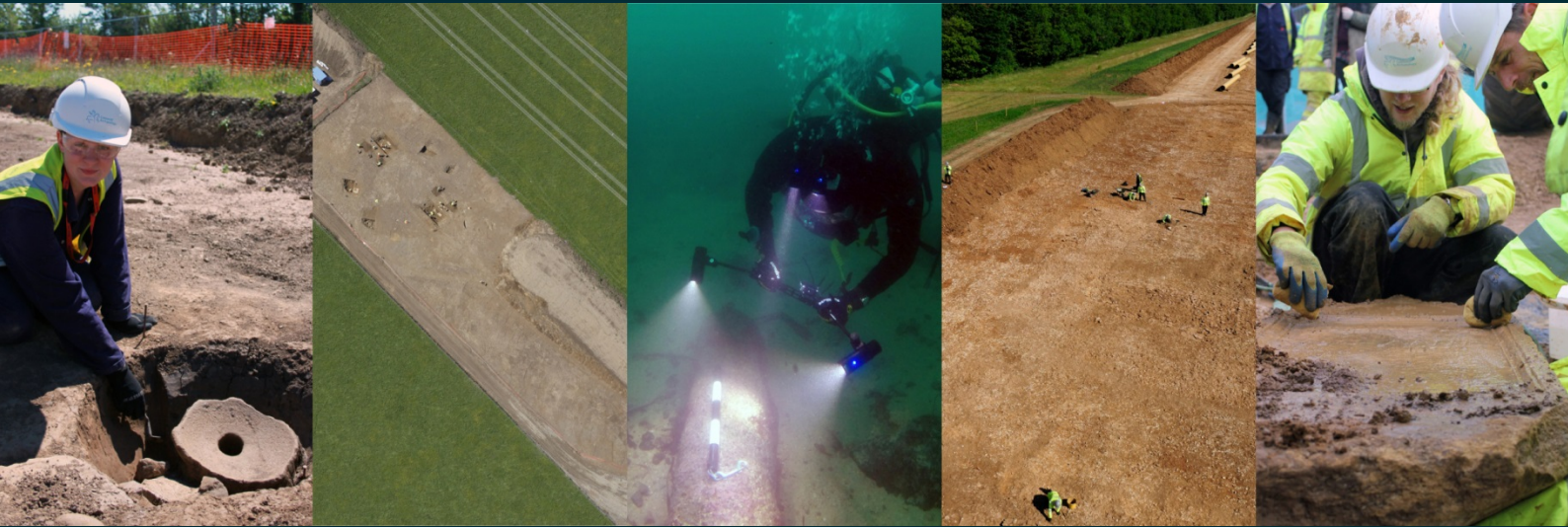


Leighton Park School Reading Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
Armour Heritage Ltd

CA Project: 770364
Report Number: 16200
April 2016



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Archaeological Evaluation

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	6
4. METHODOLOGY	7
5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3).....	9
6. DISCUSSION.....	9
7. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	10
8. REFERENCES.....	10
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	11
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM.....	12

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	Site location plan (1:25,000)
Figure 2	Trench location plan showing archaeological features (1:2000)
Figure 3	Photographs of Trenches 1 and 2



SUMMARY

Project Name: Leighton Park School
Location: Reading, Berkshire
NGR: SU 73220 71464
Type: Evaluation
Date: 29 March 2016
Planning Reference: 152304
SMC:
Location of Archive: Berkshire Museums Service
Accession Number:
Site Code: LEPS 16

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in March 2016 at Leighton Park School. Two trenches were excavated.

No features of archaeological significance were identified during the trial trench evaluation.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2016 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Armour Heritage Limited at Leighton Park School, Reading, Berkshire (centred on NGR: SU 73220 71464; Fig. 1) hereafter referred to as the 'Site'. The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application (Ref. 152304, condition 7) for the construction of new foyer facilities associated with an existing theatre and single storey teaching block and the creation of a new parking area and improved landscaping to the front of the Old School building.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a *brief* for archaeological evaluation prepared by the Archaeological Officer at Berkshire Archaeology (AOBA), the archaeological advisor to Reading Borough Council, and with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by Armour Heritage Ltd. (2016) and approved by the AOBA. The fieldwork also followed guidance outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE, English Heritage 2006), *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014). It was monitored by Sue Farr of Armour Heritage Ltd via emailed photographic updates.

