

**SAMUEL LUCAS PRIMARY SCHOOL,
GAPING LANE,
HITCHIN
HERTFORDSHIRE.**

NGR: TL 179 293

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Report No. 916
October 2013



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Quality Assurance

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SUMMARY

On the 15th October 2013 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Samuel Lucas Primary School, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 179 293). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Mansell Balfour Beatty.

The project comprised the excavation and recording of four trenches across a proposed development area.

No archaeological finds or features were present within the trenches.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology on 15th October 2013 on land at Samuel Lucas Primary School, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 179 293). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Mansell Balfour Beatty.
- 1.2 The project was conducted in accordance with the approved Specification, prepared by CgMs Consulting (2013), and IfA *Standards and Guidance on Archaeological Evaluation* (2008).
- 1.3 The code of conduct of the Institute for Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission has been granted for a two storey 10 classroom block, hall, car parking, covered walking/ramp/steps, playing field, landscaping and other related development within an area currently used as a playing field.
- 2.2 In accordance with NPPF (2012), the Archaeological Officer for Hertfordshire Council advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation was to be undertaken in order to enable the impact of the new development to be fully assessed.
- 2.3 At the time of the evaluation the site was a school playing field, which was situated within a topography which sloped gently downwards from west to east. The underlying geology comprises *Melbourn Rock Member* – Chalk (Geology of Britain - BGS on-line viewer).
- 2.4 A Saxon pot is recorded as having been found in the north western corner of the study area, although the Hertfordshire HER records that it was found in the garden of a house in Gaping Lane. The main archaeological potential of the site was, therefore, for the presence of evidence relating to the Saxon period. This did not prejudice the evaluation against features and finds associated with other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. This would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
 - ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
 - iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
 - iv) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Four trenches were excavated across the proposed development area, as shown in Figure 2. The Specification required that each trench should measure 15m by 2m, however, due to on-site constraints, it was necessary to excavate trenches which measured 18m by 1.6m, giving a total excavation area of approximately 115m².
- 4.2 Non-significant overburden was removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB type mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil tips were visually scanned for finds.
- 4.3 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Specification and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 **Trench 1** measured 18m long by 1.6m wide. Natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 0.69m (70.39m OD) below the current ground level and comprised a chalk with patches of orange brown flint gravels. The natural deposits were overlaid by a mid orange brown clay sand flint (103), up to 0.29m thick, which contained a single sherd of chinaware and occasional fragments of CBM and brick. This was sealed by a compacted chalk layer (102), up to 0.11m. Layer (102) was subsequently overlaid by a dark brown clay sand topsoil (101), up to 0.30m thick. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.

- 5.2 **Trench 2** measured 18m long by 1.6m wide. Natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 1.05m (69.76m OD) below the current ground level and comprised a degraded chalk with patches of orange brown flint gravels. The natural deposits were overlain by a mid orange brown clay sand flint (203), up to 0.34m thick, which contained occasional fragments of CBM. This was sealed by a compacted chalk layer (202), up to 0.36m. Layer (202) was subsequently overlaid by a dark brown clay sand topsoil (201), up to 0.35m thick. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.
- 5.3 **Trench 3** measured 18m long by 1.6m wide. Natural deposits were encountered at a depth of 0.82m (70.65m OD) below the current ground level at the southwest end and 1.99m (69.09m OD) at the northeast end, and comprised a degraded chalk with patches of orange brown clay. The natural deposits were overlain by a mid orange brown clay sand gravel (304), which was 0.45m thick at the southwest end and 1.05m thick at the northeast end. Layer (304) contained rare inclusions of charcoal and CBM. This was overlaid by a dark brown clay sand (303), which was approximately 0.20m thick throughout the trench and contained frequent CBM fragments. This was sealed by a compacted chalk layer (302), which was 0.20m thick at the southwest end and 0.49m thick at the northeast end. This was then overlaid by a dark brown clay sand topsoil (301), which was 0.17m thick at the southwest end and 0.25m thick at the northeast end. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.
- 5.4 **Trench 4** measured 18m long by 1.6m wide. Natural deposits were encountered at an average depth of 0.65m (70.74m OD) below the current ground level and comprised a degraded chalk with patches of beige sandy chalk. The natural deposits were overlain by a light brown clay sand flint (402), up to 0.38m thick, which contained occasional inclusions of charcoal and CBM. This was overlaid by a dark brown clay sand topsoil (401), up to 0.29m thick. No archaeological finds or features were present within this trench.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1 No archaeological finds or features were present within the trenches.
- 6.2 There was no evidence for significant Modern truncation of natural deposits within the trenches; however, the consistent occurrence of CBM, including brick, within deposits located directly above the natural substrates suggested that at least parts of the site had previously been stripped and subsequently backfilled/levelled with made ground, possibly as part of former groundworks associated with the construction of the school and the playing field.
- 6.3 The archaeological potential for the site is therefore considered to be low.

