

OLHS12



OX LANE, HARPENDEN

Archaeological Evaluation

for Jarvis Contracting Ltd

5/11/0660

May 2013

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HA Job no.: OLHS12

NGR: TL 14086 15519

Parish: Harpenden

Local authority: St Albans

OASIS ref.: headland4-147750

Archive will be deposited with St Albans Museum

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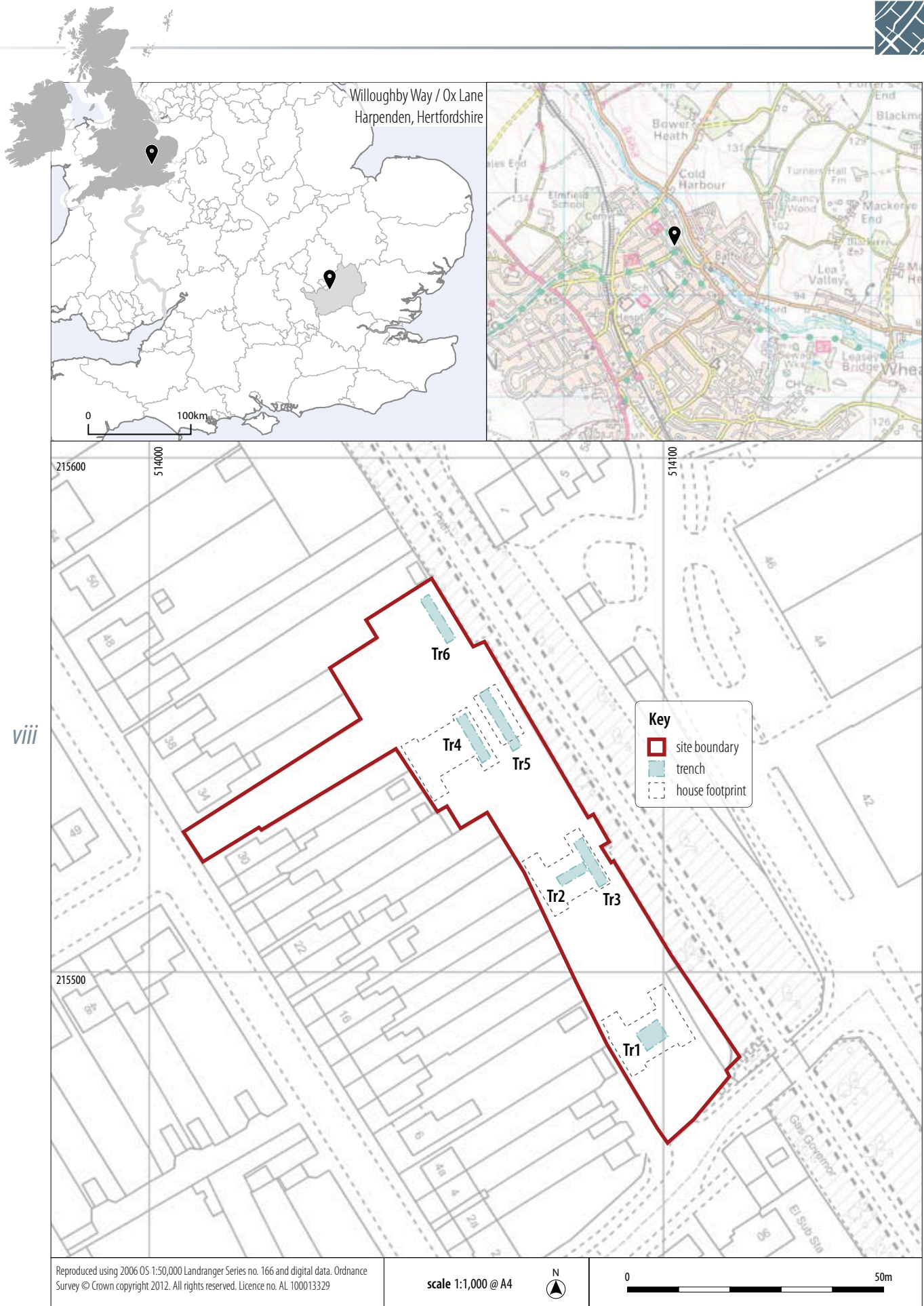


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Illus 1

Site location

OX LANE, HARPENDEN

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted an evaluation at a site off Ox Lane, Harpenden, in order to provide further information on its archaeological potential. The work was commissioned by Jarvis Contracting Ltd. A total of six trenches were opened. No significant sub-surface archaeological remains were revealed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Jarvis Contracting (the client) to undertake a programme of archaeological works ahead of residential development at a site off Ox Lane, Harpenden.

