Former James Marshall House,

Leyton Road, Harpenden,

Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS: 5/2014/2917, APPEAL APP/B1930/W/15/3004758

PCA REPORT NO: 12648

SITE CODE: JMH 16

OCTOBER 2016







PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

FORMER JAMES MARSHALL HOUSE, LEYTON ROAD, HARPENDEN, HERTFORDSHIRE

EVALUATION

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Archaeological Evaluation at Former James Marshall House, Leyton Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire

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ABSTRACT

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited conducted an eight trench evaluation at the former James Marshall House on Leyton Road, Harpenden, in order to provide further information on its archaeological potential. Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered on the site. The only feature recorded on this site was an undated tree-throw [106]. Trenches in the centre and west of the site (Trenches 1 to 6) have evidently been heavily truncated by the construction of James Marshall House.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) on land at former James Marshall House, Leyton Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire from the 19th to 26th September 2016 (Figure 1). The site is centred at National Grid Reference TL 13379 14010.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was carried out on behalf of Shaylor Group PLC in response to an archaeological planning condition attached to the construction of new later living accommodation consisting of 38 apartments with three blocks of three, four and six storied structures, with lower ground floor car parking space at lower floor level across most of the development footprint.
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and a Health and Safety Risk Assessment and Method Statement prepared by PCA (Brown 2016; Mayo 2016).
- 1.4 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.
- 1.5 A total of eight 7.5 m x 2.0 m trial trenches were excavated and recorded.
- 1.6 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. The site archive will be deposited at the St. Albans Museums.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

2.1.1 The underlying solid geology comprises Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation sedimentary bedrock overlain by Clay-withflints Formation (Diamicton) deposits. A recent geotechnical investigation demonstrated that the upper levels of the underlying geology are generally less than 1m below modern ground level.

2.2 Site Location & Topography

- 2.2.1 The site is centred at National Grid Reference TL 13379 14010. The site area is approximately 0.45 hectares and is set back from Leyton Road to the east and is accessed via a private road that runs past the Harpenden Town Council's offices. At the rear of the site is Rothamsted Park. James Marshall House comprised a 1970's local authority sheltered housing scheme.
- 2.2.2 Prior to the construction of James Marshall House the site had sloped broadly from east to west across the site. The construction of James Marshall House involved considerable truncation of the ground level towards the west of the site (c. 2 m). The original slope of the ground can be observed surviving at the edges of the site and in neighbouring properties.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1.1 The following archaeological and historical background is taken directly from the WSI (Brown 2016).

3.2 Prehistoric

3.2.1 There is little evidence for activity in the vicinity of the study site during the prehistoric periods with activity centred on the river Lea and land to the south of Wheathampstead.

3.3 Roman

3.3.1 There are no Roman finds from the immediate vicinity of the site except for three coin finds within 750 m. There are however, numerous Roman assets in the wider area of Harpenden and Wheathampstead with Roman material being recovered from Cross Farm to the south-west, a potential site of a villa at Hatching Green to the south, and the Scheduled Monument of Rothamsted Romano-British cemetery to the west. Furthermore, the foundations of uncertain date, within the ground of St Nicholas' church yard may be of Roman date, although this is only conjecture.

3.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

- 3.4.1 There are no known Saxon finds from the general vicinity of the site although Harpenden is thought to have its roots in the early Saxon period. An early Saxon burial place of Cyne at Kinsbourne Green, c. 3.1 km north-west of the site, and late Saxon watermills on the river Lea, approximately 1.7 km to the north-east attest to activity from this period.
- 3.4.2 The medieval centre of the town is likely focused to the north of the development area around the Chapel of St. Nicholas. The proposed development is however, considered to be within the southern end of the medieval core of Harpenden although there are no known remains of this date on the site.

3.5 Post-Medieval

3.5.1 Harpenden expanded during the post-medieval period, especially when the railway arrived in 1860. Furthermore, numerous Grade II listed buildings are dotted around the town including fine examples of timber-framed houses,

halls, and inns. Despite expansion in areas of the village to the north and west, a map regression exercise demonstrated that the study site remained in enclosed fields up until the 1970s when James Marshall House was constructed.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation and Sampling

- 4.1.1 The WSI proposed the excavation of eight trial trenches located by PCA to target areas of impact of the proposed new buildings and car parking levels.
- 4.1.2 Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 21-ton tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 2.0 m-wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.
- 4.1.3 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping. Spoilheaps were scanned by metal-detector.
- 4.1.4 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I) by Joanna Taylor and Gary Brown (2009).

