



## Project Allenby/Connaught Travers Barracks Aldershot Military Town, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**PROJECT ALLENBY/CONNAUGHT  
TRAVERS BARRACKS, ALDERSHOT MILITARY  
TOWN, HAMPSHIRE**

**ASSET TRO 602  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Prepared on behalf of  
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the construction of a new administration building (**TRO 602**) at Travers Barracks, Aldershot Military town, Hampshire (NGR 486974, 151808) on behalf of Rydon Construction Ltd. The work was part of project Allenby/Connaught, a long term initiative to redevelop the built estate at Military installations in Hampshire and Wiltshire.

The observations included in this report were made during preliminary ground works on the site which included the excavation of strip footings for an office building, and the grading of an area that is going to be a car park.

The former military buildings and landscaping of the site has heavily impacted upon the archaeological potential of the area observed in the watching brief. Made ground and modern material was present across all areas of the site, which directly sealed natural geological deposits. It would appear that the original ground surface has been comprehensively removed during the previous landscaping of the site, as no buried topsoil or subsoil horizons were present. It is possible that the natural geological deposits have also suffered truncation, the extent of which is unknown, but it is likely to be greater in the southern area where a greater degree of terracing was evident.

No archaeological remains or features were identified that were not of modern date, and the archaeological potential of the site is very limited. The only interesting results of the watching brief relate to the geological formation processes of the floodplain, observed in the strip footings in the Northern Area.

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

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The fieldwork was conducted by Dave Reay who also prepared this report. The illustrations were prepared by Kenneth Lymer and the project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Nick Truckle.

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ASSET TRO 602**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the construction of a new administration building (Asset TRO 602) at Travers Barracks, Aldershot Military town, Hampshire (NGR 486974, 151808). The project was carried out on behalf of Rydon Construction Ltd (the Client) as part of the continuing redevelopment of the camp under project Allenby/Connaught.
- 1.1.2 Project Allenby/Connaught is a major Ministry of Defence (MoD) project involving comprehensive improvements to the built estate at five establishments around Salisbury Plain and at Aldershot (Hampshire). The project is being implemented through a Public Private Partnership (PPP).
- 1.1.3 As part of the bidding process for Project Allenby/Connaught, outline planning applications for the proposed redevelopment of each military establishment were submitted to the appropriate local planning authority. In each case, the application was accompanied by a full Environmental Statement (ES).
- 1.1.4 The Environmental Statements included detailed reviews of the impacts of the proposed redevelopment on all aspects of the cultural heritage. This work was undertaken by CBA on behalf of the Client. Outline strategies for further mitigation were prepared by CBA and discussed with the appropriate archaeological advisors to the local planning authorities.
- 1.1.5 In the case of Aldershot, the Cultural Heritage section of the ES included a summary of previous work on historic buildings (Entec 2002).
- 1.1.6 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) covers some 215 hectares. The PDA is divided by the Basingstoke Canal which traverses the site from east to west dividing the site into North and South Camp.
- 1.1.7 Proposals for North Camp include development within Lille, New Normandy, New Mons and Hammersley Barracks, Wavell House, Government House and The Army School of Physical Training

(ASPT). Development within North Camp includes the demolition of some eighteen buildings and construction of some thirtyone new buildings with some new hardstandings. In addition some localised pockets of tree planting are proposed.

- 1.1.8 Proposal for South Camp include development within Provost, Gale, Travers and St Omer Barracks, including a bridge across the Basingstoke Canal, the ABRO site, Community Centre and Prince Consorts Library. Development within South Camp includes the demolition of some fifty-three buildings and construction of some sixty new buildings with some new hardstandings. In addition some localised pockets of tree planting are proposed.

## **1.2 Site Description**

- 1.2.1 Travers Barracks is located in the South Camp area of the military town which is divided from the North Camp by the Basingstoke Canal. The barrack buildings are clustered north of large open spaces, most of which is hardstanding. The location of the ground works monitored during the project is shown on **Figure 1**.

