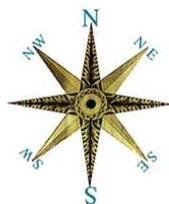


**LAND TO THE REAR OF BACK LANE,  
BUCKS HORN OAK, FARNHAM, GU10  
HAMPSHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

DECEMBER 2006

**COMPASS**



**ARCHAEOLOGY**



LAND TO THE REAR OF BACK LANE,  
BUCKS HORN OAK, FARNHAM GU10  
HAMPSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

PLANNING REFERENCE: F.22764/006/FUL

SITE CENTRE NGR: SU 8053 4190

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December 2006

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## ***Abstract***

*An archaeological watching brief took place between August and November 2006 on a redevelopment site behind Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, near Farnham in Hampshire. The site is located on a plot of land off the A325, which runs through Alice Holt Forest (Fig. 1). The work was carried out as part of the Local Authority planning process (ref. F.22764/006/FUL) and in response to recommendations made by Hampshire County Council.*

*It was thought that the site might have potential for archaeological remains, including evidence for Roman and medieval activity. The site itself lies some 2km away from the main Alice Holt Roman pottery production centre, which was also active in the early medieval era. In addition to this there is some evidence for prehistoric activity in the area, reflected in the discovery of pottery and worked flints.*

*There were two main aspects to the archaeological monitoring of the site. Firstly, stripping of soil horizons to form two discrete test trenches prior to more general site clearance; and secondly, observation of the machine excavation of deeper strip footings (up to c. 2m deep) for the new buildings. A shallower foundation trench for a new boundary wall in the northeastern part of the site was also inspected.*

*No significant artefacts, deposits or cut features were revealed. There was a simple and quite consistent sequence of deposits across the site, with relatively shallow soil horizons and some recent disturbance overlying the natural deposit of clayey silt with some gravel. The soil profile was about 400 to 500mm thick, and at the upper level contained fragments of ceramic building material, clinker and charcoal, plus occasional modern pottery, glass and plastic.*

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*Figure 1 reproduced from the OS 1:1250 map with permission of the HMSO. ©Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd., London SE1 1RQ, licence no. AL 100031317*

*Figure 2 based on a Site Plan by Simmons Taylor Hall, No. 528 / 001*

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** An archaeological watching brief took place during redevelopment groundworks on the western side of Back Lane, Farnham (Figure 1, site approximately centred at NGR SU 8053 4190). The development necessitated the digging of foundations for eight dwellings, as well as some general ground reduction and formation of access and car parking from the east of the site.

The fieldwork took place between August and November 2006 and was undertaken by Compass Archaeology. Prior to this development, the site was an open area of land and is understood to have been used at one time for the cultivation of crops.

- 1.2** Archaeological monitoring of the site was required as a condition of planning consent granted by the local authority (planning reference F.22764/006/FUL: Condition 34). The fieldwork was also carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Compass Archaeology (July 2006) and approved by Stephen Appleby, Senior Archaeologist, Environment Department, Hampshire County Council.
- 1.3** It was considered that the site had potential for archaeological remains specifically those relating to Roman activity. This is due to the close proximity of the Alice Holt pottery production centre, part of which is concentrated just 2 km north of the proposed development and which was also active during the medieval period.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

Phil Desmond (Ypres Rose Developments, London), commissioned the archaeological watching brief. Further assistance during the fieldwork was provided by the Site Agent, Tony Edwards.

Archaeological measures on this site were proposed by the Environment Department, Hampshire County Council, as part of the planning process. Background information on the area was provided by Rachel Salter of the Archaeology and Historic Buildings section of the County Council.

## **3. Site background**

The site is located on a plot of land just to the west of the A325 Farnham Road, which runs through the Alice Holt Forest. The plot itself is rectangular in plan, with dimensions (excluding access) of about 68m north-south by 45m east-west, and is approximately centred at NGR SU 8053 4190.

Geological surveys indicate that the site overlies a natural ground surface of stiff Gault Clay. It is this clay along with frequent gravel deposits that form the geological makeup of both the immediate and surrounding areas of the site.