4.2 Recording Methodology

- 4.2.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Leica 1200 GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.
- 4.2.2 Manual plans and section drawings of archaeological features and deposits were drawn at an appropriate scale (1:10, 1:20 or 1:50).
- 4.2.3 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2009). Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as 'cuts' and signified by square brackets [thus]. The record numbers assigned to cuts and deposits are

entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits recorded during the evaluation are listed in Appendix 2. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

- 4.2.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the evaluation process. Digital Photographs were taken of all archaeological features and deposits and black and white film photographs were taken when considered appropriate by the excavator and supervisor.
- 4.2.5 Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from the site (IfA 2001; Walker 1990; Watkinson 1981).

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated.
- 5.1.2 Trenches 1 to 6 were located within the footprint area of the former James Marshall House (now demolished). It is clear that the construction of James Marshall House involved variable truncation of the then existing sloping ground surface in order to level the natural slope of the ground.
- 5.1.3 The degree of truncation is most marked in the central portion of the site (Trenches 2, 4 and 3). The western block of James Marshall House (Trench 1) seems to have been built at a higher level. The degree of truncation to the east of the site is probably minimal.

5.2 Trench 1

5.2.1 In this trench two types of natural ground were recorded. A reddish clay with course flint inclusions (102) and areas of yellowish-brown silty clay (111). A small machine sondage (0.38 m deep) was excavated at the southern end of Trench 1 into natural ground (111). On the recommendation of Simon West, St Albans District Archaeologist, the silty-clay natural deposit (111) in this trench was sampled to determine whether or not it was a brickearth.

TRENCH 1	Figure 2			Plate 1		
Trench Alignment: N-S	Length: 7.5	7.5 m Max M		achine Depth (m OD): 108.71	
			Level of	Level of Natural (m OD): 109.11		
Deposit		Contex	t No.	Average Dep	oth (m)	
			N End	S End		
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground		103		0.50	0.50	
Natural (max machined dept	h)	102/111		0.50 (102)	0.88 (111)	
Summary						
No archaeological finds or features were recorded in Trench 1. Natural ground level						
(102)/(101) had been trunca	ted by constru	uction of .	James N	larshall House.		

5.3 Trench 2

5.3.1 Due to site specific circumstances the full length of Trench 2 could not be excavated in its proposed location (Brown 2016). The trench was repositioned slightly to the south (Fig.2).

NCH 2 Fig	ire 2		Plate 2		
rench Alignment: N-S Length: 9.5		m Max Machine Depth (m OD): 106		h (m OD): 106.71	
			Level of Natural (m OD): 107.74		
Deposit		t No.	Average Depth (m)		
			N End	S End	
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground			1.0	1.20	
Natural (max machined depth)			1.0	1.20	
al (max machined depth)	102		1.0		

Summary

No archaeological finds or features were recorded in Trench 2. Natural ground level (102) truncated by construction of James Marshall House. Ground has been disturbed by recent removal of modern footings.

5.4 Trench 3

5.4.1

TRENCH 3	Figure 2	Figure 2				
Trench Alignment: N-S	nch Alignment: N-S Length: 9 m		Max Machine Depth (m OD): 107.06		h (m OD): 107.06	
			Level	_evel of Natural (m OD): 107.22		
Deposit		Contex	t No.	Average Depth (m)		
				N End	S End	
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground		103		0.60	0.70	
Natural (max machined dep	102		0.60	0.70		
Summary						

No archaeological finds or features were recorded in Trench 3. Natural ground level (102) truncated by construction of James Marshall House. Ground disturbed by recent removal of modern footings.

5.5 Trench 4

5.5.1 Trench 4 contained two types of natural. In addition to the reddish clay containing coarse flint inclusions (102) there was a yellowish-brown silty-clay

natural deposit (110). (110) was sampled to determine if it was a brickearth.

TRENCH 4	Figure 2			Plate 4		
Trench Alignment: E-W	ench Alignment: E-W Length: 9.5		Max M	lachine Dept	h (m OD):106.71	
		Level			OD):106.71	
Deposit	Contex	Context No. Average Depth (m)		epth (m)		
				E End	W End	
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground		103		0.40	0.50	
Natural (max machined dep	th)	102		0.50	0.80	
Summary						
No archaeological finds or	features we	re record	ded in	Trench 4. N	latural ground level	

(102)/(110) truncated by construction of James Marshall House. Ground has been disturbed by recent removal of modern footings.

