

# Former Shrewton School, Shrewton, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

## An Archaeological Excavation



**Former Shrewton School, Shrewton, Salisbury, Wiltshire.**

**An Archaeological Excavation**

for

**MQL Developments Ltd**

by



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Front cover image: General view of Site following soil strip, from west. © Context One Archaeological Services 2015

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## Non-technical summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological excavation prior to the conversion of a former school building and the construction of 14 new dwellings at the Former Shrewton Primary School, High Street, Shrewton, Wiltshire, over 3 days between 14 April and 7 May 2014. The project was commissioned and funded by MQL Developments Ltd.*

*The archaeological excavation was requested by Ms Clare King (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Archaeology Service (WCAS)) as a condition of planning permission being granted. An earlier archaeological evaluation, carried out by AC Archaeology in 2010, identified a small curving ditch with Bronze Age finds, indicative of the possible presence of a round barrow. This area was targeted for further investigation during the present open area excavation.*

*The excavation established that no features of significant archaeological interest were present on Site. A large, circular pit was identified in the north-east of the excavation area, which may be the result of quarrying. Four further small pits were identified within the backfill of this feature, most likely used for the deposition of domestic refuse. A shallow post-medieval pit was also present directly to the west of the possible quarry feature and had also been cut by two small modern pits and a stake hole. A former pond, with evidence of trees planted later, is also present in the centre of the Site. A shallow gully identified during the 2010 evaluation was observed but not investigated further. Collected finds comprised post-medieval pottery, animal bone, clay pipe, ceramic building material (CBM), glass and a single iron artefact, however the assemblage has no research value and is not recommended for long-term curation. Neither the features nor the dateable finds provided any further indications of Bronze Age activity on the Site.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological excavation prior to the conversion of a former school building and construction of 14 new dwellings at the Former Shrewton Primary School, High Street, Shrewton, Wiltshire (the 'Site'), over 3 days between 14 April and 7 May 2014. The project was commissioned and funded by MQL Developments Ltd.
- 1.2 The programme of work was requested by Ms Clare King (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Archaeology Service (WCAS)) as a condition of planning permission being granted for the 'Conversion of former school building and new development to the rear to create 14 "age restricted" dwellings for older people including ancillary facilities, car parking and landscaping' (Wiltshire Council planning application: 13/02101/FUL). Condition 14 of the planning approval issued by Wiltshire Council on 5 February 2014 states:

*"No development shall commence within the area indicated (proposed development site) until: "A written programme of phased archaeological investigation and mitigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and*

*The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

*REASON: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest."*

- 1.3 An archaeological field evaluation was carried out by AC Archaeology in 2010 (Robinson, 2010) in support of an earlier planning application. This comprised four machine and hand dug trenches: two small trenches measuring 2m x 2m at the frontage and two trenches measuring 10m long x 1.6m wide at the rear. The trenches at the front revealed only post-medieval/modern cobbling and are of no further interest although the trenches at the rear showed evidence of prehistoric activity. Trench 1 to the north encountered a section of a curving ditch measuring approximately 1.8m wide and up to 0.90m deep containing three distinct fills. A small number of finds including pottery and worked flint suggested a Bronze Age date possibly relating to the remains of a burial mound (round barrow). Trench 2 mostly revealed periglacial-like striations within the chalk although two undated sections of shallow ditches or gullies were found to cut the natural chalk.
- 1.4 The programme of works comprised four elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which set out the project strategy; field excavation; post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The WSI was submitted to and approved by Ms Clare King on 27 May 2014 prior to the commencement of the Site works.
- 1.5 The requirement for the work is in accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Framework Policy (NPPF 2012).

## 2. Site location and topography

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SU 06941 44024) was located in the north of the village of Shrewton which is located c. 10km north-west of Amesbury (**Figure 1**). Bordered to the west by the former primary school buildings and to the east by the village vicarage, the Site was largely situated on level ground at an average height of c. 82m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). Prior to development works, the Site comprised a grassed area.
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 2015, the solid geology is predominantly recorded as Seaford Chalk Formation - Chalk. No superficial (drift) geology has been recorded. The soils are characterised by freely draining, shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes>).

