

**Geoarchaeological Borehole Survey Report  
Former Railway Sidings, Three Bridges  
Crawley, West Sussex**

**NGR: TQ 286 363**

**Planning Ref: CR/2011/0075**

**ASE Project No: 5221  
Site Code: FRS11**

**ASE Report No: 2012105  
OASIS id: archaeol6-124577**

**By Matt Pope, Liz Chambers and Rob Scaife**

**May 2012**

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**By Matt Pope, Liz Chambers and Rob Scaife**

**May 2012**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South East was commissioned by Network Rail to undertake a geoarchaeological survey by borehole of land under development on former railway sidings at Three Bridges, Near Crawley, West Sussex. Two boreholes were undertaken and one revealed the presence of up to a metre of organic alluvium overlying fluvial gravels. The alluvium was truncated and mixed but displayed potential to preserve palaeoenvironmental remains. The deposit was sub-sampled for pollen analysis.*

*The pollen analysis showed a largely open environment with few trees and shrubs in the local area. Pollen of oak, hazel and possibly birch are from farther distances. There is evidence for grassland, probably pasture but also with cereal cultivation. Cereal pollen is in evidence and may come directly from cultivation or indirectly from crop processing releasing pollen. The depositional habitat was probably a floodplain habitat with grasses sedges and other taxa of such habitats. Alder was growing along the fringe and drier zones of the wetland area.*

*This work demonstrated that pollen and spores, representative of wider palaeoenvironmental potential, are preserved at the site and thus, there is potential for further analysis which would provide greater stratigraphical and habitat resolution. While it is suggested that the sediment sequence dates to the historic period, some form of dating is required either through artefact or preferably radiocarbon dating would be required to confirm this. Unfortunately the degree of truncation and possible resultant contamination of these deposits caused by the construction of railway sidings does not warrant further detailed analysis at this locality. However, active consideration of similar deposits across the site is should be deemed a high priority during further stages of site development.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned to undertake 2 controlled geoarchaeological boreholes at land south of Three Bridges Station, Crawley, West Sussex (NGR: TQ 286 363; Figure 1) hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by Network Rail and a Written Scheme of Investigation was developed by AECOM (AECOM 2011) in consultation with John Mills, Senior Archaeologist, West Sussex County Council.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The British Geological Survey (2011) mapped the site as underlain by a solid geology comprising both Upper Tunbridge Wells Sandstone and Weald Clay. Superficial geology comprises alluvium and alluvial gravels of a minor tributary of the River Mole system, the Gatwick Stream.
- 1.2.2 The site is relatively flat and appears to occupy a floodplain of a size incommensurate with the apparent current fluvial system, suggesting major alluvial infilling of a larger valley and considerable reorganisation of the natural drainage by modern culverts, presumably as part of development of the site.
- 1.2.3 The flat and featureless topography of the site relates, to a degree, to the floodplain situation but more significantly to major landscaping and levelling undertaken as part of the construction of railway sidings. This construction process would have involved the emplacement of made ground and possible truncation of the underlying geology. It would certainly have involved the removal of topsoil.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 The site is being developed by the contractor (Spencer Ltd) for Network rail as a new regional rail control centre.
- 1.3.2 John Mills recommended that geoarchaeological assessment of alluvial deposits known to exist at the site as a result of geotechnical survey were assessed as part of the archaeological mitigation

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The aims of the geoarchaeological assessment were as follows:

1. To determine the degree of surviving alluvial sedimentation at the site
2. To assess for palaeoenvironmental potential
3. To assess for the presence of deeply buried land surfaces or terrestrial/fluvial interfaces with archaeological potential

1.4.2 These aims were to achieve an overall objective of establishing the likely impact of piling and construction at the site on an unknown geoarchaeological resource.

#### **1.5 Scope of Report**

1.5.1 This report outlines the methodology and observations made during the borehole survey, it provides an assessment of recovered pollen and statement on likely age and significance of the identified alluvial deposits.

