

HONOR OAK PARK SPORT GROUND

Brockley Rise

London SE23

London Borough of Lewisham

Post-excavation assessment

May 2012



**Honor Oak Park Sports Ground
Brockley Rise
London
SE23**

Site Code: HKP08

Author: Antony Baxter
Project Manager: Robin Nielsen

Sign-off History:

Issue No.	Date:	Prepared by:	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	22.06.12	Antony Baxter	Robin Nielsen	Final Issue

Graphics: Judit Peresztegi

© Museum of London Archaeology

Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED
tel 0207 410 2200 fax 0207 410 2201 email: generalenquiries@mola.org.uk

Summary

This report has been commissioned by King's College, London, in order to set out the results of the excavation carried out at Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Brockley Rise in the London Borough of Lewisham.

Archaeological excavation in the footprint of the new Sports Pavilion was carried out between 16th and 24th of April 2012. An archaeological evaluation and watching brief, carried out in September 2008 and April 2009 respectively, helped provide a proven alignment of the London to Lewes Roman road. The excavation investigated an area where road metalling was to be removed in order to install a piling mat for the pavilion. A roadside ditch, previously not identified, was found to lie to the east of the road. Pottery fragments date a fill of the ditch to AD70 -120 or later (Appendix 1). The road had been severely truncated by construction of the previous sports pavilion and levelling of sports pitches. Previously, the road had been sectioned in a number of places between West Wickham and Peckham during the 1930s by Davis (Davis 1935, 65; Margery 1965, 53-54), and then its course projected between these observations. The excavation has confirmed the projected route and expands our understanding of the Roman road.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Site background	1
1.2	Planning and legislative framework	1
1.3	Planning background	1
1.4	Origin and scope of the report	3
1.5	Research aims and objectives of excavation	3
2	Topographical and historical background	4
2.1	Topography	4
2.2	Prehistoric	4
2.3	Roman	4
2.4	Early and late medieval	4
2.5	Post-medieval	5
3	The excavation	6
3.1	Methodology	6
3.2	Results of the excavation	6
4	Potential of archaeology	12
4.1	Realisation of original research aims	12
4.2	General discussion of the archaeology	13
4.3	Significance of the data	13
5	Publication and archiving	14
6	Acknowledgements	15
7	Bibliography	16
8	NMR OASIS archaeological report form	17
9	Appendix 1: Note on Roman pottery from Honor Oak Park Sports Ground (HKP08)	20

List of illustrations

Front cover: The South-eastern network of Roman roads (14: London to Lewis road), (Davis 1935, 65, reproduced in Margery 1965, 53-54).

<i>Fig 1 Site location</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Fig 2 Trench location plan</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Fig 3 plan of road and accompanying ditch</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Fig 4 North facing section of road and ditch</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Fig 5 Southern view of road [104] and ditch [102]</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Fig 6 Southern view of excavated road [104] and ditch [102]</i>	<i>10</i>

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The excavation took place at Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, hereafter called 'the site'. The site is bounded to the north by the rear gardens of residential houses fronting the south side of Sevenoaks Road, to the east by residential housing fronting the eastern side of Offord Crescent, and the rear gardens to residential housing fronting the western edge of Ladywell Heights and Crofton Park Road. To the south and west the site is also bounded by the rear gardens to residential housing and a Primary School fronting the north side of Stillness Road and the eastern side of Brockley Rise (Fig 1). The centre of the site lies at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference 536435 174180. The sports ground lies at between 29.00 and 31.00m OD with modern pavement level to the south, on Stillness Road, at 36.20m OD.

A desk top *Archaeological (impact) assessment* was previously written (Swift, 2005) for the site. This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology and the historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential.

A geotechnical investigation of the site was monitored and recorded by MOLA (Rapson, 2008) and a geophysical survey undertaken, focusing on the potential line of a Roman road (Smalley, 2008). These investigations helped formulate a strategy for further investigation consisting of an archaeological evaluation (Churchill 2008) and an archaeological watching brief (Ferguson 2009), which established the survival and the location of remains of the Roman road. These documents, and the previous *Assessment*, informed the design for the excavation which was eventually carried out (Nielsen MOLA, 2009).

