

**ROXTON GARDEN CENTRE
BEDFORD ROAD
ROXTON**

**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. 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.

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, there is a summary of the results of the fieldwork in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3). Section 4 is a bibliography, and Appendix 1 contains an archaeological context summary.

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>Albion</i>	Albion Archaeology
<i>CAO</i>	County Archaeological Officer
<i>Client</i>	Marshalls plc
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.</i> Bedfordshire County Council



Non-Technical Summary

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission (04/2728/FUL) for an extension to Roxton Garden Centre, Bedford Road, Roxton. Because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits, a condition was attached to the planning permission, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The County Archaeological Officer (CAO) issued a brief (BCC 2006) specifying what was required.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Marshalls plc to prepare a project design (Albion Archaeology 2006) and undertake a programme of archaeological observation, recording, analysis and publication of the site.

The site of the extension is centred at TL 1565 5520, to the north-east of the village of Roxton. Roxton Garden Centre lies immediately to the north of the Rockham Ditch, one of a number of east-flowing minor tributaries of the Great Ouse, which drain the Boulder Clay uplands to the north-east of Roxton. The main channel of the river is some 800m to the east of the site.

The development area is on the periphery of the current garden centre. It lies at a height of 21mOD, on the western edge of the Great Ouse river gravel terrace, close to the latter's junction with the north Bedfordshire Boulder Clay plateau.

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken between 16th February and 16th March 2006. During this period, all excavations which required monitoring were completed. A mechanical excavator was used for all excavations.

Topsoil was stripped from an area of c.2400m². The groundworks also included the excavation of two small service pits and an associated service trench.

The garden centre is located adjacent to an extensive area of cropmarks (HER 1833), and therefore the potential for archaeological remains from this period was considered high. However, no archaeological features were revealed during the works. The removal of only topsoil from most of the area has ensured that if archaeological remains exist within the site, they remain preserved in situ beneath the development.

The accession number for the site archive is 2006.60. The archive will be kept in secure storage at the offices of Albion Archaeology at St Mary's Church, Bedford until deposition with Bedford Museum is completed.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission (04/2728/FUL) for an extension to Roxton Garden Centre, Bedford Road, Roxton. The works included the removal of existing topsoil over an area of $c.2400\text{m}^2$, and the excavation of two service pits and an associated service trench.

Because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits, a condition was attached to the planning permission, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The County Archaeological Officer (CAO) issued a brief (BCC 2006) specifying what was required.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Marshalls plc to prepare a project design (Albion Archaeology 2006) and undertake a programme of archaeological observation, recording, analysis and publication of the site.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site of the extension is centred at TL 1565 5520, to the north-east of the village of Roxton. Roxton Garden Centre lies immediately to the north of the Rockham Ditch, one of a number of east-flowing minor tributaries of the Great Ouse, which drain the Boulder Clay uplands to the north-east of Roxton. The main channel of the river is some 800m to the east of the site.

The development area is on the periphery of the current garden centre. It lies at a height of 21mOD, on the western edge of the Great Ouse river gravel terrace, close to the latter's junction with the north Bedfordshire Boulder Clay plateau.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The terraces of the Great Ouse have been subject to human settlement and exploitation from the earliest prehistoric times. Within the vicinity of the garden centre, remains of this activity survive in the form of cropmarks, visible on aerial photographs (HER 1833). These include a number of, as yet, undated sub-rectangular enclosures and other linear features on either side of the Rockham Ditch.

Recent fieldwork in advance of construction of the Great Barford bypass led to investigation of a small part of this landscape. One of the trial trenches closest to the garden centre revealed a ditch which produced both late Bronze Age / early Iron Age and medieval pottery. The development work at the garden centre represented a potential opportunity to add to our knowledge of this important archaeological landscape.



2. RESULTS OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

2.1 Introduction

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken between 16th February and 16th March 2006. During this period, all groundworks which required monitoring were completed. A mechanical excavator was used for all excavations.

Detailed technical information on all the deposits and archaeological features referred to below can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 Methodology

The archaeological works adhered to the standards and field methods set out in section 5 of the brief (BCC 2006), specifically:

- 1 Any stripping of overburden or excavation of service trenches was monitored to try to identify *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 2 All disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
- 3 Any excavated deposits were fully recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual* and the detailed requirements in section 5 of the brief.
- 4 All archaeological observations were recorded at a suitable scale on base plans that were tied in to the OS national grid.
- 5 A photographic record was kept of all significant deposits.

