

ASHBURTON PARK

WHAT DID WE DISCOVER?



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A COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT FOR READERS AGED 7-12

BASED ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG AND GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
CARRIED OUT IN MAY 2026

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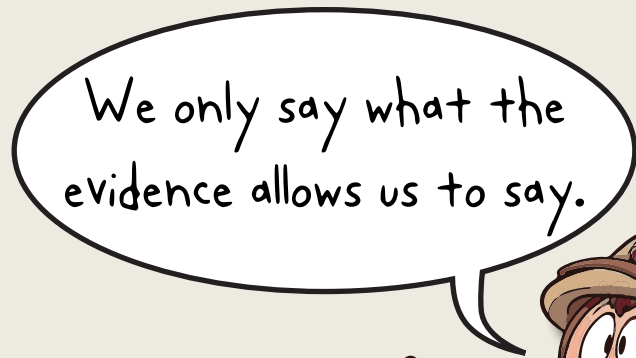
HELLO, TIME DETECTIVES!

In May 2026, children, families, volunteers and archaeologists explored the ground around Ashburton Hall in Croydon.

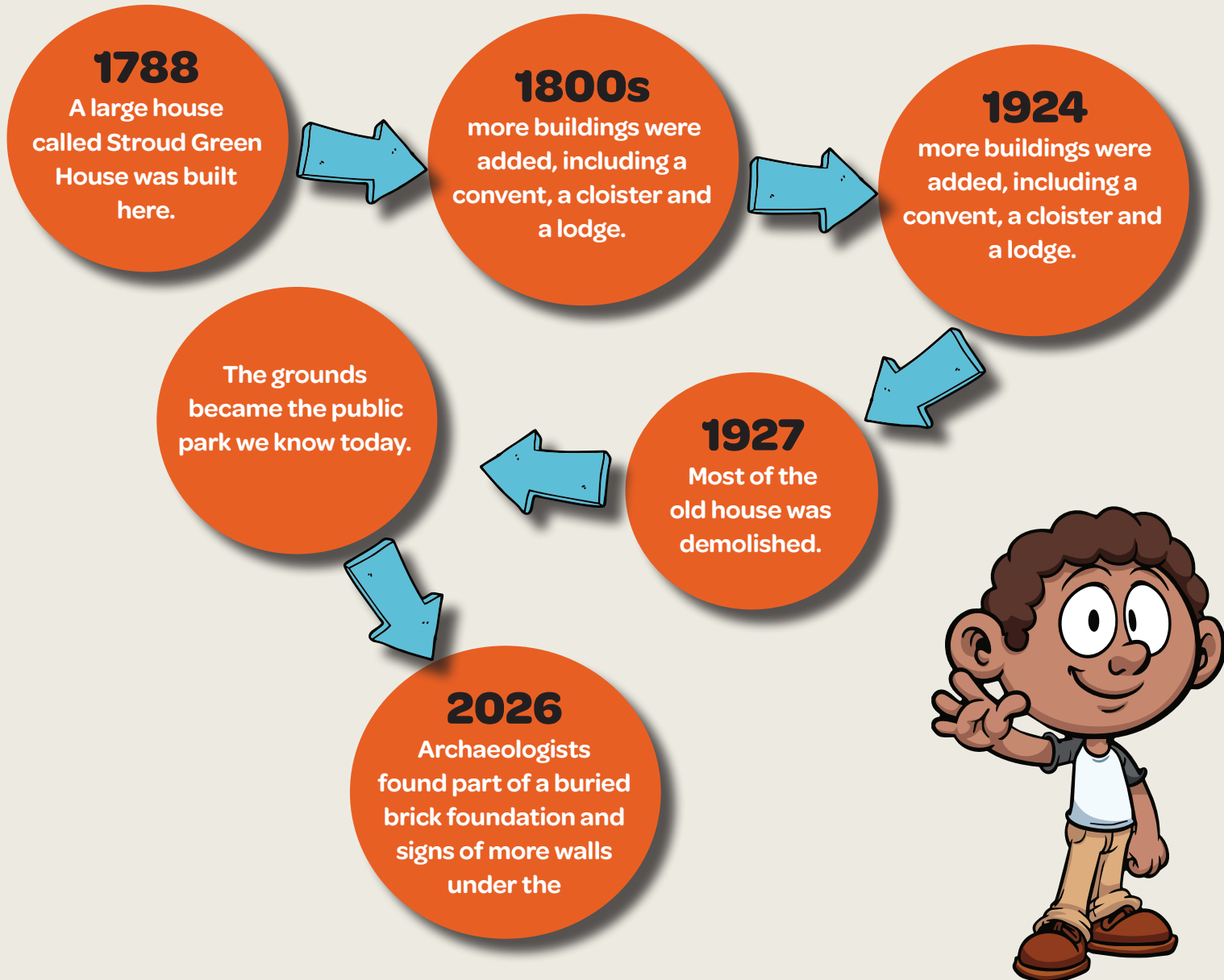
They wanted to find out what was left of buildings that once stood in the park. Some clues were found by digging test pits. Other clues were found with machines that can look below the grass without digging.