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment* which formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 2, Swift, 2005)

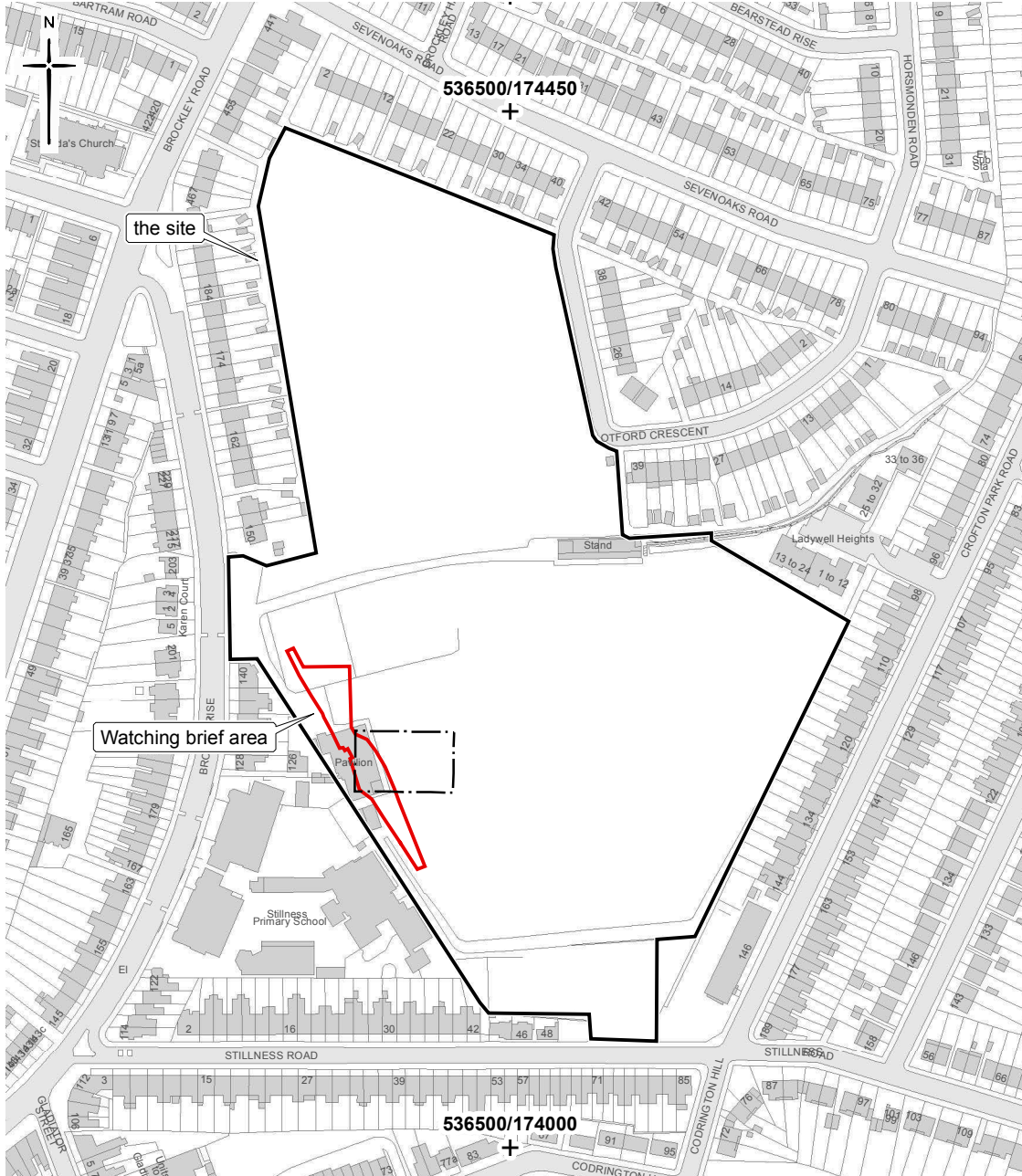
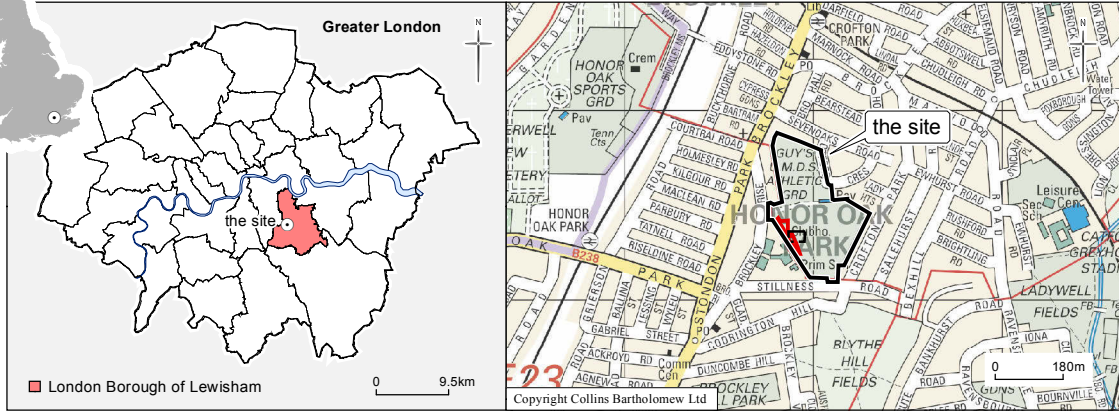
1.3 Planning background