Outline planning permission (for the erection of eight dwellings comprising six semi-detached and two detached properties) was granted by St Albans City and District Council (5/11/0660). The St Albans Archaeological Officer (AO) advised that the development site lay within a landscape that has produced archaeological activity dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods. A condition was attached to the planning consent requiring an implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation.

In order to fulfil the condition a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2012); setting out the proposed strategy for archaeological mitigation which comprised a trial trenching investigation.

The fieldwork took place on 8th to 10th April 2013 and this report details the results.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed development site (DS) forms part of the Lea Industrial Estate (now demolished) and is situated to the north of Ox Lane, to the east of properties fronting Willoughby Road and to the west of Coldharbour Lane. The DS is centred on NGR TL 14086 15519 and lies at an elevation of around 88m AOD.

The site is underlain by the Lewes nodular and Seaford chalk formation dating to the Cretaceous period. The overlying superficial geology comprises clay-with-flints formation consisting of clay, silt, sand and gravel dating to the Quaternary period (British Geological Survey Website).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A late Iron Age chieftain burial (HER 123) was revealed during the construction of the Harpenden East Railway station approximately 640m to the south of the DS. The Pickford Roman barrow (HER 667) lies approximately 70m to the north and produced a cremation burial of Roman date.

The DS is situated on the first terrace of the River Lea, which is considered to be a focus for prehistoric development in the wider surrounding area. The Middle Thames Northern Tributaries project (MTNT) is currently examining the Holocene development of the river valleys and the associated alluvial sequences. Derelict watercress beds and a damp meadow are recorded to the east of the DS at Batford Spring. Probable peat deposits of unknown date were noted. Further to the southeast of the DS a Mesolithic to Roman site was revealed during the construction of Aldwickbury Golf Club (HER 10491, 10538, 10493) and the floodplain produced evidence for peat deposits.

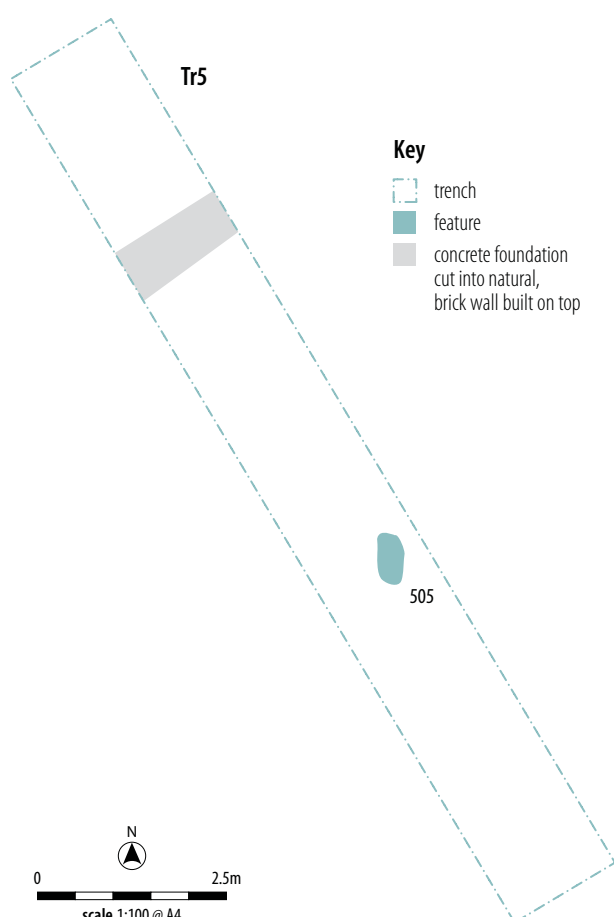
The AO highlighted the potential for significant peat deposits or occupied gravel islands within the DS. The DS lies within an area which has produced prehistoric and Roman archaeological remains and is considered to have the potential to contain sub-surface heritage assets.

