

**CASTOR PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
STOCK'S HILL,  
CASTOR,  
PETERBOROUGH**

**NGR REF: TL 12486 98435**



***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF***

**JULY 2016**

**PREPARED BY CHRISTER CARLSSON**

**CONTENTS**

**Summary**

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Project Background**
- 3 The Archaeological Background**
- 4 Aims**
- 5 Methodology**
- 6 Results**
- 7 Finds**
- 8 Discussion**
- 9 Archive**
- 10 References**

**Appendices:**

**Context Descriptions**

**Finds List**

**Plan 1, Area A**

## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants 4-5 July 2016 for the construction of a new 5 bay mobile providing two classrooms, storage and toilet facilities at Castor Primary School, Stock's Hill, Castor, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Roman and Medieval pottery sherds were found in the deposits, indicating human activity from these periods within the area.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The site was located at Castor Primary School, Castor, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 12486 98435) (Figure 1-2). The development comprised the replacement of the existing mobile to the north-east corner of the playing fields with a 5 bay mobile providing two classrooms, storage and toilet facilities.
- 1.2 The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2015), as well as discussions with the Peterborough City Council's Historic Environment Team. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).
- 1.3 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the Code of Conduct issued by the CIfA. All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project.

## **2 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been granted (16/00195/R3FUL) for a new development at Castor Primary School, Stocks Hill, Castor, Peterborough. The development site was located about 5km northwest of central Peterborough, in the village of Castor. It enclosed an area of some 625m<sup>2</sup> at an average height of 9m AOD. Castor is located between the clay capped limestone uplands and the terrace river gravels of the valley (British Geological Survey).
- 2.2 The site was located within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Peterborough HER. Therefore, an archaeological watching brief was required prior to any construction on the site. This condition was mentioned in the Planning Permission granted by Peterborough City Council, and was in line with standards described in NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

## Castor Primary School, Castor, Peterborough: Archaeological Watching Brief

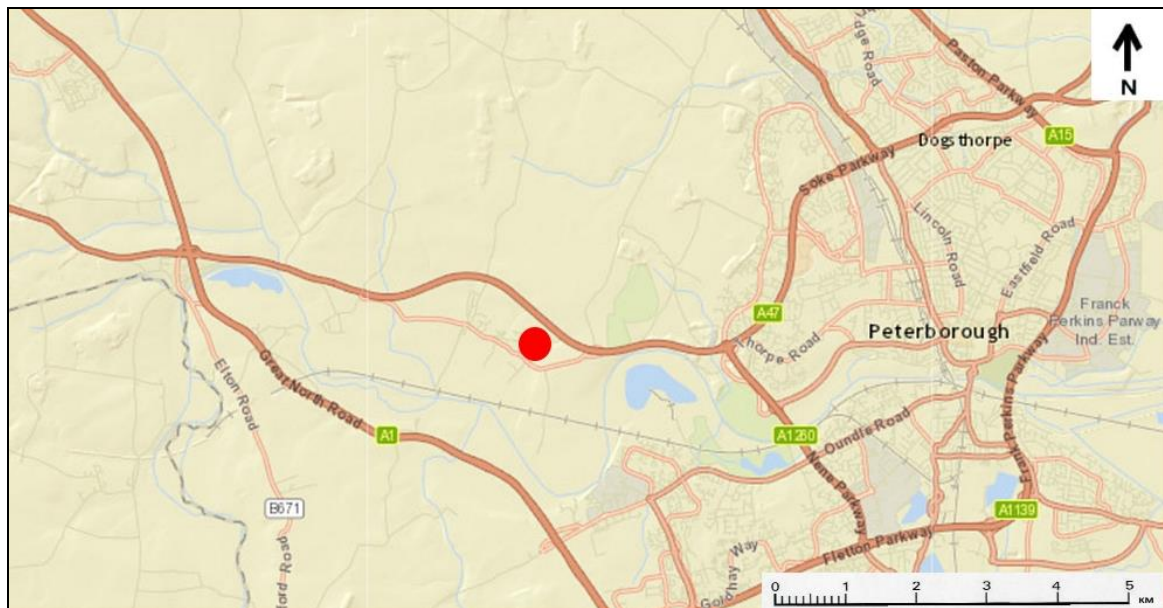


Figure 1. Site Location in England.



Figure 2. Site Outline.