## **2.0 GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Overview**

- 2.1.1 Cultural heritage issues pertaining to the site were covered as a chapter in an original Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) written by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (2011). This indicated no evidence for prehistoric activity at the site, but that lithic material had been recovered from c. 300m to the north of the site, at Maidenbower 1.2km to the south east and Tilgate 2km to the south west.
- 2.1.2 There was also no evidence for Roman or medieval activity at the site, the nearest post-prehistoric activity being recorded at Maidenbower 1.2km to the south east.
- 2.1.3 The EIA did however flag up deposits of the River Mole being present under the site and suggested these had potential for the survival of palaeoenvironmental remains.

### **2.2 Geoarchaeological Potential**

- 2.2.1 The River Mole is an important component of the north-western Weald drainage, draining a wide range of Cretaceous geologies and Wealden landforms before it's confluence with the Thames at Hampton Court, Surrey.
- 2.2.2 The alluvial sediment deposits mapped at the site relate more specifically to a minor eastern tributary of the Mole River, known as the Gatwick Stream. This drainage system underlies large parts of eastern Crawley including Maiden Bower and Three Bridges and has been subjected to much culverting, straightening and incorporation into the Crawley sewage system.
- 2.2.3 Underlying this modern urban drainage, the BGS mapping (2011) shows an ancient and established valley system with the potential to preserve deposits relating to both Pleistocene and Holocene alluviation.
- 2.2.4 Geotechnical investigation carried out in 2011 confirmed the presence of alluvium underlying the development area, showing a depending profile of organic plays to the north of the area but underlain by up to 5m of made ground.
- 2.2.5 Unfortunately it was not possible to monitor this geotechnical work, nor were cores of alluvium retained at the site for inspection and sub-sampling. Therefore it was considered necessary to undertake further geoarchaeological boreholes to target this organic alluvium before the planned piling was undertaken.

### **3.0 GEARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.1.1 Two boreholes, excavated using a standard Dando percussion rig (Figure 2), were undertaken within the development of the piling.
- 3.1.2 Sediments were recorded in the following manner. Beneath the made ground, detailed observations will be made of the lithological and sedimentological character of sediments encountered. These comprise detailed sediment descriptions at 0.25m intervals or at the junction of major stratigraphic or lithological boundaries. The descriptions comprise matrix lithology, coarse components, sediment cohesion and well as characterisation of superficial structures and likelihood of decalcification. Where deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered (such as dated excavated contexts of buried soils, well-sealed slowly silting features, sealed hearths, sealed features containing evident carbonised remains, peats, water-logged or cess deposits), bulk soil samples (40 litres or 100% of smaller features) were taken for environmental analysis.
- 3.1.3 Where possible samples were recovered as continuous U100 samples. In each case the basal 0.2m of each U100 sample, which always sits outside of the sleeve, was retained as a bulk sample. In this way continuous profiles could be recovered.
- 3.1.4 Bulk samples and U100 cores were subsampled for pollen analysis and now are stored in secure, environment controlled facilities at ASE until it is decided that the programme of analysis is complete.

#### **3.2 Fieldwork Constraints**

- 3.2.1 Fieldwork was constrained by a piling design which had already been implemented and left only restricted site access.
- 3.2.2 Progress of fieldwork was anticipated to be constrained by the depth of made ground (up to 5m) but in the field the percussion borehole rig was able to easily penetrate this obstruction



### **3.3 The Site Archive**

- 3.3.1 Archaeological works continuing as part of the redevelopment of the site is on-going, the small archive generated by this fieldwork will form part of the archive of the larger project.
- 3.3.2 ASE informed Crawley Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated
- 3.3.3 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Crawley Museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

No. of files/paper record	1 File
U100 Core	1
Photographs	8
Pollen Samples	2

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

#### 4.0 GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 The following observations were logged during the borehole survey.