4. OBJECTIVES

In general, the purpose of the investigation was to identify and assess the particular significance of any as yet unknown buried archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains that may be affected by the development, and to inform any further mitigation strategy as appropriate. Also, to analyse any evidence retrieved in light of objectives contained within the frameworks of local and regional research. In this case they are provided by Medlycott (2011), Glazebrook (1997), Brown & Glazebrook (2000) and English Heritage (1991 & 1997).



◀ **Illus 2**
Plan of Trench 5



Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded in full.

5.2 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All trenches were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded. A full photographic record including colour slide, black and white print and digital photographs was taken. A metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs

5.3 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland4-147750).

The complete project archive will be deposited with St Albans Museum within 12 months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum.

6. RESULTS

The soil profile varied across the DS. In the NW of the site, concrete and levelling material was placed directly on top of the natural geology (of yellow orange clay with frequent flint stone inclusions). From the NW towards the SE, the stratigraphy below the concrete became deeper with levelling materials and modern made ground to depths of up to 1m.

In Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5, a mid brown clay gravel was present above the natural geology and below the modern made ground. This may be a compacted, buried topsoil. The lack of any deposits below the concrete in Trenches 4 and 6 suggest the ground had been stripped of overburden prior to the construction of the workshops which the DS previously housed.

Red brick walls and concrete foundations were recorded in Trenches 1, 4 and 5 and were known to be the foundation walls of the recently demolished workshops.

A small feature [505] was investigated in Trench 5. It measured 0.54m x 0.50m by 0.13m and was fairly irregular in shape and profile. It was filled by a mixed brown and light blue clay deposit which produced no dating evidence. The function of this feature remains unknown.

No archaeological deposits or features were revealed in any of the six trenches.

2 Specifically, the aims of the investigation included:

- establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the DS;
- establishing the presence/absence of any peat deposits, date, nature and extent of any such deposits;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions; and
- identifying any constraints during the evaluation and any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Trenching

Six trenches were excavated across the DS; all varying in size and length. Trenches were laid out in order to sample areas within the various building footprints across the site. Full trench descriptions, including orientation, length and soil profile, can be found in Appendix 1.

A JCB equipped with a breaker and then a flat-bladed bucket was used to remove concrete and subsequent modern make-up deposits under direct archaeological control. Excavation continued until clean geological sediments or significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

7. CONCLUSION

The DS is situated around 1km north-east of the historic core of Harpenden. The 1879-1881 Pre-WWII 1:2,500 map of Hertfordshire shows the DS and the surrounding area as a landscape of open field systems and it is likely that this was always the case until the modern expansion of the town.

In the SE and along the eastern edge of the DS, the presence of a mid brown clay gravel deposit is likely representative of buried topsoil directly above the natural geology of clays and gravels. The lack of this deposit in Trenches 4 and 6, and towards the western end of Trench 2, demonstrates that these areas of the DS had undergone landscaping (stripping of topsoil) in the past; presumably during the change of use from arable land to the industrial estate. The shallowing of modern make up deposits in the trenches from NE to SW suggests that the landscape was sloping upwards in this direction prior to development of the land and there was a need for a larger amount of made ground on the eastern side to level the site.

The paucity of remains indicates a genuine reflection of the archaeological potential in a portion of the DS where any archaeological remains would have been protected by the presence of the buried topsoil; however, the previous development of the site has impacted upon other areas, particularly the NW of the DS, where the natural geologies had been previously exposed during development; having an impact on any archaeological remains that may have been present in these areas.

Assessment of the impact of development on the significance of heritage assets

The change of use in the DA is from recreational grounds into housing. These changes will involve destructive groundworks, however, as no significant archaeological features were uncovered, the impact of these groundworks on heritage assets is considered to be nil.





8. REFERENCES

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English Heritage 1997 *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda*. English Heritage.

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Medlycott, M 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24.

