

**17 THORNCOTE GREEN
NORTHILL
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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Mr Jim Lees
London Electronics Ltd



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements 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.

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1.0	04/08/2015	n/a

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
Client	Mr Jim Lees, London Electronics Ltd
DA	Development area
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology



Non-Technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council has granted planning permission for the erection of a two-storey steel-frame building with outer perimeter wall for B1 use on the property at no. 17 Thorncote Green, Hatch, Northill, Bedfordshire (CB/14/03425/FULL).

As the development lies in an archaeologically sensitive area, a condition (no. 2) requiring a programme of archaeological investigation was attached to the planning permission. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Jim Lees, London Electronics Ltd, to carry out the archaeological works.

Archaeological monitoring of construction works with the potential to impact on archaeological remains was carried out between 20th and 21st July 2015. The groundworks consisted of the mechanical excavation of foundation trenches, up to 1.3m deep, for the new building. The observed soil profile (from the top) consisted of: tarmac; modern levelling layers; re-deposited clay and the undisturbed clay geology. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during monitoring of the foundation trenches or from scanning of the spoil heaps.

It is likely that the area was stripped of topsoil and levelled prior to the construction of the existing tarmac court. This process may have removed any shallow archaeological features present within the development area. However, the relatively shallow depth of the disturbed ground would suggest that the lower part of any larger features would probably have survived this truncation. The absence of such features, or any artefacts, suggests that the development area is located beyond the limit of the medieval settlement at Thorncote Green.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2014.40). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-179346).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Planning permission (CB/14/03425/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the erection of a two-storey steel-frame building with outer perimeter wall for B1 use on the property at no. 17 Thorncote Green, Northill, Bedfordshire.

The proposed development site lay within an area of archaeological sensitivity, identified and described in a desk-top heritage study that accompanied the planning application. Accordingly, a condition (no. 2) was attached to the planning consent to secure 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).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by London Electronics Ltd to carry out the archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion 2014). The WSI detailed the methodology for archaeological observation, investigation and recording of any archaeological remains and a programme of post-fieldwork analysis, reporting and archiving.

This report presents the results of the archaeological observations.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Thorncote Green is a small hamlet in the parish of Northill, c. 800m south-west of Hatch. It is c. 3.4km west of Sandy, west of the A1, and 13.4km east of Bedford.

The development area (DA) is located east of Thorncote Road off Thorncote Green and is centred on grid reference TL 15223 47581 (Figure 1).

The existing premises of London Electronics Ltd are situated to the rear of no. 17 Thorncote Green, which is a Grade II listed 17th-century timber-framed building.

The current structures on the PDA itself consist of a U-shaped building which was converted from domestic to B1 use in 2008 and which is currently accessible from Thorncote Green (past no. 17). A tennis court and grassed area are situated to the rear of the U-shaped building complex.

Recent years have seen progressive development around the PDA. In 2010 the rear extension to no. 17 was rebuilt and in 2010 a new access route was put in, connecting the property with Thorncote Road to the south-west. Along this access route to the south of the PDA another property has been developed with light industrial/farm buildings.

Thorncote Green is relatively low lying at 25–30m OD. The river Ivel is located c. 2.5km to the east, beyond the A1. The underlying geology is a combination of Stewartby and Weymouth Member Mudstone, which was formed in the Jurassic period. The head deposits are a combination of glaciofluvial sand and gravel with silt and clay deposits.



1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposed development lies in an area of rich medieval and post-medieval heritage (see the desk-top heritage study that accompanied the planning application). Thorncote (HER14930) and Thorncote Green (HER17127) as well as Hatch (HER17126) are classed as settlements with medieval origins. Thorncote Road (HER14889), which connects Thorncote with Northhill, is thought to have 14th-century origins, continuing as a major route way until today. Also dating back to the 14th century is St Ann's Farm (HER14929), which formed part of St Ann's Chantry and was occupied until the mid-18th century. The 1781 Enclosure map suggests that the PDA was located on the fringes of the settlement at that time.

The majority of built heritage assets in the area date to the 17th and 18th century. They include three Grade II listed timber-framed buildings with either thatched or tiled roofs, situated around Thorncote Green — nos 13 & 15 (HER5810), no. 17 (HER10588) and no. 19 (HER5811).

