

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Mid Sussex Special School,
Burgess Hill, West Sussex**

**NGR 531242 118495
(TQ 31242 18495)**

Planning Ref:WSCC/084/10

**Project No:4519
Site Code: SSS10**

**ASE Report No.2011188
OASIS id:106224
Burgess Hill Museum: Archive accepted.**

**Sarah Porteus
With contributions by
Luke Barber, Trista Clifford and Elke Raemen
Illustrations by Justin Russell**

August 2011

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Abstract

A watching brief was maintained by Archaeology South-East on behalf of Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd during ground works associated with the construction of the Mid Sussex Special School. Groundworks revealed topsoil overlying a subsoil, heavily truncated in places, overlying the natural Weald Clay substrate. A single feature associated with the removal of a tree stump relating to a probable old field boundary in the late 19th or early 20th century was identified.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by Wilmott Dixon Constructing Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of the Mid Sussex Special School and grounds, Burgess Hill, West Sussex (Fig. 1, NGR531242 118495).

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 According to current data from the British Geological Survey the Superficial geology of the site is Weald Clay formation and the underlying bedrock is mudstone (BGS2011)
- 1.2.2 The site occupies a flat area of grass playing fields bisected by a tree lined grass avenue.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 The site lies within the archaeologically sensitive area associated with the Roman Road from London to Portslade. Planning permission was granted by West Sussex County Council (reference WSCC/084/10) subject to the following archaeological condition Condition 13 states:

"No ground excavations, landscaping works or infrastructure works pursuant to the planning permission will commence on the site until the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with the Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which has been submitted to the County Planning Authority and agreed in writing. Ground excavations involving removal of topsoil on site to be observed by an archaeologist(s), so that any archaeological Heritage Assets may be suitably sampled and recorded, and the findings made public."

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The general objective of the work is to monitor groundworks associated with the development in order to:

„ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards" ASE 2010

- 1.4.2 The specific aim of the work is to identify if any evidence of features or structures associated with the Roman road between London and Portslade remain.

1.5 Scope of Report

- 1.5.1 This report represents the findings of the watching brief undertaken by Kathryn Grant and Sarah Porteus between the 6th of April and 28th of July 2011. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The archaeological background is summarised from information contained within the written scheme of investigation (ASE 2010).

2.2 Prehistoric: 450 000BC – AD42

2.2.1 Mesolithic and late Neolithic /Early Bronze Age activity was identified at Maltings Farm (Butler 1998) and land between Eastlands Farm and Locks Manor (Sawyer 1999). A scatter of probable Mesolithic flints have been recovered from a site to the east at Birchwood Grove School (ASE 2008b).

2.3 Roman AD42-409

2.3.1 The Roman Road between London and Portslade runs is believed to follow the western edge of the playing field and has been observed close to Burgess Hill. Romano-British activity has also been identified to the north east of Burgess Hill at Theobalds Road (ASE 2008a).

2.4 Saxon and Medieval AD410-1539

2.4.1 Saxon pottery has been recovered from Maltings Farm (Butler, *ibid*). The site lay within the medieval free chase of Frekebergh comprising of woodland and belonging to the lords of the Lewes Barony (Warne 1985). The woodland began to be separated into enclosures as early as the 13th or 14th century.

2.5 Post-Medieval AD1540-present

2.5.1 The division of the wooded area into enclosures was completed by the 17th or 18th century (Warne *ibid*.) The main post-medieval town of Burgess Hill expanded in the 19th century with the site being mainly fields gradually encroached by development and in use as school playing fields in the modern period.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 The written scheme of investigation initially proposed the monitoring of the following areas:

- Topsoil and overburden strip for the main building
- Excavation of lower cut-off legs of play equipment in the small play ground
- Creation of car parking area and temporary construction compound
- The Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)
- New play area between trees and the Synthetic Turf Pitch (STP)
- The main entrance

3.1.1 Following liaison with John Mills (Senior Archaeologist West Sussex County Council) it was decided that following monitoring of bullet points 1, 2, 6 and part of the STP limited potential remained and points 2, 4 and 5 were not monitored. Three exploratory test pits excavated within the STP were also monitored.

3.2 Stripping of the car park, entrance way and school building areas was undertaken using a flat bladed bucket and taken down in spits of 10 centimetres and monitored at all times by a suitably qualified archaeologist. Excavation of part of the STP were undertaken using a bulldozer.

