

# HERITAGE NETWORK



**83-85 HIGH STREET  
Meppershall, Beds.**

HN509

*Archaeological Evaluation*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

83-85 HIGH STREET  
Meppershall, Beds.

HN509

## *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Ravenblack Ltd*

*by*

Geoff Saunders, BA

Report No.286

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## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Ian Howard and Geoff Saunders, and the finds assessment was undertaken by Helen Ashworth. The report was compiled by Geoff Saunders, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to John Carey, Ravenblack Ltd; Steven Coleman, Bedfordshire HER; Anna Slowikowski, Albion Archaeology; and Leslie-Ann Mather, Archaeological Officer, Heritage and Environment Section, Bedfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	83-85 High Street, Meppershall, Bedfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Mid Bedfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Meppershall	<b>Parish:</b>	Meppershall
<b>Planning reference:</b>	04/659	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 1377 3638
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Ravenblack Ltd, 6 The Maltings, High Street, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TU		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New dwellings	<b>Present land use:</b>	Derelict plot
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.1480m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.70m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN509	<b>Other reference:</b>	N/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Evaluation	<b>Archive location:</b>	Luton
<b>Start of work</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2005	<b>Finish of work</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> February 2005
<b>Related SMR Nos.:</b>	N/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Medieval – Modern
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	N/a		

### Synopsis:

In order to determine the archaeological risk posed by a proposal to construct four new dwellings at 83-85 High Street, Meppershall, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developers to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

Four trenches measuring c.1.6 x 10m each and a further trench measuring c.1.6 x 5m were excavated. The trenches revealed a possible trackway consisting of a metalled surface with associated drainage ditch of 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century date in Trench 1; a possible springhead or hollow containing 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century pottery in Trench 4; and a drainage ditch of 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date in Trench 5. A further boundary ditch in Trench 1 yielded no datable artefacts.

Although no direct evidence of occupation on the site was revealed, the evaluation has suggested the presence of domestic activity in the vicinity.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Ravenblack Ltd*, as part of the archaeological evaluation of a development site on land at 83-85 High Street, Meppershall, Beds. The planning permission for the development (ref. 04/659), controlled by the Mid Bedfordshire District (MBDC), has been granted subject to a standard condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note no.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning. The scope of the required investigation was set out in a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation* and a *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation* both dated 1 November 2004 prepared by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council, acting as adviser to the planning authority. A full specification for the work carried out was contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated January 2005.

**1.2** The site lies on the east side of the High Street, at the junction with Gregory Close, centred on NGR TL 1377 3638. Prior to their recent demolition, the site was occupied by two detached dwellings and their gardens. The redevelopment proposes the construction of four detached dwellings with garages, together with associated access, landscaping and services.

**1.3** The site lies in the historic core of the village, which itself lies in a documented archaeological landscape which includes Iron Age, Roman and Medieval activity. A recent excavation carried out to the north of the present study area identified extensive areas of Roman activity.

**1.4** On the basis of its location, there was considered to be a good probability that remains of Iron Age to Medieval date could be preserved on the site. The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), if they were discovered.

**1.5** The present report has been prepared in order to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further mitigation measures, if any, may be required.

## 2. Fieldwork

### *TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

**2.1** The site is located on the south side of the High street in the village of Meppershall on fairly level ground at approximately 72m OD.

**2.2** The underlying geology of the area consists of a mixture of Gault clay and Lower Greensand .

### *METHODOLOGY*

**2.3** All work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and IFA standards.

**2.4** The trenches were located by triangulation from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

**2.5** Five trenches were opened using a wheeled JCB excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision (see Figure 2). Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts. Trenches were machined to the first significant archaeological horizon.

**2.6** The trenches were cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

**2.7** All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:10 and 1:50.

### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND*

**2.8** The Bedfordshire HER demonstrates that the site lies within a well documented archaeological landscape. Extensive areas of Romano-British activity have recently been investigated to the north of the present study area (Wilson, 2004).

**2.9** Five find spots of Romano-British pottery and coins, along with medieval pottery (HER16316-16320), all within the immediate vicinity of the site, give an indication of activity during these periods.

### *RESULTS*

**Trench 1** (see Figure 3)

**2.10** Trench 1 ran across the southern half of the site on a north-west to south-east alignment. The trench measured 1.6 x 10.4m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m.

**2.11** The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of three layers above the natural geology. A layer of modern hardcore was observed in the north-west half of the trench overlying a very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil and an olive (5Y 4/3) silty clay subsoil.

Beneath this two distinct types of natural geology were observed, an olive (5Y 4/4) clay with bluish mottling, and a yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand.

**2.12** A corroded metallic service pipe was observed cutting across the very south-east end of the trench on a NE – SW alignment.

**2.13** Linear feature [101] was observed cutting into the natural clay, orientated NE – SW towards the south-east end of the trench. This feature was 0.64m wide and approximately 0.13m deep, with a gentle straight sloped NW side and a steeper slightly concave SE side and a shallow rounded ‘U’ shaped base. The solitary firm, dark greyish brown, sandy clay fill yielded only two animal bones and no datable artefacts. The nature of the ditch and small finds assemblage recovered indicates that the ditch probably represents a field boundary located away from areas of occupation.

**2.14** Linear feature [103] was observed cut into the natural sand, orientated NE – SW across the north-west half of the trench. This feature was 0.80m wide and a approximately 0.20m deep, with a steep concave SE side with one step, and a shallower slightly concave NW side and a flat base. The firm, grey, sandy clay fill (106) contained no datable artefacts, several amphibian bones were collected indicating the possibility that the ditch may have carried water and was used for drainage. Surface [105] ran above the ditch and parallel to it on its NW side. The layer consisted of compacted, reddish brown, sandy gravel which appeared to represent a rough metalled surface approximately 3.3m wide and 0.09m deep. The surface yielded two fragments of pottery of 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date. Above this was a deposit of firm, dark grey, silty clay [104] which contained a large amount of domestic debris including pottery and CBM of 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date. It is possible that layer [105] represents a rough track with an associated drainage ditch [103].

#### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	Cut	Linear cut feature with a shallow straight NW side and a steeper slightly concave SE side, and shallow ‘U’ shaped base, aligned NE to SW. Boundary ditch.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.64m Depth: 0.13m
102	Fill	Firm, dark greyish brown (2.5Y 4/2), sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Fill of [101].	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.64m Depth: 0.13m
103	Cut	Linear cut feature with a shallow slightly concave NW side and a steeper concave SE side containing one step, and a flat base, aligned NE – SW. Drainage ditch.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.80m Depth: 0.20m
104	Layer/ deposit	Firm, dark grey (10YR 4/1), silty clay with moderate charcoal flecks.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.80m Depth: 0.20m
105	Layer/ deposit	Compacted, reddish brown (5YR 4/4), sandy gravel on a NE – SW alignment. Possible metalled surface.	Width: 1.2m+ Depth: 0.30m
106	Fill	Firm, grey (5Y 6/1), sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks. Fill of [103].	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.80m Depth: 0.20m

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
107	Cleaning	Number assigned to artefacts recovered while cleaning over (104) and (105).	

### **Trench 2** (see Figures 2 & 3)

**2.15** Trench 2 was located in the south-west corner of the site close to the High Street frontage and was aligned NE – SW. The trench measured 1.6m x 5.3m and was 1.05m in depth.

**2.16** The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of three layers above the natural geology. A layer of modern brick rubble and debris, from the demolition of the bungalows which previously occupied the site, lay over the very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil which sealed a yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) gravel (weathered natural) subsoil. Beneath this the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) clayey sand with gravel patches was observed.

**2.17** Sub-circular cut feature [201] was observed cut through the subsoil in the south-west end of the trench. The full dimensions of the feature are unclear as it ran beneath the south-west baulk, although it had a maximum depth of approximately 0.29m. The feature had shallow slightly concave sides and an irregular base. The single loose, dark grey, sandy silt fill yielded two sherds of abraded undiagnostic pottery of 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century date, and CBM dating to the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
201	Cut	Sub-circular cut feature with shallow slightly concave sides and an irregular base. Probable rubbish pit.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.95m+ Depth: 0.29m
202	Fill	Loose, dark grey (2.5Y 4/1), sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small stones. Fill of [201].	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.95m+ Depth: 0.29m

### **Trench 3** (see Figure 3)

**2.18** Trench 3 was located in the north-west corner of the site and was aligned NE – SW. The trench measured 1.6 x 10m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

**2.19** Two different stratigraphic sequences were observed within the trench. The first sequence was observed in the north-east end of the trench and consisted of a layer of very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil over alternating layers of mixed clay and gravel overburden. Beneath this lay the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand and gravel. The second sequence consisted of a layer of modern hardcore and aggregate laid down over a modern geo-textile membrane, which sealed a layer of mixed overburden over the natural geology.

**2.20** A modern service trench was observed in the north-east end of the trench cut through from immediately below the surface.

**2.21** A surface layer [301] was observed beneath the mixed overburden in the south-west end of the trench. The surface consisted of fragments of clunch and flint laid down directly onto the natural geology. Pottery and CBM fragments recovered from within and on the surface are of late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

**2.22** Wall foundation [302] was observed crossing the trench on a NW – SE alignment. The foundation measured approximately 0.3m in width by 0.55m in depth and had been cut by the modern service trench. The bricks and lime mortar used in the construction of the foundation indicates an 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the structure. It is possible that the structure is associated with surface [301].

#### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
301	Cut	Surface of clunch and flint.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 1.60m+ Depth: 0.15m
302	Fill	Red brick wall foundation.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.30m Depth: 0.55m

#### **Trench 4** (see Figure 3)

**2.23** Trench 4 was located across the northern half of the site on a north-west to south-east alignment. The trench measured 1.6 x 9.8m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m.

**2.24** The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of four layers above the natural geology. A layer of modern hardcore and aggregate laid down over a modern geo-textile membrane, beneath which was a layer of mixed overburden made up of clinker, ash, slag, and CBM rubble. Below this was the very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil over an olive (5Y 4/3) silty clay subsoil. Beneath this lay the natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand and gravel.

**2.25** A large feature [401] was observed in the south-east half of the trench. The full shape and dimensions of the feature were not clear within the confines of the evaluation trench, but it had a depth greater than 0.52m. The feature had a steep slightly concave side and a flat base which sloped gently from NW to SE. The upper fill of firm, dark olive grey, silty clay yielded several sherds of pottery of 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century date. The two lower fills yielded no datable artefacts. Within the confines of the trench it was not possible to establish the origin of the feature, however it is possible that it represents a natural springhead or water filled hollow. Further springs are known within the immediate vicinity of the site (Wilson, 2004).

**2.26** Linear feature [405] was observed cut through the natural geology and sealed by (402) the primary fill of [401]. The feature appeared to be curving round the edge of [401], measuring approximately 0.6m wide by 0.3m deep with steep concave sides and a rounded



'U' shaped base. The single firm, olive grey (5Y 5/2), silty sand fill yielded no archaeological artefacts. The feature rapidly filled with groundwater as it was excavated. It is possible that the feature represents a gully running round the edge of [401], although it may also represent a natural geological feature.

#### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
401	Cut	Large feature with steep slightly concave sides and a flat base sloping gently from NW to SE. Possible spring.	Length: 5.00m+ Width: 1.60m+ Depth: 0.52m+
402	Fill	Firm, olive grey (5Y 4/2), silty clayey sand with frequent small sub-rounded gravel stones. Primary fill of [401].	Depth: 0.20m
403	Fill	Very firm, olive grey (5Y 4/2) with greenish mottles, silty clayey sand with moderate small sub-rounded pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks. Secondary fill of [401].	Depth: 0.15m
404	Fill	Very firm, dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) with bluish mottling, silty clay with moderate small charcoal inclusions and occasional small rounded stones. Tertiary fill of [401].	Length: 5.00m+ Width: 1.6m+ Depth: 0.16m
405	Cut	Linear cut feature curving round the edge of feature [401] with steep concave sides and rounded 'U' shaped base. Possible gully.	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.60m+ Depth: 0.30m
406	Fill	Firm, olive grey (5Y 5/2), silty sand with frequent rounded gravel stones. Fill of [405].	Length: 1.60m+ Width: 0.60m+ Depth: 0.30m

#### **Trench 5** (see Figure 3)

**2.27** Trench 5 was located in the north-east corner of the site and was aligned north-east to south-west. It measured 1.6 x 10m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.37m.

**2.28** Two different stratigraphic sequences were observed within the trench. The first sequence was observed in the north-east end of the trench and consisted of a layer of very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2), silty clay topsoil over a mixed deposit of clinker, ash, and slag. The second sequence consisted of a layer of modern hardcore and aggregate laid down over a modern geo-textile membrane, beneath which was a deposit of mixed modern material which may represent the backfill from a modern storm drain which crosses the site in the vicinity of the trench. On the opposite side of the trench, further modern disturbance of unknown origin was also observed. The natural geology of yellowish brown (10YR 5/6), slightly clayey sand was only observed within the centre of the base of the trench.

