

# Chesterton Community College.

An Archaeological Evaluation.



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*An Archaeological Evaluation*

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### *Summary*

*Archaeological assessment and evaluation was commissioned by Chesterton Community College, Cambridge, in advance of the construction of an artificial turf playing field (TL 451 598). No archaeological features were encountered; only very limited, residual evidence for prehistoric activity was retrieved from the subsoil and natural deposits.*

## **Introduction**

Archaeological evaluation was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at Chesterton Community College, Cambridge on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2010, to address a condition placed upon planning permission.

## ***Location, Topography, Geology***

Chesterton Community College is situated c.2km northeast from the city centre at TL 451 598. It is bounded to the east by facilities connected to the Cambridge City Football Club, and by residential housing to the north, south and west.

The development area extends across an area of c.019 ha, with an elevation of 10m AOD, and is used as a grass playing field on the east side of the College grounds (Figure 1). A tarmac car park overlies the last 10m of the development area to the north-east. Much of the area is clearly built-up ground levelled for the existing playing field, probably established during construction of the Chesterton Sports Centre that is part of the College adjacent to the development area.

The underlying geology is 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Terrace Gravel Deposits (British Geological Survey 1981).

## ***Archaeological Background***

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken within the grounds of the College.

### *Prehistoric*

Four Palaeolithic hand-axes have been found in a gravel pit 1km to the east of the development area (Wessex Archaeology 1996).

### *Roman*

A villa estate is known approximately 1km to the northeast of the development area on Arbury Road in the vicinity of the Roman Akeman Street (Alexander *et al.* 1968; 1969). Roman coins have also been found c.1km to the east (Babbington 1883).

## ***Methodology***

The work was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design Specification (Beadsmoore 2010).

The evaluation comprised of two trenches totalling 35m in length. Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under the archaeological supervision of a tracked 360° machine using a 1.8m wide toothless bucket. Work was undertaken in accordance with statutory Health and Safety guidelines detailed under the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen and Holt 2007). All archaeological features and deposits were excavated by hand and recorded using the CAU modified version of the MoLAS recording system (Spence 1990). Trenches and features were digitally

photographed and then planned at a scale of 1:50, with trench and feature sections planned at 1:10. All plans were correlated with fixed points on the OS grid using a Global Positioning System. Progress of the evaluation was monitored by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of the Cambridge County Council. The site code was CRA10.

### *Archive*

For each trench, information detailing its character was recorded on a data sheet that, along with the digital photographic record, have been catalogued together within an archive following the procedures outlined in Appendix 6 of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991). These are being stored with the processed material finds record at the Cambridge Archaeological Unit offices.

### **Results**

Topsoil varied in thickness across the PDA from 0.25m to 0.46m, overlying a subsoil of friable dark orangey brown sandy silt. Modern debris was found throughout the built-up ground of the topsoil. These deposits sealed a shallow gradient in the underlying natural gravels declining from south to north across the development area (this followed a contour of greatest thickness from the northeast limit of the site at 0.9m to the northeast of Trench 1 and 0.3m to the southwest, to its thinnest along Trench 2 to the southeast at 0.19m).

#### *Trench 1*

15m in length, and oriented NE-SW, the subsoil in Trench 1 varied in thickness from 0.3 to 0.9 metres (Figure 1). No archaeological features were identified. Two tree-throws, **F.2** and **F.3**, were represented by shallow hollows filled with a sandy-silt similar to the subsoil, and five modern drainage linears (**F.4**, **F.6**, **F.7**, **F.8**, and **F.9**) oriented northwest-southeast traversed the southern end of the trench. A single sherd of highly abraded post-Medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil, and oyster shell and bone had intruded into shallow deposits caused by animal disturbance (**F.5**). An unabraded multiple reduced blade of a type characteristic to the Late Mesolithic or Early Neolithic (L. Billington *pers. comms*) was found at the base of one of the tree-throws (**F.3**).

**F.2** Pit/Hollow/Tree-throw? No date. Fill [005], cut [006]. Fill is friable with mid-brown sandy silt, occasional dark grey vertical root stains and frequent small angular stones <5cm diameter. Running beneath west-baulk section, but appears oval in plan. Width 1.4m, depth 0.25m

**F.3** Pit/Hollow/Tree-throw? Early Neolithic?. Fill [003], cut [004]. Fill is friable with mid brown silty sand and occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter, and occasional dark grey vertical root stains. Width <2m, depth 0.2m, with fairly regular concave profile. Running beneath west-baulk section, but appears oval in plan.

**F.4** Planting bed/drain? Modern. Fill [009], cut [010]. Fill is soft with dark brown sandy silt including occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter. Oriented NW-SE. Width 0.36m, depth 0.23m, with fairly steep, slightly concave sides and a near flat base.