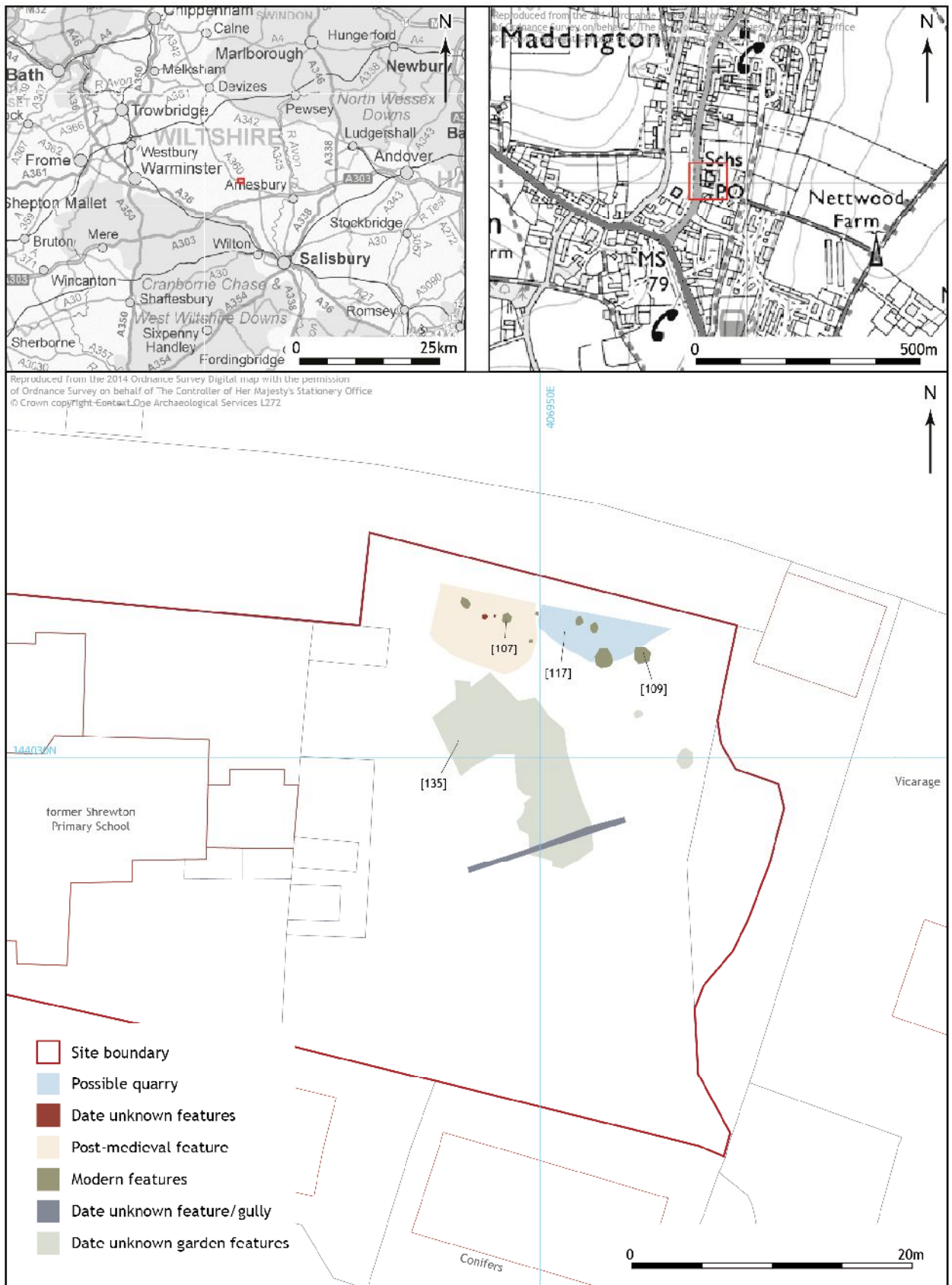


Figure 1. Site setting and location of excavation trench with archaeological features

