

Archaeological Observation and Recording at South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham, London Borough of Bromley, BR4 9HQ



September 2013



Archaeological Observation and Recording at
South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham,
London Borough of Bromley, BR4 9HQ

NGR: TQ 39145 64665

Planning reference: 12/01862/FUL

Site code: DMJ12

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September 2013

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Abstract

An archaeological programme of observation and recording was conducted by Compass Archaeology between the 28th of August and 12th of September 2013 on the site of South Gate Flats, Layhams Road, West Wickham. The programme was conducted during groundworks associated with the construction of a new block of houses and associated maintenance buildings.

In the event no archaeologically significant deposits or features were observed during the course of the watching brief.

Natural ground was observed across the majority of the footprint of the area being redeveloped from between 0.55 to 1.3m below the present ground level to beyond the base of excavation. The natural varied across the site from solid, clean, orange brown clays to soft, pale-brown / white sandy-silts containing occasional flint pebbles.

The exception was in the southern end of the site where evidence of deeper deposits of hillwashed material were encountered. It may be that the majority of the footprint of the site was subject to truncation and then consolidation immediately prior to the construction of the 1960s properties and outbuildings.

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Figs.1 and 2 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

Figs.5-7 reproduced and adapted from originals sent by RHA Architects Ltd.

1 Introduction

1.1 The following document forms a summary of a programme of Archaeological Observation and Recording, (hereafter referred to as ‘the watching brief’), undertaken by Compass Archaeology in August and September 2013 at South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham, BR4 9HQ, in the London Borough of Bromley.