**2.29** Linear feature [501] was observed in the north-east end of the trench. It was curving from a N – S alignment to a NE – SW alignment. Its full extent was not revealed within the evaluation trench, although it was at least 1.0m wide by approximately 0.63m deep. The feature had steep slightly concave sides and a flat base. The firm, dark grey, clay primary fill yielded three abraded and undiagnostic sherds of pottery of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date, whilst the firm, dark olive grey, silty clay secondary fill yielded pottery sherds of 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date. Both fills contained mottling indicating that they are likely to be waterborne deposits

indicating that the ditch had a drainage function. The fills are very similar to fill (404) in feature [401] observed in Trench 4 and it is likely that these features are contemporary.

**2.30** Feature [504] was observed in the north-east end of the trench cut through the fill of ditch [501]. The feature contained several fragments of late post-medieval peg-tile and brick and was only partially excavated in order to establish its relationship with ditch [501].

#### *Recorded contexts*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)
501	Cut	Linear cut feature with steep slightly concave sides and a rounded base curving from N – S to NE – SW. Probable drainage ditch.	Length: 1.10m+ Width: 1.00m+ Depth: 0.63m
502	Fill	Firm, dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) with greenish mottling, silty clay with occasional small stones and charcoal flecks. Secondary fill of [501].	Length: 1.10m+ Width: 1.00m+ Depth: 0.20m
503	Fill	Very firm, dark grey (5Y 4/1) with greenish mottling, clay with very occasional small stones and charcoal flecks. Primary fill of [501].	Length: 1.10m+ Width: 1.0m+ Depth: 0.43m
504	Cut	Late-post medieval feature full dimensions and shape of which were unclear within the confines of the evaluation trench.	Length: 3.00m+ Width: 1.10m+ Depth: 0.10m+
505	Fill	Firm, greyish brown (2.5Y 5/2), silty clay. Fill of [504].	Length: 3.00m+ Width: 1.10m+ Depth: 0.10m+
506	Cleaning	Number assigned to artefacts collected during cleaning over features [501] and [504].	

#### ***FINDS CONCORDANCE***

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		An.bone		Fe.obj		Slag		Stone/Flint		Shell		Cu alloy		Clay pipe	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.		
102					500	2												
104	210	11	265	7	595	23					280	1	220	30				
105	20	2			80	2												
106					15	19					5	2						
107	570	21	610	3	1005	23	150	3	175	1			75	13	75	1		
202	15	2	405	9	25	7												
301	35	10	190	4			80	1										
302			1275	1														
404	140	10			165	4			550	8	45	1						
502	195	7			5	2					90	1						
503	15	3			135	7												
506	15	1	360	4													3	1
Tr4 Subsoil	20	1																
Total	1235	68	3105	28	2525	89	230	4	725	9	420	5	295	43	75	1	3	1

## ARTEFACTS

### Pottery

**2.31** A total of 69 pottery sherds, weighing 1235g, was recovered from 2 unstratified and 7 stratified contexts during the present investigation. The pottery ranged in date from the Roman period to the post-medieval period. The bulk of the assemblage is medieval in date ranging from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**2.32** The earliest pottery recovered consisted of a single small, abraded, undiagnostic, coarse grog-tempered bodysherd (Bedford pottery fabric type series F06C) of probable 1<sup>st</sup> century date. This was recovered unstratified from Trench 5. It is surprising that further pottery of this date was not recovered given the known Roman-British activity within the vicinity of the site.

**2.33** No evidence of early or middle Anglo-Saxon pottery was recovered, indicating a possible hiatus in activity in the area between the Romano-British and late Anglo-Saxon periods. Fill (404), within the possible springhead [401], yielded several sherds of Saxo-Norman shell-tempered ware, including one sherd of St Neots type (B01), and 9 sherds of a coarser variety of the same type (B04), both of 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century date. Although this feature has been described as a possible springhead, the shell-tempering shows no sign of leaching which might be expected within a permanently waterlogged environment.

**2.34** A further large slightly abraded base of St Neots type pottery (B01A) of 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century date was recovered from fill (502) in ditch [501]. This sherd has a soot deposit on its exterior indicating that it has been used over an open fire, possibly in cooking. Fill (502) also yielded early medieval sandy and grey wares, including 3 sherds of early medieval sandy ware (C01), 2 sherds of coarse sandy ware (C59A), and 1 sherd of Hertfordshire grey ware (C60), all of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date. The primary fill of the feature (503) yielded three sherds, including 1 sherd of a mixed inclusions fabric (C67) 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century in date, and 2 undiagnostic medieval sherds (general type C) probably 12<sup>th</sup> century in date.

**2.35** Feature [201], although containing late post-medieval/Victorian CBM, also yielded 2 medieval sherds, including one sherd of late medieval oxidised ware (E03), and 1 sherd of medieval shell-tempered ware (B07), which developed from St Neots ware. Both sherds are of 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century date.

**2.36** Cleaning over contexts (104) and (105) yielded several sherds of late medieval and early post-medieval wares, including 5 sherds of late medieval oxidised ware (E02), 15 sherds of late medieval grey ware (E01) showing traces of soot deposits, and one sherd of Raeren (P23), all of 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date. Context (104), which sits over the metallised surface (105), yielded several further sherds of a similar date, including 9 sherds of late medieval grey ware (E01) with further tracers of soot deposits, and 1 sherd of late medieval oxidised ware (E02). A single residual sherd of early medieval sandy ware (slightly coarser variant of C01) of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century date was also recovered from this context.

**2.37** The possible trackway (105) yielded two sherds of late medieval pottery, including one fragment from a goblet or salt base, probably of Hertfordshire glazed ware (C58), of 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century date, although the glaze has mostly been lost; and one sherd of a slip decorated

oxidised ware (E09) of 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date. A further sherd of slip-decorated oxidised ware (E09) was recovered from the subsoil in Trench 4.

**2.38** Victorian and modern activity on the site was indicated by several sherds of white glazed pottery, some with floral print decoration, recovered from surface (301).

