

Stanground College, Peterborough

An Archaeological Evaluation



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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**



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Between the 16th and 19th January 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within the grounds of Stanground College, Peterborough. A 200m of trench was excavated which contained no features of archaeological significance and demonstrated a high degree of truncation associated with the construction of the college in the 1960's.

INTRODUCTION

Location and Topography

The development area is situated within the grounds of Stanground College lying east of Peterborough Road, and south of Wittlesey Road, Stanground, Peterborough. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay overlain by till and glacial lacustrine deposits (British Geological Service 1995). The excavated trenches were located to the east and south of the current Stanground College complex, within sports fields and tarmac tennis/ netball courts, (TL 20329/ 96017 (approx. centre)), (figure 1).

Archaeological and Historical Background.

A Desk Based Assessment (DBA), including an aerial photographic assessment was carried out for the site (Appleby 2008); the results of which only need to be summarised here.

The aerial photographic assessment revealed the presence of surviving medieval ridge and furrow within the wider landscape of the development area but not in the evaluation area. Archaeological excavations, evaluations, surveys and material find-spots within the wider vicinity have identified earlier prehistoric activity from the Palaeolithic (hand axe) and Neolithic (flint scatters), with Bronze Age activity being represented by a ring ditch c500m to the north-west and Bronze Age food vessel recovered from brick pits 400m north and 700m east of the current evaluation. A Bronze Age Urnfield cemetery of 19 cremation burials was excavated approximately 1km south east of the development area prior to the construction of a bypass (Taylor & Aaronson 2006, Kenny 2007). A grouping of early and late Iron Age settlement features associated with a palaeochannel approximately 1 km north west of the current evaluation was excavated in the early 20th century during brick clay extraction (Leeds 1905) and extensive geophysical surveys (Upson-Smith 2003) have identified linear features likely to be of a later prehistoric date to the immediate south-east of the evaluated area.

Roman and Romano-British activity possibly representing a large settlement or village within the vicinity of the development was identified as overlying and potentially developing from the Iron Age settlement to the north west, whilst to the west and south east discrete scatters of Romano-British pottery recovered during fieldwalking suggest a more widespread use if not occupation of the wider landscape (Upson-Smith 2003).

Medieval land use close to the current evaluation is attested to from the widespread ridge and furrow recorded during the aerial photographic survey, mostly located immediately south, north and north west of the college; a semi-pile type dwelling containing Late Saxon pottery and Medieval pitcher is suggestive of occupation 500m west of the PDA whilst medieval pottery scatters have been recorded to the south-east (Upson-Smith 2003). A windmill is recorded immediately south west which was likely to have medieval origins.