This report tells you what the team did, what they found and why it matters.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE IN ARCHAEOLOGY IS SIMPLE



THE BIG STORY IN 60 SECONDS



WHY DID ARCHAEOLOGISTS COME TO THE PARK?

Ashburton Park looks like a green open space, but its ground holds the remains of older buildings, paths, gardens and ponds.

The project was part of the wider restoration of the park. It gave local people a chance to help investigate their own neighbourhood and learn how archaeologists work.

The team had three main questions:

- **Could any parts of the old buildings still survive underground?**
- **Could maps and survey results help us understand where the buildings once stood?**
- **Could local children and adults take part in real archaeological work?**



A QUICK JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Before the big house

Long ago, this part of Croydon was much more rural. Woodside was mentioned in written records in the **1300s**, and the area was close to the **Great North Wood**.

1788: Stroud Green House

A large house was built in **1788**, probably for landowner **Joseph Humphrey**. It became known as **Stroud Green House**. Maps show gardens, trees, paths and water nearby.



The Victorian years

In **1878**, **Father Arthur Tooth** bought the estate. He added several buildings, including **a convent, a cloister, a lodge** and **other structures**. The convent building later became **Ashburton Hall**. People lived, worked and received care at the site. Some of those people had been sick or left with parents or carers.



A public park

Croydon Corporation bought the estate in **1924**. Much of the Georgian house was demolished in **1927**. The convent building became a library, and the grounds became **Ashburton Park**. The park continued to change. Paths, sports areas, play spaces, ponds and other features were added or removed. Two bombs fell in the park during the **Second World War**, causing damage nearby.



HOW DO YOU INVESTIGATE A PARK?

Method 1: Digging test pits

The archaeologists opened eight small areas called test pits. Each pit was carefully measured and dug by hand.

They looked for changes in the soil, layers of rubble, walls and objects. Every clue was recorded before the soil was removed and those clues were placed into labelled trays at each test pit.

Method 2: Looking underground without digging

The team also used geophysics. This means using scientific equipment to spot differences below the ground.

- **Ground-penetrating radar, or GPR, sends signals into the ground and records the echoes.**
- **Earth resistance measures how easily a tiny electrical current moves through the soil.**
- **Magnetometry measures very small changes in the earth's magnetic field.**

Different materials can produce different readings. A wall may give a different result from a ditch, a drain or ordinary soil.

WHAT DID THE DIGGING FIND?

A real buried wall

The clearest discovery came from Test Pit 8. The team uncovered part of a brick foundation covered with hard white mortar.

Its position suggests that it belonged to one of the former buildings near Ashburton Hall. Only a small part was visible, so the team could not prove exactly which room or wall it belonged to.

Rubble from old buildings

Several test pits contained broken brick, tile and mixed soil. These layers were probably left behind when buildings were demolished or changed during the 1900s.

Three test pits did not contain any structures. That information still matters because it helps archaeologists understand where remains survive and where they do not.

Small finds, big clues

The team found objects and fragments from the more recent history of the site, mostly from the 1800s and 1900s.

