

## Ogbourne St George School, Ogbourne St George, Wiltshire

### Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**Ogbourne St George School  
Ogbourne St George  
Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

Prepared for:  
**Andrew Bumphrey Architects**  
2/3 Silverless Street  
Marlborough  
Wiltshire  
SN8 1JQ

by:  
**Wessex Archaeology**  
Portway House,  
Old Sarum Park,  
Salisbury,  
Wiltshire,  
SP4 6EB

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## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**Figure 1**      **Site location plans**

**Plate 1:**      Landscaping deposits above clay and flints substrata

**Plate 2:**      Clay lenses within landscaping deposits



# **Ogbourne St George School Ogbourne St George Wiltshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Andrew Bumphrey Architects on behalf of the Local Education Authority to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Ogbourne St George School, Wiltshire to monitor groundworks during construction of a new school hall centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 419850 174425. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on all groundworks between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

The Site lies in a part of the village which is considered to be outside of the potential medieval settlement but within an area of post-medieval development with the possibility of backyard activity dating to this period.

Initially two small machine excavated geotechnical test pits were excavated in the west and south-west of the construction area. The construction area was then reduced, by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to a level of approximately 155.10m aOD. The 0.50m wide strip footing of the building were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.60m and the eight post-pads, each 2m x 1.5m were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.85m.

The natural Chalk bedrock was only recorded in one of the geotechnical test pits, in the south-west of the construction area. This was recorded at approximately 2m below the present ground level (153.2m aOD). This was directly overlain by an approximately 1.50m thick deposit of clay and flints, a stiff yellowish brown clay with very abundant sub-angular flint inclusions.

Layers of dark greyish brown clay loam, with lenses of redeposited clay and flints and abundant flint inclusions overlay the natural clay and flints substrata suggest that the area has been landscaped, levelling-out the gentle north-west facing slope. Modern brick, plastic and glass fragments noted within this deposit, but not retained, indicate that the possible landscaping had taken place quite recently, probably in the mid 1970s during the construction of the existing school buildings.

The only features recorded during the watching brief comprised modern service trenches and a large soak-away, all associated with the present school buildings. It is, however, notable that a small assemblage of medieval pottery, all locally made coarsewares, including a jar rim datable to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century, was recovered from the modern landscaping deposits, along with a single sherd of post-medieval redware and larger quantities of clearly modern materials. The presence of medieval and post-medieval pottery, albeit in small quantities, could suggest activity of these periods in the near vicinity. There is, however, a possibility that the material was brought to the Site from elsewhere.

# **Ogbourne St George School Ogbourne St George Wiltshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Andrew Bumphrey of Andrew Bumphrey Architects on behalf of the Local Education Authority. Thanks are also due to Mike Gingell of Steele Davis, the building contractors, for his and his colleagues help, patience and interest during the course of the watching brief. Further thanks are extended to Vanessa Clarke, Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council for her help and advice.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Vaughan Birbeck, who also compiled this report with the help of Lorraine Mephram (pottery identification). The illustrations were prepared by Liz James and the project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Damian De Rosa.

# Ogbourne St George School Ogbourne St George Wiltshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Andrew Bumphrey Architects on behalf of the Local Education Authority (LEA - the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief, requested by the Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS) acting on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, at Ogbourne St George School, Wiltshire to monitor groundworks during construction of a new school hall (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 419850 174425 (**Figure 1**).

### 2 THE SITE

#### 2.1 Site location, description and topography

- 2.1.1 The Site comprises a rectangular parcel of land measuring approximately 23m x 12m situated to the west of the existing school building. The school itself is bordered to the north by the High Street and to the east and west by residential housing. School playing fields lie to the west of the existing buildings with a tarmac area to the north (**Figure 1**).
- 2.1.2 The Site is fairly flat, lying at an approximate height of between 155m 155.5m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), although the surrounding topography comprises a gentle to moderate north-west facing slope.
- 2.1.3 The underlying basal geology of the whole Site is mapped as Upper or Middle Chalk of the Cretaceous Period (British Geological Survey, 1:63,360. Sheet 266). This is overlain by a c. 1.5m thick yellowish brown clay and flints drift deposit.