## **1.3 Geology and Topography**

- 1.3.1 Aldershot is situated at the northern end of the Blackwater Valley, at the confluence of the River Blackwater and River Loddon. Surrounding and underlying the Valley are Tertiary deposits with alluvial deposits along the flood plain of the River Blackwater. In the past the watercourse that is now known as the River Wey North Branch, formed the headwater of a much larger River Blackwater. This ancient River cut its way through the Tertiary deposits and with the erosive action of flowing water, worked and reworked the sands and gravels to eventually leave a wide floodplain. At some stage in the past, the headwaters of the ancient river were caught and diverted eastwards along the southern side of the Hogs Back to form the modern River Wey. The history of the river has meant that the modern River Blackwater is a small river sitting in a wide flood plain, which is underlain by valuable mineral deposits.
- 1.3.2 Underlying geology at Travers Barracks comprises Barton Sand (GSGB, Map sheet 285).

## **2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1.1 Aldershot military camp was built in response to strained French relationships during the 1850's and was of strategic national importance. Aldershot provided good communications and lay between London and the South Coast. The internationally acclaimed Torchlight Tattoo was started at Government House for the Queen's entertainment, in 1884. At the beginning of the twentieth century the advent of the aeroplane led to the

development of the Farnborough aerodrome (northwest of the Study Area). During WW I and WWII the camp trained soldiers from all over British Empire particularly Canada. After WWII the camp became a training centre for the National Service Army, and the Parachute regiment was based at the camp for over 50 years. The camp at Aldershot represents the first military camp, solely for the training of a modern professional army, to be built since the Roman invasion.

- 2.1.2 The northern boundary of this part of the PDA is defined by the Modern/19th century Basingstoke Canal (CBA 53). CBA23 records an 18th/19th century Grade II Listed Building, a small dwelling adjacent to the canal, but outside the PDA. CBA78 records the 'South Camp Magazine (Powder)' which is a non-statutory building of 18th/19th century date.
- 2.1.3 There is an unconfirmed potential for archaeological features/deposits of prehistoric and later date to be present on this part of the PDA which has been subject to a large amount of building and reorganisation over the past century, much of which will have impacted on surviving archaeological deposits. The standing military buildings are significant in terms of cultural heritage, but their significance is considered to be even greater in terms of social military history.

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The watching brief aimed to fulfil the terms and conditions of The Outline Planning Permission for Aldershot Military Town (Ref. 03/00616/OUT). Two conditions were imposed which relate to cultural heritage issues;

***Condition 9*** – *No Development shall take place in respect of any individual phase of the development until the developer has secured the implementation of measures in respect of that phase of development to:-*

*a) keep a watching brief for the presence of archaeological remains during clearance and excavation works; and*

*b) in the excavation and removal /recording of any archaeological remains that may be uncovered in respect of the site of actual or potential archaeological interest identified within the Environmental Statement submitted with the outline planning application. Details in this respect shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the commencement on site of work on that phase of the development and the approved details shall be implemented in full for the duration of clearance and excavation works at the site for that phase of development.*



*Reason – To ensure that any archaeological remains are removed/recorded before development commences*

**Condition 21** – *No development shall take place in respect of any individual phase of the development until the developer has secured the implementation of measures to protect, restore, preserve, relocate etc. any of the historic artefacts identified within the Environmental Statement submitted by the applicants with the Project Allenby Connaught masterplan outline application Ref. 03/00616/OUT that lie within the environs of that phase of development. Details in this respect shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any development commencing on that phase and the approved measure and details shall be implemented in full within the timescale(s) as approved.*

*Reason – To protect the historical and cultural heritage that has been identified within the Aldershot Military Town*

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1.1 The methodology used for this project has been set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for previous projects for *Project Allenby/Connaught* (REF 56250(6).01). In format and content it conforms with current best practice and with the guidance outlined in *Management of Archaeological projects* (English Heritage 1999) and the *Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008).
- 4.1.2 Excavation on site was conducted by 360° tracked excavators, under archaeological supervision. Clean surfaces were inspected where safe to do so. Deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's standard *pro forma* recording system.