LOCATION	BH1	OSNGR	TQ 28687 36396	ELEVATION	40m OD	
DEPTH	STRATIGRAPHY	LITHOLOGY	COLOUR	CLAST	SAMPLE	NOTES
0	Made Ground	Made Ground	-	Concrete	No	
4.1	Alluvium	Silty Clay	Dark grey	No	U100	
4.7	Weald Clay	Clay with sand	Yellow Brown	No	Grab	Compact
5.5	Weald Clay	Clay with sand	Yellow Brown	No	Grab	Compact
6	Solid proven					

Table 2: Borehole 1 Observations

LOCATION	BH2	OSNGR	TQ 28695 36415	ELEVATION	40m OD	
DEPTH	STRATIGRAPHY	LITHOLOGY	COLOUR	CLAST	SAMPLE	NOTES
0	Made Ground	Made Ground	-	Concrete	No	
4.5	Alluvium	Silty Clay	Dark grey	No	U100	Contaminated
5.1	Weald Clay	Clay with sand	Yellow Brown	No	Grab	Compact
5.5	Weald Clay	Clay with sand	Yellow Brown	No	Grab	Compact
6	Solid proven					

Table 3: Borehole 2 Observations

## **5.0 POLLEN ASSESSMENT** by Rob Scaife

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 Two pollen samples have been examined to ascertain if sub-fossil pollen and spores are preserved in these sediments and if so, to provide a preliminary view of the environment and any possible indications of age.

5.1.2 Results were positive with pollen and spores recovered and this report details the results of this preliminary analysis.

### **5.2 Method**

5.2.1 Samples of 3ml volume were prepared using standard extraction techniques (Moore and Webb 1978; Moore et al. 1992). A pollen count sum of 500 grains per sample plus extant spores was obtained in which some 36 pollen and 5 spore taxa were recorded.

5.2.2 These count data are given in table 4 below.

### **5.3 The Pollen Data**

5.3.1 Although these samples are minerogenic rich, alluvial sediments, sufficient pollen was extracted to enable substantial counts to be made. Pollen preservation, as might be expected from such sediment type, was reasonable with moderate numbers present (estimated 2-3,000 grains per ml.). These pollen count data are given in table 1 below.

5.3.2 The pollen assemblages are dominated by herbs of which Poaceae (grasses) are most important. The principal components are characterised below.

5.3.3 Trees and shrubs: *Alnus* (alder) is the most abundant (wetland) tree (9%). *Betula* (birch; to 7%), *Quercus* (oak; to 6%) are the principal dry land taxa with occasional occurrences of *Fagus* (beech), *Juglans* (walnut in sample 2) and *Picea* (spruce in sample 1). Shrubs are dominated by *Corylus avellana* type (to 7%) with occasional dwarf shrubs, *Calluna* (ling).

5.3.4 Herbs: The herb pollen flora is moderately diverse and is dominated by Poaceae (grasses; to 51% and 58%). Cereal type (3% and 2%), Lactucoideae (dandelion types) to 7%.) and *Plantago lanceolata* (ribwort plantain; 3%) are also relatively important.

5.3.5 Wetland: These are poorly represented but include Cyperaceae (sedges; 2% max) and occasional *Typha angustifolia* type (bur reed and/or reedmace). It should be noted that a proportion of the Poaceae noted above most probably come from this wetland (?) floodplain habitat. Also, *Alnus* may also be referred to this habitat or at least its fringes.

5.3.6 Ferns: There are substantial numbers of spores of *Pteridium* (bracken; 7%), *Pteropsida* undifferentiated, of *Dryopteris* type (7%) and smaller numbers of *Polypodium* (polypody fern). Other spores include those of mosses (*Sphagnum*) and liverworts in small numbers.

<b>Sample</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Trees and Shrubs		
Betula	35	23
Pinus	5	4
Picea	1	
Ulmus		1
Quercus	25	9
Juglans		1
Fagus		1
Alnus	45	48
Corylus avellana type	30	35
Calluna	2	1
Herbs		
Ranunculaceae	1	
Ranunculus type	3	3
Lotus type	1	
Rosaceae undiff.		1
Potentilla type	1	
Rumex		3
Rumex obtusifolius type	1	
Epilobium type	1	
Apiaceae	1	1
Scrophulariaceae	1	2
Plantago lanceolata	14	13
Rubiaceae		1
Cirsium type	3	1
Centaurea nigra type	6	9
Centaurea scabiosa type	1	
Lactucoideae	35	37
Poaceae	259	295
Cereal type	15	10
Large Poaceae	3	6
Cyperaceae	9	2
Typha angustifolia type		1
Unidentified/degraded	3	5
Ferns		
Pteropsida (monolete)	34	42
Pteridium aquilinum	33	31
Polypodium	8	5
Sphagnum	4	1
Liverwort		1
Pollen sum	504	508
Spore sum	79	80

