

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green,
Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson

Site Code: SHR09/06

(TQ 06796 95053)

Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Howarth Homes

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeSHR09/06

February 2010

Summary

Site name: Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

Grid reference: TQ 06796 95053

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 1st December 2009 - 9th February 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: SHR 09/06

Area of site: c.0.6ha

Summary of results: Three undated cut features were identified in addition to the remains of 19th and 20th century structures that previously occupied the site. No finds of archaeological interest were recovered and it is considered most likely that the undated cut features relate to the 19th and 20th century use of the site.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Rickmansworth (Three Rivers) Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 15.02.10 Steve Preston✓ 16.02.10

Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson

Report 09/06b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on an area of land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (TQ 06796 95053) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Brian Nason of Howarth Homes, Elthorne Gate, 64 High Street, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5.

In response to an outline planning application (Planning ref.: 8/2054/06) for the erection of seven 4-bedroom and eight 3-bedroom detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, Three Rivers District Council has placed a condition (13) on the planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development. This condition was partially fulfilled in the undertaking of an archaeological evaluation, on the basis of the results of which, the District's archaeological advisers indicated that further work was needed in the form of an archaeological watching brief.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by, and following a brief provided by, Mr Andy Instone, County Planning Archaeologist for Hertfordshire. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson between 1st December 2009 and 9th February 2010 and the site code is SHR 09/06.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Rickmansworth (Three Rivers) Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the south-west of Croxley Green, between Rickmansworth to the south-west, Chorley Wood to the west and Watford to the north-east. The site lies on the break of slope from the upland plateau to the south-west facing slope of the Chess river valley, with the confluence the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade 0.75km to the south (Fig. 1). The site covers *c.* 0.6 ha at approximately 71m above Ordnance Datum on geology mapped as the boundary of Seaford and Newhaven Formations (Chalk) and Winter Hill Gravel (BGS 2005), however, only a clayey gravel was observed within the groundworks. The site is bounded to the north by the A412, the

east and west by housing and the south by school playing fields and is currently empty with levelled areas where the new houses are to be built (Fig. 2).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the edge of a plateau overlooking the confluence of the rivers Chess, Colne and Gade. Such a location would be an ideal site for settlement in all periods, and extensive evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation has been found alongside these rivers. The Hertfordshire HER has a number of entries relating to prehistoric and medieval finds, which have been found close to the proposed development site, including the medieval manor of Croxley Green which lies nearby, close to the river Gade. Ordnance Survey maps from the 19th century show buildings on part of the application site. Recent evaluation of the site has also considered its archaeological potential (Weale and McNicoll-Norbury 2009). The evaluation recorded the presence of a small number of prehistoric struck flints, a gully that contained medieval pottery and the foundations of Victorian and modern buildings.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This included monitoring the excavation of trenches for ground beams and services.

The foundation (groundbeam) trenches observed ranged between 1.20m and 1.65m in width and 1.10m and 1.56m in depth. They were dug by mechanical digger using 0.60m- and 1.20m-wide toothed buckets. Certain or possible archaeological features were hand-cleaned and recorded. Spoil heaps were monitored for the presence of finds.

Results (Fig. 3)

Plots 1 to 4

The excavation of the foundations for Plots 1 to 4 uncovered no features of archaeological interest. The trenches were 1.20m deep and c.1.60m wide and, because the area had been used as the site car park and spoil heap, the stratigraphy only consisted of c.0.20m of subsoil covering the sandy red clay/gravel of the natural geology. The gully containing medieval pottery identified in the evaluation (trench 2, feature 3, Weale and McNicoll-Norbury 2009) was not seen continuing either to the west or the east in the footings of Plot 3. This may be due to disturbance caused by the construction of houses with cellars in the 19th century, the remains of which were

found directly west of the location of the evaluation trench (plots 3 and 4) (Fig. 3). The cellars consisted of a series of brick-built walls perpendicular to the main road. The interior surfaces of the walls were plastered and included an *in situ* iron fireplace with surviving wooden ties affixing it to the wall. The whole area in and around the walls was filled with rubble and modern rubbish, including a pickaxe head and a wooden door.

Plots 5 to 8

Plots 5 to 8 revealed no archaeological finds or features. The stratigraphy observed here consisted of c.0.10m of disturbed ground covering 0.30m of subsoil. Sandy red clay with frequent flint inclusions natural geology was observed beneath the subsoil and extending to the base of the trench (1.20m). The foundation trenches were 1.60m wide but the loose ground meant that the edges at the top were prone to collapse and therefore the upper width varied. As with Plots 1 to 4, the area was much disturbed from previous development and demolition and the features identified in evaluation trench 3 must have related to this relatively recent activity.