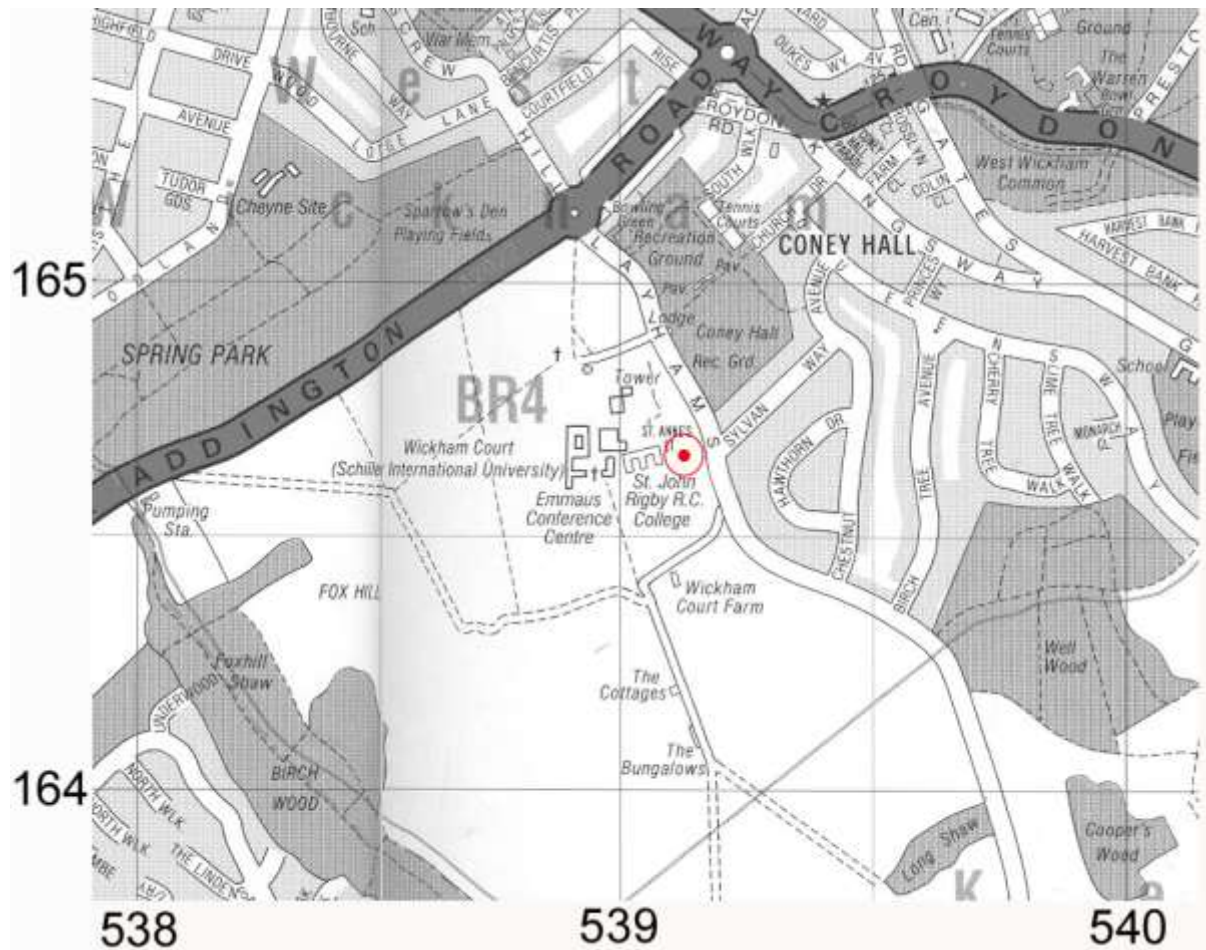


Fig.1: Site in relation to A-Z map of Greater London

1.2 The watching brief took place as part of a planning condition attached to application 12/01862/FUL. The development included the demolition of the existing structures and the construction of a new two-storey building housing five 2-bedroom maisonettes and a separate single storey maintenance office, along with associated car parking facilities.

1.3 The programme of archaeological works was recommended by English Heritage due to the sites’ location within an Area of Archaeological Importance associated with a substantial Romano-British settlement around Wickham Court Farm, and its proximity to the Roman London-Lewes Road further to the west. It was also deemed appropriate in light of a potential prehistoric / Roman ditch feature observed in a separate programme of works during redevelopment of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph Convent site further up the hill in late 2012 / early 2013.

1.4 The works were commissioned by Richard Heath of RHA Architects Ltd on behalf of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph Convent.

2 Site location, geology and topography

2.1 The site is situated in the northeastern corner of West Wickham Common, south of West Wickham itself. It lies immediately west of Layhams Road with the present structures set back *c*28.5m west of the road. It is bounded by open fields to the north, another small car park to the west and residential properties / open fields to the south. The site footprint is currently occupied by a large car park in the western half, two residential properties and ancillary buildings with yard-space in the central portion of the site, and another open space to the east fronting onto Layhams Road. The development was located within the central part of the site, replacing the existing residential and ancillary buildings.



Fig.2: Site location with the application area outlined in red

2.2 The British Geological Survey 1998¹, indicates that the site lies on an area of Thanet sand overlying chalk. This has been confirmed further up the hill during the 2012/13 archaeological works, where the Thanet sand deposits were observed at an uppermost level of 94.6mOD, approximately 0.35m below existing ground level.

2.3 The site lies near the base of a hill, gently rising from *c*86.7mOD in the east to *c*87.7mOD in the west. The hill rises continuously to the west to a maximum height of *c*95.0mOD.

¹ British Geological Survey, (1998), *England & Wales Sheet 270. Solid & Drift Geology. 1:50 000*

3 Archaeological and historical background

3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site and the wider area have been discussed at length in previous reports produced by Compass², and so to avoid unnecessary repetition only the most relevant points will be reiterated here.

3.2 Prehistoric

The area around the study site has produced numerous prehistoric features and finds ranging from Neolithic handaxes, Mesolithic worked flints at Wickham Court and a closed platform flint core during the watching brief in early 2013 in association with a linear ditch feature. Over 5,000 Neolithic and Bronze Age waste flakes were recovered during a survey around Fox Hill to the west of the Convent site, suggesting localised production on a large scale.

Later prehistoric finds include Iron Age brooches, coins and pottery uncovered during excavations at Wickham Court in association with possible settlement along the high plateau to the west and south of the site. The hillfort at Hayes Common, east of the site suggests the wider area was exploited during the Iron Age.

3.3 Roman

The London to Lewes Roman road ran north-south, c450m west of the development site, and evidence of roadside settlements have been uncovered on several occasions west of the site. This has led to the site falling within an Area of Archaeological Importance.

These include a Roman farmstead of 1st-2nd century date on Fox Hill in 1963-4, Roman structures to the northwest of the site in 1977, and several coins of 3rd-4th century date on Corkscrew Hill in 2005. Other finds from coins, brooches, rings, a seal, a pin and a spoon have also been found in the vicinity of Wickham Court, suggesting continuous settlement throughout the Roman period.

3.4 Saxon

Although no Saxon finds or features have been identified in the immediate area the name Wickham is of Saxon origin. The 'wic' element is thought to derive from the Latin 'vicus' referring to vicinity, and the 'ham' section to a dwelling. This would corroborate the theory that West Wickham began as a roadside settlement.

3.5 Medieval

Its inclusion in the Domesday Book of 1087 would suggest it was an established settlement from at least the early 11th century. In 1066 the settlement of 'Wicheha' had been owned by Godric son of Karli, and had a church, mill, 38 households and 6 plough teams. By 1087 the land was held by Adam son of Hubert, from Odo of Bayeux.

² Compass Archaeology, (2013) a & b

The present church of St John the Baptist, positioned to the northwest of the site, was built in the 13th – 14th century, suggesting that the medieval centre of population may have been centred on this area. The manor house, Wickham Court, was constructed c1469 by Sir Henry Heydon, to the north of the site. Excavations on the premises now occupied by Schiller International University uncovered a 15th century brick wall, probably associated with this manor.

