



**VALE CEMETERY, LUTON
PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT 2006/32 (Issued on 30th May 2006)

1. INTRODUCTION

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Luton Borough Council to carry out a programme of archaeological investigation ahead of the extension of Vale cemetery, Luton in Bedfordshire. The investigation followed trial trenching carried out in 2005 which demonstrated the presence of Iron Age Roman and medieval remains within the proposed development area (Albion 2005).

The investigation dealt with Phase 1 of the construction programme, a further brief for Phase II will be issued once the construction programme for the western (archaeologically sensitive) land has been decided. The investigation was carried out to an approved Project Design (Bedfordshire County Council 2006). The results are described in this summary report as follows:

- An open area excavation of Zone 1 (Figure 2).
- The observation, investigation and recording of Zone 2 (Figure 3), which comprised development works associated with the access road and included, removal of the topsoil; reduction of the subsoil; drainage pipe and manhole trenching to a depth varying between 0.75m and 1.50m.

Archaeological works within Zones 1 and 2 took place between 1st and 22nd March 2006. This interim report presents the results of these works in chronological order. It has been prepared by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor) and Wesley Keir (Project Officer). The artefacts were processed, quantified and spot-dated by Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer) and the figures were prepared by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

1.1 Assessment Groups

Assessment groups (AG **) is the term used to describe a feature, or group of features, which have been interpreted as being broadly contemporary and/or sharing a similar function. For example, a circle of postholes interpreted as the remains of a circular structure would be assigned a single AG number in order to simplify the discussion of the entire group. This avoids unnecessarily complex discussions of multiple feature and deposit numbers.

Assessment groups may be altered, or removed altogether, during the subsequent analysis phase of the project.



2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Zones 1 and 2 were subject to generic objectives which comprised the investigation of all archaeological features/deposits to a level of detail where they can be dated and an interpretation of their function made.

Zone 1 was targeted on a concentration of ditches and pits, which artefactual and spatial evidence suggested were medieval. It was believed that these features related to known medieval remains at Manor Farm (formerly known as Hayes Farm after its medieval owners the de la Haye family, HER10816) on the opposite side of Butterfield Green Road, c.250m west of the development area.

More specific objectives relating to the medieval period were as follows:

- Artefacts recovered from the evaluation suggest that there was medieval settlement activity within the development area. Do these remains extend into Zone 1?
- Do all the remains in Zone 1 date to the medieval period, as evidence from the evaluation suggests?
- A range of early to late medieval pottery was recovered from the evaluation. How did the site develop during this period?



3. RESULTS

Zone 1 (Figure 2) was 20m long and 20m wide; its position having been set to overlay Trench 8. The edges of the area were orientated north-south / east-west.

Zone 2 (Figure 3) was centred on the planned cemetery road roundabout. The roundabout measured *c.*30m in diameter. A planned haul road to the west of the roundabout was cancelled, with the developer opting to use a temporary aluminium road surface that was laid directly on top of the existing land surface. This ran from the roundabout to Manor Farm.

The topography slopes moderately downhill from 170.87m AOD to the North of the area, to a low point of 170.31m to the South. This is a drop of 0.56m over a distance of *c.* 40m.

3.1 TOPSOIL, SUBSOIL AND UNDISTURBED GEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

The topsoil (AG 1.01) consisted of dark grey/brown silt which varied in thickness from 0.23m to 0.30m and overlay a subsoil (AG 2.01) of mid orange/brown clay silt which varied in thickness from 0.13m to 0.18m.

The undisturbed geological deposit (AG 3.01) was mid red/orange clay with chalk flecks containing patches of gravel and occasional patches of white grey clay silt.

3.2 MEDIEVAL

3.2.1 AG 7.01 – A ditch

Ditch AG 7.01 ([3007]) was revealed towards the northern end of Zone 2, and orientated NE to SW. It was at least 19.50m long, 0.43m wide and 0.26m deep with a concave profile. It was filled with a mid brown-grey sandy clay and contained no artefactual material.

