

Marling Cross Compound A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme Kent



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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**Marling Cross Compound,
A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme,
Kent**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On the 24th and 25th of August 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Marling Cross Compound, Marling Cross, Kent (NGR: TQ 660 703) on behalf of Skanska/Owen Williams. No archaeological remains were discovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between the 24th and 25th of August 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Marling Cross Compound, Marling Cross, Kent (NGR: TQ 660 703). The work was commissioned by Skanska/Owen Williams in advance of the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme.

1.1.2 The work was carried out in accordance with a method statement prepared on behalf of the Highways Agency (Highways Agency 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The geology within the area of the proposed development is a mix of mostly Cretaceous Upper Chalk (white chalk with bands of flint) and Palaeocene Thanet Beds (sands) (British Geological Survey 1974, Sheet 271).

1.2.2 The site is located on the southern side of the A2 at Marling Cross (Fig. 1), in a roughly oval area measuring approximately 120 m by 60 m southeast-northwest.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site lies within the area crossed by the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme. The archaeological and historic baseline for this area can be found in Volume 2 of the Environmental Statement, Technical Environmental Impact Assessment: Cultural Heritage (Highways Agency 2004), which is further summarised in the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme: Archaeological Design (HA 2006). Selected information relating to the immediate environs of the Marling Cross junction is set out below.

1.3.2 The proposed route is located within a broader area unusually rich in evidence of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. Residual Palaeolithic and Mesolithic artefacts including a handaxe and a scatter of flakes have been found east of Tollgate some 1.2 km to the west. Deposits of Palaeolithic Loess soils and Late-Glacial soils have also been recorded in the environs of the project.

1.3.3 The proposed route and its close vicinity contain a series of features and deposits dating to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods, including a mortuary enclosure or long barrow at Tollgate and a possible monumental structure 400 m west of Marling Cross represented by three groups of Sarsen stones. Such monuments are often long-lasting foci for Neolithic people, and some examples are surrounded by

other Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity. Flint scatters of later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date were also recovered some 600 m to the west during fieldwalking.

- 1.3.4 The proposed road widening lies in an area previously identified as a focus of Bronze Age activity and settlement (DDAG 1993, 8). A number of features of later Bronze Age date were found during evaluation on the CTRL some 600 m to the west, and a pit of Middle Bronze Age date c. 300 m to the south.
- 1.3.5 Extensive evidence of Iron Age activity has been located within or in close proximity to the proposed route. A large cropmark settlement, now mostly buried under Singlewell, lay some 500 m to the north-west, and a large pit or well of Late Iron Age date was found some 400 m to the west.
- 1.3.6 Apart from Watling Street itself, which probably lies only 100 m to the north, Roman activity is known from excavations on the CTRL 300 m to the south, and there are unconfirmed reports of Roman finds from a farm buried beneath the existing A2 just 100 m east of the compound.
- 1.3.7 An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found in the 19th century in Claylane Wood some 300-400 m east of the compound. The proposed route passes through an area that was probably part of a large 8th-century estate, and which devolved into the parishes of Southfleet and Northfleet, recorded in Domesday. Manorial records of the 11th century indicate that Southfleet included much woodland. The current location of the A2 road along the edges of these parishes (with the exception of Northfleet) would suggest that this land was peripheral to the parish, and therefore unlikely to be a focal point for dense settlement. Some secondary settlement such as isolated farmsteads is however possible.
- 1.3.8 The medieval village of Singlewell lay around 500 m to the north-west, and a possible settlement was found on the line of the CTRL east of Henhurst Road some 300 m to the south. Scattered later medieval features were also found west of Henhurst Road at a similar distance to the south.
- 1.3.9 It is likely that the settlement pattern in the later medieval period would have been consistent with that recorded in various sources in the post-medieval period, although the landscape may have been more sparsely populated. The majority of the land within the area is very likely to have been used either as farmland or woodland at this time, with dispersed evidence of farming, industrial and military use of the landscape in the Modern period. Urban development since the early 20th century has increasingly impinged upon the land to the north of the current A2, with the CTRL infrastructure now dominating the landscape south of the A2.