The site has planning consent (ref DC/05/60924/X) for the redevelopment of the existing sports ground from the London Borough of Lewisham, who attached Condition 1 to the planning consent. Condition 1 refers to the archaeology:

No development shall take place on the site until the applicant, or any successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure adequate access for archaeological investigations in compliance with the advice contained in the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, entitled "Archaeology and Planning" and to comply with Policy URB 21 Archaeology in the adopted Unitary Development Plan (July 2004).

A written scheme of investigation (method statement) for an archaeological evaluation, in accordance with the condition, was submitted in July 2008 on the basis of advice from English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, the



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. City of London 100023243 2012.

Fig 1 Site location

Borough's archaeological advisers and their recommendations in respect of the planning application (Nielsen, 2008). On the basis of the evaluation, which included a geophysical survey, GLAAS recommended approval of a written scheme of investigation for a watching brief on exposure, and preservation in situ, of the metalling of a Roman road identified during the evaluation (Nielsen 2009). This document made provision for the controlled archaeological excavation of limited areas of the road metalling where preservation was not possible. These included a service run, excavated at the same time as the watching brief and reported on with it (Ferguson, 2009) and the present investigation.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by King's College, London and produced by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001) and guidelines prepared by English Heritage (English Heritage, 1998).

The report analyses the results of the excavation carried out on the site between the 16th and 24th of April. The purpose of the excavation was to excavate in full and preserve in record, the area of Roman road, identified and located in the archaeological evaluation and archaeological watching brief, upon which the construction of a new sports pavilion would have an unavoidable impact. Elsewhere on the site remains of the road have been preserved in situ.

1.5 Research aims and objectives of excavation

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002*

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the excavation (Section 2.2 Nielsen, R 2008)

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- What can be learnt from the exposure of the Roman road crossing the western part of the site and evidence for activity associated with it?
- Does the road survive in section in the bank at the southern end of the site and if so what will be the impact upon it of the installation of the gabion wall?
NB the intention to install a gabion wall at the southern end of the site was later abandoned, so this research aim became redundant.
- What are the latest deposits identified?

2 Topographical and historical background

The following is a brief summary of the topographical and historical background of the site and its immediate and regional surroundings. A detailed description was contained in the desk-based assessment (Swift, 2005).

