

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Former Works, 31 Icknield Way,  
Baldock, Hertfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief  
(strip, map and sample)**

**by Natasha Bennett**

**Site Code: IWB10/13**

**(TL 2431 3410)**

# **Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock Hertfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief (strip, map and sample)**

**For CgMs Consulting**

by Natasha Bennett  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code IWB 10/13

**July 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire

**Grid reference:** TL 2431 3410

**Site activity:** Watching Brief (strip, map and sample)

**Date and duration of project:** 3rd–9th June 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Tim Dawson, Susan Colley

**Site code:** IWB 10/13

**Area of site:** 0.14ha

**Summary of results:** Overburden removal in the western, previously unevaluated portion of the site down to the formation level of the new development, did not expose the natural geology which lay beneath a considerable thickness of modern made ground. No features or artefacts of archaeological interest were recorded.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 21.07.10 Steve Preston✓ 11.07.10
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# **Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief (strip, map and sample)**

by Natasha Bennett

**Report 10/13**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief (strip, map and sample) carried out at a former works site at 31 Icknield Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire (TL 2431 3410)(Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sally Dicks, of CgMs Consulting, Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London EC1A 2AT on behalf of Weston Homes plc, Weston Group Business Centre, Parsonage Road, Takeley, Essex, CM22 6PU.

A planning application (09/02296/1) had been submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council for residential development on the site. This led to an evaluation and a watching brief being undertaken on the site to inform the planning process before the planning application was determined. As a result, the consent was granted, subject to a condition (18) requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to the Planning Authority and approved in writing.

This was in accordance with the Department of Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. A scheme for a watching brief (strip, map and sample) was drawn up by CgMs and approved by Mr Andrew Instone, County Planning Archaeologist of Hertfordshire County Council and archaeological advisor to North Hertfordshire District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Colley and Tim Dawson between 3rd–9th June 2010 and the site code is IWB 10/13. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at North Hertfordshire Museums Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located at the northern edge of Baldock, a market town 2km to the east of Letchworth, and 0.5km to the south of the headwaters of the River Ivel (Fig. 1) The site is centred at TL 2431 3410 and is bounded to the north by Icknield Way, the east by Farriers Close, the west by an unmade track and to the south by residential housing (Fig. 2) At the time of the evaluation, it was occupied by an industrial building and areas of concrete hard standing and was generally flat with a slight sloping down to the north at the street frontage. It lies at 60.4m

above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Lower Chalk near the boundary with Melbourn Rock (BGS 1995) Hard white chalk was observed in the grubbing out of the industrial building's foundations.

## **Archaeological background**

The former building on the site dates from the 1930s. The Ordnance Survey maps of 1880, 1898 and 1922 show that buildings occupied the northern limit of the site. A medieval watermill is recorded nearby in the Extensive Urban Survey for Baldock (Thompson 2002) and the site is near the northern limits of medieval Baldock. The centre of a Roman town is 250m to the north-west of Icknield Way. This town lay at the junction of two Roman roads, that from Braughing to Godmanchester and that from Stevenage to Baldock. (Margary 1955). These roads also cross the Icknield Way, considered to be a prehistoric trackway but only in places (Harrison 2004). Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record notes the unearthing of Late Iron Age burials in the vicinity. An evaluation was conducted in February 2010 and four trenches were dug in the area of hard standing in the eastern half of the site (Weale 2010). The remains of 19th /20th Century buildings fronting Icknield Way were observed but no finds nor deposits of earlier date recorded. Much of the site had been truncated to a greater or lesser extent in late post-medieval times. The western portion of the site was inaccessible at the time of the evaluation which has led to the monitoring of groundworks described in this report.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The primary objective of the project was a programme of strip, map and sample of the area of the western part of the site which was unavailable for trenching in March 2010. This area of the site was to form a car park within the development proposal and thus intrusive groundworks were expected to be minimal. In accordance with the principles of PPS5 for 'preservation by record', the objective was to examine the archaeological resource within the site within a framework of defined aims, to seek a better understanding of that resource, to analyse the findings/record and then to disseminate the results of the work.

Research aims are were be addressed within the context of the Iron Age and Roman sections of the Research Agenda and Strategy frameworks for the Eastern Counties (2000). The overall research framework for the investigations are set out in Bryant (2000), Going and Plouviez (2000), and Wade (2000).

Specific Aims for the project are:

To establish a relative and absolute chronological framework for the site. Priority was to be given to establishing an overall plan of the site and determining the various phases and sub-phases of activity.

