

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Haslemere School, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton.**

**NGR: 526833 169186
(TQ 2683 6918)
Project No: 3649
Site Code: HZF 07**

**ASE Report No: 2009020
OASIS id: archaeol6-55578**



**By
Andrew Margetts BA (Hons)
With contributions from Gemma Driver**

February 2009

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for the excavation of a new service trench at Haslemere School, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton.

Groundworks comprised a trench approximately 50m in length and 0.5m in width dug to a depth of 0.5m below ground level. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 13th and 16th February 2009.

No archaeological horizon was reached during the course of excavations and the overburden contained no noticeable finds of an archaeological nature.

This taken in conjunction with the negative results of the preceding evaluation suggests that the main focus of the nearby Roman cemetery lies to the west and may not extend as far as the area monitored.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by the London Borough of Merton Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a service pipe trench between Haslemere Primary School and the new Children's Centre, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton (NGR TQ 2683 6918; Figure 1).

1.1.2 The development is located at the junction between Haslemere Avenue and Foxtan Grove and is bounded by Haslemere Primary School to the south and east and by residential housing to the north and west.

1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) Archaeological Advisor recommended that a watching brief be undertaken during ground works relating to the excavation of a service pipe trench between Haslemere Primary School and the new Children's Centre to record any potential archaeological remains. A Written Scheme of Investigation detailing these works was produced by Archaeology South East (ASE 2009) and was subsequently approved by GLAAS and Atkins Ltd.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 The general aim of the archaeological work was:

- to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area;
- to determine the nature, extent, condition, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological features and deposits affected by the proposed works;
- to assess the ecofactual and palaeo-environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take environmental samples where deemed appropriate.

1.4 Geology and Topography

1.4.1 The site lies on level ground and the underlying geology, according to the Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, scale 1:50,000 (Sheet 270 – South London), is Taplow Gravels.

1.5 Scope of the Report

1.5.1 This report seeks to report on the findings of the watching brief. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Margetts on the 13th and the 16th of February

2009. The project was managed for ASE by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Jim Stevenson (Post-excavation Manager).

2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The preceding brief (Atkins 2008) stated the archaeological potential of the site, reproduced below with due acknowledgement:

The site is located within a designated Archaeological Priority Area and has particular potential for finds dating from the Roman and medieval period.

Prehistoric activity is known in the area from the Sites and Monuments Records and finds from this period has been found in particular to the south of the site.

Archaeological excavation at the western section of the school site showed evidence of a cemetery dating to the Roman period and further burials have been found further south near Deen City Farm.

The site of Merton Priory is located approximately 700m north of the site. It was founded in 1114 and dissolved in 1538 and excavations have been able to recreate part of its plan, however, some sections have been truncated by Merton Station and railway tracks. The only part of the priory which exist are remains of the precinct wall.

Further medieval finds have been recovered within deposits near the proposed development site providing further evidence of medieval activity.

- 2.2 An evaluation undertaken on the site by Archaeology South-East in advance of the development revealed nothing of archaeological significance and showed a degree of disturbance and contamination in the area to the east of the watching brief (ASE, 2008).

- 2.3 Other recent archaeological sites conducted on or near the site are listed below:

HME01 Haslemere First School, Brooklands Court, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4

London Archaeologist Round-up 2001: Dumped, modern material was noted beneath topsoil; natural strata were not reached.

HEM99 Haslemere First School, Roslyn Close, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4

London Archaeologist Round-up 1999: Natural gravels were overlaid by three deposits, the lowest of which was undated, the others of 19th-20th c date.

HSM94 Haslemere First School, Roslyn Close, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4

London Archaeologist Round-up 1994: Natural gravels were overlain by a soil horizon; one trench contained backfill - probably of a large quarry pit marked on a 1911 OS map.

London Archaeologist Round-up 1995: Watching brief Aug-Sept 1995 London Borough of Merton. The site lay within the area of a Roman cemetery which was to be left in situ. Only the overburden, which produced modern rubble, was disturbed.

HMM94 Windlesham and Sunningdale Allotments, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 (to the north east of the current site)

London Archaeologist Round-up 1994: Within the natural gravels was

evidence of a silted stream channel which, during the last post-glacial period, had flowed, and flooded, across the north part of the site towards the nearby River Wandle. To the east of the channel were two ditches and, to the south, a number of shallow intrusions which are dated to the 2nd century or later. Analysis of their silt fills indicates a damp or waterlogged environment, suggesting that the area was marshy.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the GLAAS *Archaeological Guidance Paper No.3 (AGP3)* unless otherwise stated below. Any variations were agreed with GLAAS, in their capacity as advisors on archaeological matters to the local planning authority.

3.2 The following was adhered to, as stated in the preceding brief (Atkins 2008) and is reproduced below with due acknowledgement:

The archaeological watching brief will be undertaken by a professional archaeologist with a proven track record.

Machine excavations will be undertaken using a flat-bladed ditching bucket in order to minimise damage to resources during monitoring works, and will be carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

Hand excavation and recording must be carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001 Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief.