1.4 Previous Work

- 1.4.1 In November 2004 Oxford Archaeology carried out a field evaluation along part of the online section of the A2 Pepperhill to Cobham widening scheme (OA 2005). Two trenches (10 and 11) were excavated within the Marling Compound site (Fig. 2), and the results are reproduced below.
- 1.4.2 At Marling Cross, both trenches revealed evidence of previous groundworks. In Trench 10 the absence of soil layers beneath the modern made ground (1901), indicates that such layers may have been removed, potentially truncating any archaeological remains that may have been present. The sequence of chalk and tarmac surfaces and other made ground deposits recorded in Trench 11 are all likely to relate to the twentieth century use of the area as a military camp, lorry park and more recently as a Highways Agency compound. There is certainly evidence from both trenches for significant amounts of made ground, but the made ground deposits appear to derive from differing processes, and their presence does not directly indicate the truncation of archaeological features and deposits.
- 1.4.3 The sequence of deposits identified within Trench 11 indicated a series of levelling layers to counteract the natural slope of the topography. Therefore it appears the area within the vicinity of this trench was built up, rather than truncated, in order to create a level surface. Within Trench 10, by contrast, it would appear that earlier deposits have been removed or truncated during this process of cut and fill.
- 1.4.4 No archaeological remains were observed in the course of the evaluation.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To record the extent, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of the archaeological remains within the areas of the site affected by the proposed works.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The agreed method statement was for the excavation of two service trenches and a cess pit. However only the BT service trench and cess pit were excavated; the other service trench will be dug at a later stage. A soakaway (for environmental processing during the archaeological programme) was also excavated and monitored.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the location of the excavations was maintained (Fig. 2). A general record of the work was made using both colour transparency and black-and-white photographs. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The natural geology, a deposit of soliflucted Upper chalk was encountered at 2 m below the ground surface within the cess pit excavation (Fig. 3). This was overlain by a maximum 0.8 m thick levelling layer of firm greyish brown silty clay, which was in turn overlain by a maximum 0.9 m of modern rubble which serves as the present ground surface.
- 3.1.2 In the soakaway excavation the natural chalk was encountered at 0.3 m below the ground surface, and was overlain by a 0.3 m thick layer of modern rubble which serves as the present ground surface.
- 3.1.3 The natural chalk was encountered at approximately 0.5 m below the ground surface within the BT service trench. Approximately 10 m along from the south-eastern end of the trench the chalk natural was cut away down to a maximum depth of 2 m below the ground surface. This was overlain by a maximum 1.5 m thick levelling layer of firm greyish brown silty clay, which was in turn overlain by a 0.5 m thick layer of silty loam, which serves as the present ground surface.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 No artefacts were observed during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No samples suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features. The truncation of the natural chalk seen within the BT trench, and the varying depths of the natural chalk suggest that the entire site has been subject to landscaping or quarrying. The shallow depth of the natural chalk below ground level within the soakaway and Trench 10, and the deeper depth of the natural chalk within the cess pit and Trench 11, suggest that the site is more truncated to the south and west. The section of the cess pit (Fig. 3) supports this since it can be seen that the level of the natural chalk does decrease to the west.
- 4.1.2 It is probable that this landscaping dates to the twentieth century.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Highways Agency 2004 *A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Improvement. Environmental Statement*

Highways Agency 2006 *A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme: Archaeological Design Document No. 260860/30008*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2005 *A2 Pepperhill to Cobham Widening Scheme: Archaeological Evaluation*

OAU, 1992 *OA Field Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)*

APPENDIX 2 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Marling Cross Compound, A2 Pepperhill to Cobham

Site code: GRTG06

Grid reference: TQ 660 703

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of cess pit, soakaway and BT service trench.

Date and duration of project: 24th and 25th of August 2006, 2 days

Area of site: 0.72 hectares

Summary of results: No archaeology uncovered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate receiving museum in due course.



