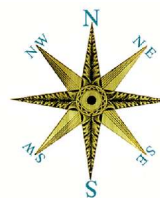


THAMES WATER UTILITIES LIMITED
ENGINEERING WORKS ON LAND ADJACENT TO THE JUNCTION OF HALE
LANE AND FARM ROAD, EDGWARE HA8
LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



C O M P A S S



ARCHAEOLOGY

December 2006

THAMES WATER UTILITIES LIMITED
ENGINEERING WORKS ON LAND LOCATED AT THE JUNCTION OF FARM
ROAD AND HALE LANE, EDGWARE HA8
LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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December 2006

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief took place in the area of Hale Lane and Farm Road, Edgware, between September and December 2006. This was carried out during groundworks for a Thames Water engineering scheme. Initial works involved stripping of turf, topsoil and some made ground within the site, followed by substantial excavation for an 8m-diameter water storage chamber.

The site was considered to have potential for a range of archaeological remains, based on its proximity to Watling Street and associated finds spanning the prehistoric, Roman and Saxon periods.

Archaeological observation of topsoil stripping across the site did not reveal any significant remains. Exposed deposits were either recent made ground associated with landscaping of the area, or an earlier and apparently truncated subsoil. Observations of subsequent excavation for the installation of the water storage chamber did not reveal any other archaeological features or deposits.

However, the watching brief appears to confirm the geological record, in terms of alluvial deposits on the south-east side of the site. These were exposed below the subsoil, in the area excavated for the construction of the storage chamber. The deposits were up to about 1m thick, overlying the natural London Clay, and reflected the proximity of Dean's Brook just to the west of the site. However, the alluvium was quite sterile and no palaeo-environmental remains were found.

Contents	page
1 Introduction	1
2 Acknowledgements	1
3 Location and topography	1
4 Archaeological and historical background	
4.1 Prehistoric	1
4.2 Roman	2
4.3 Saxon and later	2
5 Archaeological research questions	3
6 Methodology	3
7 The archaeological fieldwork	
7.1 The site topsoil strip	4
7.2 The storage chamber excavation	4
8 Assessment of results	5
9 Conclusion	6

Figures

1 The site boundary and area of groundworks (shaded orange) in relation to the current Ordnance Survey digital map reproduced at 1:1000.	7
2 View of very early stages of topsoil stripping, looking south-west across the site with number 3 Farm Road visible in the background.	8
3 A south-west view of the site with further stripping having revealed the clean subsoil.	9
4 North-west facing section of excavated area, showing the extent of the relatively clean subsoil.	10
5 A view, looking south, of the excavated trench with the wall of the storage chamber installed. The trench was waterlogged although at this stage it is fairly apparent that excavation had come down onto a natural clay with alluvial deposits.	11
6 & 7 Facing south-west. Further work on the chamber has been carried out and the base of the excavated area is now free of water. The clay and alluvial deposits have been clearly revealed.	12

Appendices

I Oasis Data Collection Form	13
II London Archaeologist publication summary	15

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This watching brief forms a response to recommendations made by English Heritage for a programme of archaeological investigation, to take place during preliminary groundworks and stripping of soil horizons in an area of land at the northern end of Farm Road, at its junction with Hale Lane.
- 1.2** The initial soil strip covered an area approximately 25m by 35m in plan, followed by the construction a new underground storage chamber some 8m in diameter. Before the machine strip, two adjoining trial trenches *c* 0.5m wide by 2m deep and overall about 8m in length were hand dug in the proposed construction area.

Stripping of the site, trial pit excavation and the initial stages of subsequent storage chamber excavation was archaeologically monitored between September and December 2006.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological programme was commissioned by Sarah Bassett of the Environment and Conservation Team, Thames Water Utilities Limited.

Assistance during the project was provided by Richard Scott and Jim Mahir of the on-site contractor Barhale Construction Plc, and also by Allen Summerskill of Faber Maunsell Ltd.

The project was monitored by Jill Hummerstone (English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service). Help with background map research was given by Ann Taylor of the LB of Barnet Local Studies and Archives Centre.

3. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1** The works took place within an area of open land, apparently not previously developed. The site lay within a stream valley immediately to the east of Dean's Brook, at a ground level of about 56.5m OD (Fig 1). The level rises eastwards along Hale Lane to at least 65.20m, and also to the west to 61.30m OD.
- 3.2** The British Geological Survey (1994, *North London Sheet 256*) indicated that the site overlay London Clay. There are also some geologically recent channels of drift alluvium (mainly sandy silt and clay) built up from Dean's Brook, which runs north-south just to the west of the site.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Prehistoric

There is limited evidence of prehistoric occupation in the Edgware area, although there is some evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity to the north west of the site in the vicinity of Brockley Hill.

There is perhaps less firm evidence for later prehistoric finds. Although a number of Bronze and Iron Age potsherds have been found these are all close to the route of Watling Street, the route of which may have been first used in prehistoric times. Brockley Hill also appears to have been occupied during the later prehistoric period, with a good quality Bronze Age flint arrowhead as well as other related artefacts recovered by Hendon and District Archaeological Society (HADAS).

However, despite the presence of Dean's Brook there has been no evidence to date for prehistoric deposits closer to the site.

4.2 Roman

The site lay fairly close to an area of well-documented Roman activity. The Roman road known as Watling Street follows the route of the A5 through Edgware. Evidence of occupation and of industrial processes has been found at locations close to Watling Street, including two cremation burials of late 1st of early 2nd century date to the north-west of Farm Road. These cremations were recorded in 1954, although more recent evidence of bones in the area has been found. A rubbish heap of Roman tiles was also found in two excavations (CPK88 and CPE79) at Canon's Park, two kilometres west of the site, representing possible waste from nearby kilns and indicative of tile production on an industrial scale.

Considering the importance of Watling Street as a route northwards out of London, it was felt that the potential for Roman remains to be found on the Farm Street site was reasonable, especially when considering the close proximity of the water source of Dean's Brook. However, to date there is a lack of evidence of Roman deposits within about a kilometre radius of the site.

4.3 Saxon and later

The route of Watling Street has certainly been used throughout Saxon and medieval times, right up to the present day. However, there is little evidence for Saxon occupation in the area, aside from a potsherd found near Warren House Woods – even further west from the site than Watling Street itself. There is no further evidence of Saxon activity in the vicinity of the site, and apparently no significant medieval remains.

On 19th century Ordnance Survey maps of Edgware in the *Village London Atlas*, surveyed c 1820, 1860s and 1902, the line of the Roman road of Watling Street is clearly marked. The position Hale Lane and Dean's Brook are also indicated, with the later maps showing a complex of buildings in the site area. Although the date of these is uncertain, it is likely that they formed part of the Victorian urbanisation of the area. It is also possible that earlier archaeological deposits have been truncated by this development.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The project presented an opportunity to address several research questions as defined in the preliminary *Specification*:

- Is there any evidence for Roman activity, either *in situ* features/deposits or residual finds? What is the date range: is there more than one phase and how does it relate to previous finds in the area?
- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity, and can the nature of this be defined?
- Is there any evidence for Saxon to early post-medieval activity, and what is the nature of this (*eg*, field boundaries, drainage ditches or other evidence for agriculture)?
- What evidence is there for later post-medieval land use or division to complement the cartographic sources?

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 A *Specification for a Programme of Archaeological Stripping and Recording* was agreed prior to commencement of the fieldwork (Compass Archaeology, Sept. 2006). The programme was also carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by English Heritage (in particular, *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*) and by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*).

6.2 The main elements of the groundworks were as follows:

- Machine stripping of turf, topsoil and most subsoil horizons within the site, with spoil stockpiled in the southwest corner. Except for areas of subsequent groundworks the exposed surface was then covered by a layer of compacted hardcore over terram.
- Excavation for an underground storage chamber (measuring *c* 8m in diameter and ultimately about 11.5m deep).

6.3 The soil stripping was monitored and exposed deposits were examined for finds and/or buried features. The area of the storage chamber was further investigated both prior to and during the initial phase of the main excavation.

The main objective in the storage chamber area was to check the depth of the soil profile, and to determine if this directly overlay natural clay or an intermediate deposit such as alluvium.

