

Archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation at Catmose College Campus Oakham, Rutland February 2016

Report No. 16/28

Author: Christopher Jones

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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	James West BSc MA
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	molarnort1-242778		
Project name	Archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation at Catmose		
Short description (250 words maximum)	College Campus Oakham, Rutland MOLA Northampton was commissioned by BAM Construction on behalf of Rutland County Council to carry out an archaeological Strip, plan and sample excavation on land at Catmose College Campus Oakham, Rutland, prior to the proposed development of the site. The whole area appears to have been levelled to the natural ground and then backfilled with modern debris from the building of the now standing college. No archaeological features or remains were seen.		
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Strip, plan and sample excavation		
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical survey (Smith and Fisher 2008), Trial trench evaluation (Brown 2008), Iron Age and Roman settlement (Brown 2009)		
Current Land use	School sports field		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Rutland		
Site address (including postcode)	Vale of Catmose College, Cold Overton Road, Oakham, LE15 6NT		
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
OS Easting and Northing	SK 85264 09223		
	c118-119m above Ordnance Datum		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation Droject brief originators	MOLA Northampton Richard Clark, Laisasterahira County Council		
Project Design originator	Richard Clark, Leicestershire County Council		
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones MOLA Northampton		
Project Manager	lim Brown, MOLA Northampton		
Sponsor or funding body	Rutland County Council		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	08. 02. 2016		
End date	11 02 2016		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone	
	(Accession no.)	etc)	
Physical			
Paper	OAKRM:2016.1	Site context record, plans, photographic record	
Digital		PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation at Catmose College Campus, Oakham, Rutland		
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Archaeological and strip, plan and sample excavation at Catmose College Campus Oakham, Rutland February 2016

Abstract

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by BAM Construction on behalf of Rutland County Council to carry out an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation on land at Catmose College Campus Oakham, Rutland, prior to the proposed development of the site. The whole area appears to have been levelled to the natural ground and then backfilled with modern debris from the building of the now standing college. No archaeological features or remains were seen.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton were commissioned by BAM Construction to undertake a strip, plan and sample excavation on land at Catmose College, Oakham, in advance of proposed development on the site (NGR: SK 85264 09223; Fig 1). The proposed development comprises the construction of a new two-storey Sixth Form school building with associated infrastructure and landscaping, including the provision of car parking to replace temporary accommodation (2015/0899/MAJ).

The Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council (LCC), as archaeological advisers to Rutland County Council, have advised that a programme of strip, plan and sample excavation should be undertaken in advance of any proposed development as a condition on any planning permission. Work proceeded following a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by MOLA Northampton and approved by Historic and Natural Environment Team of Leicestershire County Council (Finn 2015). This work comprised a soil strip under archaeological control and supervision of the development footprint, planning of the exposed surface, and sample excavation of features identified, in accordance with a LCC Brief (LCC 2011). This work was undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A key aim of the work was to investigate the archaeological potential, as at present there is insufficient information to establish possible impact of development or for the formation of an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The specific aims are focused towards achieving the requirements of the planning brief (LCC 2011):

• To determine and understand the nature, function, and character of any archaeological features present in the context of the 2008-9 excavations;





Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

- To retrieve sufficient pottery, by means of sample excavation, to confirm the date of the boundary ditches extending across the area with those identified in the 2008-9 excavations;
- To confirm and investigate the presence/absence of other significant archaeological features that had not been previously identified.

The excavation was carried out within the parameters suggested by the *East Midlands Heritage* Research Strategy and Agenda (updated) (Knight *et al* 2012), and will conform to national research criteria (English Heritage 1997).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development site comprises two areas on the Vale of Catmose College campus, on the north-west side of Oakham. Area B lies to the south of the current school buildings and is currently occupied by car park. This area has been extensively excavated during works in 2008-9, and will not be the subject of further archaeological works. Area A is situated to the east of the current school buildings, and forms a rectangular island between the eastern car park and the college (Fig 2). The ground has a raised bank that slopes down toward the college from east to west, c118-119m above Ordnance Datum.

The site lies on the border between two geological bedrocks, with Lower Jurassic limestone of the Marlstone Rock Formation to the north and mudstone of the Whitby Mudstone Formation to the south (BGS 2015). Substantial variation in the natural substrate was observed during the 2008-9 excavations and watching brief (Brown 2009). The east of the site was predominantly clay or sandy clay, to the north there were outcrops of limestone and to the west areas of mixed clay and mudstone. The soil on the site comprises well-drained, brashy fine and coarse loamy ferruginous soils of the Banbury association (LAT 1983).