This ditch is a continuation of ditch [211] previously excavated within Trench 2 (located immediately to the north-east of Zone 2). This ditch has been dated to the medieval period based on pottery that was recovered during the evaluation. It is however noted that the ditch is similar to, and on the same alignment as post-medieval ditch AG 6.01, identified in Zone 1.

3.3 POST MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

3.3.1 AG 6.01 – A ditch

Ditch AG 6.01, ([2024]), was identified towards the northern end of Zone 1, and orientated NE to SW. It was at least 23m long, 0.67m wide and 0.24m deep with a concave profile. It was filled with a mid orange-brown clay silt and contained seven sand tempered post-medieval/modern brick fragments and a modern gun cartridge fragment.



This ditch was previously excavated within evaluation Trench 8 and dated as medieval from the finds recovered. However, the present excavation suggests that the ditch dates to the post-medieval period and the medieval artefacts previously recovered from it are likely to be residual.

3.4 TREE THROWS

3.4.1 AG 4.01 - A group of tree throws in Zone 1

Seven irregular features (AG 4.01), [2008], [2010], [2013], [2015], [2019], [2026] and [2029], were identified in Zone 1. They were irregular in plan and between 1.70m and 5.20m long and between 1.06m and 1.32m wide. They varied between 0.19m and 0.40m deep and contained deposits ranging from mid orange brown to brown grey clay silts.

Their irregular nature and the characteristics of their deposits suggest they are likely to be tree throws. Tree throws are cavities caused by the up-rooting of trees. However, two of the tree throws, [2015] and [2019], contained worked flint flakes in their upper deposits. These are considered to be intrusive artefacts that were moved from the topsoil into the cavity after the tree was up-rooted.

It is noted that the un-phased pits recorded in Trench 8 of the evaluation contained no artefacts, were irregular in plan and profile and thus could also be interpreted as tree throws.

3.4.2 AG 5.01 – A tree throw in Zone 2

A broadly oval feature (AG 5.01), [3003], was identified in Zone 2, measuring 3.05m long. The feature was 1.90m wide and 0.21m deep with a shallow uneven concave profile. It contained a deposit of dark brown-grey clay silt and two pottery sherds of 17th-18th century date.

This feature is also judged to be a tree throw based on the uneven nature of its sides and base which suggested rooting activity. The difference between the nature of the deposit within this tree throw and those identified in Zone 1 suggests that this tree throw may be of a later date. The pottery sherds are thought to be intrusive.



4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 SYNTHESIS OF THE RESULTS

4.1.1 Medieval

A ditch was identified in Zone 2. The ditch contained no artefacts and is dated from pottery that was recovered from the same ditch when investigated in the evaluation. It is notable that the ditch is on the same alignment as the post-medieval ditch revealed in Zone 1. Further excavation in Phase 2 may subsequently indicate a later date for this ditch as well.

4.1.2 Post-medieval and modern

A post-medieval ditch was identified in Zone 1. This ditch was originally thought to be medieval from artefacts recovered during the evaluation, but the present investigation indicates a later, post-medieval date for this feature.

4.1.3 Tree throws

A group of seven tree throws were encountered in Zone 1. The presence of these features may suggest that the un-phased irregular pits identified during the evaluation in Trench 8, were also tree throws.

A single tree throw was identified in Zone 2. It contained two sherds of 17th/18th century pottery that are probably intrusive.

4.1.4 The limit of the archaeological remains

The low incidence of any remains of archaeological significance in Zones 1 and 2 further supports the conclusion of the trial trenching, which suggested that the archaeology was focused in the western part of the development area.

4.2 SUMMARY

A continuation of the medieval ditch investigated during trial trenching was revealed in Zone 2.

A ditch in Zone 1, previously interpreted as medieval from artefacts recovered during the evaluation, now appears to be of a later, post-medieval date.

Zone 1 contained seven tree throws and Zone 2 contained one tree throw. The investigation of these features may indicate that the un-phased irregular features previously revealed in Trench 8, may also have been tree throws.