**2.39** The pottery from the site represents a domestic assemblage. The majority of the sherds, although large, are slightly abraded indicating that the material may not be in its primary place of deposition. This indicates that the assemblage is not likely to be the result of the dumping of domestic refuse into the features. The soot deposits and the generally large nature of the sherds do, however, suggest domestic occupation within the immediate vicinity of the site from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The pottery collected from within and immediately above the trackway (105) may have been deposited in a deliberate attempt to improve its surface.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.40** Given that the majority of the assemblage is likely to be redeposited rather than in situ, and the lack of any complete vessels being represented, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

#### *Ceramic Building Material (CBM)*

**2.41** A total of 28 CBM fragments, weighing 3105g, was collected from 4 stratified and 2 unstratified contexts during the present investigations. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of small fragments of post-medieval peg tile, ranging in date from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

**2.42** A large fragment of probable Romano-British brick was recovered from context (506), which represents cleaning over features [501] and [504]. These features both contained later ceramic artefacts and thus the brick is clearly not within its primary place of deposition. The brick does however give further indication of Romano-British activity within the vicinity of the site.

**2.43** The single brick recovered from wall [302] is of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century date and makes up 41% of the assemblage by weight.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.44** Post-medieval peg-tile is a common find on urban sites of medieval and post-medieval date. The Romano-British brick fragment, although indicative of activity of this period in the vicinity of the site, is unstratified. On this basis, and given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

#### *Iron Objects*

**2.45** A total of 3 iron objects, weighing 230g, was recovered from 2 stratified contexts during the present investigations.

**2.46** A single small semi-circular strip of iron, possibly part of a boot or small horse shoe measuring approximately 81mm by 69mm by a maximum of 9mm in depth was recovered from floor surface [301] which has been dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**2.47** A small undiagnostic iron object measuring 95mm by 32mm by a depth of 8mm, was recovered in two fragments from context [107], the cleaning layer over (104) and (105). The fragment has a slight curve to it and may represent part of a horseshoe. A further heavily corroded, cylindrical iron object, with a length of 102mm and a diameter of 30mm was also recovered from this context. The object has a small socket at one end which still contains fragments of wood.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.48** Given the small size and undiagnostic nature of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

#### *Slag*

**2.49** A total of 9 fragments of slag, weighing 725g, was recovered from 1 stratified and 1 unstratified contexts during the investigation. Eight of these fragments are from fill (404) which has been dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The remaining fragment was recovered from context (107) which is from cleaning over (104) and (105).

**2.50** The fragments are an indication of metal working within the vicinity of the site during this period.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.51** Given the small size of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

#### *Copper alloy*

**2.52** A single copper alloy object, weighing 75g, was recovered from cleaning layer (107). The object measures 117mm in length by a maximum width of 40mm. The centre of the object is a circular void with a diameter of 23mm tapering to a point at one end. The void still contains fragments of wood suggesting the object was original mounted on a wooden shaft.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.53** Given that it was recovered from an unstratified context together with its undiagnostic nature, no further work is proposed on this object.

#### *Stone and Flint*

**2.54** A total of 5 pieces of stone and flint, weighing 420g, were recovered from 4 stratified contexts during the investigation. Two pieces of flint were recovered from context (106), one of which represents a possible flake, the other shows possible signs of working on one side. Two pieces of possible flint facing were recovered from contexts (404) and (502).

**2.55** A piece of stone, probably granite, weighing 280g and measuring 79 x 59 x 31mm was recovered from context (104). The stone, which has one curving side and two flat faces, is imported and broken. It may represent a stone rubber.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.56** Given its small size and undiagnostic nature, no further work is proposed on this assemblage.

### **ECOFACTS**

#### ***Animal bone***

**2.57** A total of 89 animal bone fragments, weighing 2525g, was collected from 8 stratified and 1 unstratified contexts. Most of the bone recovered, although in reasonably good condition, is in the form of broken fragments, ranging in size from substantial fragments to small pieces.

**2.58** Ditch fill (106) which has been dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century, yielded several bone fragments from a small amphibian, either toad or frog, indicating that the ditch held water and provided a damp environment at this time.

**2.59** Other species represented include larger animals such as cattle or horse, medium-sized animals such as sheep, goat and pig, as well as small mammals such as rabbit or hare. Some of the pieces show evidence of butchery.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.60** The incomplete nature of the bone fragments means that further analysis is unlikely to yield significant information.

#### ***Shell***

**2.61** A total of 43 shells, weighing 295g, was collected from 1 stratified and 1 unstratified contexts. The bulk of this material consisted of oyster shell, with mussel shells also represented. The majority of the shells are poorly preserved and fragmentary in nature.

**2.62** The entire assemblage was recovered from over the metal surface (105), indicating that it may be the result of the deliberate deposition of domestic rubbish in an attempt to improve the surface.

**2.63** The presence of oyster and mussel shells on the site are further indication of domestic activity in the vicinity of the site. Such items were common foodstuffs in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.64** Given the fragmentary nature of the assemblage, no further work is proposed on this material.

## Bulk Soil Samples

### Methodology

**2.65** Four bulk soil samples, of 20 litres each, were collected during the present project. Three came from linear features (Samples 1, 2 and 4), and one from the possible springhead (Sample 3).

Sample	Context	Vol in l	Description	Date
1	102	5	Single fill of linear [101]	Uncertain
2	106	5	Single fill of linear [103]	?14 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> C
3	404	5	Tertiary fill of possible spring [401]	?10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> C
4	503	5	Primary fill of linear [501]	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> C

**2.66** In order to assess the environmental potential rapidly, a 5 litre sub-sample of each sample was processed by flotation, using a 0.25mm and 1mm mesh for the recovery of flots and residue. The residues were sorted by eye for environmental and artefactual evidence. The flots were scanned using a binocular microscope at x10 magnification.

### Results

**2.67** The residues are largely composed of unprocessed clay lumps, angular flint and rounded quartz gravel, with some concreted sediment. Archaeological finds are relatively rare from the samples. A number of toad/frog and fish bones are present in Sample 2, indicating that this feature contained water. Unidentifiable animal bone fragments are also evident in Samples 1 and 4. Samples 2 and 4 also appeared to contain hammerscale fragments.

**2.68** Small fragments of charcoal are present in all four flots. A number of these appear to be from burnt crop stems and represent evidence for grain processing in the vicinity. Other examples are from wood. The majority of the charcoal fragments are too small for species identification.

**2.69** Very little evidence for dietary information was identified in the flots, apart from the charred grain. No fruit stones or pips were observed. A single possible hazelnut husk was present in Sample 4. This lack of such evidence would suggest that the present site lay at some distance from domestic occupation.

**2.70** The richest environmental assemblage came from the flots from Sample 3, the tertiary fill of [401]. There are at least 10 examples of charred grain, probably barley, and a number of charred seeds, possibly weed seeds, were also present. This suggests that grain processing was taking place in the vicinity of this feature. This was also the only sample to contain snail shells.

