

**ROMP HALL
THURLEIGH
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

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Produced for:
David Jamieson

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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 project design. 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.

Fieldwork was carried out by James Newbould, Mark Phillips (Archaeological Project Officers) and Joanne Barker (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by James Newbould and checked by Joe Abrams (Project Manager). Figures were produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and James Newbould. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Structure of the Report

Section 1 describes the background to the project. Section 2 describes the methodology used. There is a summary of the results of the fieldwork in Section 3 and a synthesis and discussion of their significance in Section 4. Section 5 is a bibliography. Appendix 1 provides an archaeological context summary and Appendix 2 is summary of artefactual material.

Key Terms

Throughout this report, the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Client	David Jamieson
CAO	Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer
DA	Development Area
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists



Non-Technical Summary

Bedford Borough Council granted the client, David Jamieson, planning permission (04/00746/FUL) for extensions and alterations to the 17th-19th century barn at Romp Hall to form a residential annexe.

Because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits the (then) Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer (CAO) advised that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording would be required during ground-works, with a programme of post-excavation analysis and publication (this document) to follow the fieldwork.

In March 2009, Albion was commissioned by the client to prepare a project design for this work (Albion Archaeology 2009). Between May and October 2009, Albion carried out the monitoring and prepared a report (this document) on the results.

Romp Hall is centred at (NGR) TL 0409 5733 and located c.1.5km south-west of Thurleigh village. The underlying geology is boulder clay with localised deposits of sand and gravel. Prior to development the 19th century phase of the barn was used for wood and timber storage whilst the earlier, 17th-18th century phase was largely empty.

Monitoring of ground-works within and adjacent to the barn (HER 883) revealed information pertaining to its past use (including wood storage and stables) and construction (indicating ground reduction prior to the erection of the 17th-18th century barn). Foundation remains and artefactual material also suggest continuity of activity within the grounds of Romp Hall from the 12th century to the present time and set Romp Hall in the wider context of other nearby medieval remains (HER 11551).

The project archive, comprising documentary records and artefacts, will be deposited with Bedford Museum (BEDFM 2009.39).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Bedford Borough Council granted the client, David Jamieson, planning permission (04/00746/FUL) for extensions and alterations to the 17th-19th century barn at Romp Hall to form a residential annexe. The proposed works are shown in Figure 1 and included the following phases:

1. The extension on the north-eastern part of the barn, comprising the excavation of foundations and ground reduction for the interior.
2. The replacement of the north-western (19th century) part of the barn, involving ground reduction and piling.
3. The renovation of the extant south-eastern (17th-18th century) part of the barn, including ground reduction within its interior.
4. The digging of a trench, heading south from Romp Hall, for the insertion of a new drain.

Because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits the (then) Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer (CAO) advised that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording would be required during ground-works, with a programme of post-excavation analysis and publication (as appropriate) to follow the fieldwork.

In March 2009, Albion were commissioned by the client to prepare a project design for this work (Albion Archaeology 2009). Between May and October 2009, Albion carried out the monitoring and prepared a report (this document) on the results.

1.2 Site Location and Description

Romp Hall is centred at (NGR) TL 0409 5733 and located c.1.5km south-west of Thurleigh village (Figure 1). The underlying geology is boulder clay with localised deposits of sand and gravel. Prior to development the 19th century phase of the barn was used for wood and timber storage whilst the earlier, 17th-18th century phase was largely empty.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Romp Hall is recorded on Bedfordshire's Historic Environment Record (HER882) and the National Monuments Record (NMR360513). It is described as 17th/18th-century timber-framed house, mainly with rough cast on brick and stone plinth. The barn adjacent to Romp Hall (which is the subject of this project) is described in the HER (883) as follows: "*an 18th/19th-century barn encloses ...earlier 17th- or 18th-century building with wattle or daub infill*".

The HER and NMR also record several findspots and sites of interest in the immediate vicinity of Romp Hall (Albion Archaeology 2009). The majority



are undated slag patches (HER2750, 2751, 10187) and undated cropmarks (HER16583, 16613). Both categories of remains are pre-modern and are likely to indicate the location of significant, sub-surface archaeological remains.

