

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**RALPH ALLEN SCHOOL,  
CLAVERTON DOWN ROAD,  
COMBE DOWN, BATH.**  
for  
Bath and North East Somerset Council



Report No. 2738 /2012  
OASIS: bristola1-131242

By Cai Mason



**Bristol and Region Archaeological Services**



St. Nicholas Church, St. Nicholas Street, Bristol, BS1 1UE. Tel: (0117) 903 9010



Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**RALPH ALLEN SCHOOL,  
CLAVERTON DOWN ROAD,  
COMBE DOWN, BATH.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 77142 62680

Client: Bath and North East Somerset Council

<i>Author:</i>	Cai Mason
<i>email:</i>	cai.mason@bristol.gov.uk
<i>Approved by:</i>	John Bryant
<i>Signature:</i>	 
<i>Date Issued:</i>	27 September 2012

## CONTENTS

Summary

List of Illustrations

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	The Site.....	2
3.	Archaeological and Historical Context.....	3
4.	Aims and Methodology .....	4
5.	Results.....	5
6.	Project Team.....	6
7.	Discussion.....	7
8.	Bibliography and Sources Consulted.....	8
9.	Acknowledgements.....	8

Appendix 1: Policy Statement

Illustrations and Plates

### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	EHA	English Heritage Archive
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	Km	Kilometre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	m	Metre
BC	Before Christ	NGR	National Grid Reference
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

September, 2012.

### COPYRIGHT NOTICE:-

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services retain copyright of this report under the *Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act*, 1988, and have granted a licence to by Bath & North East Somerset Council and their agents to use and reproduce the material contained within, once settlement of our account has been received.

Plans reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Bristol City Council, Licence Number LA090551, 2012.

## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of a new all-weather sports pitch at Ralph Allen School, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down, Bath.

No archaeological features were uncovered during the course of the construction work. A small quantity of residual prehistoric worked flint and two sherds of Romano-British and medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil, but these are not thought to be indicative of any significant activity on or within the immediate vicinity of the development area.

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

### **Figures**

- Figure 1      Site location plan, scale 1:10,000
- Figure 2      Site plan with plate orientations, scale 1:1000

### **Plates**

- Cover      Topsoil being stripped from the playing field to the south-west of Ralph Allen School, looking north-east
- Plate 1      Northern end of the playing field with topsoil and layer (1001) removed, looking north

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) at Ralph Allen School, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down, Bath.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council in order to comply with a planning condition for the construction of a new school building and an all-weather sports pitch, with associated works and landscaping (Application Number 11/05199/REG03).
- 1.3 The archaeological work took place between the 10th and 15th of September 2012.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Roman Baths Museum & Pump Room under the Accession Number BATRM 2012.8. A digital copy of the report will be sent to the English Heritage Archive. The project has been entered in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-131242.

## **2. THE SITE**

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR ST 77142 62680) is located *c* 2km south-east of Bath city centre, near the south-eastern edge of Claverton Down, in the grounds of Ralph Allen School (**Figs. 1 & 2**). The site is a playing field bounded by other parts of the school to the north and east, a car park to the south, and an area of wooded former quarries to the west.
- 2.2 The solid geology comprises Jurassic oolitic limestone of the Chalfield Oolite Formation (BGS 2012). The site is situated on a gentle south-facing slope, which overlooks the deep valley of the Midford Brook, and ranges in height from about 161m aOD in the north-east, down to about 156m aOD in the south-west.

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The site is situated in Monton Combe parish in an area that remained undeveloped until the construction of Ralph Allen School in 1957.
- 3.2 The downs to the south of Bath are an area of considerable archaeological interest, with evidence of prehistoric and Roman occupation, field systems, and burials found in a number of locations. In 1935 a large quantity of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flint, including several barbed and tanged arrowheads and hundreds of scrapers, were reportedly found in what is now the playing fields of Ralph Allen School (B&NES HER No. MBN 1824). A stone coffin and spreads of Romano-British pottery have also been found in the fields immediately south of the playing fields (O.S. Archaeology Branch 1949).
- 3.3 A geophysical survey (Biggs 2012) of the playing fields identified a number of features of possible archaeological origin, including several linear features that appeared to form part of a field system, and a number of discrete pit-like anomalies. The subsequent evaluation (Mason 2012b) demonstrated that apart from a modern drain crossing the school hockey pitch, most of the geophysical anomalies appeared to be natural features, primarily caused by variations in the local geology. However, a small quantity of early to middle Iron Age and Romano-British pottery, and some prehistoric worked flint was recovered from the topsoil and topsoil/natural interface layers.



#### **4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the methodology outlined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Mason 2012a), *BaRAS Site Manual* (2009) and complied with the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). The aim of the archaeological work was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of construction work.
- 4.2 The construction work involved stripping the topsoil from the existing playing field. The northern half of the field was then reduce dug by up to 2m; the resulting spoil was deposited on the southern half in order to create a new level pitch.
- 4.3 A photographic record of the construction work was made using a digital camera.

