



Wellington Academy Ludgershall, Wiltshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report





**WELLINGTON ACADEMY, LUDGERSHALL,
WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

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WELLINGTON ACADEMY, LUDGERSHALL WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

Contents

Summary	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Project Background	5
1.2 Site location, topography, geology and land use.....	5
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	6
3 EVALUATION AIMS.....	6
3.1 General.....	6
4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	6
4.1 Introduction.....	6
4.2 Fieldwork	6
4.3 Health and safety.....	7
4.4 Service Location.....	7
4.5 Survey	7
4.6 Depth of Excavation	7
4.7 Recording	7
4.8 Finds.....	8
5 EVALUATION RESULTS.....	8
5.1 Introduction.....	8
5.2 Stratigraphy	8
5.3 Archaeological Remains.....	8
6 FINDS	9
7 DISCUSSION.....	9
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
9 APPENDIX : EVALUATION TRENCH SUMMARIES	10

List of Figures and Plates

Figure 1 Site plan and detail of earthwork feature in Trench 4

Cover View along Trench 4 from south

Plate 1 Features **402** and **405** in **Trench 4** (view from west).

WELLINGTON ACADEMY, LUDGERSHALL WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Moss to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of a development at Castledown School, Ludgershall, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference 425260 150322. The redevelopment of the school comprises the demolition of the existing school, and the construction of a new academy and boarding house.

The Site comprises playing fields and school buildings including some overgrown areas and hard standing. Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS) acting on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) advised that the Site has the potential for archaeological remains and have therefore requested that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken to assess the level of impact that the proposed development could have on any buried archaeological remains present.

Of the eight trenches excavated, only one, **Trench 4**, contained archaeological features. Excavations exposed a small ditch or gulley (**405**) cut by a larger ditch (**402**). These features may relate to a shallow linear earthwork running across the playing fields and are possibly prehistoric in date although they were not accurately dated.

No evidence of archaeological features were found in the remaining seven trenches, although two pieces of residual prehistoric struck flint was retrieved from the spoil of **Trench 1**. This evidence suggests a low level of activity in the evaluated areas.

WELLINGTON ACADEMY, LUDGERSHALL WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Geoff Wilson of Kier Moss. The Site was monitored by Vanessa Clark (Assistant County Archaeologist) for Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS). Machining of the trenches was carried out by David Shearman of S F Shearman Agricultural Contractors and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank him for his assistance.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr. The evaluation was undertaken by Bob Davis assisted by Duncan Wright. The report was compiled by Bob Davis and the illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer.

WELLINGTON ACADEMY, LUDGERSHALL WILTSHIRE

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Moss to carry out an archaeological field evaluation at Castledown School, Ludgershall, Wiltshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 425260 150322 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in support of a planning application which is to be submitted for the proposed redevelopment of the school comprising the demolition of the existing school, and the construction of a new academy and boarding house.
- 1.1.3 Wiltshire County Archaeological Service (WCAS) acting on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has advised that the Site has the potential for archaeological remains and have therefore requested that an evaluation be undertaken to assess the level of impact that the proposed development could have on any buried archaeological remains present.
- 1.1.4 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2009), which was agreed in advance of the fieldwork by Vanessa Clark, Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire County Archaeology Service. All works were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the '*Standards for Archaeological Assessment and Field Evaluation in Wiltshire*' (Archaeology Service, Wiltshire County Council 1995) and in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 1999).
- 1.1.5 The evaluation fieldwork took place between 16th and 20th February 2009.
- 1.1.6 This report sets out the results of the evaluation.
- #### 1.2 Site location, topography, geology and land use
- 1.2.1 Although the Site measures approximately 6 hectares in total, only c. 1 hectare is proposed for new build. The school is bounded to the south by Tidworth Road (A342) and to the north by playing fields. To the east and west of the Site is agricultural land and woodland.
- 1.2.2 The Site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land with existing school buildings and car parking to be removed/demolished as part of the proposed development, surrounded by grassland and a number of trees (**Figure 1**).