- pieces of pottery and glass
- roofing slate and roof tile
- nails and brick
- animal bone
- part of a graphite stylus, used for writing or drawing

- a fragment of marble fireplace surround
- a small piece of a copper brooch

None of these objects was treasure. Archaeologists do not need treasure to learn something useful. Everyday objects can show how people lived, repaired buildings and changed a place over time. In fact, archaeologists rarely find the types of treasures that you might see in movies.



WHAT DID THE MACHINES FIND?

The shape of the former hall

GPR produced the clearest survey results. It showed straight and rectangular shapes below the grass that match the old building shown on historic maps.

The results may show outside walls, some inside walls, entrances, circular corner features and possible staircases. The word possible is important because geophysics shows patterns, and archaeologists must interpret what caused them.



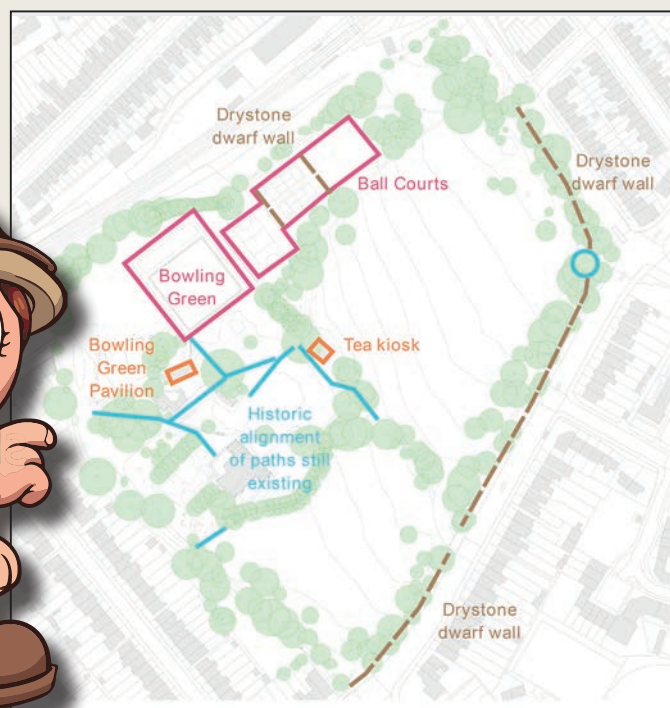
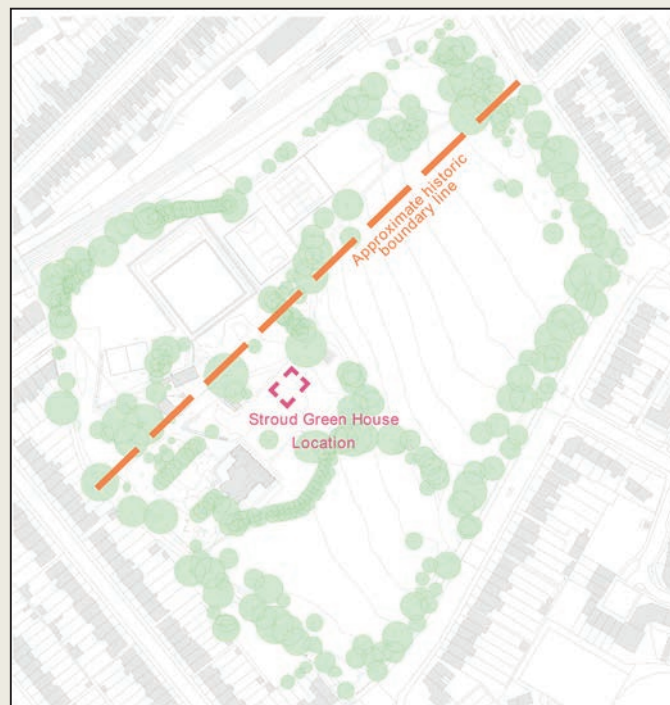
An old path

The earth resistance survey picked up a strong line that matches the position of a former path leading towards the hall.

Drains and modern metal

Magnetometry did not find clear traces of the old buildings. Most of its results came from drains, underground services, modern metal and disturbed ground.

A herringbone-shaped drainage system was found in the area of a former pond or lake. This may help people understand why that part of the park can still become wet.

