

St Michael's JMI School
St Michael's Road
St Albans
Hertfordshire



**Archaeological
Excavation Report**



December 2006

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St Michael's JMI School**

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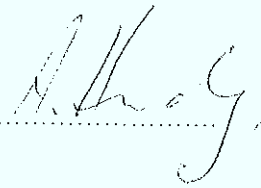
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

CONTENTS

Summary..... 2
1 Introduction..... 2
 1.1 Location and scope of work..... 2
 1.2 Geology and topography..... 2
 1.3 Archaeological and historical background..... 2
2 Project Aims and Methodology..... 3
 2.1 Aims..... 3
 2.2 Methodology..... 3
3 Results: General..... 4
 3.1 Reliability of field investigation..... 4
 3.2 Description of deposits (Fig. 4)..... 4
 3.3 Finds..... 4
 3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence..... 4
4 Discussion And Conclusions..... 4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory..... 5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references..... 5
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details..... 5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Area of excavation
- Fig. 3 Location of trench
- Fig. 4 Section through trench

SUMMARY

In August 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an excavation at St Michael's JMI School, St Michael's Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire on behalf of the Governors of St Michael's JMI School. No deposits, features or structures of any archaeological potential or significance were identified during the excavation and this suggests that the underlying deposits in the development area were destroyed during the construction of the school.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 14th and the 15th August 2006, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an excavation at the St Michael's JMI School, in St Michael's Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire on behalf of the Governors St Michael's JMI School. The work was in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new small extension for a paper store (Ref: 5/06/0412LB).
- 1.1.2 An initial brief outlining the archaeological requirements of the work was set by Simon West (West 2006) the District Archaeologist for St Albans District Council.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), outlining how OA would deal with the archaeological requirements of the work, was agreed with the Local Planning Authority (OA 2006).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies within the western part of Insular XIX of the Roman City of Verulamium, adjacent to the Basilica and north of St Michael's church (Fig. 1). The site lies close to the valley floor of the river Ver at approximately 90 m above OD. The site is currently a paved and open area.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the excavation has been the subject of a separate desk study (West 2006) the results of which are reproduced below. No significant archaeological evidence has been found for the actual development area itself.
- 1.3.2 In the St Albans Local Plan Review (1994) the surrounding area is designated as a Scheduled Monument, of national archaeological significance, and is protected under National Monuments legislation. Various archaeological excavations have taken place near the proposed development site, with the most notable being in 1955, when parts of an inscription were recovered from opposite the Basilica (Frere, 1983). Smaller excavations on Building XIX, 1-2 (monuments M222, M427 and M428: St

Albans Urban Archaeological Database (UAD)) have taken place prior to the construction of a parking ramp at Jessamine Cottage, and behind the north wall of the School - almost adjacent to the present site. These have uncovered *in-situ* stratified structures, deposits and material dating from the 1st century AD, possibly extending into the early post-Roman period, as well as material associated with the extensions of St Michael's church.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the excavation were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed area.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- To preserve by record, any and all archaeological deposits presumed to be at risk from the ensuing development.
- The excavation will examine, excavate and record all archaeological structures, deposits and remains. No period of archaeological remains will be left unrecorded except where they are demonstrably beyond construction impact.
- A full programme of analysis, project reporting, archiving and dissemination will be carried out to a level agreed by English Heritage and St Albans City and District Council.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The trench was located to the north side of the school, in a small yard between the two main buildings that form St Michael's School (Figs. 2 and 3). It was orientated roughly NE-SW, and measured 3 m by 1.2 m.

2.2.2 The trench was excavated and cleaned by hand in a careful and archaeological manner.

2.2.3 All deposits uncovered in the excavation were issued with a unique context number. Context recording followed procedures laid down in the *O.A. Fieldwork Manual* (OA 1992). A plan of the trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20, and the trench section was also drawn at a scale of 1:20. A photographic record was kept using colour slide and black and white print film.

