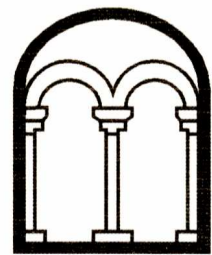


**FORMER BRITANNIA IRON WORKS – PHASES E & F  
KEMPSTON ROAD  
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

**INTERIM REPORT**

**Albion**  
archaeology



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION  
INTERIM REPORT**

Project: BR1947

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A planning application (11/02691/MAF) for the construction of 205 residential units and associated infrastructure in the western half of the former site of the Britannia Ironworks in Bedford has been submitted to Bedford Borough Council (BBC). As the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of BBC recommended that an archaeological trial trench evaluation of the site would be required prior to any planning decision being made. This advice was in accordance with *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5)* (DCLG 2010)<sup>1</sup> and its recent replacement, the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012)<sup>2</sup>.

A brief (BBC 2012<sup>3</sup>), detailing the requirements of the archaeological evaluation at the site, was issued by the HET. A Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2012<sup>4</sup>) setting out the procedures and methods that would be employed during the project was prepared following a meeting held on the 4th April 2012 between the HET officer (Vanessa Clarke), the client representative (Edmond Daly) and Albion Archaeology Project Manager (Robert Wardill), during which details of the evaluation were discussed and agreed.

Between 19th and 25th April 2012 Albion Archaeology undertook the trial trenching on behalf of WN Developments Ltd. This report presents a brief summary of the results in order to inform future decisions regarding any further phase of trial trench evaluation, if required. A fully detailed report will follow.

## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 *Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Strata*

The depth of overburden varied substantially across the site (see Table 1). It was at its greatest (2.2m to >2.9m) at the northern end of the site in the vicinity of Trenches 9, 10 and 11 and at its most shallow (0.15m to 0.4m) in the central part of the site in the vicinity of Trenches 3, 5 and 6.

Of the northernmost Trenches (9, 10 and 11), the undisturbed geological strata was only reached in a test pit excavated in the eastern end of Trench 10 at a depth of 2.2m below ground level (26.4m OD). Test pits excavated to depths exceeding 2.9m in the ends of Trenches 9 and 11 did not reach the undisturbed geological strata, although possible buried subsoils and *in situ* masonry walls were revealed at these depths (see section 2.2). Due to the excessive depth of deposits, Trenches 10 and 11 were only machined for 13m and 8m respectively of their originally proposed lengths.

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<sup>1</sup> DCLG, 2010, *PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment*

<sup>2</sup> DCLG, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*

<sup>3</sup> BBC, 2012, *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching. Phase E, Former Britannia Ironworks, Kempston Road, Bedford*. 14th March 2012

<sup>4</sup> Albion Archaeology, 2012, *Former Britannia Ironworks – Phases E & F, Kempston Road, Bedford: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Document 2012/53



Further south in Trenches 7 and 8, the depth of overburden decreased to 1.4m and 1m respectively. The overburden in Trenches 7-11 generally comprised make-up deposits containing vast amounts of brick, concrete, scrap metal and other construction debris.

The undisturbed geological strata was significantly higher in Trenches 3 - 6 in the central part of the site. Here, the overburden was between 0.15m and 0.6m thick, comprising make-up and demolition layers of mid grey brown silty sands and gravel containing frequent brick and concrete fragments overlying buried subsoil.

Being located away from the area of the most substantial Ironworks buildings, the overburden in the most southerly trenches was of distinctly different character. In Trench 2, well preserved former topsoil and subsoil layers were overlain by a 0.15–0.31m thick levelling layer containing modern building materials. The undisturbed geological strata was reached at depths of between 1.06m at the south-east end and 0.75m towards the north-west end. In Trench 1 the overburden comprised two make-up layers of modern building materials which overlay buried subsoil, which in turn overlay the undisturbed geological strata reached at between 0.4m and 0.65m below the ground surface.

Where revealed, the undisturbed geological strata consisted of yellow-brown silty sands and gravel.

## **2.2 Archaeological Features**

Archaeological features were revealed in ten of the eleven trenches (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The majority of these were directly overlain by make-up and demolition deposits associated with the Ironworks. Only in Trenches 1, 2, 4, 9 and 11 were buried topsoil or subsoil layers seen to overlay archaeological features.

### *Early Iron Age pits*

Two inter-cutting pits [802] and [805] overlain by 0.8m of make-up and demolition associated overburden were revealed in Trench 8. They were oval in shape, measuring up to 1.8m across and *c.* 0.6m deep and produced two sherds of early-middle Iron Age pottery.

