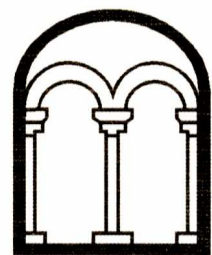


**LAND OFF MAULDEN ROAD  
FLITWICK  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION  
AND HERITAGE ASSET ASSESSMENT**

**Albion**  
archaeology



**LAND OFF MAULDEN ROAD  
FLITWICK  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION  
AND HERITAGE ASSET ASSESSMENT**

Project: MR1987  
Accession No. LUTNM: 2012.32  
OASIS ref: albionar1-131930

Document: 2012/155  
Version 1.0

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Kathy Pilkinton	Robert Wardill	Drew Shotliff

5th November 2012

Produced for:  
Flitwick Town Council



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## Preface

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.*

## Acknowledgements

*The project was commissioned by Flitwick Town Council and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kathy Pilkinton (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Kathy Pilkinton with contributions from Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). The figures have been produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).*

*Albion Archaeology*

*St Mary's Church*

*St Mary's Street*

*Bedford, MK42 0AS*

*☎: 0300 300 8141*

*Fax: 0300 300 8209*

*E-mail: [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)*

*Website: [www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)*

## Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.0</i>	<i>05/11/2012</i>	<i>n/a</i>

## Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
PDA	Proposed Development Area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Flitwick Town Council are looking to acquire land for a new cemetery and have been offered a plot of land off Maulden Road, Flitwick by Central Bedfordshire Council.*

*The proposed development area lies to the north-east of Flitwick in a landscape with a high density of heritage assets. The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist advised that an archaeological field evaluation must be undertaken in order to obtain information required to compile a Heritage Asset Assessment to accompany any future planning application. The archaeological field evaluation comprised geophysical survey followed by targeted trial trenching.*

*The geophysical survey was carried out on the 13th September 2012 and found little to indicate the presence of significant archaeological features at the site. The trial trenching took place between 2nd and 11th October 2012. Three of fifteen trenches contained archaeological features comprising four ditches, a row of postholes and an area of modern disturbance. These features all date to the post-medieval and modern periods and are probably associated with land division and/or farming activities. No features of significant archaeological interest were found at the site.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Flitwick Town Council are looking to acquire land for a new cemetery and have been offered a plot off Maulden Road, Flitwick by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The proposed development area (PDA) lies to the north-east of Flitwick in a landscape with a high density of heritage assets, characterised by a scheduled medieval moated site and high status Roman settlement remains (see section 1.3). The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that an archaeological field evaluation must be undertaken in order to obtain information required to compile a Heritage Asset Assessment to accompany any future planning application.

This advice was in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist and national planning guidelines in the form of the *National Planning Policy Framework* – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, which was published on 27 March 2012 and replaces the previous *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*.

The CBCA issued a brief for the works (CBC 2012) which stipulated that the programme of archaeological works should comprise:

Stage I – geophysical survey;

Stage II – trial trench evaluation.

If significant archaeological remains had been uncovered by the evaluation, then further stages of works might have been required.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The PDA lies to the north-east of Flitwick and south of the A507 within arable land. It is c.4ha in extent and is bounded to the east by Maulden Road, to the south by a bridleway and to the west and north by agricultural fields (Figure 1). The site currently forms the southern half of a larger agricultural field.

The site lies within the valley of the River Flit. The underlying geology is of the Flitwick Association — gleyed brown earth and Lower Greensand over Jurassic clays. The site lies at an average height of c.80m OD.



### **1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### **1.3.1 Prehistoric (before AD43)**

There is limited evidence for activity during this period from within the area. Part of a Bronze Age biconical urn (HER 15848), dated to *c.*1500BC, was recovered from the line of the A507 Ampthill bypass.