Plot 9

The digging of the foundation trenches of Plot 9 revealed no finds or features of archaeological interest. The stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.30m of disturbed topsoil overlying 0.30m of subsoil. Natural geology of red sandy clay with frequent flint inclusions was observed from a depth of 0.60m to the bottom of the trench, 1.20m below ground level. The backfilled evaluation trench 5 was visible in the sides of the Plot 9 foundation trenches.

Plot 10

The foundation trenches of Plot 10 were c.1.60m wide with a depth of 1.10m in the north and east and 1.50m in the south and west. The stratigraphy observed in this area was 0.06m of disturbed topsoil on top of 0.29m of subsoil with the natural geology of red sandy clay/gravel visible below 0.35m. A possible archaeological feature (107) was observed towards the north-east corner of the plot (Fig. 3). It was probably a pit since no continuation of the feature was observed in the trench section opposite. The section exposed in the side of the foundation trench measured 1.57m across and 0.58m deep and had a shallow-sided 'U' shape. It was filled with loose, mid-brown silty clay with very frequent rounded medium-sized gravel inclusions (157). No finds were recovered from the feature and it has not been possible to assign it a date or origin.

Plots 11 and 12

Trenches of Plots 11 and 12 were dug to a width of 1.60m and a depth of *c.* 1.04m through stratigraphy consisting of *c.* 0.30m of topsoil overlying 0.30m of subsoil and then the red sandy clay/gravel geology. No archaeological features were observed or finds made. There was much disturbance, particularly in the area of Plot 12, with many small features being noted which contained modern china, brick and metal objects. Brick walls, continuations of structure 70 seen in evaluation trench 7 (Weale and McNicoll-Norbury 2009), were seen in the northern area of Plot 12 (Fig. 3). These were associated with modern ceramic drains which cut across the plot from the south. The walls appear to correspond with a greenhouse marked in that location on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map (Weale and McNicoll-Norbury 2009, fig. 7).

Plot 13

Plot 13 was dug to a depth of *c.* 0.90m and width of 1.60m. The stratigraphy observed was 0.10m of disturbed ground with large fragments of Tarmac in the area previously occupied by tennis courts, beneath this was 0.15m of gravel made-ground used to level the courts and 0.25m of subsoil which lay upon red sandy clay/gravel geology. No archaeology was identified in this area although the fills of evaluation trenches 7 and 8 were noted.

Plots 14 and 15

The foundation trenches for Plots 14 and 15 were dug to similar dimensions as the previous plots - 1.60m wide and 1.17m deep. Unlike the previous Plots, however, 14 and 15 were largely covered by the footprint of a demolished building. Due to this, the stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.30m of disturbed topsoil containing demolition rubble overlying 0.31m of made-ground, which included modern tile and pipe fragments, and 0.23m of subsoil. This all overlay the red sandy clay with large flint inclusions natural geology.

Two possible archaeological features were identified in the foundation trenches of Plots 14 and 15. The first of these was a linear feature aligned north-south across the western half of Plot 15 (Fig. 3; Pl. 1). This was visible in seven sections of the trench walls (cuts 100-106) and was *c.* 1.30m wide and its depth varied between 0.30m and 0.56m. The general cross-section of the ditch was a shallow concave and it was filled (150-6) with loose, light brown sandy silt with very frequent (*c.* 90%) medium-large flint gravel (Fig. 4; Plate 2). In the majority of the visible sections the feature appeared to be capped by the subsoil although in one case (101) it was cut through the subsoil. No finds were present in its fill. The predominantly gravel fill raises some doubt as to whether it is of archaeological interest and it is possible that it is a drainage feature associated with 19th- and 20th-century use of the site.

