

**YILDEN VILLAGE HALL
YILDEN
BEDFORDSHIRE**

RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Project: YVH 1624

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Produced for:
Landstake

On behalf of:
The Yielden Village Hall Committee

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Introduction

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission to The Yielden Village Hall Committee for the construction of an extension to Yielden Village Hall. Because the work was in an area of significant archaeological sensitivity, Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team recommended that a condition be attached to the planning permission, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording during groundworks, with a programme of post-excavation analysis and publication (as appropriate) to follow the fieldwork (BBC 2010). Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Landstake, acting on behalf of The Yielden Village Hall Committee to produce a project design (Albion Archaeology 2010) and undertake the archaeological works.

The fieldwork and reporting was undertaken by Mark Phillips (Project Officer). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Drew Shottliff (Operations Manager).

A copy of this report and the project archive can be found at Bedford Museum (Accession No. BEDFM 2010.9) and on the OASIS website (albionar1-74736).

Site Description and Location

Yielden Village Hall is located off Spring Lane in Yielden village. It is centred on TL 0109 6700 and lies at a height of *c.* 65m OD (Figure 1). The underlying geology comprises Oxford clay with localised deposits of sand and gravel. The construction works comprised an extension on the north-western part of the existing village hall, covering an area of *c.* 42m².

Archaeological Background

The site lies within the medieval settlement of Yielden (HER17079), *c.* 115m south of the 13th-14th century church of St Mary's (HER1154) and *c.* 160m to the west of the 11th-14th century Yielden Castle (HER341). Other medieval remains include the village green (HER 1187) in the centre of the modern village. A series of earthworks, indicating medieval ridge and furrow are also located *c.* 150m to the west of the site (HER7647). A rabbit warren (HER1472) is also known, *c.* 300m to the north of the site.

In addition, the HER records the presence of cropmarks, *c.* 300m north of the site (HER14005). Although recorded as 'somewhat indistinct', their morphology suggests they are pre-Roman in date and may indicate prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the village. Yielden village also contains numerous historic buildings dating from the post-medieval period to the modern era.

Land off Spring Lane, to the north-east of the site (HER15618) was evaluated in advance of residential development. Investigations revealed sub-surface remains dating from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages. These included Neolithic and early Bronze Age occupation and ditches, gullies, pits and structural remains from the Roman, middle Saxon and medieval periods (BCAS 1992). In 1999, further evaluative work of land to the west took place, confirming the presence of Roman, Saxon and medieval settlement remains (Albion Archaeology 1999).

The site was evaluated in advance of the construction of the Village Hall in 2000 (Albion Archaeology 2000). Investigations revealed a limited range of prehistoric



artefacts, several Saxo-Norman ditches indicative of field systems and a number of Saxo-Norman spring deposits. The prehistoric assemblage was insufficient to suggest occupation. No Roman, medieval or post-medieval remains were identified. The lack of settlement remains in this area reflects its location outside the village boundary (Albion Archaeology 2000).

The evaluation was followed by a watching brief on the footings of the Village Hall (Albion Archaeology 2003). These works confirmed the results of the evaluation, identifying a number of probable pits and indicating the presence of spring deposits within the area of the current extension works.

Project Methodology

Methods employed during the project complied with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999), English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991), and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001).

Description of Groundworks

An area of approximately 10m by 7m was excavated down to the formation level for the floor of the new building. Within this area a trench 0.5m wide and 1m deep was excavated for strip footings for a building measuring 7m by 6m. The earthmoving was done with a mechanical excavator working under archaeological supervision. All works requiring archaeological monitoring were completed on 22nd March 2010.

Results (Figures 2 and 3)

The earliest deposit consisted of very dark grey/black organic clay (6). This was observed in the foundation trench where it continued below the base of the excavation, more than 1m below the ground surface. It contained decayed organic remains, possibly roots. It appears to be a naturally formed deposit which corresponds to the spring deposits found in earlier investigations on the site.

Deposit (6) was covered by further natural deposits, comprising light yellow and blue grey clay (5) over most of the trench with a localised area of dark clay with red brown mottles (4) in the south-west of the excavation area.