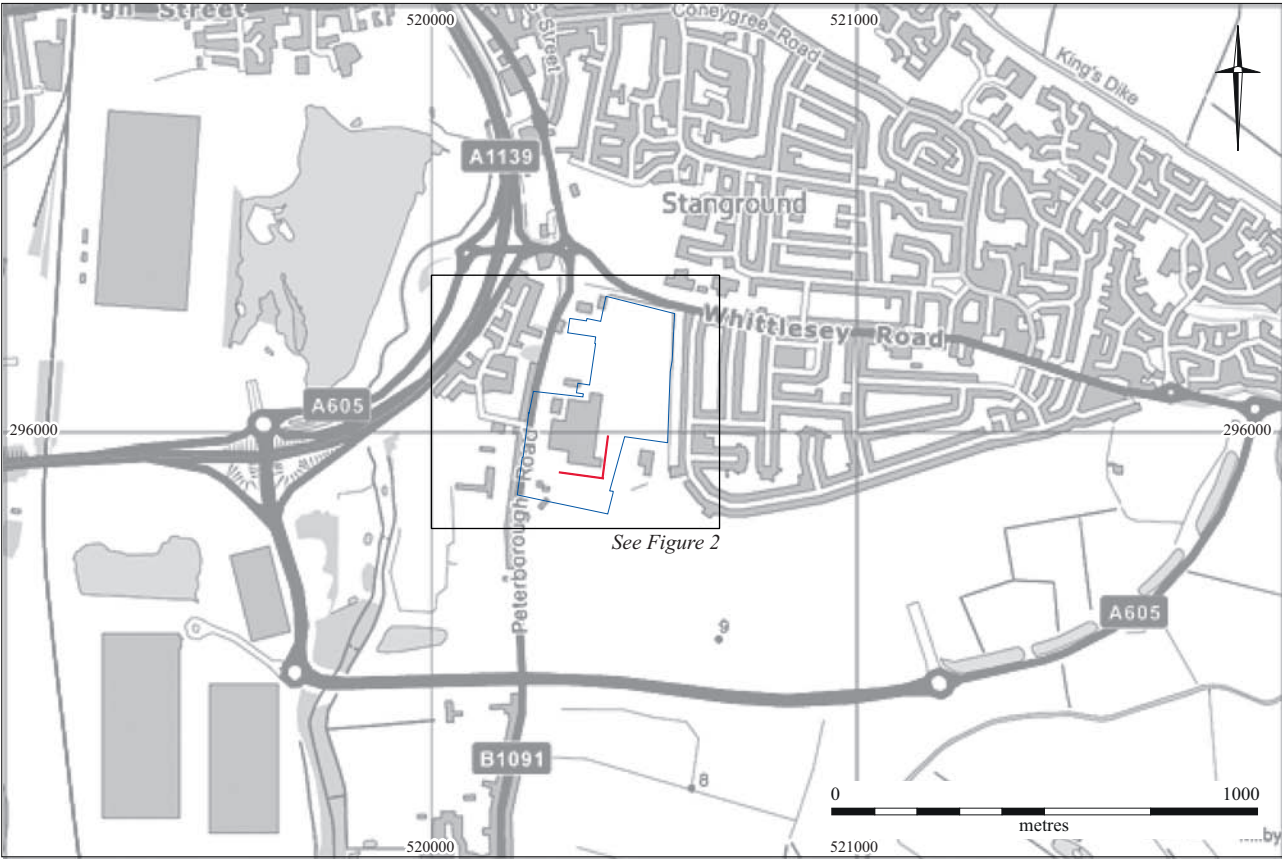
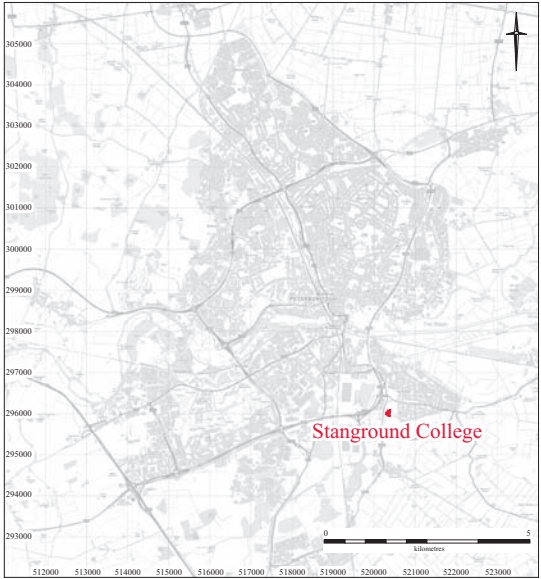


