

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

WATCHING BRIEF: KEEPERS COTTAGE GORHAMBURY ESTATE ST ALBANS HERTFORDSHIRE

on behalf of the Gorhambury Estate



Calli Rouse BA PIFA

July 2006

ASC: 806/VPW/2

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Site Data

ASC project code:	e: VPW		ASC Project No:	806				
Event No:	N/A		Accession No:					
County:		Hertford	Hertfordshire					
Village/Town:		St Alban	S					
Civil Parish:		St Micha	St Michael's					
NGR (to 8 figs):		TL 0672 1289						
Present use:		Residential						
Planning proposal:		Installati	Installation of a new sewage plant					
Planning application	n ref/date:	Not known						
Local Planning Aut	hority:	St Albans District Council						
Date of fieldwork:		28 th June	2006 – 4 th July 200	6				
Client:		Gorhamb	oury Estate					
		C/o Strut	t & Parker					
		34 St Peters Street						
		St Albans						
		Hertfordshire						
		AL1 3NA						
Contact name:		Neil Fraser – Strutt & Parker						
Telephone			Fax:					

Internal Quality Check

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Revisions:		Date:	
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

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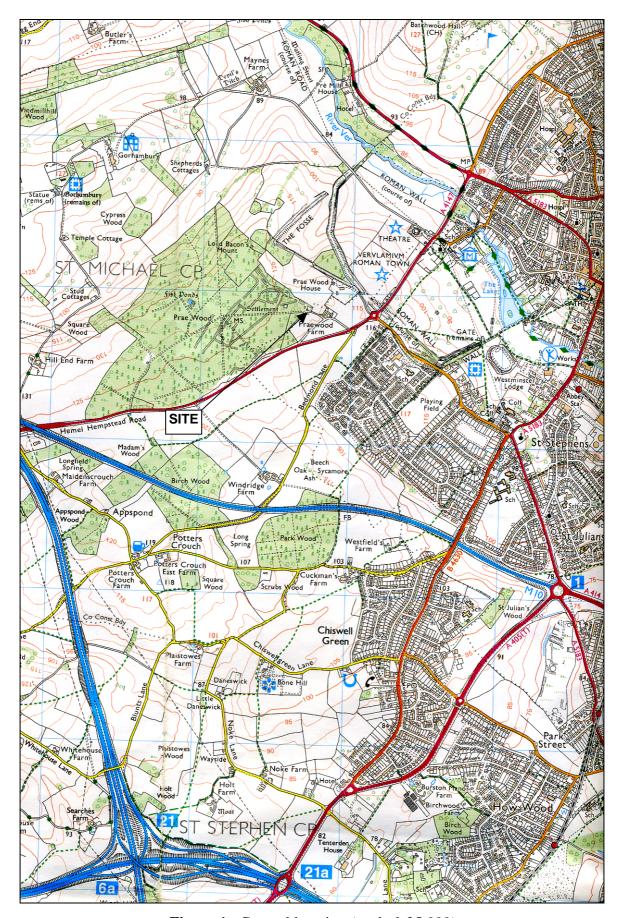


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During June and July 2006, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Keepers Cottage on the Gorhambury Estate in St Albans, Hertfordshire, during the installation of a new sewage plant. No pre modern artefacts were recovered from the site, and no definite features were observed. However, deposits of pebbly clay observed within the groundworks could potentially represent the course of an Iron Age dyke associated with the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Prae Wood, located directly to the west of the site.

1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Keepers Cottage, Gorhambury Estate, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 0672 1289: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by the Gorhambury Estate, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2006), and a brief (Priddy 2006) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), St Albans District Council, by their archaeological advisor (AA), East of England Regional Office of English Heritage.

1.2 Planning Background

This watching brief has been required as a planning condition under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of a new sewage plant.

1.3 Location

The proposed development site is located on the western side of St Albans, at NGR TL 0672 1289 (Fig. 1), within the Gorhambury Estate.

1.4 Description

The site comprises the garden of Keepers Cottage, which is largely an open lawn area. Access to the site is from an access road that branches off the A4147 and provides admission to Prae Wood Farm before passing Keepers Cottage (Fig. 2).

