



# University of **Leicester**

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## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road,  
Reading, Berkshire.  
NGR: SU 7275 7089 centre**

Andrew Hyam



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White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road,  
Reading, Berkshire.**

**NGR: SU 7275 7089**

**A R Hyam**

**For: The Kingwood Trust**

Approved by

**Signed:**



**Date:** 24.8.2011.

**Name:** ...R.J. Buckley..

**University of Leicester**

Archaeological Services

University Rd, Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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## **An Archaeological Evaluation at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading, Berkshire. NGR: SU7275 7089**

**Andrew Hyam**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading. The work took place on the 9th of August 2011 in advance of the construction of a proposed extension to the existing 1930s style care home. The development site lies close to a number of prehistoric and early Roman sites hence the requirement for archaeological work. A 14m long evaluation trench was excavated to the west of the care home within the footprint of one of the proposed extensions. A rectangular concrete pond, of similar date to the house, was observed along with a disturbed area of natural clay. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the evaluation.*

*The fieldwork was carried out by A.R.Hyam. The archive will be deposited with Reading Museum Service under Accession Number REDMG:2011.446*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE12.3 (DCLG 2010) this document forms the report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading, Berkshire. Under planning application number 10/02248/FUL it is proposed to extend the existing building with a large extension to the west and a smaller extension to the east. There will be additional hard and soft landscaping to the front (north) of the property and soft landscaping to the south. When considering the planning application the Planning Archaeologist at Berkshire Archaeology, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the requirement for a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation work take place due to the site's location within an area of archaeological interest. Dependent upon the outcome of the trial trenching further archaeological work may be required. The work has been commissioned by The Kingwood Trust.

### **Background**

Cressingham Road lies towards the south of Reading and to the south-west of Reading University (Fig. 1). The development site, known as White Barn 45 Cressingham Road, is centred on National Grid Reference SU 7275 7089 in the Church Ward of the city at a height of approximately 80m OD. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of England and Wales, Sheet number 268 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Terrace Gravel and sand over London Clay.

The Planning Archaeologist identified a number of archaeological sites which are located within the immediate vicinity of White Barn. These are summarised in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work at *White Barn, 45*

*Cressingham Road, Reading* but of particular importance are a possible disc barrow, late Iron Age and Roman boundary ditches possibly associated with a field system, and fragments of a Romano-British cinerary urn. Consequently, there was a likelihood that buried archaeological remains would be affected by the development. Because of this the Planning Archaeologist recommended archaeological trial trenching and recording to be undertaken prior to the development taking place with a contingency for further recording and detailed excavation if required.

The site is located on the southern side of Cressingham Road and is approximately half way between the A327 Shinfield Road and Northumberland Avenue which run across each end of the road (Fig. 2). White Barn is a large detached house set back from the road (Fig. 3). It appears to be of 1920s or 1930s design with white painted rendered walls and a large catslide roof on the west side at the front. Two single-storey outhouses are attached to the north-east front corner and the eastern side of the house. The front garden has a mix of tarmac drives and grass with a large conifer tree in the centre. The rear garden slopes down to the south and appears to have had a number of shallow terraces cut into it to create flat areas immediately behind the house (Fig. 4).



Figure 1. Cressingham Road location

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Figure 2. White Barn location

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Figure 3. White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road

Looking south. Trench location is to the right of the picture behind the iron gate



Figure 4. Rear garden of White Barn

Looking north-west. Trench is behind the wooden fence on the left. Note the small terraces in the lawn

When originally built, White Barn was used as a private dwelling, as most other houses along Cressingham Road still are. The building is presently used as a care home with the intention that the proposed new extensions will allow for additional residents and facilities. The planning application is to construct a large extension to the west of the house and a smaller one to the east. At present there is a fenced off area to the west with a mix of grass and paving, to the east is a small single-storey extension which appears to cover much of the area to be covered by the new extension. A wooden fence had to be partially removed to gain access to the evaluation trench area. This was temporarily replaced as well as possible at the end of the work. The front and rear of the house will be affected by a mix of hard and soft landscaping.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the trial trenching were identified in the ULAS WSI were:

To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.

To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.

To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the trench was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that can demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

### **Methodology**

A JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket fitted to the back actor was used to excavate the evaluation trench. Topsoil/modern overburden was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or to undisturbed natural.