**F.5** Animal burrow? Post-Medieval or Modern. Fill [007], cut [008]. Fill is soft with dark greyish-brown silt loam and rare small angular stones <5cm, mixed with mid orangey brown sandy silt. Width 1.65m x 0.4m, depth 0.15m, with highly irregular sides and base.

**F.6** Planting bed/drain? Modern. Fill [011], cut [012]. Fill is soft with dark brown sandy silt including occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter. Oriented NW-SE. Width 0.3m, depth 0.26m, with fairly steep, near vertical sides and a flat base.

**F.7** Planting bed/drain? Modern. Fill [013], cut [014]. Fill is soft with dark brown sandy silt including occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter. Oriented NW-SE. Width 0.36m, depth 0.27m, with fairly steep, slightly concave sides and a near flat base.

**F.8** Planting bed/drain? Modern. Fill [015], cut [016]. Fill is soft with dark brown sandy silt including occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter. Oriented NW-SE. Width 0.3m, depth 0.23m, with fairly steep, near vertical sides and a flat base.

**F.9** Planting bed/drain? Modern. Fill [017], cut [018]. Fill is soft with dark brown sandy silt including occasional small angular stones <5cm diameter. Oriented NW-SE. Width 0.36m, depth 0.26m, with fairly steep, slightly concave sides and a near flat base.

### *Trench 2*

20m in length, and oriented NW-SE, the subsoil in Trench 2 averaged 0.19m thickness (Figure 1). No archaeological features were identified. A single find was retrieved from the subsoil during machine removal, and has been identified as a utilised backed flint flake of probable Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age date (L. Billington *pers. comms*).

**F.1** Tree-throw. No date. Fill [001], cut [002]. Fill is friable with light yellowish grey sandy silt and dark grey vertical root stains. Oriented N-S. Width 0.5-0.95m, depth 0.11-0.32m, with irregular sides and base; probably connecting to F.10 to form a horseshoe plan.

**F.10** Tree-throw. No date. Fill [019], cut [020]. Fill is friable with light yellowish grey sandy silt and dark grey vertical root stains. Oriented NE-SW. Width 0.64m, depth 0.11m, with irregular sides and base; probably connecting to F.1 to form a horseshoe plan.

## **Discussion**

No archaeological features were found during the evaluation at Chesterton Community College. Two prehistoric flints were recovered from natural deposits. Although it is not uncommon to find Neolithic lithic debris within tree-throws and natural hollows (e.g. Evans et al. 1999; Lamdin-Wymark 2008: 73-99), the minor evidence for prehistoric activity in the development area is too insignificant for meaningful analysis. Moreover, the absence of archaeology indicates that the Roman presence in the local region did not extend to this area of Chesterton, and is likely to be confined to the locations of previous discovery.

## Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Chesterton Community College. Dan McConnell (Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice) oversaw and monitored the development control of the investigation. Emma Beadsmoore (CAU) was the Project Manager, and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with Emma Rees. Graphics were produced by Iain Forbes and Brian Crossan, and the site surveying was carried out by Donald Horne.