**2.71** The flots from the other three samples produced limited environmental evidence. Occasional charred grains were present in samples 2 and 4. An insect wing, possibly from a lacewing and possibly modern in date, was recorded in Sample 4.



*Assessment of Potential*

**2.72** Although only a quarter of each soil sample was scanned for this assessment, it is considered to be sufficient to provide an indication of the environmental potential for this material.

**2.73** The evidence from Samples 1, 2 and 4 is very limited, with only occasional examples of charred grain and seeds and some animal bone. The assemblage from Sample 3 was richer, with a greater number of charred grains and weeds, indicating that crop processing was taking place in the vicinity of feature [401]. Limited molluscan evidence was only noted in Sample 3, and dietary evidence is lacking from any of the samples.

**2.74** Given the lack of information in the samples, and the limited number of charred grains and seeds present, it would appear that these samples offer a very limited potential to provide significant data regarding either the local environment, or the economic activities and diet of the local population.



### 3. Discussion

**3.1** The present evaluation revealed three ditches, [101], [103], and [501], a possible trackway (105), and a possible springhead, [401]. Later activity on the site is demonstrated by a shallow pit [201], a clunch surface [301], and a wall [302].

**3.2** Ditch [101], observed crossing the south-east end of Trench 1 on an NE – SW alignment, appears to be a boundary ditch of uncertain date. The nature of its profile and the small finds assemblage recovered from the fill indicates that it is probably a field boundary located outside any area of domestic occupation at the time when it was backfilled.

**3.3** The large feature identified in Trench 4 appears to represent a natural watery hollow or springhead. The similar nature of the fills and the artefact assemblages, both of 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century date, indicates that they may be contemporary with ditch [501] observed in the north-east end of Trench 5. The fills of the ditch contained mottling indicating that they were waterborne and that the ditch had a drainage function. From the small section visible in the evaluation it was not clear whether the ditch was draining water into or out of large feature [401].

**3.4** Ditch [103] and metalled surface (105) were observed crossing the north-west half of Trench 1 on a NE – SW alignment. They appear to represent a trackway with an associated drainage ditch. The assemblage recovered from within and above the trackway suggest a 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century date for it, and may be the result of deliberate dumping to improve the surface. The trackway appears to align with the possible springhead [401], although the artefacts recovered from the springhead indicate that it had been backfilled prior to the laying of the track surface.

**3.5** Surface [301] and wall [302] represent activity on the site during the late post-medieval and modern period. It is possible that they are contemporary with one another and that they represent an earlier structure on Meppershall High Street, predating the recently demolished bungalows. Shallow pit [201] is of similar date and was filled with a dump of CBM fragments.

**3.6** The fieldwork demonstrated that the undisturbed natural clay lies approximately 1.05-1.40m below the present ground surface. This depth of overburden is consistent with the ground having been built up, possibly as a result of the site's use as a works compound for the construction of the housing estate immediately to the north of the site, and the subsequent demolition of the buildings which formerly occupied it.

#### *Conclusions*

**3.7** The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated the presence of boundary and drainage features within the current study area, as well as a possible trackway, of medieval date. The range of artefacts recovered indicates irregular activity on the site from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onward and suggests the presence of domestic occupation in the immediate vicinity, although no direct evidence of occupation on the site during this period was recovered.

**3.8** The earlier stratigraphy on the site has been disturbed by the recently demolished bungalows and their associated services, and also by a large storm water drain which crosses the south-east end of the site.

**3.9** On the basis of these findings, and in the context of the planned development, it is considered that the site offers little opportunity to explore further the research topics for the medieval period defined in the regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook 2000). The monitoring of groundworks may, however, be beneficial in establishing the extent of the features already recorded.

### ***CONFIDENCE RATING***

**3.10** Although there was intermittent rain in the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

**3.11** There are no further circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present evaluation which is less than High.

