

**EDF SUNDON TO BEDFORD PYLON  
FOUNDATION REPLACEMENT WORKS**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND  
INVESTIGATION**

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## Preface

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. 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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## Version History

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1.0	23/06/2009	n/a

## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
CAO	County Archaeological Officer
HER	Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists

## Acknowledgements

*The project was commissioned by David Wareing of Babcock Networks Ltd on behalf of EDF Energy and was monitored on behalf of the Council by Martin Oake of Bedfordshire County Council.*

*The fieldwork was undertaken by Kathy Pilkinton and the report was prepared by Robert Wardill with illustrations by Joan Lightning.*



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*The replacement of the foundations for 92 overhead power line pylons between Sundon and Bedford was carried out by EDF Energy.*

*Thirty-two of these pylons lay within, or adjacent to, areas of archaeological interest. As a consequence, the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) requested that groundworks associated with these pylons should be archaeologically monitored*

*Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Babcock Networks Ltd to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation in accordance with the CAO's requirements on groundworks associated with four of the pylons.*

*A total of 16 rectangular pits around the legs of four pylons were monitored. The majority of the deposits revealed within each of the pits represented backfill material deposited during the installation of the existing pylon leg foundation. Only at the extremities of the pits were in situ soil and geological deposits identified.*

*No archaeological deposits or features were found within the in situ deposits in any of the 16 pits associated with the monitored pylon works.*

*The lack of archaeological findings within the excavations is probably a reflection of their small size combined with the severely disturbed nature of the ground in the immediate location of the works. If archaeological remains had been present in the vicinity of the pylons, it is unlikely that they would have been found within the monitored foundation pits.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

The replacement of the foundations for 92 overhead power line pylons between Sundon and Bedford was carried out by EDF Energy.

Thirty-two of these pylons lay within, or adjacent to, areas of archaeological interest. As a consequence, the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) requested that groundworks associated with the foundation works for these pylons should be archaeologically monitored to ensure that any remains uncovered were adequately investigated and recorded.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Babcock Networks Ltd to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation in accordance with the CAO's requirements on groundworks associated with four of the pylons.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The route of the power line on which the pylons are situated runs a total of 27km from Sundon, which lies to the north of Dunstable in the south of Bedfordshire, to Bedford in the centre-north of the county (Figure 1).

### 1.3 *Archaeological Background*

A total of 32 pylons lay within, or adjacent to, areas of archaeological interest. Foundation groundworks on pylon numbers 143, 144, 145 and 147 were observed by Albion Archaeology archaeologists (Figure 1).

These pylons were located to the north of a meander of the River Great Ouse, to the west of Bedford, known as the Biddenham Loop. This region of the county has been a focus of human activity from the Palaeolithic period through to the present day. However, the majority of archaeological evidence spans the period from the Neolithic to the early 4th century AD.

Recent archaeological excavations and geophysical survey (HER 1863 and 1476) confirm that pylon 143 lies within an area of dense multi-period archaeological activity. Remains have not been confirmed in the immediate vicinity of the other pylons but there is high potential for them to be present, particularly in the vicinity of pylon 144.

### 1.4 *Project Objectives*

The specific objectives of the fieldwork were to:

- Monitor all significant groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains.
- Investigate and record those works and any archaeological deposits encountered within them.

The general aim of the project was to add to the knowledge and understanding of the archaeology of Bedfordshire and produce a report for deposition in the appropriate archive that fully describes the archaeological works.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 Standards

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were followed:

- Albion Archaeology. *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork* (2001)
- English Heritage. *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991)
- IfA. *Code of Conduct* (1999)
- IfA. *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999) and *the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (2001)
- BCC. *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford* (1998)

### 2.2 Description of Foundation Replacement Works

Each existing pylon comprised a four-legged steel lattice tower. The foundation works comprised the installation of two piles on either side of each of the four existing pylon legs. A rectangular pit was then excavated around each pylon leg and associated piles followed by the installation of a concrete cap (Figures 2 and 3).

The rectangular pits were dug by machine with an archaeologist in attendance to monitor the works. The works were recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets and planned and photographed as appropriate.

### 2.3 Archive

The archive for the site comprising original records, photographs and supporting documentation will be deposited with Bedford Museum under accession number 2009.47. A copy of this report will also be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service's online OASIS database.