The wider landscape around the area contains dispersed evidence for prehistoric activity. Immediately to the east of Ruxox Farm, surface artefact collection has recovered prehistoric stone tools dating from the Mesolithic to the early Bronze Age (Faddon 1970, 1-4). A double ring ditch (HER 15311) lies to the south-west of the PDA. A geophysical survey was undertaken on land to the north of the ring ditch and revealed several further anomalies which may be archaeological features (Stratascan 2009). However, no follow-up trial trenching was undertaken to verify the nature and date of the anomalies.

An excavation at Hinksley Road, Flitwick (Luke 1999, 43-87), 300m to the south-west of the PDA, uncovered Iron Age and later evidence. Settlement of the site began in the middle Iron Age as an unenclosed farmstead which was succeeded by an enclosed farmstead in the later pre-Belgic Iron Age. The site also produced evidence of a Roman field system and early/middle Saxon occupation.

#### **1.3.2 Roman (AD43 – c. 450)**

Extensive evidence of Roman settlement has been found in the area (HER 918). Excavations were carried out over a wide area around Ruxox Farm in the 1950s and 1960s (HER event 814) by the Ruxox Research Group and the Ampthill Archaeological Society. The results of the investigations were interpreted as an extensive rural settlement consisting of small domestic buildings. A concentration of artefacts found in a location to the west of the present area included wall plaster and tesserae, indicative of a higher status building (Faddon 1972, 20). Fragments of clay figurines, which were part of the artefact assemblage, could suggest the presence of a temple.

A number of cropmarks varying from linears to enclosures are also recorded within an area of *c.*170ha around Ruxox Farm, including two sides of a possible large rectangular enclosure within the PDA itself.

The courses of two Roman roads suggested by the *Viatores* pass through the area (HER 5020-Viatores 170b and HER 5342-Viatores 176). These, however, have not been confirmed on the ground (Simco 1984). HER 5342 is identified



in the HER as an agger (the bank of a Roman road) and crosses the line of the Maulden Road to the south of the PDA.

In the western part of the PDA a number of Roman artefacts have been recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (HER 18614, 18617, 18635, 18745 and 18935). This suggests that the PDA lies inside the overall area of Roman activity noted above.

In 1991, an excavation was carried out to the north and south sides of New Road, 400m east of the PDA. This uncovered late Iron Age and Roman settlement and a Roman cemetery (Dawson 2004, 17-34). Roman burials were also found to the north of the A507 during investigations prior to the construction of an Anglian Water pipeline. Burials ranged in date from the 2nd to the 4th century. Accompanying late Iron Age to Roman settlement evidence was also found.

### 1.3.3 Saxon (c. 450 – 1066)

The earliest Saxon reference in the area is to the place name of Ruxox, which appears as *Rokeshoc*, *Rokeshac* (1174), and *Rokesac* (1220-45). This is interpreted as deriving from the Old English *Hrōces-āc* or the oak belonging to *Hrōc* (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 74).

No archaeological find spots or sites of Saxon date are known in the vicinity of the PDA. Unenclosed Saxon occupation was found to the south-west of the site in the excavation at Hinksley Road, Flitwick (Luke 1999, 43-87). Typically, settlement in the earlier part of the Saxon period tends to take the form of small-scale, dispersed occupation.

### 1.3.4 Medieval (1066 – 1550)

The most significant remains from this period within the area is a moated site situated approximately 500m to the east of the PDA at Ruxox Farm. This is a scheduled monument (HER 919, DBD 20405, NHLE 1007780). It consists of a large D-shaped earthwork, which measures at least 250m by 160m and encloses the eastern end of a natural promontory. The northern part of the moat has been backfilled but is clearly shown on the first edition OS 25-inch map and shows up clearly as cropmarks on aerial photographs.

The site was granted to Dunstable Priory before 1189. The Priory used it as a residence for priors who had retired from the main order. The last documentary reference to it as a monastic foundation dates from 1291 (Page 1912).

