

**GILES PRIMARY SCHOOL  
ST. MARTIN'S WAY  
STEVENAGE  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**NGR: TL250262**

**ON BEHALF OF CGMS CONSULTANCY LTD.**



**Report No. 972**

**May 2014**



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**



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**Quality Assurance**

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

Author: Dr Mark Grahame BA PhD.

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

Approved: Roy King BA MifA

QA Checked: Tracy Michaels BSc AIfA

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## **SUMMARY**

Between 6<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief and evaluation at Giles Primary School, St. Martin's Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL250262) (Figures 1 and 2) in relation to the development of two new buildings and the creation of a hard play area and all-weather pitch.

The watching brief observed the mechanical stripping of the hard play area and the all-weather pitch, which did not penetrate to the natural. The evaluation trenches penetrated into the natural geology, which showed no sign of having been disturbed. The only feature observed was in Trench 3. The profile of the feature suggests that it may have been tree throw and not an archaeological feature. Neither the watching brief nor the evaluation trenches revealed any finds or features that pre-dated the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 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.

### *DMV*

Deserted Medieval Village

### *LOE*

Limit of excavation

### *Medieval*

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and c. 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.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey.

### *Post-medieval*

The period from c. AD 1500 onwards.

### *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.

### *Romano-British*

Term used to define the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated AD 43 to c. AD 410.

### *Saxon*

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Between 6<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief and evaluation at Giles Primary School, St. Martin's Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL250262) (Figures 1 and 2).
- 1.2 The brief was to excavate four 10 m x 2 m evaluation trenches and undertake an intensive watching brief on the proposed hard play area and all-weather pitch as shown on Figure 2. These works were commissioned by Rob Bourn of CgMs Consulting Ltd.
- 1.3 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Rob Bourn of CgMs Consultancy Ltd. (2013). The WSI conformed to the principles of NPPF (2012), the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008) and the brief issued by Stevenage Borough Council.
- 1.4 This document presents the findings of the archaeological watching brief and evaluation and it complies with the specification set out in MoRPHE (English Heritage, 2006).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The site is located to the north of St. Martin's Way and to the west of Durham Road, Stevenage in an area of residential housing. The two school buildings are to the east of the site with playing fields, which were under turf, to the west. The land slopes away gently to the west.
- 2.2 The site's bedrock geology is *Lewes Nodular* and *Seaford Chalk* formations, while the superficial deposits are clay with flints formation - clay, silt, sand and gravel (BGS online viewer).
- 2.3 Planning permission (2/0591-13 (CC0769)) has been granted for the for the development of two new buildings and the creation of a hard play area and all-weather pitch at Giles Primary School.
- 2.4 Condition 19 attached to the planning application required an archaeological field evaluation of the site before any development commenced and the subsequent monitoring of all groundworks.
- 2.5 The site has not been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment. Discussions between CgMs and Hertfordshire County Council indicated that the site is in an area of archaeological interest and contained a hedge that marked an important boundary.
- 2.6 The site therefore contained the potential for the presence of archaeological remains from all periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief 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; as well as to make recommendations for management of the resource, including further archaeological works if necessary.
- 3.2 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were:
- i) To determine, as far as was reasonably practicable, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
  - ii) To assess the vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains;
  - iii) To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological deposits and features encountered;
  - iv) To assess the impact of previous land use on the site;
  - v) To establish the potential for significant environmental deposits;
  - vi) To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed;
  - vii) To inform the formulation of a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains;
  - viii) To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Hertfordshire HER.
- 3.3 The field evaluation was conducted within the general parameters defined by the IfA's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (as revised) and Research and Archaeology Revisited: A revised Framework for the East of England, (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24, 2011).

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 A total of four evaluation trenches were excavated within the proposed development area as shown on Figure 2. The location of the trenches was altered at the request of the contractors so that they would correspond to the planned footings. All amendments to the trench locations were agreed with the archaeological advisor to Stevenage Borough Council.

- 4.2 The topsoil was removed mechanically under the supervision of the attending archaeologist down to the level of the subsoil. This was achieved through the use of a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter, further reduction and excavation within the evaluation trenches was undertaken manually by the attending archaeologists.
- 4.3 The reduction of the ground surface on the hard play area and all weather pitch was undertaken through the use of a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. The groundworks were supervised by the attending archaeologist.
- 4.4 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

## **5 RESULTS**

### **Hard Play Area and All-Weather Pitch**

- 5.1 The hard play area and all-weather pitch were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.15 m. The purpose of the excavation was to provide a stable ground surface, which could then be built up to a height of 0.30m to provide a level surface for both areas.
- 5.2 At the limit of excavation (LOE) the subsoil was a red-brown, plastic clay-silt with occasional patches of dark mottling. Occasional flecks of charcoal and fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) were present in the surface of the deposit. Root holes were present, particularly in the hard play area.
- 5.3 A deposit of beige-brown, friable, sandy-silt was above the subsoil, which varied in depth across both areas from 0.15m to 0.30 m. The topsoil was covered with turf.

