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Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning Ref: 15/00309/FUL
Ref: 108360.01
May 2015



**Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School
Wiltshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Arthur Williams Consulting Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Stratford sub-Castle Primary School (centred on NGR 413113, 132392) in advance of two extensions to the existing building. The site lay within the limits of a former Romano-British settlement (*Sorviodunum*), which may have become an Anglo Saxon burgh.

The watching brief, which was maintained during the excavation of foundation trenches, demonstrated that the stratigraphic sequence comprised a topsoil and modern overburden, which overlay undisturbed fluvial gravel. No artefacts, archaeological deposits or features were recorded during the course of the work.

The watching brief was undertaken between 15th - 24th April 2015.



Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Arthur Williams Consulting Ltd to whom Wessex Archaeology extends sincere thanks. Thanks are also extended to Oliver Rigg, Site Manager of Rigg Construction who undertook the groundwork and to Mrs K. Bridson, Head Teacher at Stratford sub-Castle Primary School. The completion of the work would not have been possible without the contribution made by Clare King, Assistant County Archaeologist for Wiltshire Council.

The watching brief was undertaken for Wessex Archaeology by Phil Harding, who compiled this report, and by Bob Davis. The illustrations were prepared by Nancy Dixon and the project managed for Wessex Archaeology by Caroline Budd.



Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Arthur Williams Consulting Limited ('the Client') to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School, Wiltshire, hereafter referred to as 'the Site', centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 413113, 132392 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission (15/00309/FUL) was granted by Wiltshire Council for the replacement of an existing mobile classroom by permanent classroom facilities including toilets and group room, a new hygiene room and the enlargement of a play area. This permission was given on condition (Condition WL26) that all groundwork was accompanied by a programme of archaeological work to monitor trenching.
- 1.1.3 An archaeological watching brief was considered to represent an appropriate response to the groundwork associated with these extensions and the enlargement of the play area.
- 1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared setting out the methodologies and standards to be employed by Wessex Archaeology to undertake the watching brief (Wessex Archaeology 2015). The document was submitted to and approved by the Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist prior to works commencing.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School occupies an irregular parcel of land covering approximately 8.18 ha at the north west end of Stratford Sub-Castle, which itself lies to the north-west of Salisbury, Wiltshire. The school is bounded by Stratford Road to the east, Mill Lane to the south, residential properties to the north, and an open meadow to the west. The existing school buildings are of brick construction and are surrounded by tarmac access roads and play areas of tarmac and grass.
- 1.2.2 The archaeological watching brief was to be undertaken in two areas adjoining the existing buildings. The principal area of extension covered an area of approximately 168m² that was located at the north-west corner of the school building. A smaller area, covering approximately 24m² was located against the south east façade of the school.
- 1.2.3 The Site is generally level, lying at an elevation of c. 51m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.4 The underlying geology of the Site is described by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as Seaford Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 84 to 89 million years ago. These deposits are overlain by superficial River Terrace Deposits, comprising sand and gravel which formed up to 3 million ago.



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (HER) and other on-line sources records a number of finds and features within a 1km radius of the Site.

2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British activity

- 2.2.1 The Site lies a short distance to the west of the Scheduled Monument of Old Sarum Castle (SM No 1015675). This monument has revealed evidence of Neolithic settlement as early as 3000 BC. In the Iron Age, a defensive hillfort was created consisting of a double bank and intermediate ditch with an entrance on the eastern side.
- 2.2.2 At the time of the Roman conquest, the area of Old Sarum seems to have formed part of the territory of the Atrebates.
- 2.2.3 To the south of the Site was a Romano-British settlement (*Sorviodunum*), a Scheduled Monument (SM No 1004688) which is now covered by the present village of Stratford Sub-Castle.

