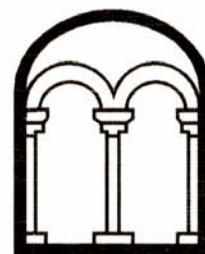


**PEGSDON GRANGE TENNIS COURT
PEGSDON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND
PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology





1. INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological works was carried out in connection with the construction of a tennis court at Pegsdon Grange, Pegsdon in Bedfordshire. The planning permission for the construction of the tennis court (CB/12/00551/FULL) included a condition (2) stating that:

“No development shall take place until the applicant or developer has secured the implementation of a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in accordance with the scheme thereby approved.”

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion 2012b) was prepared in response to a brief for the archaeological work issued by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBC 2012), requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The hamlet of Pegsdon lies in the parish of Shillington on the B655 about halfway between the small towns of Hitchin and Barton-le-Clay. The village of Hexton (formally in North Hertfordshire) lies immediately to its west. Pegsdon lies at the foot of the north facing scarp of the Chilterns Ridge where the land flattens out to an average height of c. 79m OD. The underlying geology is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation bedrock.

Pegsdon Grange is located in the north-western part of the hamlet near the junction of Pegsdon Way and the Apsley End Road. The development area (DA) lies in the south-eastern part of the grounds of Pegsdon Grange and was a grassed area at the time of the fieldwork. Its boundaries are formed by a beech hedge to the north and west between the site and the house, and a row of mature trees and low shrubs towards the south and east. The DA is centred at NGR TL 1181 3027 (Figure 1).

3. EXTENT OF WORKS

The groundworks entailed the excavation of an area measuring 33m by 16.2m to a depth of c. 200mm. Layers of aggregate over a permeable membrane in the base of the excavated area formed the foundation for the playing surface. The finished surface is to be built up slightly above the surrounding ground level.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A heritage asset assessment was prepared by Albion Archaeology to accompany the planning application (Albion Archaeology 2012 a); it encompassed a 500m-radius study area centred on the DA. The assessment examined data from the Historic Environment Record (HER) which is maintained by Central Bedfordshire Council and historic maps held by the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service. The following paragraphs summarise the findings of the assessment.



Prehistoric heritage assets in vicinity of the DA are represented by one isolated findspot of a Bronze Age spearhead (HER 18377) and a possible ring ditch represented by cropmarks (HER 9402).

Pegsdon is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a fairly substantial manor, which suggests it originated in at least the late Saxon period. However, no heritage assets dating to the Anglo-Saxon period have yet been recorded within the study area.

The DA lies within the core of the medieval village of Pegsdon (HER 17116) and also adjacent to the medieval moated site of Pegsdon Belt (HER 3328), a sub-rectangular scheduled monument (SM 20247).

The majority of recorded heritage assets within the study area are post-medieval in date. From at least the 18th century onwards there is physical and map evidence that the hamlet of Pegsdon was located to the west of the Apsley End Road. A considerable number of cottages stood along the edge of the “Old Road” which ran along the eastern edge of the DA and turned westwards along its southern boundary. Pegsdon Grange itself incorporates two sets of converted barns, which are 16th and 17th century in origin (HER 3856 and 3848 respectively), suggesting that the grange started life as part of a pre-enclosure farmstead.

To the west of the DA are landscaped grounds belonging to Hexton Manor, an 18th-century house (HER 7042), to which one of the main approach roads comes off the Hitchin Road to the south of the DA, past Pegsdon Lodge (HER 4734) and through a set of mid 19th-century entrance gates which are Grade II listed (HER 4752). Map evidence, however, suggests that the lands of the current Pegsdon Grange were always outside the boundaries of the Hexton Manor park and garden and were not related to its estate.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks was undertaken on 20th June 2012. Mechanical excavation for the base of the tennis court was undertaken by the groundworks contractors using an excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under constant monitoring by an archaeologist. Observations were recorded using standard Albion pro forma recording sheets. A digital photographic record was made of the works.

