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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Attendance and Recording (Watching Brief) During
Groundworks at Great Casterton Church of England Primary School,
Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Rutland
NGR: TF 00030 09194**

Andrew Hyam



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Grid Ref: TF 00030 09194

Author: Andrew Hyam

Client: Great Casterton Church of England Primary School

Planning Ref: 2020/0031/FUL

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University of Leicester, Archaeological Services,
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

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OASIS RECORD

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	Start/end dates	10-08-2020 to 25-08-2020		
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	Project Type	Watching brief		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	School playing field		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Condition		
Planning Ref.	2020/0031/FUL			
PROJECT LOCATION	County	Rutland		
	Site Address/Postcode	Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Rutland. PE9 4AU		
	Study Area	210m ²		
	Site Coordinates	TF 00030 09194		
	Height OD	48.5m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Leicestershire County Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Andrew Hyam		
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An Archaeological Attendance and Recording (watching brief) During Groundworks at Great Casterton Church of England Primary School, Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Rutland. NGR: TF 00030 09194

Andrew Hyam

Summary

This document is the fieldwork report for an archaeological attendance and recording (watching brief) carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in advance of the proposed construction of a multi-use games area within a playing field at Great Casterton C of E Primary School, Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Rutland (NGR: TF00030 09194).

The work was commissioned by Great Casterton Primary School in advance of the proposed development. The site consists of a small terrace containing a school playing field to the north-east of the school buildings and within an area of known Roman activity. The proposed games area consists of an artificial playing surface with 32 post holes for fencing and goal posts surrounding it.

The proposed site lies close to a Roman fortified settlement. Roman burials have been found within the school grounds and two pottery kilns around 50m from the proposed games area were identified in 2011.

The ground works entailed the removal of existing turf and a small amount of topsoil to a maximum depth of 180mm below current ground level. The surrounding post holes were then excavated to a depth of between 400mm and 600mm.

No earthfast archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundworks. No artefacts older than the 20th century were recovered from the excavated spoil. The results indicate that much of the ground where the playing field is located is an artificial terrace created using imported material.

The archive for the work will be deposited with Rutland County Museums under accession number OAKRM:2020.10

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Great Casterton Church of England Primary School to carry out an archaeological attendance and recording (watching brief) during groundworks at the school on Pickworth Road, Great Casterton, Rutland (NGR: TF 00030 09194; Fig 1). Under planning application 2020/0031/FUL it is intended to construct a multi-use games area consisting of a fenced artificial play surface set within the existing grass playing field.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 10th and 25th of August 2020 and was undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work required by the Planning Authority following advice

from the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, MHCLG 2018).

The archaeological watching brief work was intended to provide a record of any archaeological remains in mitigation of the impact of the proposed development.

At the time of the watching brief, the site consisted of a grass playing field located on a raised terrace to the south-east of the school buildings. The completed play area will measure 10m by 20m and will follow a north to south alignment. Small projections at each of the long ends will contain goals and netball hoops.

Although the school is located on the north-western edge of the current settlement core, the site of the school, and the proposed play area, lies within an area of significant archaeological interest and close to a Roman fortified settlement.

Location and Geology

The village of Great Casterton lies towards the eastern edge of Rutland close to the border with the county of Lincolnshire. The village lies approximately 5km north-west of the town of Stamford, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). The primary school lies to the north-west of the village centre and forms the corner between the eastern side of Pickworth Road and the north-west side of Ryhall Road (Fig. 2). The proposed play area lies within the school grounds and is to the south-east of the main buildings.

The land on which the school grounds are located is on a slope which rises from south to north such that in order to create a level surface the existing grass playing field has been built on a terrace approximately 3m higher than the tarmac covered playground (Figs 3 and 4). The highest point of the terrace where the games area is to be built is at approximately 48.5m aOD whilst the tarmac playground, to the south, is at 45m aOD.

The British Geological Survey identifies the underlying bedrock geology of the area as being Lower Lincolnshire Limestone Member.

The new 10m by 20m games area consists of a stone/gravel bedding 180mm deep with an artificial turf surface laid on top. Around the edge of the surface is a concrete kerb with fencing posts set at regular intervals. The post holes measure 300mm in diameter and have a maximum depth of 400mm along sides and 600mm at the shorter ends where the goal posts will be set. Additional posts in the projecting area support goals and netball hoops at each end (Fig. 5).