### 3 Methodology

- 3.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 3.2 The archaeological excavation comprised 0.8ha of open area excavation (**Figure 1**). This area covered the footprint of the proposed new building as well as the area of archaeology identified in the 2010 evaluation.
- 3.3 The excavation area was laid out using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System pre-loaded with Ordnance Survey grid co-ordinates derived from the WSI trench plan.
- 3.4 A soil strip was carried out using a 360 degree tracked machine fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless grading bucket, and this was also used for subsequent excavation work. Machining continued until archaeological features or natural geology was encountered, whichever was first.
- 3.5 Features and slots in the excavation area were cleaned by hand to define the sequence of deposits. All deposits were recorded as individual contexts and ascribed a unique number. A representative section was then recorded using COAS *pro forma* evaluation trench sheets. A digital photograph was also taken of each section. All photographs included an appropriate scale.
- 3.6 All archaeological remains were sampled by manual excavation to establish stratigraphic relationships, recover sufficient artefacts to establish 'absolute' dates, determine feature/deposit morphology and character, and to recover any palaeoenvironmental indicators.
- 3.7 All features and associated deposits were drawn in section on dimensionally stable media at a scale of 1:10. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a "Harris-Winchester matrix" diagram. Soil colours were logged using a Munsell soil colour chart. All deposits were recorded as individual contexts and ascribed a unique number with their details entered onto separate COAS *pro-forma* context recording sheets.
- 3.8 The location, extent and altitude of archaeological features and deposits were mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System receiving real-time calibrations to produce accuracies of 1-2cm.
- 3.9 A photographic record of the work was prepared and involved the use of digital images. This included shots of the excavated area, individual features and working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 3.10 Upon completion of the excavation, the trench was backfilled by machine and compacted.
- 3.11 All finds were removed from Site for processing in preparation for assessment and discard.
- 3.12 Prior to assessment, all recovered finds were first washed, air-dried and re-bagged. None of the finds required specialist treatment by a conservator. The finds were then separated into artefact types and quantified by context number, quantity and weight in grams.
- 3.13 The finds will be discarded following approval of the recommendations within this report.

### 4. Results

- 4.1 In the text, context numbers for cuts appear in square brackets, e.g. [1004]; layer, fill and structure numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (1002). Where a feature is discussed, it is referenced with its cut and associated fill numbers.
- 4.2 A shallow circular pit [117] was identified in the north-east of the Site, measuring c. 3.5m x 1.9m x 1.5m (**Plates 1 & 2**). This feature is likely the result of quarrying and three slots were excavated through it to provide profiles of the deposition sequence (**Plates 3, 4 & 5**). A number of smaller

circular pits ([103], [107] and [109]) were also present in the same area, and likely created for refuse deposition. A large sub-circular cut [135] was also present in the centre of the Site, later cut by a number of smaller irregular pits likely to be the result of tree action ([111], [113] and [115]) (Plate 6). This large cut [135] was identified as a possible pond.

### Deposit sequence

- 4.3 The stratigraphic sequence across the area of excavation was quite varied, likely due to the disturbance of the ground through quarrying, refuse deposition and tree root action. The Site was covered by a topsoil layer (100) to a depth of c. 0.35m, overlying c. 0.25m of subsoil (101). The natural (102) was chalk, which was present at a depth of c. 0.60m below the ground surface.



Plate 1. Location shot showing slot [122] within quarry feature [117] (from W; 1m scale)



Plate 2. Post-medieval quarry feature [117] (from W)



Plate 3. Profile of western slot [122] through quarry feature [117] (from SE; 1m scale)



Plate 4. Profile of eastern slot [127] through quarry feature [117] (from NE; 1m scale)





Plate 5. Profile of central slot [133] through quarry feature [117] (from N; 1m scale)



Plate 6. Tree throw [115] and pond feature [135] in the centre of the Site (from N; 1m scale)

## 5. The finds

- 5.1 A small assemblage of pottery, glass, animal bone, clay pipe, ceramic building material (CBM) and a single iron object were recovered during the excavation from contexts (126), (132) and (134). Datable finds (pottery, glass and clay pipe) are entirely of post-medieval date. The pottery assemblage amounted to 20 sherds, with 11 animal bone fragments, 16 fragments of CBM, 5 fragments of clay pipe, 2 shards of glass and a single iron object. In addition, small amounts of 20<sup>th</sup> century glass, pottery, CBM and tin were also observed but not collected from the possible quarry [117] and pit [109].

## 6. Discussion

- 6.1 The excavation established that no features of significant archaeological interest were present on Site. A large, circular pit was identified in the north-east of the excavation area, which may have been the result of quarrying. This feature encompassed the trench from the 2010 AC Archaeology evaluation, however it did not provide any further evidence of the previously supposed Bronze Age ditch. Four further small pits were identified within the backfill of this feature, and due to the presence of small amounts of 20<sup>th</sup> century glass, pottery, CBM and tin, had likely been created for the deposition of domestic refuse.
- 6.2 An area of post-medieval activity was also present directly to the west of the possible quarry feature, cut by two small pits and a stake hole of uncertain date. The area contained a small assemblage of post-medieval pottery sherds, CBM, clay pipe and animal bone fragments, while the smaller pits were cut later and contained 20<sup>th</sup> century glass, pottery, CBM and tin. These features also likely originate as refuse deposition pits.
- 6.3 A large sub-circular cut present in the centre of the Site is probably a former pond. This feature also contains evidence of later tree activity in the form of tree boles. The shallow gully identified during the 2010 evaluation was observed but identified as a modern garden feature and not investigated further.
- 6.4 In conclusion, the features and dateable finds present did not provide any further evidence of Bronze Age activity on the Site. Instead, evidence of post-medieval quarrying, post-medieval and

modern refuse deposition, trees, and a pond are indicative of a landscape previously in use as gardens and scrubland.