The trench was examined by hand cleaning and any deposits located were planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. The trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. The west-facing longitudinal face and the base of the trench was recorded in this way. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

All deposits were recorded by notes, sketches and both digital colour and 35mm black and white photographs. The recording methodology followed that specified in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work for *White Barn, 45 Cressingham Lane, Reading*. All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

### **Results**

The initial specified location of the trench was for it to follow a due north to south alignment which would set it at a slight angle to the house. Because of the location of a wooden fence running approximately 2m from the west side of the house it was decided to adjust the location to run parallel to the fence (Fig. 5). Before commencing the evaluation work a staff member at White Barn also suggested that a shallow pond used to run alongside the house. This was backfilled around 15 years ago and the area covered with tarmac and grass.



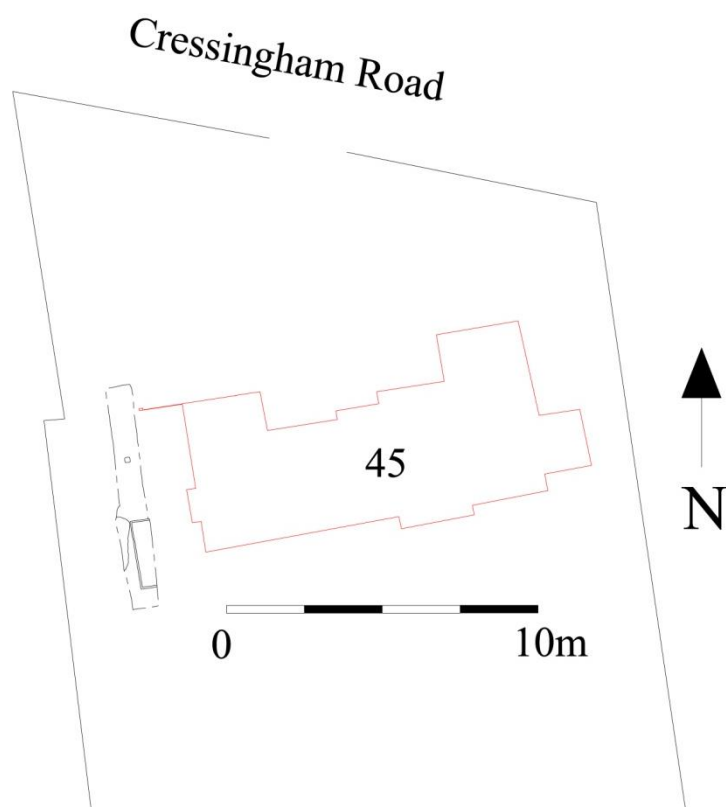


Figure 5. Trench location

The area enclosed by the fencing was covered by a thin layer of tarmac with a raised line of bricks along the eastern side. Another wooden fence ran along the western side of the area (Fig. 6). Removal of the tarmac at the south end of the trench revealed a thick layer of concrete laid on a course of unbonded bricks. The concrete surrounded a large rectangular concrete pond full of rubble backfill and appeared to be acting as a large patio around the pond. The bricks beneath the concrete patio were sat on a thin layer of mixed bedding material on top of a mid orange brown clay natural with occasional sandy patches and some small sub-rounded pebbles. The pond still had a large quantity of stagnant water along with the rubble and it was decided to leave this in-situ (Fig. 7). The location of the pond indicates that it runs beyond the eastern edge of the trench towards the house as indicated by the staff member.



Figure 6. Trench prior to excavation  
Looking north.

To the east of the pond was large semi-circular area of disturbance which contained modern brick fragments, slate and coal in a mid brown clay matrix. Beyond the pond, to the north, the concrete patio extended towards the fence and wall line level with the front of the house. There was some dark grey-brown sandy-silt subsoil here but it was quite disturbed by root action (as was the underlying natural clay). The subsoil also appeared to be quite badly mixed due to the laying of the concrete (Fig. 8). No archaeological features were seen in the natural.

After discussions with the Planning Archaeologist it was decided to extend the trench northwards by 4 metres in order to assess the potential for archaeological survival beneath the tarmac driveway to the front of the house (Fig. 9).

