

Liberty Primary School, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton: An Archaeological Evaluation Report

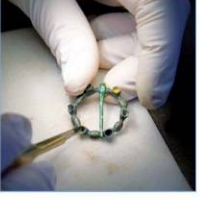
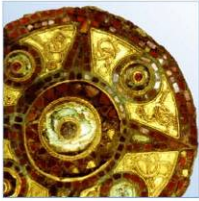
Planning Application Number: 11/P2776

National Grid Reference Number: TQ 2744 6951

AOC Project No: 32076

Site Code: LPS 12

July 2012



AOC
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Group

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CONSERVATION

Liberty Primary School, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton

An Archaeological Evaluation Report

On Behalf of: **ATKINS**
Woodcote Grove
Ashley Road
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BW

National Grid Reference (NGR): **TQ 2744 6951**

AOC Project No: **32076**

Prepared by: **Ian Hogg**

Illustration by: **Jonathan Moller**

Date of Fieldwork: **18th January and 23rd July 2012**

Date of Report: **July 2012**

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Draft Report Stage: Date: July 2012

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Non-Technical Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group, on Atkins, on the 18th January and 23rd July 2012 at the site of Liberty Primary School, Western Road, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. The evaluation consisted of two machine excavated trenches, each measuring 5m by 1.8m.

Natural Wandle gravels were observed between 16.28m and 15.72mOD. The natural deposit was overlain by an undisturbed sequence of subsoil and topsoil; in Trench 1 this was sealed by an asphalt playground surface. No archaeological features were observed in either trench.

A photographic record was also made of the exterior of the school blocks, with particular emphasis on the original structure.

The results of the evaluation will be summarised for inclusion in the London Archaeology Round-up and published via the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) website.

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Location

- 1.1.1 This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation, consisting of two evaluation trenches excavated at the site of Liberty Primary School, Western Road, London Borough of Merton (Figure 1). The centre point of the site is located at (NGR) TQ 2744 6695.
- 1.1.2 The site is located on the northeastern side of Western Road, Mitcham. The schools playing fields and grounds cover some 3.1 hectares. The western side is bounded by Western Road, to the north are the gardens of residential properties on Lavender Avenue, Lavender Grove is to the east, and Heyford Road lies to the south.
- 1.1.3 The school buildings occupy the southwest part of the site, with the rest largely comprising playing fields. The development comprised the extension of the original hall in Block 1, and a smaller extension to the southeast corner of Block 2 to provide new toilet facilities. Additionally, a fire escape will be relocated to the north elevation (Figure 2).

1.2 Planning Background

- 1.2.1 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Merton. Archaeological advice to the borough is provided by Diane Abrams of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), part of English Heritage.
- 1.2.2 There are no known designated or previously identified heritage assets within the development site; however, the part of the site falls within Mitcham Village Archaeological Priority Zone. This area is designated based on medieval finds from this area, which are thought to indicate the presence of settlement.
- 1.2.3 The site is not located within a Conservation Area, lying 650m north of Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area. The school is locally listed.
- 1.2.4 The development consists of the refurbishment of the current buildings and the construction of two extensions in the north and the south of the site (Figure 2).
- 1.2.5 A Heritage Desk-based Assessment was produced by Atkins as part of the planning application (Atkins 2011). The planning application (11/P2776) was granted with an archaeological condition attached in order that the archaeological implications of the development could be fully considered. The condition states:

‘No development shall take place until the applicant, their agent or successor in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The development of this site is likely to damage archaeological remains. The applicant should therefore submit detailed proposals in the form of an archaeological project design. This design should be in accordance with the appropriate English Heritage guidelines.’

- 1.2.6 Additionally, discussions with Diane Abrams of GLAAS refined these requirements, stipulating a two-trench evaluation in the area of extensions, with additional recording of the 1920s locally listed school through photography.

- 1.2.7 AOC Archaeology Group were commissioned by Atkins to carry out the field evaluation, which represents the first stage of archaeological fieldwork. The methodology was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (AOC 2012). This document detailed how the evaluation would be undertaken and was approved by Diane Abrams of GLAAS.

1.3 Geology and Topography

- 1.3.1 The British Geological Survey map sheet 270 (BGS 1981) shows the site to be located on London Clay, sealed by terrace gravels. The River Wandle lies c1km west of the site, and is located on roughly level ground at 16.2mOD.
- 1.3.2 No known geotechnical information is available for the site.

2. Historical and Archaeological Background

The information below has been extracted and summarised from the Heritage Desk-based Assessment (Atkins 2011). The Assessment examined evidence for archaeological remains within 750m of the site.