#### 2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 The parish of Ogbourne St. George straddles the valley of the river Og on the downs 5 km. north of Marlborough and contains the village of Ogbourne St. George and the hamlet of Southend. The name Ogbourne was used in 946–7 and was shared by several estates in the Og valley in 1086. In the 12th century there was a church at the most northerly settlement in the valley, then known as Great Ogbourne. That name continued in use until the 16th century but the settlement was also known as North Ogbourne in the 13th century and Ogbourne St. George from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

- 2.2.2 Earthworks on Whitefield Hill, Church Hill, and Round Hill Downs, artefacts of Bronze Age and Iron Age date, and a ditch leading north from Church Hill indicate considerable prehistoric activity in the north-east corner of the parish. Another ditch crosses its eastern corner. Barrows are widely scattered along the northern and western boundaries and a circular enclosure lies west of the Ogbourne St George manor house.
- 2.2.3 The Roman road from Mildenhall (*Cunetio*) to Wanborough (*Durocornovium*) runs from north to south to the east of the village. Romano British finds have also been revealed near to the village and within the parish with artefacts from Ogbourne Hill a burial north east of Coombe Down, and a building on Round Hill Downs.
- 2.2.4 Some Saxon evidence within the parish has been revealed, but what is known is that Ogbourne priory, a daughter house of the abbey of Bec-Hellouin (Eure), was established in the 12th century possibly on the site later occupied by the manor house in the western part of the village. In the 13th century many of the abbey's estates in the west of England were administered from the priory. The priory remained in royal keeping until the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and its suppression.
- 2.2.5 The church, the site of which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and manor house of Ogbourne St. George, which dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, stand on the west bank of the Og at the western end of the village. The village of Ogbourne St. George lies east of the church and manor house, and west of the Swindon-Marlborough (Roman) road. Its position, between the possible site of the priory and the Roman road, and the straightness of the village street, which runs south-east for 500 m from the bridge over the Og, give an impression of a medieval planned settlement, but no documentary or archaeological evidence has been found to support the theory. Its development most probably dates to the time of the founding of the church and manor house.
- 2.2.6 The surviving older buildings of the village are at the western end of the High Street. Kemms, a timber-framed house of the 17th century, stands west of the river and south of the street, where it curves round the grounds of the manor house. East of the bridge there are cottages of the 16th and 17th centuries above the steep banks between which the street climbs for some 200m. Newer buildings in the western half of the street include the old and new vicarage houses and, at its highest point, the school, the subject of the present watching brief, the village hall, and a small group of council houses. Along its remaining length are farm buildings, houses, and cottages, chiefly of the 18th and 19th centuries, including Rectory Farm House and Rectory House, which bear dates of 1742 and 1755 respectively, and the Park, an 18th-century house much extended in the 19th century. Some 200m west of the junction of the street and the old Swindon-Marlborough road Jubbs Lane leads north to farm buildings. Another lane, 150 m further east, runs north-east from the street linking it with the old road. On the triangle of land so formed stand cottages of the 19th and 20th centuries. East of the old road are a few buildings including bungalows built on the site of a Methodist chapel near the junction with the street.

- 2.2.7 The Ogbourne St George School lies in a part of the village, which is considered to be outside of the potential medieval settlement but within an area of post-medieval development with the possibility of backyard activity dating to this period.

### **3 METHODS**

- 3.1.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record all archaeological features revealed during excavations and groundworks
- 3.1.2 The following methodology was followed in order to meet the aims of the project. All works were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute For Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008).
- 3.1.3 A suitably experienced archaeologist was present during all groundworks on the Site, including the excavation of two geotechnical investigation pits, the reduction of the construction area to formation level and the excavation of all strip footings and all eight post-pads.
- 3.1.4 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system, supported by a photographic record. Areas under archaeological observation were surveyed using GPS survey equipment and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.
- 3.1.5 Finds were treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute For Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2008), the UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines "Conservation Guideline No 2" and the Museums and Galleries Commissions "Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (1991)".
- 3.1.6 All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, except those of obviously modern date. All retained artefacts were, as a minimum, washed, weighed, counted and identified.