## **4. Archaeology and history**

- 4.1** The site was considered to have some potential for archaeological features and finds, in particular relating to the nearby Alice Holt pottery production centre. Pottery manufacture began here in Roman times, and the area was also a focus of pottery

production into the early medieval era. There are two known medieval potting sites in the Alice Holt area: one at Bentley on the northwest side, and also at Frithend at the southern end of Alice Holt (Lyne & Jefferies 1974; 25). Finds from medieval potteries such as these have been dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The Roman pottery centre consisted of a large number of pottery kilns, as well as roughly 79 associated waste dumps dating from *c* AD 60 to 420. The Hampshire SMR indicates that a pottery kiln dating to AD 250 – 420 was discovered less than 500m from the site. This suggests that pottery production was not confined to one area, and as such increased the possibility that Roman material might be found on the present site.

- 4.2** Only a few prehistoric finds have been recovered from the immediate area. Sherds of Iron Age pottery (*c* 800 BC – AD 42) and prehistoric worked flints found close to the site suggest human activity of a transient nature, as opposed to any permanent settlements.

## **5. Archaeological Research Questions**

The archaeological fieldwork provided an opportunity to address the following research questions, as defined in the preliminary Written Scheme of Investigation:

- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity, and how does this relate to other finds recorded in the area?
- Is there any evidence for Roman or medieval activity, and can the nature of this be defined (e.g. industrial &/or settlement)?
- Is there any evidence for continued use of the site as a pottery production centre in the late medieval or post-medieval period?

## **6. Groundworks and methodology**

The watching brief record principally comprised the following elements (Figure 2):

- (a) Stripping of soil horizons to form two discrete test trenches prior to more general site clearance, under archaeological supervision.
- (b) Observation of the machine excavation of deeper strip footings (up to *c.* 2m deep) for the new houses in Plots 1-8.
- (c) Inspection of a shallower foundation trench for a new boundary wall in the northeastern part of the site.

All areas, including test trenches and building footprints, were machine-dug and the exposed deposits examined for finds and/or buried features. Once fully excavated the respective trenches were planned and representative samples of the exposed sections were drawn and photographed. Individual deposits were described on the drawings but did not produce any significant finds and were therefore not separately recorded by context. The principal foundation trenches were observed and photographed, but in some cases were too deep to be entered.



Levels were derived from a benchmark of 115.34m OD located on the northeastern corner of No. 3 Collier's Cottages, southeast of the site and facing onto the A325.

Compass Archaeology currently holds the site archive. The field records include a site location plan, trench sheets and plans, sections and photographs; however, no finds were retained. The site records will be prepared and placed within a suitable museum or similar repository as part of the ongoing programme of archive deposition.

## **7. The archaeological fieldwork**

### **7.1 Test Trench 1 (Figures 3, 4 & 5)**

Before groundwork commenced, a test trench was machine dug in the southwest corner of the site, aligned approximately north to south. The trench was *c* 300 to 400mm deep and measured 16.70m in length by 1.85m in width. A shallow and relatively straightforward soil profile was revealed overlying the natural ground surface, although there were some areas of disturbance particularly towards the northern end of the trench.

The topsoil in Trench 1 was a dark grey-brown coloured compact clay silt with inclusions of scattered pebbles, charcoal and recent material (*eg.* glass and plastic), although no such finds were retained. The subsoil was a firm mid brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal, fine clinker and scattered pebbles and flints, but no finds. Finally the natural was a stiff mottled light brown to buff orange clayey silt. This layer could be described as sterile but was disturbed/reworked at the upper level, probably mainly as a result of past cultivation.

### **7.2 Test Trench 2 (Figures 6, 7 & 8)**

Trench 2 was machine dug after work on the footprints had begun. The trench was situated in the northwest of the site, aligned roughly north-south and some 12m in length. The character and depth of the stratigraphic sequence found was similar to that described above (7.1). This too was a straightforward soil profile over natural, with a few fairly recent inclusions at the upper reworked level. The level of natural in this trench was about 112.5m OD, close to the base of excavation.

### **7.3 Trench 3 (Figures 9 & 10)**

Trench 3 was part of the general groundworks, dug on the line of the new property boundary towards the northeastern corner of the site. It formed a fairly shallow foundation cut (*c* 0.8m) for a wall as part of the new development, and a representative section was recorded (although not dug) by the on-site archaeologist.

