



**William Cowley Parchment Works
Caldecote Street
Newport Pagnell
Milton Keynes**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TEST PIT EVALUATION**

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MK HER Event no.	1259
Town / Parish	Newport Pagnell
Address	97 Caldecote Street Newport Pagnell
National Grid Reference	SP 8757 4348
Planning application no.	09/01237/FUL
Archive	Buckinghamshire County Museum
Client	Mr. Wim Visscher
Albion Project no.	PW1590
Fieldwork	30th March 2010





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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 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 Wim Visscher of the William Cowley Parchment Works. The archaeological works were monitored on behalf of the local planning authority by Nick Crank, the Milton Keynes Council Archaeological Officer.

Fieldwork was undertaken by Wesley Keir and Mark Phillips (Project Officers). This report has been prepared by Wesley Keir, with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). The report was edited by Robert Wardill (Project Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBM	Ceramic building material
HER	Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
MKAO	Milton Keynes Council's Archaeological Officer



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted for the demolition of a 19th-century factory building within the site of the William Cowley Parchment Works and the construction of a new three-storey building in its place. Due to the archaeological potential of the site the Milton Keynes Council Archaeological Officer recommended to the Local Planning Authority that no development should take place until the applicant had secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This advice was in accordance with government planning policy.

The Parchment Works lie between Caldecote Street and the River Ouzell/Lovat with the site of the proposed development being centred on NGR SP8757/4348. Trade directory entries suggest that the parchment works were established on the site sometime between 1868 and 1876. Maps dating to 1644 also show elements of the town's civil war defences possibly being located within the site.

The archaeological works comprised the excavation of three test pits that revealed features and deposits associated with the recently demolished parchment works building. These comprised demolition layers, remnants of foundations and make-up layers. In addition, three sunken, wood-lined lime pits and a brick wall foundation were revealed that pre-date the latest form of the building prior to its demolition.

No evidence of the civil war defensive earthwork or any other activity pre-dating the 19th-century parchment works was revealed within the test pits.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (ref. 09/01237/FUL) was granted for the demolition of a factory building within the site of the William Cowley Parchment Works and the construction of a new three-storey building in its place.

Due to the archaeological potential of the site the Milton Keynes Council Archaeological Officer (MKAO) recommended to the Local Planning Authority that no development should take place until the applicant had secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This advice was in accordance with government planning policy.

The MKAO issued a brief (MKAO 2009) outlining the requirement for the site of the development to be evaluated by test pitting. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2010b).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The Parchment Works lie between Caldecote Street and the River Ouzel/Lovat with the site of the proposed development being sited adjacent to the river and centred on NGR SP8757/4348 (Fig. 1).

The geology of the area comprises Alluvium over Kellways Formation (sandstone, siltstone and mudstone).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The site lies to the south of the medieval core of the town and is shown undeveloped on the 1805 Ordnance Survey surveyors' map.

Trade directory entries suggest that the parchment works were established on the site sometime between 1868 and 1876 (Albion Archaeology 2010a). However, an early mill, or mills, has been postulated as being located on this stretch of the Lovat (MKAO 2009). The 19th-century factory building was subject to a programme of historic building recording prior to its demolition (Albion Archaeology 2010a).

Van den Boom's 1644 map of the town's civil war defences shows the site as being in the vicinity of the 'High Halsse Bulworke'. Although the remains of the earthwork defences have been positively identified and are now a scheduled monument to the north in Bury Field, it is uncertain whether this map is reliable with regard to this riverside circuit.

Other than a probable post-medieval burial revealed in 1899 (CAS 4875), little else is recorded in the HER for the vicinity.

1.4 *Project Objectives*

The principal objectives of the test pitting were to determine whether archaeological remains were present at the site and, if so, to record their extent, condition, nature and significance. This information was to be used in the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy for the archaeological remains, if present.



Specific objectives of the work included identifying whether civil war defences were present, as suggested by Van den Boom's map, and whether any early mill buildings or associated features lay within the site.