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on all groundworks between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009.
- 4.1.2 A suitably experienced archaeologist was present during all groundworks on the Site. Initially two small machine excavated geotechnical test pits were excavated in the west and south-west of the construction area. The construction area was then reduced, by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to a level of approximately 155.10m aOD. The 0.50m wide strip footing of the building were excavated to a depth of



approximately 0.60m (154.5m aOD) and the eight post-pads, each 2m x 1.5m were excavated to a depth of approximately 0.85m (154.25m aOD).

## 4.2 The **Soil** Sequence

4.2.1 The natural Chalk bedrock was only recorded in one of the geotechnical test pits, in the south-west of the construction area. This comprised a weathered pale grey, very friable chalk, probably Upper Chalk, with flint nodule inclusions, which was recorded at approximately 2m below the present ground level (153.2m aOD). This was directly overlain by an approximately 1.50m thick deposit of stiff yellowish brown clay with very abundant sub-angular flint inclusions; rounded sarsen cobbles, up to 300mm in diameter were also noted within the clay matrix, along with chalk and green sandstone fragments.

4.2.2 This deposit is almost certainly a geological deposit, known as “Clay with Flints”. Many geologists have supposed that the Clay-with-Flints is the residue left by the slow solution and disintegration of the Chalk by the processes of weathering. However, it has also long been known that the deposit very frequently contains materials foreign to the Chalk, derived either from the Tertiary rocks or from overlying drift. Many patches of the Clay-with-Flints lie upon the same plane and may be directly associated with Reading Beds, suggesting that the Clay-with-Flints has been chiefly derived from Eocene clay, with the addition of some flints from the Chalk and small pieces of other local rock formations (Melville and Freshney 1982, 124).

4.2.3 Layers of dark greyish brown clay loam, with lenses of redeposited clay and flints and abundant flint inclusions overlay the natural Clay and Flints substrata (**Plates 1 and 2**) suggesting that the area has been landscaped, levelling-out the gentle north-west facing slope. Modern brick, plastic and glass fragments noted within this deposit, but not retained, indicate that the possible landscaping had taken place quite recently, probably in the mid 1970s during the construction of the existing school buildings. The probable landscaping deposits were overlain by a c. 0.30m thick dark greyish brown silty clay loam topsoil deposit.

## 4.3 Features and Deposits

4.3.1 The only features recorded during the watching brief comprised modern service trenches (water and foul sewer) and a large soak-away filled with brick fragments, all associated with the present school buildings.

## 5 **FINDS**

5.1.1 A small assemblage of medieval pottery (5 sherds weighing 44g), all locally made coarsewares, including a jar rim datable to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century, were recovered from the modern landscaping deposits, along with a single sherd of post-medieval redware (1 sherd weighing 27g)

5.1.2 Larger quantities of clearly modern materials were present, but were not retained.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL**

- 6.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of the watching brief

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1.1 Although no archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief a small assemblage of medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered from recent landscaping deposits. It is assumed that the landscaping probably took place during the construction of the present school buildings in the mid 1970s and that the material used to raise the ground level was derived from groundworks associated with the construction. If this was so, the presence of medieval and post-medieval pottery, albeit in small quantities, could suggest activity of these periods in the near vicinity. There is, however, a possibility that the material was brought to the Site from elsewhere.

## **8 ARCHIVE**

### **8.1 Preparation and Deposition**

- 8.1.1 The complete project archive comprises an A4 ring bound folder comprising context record sheets, photographic register, Risk Assessment and various background documentation. There is a small accompanying archive of photographs in monochrome contact prints and colour digital images. The entire archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology where they are held under the Wessex Archaeology project code 71450 until agreement has been reached to deposit them for permanent storage with the Wiltshire Museums Service.

### **8.2 Copyright**

- 8.2.1 Wessex Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. Excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the specification. Any document produced to meet planning requirements may be copied for planning purposes by the Local Planning Authority.