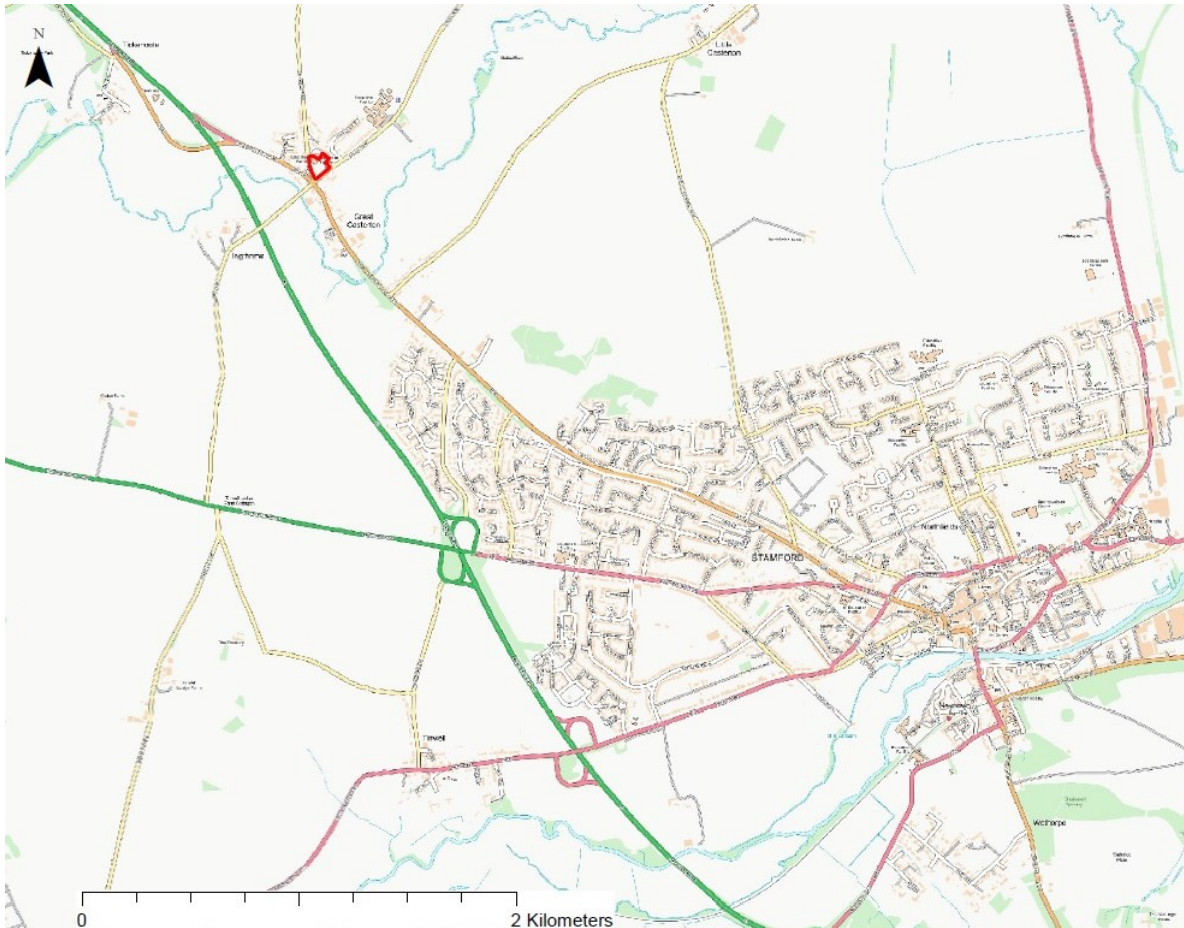


Figure 1 Site Location
Site highlighted, Stamford to south-east

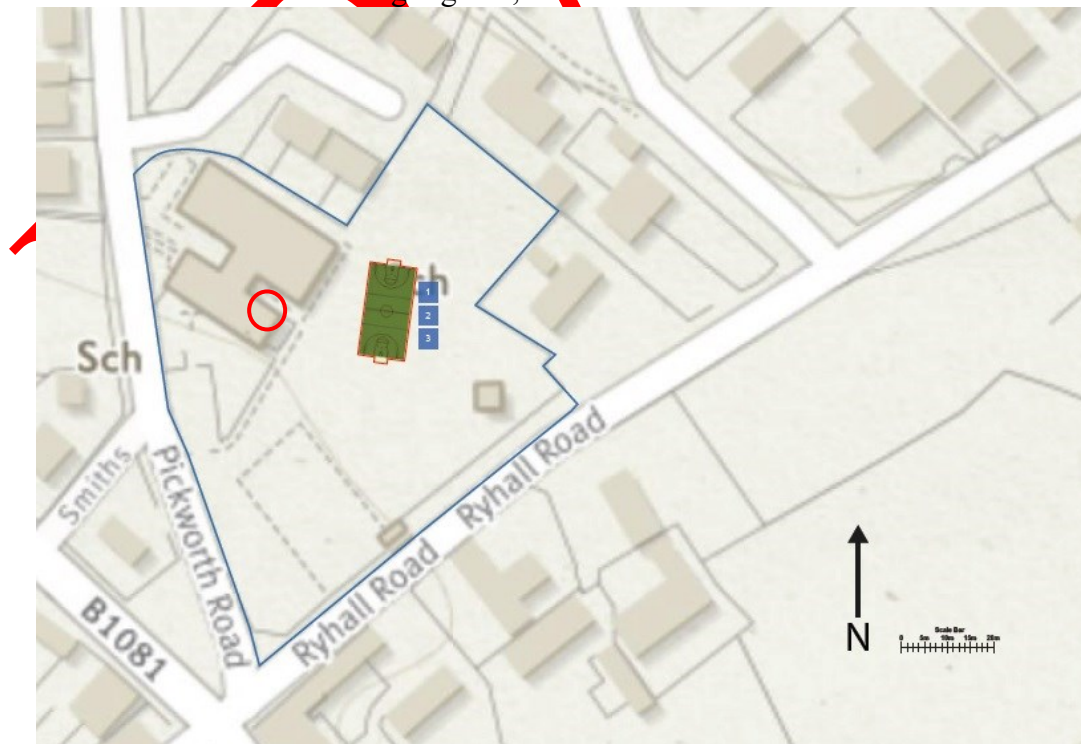


Figure 2 Location of proposed games area
Green rectangle indicates the surface. Red circle indicates the approximate area of known pottery kilns. Plan provided by client



Figure 3 General view of site
Looking south-west. The new games area is to be placed within orange fenced area



Figure 4 Terrace within school grounds
Looking north. The games area is to be placed as shown by red arrow. Yellow arrow shows location of kilns found in 2011