The archaeological watching brief will first monitor the excavation of the trench Draw Pits. Atkins Heritage will be immediately notified of the depth and nature of any archaeological deposits found within it

The choice of trench route may be altered upon discovery of archaeological deposits, in particular human remains, in the Draw Pits.

Sections will be drawn at 1:20 and plans at 1:50 unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Plans at other scales will be drawn if appropriate (i.e. burials or deep stratigraphy).

A full photographic record comprising black and white negative and colour slides will be made. If digital photographs from part of the final report, images need to be at least 300 dpi and be taken with an optical zoom camera.

Any discovered human remains will be left in-situ, covered and protected and Atkins Heritage notified. Atkins Heritage will inform the local Coroner and GLAAS.

Buried remains will not be excavated unless removal is deemed necessary, in which case only under an appropriate Home Office Licence, section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 and local environmental health regulations, and if appropriate in compliance with the Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981. If human remains are to be excavated, the trench will be widened to allow removal of the whole inhumation.

All finds of gold and silver will be removed to a safe place (preferably the Archaeological Contractor's premises) and reported to Atkins Heritage who will inform the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act of 1996.

3.3 The spoil from the excavations was inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. A metal detector was used at regular intervals to scan spoil derived from the excavations.

- 3.4 GLAAS, in their capacity as advisors to the local planning authority, were to be informed by Atkins Ltd. at the earliest opportunity of any archaeological features or deposits worthy of preservation.
- 3.5 All archaeological remains were levelled in relation to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.6 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the standard context record sheets used by the UCL Field Archaeology Unit. Soil colours were recorded using visual inspection and not by reference to the Munsell Colour chart.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

(Figure 2)

- 4.1 A single service trench was excavated across the area of watching brief. This measured approximately 50m in length, 0.5m in depth and 0.5m in width. The deposits revealed during its excavation consisted firstly of c.0.1m of modern paving and sand bedding [1] overlying c.0.4m of dark grey brown silty clay made ground [2].
- 4.2 This construction deposit [2] contained frequent inclusions of sub-rounded pebbles as well as finds of modern dumped material. Contexts [1] and [2] were only found in the vicinity of the school building.
- 4.3 The deposits revealed during the remainder of the excavated service trench comprised [3] a c.0.5m thick topsoil of firm mid black grey silty clay that contained occasional inclusions of sub-angular flint nodules.
- 4.4 Two fragments of animal bone were recovered from this topsoil [3].
- 4.5 No other archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

5.0 ANIMAL BONE by Gemma Driver

- 5.1 Context [3] produced two fragments of cattle bone including the proximal epiphysis of a humerus and the distal end of an unfused humerus. The humerus has been sawn off mid-shaft possibly for marrow extraction. There is no indication of burning, pathology or gnawing on the bone.
- 5.2 The assemblage has no further potential for analysis.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Underlying geology was not encountered during the course of the groundworks however the deeper levels of topsoil deposit Context [3] contained increasingly frequent flint inclusions suggesting the underlying gravels were located not far beyond a depth of 0.5m from the ground surface.
- 6.2 The results of the watching brief suggest negative evidence for archaeological activity within the area monitored at the depths encountered. The findings suggest that the natural horizon has been truncated in the immediate vicinity of the school buildings.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The archaeological horizon was not reached during the course of the excavations, and the overburden contained no noticeable finds of an archaeological nature. This, taken in conjunction with the negative results of the preceding evaluation suggests that the main focus of the nearby Roman cemetery possibly lies to the west of the area monitored.

Bibliography

Atkins, 2008, Brief for An Archaeological Watching Brief at Haslemere School, unpub rep.

Archaeology South-East, 2008, Archaeological Evaluation at Haslemere Primary School, Haslemere Avenue, London Borough of Merton, ASE Report No. 2008010

Archaeology South-East, 2009, Haslemere Primary School, Haslemere Avenue, London Borough of Merton, Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation, ASE unpub rep.

Acknowledgements

ASE would like to thank Tom Wilson of Atkins Ltd for commissioning the work.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	HZF07					
Identification Name and Address	Haslemere School, Mitcham, London Borough Of Merton					
County, District &/or Borough	Merton, London					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 526833 169186					
Geology	Taplow Gravels					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3649					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Othe
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 13 th – 17 th February 2009	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Atkins Ltd					
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave and Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Andrew Margetts					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern ✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for the excavation of a new service trench at Haslemere School, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. Groundworks comprised a trench approximately 50m in length and 0.5m in width dug to a depth of 0.5m below ground level. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 13th and 16th February 2009. Although the archaeological horizon was not reached during the course of excavations the overburden contained no noticeable finds of an archaeological nature. This taken in conjunction with the negative results of the preceding evaluation suggests the main focus of the nearby Roman cemetery possibly lies to the west and may not extend as far as the area monitored.</i></p>						

