

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF OF A NEW RESIDENTIAL  
DEVELOPMENT AT  
1-13 BEAVERS ROAD, FARNHAM,  
SURREY**



## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF A NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT 1-13 BEAVERS ROAD, FARNHAM, SURREY

### *Summary*

*A watching brief was undertaken in phases between October 2006 and March 2009 on the site of a new residential development at 1-13 Beavers Road, Farnham, Surrey, in order to satisfy an archaeological condition placed on the planning permission for the site. The watching brief revealed a small amount of material of post medieval and Bronze Age date, including a ditch or ditches which are broadly parallel with a ditch identified as Bronze Age during the previous evaluation. The present features are not, however, directly dated by artefacts. No further archaeological fieldwork is recommended in relation to this development scheme.*

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NGR (centre of area)	SU 8339 4676
Client	Crownwood Estates (Farnham) Ltd



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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 During October and November 2006, April 2007, and February and March 2009, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by staff of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit on the site of the new residential development at 1-5 and 9-13 Beavers Road, Farnham, Surrey (fig 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of MH Character Homes Ltd (Phase A) and Crownwood Estates (Farnham) Ltd (Phase B), in order to fulfil an archaeological planning condition placed on the development.

1.2 The watching brief took place following the recommendations of an archaeological evaluation of the site (Lambert 2006), that revealed a small quantity of medieval and post medieval material, and a Bronze Age ditch that would probably be disturbed during the ensuing development activities. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the conduct of an archaeological watching brief was prepared by SCAU (Shaikhley 2006), which highlighted the need for archaeological monitoring of all groundworks exceeding a depth of 40cm.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 The work took part in two key phases; phase A which encompassed former house plots 1-5, and phase B plots 9-13 (see figure 2). The first part of the phase A watching brief entailed the observation of the removal of the house foundations of plots 1-5, followed by a walkover of the reduced surface across the southern half of the site, prior to excavation of the new foundation trenches. The second component involved the observation of the excavation of soakaway and foundation trenches for the new buildings in the phase A area. The phase B watching brief required observation of the foundation removal of former house number 9, due to the close proximity of the Bronze Age ditch observed during the evaluation. The final component of this phase was to observe foundation trenching for the new buildings, of particular importance in the proximity of the Bronze Age ditch.

2.2 Close liaison with the site contractors was maintained in order to ensure that visits were carried out at appropriate times, however due to the prolonged time frame of the work, some areas of the groundworks were undertaken without an archaeologist present. Some of the machining was also undertaken with a toothed, rather than a plain bucket, but despite this, a good sample of the site was observed and the conclusions drawn from the work are made with confidence.

2.3 The machining process was carefully watched for the occurrence of any features or artefacts of archaeological interest, which might relate to ancient activity in the immediate vicinity. Where exposed, the natural surface below the subsoil was examined for evidence of features cutting it, and hand excavation and recording carried out as necessary.

### 3. Results

#### *Area A*

3.1 The observation of the grubbing out of foundations of houses 1-5 revealed no archaeological finds or features. The process was undertaken using a 1.5m toothed bucket to remove the concrete to a depth of 1m, and this process involved a large amount of churning of the top and subsoil to separate building material from soil. During this process it was fairly difficult to see any intact stratigraphy, however the archaeologist present was confident that no features were revealed during this process.

3.2 Following the demolition of the existing houses, much of the ground was levelled across the southern half of the site, to a depth of 40cm from the original ground surface. During a walkover of the area, a number of residual finds were collected from this surface (the lower level of the topsoil) in the south-east corner of the site, including late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century clay tobacco pipe stems, a sherd of 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century English stoneware pottery and three pieces of struck flint. One of these pieces was a small flint core with several flake removals and incipient cones of percussion on its surface, that most likely dates to the Bronze Age. Another looked to also be a small Bronze Age core with a few plate removals, but the battered surface suggests the core was later used as a small hammerstone for applying retouch to flint tools. The third piece was a shattered lump of chalk flint that was difficult to date; it could even be medieval or post medieval building waste (flint identified by Nick Marples, SCAU).

3.3 Observations of the foundation trenching across the southern half of the site revealed no evidence of any archaeological features. The sections of the trenches, spoilheaps and exposed surface were also examined for stray finds, but only one struck flint was found on the surface in the centre of the plot. The flint is again likely to be Bronze Age, and shows evidence of dorsal scarring, but is in poor condition with a battered surface probably caused by frost shattering.

3.4 The foundation trenches dug across the northern half of the site quickly revealed a large amount of modern disturbance and deep made ground across the frontage of the site. This is most likely to be disturbance from the construction and subsequent demolition of houses 1-5. No original stratigraphy was found to be intact, so the decision was made not to observe the rest of the foundation trenching in this area.

