



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief
at Tempsford Hall, Station Road,
Tempsford, Bedfordshire
July – November 2007



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Report 08/041

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at Tempsford Hall, Station Road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks connected with the construction of a temporary access road, works compound and a swale pit with a water pipe trench followed by the construction of new buildings along with associated groundworks, on land at Tempsford Hall, Station Road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire. A severely truncated natural substratum was present within the area of the new buildings and no archaeologically significant artefacts were recovered. Within the area of the temporary access road, works compound and swale pit, undisturbed deposits were encountered however no archaeological deposits were present. A number of unstratified artefacts were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil layers.	
Project type	Watching Brief; Planning Application 06/2113/FUL	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Commercial headquarters of the Kier Group Limited.	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Tempsford Hall, Station Road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 165, 535	
Height OD	19.2 – 17.4m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	The County Archaeological Officer, Bedfordshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	David J. Leigh	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Kier Group Ltd, Tempsford Hall, Bedfordshire	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	July 2007	
End date	November 2007	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Bedford Museum	Metal objects (13)
Paper	Bedford Museum	Watching brief forms (19) Colour slides (22) black and white contact prints (22) Digital photographs (67) Video (3)
Digital	Bedford Museum	Report text and figures

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
TEMPSFORD HALL, STATION ROAD, TEMPSFORD
BEDFORDSHIRE
JULY – NOVEMBER 2007**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between July and November 2007 during groundworks connected with the construction of a temporary access road, works compound and swale pit with a water pipe trench followed by the construction of new buildings along with associated groundworks on land at Tempsford Hall, Station road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire. A severely truncated natural substratum was present within the area of the new buildings and no archaeologically significant artefacts were recovered. Within the area of the temporary access road, works compound and swale pit undisturbed deposits were encountered, however no archaeological deposits were present. A number of unstratified artefacts were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil layers.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between July and November 2007 during groundworks associated with the construction of a temporary access road, works compound and a swale pit with a water pipe trench followed by the construction of new buildings along with associated groundworks on land at Tempsford Hall, Station Road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 165, 535: Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of The Kier Group Limited, in order to fulfil the requirements of a brief for an archaeological watching brief issued by The County Archaeological Officer, Bedfordshire County Council on the 29th June 2007 and following an specification produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Leigh 2007) and approved by the County Archaeological Officer.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

The parish of Tempsford is located in north-east Bedfordshire approximately 12km east of the county town of Bedford, 9km north of the market town of Biggleswade and 7km south of the market town of St Neots, Cambridgeshire. It is situated within the valley of the River Great Ouse, which runs to its confluence with the River Ivel. The development area itself is located on ground sloping down towards the south, from a height of c19.2m aOD to 17.4m aOD within the grounds of Tempsford Park just to the south of the present village of Tempsford.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as Gravel deposits of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd terraces. The drift geology of most of the parish of Tempsford comprises Oxford Clay overlain by deposits of Boulder Clay, forming ridges of higher ground east of Church End and north of Langford Close End, close to the Little Barford parish boundary. The soils are recorded as imperfectly drained gleyed brown earths of the Milton Association (King 1969).

2.2 Historical Background

The development area is located within an area of archaeological interest. A large body of data for the history of the Tempsford area from the immediate post-glacial period through to the present day is contained within the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). This has been summarised both within a desk-based assessment (Albion Archaeology 2006) and in a monograph detailing the excavation of a medieval moated enclosure in Tempsford Park (HER 9276) (Maull and Chapman 2005).

2.3 The prehistoric landscape

The earliest finds recovered from the immediate area around the development area include a number of stone tools and other artefacts dating from the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. A series of Bronze Age ritual monuments, including five ring ditches of former round barrows, was excavated to the north of the Great River Ouse at Roxton during 1972-74 (Taylor and Woodward 1985) (HER No: 617). Crop-marks of further ring ditch round barrows lie south of Tempsford Church End and east of the River Ivel (HER 1776). Other finds of prehistoric date include a series of Bronze Age flint scatters recovered from the fields north of the excavated ring ditches (Woodward 1978).

2.4 The Iron Age and Roman landscape

A series of rectilinear enclosures excavated with the Bronze Age ring ditches (HER 617) date from the 1st century BC-1st century AD, and appear to have been fields associated with a nearby farmstead (Taylor and Woodward 1985). The local landscape contains many similar crop-mark sites of probable enclosures and associated fields that formed small farmsteads. These all lie close to a Romano-British villa (HER 801), where excavation in 1962 uncovered building materials including ashlar blocks, tesserae, and marble fragments along with large amounts of pottery and other artefacts (Simco 1984). Crop-marks of probable Iron Age/Roman enclosures lie both to the north-east and south of Tempsford Park (HER 627 and 671).