Throughout the project, the standards set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999), in English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) and in Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* were adhered to.

2.3 Extent and Nature of Groundworks

Topsoil was stripped from an area of c.1500m² in advance of laying foundations and surfaces (Figure 1). An adjacent area of c.900m² was stripped of topsoil for the creation of an access route.

The groundworks also included the excavation of a 3m x 2.5m pit for a septic tank and a 1.6m x 1.2m pit for a soakaway, with an associated 0.4m wide service trench. The two pits were in excess of 1.5m deep, and the service trench was 0.5-0.8m deep.

2.4 Results

The groundworks were mostly confined to the removal of topsoil. A limited amount of deeper excavation took place, but without uncovering any archaeological features.

2.4.1 Topsoil, Subsoil and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The underlying, undisturbed geological deposit (103) revealed during the groundworks was light yellow sandy gravel, and formed part of the river gravel



terrace of the Great Ouse. Overlying this was a sterile, 0.5m thick layer of sandy silt (102). These deposits were only revealed in the excavation of the two service pits and the service trench.

A c.0.35m thick layer of subsoil (101) was revealed across the whole area, and was composed of dark orangey brown sandy silt. Above this was the modern topsoil (100), which was also c.0.35m thick and contained numerous modern artefacts derived from the use of the land as a garden centre.



3. SYNTHESIS

3.1 Interpretation

No archaeological features were revealed during the groundworks, though only the two service pits and the service trench were excavated to a depth where archaeological deposits were likely to be encountered. Therefore, it is possible that archaeological features have been preserved *in situ* beneath the development.

The deposits revealed are comparable with those encountered at other sites along the Great Ouse valley, such as Willington Quarry (Jeremy Oetgen, pers. comm.). Work at these sites suggests that features dating from the Bronze Age to the Saxo-Norman period would truncate alluvial silts like (102) and be sealed by subsoil like (101). However, the work at Willington has suggested that features may originally have survived higher up in the soil profile, with post-depositional processes subsequently making them indistinguishable from the surrounding soil.

The period during which layer (102) was formed is unknown. It appears to be an alluvial deposit, and, as such, has the potential to seal earlier prehistoric remains. There is a further possibility that Palaeolithic artefacts may be recovered from (103), since hand-axes of this date have been found in the river gravel terraces along the middle Great Ouse valley (Reynolds 2000).

3.2 Summary

The garden centre is located adjacent to an extensive area of cropmarks (HER 1833), and therefore the potential for archaeological remains from this period was considered high. However, no archaeological features were revealed during the works. The removal of only topsoil from most of the area has ensured that if archaeological remains exist within the site, they remain preserved *in situ* beneath the development.



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1 - Context Summary



Area: 1
 Extent (ha): 0.24
 OS Co-ordinates: TL1565055200
 Description: Development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt moderate small-medium stones. 0.35m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Firm dark orange brown sandy silt frequent small-medium stones. 0.35m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Firm mid brown orange sandy silt moderate small-medium stones. 0.5m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Firm light yellow sandy gravel .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