1.2.3 The Site is generally flat and lies at a height of approximately 130m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The Geological Survey of Great Britain and Wales Sheet 283, describes the underlying geology of the Site as Upper Chalk.

1.2.4 **Trenches 1-6** were located in the playing field area set to mown short grass. **Trenches 7-8** were located to the south-west of the Site and within an area of mixed coverage including trees, scrub and metalled hard standing.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The Site is positioned on the south eastern edge of Salisbury Plain Training Area. The military training area retains a wealth of well-preserved archaeological monuments and extensive relict historic landscapes.

2.1.2 Approximately 600m to the west of the Site, an undated bowl barrow is recorded from aerial photography on Pickpit Hill. Further to the north, a late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age linear ditch boundary is recorded and to the south-west at Perham Down, Romano-British pottery fragments including samian ware have been collected. Also to the south-east parallel ditches, possibly multiple trackways have been identified on aerial photography and evidence of modern military trench excavation is recorded on both Tidworth Down and Windmill Hill plantation.

3 EVALUATION AIMS

3.1 General

3.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine or confirm the presence/absence and the general nature of any remains present.

3.1.2 A further aim was to determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence where development is proposed.

4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following methodology was proposed in order to meet the aims of the evaluation. All works were undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the WSI and the requirements of the client and the Assistant County Archaeologist for WCAS. All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (as amended 1994).

4.2 Fieldwork

4.2.1 A total of 8 trenches were excavated. All the trenches were at least 1.8m wide and 30m long. The trenches were positioned slightly off line with the pattern given within the footprint of the proposed buildings. It was not possible to accurately locate the trenches using DGPS (Differential Global Positioning System) as the accuracy of the telemetry was hampered by poor satellite coverage at the time of set out (**Figure 1**).

4.2.2 As a result of ecological issues the positions of **Trenches 7 and 8** were moved under the supervision of the site Ecologist. This was carried out to minimise reptile habitat damage and to avoid Japanese knot weed.

4.3 Health and safety

4.3.1 All work was carried out in accordance with Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4.3.2 Prior to the commencement of the fieldwork a Risk Assessment was produced. All staff involved in works signed and complied with this document.

4.4 Service Location

4.4.1 Prior to and during excavation, the trenches were scanned to verify the absence of any underground services using a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT). As a result no underground services were present within the footprint of the trial trenches.

4.5 Survey

4.5.1 Trial trenches were laid out in advance and in general accordance with the pattern given in **Figure 1** and surveyed using DGPS (Differential Global Positioning System), to an accuracy of $\pm 20\text{mm}$. At the time of survey satellite coverage had increased and improved accuracy of survey.

4.5.2 All trenches were excavated by tracked excavator under constant archaeological supervision. All machining was carried out using a 1.8m wide toothless bucket in discrete level spits of approximately 0.10m maximum depth. Topsoil and underlying deposits of chalk were stored adjacent to the trenches in preparation for reinstatement. All trial trenches were machined to the upper surface of archaeological features and/or underlying geology (upper chalk) whichever was encountered first.

4.5.3 The trial trenches were fenced with Heras fencing.

4.5.4 On the completion of the trenches to the satisfaction of the client and the Assistant County Archaeologist for WCAS, the trenches were backfilled using the excavated material in the order in which they were excavated by Wessex Archaeology and left level and compacted by the machine tracks. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

4.6 Depth of Excavation

4.6.1 None of the trenches exceeded 1.2m in depth and therefore required no stepping or battering in profile.

4.7 Recording

4.7.1 Written recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology *pro-forma* recording sheets. Representative soil profile sections of trial trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Archaeological features were recorded at 1:10 in section and 1:20 in plan. The Site was surveyed using a DGPS.

4.7.2 A unique number was issued for each feature and deposit, relating to the trench in which it was found.

4.7.3 A photographic record was produced consisting of 35mm monochrome prints and transparencies. Digital images were also taken to support general site recording.

4.8 Finds

4.8.1 All recovered objects were retained unless they were undoubtedly of modern or recent origin. All finds were recorded by context.