1.5 Geology & Topography

The soils of the area are of the *Marlow Association*, and are characterised as *well* drained fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils. Some coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. The underlying geology comprises plateau and river terrace drift (Soil Survey, 1983, 581e). The site lies at an elevation of c.100m AOD.

1.6 Archaeological & Historical Background

There is little evidence for early prehistoric activity in the area, with only one Palaeolithic scraper (SMR=594) being recorded in the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Records (Stephenson, 1999, 10), though slight traces of a Bronze Age settlement were reported from excavations on King Harry Lane to the east of the site (Stead and Rigby, 1989, 53).

Keepers Cottage is archaeologically significant due to its proximity to an important Iron Age site, known as Prae Wood. The site survives in the form of earthworks immediately to the west of the proposed development. It has been suggested that these earthworks were part of a communal kraal-system which began in the late Iron Age and continued to function into the Roman period, serving the needs of Verulamium (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936; Hunn 1980).

The playing field c.1km to the east of the site was the subject of an excavation in the 1930s which identified the presence of an Iron Age oppidum or town. The oppidum probably consisted of a series of open spaces interspersed with farmsteads and small settlements linked by trackways. The focal point may have been a royal building in the centre of what later became the Roman town of *Verulamium* and from where coin moulding debris has been recovered. The type of settlement might be described as an 'enclosed, dispersed settlement' carrying out some of the functions of a town, such as trade and administration, but with a heavy bias towards farming (Lightfoot and Hunn, 2002, 6).

Two important cemeteries dating roughly to the first half of the first century AD have been excavated in the vicinity of the site; at Verulam Farm Fields (Anthony, 1968), and immediately to the west of the aforementioned playing field (Stead and Rigby 1989). In addition to the late Iron Age burials, Roman and Saxon graves were also identified.

After the Roman invasion in AD 43, *Verulamium* (the Romanised version of *Verlamion*) grew to become the third largest Roman town in Britain, with the status of *municipium*, which would have meant that it was a self governing chartered city, with administrative responsibility for a significant part of the surrounding countryside, probably much of the area occupied by the *Catuvellauni* tribe (Lightfoot and Hunn, 2002, 10). The site itself is outside the *Verulamium* city wall, which was constructed between AD 265 and 270.

The development site falls within the boundaries of the Roman villa estate of Gorhambury. The earliest evidence for settlement on the estate dates back to the Neolithic period, but it was at its height from the late Iron Age through to the 3rd century AD (Neal *et al*, 1990).

Thirty-nine Saxon graves were identified c.0.9 km to the east of the site. This cemetery is likely to have been in use from the middle of the 7th to the early 8th century (Ager 1989, 226), and indicates the occupation of the area by Germanic settlers at that time (Niblett, 2001, 142).

