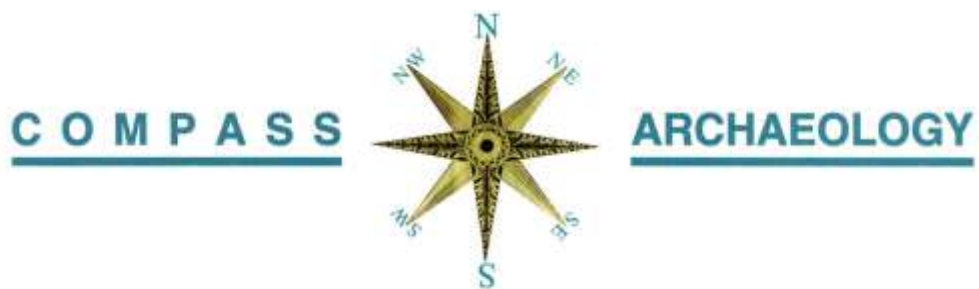


**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
49 BRIDGEN ROAD, BEXLEY
London Borough of Bexley, DA5 1JE**



January 2014



An Archaeological Watching Brief at
49 BRIDGEN ROAD, BEXLEY
London Borough of Bexley, DA5 1JE

Site code: BGN14

Site centre NGR: TQ 48432 73946

Planning Reference: 12/01848/F

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January 2014

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Abstract

In January 2014 Compass Archaeology conducted a watching brief at 49 Bridgen Road in Bexley on the site of a former Victorian gate Lodge building, during redevelopment of the site.

The watching brief was successful in that it revealed the footprint of the Lodge house to Bridgen Place within the area of redevelopment, (between 19.90mOD in the northwest corner and 19.39mOD in the southeast corner), and was able to be recorded before it was lost.

Details of the Lodge's floor plan can be inferred, as can the method of construction along with overall dimensions. These equate very well with available cartographic sources.

No earlier archaeological deposits were exposed during the watching brief, which is unsurprising considering the lack of development prior to the Lodge being built. Natural geology was revealed at a relatively shallow depth, (19.50mOD or 800mm below ground level in the southwest corner).

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Figs.2, and 9 reproduced and adapted from original drawings provided by Russell Associates

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document forms a summary of the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted by Compass Archaeology at 49 Bridgen Road in the London Borough of Croydon, DA5 1JE. The fieldwork was carried out on the 14th January 2014.

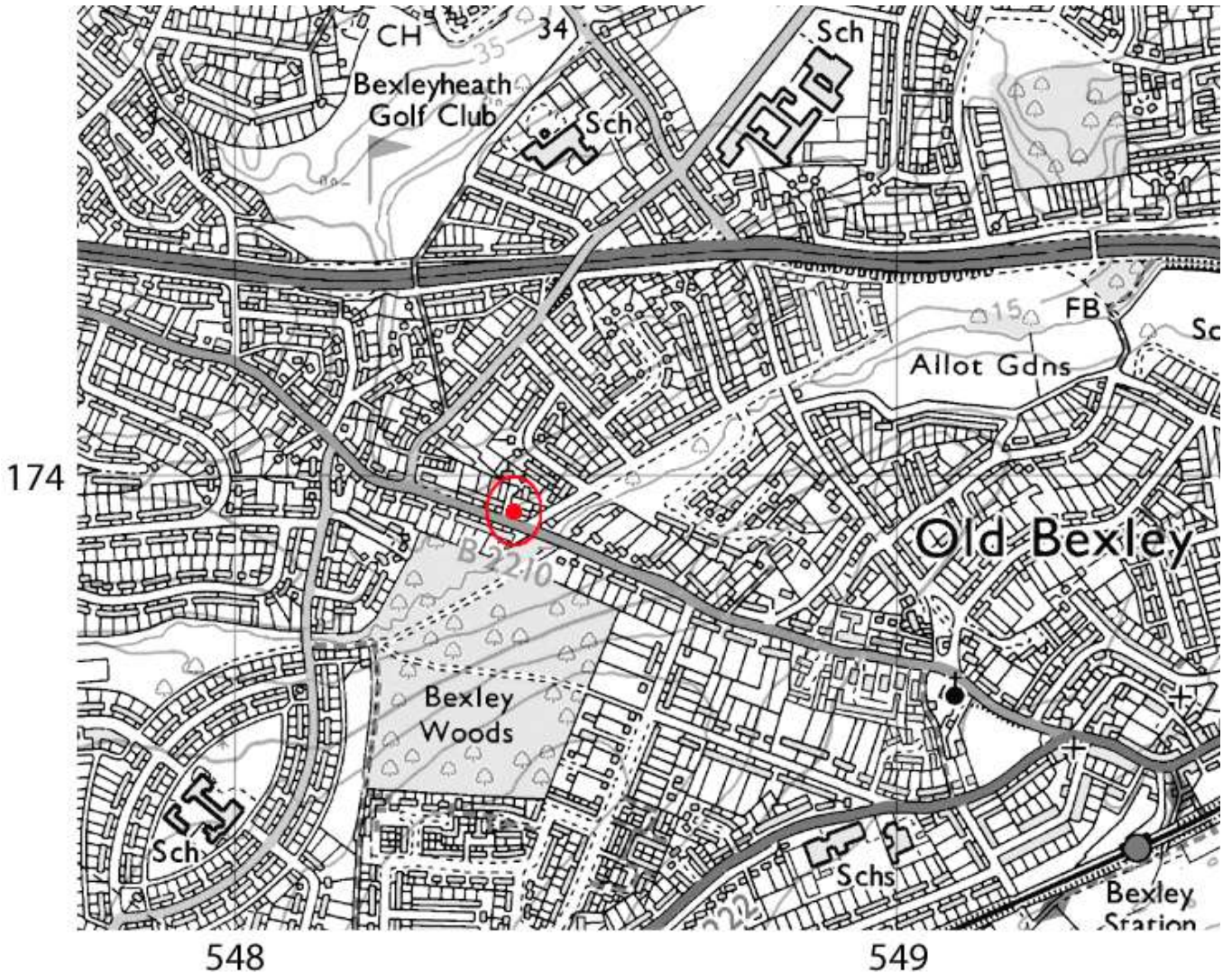


Fig.1: *Site location*

1.2 The watching brief was conducted in accordance with a planning condition attached to the construction of a pair of new three-bedroom semi-detached houses with provision for parking spaces, along with bicycle and refuse storage, (Planning Ref: 12/01848/FUL).