These particular objectives are in accordance with the Solent Thames Research Agenda with regard to the study of post-medieval military defences and medieval and post-medieval rural settlement morphology and economy. The latest documentation for this research framework can be found at <http://thehumanjourney.net>.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Standards

Throughout the project the standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to:

• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (updated 2008)</i>
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide (2006)</i>
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2002/01)</i>
• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn, 2001).</i>
	<i>Albion Archaeology. Parchment Works, Caldecote Street, Newport Pagnell: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Test Pits. Document 2010/001 (2010)</i>
• MKAO	<i>Parchment Works, Caldecote Street, Newport Pagnell: Brief for Archaeological Evaluation. Ref. PS/537/2/A/C2524.</i>

2.2 Test Pits

The fieldwork was undertaken on 30th March 2010 following demolition of the existing building and clearance of rubble from the site. The works comprised the excavation of three test pits, each measuring approximately 3m x 3m, and covering a total area of c.27m² (Figure 1). They were located on the site of the demolished factory, and within the footprint of the proposed new building.

The test pits were opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, operated by an experienced driver under archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of either archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits. The spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

The bases and sections of the pits were cleaned by hand in order to clarify the nature of the deposits. All deposits were recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. The deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Test Pit 1, 200 for Test Pit 2 and 300 for Test Pit 3 (see Appendix).

A detailed methodology was set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2010b) and was approved by the MKAO prior to commencement of fieldwork. The excavations were backfilled following the agreement of the MKAO.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The findings within the test pits are summarised below and shown on Figure 2. Detailed descriptions of all contexts and deposits can be found in the Appendix.

3.2 Undisturbed Geological Deposits and Overburden

The upper deposits within all three pits consisted of deposits associated with the recently demolished factory building. These comprised a mixture of tarmac and concrete hardstanding together with brick rubble and remnants of building foundations. Within Pits 2 and 3, these deposits overlay a distinct silty clay make-up layer containing small brick fragments (201/301).

Undisturbed geological deposits were reached at between 0.46m and 0.57m beneath the ground surface (between 53.98m and 54.25m OD) and consisted of alluvium overlying sandy gravel.

3.3 Archaeological Remains

3.3.1 Test Pit 1

No archaeological remains were found in Test Pit 1.

3.3.2 Test Pit 2

A north-south aligned brick structure (203) was revealed beneath the remnants of the factory building's concrete and brick floor surfaces within the eastern side of Test Pit 2. This probably represents the footings of an internal division that was no longer extant in the recently demolished building.

3.3.3 Test Pit 3

The remains of three rectangular, wood-lined pits (303) were partially revealed beneath the overburden within Test Pit 3. Lime residue was visible adhering to the wood lining of the pits, which had been backfilled predominantly with clinker before being overlain with concrete.



4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Summary of Findings

All the archaeological features and deposits revealed within the test pits appeared to be associated with the recently demolished 19th-century parchment works building.

These comprised demolition layers, remnants of foundations and make-up layers. In addition, three backfilled probable lime pits and a brick wall foundation were revealed, both of which pre-date the latest form of the building prior to its demolition.

Pits or baths filled with dissolved lime were used in the initial phase of parchment manufacture in order to soak the animal skins before they were washed and scraped to remove hair and flesh (Albion Archaeology 2010a). These sunken pits were replaced by above ground baths at a later date. The outlines of infilled lime soaking pits were noted in the floor of the building in this location prior to its demolition (Albion Archaeology 2010a).

No evidence of the civil war defensive earthwork shown in the vicinity of the excavations on van den Boom's 1644 map, or any other activity pre-dating the 19th-century parchment works was revealed within the test pits. It is possible the defensive ditch was located further away from the river or was not needed in this location due to the proximity of the river.

4.2 Deposit Model and Confidence Rating

The table below details the deposits revealed by the test pitting. It shows the minimum depths below ground level (max. height OD) at which the deposits were identified. It is reasonable to predict that deposits within the unexcavated part of the development area will fall within the ranges identified.

