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Land At Kingsnympton Park Estate Kingston Hill, Kingston Upon Thames

Archaeological Evaluation Report

NGR TQ 1970 7052

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

July 1995

LAND AT KINGSNYMPTON PARK ESTATE, KINGSTON HILL

KINGSTON UPON THAMES

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

SUMMARY

An evaluation on the site of a proposed new community centre revealed that any in situ archaeological deposits had been removed by intensive quarrying for gravel. No dating evidence was recovered to determine when this quarrying took place.

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological evaluation, on behalf of Kingston Borough Council, on the above named site. This was in accordance with a condition attached to the planning permission, and under advice from English Heritage.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies on the SW facing slope of Kingston Hill, E of the town centre, and is underlain by Glacial Gravel of the Recent or Pleistocene Period. At depth, the Claygate Beds series of late Eocene age is thought to be present. This stratum consists of alternations of sand (above) and clay (below), and represents the sandy transition beds at the top of the London Clay.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Kingston lies on the S bank of the Thames, and developed from the early medieval period into a thriving town. The recent redevelopment of the centre has allowed a considerable amount of archaeological investigation to be carried out, which seems to suggest that Kingston was one of the few Surrey towns to resist the inhibiting dominance of London.

Although little in the way of definitive evidence for extensive Romano British settlement has been recovered, a 'Roman' building and various other finds were described by a 16th century antiquarian as being sited 'yn the declyning doune from Come parke towards the galloys'. This has been interpreted as referring to the Kingston side of the hill.

Furthermore, reports during the 18th and 19th centuries describe the discovery of Roman burials along Kingston Hill, possibly where Kingsnympton Flats now stand.

AIMS

The aims of the evaluation were:

1. To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains in the area, and in particular to establish whether any Romano-British remains existed.
2. To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
3. To establish the ecofactual/environmental potential of archaeological features.
4. To appraise the likely impact of the development proposals on any archaeological features or deposits present.

STRATEGY

An initial borehole survey of the site had been carried out by Fothergill & Co Ltd. Broadly, this indicated that beneath the present topsoil was a layer of made ground between 1.50 and 2.20 m deep, which overlay the natural gravel.

Two trenches, 1.6 m wide by 5.0 and 6.0 m long respectively, were sited to maximise the potential understanding of any archaeological deposits encountered, although a major electrical supply cable known to run across the site severely restricted options for their position.

In the event, the uncovering of two further service pipes (water) necessitated a slight change to the position of the trenches from that which was provisionally proposed.

METHODOLOGY

Using a JCB equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, each trench was machined initially to a depth of between 1.0 and 1.2 m. A deeper sondage was then machined

in each trench, down to the natural gravel. The trench sides were then shored, in accordance with Health & Safety regulations, prior to the manual cleaning, recording and photography of the exposed deposits.

The standard OAU recording system was used (OAU Fieldwork Manual, ed. D Wilkinson 1990). Each trench was allocated a block of 100 context numbers (hence Context 204 = Trench 2 Context 4).

The fieldwork took place from July 3rd - 5th inclusive.

RESULTS (Fig 1)

Trench 1 5.0 m x 1.6 m NW-SE

Natural sand (109) was revealed at a depth of 2.10 m below ground level, (49.90 O.D.). This was cut by a large, flat bottomed feature (110), the near vertical side of which was partly revealed on the N side of the sondage. The revealed depth of 110 was 1.10 m., and it evidently extended beyond both sides of the trench and further to the S.

110 was filled with apparently dumped layers of sand/gravel and sandy silt (108 to 103 inclusive). No artifactual evidence was recovered from any of these deposits.

In the N end of the trench the upper fills of the cut 110 were evidently truncated by the deposition of a gravel make up layer (102) for a thin tarmac surface (101). This was sealed by a loose modern topsoil/dump (100), which contained a considerable quantity of evidently very recent domestic rubbish.

Trench 2 6.0 m x 1.6 m NE-SW

Natural sand (210) was revealed at a depth of 1.85 m (50.19 O.D.). This was overlaid by a thin natural layer of pale grey clay (207), and a layer of coarse natural gravel (206), up to 0.60 m deep. This was cut by a large, steep-sided, flat bottomed feature (204), the W side of which was partly revealed in the trench sondage. The fill (204) of this feature consisted of accumulated small dumped lenses of sand and sandy silt. The upper layers were well mixed, and were not readily distinguishable from overlying deposits. In the W end of the trench a small bowl shaped pit (209) was identified, with a fill (208) very similar to (204). No artifactual evidence was recovered from any of the fills of these features.

Sealing both features was a 0.20 m deep layer of mid brown sandy silt (203), which was cut by a NE-SW pipe trench (202).

202 and 203 were sealed by a thin dumped layer of sand and gravel (201), which was itself sealed by the modern topsoil (200).

DISCUSSION

The large features in both trenches (110) and (205) are characteristic of gravel quarry pits. The total absence of artifacts from their fills argues against their being domestic or industrial refuse pits. A further indicator is that (205) is cut through the coarse gravel (206), to the top of the clay layer (207). The fine sand (109) and (210) was clearly not required by the quarriers.

The evidence from the trenches, and the implications of the borehole data, indicate that this quarrying was, as would be expected, intensive over the area. It would be reasonable to conclude that any earlier archaeological deposits have been destroyed by this quarrying. The lack of even residual artifacts within the backfill of the pits could suggest that whatever archaeological deposits might have existed, if any, were very slight, and not indicative of occupation in the vicinity.

With no artifactual evidence, establishing a date for the quarrying is a matter of pure speculation. Almost any date up to the present century would be feasible.