As with the previous two test trenches in other areas of the site the stratigraphy was uncomplicated, and revealed reworked topsoil over a thin layer of subsoil merging into a slightly weathered natural clayey silt. This in turn overlay the undisturbed natural layer towards the base of the trench.

#### 7.4 The footprint excavation, Plots 1-8 (*Figures 2, 11 & 12*)

There were eight building plots in all, with the individual footings covering areas of approximately 8.0m by 10.0m up to just over 10.0m square (*cf.* Fig 2). Trench depths ranged from just under 1.0m to about 2.0m, and in all cases these were dug into the firm and undisturbed natural deposit.

The foundation trenches for the housing plots revealed straightforward topsoil and subsoil horizons over weathered natural, and were therefore similar to the stratigraphic sequences found in trenches 1, 2 and 3 above. Plot 8 (Fig 12) provides a good representative example of this. The plot was situated to the northwest of the site and contained a clearly defined and simple soil profile overlying natural. The topsoil was a mid to dark grey-brown sandy silt with root disturbance and some pebbles/flints (*c.* 0.35m in depth). This merged to a shallower band of mid brownish sandy silt subsoil, which in turn overlay the natural layer. The subsoil contained scattered medium-fine flints but was otherwise quite sterile.

The natural was typically a mottled buff/yellow and orange silt/clay, slightly sandy and with moderate inclusions of small to large angular flint pebbles. At its uppermost level weathering and/or root disturbance had given the deposit a slightly darker/more mixed consistency, which soon disappeared.

### 8. Assessment of the methodology and conclusion

8.1 The archaeological fieldwork provided an opportunity to address objectives that were defined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (*cf.* section 5 above) in relation to the archaeological potential of the site:

- *Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity, and how does this relate to other finds recorded in the area?*

There was no evidence of prehistoric activity on the site. No artefacts relating to that era were seen, either *in situ* or residual, nor were there any features or deposits.

- *Is there any evidence for Roman or medieval activity, and can the nature of this be defined (e.g. industrial &/or settlement)?*

Although it seemed likely that material relating to pottery production could be found due to the site's proximity to previous discoveries, no evidence for Roman or medieval activity was discovered. The site yielded no such archaeological evidence either in the form of discrete artefacts, deposits or features.

- *Is there any evidence for continued use of the site as a pottery production centre in the late medieval or post-medieval period?*

There was no evidence for the use of the site as a pottery production centre in either the late medieval or post-medieval period; nor indeed was there any evidence for activity on the site in these periods.

- 8.2** To summarise: the stratigraphic sequence was fairly consistent across the site, and comprised relatively shallow soil horizons overlying undisturbed natural clay/silt. No finds were retained, and there were no cut features, deposits or fills that were considered to have archaeological potential.

Although not all the groundworks on the site were observed it is considered that an adequate sample was monitored and recorded, particularly in view of the essentially negative results that were obtained. Moreover, the fieldwork included two test trenches that were subjected to thorough archaeological investigation during the project.

The archaeological monitoring that took place provided no evidence for any significant archaeological remains, deposits or features. No evidence was found relating to the Roman Alice Holt pottery production centre, or to subsequent medieval/ earlier post-medieval pottery manufacture. Nor was there any other evidence for past activity: only modern finds were yielded, from the upper levels of the reworked soil profile.

#### **References:**

Compass Archaeology (2006) *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham GU10 4LW, Hampshire*

Lyne, M A B & Jefferies, R S (1979) *The Alice Holt/Farnham Roman pottery industry*. Council for British Archaeology Research Report No. 30

Lyne, M & Jefferies, R S (1974) *The Alice Holt Medieval Potters*. Surrey Archaeological Collections. Vol 70, 25-46