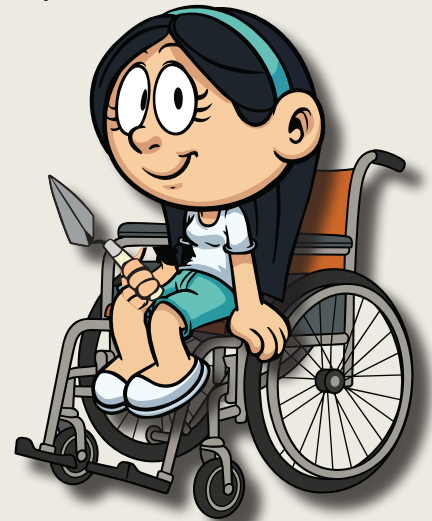


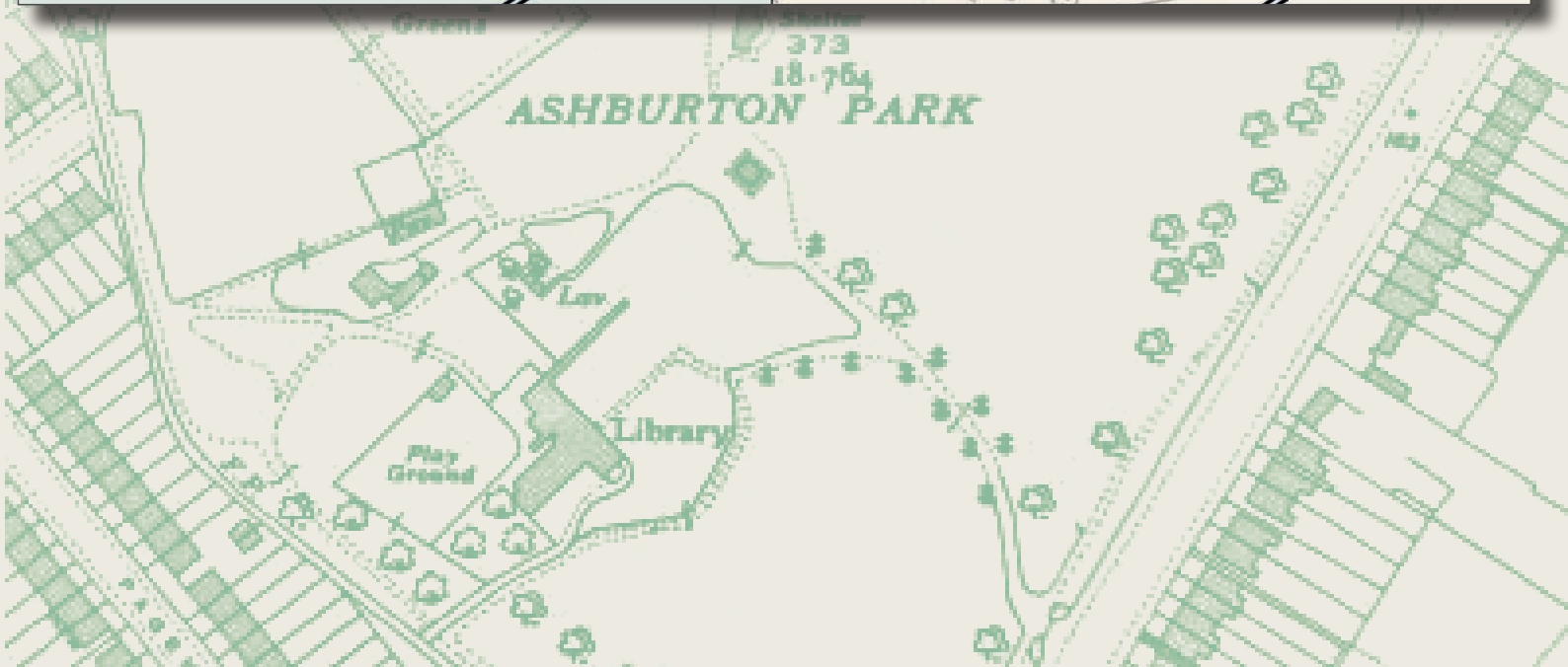