## **5. RESULTS**

- 5.1 No archaeological features were uncovered during the course of the construction work.
- 5.2 The geology of the site is Jurassic oolitic limestone, the upper surface of which was degraded and fissured. In places the rock was broken into small angular cobble and gravel-sized fragments, in others it was split into large angular boulders. Natural disturbance caused by tree roots or animal burrows were evident in some parts of the site.
- 5.3 The limestone bedrock was partially overlain by a 0.1m - 0.3m thick layer of firm yellowish-brown silty clay mixed with limestone fragments (1001), which was in turn overlain by a 0.1m - 0.3m thick layer of dark brown friable silty clay topsoil (1000), which contained occasional angular limestone, slate, brick, glass, coal, charcoal, plastic and pottery inclusions.
- 5.4 Many of the anomalies identified during the geophysical survey (Biggs 2012; Mason 2012a) were visible as linear bands of natural outcropping bedrock.

## **6. THE FINDS**

6.1 A total of 11 finds were recovered during the watching brief. The finds comprise 5 pieces of struck flint, 4 pieces of burnt clay, and 2 sherds of pottery. The finds were cleaned and marked with the Roman Bath Museum and Pump Rooms Accession Number BATRM 2012.8 and a context number. The finds were identified and catalogued according to material type.

6.2 None of the finds are of more than site importance and no further work is recommended.

6.3 The finds are discussed separately by type below.

### **Ceramics**

6.4 Two sherds of pottery and 4 pieces of burnt clay were recovered from topsoil (1000). The pottery was identified with reference to the Bristol pottery type series, and the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). Two fabric types were identified:

Fabric 1. Severn Valley ware. Fine textured slightly micaceous fabric with a reddish-orange surface and a grey core. 2nd to 4th century AD.

Fabric 2. Bath A ware. Hard, sandy micaceous fabric with quartz and calcareous inclusions. Mid-11th to mid-14th century.

6.5 The burnt clay contained oolitic limestone inclusions, which suggests it is of local origin. The burnt clay may be derived from burnt daub, oven lining or from heat affected clay beneath a hearth.

### **Flint**

6.6 A total of 5 pieces of struck flint were recovered from topsoil (1000), 4 of which are pieces of undiagnostic debitage; the fifth is a broken bladelet, probably of Mesolithic or Neolithic date.

### **Discussion and Dating**

6.7 The assemblage is too small for meaningful comment apart from noting the presence of some residual prehistoric, Roman and medieval material.

## **7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Apart from five pieces of prehistoric struck flint, and two sherds of Roman and medieval pottery, there is no evidence of any archaeological activity within the development area. This provides further evidence to support the suggestion (Mason 2012) that the large quantities of flint purported to have been recovered from the site in 1935 were in fact found in a slightly different location; possibly in what is now the rear garden of St Winifred, or on the land between the school playing fields and the former quarry to the west of the site, or perhaps in another part of the school grounds.

## **8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **Maps and Plans**

O.S. Archaeology Branch (1949). Annotated Ordnance Survey map (1939 Rev.) held at BaRAS offices.

### **Published material**

DCLG (2012). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: TSO.

IfA (2008). *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Reading: IfA.

Tomber, R. & Dore, J. (1998). *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection*. MoLAS Monograph 2. London: MoLAS.

### **Unpublished material**

BaRAS (2009). *Site Manual*.

Bristol Pottery Type Series, held at The Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, and the Offices of BaRAS.

Biggs, M. (2012). *Geophysical Survey Report Ralph Allen School, Bath*. Upton upon Severn: Stratascan.

Mason, C. (2012a). *Archaeological Evaluation at Ralph Allen School, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down, Bath*. Report No. 2636/2012. Bristol: BaRAS.

Mason, C. (2012b). *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Ralph Allen School, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down, Bath*. Bristol: BaRAS.

Vince A. (2004). *Correlations of the Bristol Pottery Type (BPT) Series with other classifications*. AVAC Report No. 2004/77.

### **Internet sources**

British Geological Survey. (2012). Geology of Britain Viewer. URL: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>. Accessed 30 March 2012.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

BaRAS would like to thank Bath and North East Somerset Council for funding the project. We would also like to thank Vanessa Dale (Development & Major Projects B&NES) for her assistance throughout the project, and Richard Sermon (Archaeological Officer, B&NES) for his advice. The archaeological work was managed by John Bryant (Acting Manager BaRAS). Plans, figures, and plates in this report were prepared by Ann Linge (Design and Production Officer BaRAS). The archaeological work was undertaken by Cai Mason (Project Officer BaRAS).

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)**

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designate heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

### **LOCAL POLICY**

Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan including waste and minerals policies Revised Deposit Draft 2003 as approved for used for Development Control purposes contains the following policies:

**Policy BH.11** – Development which would adversely affect Scheduled Ancient Monuments or any other sites of national importance, and their settings and does not preserve such sites in situ will not be permitted.

