 -0.48388888889 51 31 43 N 000 29 02 W Point Site coordinates

Project creators

Name of AOC Archaeology

Organisation

Project brief AOC Archaeology

originator

Project design AOC Archaeology

originator

Project Catherine Edwards

director/manager

of developer

sponsor/funding body

of Vinci Facilities Name

sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive LAARC

recipient

Digital Archive LAARC

recipient

Digital Media "GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"

available

Paper Archive LAARC

recipient

Media "Context Paper sheet","Drawing","Notebook Excavation',' Research',' General

available Notes","Plan","Report","Section","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

Project

bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

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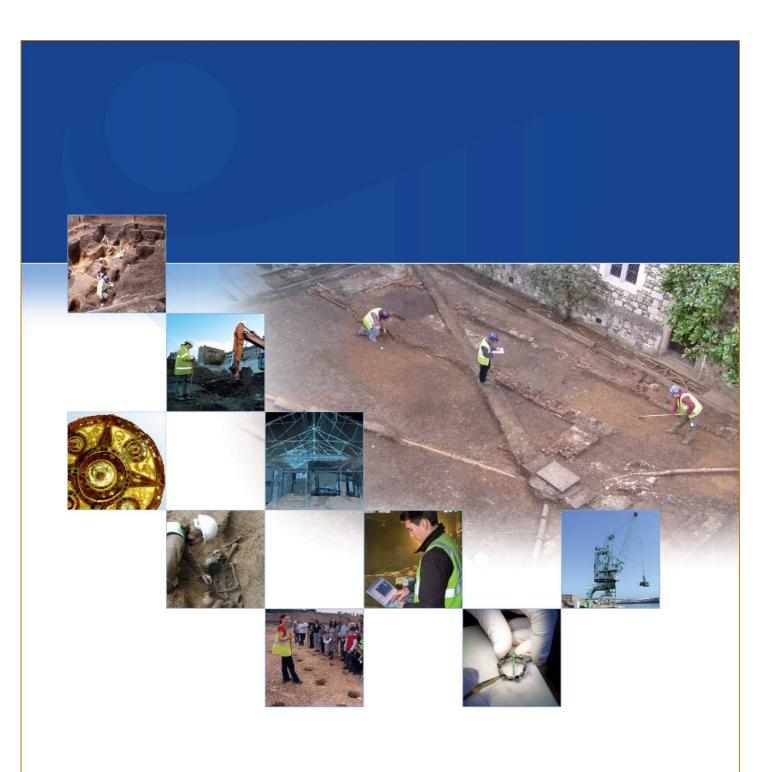
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