Figure 1. Location map

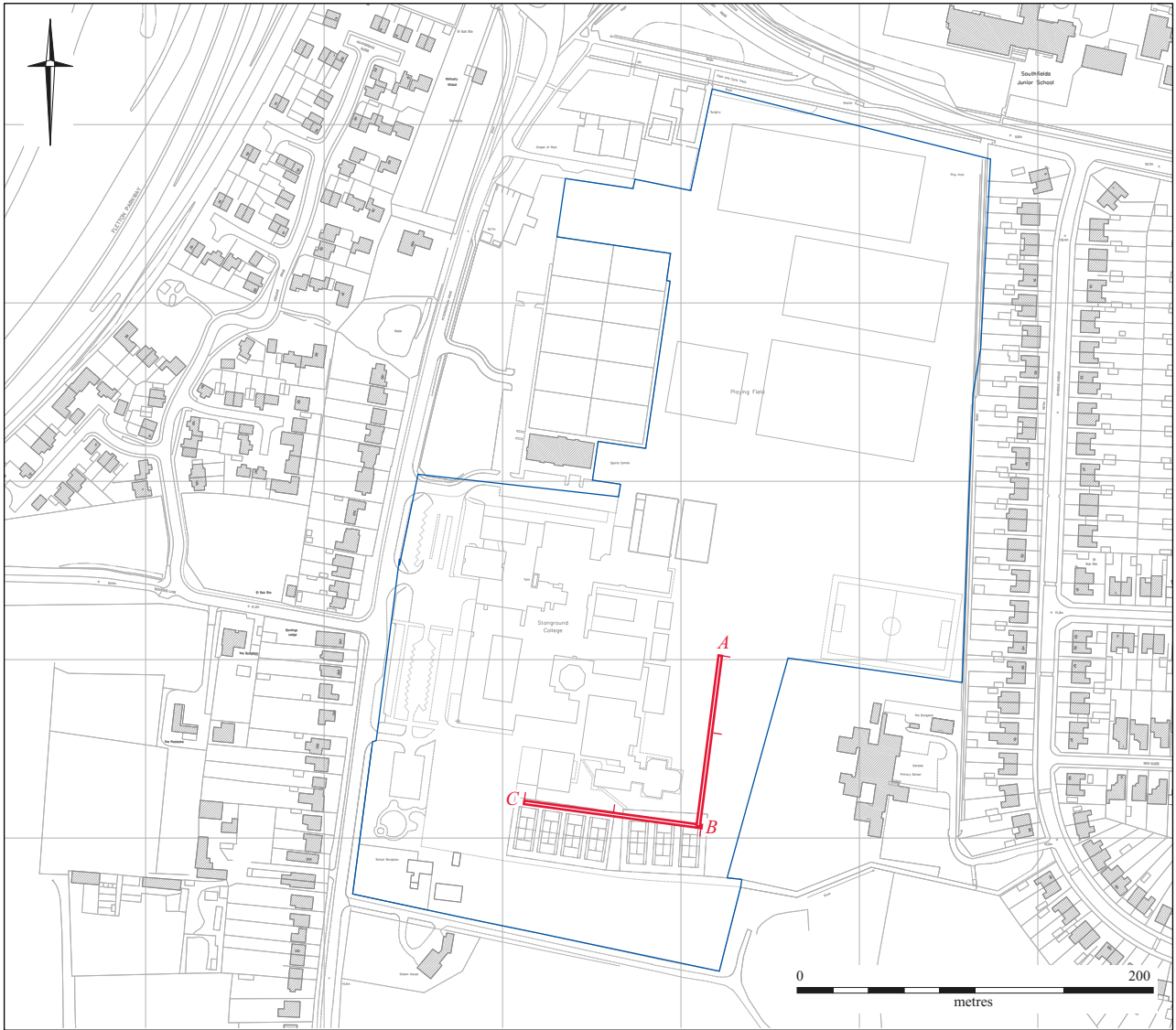


Figure 2. Trench plan and location of recorded profiles

Circumstances of the Project

A condition requiring archaeological investigation was placed on the planning consent for the college construction scheme, and a Brief for Archaeological Evaluation was issued by Rebecca Casa-Hatton (2011), Archaeological Officer for Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (PCCAS). The Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a specified programme of work approved by the PCCAAS, and based on the requirements outlined in the Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (Beadsmoore 2012).

Methodology

A single 'L' shaped trench 200m in length, numbered A-B (north-south) and B-C (east-west) was laid out in accordance with the trench plan issued with the specification, based on the footprint of the proposed construction (figure 2). The trench was machine excavated using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision to the depth of any visible archaeology or to the depth of geological 'natural'. The topsoil/ overburden and any underlying subsoil deposits were kept separate for a full metal detector survey to be carried out.

Any exposed archaeological features were to be planned at 1:50 with further detail recorded at 1:20 or 1:10 as and if needed. Each excavated feature was to be recorded using the CAU modified version of the MoLAS recording system with individual features assigned feature numbers (F.#) and individual stratigraphic sequences assigned context numbers ([context #]) with complementary section drawings at a scale of 1:10. Pertinent features and feature sets were photographed on black and white film, colour slide and digital media. The trench was photographed and a full soil profile was recorded at intervals along it. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2002). The site code is SCP11.