## 4. Sources Consulted

### *Archives*

#### **Bedfordshire County Historic Environment Record**

### *Bibliography*

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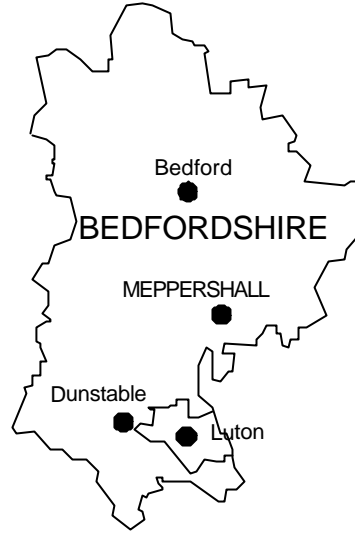
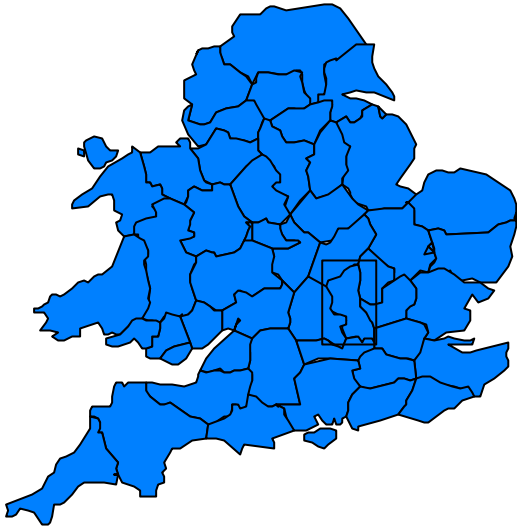
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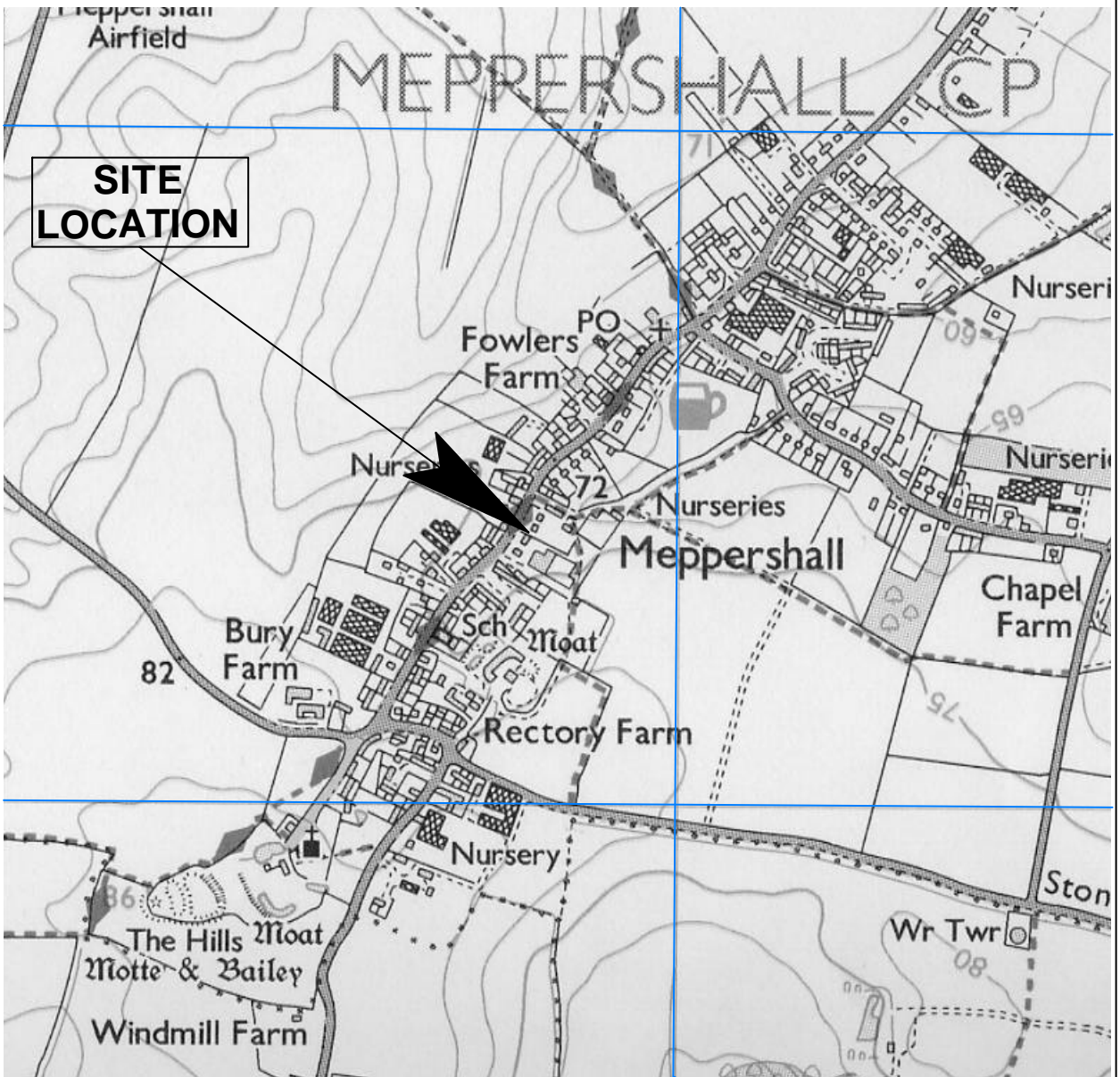
## 5. Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site location
Figure 2 .....	Site layout
Figure 3 .....	Trenches 1-3 plans and sections
Figure 4 .....	Trenches 4 & 5 plans and sections
Figure 5 .....	Feature sections



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**SITE  
LOCATION**



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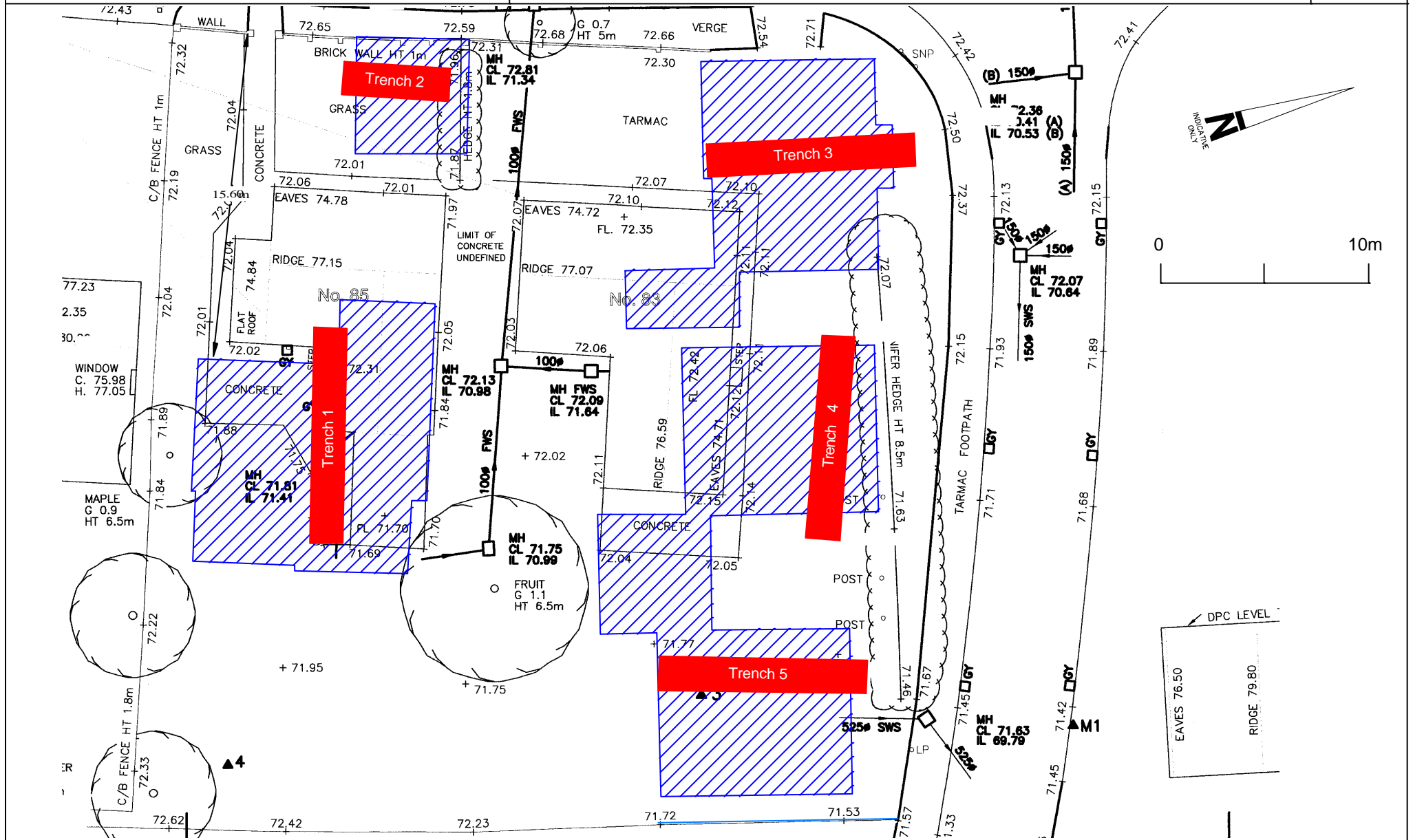
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Site Location