To determine the internal morphology of the site and land-use, to identify the nature, date and range of zones of activity: residential, industrial, religious, etc. and to determine the dynamics of the spatial distribution of activities and changes over time. Within these parameters, the excavation presents an opportunity to address the following research objectives/questions:

What is the natural topography of the site?

To determine the presence or absence of Iron Age or Roman burials

To determine the presence or absence of further evidence of 19th century occupation fronting Icknield Way.

To establish the potential for significant environmental deposits.

To determine the environmental history of the site and its immediate surrounding area throughout the sequence of human activity on the site.

To support the detailed assessment of the chronology of the artefactual and environmental material with a programme of radiocarbon samples if possible.

To enhance the understanding of Roman Baldock through the examination of the date, form and character within its local, regional and national context.

All areas were to be stripped mechanically under close and continuous archaeological observation and direction.

Where archaeological deposits were present, hand cleaning would then follow. The entire site was to be planned and archaeological features sampled or excavated in order to satisfy the aims for the project and according to a sampling strategy agreed in advance. Spoil heaps and the stripped surface were to be checked by metal detector.

## **Results**

The recording action observed the removal of the concrete slabs from across the site along with the grubbing out of 19th and 20th century brick and concrete foundations where encountered (Fig. 3, Plates 1 and 2).

Along the front (north west) of the now demolished building. The concrete raft was 0.15m deep and overlay made ground comprising a mix of chalk and topsoil with modern material (brick, glass, etc). No further excavation took place in this area as the formation level of the new car parking zone had already been reached.

The concrete floor within the demolished building was also removed and also shown to be 0.15m deep. Some of the underlying made ground was also removed down to a depth of at least 0.75m. This made ground contained frequent modern inclusions such as brick, glass, transfer printed pottery, etc. Solid chalk bedrock was not exposed in this deeper area of excavation as expected and may indicate the presence of further truncation and subsequent infill as already revealed in the evaluation area.

The natural chalk bedrock was only partially observed when the footings of the old building were grubbed out. This was revealed at a depth of 0.9m or deeper, especially on the western portion of the site which was well below the stripped area of the majority of the site. Some of the removed footings did not expose any chalk and

appear to have been founded on made ground. No features of archaeological relevance were noted nor any finds uncovered despite checking the spoil heaps.

## **Finds**

Only objects of late post-medieval date were observed in modern made ground contexts. No finds of archaeological interest were observed or recovered from this site.

## **Conclusion**

As was noted in the evaluation report, it appears that the site has been heavily landscaped with the removal of most of the topsoil, subsoil and some chalk natural geology, subsequently followed by modern infill. It was suggested that this landscaping took the form of a terrace cut into the natural geomorphology, possibly where the current building stood. This appears to have been confirmed by the observations of the watching brief which witnessed the demolition of the building and the grubbing out of its foundations. It was suggested in the evaluation report that this terracing may have removed any shallow archaeological features within the yard area but that deep cut features may survive, however no archaeological features or finds were uncovered during the watching brief, suggesting that any archaeological features that may have existed were probably removed during terracing.