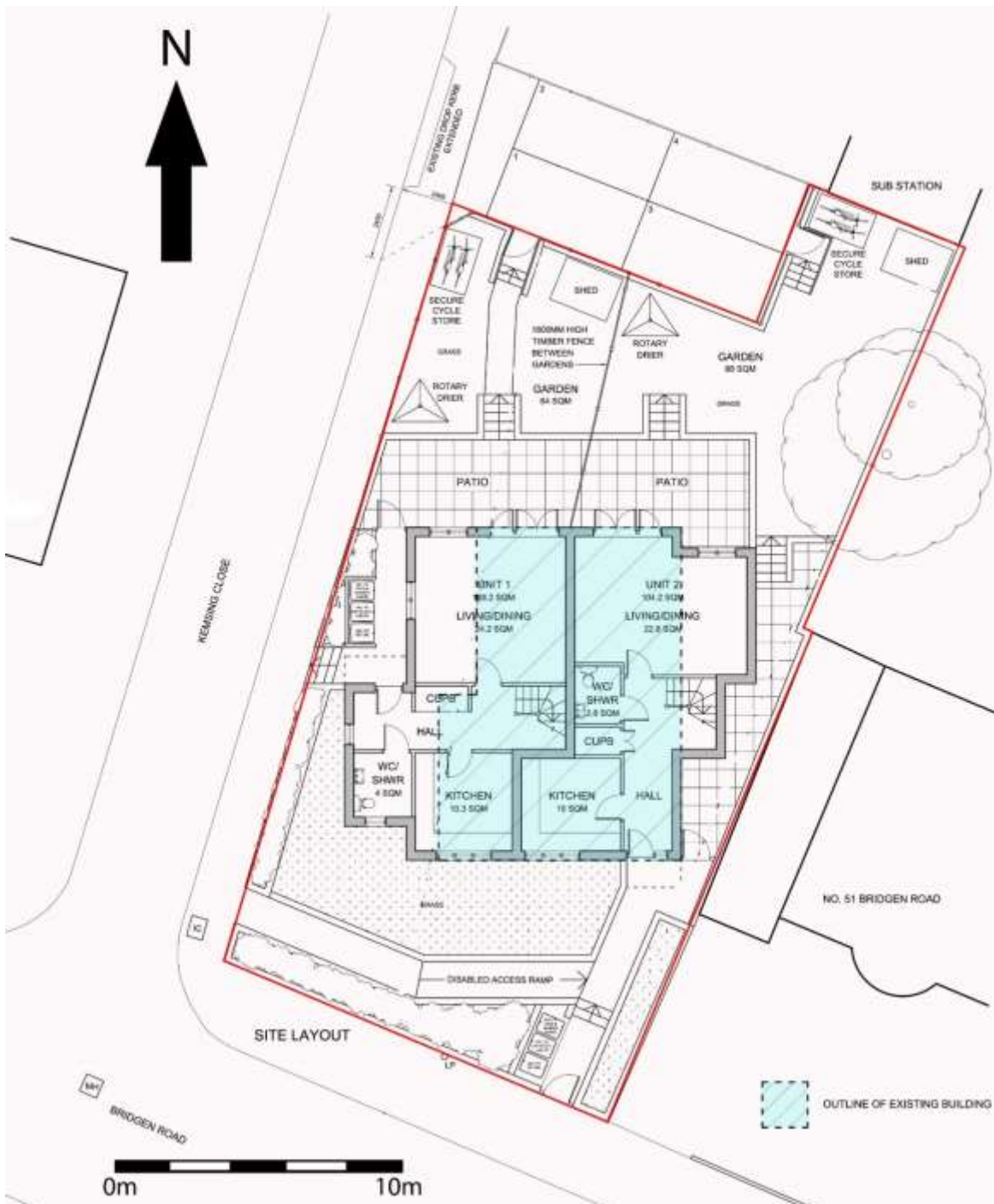


Fig.2: Site plan showing the proposed development, along with the existing 1960s building in green

1.3 The watching brief followed recommendations from English Heritage, and was commissioned by Russell Associates on behalf of Mr Noel Fitzgerald of Moushill Developments Ltd.

Particular thanks to Mr Fitzgerald for his assistance on site, and to Kieron Heard for identification of the clay pipe. Background research was undertaken with the help of Bexley Local Studies Library.

2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 The site centre is approximately centred on NGR TQ 48432 73946. It is positioned on a corner plot; directly to the north of Bridgen Road and on the east side of Kensing Close. The site was previously built over with a single-storey residential building, (constructed in the 1960s), surrounded by grassed areas. The overall site dimensions are as follows: c16m east-west by c31m north-south, (an area of approximately 496m²).
- 2.2 The site is on a slope, falling north to south from c21.80mOD at the northern end and c19.80mOD at the southern end, before dropping to c19.20mOD on the northern pavement of Bridgen Road.
- 2.3 The geological survey, (BGS, 1998, Sheet 271), indicates that the site lies on a narrow ridge of Lambeth Beds, overlying the Harwich Formation, with alluvium laid down by the River Shuttle forming the base of the valley immediately east of the site.

