THE RAVENSBOURNE
at Hayes Lane
London
BR2

London Borough of Bromley

An archaeological watching brief report

June 2006

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

MUSEUM OF LONDON
Archaeology Service

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An archaeological watching brief report

Site Code: RNB06
National Grid Reference: 5540600 167900

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service to monitor the soil stripping in advance of the construction of a site compound and construction of a short length of new meandering river channel adjoining Hayes Lane, Bromley. This work was undertaken during February 2006 as part of the rebuilding of the Hayes Lane trash screen. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by the Environment Agency (scheme no. IMTH000540).

No evidence for palaeochannels was seen and no artefacts were recovered. The underlying natural geology consists of a sandy gravel interpreted as part of Palaeocene Harwich Formation.

Contents

List of Figures

Front Cover: John Evelyn (1620-1706), writer, gardener and diarist. He lived at Deptford and in June 1652 was robbed while crossing Bromley Common.

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place along the intersection of Hayes Lane and the River Ravensbourne, hereafter called 'the site'. The site is bounded to the north by Hayes Lane and to the west by the River Ravensbourne (see Fig 1). The area of the site is pastureland. The Ordnance Survey National Grid reference for the area of investigation is 5406750 1678760. The fieldwork was carried out during February 2006. The site code is RBN 06.

1.2 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by the Environment Agency and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remain or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains. The aim of this project was twofold; firstly to monitor soil stripping in advance of compound construction in an area adjoining Hayes Lane, intended as the permanent site compound (NGR 540610 167920) and, secondly, to monitor the excavation of a new 30m length of meandering river channel on the south side of the existing trash screen (NGR 540600 167925) (see Fig 2). This fieldwork was undertaken during February 2006 as part of the rebuilding of the Hayes Lane trash screen.

