

**THE CONVENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF
MARY AND JOSEPH**

**LAYHAMS ROAD, WEST WICKHAM,
The London Borough of Bromley
BR4 9QJ**

**PHASE II
An Archaeological Watching Brief**



April 2013

C O M P A S S



ARCHAEOLOGY

**THE CONVENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND
JOSEPH
LAYHAMS ROAD, WEST WICKHAM,
The London Borough of Bromley
BR4 9QJ**

**PHASE II
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Site Code: DMJ12

NGR (centre): TQ 3898 6464

Planning reference: 11/03995/FULL1

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April 2013

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Abstract

Between the 25th of February and the 19th of March 2013 an archaeological watching brief was conducted by Compass Archaeology on the site of The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph, West Wickham, in the London Borough of Bromley.

The watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of footings for the new convent buildings, post demolition of the existing structures. The watching brief was recommended by English Heritage due to a previous evaluation by Compass Archaeology identifying a potentially ancient cut feature aligned northwest-southeast across the eastern side of the site.

In the event the watching brief did identify the feature in the southeast corner of the site, and a Mesolithic closed platform bladelet flint core, possibly associated with it, was found on cleaning up the surface of the feature for photography. The feature was not however observed in the northern half of the site on this occasion, and there was no other potential dating evidence.

Natural deposits were exposed across the entire site and consisted of orange / yellow / grey sandy silts, present from as little as 130mm below construction level.

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Fig.1 Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey A-Z map with permission of the HMSO. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd, London SE1 1RQ; licence no. AL 100031317

Fig.2 adapted from a plan provided by Beard Construction, OPUS Drawing No. 200/ R3

1 Introduction

- 1.1** This report forms a summary of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 'The Convent of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph', on Layhams Road, West Wickham, in the London Borough of Bromley (approximately centred at NGR TQ 3898 6464). The archaeological watching brief was carried out as a condition of planning consent, during the excavation of foundations for a new chapel and 19-bedroom Sisters home, with associated accommodation including offices, kitchens, and dining areas, (Planning Ref: 11/03995/FULL1).
- 1.2** The watching brief was conducted by Compass Archaeology over several visits between the 25th of February and the 19th March 2013. The works were recommended by Mark Stevenson, English Heritage Advisor for the London Borough of Bromley, after an earlier evaluation was conducted by Compass Archaeology in December 2012 and archaeology encountered. The works were commissioned by RHA Architects Ltd. on behalf of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

2 Site location

- 2.1** The site is centred on NGR TQ 3898 6464 and positioned on West Wickham Common, to the south of West Wickham. Addington Road lies to the north and Layhams Road to the east. It is bounded by open fields to the south and west, Wickham Court School to the north-east, St John Rigby College to the north, and Coloma Court to the east. The site lies within an 'Area of Archaeological Importance', as designated by Bromley Council
- 2.2** The site lies on high ground, overlooking lower ground on all sides. The ground level across the site is relatively consistent, at approximately 95mOD, only slightly rising to the north and west.
- 2.3** The British Geological Survey, 1998, indicates that the site lies on Thanet Sand overlying chalk. During the evaluation works conducted by Compass Archaeology in 2012 natural deposits were observed at an uppermost level of 94.6mOD (0.35m beneath the modern ground-surface, in trench 3). Elsewhere, it was observed at a level of c.94.15 – 94.4mOD (around 0.5m beneath the modern ground-surface). These natural deposits had clearly been truncated when the buildings were constructed in the 1960s (along with any earlier soil horizons / made-ground deposits which may have existed), and were originally presumably present at an even higher level.