3 RESULTS: GENERAL

3.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 3.1.1 The percentage sample of the site, the location of the trench and the consistent results from within the trench indicate that the interpretation of the results will apply equally throughout the development site.

3.2 Description of deposits (Fig. 4)

- 3.2.1 The earliest deposit found in the trench was a loose, whitish grey fine gravel (007). This deposit was part of the foundation deposits for the school building and it was reached at a depth of 1.10 m below ground level, 86.85 m above OD.
- 3.2.2 Overlying layer 007 was a 0.32 m thick layer of soft, light grey clay (006), which was in turn overlain by a 0.4 m thick layer of soft, dark grey stony clay (005). This was overlain by a loose mix of gravel and orange sand (004), with an average thickness of 0.56 m, which was overlain by a 0.06 m thick layer of compact and solid broken concrete slabs (003). Overlying this was a very thin layer of orange sand with occasional thin gravel inclusions (002), which was the bedding layer for the overlying paving slabs (001).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the excavation.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were identified during the evaluation.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The excavation produced no evidence of activity prior to the construction of the school buildings within the footprint of the proposed new developments.
- 4.1.2 There was no evidence of any residual material remains. No archaeological deposits or features were identified during the excavation. It is very likely that the construction of the school buildings and yards have totally removed archaeological deposits that may have existed in the upper part of the soil profile in this area.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
001								
	001	Layer		0.05	Paving slabs			Modern
	002	Layer		0.02	Bedding layer			Modern
	003	Layer		0.60	Foundation deposit			Modern
	004	Layer		0.56	Foundation deposit			Modern
	005	Layer		0.40	Foundation deposit			Modern
	006	Layer		0.32	Foundation deposit			Modern
	007	Layer		-	Gravel (Foundation deposit)			Modern

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Frere, S., 1983, *Verulamium Excavations* Vol. 2 Soc. Antiq. London Res. Rep. 41. Oxford. Society of Antiquaries of London.

OAU 1992, *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OA 2006, *Proposed Paper Store, St Michael's JMI School, St Michael's Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire Written Scheme of Investigation*

West, S 2006, *Brief for the archaeological recording of A Proposed Paper Store Development at St Michael's JMI School, St Albans*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Michael's JMI School, St Albans