Two areas of medieval activity are recorded. HER 11551 refers to the location of a series of rectilinear cropmarks and slag patches; HER 2725 refers to a visit made by the Historic Environment Unit to inspect the possible site of a medieval moat at Romp Hall. The comment relating to this visit reads: “*No evidence of a moat here. A series of ornamental ponds with superficial resemblance to a moat lie NW and S of Romp Hall. The house...stands in a hollow with neither suggestion of an elevated platform, nor of a moated island*”.

1.4 Project Objectives

Although the footprint of the proposed footings and extensions were relatively small, it was clearly situated in an archaeologically sensitive area. The aim of the fieldwork was therefore to:

- Observe all significant ground-works associated with the development.
- Investigate and record these works and any archaeological deposits encountered within them.
- Prepare a report of the fieldwork findings for deposition in the Bedfordshire HER and with OASIS.
- Deposit the project archive with Bedford Museum.



2. METHODOLOGY

Monitoring was carried out between 19th May and 14th October 2009. During this period, all construction ground-works requiring monitoring were completed. All of the proposed foundation and ground reduction works (Phases 1-3, Section 1.1) were undertaken. However, the proposed drain (Phase 4) was not fitted.

Foundation trenches were excavated by a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothed bucket. Deposits from within the footprints of the extant barn were removed by hand by the client's building contractor.

The archaeological works adhered to the standards and field methods set out in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2003) and comprised the following:

- 1 Stripping of overburden or excavation for any associated ground-works was monitored to try to identify *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 2 Disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
- 3 Excavated features and deposits were fully recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*.
- 4 Archaeological observations were recorded at a suitable scale on base plans tied in to the OS National Grid.
- 5 Significant features were recorded in a suitable photographic format.
- 6 Had more detailed recording of exceptional finds been necessary, the client and CAO/Local Planning Authority would have been consulted before any contingency work was undertaken. In the event, such work was not required.

Throughout the project, the standards set out in the IfA's *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance* documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999) were followed.

If permission is given by the client, the project archive, comprising artefactual material and documentary records, will be deposited with Bedford Museum under accession number BEDFM: 2009.39.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Ground-works for the foundation slots (Figure 1) revealed archaeological remains and artefacts associated with the history of the barn and the wider site. All overburden and natural deposits were issued with unique context numbers, written below as (**).

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

3.2 Overburden and Natural Deposits

Topsoil (100) was removed from the area of the proposed extension (Phase 1) to a thickness of up to 0.12m, revealing the underlying undisturbed geological deposits comprising heavy clay. Within the area of the proposed extension, a pocket of re-deposited natural (103) containing modern ceramic building material was shown to overlie the topsoil. This deposit was probably used as make-up material to level a formerly uneven area.

3.3 Metalled Surface

Observation of ground reduction within the interior of the Phase 1 extension revealed the partial remains of a metalled stone surface (105). The surviving surface covered an area of *c.* 3.5m by 4.5m and consisted of pebbles and flint nodules between 50mm and 300mm in size. A single sherd of 16th-17th century roof tile was also recovered from within this surface (Appendix 2). The stones had been pressed into the underlying undisturbed geology, suggesting that ground reduction had taken place in preparation for the surface (Figure 2).

It is likely that these remains represent the former exterior yard surface of the adjacent barn (HER 883). The roof tile recovered from within the surface is considered to be residual, suggesting the surface is certainly no earlier than the 16th century. However, its association with the barn suggests it is more likely to date from the 17th-19th centuries.

The surface was partially overlain by a re-deposited clay deposit (101) up to 0.7m thick, which appears to have been used to raise the ground level north-east of the barn. It is possible (101) that this may be associated with the creation of an extant track-way that runs parallel to the barn (Figure 1).

3.4 Foundation Trench

Ground reduction within the interior of the north-eastern part of the barn (Phase 2) revealed the truncated remains of a narrow trench [106] (Figure 2), *c.* 3.6m in length and aligned parallel with the north-eastern gable end of the barn. This trench was sealed beneath the surface of the (now removed) 19th century structure and is, therefore, un-associated with its construction. Excavation demonstrated it had a flat base and steep sides and that its fill



(107) contained numerous stones and a single sherd of 12th-13th century pottery (Appendix 2).

The morphology, alignment and positioning of [106] suggest it was designed to support the beam and/or posts for an earlier phase of the barn. Indeed, the stones contained within deposit (107) were of a sufficient quantity and size to represent packing material for such timbers. However, the deposits did not appear to be *in situ* and, despite the relatively unabraded state of the pottery, it may be residual.