Table 4: Pollen count data from Three Bridges

## 5.4 Discussion

- 5.4.1 This study was undertaken primarily to establish the presence of absence of pollen in this alluvial sediment. This proved to be the case allowing full pollen counts to be attained. Although only two samples have been examined, some useful information on the vegetation and environment and an indication as to the age of the samples has been obtained.
- 5.4.5 The vegetation and environment: Herb pollen types are dominant with grasses (Poaceae) being most important. Interpretation of these data should consider the source of the pollen in relation to the on-site/habitat of deposition and to that coming from further afield, that is, the pollen catchment. Here, it is highly probable that a proportion of the grass pollen comes from the former, i.e. the autochthonous component. Along with grasses, sedges (Cyperaceae) and occasional reedmace and/or bur reed (*Typha angustifolia* type) suggest that the floodplain was a fen habitat growing on the river floodplain. Sediment accretion was probably from overbank deposition during periods of high fluvial discharge. There is, however, a paucity of such marsh and aquatic taxa and additional analyses are required to establish this. Alder (*Alnus*) is present and although well represented, pollen is not in great enough numbers to suggest on-site growth (carr woodland). It likely that this was growing along the margins or drier areas of the floodplain or, from pollen possibly fluvially transported from upstream.
- 5.4.6 The moderate diversity of herb pollen includes both taxa of pastoral affinity as well as quantities of cereal pollen indicating a mixed agricultural environment. The former comprise grasses, ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion types (Lactucoideae), knapweeds (*Centaurea* sp.) and possibly other taxa which are not differentiable to lower taxonomic level because of their pollen morphology. Cereal pollen, especially in the upper sample (1) clearly indicate cereal cultivation. It is, however, also possible that this may derive from crop processing in the vicinity or fluvially transported (mills upstream?).
- 5.4.7 As noted, there are relatively few trees. Alder, as a wetland taxon, has been noted as a possibly growing along the fringes of the floodplain or in localised drier areas. Other taxa include Birch (*Betula*), oak (*Quercus*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) with occasional beech (*Fagus*), pine (*Pinus*) and interestingly, walnut (*Juglans*) and (*Picea*) because of their dating implications.
- 5.4.8 Birch, oak and hazel are all well represented in pollen assemblages because of their copious pollen production and wind pollination. As such, this pollen will come from occasional local growth or from the region as a whole. Birch may be from areas of scrub regeneration. Beech is present, albeit in small numbers. However, pollen of this tree is poorly represented in pollen assemblages at any distance from its area growth (due to relatively large size and density which negates it transport).

- 5.4.9 Walnut, spruce and dating: Walnut (*Juglans*) is present in sample 2 and spruce in sample 1. The former tree is regarded as having been introduced into Mediterranean Europe as early as ca. 3500BP from the Middle East (Bottema 1980) and into Western Europe during the Roman Empire (Godwin 1975) and, thus, has been used as a marker for this period. This similarly applies to England having been recovered from Roman and post-Roman contexts. Spruce (*Picea*) is similarly not a native tree during this interglacial period. As with walnut, there are sporadic records coming from the Roman and later periods with suggestions of its introduction as an ornamental tree (Scaife 2004). However, along with pine, its was also introduced in formal gardens after the publication of John Evelyns', *Sylva* with its pollen occurring in sediments of post ca. AD 1700 date. Its should also be noted that there is also the possibility of reworking from early sediment. Preservation was, however, of similar character to other pollen in the sample and thus, this explanation seems unlikely.
- 5.4.10 From the above, it is suggested that these alluvial sediments are of Roman or post-Roman age.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The borehole survey confirmed the interpretation of the geotechnical site investigation as determining deposits of an alluvial character with localised organic preservation. Unfortunately, at both investigated localities the upper surface of these alluvial deposits had been severely truncated by the emplacement of made ground and contamination and mixing of the sediments could not be discounted.
- 6.2 The pollen analysis results can summarised as:
- Pollen and spores are present in these sediments and in sufficient numbers to enable full pollen counts to be made
  - Pollen may be derived from airborne and fluvial sources and the taphonomy may be complex
  - The pollen shows a largely open environment with few trees and shrubs in the local area. Pollen of oak, hazel and possibly birch are from farther distances. Occasional pine is probably from extra regional sources. Beech may have been locally present
  - There is evidence for grassland, probably pasture but also with cereal cultivation.
  - Cereal pollen is in evidence and may come directly from cultivation or indirectly from crop processing releasing pollen.
  - The depositional habitat was probably a floodplain habitat with grasses sedges and other taxa of such habitats. Alder was growing along the fringe and drier zones of the wetland area
- 6.3 This study has demonstrated that pollen and spores, representative of wider palaeoenvironmental potential, are preserved at the site and thus, there is potential for further analysis which would provide greater stratigraphical and habitat resolution.
- 6.4 While it is suggested that the sediment sequence dates to the historic period, some form of dating is required either through artefact or preferably radiocarbon dating. Unfortunately the degree of truncation and possible resultant contamination of these deposits caused by the construction of railways sidings does not warrant further detailed analysis at this locality. However, active consideration of similar deposits across the site should be deemed a high priority during further stages of site development.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**HER Summary Form**

