

Berkeley Homes

Northwest of School Lane, Bapchild,
Near Sittingbourne, Kent

NGR TQ 9278-6310

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. SW/98/567 (case 16042)

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

March 1999

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Prepared by: <i>M. Sims</i>
Date: <i>26th March 1999.</i>
Checked by: <i>JR Scott</i>
Date: <i>29 March 99</i>
Approved by: <i>R Williams</i>
Date: <i>HEAD OF FIELDWORK</i> <i>9/4/1999</i>

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out on land at School Lane, Bapchild between the 3rd and 17th of December 1998 in accordance to the W.S.I submitted to Kent County Council.

A total of 1600m² of topsoil were stripped under OAU supervision to reveal a clean, undisturbed colluvium. All works which cut the colluvium were either monitored during or after machining. These works included a 48m length of drain run and house foundation trenches and revealed the original slope of the ground, the underlying natural and the build up of colluvial deposits but no archaeological features were exposed. The only evidence of significance was a Romano-British find recovered from the topsoil which is likely to have been redeposited from higher up the surrounding land.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief on behalf of Berkeley Homes Ltd on land to the North West of School Lane, Bapchild near Sittingbourne (NGR TQ 9278-6310) between the 3rd and 17th of December 1998.

The work was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by OAU, and approved by Kent County Council, detailing the scope and methods for the watching brief.

Several sites of archaeological interest have been located within the surrounding area. These include over 40 Palaeolithic implements found in gravel pits to the south-east of the development site and an Early Iron Age enamelled bronze terret recovered some 500 m to the south-west. The site lies between two areas with evidence of Roman activity. Watling Street lies less than 50 m to the north of the site and a cemetery dating to the 1st century AD lies c. 400m to the south-east. Roman cremations with urns were discovered a further 250 m to the east of the cemetery. St Lawrence's Church, located 120 m to the south, is 12th or 13th century with some later additions and restoration. Further medieval sites, all located to the north-east, include a 12th-century chapel and cemetery of St James' leper hospital, the possible site and building of St Thomas' hospital, Tonge castle (a motte and bailey with stone foundations and finds dating to the 12th to 14th centuries), and St Thomas A Becket's spring.

1.2 Geology, Landscape and Landuse

The geology of the site is Head Brickearth over Thanet Beds (sands) as identified from British Geological Survey sheet 272, however a large outcrop of chalk was identified in addition to the brickearth during fieldwork.

The site lies midway on a gentle North facing slope (approx 39.5m O.D) adjacent to a terrace formed by the A2 with the surrounding arable farmland rising to the South and West.

2. AIMS

The Written Scheme of Investigation outlined the objectives of the watching brief and are listed below:

To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) which the groundworks will remove or damage within the development area.

To ensure that if significant archaeological remains are discovered that sufficient resources will be allocated whilst building work is suspended.

To make available the results of the investigation.

3. METHODS

A detailed strategy for the watching brief was agreed with Kent County Council.

All areas of ground disturbance, i.e ground levelling, site stripping and excavation of service and foundation trenches were monitored by an archaeological supervisor under guidance from a Project Manager.

All features and deposits exposed were recorded using proforma record forms, black and white and colour slide photography and drawn plans and sections as appropriate. All on site recording was undertaken in accordance with the OAU Field Manual (Wilkinson 1992). Appropriate registers of all contexts, plans, sections and photographs were prepared as part of the site archive.

4. RESULTS

Observations during topsoil stripping and the excavation of foundation and service trenches revealed that the natural deposits (Chalk and brickearth) were overlain by 0.3 m-thick layer of light reddish brown colluvium. A layer of topsoil overlay the colluvium. The colluvium was not cut by and nor did it overly any archaeological features or deposits. A single abraded sherd of Romano-British pottery was retrieved from the topsoil.