### **Trench 1**

- 5.4 The trench was 10 m by 1.5 m and was oriented north-south. It excavated to a depth of 0.35 m. An orange-brown, slightly plastic, clay-silt, which contained abundant inclusions of unworked flint and natural chalk, along with patches of red-brown clay, was present at the LOE. This deposit was devoid of charcoal, CBM or finds and appeared to be natural geology.
- 5.5 Two subsoils were present above the natural. The lower subsoil was 0.25 m deep and consisted of a light brown-orange, slightly plastic, clay-sand with occasional flecks of charcoal and occasional fragments of CBM. The upper subsoil was 0.1 m and consisted of a dark grey, plastic, clay-sand with frequent inclusions of flint and occasional fragments of CBM. No finds were present in either deposit.



- 5.6 A modern, southwest-northeast ceramic drain, as shown in Figure 3, was removed during the excavation.

### **Trench 2**

- 5.7 Trench 2 was 10 m by 1.9 m and was orientated north-south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.37 m. The same sequence of soils above the natural observed in Trench 1 was also present in Trench 2. The lower subsoil was 0.25 m deep and contained occasional flecks of charcoal and fragments of CBM. The upper subsoil varied in depth between 0.08 m and 0.12 m, and contained frequent inclusions of flint and occasional fragments of CBM. No finds were present in either deposit.

### **Trench 3**

- 5.8 Trench 3 was 8.5 m by 1.5 m and was orientated north-south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.57 m. An orange-brown, slightly plastic, clay-silt, which contained abundant inclusions of unworked flint and natural chalk, along with patches of red-brown clay, was present at the LOE. This deposit was devoid of charcoal, CBM or finds and appeared to be natural geology.
- 5.9 Two subsoils, ((303) and (302)), and a topsoil (301) were present above the natural. Context (303) was 0.22 m deep and consisted of a yellow-orange, slightly plastic, clay-silt with frequent inclusions of unworked flint and occasional flecks of charcoal and fragments of CBM. No finds were present.
- 5.10 Context (302) was 0.12 m deep and was composed of a yellow-orange, friable, sandy-silt with occasional flecks of charcoal. No finds were present.
- 5.11 The topsoil (301) was 0.23 m deep and consisted of a brown-grey, friable sandy-silt without either charcoal or CBM. No finds were present.
- 5.12 **Feature [304]** was the only feature present Trench 4 (Figure 3). It consisted of a roughly circular cut [304] through the natural with sloping sides and a slightly rounded base with possible root holes. The sides of the feature were steep to the south, but more gently sloping to the north. The cut contained a single fill (305), which was 0.28 m deep and comprised a light, yellow-brown, plastic clay-sand, which contained occasional unworked nodules of flint. No charcoal or finds were present. It was sealed by context (303).
- 5.13 A modern, southwest-northeast drain, which cut into the natural, was observed in the southwest corner of the trench. A second east-west modern (ceramic) drain, which also cut into the natural, was present in the north end of the trench. These are both shown on Figure 3.

### **Trench 4**

- 5.14 Trench 4 was 10 m by 1.5 m and was oriented north-south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.64 m. An orange, reddish brown, plastic clay-silt was present at the LOE. It contained abundant inclusions of unworked flint and natural chalk.

The deposit was devoid of charcoal, CBM and finds and appeared to be natural geology.

- 5.15 Two subsoils were present above the natural. The lower subsoil was 0.23 m deep and consisted of a grey-brown, plastic clay-silt. The upper subsoil was 0.28 m deep and consisted of a light brown, plastic clay-silt. No charcoal, CMB or finds were present in either deposit.
- 5.16 Above the subsoils was a 0.13 m deposit of topsoil. It consisted of a grey-brown, friable sandy-silt without either charcoal or finds.
- 5.17 A modern service (telephone cable), which cut the natural, ran east-west across the southern end of Trench 4. A modern pipe, oriented northwest-southeast, which also cut through the natural, was observed in the centre of the trench.
- 5.18 The remnants of an east-west, modern path were observed cutting through the topsoil and subsoils. The modern features observed in Trench 4 are shown on Figure 3.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The watching brief observed the mechanical stripping of the hard play area and all-weather pitch. Only the turf and topsoil was removed. The flecks of charcoal and CBM present in the subsoil suggest modern disturbance and that the subsoil observed was possibly made ground. Root holes also indicate disturbance to the subsoil by vegetation, which had been cut down prior to the commencement of the watching brief.
- 6.2 The evaluation trenches penetrated into the natural geology, which showed no sign of having been disturbed. The presence of occasional flecks of charcoal and CBM in the subsoils indicate modern disturbance, perhaps during the construction of the existing school buildings and the digging of trenches for the modern services present in Trenches 1, 3 and 4, and the laying of the modern path observed in Trench 4.
- 6.3 The only feature observed was in Trench 3. The profile of the feature, with the south side steep and the north side sloping more gently and a pointed base with possible rooting suggests that the feature may have been tree throw and not an archaeological feature.
- 6.4 Neither the watching brief nor the evaluation trenches revealed any finds or features that pre-dated the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 6.5 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with the appropriate museum. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2012. *National Planning Policy Framework*.