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 0.32ha, and comprises Leighton Park School Theatre, a temporary portacabin, protected trees and school playing field. The Site lies at approximately 78m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.4 The underlying geology of the Site is described by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as London Clay Formation, comprising clay, silt and sand, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 34 to 56 million years BP. Superficial geological deposits are recorded as River Terrace Deposits: sand and gravel, formed up to 3 million years BP in the Quaternary Period. This appeared to be mostly accurate with some patches of gravel, but otherwise predominantly silty clay/clayey silt making up the natural geology.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 2.1 Information on the archaeological and historical background of the Site is taken from the Heritage Statement (Armour Heritage 2015); a rapid appraisal of the archaeological potential, which indicated there were no known significant remains within the Site itself or in close proximity to it.

Archaeological Potential

- 2.6 A rapid appraisal of the archaeological potential of the Site identified no known significant remains within the Site or in very close proximity to it.

Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic (500,000 BC – 2,400 BC)

- 2.7 The main focus of early activity in the area is located further north, closer to the River Thames along the edge of the Thames Valley. The Thames river gravels are known for their Palaeolithic and wider prehistoric potential, and approximately 1.1km north east of the Site at Christchurch Gardens, thirteen hand axes were recovered. Within Redlands gravel pit, some 500m to the north, significant faunal remains (including mammoth teeth) have been identified along with a well-defined stratigraphic sequence. Mesolithic and Neolithic material is sparse, represented by single, isolated artefacts.

Bronze Age (2,400 BC – 700 BC)

- 2.8 A cluster of Bronze Age finds and features are noted approximately 200m to the west of the Site, where pottery, flint artefacts and a disc barrow are recorded. In addition, to the immediate south of the existing theatre, a ring ditch, indicative of Bronze Age funerary activity has been recorded from aerial photography. Within the wider area, a fairly typical pattern of activity for this period is noted, comprising a number of funerary monuments such as barrows and ring ditches, with limited tangible evidence of occupation.

Iron Age, Roman and Anglo Saxon (700 BC – AD 1066)

- 2.9 Iron Age material is similarly sparse, represented by cropmarks indicating possible enclosures some 1.5km to the southeast, and a hoard of currency bars 1km to the northwest of the Site. Romano-British features and a quern stone found at Northcourt Avenue, some 250m to the west of the Site, and a nearby cremation, may indicate a small farmstead. A Romano-British cemetery to the north of the Site

close to the Thames continued in use into the early medieval (Anglo-Saxon) period, with a limited number of stray finds recorded across the wider area indicating low level activity.

Medieval, Post-Medieval and Modern (1066 - 2016)

- 2.10 The Site falls immediately outside the Whiteknights estate, and cropmark evidence suggests some agricultural activity in the area, perhaps associated with either the Abbey, one of the nearby manors or more recently Pepper Farm (see below), which was still active in the early 19th century. Additional cropmark features suggest a ditch or earthwork features to the north of the site, within the Whiteknights campus, which may delineate the historic parish boundary.

Historic map regression and the developmental history of the Site

- 2.11 The earliest mapping accessed for this assessment was the 1756 plan of the Lordship and Liberty of Earley. Whilst only the fields to the east and south of the area of the Site are named and numbered, the Site itself lies within a broad area of land annotated as Pepper Farm.
- 2.13 The earliest mapping accessed which illustrates Leighton Park is the 1877 First Edition Ordnance Survey. This map shows Leighton Park as formal parkland complete with unnamed house – the former Pepper House, possibly now known simply as Leighton Park. The north and south lodges are shown along with the two approaches to the west end of the main drive. Both approaches pass through dense tree cover, as seen today, prior to the house being ‘revealed’ at the convergence of the two drives.
- 2.14 In 1891 School House was extended by the renowned British architect Alfred Waterhouse, with the addition of a gymnasium, a fives court, laboratories and a lecture room. This extension is included in School House’s Grade II Listing.
- 2.15 The 1899 OS illustrates these additional structures, along with a swimming bath to the rear (east) of School House which was added in 1895. This OS edition also illustrates considerable division of land within the school’s grounds, presumably for recreation/sports purposes.