2.1 The Prehistoric Periods

(Palaeolithic c. 500,000 – 10000 BC; Mesolithic c. 10000 to 4000 BC; Neolithic c. 4000-2200 BC; Bronze Age c. 2200-700 BC and Iron Age c. 700 BC - AD 43)

- 2.2.1 During the early prehistoric period the wider area of Merton would have been densely forested, but closer to the Wandle, the alluvial soil and terrace gravels around Wimbledon Common and Mitcham were more easily worked, where Mesolithic flints have been recorded (Merton Council 2004).
- 2.1.2 Evidence of prehistoric activity has been recorded along the flood plain of the River Wandle. This evidence includes water channels revealed at the Deen Farm Grazing site to the west. To the south, at Miles Road, a Palaeolithic tool was discovered, and there have been two flints recorded from Mitcham Town Centre.
- 2.1.3 Direct evidence of settlement was recorded at the former Kings College Sports Ground 550m to the north of the school, where a Bronze Age 'Banjo Enclosure' was excavated in 1989, the archaeology characterised by ditches and a pit.
- 2.1.4 There is very little evidence of Iron Age activity in the area; it is limited to an assemblage of nails and pottery on a burial site on Varley Way, 650m west of the site. In the wider area, there is a hill fort to the southwest of Wimbledon Common, and a second in the Pollards Hill area of Mitcham.
- 2.1.5 There is a no evidence of prehistoric activity recorded within close proximity to the site.

2.2 The Roman Period (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 2.2.1 Shortly after Romans arrived in Britain in AD43, they constructed an important road called Stane Street through the area now covered by the borough of Merton. This busy trade route linked London with the Roman port of Chichester. The street crossed the border with Tooting, bridged the Wandle at Colliers Wood, passed under Merton Civic Centre, crossed Morden Park and continued on to Sutton (Merton Council 2008). The Roman road is thought to survive at a depth of 1.2m below the present ground level at Modern Park (Weinreb & Hibbert 1995) and passes c.600m to the northwest of the site.
- 2.2.2 Coins, pottery and tiles have been found at the river crossing by Colliers Wood, and a Roman well and graves were discovered near Mitcham Gas works in Western Road.

- 2.2.3 Two burial sites of Roman date are known from the Phipps Bridge area. Within the town centre, pottery has been found during excavations at Upper Green and Durham House. A single sherd of pottery is recorded from excavations at Church Road.
- 2.2.4 It has also been postulated that a '*mansio*' may have existed in Morden or Merton (Goodman 1995). A *mansio* was an official stopping place established on Roman roads maintained and used by government officials.

2.3 The Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066) and Medieval Periods (AD 1066 – AD 1538)

- 2.3.1 Mitcham itself is an Anglo Saxon place name, deriving from the Saxon 'big settlement'. The main Saxon monument in the area is a cemetery located on the north bank of the River Wandle close to the junction of London and Morden Roads, south of the site. The parish church also has Saxon origins, though it was considerably rebuilt in 1819 – 1821.
- 2.3.2 Mitcham was listed in the Domesday Book, appearing as "*Michelham*". It comprised two hamlets known as Upper Mitcham and the Lower Green area. Michelham was held partly by the Canons of Bayeux.
- 2.3.3 In 1114 AD, Henry I granted the estate to a knight called Gilbert, who founded an Augustinian priory in 1117 at the point where Roman Stane Street crossed the River Wandle.
- 2.3.4 Medieval activity in the archaeological record is mostly represented by archaeological investigations at or near the former Merton Abbey at Maerantum Way, to the north-west. These include a boundary ditch, a mill, and semi-industrial sites. Remains of a medieval farmstead have been discovered at London Road and two rubbish pits in the Upper Green area. Finds of medieval pottery have been found north of the site, and towards Phipps Bridge.

2.4 The Post-Medieval (AD 1538 – AD 1900) and Modern Period (AD 1900 to present)

- 2.4.1 The settlement of Morden appears to have remained relatively rural and undeveloped during the first half of the post-medieval period, though it did experience the growth of a number of country estates created by wealthy landowners.
- 2.4.2 The area became a centre for the cultivation of roses, camomile, white poppies, liquorice, peppermint, angelica and lavender. During the course of the 16th century, Mitcham became known for its soothing air. John Donne and Sir Walter Raleigh had residences here and Queen Elizabeth I made at least five visits here during the course of her reign. During the 17th century, the lands passed from the royalty to tradesman, and industry along the banks of the Wandle flourished. By 1750, Merton Abbey and Mitcham had become the main centres of calico cloth printing in England and led to the construction of the world's first public railway, the horse-drawn Surrey Iron Railway in 1803.
- 2.4.3 The rapid development of Mitcham at the end of the 19th century, and the early 20th century is depicted on the earliest Ordnance Survey Maps, growing along with the introduction of the railway. Western Road is first named on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map, when it was known as Merton Lane, not becoming Western Road until 1895. The 1895 map shows the Holborn Union Workhouse on Bond Road (since demolished) southeast of the site, and to the east Holborn Union Gas Works. To the north Lavender Lane was still a country lane and the site itself is open land, crossed by footpaths.
- 2.4.4 The Ordnance Survey map of 1935 shows that the school had been built and the neighbouring housing on Heyford Road, Dorset Road, Lavender Grove, Laing Avenue all developed. The school playing fields, which were formerly agricultural land, remained untouched by construction and

