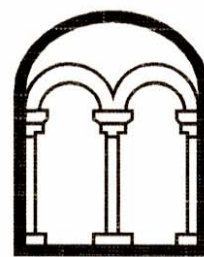


**RUXOX HOUSE
FLITWICK
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



**RUXOX HOUSE
FLITWICK
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

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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 commissioned by Fordfield Nursery Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist)

The fieldwork was undertaken by Slawomir Utrata (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips with illustrations by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Mark Phillips. 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
Website: www.albion-arch.com*

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Non-Technical Summary

Planning consent was granted for construction of a single-storey side extension and first floor rear balcony with staircase; and change of use of land to provide extension to the nursery garden and associated landscaping at Ruxox House, Flitwick (CB/12/01094/FULL). Archaeological background information from the surrounding landscape indicated some potential for archaeological remains in the area of the development and a condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation was attached to the planning permission.

The construction of an extension on the south end of the existing building had the potential to impact on buried remains, if any were present. This area was subject to archaeological monitoring during groundworks carried out by the building contractor on 15th April 2014.

No archaeological features were identified or artefacts recovered. The soil profile consisted of topsoil and subsoil with evidence of modern disturbance above undisturbed geological strata. The geological strata exposed in the trench consisted of sandy clay forming part of the superficial geology recorded for this area, i.e. Mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits. A relatively thin, dark layer sandwiched between the top of the geological deposit and the subsoil in the north-west of the trench may be a buried soil. The upper part of the soil profile consisted of modern deposits. A deep layer of topsoil recorded in part of the trench is likely to be a garden soil formed when the building was in residential use as cottages.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission (CB/12/01094/FULL) for construction of a single-storey side extension and first floor rear balcony with staircase; and change of use of land to provide extension to the nursery garden and associated landscaping at Ruxox House, Flitwick. Condition no. 2 on the decision notice required the applicant or developer to secure the implementation of a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation (WSI) which had been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer (Fordfield Nursery Ltd) to prepare a WSI (Albion 2014) and undertake the archaeological works.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

Ruxox House is a former pair of 19th-century cottages which have been converted and extended. It is currently used as a private daycare nursery. The building stands in a rural setting, 0.5km north of Flitwick on the east side of Maulden Road. It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 0435 3610.

The site lies within the valley of the River Flit. The geological deposits recorded in the development area consist of Mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial sands and gravels above the Woburn Sands formation (Greensand). The site lies at an average height of 66m OD.

The main impact of the development was the construction of an extension at the south end of the building measuring 8m by 6m in plan. The construction work consisted of ground reduction for the floor slab and strip footings up to 2.3m deep. This part of the construction had the potential to impact on buried remains, if present, and was subject to archaeological monitoring.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The archaeological background to the development area had been examined in detail in an earlier desk-based assessment, which was produced in support of the planning application (Albion 2012). The assessment considered the archaeological potential of the development area based on a review of known heritage assets within a 500m-radius study area. The chronological summary from the assessment report is presented below.

1.3.1 *Prehistoric (before AD 43)*

There is limited evidence for activity during this period from within the study area. Part of a Bronze Age biconical urn (HER 15848) dated to c. 1500BC was recovered from the line of the A507 Ampthill Bypass (*Beds. Archaeol.* 1991, 79).

The wider landscape around the study area contains dispersed evidence of 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). An excavation at Hinksley Road, Flitwick (Luke 1999, 43–87) 300m to the south-west of the study area uncovered Iron Age and later evidence. The site began in the middle Iron Age as an unenclosed



settlement 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 (AD 43–c. 450)

Extensive evidence of Roman settlement has been found in the study 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 study area included wall plaster and tesserae, indicative of a higher status building (Faddon 1972, 20).

The courses of two Roman roads suggested by the Viatores pass through the study area (HER 5020-Viatores 170b and HER 5342-Viatores 176). These, however, have not been confirmed on the ground. HER 5342 which is identified in the HER as an agger (the bank of a Roman road) follows the line of the Maulden Road; the latter was constructed as part of landscape reorganisation at enclosure and is therefore not Roman in date.

Inside the study area a number of Roman artefacts have been recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (HER 18614, 18617, 18635, 18745 and 18935). The distribution of artefacts extends to the west of the PDA, suggesting 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 study area. This uncovered late Iron Age and Roman settlement and a Roman cemetery (Dawson 2004, 17-34).