### *Probable medieval features*

Two stone walls [903] and [1103], possibly constructed of limestone, were revealed in the bases of test pits excavated at the north end of Trench 9 and south end of Trench 11. An inhumation was partially revealed in the base of a test pit excavated at the east end of Trench 10. Parts of the lower leg bones were exposed, aligned approximately E-W.

These features were revealed at heights of between 25.33m OD and 27.16m OD, beneath substantial depths of make-up deposits (2.25–2.9m). The location and nature of these remains suggest that they are likely to be associated with Cauldwell Priory.



#### *Post-medieval and modern features*

A number of post-medieval and modern features pre-dating the Ironworks were revealed in the central and southern parts of the site. A large ditch [502] revealed in Trench 5 corresponds with the location of the perimeter boundary of Cauldwell Farm and mansion marked on the 1st edition OS map. A ditch [703] of similar character revealed at the north-west end of Trench 7, though not marked on the OS map, could be associated with the same boundary.

Also recorded in Trench 5 were a series of irregular cut features likely to be the result of sand and gravel quarrying possibly associated with the farm. Trench 3 revealed a number of features, including ditches and a possible furrow [303], which might be associated with land division and agricultural use of the land.

Artefacts within these features included post-medieval and modern domestic pottery, clay tobacco pipe fragments and animal bone.

#### *Features associated with the ironworks*

Features associated with the Ironworks were seen within all the trenches.

These included –

- make-up and levelling layers;
- cut features where footings are likely to have been grubbed out e.g. Trenches 6-8;
- underground concrete structures in the southern half of Trench 1.

#### *Undated features*

Three ditches and a possible pit were revealed beneath the subsoil in Trenches 1 and 2. These included a large ditch [204] measuring *c.* 2m wide and 0.7m deep that was parallel with the adjacent NW-SE aligned hedgerow. Unlike the hedgerow, it is not marked on the 1st edition OS map. The only artefacts recovered were some animal bone from ditch [204].

A small, shallow ditch aligned NW-SE and containing no artefacts was revealed in Trench 4.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

Archaeological features were revealed in 10 of the 11 trenches, indicating that large areas of the site away from the areas of known previous significant disturbance, e.g. former basements and sand pit, have suffered relatively little truncation.

The earliest features revealed were two pits in Trench 8 dating to the early-middle Iron Age. No features of this date were revealed elsewhere, although three abraded Iron Age pottery sherds recovered from the subsoil of Trench 3 suggest the possibility for further activity in the vicinity.

Remains likely to be associated with Cauldwell Priory were identified within Trenches 9, 10 and 11 at the northern end of the site. These are potentially of



regional or national importance (BBC 2012<sup>5</sup>). The remains were located in an area where a considerable depth of material (2.25–2.9m) had been deposited prior to and during the use of the Ironworks in order to level up the ground. Due to the substantial overburden, these remains and any other potential remains in this area are only likely to be impacted by the development if deep groundworks/foundations are proposed.

Remains of post-medieval and modern land use likely to be associated with the farm and/or villa were recorded in the central part of the site where the depth of overburden could be as little as 0.15m.

Three undated ditches and a possible pit were revealed in Trenches 1 and 2, overlain by 0.6m of overburden.

