

**ENTRANCE EXTENSION SITE
C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL
SCHOOL STREET, GREAT CHESTERFORD
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

May 2012

ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD/ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: Entrance Extension site, C of E Primary School, School Lane, Great Chesterford	
Parish: Great Chesterford	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 50725 42825	Site Code: GC53
Type of Work: Monitoring & Recording	Site Director/Group: M. Atkinson, ECC FAU
Date of Work: 02/05/12 - 08/05/12	Size of Area Investigated: approx 55sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding source: Client
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos: 25385, 46542
Final Report: EAH summary	OASIS Ref: 125576
Periods Represented: Post-medieval, ?medieval (or earlier)	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>The contractor's excavation of foundation trenches for an extension to the school was monitored. The new entrance extension site was located on the north side of the building, at what is already the main entrance into the school, in between the junior library and office/music rooms. The site was previously occupied by a tarmac path leading from the playground, with an adjacent area of grass and shrubs.</p> <p>The c.0.6m-wide wall foundation trenches were machine-cut to a depth of c.1.0-1.1m (plate 1). These exposed a sequence of silt deposits underlying the modern tarmac surface and bedding layers or else underlying a c. 0.4m thickness of turf and disturbed garden soil.</p> <p>In the southeast corner, alongside the library building, an area of clean re-deposited chalk was found directly under a c.0.4m thickness of modern rubble bedding for the path (Plate 2, background).</p> <p>Exposed in southwestern and western parts of the foundation trenching was a 0.4m-thick layer of mid brown clayey silt over a 0.35-0.45m deposit of dark brown clayey silt that contained tile fragments, charcoal flecks and grey ?ashey lenses. These were evidently of post-medieval date but likely predated the original school construction. They were cut by a roughly constructed modern soakaway pit, filled with brick rubble, into which a number of rainwater drains from the surrounding buildings fed (plate 2, foreground). While the full depth of the dark brown silt was not established along the southern side, to the west it bottomed onto a lighter greyish brown clay/silt at a depth of c.1.0m below ground surface (plate 3). This also contained small tile fragments and occasional charcoal flecks. Being a firmer deposit, it is possible that this was a decent in situ deposit, though probably still of post-medieval date. Its nature and depth was not further explored.</p>	
(continued)	

The deposit sequence exposed within the northern part of the trenching was distinctly different. The dark silt deposits observed to the south became increasingly less substantial, overlying an earlier deposit that became increasingly lighter in colour and texture (plate 4). At the northern extreme, this was an orangey brown sandy silt c.0.4m thick, more-or-less directly under the topsoil and overlying light brown-yellow natural clay (over chalk?) encountered at a depth of c.0.8m below ground surface. The orangey brown silt contained occasional fragments of peg tile, charcoal flecks and rare whole cow leg bones and oyster shells.

A further foundation pit was cut in the approximate middle of the site to a depth of c.0.7m, but only revealed the presence of the upper mid brown silt evident to the south (plate 1).

Oddly, no pottery or other diagnostic dating evidence was retrieved from any of the exposed deposits. While the presence of tile, some of it with peg holes, suggests that the whole sequence was probably post-medieval, it remains possible that the lighter-coloured deposits at the north end of the site could be earlier - perhaps medieval.

It is suspected that all of these deposits occupied a single large hollow or cut, with the lighter-coloured silts representing relatively early accumulations within it and the dark silts perhaps being the result of deliberate infilling or at least more rapid accumulation in wet conditions. The centre of this feature is located at or beyond the south edge of the site. The northern edge of this feature probably lies only a short distance to the north of the site - the orangey nature of the silts here being judged to derive from erosion of its cut edge in the natural deposit. It is possible that remains of earlier date may also be present to the north, though it is noted that no residual artefacts of medieval or earlier date were observed in the topsoil.

It is tempting to speculate that this is all part of the fill sequence of a pond or quarry pit. A pond was reportedly filled prior to the construction of the school in 1844-9. No evidence of Roman pits, similar to those found c.25m to the east in 2003, was encountered.

No finds were collected from site and retained.

