

# CFA Archaeology Ltd

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*Historic Building Recording*

*Site & Landscape Survey*

*Geophysical Survey*

**Merchiston Castle School,  
294 Colinton Road,  
Proposed 2G Hockey Pitch**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**Report No. 3326**

## **CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD**

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This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd  
standard operating procedures.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in August 2015 within the grounds of Merchiston Castle School within the City of Edinburgh (NGR: NT 2166 6968; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Merchiston Castle School.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), dated 05 August 2015, for the evaluation was produced by CFA to meet the requirements of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS)

### **1.2 Background**

A planning application (Ref. No. 15/01483/FUL) has been approved for the construction of a new hockey pitch within the grounds of Merchiston Castle School, City of Edinburgh. The development site occupied a level surface with short grass lawn ground cover at the time of the works.

Merchiston Castle School occupies a prominent area of high ground overlooking the southern bank of the Water of Leith, east of Colinton. The school is centred upon Colinton House built in 1801-6 for Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo. Immediately SW of the House lie the scheduled remains of Colinton Castle, which was constructed in the early 16th century. This L-shaped towerhouse (with 17th century additions) was occupied and subsequently burnt by the forces of Cromwell in 1650. Although subsequently repaired, the castle was un-roofed by 1801 and was then partly demolished to form a 'romantic ruin' within the gardens of Colinton House and latterly Merchiston Castle school. A gable of a possible medieval chapel was recorded to the west of the castle during the 19th century, though no visible remains exist today. Archaeological investigations, carried out in May 2007 in advance of the construction of the adjacent 6th form accommodation block, revealed evidence for medieval rig and furrow. Based on the archaeological evidence, the development site was identified as occurring within an area of high archaeological potential, so the proposed development was subject to a trial trenching evaluation.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the programme of works were:

- to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features or deposits within the development area through trial trenching evaluation;
- to establish the vulnerability of any archaeological features to the proposed development;
- to propose mitigation measures.



## 2. WORKING METHODS

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance.

The plot for the proposed hockey pitch development covered an area of 12000m<sup>2</sup>. However, due to evidence of intensive terracing works on the southern half of the plot, CECAS determined an evaluation was only necessary on the less disturbed northern half, an area of 6000m<sup>2</sup>. A 10% trial trenching strategy was devised, so c.600m<sup>2</sup> was to be evaluated. Trial trenches were targeted to provide good coverage of the area, whilst avoiding on site obstructions as well as modern cable and gas services.

All trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator equipped with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket down to either the natural surface or the first archaeological horizon. Any further excavation required to fulfill the objectives of the evaluation was carried out by hand.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms. The positions of all archaeological features were surveyed using industry standard electronic surveying equipment

## 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 3.1 General

Appendix 1 presents a tabulated summary of trench dimensions and a brief summary of the features encountered. Numbers in bold in the following text refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 2. The location of the trenches is presented on Fig. 1.

Seven trenches were excavated, with a combined total area of 606m<sup>2</sup>.

Topsoil (**001**) was grey-brown silt across the site, and was sterile with no artefacts or archaeological remains discovered within.

### 3.2 Trial Trenching Results

*Trench 1 (1.8m by 40m; Fig. 2)* ran in northwest to southeast orientation. Topsoil (**001**), c.0.6m deep overlay 0.2m to 0.3m of orangey brown silty clay subsoil (**002**) which in turn overlay orangey brown sandy clay natural (**003**). A substantial stone drain bisected the trench in a roughly northeast to southwest orientation. The cut of the drain [**005**] was V-shaped in section (Fig.3) and formed of stone slabs (**004**) with horizontal capping slabs on top. The drain passage had been filled in with grey silt (**006**). Four rubble-filled field drains were also present in the trench; two aligned northeast to southwest and two aligned west-northwest to east-southeast. No other archaeological remains were discovered.

*Trench 2 (1.8m by 80m; Fig. 4)* ran in a northeast to southwest orientation. The trench was excavated through 0.6m of topsoil (001) at the southwest end, which increased to 0.75m at the northeast end. Topsoil (001) overlay 0.3m to 0.45m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). Seven rubble-filled field drains and two ceramic horse-shoe field drains were discovered. No other archaeological remains were found.

*Trench 3 (1.8m by 78m; Fig. 5)* ran in a northeast to southwest orientation. Topsoil (001), 0.3m deep, overlay 0.1m to 0.5m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). Seven rubble filled field drains and one ceramic horse-shoe field drain were discovered. No other significant archaeological remains were found.

*Trench 4 (1.8m by 60m; Fig. 6)* ran in a northeast to southwest orientation. Topsoil (001), 0.3m deep, overlay 0.2m to 0.3m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). Two rubble filled field drains and seven ceramic horse-shoe field drains were discovered as well as a poorly preserved and irregularly constructed stone box drain. No other archaeological remains were found.

*Trench 5 (1.8m by 36m; Fig. 7)* ran in an east to west orientation. Topsoil (001), 0.3m deep, overlay 0.3m to 0.4m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). One stone box drain aligned north-northwest to south-southeast was discovered, in a poorer state of preservation than drain (004) in Trench 1. No other archaeological remains were found.