The time-scales used in this report are:

Palaeolithic:	650,000-10,000 BC
Mesolithic:	10,000-4,000 BC
Neolithic:	4,000-2,000 BC
Bronze Age:	2,000-600 BC
Iron Age:	600 BC-AD 43
Roman:	AD 43-410
Saxon (early-medieval):	AD 410-1066
Medieval:	AD 1066-1485
Post-medieval:	AD 1485-present

2.1 Topography

The River Ravensbourne is located c 850m east of the site. The site is located on the Sydenham Range at c 30.00m OD in an area where Woolwich beds are overlain by London Clay. The site is situated on a natural slope (from the south down towards the north) and has been terraced on the south side.

2.2 Prehistoric

Occasional prehistoric flints artefacts have been found in the Ravensbourne valley. Whilst it is possible that some of this material derived from higher up the valley sides, in the area of the site for instance, it is also possible that there was scattered prehistoric occupation along the valley floor.

2.3 Roman

Honor Oak is situated on One Tree Hill and is allegedly the site of the victory of Suetonius Paulinus over Boudicca in AD 61. The site is crossed on its western edge by the projected line of the Roman London-Lewes road. This road was sectioned in a number of places between West Wickham and Peckham during the 1930s by Davis (Davis 1935, 65; Margery 1965, 53-54), and then its course projected between these observations. It was generally located at an approximate depth of 0.50m or less below the ground surface.

2.4 Early and late medieval

The earliest evidence for Saxon activity in the area seems to have been in a grant of AD 862 by Ethelbert of Wessex. The nearest evidence of Saxon activity is some distance from the site at Catford Bridge c 950m south east of the site, where the GLSMR notes that a Saxon bridge mill was located. How long the Roman road remained in use after the departure of the Romans is difficult to determine. Its line, to the north-west, later formed the county boundary between Kent to the east and Surrey to the west (still apparent in London as the boundary between the boroughs of Lewisham and Bromley, to the east, and Southwark and Croydon to the west). Thus

preserved as an administrative boundary, the road line was undoubtedly a prominent landscape feature in the early medieval period.

2.5 Post-medieval

The site was in open fields for most of the post-medieval period, as can be seen from early maps of the area.

3 The excavation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the excavation was done in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2009) and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

The extent of the area of impact of the formation level of a piling mat and pilling associated with the construction of the pavilion, was located by off-setting from standing buildings and the sites boundary using measurements obtained from a site plan produced by the MOLA geomatics team, who carried out the surveys of the 2008 evaluation and 2009 watching brief (Fig 2). The overlaying deposits were then carefully reduced down to the top of the Roman road, by a 360° excavator with a wide, flat-bladed bucket, under the supervision of the attending Senior Archaeologist.

The exposed archaeological deposit and features were then cleaned by hand, excavated to their full extent and recorded by the attending Senior Archaeologist and members of the MOLA field team. The MOLA Geomatics team recorded the limit of excavation and a site grid established using a GPS survey station. This information was then plotted onto the OS grid. Levels were calculated via an engineering level traverse from a spot height of 32.20m OD, located against the southwest boundary wall of the site.

The site has produced: one trench location plan and two context plans at 1:20; six context records; one sample sheet; one section drawings at 1:10; and 19 photographs. In addition one environmental sample and three bags of finds were recovered from the site. The analysis phase of post-excavation was based around the creation of a phased matrix of the six contexts. The site finds and records can be found under the site code HKP08 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the excavation

The excavation area was located under the footprint of the proposed sports pavilion building (Figs 1 and 2). The area measured 21.60m north-south by 12.80m east-west.

The underlying natural clay (London Clay) [105] sloped from 30.46m OD at the southern end of the excavation area down to 29.91m OD at the north end.