3.5 A 13m long soakaway trench parallel to the southern boundary of the site, was excavated in controlled spits using a 1.6m smooth ditching bucket, but no features were identified. One Bronze Age struck flint was however retrieved from the subsoil, that seems to show characteristics of a core, with incipient cones of percussion and a few flake removals, however its steep face and possible retouch suggests the core was later used as a scraping tool. A second soakaway was not observed due to a lack of communication from the groundworkers.

3.6 The stratigraphic sequence was shown to be very similar across the whole of area A, consisting of a humic garden topsoil of 50cm in depth, overlying a clayey subsoil of 30-50cm in depth. The natural geology was gravel with pockets of grey clay, and in the soakaway, the gravel was seen to overlie the clay at a depth of 1.8m.

## **Area B**

3.7 Observation of the removal of the foundations of house number 9, revealed no finds or archaeological features, primarily because the depth of the demolition was not sufficient to reveal the subsoil or its interface with the natural geology. This meant that the observation of the new foundation trenches in this area would be the best opportunity for identifying more of the suspected Bronze Age ditch revealed during the evaluation.

3.8 Prior to the excavation of the new foundation trenches, the northern half of Area B was stripped and levelled in the area of the house platforms, to a similar depth as Area A (c.40cm). A walkover of the stripped area revealed two ditches (101 and 102), one at each end of the site, running on north-east to south-west alignments, and parallel to the two site boundary fences (see figure 2). Ditch 101 terminated after 4m, but ditch 102 continued across the whole of the stripped area. Segments through the ditches showed that both had a mid grey-brown silty-clay fill; 101 contained a clay pipe stem, brick, tile, fragments of animal bone and oyster shell, and 102 contained brick, tile, oyster shell and the rim sherd of a terracotta vessel. The location of the ditches high in the soil profile suggested they were probably post-medieval in date, and the finds confirmed an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the features.

3.9 Observation of the foundation trenches for the new house plots 3, 4 and 5 (former house numbers 11 and 13), showed that much of the area consisted of disturbed debris and rubble creating a layer of made ground 1-1.2m in depth. This disturbance probably originated from the construction and demolition of the former houses, and meant that no intact stratigraphy or archaeology was seen to survive across these plots. Within new house plots 1 and 2 (former house number 9), there was however, much better survival of the stratigraphic sequence, with only the top 20-55cm of the soil profile consisting of made ground.

3.10 After the excavation of the foundation trenches for new plots 1 and 2, it became apparent that two ditch profiles (103 and 104) were visible in the trench sections. The ditches were visible 20-55cm below the stripped surface, immediately below the demolition rubble. The ditches were not seen during the excavation as both were located at the intersections of foundation trenches, and the machining of such intersecting angles did not allow a clear view. It should be noted that the location of the observations makes it very difficult to show exact alignments, and those given are approximate. Unfortunately very few artefacts were therefore collected from the fills of the features, with the exception of a calcined flint and a struck blade or flake fragment from 103, and a snapped flint bladelet of Mesolithic date in 104 retrieved from the sections. None of the finds was enough to provide firm dating evidence, and the Mesolithic flint must be residual in a later feature.

3.11 Ditch 103 was quite a substantial feature measuring nearly 2m wide and 60cm deep, with three silty-clay fills; a pale grey primary silting fill with numerous pebbles and flints, a secondary pale grey fill, and a light brown upper deposit. The ditch was about 7m west of the suspected Bronze Age ditch (010) identified during the evaluation, and did not seem to be on quite the same alignment. Ditch 010 was also much smaller and had a single fill. The ditches are clearly different features, although it does seem they may run roughly parallel with one another.

3.12 Ditch 104 was identified at some distance from both 103 and 010, on the southern side of the house plot, but seemed to run on a similar alignment to 010. Ditch 104 had a flattish bowl-shaped profile and measured 60cm wide and just over 20cm deep. It primarily had a pale greenish grey fill, but there were patches of light brown silty clay visible in parts of the section, that may have been part of an upper fill truncated by the construction/demolition process. It seems possible that 104 is a continuation of ditch 010, but this is not certain due to the distance between the two recorded segments.

3.13 The final stage of the watching brief was the observation of foundation trenches dug for the bin and cycle store to the east of the main building in Area B. The trenches showed the stratigraphy was fairly intact in this area with only a small amount of mixing with modern material in the upper surface, and the same top, subsoil and natural layers as in Area A. No archaeological finds or features were identified in this area, and some of the trenches did not reach sufficient depth to disturb any archaeological deposits.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

4.1 The watching brief was successful in identifying archaeological material in Area A, and archaeological features in Area B. The artefacts in area A were however all retrieved from within the topsoil or subsoil, so none of the material can be deemed as in-situ, but the Bronze Age flint is interesting as it adds to general knowledge of prehistoric activity in the local area. The post medieval features in Area B may relate to domestic or agricultural activity, and the pottery and clay pipes in Area A probably originated from manuring of the topsoil prior to the area becoming private gardens. No clear date was achieved for ditches 103 and 104, however 103 ran broadly parallel to 010 suggesting they may be contemporary, and if 104 is a continuation of 010 then all may well be Bronze Age, as suggested by struck flint and a pot sherd found in 010 in the evaluation.