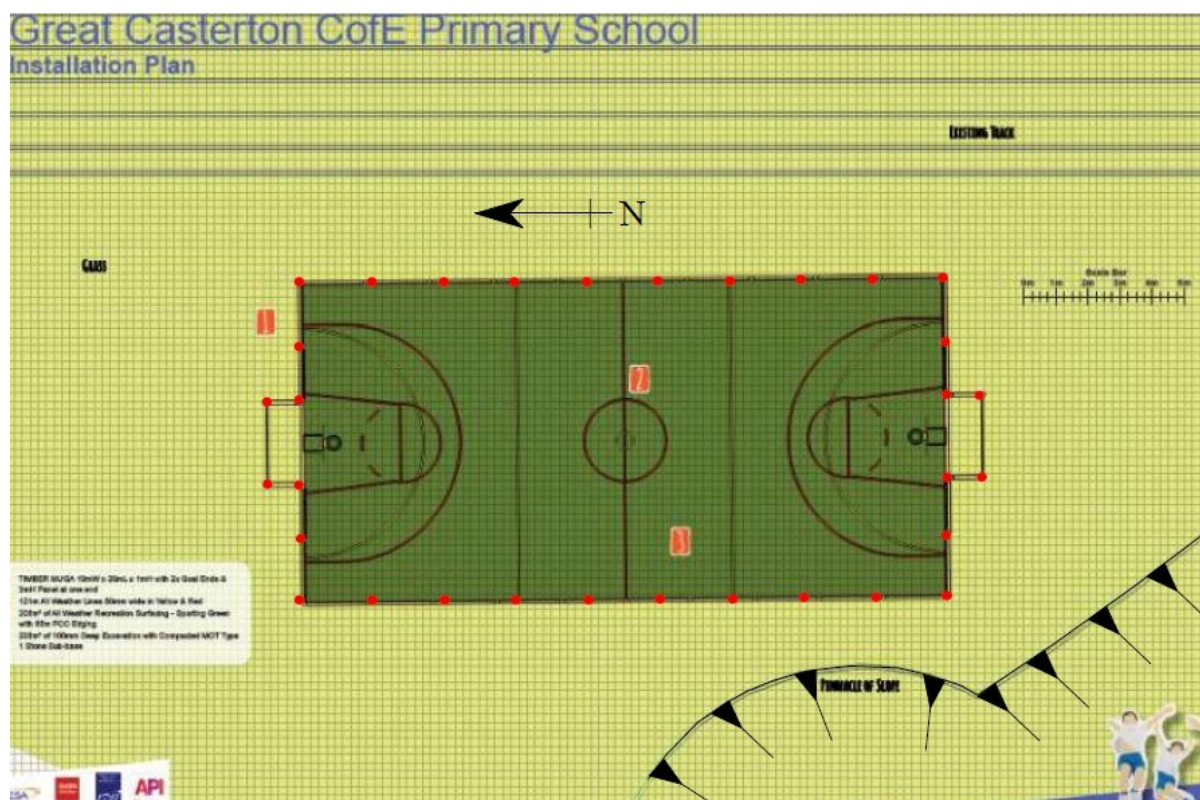


Figure 5 Plan of games area
Red dots indicate position of posts. Plan supplied by client

Historical and Archaeological Background

The ULAS WSI notes that the site of the proposed games area lies within an area of archaeological interest with a number of nearby archaeological entries in the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER).

The remains of a Roman fort lie to the east of the primary school (HER Ref. No **MLE5293**), and the associated Roman town lies to the south-east (**MLE5294**). The well-preserved town defences are located just south-east of the school on the southern side of Ryhall Road (**MLE8776**). The area covered by the Roman settlement is a Scheduled Monument (**SM1005067**) although the school lies outside this area. Within the scheduled area remains which have been discovered include stone buildings, earlier timber buildings, kilns and hearths (**MLE17238**). The route of Ermine Street, a major Roman road, passes through the village.

A late Roman cemetery was discovered whilst the school was being constructed in the 1960s. More burials were discovered during road widening in 1966 and more again during an evaluation to the north of the school in 2004-2005. A total of 139 inhumations were found (**MLE5302**). Further burials have been found to the north and north-west of the site (**MLE21951**) giving a high potential for further burials to be discovered.

A small evaluation carried out by ULAS at the school in 2011 in advance of a new soft-play area revealed the remains of two pottery kilns (Hunt, 2011). The larger of the two still contained a large amount of pottery finds and kiln furniture still within the kiln (**MLE20102**). These were

found approximately 50m to the west of the proposed games area (see Fig. 4 above). More Roman kilns have been found to the north of the school (**MLE16838**). There are also earlier Iron Age remains nearby, including a burial (**MLE16836**), plus further Roman finds such as coins (**MLE16837**; **MLE5315**), plus many other features and finds from within the core of the village to the south.

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery lies adjacent to the Roman graveyard 100m to the south-east of the school grounds (**MLE5304**). The school lies just within the medieval historic settlement core of the village (**MLE8829**). Medieval remains have been found nearby (**MLE19784**).

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were as laid out in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Attendance and Recording During Groundworks: Great Casterton C of E Primary School, Pickworth Road, Great Casterton* (the WSI) and can be summarised as:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the recording was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

Research Objectives

The site lies within an area of significant archaeological potential, particularly from the Romano-British period. Research objectives are derived from *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (2006) and *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (2012).

Romano-British

How can we enhance our knowledge of developments in regional pottery industries, particularly during the Conquest period and third to fourth centuries? (5.1.1)

How may information on temporal and intra-regional variations in ceramic forms, styles of surface treatment and fabrics best be disseminated? (5.1.2)

What might studies of later Roman inhumation cemeteries teach us about changing burial practices and population characteristics? (5.8.5)

Early Medieval

What may be deduced about changes in diet, mortality and other demographic variables from detailed osteological studies of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and how might this have varied spatially and over time? (6.1.1)

These research aims were identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. Dependant on the findings of the evaluation the research aims would be re-assessed and updated as necessary during the course of the fieldwork.

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2014a) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (rev. 2014b). The archaeological work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by ULAS and agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist (August 2020). The work was monitored by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist although due to the movement restrictions caused by the current Coronavirus contact with the Planning Archaeologist was by telephone, email and site photographs.