### 3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

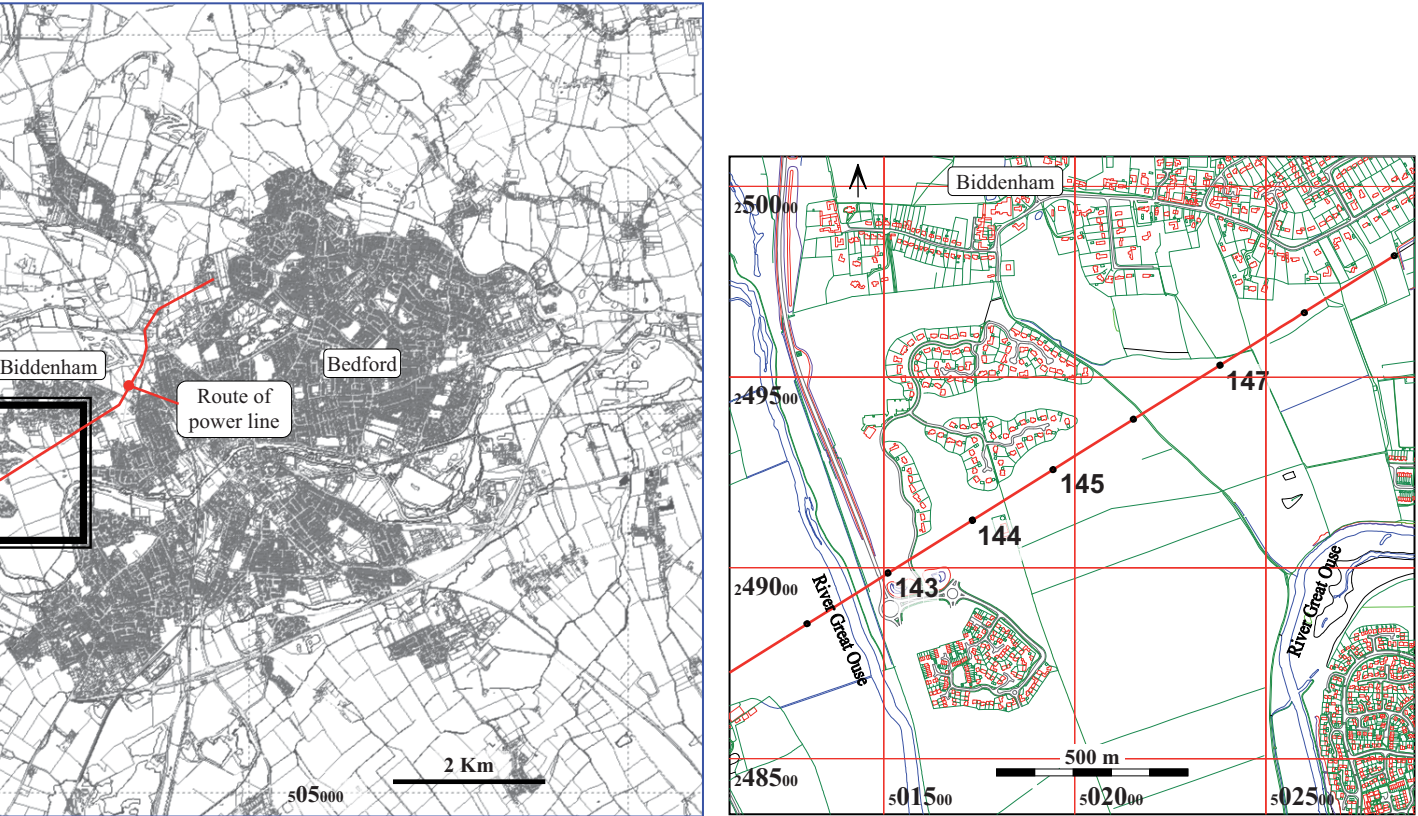
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A total of 16 rectangular pits excavated around the legs of four pylons were monitored during February and March 2009. Each pit measured approximately 3m x 2m x 0.70m deep. Where present, around 0.15m of topsoil overlay 0.20m of subsoil. Beneath this were geological deposits of orange gravel and sand.

The majority of the deposits revealed within each of the pits represented backfill material deposited during the installation of the existing pylon leg foundation. Only at the extremities of the pits were *in situ* soil and geological deposits identified.

No archaeological deposits or features were found within the *in situ* deposits in any of the 16 pits associated with the monitored pylon works.

The lack of archaeological findings within the excavations is probably a reflection of their small size combined with the severely disturbed nature of the ground in the immediate location of the works. If archaeological remains had been present in the vicinity of the pylons, it is unlikely that they would have been found within the monitored foundation pits.



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

ion of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Albion Archaeology, Central Bedfordshire Council. OS Licence No. 100017358(LA). © Crown Copyright.





**Figure 2:** Pylon 147. Machine excavation of foundation pit



**Figure 3:** Pylon 145. Excavated foundation pit showing piles and existing pylon leg