Large fragments of stone found near the edge of the moat suggest that buildings





once occupied the area close to the inner edge of the moat. Archaeological excavations carried out in the north-west corner of the enclosure in 1959 uncovered medieval stone walls, pottery, building materials and window glass as well as Roman pottery and tile fragments.

A medieval pottery scatter has been identified to the north of the A507 (HER 2763). Finds of possible medieval date have been recorded from the area by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. These comprise a medieval or post-medieval metal mount (HER 18616) and Roman and medieval finds (HER 18617).

Place-name evidence from fields and tracks in historic maps and documents indicate possible medieval origins for some of these fields and tracks. Possible early tracks are represented by “Ridgeway” and “Greenway” which are named on a pre-enclosure map dating from the late 18th century (HER 2859 and 6054). The PDA lies immediately west of the “Greenway”.

The same map shows that the PDA was part of two parcels of land which are named “Castel Grene” and “Castle Piece” (HER 7730). There is no other evidence for a castle in the area apart from the large moat, discussed above, in the eastern side of the area (HER 919). It is possible that the name comes from an association with the moat. It is worth remembering that the term castle was used quite loosely to refer to a variety of earthwork enclosures in the medieval period.

### **1.3.5 Post-medieval to modern (1550 onwards)**

The HER includes a small number of entries dating from modern period. These include the farmhouse and outbuildings at Ruxox Farm (HER 7771) which date from the 19th century. The location of a clay pit labelled “Old Clay Pit” on the 1st edition OS map of 1881 falls on the north-east edge of the area (HER 2970). Finds recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme include a silver penny of Charles I found to the west of Ruxox House (HER 18615) and three post-medieval lead seals (HER 18618).

The Maulden Road itself was constructed as part of landscape reorganisation at enclosure and therefore only dates from the late 18th/early 19th century.

The location of WW2 Nissen huts, formerly used for the storage of ammunition, is recorded next to the Maulden Road (HER 17896).



## 1.4 Project Objectives

The relevant research frameworks for the area are: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al.* 2007) and *A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

The PDA lies in the Flit river valley in an area of potential high status Roman settlement and a scheduled medieval moated enclosure. The research agenda for Bedfordshire states that little detailed work has been carried out on the characterisation of rural settlement in the Iron Age or Roman period and that there is also a need to understand more about the range of variation of settlements in the river valleys and how they differ from settlements on the heavier clay soils (Oake 2007, 11). Further study of Roman cemetery sites and potential ritual practices in the county is also needed (Oake 2007, 12).

With regards to the medieval period, the research agenda states that elements of the medieval settlement pattern, other than settlements, like moated sites, “Ends”, magnate enclosures and manorial complexes merit further study (Oake 2007, 14).

The specific research objectives of the evaluation were:

- To assess if any heritage assets relating to the Iron Age and Roman settlements in the area are present on the PDA;
- To assess if there is any evidence relating to the high status or potential votive element of the site at Ruxox Farm;
- To assess if there is any evidence of the Roman roads extending through the area;
- To assess if there is any evidence to elucidate the origin of the place names “Castel Grene” and “Castel Piece” on the PDA;
- To assess how the site fits into the medieval landscape of the area, in particular with regards to the scheduled moated site to the east and known trackways around the site.

The general purpose of the archaeological field evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the application site;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the application site.



- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

This information was to assist in determining the nature, function and character of any archaeological remains in their cultural and environmental setting. These characteristics are what form the significance of an archaeological heritage asset, from which we derive its value for this and future generations (as defined by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012, Annex: 2).



## 2. METHODOLOGY

---

### 2.1 Geophysical Survey

The geophysical survey was carried out on the 13th September 2012. It comprised a detailed magnetic survey using a Bartington Grad 601-2 instrument which has a typical depth of penetration of 0.5–1.0m. Readings were taken at 0.25m centres along traverses 1.0m apart. This equates to 3600 sampling points in a full 30m x 30m grid. A temporary grid was established across the entire survey area using wooden pegs at 30m intervals (for full methodology see Appendix 2).