These natural strata were sealed by subsoil (3) and topsoil (2) in the north-western part of the trench. Across the remainder of the trench they were sealed by a mixed layer of soil that contained brick debris associated with the construction of the village hall. Four abraded shell-tempered pottery sherds (11g) in the St Neots-type tradition (fabric types B01 and B01B¹), datable to the Saxo-Norman period (c. AD850-1150) were recovered from the upper surface of the subsoil layer (3).

The uppermost part of the soil profile consisted of a layer of mid yellow brown silty clay (1). This deposit became deeper towards the north. It appears to be a levelling layer that was probably deposited during the construction of the village hall in 2004.

No significant archaeological remains were observed during the groundworks.

¹ Defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, held by Albion Archaeology.



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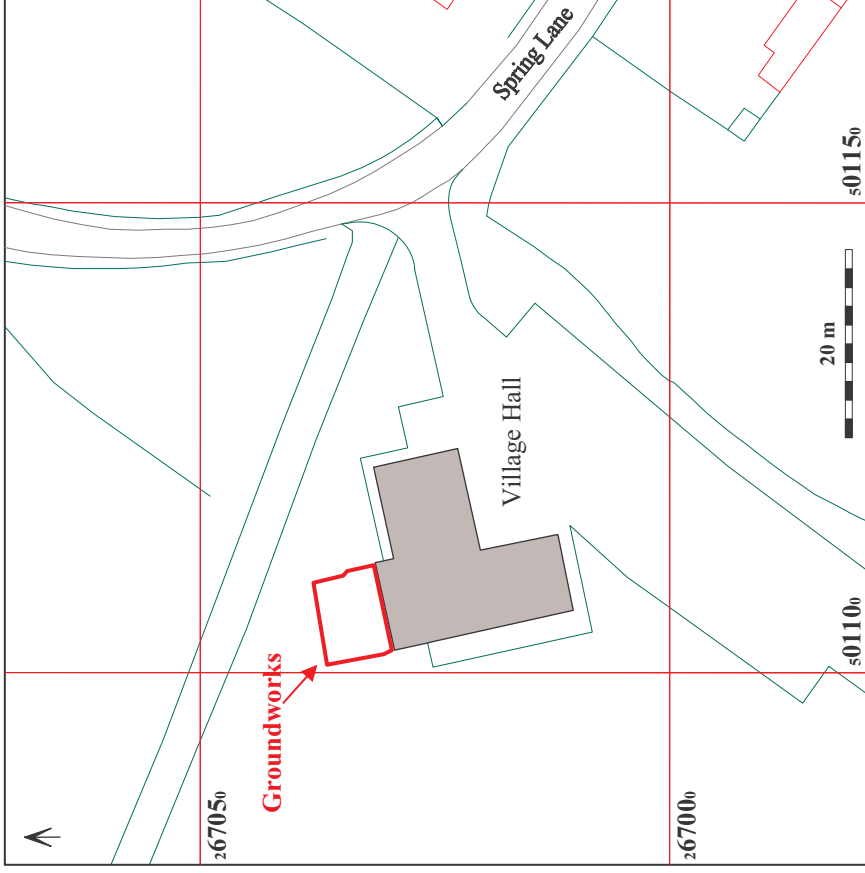
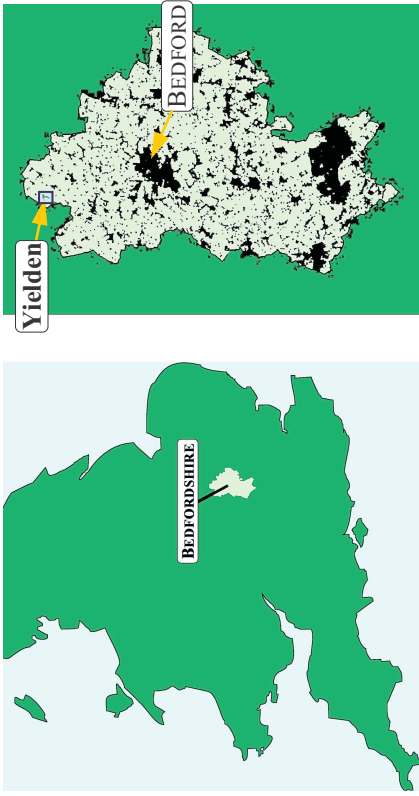
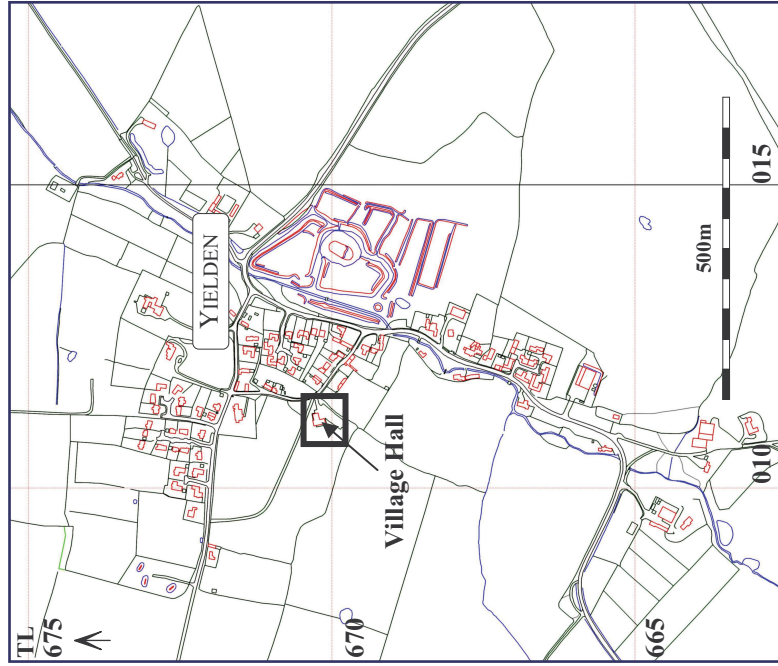