3.5 **Former Uses of the Barns**

The replacement of the 19th century barn (Phase 2) necessitated the removal of its internal surface (113). This surface was informal, consisting of wood chips and fragments, built up during its former and recent use as a wood store (Plate 1).

Beneath the cobbled interior surfaces (111) and (112) of the 17th-18th century barn (Plates 2-3), were two distinct former internal surfaces (104) and (109) which lay to the north-west and south-east (respectively) of the barn's internal dividing wall (Figure 2). Both surfaces represented a build up of material associated with a former use of the barn.

Surface (104) contained post-medieval ceramic building materials and a single sherd of residual 12th-13th century pottery. Surface (109) principally consisted of wood chippings and fragments, suggesting this half of the structure had also been used as a wood store prior to the laying of cobbles.

The composition of the internal surface of the larger 19th-century extension (113), north-east of the older barn, suggests it was used as a wood store for some time. It is possible that the south-eastern half of the older barn ceased to be used as a wood store after the construction of the newer extension. By implication, it is likely that cobbled surfaces (111) and (112), which overlie (109) were installed after this change had occurred, probably sometime in the 19th century.

An incomplete iron curry comb was also recovered from the upper part of surface (109). This artefact was used to groom horses and is of a type likely to date from the 17th-18th centuries (Appendix 2). This artefact implies the presence of stables at the site and it is possible that the extant barn may at some point have been used for, or associated with, this purpose. The metallated surface (105) at the entrance to the barn supports this assertion. Indeed, the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 shows a range of now demolished buildings to the immediate east of the extant barn. It is possible these formerly contained the stabling and storage facilities for the main Hall.

3.6 **Other Deposits**

Ground reduction within the interior of the south-eastern part of the barn (Phase 3) revealed deposits associated with the construction of the 17th-18th



century barn. Beneath surfaces (104) and (109) were disturbed deposits consisting of re-deposited clay (108/110) up to 0.35m thick (Figure 2). These contained over 1.3kg of Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval pottery as well as a fragment of post-medieval clay pipe and a medieval whetstone (Appendix 2). The Saxo-Norman to post-medieval artefactual assemblage recovered from these deposits, provides indirect evidence for activity at Romp Hall dating from the Saxo-Norman to the post-medieval periods.

The mix of dates in the assemblage supports the suggestion that deposits (108/110) consisted of residual material, deliberately placed within the interior of the barn. It is likely that the ground was reduced down to the undisturbed clay, during the construction of the 17th-18th century (extant) timber-framed barn. This would have both facilitated the construction of the frame and provided materials for the daub used within the walls of the finished barn. The removed material, together with residual deposits containing the pottery and other artefacts, were then re-deposited within the interior of the building to make-up the level and when dry, provide an internal dirt surface.



4. SYNTHESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REMAINS

Monitoring of ground-works within and adjacent to the barn (HER 883) revealed information pertaining to its past use and construction. The evidence also suggests continuity of activity within the site from the 12th century to the present and augments our knowledge of how Romp Hall relates to other nearby medieval remains (HER 11551).

The results of monitoring support the HER's dismissal of possible moated remains at Romp Hall (2725). The presence of undisturbed geological deposits beneath the 19th century barn demonstrates that the adjacent pond did not continue northwards beneath it.

The composition of internal surfaces within both the 17th-18th century and 19th century phases of the barn (Figure 1) pointed to their use for wood and timber storage. The presence of a metallised surface on the exterior of the barns and a 17th-18th century curry comb attest to the historical presence of horses and the possibility that the barns were associated with stabling and/or equipment storage.

The discovery of the foundation slot in the north-western part of the barn represents direct evidence for the presence of a timber structure that certainly pre-dates the 19th century building. However, the presence of a sherd of 12th century pottery within its deposit suggests it could be much earlier.