development works. The fact that the land has remained undeveloped is a contributory factor to its inclusion within the Mitcham Village Archaeological Priority Zone.

- 2.4.5 The original school (Block 1) was established by 1935. The Ordnance Survey map of 1954 shows the area currently occupied by Block 2 set out as formal gardens. The 1968 map indicates a detached building to the north of Block 1 which is presumed to be a former sports hall or pavilion and the addition of Block 2. The 1969 map again indicates a detached building north of Block 1 and a second detached building to the west of Block 2, both since demolished.

3. Strategy

3.1 Aims of the Archaeological Investigation

3.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were defined as being:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
- To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
- To enable the archaeology advisor to the London Borough of Merton, to make an informed decision on the status of the condition, and any possible requirement for further work in order to satisfy that condition.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

3.1.2 The specific aims of the evaluation were defined as being:

- To identify any evidence for prehistoric evidence on site.
- To identify any evidence for Romano-British activity on site.
- To identify any evidence that may confirm the agricultural character of the site in the medieval and post-medieval period.

3.1.3 The specific aims of the photographic record were defined as being:

- To create a photographic record of the oldest part of the school (Block 1)

3.1.4 The final aim was to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AOC Archaeology (2012), defined the site procedures for the archaeological evaluation. This document detailed how the evaluation, consisting of one machine excavated trench, would be undertaken. All work was carried out in accordance with local and national guidelines (IfA 2009 & 2010, EH 2008 & 2009). Provision was made for a report as defined in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

3.2.2 A unique site code for the project (**LPS12**) has been issued by the London Archaeological Archive Resource Centre (LAARC), and was used as the site identifier for all records produced.

3.2.3 The evaluation trenching was undertaken on the 18th January and 23rd July 2012. The photographic record was made on 14th February 2012.

- 3.2.4 The levels for the trenches were established in relation to the main contractor's survey station on site at a values of 16.41m AOD for Trench 1 and 17.19m AOD for Trench 2.
- 3.2.5 The evaluation was conducted by the author under the overall management of Paul Mason, AOC Project Manager. The site was monitored by Diane Abrams of GLAAS on behalf of Merton Borough Council.

4 Results

4.1 Trench 1

Level (OD)	Depth BGL	Context Number	Description
16.46m -16.37m	0.00m	(100)	Tarmac.
16.41m – 16.32m	0.05m	(101)	Bedding Layer
16.31m – 16.22m	0.15m	(102)	Topsoil
16.11m – 16.02m	0.35m	(103)	Subsoil
15.81m – 15.72m	0.65m	(104)	Natural Wandle Gravels



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking northwest.

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 was located in the centre of the site, north of the main school building; it was orientated northwest-southeast and measured 5m by 1.80m (Figures 2 and 3, Plate 1).
- 4.1.2 Natural Wandle sands and gravels (104) were observed between 15.81m and 15.72mOD; they were mid orangey grey sandy gravels with occasional flint pebble inclusions. The natural deposit was sealed by subsoil deposit (103), a firm brownish grey, gravelly sand 0.30m thick. The subsoil was overlain by a 0.20m thick deposit of dark grey clayey sand topsoil (102). The topsoil was overlain by

an orange stone bedding layer (101) and an asphalt playground surface (100), 0.10m and 0.05m thick respectively. No archaeology was observed in this trench.

4.2 Trench 2

Level (OD)	Depth BGL	Context Number	Description
16.91m -16.70m	0.00m	(200)	Topsoil
16.60m – 16.42m	0.30m	(201)	Subsoil
16.28m – 16.23m	0.50m	(202)	Natural Wandle sands and gravels



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking northwest.

