LAND AT THRUXTON AIRPORT
ANDOVER, HAMPSHIRE
AREA ONE

PROGRAMME OF ARCHAOLOGICAL 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 programme of archaeological observation and recording 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:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
Client	Earthline Ltd
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.* Bedfordshire County Council

Non-Technical Summary

In November 2004 Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Brook Consultants (acting on behalf of Earthline Ltd) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation during topsoil stripping of land at Thruxton Airport, Andover, Hampshire.

Archaeological investigation was a condition of planning permission for landscaping at Thruxton Airport. This document sets out the results for the first phase of c.*0.8ha of topsoil stripping (Area 1). Further work is likely to occur in spring/summer 2005.*

The entire study area is c.20ha in extent and comprises a roughly rectangular plot of land adjacent to Thruxton Airport. It is bordered by the airport to the north and the A303 to the south. It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 4276 1450.

The site lies on relatively flat land which gently slopes down from east to west, and from south to north. The ground level varies from a maximum of 95m to 90m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Soils in the area are derived from calcareous brown earths and argillic or palaeo-argillic brown earths characterised by well-drained shallow chalky soils associated with deeper, loamy or clayey, flinty soils (Ordnance Survey 1975).

Machine stripping removed only the topsoil within Area 1. As a result the optimum level for observing archaeological remains was never reached. This level lies sealed beneath a layer of subsoil which has served both to protect, and conceal, any archaeological remains that may exist at the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Archaeological investigation was a condition of planning permission for landscaping at Thruxton Airport. The landscaping involved topsoil stripping of land adjacent to existing bunds at the site. It is intended that the stripped area will be used for the dumping and storage of additional material.

Albion Archaeology has been commissioned by Brook Consultants (acting on behalf of Earthline Ltd) to undertake the archaeological work required to discharge the condition. A project design was produced (Albion Archaeology 2004) in order to outline the circumstances of the project and give an indication of the scope of the work required. It also included fieldwork methodologies so that the proposed works were quantifiable and could be monitored by the Principal Archaeologist of Hampshire County Council (PA HCC). The project design was approved by the PA HCC prior to the commencement of any fieldwork.

This interim report sets out the results for Area 1 of these works; the next phase of stripping is likely to occur during spring/summer 2005.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The entire development area is *c*. 20ha in extent and comprises a roughly rectangular plot of land adjacent to Thruxton Airport. It is bordered by the airport to the north and the A303 to the south. It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 4276 1450.

The site lies on relatively flat land which gently slopes down from east to west, and from south to north. The ground level varies from a maximum of 95m to 90m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Soils in the area are derived from calcareous brown earths and argillic or palaeo-argillic brown earths characterised by well-drained shallow chalky soils associated with deeper, loamy or clayey, flinty soils (Ordnance Survey 1975).

Within the site the soil profile is characterised by a mid brown slightly clayey silt topsoil with sparse flint inclusions. This overlies relatively uniform pale brown clayey silt subsoil with rare flints and chalk grains.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies in an archaeologically sensitive area from which remains of prehistoric and Roman date have been recorded.

Extensive late Bronze Age (1100-700BC) linear ditches and Iron Age (700BC-AD43) field systems, some associated with the large late Bronze Age linear ditches of the Quarley Hill system, have been recorded to the immediate north-west and south-west of the site, including the Lains Farm complex. Information derives from aerial surveys and limited excavations (RCHME 1984; Bellamy 1992).

Immediately to the south of the site, at Lains Farm (SU 269 444) limited excavations of a large early-late Iron Age (5th-1st century BC) possible "banjo" enclosure were undertaken prior to the upgrading of the A303 (Bellamy 1992). Associated features included pits, postholes and hearths as well as late Roman (AD 240-410) inhumations. Archaeological works carried out along the route of the A303 prior to the improvement scheme recorded north-west to south-east orientated linear ditches of probable late prehistoric date (Bellamy 1992, 71). These lie to the immediate south of the present site.

To the west of the site a Roman villa was excavated in 1823 and has been the subject of intermittent fieldwork since then. In 2002 it was again investigated as part of the Danebury Trust's study of Roman villa establishments on the chalklands of eastern Hampshire. The main villa building comprised an aisled hall which contained an elaborate mosaic in contrast to the rest of the rooms which were floored with chalk. A possible ritual shaft and burials suggest a possible ritual association with the villa.