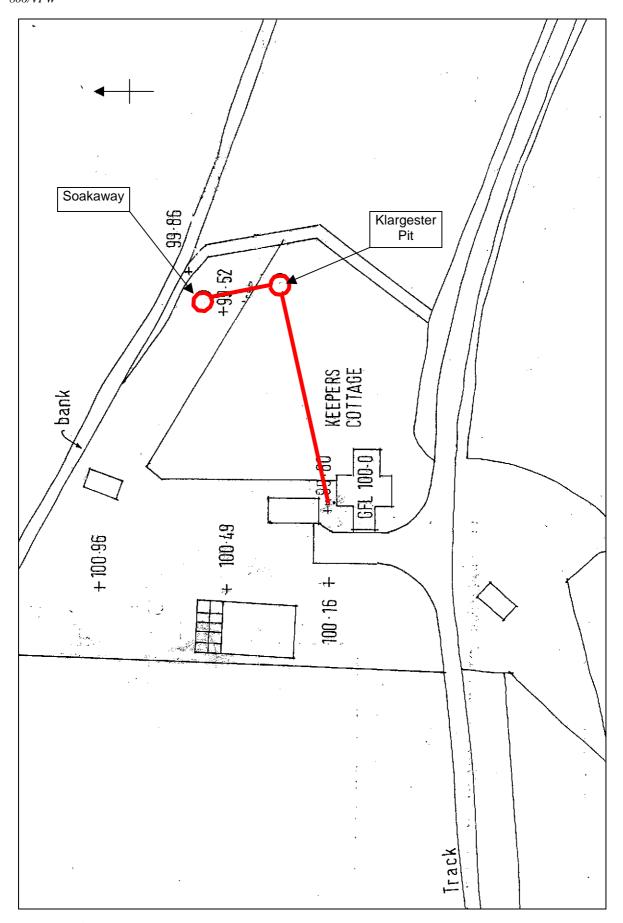


Figure 2: Site plan showing proposed route of sewage plant (scale 1:500)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 2), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To preserve, by record, the archaeological deposits that were revealed during the topsoil strip for the Klargester and the soakaway, or revealed by service trenches.
- To ascertain the range of activity within the site
- To identify the periods of occupation represented.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design (Rouse 2006), to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 1), which required:

- The monitoring of groundworks associated with the development
- The recording and excavation of any archaeological deposits identified

3 Results

- 3.1 Four visits were made to the site between 28th June 2006 and 4th July 2006. During these visits, the excavations of the pipe trench, soakaway and Klargester pit were observed.
- 3.2 The pipe trench running from the house (Plate 1) to the Klargester pit was excavated to a depth of 0.3m, except at the junction with the Klargester pit, where it measured c.0.5m in depth, and at the eastern end where it was 1.05m. It was 0.35m in wide throughout. The trench was cut through c.0.25m of topsoil (Context 100), below which was a natural sandy, gravelly clay (Context 101) (Plates 2 & 3).
- 3.3 The Klargester pit measured 2.8m by 2.8m, and was 2m in depth (Plate 4). The topsoil (Context 100) in the pit reached to the same depth as in the pipe trench. Below this was a brown gravelly clay (Context 102) which made up the entire western side of the pit. The remaining three sides had a yellowish brown silty sand and gravel (Context 103) below the brown gravelly clay.
- 3.4 The soakaway was located between 6m and 7m to the north of the Klargester pit, and measured 2m by 2m, and was 2m deep (Plate 5). It was cut through 0.2m of topsoil (Context 100), below which was the same gravelly brown clay (Context 102) that was observed in the Klargester pit. The clay was 0.6m thick, and below this was a sandier version of the yellowish brown silty sand and gravel (Context 103) observed in the Klargester pit.
- 3.5 The connecting drainage run between the Klargester pit and the soakaway was excavated to a depth 0.9m and a width of 0.4m. The topsoil (Context 100) was c.0.4m deep, becoming shallower towards the northern end of the trench. Beneath the topsoil was a brown, pebbly soil (Context 104) (Plate 6).



Plate 1: View of service trench between house and Klargester pit, looking west north west, 2m scale 30/06/06



Plate 2: Detail of soil profile in service trench between house and Klargester pit, 2m scale 30/06/06



Plate 3: Service trench outside house, looking east 30/06/06



Plate 4: View of Klargester pit, looking west , 2m scale 03/07/06



Plate 5: Detail of soakaway, looking east, 2m scale 03/07/06



Plate 6: Detail of service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking south east, 2m scale 04/07/06

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The extensive earthworks of Prae Wood, located to the west and south of the development, are thought to extend in the form of dykes along the northern boundary of the site (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936; Hunn 1980).
- 4.2 Upon examination of the site prior to excavation, it was noted that both the Klargester pit and the soakaway appeared to be aligned on the projected course of one of the Iron Age dykes. The earthworks of the bank and ditch were no longer visible above ground, but possible evidence for their existence was noted in the soil profile of both pits, particularly the Klargester pit.
- 4.3 The western side of the Klargester pit completely comprised a brown gravelly clay (Context 102), which was distinctly different from the soils observed in the cut of the pipe trench. This soil is almost certainly re-deposited, and is likely to be fill of one of the ditches. No archaeological artefacts were recovered from the Klargester pit.
- 4.4 The same gravelly clay (Context 102) was observed in the soil profile of the soakaway, although here it was only 0.6m thick. No manmade features or artefacts were observed within the soakaway, however it is probable that the gravelly clay represents upcast from the suggested ditch to the south.
- 4.5 The connecting drainage run between the Klargester pit and the soakaway revealed a brown pebbly soil (Context 104) beneath the topsoil. On examination, it was concluded that this soil could be disturbed. The drainage run was too shallow and constricted to establish the presence of the ditch, but it is probable that it is in this area. No archaeological finds were recovered from the drainage run.
- 4.6 In conclusion, while the works were limited and no pre modern artefacts were recovered from the site, the results imply that the projected alignment of the Iron Age ditches is correct. The presence of 19th century artefacts in the topsoil also suggests that the site was levelled during this period.

5. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Neil Fraser of Strutt & Parker for commissioning the work on behalf of the Gorhambury Estate. We would also like to thank Deborah Priddy of the East of England Regional Office of English Heritage for providing curatorial advice and monitoring the project on behalf of St Albans District Council.

The fieldwork was managed and undertaken for ASC Ltd by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA. The report was prepared by Calli Rouse and edited by David Fell MA MIFA.

6. Archive

- 6.1 The project archive will comprise:
 - 1. Brief
 - 2. Project Design
 - 3. Initial Report
 - 4. Clients site plans
 - 5. Site Monitoring Sheets
 - 6. List of photographs/slides
 - 7. Colour slides
 - 8. B/W prints & negatives
 - 9. Original specialist reports and supporting information
 - 10. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 6.2 The archive will be deposited with Verulamium Museum.

7. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition.* English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds).
- Priddy, D 2006 Archaeological Monitoring and Watching Brief: Verulamium Prae Wood Settlement English Heritage
- Rouse C 2006 Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Keepers Cottage, Gorhambury Estate, St Albans, Hertfordshire ASC 806/VPW/1

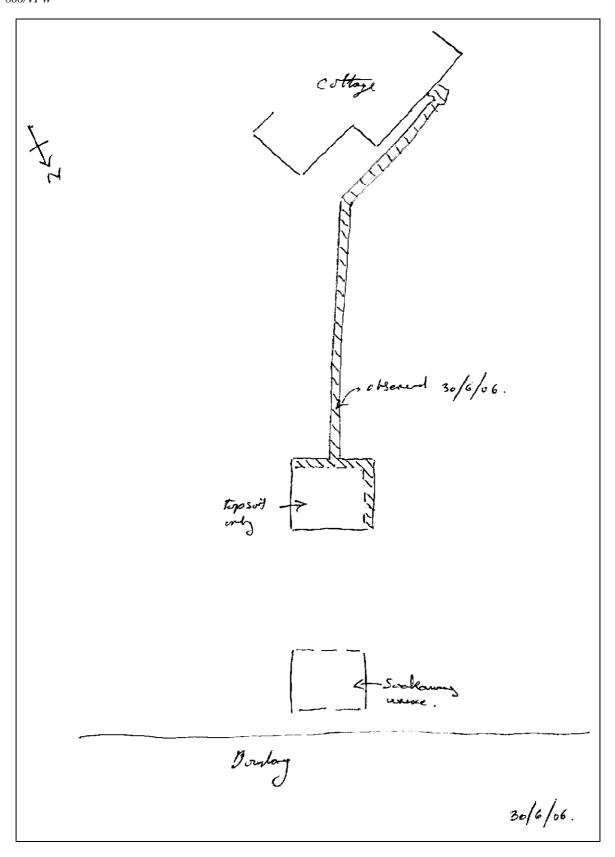
Secondary Sources

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- Anthony, I. E. 1968 Excavations in Verulam Hills Field, St Albans 1963-64, *Hertfordshire Archaeology*, **1**, 9-50
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- Stephenson, A. 1999 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: King Harry Lane Playing Field, St Albans, Herfordshire, CgMs: AS/KB/1896
 - Wheeler, R.E.M. and T.V., 1936 *Verulamium, a Belgic and two Roman cities*, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London **11** (Oxford).