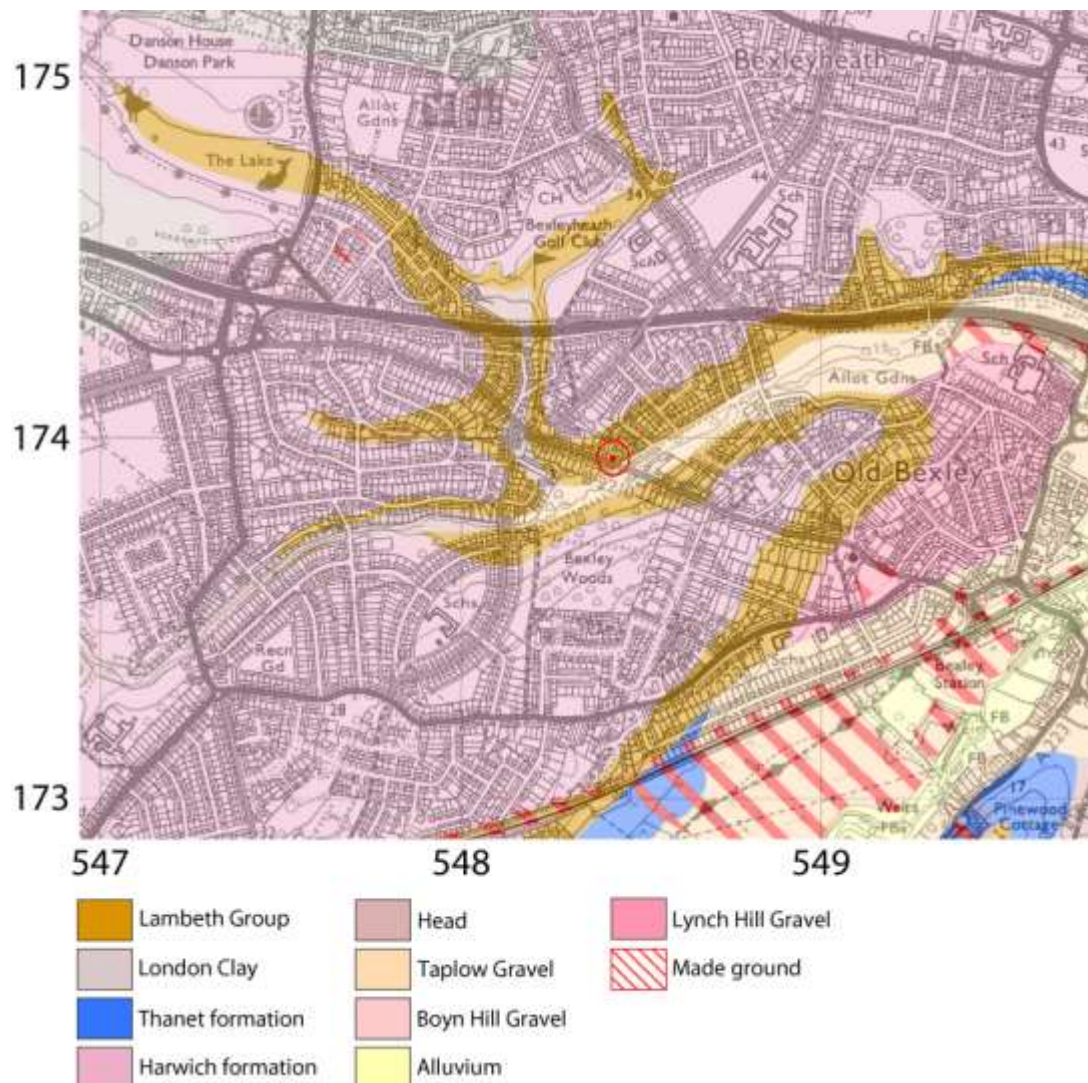


Fig.3: Site in relation to the underlying geology

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric

Prehistoric activity uncovered in the vicinity of the site mainly consists of individual find-spots rather than evidence for settlement or other more intensive activity.

The earliest evidence dates from the Mesolithic period, and consists of 17 waste flint flakes and chips including a core fragment, from Parkhill Road, (GLHER: 070567/00/00); plus a tranchet axe and two core axes from the site of the former Mental Hospital, (GLHER: 070597/00/00). Individual finds of Neolithic date have also been recovered, including four pressure-flaked arrowheads, (GLHER: 070546/00/00); and a late Neolithic / Early Bronze Age axe head fragment found in 1980 in Bexley Woods to the south, (GLHER: 070517/00/00); an Early Bronze Age flint dagger was found at 36 Eynsford Crescent in 1953, (GLHER: 070487/00/00), but this is located a considerable distance to the southwest.

Evidence for Iron Age activity, including a ditch, pit, and pottery uncovered during gravel-pitting at Upper College Farm, (GLHER: 070589/00/00), may indicate the location of a settlement, although no further evidence to support this has been found.

3.2 Roman

It is known that the Roman road Watling Street ran east-west some 1.5km to the north of the site, (along the line of the present A207). However, the only evidence for Roman activity in the vicinity of the site consists of cremations, with human remains in a glass vessel, accompanied by grave-goods including amphorae, three brooches, and a wooden comb, being uncovered during work at 28 Iris Avenue, (GLHER: 070505/00/00). Furthermore, four cinerary urns were supposedly found at Beechway in 1811, the largest containing human remains, (GLHER: 070487/00/00). This may indicate a nearby roadside cemetery, although the evidence is somewhat limited.

3.3 Saxon

No archaeological evidence for Saxon activity or settlement has been found in the vicinity of the site. The Domesday Book records Bexley as “Bexlea”, with 41 inhabitants. The place-name derives from the Saxon for “settlement in a clearing in the woods”. It seems likely that this settlement would, however, have been focused in Old Bexley, (where the medieval village was later focused), approximately 1.25km to the east of the site.

3.4 Medieval

No archaeological evidence for medieval activity has been found in the vicinity of the site. This is not surprising considering the medieval village was focused in Old Bexley. There is mention of an estate at Blendon Hall, (to the west of the site) in 1301, so it seems likely that there would have been a house of some sort here.

3.5 Post-Medieval

The site remained broadly undeveloped until the later 19th century. Cartographic evidence illustrates this most clearly – the 1799 Ordnance Surveyors' Drawings (fig.4) show the site positioned within a field just to the north of a road (the present Bridgen Road), with the River Shuttle to the east and another road (Arbutnot Lane), to the west. Some buildings are depicted to the west of the site – Bridgen palce and village, through to the Blendon estate. Blendon Hall, which was rebuilt in 1763, (GLHER: MLO8443), is just off of the left hand side of the map. The area is characterised by agriculture, as it remained until the later-19th / early-20th century.



Fig.4: *Extract from OSD 130, c1799 with approximate site location*

The 1860s OS Map, (fig.5), still shows the site within a wooded plot to the north of the main road. Bridgen Place, a large house constructed in the early 18th century, is shown to the north-west, with an entrance drive immediately east of the junction of Bridgen Road and Arbuthnot Lane.

