

**LAND AT CEMETERY ROAD  
HOUGHTON REGIS  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING**

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Figure 1: Site location and trench plan

*All figures are bound at the back of this report.*



## **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.*

## **Acknowledgements**

*The project was commissioned by John Lawson on behalf of Houghton Regis Town Council and monitored by Martin Oake of Central Bedfordshire Council.*

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

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## **Version History**

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1.0	03/06/2009	n/a

## **Key Terms**

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>CBC</i>	Central Bedfordshire Council
<i>CDT</i>	Conservation and Design Team
<i>Client</i>	Houghton Regis Town Council
<i>IfA</i>	Institute for Archaeologists
<i>HER</i>	Heritage Environment Record



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Houghton Regis Town Council plans to extend the existing town cemetery at Cemetery Road, Houghton Regis, into an adjacent plot of land. Planning permission to use the 0.18ha plot as a cemetery had already been granted. However, prior to its active use, the Town Council wanted to determine whether any archaeological remains were present in the area.*

*The site lies to the south of the historic core of settlement at Houghton Regis which is known to be medieval in origin and may date back to the Saxon period. The site does not contain any known archaeological sites or features. However, there is a strong local tradition that it contains human burials or a mass grave.*

*Six trial trenches were excavated at the site. No remains of archaeological interest were found in any of the trial trenches and no evidence was uncovered to suggest the presence of graves or burials at the site. The findings of the trial trenching indicate that the proposed use of the site as a cemetery will have no archaeological impact.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Houghton Regis Town Council plans to extend the existing town cemetery at Cemetery Road, Houghton Regis into an adjacent plot of land.

Planning permission to use the plot as a cemetery had already been granted. However, prior to its active use, the Town Council wanted to determine whether any archaeological remains were present in the area.

The Town Council contacted Central Bedfordshire Council Conservation and Design Team (CDT) for advice and they in turn issued a brief for a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (CBC 2009) to be carried out at the site.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the Town Council to undertake the trial trenching. A project design was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2009) in accordance with the brief and this document was approved by the CDT prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Houghton Regis cemetery is located towards the south-east of the town, adjacent to Cemetery Road (Figure 1). The site of the extension lies to the immediate north of the existing cemetery and is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference TL01700 23610. The site measures approximately 0.18ha in area and is currently an open lawn area.

### 1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The site lies to the south of the historic core of settlement at Houghton Regis which is known to be medieval in origin and may date back to the Saxon period.

To the north-west is Puddlehill, a former quarry site. Archaeological investigation in advance of quarrying produced substantial evidence of occupation from the Neolithic through to the Saxon period (HER687)

The site of the proposed cemetery extension does not contain any known archaeological sites or features. However, there is a strong local tradition that it contains human burials or a mass grave. There is no documentary evidence to support this tradition.



#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

Given that the use of the site as a cemetery was likely to have a significant impact on any archaeological remains present, and in order to assess that impact and to devise an appropriate mitigation strategy if required, the specific objectives of the archaeological work were to determine:

- the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.

The general objective of the project was to add to the knowledge and understanding of the archaeology of Houghton Regis 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. *Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*
- Bedfordshire County Council. *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford* (1998)

### 2.2 Trial Trenching

The trial trenching was carried out on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Five trenches measuring 10m x 1.65m were initially opened to investigate deposits across the site. A sixth trench measuring 5.3m x 1.65m was opened at the request of the client to investigate an area where below ground features were suspected. A total of c.91m<sup>2</sup> of trenching was excavated at the site (Figure 1).

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the undisturbed geological deposits. The spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

A photographic record was compiled of each trench. All deposits and features were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc.* A full methodology was provided in the Project Design (Albion Archaeology 2009).

### 2.3 Archive

The archive for the site comprising original records, photographs, plans and other supporting documentation will be deposited with Luton Museum under the accession number 2009.64. A copy of this report will also be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service's online OASIS database.



### 3. RESULTS

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#### 3.1 *Overburden and Geological Deposits*

Overburden removed by machine comprised a thin turf layer overlying a dark brown silty clay topsoil, 0.20-0.28m thick, and a mid grey brown clay silt subsoil, 0.15-0.20m thick. Undisturbed geological deposits of chalk were uncovered at a depth of around 0.50m below ground level.

#### 3.2 *Archaeological Deposits*

No deposits of archaeological interest were found within any of the six trial trenches.

#### 3.3 *Modern Intrusions*

Trench 4 contained a line of five post holes [404] containing the remains of wooden posts. The post holes were visible cutting through the topsoil and subsoil indicating a very recent date for their creation. The line also appeared to be a continuation of an existing tree lined boundary.

A number of shallow depressions in the ground surface were visible in the vicinity of trench 5. Within the excavated trench, these depressions corresponded with two large, irregular pits [503] and [505] containing tree branches, scrap metal, plastic debris and brick rubble.

A further large pit was found within trench 6. It also contained large amounts of modern brick rubble and some scrap metal.





## 4. CONCLUSION

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No remains of archaeological interest were found in any of the trial trenches at the site and no evidence was uncovered to suggest the presence of graves or burials in the area. The findings of the trial trenching indicate that the proposed use of the site as a cemetery will have no archaeological impact.



## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Albion Archaeology, 2009. *Land at Cemetery Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire: Project Design for Archaeological Trial Trenching.*

CBC, 2009. *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Cemetery Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire.*



## 6. APPENDIX: CONTEXT DETAILS

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**Trench: 1**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610

**Reason:** Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Turf line	Thickness 0.06m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.27m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.17m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 2**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610

**Reason:** Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Turf line	Thickness 0.06m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.24m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.15m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
300	Turf line	Thickness 0.06m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 3**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610**

**Reason: Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
301	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.27m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.17m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 4**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610**

**Reason: Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
400	Turf line	Thickness 0.06m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.28m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.15m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Posthole	5 postholes forming a line orientated ne-sw.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Timber	Remains of five posts within postholes [404].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
406	Backfill	Clay chalk Backfill of postholes [404].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 5**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610**

**Reason: Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
500	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.23m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.20m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
503	Pit	Irregular shaped modern rubbish pit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
504	Backfill	Backfill of pit [503]. Contains brick, plastic, scrap metal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
505	Pit	Irregular shaped modern pit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
506	Backfill	Backfill of pit [505]. Contains brick, plastic, scrap metal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
507	Turf line	Thickness 0.10m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





**Trench: 6**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 5.30 m. Width: 1.65 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0170023610**

**Reason: Evaluation of site of proposed cemetery**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
600	Turf line	Thickness 0.06m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
601	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay Thickness 0.27m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
602	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt Thickness 0.15m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
603	Natural	Chalk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
604	Pit	Large modern pit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
605	Backfill	Dark brown silty clay Backfill of pit [604]. Contains large quantities of brick rubble, and scrap metal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