### **3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The proposed development site was located within the boundaries of Scheduled Monument PE 93, which includes a complex of high status Roman buildings in the centre of Castor.
- 3.2 The village of Castor has been the subject of a number of archaeological investigations since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. E.T. Artis was the first to excavate elements of this complex during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A series of illustrations published in his *Durobrivae of Antoninus* (1828) depicts the on-going excavation of substantial masonry buildings in the vicinity of Castor church. A plan of the building ranges that he revealed in this area (*ibid*, plate xiii, plan 1) suggested a very large building based on an open courtyard, with east and west wings that projected down slope to the south-west. He mapped a range of Roman rooms (possibly an extension of the palace's west wing). A very fine, near complete, mosaic was found in the middle of the central room. This was transferred to Milton Hall (Artis 1828).
- 3.3 Subsequent investigations have corroborated Artis's results, and have confirmed that a large part of the complex may constitute a single great later Roman 'palatial' building (or *praetorium*, as Artis called it), possibly the seat for an (as yet) unidentified Roman dignitary (Mackreth 1984; Upex 2008). The monumental aspect of the complex is apparent in the scale of the building foundations, their prominent location, and evidence for the methodical terracing of the hillside on which they sit.
- 3.4 Further to the south there is evidence for a series of dispersed Roman buildings, which appear to pre-date the main palatial structure. During his excavations Artis revealed a bathhouse in the south-west corner of the school playing field. He recorded more Roman building ranges close to No. 26 Peterborough Road, within the grounds of the Royal Oak Pub and south of Peterborough Road.
- 3.5 Excavations carried out in the grounds of 'Elmlea' (north of Church Hill) during the 1970s and 1980s confirmed the location of the main range of Artis's palatial Roman building (Upex 2008; *Id.* 2009). Artis's mapping, though perhaps questionable in certain areas, was also found to be quite accurate during the excavation of a service trench across the churchyard. A substantial Roman end wall and cement sub-floor was found to be almost exactly where Artis mapped an end wall of a room within palace's west wing.
- 3.6 Though Artis's work in Castor was evidently extensive, subsequent excavations have demonstrated that there are other substantial Roman building remains that he did not note. Excavation during the 1950s in advance of an extension of the churchyard immediately north of the school field revealed hitherto unrecorded substantial well-preserved Roman building foundations (Green et al 1988).

- 3.7 A small excavation in advance of construction of an office at the school exposed more Roman building remains and a Roman period inhumation (Meadows 1991). Archaeological deposits (at a depth of some 0.50m) were well sealed by modern construction layers and topsoil. Trial pit excavation in advance of the construction of access ramps and play equipment revealed a similar depth of overburden at the east side of the school field area (Wall 1997).
- 3.8 An evaluation across the school grounds (Hatton & Spoerry 2000) revealed substantial *in situ* Roman building remains immediately below turf level in the north-east quadrant of the playing field. Adjacent to the (south side) of the main school block building remains were sealed beneath modern tarmac and make-up levels and a buried garden soil at over 0.30m below current ground level.
- 3.9 Some light has also been shed on the post-Roman history of the complex. Evaluation during 1998 in advance of the construction of the church Benefice Centre produced late Roman building remains, together with evidence of early Saxon occupation and the robbing of Roman masonry during the Middle Saxon period (Lucas 1998). The remains of a late Saxon or post-Conquest timber building and a later grave were also revealed. These elements of the complex archaeological stratigraphic sequence were sealed by a garden soil up to 0.80m thick.
- 3.10 Evidence of Middle Saxon settlement was revealed within and outside the area of the Roman building excavated in the churchyard extension (Green et al 1988, 109-148).
- 3.11 Several of the other excavations have produced Early and Middle Saxon settlement evidence, some of which is consistent with high status occupation (Dallas 1973). Castor is historically associated with the nunnery that is said to have been founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by St Kyneburgha.
- 3.12 St Kyneburgha's is a very fine 12<sup>th</sup> century church. A dedication inscription above the south door of the chancel records its consecration in 1124. Fragments of decorated stone and cross indicate a pre-conquest ecclesiastical presence on the site. Castor parish included the hamlets of Ailsworth, Milton, Upton, and Sutton. The central role of St Kyneburgha's, its antiquity and architectural splendour, further suggest the early significance of this site.
- 3.13 A trial trench and test pit evaluation undertaken on part of the Castor Barns site by Archaeological Project Services during March 2006 (Mellor 2006) hinted at the presence of Roman buildings within the site boundaries.
- 3.14 This was confirmed by a watching brief and small excavation carried out in 2007 and 2008 (Cope-Faulkner 2009). Excavation following topsoil removal in part of the yard area revealed Roman structural remains and features,

including the remains of a hypocaust heated building. This was recorded and then preserved beneath the new yard surface.

