

# Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent

NGR: 575496 155370  
Site Code TON-WB-12



**Report for Jenner Contractors Ltd**  
**Planning Reference No. 11/10/1078**  
**Date of report 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012**

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## **Archaeological Watching Brief at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent**

**NGR 575496 155370**

**Site Code: TON-WB-12**

### **1.0 SUMMARY**

*From 8<sup>th</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012, Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on the site at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, during the ground works associated with a new build medical centre. The works were carried out on behalf of Jenner Contractors Ltd. Planning Application Number: 11/10/1078.*

*The Watching Brief revealed no archaeological features.*

### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **2.1 Planning Background**

A planning application (PAN: 11/10/1078) for the construction of a new build medical centre was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to record any archaeological remains uncovered during associated groundworks. The following condition was attached to the planning consent:

*8. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification, which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

#### **2.2 Schedule of Visits**

An experienced archaeologist attended the site and monitored site clearance from 8<sup>th</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012 during works associated with the demolition of the substantial office block foundations.

### **2.3 Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of the monitoring and recording, as specified by Kent County Council was to:

*3.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of the archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the ground works.*

### **2.4 Groundworks**

The ground works involved area strip of concrete and tarmac followed by the demolition of the office block platform and the removal of deep concrete foundations reinforced with steel (Figs 1-3).  
No archaeology was revealed.

### **2.5 Confidence Rating**

No factors hindered the recognition of archaeological and geological deposits during the monitoring and recording exercise.

## **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The site (Fig. 1) is centrally located on national grid reference (NGR) 575496 155370, within the historic town of Maidstone lying to the south of Tonbridge Road on the western side of the River Medway.

3.1 The British Geological Survey (1990, sheet 288 Maidstone) shows the site as lying on the eastern limits of an extensive area of Lower Cretaceous Hythe Beds (alternating layers of sandy limestone and calcareous sand or sandstone) which forms the solid geology. To the east and south of the site, an underlying band of Aberfield Clay is plotted at lower levels following the western side of the River Medway. Although no drift deposits are shown within the site limits, or its immediate vicinity, river terrace gravels or head brickearth deposits associated with the river valley may be present.

3.2 The site is rectangular in shape, aligned roughly north to south perpendicular to Tonbridge Road. Measuring 98m at its longest and between 40 - 43m wide, it covers an area of approximately 4,025 sq m. The current ground levels are between +19 and +21m OD, with a gradual decline towards the south and east in the direction of the River Medway. The site is bounded to the west by residential properties associated with Westree Court (formerly the Old Grammar School), to the east and south by commercial units (formerly a builder's yard) which occupy a terrace at a much lower level than the study site, whilst Tonbridge Road itself forms the northern boundary to the site.

#### Archaeological background

The historic market town of Maidstone has been identified by a recent archaeological assessment, undertaken by KCC as part of the Kent Historic Towns Survey, as being of pre-Conquest origin and appears in the Domesday Book and an earlier Anglo-Saxon charter of c. AD 975.

However the Maidstone area probably became a significant focus of activity in the Romano-British period, being along the route (Stone Street) connecting the Roman urban centre of Rochester in the north with the Weald towards the south. The nucleus of the settlement that became Maidstone appears to have formed around an intersection of Stone Street, where it crossed the River Len to the east of the River Medway, and the establishment of a later east-west route that crosses the River Medway itself sometime during the Anglo-Saxon period.

In the later eleventh and twelfth centuries a planned urban centre was laid out along the line of the east-west route which became the High Street.

The site, being on the opposite western side of the River Medway and therefore away from the urban centre, is passed by the east-west route and a later route towards London.

The site itself has been identified as of potential archaeological significance, as it lies on or close to a Romano-British cemetery found between the Old Grammar School and Maidstone West Station (KCC 2012). This cemetery was disturbed between 1859 and 1860 during the construction of a new nursery garden; part of the area of that nursery is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1883 as occupied by the Council offices situated on the development site.

An Archaeological Evaluation was carried out on the site by Canterbury Archaeological Trust in October 2008 when four evaluation trenches were cut. The report of the evaluation states that 'no significant archaeological remains were identified' and there was 'no archaeological activity on the site prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century'. It seems that the site does not appear to be the location of the postulated Romano-British cemetery (CAT 2010).

#### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The Watching Brief was conducted in accordance with the specification compiled by Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation and it also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1999). The works comprised the observation of all groundworks, including the inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and finds.

## **5.0 RESULTS**

### **5.1 General**

The site strip and removal of deep concrete foundations across the site revealed no archaeological features.

## **6.0 FINDS**

No archaeological features were found and no finds were retrieved.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION**

The Archaeological Watching Brief carried out on land at 13 Tonbridge Road revealed that no archaeological features were present. The ground disturbance caused by the previous build plus the recent investigative work by Canterbury Archaeological Trust meant that little remained to be watched.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The Archaeological Watching Brief has fulfilled the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. No buried archaeological features have been affected as a result of the development.

## **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the Jenner Contractors Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council).