### 2.2 Trial Trenching

Trial trenching took place between 2nd and 11th October 2012. The trenches were positioned to investigate areas and features of archaeological potential identified by the geophysical survey. Blank areas on the geophysical survey were also investigated.

A layout of fifteen trenches each measuring 50m by 2m was agreed with the CBCA. The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The spoil heaps were also scanned for artefact recovery.

Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 201 for Trench 2 *etc.* Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [\*\*\*] and round brackets to fills or layers (\*\*\*)). The trenches were inspected by the CBCA prior to their backfilling.

A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2012) which was approved by the CBCA prior to commencement of fieldwork.

The project adhered throughout to the standards and requirements set out in the following documents:

- Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd edn, 2001).
- Bedford Borough *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition*



- Council *in Registered Museums in Bedford (2010)*
- EAA *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003)*
- English Heritage *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide (2006)*  
*Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition (2011)*
- IfA *By-Laws and Code of Conduct*  
*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (updated 2009) and finds (updated 2008)*

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (Accession No. LUTON: 2012.32). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref: albionar1-131930) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.



### 3. RESULTS OF FIELD EVALUATION

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#### 3.1 *Geophysical Survey*

The geophysical survey identified little evidence of archaeological remains: a small linear response and a scattering of discrete anomalies were seen which were all positive in polarity and indicative of in-filled cut features. Closely spaced linear responses were seen across much of the site and are associated with modern agricultural activity. Areas of amorphous magnetic variation were identified and are likely to be of natural origin associated with the geology or pedology of the site. Also noted were several areas of magnetic disturbance and spikes, typically associated with ferrous material (for full report see Appendix 2).

#### 3.2 *Trial trenching*

All deposits and features found within the trial trenches are described chronologically below and shown on Figure 2. Detailed information on all deposits and features can be found in Appendix 1.

##### 3.2.1 *Overburden and geological deposits*

The overburden generally comprised topsoil of dark grey brown, silty sand. This overlay a brownish orange sandy subsoil at the southern end of site and a firmer silty sand to the north. The thickness of the overburden varied from 0.3–0.85m and was generally thickest within the trenches located in the north-west corner of site (Trenches 8, 10 and 11) in comparison with those at the top of the slope (Trenches 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

The undisturbed geological deposits varied from very soft orangey-yellow sand with natural outcrops of ironstone and gravel, at the top of the slope, to a light greyish-yellow silty sand in Trenches 12 and 13.

##### 3.2.2 *Post-medieval (1500-1750)*

Two shallow ditches [1205] and [1209] measuring 1 and 1.4m in width respectively ran parallel on a NW-SE alignment in Trench 12. They were *c.*4m apart. A shallow gully [1211] ran alongside ditch [1209]. Ditch [1209] produced three abraded fragments of sand-tempered flat roof tile (86g) dating to the post-medieval period. Although the other features produced no finds, their proximity and alignment suggests they are contemporary.

##### 3.2.3 *Modern (1750 onwards)*

Trench 15 revealed the remains of three large square postholes. Their shape and



the presence of undecayed wooden post date them to the modern period. They are aligned NE-SW in line with the boundary of the field and Maulden Road itself.

The southern 22m of Trench 1 revealed modern sand and silt deposits. These contained a moderate amount of modern building material including bricks and some concrete. Investigation in the southern end of the trench revealed these deposits to be present to a depth of at least 1m.

Land drains were visible in all trenches other than 1, 3 and 11. They were aligned NE-SW and placed below the level of the undisturbed natural deposits in all cases.

#### **3.2.4 Undated**

A possible N-S aligned ditch in Trench 12 [1203] produced no dating evidence. It was filled with brown-grey silty sand, similar to some of the surrounding geological deposits. It is possible that this feature is of geological rather than archaeological origin.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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The trial trenching found no features or deposits of archaeological significance. It confirmed that any anomalies identified by the geophysical survey were probably the result of farming activities or geological variation such as ironstone outcropping within the sand.