3.3 The stripped area was inspected for finds and the spoil heap inspected at regular intervals to recover artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.

3.4 Where possible features were identified sufficient time was allowed for investigation by the monitoring archaeologist before work recommenced.

3.5 A full digital photographic record was maintained during the works.

3.6 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded on pro-forma context recording forms.

3.7 ASE informed Burgess Hill Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated and it was agreed that the archive would be accepted. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Burgess Hill museum in due course. Burgess Hill Museum does not give out archive accession numbers. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	5
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	1 digital CD
Bulk finds	1 small box
Registered finds	0

Environmental flots/residue	0
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Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1** The stratigraphy varied across site but was broadly similar. The basic stratigraphy comprised the „natural“ Weald Clay substrate [002] overlain in places by a probable plough soil [003], a loose orangish brown silty clay with occasional flint inclusions with average 0.20m thickness which was overlain by a mid brown silty clay topsoil [001] of consistent 0.15m thickness containing post-medieval pottery possibly introduced through ploughing prior to or during levelling for playing fields. Cut into the „natural“ [003] was a patchy shallow uneven feature with likely root holes in the base [004] over an area of 2.20m north to south and 1.20m east to west, the feature was filled by [004] a loose black and orange deposit containing scrap iron and glass and in situ burning, the feature is likely to be a burned and grubbed out tree root and follows the line of an existing northwest to south east tree line.
- 4.2** The subsoil appeared to have been truncated to the north of the site in the area of the new buildings by the levelling of the area for temporary classrooms excavations here immediately revealed the Weald Clay indicating removal of upper stratigraphy historically.
- 4.3** Subsoil remained in the area of the new car park and was found to be thickest (0.30m) beneath the trees to the east of the site by the new entrance, perhaps suggesting build up of material around a field boundary preserved by the tree line.
- 4.4** The area of the STP was retained some evidence of a subsoil of 0.20m thickness and moderate quantities of post-medieval pottery within the topsoil.

List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Thickness
001	Dep	Topsoil	N/A	N/A	0.15
002	Nat	Weald Clay	N/A	N/A	N/A
003	Dep	subsoil	N/A	N/A	0.30
004	Cut	Tree bowl	2.20	1.20	0.03
005	Fill	Fill of tree throw	2.20	1.20	0.03

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 A small collection of finds was recovered during the watching brief at Sussex Special School, Burgess Hill. The assemblage is quantified in Table 1 below

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	Fe	Wt (g)	Glass	Wt (g)	Cu Alloy	Wt (g)
1	11	318						
4			1	32	2	64		
3	6	448			1	52	1	8
Total	17	766	1	32	3	116	1	8

Table 1 Quantification of finds

5.2 The post-Roman pottery by Luke Barber

5.2.1 The archaeological work recovered a small assemblage of pottery from two contexts. Both groups contain material that can be placed between c. 1875 and 1925 and no definite older material, residual or otherwise, is present in the assemblage.

5.2.2 Context [1] produced 11 sherds including both coarsewares and table/tea wares. The three pieces of English stoneware (188g) are from a light grey shouldered preserve jar and large shouldered bottle with Bristol glazed tan top and impressed beaded decoration on the shoulder. The bulk of the group consists of transfer-printed wares. These include a range of table wares (mainly plates) with black (2/32g), blue (1/15g) or green (2/15g) floral designs. There is also a single polychrome transfer-printed side plate with the design on an Asiatic bird standing in a flowering tree. The underside of this piece carries the remains of a stamp and hand-painted batch number along with a green transfer-printed flower motif similar to (but not the same as) 1920s marks of the Shaw & Copestake pottery at Longton. The only other sherds consist of two refined white earthenware pieces with green all over glaze from a hemispherical carinated vessel.

5.2.3 Context [3] produced a smaller assemblage of six sherds but of very similar make-up to that in [1]. Two English stoneware vessels are represented (2/396g). One is a cylindrical preserve jar with close-set vertical ribbing and string groove, the other a small (55mm diameter base) probable ink bottle with illegible circular stamp near its base. With the exception of a refined white earthenware door/draw knob the remaining pieces are transfer-printed wares. These consist of plates with brown foliage and black pattern designs (2/10g) and a probable jug with blue landscape design (1/9g).