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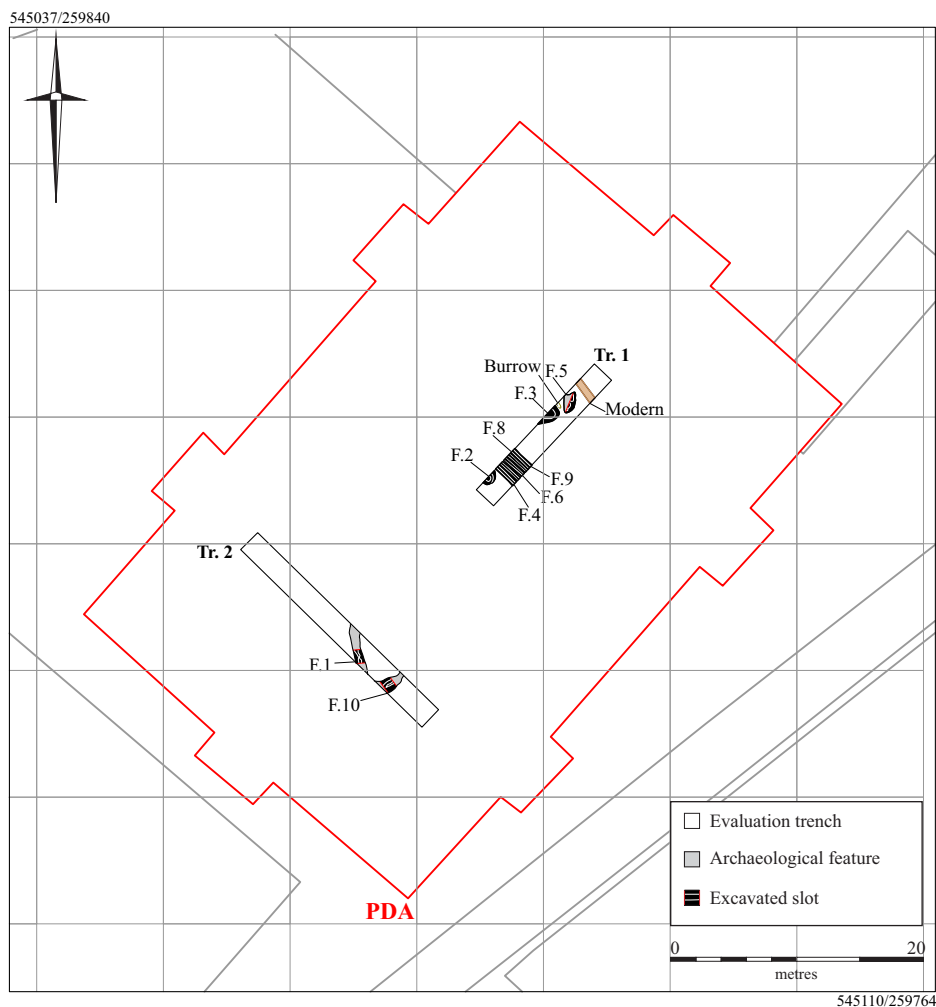
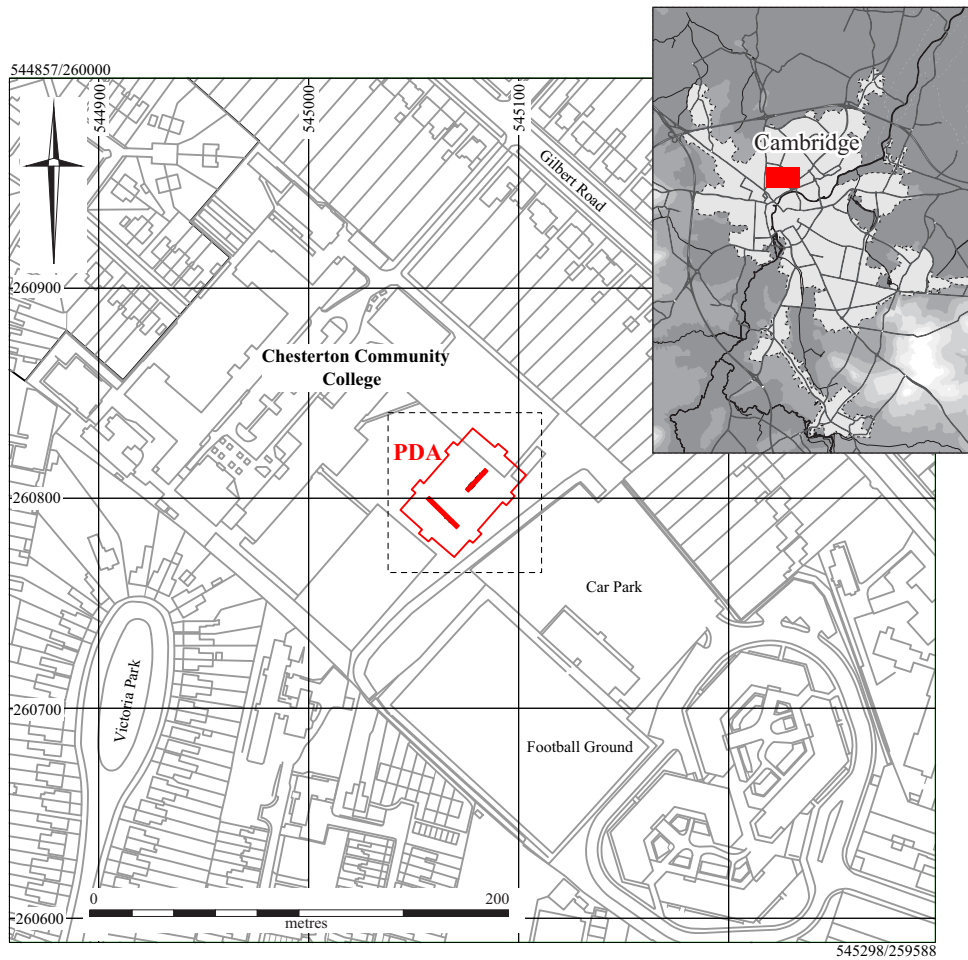


Figure 1. Location Plan (top), with Trench Plan (below).