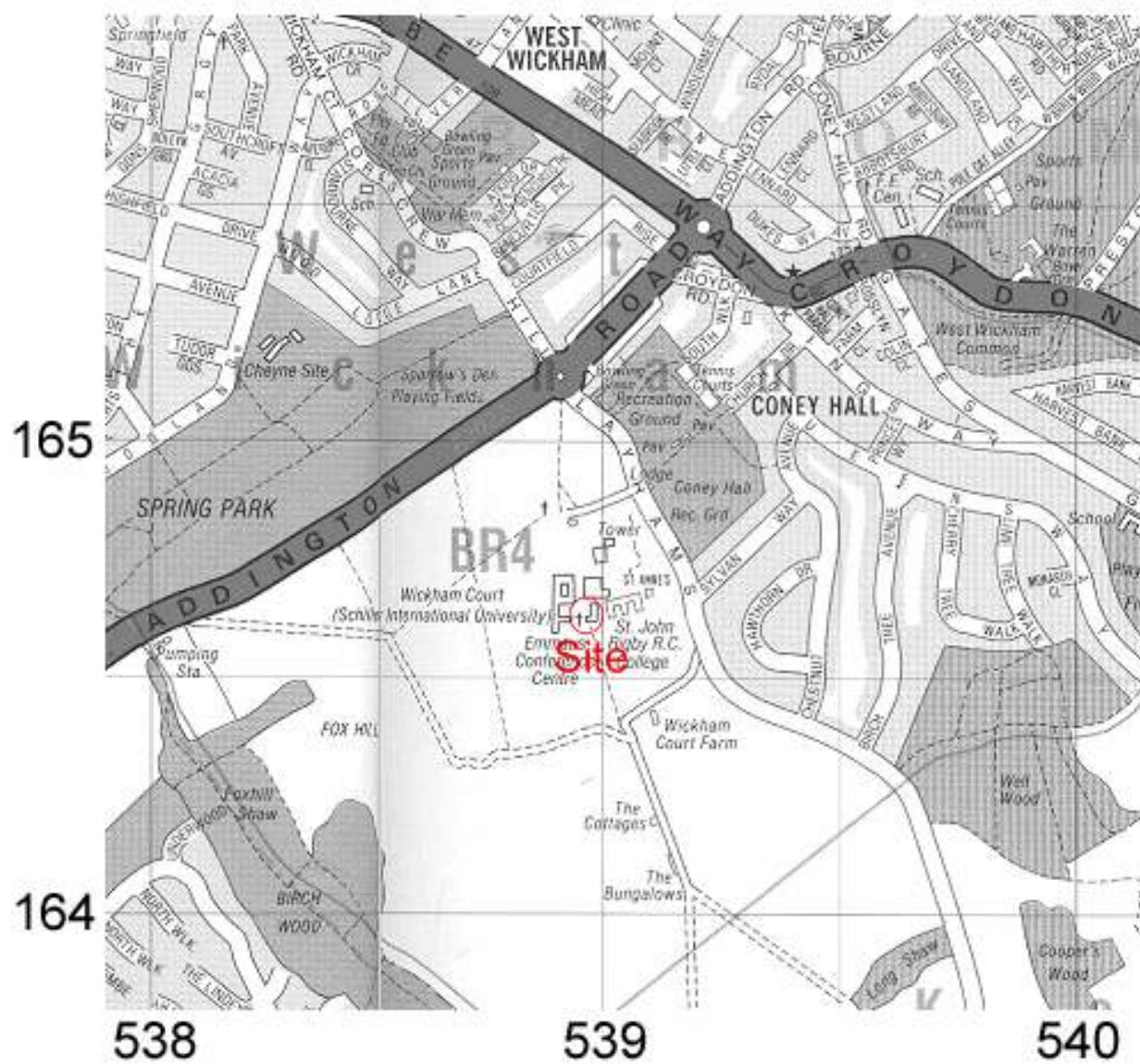


Fig.1: Location of site on A-Z map

3 Archaeological and historic background

A detailed discussion of the historical and archaeological background of the site is provided in Sutton Archaeological Services' 'Archaeological Assessment', (December 2011), and is summarised below.

3.1 Prehistoric

A number of Palaeolithic hand-axes and flints have been found in the general vicinity of the site (although many of these are unprovenanced antiquarian findspots) – nonetheless, this does suggest that there may have been some Palaeolithic activity in the area.

Mesolithic finds, in the form of burnt and struck flint, were uncovered during an evaluation at Schiller University, Wickham Court (to the north-east of the site). This suggests that there may have been Mesolithic activity, possibly itinerant hunters moving through the area.

Some Neolithic / Bronze Age finds have also been uncovered in this area, including a survey of the area around Fox Hill which uncovered over 6,000 pot-boilers and 5,000 waste flakes. This suggests significant Neolithic – Bronze Age activity in the area, possibly associated with flint-production, although excavations have not yet uncovered any features of this date.

Iron Age finds have been uncovered in the area, including a late Iron Age brooch, a number of Iron Age coins, and Iron Age pot uncovered during the Schiller University evaluation. This general area appears to have been an Iron Age landscape, with possible dwellings along the plateau, a possible Iron Age hillfort on Hayes Common, and the general area possibly being farmed during the Iron Age.

3.2 Roman

The London to Lewes road ran north-south, c.250m to the west of the site. It was 44miles long, constructed of chalk covered by packed flints, between 15 and 20ft wide, and dated to the late 1st – early 2nd century, (Margary, 1965).