The concrete patio, as noted in the original 10m trench, was seen extending up to the fence dividing the front garden from the side of the house. Beyond the fenceline, to the north, the tarmac drive was seen to be laid on a bedding layer of sand and ash with an average depth of around 0.18m. A thin layer of mixed subsoil and building debris was below this leaving a thin layer of sandy silt subsoil approximately 0.1m in depth. The same mid orange brown clay natural as noted elsewhere was observed beneath the subsoil. No archaeological features were noted in the natural (Figs. 10 and 11).





Figure 7. Trench after initial 10 metre excavation  
Looking north-west, 1m scale. Backfilled pond on right of picture





Figure 8. Trench after initial 10 metre excavation  
Looking south-east, 1m scale.



Figure 9. Additional 4 metre extension to north end of trench  
Looking north-west, 1m scale



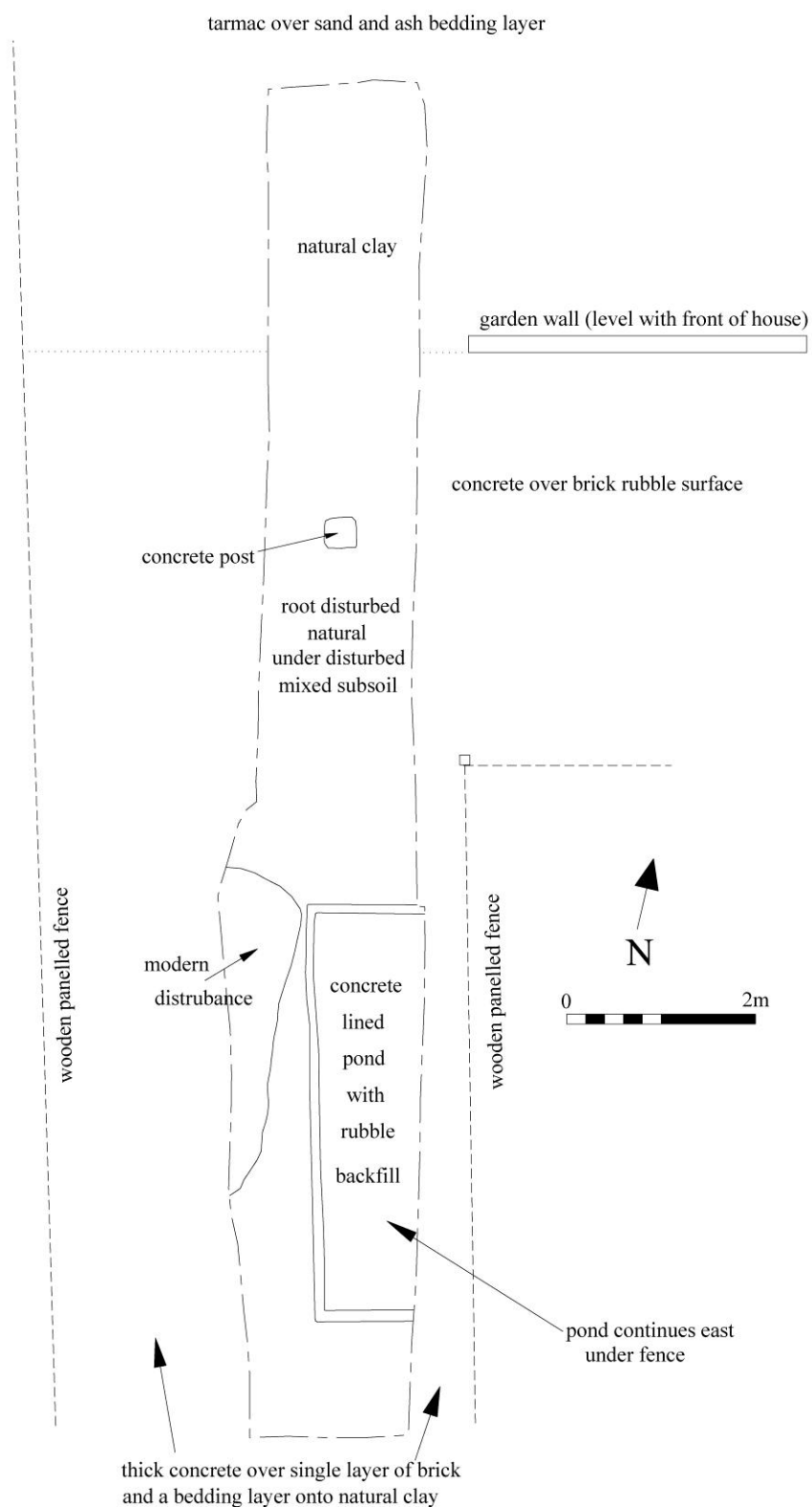


Figure 10. Plan of evaluation trench

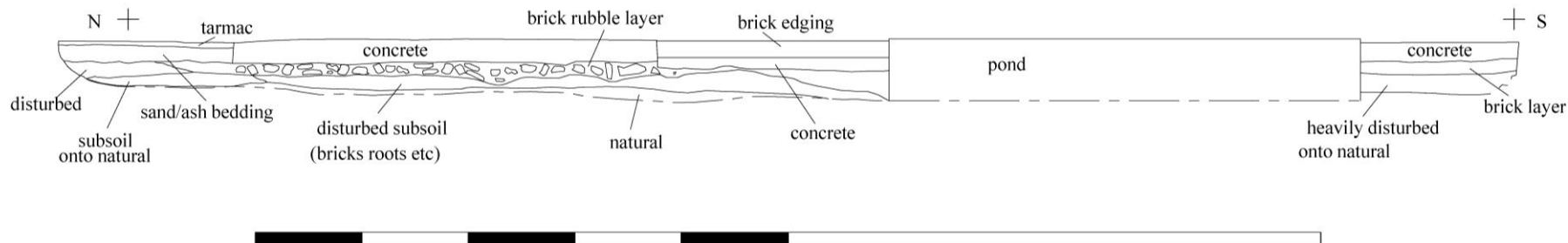


Figure 11. West-facing section of evaluation trench  
10 metre scale

## **Discussion**

Much of the area around the trench had been disturbed and most, if not all, of the subsoil had been removed probably when installing the pond and the patio. The rectangular design of the concrete pond was reminiscent of the 1930s and was probably built at the same time as the house. The thick concrete patio may be contemporary with the pond or could be a later addition. Either way the thickness of the concrete and bedding layer of bricks appears to have removed any chance of survival for any archaeological deposits.

In the extended portion of the trench there seems a little less disturbance with the tarmac surface being relatively thin. Beneath this the sand and ash bedding layer has only partially disturbed the subsoil leaving a thin 0.1m layer of potentially undisturbed subsoil. The extent of the proposed landscaping in this area is not clear but it would appear that unless it extends approximately 0.3m below current ground level it would not impinge on any archaeological deposits that may or may not be present. Overall, no archaeological features or deposits were observed during the evaluation. It seems likely that much of the area around the trench will have been similarly disturbed.