A second feature was observed in the southern-most trench of Plot 14 (108, Fig. 3). This consisted of a linear gully aligned NW-SE across the foundation trench at right-angles. The feature was not identified in the next trench to the north so it is unclear whether the gully terminated before that point or whether it was instead an elongated pit. The feature was 0.76m wide and 0.60m deep and had a 'U'-shaped cross-section and contained two fills (158, 159; Fig. 4). The primary fill (158) consisted of slightly compacted mid- to dark-brown sandy silt containing frequent small gravel while the secondary fill (159) was a loose mid- to dark-orange/brown silty sand with very frequent gravel inclusions. Neither of the fills yielded any artefacts so no date could be assigned to the feature. The gully cut through the subsoil and was capped with a 0.09m thick layer of dark organic material containing frequent fragments of coal.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

Despite a possible medieval gully and a prehistoric struck flint being found during the earlier evaluation, no artefacts or features of these periods (or any other pre-19th century date) were recorded during the watching brief. The three features that were observed contained no artefacts which could be used to provide a date for them and there is a strong suspicion that they all relate to the 19th and 20th century use of the site.

References

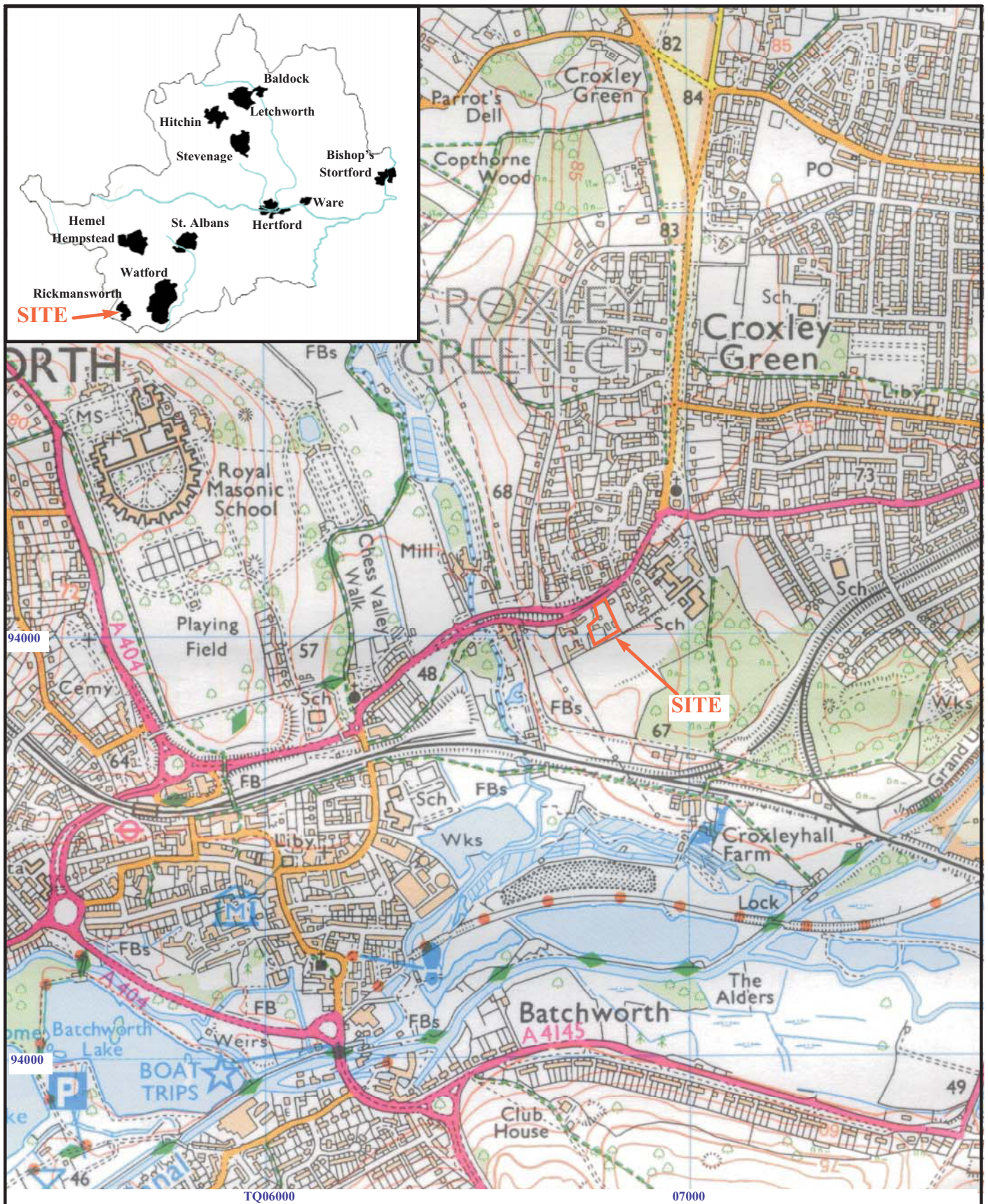
BGS, 2005, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Weale, A and McNicoll-Norbury, J, 2009, 'Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 09/06, Reading

APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Plot</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating Evidence</i>
15	100	150	Ditch	Undated	None
15	101	151	Ditch	Undated	None
15	102	152	Ditch	Undated	None
15	103	153	Ditch	Undated	None
15	104	154	Ditch	Undated	None
15	105	155	Ditch	Undated	None
15	106	156	Ditch	Undated	None
10	107	157	Ditch/pit	Undated	None
14	108	158	Gully/pit	Undated	None
14		159	Layer	Undated	None

APPENDIX 1: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Three Rivers	
Village/Town: Rickmansworth	Parish: Croxley Green	
Planning application reference: 8/2054/06		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Howarth Homes, Elthorne Gate, 64 High Street, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 0208 429 8891		
Nature of application: Residential construction		
Present land use: Derelict		
Size of application area: 0.6ha	Size of area investigated: c. 0.2ha	
NGR (to 8 figures): TQ 0680 9505		
Site code (if applicable): SHR09/06		
Site director/Organization: Steve Ford, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd		
Type of work Watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: 01/12/2009	Finish: 09/02/2010
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Rickmansworth (Three Rivers) Museum		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Modern	
Relevant previous summaries/reports A Weale and J McNicoll 'Land off Scots Hill, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire; an archaeological evaluation' Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd report 09/06, 2009		
Summary of fieldwork results: Three undated cut features were identified in addition to the remains of 19th and 20th century structures that previously occupied the site. No finds of archaeological interest were recovered and it is considered most likely that the undated cut features relate to the 19th and 20th century use of the site.		
Author of summary: Tim Dawson	Date of summary: 16/02/2010	



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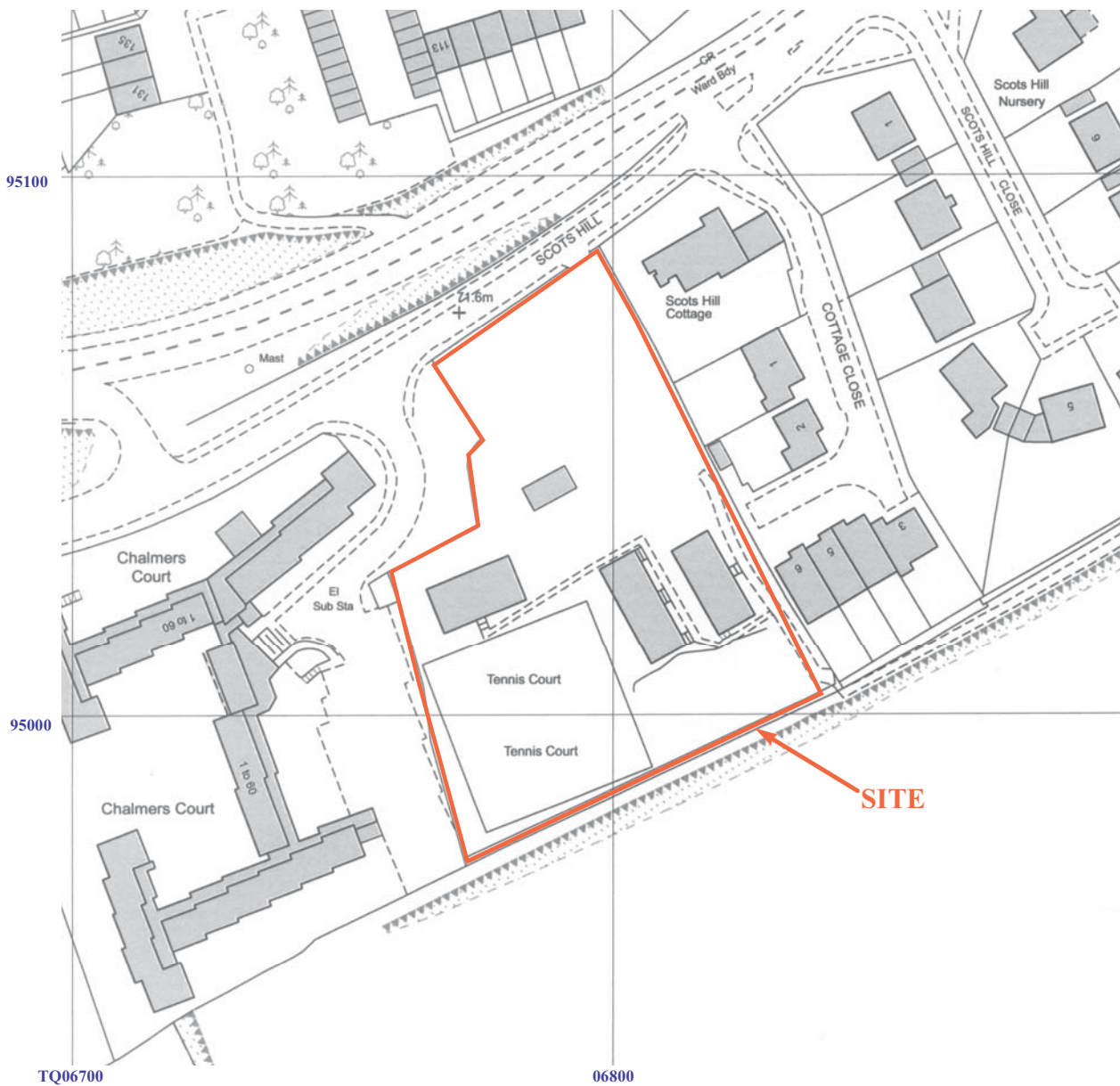
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Figure 1. Location of site within Croxley Green and Hertfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Scots Hill.