- 2.16 By 1912, very few changes are evident within the school complex. A pavilion is noted between South Lodge and the main east-west drive and the ha-ha and lawn area has been added to the immediate south of School House.
- 2.17 In the period 1915-16, Peckover Hall and the Central Buildings, including the Central Library, were completed, with Townson House renamed from Third House in 1920.
- 2.18 Between the later 1930s and the late 1950s there were few changes evident at the Site. The swimming baths at the rear of School House were covered and extended to include a new gymnasium (1953).
- 2.19 The year 1962 saw the construction of the East Lodge and Fryer House, with new classrooms and the Geography Block added in 1964. Further development is evident in 1964 with the opening later that year of Field House. Reckitt Lodge was added to the school complex in 1970.
- 2.20 The New Hall and Music Centre opened in May 1972 whilst in 1990 the New School House was completed. Modern mapping and site visits indicate that little further development has been completed at the Site.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological fieldwork were to:
- Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the site that might have impacted by the development;
 - Identify within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site in accordance with *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014);
 - Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits;
 - Produce a report which would present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail as to allow an informed decision to be made regarding the Site's archaeological potential, and inform an archaeological mitigation strategy in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The methodology comprised the excavation of two trenches, each 10m in length and 2m wide (Figure 2). Trenches were positioned to investigate areas of greatest impact, including a trench positioned across the proposed car parking extension to the west of New Hall and Music Centre, and a further trench located within the footprint of the proposed extension.
- 4.2 The following methodology was proposed in order to meet the aims and objectives of the evaluation. All works were conducted in compliance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), excepting where they were superseded by statements made below.
- 4.3 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) submitted a Health and Safety Risk Assessment for approval to Armour Heritage prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- 4.4 Armour Heritage Limited took responsibility for consultation and/or document approval with the AOBA and any other key stakeholders.
- 4.5 The two machine excavated trial trenches were excavated, as indicated on Figure 2. A 1% contingency was also included to enable a small extension to the trenches, had archaeological features been partially exposed which required further investigation.
- 4.6 The trenches were laid out using GPS/TST in general accordance with the pattern given on Figure 2. Minor adjustments to the layout were required to take account of the on-site constraints such as services and trees as well as other simultaneous groundworks by other contractors. The trench locations were tied in to the Ordnance Survey. Any amendments to the trench design due to site constraints were agreed with the AOBA via Armour Heritage Limited.
- 4.7 All trial trenching was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator (or equivalent) fitted with a toothless grading bucket under the supervision and control of a qualified site archaeologist. Excavation stopped with the surface of the natural geology or archaeological deposits whichever was encountered first in the stratigraphic sequence.

- 4.8 Where appropriate, the base of each trench was hand cleaned and surveyed to produce a plan of the features within the trenches.
- 4.10 Trenches were completed to the satisfaction of Armour Heritage Limited, the Client and the AOBA, and were backfilled using the excavated material in the approximate stratigraphic sequence in which they were excavated. They were left level on completion. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.
- 4.11 Any variation of the above methodologies was undertaken in agreement with the AOBA.
- 4.12 The general depth of the trenches did not exceed 1m or a safe working depth.
- 4.13 Armour Heritage Limited and CA were afforded reasonable access to all areas of the Site in order to undertake the investigation thoroughly.
- 4.15 Works were undertaken on Monday 4th April, which falls within the Easter school holidays (21st March – 8th April 2016) to limit any disruption to the school.
- 4.16 Site monitoring by AOBA was arranged in advance that if monitoring was not possible, a series of digital images would be forwarded to the AOBA to confirm the initial results.
- 4.17 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using the CA's proforma recording system. A further more general record of the work comprising a description and discussion of the archaeology was to be maintained as appropriate. Context sheets were primarily filled in by the archaeologist excavating the feature or deposit.
- 4.19 A digital photographic record was maintained. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the Site as a whole.
- 4.20 A complete drawn record of features and deposits was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (in general, 1:20 for plans, 1:10 for

