

**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Smarden Primary School,
Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent**

**NGR: 588337 142499
(TQ 88337 42499)**

**ASE Project No: 6640
Site Code: SMD 14**

**ASE Report No: 2014197
OASIS ID: archaeol6-181209**



Simon Stevens BA (Hons) MfA

Illustrations by Rob Cole

June 2014

**Archaeological Evaluation Report
Sarden Primary School
Pluckley Road, Sarden
Kent**

**NGR: 588337 142499
(TQ 88337 42499)**

**ASE Project No: 6640
Site Code: SMD 14**

**ASE Report No: 2014197
OASIS ID: archaeol6-181209**

Simon Stevens BA (Hons) MIfA

June 2014

**Archaeology South-East
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830
Fax: 01273 420866
Email: fau@ucl.ac.uk**

Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Wates Construction to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent

Three trial trenches were mechanically excavated at the site to a cumulative length of 30m in late May 2014. The area was found to have been subjected to extensive groundworks during the construction of a playground in the 1990s. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered and no artefacts were recovered from the overburden.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

HER Summary
OASIS Form

TABLES

- Table 1: Quantification of site archive
- Table 2: Trench 1 - list of recorded contexts
- Table 3: Trench 2 - list of recorded contexts
- Table 4: Trench 3 - list of recorded contexts

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Site location
- Figure 2: Trench plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Wates Construction to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent (NGR 588337 142499; Figure 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site comprises a level playground to the rear of the existing complex of school buildings which lay to the south. The playground is surrounded by soft landscaping, with some mature trees. The village cricket ground lies to the west.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey, the underlying bedrock is Weald Clay. There is no recorded superficial geology (BGS 2014).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 It is understood that planning consent is being sought from Ashford Borough Council for the construction of a new block at the school. Following early consultation, Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group (KCCHCG) (Ashford Borough Council's advisers on archaeological issues) recommended that the archaeological potential of the site might be addressed by maintaining a watching brief for the duration of the groundworks.

1.3.2 However, following liaison between KCCHCG, Wates Construction and ASE, it was agreed that an archaeological evaluation of the site in advance would negate the risk that unforeseen archaeology might pose to the construction programme. This work was carried out on the understanding that if archaeological remains were found to be present that a suitable programme of mitigation work will take place.

1.3.3 Consequently ASE prepared a *Specification* for the archaeological evaluation of the site (ASE 2014) by mechanically excavated trial trenches, which was approved by KCC in advance of the commencement of work. The document laid out the methods to be used at the site and the possibility that further archaeological work might be considered necessary to allow the discharge of any subsequent planning condition.

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 The current report provides the results of the archaeological evaluation of the site by the mechanical excavation of trial trenches carried out in late May 2014. The on-site work was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist) and by Liz Chambers (Assistant Archaeologist). The project was managed by Paul Mason (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift (Post-Excavation Managers).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 An appraisal of the archaeological background of Smarden was undertaken as part of a recent community archaeology project (Lewis and Ranson, 2012). The following summary is taken from this, with due acknowledgement.
- 2.1.2 In essence, there is little evidence of prehistoric activity in the general area, except for limited flint scatters. Evidence of Romano-British activity is limited to ironworking sites some distance from the village itself. No Anglo-Saxon remains are known from the Smarden area.
- 2.1.3 The development of Smarden can be traced back to the 13th and 14th centuries, its wealth (reflected in the size of the parish church) based on the cloth industry of the Weald rather than on ironworking. The village was granted a market charter in 1333, showing its significance in the local economy.
- 2.1.4 The results of the community archaeology project suggest that the medieval and post-medieval centre of the village was to the west of the school, as it is today. This conclusion was supported by the discovery of pottery and coins in test pits in the gardens of a number of properties (*ibid.*) and the presence of numerous listed post-medieval buildings.
- 2.1.5 The original school buildings date from the 19th century, with various later additions.