Site code: STALSM06

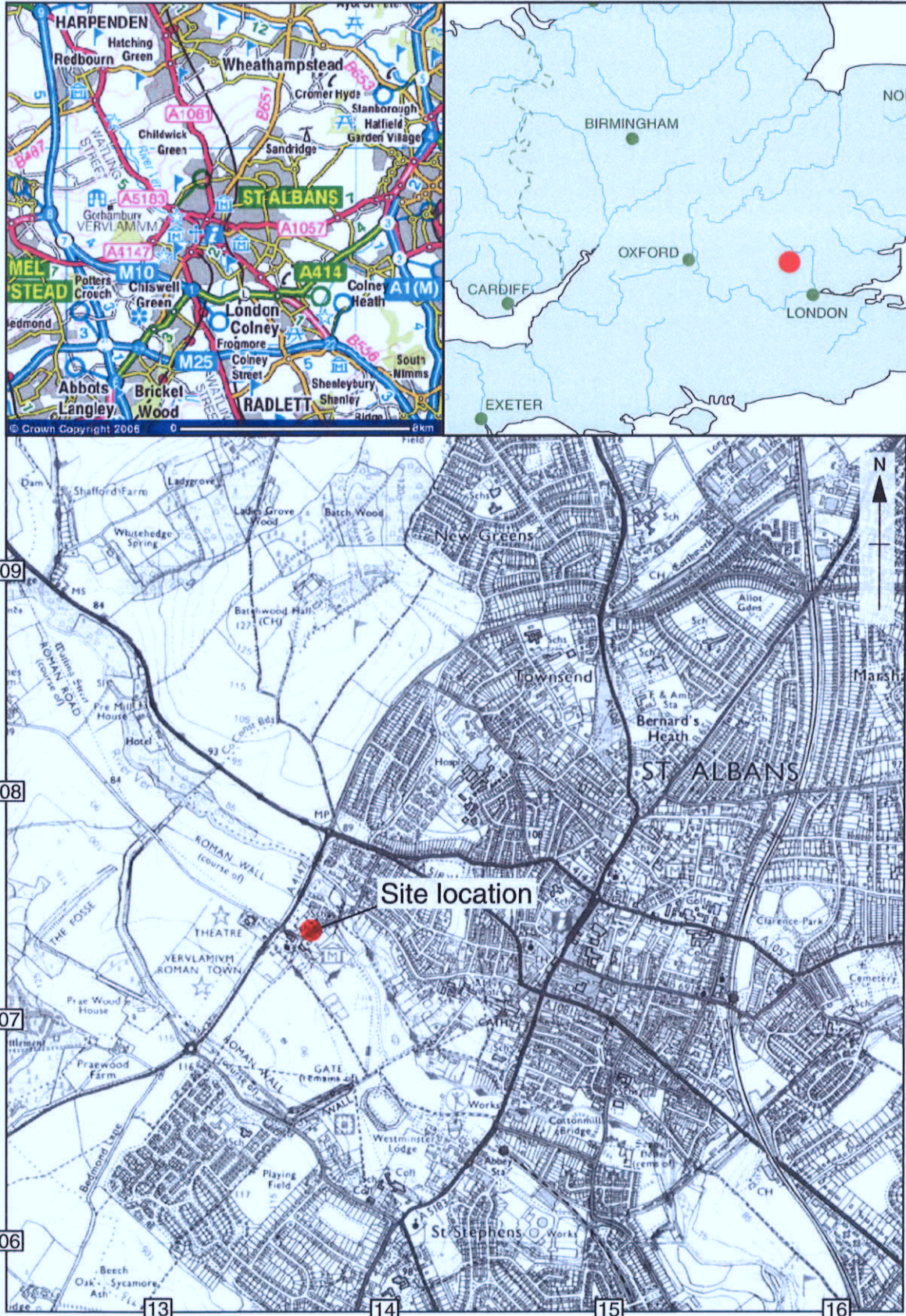
Grid reference: NGR TL 136 073

Date and duration of project: 14th - 15th August 2006

Area of site: 3 m by 1.2 m

Summary of results: No archaeology uncovered

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with St Albans Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2 : Area of Excavation