5.6 Trench 5

TRENCH 5	Figure 2			Plate 5		
Trench Alignment: E-W	Length: 10	m	Max Machine D		Depth (m OD):106.43	
			Level	evel of Natural (m OD):106.43		
Deposit		Contex	t No.	Average Depth (m)		
			E End	W End		
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground		103		0.60	0.60	
Natural (max machined depth)		102		0.60	1.10	
Summary						
No archaeological finds or	features were	recorded	in Tren	ich 5. Ground	disturbed by recent	
removal of modern footings	removal of modern footings.					

5.7 Trench 6

TRENCH 6	Figure 2			Plate 6
Trench Alignment: N-S	Length: 8 m		Max Machine Depth (m OD):106.47	
			Level	of Natural (m OD):106.42
Deposit		Contex	t No.	Average Depth (m)

		N End	S End		
Natural (max machined depth)	102	1.20	0.80		
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground 103		1.20	0.80		
Summary					
No archaeological finds or features w	ere recorded in	Trench 6. Ground	disturbed by recent		

5.8 Trench 7

removal of modern footings.

TRENCH 7	Figure 2		Plate 7		
Trench Alignment: E-W	Length: 8 m		Max Machine Depth (m OD):c.106.50		(m OD):c.106.50
			Level o	of Natural (m	OD):c.106.50
Deposit		Contex	ntext No. Average Depth (m)		epth (m)
				SE End	NW End
Modern Intrusion/Made Ground		103		0.50	0.60
Natural (max machined depth)		102		0.50	0.60
Summary					
No archaeological finds or features recorded in trench 7. Level of natural ground not					

No archaeological finds or features recorded in trench 7. Level of natural ground r significantly truncated.

5.9 Trench 8

- 5.9.1 This trench was extended from 7.5 m to 9 m in order to excavate feature [106].
- 5.9.2 Tree throw [106] measured 1.95 m wide and was 0.77 m deep with steep sides and a convex base. It had four fills (105), (107), (108) and (109), all of which were of a clayey-silt composition. No archaeological finds were found in any of the fills. On the recommendation of Simon West, District Archaeologist, St Albans, the fills of this feature were sampled.

TRENCH 8	Figures 2 & 3		Plates 8 , 13	
Trench Alignment: N-S	Length: 9 m Max M		achine Depth (m OD):c.106.90	
		Level o	of Natural (m OD):c.106.90	

Deposit	Context No.	Average Depth (m)		
		S End	N End	
Modern Material/Made Ground	103	0.67	0.68	
Natural (max machined depth)	102	0.67	0.68	
Summary				
A tree throw [106] was located at the southern end of trench 8. No finds were recovered from this feature.				

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered on the site. The only feature recorded on this site was an undated tree-throw [106]. Trenches in the centre and west of the site appear to have been heavily truncated by the construction of James Marshall House. Recent demolition of James Marshall House has had significant localised impact in all trenches except Trenches 1, 7 and 8. The absence of archaeological features in Trenches 1, 7 and 8 can be taken to indicate a low intensity of settlement activity on the site for all periods. Other archaeological evaluations at nearby sites in Harpenden have revealed a similar lack of archaeological features (Woodley, 2013; Chinnock, 2014).

6.2 Conclusions

- 6.2.1 Eight archaeological trial trenches were excavated. Only one feature [106], an undated tree-throw was encountered during this evaluation. Trenches 1-6 were located within the footprint of the former James Marshall House. Any archaeological features (unless they were very deep) that had existed within the area covered by the majority of the site would have been destroyed by the construction of James Marshall House.
- 6.2.2 The presence of a surviving tree-throw in Trench 8 and the relative height of the natural ground in Trenches 1, 7 and 8 indicate that the best potential for surviving archaeology on the site is towards its western edge and eastern boundary (outside the footprint of recently demolished James Marshall House). The centre of the site is heavily truncated (at Trench 2 by up to 2.0 m below original ground level).
- 6.2.3 The column samples were examined to see if it could be determined whether the soil was brickearth, but this identification could not be determined (see Appendix 4).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.3 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Shaylor Group PLC, especially John Williams, for commissioning this work, and Tony Wikerson for his help on site. Thanks to Simon West, St Albans District Archaeologist, for monitoring this work, and to Ray Murphy for the CAD figures. Thanks also to Sîan O'Neill for organising the soil samples and to Kate Turner for examining them.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