The earliest archaeological feature cutting the clay, was the previously identified northwest–southeast running Roman road cut [104], this was represented by a shallow, concave, linear cut or depression, encountered between a maximum height of 30.46m OD and depth of 30.16mOD in the southeast, sloping to 30.20m OD and 29.92m OD in the northwest It was 3.60m wide and a length of 15.90m was exposed (Fig 3). Cut feature [104] was primarily filled by a weakly cemented, orange brown, gravely sand [106], recorded with a width of 1.7m, thickness 80mm and seen at a height of 30.33mOD to 30.22m OD within Section 11 (Figs 3, 4, 5, 6). This was in turn overlain by a indurated dark orange brown, sandy gravel, 0.28m thick, that filled [104] throughout its extent; one small fragment of pottery was found in this deposit, which could only be broadly dated to the Roman period.



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. City of London 100023243 2011.

LEM11102PXA112#02

Fig 2 Trench location plans

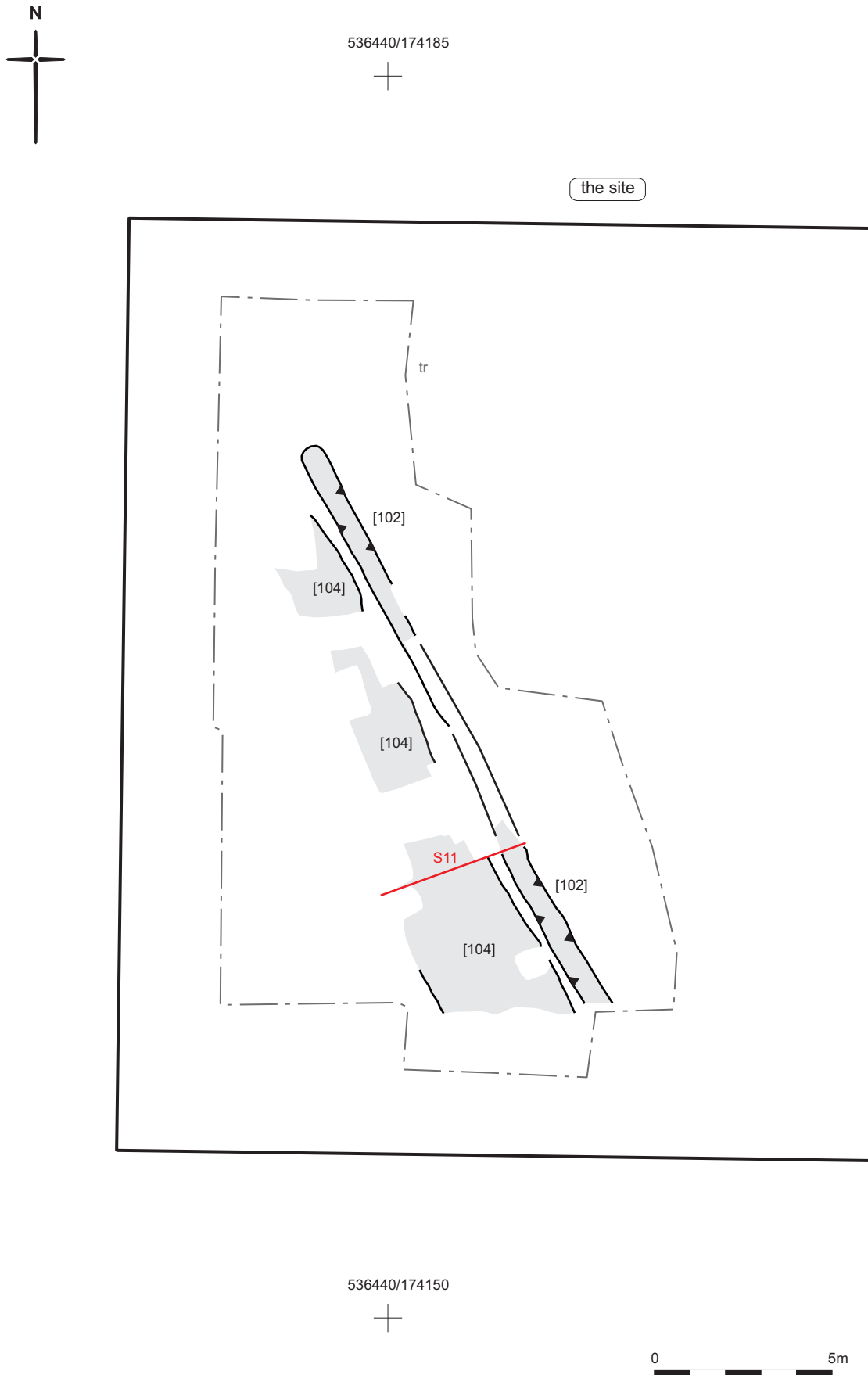


Fig 3 Plan of road and accompanying ditch

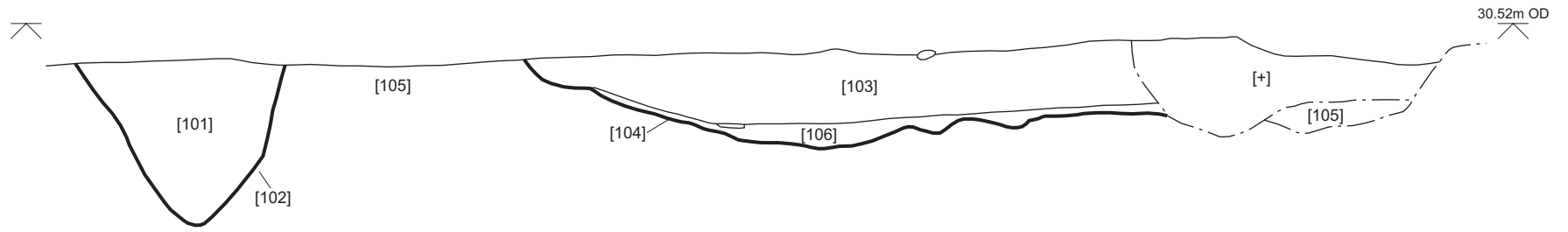


Fig 4 North facing section of road and ditch



Fig 5 Southern view of road [104] and ditch [102]



Fig 6 Southern view of excavated road [104] and ditch [102]

Running parallel with the east side of [104] and also truncating the natural, was [102] a steep sided, V-shaped, linear cut, interpreted as a roadside ditch, encountered at maximum heights of 30.45m OD in the southeast to 30.08m OD in the northwest, 0.66m width, 17.72m in length and a maximum depth of 0.54m (Figs 3, 4, 5, 6). There appeared to be a possible butt end in the northwest, though this may in fact be a product of heavy modern truncation in this area of the site. Filling [102] throughout was [101] a firm, mid brownish orange, silty clay, which contained occasional striations of coarse sands and a number of pottery sherds, from a single vessel. This was a Verulamium region white ware flagon with flared dating to AD 70–120 (Appendix 1). A sample of the fill of the ditch taken from the vicinity of the vessel proved, on processing to contain no organic remains to provide information on the environment at that time. There was no evidence for a roadside ditch on the west side of the road.

All of above archaeological features and natural within the area of excavation, had been heavily truncated through out by construction of the previous sports pavilion, particularly in the north and west where there was practically no survival of the road metalling, and original levelling of the playing fields.

4 Potential of archaeology

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

The results of the watching brief, in relation to the research aims suggested in the method statement (Nielsen, 2008) are discussed here:

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*

The underlying natural clay slopes from 30.46m OD at the southern end of the excavation area down to 29.91m OD at the north end. The former height represents a truncation level resulting from the levelling of the site to form the original playing fields.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest deposit identified was the Roman road constructed from compacted gravel. A coin, dating from AD81–96, was found during the previous watching brief may suggest that the road was constructed in the late 1st century AD or later. This is consistent with pottery from Margary's excavation at Barcombe Mills, East Sussex which indicates a date for construction as late 1st or early 2nd century.