The principal features found by the trenching comprised two shallow parallel ditches. These are likely to delineate a trackway and/or land boundary which dates at the earliest to the post-medieval period.

The land drains are aligned with the current field system which dates to the creation of the Maulden Road during enclosure in the late 18th/early 19th century. It is possible that the parallel ditches in Trench 12 are also associated with this system as they appear to run perpendicular to Maulden Road.

The postholes in Trench 15 run parallel to the road and may represent the remains of a fence line or agricultural building associated with Ruxox Farm.

The modern deposits in Trench 1, although at the higher end of the site, lie within a depression or pit.





## **5. HERITAGE ASSET ASSESSMENT**

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The archaeological evaluation of the site at Maulden Road, Flitwick has revealed a number of buried heritage assets at the site. However, all are of low archaeological significance. The principal features identified at the site probably represent a post-medieval or modern track/field boundary. Other features found at the site date to the modern period.

The uniformly low level of cultural evidence that was identified by the trial trenching and geophysical survey suggests that the site has never previously been used for settlement.

The proposed development would have a negative impact on most, if not all of the buried heritage assets identified by the evaluation. However, as the results of the fieldwork have demonstrated those assets are of very limited significance.

There will be no impact from the proposed use of the site on above ground heritage assets as none are present in the vicinity.



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## **7. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES**

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## **8. APPENDIX 2: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT**

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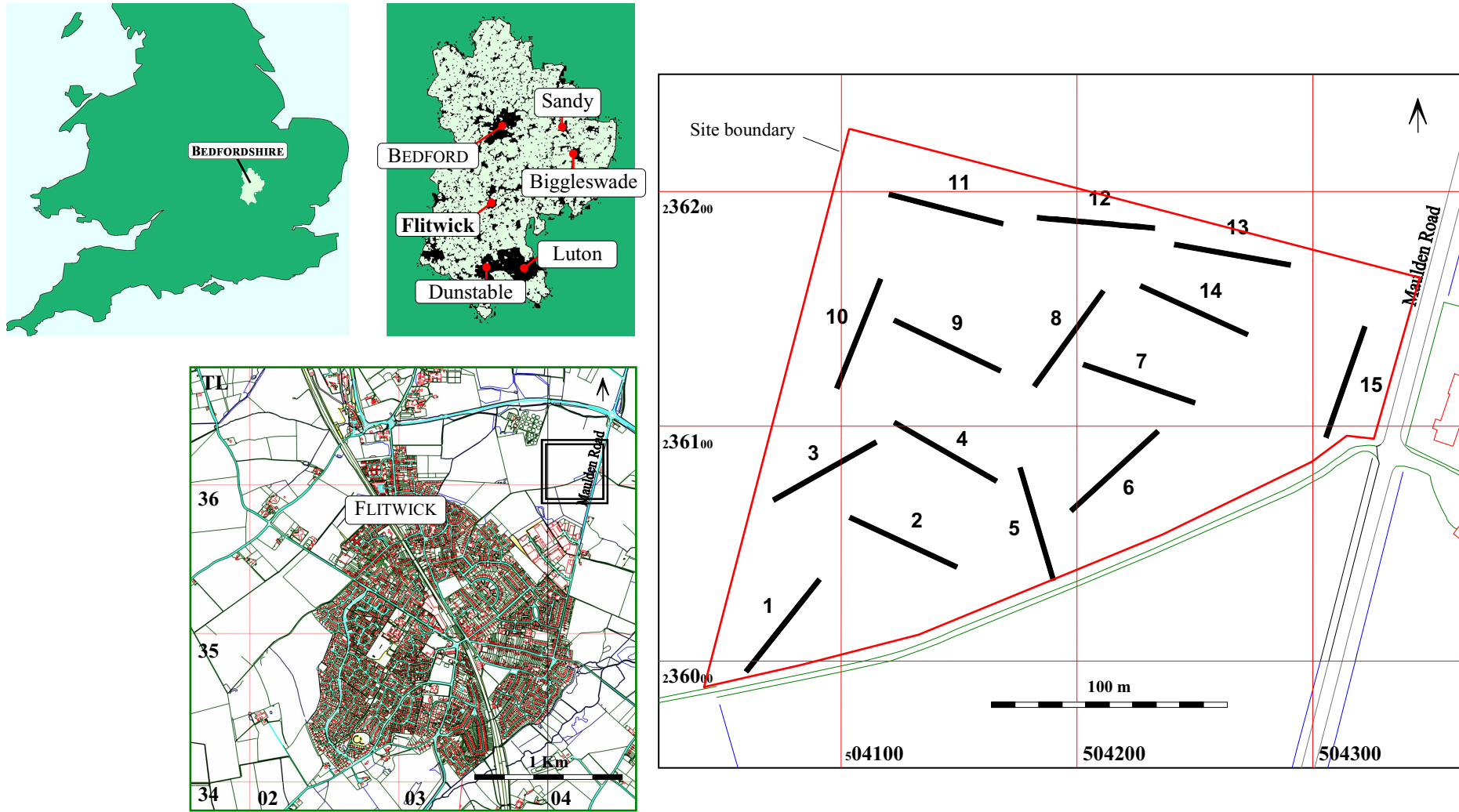