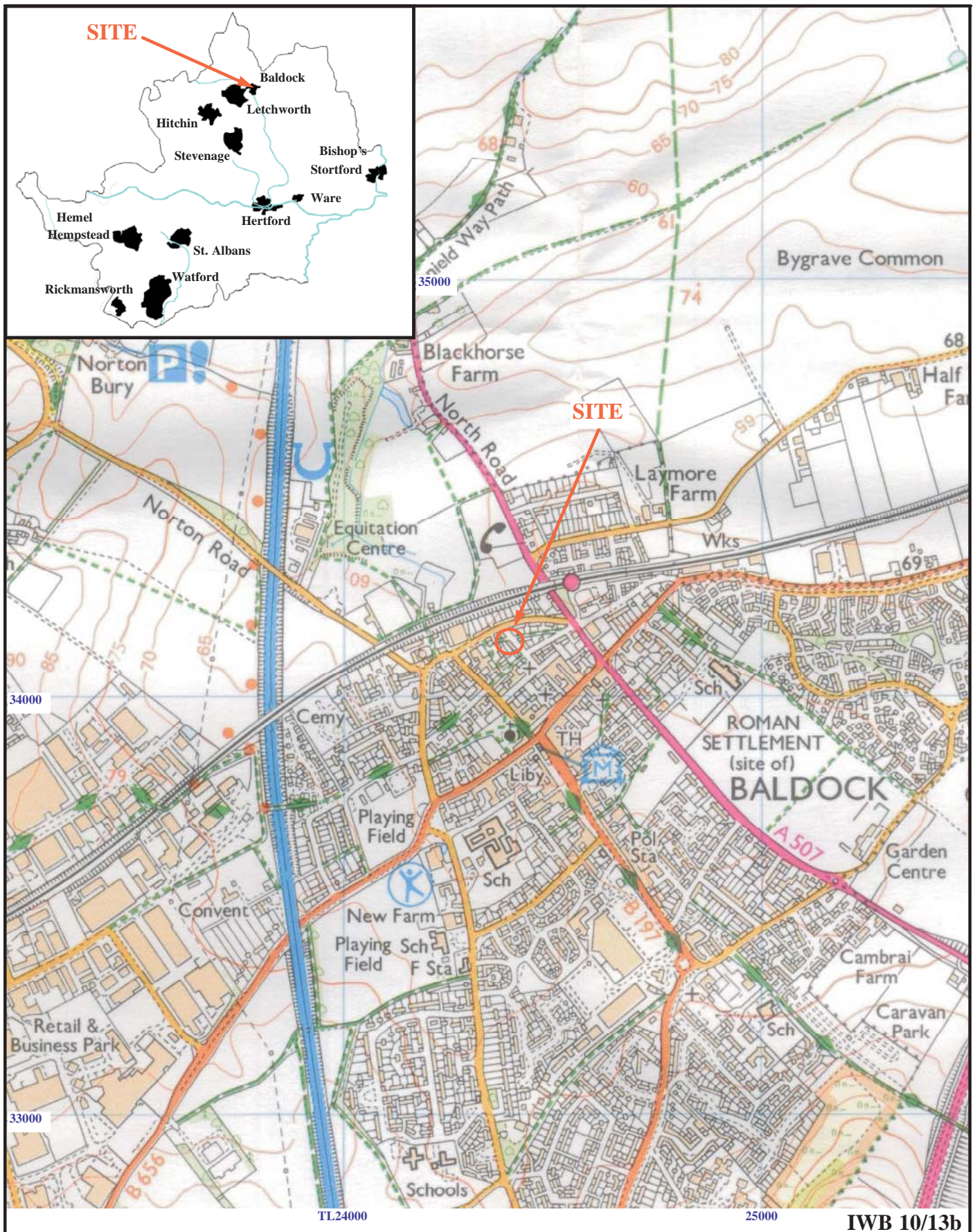
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**APPENDIX 1: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Site name and address:</b> Former Works at 31 Icknield Way, Baldock		
<b>County: Hertfordshire</b>	<b>District: Hertfordshire</b>	
<b>Village/Town: Baldock</b>	<b>Parish: Baldock</b>	
<b>Planning application reference: 09/02296/1</b>		
<b>Client name, address, and tel. no.:</b> Weston Homes Plc, Weston Group Business Centre, Parsonage Road, Takeley, Essex CM22 6PU		
<b>Nature of application:</b> It is proposed to redevelop the site for residential purposes.		
<b>Present land use: unused</b>		
<b>Size of application area: 0.14ha</b>	<b>Size of area investigated: 0.14ha</b>	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 24307 34095		
Site code (if applicable): IWB 10/13		
Site director/Organization: Steve Ford, TVAS		
Type of work Watching Brief		
Date of work: 2010	Start:3/06/2010	Finish: 9/06/2010
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Currently at TVAS, to be deposited Hertfordshire Museums Service		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Late Post-Medieval/Modern	
Relevant previous summaries/reports IWB 10/13 evaluation. (TVAS 2010)		
Summary of fieldwork results:  No archaeological features were found and no finds were recovered.		
Author of summary: Natasha Bennett		Date of summary: 07/07/2010





**Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock,  
Hertfordshire, 2010**

**Archaeological watching brief (strip, map and sample)**  
Figure 1. Location of site within Baldock and Hertfordshire.

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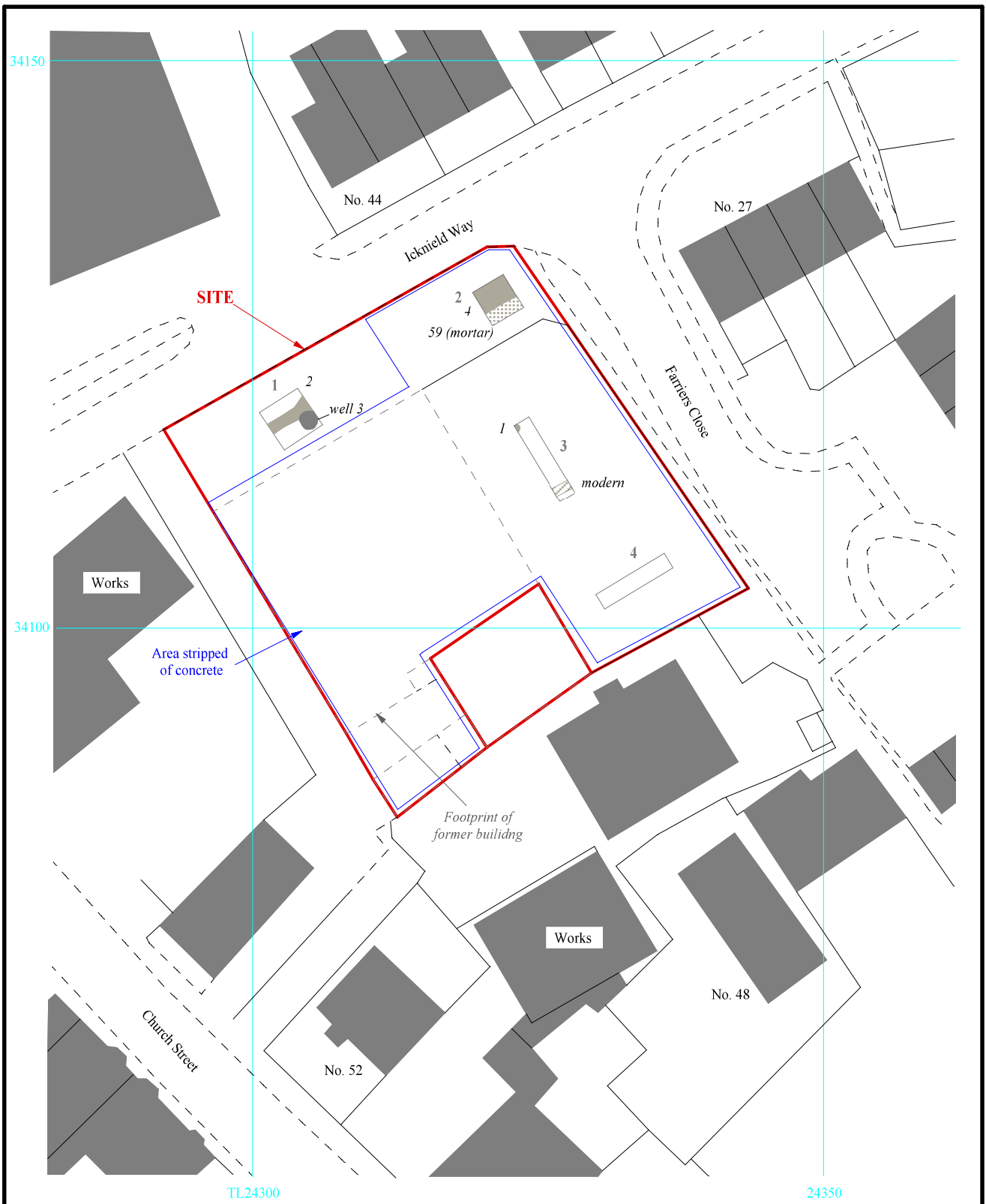


IWB 10/13b

**Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock,  
Hertfordshire, 2010**  
**Archaeological watching brief (strip, map and sample)**  
 Figure 2. Location of site off Icknield Way.

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**Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock,  
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Figure 3. Location of areas observed during watching brief.



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Plate 1. Former yard, looking south east



Plate 2. Former building, looking south

IWB10/13b

**Former Works, 31 Icknield Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire, 2010  
Archaeological Watching Brief (strip, map and sample)**

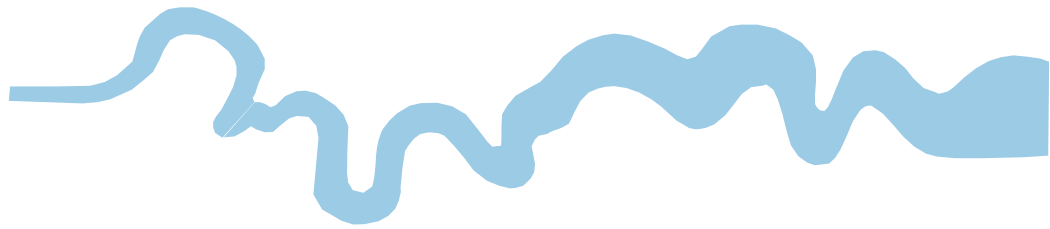
Plates 1 and 2

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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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