- *What can be learnt from the exposure of the Roman road crossing the western part of the site and evidence for activity associated with it?*

Margary concluded that London to Lewes road had a dual function. The first was to link London with the rich corn-growing area of the South Downs and the second was to open up the Weald iron-producing region for trade with London and the Continent (Straker and Margary 1938, 56). There was little evidence of any major activity associated with the road, such as road side burials or settlements. Although a roadside ditch was encountered along the eastern side of the road, cultural material found within its fill was almost completely limited to the remains of a partially complete vessel, which was most likely dropped or discarded rather than being purposely placed. This would confirm, as suggested in the watching brief report, that at this point the road was passing through open agricultural land or, more likely given the site's location on heavy clay, an area of forest.

The road is constructed from gravel. The nearest source of which would have been found within the valley of the River Ravensbourne, located c 850m to the east of the road, although no evidence of Roman quarrying has been recorded in that area.

It is known from previous archaeological investigations in the mid 20th century, that the width of the London to Lewes road varies along its route. At its narrowest, the road is just 4.4m wide but was found to be up to 10.5m wide near Hartfield, East Sussex (Straker and Margary 1938, 57). There was evidence of a road side ditch along the eastern side of the road on the site, although if a western ditch existed to define the width of the road (possibly only in its initial form) heavy truncation may have removed it. Where the roadside ditches have been recorded elsewhere on the road's course, such as in the Ashdown Forest, the distance between the ditches was 19m. The section of road observed was 3.6m wide as seen, due to truncation; although during the watching brief, in areas less heavily truncated, it was recorded as being c 6m wide, which is in the middle of the range for known sections of the

London to Lewes road. This compares well with the average width of major Roman roads in Britain being 6.5m or 22 *pedes* (a Roman foot *pes*, plural *pedes*, is equal to c 29.4cm).

- What are the latest deposits identified?

The latest archaeological feature encountered on site was the deposit filling the eastern road side ditch. This fill was most likely formed over a long period of time by silting and slumping from the road and the surrounding natural and, given the comparatively early date of the vessel recovered from it (AD70-120), is unlikely to provide a reliable indicator for the final disuse of the road.

4.2 General discussion of the archaeology

The type of broad, shallow ditch represented by [104], known as a *fossa*, would have been tamped down to form the *pavimentum* (the Latin word *pavire* means to 'ram down'), or the base of the road. In many Roman military roads, a foundation layer called the *statument*, consisted of layers of flat stones would have been laid down. However there was no evidence of this at the Honor Oak Park Sports Ground site. It was then usual for the *statument* to be sealed by a layer of sand or gravel called the *rudus*. There is evidence of the *rudus* at the southeastern end of cut [104], where the *fossa* was filled with [106].

A top layer of gravel, known as the *nucleus*, would have formed the road's surface (although often in towns large flat stones, known as the *summum dorsum*, formed the road surface). Overlaying [106] was [103], which would appear to be the *nucleus*. These layers were heavily truncated by the demolished pavilion and terracing to form sports pitches.

Roman roads are commonly flanked by roadside ditches; this was evident on site in the form of [102] to the east of the road, with no evidence for one in the west due to truncation. Often these ditches would have formed an integral part of the roads construction, in the form of quarries for material used for the roads make up. On site, due to the natural being of a clay nature, it is likely that the purpose of the ditch found was largely to act as drainage to carry water away from the road's surface. Possible evidence for this is the noted abrasion of pottery recovered from the ditch's fill (Appendix 1).

4.3 Significance of the data

The archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local and regional significance in demonstrating the presence of and providing limited dating evidence for a relatively major Roman road. Beyond this, the finds recovered have no additional research significance.

5 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic research into the development of London and its hinterland or into Roman roads.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2009) with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the lack of potential of the finds for further research and the essentially topographic significance of the data (Section 4.3) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the excavation should appear in the annual round-up of the *London Archaeologist*.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank King's College, London for commissioning this report and Peter Armstrong and ISG for their site facilities, co-operation and assistance during the excavation.