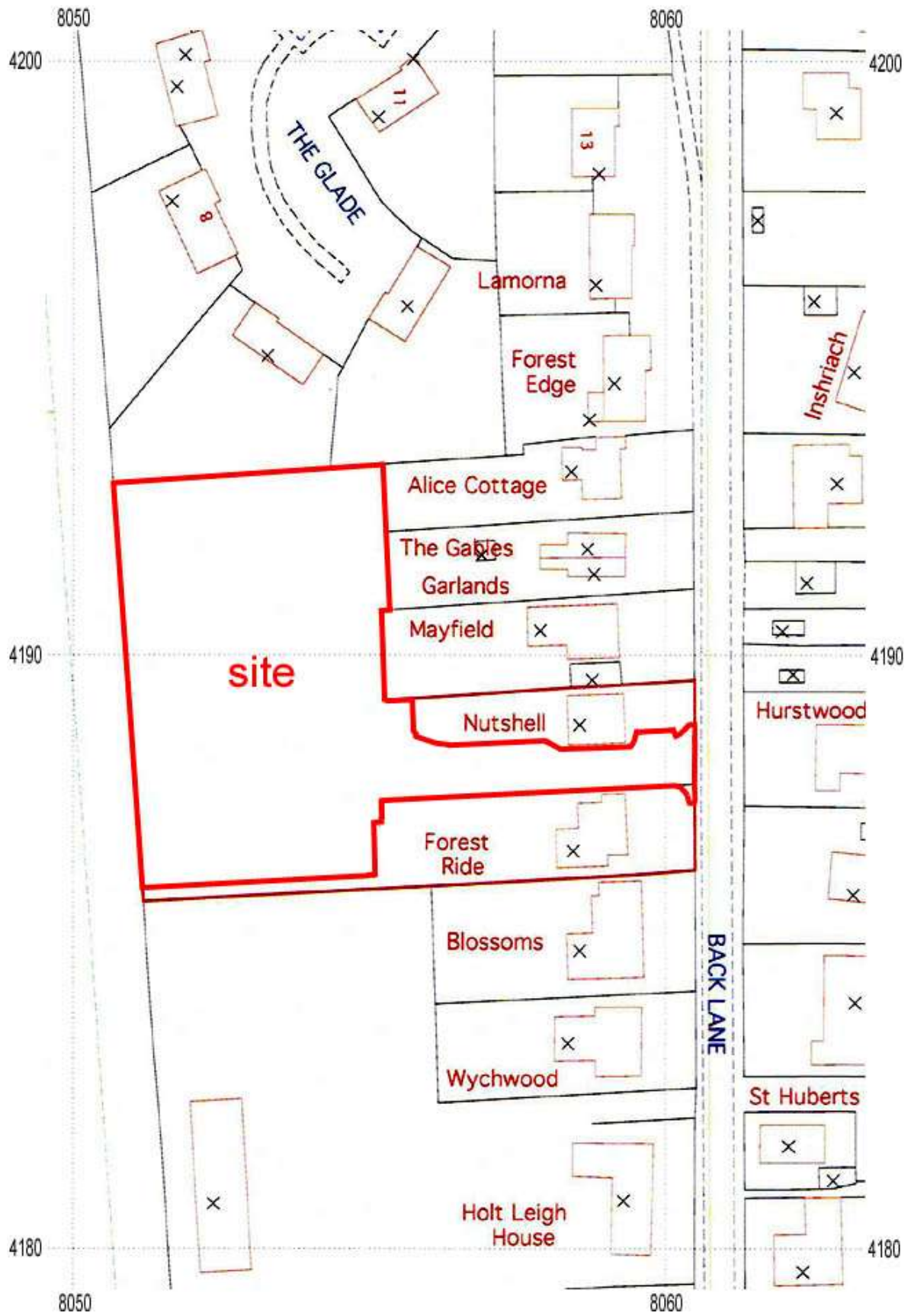


Fig 1. Map to show location of the development (highlighted in red)