CONCLUSION

The evidence indicates that there are no significant 'in situ' archaeological deposits remaining in the area, and that the proposed development should constitute no appreciable threat in this respect.

Alan Hardy
OAU
July 1995

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APPENDIX: TABLE OF CONTEXTS

CXT	TYPE	DEPTH	COMMENTS
Tr 1			
100	LAYER	0.40-1.10	DISTURBED TOPSOIL/DUMPING
101	LAYER	0.04	MODERN TARMAC
102	LAYER	0.25	MAKE UP FOR 101
103	LAYER	<0.20	INFILLING/LEVELLING
104	FILL	<0.50	FILL OF 110
105	FILL	<0.36	FILL OF 110
106	FILL	<0.10	FILL OF 110
107	FILL	<0.30	FILL OF 110
108	FILL	<0.10	FILL OF 110
109	NATURAL	-	FINE ORANGE SAND
110	CUT	C. 1.10	N. SIDE QUARRY PIT CUT
Tr 2			
200	LAYER	<0.30	MODERN TOPSOIL
201	LAYER	<0.10	MODERN GRAVEL/SAND DUMP
202	PIPE TRENCH		MODERN
203	LAYER	<0.20	BURIED TOPSOIL
204	FILL	<1.20	BACKFILL OF QUARRY 205
205	CUT	C.1.20	QUARRY
206	NATURAL	0.65	COARSE GRAVEL
207	NATURAL	0.10	GREY CLAY
208	FILL	0.25	FILL OF 209
209	CUT	0.25	SMALL PIT/ PART OF 205
210	NATURAL	-	COMPACTED FINE SAND

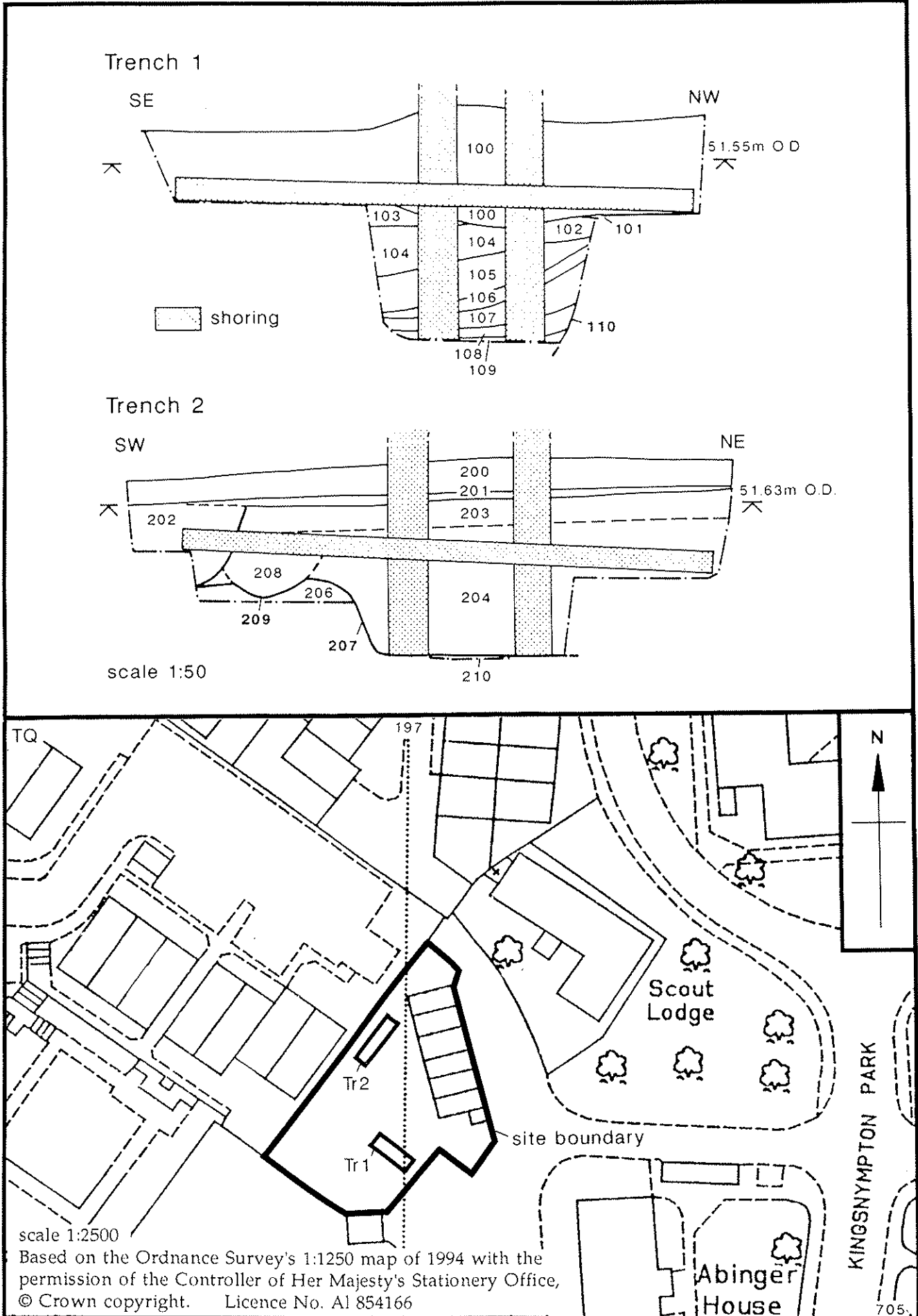


figure 1



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