Only one feature of possible medieval date was encountered in Zones 1 and 2, confirming that the majority of archaeological remains are focused in the western half of the proposed development area.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2005 *Vale Cemetery and Crematorium Extension, Luton. Archaeological Field Evaluation. Report 2005/25*

Bedfordshire County Council 2006. *Brief for A Programme Of Archaeological Excavation, Recording, Analysis And Publication Of The Vale Cemetery And Crematorium Extension, Bedfordshire.*

6. APPENDIX 1: ARTEFACT SUMMARY

A small artefact assemblage comprising mainly pottery, brick fragments and worked flint was recovered, the majority deriving from Zone 1 (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Zone	Assess Gp	Description	Spot date*	Find type
01	AG 4.01	Tree-throws	-	Worked flint (4g)
	AG 6.01	Ditch	Post-medieval/modern	Brick fragments (446g); ?gun cartridge (3g)
02	AG 5.01	Tree-throw	Post-medieval	Pottery (50g)

* - spotdate based on date of latest artefact in context

Table 1: Artefact Summary

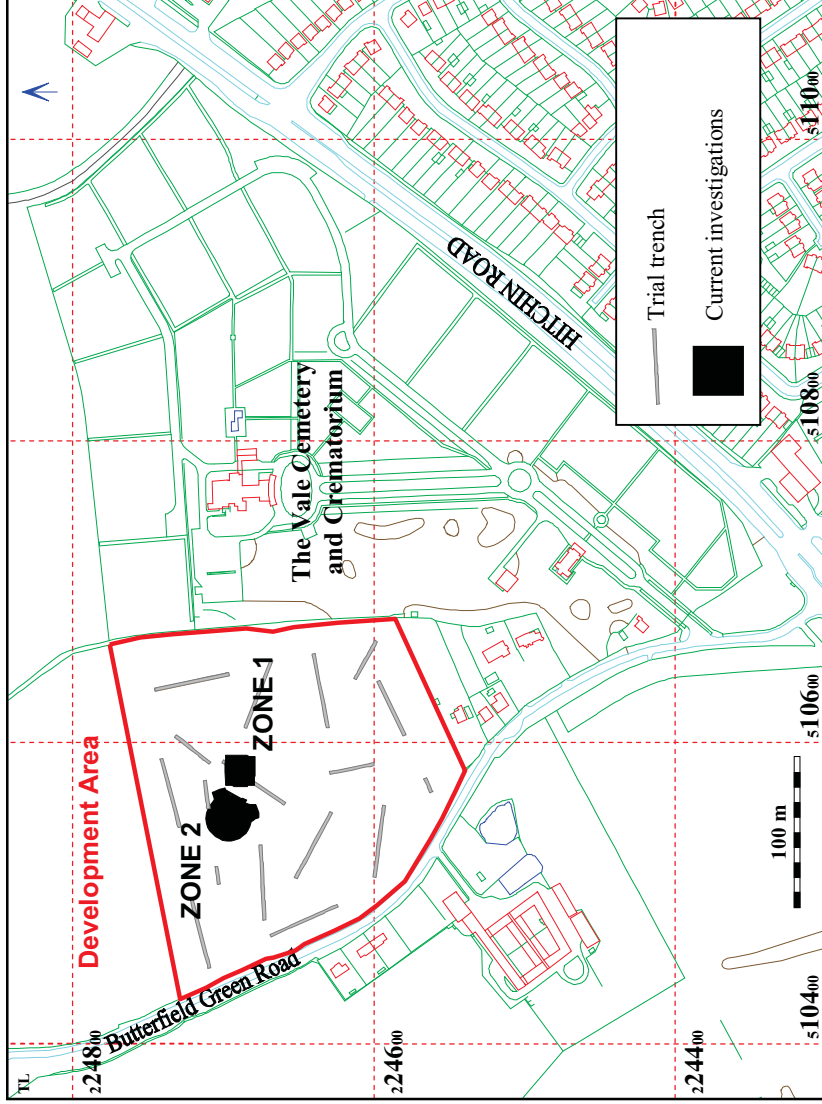
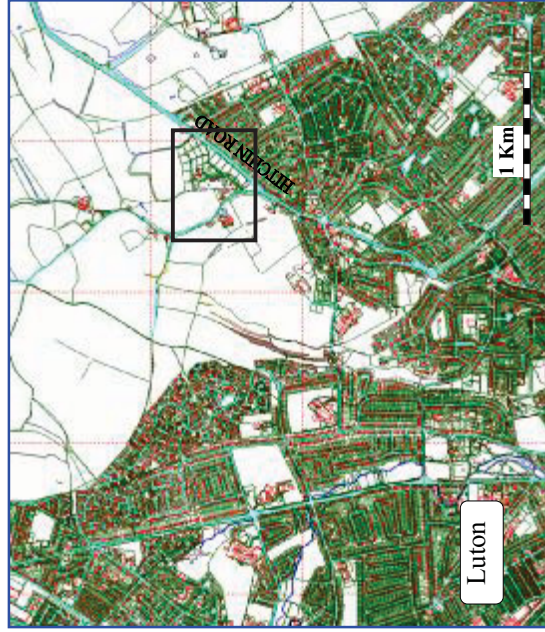
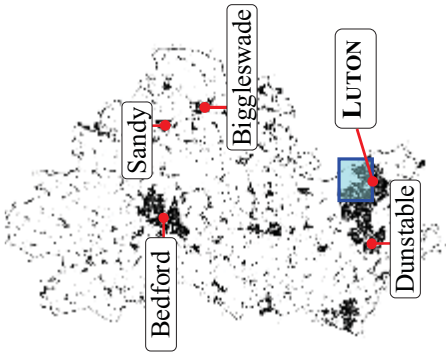
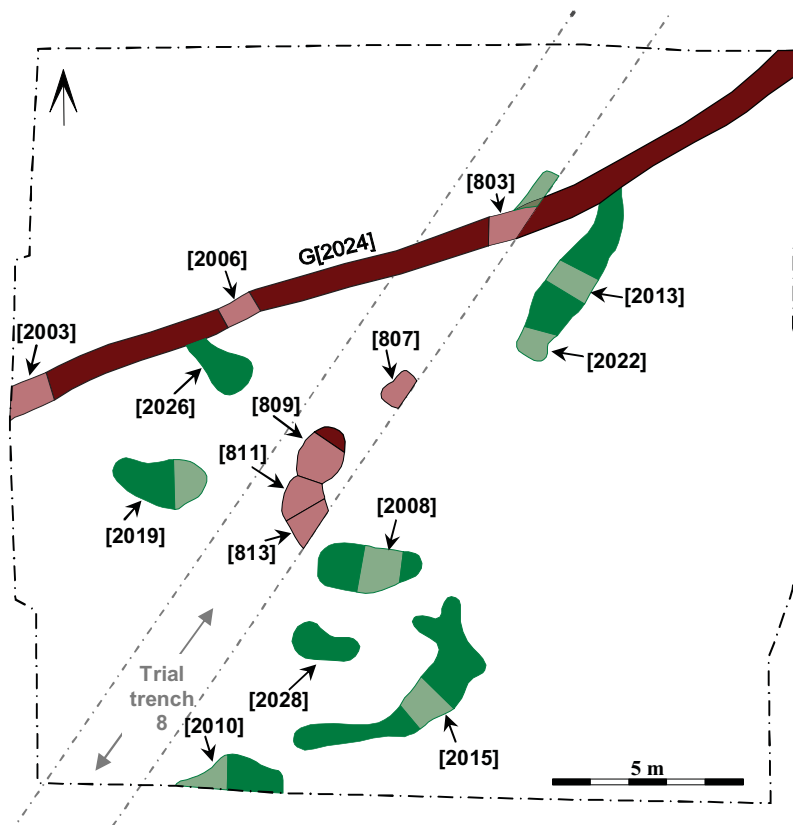


Figure 1: Site location map

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 076465(LA). © Crown Copyright.