1.3.3 Saxon (c. 450–1066)

The earliest references to Ruxox appear as Rokeshoc, Rokeshac (1174), and Rokesac (1220-45). This is interpreted as derived 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 within the study area. Unenclosed Saxon occupation was found 300m to the south-west of the study area 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 study area is a moated site situated approximately 300m to the east of the PDA at Ruxox Farm (HER 1277 and HER 919). This large D-shaped earthwork which measures at least 250m by 160m 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 (Albion Archaeology 2012, fig. 5). 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 (Victoria County History 3, 1912, 286).



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 in the northern part of the study area (HER 2763). Finds of possible medieval date have been recorded from the study 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 features. 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 location of the PDA lies approximately on the line of the “Greenway”. The same map shows parcels of land situated immediately to the west of the PDA 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 in the eastern side of the study area (HER 1277). 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.

The PDA lies on the line of a track of possible medieval or pre-modern origin, the “Greenway”, as illustrated on a late 18th century map (Albion Archaeology 2012, fig. 3). Although no other medieval evidence is known from the PDA, the surrounding landscape contains dispersed evidence of activity during this period.

1.3.5 Post-medieval (1550–1900)

The HER includes a small number of entries dating from the post-medieval 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 study 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).

Ruxox House itself, although not listed as a heritage asset, also appears on the 1st edition OS map indicating a 19th-century origin.

1.3.6 Modern (1900 – present)

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

1.4 Previous Archaeological Investigations

In December 2007 Albion Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of car-parking spaces at Ruxox House (Albion Archaeology 2007). This involved the machine removal of the upper layer of topsoil to a depth of 200mm. An area of approximately 400sqm at the north end of the site was machined under constant archaeological observation



(see Figure 1). The underlying subsoil was exposed sporadically but no archaeological deposits were located. With the agreement of the Archaeological Officer the remaining ground reduction was not monitored as it was unlikely that potential archaeological remains would be disturbed by the work.

1.5 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the development area;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes.
- to recover contemporary palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The investigation did not produce any significant archaeological remains or anything relevant to the published local and regional archaeological research objectives. The results are presented below in the form of a summary description.

1.6 Methodology

The methodology for the archaeological works is set out in full in the WSI (Albion 2014). The site was attended on 15th April 2014 and the foundation trenches for the extension were fully excavated under archaeological observation. The groundworks consisted of a strip foundation trench, 0.65m wide along the east, west and south sides of an area of ground reduction for an 8m by 6m floor slab. The works abutted a modern extension on the south end of the existing building.

No significant archaeological remains were observed and the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist agreed that limited additional groundworks for services did not need to be monitored.



2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

2.1 Introduction

The deposits are summarised below and are shown in Figure 3.

2.2 Modern Deposits

The uppermost surface deposits had been partially removed at the start of archaeological monitoring. These consisted of gravel, sand and rubble with the remains of modern block paving in the eastern part of the area. An area 4.5m square in the north-east of the area was defined on its south and west sides by a narrow, concrete strip foundation. This area corresponds with the location of a former timber-decking balcony at this end of the building; it was in place at the time of the heritage assessment (Albion 2012).

The ground in the south-west corner of the trench was disturbed by the roots of a recently removed tree.

A land-drain was observed in the south face of the southern arm of the foundation trench at a depth of 1.5m.

2.3 Topsoil

The topsoil (1) consisted of loose, dark brown-grey, silty sand. In the areas where it had not been replaced by modern rubble make-up deposits it was up to 0.4m thick.

2.4 Subsoil

Subsoil (2) comprised of a friable, mid brown sandy silt layer, approximately 0.15m thick.

2.5 Dark Sand Layer

A layer of dark grey clay sand (4), 50–100mm thick was recorded immediately below the subsoil in the western arm of the foundation trench. It extended 1.5m from the north end of the trench (see Figure 3).

2.6 Geological Deposits

The undisturbed geological deposit (3) was exposed in the sides and base of the strip foundations. It consisted of light orange-yellow sandy clay with light grey mottles and patches overlying dark grey sand.