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

The Iron Age boundary that divided the site was retained until the mid-2nd century AD, when a new field boundary arrangement was created, respecting the earlier alignment. In the 3rd and 4th centuries a small Roman settlement comprised a rectangular sub-enclosure, layers of domestic debris and two wells on the west side of this boundary. These were probably related to a timber house for which all direct traces had been lost, although wooden shingles were recovered amongst the ditches. Ditch boundaries belonging to the surrounding 3rd- to 4th-century field systems are expected to pass through Area A (Brown 2008; 2009).

A detailed geophysical survey by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA Northampton) was undertaken across the Catmose College sports fields prior to development of the current Catmose College campus buildings in 2009 (Smith and Fisher 2008; Fig 2). Magnetic anomalies were identified in the three fields of the site, and included four circular features interpreted as roundhouses, and clusters of probable features thought to be trackways and associated enclosures. Two of the fields had remnant ridge and furrow surviving below ground.



Subsequent to this, a programme of trial trench evaluation investigated and confirmed the presence of archaeological features, with their main concentration immediately to the west of the current development, Area A, characterising their depth, extent, likely date, state of preservation and recovering finds for assessment (Brown 2008). The overall conclusion was that three main groups of features survived, broadly correlating with the geophysical survey in which additional features not identified by the survey were likely to be found. A sparse scatter of smaller features was also present in the wider area, likely to be associated with dispersed settlement activity and field systems.

A full programme of mitigation by open area excavation was subsequently undertaken across the Catmose College campus in areas of development impact where archaeology was present (Brown 2009; Fig 2). Area B in the current application area was excavated during these works. Area A was not under threat of development at this time.

The excavation showed there were two settlements from the middle Iron Age (Brown 2009). Initially the site contained a small open settlement, probably comprising four roundhouses, although these were not necessarily contemporary. These were located immediately adjacent to Area A, but are not thought likely to extend much further. It is suggested that occupation spanned the 2nd to 1st centuries BC. In the early 1st century AD, a boundary division was introduced and it is likely that further settlement was established to the west. At least one roundhouse was present into the early Roman period.

There was extensive evidence of medieval ridge and furrow throughout the site belonging to Barleythorpe parish, although the field in which Area A is located was pasture and lay in Oakham parish. A stretch of medieval road between Oakham and Barleythorpe was excavated and the post-medieval parish boundary wall was recorded, along with a 17th- to 18th-century brick well.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

All works were carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (2014b), and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (2014a). All works did conform to Historic England procedural document Management of Research projects in the Historic Environment (HE 2015). All site recording procedures are detailed in MOLA's in-house Archaeological Fieldwork Manual (MOLA 2014), which is issued to all staff.

Modern overburden in Area A was removed to the level of the former topsoil ground surface in 2008 before archaeological works began. All subsequent mechanical excavation in Area A used a toothless ditching bucket under continuous supervision of a qualified and suitably experienced archaeologist. The stripping process entailed the removal of the topsoil and subsoil across the whole of Area A. This was followed by targeted investigation and recording of any archaeological features.

Archaeological features were hand excavated sufficiently to characterise the remains and determine their date and function to inform upon the previous site work. Excavated sections were targeted to confirm stratigraphic relationships where these were not visible in plan, and to obtain a representative sample of larger features.

A photographic record was maintained with high resolution digital photography, supplemented with monochrome film. Overall images of the site were taken prior to,

during and after excavation, together with detailed images of individual features and feature groups, as appropriate. The field data was be compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 The general stratigraphy

The modern overburden on Area A was removed and the whole area levelled to a topsoil level. The remaining soils were removed down to the natural ground level. The overburden contained discarded building material from the building of the college. The natural substrate was mixed clay and limestone.



Area A excavated, looking north-east Fig 3

5.2 The excavated evidence

The modern building material found in the overburden was also found in the soils down to and imbedded in the natural, which included fragments of concrete slabs, plastic, stone, wood and hessian. The levelling and dumping of modern building material would have destroyed any archaeological remains that may have been present on the area. No archaeological features were seen.



Modern stone buried in natural Fig 4



Modern hessian buried in natural Fig 5



Modern stone buried in natural

Fig 6

6 DISCUSSION

Area A was so heavily disturbed by the works done in the building and landscaping of Catmose College that no archaeology had survived. As no archaeological finds were recovered from the site it would appear the area is on the peripheral of any occupation with features likely to be associated with dispersed settlement activity and field systems. It is possible that ditches forming field enclosures could have ran across the site but the only evidence is from the geophysical survey and earlier excavations to the south-west. The potential for archaeological features beyond the excavated area is still possible.

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