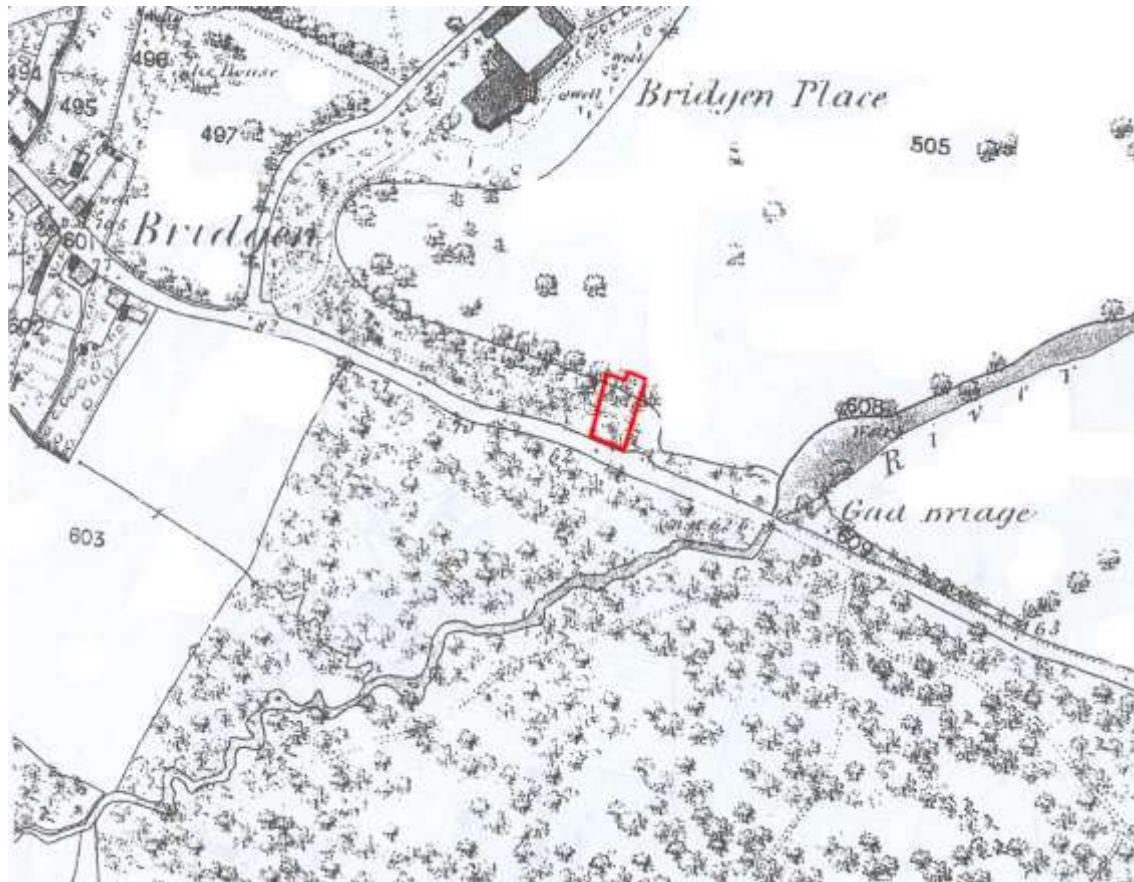


Fig.5: Extract from the 1860s OS map

By the time of the 1897 OS Map, (fig.6), the access road to Bridgen Place has been re-routed and a 'Lodge' had been constructed on the site. This was built on a Greek-cross plan, positioned towards the southern part of the plot. No other development is shown in the vicinity of the site.



Fig.6: Extract from the 1897 OS map showing the Lodge building at the end of the carriage drive to Bridgen Place

In the 1936 OS Map (fig.7) the area around the site was heavily developed, with rows of terraced houses on the southern side of Bridgen Road, and other buildings to the east and west of the site. These include the newly widened / developed Arbuthnot Road, named after the resident of Bridgen Place, W.U.Arbuthnot, a local J.P. Bridgen Place itself has been demolished to make way for new semi-detached properties. Much of the former carriage drive was now overlain by the Blue Anchor Public House and its associated garden, which was moved to this site in 1928 from the opposite side of the road.

The 1961 OS Map (fig.8) shows further development, with a row of detached houses along the northern side of Bridgen Road to the west of the site. This is broadly the layout of the area today, with the exception of the demolition of the 'Lodge' and construction of the single-storey building on the site itself sometime around 1966.



Fig.7: Extract from the 1936 OS map showing the development along Bridgen Road and Arbuthnot Lane. Bridgen Place did not survive this redevelopment, but the Lodge did.