2.7 Discussion and Conclusions

No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered during monitoring of the groundworks. The soil profile consisted of topsoil and subsoil with evidence of modern disturbance above undisturbed geological strata. As exposed in the trench, the latter comprised sandy clay forming part of the superficial geology recorded for this area, i.e. Mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits. A relatively thin, dark layer sandwiched between the top of the geological deposit and the subsoil in the north-west of the trench may be a buried soil. The upper part of the soil profile consists of modern deposits with a deep layer of topsoil noted in part of the trench.



This is likely to be a garden soil formed when the building was in residential use as cottages.

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. LUTNM 2014/14). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-177088).



3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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4. FIGURES

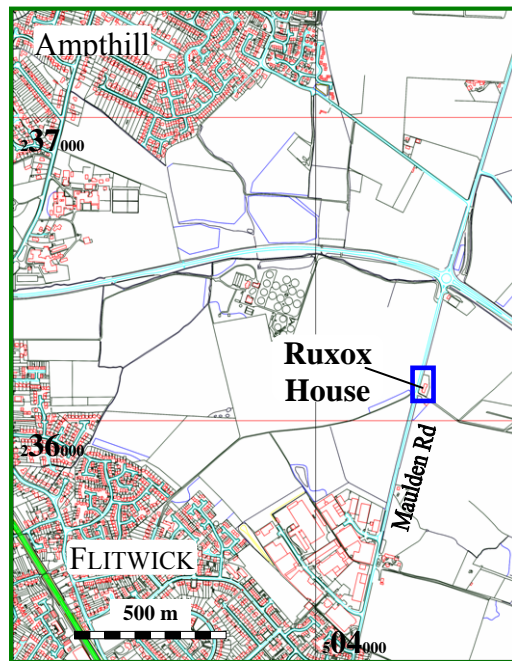
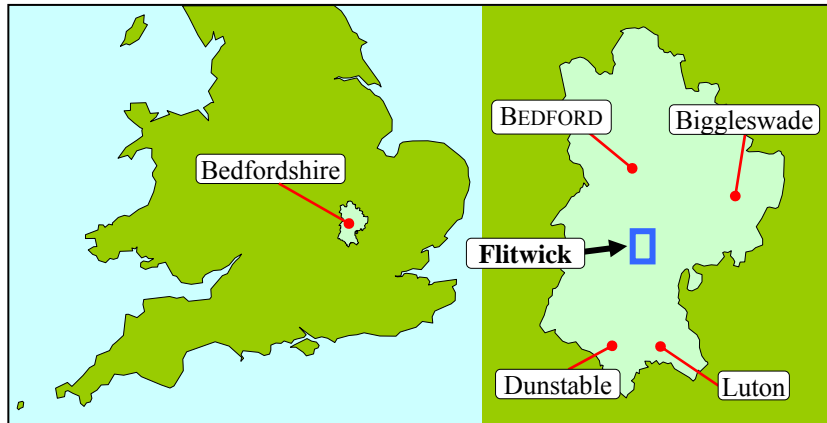
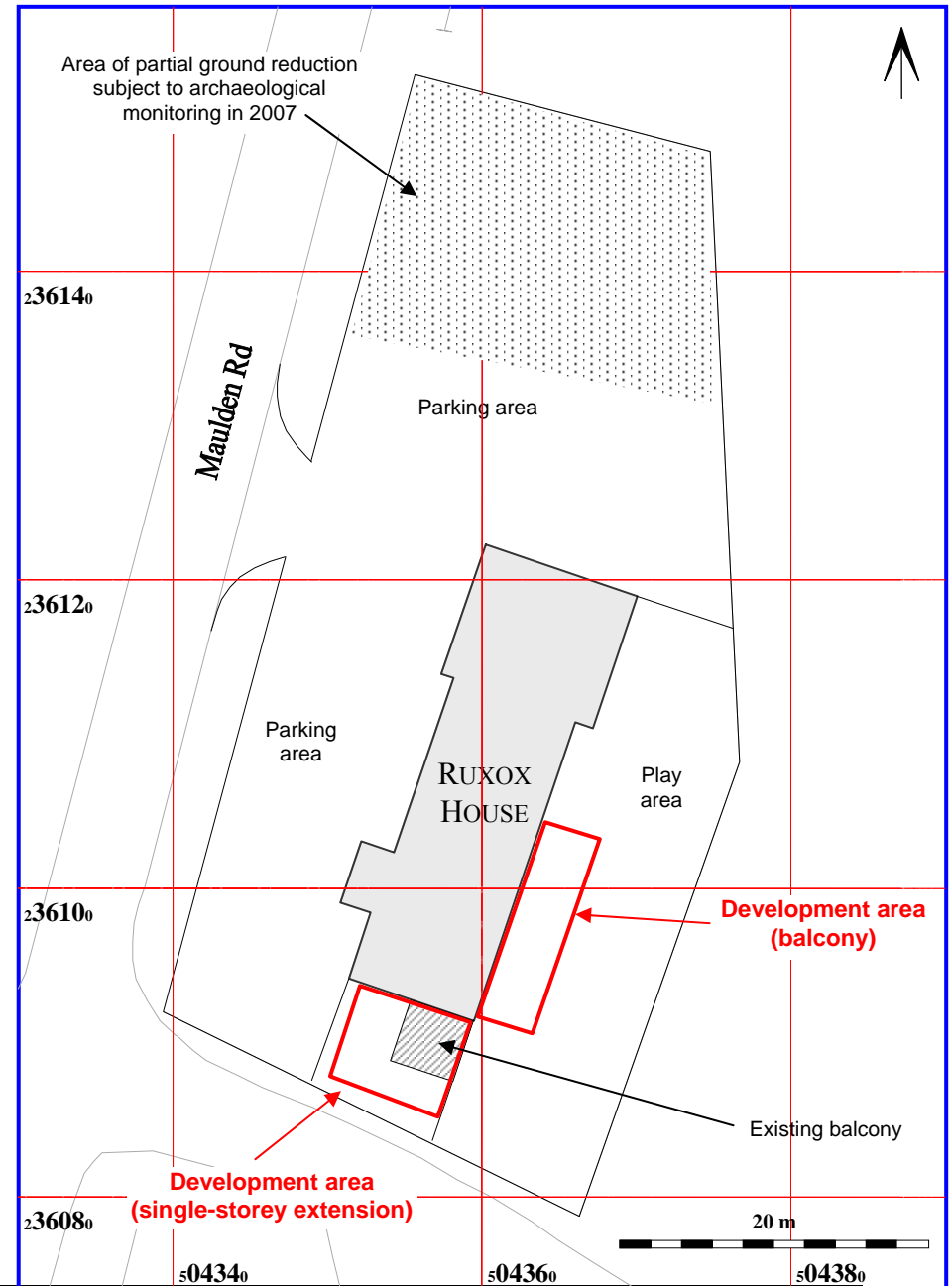