Re-deposited layers within the earlier (17th-18th century) barn indicate that ground reduction took place in advance of its construction. The artefactual assemblage recovered from the reinstated deposits that formed the original internal surface, provide indirect evidence for activity at Romp Hall dating from the Saxo-Norman to the post-medieval periods. Given that archaeological investigations were restricted to the barn, it is likely that other remains from these periods exist within the grounds of Romp Hall.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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English Heritage 2002 *Environmental Archaeology. A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*

IfA, 1999a Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IfA, 1999b Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*

Maps Consulted

1st Edition 1884 Ordnance Survey Map (BED5 VII-II & VII-12)



6. APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT SUMMARY



Area: 1
 Extent (ha): 0.01
 OS Co-ordinates: TL0408957345
 Description: Phase 1-3 ground-works within area of barn

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Firm dark brown grey clay loam occasional small ceramic building material, occasional small-medium stones. Up to 0.12m thick, contains modern bone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Redeposited natural	Firm mid grey clay occasional small-medium stones. Up to 0.7m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Hard mid yellow grey clay occasional small stones. Contains flint nodules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Make up layer	Firm mid yellow grey clay moderate medium ceramic building material. 0.35m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Internal surface	Loose mid yellow brown clay frequent flecks ceramic building material, frequent small stones. Surface build-up, to NW of internal division of barn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
105	External surface	Close packed small-large stones and flint nodules pressed into clay natural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
106	Foundation	Linear NE-SW profile: near vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.38m, max depth 0.11m, max length 3.6m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Packing	Firm mid brown clay frequent small-large stones. 0.11m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
108	Redeposited natural	Firm mid grey clay occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones. 0.35m thick (same as 101)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
109	Internal surface	Loose mid brown loam moderate small stones. Frequent wood chippings forming humic layer 0.10m thick, surface build-up, to SE of internal division of barn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
110	Redeposited natural	Firm light yellow silty clay occasional small chalk, occasional flecks charcoal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
111	Internal surface	Up to 0.15m thick, consisting of regularly laid pebbles up to 0.2m in size with modern mortar repairs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	Internal surface	Up to 0.15m thick consisting of regularly laid pebbles up to 0.2m in size	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
113	Internal surface	Loose dark brown loam occasional small stones. 0.1m thick, consists largely of wood chips and fragments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7 APPENDIX 2 – ARTEFACT SUMMARY

7.1 Introduction

The investigations produced a small finds assemblage comprising mainly pottery (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Feature	Type	Context	Spot date*	Finds summary
101	Subsoil	101	16th-17th century	Pottery (44g)
104	Internal surface	104	12th-13th century	Pottery (95g)
105	External surface	105	16th-17th century	Roof tile (33g)
106	Foundation	107	12th-13th century	Pottery (15g)
108	Redeposited natural	108	16th-17th century	Pottery (1.3kg); roof tile (99g); clay tobacco pipe (4g); animal bone (65g); whetstone (RA 2)
109	Internal surface	109	17th-18th century	Iron curry comb (RA 1)
110	Redeposited natural	110	12th-13th century	Pottery (15g)

* - spot date based on date of latest artefact in context

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and context

7.2 Pottery

Eighty-one pottery sherds weighing 1.5kg were recovered, the majority deriving from layer (108). These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. Sherds are fairly small (average weight 19g), although survive in good condition, with little surface abrasion. A few vessels are represented by more than single sherds. Sixteen fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, held by Albion Archaeology. Fabrics are listed below (Table 2) in chronological order.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context/Sherd No.
<i>Saxo-Norman</i>			
Type B01	St Neots-type ware	14	(108):14
Type B01A	St Neots-type (orange)	3	(108):3
Type B01C	St Neots-type (mixed)	1	(108):1
<i>Medieval</i>			
Type B07	Shell	31	(104):2, (108):28, (110):1
Type C03	Fine sand	2	(108):2
Type C04	Coarse sand	4	(108):4
Type C05	Sand (red margins)	2	(108):2
Type C09	Brill/Boarstall type (fine)	1	(108):1
Type C59A	Coarse sand	2	(108):2
Type C59B	Harsh sand	1	(107):1
Type C71	Buff-grey cored	2	(107):2
Type C75	Micaceous	1	(108):1
Type C85	Sand and calcareous	7	(108):7
<i>Late medieval</i>			
Type E01	Reduced sand	3	(108):3
Type E02	Oxidised sand	6	(108):6
<i>Post-medieval</i>			
Type P01	Fine glazed red earthenware	1	(101):1

Table 2: Pottery type series

The pottery ranges in date from the Saxo-Norman to the post-medieval period, with the bulk of the assemblage being of early medieval origin.