- 3.15 The evaluation and subsequent recording also revealed that medieval stone post pads, pits and post holes also survive at the site, and that early post-medieval moulded masonry pieces had been used in the foundations of a barn (Mellor 2006; Cope-Faulkner 2009). Buried post-medieval cobble surfaces were noted within the barns and in the open yard. In some instances these probably pre-date the existing buildings.
- 3.16 Recent investigations at Castor Barns have revealed remains of walls possibly associated with a further Roman building. These have been recorded and preserved *in situ*. Finds included ceramic building material and occasional sherds of pottery. Later, post medieval activity was represented by a cobbled surface and a yard associated with the barns.
- 3.17 In summary, the application site was within an area of very high archaeological potential at a location where sequences of important archaeological remains spanning the Roman period to the Late Medieval period are known to survive in a good state of preservation.

## 4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- Provide a record of archaeological remains whose preservation *in situ* is threatened by the proposed work. If applicable, remains that can be preserved *in situ* will be recorded and prepared for re-burial. Therefore, steps will be taken to ensure construction and future maintenance do not threaten preserved remains
  - Provide detailed information regarding the date, character, extent and degree of preservation of all excavated archaeological remains
  - Define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains
  - Interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional, and national, archaeological context

The watching brief also considered the general investigative themes outlined by: Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24; *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties*

(Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000), *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2010 - 2015* (Historic England 2015).

Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:

- Characterisation of the site in the broader landscape
- Characterisation of the activities identified on the site
- Characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Monitoring of Groundworks**

The archaeological investigation consisted of the continuous observation of removal of overburden in the development area, followed by the investigation and recording of all archaeological features that were uncovered.

All groundworks were made under constant archaeological supervision using a flat bladed ditching bucket. When archaeological features were encountered they were investigated and recorded according to the parameters described below.

The program of fieldwork took into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance.

The development area was excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these were not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation was required to sample any features exposed.

The monitoring was not carried out at the expenses of the heritage assets and was minimally intrusive to archaeological remains.

### **5.2 Metal Detecting**

Thorough metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process.

### **5.3 Hand Excavation**

All man-made features were investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws) were sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. The monitoring provided a



representative sample of the site's archaeology at no significant cost to the value or integrity of archaeological remains therein.

The developer was informed that provision must be made for delays caused by the need for archaeological recording, or if contingency allowance must be made for more detailed recording of exceptional finds.

#### **5.4 Recording**

A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.

Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features, etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied in to trench plans/trench location plans, that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably mapped local features (boundaries, buildings, roads, etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum.

A photographic record comprising monochrome and digital photos formed part of the excavation record. A selection of digital photographs was also used in this report.

## **6 RESULTS**

### **Area A**

- 6.1 In Area A the lowest deposit encountered in all test pits was a layer consisting of dark brown, loose garden soil with occasional small stones and roots. This layer also contained pieces of Roman, Medieval and Modern pottery, indicating that the layer had been mixed with Modern deposits at some time.
- 6.2 The garden soil contained 1 sherd of Ipswich Ware from ca AD 720-850, 1 sherd of Modern Wares from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two sherds of Nene Valley Colour-coated Ware from the 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> century, 1 sherd of Shelly Coarseware from ca AD 1100-1400 and 1 sherd of Stamford Ware from ca AD 900-1200. The garden soil was covered by up to 0.2m thick topsoil of dark brown, loose, silty clay.
- 6.3 No archaeological features were found in any of the test pits, but earlier archaeological investigations in the area have clearly indicated that Area A contains a good potential for well preserved archaeology. Such features could therefore, in theory, still be preserved deeper down in the ground.
- 6.4 The new mobile cabin and its shallow foundation is, however, not going have any impact on potentially deeper archaeology, as the weight of the construction will be spread out on 24 different concrete plinths. The risk for

potential compression of deeper deposits is therefore very small indeed (Figure 3).

### **Area B**

- 6.5 In Area B one 0,25m deep trench was opened up for the construction of a new shed. The trench was dug in made ground, and contained no archaeological features or artefacts (Figure 4).