## 9. APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID	albionar1-131930
PROJECT DETAILS	
Project name	Land at Maulden Road, Flitwick
Short description of the project	Flitwick Town Council are looking to acquire land for a new cemetery and have been offered a plot of land off Maulden Road, Flitwick by Central Bedfordshire Council. The archaeological field evaluation consisted of geophysics followed by trial trenching. Three of the fifteen excavated trenches contained traces of activity. Four ditches, a row of postholes and an area of modern disturbance were identified. These were dated to the post-medieval and modern periods and are associated with agricultural land division and management.
Project dates	Start: 02-10-2012 End: 11-10-2012
Previous/future work	Yes/ Not known
Any associated project reference codes	MR1987 - Contracting Unit No. LUTNM:2012.32 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Field evaluation
Monument type	DITCHES Post Medieval DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	None
Methods & techniques	Targeted Trenches
Development type	New Cemetery
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	Pre-application
PROJECT LOCATION	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE FLITWICK Land at Maulden Road, Flitwick
Study area	4.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 04170 36130 52 0 52 00 48 N 000 28 55 W Point
PROJECT CREATORS	
Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Robert Wardill
Project supervisor	Kathleen Pilkinton
PROJECT ARCHIVES	
Physical Archive Exists?	Yes
Physical Archive recipient	Luton Museum
Physical Archive ID	LUTNM:2012.32
Physical Archive Contents	Ceramics"
Physical Archive notes	To be stored at Albion Archaeology until deposition
Digital Archive Exists	Yes
Digital Archive recipient	Albion Archaeology
Digital Archive ID	N/a
Digital Media available	"Database", "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"