	Height at which revealed (m OD)		Composition
	Max	Min	
Layers associated with demolition and use of the parchment works building	54.77	54.55	Tarmac/concrete; mixed rubble/silt
Features pre-dating the latest form of the parchment works building prior to its demolition	54.70	54.32	Backfilled lime pits in Test Pit 2 and brick structure in Test Pit 3
Make-up layer for the parchment works building	54.65	54.22	Firm grey-brown silty clay with flecks of brick and tile
Alluvium	54.25	53.98	Firm grey-brown silty clay
Natural gravels	53.85	53.61	Sandy gravel

Table 1: Deposit Model

By sampling a large percentage of the development area, the evaluation can be said with reasonable confidence to have characterised the archaeological potential of the site with regard to the nature, extent, date and condition of any remains preserved therein. A full profile from the undisturbed natural deposits to the modern ground level was seen in all test pits.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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MKAO, 2009. *Parchment Works, Caldecote Street, Newport Pagnell: Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*, Milton Keynes Council



6. APPENDIX: CONTEXT DETAILS



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.50 m. Width: 3.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.1 m. Max: 0.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP 87574 43474

Reason: Evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Make up layer	Tarmac hardstanding over mixed rubble, over bands of redeposited clay over mixed soil containing mortar and brick fragments. 0.46m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Alluvium	Mid brown silty clay with occasional small stones. 0.45m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Alluvium	Dark blue grey clay silt deposit within (101), formed through naturally decaying organic matter.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Yellow brown sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Alluvium	Dark blue grey clay silt deposit within (101), formed through naturally decaying organic matter.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.00 m. Width: 3.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.1 m. Max: 0.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP 87576 43483

Reason: Evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Demolition layer	Mixture of brick foundations, brick rubble and concrete associated with the recently demolished parchment works building. Up to 0.40m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Make up layer	Firm grey-brown silty clay with occasional flecks of CBM. 0.17m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Alluvium	Firm grey brown silty clay. 0.35m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Brickwork	Brick walled structure measuring 3m+ long, c. 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep. Overlain by a concrete layer within (200). Possible brick lined pit associated with the parchment works.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Backfill	Brick rubble backfill into (203).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Natural	Yellow brown sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 3.50 m. Width: 3.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.1 m. Max: 0.1 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP 87573 43491

Reason: Evaluate area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Demolition layer	Brick rubble, gravel and sandy silt associated with the recently demolished parchment works. 0.21m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Make up layer	Firm grey-brown silty clay with occasional flecks of CBM. 0.40m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Alluvium	Firm grey brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Pit	Rectangular pit with wood lined vertical sides measuring 3.6m+ long, 1m wide and 0.8m+ deep. Parchment works processing pit. Two further pits were partially visible within the trench.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Backfill	Backfill into processing pit, consisting predominantly of clinker with a smaller amount of processing waste and building rubble.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Natural	Yellow brown sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