A fieldwalking survey was carried out on the development area, including the present site, in May 1994 by Thames Valley Archaeological Services. Worked flint was relatively abundant, occurring across the whole site, with a noticeable denser concentration to the west (TVAS 1994). Seven sherds of Iron Age/Roman pottery were recovered and were not thought to be indicative of sub-surface features. Overall the density of finds was higher than those obtained from comparable surveys carried out on the Upper Chalk of East Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. The results are thought to reflect considerable prehistoric activity in the area.

During the watching brief on soil stripping for an access road through the middle of the development area (Wessex Archaeology 1997), four archaeological features were recorded and sample excavations were carried out to determine their date, nature and possible function. In the middle section of the easement (south of the site) two large pits were recorded which contained late Bronze Age pottery (1100-700BC) and associated worked and burnt flint. In the east of the road a north-south orientated possible field boundary ditch was recorded which contained worked flint and burnt flint.

In the west of the road line (and west of the site) a large curvilinear possible field boundary ditch was recorded. It contained worked flint, worked stone, possible fragments of quernstone and animal bone. Although both ditches contained material that was not closely datable, the finds would not be inconsistent with a late prehistoric date, *i.e.* Bronze Age or Iron Age.

2. RESULTS OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

2.1 Introduction

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken between 4th and 10th November 2004. During this period all groundworks requiring archaeological monitoring were completed in Area 1 of the site.

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

2.2 Methodology

The programme of archaeological observation adhered to the field methods set out in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2004) specifically;

1. All excavation was monitored to try to identify *in situ* archaeological deposits.
2. All disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
3. Potential archaeological deposits were investigated to determine stratigraphic relationships and to recover artefactual material.
4. All deposits were fully recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual* and the Project Design.
5. All archaeological observations were recorded at a suitable scale on base plans that were tied in to the OS national grid.
6. Significant features were recorded using a digital camera.

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 Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* were adhered to.

2.3 Extent and Nature of Groundworks

The groundworks were confined to one L-shaped area to the west and north of the site measuring approximately 190m by 30m and 125m by 27m, totalling approximately 0.8ha (See Figure 1). Overburden was removed to the top of subsoil deposits using a 360 degree, tracked, mechanical excavator. Two additional test pits (Trenches 1 and 2) were also excavated to the top of undisturbed chalk bedrock in order to establish the total depth of overburden at the two ends of the site.

2.4 Observations

The depth of stripping within Area 1 was approximately 0.3m. This removed topsoil (100) (200) and partially removed subsoil (101) (201). The depths of these deposits varied from each end of the site.

2.4.1 Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 was located in the western part of Area 1 (Figure 1).

The underlying, undisturbed geological deposits consisted of solid chalk (103) approximately 0.5m below ground level. This was overlain by a chalk/subsoil interface (102) consisting of a firm light white brown clay silt with chalk and flint inclusions. It was approximately 0.06m thick.

Subsoil (101) consisted of a firm mid grey brown clay silt approximately 0.18m thick. Machine stripping ceased at the surface of this layer.

Topsoil (100) consisted of a dark brown grey clay silt with occasional small stones. It was 0.26m thick. This deposit was entirely removed from the stripped area.

2.4.2 Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2 was located in the eastern part of Area 1 (Figure 1).

The underlying, undisturbed geological deposits consisted of solid chalk (202) approximately 0.3m below ground level. This was overlain by subsoil (201) , which consisted of a mid grey brown clay silt approximately 0.10m thick.

An electric cable trench [203] aligned north to south was observed cutting through subsoil (201). This is likely to be associated with a nearby disused building (Figure 1).

Topsoil (200) was a dark brown grey clay silt containing occasional small stones. It was approximately 0.2m thick. This deposit was entirely removed during stripping.

2.4.3 Other observations

Disturbance to the natural soil profile was observed in the north-western part of the site. This took the form of a dark brown/black area measuring approximately 5m by 6m (300). This overlaid a subsoil deposit equivalent to (101) in Trench 1, and was in turn sealed by the topsoil.

It is likely that this deposit represented modern activity, perhaps tree removal or other topsoil disturbance.

In the eastern part of the site, lenses of chalky material were observed. These consisted of patches of firm light white brown clay silt with chalk and flint inclusions. They were stratigraphically earlier that the subsoil and similar in character to the bedrock interface deposit (102) observed in Test Pit 1.