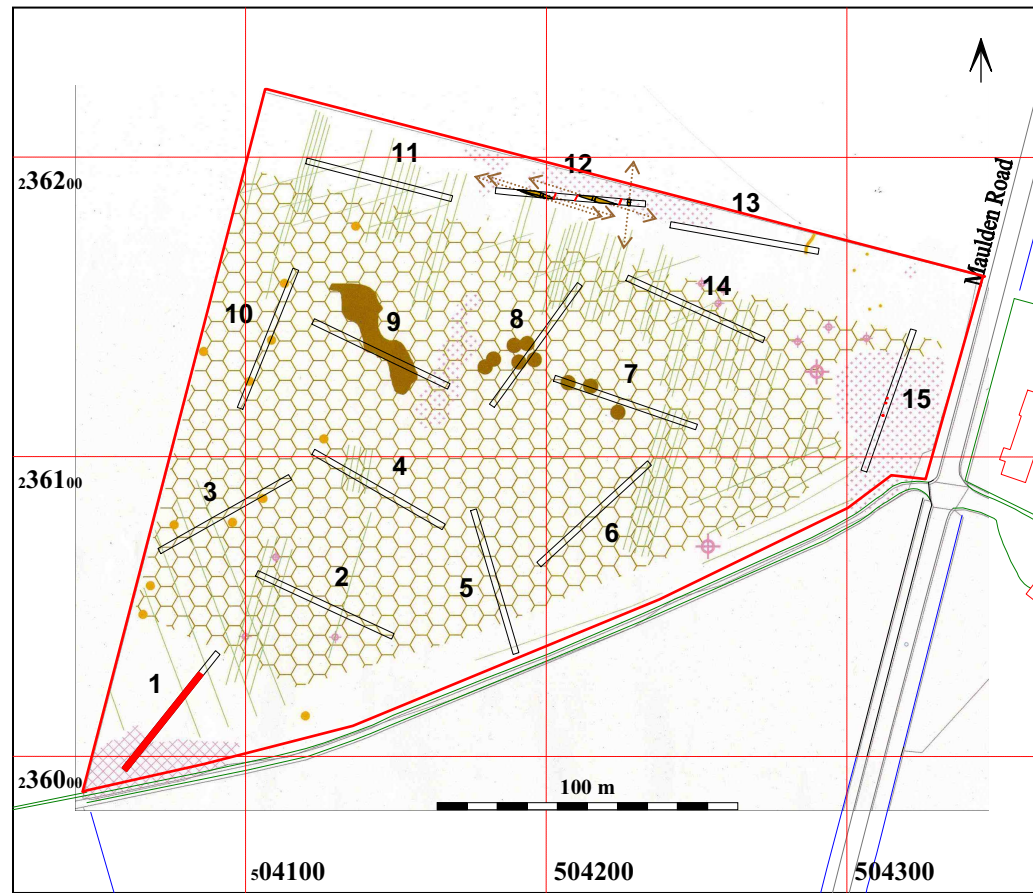
Digital Media Comments	N/a
Paper Archive recipient	Luton Museum
Paper Archive ID	LUTNM:2012.32
Paper Contents	"Ceramics", "other"
Paper Media available	"ContextSheet", "Correspondence", "Microfilm", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section"
Paper Archive notes	To be stored at Albion Archaeology until deposition
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land at Maulden Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Field Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Pilkinton, K.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wells, J.
Other bibliographic details	2012/155
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Albion Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Bedford
Description	Comb bound report



