Charters School Playing Field Parking, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

An Archaeological Recording Action

For CgMs Consulting

by Andrew Mundin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CCS 08/37

September 2008
Summary

Site name: Charters School Playing Field Parking, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9415 6692

Site activity: Recording action

Date and duration of project: 21st–26th August 2008

Project manager: Jennifer Lowe

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: CCS 08/37

Area of site: c. 1800 sq m

Summary of results: Topsoil was stripped to create a hardstanding area to the south of the playing fields at Charters School. Extensive drainage channeling was uncovered in a regular pattern across the stripped area, with only modern finds identified in the soil removed. No other truncation was identified and no archaeology was uncovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 04.09.08
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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action (strip and record) carried out at land to the north of Charters School, currently used as playing fields (SU 9415 6692) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Lorraine Darton, of CgMs Consulting, Morley House, 26 Holbourn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2AT, on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Planning consent (06/02809/FUL) had been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to construct a new parking area south of the sports pitches on the playing field. The planning consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Mundin, from 21st to 26th August 2008. The site code is CCS 08/37.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the north of Charters Road, on a ground used as playing fields opposite the site of the Charters School (Fig. 2). The ground is landscaped flat, but has a slight fall of slope from north-west to south-east. The area monitored was a rectangular strip of land to the south of the pitches, bounded by the roadside ditch and the road to the south. The lower side (south) of the site is at approximately 58m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The underlying geology is mapped as Bracklesham Beds (BGS 1981). Clay, of many local variants of this formation, was observed on site.
Archaeological background

The site is situated approximately 150m north of the projected line of the ‘Devil’s Highway’, the Roman road between Silchester and London (Margary 1973). Several large Roman sites are already known to exist at the side of the road, as at Wickham Bushes (Ford 1987, 83; Roberts and Leese 1933; Corney and Gaffney 1983), and further remains are to be anticipated. A Roman brick was recovered from an evaluation on the east end of Charters Road (Wallis 2004), though no positively dated Roman features were uncovered. This area has a scattering of prehistoric activity in the form of round barrows, and isolated Mesolithic and Neolithic findspots without contextual information. It is assumed possible Bronze Age settlement may be nearby associated with the known funerary activity.

Various other fieldwork projects have taken place in the area. Fieldwork within the grounds of a large house (Charters), immediately to the north of the current site, did not reveal any finds or deposits of archaeological interest (Oram 2005; Wallis and Cass 2006) Similarly recent evaluations on Fireball Hill (Coles and Ford 2004, Taylor 2006), elsewhere on Charters Road (Cass 2007a) and elsewhere around Sunningdale (Ford 2006; Oram and Taylor 2006; Cass 2007b; Lewis and Mundin 2008) have not yielded any discoveries of archaeological interest.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the recording action was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of deep foundation trenching truncating possible archaeologically relevant layers to natural geology. The specific research aims of this project were:

To determine if archaeological relevant material survived on this site;

To determine if archaeology of any period are present;

To establish whether there is evidence/potential for Roman activity suggesting settlement or Bronze Age settlement/funerary activity. Any finds of Mesolithic or Neolithic would also be of note too, given the other finds in the area.

Results

The rectangular stripped area was c.100m long by 17m wide, on the southern side of the playing field with the new access though the roads hedge already cleared of vegetation and the road side ditch exposed (Fig. 3). Stratigraphy observed consisted of 0.25m of turf and topsoil directly over the clay natural. A test pit was dug to
confirm that the clay was indeed the Bracklesham Beds, which can vary in composition. Other than the modern field drainage system, no features were observed cutting the clay.

**Finds**

The only finds noted were occasional 20th-century white and blue glazed china and pottery, modern ceramic building material and land drain pipe. These finds were not retained.

**Conclusion**

The construction of the new car park did not involve any impact on archaeological features. The entire area had previously been denuded of topsoil and subsoil, presumably by leveling for the playing fields, and the archaeologically relevant level had been previously exposed and possibly truncated, though not to the extent that large cut features such as ditches or pits would have been removed without trace.

**References**

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Figure 1. Location of site within Sunningdale and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Charters Road.

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Figure 3: Detail of stripped area.
Plate 1. Site, looking west.

Plate 2. Site, looking west.