This is likely to represent lenses of geological material present within the subsoil. This suggests a varied depth of subsoil particularly in the eastern part of Area 1.

3. SYNTHESIS

3.1 Interpretation

Although no archaeological remains were uncovered during the investigations, useful information on the depth of overburden within Area 1 was recorded. Two test pits were excavated and as a result the likely optimum depth for observing archaeological remains was established. The results from these test pits also indicated that topsoil and subsoil depths are not uniform across the site. Deeper deposits exist in the west when compared to the east.

Lenses of chalk observed within the subsoil indicate that undisturbed geological deposits are closer to the surface in some parts of Area 1. This may be indicative of undulations in the chalk bedrock.

The existence of a modern burnt patch and an electric cable within Area 1 suggest that the site has been subject to modern disturbance; perhaps associated with the nearby airfield. The level of this disturbance is unlikely to have had impact on the archaeological potential of the site, as any significant archaeological remains are most likely to be sealed below a protective layer of subsoil.

3.2 Summary

Machine stripping removed only the topsoil within Area 1. As a result the optimum level for observing archaeological remains was never reached. This level lies sealed beneath a layer of subsoil which has served both to protect, and conceal, any archaeological remains that may exist on the site.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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5. APPENDICES

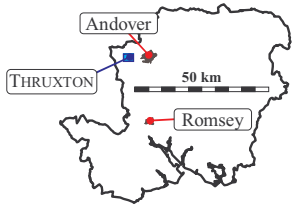
Appendix 1, Context Summary

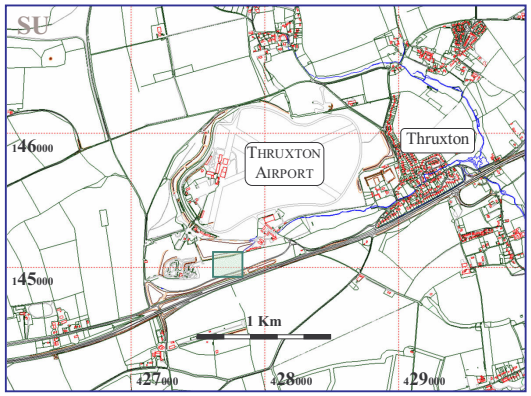
Test Pit: **1**
Max Dimensions: **Length: 3.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.44 m. Max: 0.44 m.**
OS Co-ordinates: **Ref. 1: SU2767444993 Ref. 2: SU2767744993**
Reason for Test Pit: **Establish overburden depths to geological deposits at the western end of Area 1.**

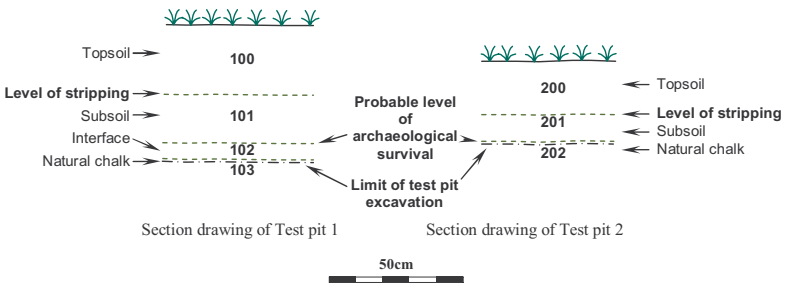
Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional small stones	☑	☐
101	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay silt moderate flecks chalk, moderate medium stones	☑	☐
102	Natural Interface	Firm light brown white silt frequent medium chalk	☑	☐
103	Natural	Firm light grey white chalk frequent small-medium chalk	☐	☐

Test Pit: **2**
Max Dimensions: **Length: 3.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.3 m. Max: 0.3 m.**
OS Co-ordinates: **Ref. 1: SU2783245070 Ref. 2: SU2783545071**
Reason for Test Pit: **Establish overburden depths to geological deposits at the eastern end of Area 1.**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional small stones	☑	☐
201	Subsoil	Firm mid brown grey clay silt occasional small stones	☑	☐
202	Natural	Firm light grey white chalk frequent small-medium chalk	☐	☐
203	**Modern Intrusion**	**Linear N-S profile: 45 degrees base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.35m Electric cable**	☑	☐
204	Backfill	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional small stones	☐	☐