Despite these factors other medieval archaeology has been limited to a brooch, 5 coins and two strap fittings.

3.6 Post medieval

The manor house was gradually expanded throughout the post-medieval period. It was sold in 1935 to be used as a hotel, and finally sold to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph after the Second World War.

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

Cartographic evidence indicates that the site remained broadly as open fields until the late 19th-century.



Fig.3: Extract from the 1880 25inch Ordnance Survey map

The 1880 First Edition 25inch OS Map (fig.3) depicts two small buildings, labelled 'Garden Cottages' in the eastern part of the site, with the eastern stretch of land appearing to be gardens. The majority of the site is positioned within an open field, and the northern strip within gardens.

The site is depicted in broadly the same way on the 1955 OS Map (fig.4), with the additional delineation of the southern boundary of the site.

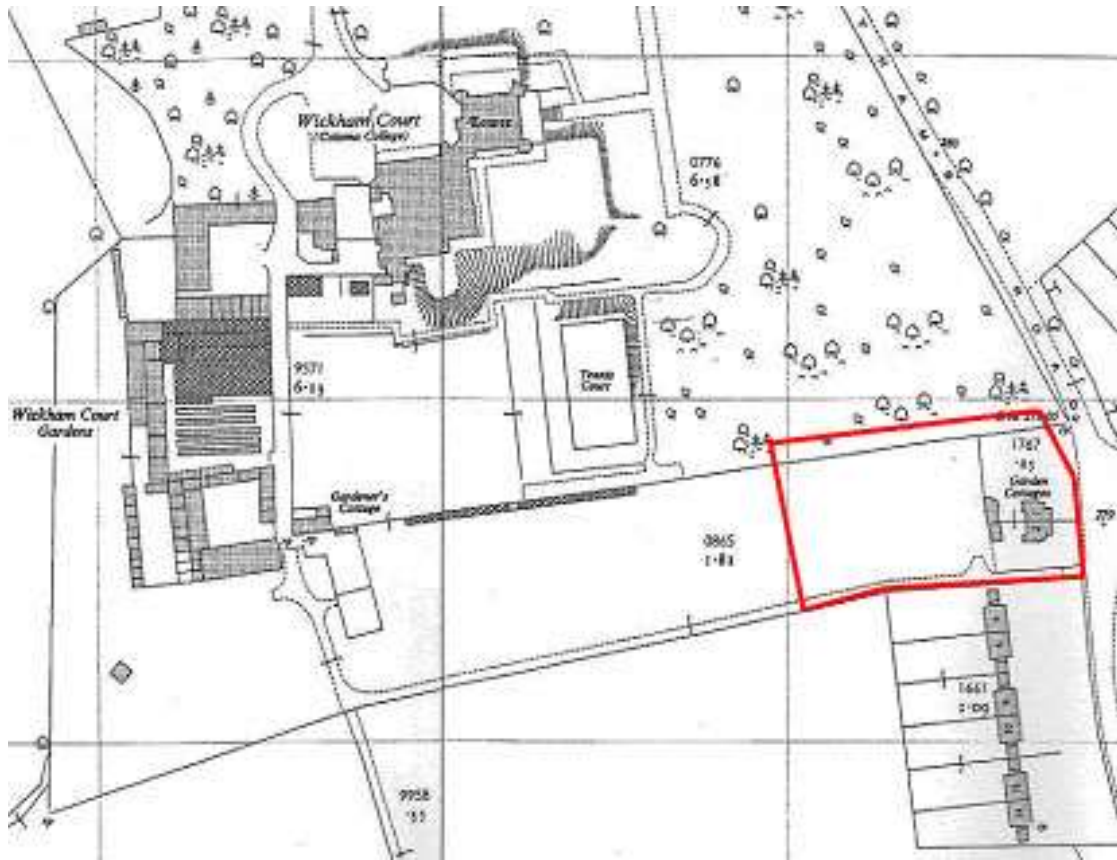


Fig.4: Extract from the 1955 OS, 1:2500 scale

The present layout of the site appears to have been set out by the time of the 1975 small-scale OS Map (not depicted).