2.2 Project Aims and Objectives

- 2.2.1 The broad aims of the evaluation given in the ASE *Specification* (ASE 2014) were:

'To assess the character, extent, preservation, significance, date and quality of any such remains and deposits

To assess how they might be affected by the development of the site

To establish the extent to which previous groundworks and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the site

To assess what options should be considered for mitigation

Investigation of the site also has the potential to address the following research priorities identified in the draft South East Research Framework:

'The interaction between town and country in the medieval period

To contribute to the study of agricultural buildings and practices in the post-medieval period

To contribute to the study of public utilities in the post-medieval period'

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The location of the trenches set out in the *Specification* was altered to avoid damage to an overhanging tree. The resulting pattern still provided good coverage of the site (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 The location of each of the trenches was scanned prior to excavation using a CAT scanner. The trenches were then excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision of staff from Archaeology South-East.
- 3.1.3 The mechanical excavation was taken down to the top of 'natural' geological deposits. Care was taken not to damage potential archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation. Revealed surfaces of the 'natural' geology were manually cleaned in an attempt to identify archaeological features. Spoil was scanned for the presence of artefacts, both visually and with a metal detector.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 At the present time Ashford Museum is not in a position to accept archaeological archives. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE in Portslade, East Sussex. The contents of the archive are tabulated below.

Number of Contexts	18
No. of files/paper record	1
Photographs	10 digital images

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

Three trial trenches each measuring 10m in length and 1.6m in width were mechanically excavated at the site. The stratigraphic sequences were similar in each of the trenches. They consisted of the tarmac surface of the playground which had been laid on a deposit of *Type 1* aggregate, which in turn overlies a deposit of tarmac scrapings laid on a *terram* sheet. This had been laid on a layer of redeposited clay levelling, which directly overlies the natural orange and grey 'Weald Clay.

4.1 Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Max. Deposit Thickness mm
1-001	Layer	Tarmac	Trench	Trench	90mm
1-002	Layer	Type 1	Trench	Trench	150mm
1-003	Layer	Tarmac Scrapings	Trench	Trench	270mm
1-004	Layer	Terram Sheet	Trench	Trench	<10mm
1-005	Layer	Levelling	Trench	Trench	140mm
1-006	Layer	Weald Clay	Trench	Trench	N/A

Table 2: Trench 1 - list of recorded contexts

4.1.1 Trench 1 was excavated to a depth of 730mm (23.21mAOD) at the western end and to 540mm (23.40mAOD) at the eastern end at which the surface of the Weald Clay was encountered and mechanical excavation ceased. No archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were recovered from the various layers of overburden.

4.2 Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Max. Deposit Thickness mm
1-001	Layer	Tarmac	Trench	Trench	90mm
1-002	Layer	Type 1	Trench	Trench	70mm
1-003	Layer	Tarmac Scrapings	Trench	Trench	330mm
1-004	Layer	Terram Sheet	Trench	Trench	>10mm
1-005	Layer	Levelling	Trench	Trench	50mm
1-006	Layer	Weald Clay	Trench	Trench	N/A

Table 3: Trench 2 - list of recorded contexts

4.2.1 Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 690mm (23.45mAOD) at the southern end and to 530mm (23.36mAOD) at the northern end at which the surface of the Weald Clay was encountered and mechanical excavation ceased. No archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were recovered from the various layers of overburden.

4.3 Trench 3

Context	Type	Description	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Max. Deposit Thickness mm
1-001	Layer	Tarmac	Trench	Trench	90mm
1-002	Layer	Type 1	Trench	Trench	140mm
1-003	Layer	Tarmac Scrapings	Trench	Trench	140mm
1-004	Layer	Terram Sheet	Trench	Trench	>10mm
1-005	Layer	Levelling	Trench	Trench	420mm
1-006	Layer	Weald Clay	Trench	Trench	N/A

Table 4: Trench 3 - list of recorded contexts

- 4.3.1 Trench 3 was excavated to a depth of 660mm (23.40mAOD) at the western end and to 760mm (23.30mAOD) at the eastern end at which the surface of the Weald Clay was encountered and mechanical excavation ceased. No archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were recovered from the various layers of overburden.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

5.1.1 The mechanical excavation and recording of the trial trenches revealed a straightforward stratigraphic sequence, resulting from recent groundworks at the site.