8.2 Internet sources

British Geological Survey Website <<http://www.bgs.ac.uk>> – accessed 11.04.13

Old Maps Website < <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/index.html>> – accessed 12.04.13

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Appendix 1.1 Trench register

Trench	Orientation	Description	Dimensions (m)
1	NW - SE	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying mixed made ground of black ash, yellow sand, red brick and concrete debris (0.40m). This overlay mid brown black clay ash deposit (0.20m) and a mid brown clay gravel with a thin white chalk lense in the middle (0.25m). These deposits overlay the natural geology of yellow orange clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion. All deposits below the made ground shallowed from NE to SW.	4 x 5 x 1
2	NE - SW	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying yellow sand levelling material (0.05m) overlying mixed made ground of black and white ash clay with red brick debris (0.30 - 0.55m). These deposits overlay mid brown clay with gravel overlying the natural geology of yellow brown clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion.	1.6 x 6 x 1
3	NW - SE	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying a ceramic drain (0.10m) which overlay mid brown grey friable clay make up with brick rubble and concrete pads. Below the made ground was black ash sand clay which overlay mid brown clay with gravel (0.15m) which overlay the natural geology of yellow brown clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion.	1.6 x 10 x 1.05
4	NW - SE	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying yellow sand levelling material (0.10m) overlying the natural geology of yellow orange clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion. A concrete block and red brick walls were cut into the natural geology and are associated with the work shops that were recently demolished.	1.6 x 10 x 0.35
5	NW - SE	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying yellow sand levelling material between concrete pads (0.15m). These overlay mid brown clay with frequent gravel inclusion (0.15 - 0.25m) which overlay natural geology of yellow brown clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion.	1.6 x 13 x 0.45
6	NW - SE	Concrete surface (0.15m) overlying levelling material of yellow sand (0.10m) overlying the natural geology of orange clay with frequent flint gravel inclusion.	1.6 x 10 x 0.25

Appendix 1.2 Context register

Context	Area	Description
101	T1	Concrete surface
102	T1	Mixed made ground deposit

Context	Area	Description
103	T1	Mid brown/ black clay ash deposit
104	T1	Mid brown clay gravel deposit
105	T1	Natural yellow orange clay gravel
106	T1	Red brick wall
201	T2	Concrete surface
202	T2	Yellow sand levelling
203	T2	Mixed made ground
204	T2	Mid brown clay gravel
205	T2	Natural yellow brown clay gravel
301	T3	Concrete surface
302	T3	Ceramic drain
303	T3	Mid brown clay make up
304	T3	Black ash sand clay
305	T3	Mid brown clay gravel
306	T3	Natural yellow brown clay gravel
401	T4	Concrete surface
402	T4	Levelling deposit
403	T4	Natural yellow orange clay gravel
404	T4	Concrete block
405	T4	Red brick walls
501	T5	Concrete surface
502	T5	Levelling material
503	T5	Mid brown clay
504	T5	Natural yellow brown clay gravel
505	T5	Cut? Of pit-like feature
506	T5	Fill of [505]
601	T6	Concrete surface
602	T6	Yellow sand levelling material
603	T6	Natural orange clay gravel

Appendix 1.3 Photographic register

Frame	Direction	Description
001	NW	Site condition survey



Frame	Direction	Description
002	SE	Site condition survey
003	W	Site condition survey
004	NW	Site condition survey
005	SE	Site condition survey
006	N	Site condition survey
007	S	Site condition survey
008	SE	Trench 1 Area
009	N	Breaking concrete working shot
010	W	Breaking concrete working shot
011	SE	Wall foundation in Tr.1
012	SW	NEFS of Tr. 1
013	SW	Post-ex.Tr. 1
014	E	Post-ex.Tr. 1
015	NW	SEFS through possible pit [505]
016	NW	Overview of [505]
017	SE	Post-ex.Tr. 5 (showing wall foundation concrete base)
018	NW	Post-ex.Tr. 6
019	SE	Post-ex.Tr. 4 (showing concrete foundation)
020	SW	Wall and concrete foundation in Tr.4
021	NW	Post-ex.Tr.3
022	W	Post-ex.Tr.3 / Tr.2
023	NE	Post-ex.Tr.2
024	NW	SEFS of Tr.2 (showing slope in natural and make up)
025	NE	Working shot of T3 section
026	NE	Working shot of T3 section
027	SE	General shot
028	NW	General shot



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