

**RUSTLING END, PIPERS LANE
ALEY GREEN
LUTON**

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

Albion
archaeology



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Introduction

Planning permission (CB/12/00509/FULL) was granted for the erection of a detached double garage within the development area (DA). Given the site's location within an area of archaeological sensitivity, a condition was attached to secure a programme of archaeological works. All groundworks with the potential to impact buried archaeological deposits were monitored.

Site Location and Topography

The village of Aley Green is situated to the south-west of Luton, in southern Bedfordshire, between Caddington and Slip End (Figure 1). The DA lies towards the northern edge of the settlement, where the two main roads converge. Situated on the northern side of Pipers Lane, central grid reference TL 06500 18459, the focus of investigation was on the area of the front garden towards the southern property boundary.

The rear gardens sloped downwards towards the NE whilst the house occupied a level area, probably the result of terracing associated with construction of the dwelling. In contrast, the front garden sloped down to the SW, towards Pipers Lane.

Archaeological Observations

On the 25th June 2013 archaeological observation was of the groundworks associated with construction of the detached garage was undertaken. This consisted of ground reduction of an area towards the SW corner of the site (Figure 2), extending up to 1m below the existing ground level, prior to the excavation of a series of footings for the garage and excavation of an adjacent soakaway (Figure 2 and Figure 3: image 1).

The garage footings comprised *c.* 30 linear metres of trench, up to 1.3m wide and 1.7m deep below the level of the terrace. The soakaway pit lay to the north of the garage and was roughly square, 1.8m across by 1.9m deep (Figure 2). Due to the depth of these excavations, the archaeologist did not enter them, with all observations being made from the adjacent area.

Soil profile

The observations revealed a dark greyish brown friable silt clay topsoil horizon (1), which contained moderate small and medium flint fragments. This was up to 0.5m thick towards the house in the NE, though thinning to 0.3m in the south towards the lane (Figure 3: image 2). The tapering profile of this deposit suggests a degree of



landscaping. This would appear to be the remnants of a former cultivation soil, based on the thickness of the deposit, though probably disturbed by activity associated with construction of the dwelling; no artefacts were recovered.

Below this was an extensive mid orange sandy clay deposit (2) (Figure 3: image 2), up to 0.9m thick, which contained unworked flint. The basal part of this deposit was also visible in the top of the soakaway section (Figure 4: image 4). The deposit was darker towards the interface with the topsoil, suggesting that an element of the original profile was present.

Earlier deposits

A series of deposits were identified below this level, all of which sloped markedly downwards to the north, into the valley. The earliest was in the south and comprised a small exposure of brashy chalk (5), presumably indicating that the edge of the valley side was close. Above this was dark brownish orange silt clay (3). This was sealed by an extensive and distinctive light yellow clay deposit (4) (Figure 3: image 2, Figure 4: image 3), which was also identified further to the north in the soakaway (Figure 4: image 4). This deposit contained large quantities of flint nodules.

Possible ice wedge

The excavation of the soakaway revealed a vertical edge between the continuation of the distinctive light yellow clay deposit (4) and a darker deposit. The darker deposit is considered to be the fill of a periglacial ice wedge [6], rather than a man-made feature (Figure 4: image 4). The mid orangey brown fill contained frequent flint nodules, which were irregular in shape, up to 50cm long, with a thin white cortex (Figure 5: image 5). The nodules appear to have been whole prior to excavation of the soakaway. When broken open, the nodules revealed grey cherty flint with numerous inclusions.

Summary

It would appear that the DA had undergone landscaping, probably associated with construction of the dwelling. This affected the upper soil profile. However, it would appear that this deposit is the remains of a former ploughsoil. If any archaeological features had been present, they should have been well defined against the underlying deposits. No archaeological features or finds were identified during the observation works.



Given the significant discoveries of Palaeolithic implements from the area, recording of the variations in the underlying strata was undertaken. It would appear that the site was close to the south side of the valley, with material derived from the chalk bedrock being identified. The series of deposit which accumulated in the valley contained significant quantities of unworked flint nodules (Clay-with-flints). No worked flints were recovered, despite an extensive search through the excavated soils.

The vertical feature identified in the soakaway is considered to be natural feature rather than a man-made shaft. This is similar to the 'pipe' recorded R A Smith (Scott-Jackson 2000, fig.17, 37).