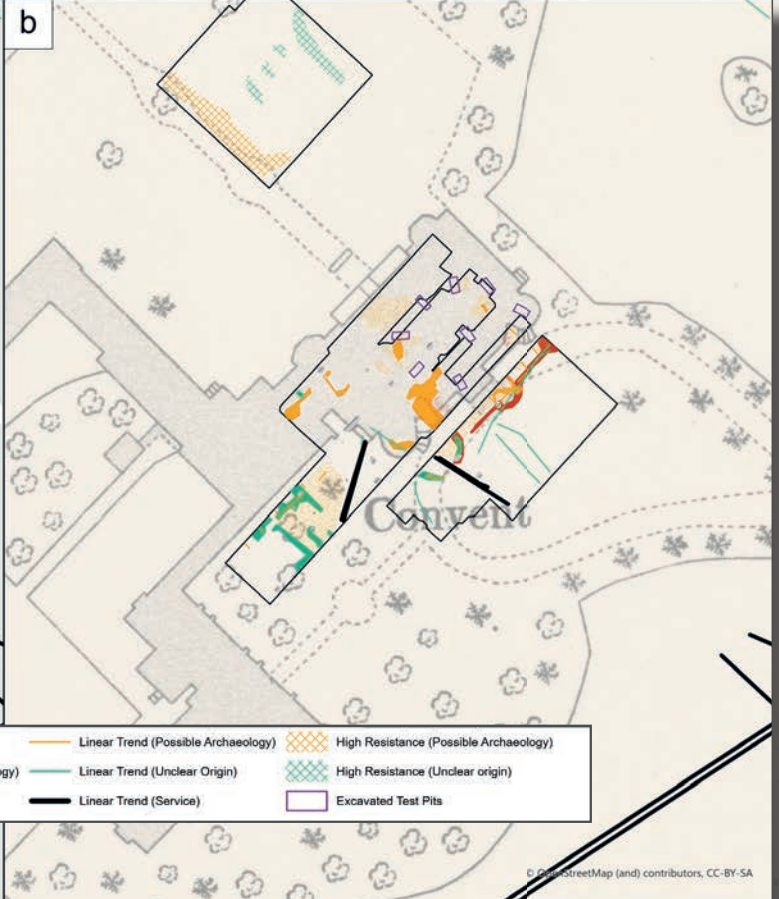
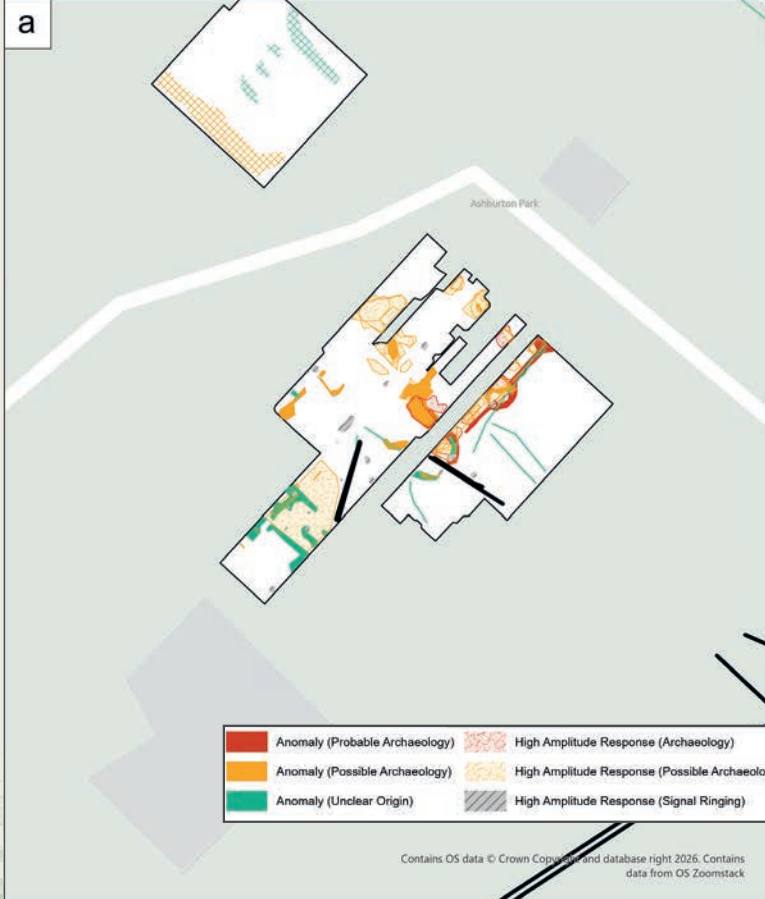
HOW DID ALL THE CLUES FIT TOGETHER?