Figure 1: Site location plan

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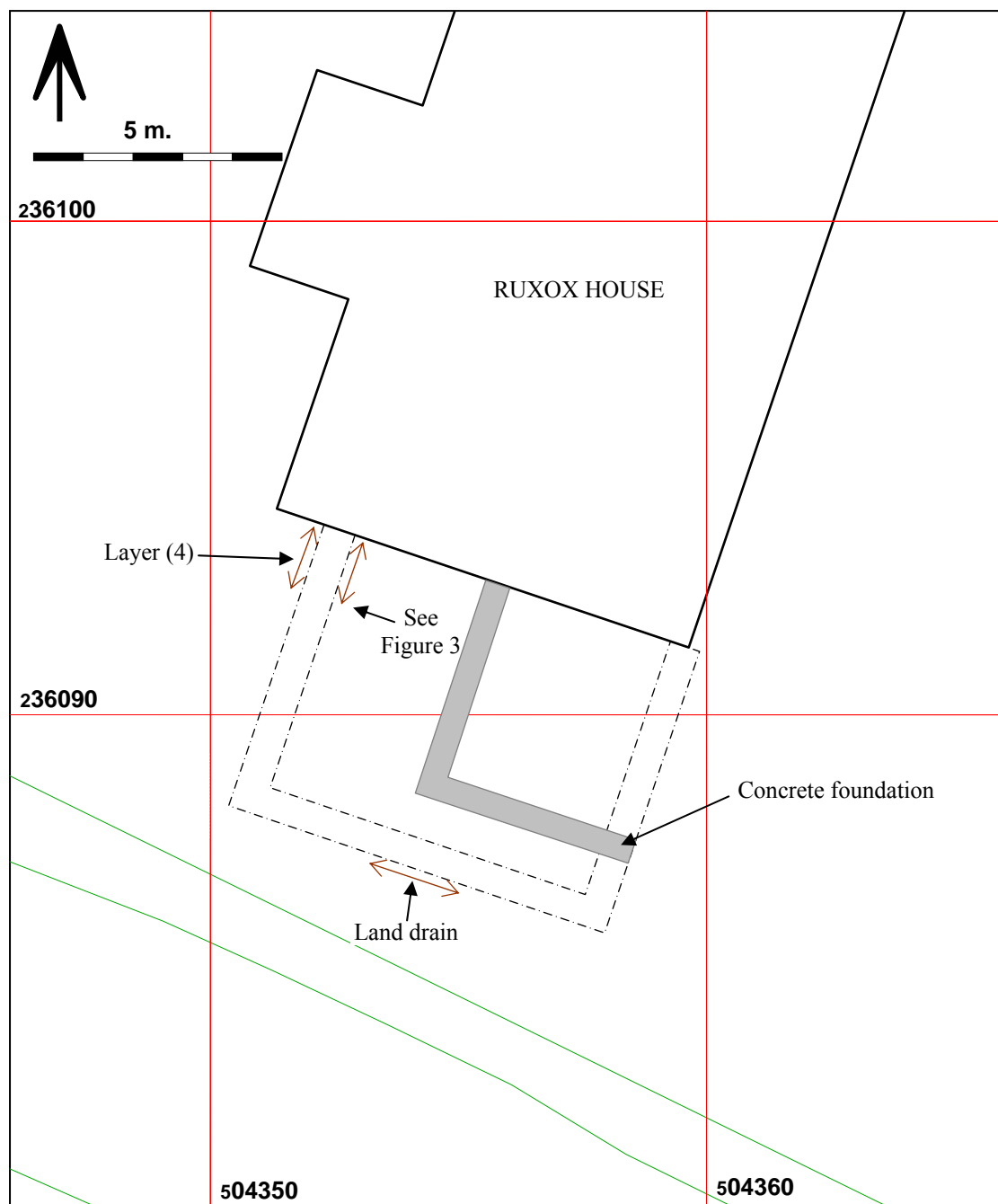


Figure 2: Plan of trench

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Figure 3: Soil profile

The photograph shows the east-facing side of the western arm of the trench. The foundations of the south end of the existing building are visible to the right hand side. Deposits from top to bottom: modern surface makeup, topsoil (1), light subsoil (2), dark sand layer (4) over geological strata (3)



5. APPENDIX 2: OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM — albionar1-177088

Project details

Project name	Ruxox House, Flitwick
Short description of the project	Planning consent was granted for construction of a single-storey side extension and first floor rear balcony with staircase; and change of use of land to provide extension to the nursery garden and associated landscaping at Ruxox House, Flitwick. Archaeological background information from the surrounding landscape indicated some potential for archaeological remains in the area of the development and a condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation was attached to the planning permission. The construction of an extension on the south end of the existing building had the potential to impact on buried remains, if any were present. This area was subject to archaeological monitoring during groundworks carried out by the building contractor. No archaeological features were identified or artefacts recovered. The soil profile consisted of topsoil and subsoil with evidence of modern disturbance above undisturbed geological strata. The geological strata exposed in the trench consisted of sandy clay forming part of the superficial geology recorded for this area, i.e. Mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits. A relatively thin, dark layer sandwiched between the top of the geological deposit and the subsoil in the north-west of the trench may be a buried soil. The upper part of the soil profile consisted of modern deposits. A deep layer of topsoil recorded in part of the trench is likely to be a garden soil formed when the building was in residential use as cottages.
Project dates	Start: 15-04-2014 End: 15-04-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	RH1957 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	LUTNM 2014/14 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	CB/12/01094/FULL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	NONE
Significant Finds	NONE
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE FLITWICK Ruxox House, Flitwick
Study area	400.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 0435 3610 52.0130744572 -0.479350199945 52 00 47 N 000 28 45 W Point



Project creators

Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	No Brief
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Mark Phillips
Project supervisor	Slawomir Utrata

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Luton Museum
Paper Archive ID	LUTNM 2014/14
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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Central
Bedfordshire

Albion
archaeology



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

Telephone 01234 294000
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com