The size of the extension to the east of the house is not known but it seems likely that only a small area around outside of the existing building would remain undisturbed. This part of the house is used as a washroom, toilet and kitchen so there are a number of service pipes running from this building towards the road.

## **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

1 pro-forma trench recording form,

2 photo record sheets, 1 for colour digital and one for 35mm black and white,

1 contact sheet of 35mm black and white photographs,

35mm black and white negatives,

1 contact sheet of 33 digital photographs,

1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

## **Publication**

A record of the project will be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

## **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by A. Hyam. The project was managed by Richard Buckley. Thanks are also due to the staff at White Barn.

## **Bibliography**

Brown, D. 2008 *Standard and Guidance for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists).

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work. *White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading*. ULAS

IfA, 2008, *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

## **Appendix 1. OASIS Information**

Project Name	White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading
Project Type	Evaluation trenching
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	No previous work.
Current Land Use	Residential care home
Development Type	Extension to existing building
Reason for Investigation	Archaeological potential
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SU 7275 7089
Start/end dates of field work	9.8.2011
Archive Recipient	Reading Museum
Study Area	Approx 2000m <sup>2</sup>



## Appendix 2. Digital photographs



Reading REDMG2011 (1).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (2).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (3).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (4).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (5).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (6).jpg



Reading REDMG2011 (7).jpg



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## ULAS Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay  
University of Leicester Archaeological  
Services (ULAS)  
University of Leicester,  
University Road,  
Leicester LE1 7RH

**T:** +44 (0)116 252 2848

**F:** +44 (0)116 252 2614

**E:** [ulas@le.ac.uk](mailto:ulas@le.ac.uk)

**W:** [www.le.ac.uk/ulas](http://www.le.ac.uk/ulas)



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