5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

5.2.1 The consistency of the level of the surface of the 'natural' Weald Clay (only varying from 23.21mAOD to 23.45mAOD) and the character of the overlying deposits (including the complete absence of topsoil and subsoil horizons) show that the site had been subject to intrusive groundworks at the time of the construction of the playground in the 1990s (plaque in the school).

5.3 Discussion of archaeological remains by period

5.3.1 There were no surviving archaeological deposits, features or finds.

5.4 Potential impact on archaeological remains

5.4.1 It appears likely that the entire area of the proposed new block was stripped during the previous works, and although there were no indications of a wholesale removal of 'natural' Weald Clay, it is suspected that any shallow potential archaeological deposits would have been removed at this time.

5.5 Consideration of research aims

5.5.1 Given the absence of surviving archaeological deposits, none of the research aims could be addressed.

5.6 Conclusions

5.6.1 No archaeological deposits, features or finds were encountered during the archaeological evaluation. The site has been heavily truncated during construction of the school and playground which has resulted in the removal of all topsoil and subsoil as well as the top of the underlying natural clay.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ASE 2014. *Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8ND Specification for Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpub. ASE document

BGS 2014. British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain Viewer, accessed 11.06.2014

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Lewis C. and Ranson, C. 2012. *Archaeological test pit excavations in Smarden, Kent*. Unpub. Access Cambridge Archaeology Report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank Wates Construction for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and Wendy Rogers, Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council for her guidance and monitoring. The evaluation was directed by Simon Stevens. The author would like to thank Liz Chambers who worked on the evaluation; Rob Cole who produced the figures for this report; Paul Mason who project managed the evaluation and Jim Stevenson and Dan Swift who project managed the post-excavation process.

HER Summary

Site Code	SMD 14					
Identification Name and Address	Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden					
County, District &/or Borough	Ashford Borough, Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	588337 142499					
Geology	Weald Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	6640					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓					
Type of Site				Other Existing Playground		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 28.05.2014 – 29.05.2014					
Sponsor/Client	Wates Construction					
Project Manager	Paul Mason					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary						
				None		
<p>Summary</p> <p>Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA), Institute of Archaeology (IoA), University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Wates Construction to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent</p> <p>Three trial trenches were mechanically excavated at the site to a cumulative length of 30m in late May 2014. The area was found to have been subjected to extensive groundworks during the construction of a playground in the 1990s. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered and no artefacts were recovered from the overburden.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-181209

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Smarden Primary School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent
Short description of the project	Three trial trenches were mechanically excavated at the site to a cumulative length of 30m in late May 2014. The area was found to have been subjected to extensive groundworks during the construction of a playground in the 1990s. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered and no artefacts were recovered from the overburden.
Project dates	Start: 28-05-2014 End: 29-05-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	6640 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SMD 14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

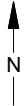
Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT ASHFORD SMARDEN Smarden Primary School
Postcode	TN27 8ND