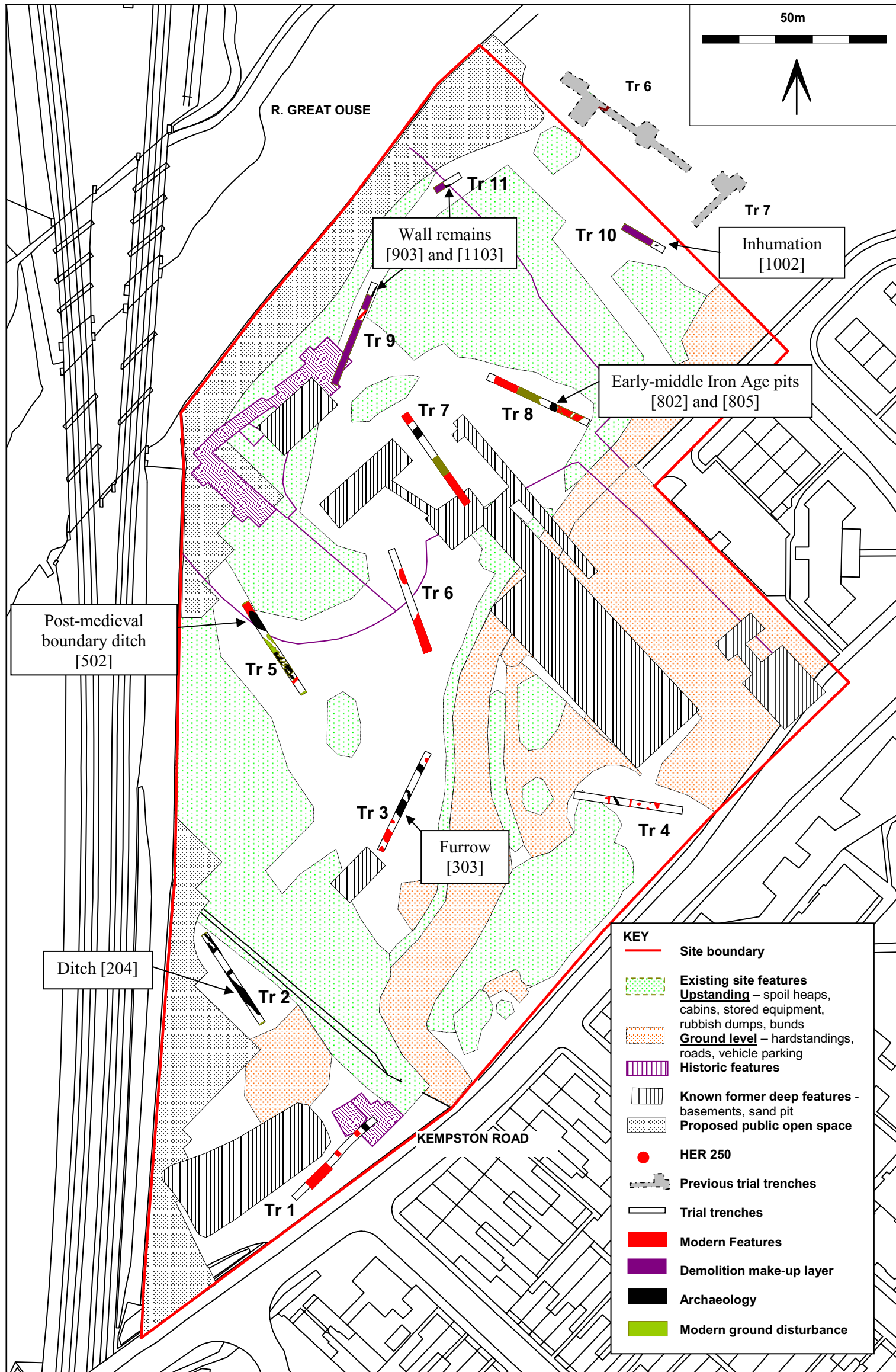
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<sup>5</sup> BBC, 2012, *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching. Phase E, Former Britannia Ironworks, Kempston Road, Bedford*. 14th March 2012



Trench	Minimum depth to underlying geology	Minimum Depth to Archaeology	Feature no.	Feature Type	Date	Artefacts
1	0.4-0.65m (29.75-29.43m OD)	0.6m (29.45m OD)	105	Ditch	-	-
2	0.8 (29.5m OD)	0.6m (29.72m OD)	204	Ditch	-	Animal bone
			206	Ditch	?Post-medieval/modern (cuts the subsoil)	-
			208	Ditch	-	-
			210	Pit	-	-
3	c. 0.4-0.6m (29.29-29.09m OD)	0.4m (29.29m OD)	303	Furrow	Post-medieval	Ceramic roof tile
			305, 307, 308	Subsoil	Modern	Brick, clinker and pottery (including 3 Iron Age sherds)
			310	Ditch	?Post-medieval/modern	Ferrous/glass slag
			312	Pit	?Modern (cuts the subsoil)	-
			314	Ditch	-	-
			316	Ditch	Modern	Brick and window glass
4	0.5m (29.06m OD)	0.63m (28.93m OD)	403	Ditch	-	-
5	0.4m (c. 28.41m OD)	0.47m (28.27m OD)	502	Ditch	Post-medieval	Pottery, clay tobacco pipe and animal bone
			509	Quarry pit	-	Animal bone
			511	Quarry pit	Modern	Modern and post- medieval pottery, ceramic roof tile and animal bone
6	0.15m (c. 29.92m OD)	-	-	-	-	-
7	1.15-1.43m (28.76-29.04m OD)	1.17m (27.59m OD)	703	Ditch	Post-medieval	Pottery, ceramic roof tile, land drain, clay tobacco pipe and animal bone
			705	Post hole	-	-
8	0.85m (28.33m OD)	0.82m (28.1m OD)	802	Pit	Middle Iron Age	Pottery
			805	Pit	Middle Iron Age	Pottery and animal bone
9	Not reached	2.75m (27.16m OD)	903	Wall	?Medieval	-
10	c. 2.20m (c. 26.40m OD)	2.25m (26.46m OD)	1002	Inhumation	?Medieval	-
11	Not reached	2.9m (25.33m OD)	1103	Wall	?Medieval	-

**Table 1:** Summary of Archaeological Features



**Figure 1: All features**

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