The dig, the machines and the old maps worked best when they were used together.

- The dig proved that at least one brick foundation still survives.
- GPR showed a much wider pattern of possible walls and surfaces.
- Historic maps helped the team compare the underground shapes with buildings that once stood there.
- The survey also revealed paths, drains and changes to the park landscape.

Archaeologists still do not have a perfect map of everything underground. Some remains may be too deep, too broken or too similar to the surrounding soil to appear clearly.





WHY WAS THIS A COMMUNITY PROJECT?

Local children, families and volunteers were invited to take part in the work. School groups visited during the first week, and bookable community sessions took place during the second week. Participants could help with excavation, wash finds, do archaeological drawing, learn about animal bones and try three kinds of geophysical survey.

That matters because archaeology belongs to everybody. Taking part can help people:

- **learn new practical skills**
- **work as a team**
- **ask questions about evidence**
- **understand how their local area has changed**
- **feel more connected to a place they use every day**

The reports do not give a final total for every participant or measure the project's long-term effect. This means we should celebrate what was delivered without inventing numbers or making claims the evidence cannot support.

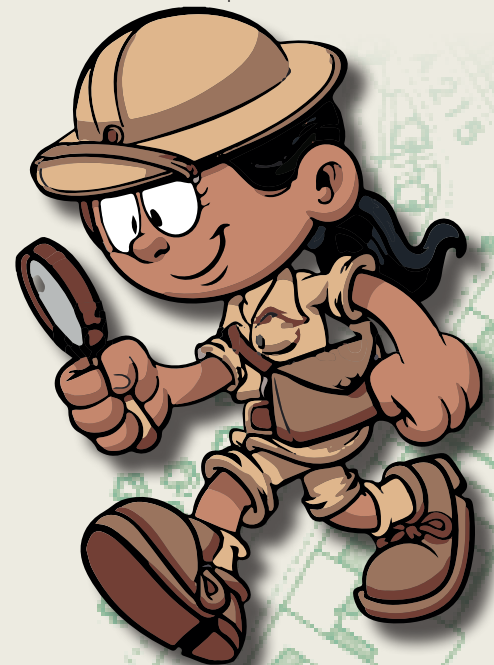


SO, WHAT DID WE DISCOVER?

Parts of the former buildings survive beneath Ashburton Park.

- A brick foundation was found in Test Pit 8.
- GPR traced more possible walls and building features.
- An old path was detected.
- Drainage and modern services were mapped.
- Most of the objects came from the 1800s and 1900s.
- Local people helped carry out real archaeological work.

The project discovered more than one dramatic object. It built a clearer picture of how the park changed from a private estate into a public place.



BE AN EVIDENCE DETECTIVE

Good archaeologists separate facts from ideas. Here are great examples of facts and ideas:

What the evidence shows	What archaeologists think may be true
A brick foundation was uncovered in Test Pit 8.	It may have been an internal wall of a former building.
GPR showed straight and rectangular shapes underground.	Some of these shapes may be walls, entrances or staircases.
A line matched the position of an old path on historic maps.	It was probably part of the route leading towards the hall.
A drainage system was recorded near the former pond area.	It may help explain why the ground there still becomes wet.



ARCHAEOLOGY WORDS

Archaeology: The study of people in the past using the things and places they left behind.

Test pit: A small area dug carefully to find out what is below the ground.

Foundation: The strong base beneath a wall or building.

Geophysics: Using scientific equipment to investigate underground without digging.

GPR: Ground-penetrating radar. It sends signals into the ground and records echoes.

Deposit: A layer of soil, rubble or other material.

Historic map: An old map that helps us see how a place has changed.

Interpretation: An explanation based on the evidence.

Archive: The collection of records, plans, photographs and information kept after a project.