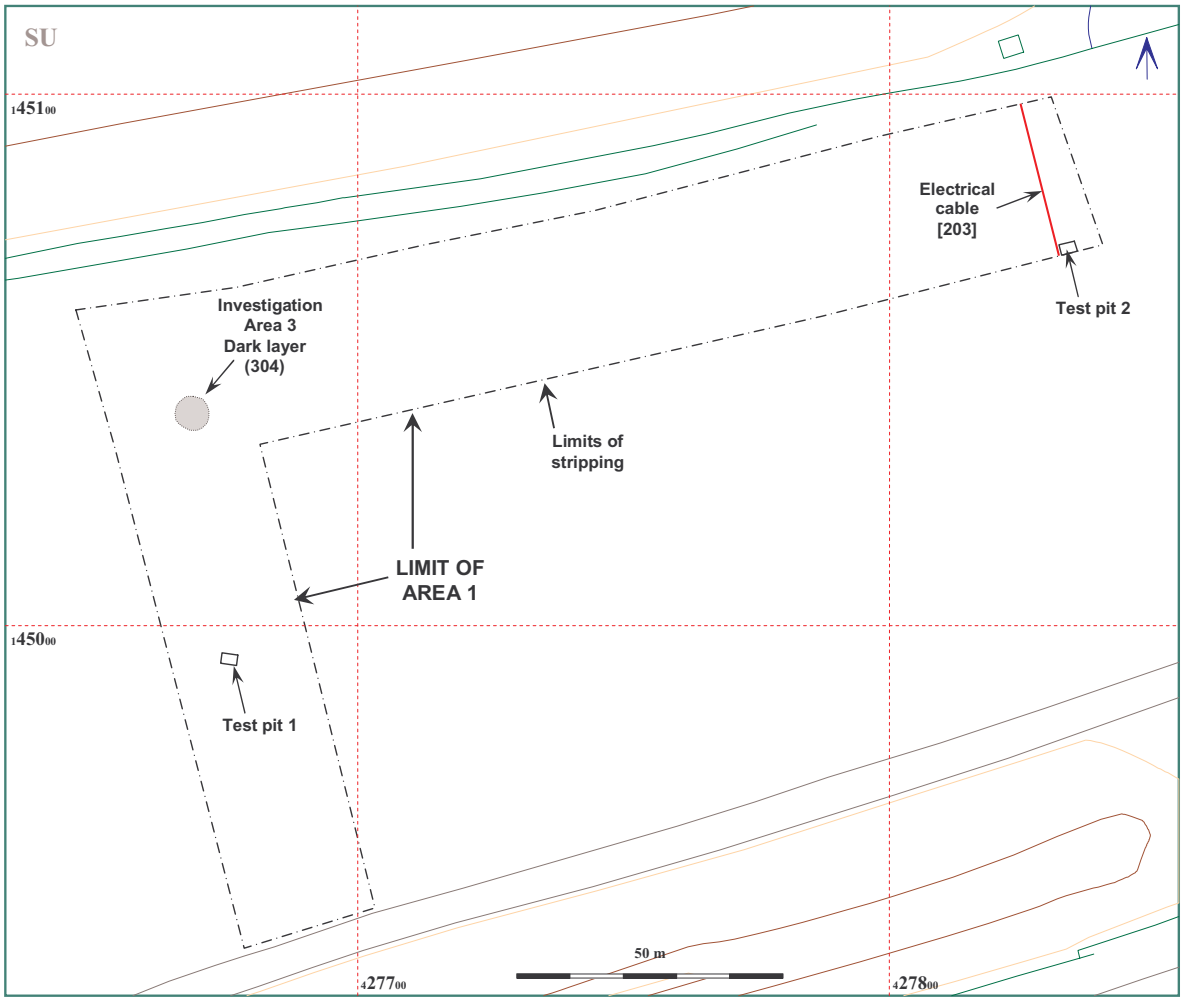


Figure 1: Site location and Area 1 plan

Plate 1: Test Pit 1: Profile

Plate 2: Test Pit 2: Profile

Plate 3: Area 1 near completion (western end taken from the northern bund)

Plate 4: Area 1 near completion (eastern end taken from the northern bund)