Saxo-Norman pottery comprises eighteen wheel-thrown shell tempered sherds (305g) in the St Neots-type tradition (type B01 and variants B01A, B01C), datable to the 10th-12th centuries. Forms are mainly shallow bowls with simple rounded rims. Two bowls have post-firing holes drilled below their rims to facilitate repair. The exterior surfaces of several sherds are sooted, indicating their use as cooking pots.

The medieval assemblage comprises sixty-two sherds, weighing 1.2kg, the majority of which are wheel-thrown shell tempered examples of 12th-13th century date (B07). Contemporary wheel-thrown and hand-made sand tempered sherds (C03-5, C59A/B, C71, C75 and C85) constitute the remainder of the early medieval material. All are likely to be of local manufacture. Pottery of 13th-15th century date is represented by a glazed jug base sherd of Brill-Boarstall ware (C09), a regional import from Buckinghamshire. Late medieval pottery comprises nine wheel-thrown oxidised and reduced sand tempered sherds of 14th-15th century date (E01, E02).

Vessel forms are jars with everted, square or rectangular rims, jugs, and bowls with simple rounded rims. Decoration is rare and comprises applied thumbed strips on body sherds and thumbing on jug handles.

A single sherd of 17th-century glazed red earthenware (44g) derived from subsoil (101).

7.3 Other finds

Two sand tempered pieces of late medieval/post-medieval flat roof tile (132g) were recovered from layers (105) and (108). The broken edge of one has been deliberately straightened. Layer (108) also contained a post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem fragment, five pieces of animal bone (65g), including a possible cat skull, and an incomplete primary whetstone (RA 2). The latter is made from Norwegian ragstone, and is likely to be of early to high medieval date.

An incomplete iron curry comb (RA 1), used to clean brushes during horse grooming, derived from internal surface (109). Combs with semi-cylindrical blades, of which RA 1 is an example, were introduced at the beginning of the 15th century and continue in use to the present day (Clark 1995). The design of the Romp Hall comb suggests it may be of 17th-18th century date.

