New Teaching Block, Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Leighton Park School

by Simon Cass
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LPR 06/120

December 2006
Summary

Site name: Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7324 7157

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 16th October – 14th November 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jo Pine

Site code: LPR 06/120

Summary of results: No archaeologically relevant finds or features were seen.

Monuments identified: None.

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 22.12.06
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7324 7157) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Kevin Larkin of Broadway Malayan, Interchange Place, 151-165 Edmund Street, Birmingham, B3 2TA on behalf of the school.

Planning permission (06/00500/FUL/AC) was granted by Reading Borough Council to construct new teaching accommodation on land within the grounds of Leighton Park School. The site lies adjacent to Pepper Lane, which is on the eastern side of Shinfield Road in the southern outskirts of Reading. The consent was subject to a condition (5) relating to archaeology, requiring an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during ground disturbance.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to the Borough Council on archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jo Pine, Jennifer Lowe and Steve Ford between 16th October and 14th November 2006 and the site code is LPR 06/120.

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 in south-east Reading, on the school site adjacent to Pepper Lane. It is bounded on three sides by existing school buildings and extends into what was, prior to this development, parkland/school fields. According to the geological survey map the site lies on the interface between Plateau Gravels and London Clays (BGS 1946) (Fig. 2). The site slopes gently to the north and lies at a height of c. 75m above ordnance Datum.
Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site stems from its general location in the vicinity of a Bronze Age circular enclosure recorded at Marshall’s Hill. While the nature and status of this site is as yet undetermined it is possibly of high status (Bradley 1984, 121). Further to the north, on Addington Road, a Late Bronze Age pit and hoard of Iron Age iron currency bars were recorded (Ford 2004). Closer to the proposal site, however, an evaluation at Northumberland Avenue (Saunders 2000) and a watching brief on Wellington Avenue (Oram and Colls 2006) both found no evidence of archaeological activity.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to include examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction, and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs.

Results

Topsoil stripping and ground reduction for the access road and site compound was observed prior to the main groundworks on the site (Fig. 3). This involved stripping approximately 0.3m of topsoil to expose subsoil which was found to be at a higher level than that of the natural geology, which is the top of the archaeologically relevant level. No archaeological deposits were observed and no artefacts recovered during this phase of the project.

Following insertion of the piles and removal of the piling mat, the ground beam trenches were excavated in stages. The groundbeam trenches were 1.0m deep and 0.7m wide and encountered natural clay at a depth of approximately 0.1m below surface level. Above this was approximately 0.1m of topsoil with an intermittent residue of the piling matt still in places (Fig 5). It is possible that this area had already been reduced slightly at some point prior to this phase of activity on the site, due to the lack of subsoil and the high level of the natural geology compared to elsewhere on the site.

Apart from modern service runs, no deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.
Conclusion

In conclusion, no deposits of archaeological interest were observed nor artefacts recovered.

References
Ford, S, 2004, A Late Bronze Age pit and hoard of Iron Age currency bars at Addington Road Reading,
   Berkshire, Draft publication report, Thames Valley Archaeological Services project 03/13, Reading
Oram, R and Colls, D, 2006, 15 Wellington Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief,
   Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 06/24, Reading
Saunders, M J, 2000, Land adjacent to 2 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, an archaeological
   evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/06, Reading
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An archaeological watching brief.

Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Leighton Park School.
Scale: 1:1250
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Figure 3. Location of groundbeam trenches observed
Scale: 1:625
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Figure 4. Representative section

- Topsoil (partially stripped)
- Base of foundation trench
- Natural geology
  (Clay with rare pebbles)