5. CONCLUSIONS

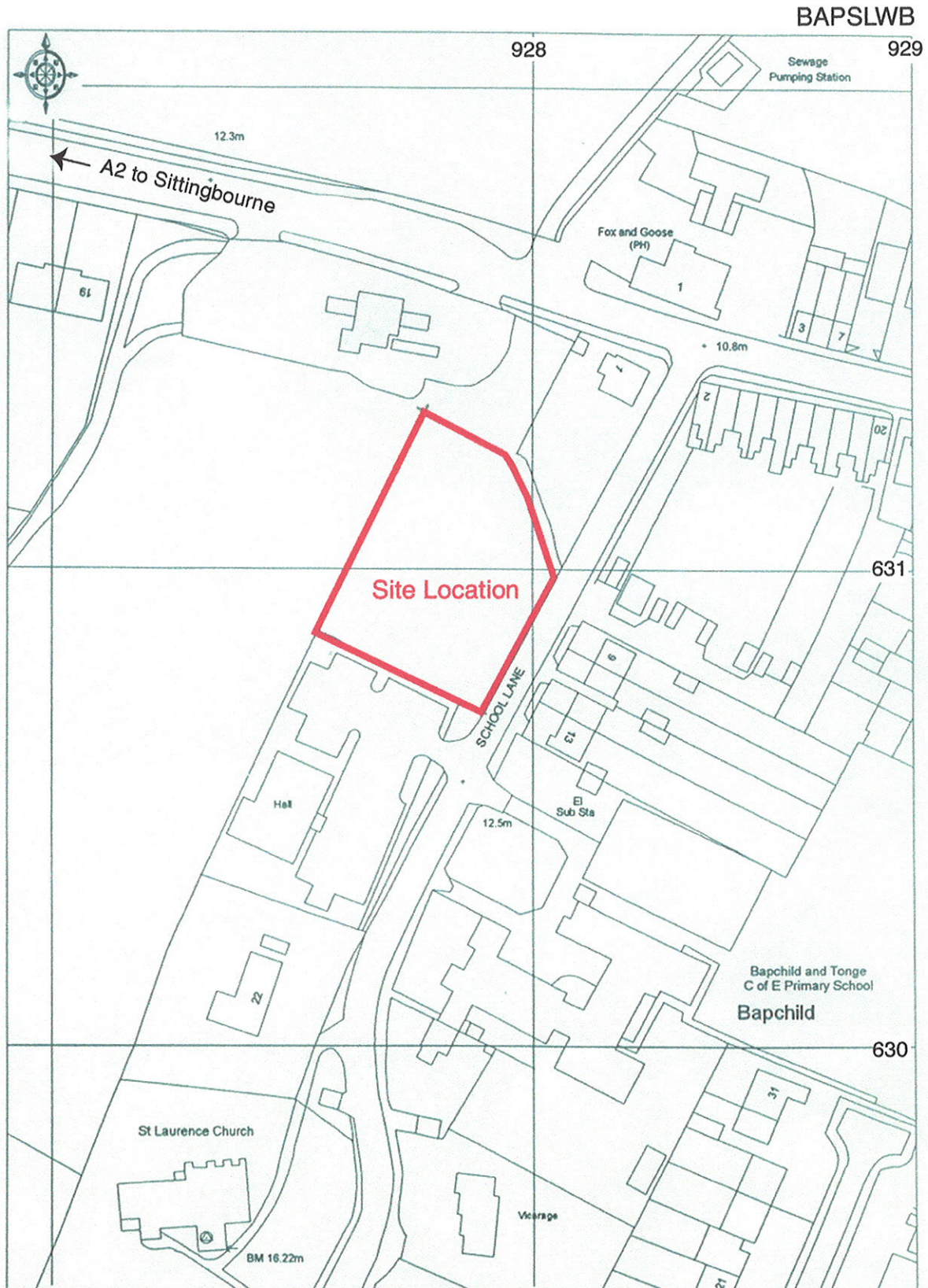
The results of the watching brief showed that no archaeological deposits would be damaged by the construction on this site. The single sherd of Romano-British pottery recovered from this site was wholly contained within the worked topsoil. Therefore any associated features have been completely destroyed by previous cultivation of the site or, more likely, the find is the result of migration of finds from sites further up the field slope to the south and west.

6. CONTEXT INVENTORY

CONTEXT	TYPE	RELATIONSHIPS	FINDS	DATE
1	Topsoil	Above 2	Modern Pot + CBM RB Pot	Modern
2	Colluvium	Above 3 and 5	-	-
3	Colluvium	Above 4	-	-
4	Natural Clay	Below 3	-	-
5	Natural Chalk	Below 2	-	-

