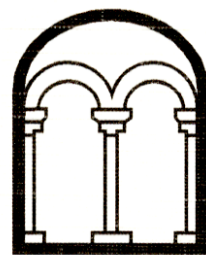


**CLIFTON POST OFFICE
27 SHEFFORD ROAD
CLIFTON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



**CLIFTON POST OFFICE
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING AND ANALYSIS**

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Compiled by	Approved by
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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 Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner and Jo Barker (Archaeological Supervisors), 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 the engaged contractors throughout the project are gratefully acknowledged.

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
DA	Development Area
EBD	Events BeDfordshire
HER	Historic Environment Record
I/A	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (CB/11/02644/FULL) has been granted for a single-storey rear extension to provide additional retail and storage space for the existing convenience store at the Clifton Post Office, 27 Shefford Road, Clifton Bedfordshire.

A Heritage Statement was prepared in 2011 to support the planning application. This concluded that “there is a possibility that the excavation of the footings trenches for the extension could expose and damage or destroy unknown archaeological features and deposits, particularly dating from the Roman period onwards” (Heritage Network 2011, 10). The Development Area (DA) also lies within the area of the medieval settlement of Clifton, as defined in the HER.

Accordingly, a condition was attached to the planning consent (Condition 5) requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation 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* (Pre-submission version January 2013).

A written scheme of investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2014) was prepared after consultation with the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) who confirmed the requirement for a programme of archaeological observation of the groundworks, investigation and recording of any archaeological remains that were revealed, and an appropriate programme of post-fieldwork analysis, reporting and archiving.

Archaeological monitoring of the construction works took place between 30th January and 7th February 2014. The results are presented in this report.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Clifton is a village in the south-east of Central Bedfordshire and lies *c.* 2.5km west of the A1 Great North Road (Figure 1). It lies on fairly level ground just south of the confluence of the Rivers Flit and Ivel and in between the villages of Shefford and Henlow.

The site lies in the south-west part of Clifton and is part of a row of residential properties along the southern side of Shefford Road. It is bounded in the south by a large open field and to the east and west by neighbouring properties. The Post Office itself is set back from the road with car parking to the front accessible from Shefford Road.

The underlying geology comprises soils of the “Milton” association, a gleyed brown earth found in Bedfordshire on the loam and gravel terraces of the Rivers

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>.



Ouse and Ivel (Taylor 1982). The solid geology is sandstone and mudstone of the Lower Greensand Group².

The DA is centred on grid reference TL1633 3884.

1.3 **Archaeological Background**

The archaeological and historical context and potential of the site was described in the heritage statement (Heritage Network 2011) submitted with the planning application. This information, together with updated data received by the HER prior to writing the WSI, has been incorporated into the archaeological background summarised below.

There is no evidence for prehistoric activity within a 500m radius of the site. A Bronze Age burial site (HER 394), comprising five inhumations with an early Bronze Age beaker, lies *c.* 750m to the west.

The route of a Roman road (HER 5342) was suggested to run along the northern boundary of the DA along Pedley Lane. This was one of many roads identified by the Viatores group in the South Midlands (Viatores road no. 176). However, its existence was later discounted (Simco 1984). An evaluation (EBD 1048) undertaken at Pedley Farm, Clifton, to the south of Pedley Lane, revealed no archaeological remains.

Clifton is listed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as 'Clistone'; it extended to 3 hides and ½ virgate (Page 1908). It is, therefore, likely to be of at least late Saxon in origin; however, the actual location of the earliest settlement is unclear. It is possible that it was close to the 14th-century manorial site (HER 3575) and associated earthworks (HER 2523) to the north of the village. The earthworks are now ploughed-out but a three-sided moat still exists, designating the location of the early manor house. No known Anglo-Saxon remains are close to the DA.

Clifton today is classed as a 'large village' but it grew out of a much smaller medieval settlement that was most likely polyfocal in nature (HER 17110). There are two likely cores to the village: the Stockbridge Road/Church Street crossroads in the north, centring on the parish church; and the area at the southern end of Church Street in the vicinity of the village pond and former triangular village green.

The DA lies *c.* 120m west of the village green within the area of the medieval village as defined in the HER. Very little archaeological evidence for medieval activity has been recorded in the vicinity of the site. The exception is a findspot of medieval coins, buckles and a harness pendant (HER 18345), located *c.* 450m to the north-west of the DA. An archery butt site (HER 7791) was recorded 100m to the north-west of the DA.

² Contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC [2013]".



So far, few archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the village. An evaluation (EBD 1048) undertaken at Pedley Farm, Clifton, to the south of Pedley Lane in the northern part of the village, revealed no archaeological remains apart from a undated gully and external surface (Albion Archaeology 2012).

A watching brief during conversion of a 17th-century timber barn at Pedley Farm and construction of adjacent new residential dwellings revealed a medieval ditch and a number of post-medieval or modern postholes and drainage features (Albion Archaeology in prep.).

A further evaluation at 28 Grange Street, opposite Pedley Farm, revealed a possible medieval field boundary and three post-medieval pits (Heritage Network 2012).

An archaeological evaluation in the field immediately south of Clifton Post Office revealed a number of ditches and one large pit. The ditches were dated to the post-medieval period based on their parallel alignment to existing field boundaries and the retrieval of post-medieval peg tile and brick from the pit and one of the ditches (Albion Archaeology 2013).

For the post-medieval period there are several heritage assets in the form of standing buildings, some of them Grade II listed, in the centre of Clifton village. The almshouses along Shefford Road (HER 6657) and Broad Street (HER 9171) lie within 100m of the Clifton Post Office.

The 1st edition 25-inch OS map dating from 1882-1883 shows the DA occupied by an L-shaped structure set back from the road. This building is no longer in existence by the date of the OS map of 1938. The current Clifton Post Office was built in the late 1950s.

The development along Shefford Road in the vicinity of the Clifton Post Office is predominantly mid- to late 20th century in date with some interspersed 19th- and early 20th-century terraced and semi-detached houses.

1.4 Project Objectives

The DA lies within the extent of the Clifton medieval village as defined in the HER; there may also be potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains relating to potential roadside settlement and backyard activity along Shefford Road.

This indicated that there was potential for the investigation to contribute to regional research topics identified within the regional research frameworks. These are: *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (ed. Medlycott 2011) and specifically for Bedfordshire: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake et al 2007).

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;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

More specifically, the local research framework states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements have been investigated in Bedfordshire and there is a need to study present-day settlements with Saxon or medieval origins — in particular settlements at the ‘lower end’ of the medieval settlement hierarchy like “Ends”, and those that serve to complement the picture of Bedfordshire’s varied settlement forms, such as polyfocal settlements (Oake et al. 2007).

This would feed into regional research aims of the investigation of medieval settlements with Saxon origins in order to determine settlement origins, development, form and diversity (Medlycott 2011, 70; Oake 2007, 14).

1.5 Methodology

The following groundworks were monitored:

1. Excavation of footings trenches for the building extensions at the back of the Post Office.
2. Ground reduction within the footprints of each extension.

The removal of topsoil and subsequent ground reduction were 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.

Ground conditions were extremely wet, with flooding of trenches and reduced ground after excavation. The presence and absence of features was recorded during excavation and there was enough time before flooding for conclusions as to the absence of features to be reached with confidence.

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

• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (2009)</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (updated 2008)</i>
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (2003)</i>
• Bedford Museum	<i>Procedure for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with registered museums in Bedfordshire (Version 2.8, 2010)</i>
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (2009)</i>



• English Heritage	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2011)</i>
• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd ed, 2001).</i>



2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

All contexts recorded on site are listed in Table 1. No significant archaeological features were identified during the groundworks and no artefacts were found within the topsoil or overburden.

One posthole or very small pit [103] was located in the central eastern part of the DA. It was recorded in the section of one of the foundation trenches. It truncated the subsoil and, therefore, most likely dates to the post-medieval or modern period. Its function is unclear.

A large sewage tank was located in the south-west corner of the DA behind the Post Office. The tank was constructed of concrete breeze blocks and is most likely contemporary with the construction of the Post Office. Removal of the tank did not reveal any archaeological layers or features. The area was also truncated by foul water / sewage pipes and a live gas pipe.

The archaeological observation works revealed no evidence for medieval or earlier activity within the DA. It is possible that it is set back too far from the main Shefford Road to accommodate any backyard or garden activity related to potential medieval or post-medieval occupation along the street frontage. It could also suggest that this part of Clifton was not occupied until the mid-20th century and consisted of open land before that date.