1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

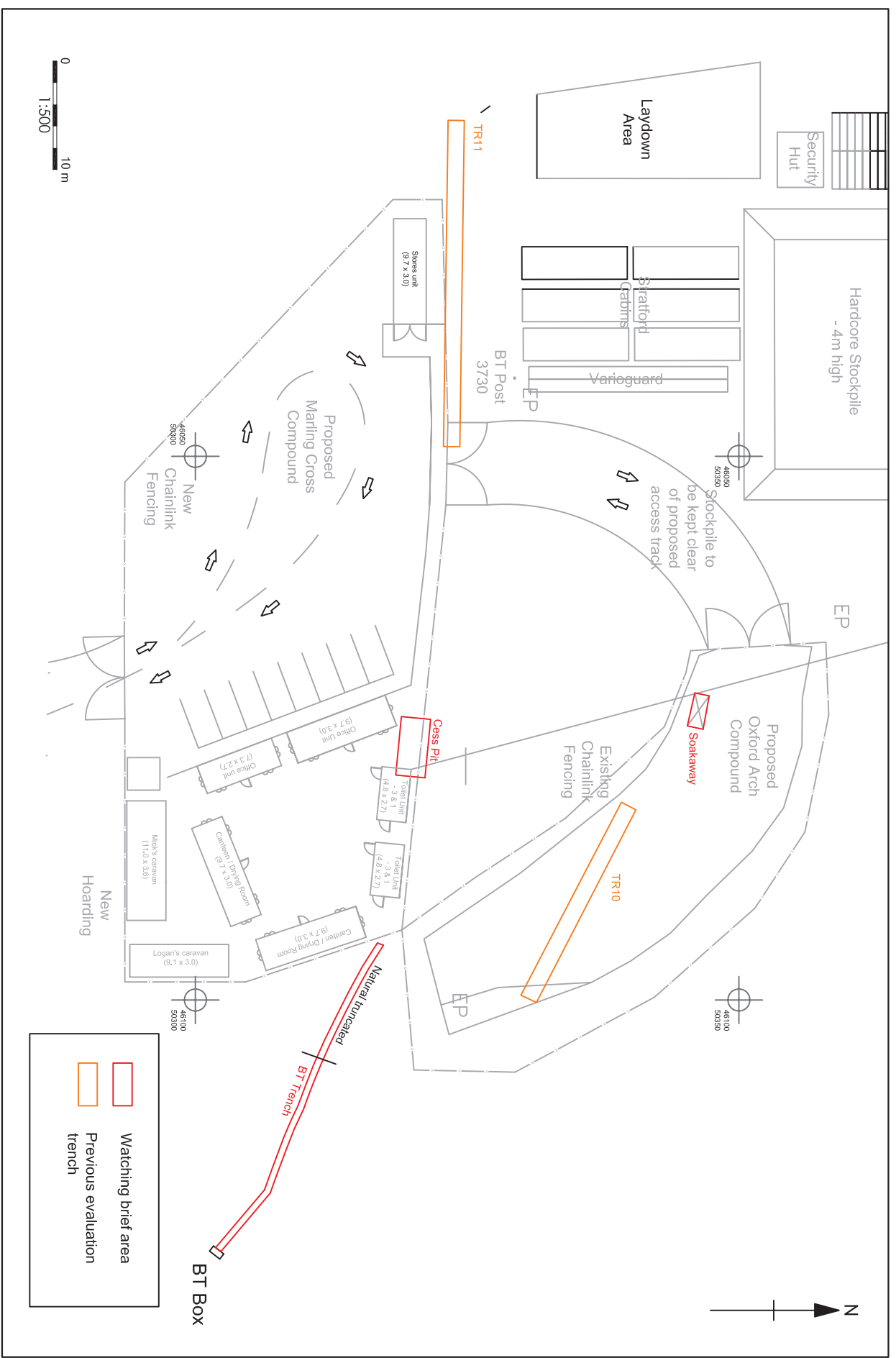


Figure 2: Site Layout

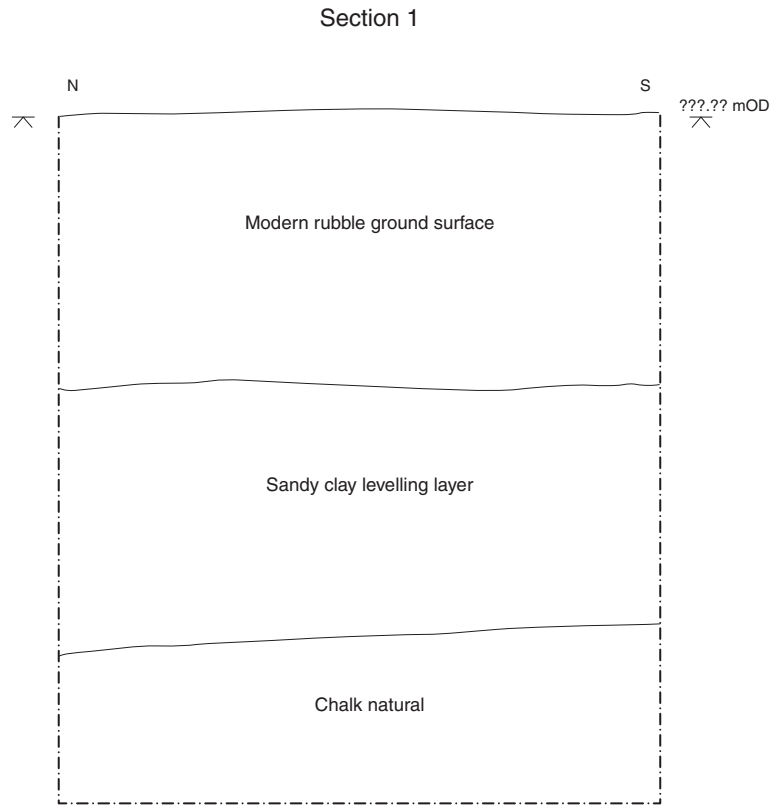


Figure 3 : Cess Pit section



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