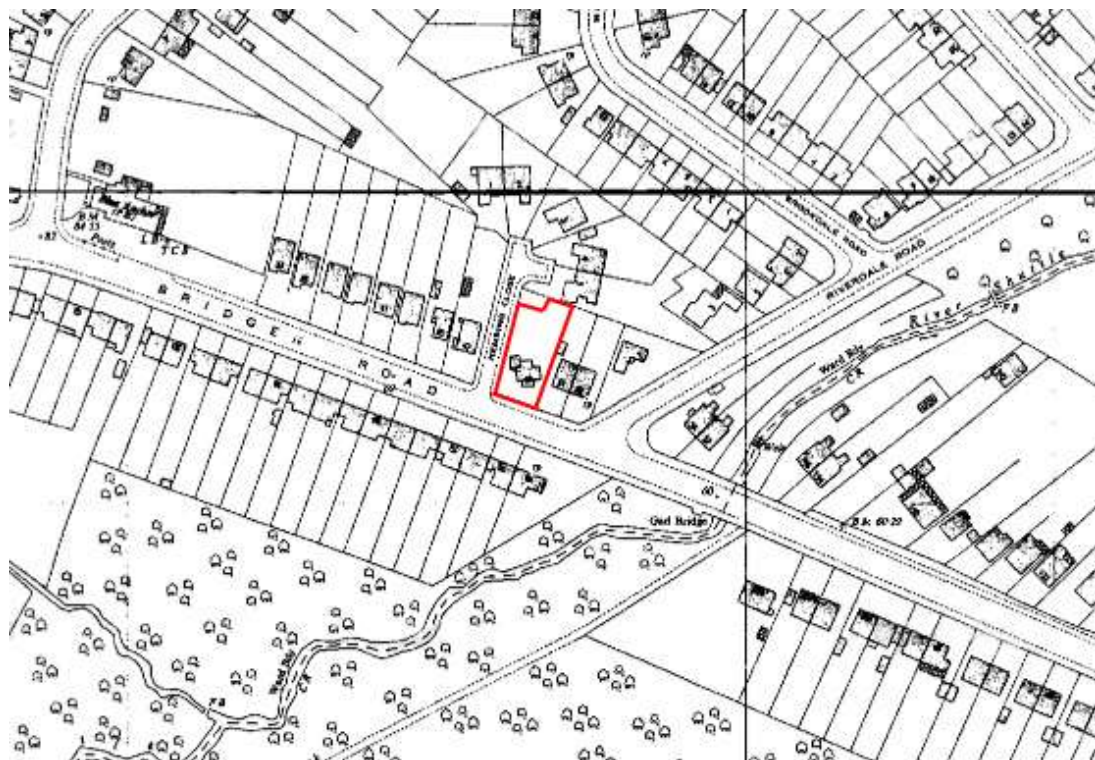


Fig.8: Extract from the 1961 OS map showing the road layout much as it existed up to the modern day. The Lodge building still survives but with an addition to the NW corner

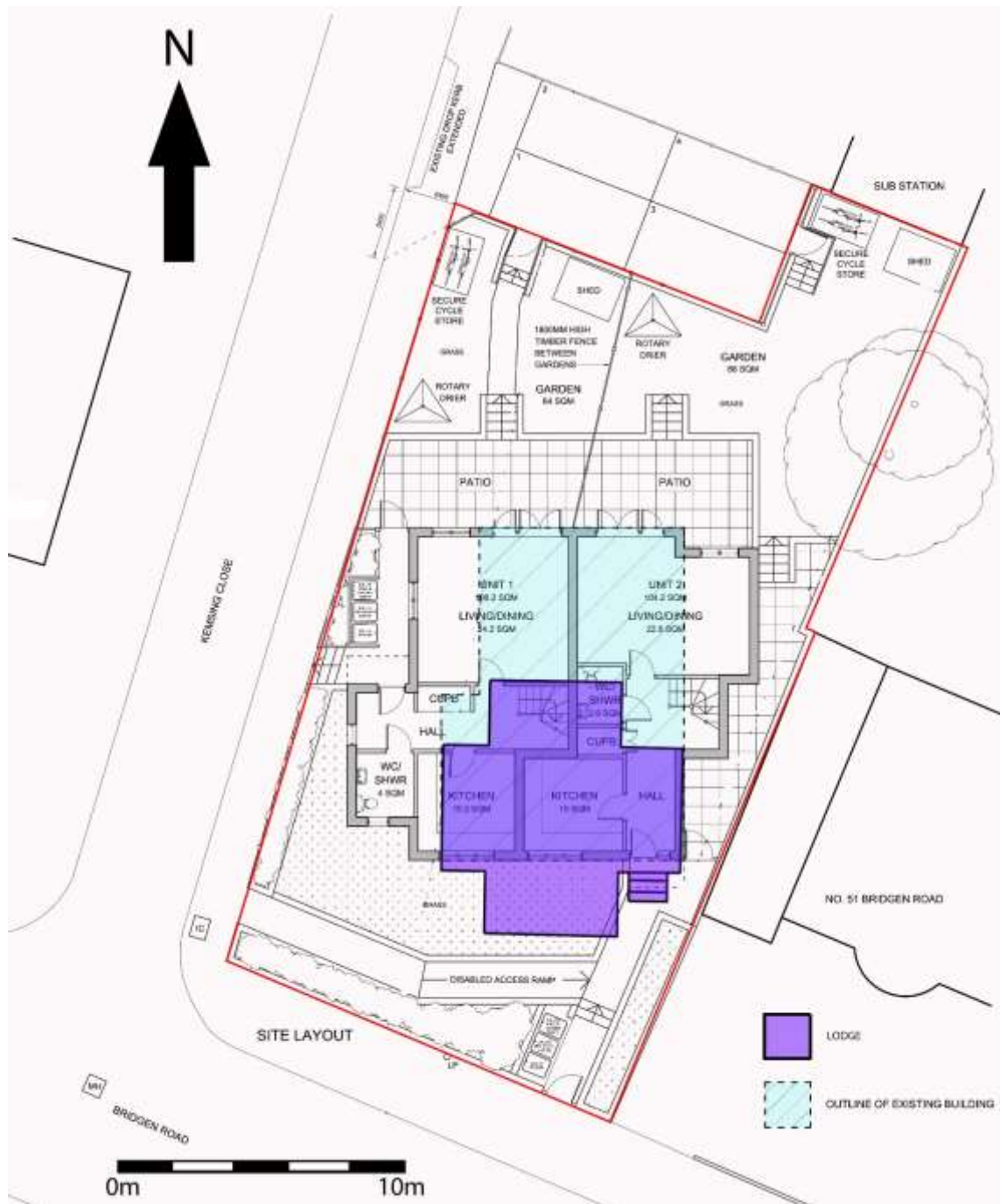


Fig.9: Plan showing the approximate location of the 'Lodge', (as taken from a 1932 drainage plan), in comparison to the OS map, proposal plan and 1960s bungalow

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The fieldwork presented an opportunity to address the following general, and more specific, research questions:

- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity on the site, such as find-spots or evidence for more concentrated activity or settlement?
- Is there any evidence for Roman activity on the site, possibly associated with burials and/or cremations?
- Is there any evidence for medieval – earlier post-medieval activity on the site, when it was broadly undeveloped and used for agriculture?
- Is there any evidence for the late 19th century Lodge which stood on the site, particularly the building foundations in the southern part of the site?
- At what levels do archaeological or geological deposits survive across the area?

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 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 also conformed to the standards of the Institute for Archaeologists, (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full Member of the Institute.

Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Construction (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations. All members of the fieldwork team carry valid CSCS Cards, (Construction Skills Certificate Scheme), and wore hi-vis jackets, hard-hats, and steel-toe-capped boots as required during the watching brief. All members of the fieldwork team followed the contractors' health and safety guidelines.

