

**LAND AT NEWBURY MANOR  
AMPTHILL ROAD, SILSOE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

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Produced for:  
Mrs K Shattock



## **Introduction**

Mid Beds District Council granted planning permission (06/1986) for the demolition of an existing greenhouse and construction of a new car port and garage at Newbury Manor, Ampthill Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire. The proposed development lay within a scheduled complex of medieval earthworks.

DCMS consented to the works, subject to them being carried out under archaeological supervision. The County Archaeological Officer (CAO) issued a brief (BCC 2008), specifying that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording should take place during the groundworks, followed by an appropriate programme of post-excavation analysis and publication. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mrs K Shattock to prepare a Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2008) and undertake the required archaeological works.

The fieldwork and preparation of this report were undertaken by Victoria Osborn (Archaeological Supervisor), Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer) and Wesley Keir (Project Officer). The figures were prepared by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

A copy of this report and the project archive can be found at Luton Museum (Accession No. 2008/59).

## **Site Description and Location**

The Scheduled Ancient Monument at Newbury Farm comprises two medieval moated enclosures, associated leats and fish ponds (National Monument No. 11548). It is located to the north-west of Silsoe village on the southern edge of the Greensand ridge, at a height of c. 60m OD. (Fig. 1).

The investigation area, centred at TL 0762 3615, was located within the southern moated enclosure, which is square and c. 60m in length, with a 12m wide moat preserved to the north-east and south-east. It lay within the south-east quadrant of the enclosure, adjacent to Newbury Manor, a Grade 2 listed building (No. 37681). To the north-east were two Grade 2 listed garden buildings (Nos. 37682 and 37683), and to the north-west a converted post-medieval barn. The interior of the moated site is flat and has no visible evidence of earlier buildings. Before the work was carried out, a modern greenhouse occupied the area of investigation.

## **Archaeological Background**

Moated sites were a distinctive feature of the Bedfordshire landscape throughout the medieval period. They consist of islands of dry ground, surrounded by wide ditches often filled with water, upon which there were buildings or areas of horticulture. The earthwork complex at Newbury Manor Farm was likely to have been located on the periphery of medieval Silsoe (Albion Archaeology, 2008b).

To the north-west and south-west the moat was backfilled, probably for the construction of Newbury Manor, during the late medieval period by a member of the Daniell Family. Originally, this building featured a central hall with chimneys and a cross wing to the north-west and south-east. It was built in brick with ashlar dressings and a clay tile roof. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was extended with the construction of two-storey gables to the



north-east, south-east and north-west. Two red brick garden houses were also constructed to the north of the enclosure (Heritage Gateway 2008).

### **Project Methodology**

The project was carried out in accordance with the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2008b) and the CAO's Brief (BCC 2008). The standards and guidance set out in the following documents were also adhered to:-

- Institute of Field Archaeologists' (IFA) *Code of Conduct* (Revised edition 2006);
- IFA's *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (Revised edition 2001);
- IFA's *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (2001);
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd edition, 2001).

### **Description and Results of Groundworks**

Groundworks within the scheduled area included the demolition of a modern greenhouse, machine excavation of fourteen holes for the footings for the garage and topsoil stripping of the driveway immediately to the north-west (Fig. 2). All works requiring archaeological monitoring were completed on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

#### **Area 1 – Garage footings**

The footings measured approximately 1.40m long x 1.00m wide and were excavated to a depth of c. 0.80m. A layer of modern made ground, up to 0.50m thick, was observed. To the south-west it overlay a compact gravel make-up layer, c. 0.25m thick, which itself sealed redeposited Greensand. Undisturbed geological deposits were reached at c. 0.9m below ground level.

With the exception of the modern made ground, no archaeological features or finds were revealed by the groundworks.

#### **Area 2 – Driveway**

The driveway was stripped with a flat-edged bucket to a depth of c. 0.40m. The overburden consisted of silt clay topsoil, 0.23m thick, and silt clay subsoil, 0.16m thick, overlying two make-up layers. The upper make-up layer comprised post-medieval ceramic building material (34). The lower make-up layer (7) comprised sandy clay with small – medium fragments of ceramic building material, charcoal and occasional whole oyster shells. The ceramic building material is broadly datable to the late medieval / post-medieval periods and comprises eight pieces of sand-tempered, flat roof tile (453g) and an incomplete, hand made gault clay brick (86g).

Cut into make-up layer (7) were seven features dating to the late medieval / post-medieval and post-medieval periods. They comprised brick walls, brick-lined drains, a sandstone wall and a posthole alignment.

Three separate brick walls were identified. Wall (20) was aligned NE–SW. It was 1.88m long and is likely to date to the post-medieval period. Immediately to the north-west, two walls (18) of stock-moulded, sand-tempered brick (measuring 8¾” x 4” x 2”) were identified.



formed a right angle. They covered an area 1.40m x 1.30m and are likely to be former garden walls, associated with the early post-medieval house.

Two brick-lined drains – one square [21] and one rectangular [23] – were revealed. They are likely to date to the early post-medieval period. Drain [21] cut an earlier gully [14], but whether it was associated with the drain is unclear. Three stock-moulded, sand-tempered brick fragments, each with a width of 4” and depth of 2” were recorded from [21] and [23]. Again, it is likely that these former drains are associated with the house.

To the north-west of the investigation area was a NE–SW aligned sandstone wall (28), which continued beyond the site to the south-west. The wall comprised coursed, roughly hewn blocks bonded with mortar; it sat on a foundation (27) of irregular sandstone blocks bonded with clay. The wall could be traced for a distance of 5.9m and survived to a maximum height of 0.45m, though for the most part only the foundations still remained.