THREE QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1

Why can a broken piece of pottery be useful to an archaeologist?

2

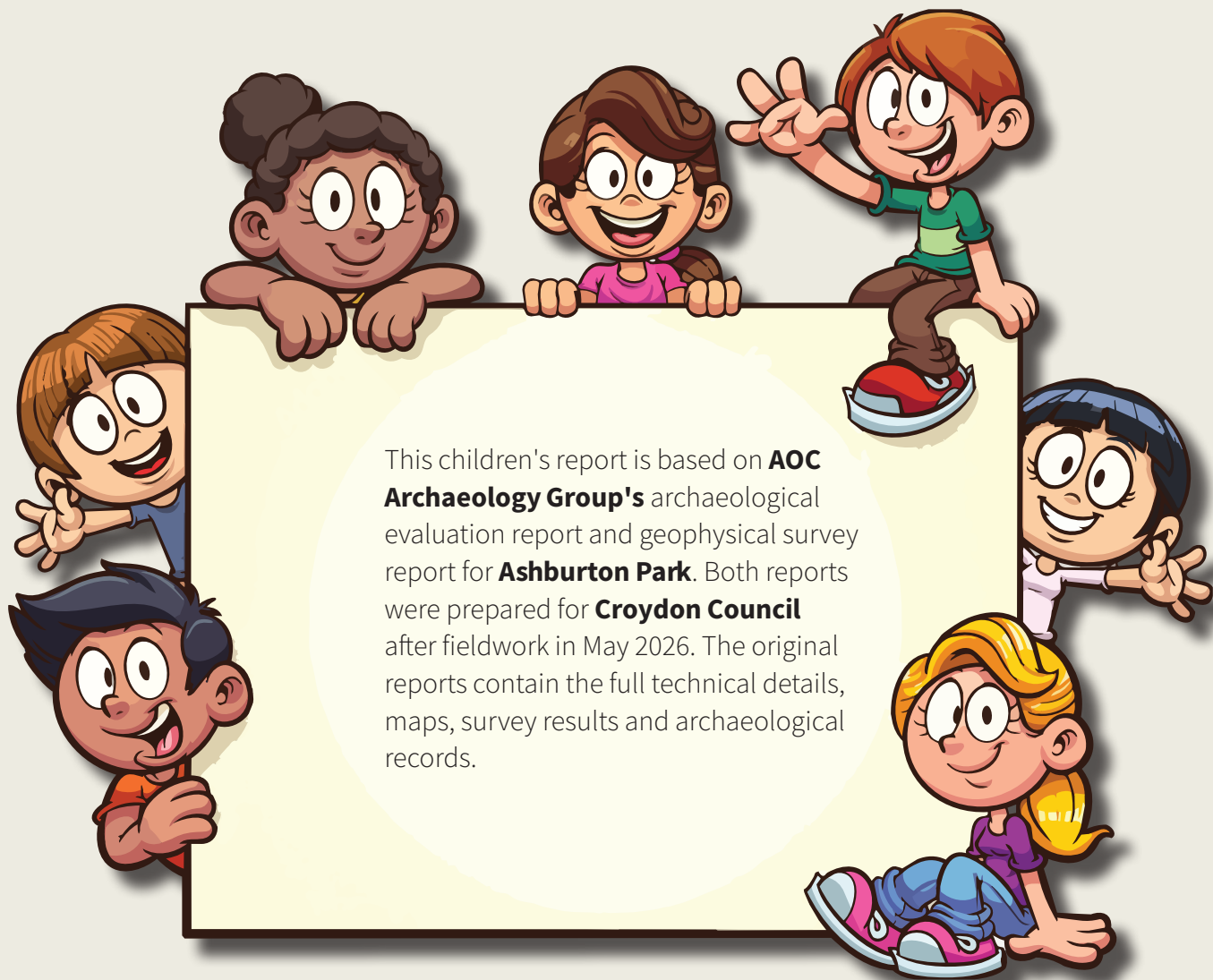
Why is it important to use the word 'possible' when talking about some geophysical results?

3

What would you like archaeologists to investigate next in Ashburton Park or your neighborhood?



WHERE THIS INFORMATION CAME FROM





AOC
Archaeology
Group