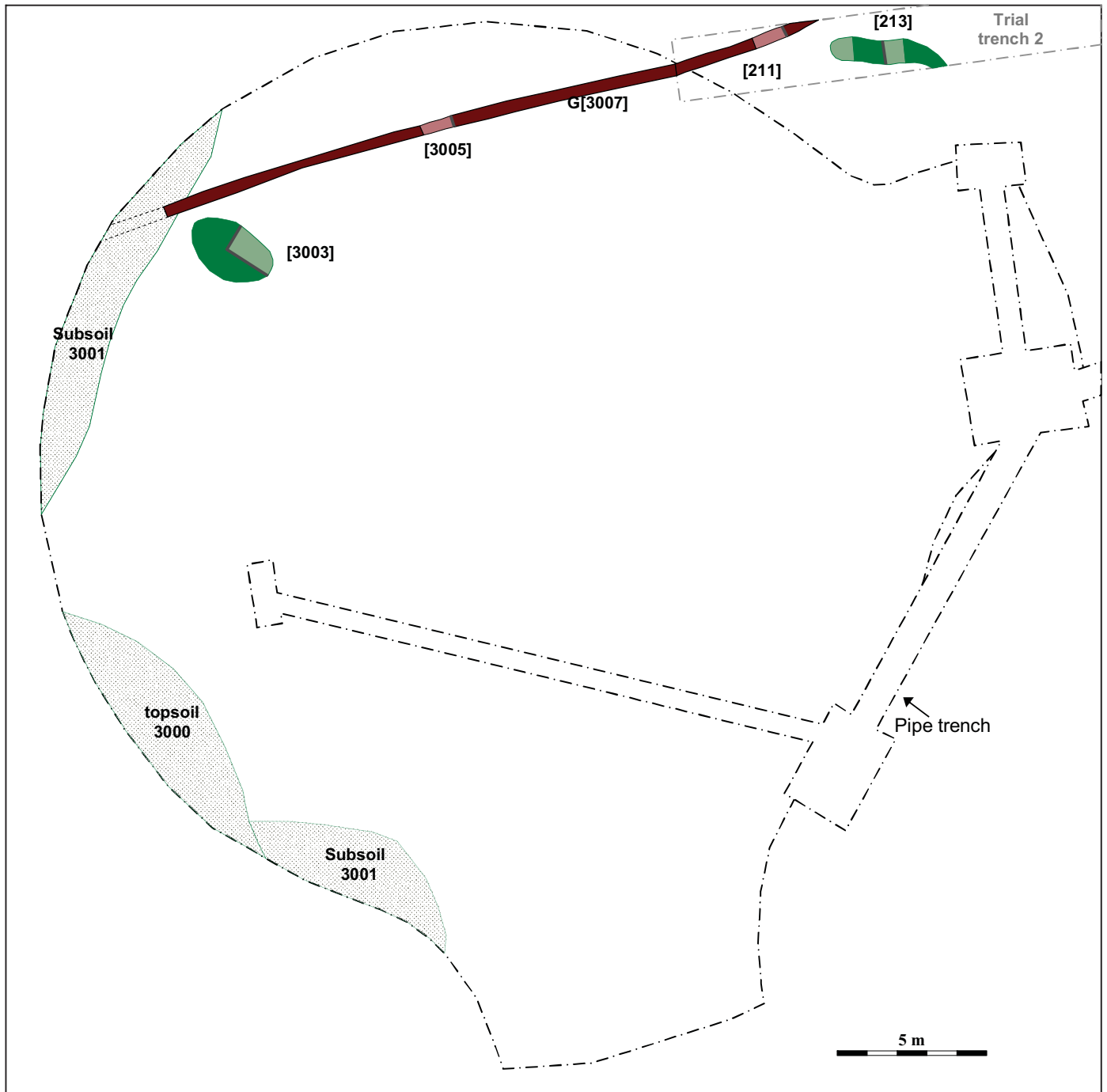
-  Archaeological Feature
-  Archaeological Feature; excavated segment
-  Tree throw hole
-  Tree throw hole; excavated segment

Figure 2: Zone 1, All features plan.








-  Archaeological Feature
-  Archaeological Feature; excavated segment
-  Tree throw hole
-  Tree throw hole; excavated segment
-  Layer

Figure 3: Zone 2 - Roundabout Area, All features plan.



Plate 1: Ditch segments [2006] and [2003]
(Photograph enhanced to emphasise ditch)



Plate 2: Tree throw [2015]

Figure 4: Photographs. (Scales 1m in 0.5m divisions)