5.2 Fieldwork

5.2.1 The archaeological watching-brief took place immediately post-demolition of the existing structures and during general site reduction prior to excavation of the foundation trenches.

Machine stripping of these areas was supervised by the on-site archaeologist so that any potential remains could be investigated, identified and recorded prior to construction. English Heritage were advised beforehand of the on-site start date, and of any significant remains that were exposed.

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

5.2.2 Methodology

Archaeological deposits and features were investigated and recorded in stratigraphic sequence, and finds dating evidence recovered.

Archaeological contexts were recorded as appropriate on *pro-forma* sheets by written and measured description, and drawn in plan at a scale of 1:20. The location of the groundworks was recorded on a general site plan and related to the Ordnance Survey grid. The fieldwork record was supplemented as appropriate by digital photography. Levels were taken from a previous site survey by MULTI-UMN and originally derived from Ordnance Datum through the OS Active GPS Network.

The Client and the archaeological representative of English Heritage were kept advised of the progress of the fieldwork, and in particular any significant finds or remains.

5.3 POST-EXCAVATION

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

5.3.1 Finds and samples

Assessment of finds was undertaken by appropriately qualified staff. There was only one retained find, (see 6.8), which was 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*'. The find has been retained and bagged with a unique number related to the context record.

5.3.2 Report procedure

Copies of the report will be supplied to the client, English Heritage GLAAS, 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*.

5.3.3 The site archive

An ordered indexed and internally consistent archive of the evaluation will be compiled in line with MoL *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives*, and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archaeological Archive under site code BGN14. The integrity of the site archive should be maintained, and the landowner will be urged to donate any archaeological finds to the Museum.

6 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

- 6.1** The watching brief / fieldwork was conducted on the 14th of January 2014 during the initial ground reduction following demolition of the pre-existing building. The results of the fieldwork are detailed below.
- 6.2** The existing building was built from approximately 0.50m and 0.80m above the buried footings of the late-19th century Lodge judging from levels, with the depth increasing from the southwest to the north and east. Outside the footprint of the previous building the existing topsoil, (1), sealed a thick layer of made ground, containing large quantities of crushed brick, slate, mortar dust and modern rubbish, representing demolition debris from the destruction of the Lodge, used to create a level platform prior to construction of the 1960s bungalow, (2). These layers amounted to the topmost 0.50-0.60m of stratigraphy.
- 6.3** In the eastern section, visible on the boundary with no.51 Bridgen Road, was a lower deposit of thick, dark-grey silty-clay, probably representing a buried topsoil, (7), indicating the earlier ground level contemporary with the Victorian Lodge. This was approximately 0.20m thick.
- 6.4** Natural ground, (8), was observed from c.19.50mOD in the southwestern corner of the site, and was an orangey-brown, clayey-sand containing frequent river-washed rounded pebbles up to 20mm big. It was into these natural deposits that the original footings for the Lodge had been dug.
- 6.5** The foundations associated with the late-19th century Lodge took 3 forms. The first, including the main perimeter wall and interior structure of red, frogged, stock bricks usually between 360-420mm thick, and bonded with a fairly soft off-white lime mortar, [6]. Many of the internal footings for partition walls etc. were a single stretcher wide; 220-260mm. Surrounding this structure was a thin, (220mm thick), outer layer of yellow, frogged, stock brick, bonded by a harder, off-white / grey lime mortar, [5]. These two ‘phases’ of brickwork were separated by a gap of up to 120mm, (but often as little as 50mm), filled with a dark-grey clay-silt or brick, slate and mortar rubble, (10). In the top northwest corner of the Lodge structure a third style of foundation was present, for a width of approximately 0.80m, taking the form of a solid concrete slab, equating to the footings for the mid-20th century addition to the northwest corner of the Lodge, [4]. This concrete partially overlapped the outer face-work footings.
- 6.6** The overall dimensions of the Lodge building as exposed were 7.15m, E-W, (though the eastern extent of the outer face-work was not exposed), by 5.84m N-S. Although the southern arm of the Lodge was not exposed the southern extent of the western arm was observed as a flushed face in the southwest corner of the excavation. Extrapolating these measurements in relation to the known plan of the building it is presumed that overall dimensions of the original structure would have been approximately 7.15m E-W by 8.15m N-S.

This would have meant that the Lodge was broadly laid out as a ‘Greek cross’ but with a slightly longer eastern arm than western arm. This may reflect the overall

position of the Lodge, with the eastern face being the front, facing the access drive and the north and southern wings projecting equidistantly either side. The western arm would have been at the rear of the property and so would not really have been seen, hence the slightly shorter length.