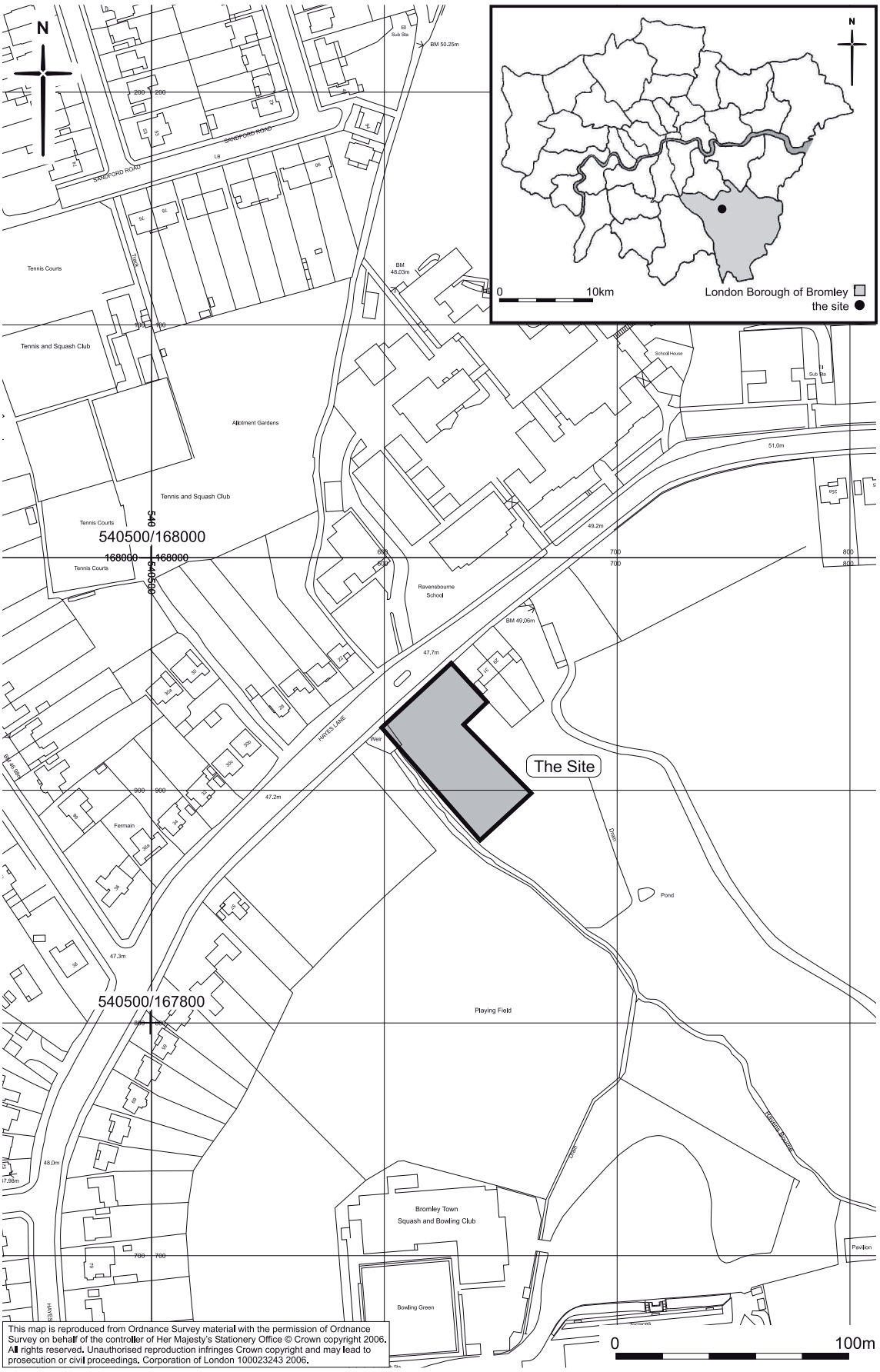

Fig 1 Site location

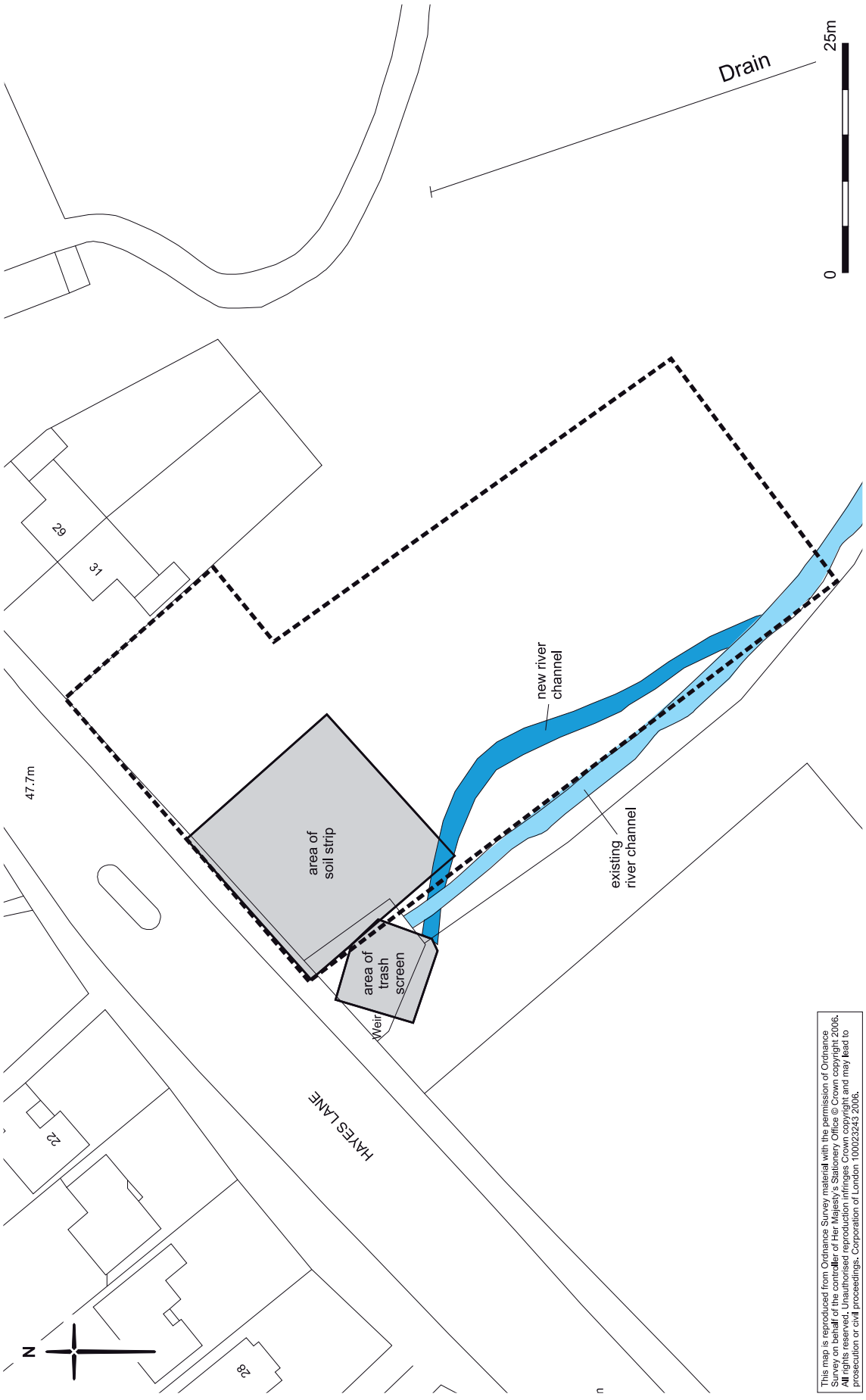

Fig 2 Plan of areas of archaeological monitoring

2 Geological, topographical and historical background

The time-scales used in this report are:

Palaeolithic:	450,000-12,000 BC
Mesolithic:	12,000-4,000 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 Geological and topographical background

The site is situated on the boundary between the Palaeocene Harwich Formation, (sands contains black flint pebbles, with localised occurrences of marine shells) and the overlying Holocene Ravensbourne alluvium (mainly silts and clayey sediments).[1] Ground level within the area site is situated at about 47m OD (Ordnance Datum).