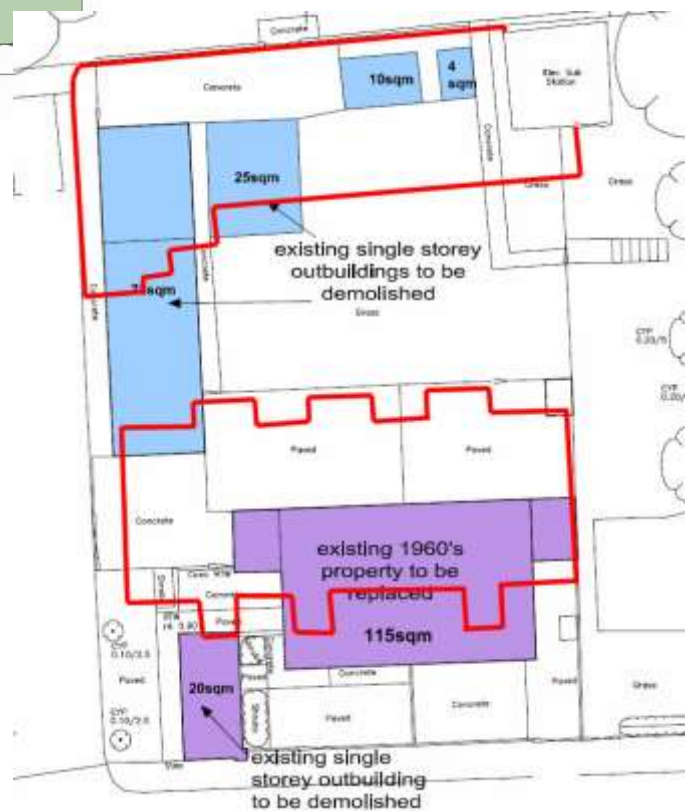
4 Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed redevelopment involves the demolition of the existing two buildings on the site, the construction of a two-storey building comprising five 2-bedroom maisonettes in the southern part of the site and a single-storey grounds maintenance building in the northern part of the site. Figure 5 depicts this, with figure 6 showing the area of new development (in red) superimposed over the present buildings.



Fig.5: *The proposed development within the centre part of the application area*

Fig.6: *Plan showing the proposed development (in red) in relation to the existing buildings on the site*



5 Archaeological research questions

The fieldwork presents an opportunity to address the following research questions:

- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity in the site-area? What period and what form does this take? What does this suggest about prehistoric activity in the surrounding area – was it itinerant or sedentary; associated with agriculture or flint-production etc.?
- Is there any evidence for Roman activity in the area? Is this related to roadside settlement based around the Roman road to the west of the site or other more general Roman exploitation of the area?
- Is there any evidence for Saxon and / or medieval activity in the site-area? What form does this take, and what does this suggest about the type and intensity of Saxon / medieval activity in this area? Does this provide any indication about the possible location of the Saxon / early medieval settlement?
- Is there any evidence relating to the post-medieval development of the area? In particular, is there any indication that there may have been buildings / activity not depicted in cartographic evidence; possibly associated with Wickham Court?
- At what levels do any archaeological or geological deposits survive across the area?

6 Methodology

6.1 Standards

The field and post-excavation work was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*). Works conformed to the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full Member of the Institute.

6.2 Fieldwork

The archaeological observation and recording programme took place during the initial soil stripping and subsequent groundworks associated with the excavation of footings. Foundations were dug using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Ground reduction was supervised by an on-site archaeologist so that any potential evidence could be investigated, identified and recorded prior to construction.

Adequate time was allowed for investigation and recording, although every effort was made not to disrupt the development programme.

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 managers, Dave Codd and Len Elliott 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.

6.3 Post excavation procedures

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.

Assessment of finds was undertaken by appropriately qualified staff. 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*'. Identified finds and artefacts were retained and bagged with unique numbers related to the context record, although certain classes of building material were discarded if an appropriate record had been made.

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

7 Results

The watching brief was split over two separate visits on the 28th August and 12th of September 2013 to observe footings being dug in the eastern half of the main buildings and the majority of the perimeter of the northern maintenance building. The results of these visits are discussed below in chronological order. The following discussion should be read in conjunction with fig.7 below, which shows the monitored areas.