**Policy BH.12** – Development which would harm important archaeological remains or their settings outside the scope of Policy BH.11 will not be permitted unless the adverse impact of the development proposal on the remains can be mitigated.

**Policy BH.13** – Development which adversely affects significant archaeological remains within Bath will not be permitted unless the preservation in situ of these remains can be achieved through a detailed design and construction scheme.

Two Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents 'Archaeology in Bath & North-East Somerset' and 'Archaeology in the City of Bath' (both 2004) have been adopted. Their principal purpose is to supplement Policies BH.11, BH.12 & BH.13 of the existing and emerging Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan and should be read in conjunction with these.





Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:10,000



Fig.2 Site plan with plate orientations, scale 1:1000





Plate 1 Northern end of the playing field with topsoil and layer (1001) removed, looking north

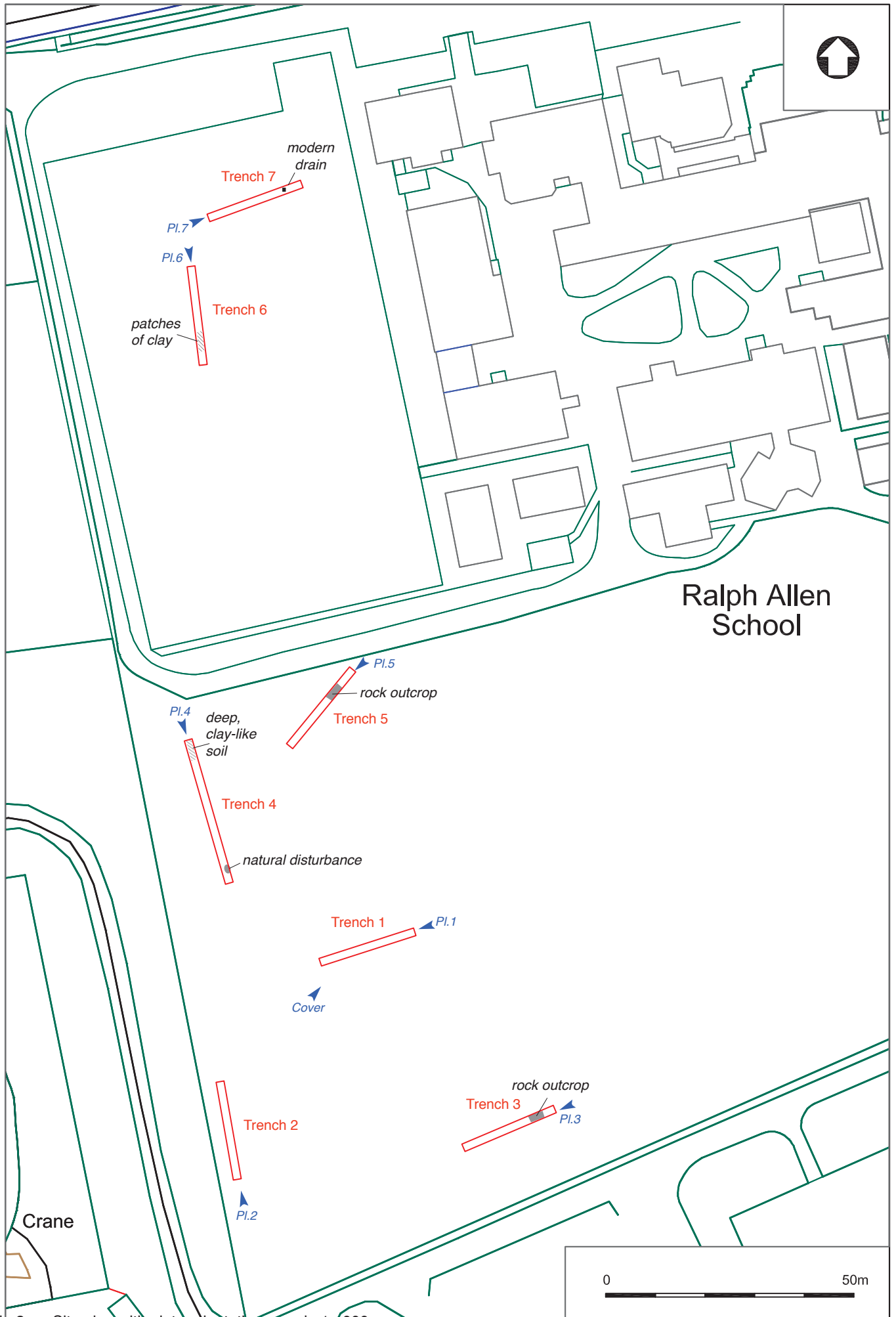


Fig.2 Site plan with plate orientations, scale 1:1000