Site Code						
Identification Name and Address	Land South of Three Bridges Station, near Crawley, West Sussex.					
County, District &/or Borough	Mid Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR: TQ 286 363					
Geology	Weald Clay/Tunbridge Wells Sandstone/Alluvium					
Arch. South-East Project Number	5221					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	.				
Type of Site			Deep Urban			
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.					
Sponsor/Client	Network Rail					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Matt Pope					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern		
<p><i>Archaeology South East was commissioned by Network Rail to undertake a geoarchaeological survey by borehole of land under development on former railway sidings at Three Bridges, Near Crawley, West Sussex. Two boreholes were undertaken and one revealed the presence of up to a metre of organic alluvium overlying fluvial gravels. The alluvium was truncated and mixed but displayed potential to preserve palaeoenvironmental remains. The deposit was sub-sampled for pollen analysis. The pollen analysis showed a largely open environment with few trees and shrubs in the local area. Pollen of oak, hazel and possibly birch are from farther distances. There is evidence for grassland, probably pasture but also with cereal cultivation. Cereal pollen is in evidence and may come directly from cultivation or indirectly from crop processing releasing pollen. The depositional habitat was probably a floodplain habitat with grasses sedges and other taxa of such habitats. Alder was growing along the fringe and drier zones of the wetland area. This work demonstrated that pollen and spores, representative of wider palaeoenvironmental potential, are preserved at the site and thus, there is potential for further analysis which would provide greater stratigraphical and habitat resolution. While it is suggested that the sediment sequence dates to the historic period, some form of dating is required either through artefact or preferably radiocarbon dating would be required to confirm this. Unfortunately the degree of truncation and possible resultant contamination of these deposits caused by the construction of railway sidings does not warrant further detailed analysis at this locality. However, active consideration of similar deposits across the site is should be deemed a high priority during further stages of site development.</i></p>						

**OASIS Form**

OASIS ID: archaeol6-124577

Project details

Project name Former Railway Sidings Three Bridges, West Sussex

Short description of the project Borehole survey of former railways sidings at Three Bridges, West Sussex. Two boreholes encountered a remnant of an alluvial sequence at depth >4m below made ground. The alluvium was organic in nature and preserved pollen, possibly relating to a post-medieval agricultural landscape.

Project dates Start: 05-01-2012 End: 07-01-2012

Previous/future work No / Yes

Any associated project reference codes 5221 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project reference codes FRS11 - Sitecode

Type of project Environmental assessment

Site status None

Current Land use Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure

Monument type ALLUIVAL DEPOSIT Post Medieval

Significant Finds N/A None

Survey techniques Archaeology

Project location

Country England

Site location WEST SUSSEX MID SUSSEX TURNERS HILL Fomrer Railway Sidings, Three Bridges

Postcode RH10 6SD

Study area 4.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 286 363 51.1110053851 -0.162666827085 51 06 39 N 000 09 45 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 39.00m Max: 41.00m

