LAND AT FURZENHALL COTTAGE FURZENHALL ROAD BIGGLESWADE BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Albion archaeology





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ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Project: FC2202

Document: 2013/106 Version 1.0

Bedford Museum accession no.: BEDFM 2013.29 OASIS reference no: albionar1-151979

13/06/2013

Compiled by	Approved by
Christiane Mecksepe	er Drew Shotliff

Produced for: Mrs Lynda Ford

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. 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.

The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Gregson (Archaeological Supervisor) and Christiane Meckseper (Project Officer), who also prepared the report. The project was managed by Christiane Meckseper (Project Officer). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

The assistance and co-operation of Ms Lynda Ford of Furzenhall Cottage and the engaged contractors throughout the project are gratefully acknowledged.

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Version History

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1.0	13/06/2013	n/a

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

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LBLA	t emrai	Bealmanachire		a renaeo	1/10/12/

BLARS Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service

CBC Central Bedfordshire Council

DA Development Area
EBD Events BeDfordshire

HER Historic Environment Record

If A Institute for Archaeologists

WSI Written Scheme of Investigation



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Planning permission (CB/12/03996/FULL) has been granted for the construction of new timber outbuildings at Furzenhall Cottage, Furzenhall Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. They are to comprise a garage, workshop and storage space.

As the Development Area (DA) lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity, a condition attached to the planning consent (Condition 2) required the implementation of a scheme of archaeological resource management as a consequence of the development. This is in line with national planning guidelines in the form of Policy 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF)1 and local Policy 45 of the *Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire* (Presubmission version January 2013).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared in response to a brief for the archaeological work issued by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) (CBC 2013), detailing the requirement for the scheme of archaeological resource management.

Archaeological monitoring of the construction works took place on 10th and 11th June 2013. The results are presented in this report.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The DA is located in an area of farmland, c. 1.2km north of the town of Biggleswade and c. 600m east of the River Ivel (Figure 1). It is centred at TL 1927 4671.

Topographically the DA lies in the valley of the River Ivel at a height of c. 27m OD. The local solid geology comprises sandstone of the Woburn Sands Formation; it is overlain by River Terrace Deposits comprising sands and gravels.

1.3 Archaeological Background

An Archaeological Desk Study (5th December 2012), based on a 500m-radius HER search, was submitted as part of the planning application.

The DA is located within a complex of archaeological features known from cropmarks and archaeological investigation. The features represent a Neolithic cursus and associated monuments (HER 644). The cursus is a rectangular ditched enclosure on a NW-SW alignment.

The north-west end of the cursus has not been identified, although it may be underneath the sewage works or railway line to the west of Furzenhall Cottage. Small-scale archaeological investigation within the sewage works identified the

⁻



cursus ditch and showed that the southern arm of the monument had two phases of construction (Abrams 2010).

A group of ring ditches have been identified at the south-east end of the cursus (HER 644) and a further ring ditch is known from the north-west end (HER 10138 and Abrams 2010). The association of ring ditches with cursus is a commonly observed phenomenon. The ring ditches represent Bronze Age round barrows and suggest the continued ritual or funerary use of the landscape focusing on the earlier monument.

Further ring ditches are known to the north of the cursus (HER 701 and 1343). A series of cropmark sites in the surrounding area suggest extensive use of the Ivel Valley. Part of a pit alignment (HER 15101) has been identified to the south of the cursus.

A number of enclosures and other features are also known from the area (HER 509, 1343, 15507 and 16818); these are likely to represent later prehistoric and Roman settlements. A rectangular double-ditched enclosure (HER 446) located to the north-east of the DA has produced substantial quantities of Roman pottery and other contemporary material. The line of the Roman road from Baldock to Godmanchester via Sandy runs to the west of the DA (HER 505).

To the west of the DA are a series of well-preserved earthworks and associated cropmark features (HER 1615). They represent a multi-period landscape dating from the Roman period to remains of WW2 military features.

1.4 Project Objectives

The 1ha red-line application area overlaps the northern ditch of the cursus (Figure 1). The new outbuildings lie c. 60m to the north of the ditch, although they do fall within the early prehistoric landscape represented by the cursus and later monuments.

The DA, therefore, had the potential to contain remains of the Neolithic and Bronze ritual and funerary monuments focused on and around the cursus. In particular, understanding the development and nature of ritual and funerary monuments in the Neolithic and Bronze Age (Oake 2007, 9-11 and Brown and Murphy 2000, 9-13); the relationship between monuments and contemporary settlements (Oake 2007, 9-11 and Brown and Murphy 2000, 9-13) and the place of and relationship to the wider use of the landscape (Brown and Murphy 2000, 9-13 and Medlycott 2011, 9-14 and 15-21) have been identified as local and regional research topics.