These sites all lie within 4km of the course of a Roman road that forms the present eastern limit of Tempsford parish (HER 505). This road links a number of small Roman towns including Godmanchester, (*Durovigutum*), Sandy and Baldock, to Ermine Street, one of the major Roman roads.

2.5 The Saxon and medieval landscape

The two historic cores of Tempsford comprise Langford End to the north-east and Church End to the south-west. Crop-marks of medieval earthworks lie both to the north and south of Langford End along the eastern end of Station Road (HER 1848), and include Mossbury Manor. To the west there is a possible ford across the River Great Ouse (HER 8803), which would have connected Langford End to the village of Roxton. Church End contains a small square moated enclosure known as Gannocks Castle (HER 761). There are also further earthworks (HER 17155) and former cottages (HER 9733) to the east of the A1 at the southern end of Tempsford Park.

An archaeological excavation was carried out on the site of a medieval moated enclosure to the north-west of the development area (Fig 2). This revealed intensive occupation of the site from the middle Saxon period through to the mid 15th century (Maull & Chapman 2005).

2.6 Tempsford Hall and Park

Tempsford Hall and Park was established by Sir Gillies Payne in the late 18th century, through the 19th and early 20th centuries it was occupied by the Stuart family. It is presently the corporate headquarters of the Kier Group Limited.

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken within the development area

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the construction of the temporary access road, works compound and swale pit followed by the construction of the new buildings, along with associated groundworks, and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered.
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts.

- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis.

The fieldwork comprised a number of visits to the site during the erection of a newt fence and the creation of the temporary access road, works compound and swale pit and water pipe trench (Plates 1 – 5 & 9 – 10) followed by the construction of the new buildings (Fig 2; Plates 7 & 8). The new buildings comprised of a workshop which was located to the north-east of Tempsford Hall, and an office block to the north east of the workshop. The groundworks were carried out using a variety of 360° mechanical excavators fitted with a combination of both toothed and toothless buckets. A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the standards and guidelines for an archaeological watching brief (IFA 2000).

During the course of the groundworks a metal detector survey using an XP Goldmax metal-detector (Plate 6) was undertaken across all areas stripped of topsoil and subsoil and over all associated spoil-heaps.

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The newt fence (Fig 2)

A newt fence was erected along the eastern boundary of the access road and continued around the works compound and the northern boundary of the development area (Fig 2; Plate 2). The construction of the newt fence comprised the excavation of a narrow trench, approximately 0.20m wide with a maximum depth of 0.20m. A constant depth of 0.20m was maintained even within the area of preserved ridge and furrow with the newt fence following the undulations of the earthworks. As the excavation of the trench progressed wooden posts were set-in which supported a UV resistant polythene membrane creating a barrier preventing amphibians from straying into the development area.

An examination of the stratigraphy within the trench revealed mid brown silt loam subsoil, overlain by grey/brown topsoil, up to 0.16m thick, containing occasional irregular stones.

4.2 The temporary access road, works compound and swale pit (Fig 2)

Once the newt fence had been completed the area of the new access road, works compound and a swale pit with connecting water trench were excavated (Fig 2; Plates 3-5) and a geotextile membrane was laid onto which a hardcore surface was constructed.

The stratigraphic sequence comprised grey/brown compact clay with patches of orange/red gravel. This was overlain by mid brown silt loam subsoil, up to 0.24m thick, containing occasional irregular stones. Sealing this was grey/brown topsoil, up to 0.16m thick, containing occasional irregular stones and very occasional fragments of modern ceramic building material.

A number of unstratified metal objects were recovered from within the topsoil horizon in the northern half of the access road and within the area of the works compound.

4.3 **The new workshop (Fig 2)**

Within the area of the new workshop a severely truncated natural substratum was revealed. This comprised orange/red sand and gravel with patches of grey/brown compact clay. Cutting into this were a number of modern pits and trenches containing large fragments of modern ceramic building material and objects made of modern plastic and rubber.

Sealing this was a layer of mixed mid grey/brown silt loam, up to 0.20m thick containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and modern fragments of corroded iron objects.

4.4 **The new office block (Fig 2)**

An examination of the stratigraphy revealed a natural substratum of grey/brown compact clay. In the western half of the area this was overlain by a mixed deposit of grey/black silt loam, up to 0.56m thick, containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and modern electrical cable and electrical insulation fragments.

In the eastern half of the workshop area, the natural substratum was overlain by mid brown silt loam subsoil, up to 0.32m thick, containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and occasional irregular stones. This was sealed by grey/brown silt loam topsoil, up to 0.30m thick, containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and occasional irregular stones.

5 THE METAL FINDS

A total of 14 metal objects were collected during the metal-detector survey, these were recovered from unstratified deposits and may be regarded as casual losses.