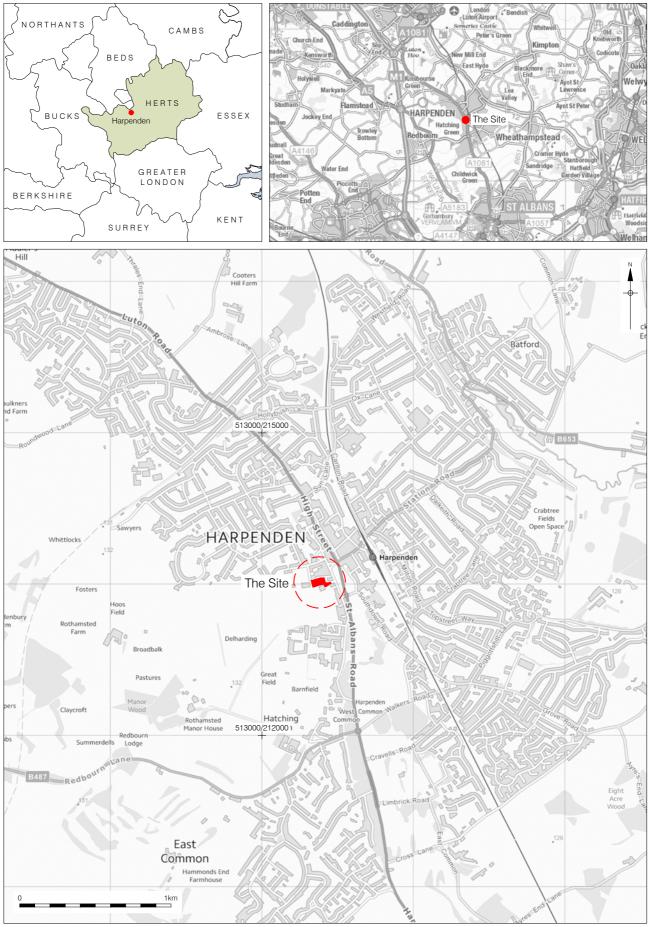
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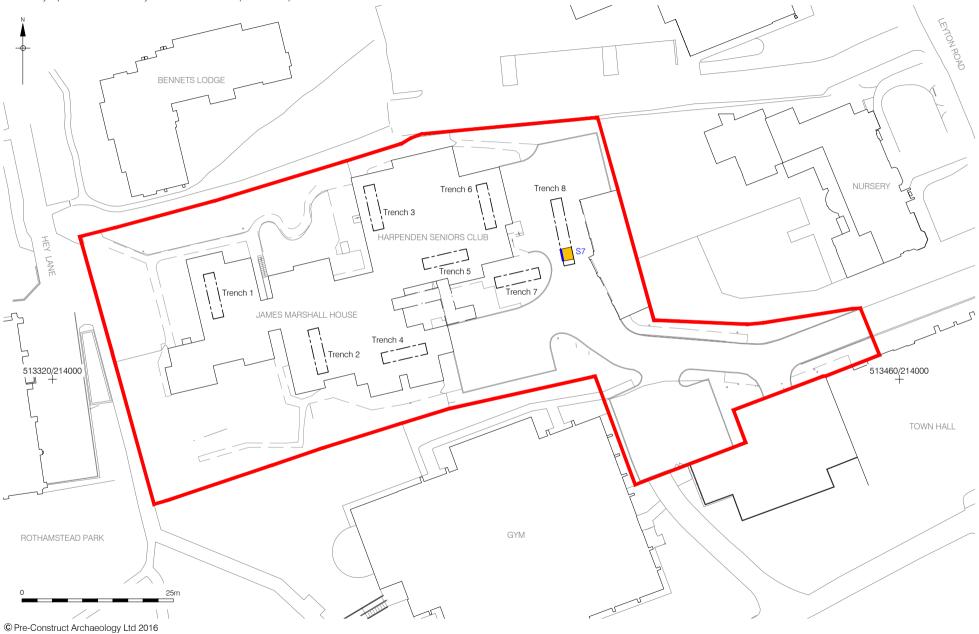
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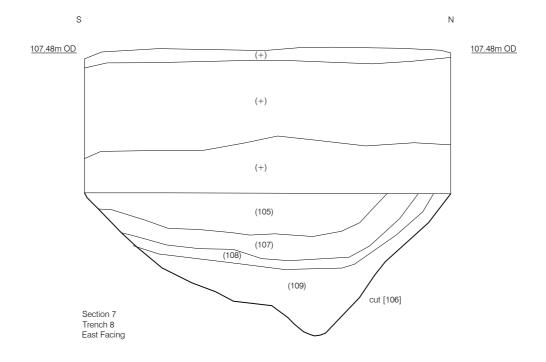
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Figure 2 Trench Location Plan 1:625 at A4



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Figure 3 Section 1:10 at A4

8 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1 view south.