Bibliography

Scott-Jackson J 2000 *Lower and Middle Palaeolithic artefacts from deposits mapped as Clay-with-flints.*

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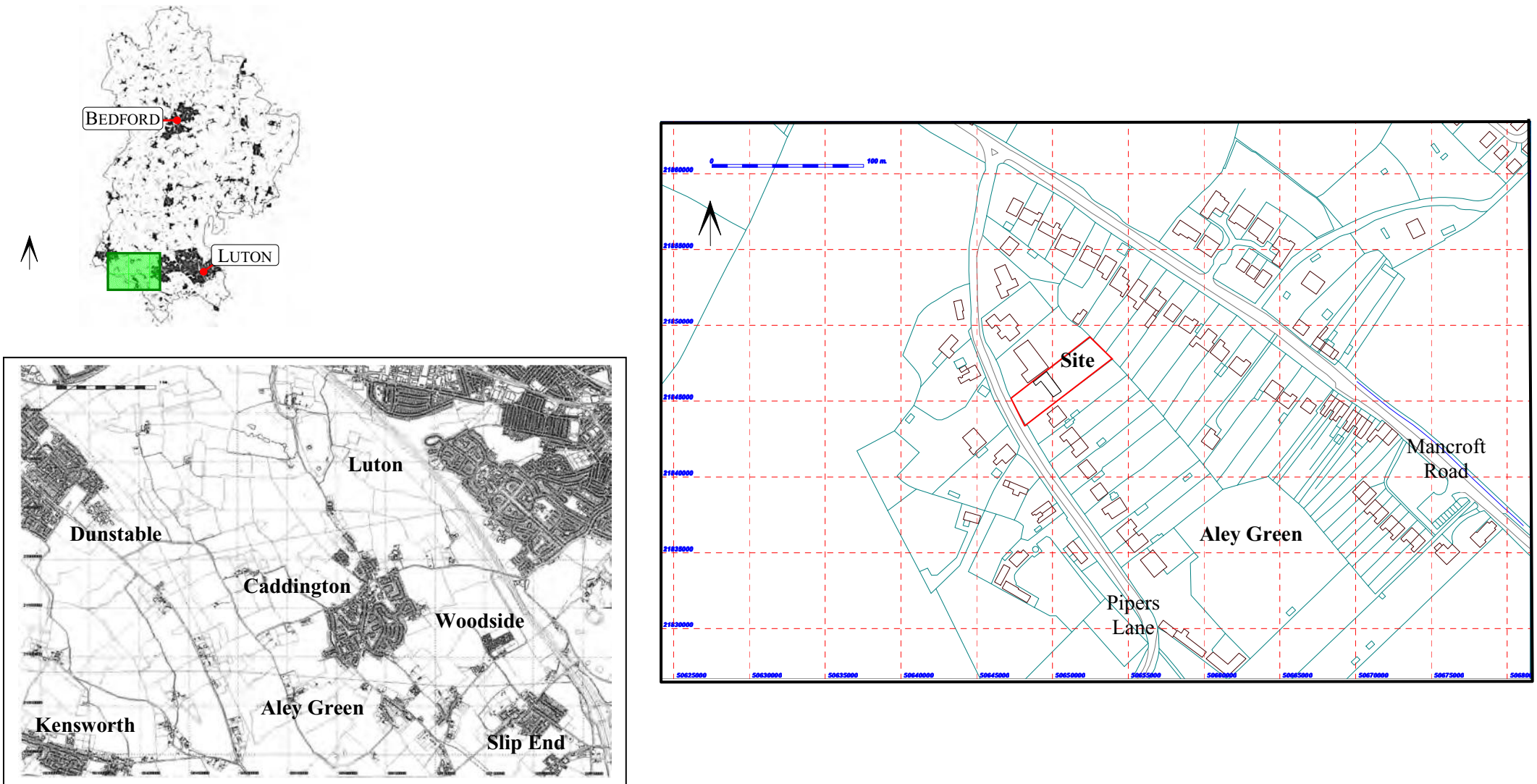


Figure 1: Site location map

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Figure 2: Site plan

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Image 1: General view of excavated footing trenches set within an area of ground reduction. Image is looking towards the house in a north-easterly direction.



Image 2: Stepped section at SE margin of site, the upper step exposes the topsoil (1) and extensive deposit (2), with the lower step revealing yellow clay (4) and brown Clay-with-flints (3) which slope down towards the north.

Figure 3: Selected images 1 and 2



Image 3: Yellow Clay-with-flints (4), above brownish clay (3) with brashy chalk (5) below this. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



Image 4: The soakaway section revealed the remains of the horizontal strata (2), overlying a possible periglacial ice wedge [6], defined by the darker vertical band of material on the left hand side of the image. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 4: Selected images 3 and 4



Image 5: Example of one of the flint nodules recovered from the fill of the ice wedge [6]. The nodule was *c.* 0.4m long. The fracture of the nodule occurred during excavation.

Figure 5: Selected image 5

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