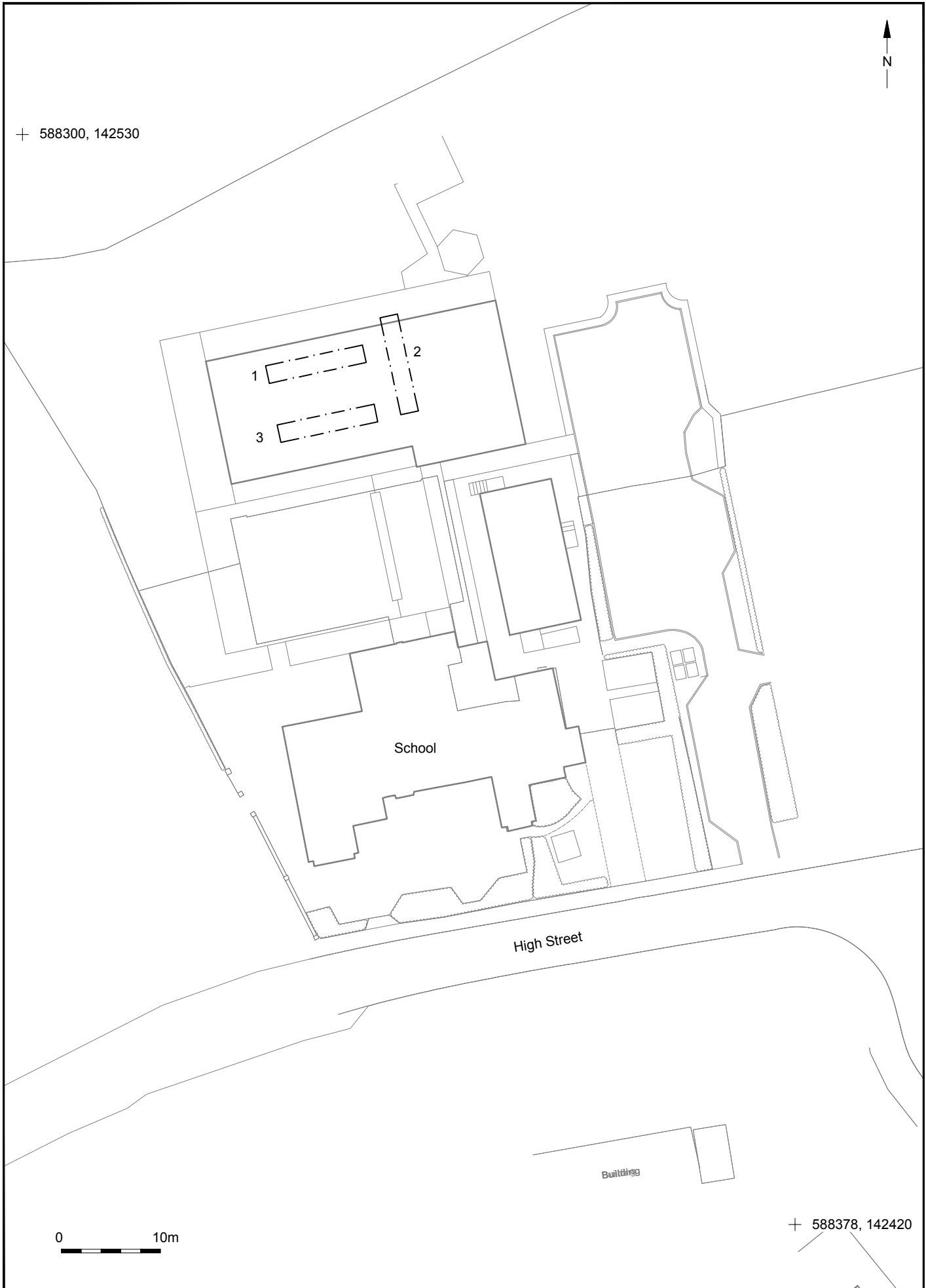
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Portslade, East Sussex
Description	Standard ASE client report. A4-sized with cover logos.
Entered by	Simon Stevens (simon.stevens@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	11 June 2014



© Archaeology South-East		Smarden Primary School, Ashford	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 6640	June 2014	Site location	
Report Ref: 2014197	Drawn by: RHC		



+ 588300, 142530



0 10m

+ 588378, 142420

© Archaeology South-East		Swarden Primary School, Ashford		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 6640	June 2014	Trench location		
Report Ref: 2014197	Drawn by: RHC			



Trench 1 facing east



Trench 2 facing north



Trench 3 facing east

© Archaeology South-East		Smarden Primary School, Ashford	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 6640	June 2014	Photographs	
Report Ref: 2014197	Drawn by: JLR		

Sussex Office

Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex BN41 1DR
tel: +44(0)1273 426830
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.archaeologyse.co.uk

Essex Office

The Old Magistrates Court
79 South Street
Braintree
Essex CM7 3QD
tel: +44(0)1376 331470
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.archaeologyse.co.uk

London Office

Centre for Applied Archaeology
UCL Institute of Archaeology
31-34 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PY
tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
web: www.ucl.ac.uk/caa