Figure 1: Site location plan

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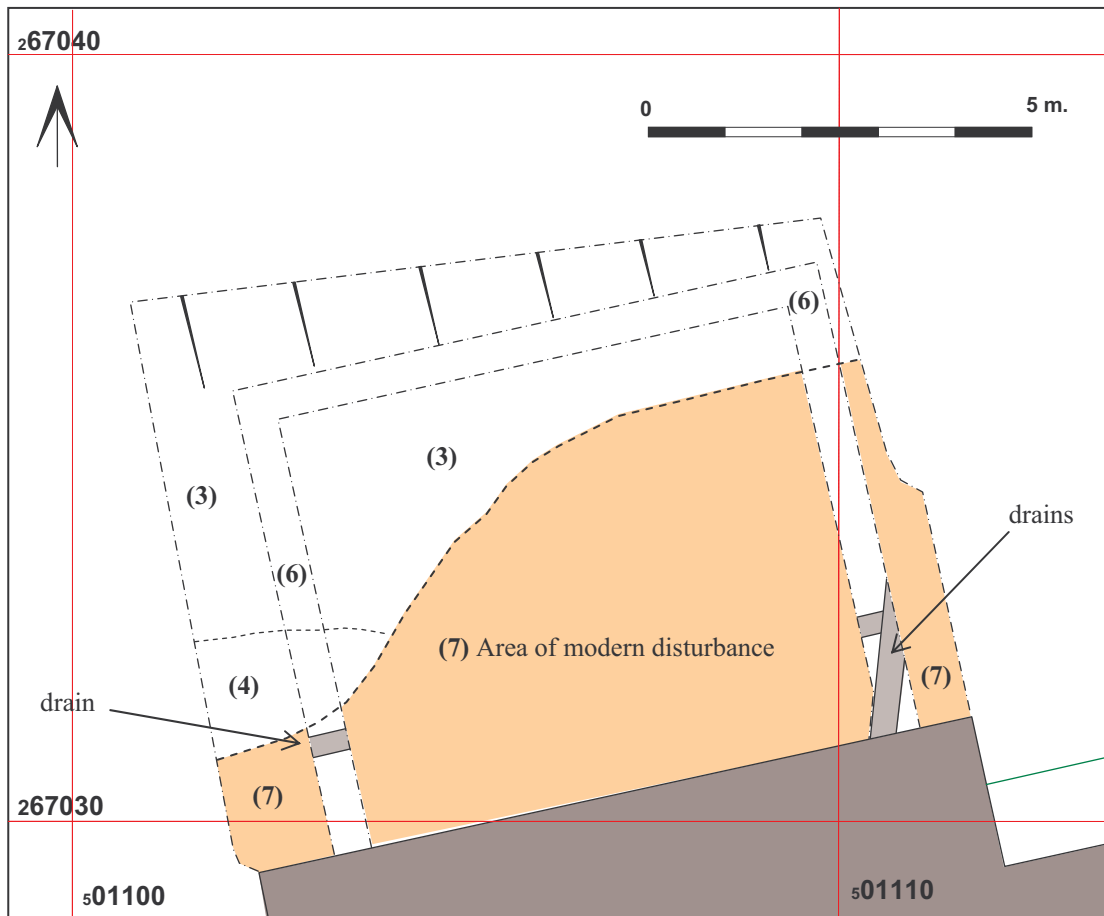


