

## **Rainbow Bar Community Research Project**

### **Title:**

### **Proposal for a participatory excavation at Crofton Hammond Junior School, Stubbington, Hampshire**

### **Summary**

### **Overview**

The Rainbow Bar Community Research Project (RBCRP) proposes to conduct a short-term small-scale excavation in the grounds of the Crofton Hammond Junior School (CHJS), Stubbington, Hampshire in support of stated goals of the grant application submitted to the 2021 round of the Lithics Studies Society (LSS) Alan Saville Grant. The Project is greatly assisted by the oversight of the Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT) and the support of the LSS. The excavation aims to engage the 2021/22 year 4 primary school cohort in the experience of a real excavation in the context of their curriculum with a view to developing their participation in a full field survey of the Rainbow Bar shore site later in 2022. This will parallel the project run at Wicor Primary School in November 2021. A further outcome will be continued curriculum (method and content) development that will be transferable to a wider primary school audience. Concurrent with the archaeological exploration, an environment theme will be present to examine the flora and fauna at surface and sub-surface level as excavation progresses, making its own contribution to curriculum development.

### **Site location and context**

CHJS is located just south of Stubbington village (Grid Reference: SU 55134 02583) surrounded by an established residential housing environment. The school opened at this site in 1974 and has a large playing field (approximately 0.05 Km<sup>2</sup>) to the east and north of the school buildings which anecdotally has been untouched by development or industrial activity. To test this, the historic OS 25 inch to the mile mapping (Hampshire Sheet LXXXII. 4.) for the area has been reviewed as follows:

- Second Edition 1881 map - surveyed 1856
- Edition of 1907 - surveyed 1859-60, published 1909
- Edition of 1932 - surveyed 1859-60, revised 1930-31, published 1933
- Revision of 1941 - surveyed 1859-60, published 1947

The Land Utilisation survey of Britain 1931-33 Sheet 32 (surveyed on the 6 inch scale and reduced to the scale of 1 inch to 1 mile) records the land usage as “Arable land – Including fallow, rotation grass and market gardens”.

A reproduction map of the Series 1 OS 1 inch map (Timeline Reproduction) shows a marshy but in-filled channel inlet to the south of the land now occupied by CHJS. What is now a seasonal water course runs to the immediate east of the school grounds aligned to and joining this feature. Local anecdote refers to the general area as a previously ‘marshy’ land.

This brief map survey produces no evidence of previous industrial use or development with the exception of Seafield Park which lies to the south of the school grounds. This saw various naval training and private school education usage. Following closure and subsequent demolition this area is now a recreational and wildlife habitat.

CHJS is approximately 8m above mean sea level on a superficial river terrace deposit (Undifferentiated) of sand, silt and clay – predominantly sand and gravel with local lenses of silt, clay or peat (British Geological Survey data, 2022). This terrace deposit has been mapped by the Palaeolithic Archaeology of the Sussex/Hampshire Coastal Corridor project (PASHCC) and subsequently dated to MIS 7 (c. 245 – 200 ya) (Bates *et. al.* 2008).

Contemporary satellite imaging (Microsoft Bing © 2022 Microsoft Corporation) confirms the extent of development of land around the boundary of the school. The image, taken during drought conditions, suggests land drainage installation in the playing field at some point running diagonally from NE to SW. It also hints at a number of rectilinear marks that are indeterminate in terms of interpretation.

In addition to possible contemporary artefacts arising from general accumulation and possible drainage improvement, based on map detail, the modern top layers of excavation may produce post-mediaeval artefacts due to land improvement practices. The previous functions of Seafield Park may or may not be reflected in artefact finds. More generally, whether there is significant depth of deposit/stratification is not known – there are no HER entries of excavation. Those HER entries that exist refer to post-mediaeval buildings and C20th structures dating from the period 1939-1945. Thus with no early or prehistory antecedents in the HER relating to lithic scatters and such, it is not possible to anticipate such finds.

It is anticipated that the excavation will effectively further deliver the curriculum development outcomes of the LSS grant, certainly in terms of inspiring a new generation in respect of the archaeology and narrative of human and hominid presence through time.

A key caveat is understood and agreed that in the event of finds of significance the excavation will be halted pending notification to and investigation by a professional team. It is anticipated that Hampshire Cultural Trust will facilitate this should it be necessary, although details are to be finalised.

## **The excavation**

Following meetings and a confirmatory site visit to CHJS on XX May 2022, the proposed excavation will be conducted (weather permitting) during the week beginning 13 June 2022 for 5 days. It will also include an ecological analysis led by RBCP's biologist designed to explore the nature and range of life at surface and subsurface levels to further the curriculum aspects of the project. Year 4 pupils under the supervision of the CHJS teaching team will participate in all aspects of the dig.

The excavation will be based on an initial 3 metre by 3 metre trench which, following the site visit, was determined to be located to the East edge of the CHJS playing field. The judgement as to this was guided by a need not to encroach on the area used primarily for sport, yet sufficiently distant from possible major root incursion from the mature trees; close to a suitable area to deposit excavation spoil whilst ensuring sufficient space to allow for pupil participation in all activities including: digging, spoil removal, spoil sieving, find identification and documentation, and recording activities.

CHJS staff will conduct necessary Health and Safety assessments and control measures in relation to pupils and staff, whilst RBCP will conduct its own Health and Safety assessment in relation to its presence and excavation activities. A separate infection risk mitigation will also be conducted as part of RBCP's welfare consideration. The trench will be clearly marked, cordoned off, and covered with scaffolding board at the end of each digging day to ensure that it is not a fall hazard when not under active supervision.

The excavation will commence with marking out and aligning the trench to the National Grid using GPS location. The approximate centre of the trench is SU 60508 05479. The trench will be de-turfed manually to allow for the ecological investigation to start to take place and the anticipated plough disturbed layer will be trowelled to clarify the presence of any contemporary features and to locate any disturbance agents (e.g. former tree presence, land drainage installation). From here, excavation will proceed in standard form with rigorous recording, planning and photography of the excavation and its found artefacts and features. Particular attention will also be paid to the concept of stratification in order to support the curriculum development elements of the dig. The depth of

natural bedrock at this point is currently not known, but a mitigation decision is already in place that the trench will not exceed 85 cms in depth given the age of participants accessing the trench – a dynamic assessment of soil and trench conditions at lesser depths will be maintained to review the safety of all entering the trench.

The excavation site will be back-filled at the end of the allotted time, subject to CHJS views on whether they wish to keep the trench open for longer in terms of teaching and learning opportunities. If this is the case then CHJS will need to assess the potential hazard this presents and mitigate accordingly.

## **References**

Bates, M. R., F. Wenban-Smith, Rebecca M. Briant, and C. R. Bates. (2008). 'Curation of the Sussex/Hampshire Coastal Corridor Lower/Middle Palaeolithic Record'. ALSF, 3279 ANL. York: Archaeology Data Service [distributer]. <https://doi.org/10.5284/1000303>.