Excavations indicate that there may have been a roadside settlement (designated a SAM), just to the north-west of the convent site; occupation evidence, including possible structures, was uncovered during trial excavations by West Kent Border Archaeological Group in 1977. A watching brief undertaken by Compass Archaeology in 2005 on Corkscrew Hill and the adjacent area of Sparrow's Den playing fields also uncovered seven 3rd – 4th century coins and the line of a Roman stream. Other individual Roman finds within the vicinity include coins, brooches, rings, a pin, a seal, and a spoon, dated to between 200AD and 410AD. The full extent of the Roman settlement, and associated roadside activity, is as yet unknown, although indications suggest it could be relatively substantial.

1963-4 excavations at Fox Hill uncovered a Roman farm, with finds dated to between 80 and 140AD. This suggests that there may have been Roman activity in the wider area around the site, and not just directly in association with the road.

During the evaluation works conducted by Compass Archaeology in 2012, immediately prior to the watching brief discussed in this report, a cut feature aligned northwest - southwest, (possibly a substantial boundary ditch or land division), was identified in two of the trenches and excavated by hand. It was tentatively dated to the Roman period, due to the high level of evidence for Roman activity in the nearby vicinity and the composition of the feature's single fill. It must be noted, however, that no dating evidence was recovered.

3.3 Medieval

The manor of 'West Wickham' is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but the name 'Wickham' indicates an early Anglo-Saxon settlement; the 'wic' element refers to a street or way; and the 'ham' to a dwelling. No archaeological evidence for Saxon activity has, however, been found in this area.

West Wickham was mentioned in the Domesday Book, as having a total of about 38 households, plus a church and mill, despite this relatively large population, few archaeological finds have been uncovered, aside from a brooch, five coins, and two strap fittings.

The present church of St John the Baptist, positioned to the north of the site, was built in the 13th – 14th century, suggesting that the medieval centre of population may have been around this area. The manor house, Wickham Court, was constructed in about 1469 by Sir Henry Heydon, to the north of the site and excavations at Schiller University uncovered a 15th century brick wall, possibly associated with this house.

3.4 Post-medieval

The manor house was gradually expanded throughout the post-medieval period, until it was sold in 1935 to be used as a hotel, and then sold to The Daughters of Mary and Joseph after WWII.

Previous archaeological work in the vicinity of the site has uncovered a range of post-medieval remains, including ditches, a wall foundation, and drains at the Schiller University site; and a 17th century wall-base observed during a watching brief by Compass Archaeology at The St John Rigby College.

Cartographic evidence indicates that the site remained broadly as open fields until the mid-later 20th century. The first detailed map is Hasted's 1778 Map, which simply depicts the church and Wickham Court, with the surrounding area undeveloped. The 1838 tithe map, 1862 25inch OS Map, and 1897 25inch OS Map, all show the area in broadly the same way; with the church, Wickham Court, and further buildings along the western edge of Wickham

Court (probably stabling and carriage buildings) and to the south (probably farm buildings). The 1909 OS Map depicts a small farm building in the northwestern part of the site, although this had disappeared by the 1936 OS Map. The site itself remained as open land until 1964, when the chapel and Sister's accommodation were constructed (these are first depicted on the 1972 OS map).

4 Archaeological research questions

The watching brief presented an opportunity to address three main research questions, following on from the initial evaluation:

- Is there any further evidence for the linear ditch running northwest – southeast across the site? Can this be dated, and can its function be ascertained?
- Is there any evidence for other Roman and/or prehistoric activity in the area? What does this suggest about the nature of activity on the site?
- Is there any evidence surviving elsewhere on the site for medieval and/or post-medieval activity in this area?

5 Methodology

5.1 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *GLASS Standards, Paper 3: Fieldwork, Consultation Draft, 2009*) and to the standards of the Institute for Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Watching Brief, 2008*). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full member of the Institute.

Adequate time was given for investigation and recording of the observed trenches and lift pits, although every effort was made not to disrupt the contractors' programme. Observations were recorded on *pro forma* trench sheets. The investigations were recorded on a general site plan and related to the Ordnance Survey grid. The fieldwork record was supplemented as appropriate by digital photography.

Close liaison was maintained with the site manager, Dave Codd of Beard Construction, and the groundworks team to ensure a presence on site as and when necessary. The Client's agent, RHA Architects Ltd., and Mark Stevenson, English Heritage Archaeological Advisor for the Borough of Bromley, were kept advised of the progress of the fieldwork.

- 5.2** The fieldwork was followed by off-site assessment and compilation of a report, and by ordering and deposition of the site archive under site code DMJ12.

Finds were treated in accordance with the appropriate guidelines, including the Museum of London's '*Standards for the Preparation of Finds to be permanently retained by the Museum of London*'. Finds were retained and

bagged with unique numbers related to the context record, although some material was discarded following assessment. Assessment was undertaken by appropriately qualified staff, (Jon Cotton, expert in Prehistoric flint).

