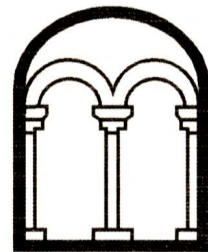


**LAND SOUTH OF NORTH END FARM
BLETSOE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATION**

Albion
archaeology



**LAND SOUTH OF NORTH END FARM
BLETSOE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATION**

Project: NF3397
Museum accession no.: BEDFM 2018.52
OASIS no.: albionar1-324512

Document: 2018/134
Version 1.0

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
David Ingham	Mike Luke	Drew Shottliff

3rd October 2018

Produced for:
Historic England



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Preface

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Historic England, and was monitored on their behalf by Geoff Saunders of Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team.

The fieldwork was undertaken by David Ingham (Project Officer) with the assistance of Allan King (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor), Ron Westwood (metal-detectorist) and Matthew Tuohy (HER assistant). David Ingham also prepared this report. The project was managed for Albion Archaeology by Mike Luke (Project Manager), under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	03/10/2018	n/a

Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

AO	Bedford Borough Council's Archaeological Officer
HER	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
OD	Ordnance Datum



Non-Technical Summary

In January 2017, a metal-detectorist dug a trial hole in a field north of Bletsoe, a small village north of Bedford, to investigate a high reading on his detector. He exposed what appeared to be the rounded top of a possible stone coffin; a strong metal signal detectable along its length suggested that the possible coffin might have been lead-lined.

After the discovery was reported to Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team, discussions with Historic England's local Inspector of Ancient Monuments led to the design of a multi-stage approach to investigate the object in question. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the initial stage, which involved excavating a small test pit so that the object could be observed more closely in order to ascertain whether it actually was a coffin or not.

Excavation of the test pit revealed that the object in question was not in fact of archaeological significance, but merely a layer of concrete over a modern pipe, presumably helping to protect a repair to the pipe that had included metallic components (thereby causing a reading on the metal-detector). No further archaeological investigation was therefore required.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

In January 2017, a metal-detectorist dug a small trial hole at TL 02446 59218 in a field near North End Farm, north of Bletsoe, Bedfordshire (Fig. 1) to investigate a high non-ferrous reading on his detector. He exposed what appeared to be the rounded top of a possible stone coffin. The detectorist did not dig any further or lift the ‘lid’ of the possible coffin, but reported to the Bedford Borough Council’s Historic Environment Team that a strong metal signal could be detected along the length of the object, suggesting that it might have been lead-lined, or perhaps contained a sealed lead coffin.

The discovery of an intact stone sarcophagus with sealed lead coffin would have been of national significance. A multi-stage project was therefore outlined by Geoff Saunders, Bedford Borough Council’s Archaeological Officer (AO), and Will Fletcher, Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk) (Bedford Borough Council 2017). The potential scope of this project is described in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2018).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the initial phase of work, which comprised the excavation of a small test pit to enable a preliminary surface examination of the object. The aim of this work was to ascertain whether it was a coffin or not, and, if possible, to date it before proceeding with further investigation.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Bletsoe is a small village in north Bedfordshire, c.9km NNW of Bedford town centre (Fig. 1). The A6 and the River Great Ouse lie c.1km to the west. North End Farm lies at a height of c.60m OD on land that slopes down gently south-west towards the river.

North End Farm lies at the junction of the Jurassic Oxford Clay Formation – Mudstone and the Kellaways Sand Member – Sandstone and Siltstone, Interbedded¹. There are no recorded superficial deposits at the farm, although deposits of Boulder Clay and river terrace gravels lie to the east and west respectively.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The object’s find-spot is close to an area of deserted medieval settlement, Bletsoe North End (HER 2642), although there is no previous record of burials in this particular location. Roman burials in stone cysts are reported from elsewhere in the parish (Dawson 1994; HER 307), but they are different in character — constructed from multiple stones with no ‘lid’, rather than the sealed sarcophagus that was suspected in the case of the detectorist’s find.

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2014]