sections), and with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

- 4.21 The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels was calculated and plans/sections were annotated with OD heights. All plans and sections were drawn on polyester based drafting film and clearly labelled.
- 4.22 The Contractor will ensure that the complete site archive including finds and environmental samples are kept in a secure place throughout the period of excavation and post-excavation works.

5. RESULTS (FIGURES 2-4)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are presented in Appendix A.
- 5.2 Both trenches had to be moved due to services and protected trees and only revealed modern ceramic land drains. A layer of modern made ground was found at the east end of **Trench 1** likely associated with the north-south aligned service, 2m to the east of the trench.

Stratigraphy

- 5.3 The natural geology varied from a yellow silt/clay with patches of gravel on the east side of the site to a light grey/brown compact clay/silt on the western side of the site and was recorded at depths of between 0.32m to 0.42m below present ground level (bpgl). Overlying this was mid grey/brown silt/clay subsoil at a depth of 0.1m bpgl and above this subsequently a dark brown/black clayey silt topsoil. The made ground in **Trench 1** overlay the subsoil, lying as a similarly thick layer at approximately the same level.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified during the evaluation, reinforcing the low anticipated archaeological potential identified by the desk-based assessment. A lot of ground water was evidently retained by the

geology on site which might historically have been a deterrent to significant activity in the area.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Jeremy Clutterbuck, assisted by Adam Howard. The report was written by Jeremy Clutterbuck. The illustrations were prepared by Leo Heatley. The archive has been compiled by Andy Donald, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Richard Greatorex and Damien De Rosa

8. REFERENCES

AH (Armour Heritage) 2015 *Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire: Heritage Statement for Proposed Development Options* (Ref: AH258)

AH (Armour Heritage) 2016 *Leighton Park School, Reading, Berkshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation* (Ref: AH375)

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 9 March 2016

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



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown/black compact clayey silt with frequent bioturbation	>10	>2	0.1	Modern
1	101	Layer		Made Ground	Red brick rubble in a topsoil matrix	>5	>2	0.22	Modern
1	102	Layer		Subsoil	Mid greyish brown compact silty clay	>10	>2	0.22	
1	103	Layer		Natural	Light greyish brown compact clayey silt	>10	>2	0.18	
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey firm clayey silt with frequent bioturbation	>10	>2	0.1	Modern
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey moderately compact clayey silt with rare sub angular flint	>10	>2	0.32	
2	202	Layer		Natural	Light yellow silty clay with frequent patches of gravel (sub rounded ≤30mm flint)	>10	>2	0.05	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Leightons Park School, Reading, Berkshire	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in March 2016 at Leightons Park School. Two trenches were excavated. No features of archaeological significance were found during the trial trench evaluation.	
Project dates	29.03.16	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Leightons Park School, Reading, Berkshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	0.32ha	
Site co-ordinates	SU 73220 71464	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Armour Heritage	
Project Manager	Richard Greatorex	
Project Supervisor	Jeremy Clutterbuck	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Berkshire Museums Service	None
Physical		None
Paper		Context sheets, matrices
Digital		Database, digital photos and suvey data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Leightons Park School, Reading, Berkshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i>		

Andover Office

Stanley House
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5LH

t: 01264 347630

Cirencester Office

Building 11
Kemble Enterprise Park
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 6BQ

t: 01285 771022

Exeter Office

Unit 53
Basepoint Business Centre
Yeoford Way
Marsh Barton Trading Estate
Exeter
EX2 8LB

t: 01392 826185

Milton Keynes Office

41 Burners Lane South
Kiln Farm
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK11 3HA

t: 01908 564660