Copies of this report will be supplied to the Client, and English Heritage. A short summary of the fieldwork has been appended to this report using the OASIS Data Collection Form, and in paragraph form suitable for publication within the 'excavation round-up' of the *London Archaeologist*.

6 The Archaeological watching brief

- 6.1** The watching brief was preceded by demolition of the existing buildings, including the Chapel and old Convent buildings and the soft stripping of existing tarmac and garden soils. In the event this amounted to a ground reduction of up to 800mm in the southwestern corner of the site, diminishing to 200mm across the eastern end of the site. This took into account the upward slope of the ground (east to west), and provided a construction level from which to commence digging of the foundations.

The watching brief was conducted between the 25th of February and the 19th of March 2013. The foundations were dug in three phases, commencing in the southwest corner and continuing along the southern half of the site; the second phase began in the northwest corner and continued along the northern half of the site. The third phase included the excavation of two lift pits and the northeast corner of the building footprint (dug last to maintain the access route for cement deliveries).

All trenches were dug by 360° mechanical excavators fitted with toothless buckets.

Reference should be made to Fig.2 below in regard to location of observations, which are discussed in chronological order.

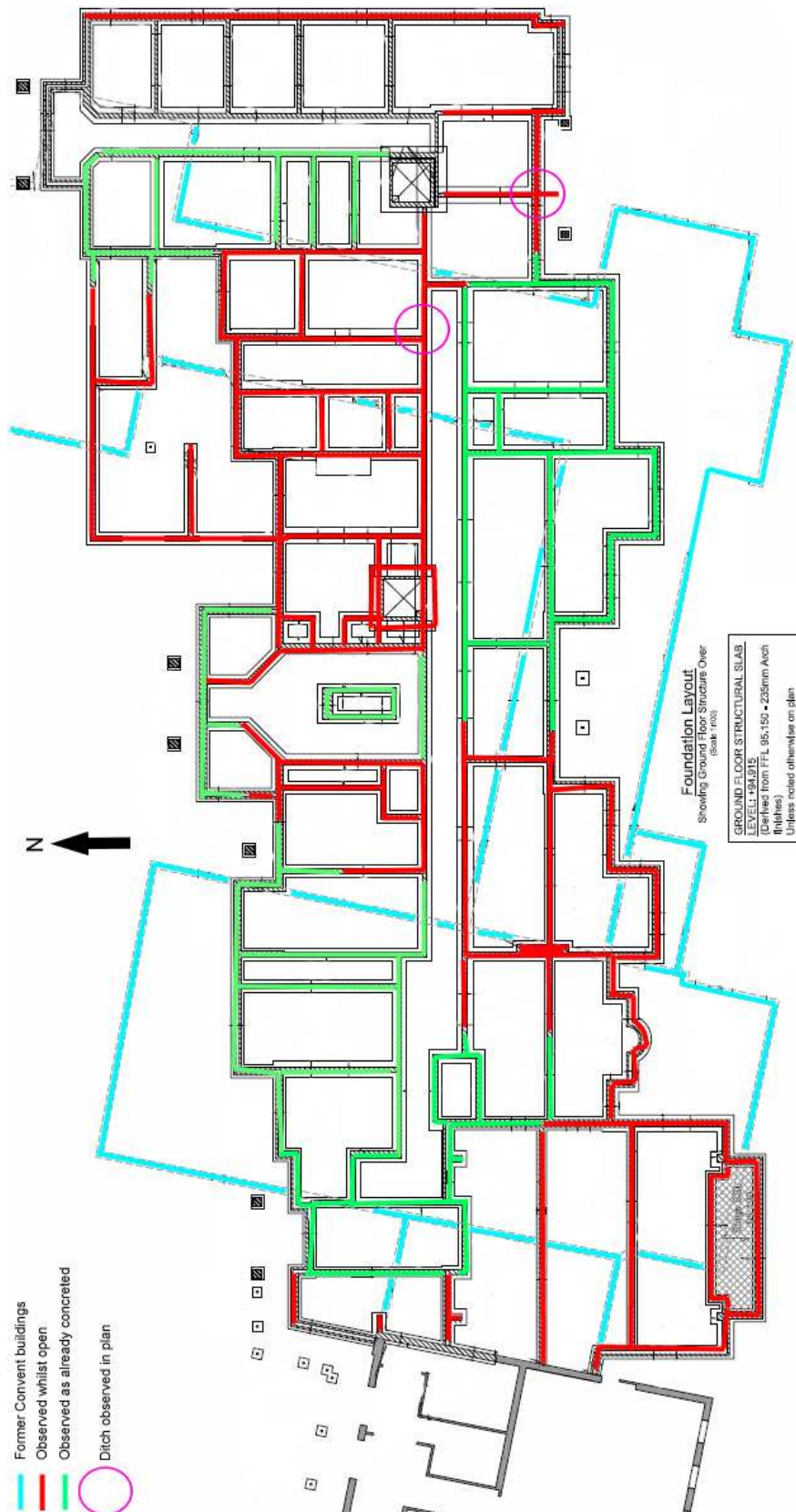


Fig.2: Foundation plan of the new buildings showing observations made during the watching brief (provided by Beard Construction, OPUS Drg No. 200/ R3)

- 6.2 The first monitoring visit to site was made on the 25th of February 2013. Trenching in the southwest corner of the site was inspected extending over an area roughly 17m north to south and 18.5m west to east. The foundation trenches varied in width from 0.80m to 1.2m wide depending on the intended foundation structure, and were 600mm in depth. Overall ground reduction amounted to a total of 1.2m to 1.4m in depth, (including the initial soft stripping).