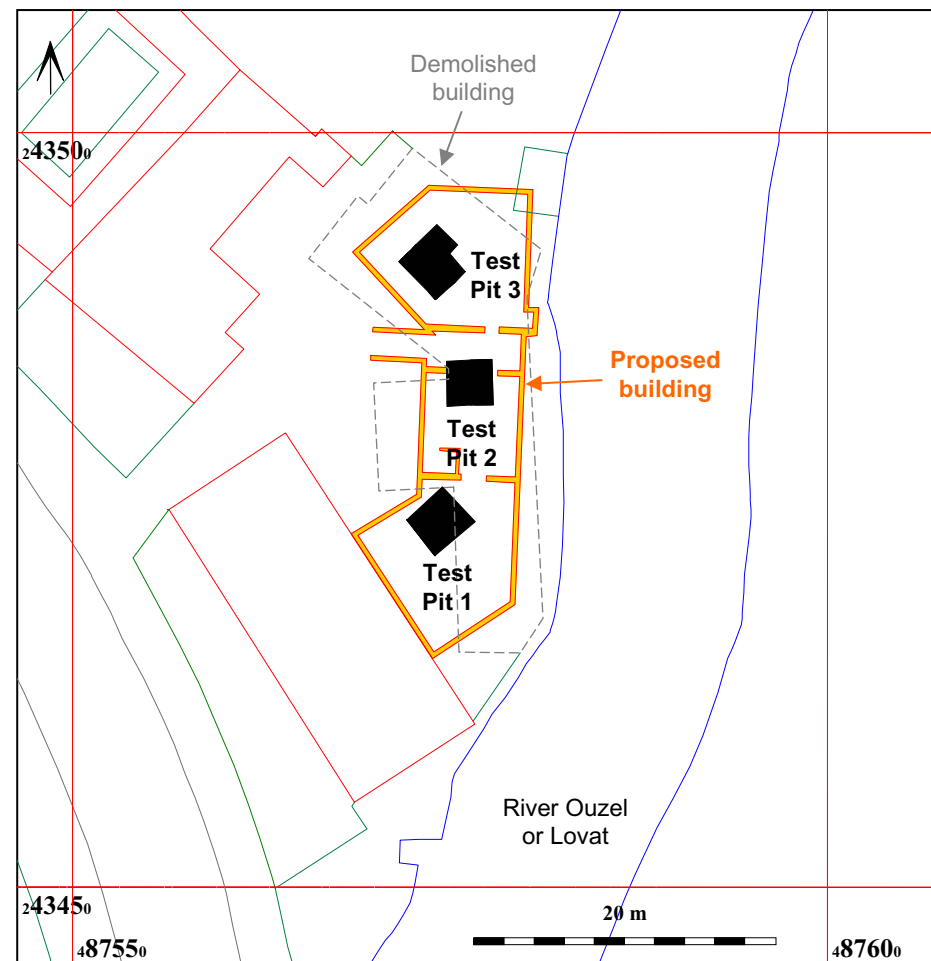
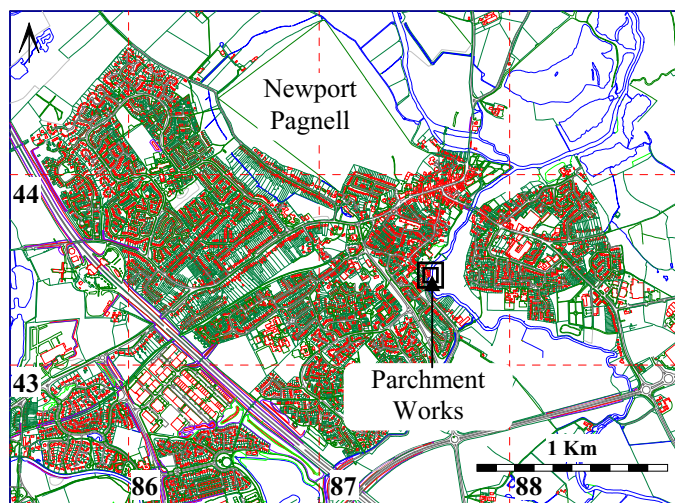
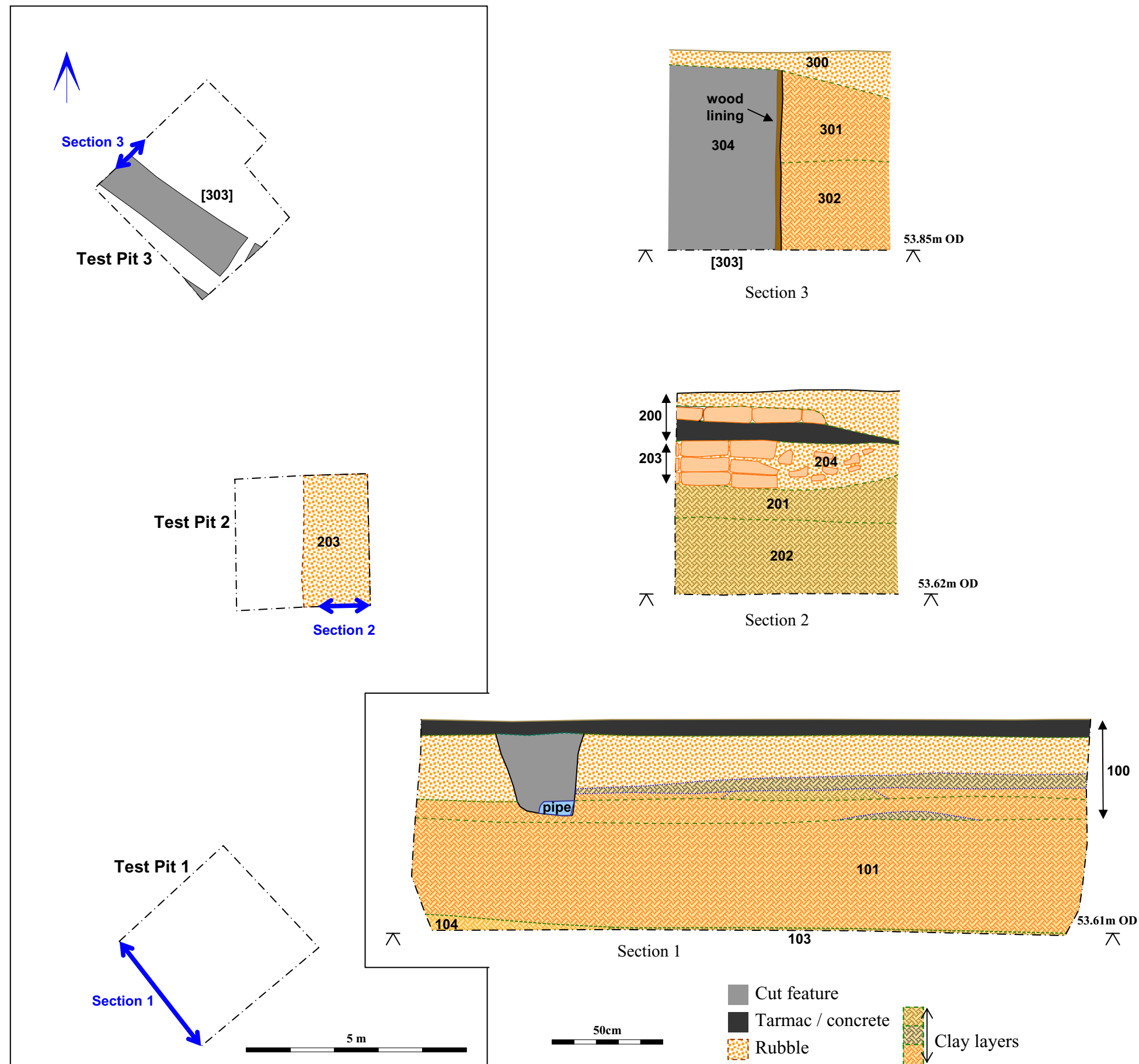