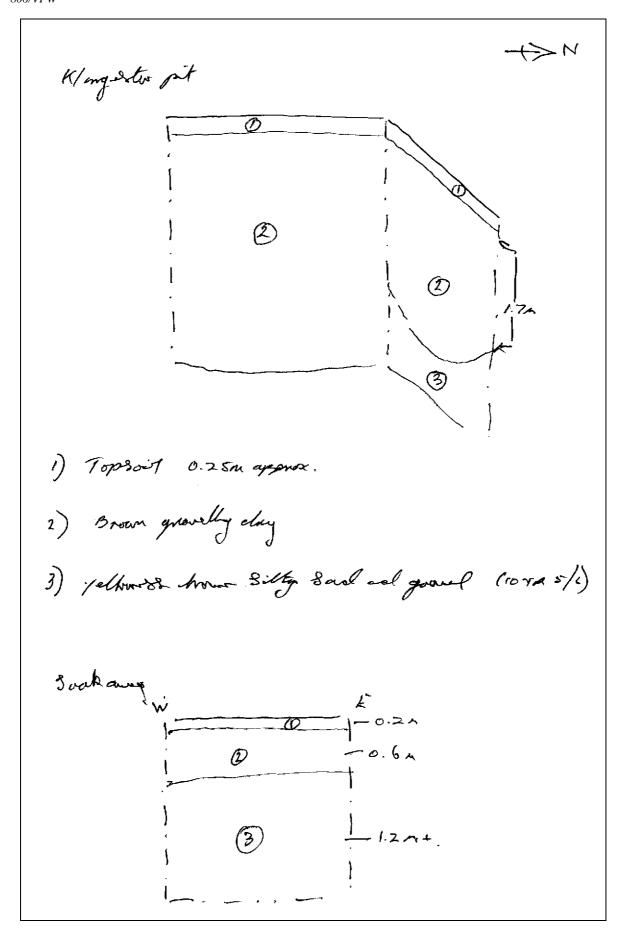
Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

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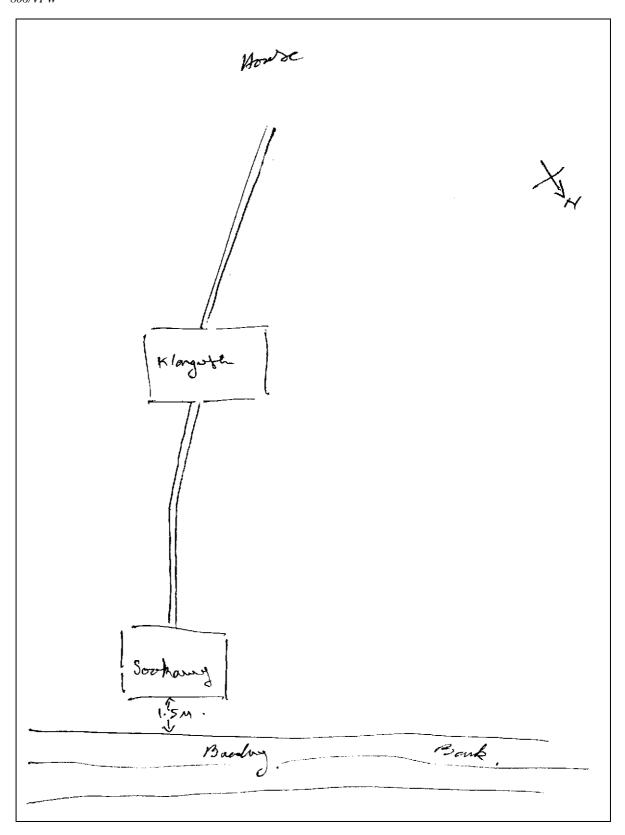
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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