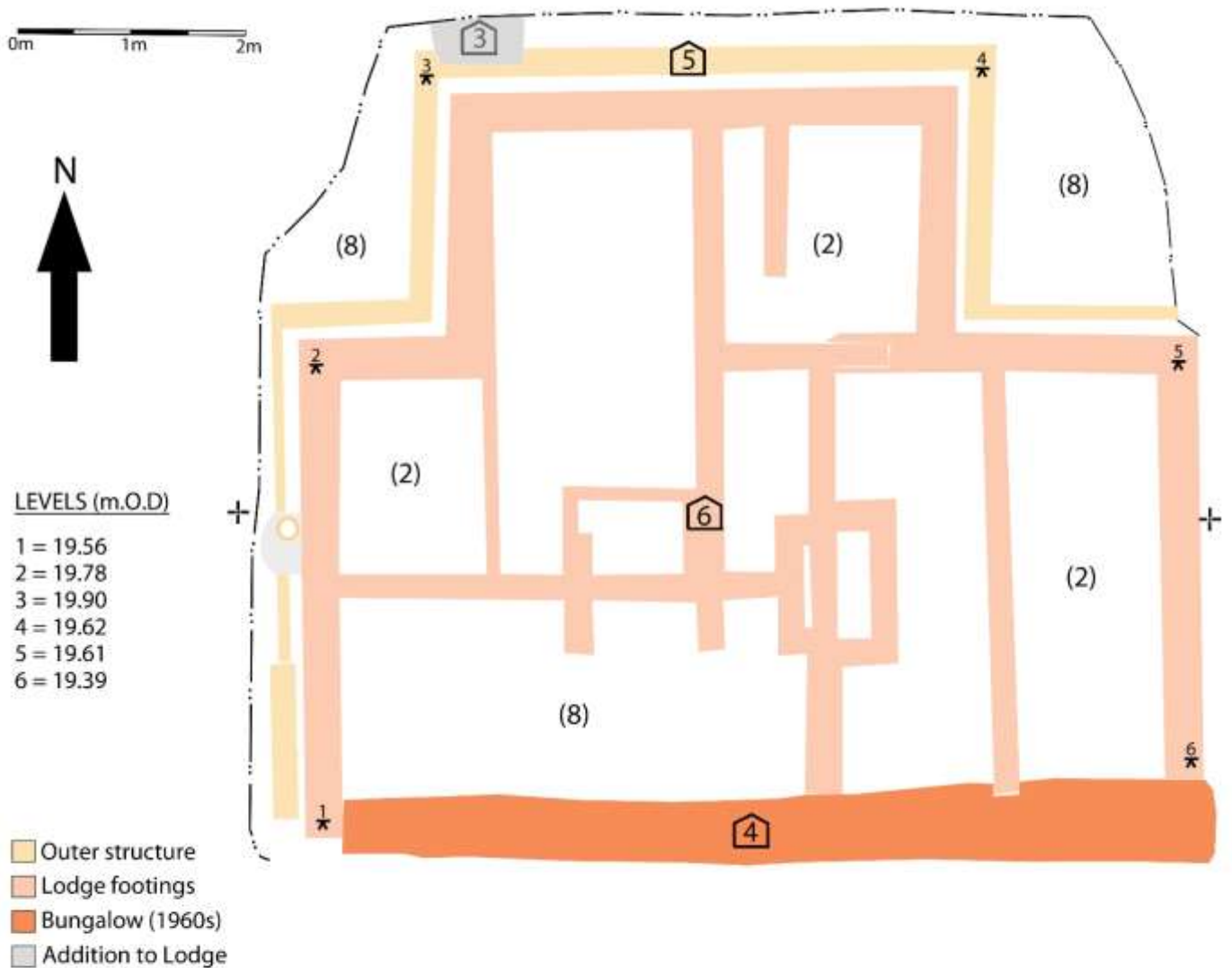


Fig.10: Plan of the excavated foundations for the Lodge building. Scale 1:20

6.7 The many internal footings suggest that the Lodge had a suspended floor construction, with the floor boards / joists resting on the brick footings. There were also two areas of brickwork around the centre of the structure which could be interpreted as potential fireplaces / chimney stack footings. Some of the nearby loose bricks looked somewhat blackened, as if exposed to fire or from soot, but none of these were *in situ*. The broadly central location of these footings would make sense, however they also seem a bit insubstantial to form the actual structure of a chimney stack / fireplace, but may instead form the bases of several fireplaces coalescing to one single stack at a higher level.



Fig.11: 'Lodge' footings facing NE, (1m scale)



Fig.12: 'Lodge' footings facing NW, (1m scale)



Fig.13: 'Lodge' footings facing *W*, (1m scale)



Fig.14: 'Lodge' footings facing *SW*, (1m scale)



Fig.15: 'Lodge' footings facing SE, (1m scale)



Fig.16: 'Lodge' footings facing E, (1m scale)

6.8 The sole noteworthy find was an extremely large clay tobacco pipe bowl, measuring 66mm tall and 48mm wide. The bowl was found in the infill between the inner and outer walls, (10). The bowl itself was devoid of decoration and did not show any signs of use, although a mould line was visible on the front face, which formed a slightly decorative finish. The bowl had broken away from the stem at some point in the past and so the owner had cut / sanded back the bowl at this break, potentially for re-use. The large size of the bowl identifies the pipe as a ‘cadger’ pipe, so-called because the individual would ask a fellow smoker for a fill of tobacco, and then produce the huge pipe! They were popular in the late-Victorian / Edwardian era; c1850-1910 and this example was probably made towards the end of that period¹.



Fig.17: *Right side and rear face of the ‘Cadger’ pipe*

6.9 The whole building had later been demolished to make way for the bungalow constructed in 1966. The footings for the modern bungalow, [4], were seen to follow the line of some of the earlier footings such as the easternmost wall, and in other places truncated earlier footings such as along the southern limit of excavation, where a 420-720mm wide section of brickwork over concrete extended across the entire width of the excavation area. This brickwork was cut into the natural and was haphazardly lain, with no coherent pattern, in places the brickwork was replaced at slightly higher level with concrete, suggesting the brickwork was merely used as a base from which to start construction from.

¹ Pers.comm. Kieron Heard, (January 2014)