The archaeological watching brief entailed the monitoring, observation and recording during the stripping of the games area and the excavation of the post holes around it. The games area was stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Turf and a thin layer of topsoil was removed carefully in level spits under continuous archaeological observation. All of the excavated spoil was inspected for archaeological artefacts. As noted only a maximum 180mm of turf and topsoil were removed before the area was stoned over. Thirty two 300mm diameter post holes were excavated around the games area which included two additional post holes for goal supports. The holes were a further 400mm deep along the sides and 600mm at the shorter ends where two tall goal posts will be located. All upcast spoil from each post holes was inspected for finds.

An accession number (OAKRM:2020.10) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records.

Results

Photographs of the site were taken prior to the commencement of the groundworks (Figs 6 and 7). The turf across the 10m by 20m games area was carefully stripped to reveal a light greyish brown fine silty topsoil (Fig. 8). Because of the slope of the land the south-western corner of the new games area was left at this level and no more material was removed here. Further north, across the games area, a thin layer of topsoil was also removed to a maximum of 180mm below current ground level. This exposed, in places, patches of fractured limestone brash within the light grey silty topsoil (Figs 9 and 10). Fragments of modern glass, brick and metal screws and nails were observed in the spoil but were not retained.

Following the main area strip two small goal areas were stripped to the same depth at each end of the pitch (see Fig. 5). These areas measured 2.5m in width. Removal of turf and some subsoil revealed the same grey silty topsoil with some limestone fragments as seen elsewhere. No areas

of subsoil or any other deposits were reached, or seen, across the area. A continuous border of kerb stones were concreted around the edges of the games area. This kerb was laid on the stripped surface with no more ground being removed.

The next stage of invasive groundwork was the excavation of the post holes surrounding the games area. These will hold a perimeter fence and a raised walled area around each goal and netball hoop. All holes were hand dug and the spoil inspected for finds (Figs 11 to 14). All of the post holes contained the same grey silty soil with varying amounts of limestone fragments within this matrix. No layers or archaeological deposits were seen in any of the holes. A small amount of hard-fired modern land drain, glazed sewer pipe and brick were recovered from the spoil along with a glass marble and a metal bolt (Fig. 15). No archaeological artefacts were observed or recovered from the spoil.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the post holes.



Figure 6 General view of site and terrace
Looking north-west. The games area is located where the excavator is standing



Figure 7 Games area location
Looking north-west. The games area is marked in white spray paint on the grass



Figure 8 Games area following turf stripping
Looking north-west. The two goal areas have yet to be stripped



Figure 9 North end of games area at maximum depth of excavation



Figure 10 Stripped games area from the north
With the exception of the spoil heap the area is at maximum depth



Figure 11 Post-excavation photograph of all post holes
The posts are set loosely into each post hole to show their location



Figure 12 South-easternmost post hole
0.4m scale



Figure 13 Southern goal mouth post holes
0.4 and 1m scales



Figure 14 Northern goal mouth rear post hole
0.4m scale



Figure 15 Modern finds recovered from the post hole spoil

Conclusion

Despite the promising potential for revealing Roman archaeological features and deposits none were found within the stripped games area or any of the post holes. The results indicate that the terrace where the games area is located is an artificially created land surface using material which was probably imported from elsewhere. It seems highly likely that the original ground surface is still present to the north and north-east of the larger playing field and that this original surface continues southwards as a sealed deposit beneath the terrace. The depth of excavation for these groundworks was not deep enough to even come close to this probable surface.

Even if no earthfast features were found it had been hoped that the terrace may have been created using upcast from the tarmac playground and, possibly, that disturbed and unstratified artefacts may still be present. None were found although the disturbance caused by the groundworks was relatively minimal.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Rutland County Museums with accession number OAKRM:2020.10 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2020-130)
- 2 Watching brief recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 DVD digital photographs

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are given to the staff of Great Casterton Primary School for assistance during the groundworks. Andrew Hyam carried out the fieldwork for ULAS and the project was managed by John Thomas. The excavator was provided by the client.

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ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614
Email: ULAS@le.ac.uk
03.09.2020



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
UK

Directors

Dr Richard Buckley OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

e: rjb16@le.ac.uk

t: +44 (0)116 252 2848

f: +44 (0)116 252 2614

e: ulas@le.ac.uk

DRAFT