Evidence for medieval ridge and furrow (HER640) is known from areas west of Thorncote Farm and north-east of Hatch.

Thorncote, Thorncote Green and Hatch are not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. However, this is probably because any settlements there were assessed as part of larger, neighbouring manors. The two closest manors mentioned in the survey are Beeston, a medium-sized holding to the east and Northhill to the south. With *c.* 26 households Northhill represents a significant manor. Thorncote Road connects Beeston with Northhill and may account for the establishment of the smaller hamlets at Thorncote and Hatch. Written sources first mention Thorncote in AD 1206 and Hatch in AD 1232. However, it is not impossible that their origins lie in the late Saxon period.

There is no recorded HER evidence, predating the medieval period, within 500m of the PDA. However, this may not reflect an absence of such evidence, as virtually no archaeological work has been undertaken in the area.

Thorncote Green lies on the edge of the Ivel valley within which extensive Roman and prehistoric settlement evidence has been found.

1.4 Project Objectives

The DA had the potential to reveal information on a number of research objectives identified in the research framework for Bedfordshire (Oake *et al* 2007) and the revised framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011). The DA lies in the core of the identified medieval settlement at Thorncote Green. The settlement is likely to have at least early medieval origins and appears to represent a roadside or green side settlement. The focus of the research objectives, therefore, lies in the early medieval to post-medieval periods.

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements have been investigated in the county (Oake in Oake *et al* 2007). Oake states a need for research into rural settlement on a micro-scale of investigation, in order to establish the chronology, structure and function of individual settlements as well as classes of settlement, ranging from the prehistoric to the medieval period. The revised research framework for the



East of England states that more research is required into the dynamics of rural settlements and in the origins of greens and green side settlements (Medlycott 2011, 70). Thorncote Green's status as a subsidiary settlement within the parish of Northill also puts it into an under-research class of settlement.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- whether there is any evidence in this part of Thorncote Green for activity predating the medieval period.
- whether there is any evidence for activity relating to the early medieval green side settlement or early medieval land use within the PDA.

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature and date of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present at the site.
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape
- local environmental conditions via recovering palaeo-environmental remains

As the project progressed and the archaeological potential of the site became clear, research objectives were to be revised as required.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2014).

2.1 *Methodological Standards*

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

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (1998)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• Historic England (formerly English Heritage)	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition</i> (2011)
• CIfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> (2014)

2.2 *Description of Construction Works*

Archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks took place between 20th and 21st July 2015. The groundworks consisted of the machine-excavation of a rectangular foundation trench that followed the outer perimeter footprint of the new building. The trench was 1–1.30m wide and 1–1.30m deep below the existing ground level.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The location of the groundworks that were subject to archaeological observation, investigation and recording are shown on Figures 2 and 3. The foundation trench was excavated around the perimeter of the existing tarmac tennis/football court, enclosing an area of approximately 20m by 10m. No archaeological features or deposits were identified other than modern disturbance associated with the construction of the extant tennis/football court and arisings from the construction of a swimming pool.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

To the north-east, adjacent to the existing buildings, the foundation trench cut through a block-paved pathway; elsewhere the upper surface was a turf lawn. The interior section of the foundation trench was covered by a 0.05m-thick layer of tarmac which formed the court surface. The tarmac overlay a 0.2m-thick layer of light grey-orange silty gravel sub-base material which also extended below the paving.

Immediately below the modern made-ground, a 0.30m-thick layer of dark grey organic clay was observed. This layer of subsoil is likely to have been disturbed during the construction of the tennis/football pitch. The area to the south of the court is known to have been artificially raised with the arisings from the construction of a swimming pool, now replaced by the industrial premises located to the immediate north (pers. comm. Jim Lees). The deposit was largely sterile, although the occasional small fragment of animal bone, roof tile and modern building debris was noted.

The disturbed / re-deposited clay directly overlay the undisturbed geological deposit of mid green-grey clay which was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m below the current ground level.

3.3 Summary and Significance

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were present within the DA. It is likely that the area was stripped of topsoil and levelled prior to the construction of the existing tarmac court. This process may have removed any shallow archaeological features present within the DA. However, the relatively shallow depth of the disturbed ground would suggest that the lower part of any larger features would probably have survived such truncation.