## 7. Archive

7.1 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
Context record sheets	12	Paper
Context summary sheets	1	Paper
Drawing sheets	2	Permatrace
Photographic register	1	Paper
Sketch plan	1	Paper
Digital images	54	.JPG

7.2 The paper archive has been scanned as a single file in .PDF format and will form part of the physical Site archive to be deposited with Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.

7.3 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record.

## 8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Mr Martin Quigley, MQL Developments Ltd.  
Ms Clare King, Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council

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## Appendix 1. Context summary

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION	EARLIER THAN	CONTEMP. WITH	LATER THAN
100	-	Horizon	Topsoil	Topsoil	-	-	101
101	-	Horizon	Subsoil	Subsoil	100	-	102
102	-	Horizon	Chalk	Natural	101	-	103
103	PM	Cut	Circular in plan located in the NW corner of the Site	Rubbish pit	104	-	102
104	-	Fill	-	Fill of rubbish pit [103]	100	-	104
105	-	Cut	Steep sided	Stake hole	106	-	102
106	-	Fill	-	Fill of stake hole [105]	100	-	105
107	PM	Cut	Circular in plan located in the NW corner of the Site	Rubbish pit	108	-	102
108	-	Fill	-	Fill of rubbish pit [107]	100	-	107
109	PM	Cut	Circular in plan to SE of feature [117]	Rubbish pit	110	118,120	117
110	-	Fill	-	Fill of rubbish pit [109]	100	-	109
111	-	Cut	Shallow sub-circular in plan	Tree throw	112	-	102
112	-	Fill	-	Fill of tree throw [111]	100	-	111
113	-	Cut	Shallow sub-circular in plan	Tree throw	114	-	102
114	-	Fill	-	Fill of tree throw [113]	100	--	113
115	-	Cut	Shallow sub-circular in plan	Tree throw	116	-	102
116	-	Fill	-	Fill of tree throw [115]	100	-	115
117	PM	Cut	Large, circular in plan. Edges very steep but not straight. Measured 3.50m wide by 1.90m long and 1.15m deep.	Post-medieval quarrying	109, 120, 118	-	102
118	-	Cut	Circular in plan located at S side of feature [117]	Rubbish pit	118	109, 120	117
119	-	Fill	-	Fill of rubbish pit [118]	100	-	118

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION	EARLIER THAN	CONTEMP. WITH	LATER THAN
120	-	Cut	Circular in plan located at E side of feature [117]	Rubbish pit	121	109, 118	117
121	-	Fill	-	Fill of rubbish pit [120]	100	-	120
122	-	Cut	0.75m deep.	Western slot cut through [117]	123, 124, 125, 126	-	117
123	-	Fill	Loose silty clay, mid brownish grey in colour with occasional small flint and chalk fragments. 0.18m deep.	Basal fill of slot [122]	124	-	122
124	-	Fill	Chalk with chalk fragments, 0.05m deep.	Secondary fill of slot [122]	125	-	123
125	-	Fill	Chalky and silty clay, mid grey in colour with very frequent chalk fragments. 0.35m deep.	Secondary fill of slot [122]	126	-	124
126	-	Fill	Silty clay, mid grey-brown in colour with occasional chalk fragments. 0.18m deep.	Upper fill of slot [122]	100	-	125
127	-	Cut	-	Eastern slot cut through feature [117]	129, 129, 130, 131, 132	-	117
128	-	Fill	Dark brown silt, 0.40m deep.	Basal fill of slot [127]	100	-	129
129	-	Fill	Yellowish-white chalk containing chalk fragments, 0.30m deep.	Redeposited chalk fill of slot [127]	100	-	130
130	-	Fill	Mid-dark brown silt.	Fill of slot [127]	100	-	131
131	-	Fill	Yellowish-white chalk containing chalk fragments, 0.05m deep.	Redeposited chalk fill of slot [127]	100	-	132
132	-	Fill	Soft mid-brown silt with multiple inclusions, 0.25m deep.	Fill of slot [127]	100	-	127
133	-	Cut	-	Central slot cut through feature [117]	133	-	117
134	-	Fill	-	Fill of slot [133]	100	-	133
135	-	Cut	Large sub-circular in plan	Possible pond	136	-	102
136	-	Fill	-	Fill of possible pond [135]	100	-	135