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18 ✓ ✓ Oblique view of Klargester pit, looking west 03/07/06 19 ✓ Working shot, looking east 03/07/06 20 ✓ View of soakaway, looking north 03/07/06 21 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking north north east 03/07/06 22 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking east 03/07/06 23 ✓ Soakaway, showing outcropping of chalk at base 04/07/06 24 ✓ Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking so east 04/07/06	17		✓	✓						
19 ✓ Working shot, looking east 03/07/06 20 ✓ View of soakaway, looking north 03/07/06 21 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking north north east 03/07/06 22 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking east 03/07/06 23 ✓ Soakaway, showing outcropping of chalk at base 04/07/06 24 ✓ Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking seast 04/07/06	18		✓	✓						
20 ✓ View of soakaway, looking north 03/07/06 21 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking north north east 03/07/06 22 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking east 03/07/06 23 ✓ Soakaway, showing outcropping of chalk at base 04/07/06 24 ✓ Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking so east 04/07/06	19			✓						
21 ✓ ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking north north east 03/07/06 22 ✓ Detail of soakaway, looking east 03/07/06 23 ✓ Soakaway, showing outcropping of chalk at base 04/07/06 24 ✓ Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking so east 04/07/06	20			✓						
22	21		✓	✓	Detail of soakaway, looking north north east 03/07/06					
24 Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking so east 04/07/06	22			✓	Detail of soakaway, looking east 03/07/06					
east 04/07/06	23			✓	Soakaway, showing outcropping of chalk at base 04/07/06					
	24			√	Service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking south east 04/07/06					
Detail of service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit, looking south east 04/07/06	25			√	Detail of service trench between soakaway and Klargester pit,					
26 View of soil dump, looking west 04/07/06	26			✓						
27	27									
28	28									
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Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS							
Project Name:							
Short Description:	During June and July 2006, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Keeper Cottage on the Gorhambury Estate in St Albans, Hertfordshire, during the installation of sewage plant. No pre modern artefacts were recovered from the site, and no definite fe were observed. However, deposits of pebbly clay observed within the groundworks coupotentially represent the course of an Iron Age dyke associated with the Scheduled Anc Monument (SAM) of Prae Wood, located directly to the west of the site.						
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	DBA	FW	Geophys	Survey	Bldg Rec	Post-Exc	
(maisate all that apply)	<u>WB</u>	Strip&Rec	Trenching	Test pits	Exc	Other	
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	SAM	l	Previous work (eg. SMR refs		-		
Current land use:	Garden		Future work: (yes / no / unk	nown)	-		
Monument type:	Settlement		Monument per		Iron Age - Rom	an	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)							
PROJECT LOCATION							
County:	Hertfordshire		OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)		TL 0672 1289		
District:	St Albans		Parish:		St Michael's		
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Keepers Cottage, Gorhambury Estate, St Albans, Hertfordshire						
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)			Height OD: (metres)		c.100		
		PROJECT	CREATORS				
Organisation:	Archaeolog	gical Service	s & Consulta	ancy Ltd			
Project brief originator:	Deborah Pridd	у	Project design	originator:	Calli Rouse		
Project Manager:	Jonathan Huni	า	Director/Super	visor:	Jonathan Hunn		
Sponsor / funding body:	Gorhambury E	state					
		PROJE	CT DATE				
Start date:	28/06/06		End date:		04/07/06		
			ARCHIVES				
	Location (Ad	ccession no.)	Content (eg	. pottery, anima	l bone, files/shee	ts)	
Physical:	Verulamium I	Museum	No Finds				
Paper:			Brief/PD/Report/Record Sheets/Plans				
Digital:			CD with all d	igital files			
BIBLIOGRA	PHY (Journal/m	nonograph, publi	shed or forthcom	ing, or unpublis	shed client report		
Title:	Watching Brid	ef at Keepers C	Cottage, Gorhar	nbury Estate,	St Albans, Herti	fordshire	
Serial title & volume:	ASC Report 8						
Author(s):	Calli Rouse E	BA PIFA	T		40/07/0		
Page nos	1-22 Date: 19/07/06				19/07/06		

Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address:									
Keepers Cottag	e, Gorha	ambury Estate,	St Albans, Hertfordshire						
County: Hertfordshire		District: St	Albans						
Village/Town: St Albans		Parish: St N	Michael's						
Planning application reference: Not kno	wn								
Client name, address, & tel. no: Gorhambury Estate C/o Strutt & Parker 34 St Peters Street St Albans Hertfordshire AL1 3NA Nature of application: Installation of a new sewage plant									
Present land use: Garden									
Size of application area: n/a									
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 0672 1289 Site code: 806/VPW									
Site director/Organization: Bob Zeepvat / ASC Ltd									
Type of work: Watching Brief									
Date of work: Start: 28/06/06			Finish: 04/07/06						
Curating museum: Verulamium Museur	n								
Related SMR nos:	Peri	iods represe	ented:						
Relevant previous summaries/reports									
Summary of fieldwork results: During June and July 2006, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Keepers Cottage on the Gorhambury Estate in St Albans, Hertfordshire, during the installation of a new sewage plant. No pre modern artefacts were recovered from the site, and no definite features were observed. However, deposits of pebbly clay observed within the groundworks could potentially represent the course of an Iron Age dyke associated with the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Prae Wood, located directly to the west of the site.									
Author: Calli Rouse		Date: 19/0	07/06						