Previous Summaries/Reports:

Turner, C. 2003 *Great Chesterford Primary School, School Street, Great Chesterford, Essex: Archaeological Assessment Report*, Heritage Network rep. 211

Author of Summary: M. Atkinson

Date of Summary: 10 May 2012



Plate 1. General view of groundworks, looking south



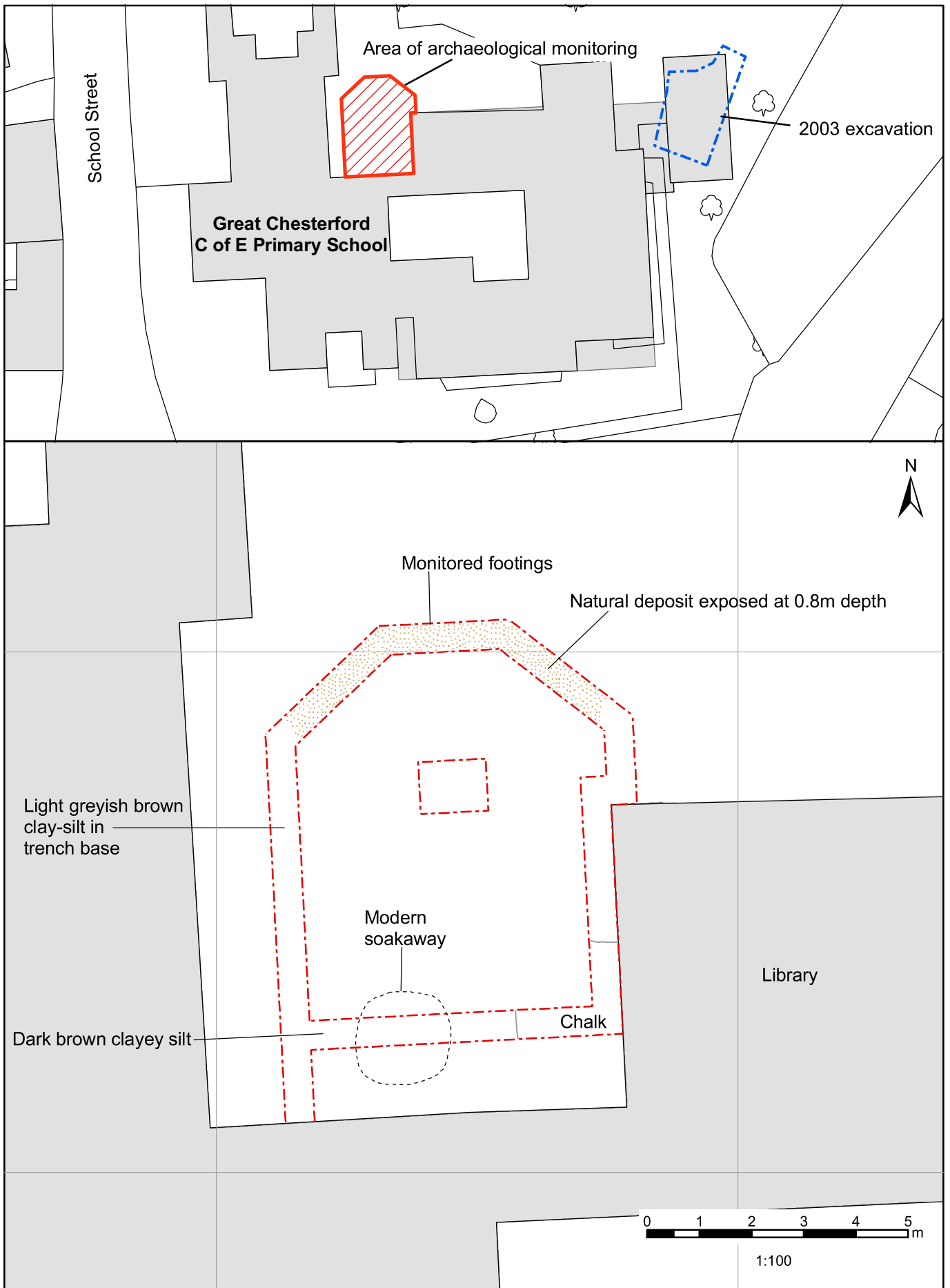
Plate 2. South foundation trench, looking east



Plate 3. West foundation trench, looking north



Plate 4. South Trench, looking northeast



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Fig.1. Location of archaeological monitoring