Figure 2: Site plan

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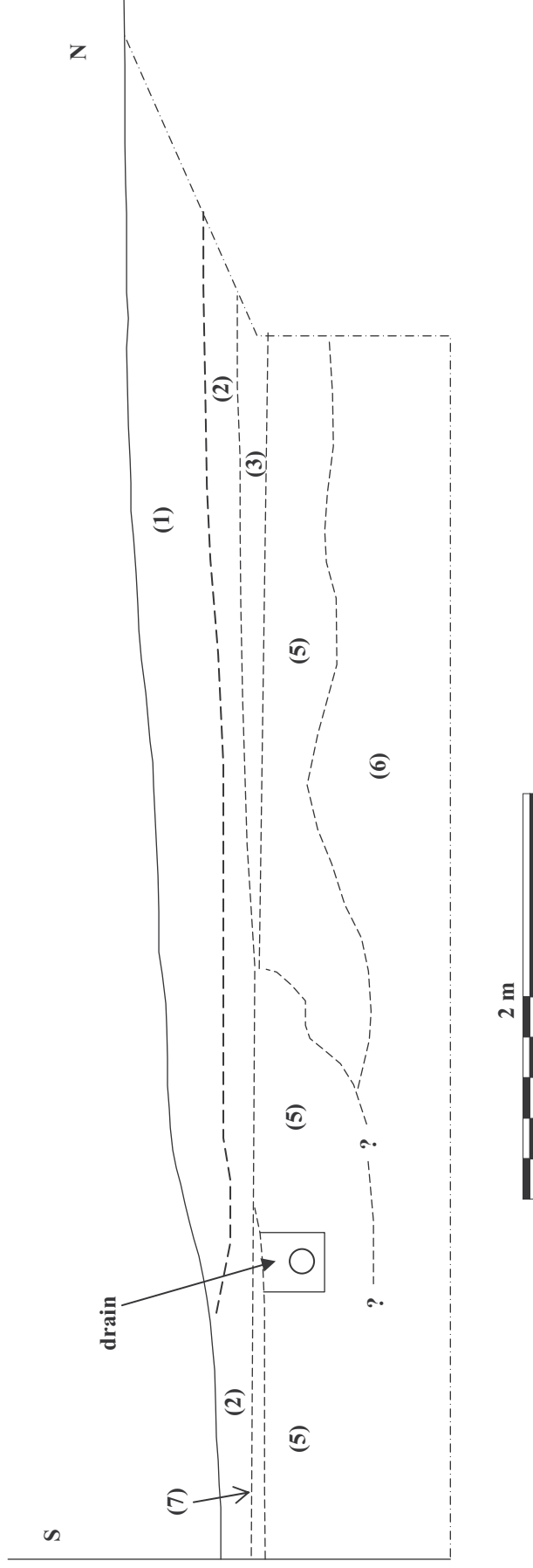


Figure 3: Schematic section through western side of excavation area