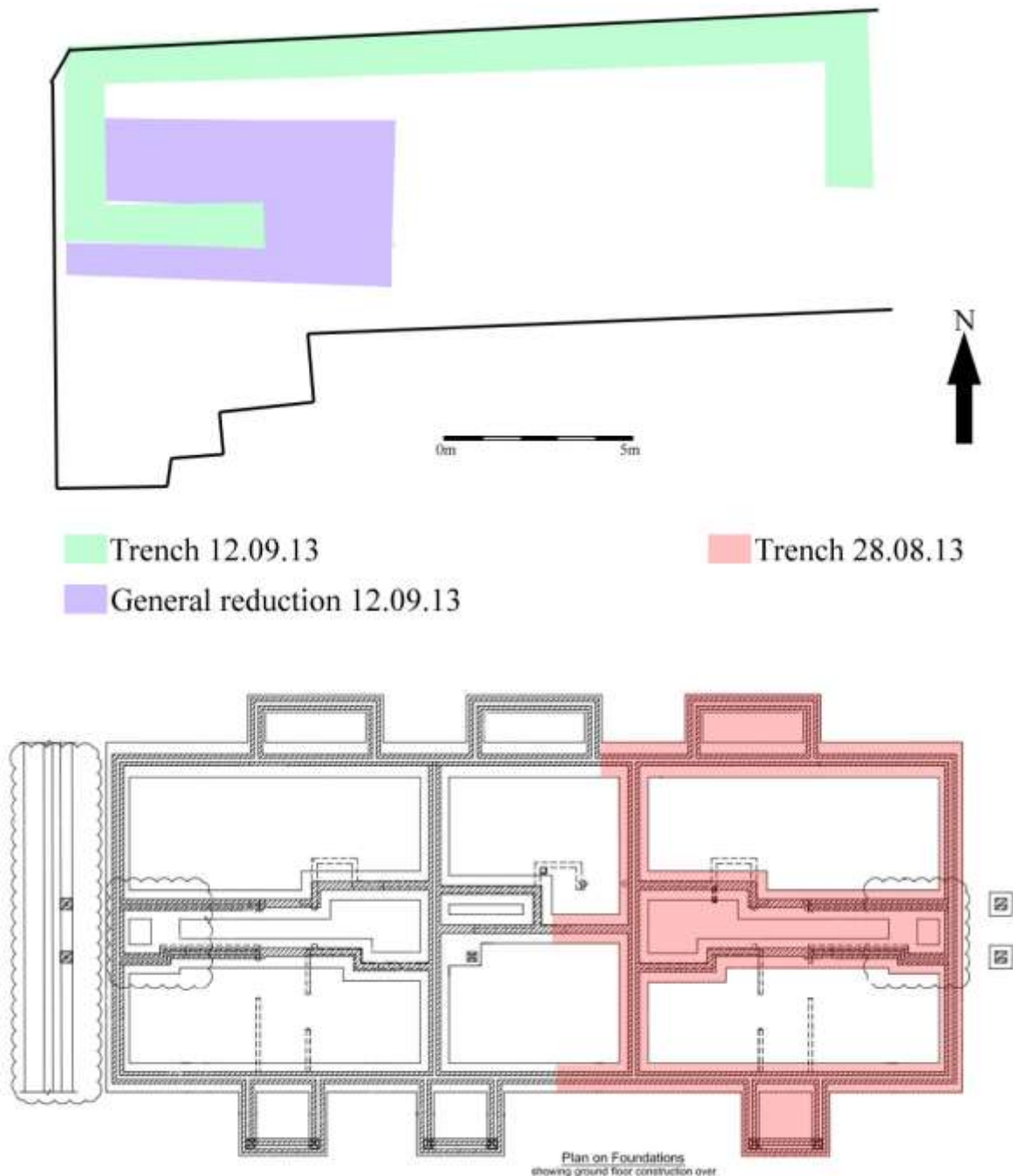


Fig.7: Plan showing the approximate location of observations between 28th August and 12th September 2013. The building outlines are in black, (compare with figures 5 and 6), and observed areas in red, green and blue

7.1 Foundations for main housing

The eastern half of the foundations of the main building were archaeologically monitored on the 28th August 2013 (fig.7 highlights the monitored areas). A total length of approximately 48m was monitored, with the foundations measuring between 1 and 2.25m in width, and excavated to a general depth of 1.9m (c84.5mOD). In total, an area of approximately 70m² was archaeologically monitored.



Fig.8: *Photo of the excavation of the foundations of the main building, looking north-west*



Fig.9: *General photos of the foundations of the main building*

The stratigraphy in the southern part of the foundations, within the area occupied by the previous building, consisted of modern disturbance (caused by the foundations of the modern building) to a depth of between 0.75 and 0.8m beneath the present ground-surface. This consisted of a general loose grey-brown silty deposit, with frequent chunks of modern brick rubble, concrete, and other modern inclusions. Beneath this was a substantial quantity of relatively homogeneous mid-light brown silty-sand deposit with pebbles, stretching to beyond the limit of excavation (1.85m beneath the modern ground-surface). Subtle differences between layers were observable – the uppermost 0.2m was a mid-brown silty-sand; the next 0.5-0.6m was a lighter-brown silty-sand; and the lowermost 0.2-0.3m a sandier deposit. Interestingly, the natural clay deposits were not observed. It seems likely that these deposits may have been a colluvial / hillwash deposit, which had accumulated at the base of the hill.

The northern part of the foundations, in the area outside of the pre-existing building, had not been disturbed by the modern building and retained more of a soil profile. The topsoil, a loose dark-grey-brown garden soil deposit, was c0.28m thick, and overlay a compact chalky-pebbly sandy-silt deposit (0.33m in thickness), over the yellow-brown sandy subsoil with scattered pebbles, flints, and ceramic building material (0.4–0.55m in thickness). This directly overlay the clean solid yellow clay (the natural deposits), between 0.8 and 0.9m thick and continuing beyond the limit of excavation. No archaeological finds or features were observed, with only two small fragments of post-medieval peg tile recovered from the chalky-pebbly sandy-silt deposit and sandy subsoil respectively.