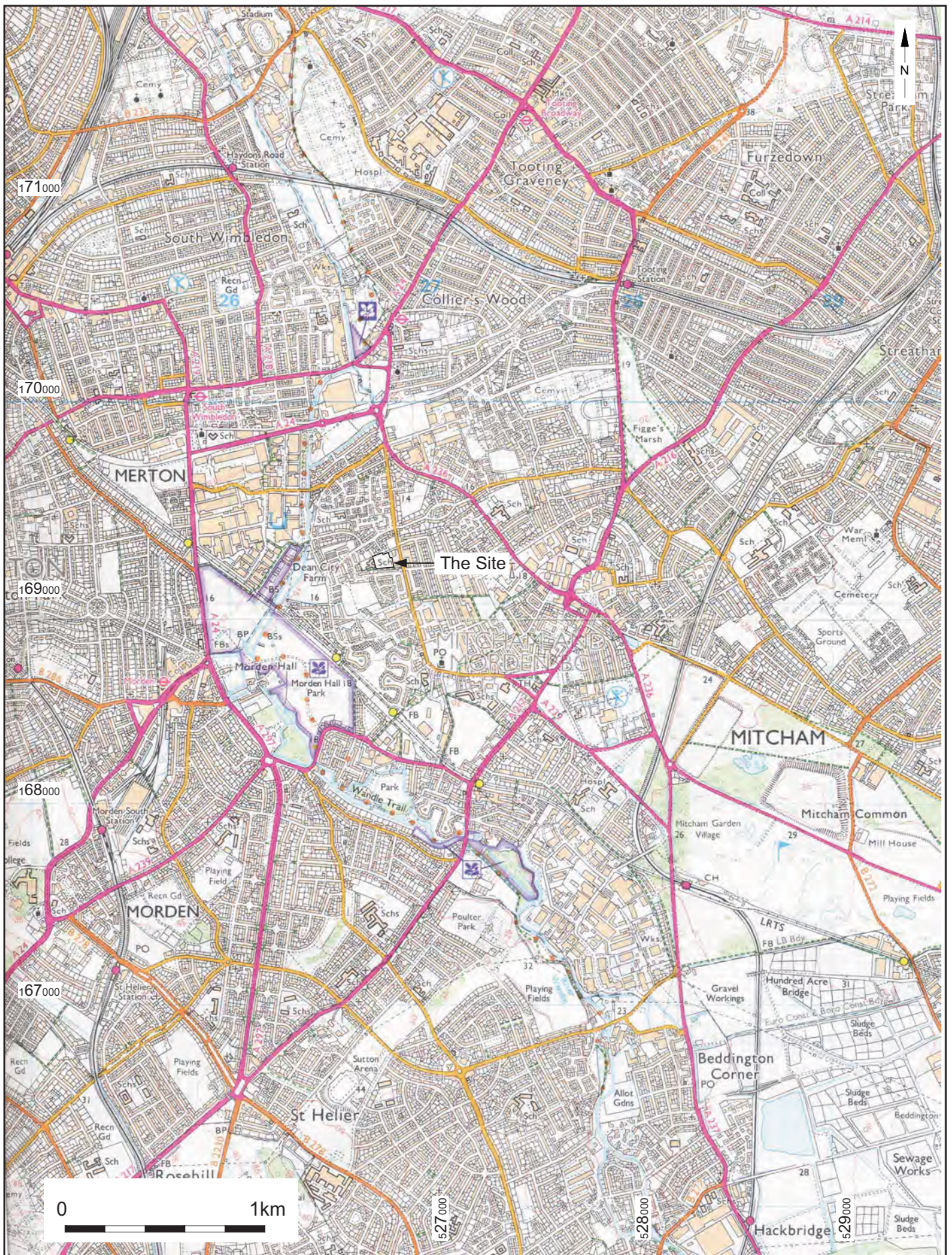
OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-55578	
Project details	
Project name	Haslemere School, Mitcham, London Borough Of Merton
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for the excavation of a new service trench at Haslemere School, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. Groundworks comprised a trench approximately 50m in length and 0.5m in width dug to a depth of 0.5m below ground level. Site visits were made to monitor groundworks on the 13th and 16th February 2009. Although the archaeological horizon was not reached during the course of excavations the overburden contained no noticeable finds of an archaeological nature. This taken in conjunction with the negative results of the preceding evaluation suggests the main focus of the nearby Roman cemetery possibly lies to the west and may not extend as far as the area monitored.
Project dates	Start: 13-02-2009 End: 16-02-2009
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HZF 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	FEATURES None
Significant Finds	FINDS None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM Haslemere School
Postcode	CR4 3PQ
Study area	25.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 526833 169186 50.9309063882 0.173009824560 50 55 51 N 000 10 22 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Jon Sygrave
Project director/manager	Giles Dawkes
Project supervisor	Andrew Margetts
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Atkins Ltd.

**Project
bibliography 1**

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Entered by	andrew Margetts (andrew_margetts@tiscali.co.uk)
Entered on	18 February 2009



© Archaeology South-East		Haslemere Primary School	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 3649	Feb 2009	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2009020	Drawn by: JLR		

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