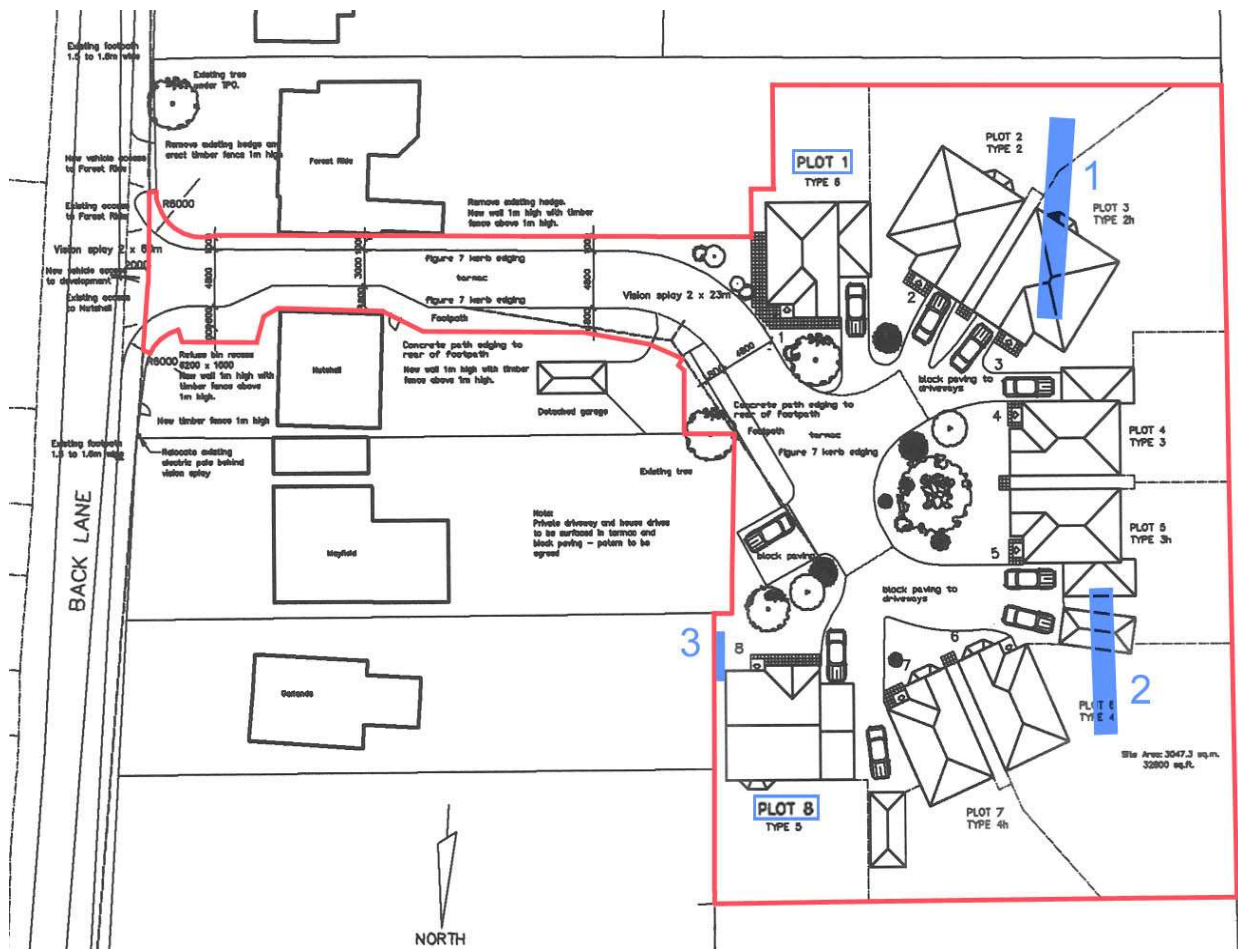


Fig 2. Site plan and areas of Archaeological Investigation, with the site boundary marked in red and the test trenches, etc., marked and numbered in blue

*Note orientation of plan with north to base*



Fig 3. Trench Photograph – Test Trench 1 looking north (*0.5m scale*)



Fig 4. Photograph of part of the west-facing section in Test Trench 1 (0.2m scale)