2.3 Saxon and later activity

- 2.3.1 Old Sarum was purportedly captured by Cynric, King of Wessex in 552. It remained part of Wessex thereafter but, the Saxons largely ignored Old Sarum until the Viking invasions led King Alfred to restore its fortifications. In the early part of the 9th century, it was a frequent residence of Egbert of Wessex and, in 960, King Edgar assembled a national council there to plan a defence against the Danes in the north. Along with Wilton, it was abandoned by its residents to be sacked and burned by King Sweyn Forkbeard in 1003. It subsequently became the site of Wilton's mint.
- 2.3.2 A motte-and-bailey castle was built by 1070, four years after the Norman Conquest. The castle was held directly by the Norman Kings. In 1075, the Council of London established Herman as the first Bishop of Salisbury. He and Saint Osmund began the construction of the first Salisbury Cathedral but neither lived to see its completion in 1092. The Domesday Book was probably presented to William I at Old Sarum in 1086 but, does not specifically mention Stratford, and it is impossible to establish who was living here at this time. However, the name Stratford first appears in a document in 1091. The name refers to the point where the Roman road crosses the Avon.
- 2.3.3 Two other national councils were held at Old Sarum: one by William Rufus in 1096 and another by Henry I in 1116, which has sometimes been described as the first English parliament.
- 2.3.4 The cathedral was consecrated on 5th April 1092 but suffered extensive damage in a storm. The cathedral was further expanded in the 1110's, doubling the cathedral's original length and involved large-scale levelling of the north-west quadrant of the town.
- 2.3.5 The late 12th century canon Peter of Blois describes his prebendary as 'barren, dry, and solitary' and other records suggest that clerics brawled openly with the garrison troops. This led to Bishop Herbert receiving permission from King Richard I to move the Cathedral. Pope Honorius III thereupon issued an indulgence to relocate the cathedral on March 29th of 1217. The settlement that grew up around the new cathedral was called



New Salisbury. The inhabitants of the new city gradually razed the old, constructing Salisbury Cathedral and other buildings from the materials at Old Sarum.

2.4 Previous investigations in the area

- 2.4.1 A detailed Gradiometer Survey was carried out by Wessex Archaeology in November 2011, on 3.5ha of land to the south of Mill Lane (Wessex Archaeology 2011). The land was located within the Scheduled Monument of Stratford Sub Castle Romano-British settlement (SM No 1004688). The report concluded that a number of linear 'anomalies' of archaeological interest were found.
- 2.4.2 A subsequent archaeological watching brief was undertaken on ditch clearance in relation to drainage works. A draft report on the watching briefs findings (Wessex Archaeology Draft 2013), revealed largely modern features and fills of drainage ditches.
- 2.4.3 Most recently Langlands (2014) has argued that the site of the former Romano-British settlement was adopted subsequently as the site of an Anglo Saxon *burgh*. The interpretation locates the school site within the north west limits of this settlement.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The methodology adopted was designed to meet the aims and objectives of the watching brief at the Site, which were:
- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to ensure their preservation by record;
 - to establish the approximate date or date range of the remains using artefacts or other evidence;
 - to determine or confirm the approximate extent, condition and state of preservation of any remains;
 - to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present;
 - to prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.
- 3.1.2 The project was undertaken with due regard to the ClfA *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a).

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2015), this is summarised below:
- 4.1.2 The archaeological watching brief required that all groundwork associated with construction activity was monitored until the potential for archaeological remains to be exposed was exhausted.
- 4.1.3 Investigations were recorded commensurate with the archaeological results using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system and a comprehensive day book. Recording also included written, drawn, and photographic elements as conditions determined.
- 4.1.4 A full photographic record was compiled using digital images. The record illustrated both the detail and the general context of the Site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process that has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure the long term accessibility of the image set.



4.1.5 A real time kinematic (RTK) survey was carried out using a Leica Viva series GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service. All survey data was recorded in Ordnance Survey National Grid coordinates and heights above Ordnance Datum (Newlyn), to a three-dimensional accuracy limit of 30mm.

4.1.6 A unique code **108360** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

4.2 Health and safety

4.2.1 Health and safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices override archaeological considerations at all times.

4.2.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Site visits to monitor the groundwork were undertaken, as required by progress, from 15th - 24th April 2015. Observations were restricted to monitoring the sections of foundation trenches and service ducts related to the extension at the north-west corner of the school building. A total length of 62 m of foundation trenches was monitored, approximately 1.3 m deep. All internal floor areas of the extensions were covered by hard core from previous work, which was retained, or topsoil remnants at formation level.

5.1.2 In view of the negative results in the north west corner of the building, it was agreed, with the consent of the Assistant County Archaeologist, that the small extension against the south east façade of the building could be excluded from the watching brief.

5.2 Details

5.2.1 The Site was covered by variable thicknesses of stone free, mid grey-brown silt topsoil. This material was extensively infiltrated by the roots of a tree that had been on the Site. The topsoil, which is likely to have been derived largely from flood alluvium, measured up to 0.40m thick on the north-west side of the site, but thinned towards the existing school building.

5.2.2 These variable thicknesses, which appear to constitute a single deposit, may represent increased soil accumulations along a former tenement or field boundaries, which are indicated on early mapping. Alternatively it is possible that they relate to movement of topsoil during previous development at the school.