Fig.12: Photo of a section in the northern part of the site (1m scale)

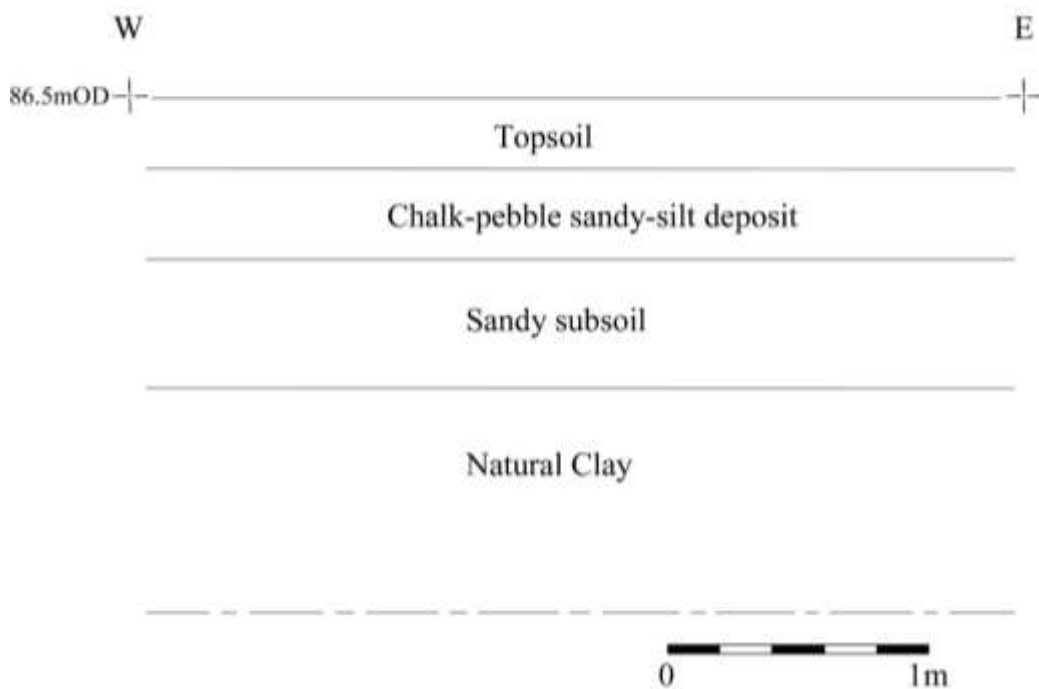


Fig.13: Representative section of the northern part of the site

The only find recovered from the archaeological monitoring of these foundation trenches was a piece of moulded stone recovered from approximately midway along the easternmost section. This was a fluted column-type piece of white marble, partially rounded, with acanthus leaves at the top and a double band of small holes around it. The overall dimensions of the piece were 280mm high and 128-154mm wide. The remains of plant stalks was found in two of these holes, such that it seems likely that it was some form of cemetery monument, in which flowers were placed. It was recovered from the uppermost ‘modern disturbance’ deposits, and probably found its way in when the modern building was constructed in the 1970s.



Fig.14: *Photo of the moulded stone recovered from the foundations, (10cm scale)*

Monitoring of the foundations of the main building therefore uncovered no finds, features, or deposits of archaeological interest. Much of this area had been heavily truncated by the existence of the modern building, and elsewhere a soil profile survived, although with no archaeological features present. The natural clay was observed at around 1.1m beneath the present ground-surface in the northern part of the foundations (85.4mOD); and colluvial hillwash deposits were observed in the southern part, at around 0.8m beneath the present ground-surface (85.4mOD). The natural clay was observed to drop fairly consistently across the foundation area from north to south, with its upper surface disappearing below the limit of excavation on the south side of the central east-west foundation.

7.2 Foundations for maintenance building

A second site visit was made on the 12th of September 2013 to monitor the footings for the workshop / maintenance offices, (see fig.7). The strip footings extended along the line of the northern boundary fence for 21.35m from the east and extended south by 4.35m in the east and 5.25m in the west. The western footings then turned a right angle, east for 5.25m. The strip footings were between 0.7 and 0.9m wide and were up to 2.2m deep at the western end. This amounted to approximately 36.2m of trenching covering an area of just over 112m² that was monitored.

No finds or archaeologically significant deposits were observed in either of the sections recorded.