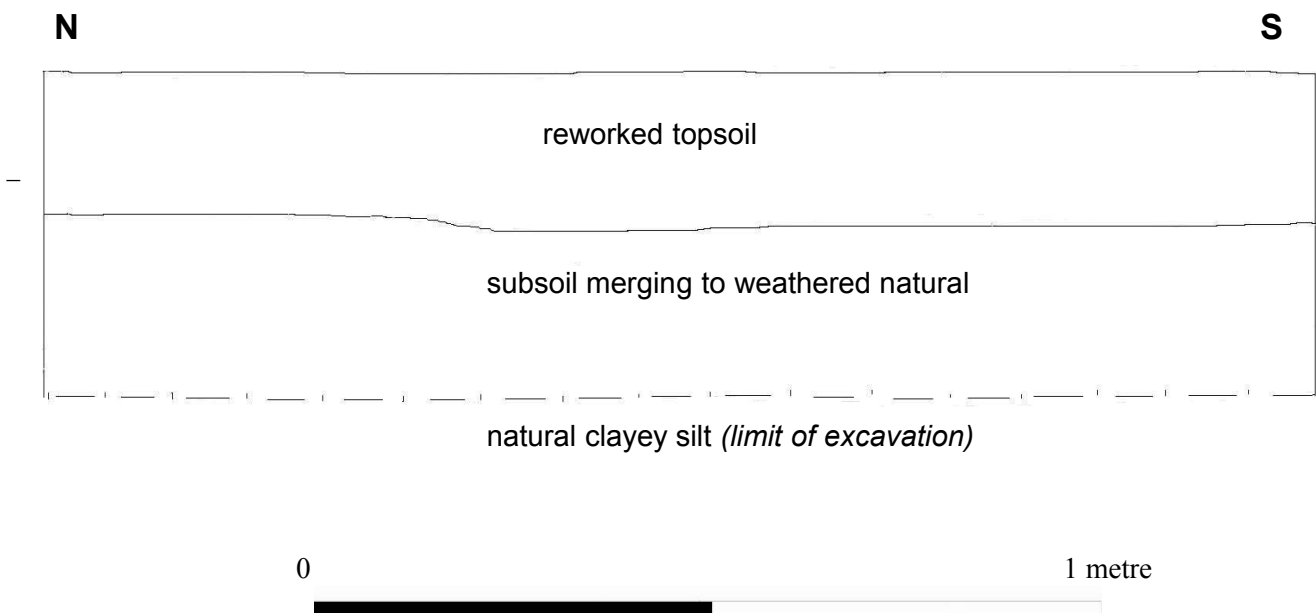


Fig 5. Drawing of above west-facing section in Trench 1



Fig 6. Photograph of Test Trench 2, looking south (*0.5m scale*)





Fig 7. Photograph of part of the east-facing section of Test Trench 2 (0.5m scale)

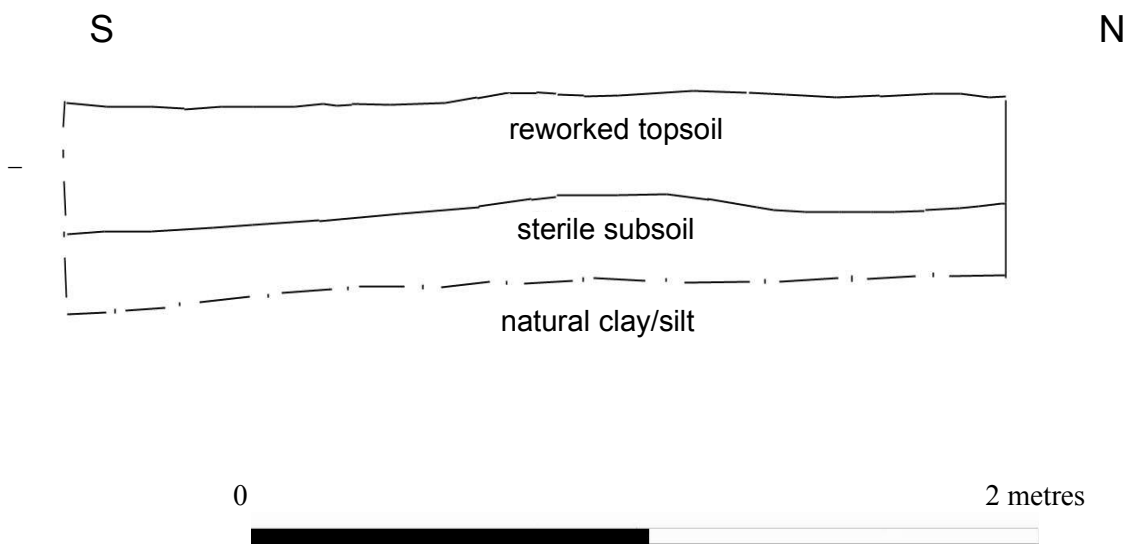


Fig 8. Drawing of the above east-facing section of Test Trench 2



Fig 9. Photograph of the west-facing section in the boundary wall trench (Trench 3)