5.2.3 Irrespective of these alternatives the absence of artefacts within the environs of the Romano-British, and possible Anglo Saxon, settlement was marked.

5.2.4 The topsoil rested on a deposit of poorly sorted, medium-fine, light yellow, sandy, fluvial gravel. Chalk flecks, derived from the surrounding parent geology, were also apparent with sub rounded flint pebbles.

5.2.5 A number of pockets, filled with clean mid brown silt and silty clay, were visible in the upper parts of the gravel and beneath the topsoil. There was no apparent pattern to their distribution, size or depth and no hint of human influence in the filling. This suggests that



these pockets result from decalcification of the chalk rich gravel and are of natural formation.

6 ARTEFACTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1.1 No artefacts were recovered during the works. Due to the absence of any features or securely dated deposits no environmental samples were taken.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was commissioned to record and assess the importance of any archaeological remains that might be impacted adversely by the redevelopment work at Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School.

7.1.2 Apart from the immediate threat at the site itself the discovery of any archaeological deposits, features or artefacts would have been of considerable importance in the understanding of the development and chronology of settlement within Stratford Sub-Castle.

7.1.3 The negative results of the watching brief have been surprising in view of the proximity of known Romano-British settlement. All of the exposed sections have shown a consistent sequence of fluvial river valley gravel deposits that are overlain by clean, well developed topsoil. The lack of evidence of any human activity, especially artefacts, within the proposed boundaries of the Romano-British settlement and the possible Anglo Saxon *burgh*, is marked.

7.1.4 It is only possible to speculate on reasons for the absence of artefacts within this very restricted area. It may be that settlement was located along the street frontages and that areas to the rear of the occupied strip were uncultivated and were maintained, much as in the present day, as pasture land.

8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

8.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project currently under the project code **108360**. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

8.1.2 All archive elements will be marked with the project number or accession number, and a full index will be prepared.

8.2 Archive

8.2.1 The complete site archive, comprising paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, has been prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Salisbury Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014b).

8.2.2 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> has been completed and submitted. A copy of this is included as **Appendix 2** of this report. A finalised version of this report will be uploaded in .pdf format on completion in conjunction with selected



photographic images of the fieldwork. A paper copy of the finalised report will also be included with the project archive.

8.3 Security Copy

- 8.3.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), a security copy of relevant written records has been prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

8.4 Copyright

- 8.4.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms with *the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003*.
- 8.4.2 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

9 REFERENCES

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10 APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1: Stratigraphic sequence

Trench 1			
Context	Category	Description	Depth (m)
101	<i>Modern overburden</i>	Tarmac and modern make-up. Overlies 102.	0.00-0.20
102	<i>Topsoil</i>	Mid grey silt with rare flint inclusions. Some bioturbation. Diffuse interface with 103.	0.20-0.45
103	<i>Layer</i>	Mid brown silt, occasional chalk flecks. Overlies 104.	0.45-0.68
104	<i>Natural</i>	Pale yellow-brown gravel. Occasional chalk flecks.	0.68+
No archaeological features or deposits observed			



10.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form

OASIS ID: wessexar1-210970

Project details

Project name	Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School, Wiltshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Arthur Williams Consulting Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Stratford sub-Castle Primary School (centred on NGR 413113, 132392) in advance of two extensions to the existing building. The site lay within the limits of a former Romano-British settlement (Sorviodunum), which may have become an Anglo Saxon burgh. The watching brief, which was maintained during the excavation of foundation trenches, demonstrated that the stratigraphic sequence comprised a topsoil and modern overburden, which overlay undisturbed fluvial gravel. No artefacts, archaeological deposits or features were recorded. The watching brief was undertaken 15th - 24th April 2015.
Project dates	Start: 15-04-2015 End: 24-04-2015
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	108360 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WILTSHIRE SALISBURY SALISBURY Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School, Wiltshire
Postcode	SP1 3LL
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 13113 32392 51.0901594365 -1.81274305896 51 05 24 N 001 48 45 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body



Project design originator Wessex Archaeology

Project director/manager Caroline Budd

Project supervisor PA Harding

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum

Digital Archive ID 108360

Digital Contents "Survey"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"

Paper Archive recipient Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum

Paper Archive ID 108360

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Diary", "Report"

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Watching brief location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: General site shot, from the north-west



Plate 2: General site shot, from the south



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Plate 3: Sample section, with concrete foundations



Plate 4: Sample section, as excavated

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