A copy of this report and the project archive, which comprises all written and photographic records, will be stored at Luton Museum (Accession No. LUTNM: 2012.25). Copies of the report will also be forwarded to the CBC Historic Environment Record and the OASIS online database (OASIS No. albionar1-128876).

6. RESULTS

6.1 Archaeological Observations

The material removed from the site of the tennis court consisted of a single undifferentiated layer of topsoil. It comprised a dark grey silty loam with



occasional small to medium sized stones. No subsoil deposits were exposed, although some lighter patches of soil may have marked the interface with the underlying deposits.

In the north-west corner of the excavation the top of a brick chamber was exposed (see Plates 3 and 4). It consisted of a rectangular cut, lined with a single layer of bricks. The chamber had external dimensions of 1.4m by 0.7m. The bricks were 9 inches long by 4 inches wide (height unknown) in a light pinkish or yellow colour without frogs in the exposed upper surfaces. The interior surface of the chamber was lined with a thin layer of cement render. The interior was filled with soil indistinguishable from the overlying topsoil layer.

6.2 Artefacts

The machined surface and spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts. The topsoil layer that was removed contained only a small quantity of artefacts. These comprised ceramic roof tile, modern ceramics (transfer printed and white glazed), modern vessel glass, animal bone and a small quantity of pre-modern ceramics. The modern artefacts and animal bone were not collected. The earlier pottery was collected and is detailed below.

Six pottery sherds (68g) of late and post-medieval date (*c.* late 14th–17th century) were collected. They survive in fair condition, with an average sherd weight of 26g. Four fabric types were identified, using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology (Table 1). All are well known and commonly occurring fabric types across the county. Luton Museum confirmed that they did not want to accession the finds into their collections and they were not retained.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No	Wt (g)	Comments
<i>Late medieval</i>				
E01	Reduced sandy ware	2	36	Body sherds, one with combed wavy decoration
E02	Oxidised sandy ware	2	68	Body sherd and abraded base angle with worn, patchy external glaze
<i>Post-medieval</i>				
P01	Glazed red earthenware (fine)	1	17	Body sherd with internal glaze
P05	Unglazed hard fired earthenware	1	37	Lid-seated jar rim; diameter 150mm
		6	158	

Table 1: Quantification of recovered ceramics

7. CONCLUSIONS

The site of the tennis court was machined to a depth of *c.* 200mm. The excavated material consisted entirely of topsoil. A few lighter patches of soil were visible in the base of the excavation but no clearly identifiable subsoil layer was uncovered.

A disused brick-lined chamber was identified in the north-west corner of the area. The type of brick used in its construction indicates a later 19th or earlier 20th century date. The relatively small size of the chamber suggests that it could have been an inspection pit for a drain; however no cut for a drain was visible.



The excavated topsoil contained small amounts of occupation debris consisting of roof tile, glass, animal bone and pottery. The pottery included material dating from the late medieval, post-medieval and modern periods.

It was suggested in the heritage assessment (Albion 2012a) that the development area was likely to have been used for agricultural/pasture in the medieval period (Section 3.53) or as a pasture/garden area in the post-medieval period (Section 3.5.4). Historic maps indicate that during the post-medieval period the development area was situated between cottages to the south and a farmyard to the north. The relatively small concentrations of occupation debris in the topsoil appear to support this interpretation.

The earliest dateable pottery that was found dates from the late medieval period (late 14th century). The sample, however, is extremely small and little significance should be attached to it in terms of the origins of this part of the settlement of Pegsdon.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2012 a, *Pegsdon Grange Tennis Court, Pegsdon, Bedfordshire: Desk-Based Heritage Asset Assessment*. Albion Report No 2012/32

Albion Archaeology 2012 b, *Pegsdon Grange Tennis Court, Pegsdon, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*. Albion Report No 2012/84

CBC 2012, *Brief for a Scheme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at Pegsdon Grange, Pegsdon Way, Shillington, Bedfordshire*.