Plate 2: Trench 2 view north.



Plate 3: Trench 3 view south.



Plate 4: Trench 4 view west.



Plate 5: Trench 5 view east



Plate 6: Trench 6 view south.



Plate 7: Trench 7 view east



Plate 8: Trench 8 view south



Plate 9: View west along northern edge of the site showing increase in ground level east to west.



Plate 10: View east towards site entrance.



Plate 11: Tarmac area surviving at eastern end of site.



Plate 12: View east along northern edge of site showing decrease in original ground level from west to east.



Plate 13: Trench 8. Section of tree throw [106] view west.

9 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

					Trench
Context	Cut	Туре	Category	Comment	Number
100	-	Layer	Topsoil	Modern/imported	3
101	-	Layer	Subsoil	Absent	-
102	-	Layer	Natural	Clay with Flints	All
				All Modern Made	
				Ground/Modern	
103	-		Modern	Demolition Disturbance	All
105	106	Fill	Tree throw	Upper fill of [106]	8
106	106	Cut	Tree throw	Cut of tree throw	8
107	106	Fill	Tree throw	Second fill of [106]	8
108	106	Fill	Tree throw	Third fill of [106]	8
109	106	Fill	Tree throw	Primary fill of [106]	8
110	-	Layer	Natural	Silty Clay Natural	4
111	-	Layer	Natural	Silty Clay Natural	1

10 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-264401

Project details

- Project name Archaeological Evaluation at Former James Marshall House Leyton Road Harpenden Hertfordshire
- Short description of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd conducted an the project evaluation at the former James Marshall House on Leyton Road, Harpenden, in order to provide further information on its archaeological potential. Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered on the site. The only feature recorded on this site was an undated tree-throw [106]. Trenches in the centre and west of the site (Trenches 1 to 6) have evidently been heavily truncated by the construction of James Marshall House.
- Project dates Start: 19-09-2016 End: 26-09-2016
- Previous/future Not known / Not known

work

Any associated JMH16 – Sitecode

project reference

codes

Type of project Field evaluation

Current Land use	Residential 2 - Institutional and communal accommodation
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England			
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE ST ALBANS HARPENDEN Former James Marshall House			
Study area	0 Kilometres			
Site coordinates	TL 13379 14010 51.812752452647 - 0.355103291873 51 48 45 N 000 21 18 W Point			
Height OD / Depth	Min: 106.46m Max: 109.1m			

Project creators

Name of PCA

Organisation

Project	brief	St Albans District Council
originator		
Project	design	Gary Brown
originator		
Project		Peter Moore
director/man	ager	
Project supe	rvisor	Alexander Pullen
Туре	of	Developer
sponsor/fund	ding	
body		

Project archives

Physical Exists?	Archive	No			
Digital recipient	Archive	Local Museum			
Digital Conte	ents	"Survey"			
Digital available	Media	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey"			
Paper recipient	Archive	Local Museum			
Paper Conte	ents	"Survey","other"			
Paper available	Media	"Context sheet","Plan","Section","Survey "			

Project

bibliography 1

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Date	2016			
Issuer or publisher	PCA			
Place of issue or publication	Brockley			
Description	A4 evaluation r	eport. 32 pag	es	
Entered by	Alexander Pullen (agp27@hotmail.com)			
Entered on	3 October 2016			

10.1.1

11 APPENDIX 4: EXAMINATION OF COLUMN SAMPLES – KATE TURNER

Three column samples were taken from a layer of natural deposits in Trenches 4 and 8, in order to determine whether brickearth was present, and thus the potential for the preservation of sealed Palaeolithic remains. A visual assessment of samples <3>, <4> and <5> revealed a well sorted homogenous orange-brown clayey silt, with occasional larger gravel inclusions and no observable sedimentary structures. Whilst the composition of the soil matrix is similar to that observed in loess derived brick-earth deposits identified throughout southern Britain, the presence of these larger gravel clasts could be evidence of post-depositional reworking, via colluvial or fluvial processes. As a result a definitive conclusion could not be reached as to the nature of sediment transportation that produced this deposit.

PCA

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