The specific objectives of the investigation were, therefore, as follows:

- Is there any evidence for early prehistoric settlement in the vicinity of the cursus?
- Is there any evidence for further early prehistoric ritual activity in the vicinity of the cursus?
- Is there any evidence for later use of this part of the Ivel Valley?



The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the DA;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes; and to
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions:
- produce an archive report that fully describes the archaeological investigations.

1.5 Methodology

The following groundworks were monitored:

- 1. Removal of topsoil within the footprint of the proposed new building.
- 2. Excavation of the footing trenches.

The ground reduction and removal of topsoil was carried out by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The excavation of the footing trenches was undertaken using the same excavator fitted with a narrow toothed, bucket. All archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out by experienced Albion Archaeology staff.

Throughout the project the standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to:

•	IfA	By-Laws and Code of Conduct
		Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological
		Watching Brief (2009)
		Standard and Guidance for the collection,
		documentation, conservation and research of
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•	EAA	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of
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•	Albion Archaeology	Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd ed,
	<i></i>	2001).



2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first stage of the groundworks involved the removal of topsoil within the footprint of the proposed building. The topsoil was generally 0.50–0.58m deep and consisted of friable dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional small to medium sized stones. This lay directly above geological deposits, which consisted of loose mid brown and orange gravelly sand with patches of yellow gravelly sand. No subsoil was observed.

The second stage of the groundworks was the excavation of the footings trenches for the proposed outbuildings. These were 0.50-0.90m wide and 1.20m deep. In some areas the base of the footing trenches revealed a change in the geological layers to a deposit of fine yellow sandy gravel at a depth of c. 1.40m.

The ground reduction revealed several features relating to a septic tank that was located in the centre of the building footprint. The features consisted of the septic tank itself, a plastic service pipe leading to the tank from the building, a brick manhole and a large outflow area for septic tank liquids (Figure 2).

No archaeological features were identified during the groundworks and no artefacts were present within the topsoil.

The archaeological investigations revealed no evidence for features associated with the Neolithic cursus within the part of the development area impacted by the groundworks. The lack of any man-made artefacts within the soil suggests that the development area lies some distance from the focus of any past human activity. However, it does not preclude the presence of features associated with prehistoric or later ritual and/or settlement activity within the wider vicinity.

The site records do not merit any further analysis or reporting. The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM.2013.29). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-151979).

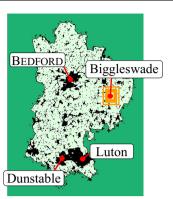


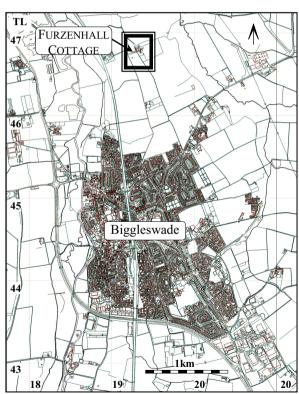
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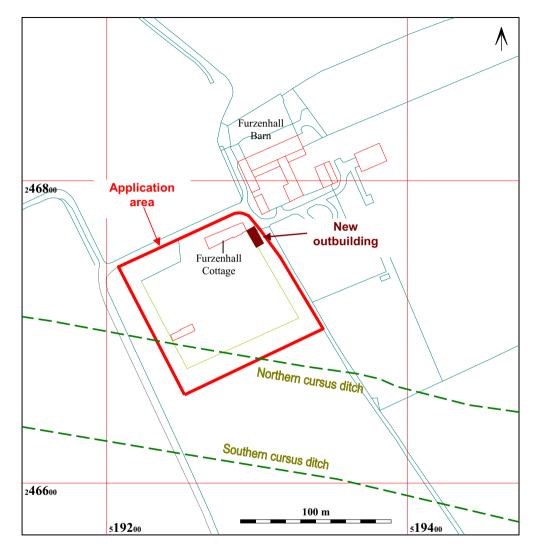