Fig.15: *General shot of area monitored, facing NE, note the top third of 1m scale in base of trench in foreground*



Fig.16: *General shot of strip footings along northern boundary facing ESE*

The shallower of the two sections was situated in the NE corner of the dig area. It was approximately 1.2m deep with its base at 85.97mOD. Natural, clean, orange-brown clay was observed at c86.43m OD overlain by 0.18m of lighter brown silty-clay deposit representing reworked natural, sealed below 0.55m of loose, dark-grey / brown made ground containing frequent modern London brick and tile rubble and mixed pebbles. No earlier soil horizons or land surfaces were observed. It would appear that these had been truncated prior to the construction of the modern car park and previous buildings on the site.



Fig.17: *Section in northeast corner of site, facing south, (1m scale)*

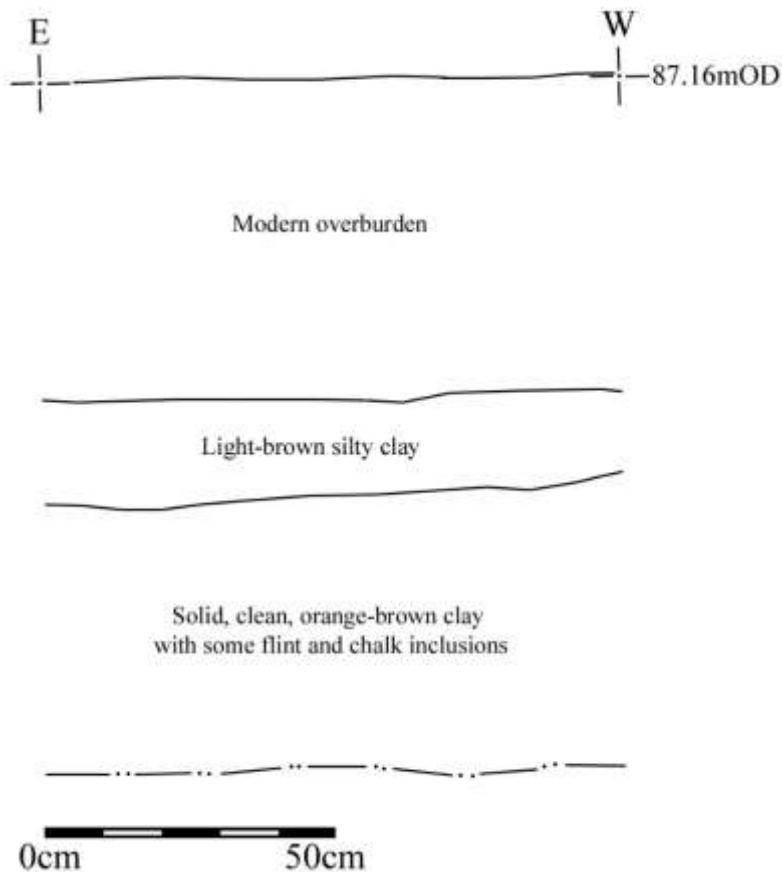
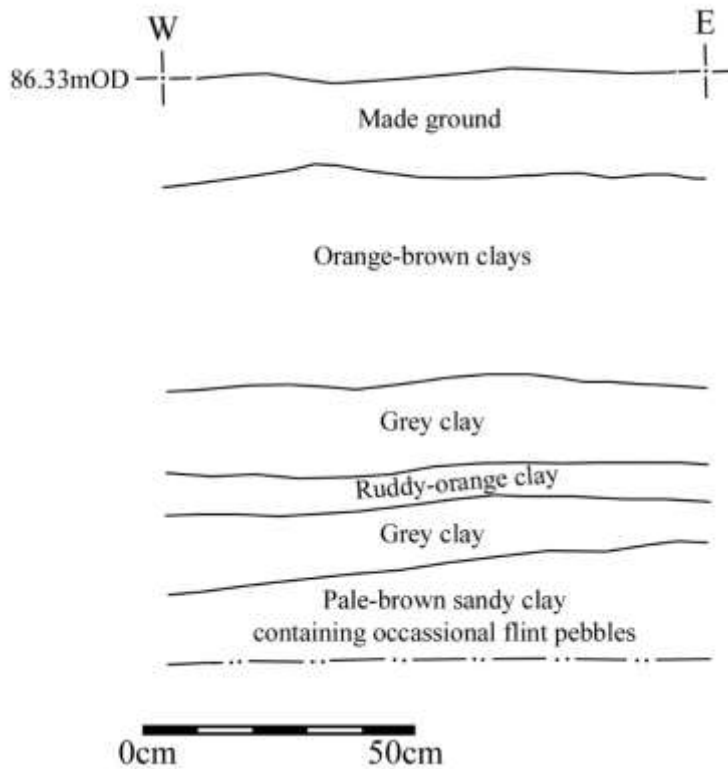


Fig.18: *Representational drawing of the section in the northeast corner of the site*