## **5 RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 The watching brief observed the excavation of strip footings for the new office building in the north of the area, and the grading of the Site during construction of a car park in the Southern Area, and took place on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Both areas had suffered significant truncation to varying degrees, from the former military buildings and associated landscaping present across the Site. No archaeological features were observed in any areas of the Site.

### **5.2 Southern area**

- 5.2.1 This area had suffered extensive truncation from landscaping of the Site, and from the previous military building that occupied the Site.

The natural geology was only revealed in a very small area in the south, in the terraced area immediately to the north of the existing roundabout. It consisted of well sorted, rounded flint gravel, pea grit and coarse sand, and is water lain in origin. This was overlain by modern made ground, which also indicates that the area had been landscaped in the past, as there was no buried topsoil or subsoil present. The formation level of the car park did not reach the natural geology over the majority of the area, with only made ground present (see **Plate 3**).

### 5.3 Northern Area

- 5.3.1 This area had suffered less truncation than the Southern Area from the former use of the Site, as the majority of it was a former car park. The strip footings in this area were excavated to over 2m deep, and a greater amount of the soil profile was observable in section (see **Plates 2 and 3**). A complete profile for the northern portion of the eastern footing was not observed, as the concrete had already been poured. The natural ground surface slopes from south to north, and the northern portion of the former car park had been made up to level off the area. The southern 9m of the strip footings had been subjected to a greater degree of truncation, as the former building had extended into this area (**Front Cover**).
- 5.3.2 The upper 0.50m of the soil profile consisted of a tarmacadam surface **100**, which overlaid make up layer **101**, light brownish yellow sub-angular sandstone hardcore, within a coarse sand matrix, which in turn sealed make up layer **102**, a very mixed deposit of dark to mid brownish grey coarse sand with 40% well sorted rounded flint gravel, with occasional modern brick and ceramic building material inclusions.
- 5.3.3 The modern made ground overlaid a series of natural water lain deposits, including **103**, a very dark greyish brown silty sand, with occasional bands of well rounded sorted flint gravel, with lighter grey laminations present towards the top of this deposit. This sealed **104**, a mid reddish grey brown silty sand with occasional rounded flint gravel inclusions, which in turn sealed **105**, a mottled light bluish green clayey sand. It is likely that these three deposits relate to either localised alluvial deposition within a low-lying boggy area, or alternatively alluvial deposition of the floodplain itself. The darker colours of **103** and **104**, are probably due to decayed organic components within these deposits.
- 5.3.4 At the bottom of the sequence, and observable to a depth of over two metres was **106**, a heavy, mottled light green, changing to orangey brown deeper down, sandy clay, which is probably alluvial in origin, and relates to the formation of the floodplain.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The former military buildings and landscaping of the site has heavily impacted upon the archaeological potential of the area observed in the watching brief. Made ground and modern material was present across all areas of the Site, which directly sealed natural geological deposits. It would appear that the original ground surface has been comprehensively removed during the previous landscaping of the area, as no buried topsoil or subsoil horizons were present. It is possible that the natural geological deposits have also suffered truncation, the extent of which is unknown, but it is likely to be greater in the southern area where a greater degree of terracing was evident.
- 6.1.2 No archaeological remains or features were identified that were not of modern date, and the archaeological potential of the site is very limited. The only interesting results of the watching brief relate to the geological formation processes of the floodplain, observed in the strip footings in the Northern Area.

## 7 REFERENCES

Entec 2002 *Project Allenby/Connaught: Aldershot Area: Review of Historic Buildings*, Entec, Leamington Spa

Wessex Archaeology 2004 *Project Allenby/Connaught, Aldershot Military Town, Hampshire: Project Design for a programme of Archaeological Works*, document ref. 56250(6).01



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Watching brief area  
 Former standing building

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Site location and watching brief area

Figure 1



Plate 1: View of strip footings from the north



Plate 2: North facing section of strip footing



Plate 3: View of Southern Area from the north east

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