- 6.4 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with the North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service under the Accession Code SLS13. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

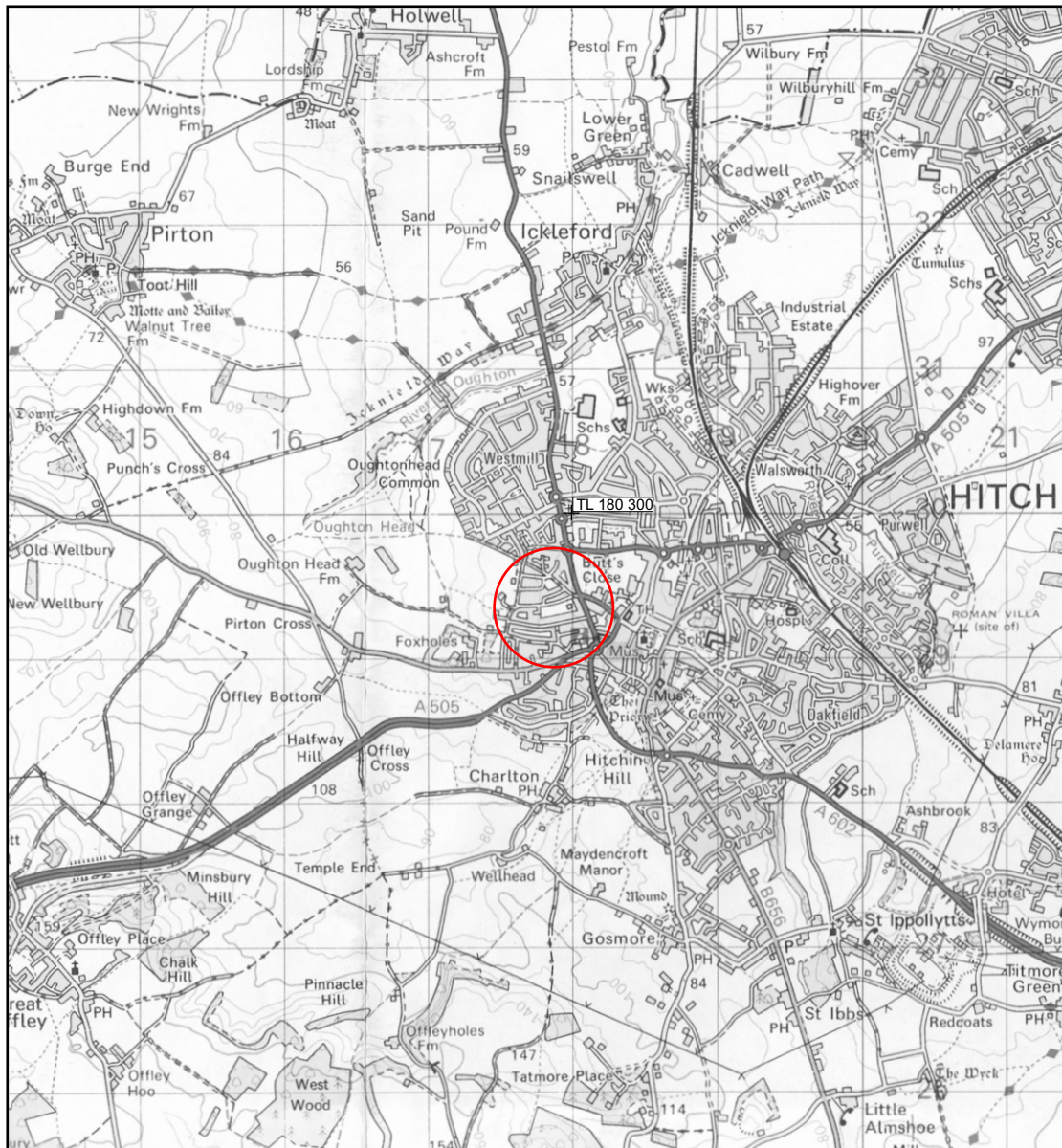
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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