The excavations were recorded in plan and section and by digital photography. Individual elements were noted on trench sheets, but did not produce any significant finds and were therefore not separately contexted.

6.4 Levels were derived from an OS benchmark located on the east-facing wall of 221 Hale Lane, just to the northwest of the site, value 56.68m OD. The open-area

groundworks and storage chamber excavation were located by taped measurement: this was plotted onto the Ordnance Survey map (Fig 1).

- 6.5** An ordered and indexed site archive will be compiled and in due course offered to the Museum of London Archaeological Archive for deposition. No archaeological finds or artefacts were retained from the fieldwork.

7. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

For descriptive purposes the watching brief has been divided into two areas: the preliminary soil strip of the site, and deeper excavation for the proposed storage chamber within the southern part of this area. Inspection was also made of the preliminary trial pit, but the results of this are more fully covered by subsequent observations.

7.1 The site topsoil strip (Figs 2-4)

Initial monitoring recorded the removal of a *c.* 2m wide strip of ground to a maximum depth of 1m. This was located along the western side of the site, to facilitate a temporary diversion to the footpath that ran west to east through the site.

No subsoil was visible, and only topsoil and part of an underlying dumped layer of building material had been removed. This dump seemed to extend down towards Dean's Brook to the west, and appeared to be part of a landscaping deposit of fairly recent origin behind the revetment of the brook.

Subsequent observations covered an area approximately 10m square in the south-west corner of the site. This had been excavated and levelled to a maximum depth of *c.* 0.2m to the north and *c.* 0.5m to the south.

It was evident that the topsoil and a shallower spread of dumped rubble had been completely removed, revealing the subsoil/natural deposit. Unfortunately the area had been quite disturbed, and although there were some darker patches visible it was not possible to ascertain whether these were archaeological in origin. However, there were no clear edges or form and no finds, and it seems unlikely that these were significant features.

No further potential archaeological features were observed during machine stripping. However, it appears that the site had undergone general landscaping, involving importation of the made ground below the present topsoil. Where these deposits were fully removed it is suggested that the previous soil horizons had been partially truncated, leaving a rather mottled subsoil which in some areas merged to a cleaner natural layer.

7.2 The storage chamber excavation (Figs 5-7)

Subsequent excavation occurred within the south-east portion of the site for the installation of the storage chamber. The excavation took place within a circle around 8m in external diameter, which was cut from the reduced surface at

approximately 55.2m OD. The exposed deposit at this level appeared to be a slightly mixed and reworked subsoil, as described above (final para. 7.1).

During observation of the first stage of excavation the shaft was dug to a depth of approximately 1.3m, so down to a reduced level of *c.* 53.9m OD. It appeared at this point that the excavation had exposed and cut through a natural deposit, namely of drift alluvium (sandy silt and clay) overlying the London Clay. However, details were unclear as the pit was waterlogged and workmen were attempting to drill out layers of concrete that had been added around the base of the perimeter ring.

To confirm the findings in somewhat better conditions the site was visited once more. This confirmed that the excavation had come down onto a natural clay deposit at or just below 54m OD, and that this did not conceal any further features or archaeological deposits.

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

The archaeological fieldwork provided an opportunity to address the site-specific questions that have been noted above (5). The responses are outlined below:

- *Potential evidence for Roman activity.*

Given the site's proximity to Watling Street it was hoped that evidence of Roman activity would be observed between Farm Road and Dean's Brook. This however was not the case, and in conjunction with the lack of material remains of this date within a kilometre radius of the site it is possible that the area was hardly (if at all) utilised during the Roman period.

- *Any evidence for prehistoric activity?*

Despite the discovery of prehistoric finds relatively close by, mainly within the vicinity of Watling Street and Brockley Hill, the Farm Road site did not reveal any evidence of prehistoric activity.

- *Is there any evidence for Saxon to post-medieval activity?*

There were no archaeological features or deposits observed at this site in relation to Saxon through to earlier post-medieval activity. Indeed the presence of the former was only postulated in relation to the potsherd found near Warren House Woods, quite some distance west.

- *Evidence for later post-medieval land use or division?*

Once again, given the lack of archaeological material from this period there is no evidence to establish any land use or division. Although the 19th century maps do indicate a complex of buildings in the general area, no trace of these could be found within the area excavated.