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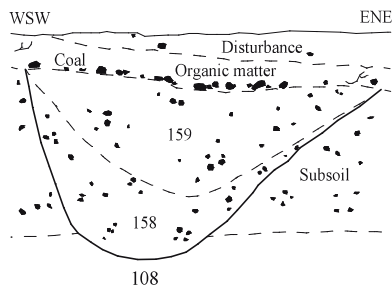
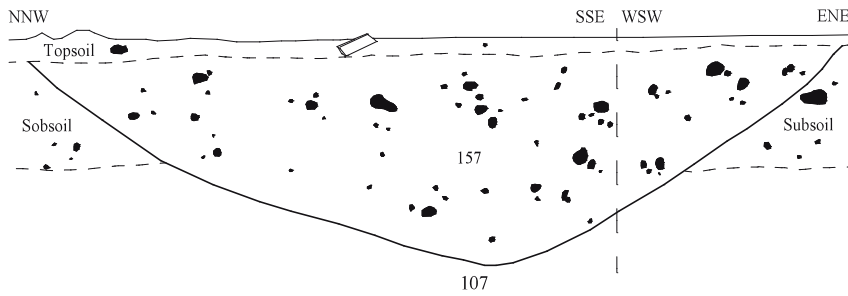
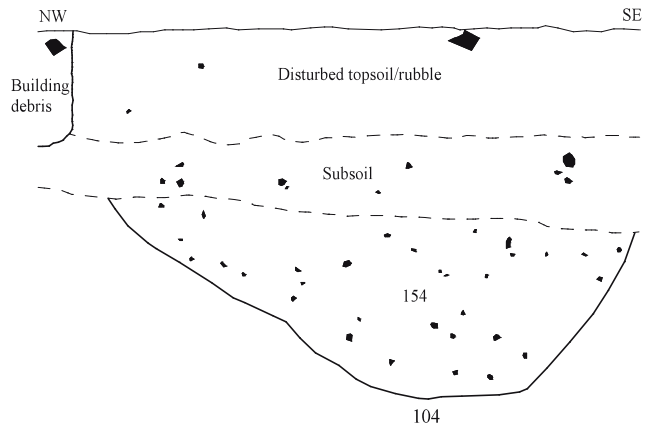
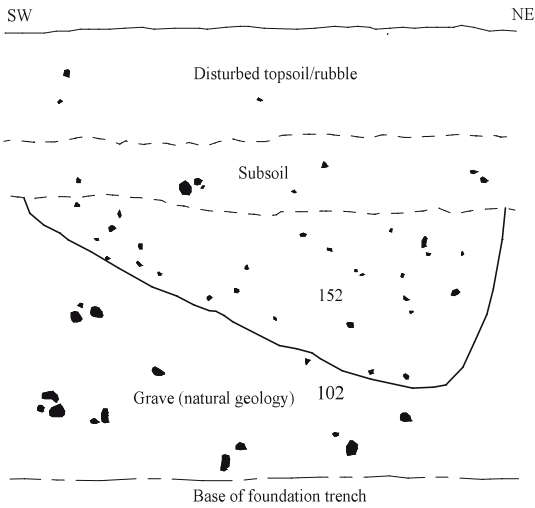
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Figure 3. Detail of areas observed in watching brief.