4.2 In view of the above information, it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological work is required in respect of this development scheme.

#### **References**

Lambert, R, 2006 *An archaeological evaluation on the site of the proposed residential development at 1-13 Beavers Road, Farnham, Surrey*. Client report prepared by Surrey County Archaeological Unit.

Shaikhley, N, 2006 *1-13 Beavers Road, Farnham, Surrey; Written Scheme of Investigation for the conduct of an archaeological watching brief*. Client report prepared by Surrey County Archaeological Unit.







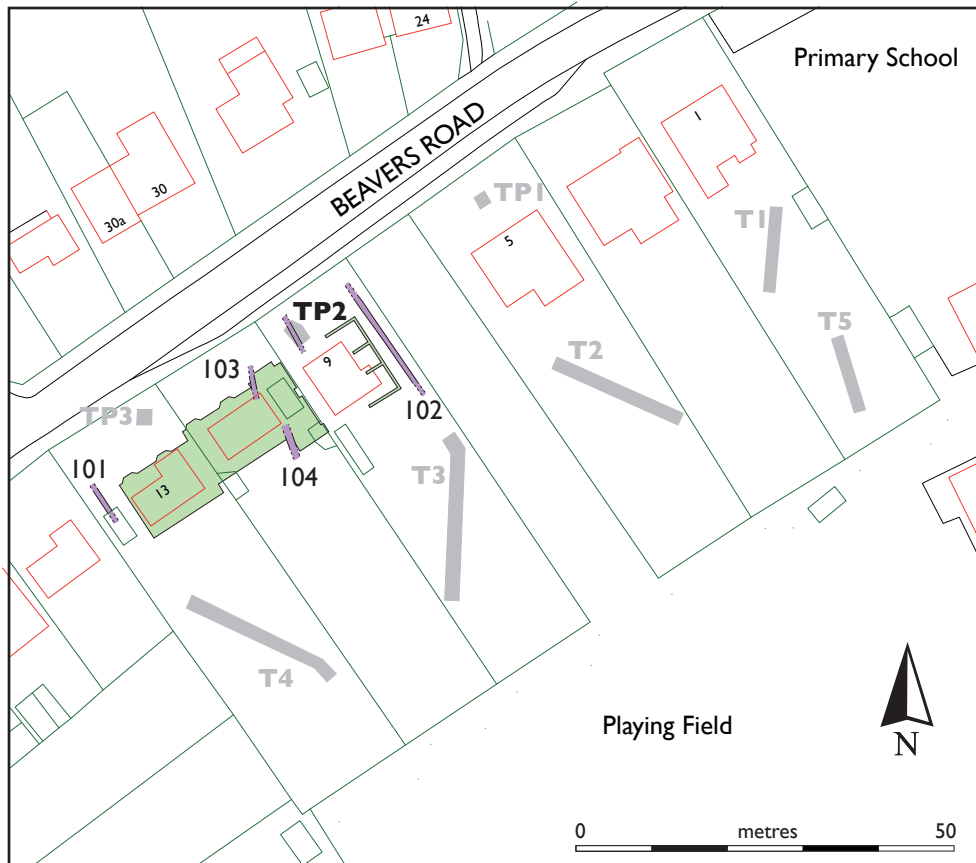


Fig 2 1—13 Beavers Road, Farnham. Location of features identified during the watching brief (Phase B structures shown green), also showing the location of evaluation trial trenches and test pits

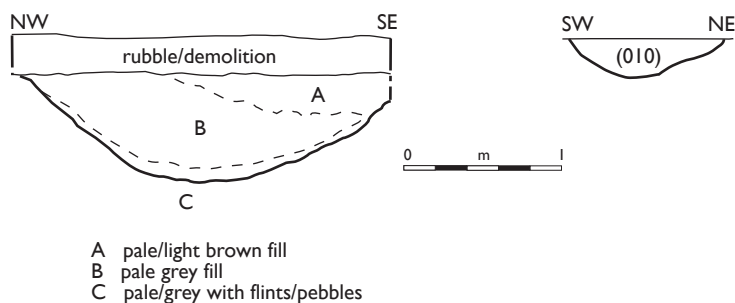


Fig 3 1-13 Beavers Road, Farnham. Sections of feature 103 and of 010 in TP2