English Heritage. 2006. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*.

Institute for Archaeologists. 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

*Written Scheme of Investigation*, 2014. CgMs Consultancy Ltd.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

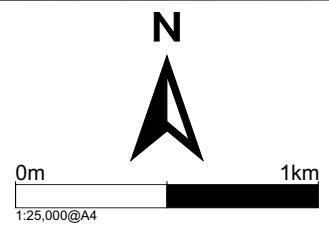
Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Rob Bourn of CgMs Consultancy Ltd., the Archaeological Service of Stevenage Borough Council and the site manager and groundworkers at Giles Primary School for their assistance during the course of this project.



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**Accession Code:**

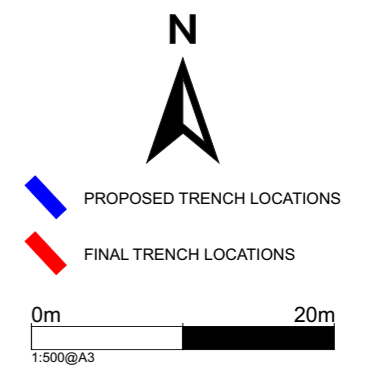


**FIGURE 1: Site Location**



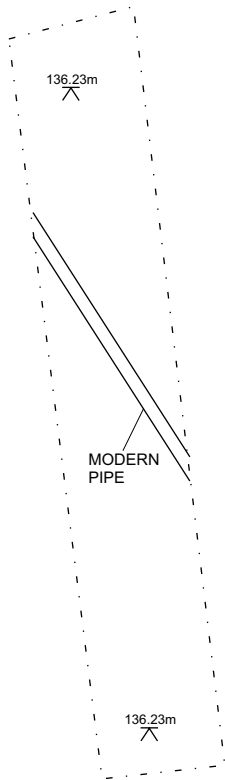
Watching brief  
down 300mm +/-  
strip formation level.

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**FIGURE 2: Trench Location Plan**

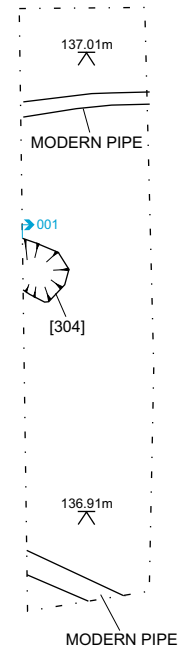
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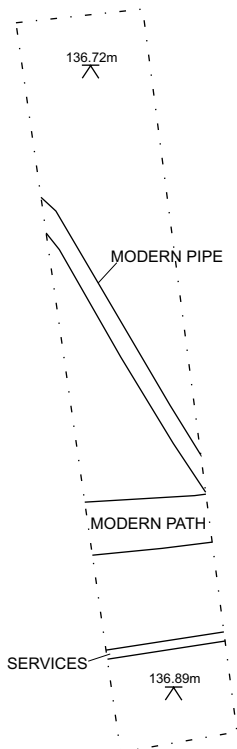
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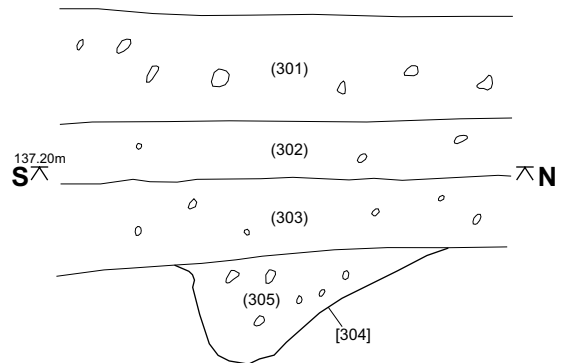
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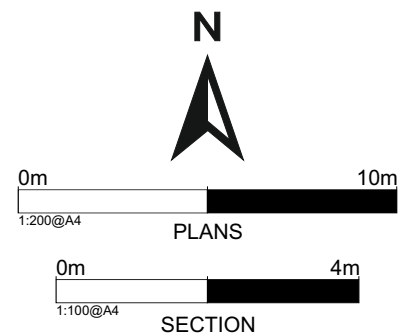
**TRENCH 4**



**001: EAST FACING SECTION [304]**



**Site Code: GPS14**  
**Accession Code:**



**FIGURE 3: Plans and Section**