

Maidstone Borough Council

Chillington Street, Maidstone, Kent.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

TQ 759 569

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OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
April 2001

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) in May 1999, on land north and west of Chillington Street, Maidstone. The watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. The development site was formerly allotments, and was being converted for use by the borough council as a sports field. Observations were made during the construction work; no significant archaeological features or finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In May 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief on land lying north and west of Chillington Street, Maidstone (Figs 1 and 2), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council.
- 1.2 The land was formerly used for allotments, and was being developed by the Borough Council as a sports field (planning reference MA/97/1625N). A condition for an archaeological watching brief, based on an approved program and specification, was attached to the planning consent on the advice of Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the time of the site investigation, the precise archaeological potential of the site was unclear. It is known that the site lay adjacent to the line of the Roman road that extended from Rochester to Maidstone and thence on to Hastings.
- 2.2 Roman finds have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site and it was thought that further Roman remains might survive within the development area. Part of the watching brief area, particularly to the east, may have been used as a Ragstone quarry, but the date of this feature and its extent to the west are uncertain.

3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The objectives of the watching brief were to identify the presence, character and date of any archaeological features and to provide an assessment of the likely levels of resourcing necessary to examine and record any such archaeological features.
- 3.2 The specific requirements of the watching brief related to two aspects of the development. One was the observation of excavation of pits for the foundations of a ramp, accessing the site from the south-east. The other was the examination of a larger area of the site after topsoil removal in order to establish the nature and date of any

surviving archaeological features. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson 1992). Several visits were made to site as the contractors' work progressed.

4 RESULTS: DESCRIPTION

4.1 *Foundation Pits*

Two foundation pits were dug within the southern extent of the site by building contractors, to accommodate the foundations of an access ramp from Chillington Street. The southern-most of these pits was located immediately against the outer allotment wall adjoining Chillington Street and measured 1.5 m square by 0.6 m deep. This pit revealed a layer of orange clayey silt, containing modern pottery and glass, which was at least 0.35 m thick. This layer was cut to the south by the construction trench of the outer allotment wall. The fill of this cut was not readily distinguished from the overlying modern topsoil, which was typically 0.25 m deep.

A second pit, some 12 m to the north, measured 1.4 m x 1.5 m x 0.47 m deep. Within this pit the lowest deposit found, with a minimum depth of 0.22 m, was a layer of light brown silty clay containing patches of greensand and brick fragments. This deposit was again overlaid by 0.25 m of modern topsoil.

No archaeological features or horizons were apparent within either foundation pit

4.2 *Topsoil Strip*

The depth of topsoil stripping across the main area of the site was very shallow and no undisturbed archaeological or subsoil horizons were revealed. Scattered modern finds were apparent within a deposit, which appeared to be a lower topsoil.

5 FINDS

All the artefacts seen, both in the foundation pits and in the general topsoil stripping were of recent date. Their presence was noted in the site records but none were retained for further analysis.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No archaeological deposits were observed during the watching brief and much of the excavation was too shallow to reveal possible archaeological horizons.
- 6.2 Within the two foundation pits to the south of the site, layers of mixed soils containing modern finds (including broken brick) probably represent made ground while the deposit exposed in the main topsoil stripped area may have been of similar character, but insufficient was seen for this to be certain.

- 6.3 The archaeological potential of the site therefore remains unclear, but any surviving archaeological features or deposits will have been located below the level of disturbance involved in this development.

Reference

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



scale 1:4000

Figure 1: site location

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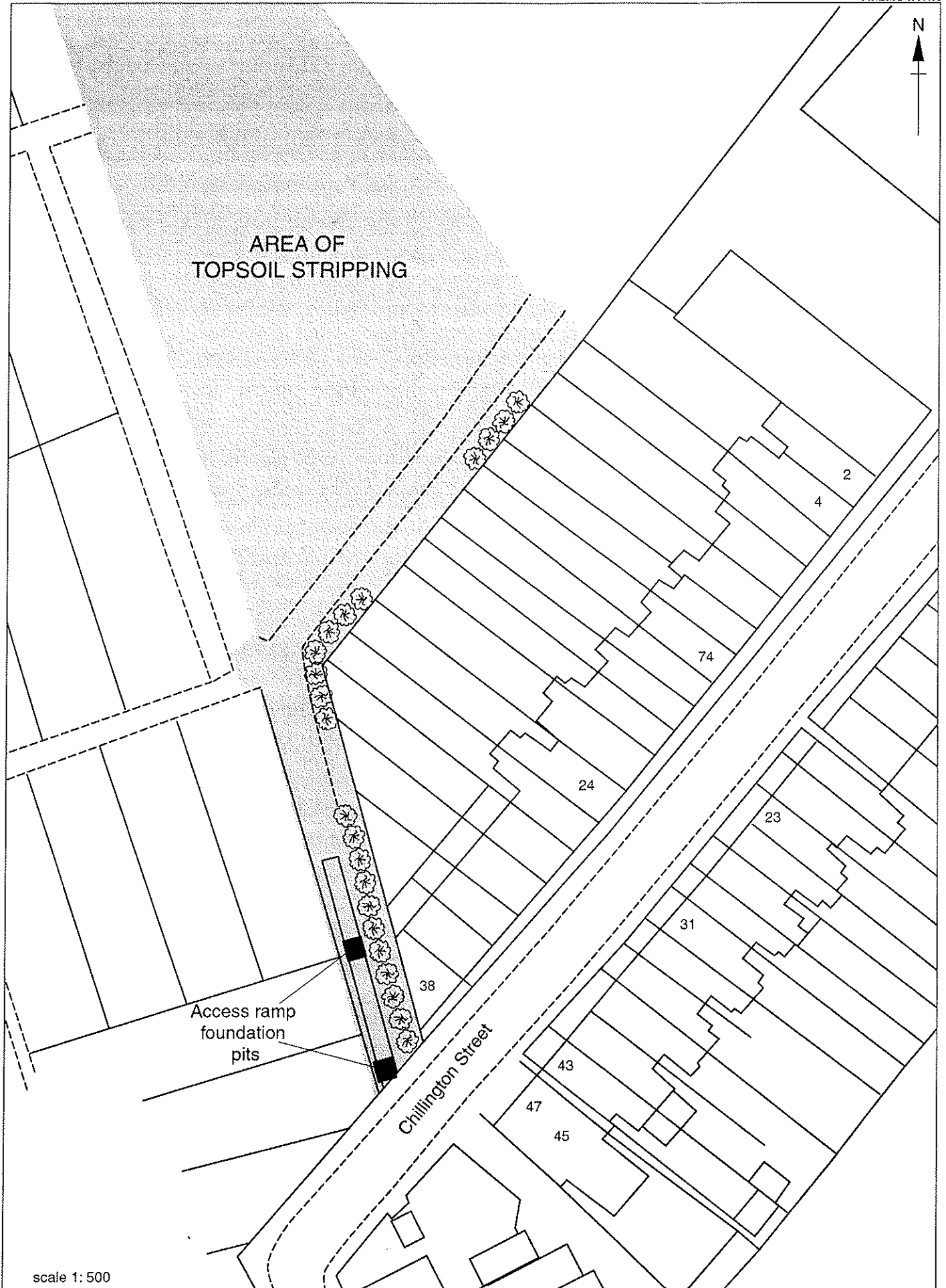


Figure 2: site plan



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