Exposed stratigraphy included 300mm of clay-rich topsoil observed in section along the southern boundary of the site, with no trace of any accumulated subsoil. It is assumed that the site had been historically stripped prior to construction of the convent buildings in the 1960s, and so any of the pre-existing soils or made ground deposits had been removed. This meant that most of the site was dug directly into natural deposits. These were comprised of a mixture of orange / yellow / off-white sands and silty-clays, containing occasional flint pebbles or red-brick rubble from the demolition process.

No archaeologically significant deposits were observed.



Fig.3: *Foundation trenches in the southwest corner facing north, 25th February 2013 (50cm scale)*



Fig.4: Sample section through trenching in the southwest corner of the site, (site of formal chapel), facing west towards standing building. 25th February 2013 (50cm scales)

- 6.3 A visit was made on the 28th of February 2013, but no archaeologically significant deposits were observed. The same stratigraphic sequence was observed in trenching, this time in the central section of the southern face of the foundation scheme. The trenches were largely 0.6m wide, in some cases up to 0.9m, but were consistently 600mm deep. Natural sand and silt deposits were observed throughout.



Fig.5: *Section through trenching observed on the 28th February 2013, facing north, (50cm scale)*



Fig.6: *Foundation trenches facing southeast, 28th February 2013 (50cm scale)*

- 6.4** On the 4th of March 2013 observations were made of trenches in the southeast corner of the site, in the vicinity of Evaluation Trench 2 where the cut feature was encountered¹. 300mm of dirty, reworked natural and topsoil overlay a further 300mm of homogenous mixed silts and sands.

In the foundation trenches delineating the southern extent of the new building a linear feature, approximately 1.2m wide and aligned northwest-southeast, was identified. It appeared to follow the same alignment as the ditch observed in Evaluation Trench 2 and had a similar brown-grey silty-clay fill. The ditch was only observed in plan, 600mm below the ground surface, and did not obviously show up in section suggesting that it was the upper level that had been exposed. However, it is thought to represent the same feature as previously observed and is evidence of the feature continuing on a southeast alignment. Due to the limitations of the footings it was decided not to excavate a section through the feature as the new footings would not impact any further on it.