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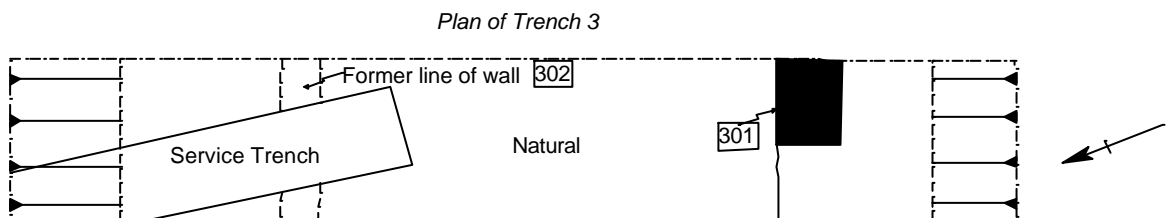
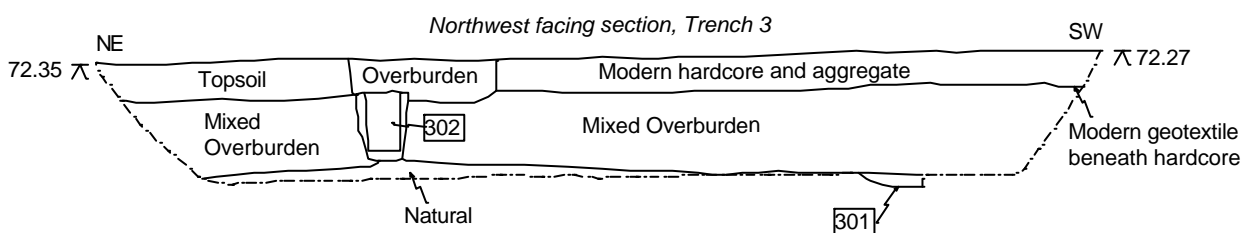
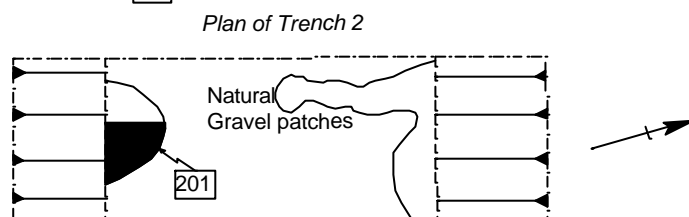
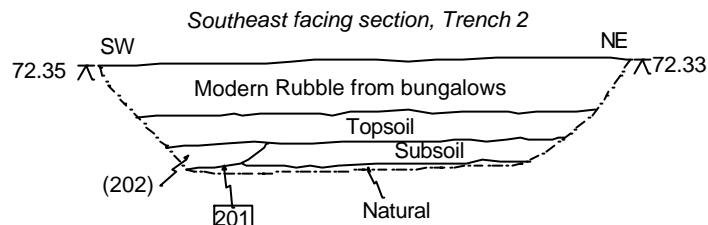
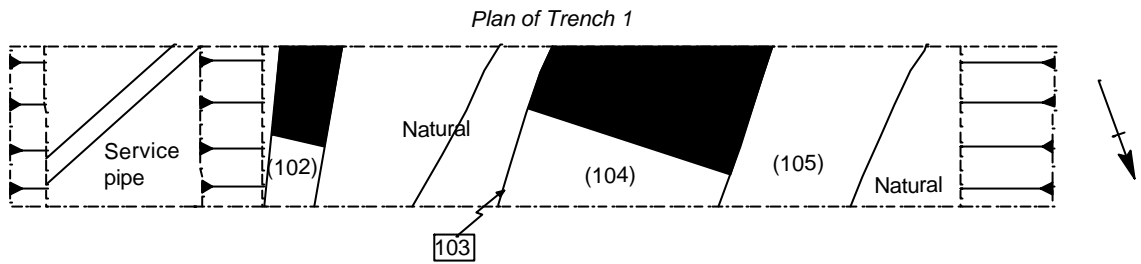
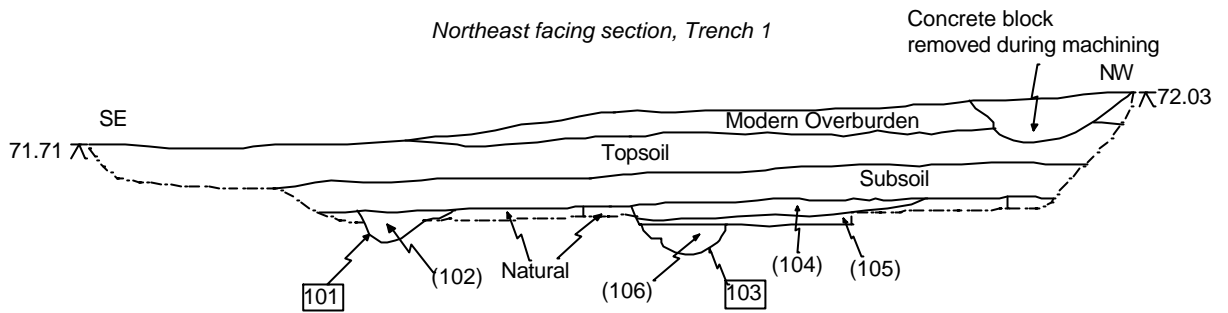
Figure 1