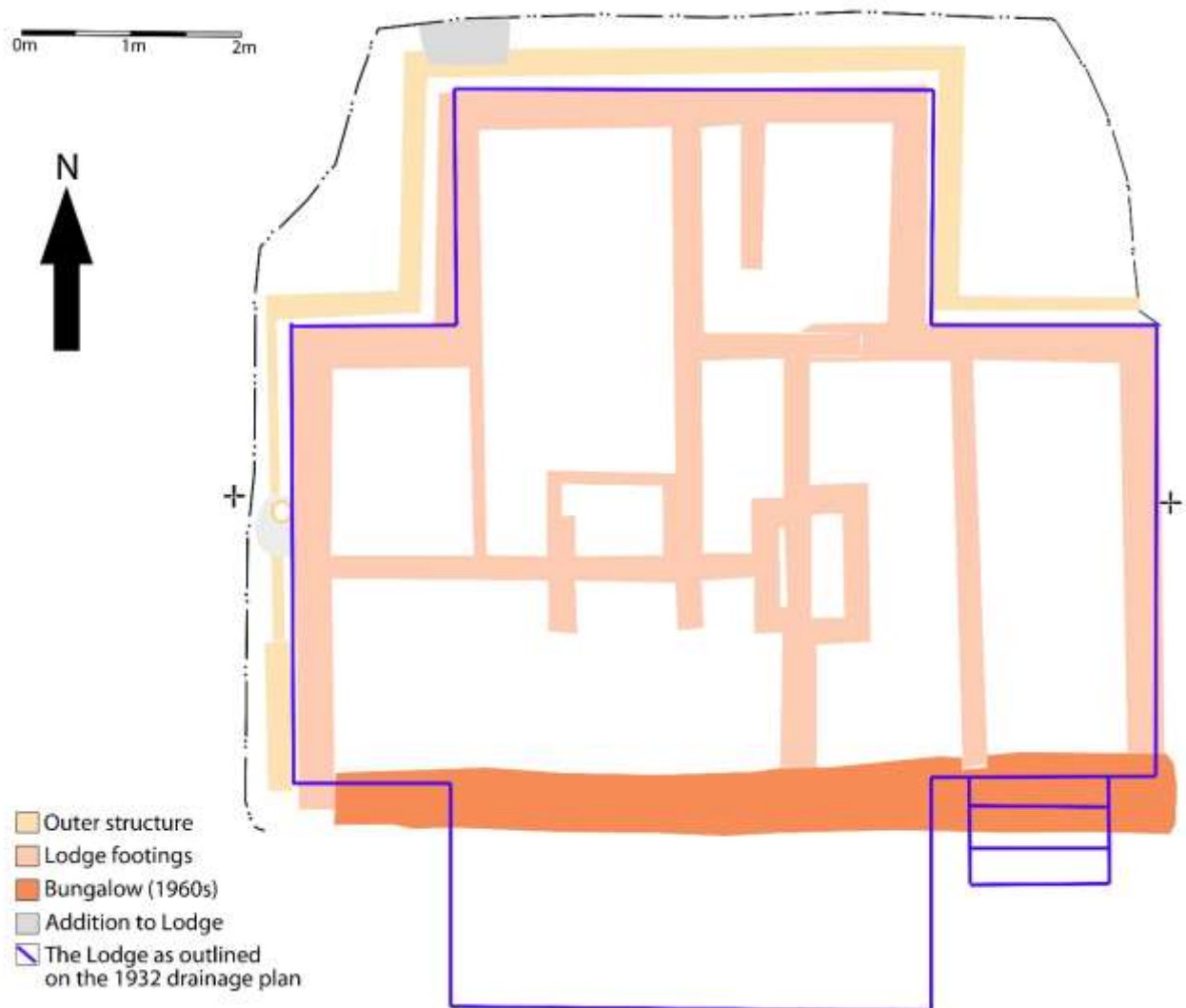


Fig.18: *Plan of buried remains with an overlay of the 1932 drainage plan*

6.10 Attempting to relate the remains to the cartographic evidence is enlightening as it would appear that the ‘inner structure’ relates more closely to the building depicted in plans, especially the 1932 drainage plan, (see fig. above). This may indicate that the ‘outer structure’ was not actually a standing outer facework or second phase of rebuilding but maybe a partially buried feature such as a surrounding drainage gully or damp-proofing measure. This is highly possible as the slope of the surrounding ground would no doubt have caused issues with drainage.

6.11 The extension that was built into the northwest corner of the Lodge would suggest a sparse interior, with the extension being necessary to provide space for more comfortable living, and indeed the exposed footings do not suggest a large number of rooms.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to find any contemporary illustrations, so it is not known whether the building was of one or two storeys. However, amongst the overlying demolition material were quantities of slate, (though no clay roof tile), which points to the nature of the roof covering.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief was successful in that it revealed the footprint of the Lodge house to Bridgen Place within the area of redevelopment, (between 19.90mOD in the northwest corner and 19.39mOD in the southeast corner), and was able to be recorded before it was lost.

Details of the Lodge's floor plan can be inferred, as can the method of construction along with overall dimensions. These seem to equate very well with available cartographic sources, in particular the 1932 drainage plan.

No earlier archaeological deposits were exposed during the watching brief, which is unsurprising considering the lack of development prior to the Lodge being built. Natural geology was revealed at a relatively shallow depth, (19.50mOD or 800mm below ground level in the southwest corner).

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Ordnance Survey Maps, *various dates and scales*

APPENDIX I OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: [compassa1-169468](#)

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 49 Bridgen Road, Bexley, DA5 1JE
Short description of the project	In January 2014 Compass Archaeology conducted a watching brief at 49 Bridgen Road in Bexley on the site of a former Victorian Lodge building during redevelopment of the site. The watching brief was successful in that it revealed the footprint of the Lodge house to Bridgen Place within the area of redevelopment, (between 19.90mOD in the northwest corner and 19.39mOD in the southeast corner), and was able to be recorded before it was lost. Details of the Lodge's floor plan can be inferred, as can the method of construction along with overall dimensions. These equate very well with available cartographic sources. No earlier archaeological deposits were exposed during the watching brief, which is unsurprising considering the lack of development prior to the Lodge being built. Natural geology was revealed at a relatively shallow depth, (19.50mOD or 800mm below ground level in the southwest corner).
Project dates	Start: 14-01-2014 End: 14-01-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BGN14 - Sitecode bexl009 - Contracting Unit No. 12/01848/F - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	WALL FOOTINGS Post Medieval
Monument type	WALL FOOTINGS Modern
Significant Finds	'CADGER' PIPE BOWL Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BEXLEY BEXLEY 49 Bridgen Road
Postcode	DA5 1JE
Study area	496.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 4843 7394 51.4444582143 0.136090142696 51 26 40 N 000 08 09 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 19.27m Max: 19.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Geoff Potter
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Moushill Developments Ltd.

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Physical Contents	"other"
Physical Archive notes	One 'Cadger' clay tobacco pipe bowl
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","Map","Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Plan","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 49 Bridgen Road, Bexley, DA5 1JE
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Aaronson, J
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street, 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: 49 Bridgen Road, Bexley, DA5 1JE
Project type: Watching Brief

Dates of fieldwork: 14th January 2014
Site code: BGN14
Site Supervisor: Geoff Potter

NGR: TQ 48432 73946

Funding body: Moushill Developments Ltd.

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Details of the Lodge's floor plan can be inferred, as can the method of construction along with overall dimensions. These equate well with available cartographic sources, especially a 1932 drainage plan.

No earlier archaeological deposits were exposed during the watching brief, which is unsurprising considering the lack of development prior to the Lodge being built. Natural geology was revealed at a relatively shallow depth, (19.50mOD or 800mm below ground level in the southwest corner).