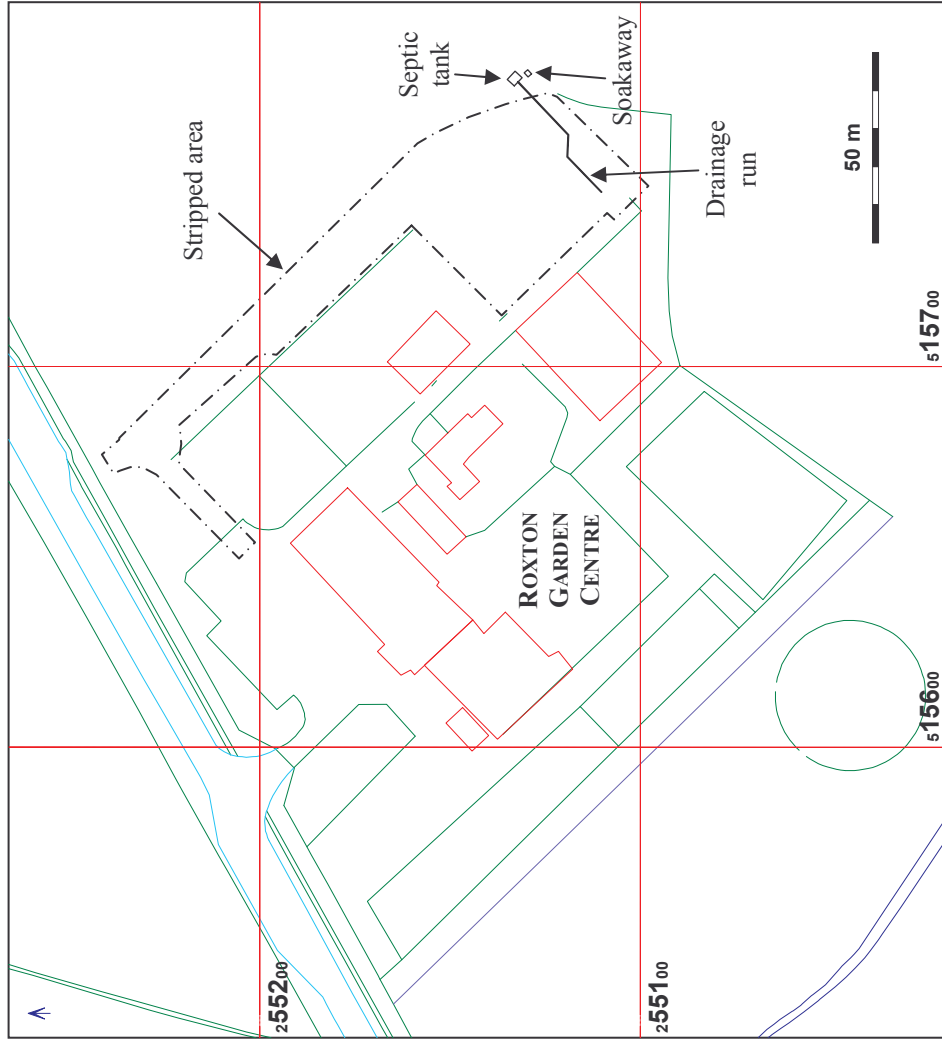
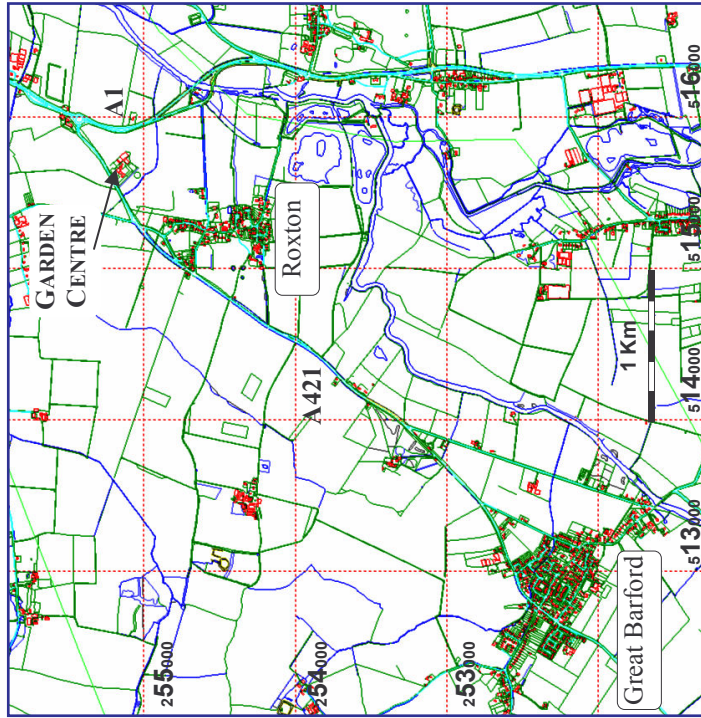
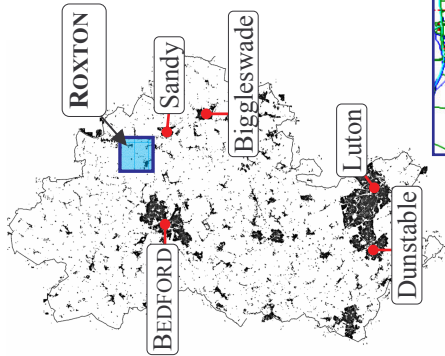


Figure 1: Site location map

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