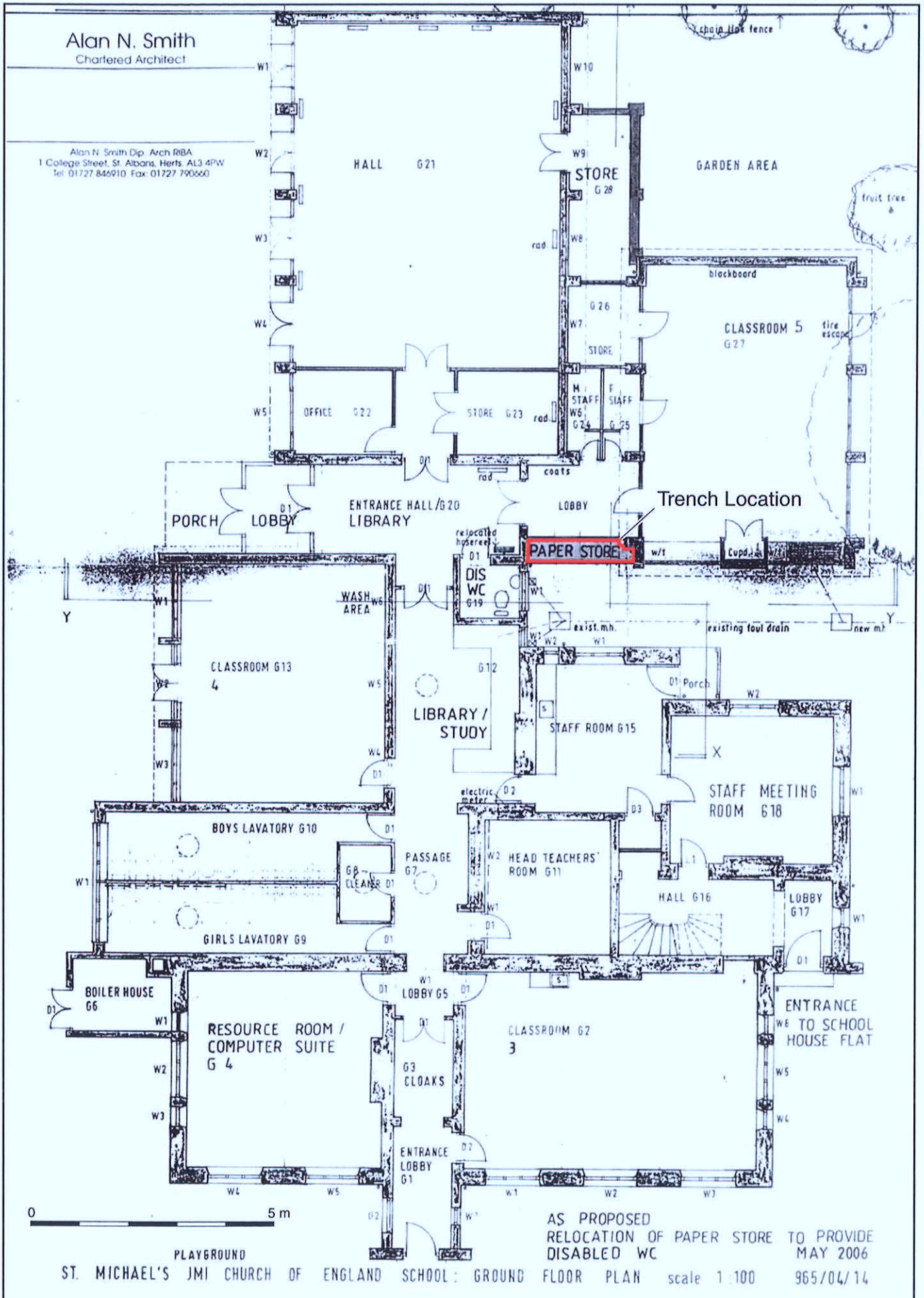
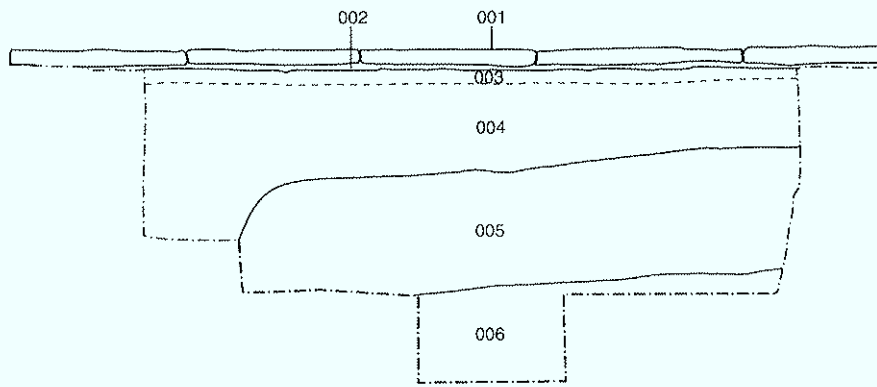


Figure 3: Location of Trench



NE



SW

99.80 mOD
X

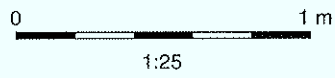


Figure 4: Section through Trench



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