2.2 Historic Background

The manor of Bromley (wood with broom shrubs) is first documented in AD 862 as part of the estates of the Bishop of Rochester. In 1205, the town was granted a charter for a weekly market, and a second charter in 1447 allowed the holding of two annual fairs plus a weekly market. The parish church of St Peter and St Paul dates from the 14th century (Newman 1969, 177).

The site forms part of an area known as Bromley Common. The common was an area of rough pasture, overgrown with gorse, heather, fern and broom. The main road from London to Kent (now the A21) crossed the common. Travellers were sometimes robbed by highwaymen because of the common's relatively remote location. In June 1652, John Evelyn, the noted writer, gardener and diarist was robbed here.

[1] British Geological Survey Sheet 271, Dartford 1:50,000, 1998.

In 1764, part of the common was enclosed and, in 1821, the rest of it was enclosed. New roads, ditches, fences and drains were constructed and 'Bromley town' expanded southwards across this area (Weinreb and Hibbert 1983, 95). On a map of 1805, the area of the site was shown as pasture and where the Hayes Lane crossed the River Ravensbourne there was a ford (see Fig 3).

By 1861, several cottages had been constructed nearby and these were known as Hayesford (Fitzgerald 1986, 174). Today most of the area this of former common has been developed, but the majority of surviving open space is woodland while the remainder of it consists of pony pasture for riding schools, various playing fields and an athletics track.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Results of watching brief

On the 2nd February, machine stripping of the top- and subsoil (down about 0.8m below existing ground level) of the 20m by 20m compound area adjoining Hayes Lane was monitored (see Fig 2). There was a depth of 0.35m of humic topsoil. It was a greyish-brown, fine sandy silt, topped by a turf horizon. Underneath this was subsoil horizon consisting of a light brown fine/medium grained sandy silt, containing a moderate frequency of pebbles. This material was obviously derived from Brickearth. There was extensive evidence of root disturbance within the subsoil horizon and several probable tree holes were present, but no archaeological features or artefacts were seen. Close to the river the topsoil was up to 0.70m thick, this increased thickness is interpreted as the result of dredged material being dumped here.

On the 7th February, the excavation of the new meandering river channel was monitored (see Fig 2). The sequence consisted of 0.50m depth of topsoil with extensive root disturbance. Below it was a 0.30m thick layer of loose light brown fine sandy silt, containing 1 to 2cm thick lenses or bands of black silt and yellow sand. These lenses generally sloped from east to west (towards the present river channel). The presence of these lenses imply that at various times the river has flooded and these should be interpreted as overbank deposits representing two different sorts of flood events. The sands would have been laid down by high energy or fast flowing water and the silts represent prolonged standing water sedimentation. No evidence of any palaeochannels was seen. The lowest 0.20 depth of excavation revealed the top portion of an orange sandy gravel deposit extending below the limit of excavation. This material is interpreted as natural sands, as part of the Palaeocene Harwich Formation (see section 2.1).

3.2 Assessment of watching brief

The watching brief provided information concerning the sequence of Holocene overbank flood deposits and located a subsoil horizon derived from Brickearth. At a depth of 0.80m below existing ground level (circa 46.2m OD), a layer of sandy gravel was located, which is interpreted as part of the Palaeocene Harwich Formation (see section 2.1). No evidence of any palaeochannels was seen and no artefacts were recovered.

Fig 3 The area of Bromely Common in 1805, showing the site location (source Fitzgerald 1984, 142, 172)

4 Acknowledgements

MoLAS wishes to thank the Environment Agency who funded the evaluation and subsequent production of this report.

The author would like to thank the following people who contributed to the success project: Tony Mackinder of MoLAS field team who undertook most of the fieldwork; Richard Lewis and Phil Gwynne of Halcrow.

5 Bibliography

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6 OASIS summary of archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-16164

Project details

Project name	Hayes Lane Bromley
Short description of the project	Watching brief to monitor soil stripping and digging of new river channel (Ravensbourne) adjoining the Hayes Lane trash screen revealed no palaeochannels or artefacts. Natural sandy gravel probably part of Palaeocene Harwich Formation Top est. 46.2m OD
Project dates	Start: 02-02-2006 End: 07-02-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	RBN06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 4 - Regularly improved
Monument type	nt Post Medieval
Significant Finds	none
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Environmental (unspecified schedule)
Status	Complete

Project location

Site location	GREATER LONDON BROMLEY Hayes Lane
Postcode	BR2
Study area	800 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 54067 16787 Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	Environment Agency
Project design originator	MoLAS

Project director/manager	Robin Nielsen
Project supervisor	Bruce Watson