¹ Compass Archaeology, 2012, pgs.18-23

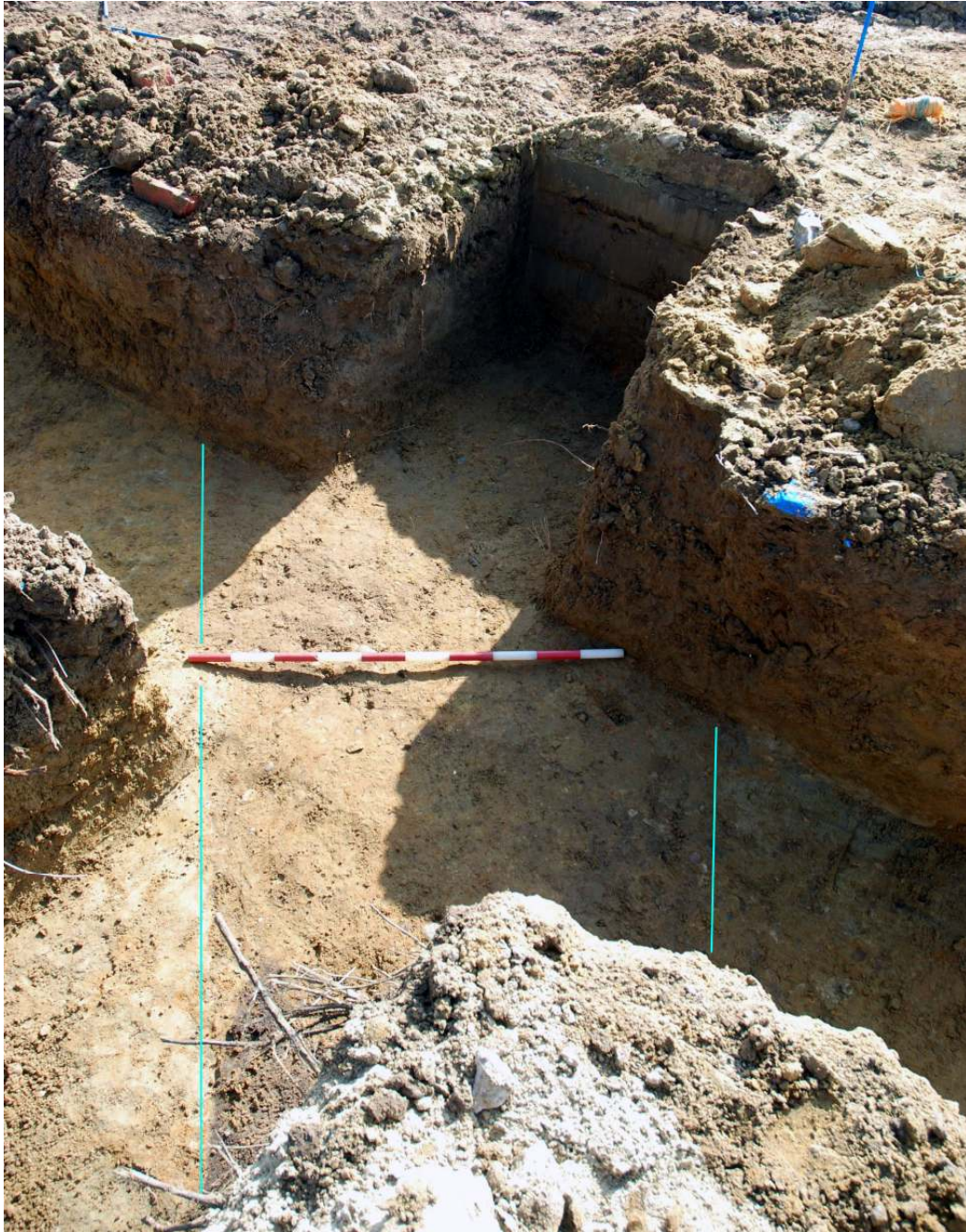


Fig.7: Ditch feature facing southeast, 4th March 2013, edges of feature highlighted due to poor lighting conditions. (1m scale)