5.3 The Metalwork by Trista Clifford

5.3.1 A length of iron wire was recovered from context [4]. It is modern in date. Context [3] contained an unidentified fragment of copper alloy, probably of late post medieval to modern date.

5.4 The Glass by Elke Raemen

- 5.4.1 The assemblage consists of three glass fragments (wt 115g) recovered from two individually numbered contexts. Included are an aqua glass jar stopper ([003]; di. 53mm) of late 19th- to early 20th-century date, a 20th-century clear glass window pane fragment (2.9mm thick) and a clear glass milk bottle fragment. The latter is again of 20th-century date and retains the partial embossing "(...)ODGATE" across the body.

7.0 DISCUSSION

- 7.1** The archaeological watching brief revealed the stratigraphy of the site to comprise Weald Clay substrate overlain by subsoil with a topsoil containing a moderate amount of late post-medieval pottery.
- 7.2** It is thought the fields may have been ploughed prior to being grassed for use as playing fields or possibly a quantity of topsoil was imported to explain the presence of moderate quantities of post-medieval pottery within the topsoil.
- 7.3** A line of trees running north west to south east to the side of the new entrance way is thought to have previously extended further to the north west based upon the identification of a burned and grubbed out tree stump. The tree is likely to have been removed in the early 20th century based on finds recovered from the fill. The thickness of subsoil noted in the area of the new entrance along side the remaining trees may indicate build up of leaf matter related to an old field boundary preserved by the remaining trees.
- 7.4** The deposits to the north of the site in the area of the new school had been substantially truncated during recent insertion of mobile class rooms.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** The watching brief did not reveal any significant finds or features of archaeological interest. Evidence was found for the continuation of a possibly field boundary removed in the early 20th century and partly preserved in a line of trees to the south east of the site.
- 8.2** Following the lack of finds or features of archaeological interest the watching brief was called off following monitoring of approximately 50percent of the area to be affected. The watching brief uncovered no evidence to suggest activity within the area before the later post-medieval period.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd for commissioning the work and John Mills of West Sussex County Council for his continued guidance throughout the project.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	SSS10					
Identification Name and Address	Mid Sussex Special School, Burgess Hill,					
County, District &/or Borough	West Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	531242 118495					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4519					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field ✓	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 06/04/2011- 28/07/2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Wilmott Dixon					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Sarah Porteus					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>A watching brief was maintained by Archaeology South-East on behalf of Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd during ground works associated with the construction of the Mid Sussex Special School. Groundworks revealed a plough soil, heavily truncated in places, overlying the natural Weald Clay substrate. A line of trees is thought to mark a field boundary which once previously extended to the north west with remaining trees removed in the early 20th century.</i></p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-106224

Project details

Project name	Mid Sussex Special School, Burgess Hill, West Sussex
Short description of the project	A watching brief was maintained by Archaeology South-East on behalf of Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd during ground works associated with the construction of the Mid Sussex Special School. Groundworks revealed topsoil overlying a subsoil, heavily truncated in places, overlying the natural Weald Clay substrate. A single feature associated with the removal of a tree stump relating to a probable old field boundary in the late 19th or early 20th century was identified.
Project dates	Start: 06-04-2011 End: 28-07-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SSS10 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	4519 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status (other)	archaeologically sensitive
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX MID SUSSEX BURGESS HILL Mid Sussex Special School
Postcode	RH15 9DZ
Study area	400.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3124 1849 50.9503220476 -0.131420489920 50 57 01 N 000 07 53 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South-East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Sarah Porteus
Type of sponsor/funding	Developer

body

Name of sponsor/funding body
Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient
Burgess Hill Museum

Physical Archive ID
SSS10 site code

Physical Contents
'Ceramics','Glass'

Physical Archive notes
Currently housed at archaeology south-east in Portslade, due to be deposited at Burgess Hill museum when space is available

Digital Archive recipient
Burgess Hill Museum

Digital Contents
'none'

Digital Media available
'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Archive recipient
Burgess Hill Museum

Paper Contents
'none'

Paper Media available
'Context sheet','Report'

Project bibliography
1

Publication type
Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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Porteus, S.

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© Archaeology South-East		Mid Sussex Special School	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4519	Aug 2011	Site location	
Report Ref: 2011188	Drawn by: JLR		



↑ Archaeology South-East		Mid Sussex Special School, Burgess hill	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4519	Aug 2011	Plan of monitored works	
Report Ref: 2011188	Drawn by: JLR		

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