Wall (28) appears to correlate with a boundary wall marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1896 that shows it as being connected with the barn that still exists to the north-west.

Three roughly square postholes [8, 10, 12] were regularly spaced approximately 1.50m apart on a NE–SW alignment. The fill (13) of posthole [12] contained a small sherd (1g) of modern, mass-produced glazed earthenware pottery and a fragment of fired clay (2g). It is likely that these postholes were associated with the garden.

To north-west of the monitored area, a brick-lined culvert [32] continued beyond the site to the north and south. It was intact, presumably associated with the house, and was left unexcavated.

## **Conclusions**

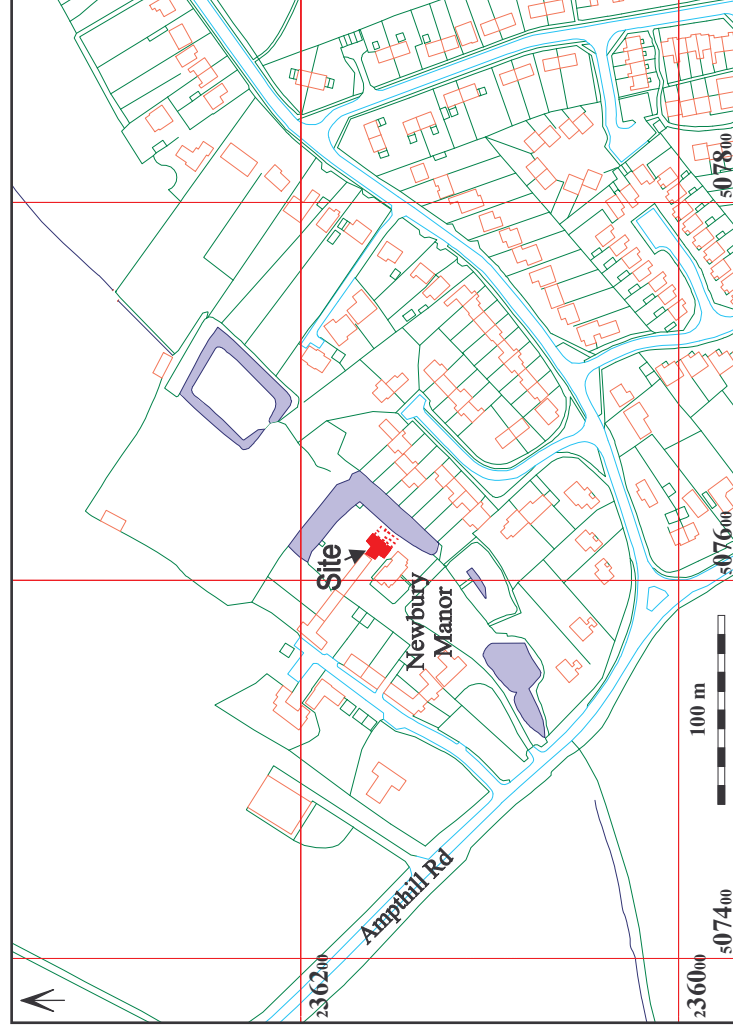
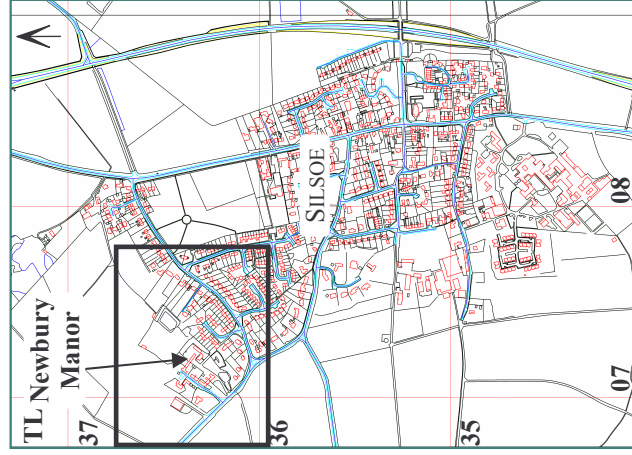
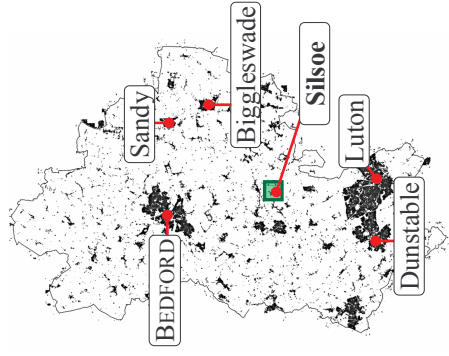
The groundworks were undertaken in close proximity to the late medieval house within the moated site. Archaeological remains, directly to the rear of the house, were revealed and are likely to be associated with the use of the property in the late medieval and/or post-medieval periods. However, given the shallow depth of the groundworks, there remains a strong possibility that buried features and finds associated with the construction of the moated site, still survive.

## **Bibliography**

Albion Archaeology, 2008b, *Land at Newbury Manor, Ampthill Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire: Project Design for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*. Albion Archaeology 2008/78.

BCC, 2008, *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of land at Newbury Manor, Ampthill Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire*.

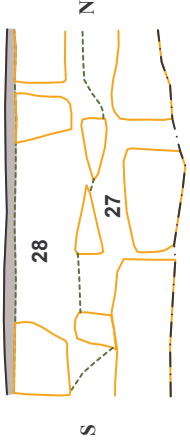
Heritage Gateway, 2008, [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk) (accessed 02/09/08)



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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Elevation of wall (28)



Photograph showing wall (28) and foundations (27), scale 40cm

**Figure 2: All features**

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