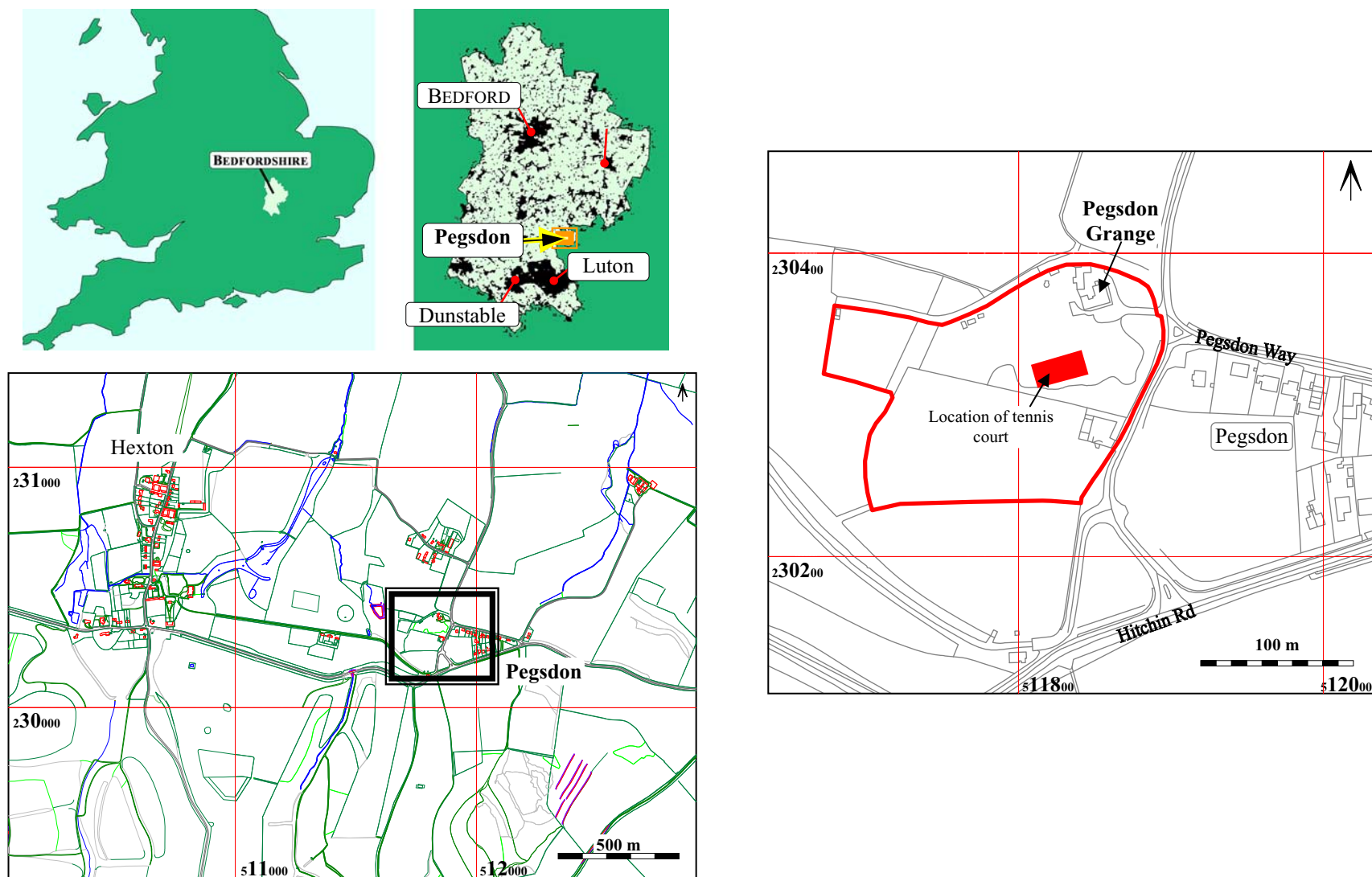


Figure 1: Site location

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright.
 Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2011)



Plate 1: Area before machining, looking west



Plate 2: Area after machining, looking west



Plate 3: Brick-lined chamber in north-west corner of site



Plate 4: Area after machining, looking south-east