*Trench 6 (1.8m by 26m; Fig. 8)* ran in an east to west orientation. Topsoil (001), 0.3m deep, overlay 0.1m to 0.5m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). One ceramic horse-shoe field drain was discovered. No other archaeological remains were found.

*Trench 7 (1.8m by 17m; Fig. 9)* ran in a southeast to northwest orientation. Topsoil (001), 0.3m deep, overlay 0.4m to 0.5m of subsoil (002) which overlay natural (003). One ceramic horse-shoe field drain, one rubble filled field drain, and the possible remains of a damaged stone box drain were discovered. No other archaeological remains were found.

It is likely that the box drains discovered are the remains of a drainage system for now demolished buildings within the school grounds, or the school building itself, with the horseshoe and rubble drains representing land drainage in order to improve the quality of the grassed areas of the school grounds.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd. in advance of the construction of a new hockey pitch within the grounds of Merchiston Castle School, City of Edinburgh. Seven trenches were excavated covering just over 10% of the area of the plot to be evaluated. No archaeological evidence was discovered aside from a substantial V-profile stone box drain, several instances of ceramic and rubble field drains, and three poorly-preserved box drains.

Based on the results of this evaluation CFA recommend that no further work is required. However, it is recognised that the final decision lies with the City of Edinburgh Council.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the City of Edinburgh Council Sites and Monuments Record.

On completion of the programme of archaeological works a summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 4) and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

## APPENDIX 1: Summary of Trenches

Trench	Dimensions and Orientation	Depth	Features
1	1.8m by 40m; NW to SE	0.5m at SE end, 0.6m NW end	One substantial stone slabbed box drain ( <b>004</b> ), four rubble filled field drains.
2	1.8m by 80m; NE to SW	0.75m at NE end, 0.6m at SW end	Seven rubble filled field drains, two ceramic horse-shoe field drains
3	1.8m by 78m; NE to SW	0.4m at NE end, 0.8m in natural dip near centre, 0.6m at SW end	Seven rubble filled field drains, one ceramic horse-shoe field drain
4	1.8m by 60m; NE to SW	0.8m at SW end, 0.5m at NE end	One poorly preserved stone box drain, two rubble filled field drains, seven ceramic horse-shoe field drains
5	1.8m by 36m; E to W	0.6m at W end, 0.7m at E end	One poorly preserved stone box drain,
6	1.8m by 26m; E to W	0.8m at E end, 0.4m at W end	One ceramic horse-shoe drain
7	1.8m by 17m; SE to NW	0.7m at NW end, 0.8m at SE end	Possible remains of a stone box drain, one rubble filled field drain, one ceramic horse-shoe drain

## APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context	Fill Of	Trench	Description
001		All	Greyish brown silt topsoil
002		All	Mid to dark orangey brown sandy clay subsoil
003		All	Mid to dark orangey brown sandy/silty clay natural
004	005	1	Stone slabs in box drain
005		1	Cut for box drain
006	005	1	Grey silty fill of stone drain

## APPENDIX 3: Photograph Register

Photo No	Contexts/Description	Taken From	Conditions
1	Trench 1 general shot	SE	Overcast
2	Trench 1 showing box drain 004	ESE	Overcast
3-5	Trench 1 showing box drain 004	NE	Overcast

Photo No	Contexts/Description	Taken From	Conditions
6	Trench 2 general shot	NE	Overcast
7	Trench 3 general shot	NE	Overcast
8	Trench 4 General shot	NE	Sun
9	Trench 4 showing possibly damaged box drain	NNE	Mon
10	Trench 4 showing possibly damaged box drain	NNW	Tue
11	Trench 5 general shot	W	Wed
12	Trench 5 box drain	SE	Thu
13	Trench 6 general shot	W	Fri
14	Trench 5 box drain	NNW	Sat
15	Trench 5 box drain	ENE	Sun
16	Trench 7 general shot	SE	Mon
17-21	General shots of site after trench backfilling	Various	Tue

#### APPENDIX 4: Discovery and Excavation In Scotland Entry

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	City of Edinburgh Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Merchiston Castle School, 294 Colinton Road, Proposed 2G Hockey Pitch: Archaeological Evaluation
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	MERC
<b>PARISH:</b>	Edinburgh
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Ewan MacNeilage MA
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	CFA Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Evaluation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	N/A
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	N/A
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	N/A
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NT 217 699
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	August 2015
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	August 2015
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	None
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new hockey pitch. No archaeological evidence was discovered aside from a substantial V-profile stone box drain, several instances of ceramic and rubble field drains, and three poorly-preserved box drains.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	None
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Merchiston Castle School
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ.
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	<a href="mailto:cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk">cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk</a>
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	Archive to be deposited in NMRS, Reports lodged with SMR and NMRS.









Fig. 2 Trench 1 post-excavation



Fig. 3 Stone box drain in Trench 1, post-excavation



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Project:	Client: Merchiston Castle School Merchiston Castle School, 294 Colinton Road, Proposed 2G Hockey Pitch				





Fig. 4 Trench 2 post-excavation



Fig. 5 Trench 3 post-excavation



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Fig. 6 Trench 4 post-excavation



Fig. 7 Trench 5 post-excavation



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Fig. 8 Trench 6 post-excavation



Fig. 9 Trench 7 post-excavation



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