The southwestern section showed a much cleaner profile. The surrounding area had been reduced by up to 1.1m prior to excavation of the strip footings due to the nature of the modern overburden. Natural ground was observed from 86.13m OD and was laid down in a series of clay lenses and silts to a depth of 85.24mOD and beyond. The lowermost layer consisted of 0.20m of pale-brown sandy clay, containing occasional flint pebbles, continuing beyond the base of excavation. This was overlain by 0.15m of grey-white clay, sealed below a thin lens of ruddy-orange clay. Above this layer was another 0.15m of grey clay which was in turn overlain by 0.38m of orange-brown mottled clay. The uppermost layer consisted of 0.20m of grey-brown silty-clay containing frequent mixed pebble inclusions, and occasional brick and tile rubble representing the base of the made ground deposit observed in the footprint of the former buildings.



Fig.19: Section through southwest corner of dig area, facing north, (1m scale), and representational drawing below



8 Conclusions

No archaeologically significant deposits or features were observed during the course of the watching brief.

Natural ground was observed across the majority of the footprint of the area being redeveloped from between 0.55 to 1.3m below the present ground level to beyond the base of excavation. The natural varied across the site from solid, clean, orange brown clays to soft, pale-brown / white sandy-silts containing occasional flint pebbles.

The exception was in the southern part of the site where evidence of deeper but sterile deposits of hillwashed material were encountered. It may be that the majority of the footprint of the site was subject to truncation and then consolidation immediately prior to the construction of the 1960s properties and outbuildings.

9 Bibliography

General Sources

Greater London Historic Environment Record

London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC) database

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Map and Pictorial Sources

British Geological Survey 1998 *South London. England & Wales Sheet 270. Solid & Drift Geology*. 1:50 000

Ordnance Survey Maps. Various dates and scales

Appendix I OASIS data collection form

OASIS ID: [compassa1-159235](#)

Project details

| | |
|--|--|
| Project name | A programme of Archaeological observation and Recording at South Gate Flats, Layham Road, West Wickham |
| Short description of the project | An archaeological programme of observation and recording was conducted by Compass Archaeology between the 28th of August and 12th of September 2013 on the site of South Gate Flats, Layhams Road, West Wickham. The programme was conducted during groundworks associated with the construction of a new block of houses and associated maintenance buildings. In the event no archaeologically significant deposits or features were observed during the course of the watching brief. Natural ground was observed across the majority of the footprint of the area being redeveloped from between 0.55 to 1.3m below the present ground level to beyond the base of excavation. The natural varied across the site from solid, clean, orange brown clays to soft, pale-brown / white sandy-silts containing occasional flint pebbles. The exception was in the southern part of the site where evidence of deeper but sterile deposits of hillwashed material were encountered. It may be that the majority of the footprint of the site was subject to truncation and then consolidation immediately prior to the construction of the 1960s properties and outbuildings. |
| Project dates | Start: 28-08-2013 End: 12-09-2013 |
| Previous/future work | No / No |
| Any associated project reference codes | DMJ12 - Sitecode |
| Type of project | Recording project |
| Site status | Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) |
| Current Land use | Other 3 - Built over |
| Monument type | NONE None |

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Significant Finds | NONE None |
| Investigation type | "Watching Brief" |
| Prompt | Planning condition |

Project location

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Country | England |
| Site location | GREATER LONDON BROMLEY BROMLEY South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham |
| Postcode | BR4 9HQ |
| Study area | 182.00 Square metres |
| Site coordinates | TQ 39145 64665 51 0 51 21 48 N 000 00 03 W Point |
| Height OD / Depth | Min: 0.55m Max: 1.30m |

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 | Emma Jeffery |

Type of sponsor/funding body Landowner

Name of sponsor/funding body Daughters of Mary and Joseph Convent

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

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 "Photograph","Plan","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

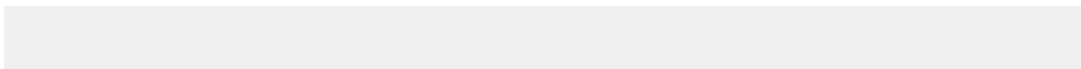
Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Archaeological Observation and Recording at South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham, London Borough of Bromley, BR4 9HQ

Author(s)/Editor(s) Jeffery, E

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Date | 2013 |
| Issuer or publisher | Compass Archaeology |
| Place of issue or publication | 5-7 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1RQ |
| Description | Short summary 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 areas monitored, and brief conclusions reached. |



Appendix II London Archaeologist summary

Site address: South Gate, Layhams Road, West Wickham, London Borough of Bromley, BR4 9HQ

Type of project: Watching brief

Dates of fieldwork: August 28th - September 12th 2013

Site code: DMJ12

Site Supervisor: Emma Jeffery

NGR: TQ 3914 6466

Funding body: Daughters of Mary and Joseph Convent

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