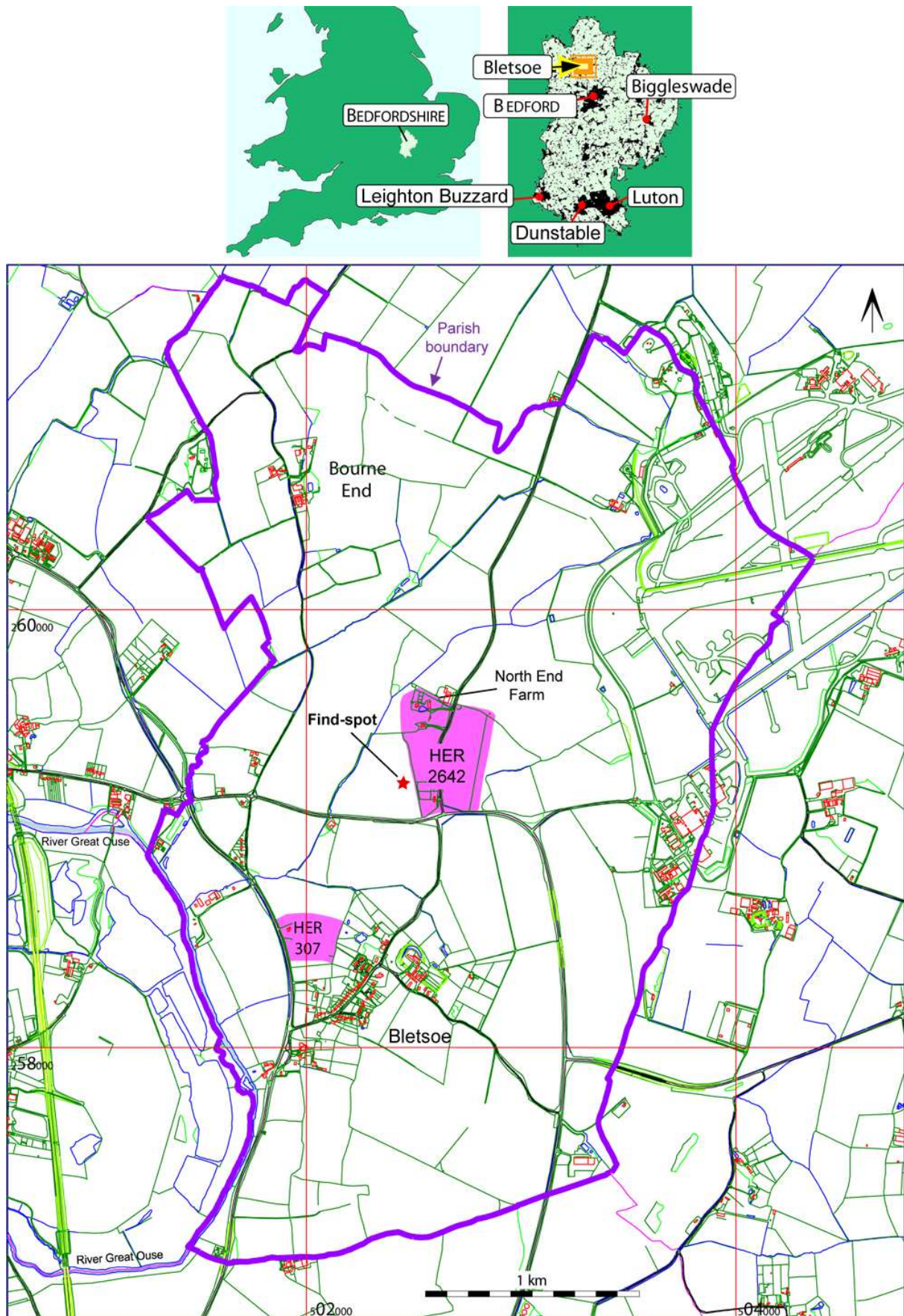


Figure 1: Site location

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2011)



2. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

2.1 Results

A test pit measuring *c.*3m x 1.5m was excavated by hand at the location of the find-spot, to a depth of *c.*0.5m. Nothing of archaeological significance was identified, but a moulded 2.4m length of concrete was revealed overlying a large pipe — this is what had previously been identified as the possible lid of a coffin.



Figure 2: Photograph of the test pit, looking south (scale 1m)

The pipe's orientation suggests that it may have been associated with the WW2 and post-war Thurleigh Airfield, *c.*1.5km to the east. The concrete is assumed to have been put in place as a protective patch over a repair to the pipe; a length of metal pipe may have been inserted, or a metal mesh used in the repair, thus causing the signal on the metal-detector over only this length of the pipe.

The test pit was inspected in the field by the AO, who confirmed that no further archaeological investigation was required.

2.2 Conclusion

Excavation of the test pit revealed that the metal-detector reading at the find-spot related to a modern pipe. No further archaeological investigation is required.



3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2018: *Land South of North End Farm, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire: Project Design for Archaeological Investigation* (unpublished report 2018/104)

Bedford Borough Council 2017: *Project Proposal for Archaeological Investigation at Bletsoe, Bedfordshire* (07/08/2017)

Dawson, M. 1994: *A Late Roman Cemetery at Bletsoe*, Bedfordshire Archaeology monograph **1** (Bedford)



4. APPENDIX: OASIS SUMMARY FORM

OASIS ID: *albionar1-324512*

Project details

Project name	Land south of North End Farm, Bletsoe
Short description of the project	Test-pit evaluation of metal-detecting find at Bletsoe. A single test pit was excavated; the metal-detector signal was found to relate to a water pipe.
Project dates	Start: 22-08-2018 End: 22-08-2018
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	NF3397 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BEDFM 2018.52 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 3 - Operations to a depth more than 0.25m
Monument type	WATER PIPE Modern
Significant Finds	NONE
Methods & techniques	"Metal Detectors", "Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Not recorded
Development type	Not development-related
Prompt	Voluntary/self-interest
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country England



Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE BEDFORD BLETSOE Land south of North End Farm, Bletsoe
Study area	5 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 02446 59218 52.221225543269 -0.500126514569 52 13 16 N 000 30 00 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 60m Max: 60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	none
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Mike Luke
Project supervisor	David Ingham
Type of sponsor/funding body	Public body
Name of sponsor/funding body	Historic England

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Photograph", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land South of North End Farm, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Investigation



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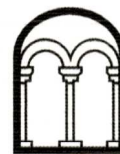
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