*Figure 3. Testpit 3 in Area A was representative for most test pits within the site. Beneath an up to 0.2m thick layer of topsoil an older layer of garden soil with Roman, Medieval and Modern pottery was reached. South west facing photo.*





Figure 4. Area B after stripping of the topsoil. No archaeological features or artefacts were uncovered.

## 7 FINDS

### The Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

7.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 6 sherds with a total weight of 55g. It comprised a mixture of Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and modern wares. The Romano-British pottery was recorded utilising the conventions of the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998).

7.2 The following fabric types were noted:

**IPS: Ipswich Ware**, AD720-850 (Blinkhorn 2012). 1 sherd, 5g

**MOD: Modern Wares**, 19<sup>th</sup> century+. 1 sherd, 7g

**NVCC: Nene Valley Colour-coated Ware**, 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> century. 2 sherds, 26g

**SHC: Shelly Coarseware**, AD1100-1400 (McCarthy 1979). 1 sherd, 7g

**STAM: Stamford Ware**, AD900-1200 (Kilmurry 1980). 1 sherd, 10g

7.3 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region, and parallels

earlier finds from excavations in the vicinity of the school, particularly site III, which was adjacent (Green *et al* 1987, fig. 2 and 118-128). The Stamford Ware rim is from a small jar which is a typical early product of the industry (Kilmurry 1980), and is almost certainly late Anglo-Saxon rather than Saxo-Norman.

- 7.4 All the sherds are in fairly good condition and, obvious residual material aside, appear reliably stratified.

*Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type*

	NVCC		IPS		STAM		SHC		MOD		
Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
Pit 8									1	7	MOD
Pit 9							1	7			12thC
Pit 13	1	10									2ndC
Pit 16	1	16			1	10					10thC
Pit 20			1	5							E8thC
Total	2	26	1	5	1	10	1	7	1	7	

## 8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 The archaeological watching brief at Castor Primary School, Stock's Hill, Castor, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire revealed Roman and Medieval pottery in the lower deposits. The pottery was in a good condition, indicating that it has not been disturbed by for example modern farming activities. The fact that Modern pottery was found in the same context indicates, however, that this level had been disturbed at some time.
- 8.2 Even though no archaeological features were found in the ground the area has a high potential for well preserved archaeological remains. This is particularly true for the school playfields, some 20m west of the investigation area that was described in this report.

## 9 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

### Paper Record

The project brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

The photographic and drawn records

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants.

The project report

The primary site records

Finds

The archive will be transferred to:

Peterborough Museum, Priestgate, Peterborough, PE1 1LF, Cambridgeshire

**10 REFERENCES**

Blinkhorn, P, 2012. *The Ipswich ware project: Ceramics, trade and society in Middle Saxon England* Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper 7

British Geological Survey. (Online resource).

Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J. 2000. *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the eastern Counties, 2. Research agenda and strategy*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8.

English Heritage, 1997. *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda*.

Glazebrook, J. 1997. *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource Assessment*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 3.

Green, C, Green, I and Dallas, C with Wild, JP 1987 'Excavations at Castor, Cambridgeshire in 1957-8 and 1973' *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 21

IfA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

Kilmurry, K, 1980. *The Pottery Industry of Stamford, Lincs. c. AD850-1250* British Archaeol Rep British Ser 84

McCarthy, M, 1979. The Pottery in JH Williams *St Peter's St, Northampton. Excavations 1973-76* Northampton Development Corporation Monog Ser 2, 151-242

Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.). *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24.

*NPPF 2012*. (National Planning Policy Framework). Department for Communities and Local Government. London 2012.

*Peterborough Historic Environment Record (HER)*.

Tomber, R, and Dore, J, 1998. *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook* Museum of London/English Heritage/British Museum.

Wass, G. 2003. *Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery Standards for Archaeological Archive Preparation*.

## APPENDICES

### CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
Topsoil	0.20	Dark brown, loose silty clay with grass.	The older garden soil	-
Older garden soil	?	Dark brown, loose silty clay with occasional small stones and roots.	?	Topsoil

### FINDS LIST

Find nr	Context	Material	Object	Description	Period
1	Old garden soil	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Ipswich Ware	AD 720-850
2	Old garden soil	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Modern Wares	19 <sup>th</sup> century
3	Old garden soil	Fired clay	2 sherds of pottery	Nene Valley Colour-coated Ware	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> century
4	Old garden soil	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Shelly Coarseware	AD 1100-1400
5	Old garden soil	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Stamford Ware	AD 900-1200