7 Bibliography

- Churchill, D, 2008 *Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Brockley Rise, London SE23: A report on the evaluation*, MoLAS unpub report
- Ferguson, B, 2009 *Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Brockley Rise, London SE23: A report on the watching brief*, MoLAS unpub report
- Institute for Archaeologists (IFA), 2001 *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute for Archaeologists (rev. 2001), Standard and guidance: watching brief*
- Institute for Archaeologists (IFA), supplement 2001, *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute for Archaeologists: Standards and guidance – the collection, documentation conservation and research of archaeological materials*
- Margary, I, 1955 *Roman Roads in Britain Vol. 1*
- Margary, I, 1965 *Roman ways in the Weald*. London
- Museum of London, 1994 *Archaeological Site Manual 3rd edition*
- Museum of London, 2002 *A research framework for London archaeology 2002*
- Nielsen, R, 2009 *Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Brockley Rise, London SE23: A Method Statement for archaeological investigation*, MoLAS
- Rapson, G, 2008 *Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Lewisham, SE4: A report on archaeological monitoring of geotechnical boreholes*, MoLAS unpub. report
- Smalley, R, 2008 *Geophysical Survey Report: Honor Oak Park, Lewisham, London, SE23*, Stratascan unpub. report for MoLAS
- Swift, D, 2005 *Honor Oak Park Sports Ground, Lewisham, SE4: Archaeological Assessment*, MoLAS unpub. report
- Straker, E, and Margary, I, D, 1938 'Ironworks and Communications in the Weald in Roman Times', *The Geographical Journal*

8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-125438

Project details

Project name: Honor Oak Park Sports Ground Brockley Rise London

Short description of the project The excavation area was located under the footprint of the proposed sports pavilion building. Natural London clay was found on site, sloping from 30.46m OD (S) to 29.91m OD (N). The earliest archaeological feature truncating the natural on site, was the previously identified Northwest-Southeast running Roman road cut. This was evident in the form of a shallow, concave, linear, ditch. This was primarily filled by a weakly cemented, orange brown, gravely sand. This was in turn overlain by a indurated dark orange brown, sandy gravel and would appear to have formed the road's surface, to the east of the road, in the form of a V-shaped linear; pottery fragments within its fill date its disuse and infilling to xxx, no evidence for one in the west was found due to truncation.

Project dates Start: 16-04-2012 End: 24-04-2012

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated project reference codes HKP08 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Other 14 - Recreational usage

Monument type ROAD Roman

Significant Finds VESSEL Roman

Investigation type 'Full excavation'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG15

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM CATFORD Honor Oak Park Sports Ground Brockley Rise London

Postcode SE23

Study area 58752.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 36435 74180 51.4496394859 -0.036326447344 51 26 58 N 000
02 10 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 29.91m Max: 30.46m

Project creators

Name of Organisation MOLA

Project brief originator Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)

Project design originator MOLA

Project director/manager Robin Nielsen

Project supervisor Antony Baxter

Type of sponsor/funding body Client

Name of sponsor/funding body King's College, London

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Physical Archive ID HKP08

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Archive ID HKP08

Digital Contents 'Survey','other'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Archive ID HKP08

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic','other'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Matrices','Microfilm','Plan','Report','Section'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Honor Oak Park Sports Ground Brockley Rise London SE23,Post excavation assessment

Author(s)/Editor(s) Baxter,A

Date 2012

Issuer or publisher MOLA

Place of issue or publication London

Description A4 Client Report

Entered by Antony Baxter (abaxter@mola.org)
Entered on 10 May 2012

9 Appendix 1: Note on Roman pottery from Honor Oak Park Sports Ground (HKP08)

(Amy Thorp)

Roman pottery was recovered from two contexts in the course of the watching brief at Honor Oak Park Sports Ground.

Context [101], fill of a roadside ditch, contained primarily the highly fragmented section (39 sherds) of a Verulamium region white ware ring-necked flagon with flared mouth (VRW 1B2) dating AD 70–120. The only complete part of the vessel is the rim/neck and all sherds have a stripped appearance from a high level of abrasion. The only other sherd present is a heavily abraded sand tempered fabric which cannot be sourced.

Context [103], road make-up, contained a single sherd of a grog-tempered ware fabric (heavily abraded) which cannot be sourced and, therefore, is dated AD 40–400.