References.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

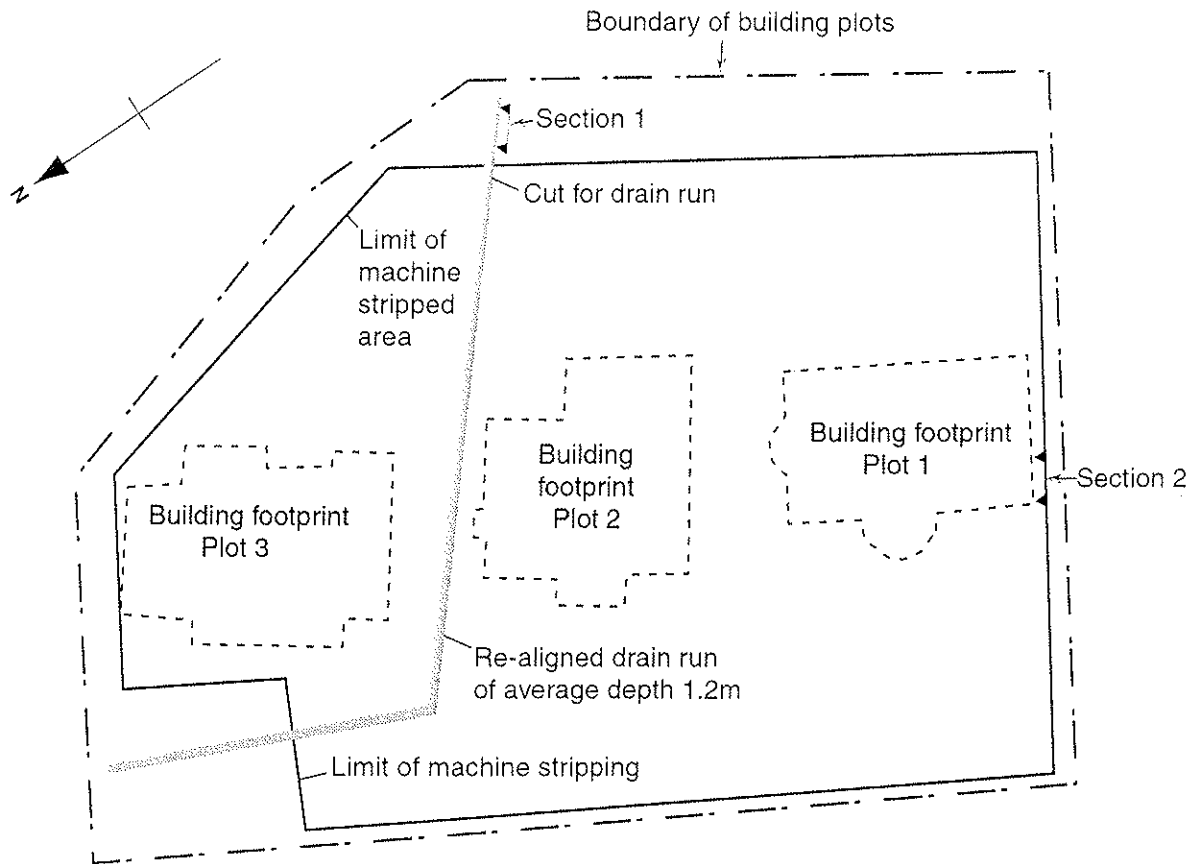


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Survey Scale - 1:1250 Plotted Scale - 1:1250



Ordnance Survey
Value Added Reseller

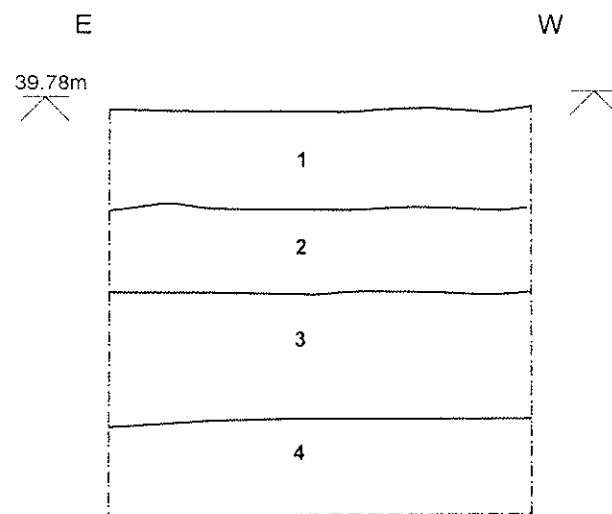
Figure 1 : Site location



Scale 1: 400

Figure 2 : Plan of site

Section 1
North facing section within drainage trench.



Section 2
North facing section within building footing.

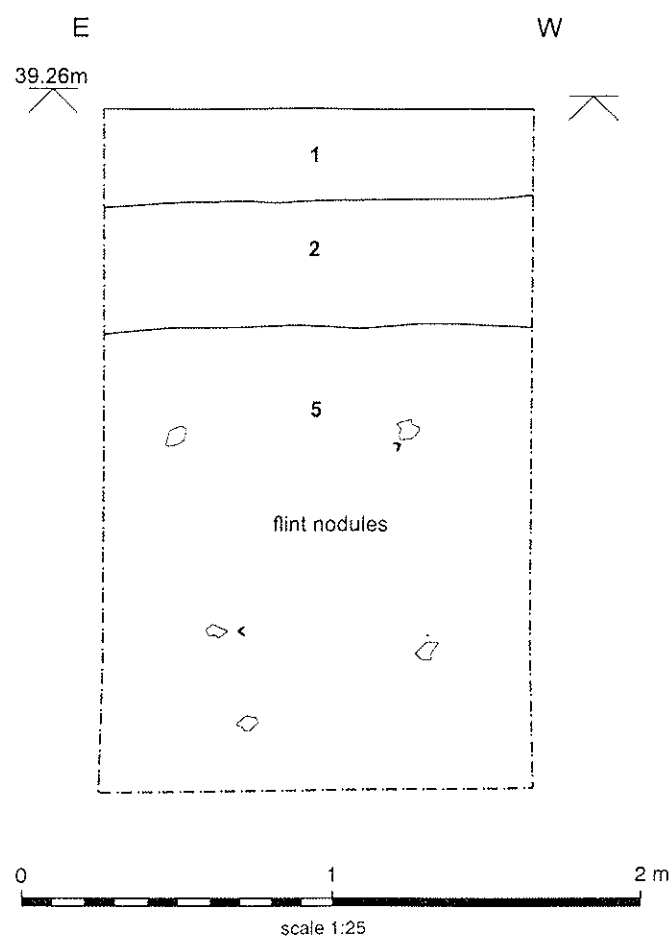


Figure 3 : Sample sections.



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