The absence of archaeological features or artefacts within the DA suggests that this development is located beyond the limit of the medieval settlement at Thorncote Green.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2014.40). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-179346).



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2001. *Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd ed.

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Medlycott, M. 2011. *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*. EAA No. 24, 2011.

Oake, M. 2007. 'Research Agenda and Strategy'. In: Oake et al. *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy*. Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph 9.

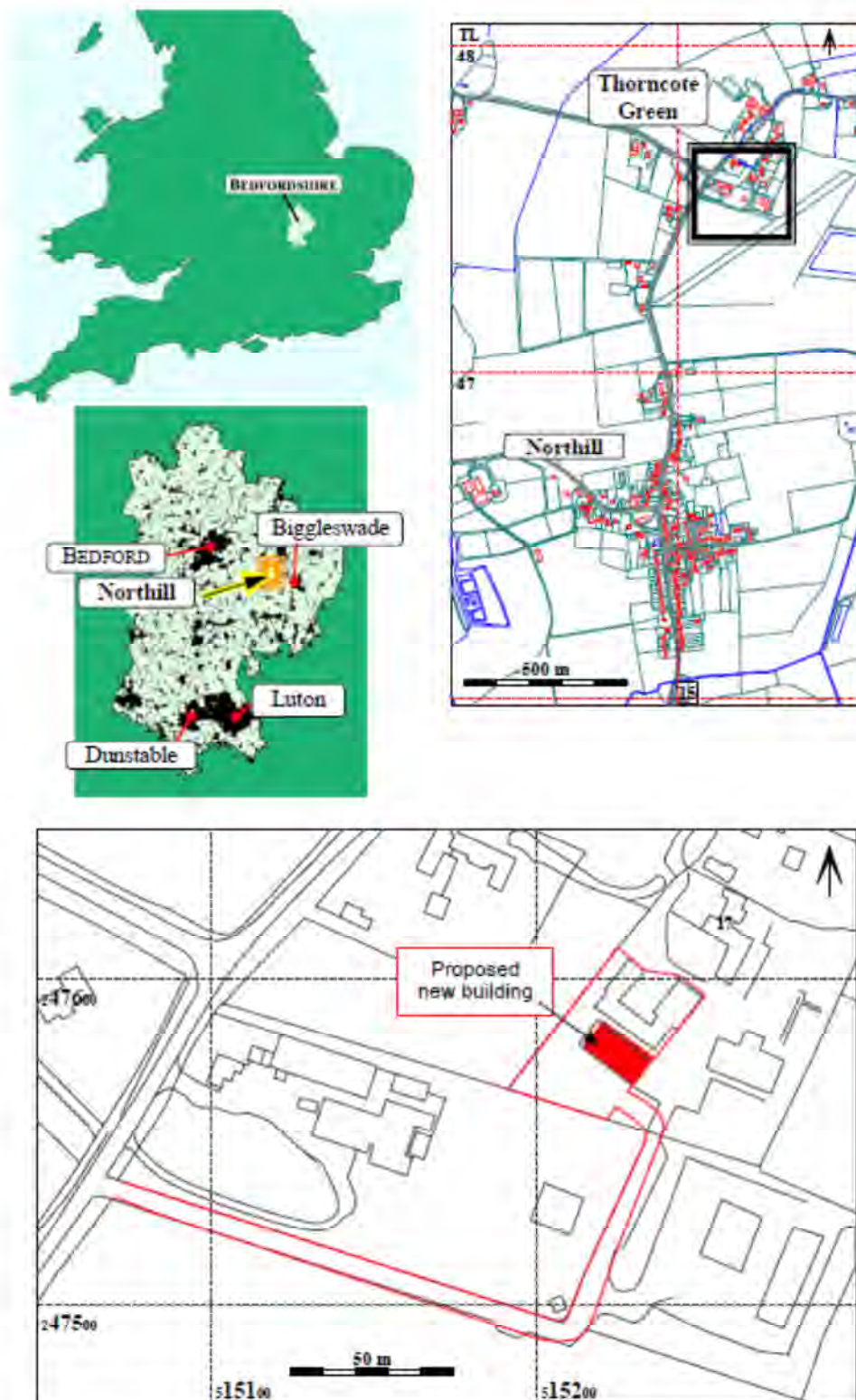


Figure 1: Site location

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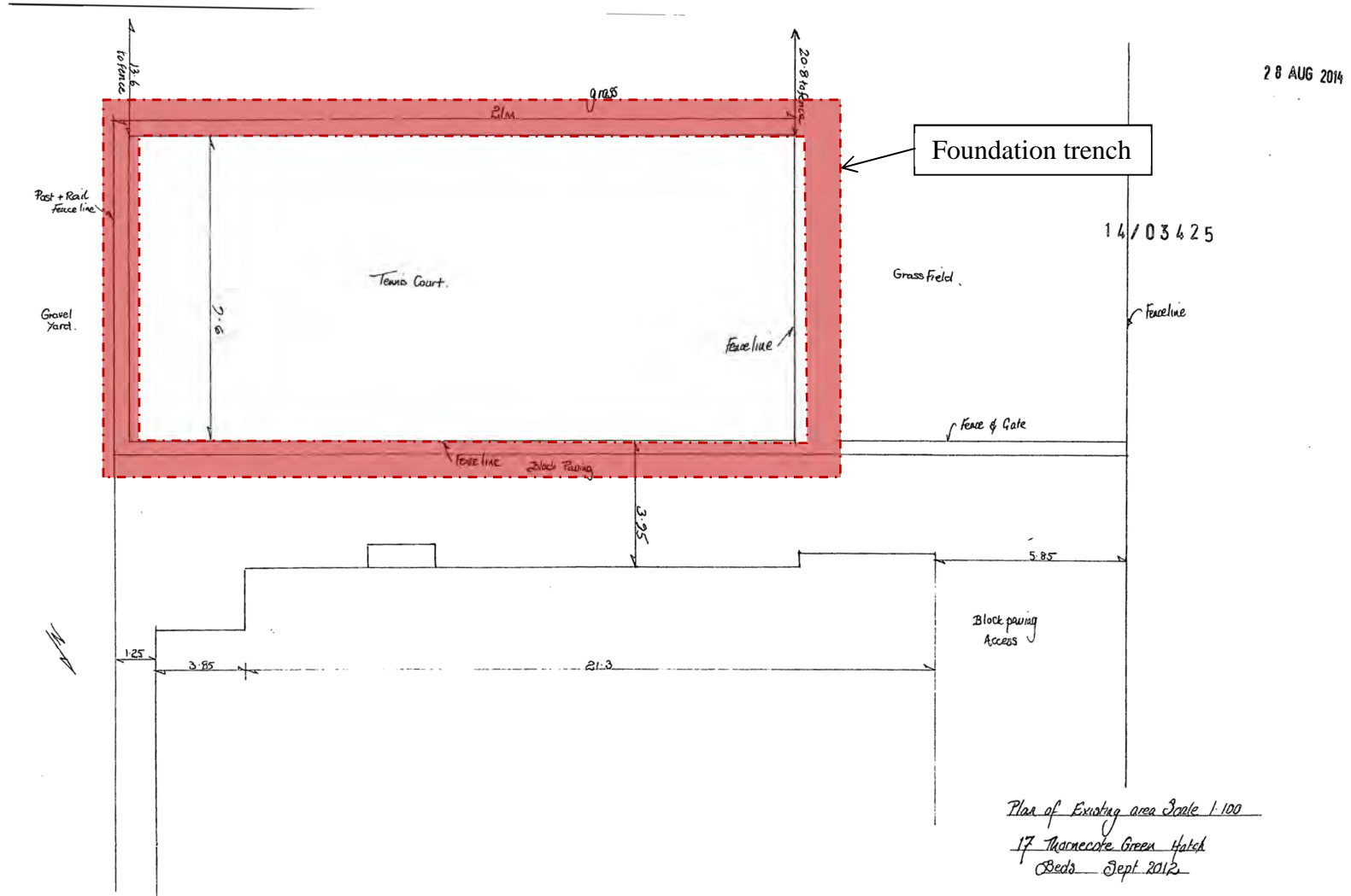


Figure 2: Extent of observed groundworks
(Based on architect's drawings submitted as part of the planning application)

No 1



Figure 3: Plates I–IV:
working shots of the foundation trenches

I (*top left*): NE foundation trench
II (*top right*): Exterior SW facing trench section
III (*bottom left*): NW foundation trench
IV (*bottom right*): SW foundation trench



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