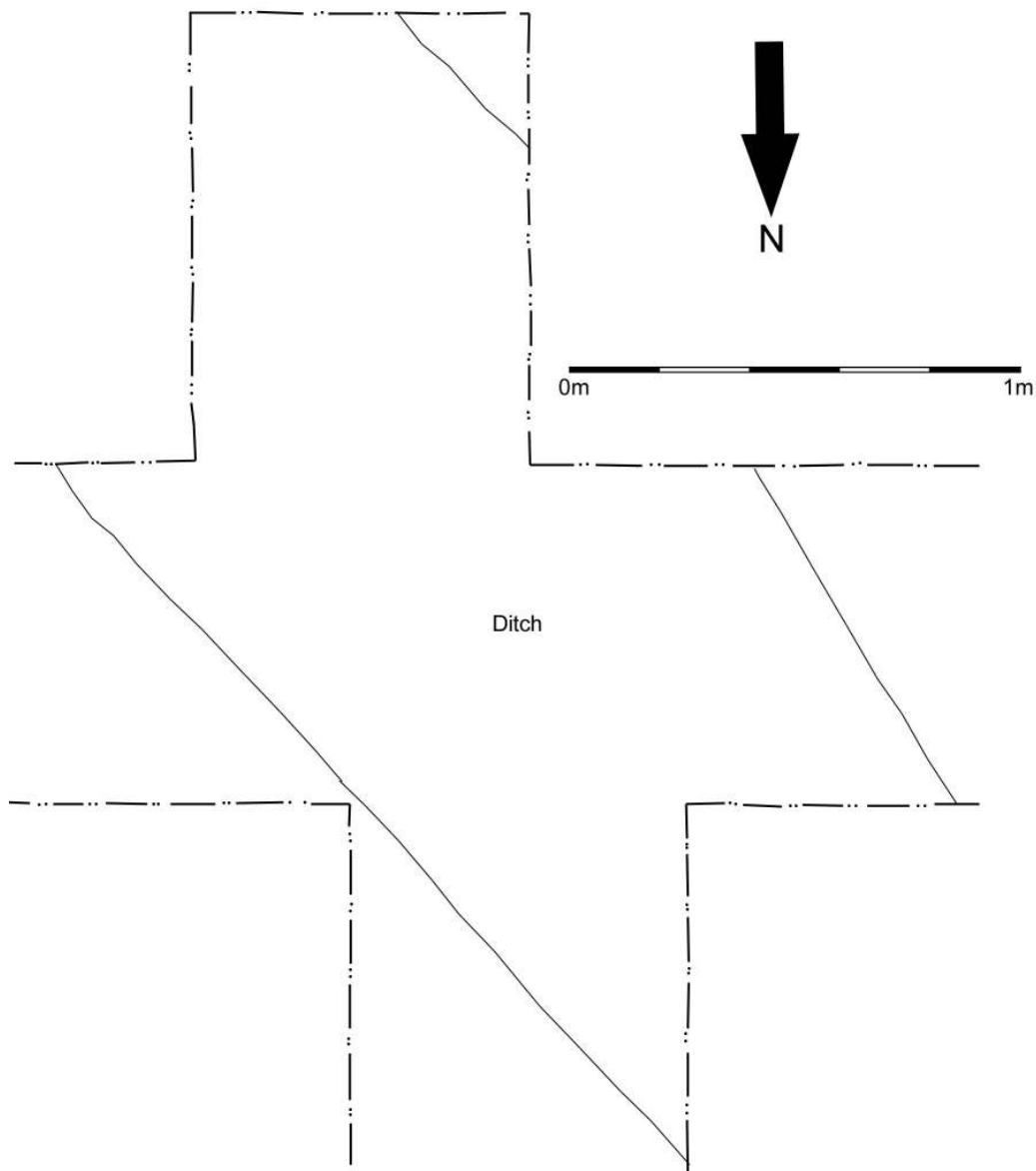


Fig.8: *Drawing of the ditch as it appeared in plan on the 4th of March 2013*

Upon cleaning over the surface of the feature, for photos, a worked flint was recovered. It represented a closed platform bladelet core formed from an elongated nodule. The flint showed several signs of having abraded edges created to utilise the core as much as possible, creating new platforms from which to strike new blades (Figs 9-12 overleaf). The flint is typical of Mesolithic work, *c* 10,000–5,500BC². It would suggest that the feature could be prehistoric (earlier than previously thought), however it cannot be conclusively proved that the flint came from the feature as it was not found deep within the fill, but was more of a surface find. This may suggest that the flint could have been intrusive, having found its way into the feature during landscaping works in the 1960s.

² Pers.comm. Jon Cotton



Fig.9: Mesolithic flint bladelet core from cleaning over ditch feature on 4th March 2013. Some of the platforms are quite long suggesting sizeable blade tools (10cm scale)



Fig.10: Flint core from cleaning over ditch feature on 4th March 2013. (10cm scale)



Fig.11: *Flint core from cleaning over ditch feature on 4th March 2013. Note the abraded edge creating a platform from which the blades have been struck. (10cm scale)*



Fig.12: *Flint core from cleaning over ditch feature on 4th March 2013, showing the white cortex of the flint*

- 6.5 A visit was made on the 8th of March to site, but poor weather conditions meant that little groundwork was undertaken. Nevertheless exposed stratigraphy in the centre of the northern half was recorded as c280mm of reworked natural and demolition debris overlying orange / brown / grey silty-sands to a depth of 800mm below ground level. No archaeological deposits were observed.



Fig.13: *Section through trench observed on the 8th March 2013, facing east-south-east. (1m scale)*

6.6 Monitoring took place on the 13th of March, east of centre on the northern side of the site. Trenches measured between 0.75m and 0.90m wide and between 600mm and 1050mm in depth, increasing in depth to the north and west following the contour of the brow of the hill. The top 130mm - 250mm of the trenchworks included reworked natural and mixed building rubble associated with the demolition of the once standing structures. The increasing presence of such rubble led one to believe that the demolition of the buildings had included considerable 'grubbing out' of foundations and services and therefore some ground disturbance. This layer of material overlay the same silty-clay and sand mix as observed across the rest of the site. This deposit was present to the base of the trench and beyond.

The western edge of a cut feature was possibly observed in the southeastern corner of this dig area aligned northwest-southeast. It was seen in plan at approximately 600mm below ground surface, but in section was possibly present from as high as 400mm below ground surface. It was not very clear, and was in close proximity to a modern cut full of building debris and reworked natural, (probably a former wall footing). It is possible that this modern disturbance may have truncated the eastern half of the earlier feature. The alignment of the feature suggested it may be related to that observed in Evaluation Trench 2 and subsequently on the 4th of March (6.4 above).