5 EVALUATION RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Archaeological features were present in one trench (**Trench 4**), located in the central part of the playing field area. The remains comprised two linear features or ditches (**402**) and (**405**) (**Plate 1**). These features were located approximately mid-way along the trench and appeared to cross the width of the trench in a west to east direction. None of the remaining trenches contained any archaeological features or deposits. Detailed trench summaries are contained in the **Appendix**.

5.2 Stratigraphy

5.2.1 The general soil sequence encountered across the Site was consistent. It comprised dark brown clay silt topsoil overlying the weathered geology of upper chalk. Although the topsoil varied in depth it was not to a significant degree. In **Trench 8** the original topsoil was sealed below a deep layer of made ground thought to have derived when the school buildings were built.

5.2.2 The underlying natural geology of upper chalk was identified in all of the trenches.

5.3 Archaeological Remains

5.3.1 Within **Trench 4**, two linear features were recorded (**Figure 1**). The smaller and earlier of these two features (**405**) had been truncated by the larger (**402**). Both of these features crossed the width of the trench and may relate to a shallow earthwork seen to cross the playing field in a west to east direction. The two ditches appear to run along the southern edge of the shallow earthwork, but this could not be confirmed due to the constraints of the trench size.

5.3.2 Ditch/gulley **405** measured 0.33m deep and had an estimated width of 0.40m. The fill was a sterile compacted chalk and contained no finds. Ditch **402** measured 1.0m wide and 0.40m deep. The upper soily fill (**403**) produced a small struck flint blade and a single animal tooth.

5.3.3 Although no archaeological features were present in **Trench 1** two struck flint blades were recovered from the topsoil during machining.

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the Site. This consisted of two pieces of worked flint weighing 25g from the topsoil (**100**), one of which is of probable Neolithic date, the other of uncertain prehistoric origin.
- 6.1.2 Context (**403**) produced one small worked flint of uncertain date and one sheep's tooth.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The trial trench evaluation has identified archaeological features within **Trench 4**. This consisted of a narrow shallow ditch/gulley and a larger ditch. Although they remain undated, these features are consistent with small boundary ditches associated with field and/or track boundaries known across Salisbury Plain. The surrounding area has probably been farmed since the prehistoric period although specific occupation sites from this period are scarce. It is possible, however, that these two features are related to farming practise or land division and could date from anywhere between the prehistoric to the medieval periods.
- 7.1.2 It is also notable that a small quantity of residual prehistoric worked flint was recovered from **Trench 1**. This material is consistent with the prehistoric period but the small quantity found suggests a low level of activity in the immediate area.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology 2009, *Wellington Academy, Ludgershall, Wiltshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Field Evaluation.*

9 APPENDIX : EVALUATION TRENCH SUMMARIES

Evaluation Trench 1		Max Depth: 0.40m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.97m	Length: 30m	Width:2.0m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
100	<i>layer</i>	Turf and topsoil layer. Mid to dark brown clay silt. Diffuse A/B horizon onto-		0-25cm
101	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk- subject to crio-turbation also affected by tree throws		25cm- to base of trench

Evaluation Trench 2		Max Depth: 0.33m Ground Level(m aOD): 140.15m	Length: 30m	Width:1.95m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
200	<i>layer</i>	Turf and topsoil layer. Consisting of mid to dark brown clay silt. Fairly diffuse A/B horizon onto-		0-22cm
201	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk. Subjected to crio-turbation with some evidence of tree throws present		22cm to base of trench

Evaluation Trench 3		Max Depth: 0.40m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.45m	Length: 30m	Width:1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
300	<i>layer</i>	Turf and topsoil layer. Consisting of dark brown clay silt. Diffuse A/B horizon onto-		0-20cm
301	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk. Subject to cri-turbation with evidence of the remains of tree throws		20cm to base of trench
302	<i>cut</i>	Probable natural feature		
303	<i>fill</i>	Fill of above light brown silty clay mottled appearance. Low % of small unbroken flints and no finds		