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 was located in the southeast of the site within the footprint of the new development to the southwest of the main school building, orientated northwest-southeast and measured 5.00m by 2.00m (Figures 2 and 3, Plate 2).
- 4.2.2 Natural Wandle sands and gravels (202) were observed between 16.28m and 16.23mOD; these deposits were mid greyish yellow sandy gravels with occasional flint pebble inclusions. The natural deposits were sealed by a mid greyish brown silty sand deposit (201) interpreted as subsoil; this deposit was 0.20m thick. The subsoil was overlain by topsoil deposit (200); this consisted of dark, greyish brown clayey sand, 0.30m thick. No archaeological features were seen in this trench.

4.3 Photographic Survey

- 4.3.1 The photographic survey captured 55 images of the school buildings prior to their alteration. Particular focus was afforded to the original school block (Plates 3, 4 & 5) but the newer block was also photographed. The images are available in archive.



Plate 3. Entrance to original school block (Block 1), looking east.



Plate 4. Blocks 1 and 2, looking northeast.



Plate 5. Area of extension to rear of original school block (Block 1), looking west.

5. Finds

- 5.1 During the course of the archaeological investigation no finds were retrieved from the evaluation trenches and no environmental samples were taken.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The evaluation successfully characterised both the stratigraphic sequence and the archaeological potential of the site. Undisturbed natural Wandle gravel deposits were observed at the base of Trenches 1 and 2 between 16.28m and 15.72mOD.
- 6.2 The natural deposits were overlain by an undisturbed sequence of subsoil and topsoil; in Trench 1 these were overlain by a tarmac playground surface. No archaeological features were observed in either trench and no finds were retrieved.
- 6.3 A comprehensive photographic record was made of the exterior of the school blocks, with particular emphasis on the older structure (Block 1).
- 6.4 Due to the lack of archaeological deposits encountered it is recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork be undertaken. The final decision in regards to the requirement for further archaeological fieldwork lies with Diane Abrams of GLAAS, Archaeology Advisor to the London Borough of Merton.

7 Publication and Archive Deposition

- 7.1 Due to the nature of the results at this stage of the archaeological investigation, publication is expected to be limited to a summary in the London Archaeology Round-up and publication via the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) (Appendix B).
- 7.2 On completion of the project, the archive, consisting of paper records, drawings, digital and black and white photographs, and finds, will be deposited with the LAARC.

8 Bibliography

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Fig 1 Site Location

Fig 2 Detailed Site Location

Fig 3 Sample Sections.

Appendices

Appendix A – Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth
100	Tarmac	5.00m	1.80m	0.05m
101	Bedding Layer	5.00m	1.80m	0.15m
102	Topsoil	5.00m	1.80m	0.20m
103	Subsoil	5.00m	1.80m	0.30m
104	Natural	5.00m	1.80m	0.10m
200	Topsoil	5.00m	2.00m	0.30m
201	Subsoil	5.00m	2.00m	0.50m
202	Natural	5.00m	2.00m	0.10m

Appendix B – OASIS Form

Printable version

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-117355

Project details

Project name Evaluation and Watching Brief at Liberty Primary School Mitcham

Short description of the project An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group. The evaluation consisted of two machine excavated trenches. Natural Wandle gravels were overlain by an undisturbed sequence of subsoil and topsoil; in Trench 1 this was sealed by an asphalt playground surface. No archaeological features were observed in either trench.

Project dates Start: 13-01-2012 End: 23-07-2012

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference 32076 - Contracting Unit No. codes

Any associated project reference LPS12 - Sitecode codes

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)

Current Land use Other 2 - In use as a building

Monument type SCHOOL Modern

Significant Finds NONE None

Methods & "Photogrammetric Survey", "Sample Trenches", "Survey/Recording Of techniques Fabric/Structure"

Development type Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM Liberty Primary School, Western Road

Postcode CR4 3EB

Study area 3.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 2744 6951 51 0 51 24 35 N 000 10 02 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 15.72m Max: 16.28m

Project creators

Name of Organisation AOC Archaeology

Project originator brief EH GLAAS

Project originator design AOC Archaeology

Project director/manager Paul Mason

Project supervisor Ian Hogg

Project supervisor Chris Clarke

Type of sponsor/funding Developer

body

Name of
sponsor/funding Atkins
body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive LAARC
recipient

Digital Contents "Stratigraphic","Survey"

Digital Media "Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
available

Paper Archive LAARC
recipient

Paper Contents "Stratigraphic","Survey"

Paper Media "Context sheet","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Unpublished Text"
available

Entered by Ian Hogg (ian.hogg@aocarchaeology.com)

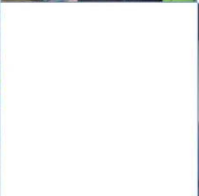
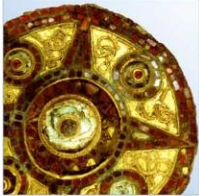
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OASIS:

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