The site records do not merit any further analysis or reporting. The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2014.1). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-168621).

Context	Description	Measurements
100	Topsoil. Friable dark grey brown clay silt with moderate small to medium stones and occasional fragments of modern brick, tile, plastic and bottle glass	0.28m thick
101	Subsoil. Friable light grey brown clayey silt.	0.26m thick
102	Geological stratum. Light grey-orange silty clay with moderate small white stones.	n/a
103	Posthole or small pit. Sub-circular in plan, concave and convex sides, narrow concave base.	0.48m wide 0.52m deep
104	Main fill of posthole [103]. Mid orange-brown clay silt with occasional small stones.	0.38-0.52m thick
105	Upper "capping" fill of posthole [103]. Light white yellow sandy clay.	90mm thick

Table 1: Context table



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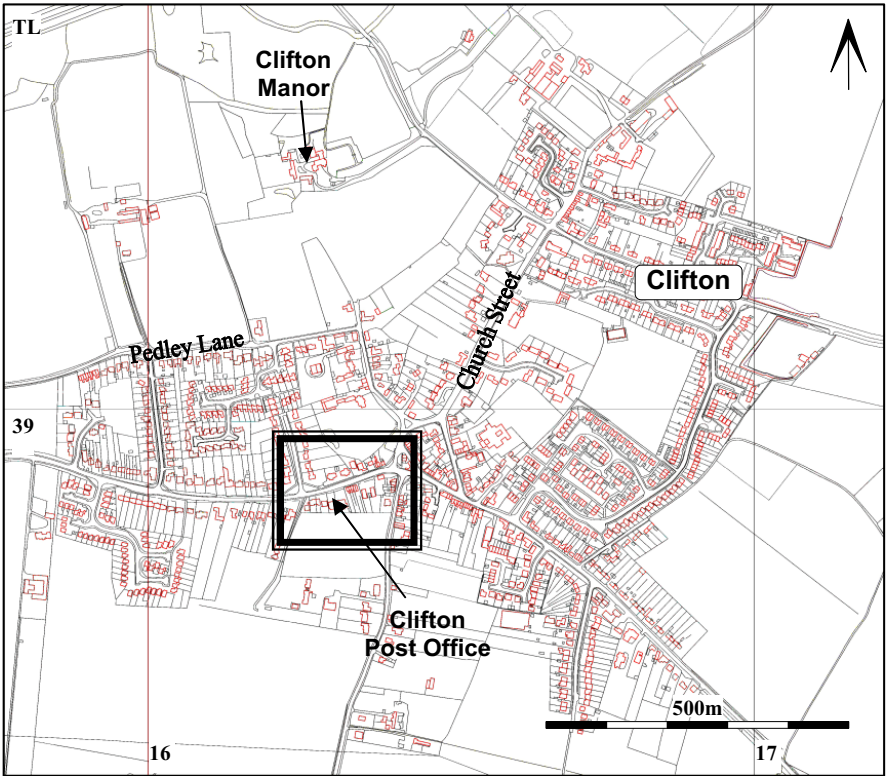
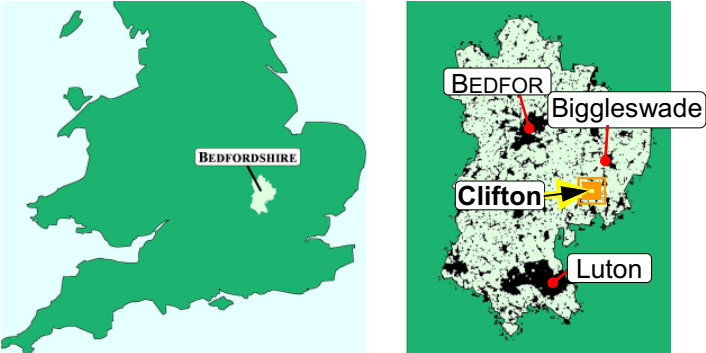
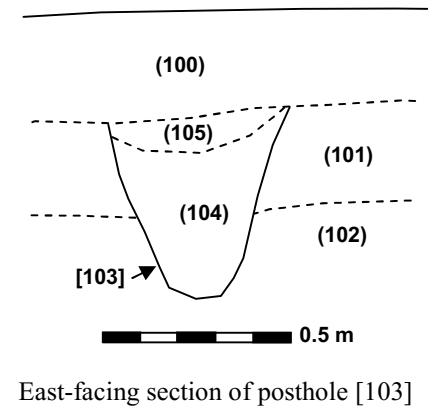
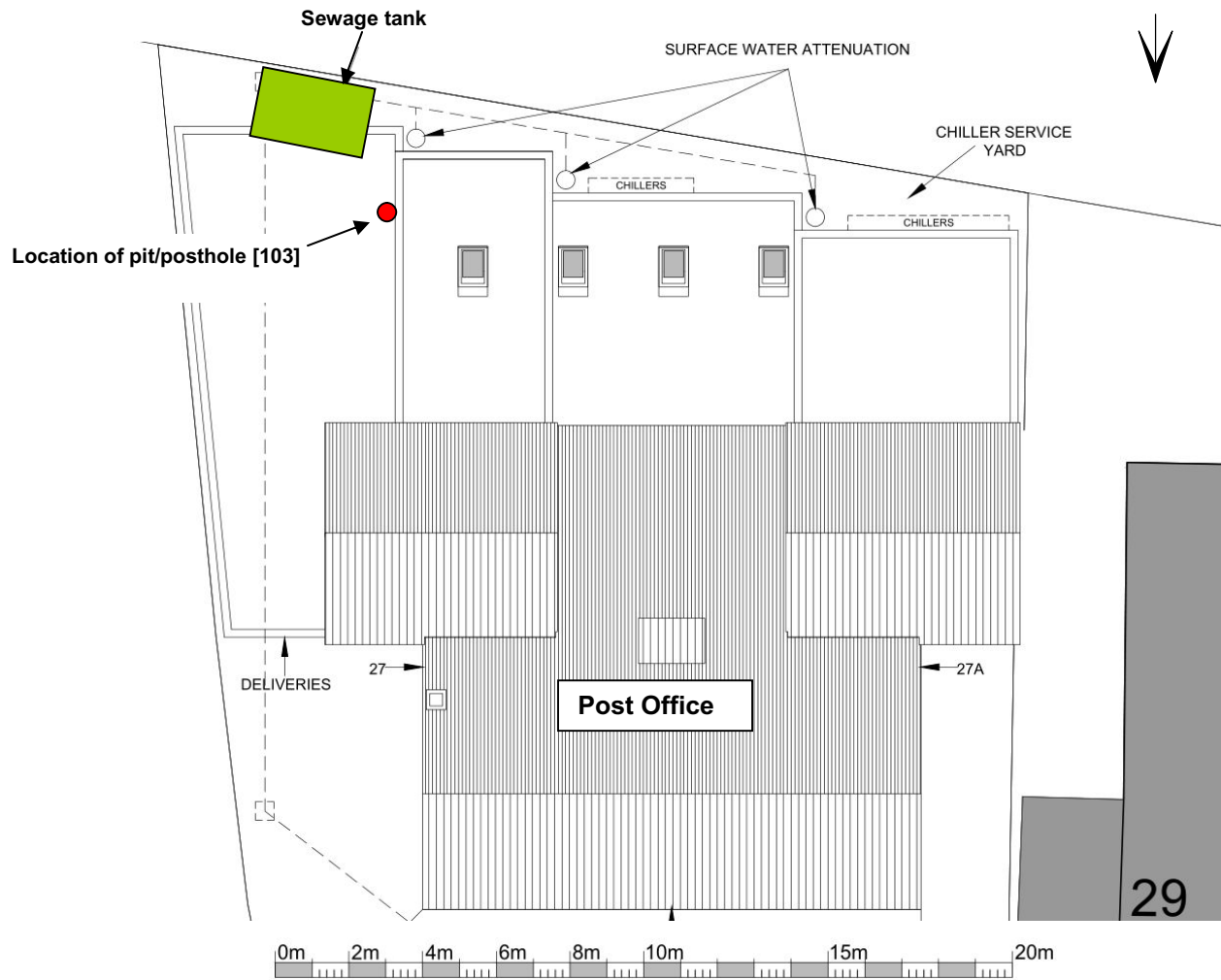


Figure 1: Site location plan

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East-facing section of posthole [103]. 1m scale.

Figure 2: All features plan



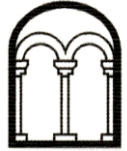
Figure 3: Soil profile in western part of site after ground reduction



Figure 4: Soil profile in southern part of site after ground reduction

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