### **8.3 Security Copy**

- 8.3.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the Museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

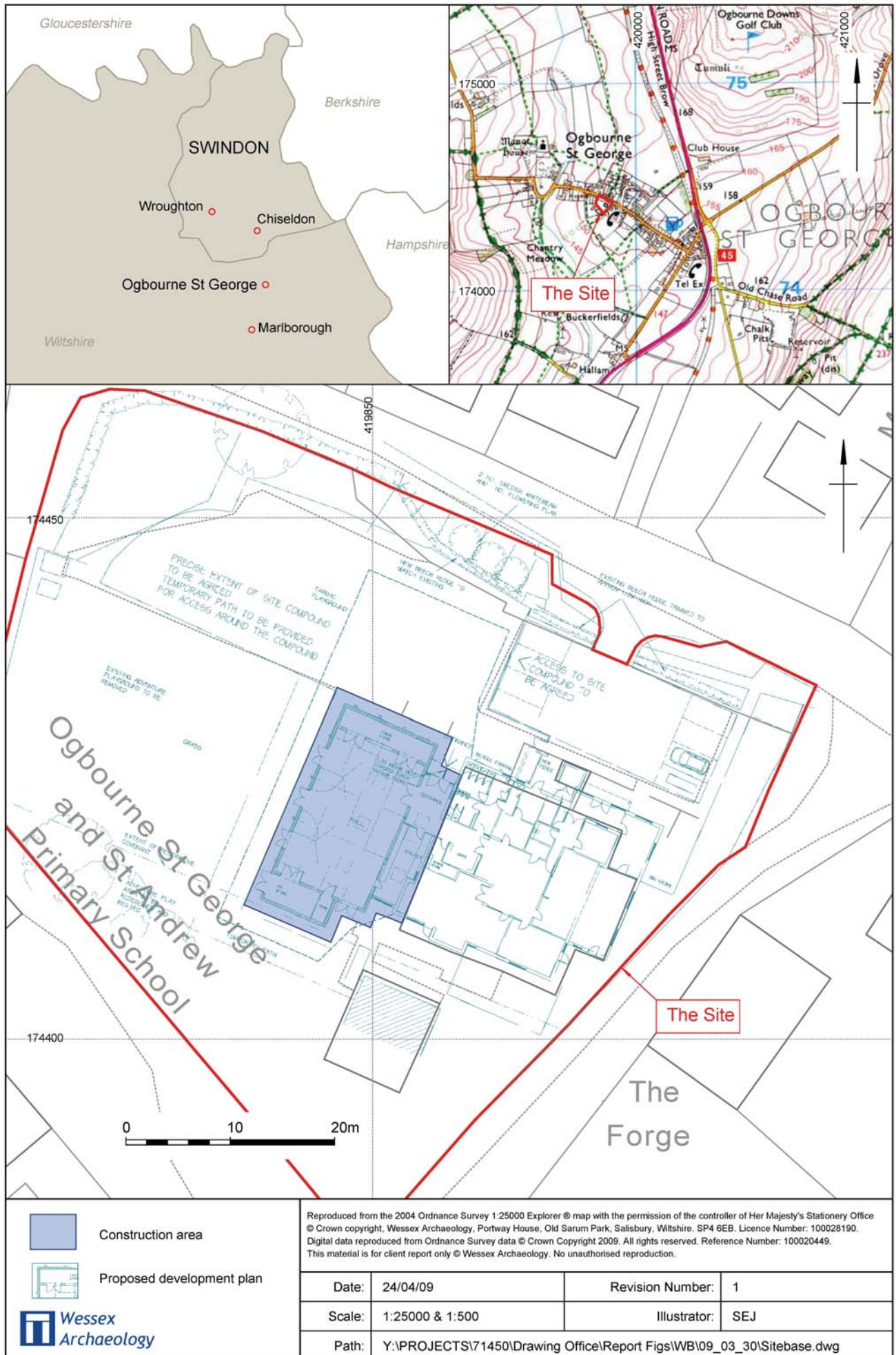
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Site location plans

Figure 1






Plate 1: Landscaping deposits above clay and flint substrata



Plate 2: Clay lenses within landscaping deposits

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**WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.**

Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 [info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:info@wessexarch.co.uk) [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 [london-info@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:london-info@wessexarch.co.uk) [www.wessexarch.co.uk](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk)