RESULTS

No archaeological features were encountered throughout the length of the excavated trench. Whilst the majority of A-B was seemingly undisturbed by modern activity, being 0.06-0.65m in depth with a thick deposit of topsoil and cultivated turf overlying a compacted sandy clay subsoil, the southern end of A-B and the entirety of B-C had been terraced for the laying of a thick tarmac and gravel hardcore surface 0.3-0.36m in depth a thin deposit of subsoil (maximum 0.14m in thickness) was present within the eastern half of B-C. Further landscaping, likely associated with the original college construction, was present within the western half of B-C, where a notable drop in the modern ground surface of approximately 1.5m appears to have largely truncated the topsoil/ subsoil horizons and dug into the underlying geology, the tarmac and hardcore surface of the modern courts being laid directly on top of natural substrata.

Location in Trench	Topsoil/ Overburden	Subsoil	Trench Depth
Point A	0-0.4m Mid to light grey-brown moderate to loosely compacted silty clay	0.4-0.65m Light brownish-grey firmly compacted sandy clay.	0.65m
Mid A-B	0-0.4m Mid to light grey-brown moderate to loosely compacted silty clay	0.4-0.60m Light brownish-grey firmly compacted sandy clay.	0.6m
Point B	0-0.1m Tarmac 0.1-0.26 Loosely compacted sandy gravel bedding.	0.26-0.4m Light brownish-grey firmly compacted sandy clay.	0.4m
Mid B-C	0-0.1m Tarmac 0.1-0.3m Loosely compacted sandy gravel bedding.	None	0.3m
Point C	0-0.1m Tarmac 0.1-0.36m Loosely compacted sandy gravel bedding.	None	0.3m

Table 1; Soil profiles throughout Evaluation Trench.

Discussion

The composition of the topsoil within the majority of A-B is consistent with the agricultural use of the area until the latter half of the 20th century. Evidence of medieval ridge and furrow or a surviving buried soil was not present however, even though notable quantities of such cropmarks have been identified within the vicinity. The use of deep ploughing and probable ground consolidation associated with the construction of the college sports fields may account for this lack of survival. The remaining two thirds of the evaluated trench showed varying but substantial varying degrees of truncation associated with the school construction. The terracing involved in this construction was evident from the notably contrasting heights of still cultivated farmland to the immediate south of the evaluated area.

The paucity of archaeological finds or features at Stanground College seems surprising, even when such large amounts of truncation were evident, given the indications of extensive use of the landscape further to the west and southeast in the

prehistoric and Roman periods. This suggests a landscape in the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods with areas of intensive settlement divided by generally clear hinterlands, as seen close to the fen edge elsewhere locally (eg. Evans 1992, 1993) and regionally (Evans et al 2008).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Stanground College for commissioning the work and Kier Construction (Eastern) for their assistance. Particular thanks to Rebecca Casa-Hatton, Archaeological Officer for Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (PCCAS). The CAU excavation team consisted of the author and Karl Hanson, graphics were prepared by Vicki Herring and survey undertaken by Donald Horne. The project was managed by Emma Beadsmoore.

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Project details

Project name	Stanground College, Peterborough Road, Peterborough
Short description of the project	Between the 16th and 19th January 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within the grounds of Stanground College, Peterborough. A 200m of trench was excavated which contained no features of archaeological significance and demonstrated a high degree of truncation associated with the construction of the college in the 1960's.
Project dates	Start: 16-01-2012 End: 19-01-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE PETERBOROUGH STANGROUND NORTH Stanground College

Postcode PE7 3BY
 Study area 10.00 Hectares
 Site coordinates TL 20329 96017 52.5483109058 -0.225216677086 52 32 53 N 000 13 30 W Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 9.80m Max: 11.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
 Project design originator Emma Beadsmoore
 Project director/ manager Emma Beadsmoore
 Project supervisor Adam Slater
 Type of sponsor/ funding body Developer
 Name of sponsor/ funding body Stanground College

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Physical Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Digital Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic','Survey'
 Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'
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