Paul Wilkinson  
July 2012

## **REFERENCES**

IFA (1999) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Kent County Council (2012) *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent*

Canterbury Archaeological Trust (2010) *13 Tonbridge Road Archaeological Report*

**APPENDIX 1 Kent County Council HER summary form**

<b>Site Name:</b> Land at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent	
<b>Site Code:</b> TON-WB-12	
<b>Site Address:</b>	
As above.	
<b>Summary:</b>	
<p>From 8<sup>th</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2012 Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief at the above address. The works were carried out on behalf of Jenner Contractors Ltd in advance of the construction of a medical centre (Planning Application Number: 11/10/1078).</p> <p>The Watching Brief revealed no archaeological features.</p>	
<b>District/Unitary:</b> Maidstone	<b>Parish:</b>
<b>Period(s):</b> N/A.	
<b>NGR (centre of site : 8 figures):</b> NGR 575496 155370 <b>(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs)</b>	
<b>Type of archaeological work (delete)</b>	
Watching Brief	
<b>Date of Recording:</b> May/June 2012	
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> Swale & Thames Archaeological Survey Co. (SWAT)	
<b>Geology:</b> Hythe Beds	
<b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b>	
Wilkinson, P. (2012) <i>Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at 13 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent (SWAT Archaeology)</i>	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>	
As above.	
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b> SWAT Archaeology	
<b>Contact at Unit:</b> Dr P. Wilkinson	<b>Date:</b> July 2012



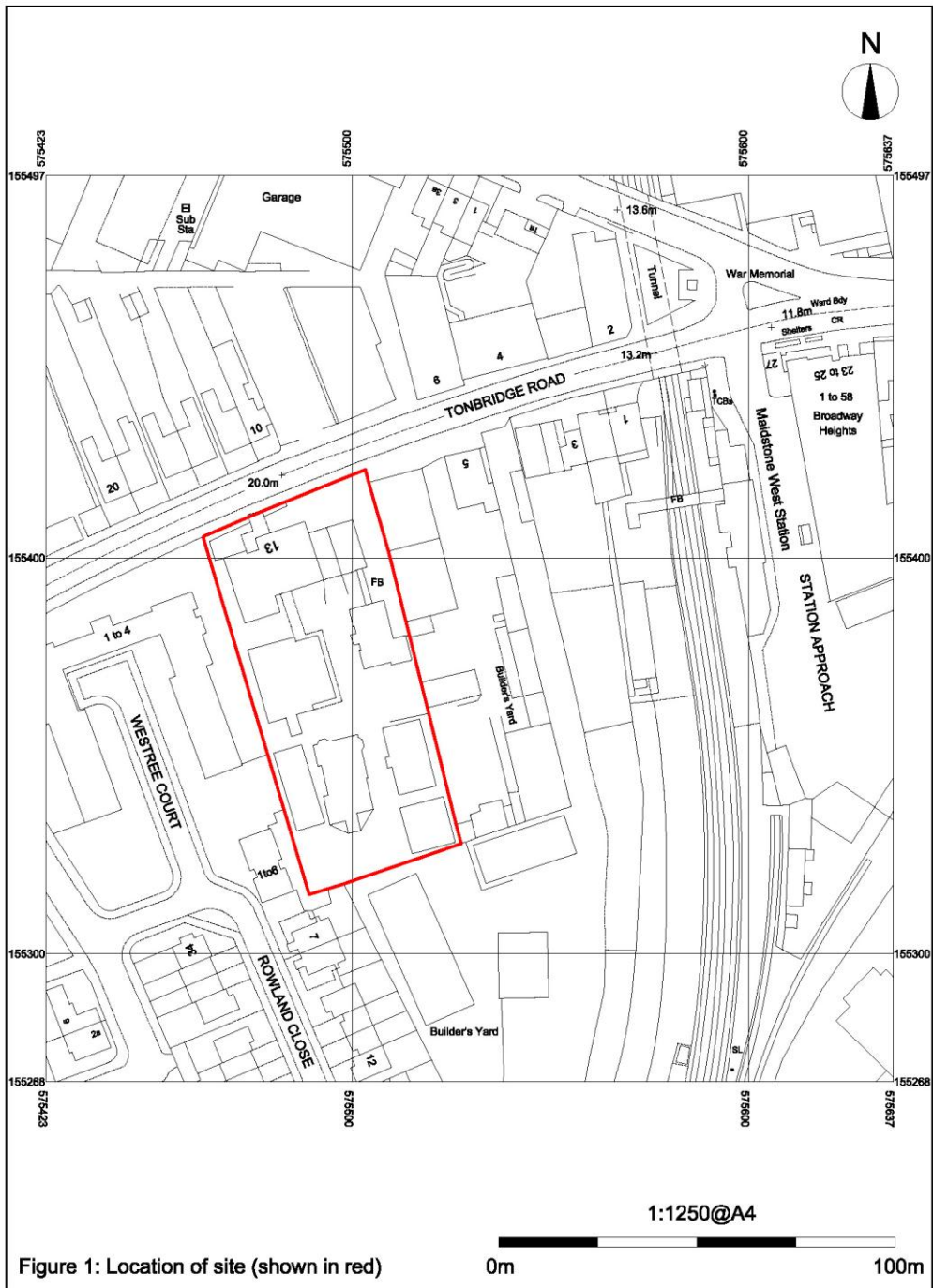


Figure 1. Site Location



Plate 1. Showing on-going site clearance and looking towards Tonbridge Road





Plate 2. Showing removal of deep reinforced concrete foundations





Plate 3. Most of the site was excavated to remove concrete foundations