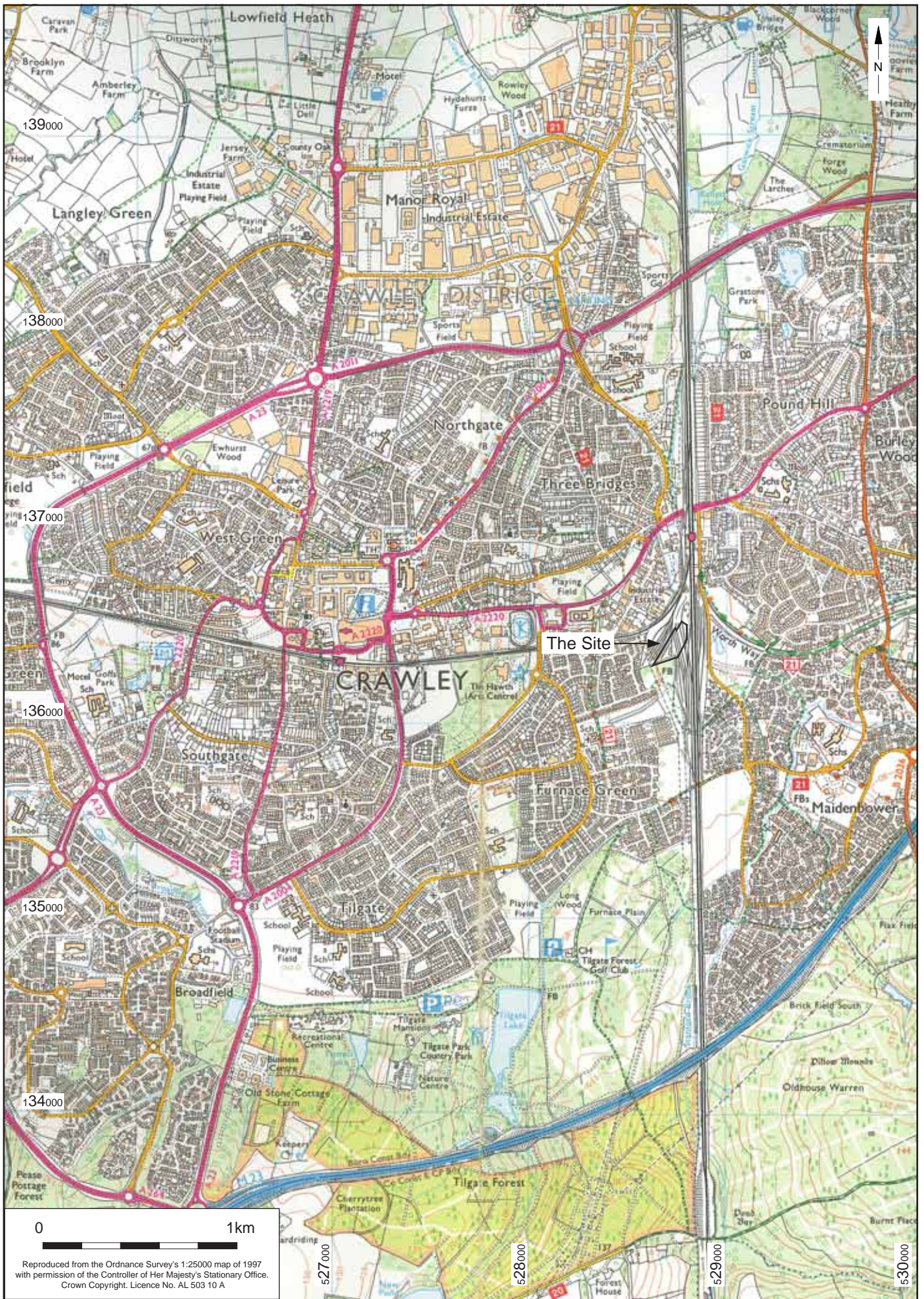
Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South East  
Project brief originator West Sussex County Council  
Project design originator west sussex county council  
Project director/manager Neil Griffin  
Project supervisor Matt Pope  
Type of sponsor/funding body client  
Name of sponsor/funding body National Rail