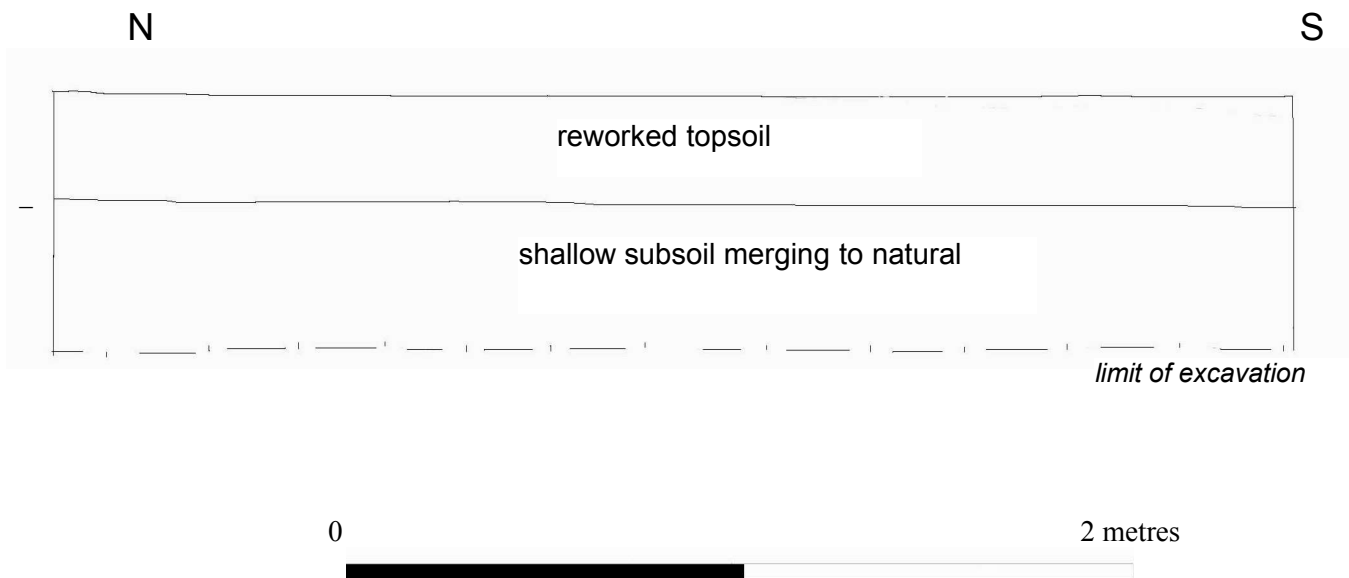


Fig 10. Drawing of the above west-facing section of Trench 3



Fig 11. View of the *c* 2m deep excavated footings for Plot 1, looking south



Fig 12. Photograph of a west-facing section within the footings for Plot 8

## Appendix I.

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Printable version

OASIS ID: compassa1-21041

### Project details

Project name	Back Lane, Farnham
Short description of the project	An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken at Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, near Farnham in Hampshire, between August and November 2006. Due to the close proximity of the Alice Holt Roman pottery production centre, which was active into the early medieval period, it was deemed that the area might reveal some archaeological evidence. The new development of the site was in the form of eight new dwellings with an access route from the east. Archaeological monitoring, including test trenching and observation of deeper strip foundation excavation, did not reveal any archaeological evidence, and no finds were retained. There was a simple and quite consistent sequence of deposits across the site, with recent soil horizons up to 0.5m thick and some modern disturbance overlying natural clayey silt with some gravel.
Project dates	Start: 10-08-2006 End: 08-11-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	F.22764/006/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	HAMPSHIRE HART FLEET Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, Hampshire
Postcode	GU10 4LN
Study area	3000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 8055 4190 51.1701386939 -0.847720920687 51 10 12 N 000 50 51 W Point
Height OD	Min: 112.50m Max: 113.05m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Geoff Potter
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

### **Project archives**

Digital Archive recipient	Farnham Museum?
Paper Archive recipient	Farnham Museum?
Paper Media available	'Drawing','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report'

### **Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	A forthcoming report
Title	Land to the rear of Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, Hampshire. An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wilson, C
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Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
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