Fig.14: Possible cut of feature, partially exposed to right of 50cm scale. Modern disturbance to left of frame, and natural deposits on right of frame. Facing south



Fig.15: *Possible cut of feature, partially exposed to right of 50cm scale. Modern disturbance to top left of frame, natural deposits to bottom left.*

- 6.7** A final visit to site was made on the 19th of March 2013. Footings were dug in the northeast corner of site, including the area around Evaluation Trench 4 (in which the northwest-southeast aligned ditch feature was also found). The central lift pit was also opened.

The footing trenches were of similar dimensions as those previously monitored: 600-750mm wide by 600-900mm deep, (becoming deeper towards the north and west). Near identical stratigraphy was observed in section and plan, with *c*400mm of reworked natural and demolition rubble, overlying natural deposits of orange / yellow/ grey sandy-silts to the base of the footings and beyond.

The central lift pit measured 3.5m square and was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.3m. Access to the pit was limited and so measurements were taken from the side of the pit. Reworked natural and demolition rubble was present for up to 500mm in some places due to buried services. The lower half of the lift pit exposed natural sands and silts at least 800mm thick, with occasional banding.



Fig.16: *Lift pit facing west*

No archaeological deposits or features were observed in either the trenching works or lift pit.

7 Conclusions

The watching brief produced mixed but limited results.

The linear feature previously observed in Evaluation trenches 2 and 4 was observed in plan in the southeast corner of the site (near Evaluation Trench 2; see Fig 2), but not in the northern half (near Evaluation Trench 4). This was disappointing, in that the course of the feature could not be confirmed towards the northern half of the site and that there was no conclusive dating evidence. However, it was useful to have seen it in plan again in the southeastern corner of the site, and the finding of the Mesolithic flint core may help in dating the feature more accurately. The fact that the flint cannot be positively associated with the feature is tempered by the fact that it is supporting evidence for prehistoric activity within the local area, as has been proved in the past, (see 3.1).

The majority of the observed groundworks produced no archaeologically significant deposits.

Natural ground, albeit in a truncated form, was observed across the entire site from as little as 130mm below construction / dig level. The fact that subsoil was little evident is explained by the initial soft stripping that occurred prior to the main watching brief and also (as observed in the previous evaluation) by landscaping works that occurred during the construction of the initial convent buildings in the 1960s.

8 Bibliography

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Appendix I: OASIS data collection form

OASIS ID: compassa1-147265

Project details

Project name	The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph: West Wickham: An Archaeological watching Brief
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Compass Archaeology on the site of The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph, West Wickham, in the London Borough of Bromley. The watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of footings for the new convent buildings, post demolition of the existing structures. The watching brief was recommended by English Heritage due to a previous evaluation by Compass Archaeology identifying a potentially ancient cut feature aligned northwest-southeast across the eastern side of the site. In the event the watching brief did identify the feature in the southeast corner of the site, and a Mesolithic closed platform bladelet core, possibly associated with it, was found on cleaning up the surface of the feature for photography. The feature was not however observed in the northern half of the site on this occasion. Natural deposits were exposed across the entire site and consisted of orange / yellow / grey sandy silts, present from as little as 130mm below construction level.
Project dates	Start: 25-02-2013 End: 19-03-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	DMJ12 – Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Residential 2 - Institutional and communal accommodation
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	WORKED FLINT Mesolithic
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BROMLEY BROMLEY The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph
Postcode	BR4 9QJ
Study area	2600.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3898 6464 51 0 51 21 47 N 000 00 12 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 1.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Compass Archaeology
Project supervisor	James Aaronson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Physical Contents	"Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"

Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Plan", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph: Layhams Road, West Wickham: An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Aaronson, J
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street, SE1 1RQ
Description	Short report of the results of the watching brief. Includes historical, archaeological, geological and topographical background of the site, details of the methodology used, photographs and descriptions of all trenches monitored, and brief conclusions reached.

Appendix II: London Archaeologist summary

Site Address: The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph, West Wickham, London Borough of Bromley, BR4 9QJ

Project Type: Watching brief

Dates of Fieldwork: 25th February – 19th March 2013

Site code: DMJ12

Site Supervisor: James Aaronson

NGR: TQ 3898 6464

Funding body: RHA Architects Ltd.

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Compass Archaeology on the site of The Convent of The Daughters of Mary and Joseph, West Wickham, in the London Borough of Bromley.

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