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Figure 4. Sections.





Plate 1. Ditch 100-106, looking north along its length. Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 2. Section through the ditch (cut 104), looking north east.
Scales: 1m and 0.3m

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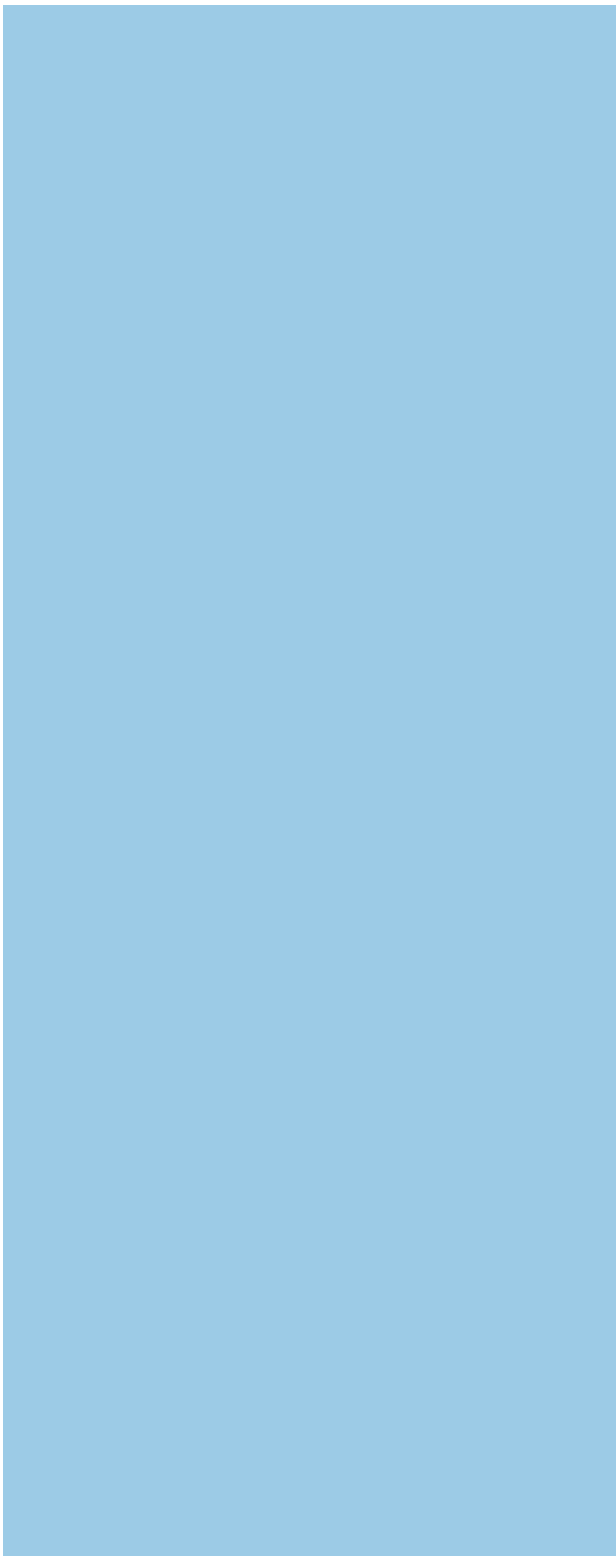
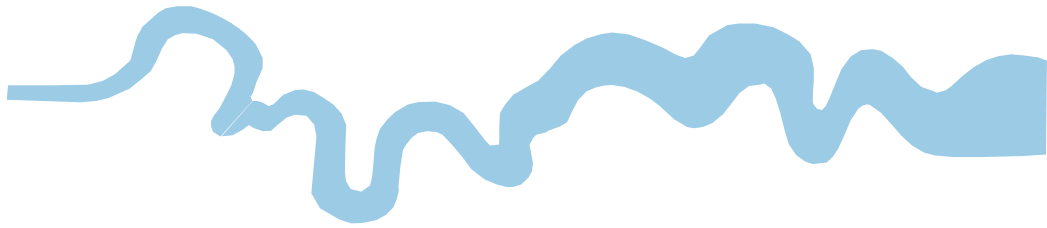
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Plates 1 and 2

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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