The only evidence that did exist was in relation to the fairly recent landscaping of the site, involving apparent truncation of previous soil horizons and importation of made ground with frequent building rubble inclusions. This probably took

place in the late 19th or earlier 20th centuries, at a time when the surrounding area was being developed.

9. CONCLUSION

The archaeological fieldwork enabled a substantial area of ground to be examined during the topsoil strip; however no significant remains were observed. Exposed deposits were generally either quite recent made ground, or more commonly a reworked but fairly clean subsoil.

In addition observation of the early stages of excavation and building work for the proposed storage chamber, within an area *c.* 8m in diameter, revealed no archaeological features or deposits. There was a simple progression from subsoil to sterile natural.

This watching brief supports the geological record, noting probably alluvial deposits overlying the much older natural London Clay. The drift alluvium has built up from Dean's Brook, which runs north-south just to the west of the site. However, there were no other associated features or environmental remains.



Fig 1. The site boundary and area of groundworks (shaded orange) in relation to the current Ordnance Survey digital map reproduced at 1:1000.

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Fig 2. View of vssery early stages of topsoil stripping, looking south-west across the site with number 3 Farm Road visible in the background.



Fig 3. A south-west view of the site with further stripping having revealed the clean subsoil.



Fig 4. North-west facing section of excavated area, showing the extent of the relatively clean subsoil.



Fig 5. A view, looking south, of the excavated trench with the perimeter wall of the storage chamber installed. As noted the trench was waterlogged, although at this stage it is fairly apparent that excavation had come down onto a natural clay with alluvial deposits over.



Figs 6 & 7. Facing south-west. Further work on the chamber has been carried out and the base of the excavated area is now free of water. The clay and alluvial deposits have been clearly revealed.

Appendix I

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Printable version

OASIS ID: compassa1-21689

Project details

Project name	LAND ADJACENT TO THE JUNCTION OF HALE LANE AND FARM ROAD, EDGWARE
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief took place in the area of Hale Lane and Farm Road, Edgware, between September and December 2006. This was carried out during groundworks for a Thames Water engineering scheme. Initial works involved stripping of turf, topsoil and made ground within the site, followed by substantial excavation for a water storage chamber. The site was considered to have potential for a range of archaeological remains based on its proximity to Watling Street and associated finds spanning the Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon periods. Archaeological observation of topsoil stripping across the site did not reveal any significant remains. In addition, observance of subsequent excavation for the installation of the water storage chamber did not reveal any further archaeological features or deposits. The watching brief appeared to confirm the geological record, in terms of sterile alluvial deposits on the south-east side of the site in the area excavated for the storage chamber. The deposit overlay the natural London Clay, and reflected the proximity of Dean's Brook just to the west, although no paleo-environmental remains were found.
Project dates	Start: 26-09-2006 End: 02-12-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	H AJ06 - Sitecode
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	GREATER LONDON BARNET EDGWARE LAND ADJACENT TO THE JUNCTION OF HALE LANE AND FARM ROAD, EDGWARE
Postcode	HA8 7XX
Study area	600.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 2014 9237 51.6168368760 -0.2645252894 51 37 00 N 000 15 52 W Point
Height OD	Min: 53.88m Max: 54.00m

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	Iain Bright
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London archaeological archive
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Media available	'Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Report'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	ENGINEERING WORKS ON LAND ADJACENT TO THE JUNCTION OF HALE LANE AND FARM ROAD, EDGWARE. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
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Appendix II. London Archaeologist publication summary

Land adjacent to the junction of Hale Lane & Farm Road, Edgware HA8. NGR: TQ 20140 92375. CA (Iain Bright). Watching brief. Sept.-Dec. 2006. HAJ06

Summary

Observations during topsoil stripping of the site revealed no significant remains. Exposed deposits were generally either recent made ground from previous landscaping of the area, or an earlier and apparently truncated subsoil.

Deeper excavation of an 8m-diameter storage chamber demonstrated a simple progression from subsoil to sterile alluvium. This latter is clearly associated with Dean's Brook, which runs north-south just to the west of the site.

The alluvium overlay much older London Clay some 1.6m below the present land surface.