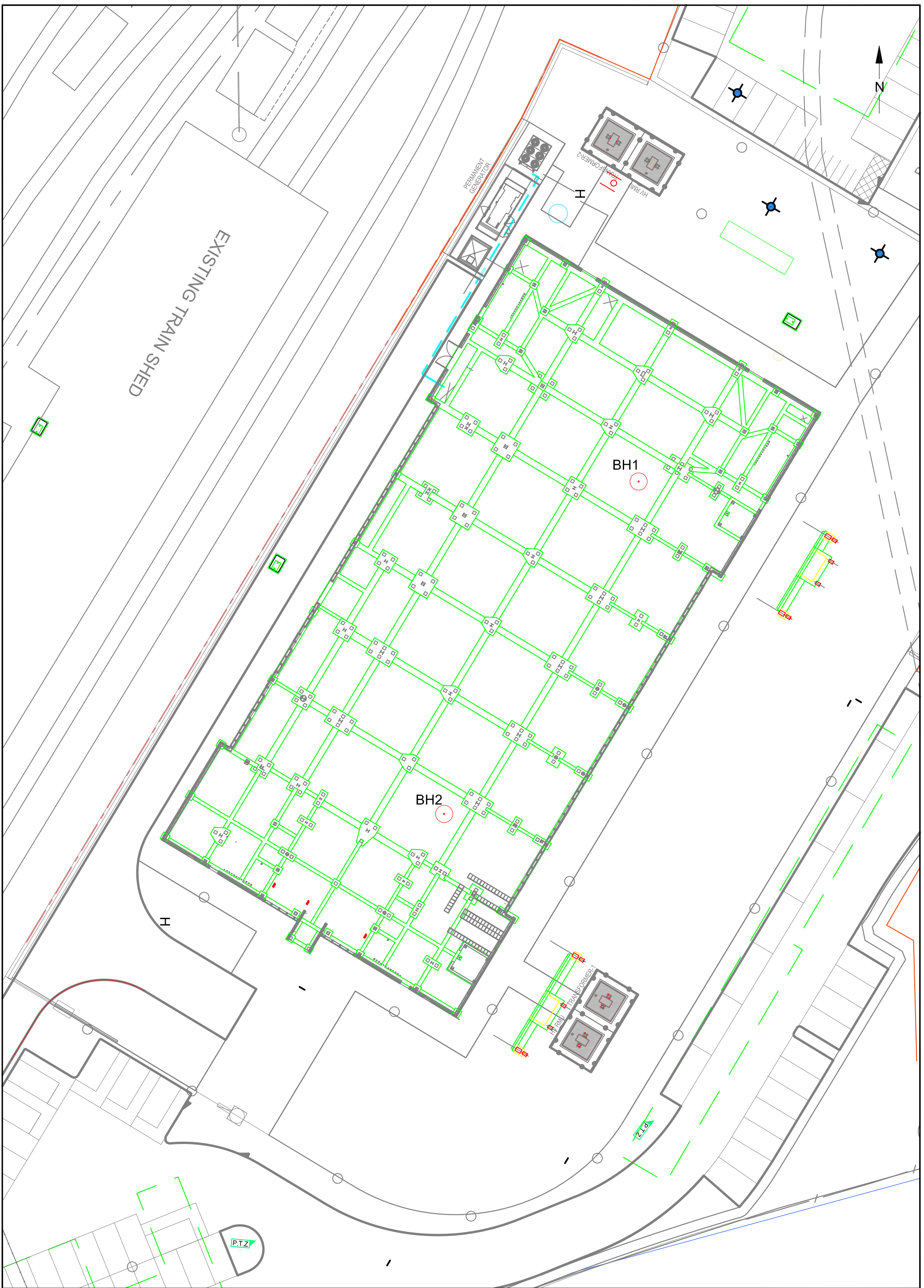
Project archives  
Physical Archive recipient Crawley Musuem

Physical Contents 'other'

Entered by Matt Pope (matt.pope@btinternet.com)  
Entered on 30 April 2012



© Archaeology South-East		Three Bridges, Crawley	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5221	May 2012	Site location	
Report Ref: 2012105	Drawn by: JC		



© Archaeology South-East		Three Bridges, Crawley	Fig.2
Project Ref: 5221	April 2012	Borehole Location Map	
Report Ref: 2012105	Drawn by: JC		

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