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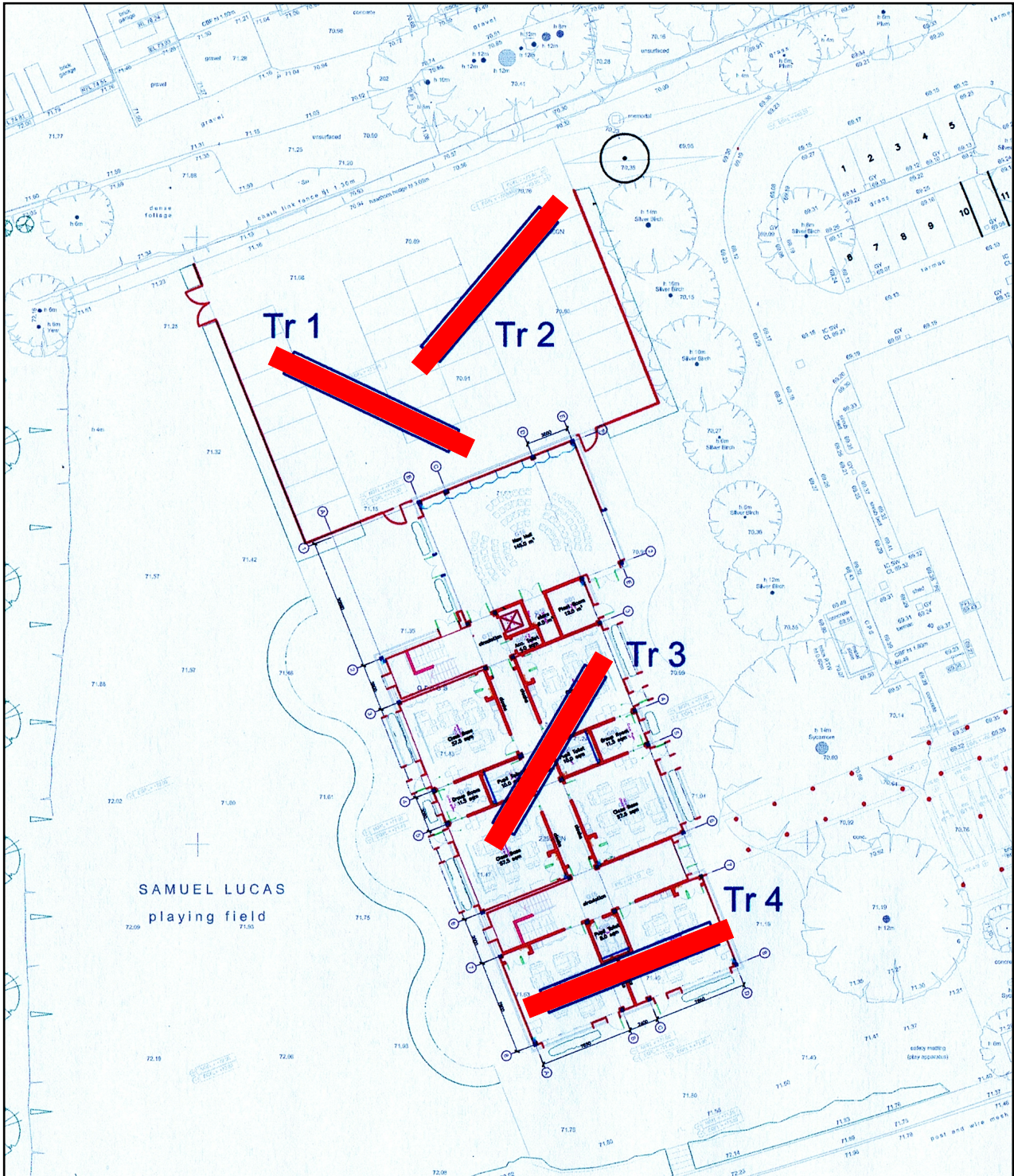
Site Code: SLS13
Accession Code: SLS13

N

0m 2km

1:50,000@A4

FIGURE 1: Site Location



Site Code: SLS13
Accession Code: SLS13

N

Original Trench Locations
 Final Trench Locations

0m 20m

1:500@A4

FIGURE 2: Trench Locations