Evaluation Trench 4		Max Depth: 0.31m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.83m	Length: 30m	Width: 1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
400	<i>layer</i>	Turf and topsoil layer. Consisting of dark brown clay silt. Diffuse A/B horizon onto-		0-30cm
401	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk. Subjected to crio-turbation with many tree throws present		30cm to base of trench
402	<i>cut</i>	Ditch crossing trench from sw-ne		
403	<i>fill</i>	Upper fill of ditch 402. Light brown clay silt with low % of medium sized flint nodules accumulated toward the centre bottom of layer		
404	<i>fill</i>	Basal fill of 402. Pale brown clay silt fairly compact with small pieces of chalk		
405	<i>cut</i>	Small linear gulley cut by 402. Runs parallel to 402		
406	<i>fill</i>	Upper fill of 405. light to pale brown clay silt with small pieces of chalk		
407	<i>fill</i>	Basal fill of 405. very pale brown with almost no textural class apart from compressed chalk pieces also compact		

Evaluation Trench 5		Max Depth: 0.33m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.29m	Length: 30m	Width: 1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
500	<i>layer</i>	Turf and topsoil consisting of mid to dark brown clay silt. Diffuse horizon onto-		0-25cm
501	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk. Subjected to crio-turbation and numerous tree throws		25cm to base of trench

Evaluation Trench 6		Max Depth: 0.23m Ground Level (m aOD): 141.11m	Length: 30m	Width: 1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
600	<i>Layer</i>	Turf and topsoil layer consisting of mid to dark brown clay silt. Diffuse horizon onto-		0-30cm
601	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk. Subjected to crio-turbation and numerous tree throws		30cm to base of trench

Evaluation Trench 7		Max Depth: 1.13m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.18m	Length: 30m	Width:1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
700	<i>layer</i>	Turf line of modern origin i.e. has to have been laid recently as this area made ground		0-5cm
701	<i>layer</i>	Underlying zone of made ground consisting of dark brown soil layers mixed with discrete layers of pure white Redeposited chalk		5cm-33cm
702	<i>layer</i>	Buried original soil horizon. Consisting of dark brown clay silt giving way to patches of orange brown colluvium present in underlying hollows		33cm-65cm
703	<i>layer</i>	Weathered and affected upper chalk. The exposed surface has been affected by solifluction hollows and gulleys of natural origin		65cm to base of trench

Evaluation Trench 8		Max Depth: 0.10m Ground Level (m aOD): 139.90m	Length: 30m	Width:1.8m
Context	Type	Description		Depth (m)
800	<i>layer</i>	Layer of compacted scalpens covering the immediate area directly onto-		0-10cm
801	<i>layer</i>	Upper chalk showing evidence of crio-turbation and modern intrusion		10cm to base of trench



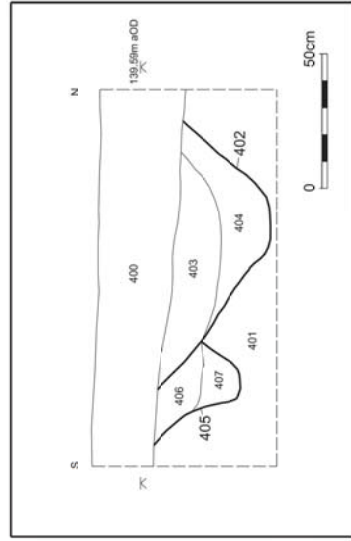
□ The Site
□ Evaluation trench

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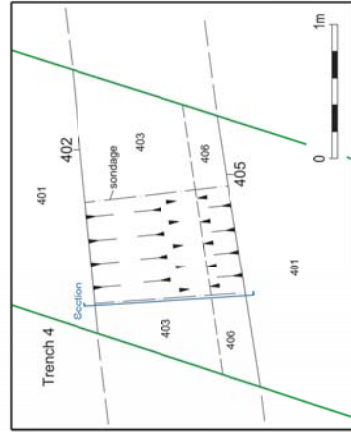
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Plate 1: Features 402 and 405 in Trench 4 (view from west)



C. Section of features 402 and 405 in Trench 4



B. Plan of earthen features 402 and 405 in Trench 4



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