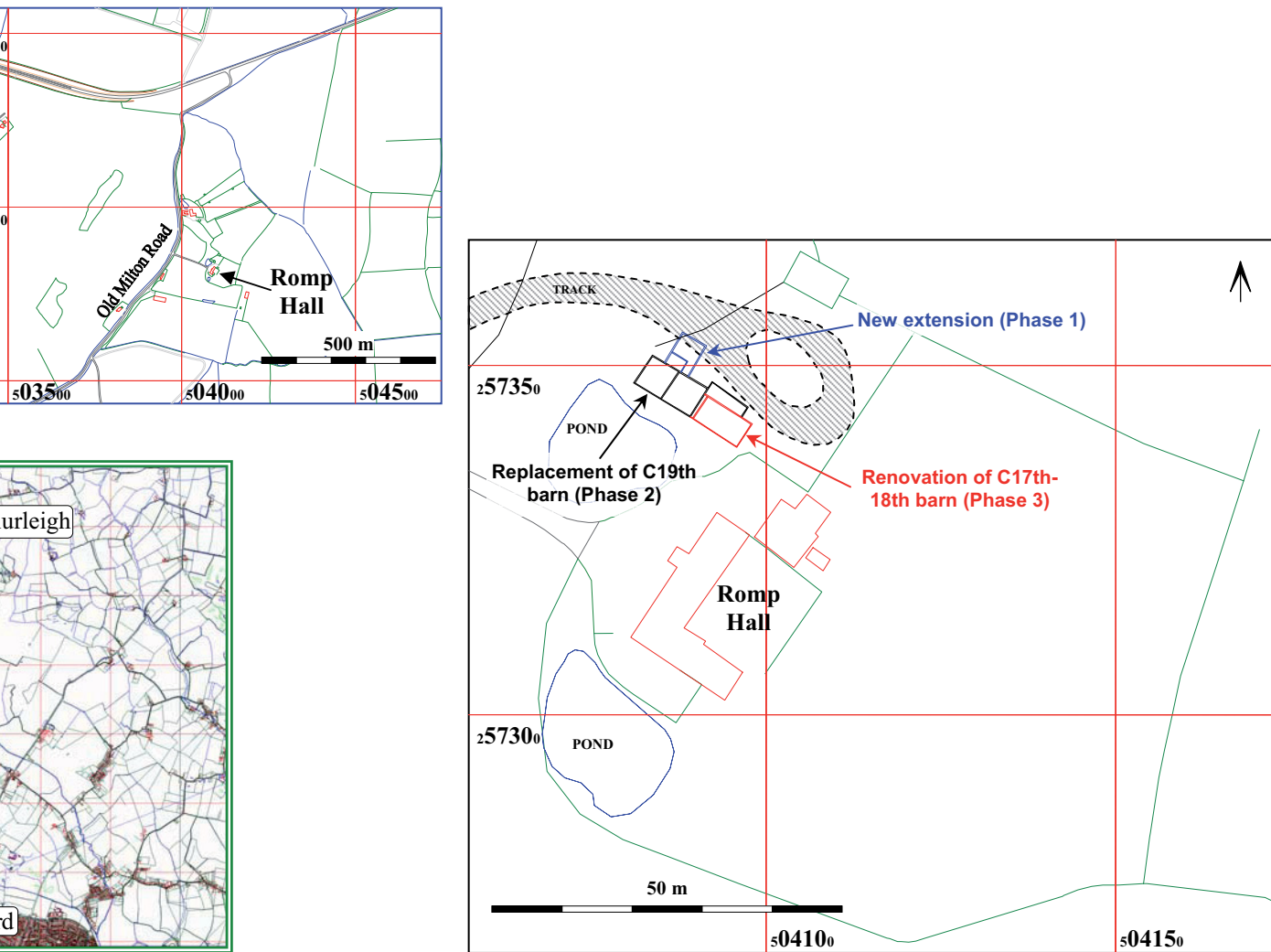
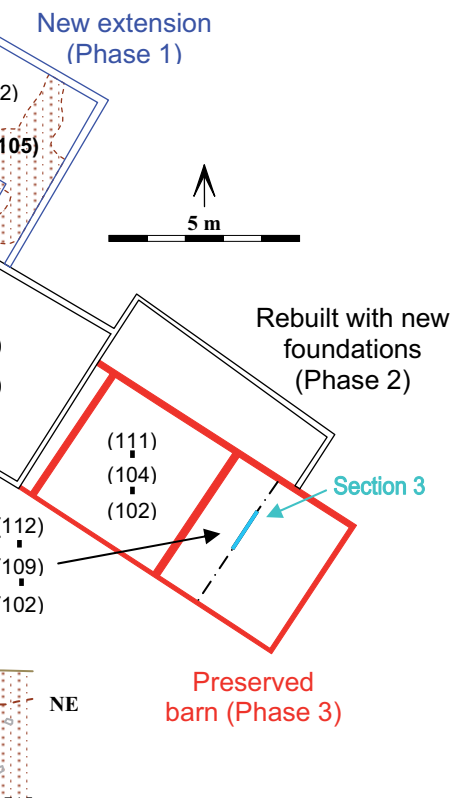
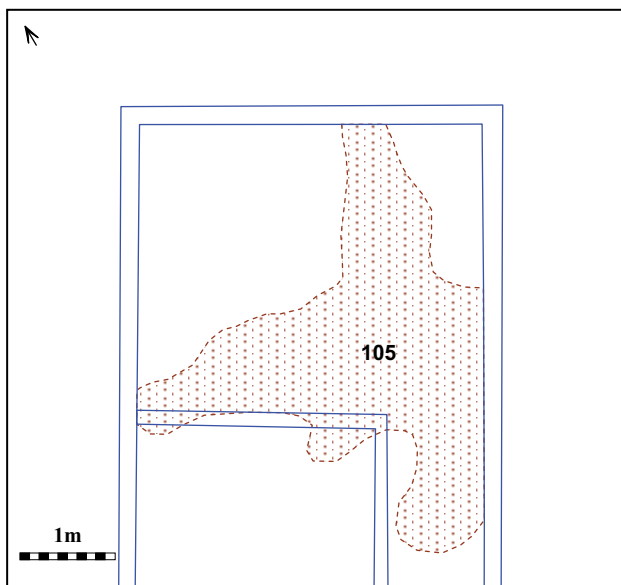


Figure 1: Site location and plan of works

Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford.
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105 looking northeast Scale 40cm

Key





-  Layer
-  Unexcavated portion
-  Excavated segment
-  Root disturbance

Figure 2: All features

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Plate 1: Interior of 19th century extension, facing SE towards 17th-18th century barn. 1m scale.



Plate 2: Interior of south-eastern showing cobbled surface (1)