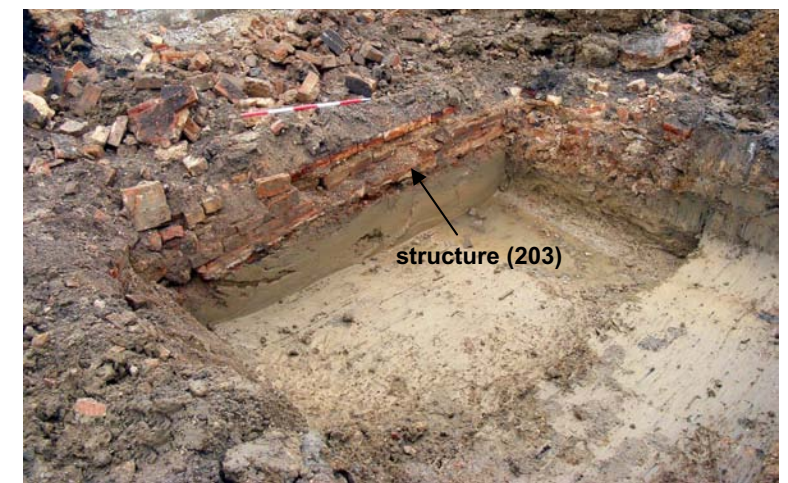
Figure 1: Site location plan

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Albion Archaeology, Central Bedfordshire Council, OS Licence No. 100017358(LA). © Crown Copyright.

*William Cowley Parchment Works, Caldecote Street, Newport Pagnell, Milton Keynes:
Archaeological Test Pit Evaluation*



Test Pit 3 looking SW, scale 1m



Test Pit 2 looking SE, scale 1m



Test Pit 1 looking SW, scale 1m

Figure 2: All features plan