Figure 1: Site location

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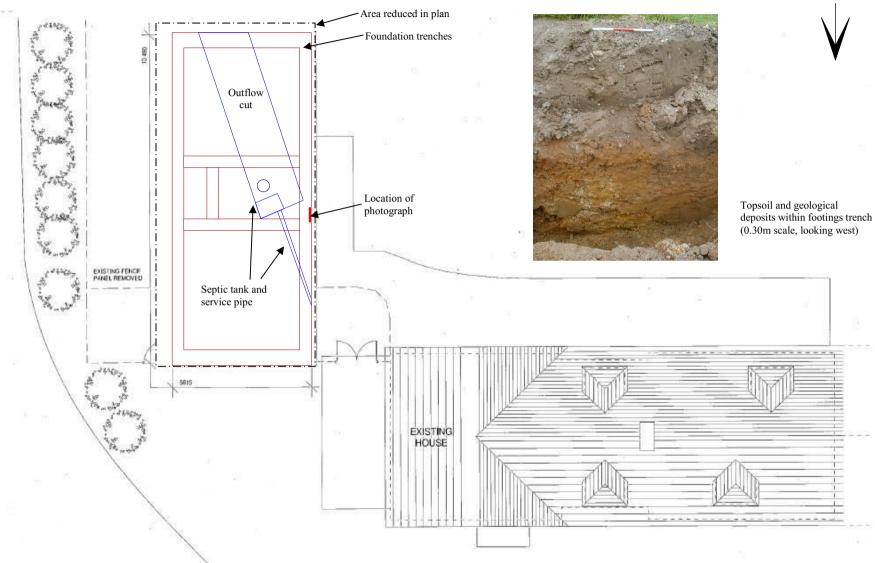


Figure 2: Features recorded in footprint of proposed building (Not to scale. Figure based on Andrew Hills architects drawing)



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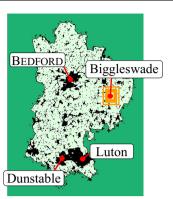


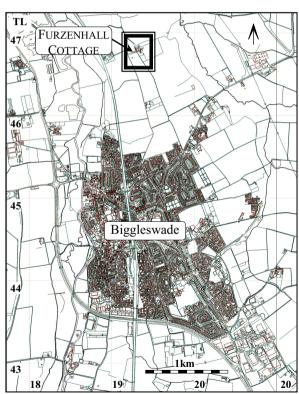
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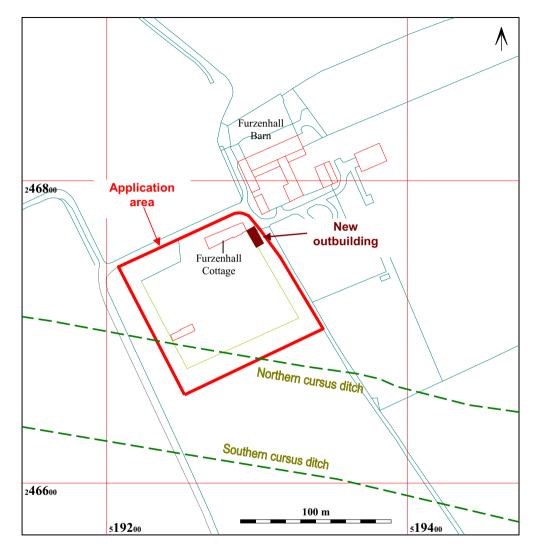


Figure 1: Site location

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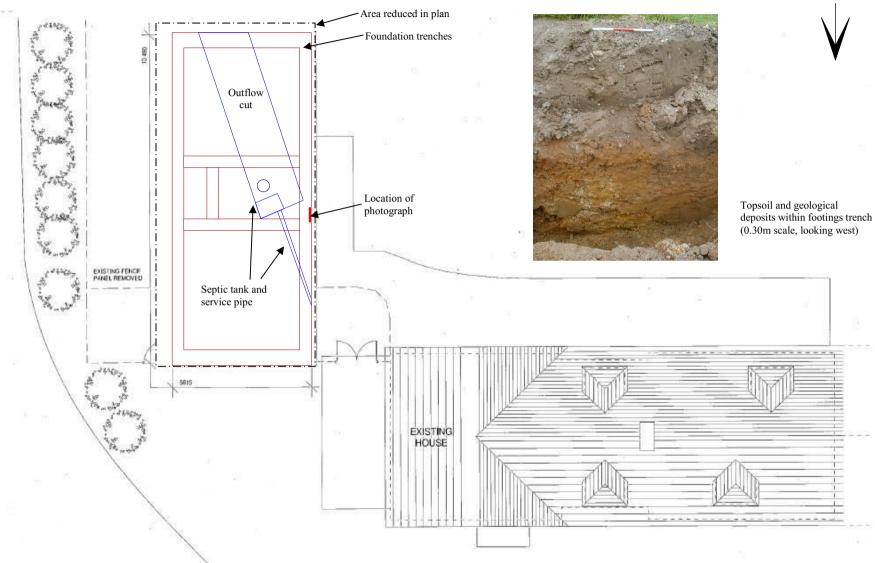


Figure 2: Features recorded in footprint of proposed building (Not to scale. Figure based on Andrew Hills architects drawing)



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