Trench Layout

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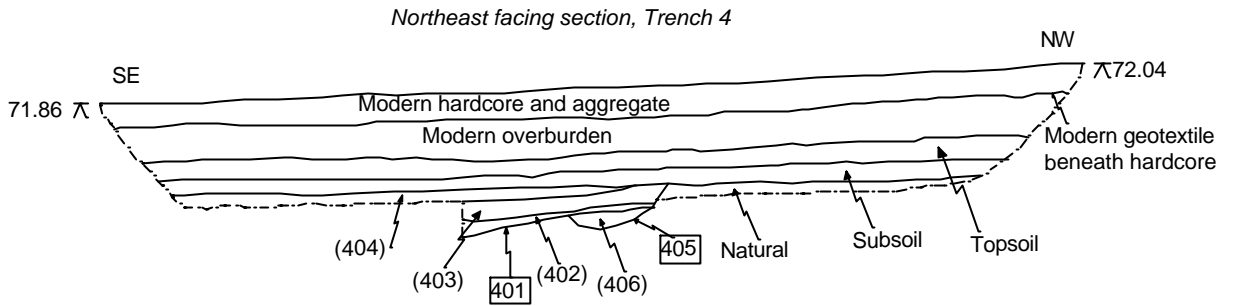
Figure 2



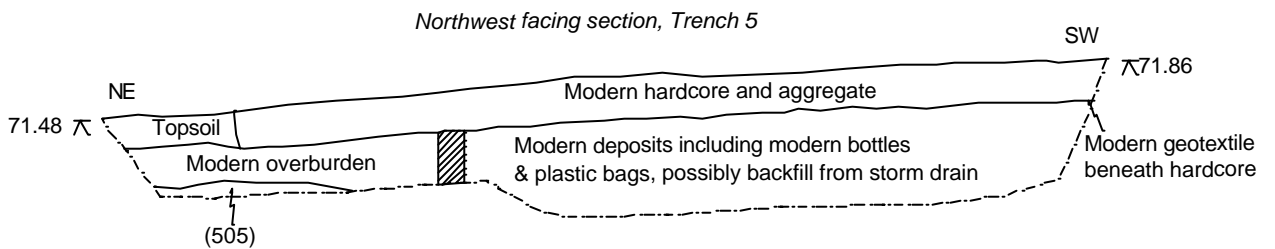
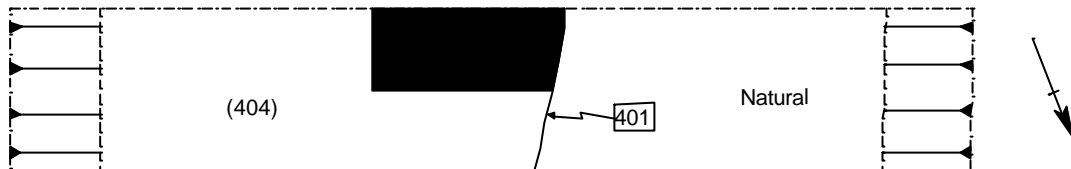
Trenches 1-3 : plans and sections

Scale 1:75

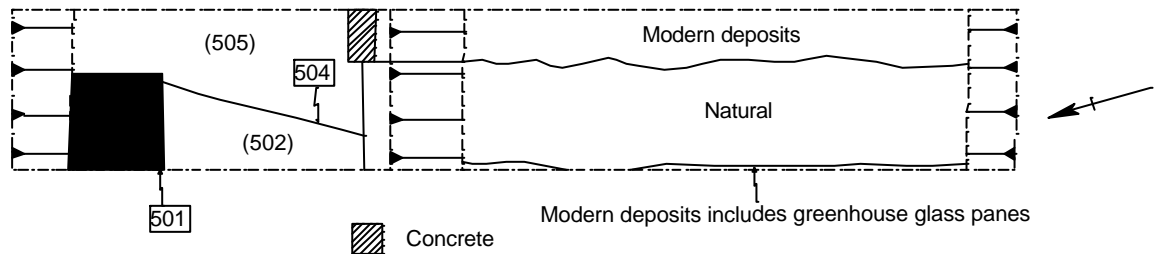
Figure 3

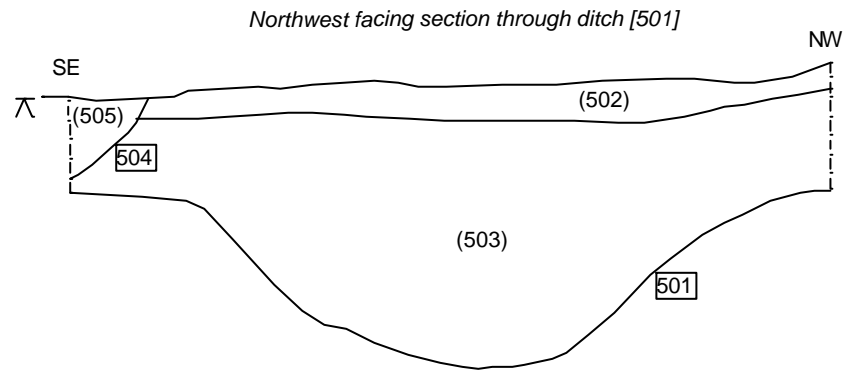
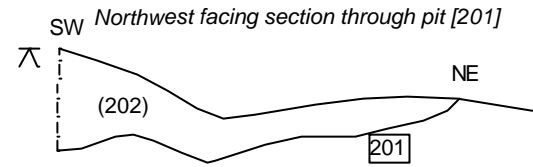
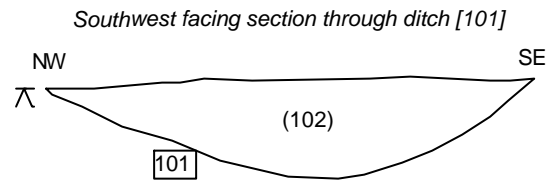
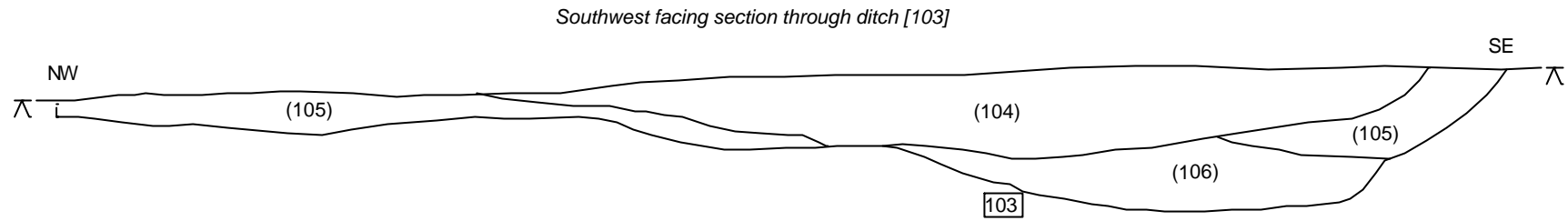


*Plan of Trench 4*



*Plan of Trench 5*





Feature sections

Scale 1:10

Figure 5