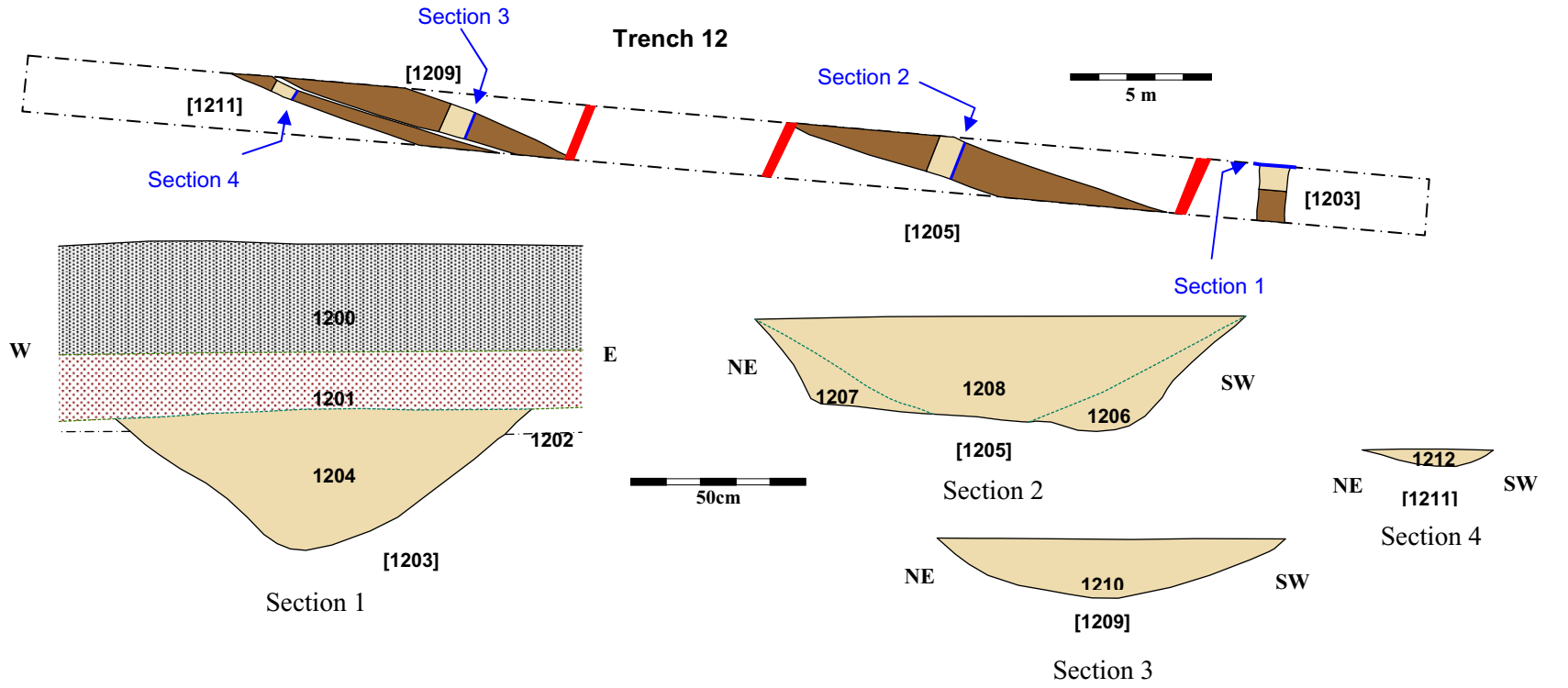
**Figure 1: Site and trench location plan**

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Trenching and geophysical survey results



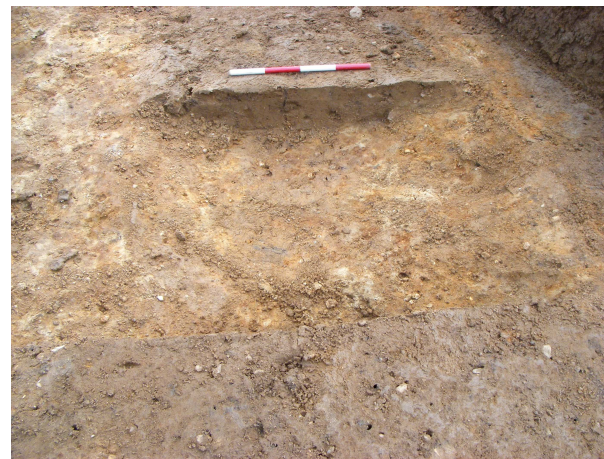
Modern disturbance in trench 1



Ditch [1203]. Scale 1m



Ditch [1205]. Scale 1m



Ditch [1209]. Scale 40cm



Ditch [1211]. Scale 1m

- Modern disturbance
- Feature
- Excavated segment
- Topsoil
- Subsoil

**Figure 2: Trial trenching results**

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**Albion**  
archaeology



Albion Archaeology  
St Mary's Church  
St Mary's Street  
Bedford  
MK42 0AS

**Telephone** 01234 294000  
**Email** [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
[www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)