DESCRIPTION OF OBJECT	DATE	QUANTITY
Lead alloy musket balls, size equates to 20 Bore	Post 1704	5
Bell constructed of copper alloy sheet metal	1400 -1450	1
Copper alloy shoe buckle	1720 - 1790	1
Copper alloy thimble, machine made	17 th Century	1
Copper alloy ring, with a soldered joint	Undated	1
Tin farthings	17th Century	4

6 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	19
Colour slides	22
Black and white contacts and negatives	22
Digital photographs	67
Video	3
Metal objects	14

7 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the watching brief clearly indicate that whilst extensive truncation of the natural substratum has occurred within the immediate vicinity of Tempsford Hall, the area of the temporary access road contains undisturbed soils.

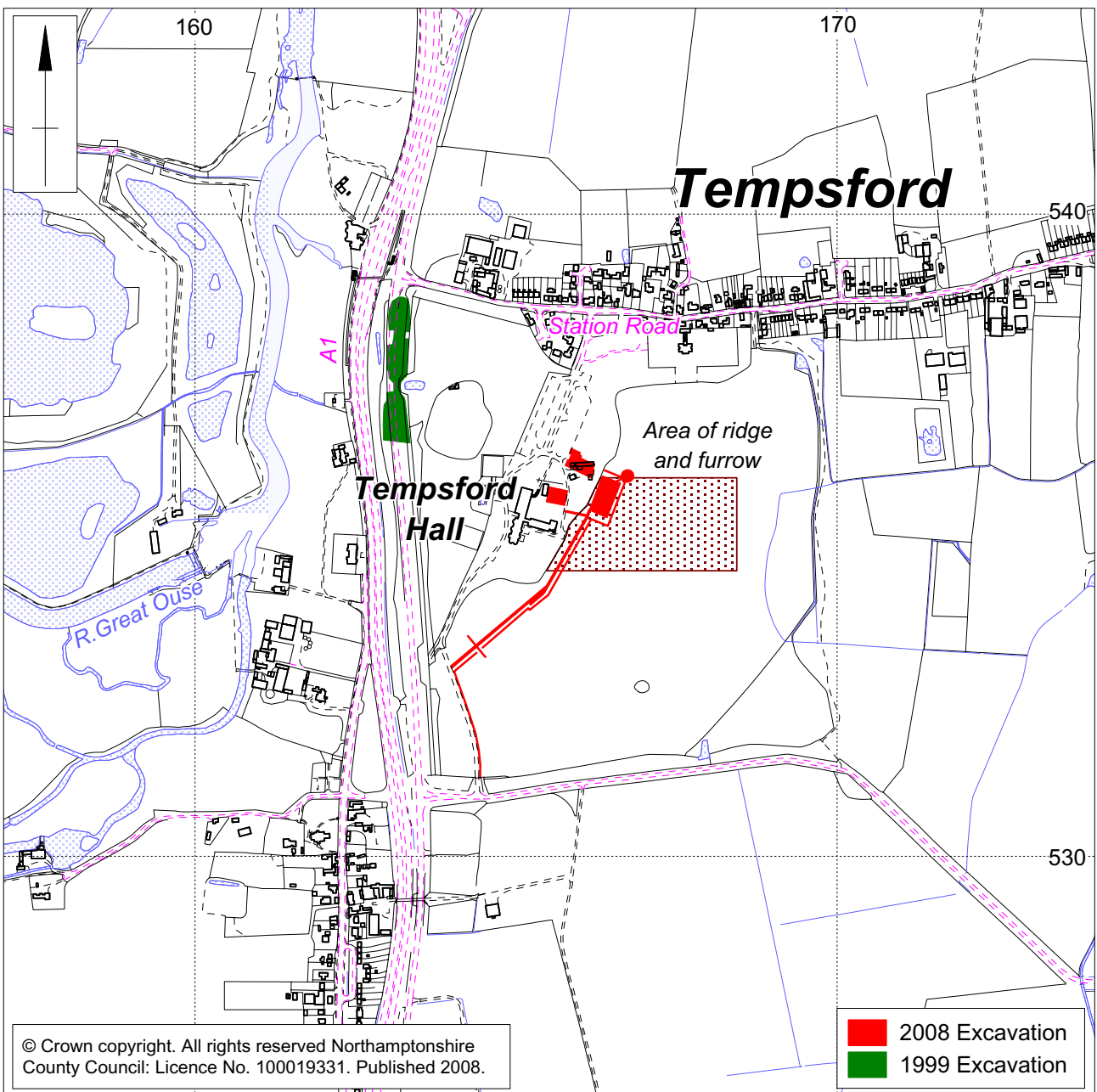
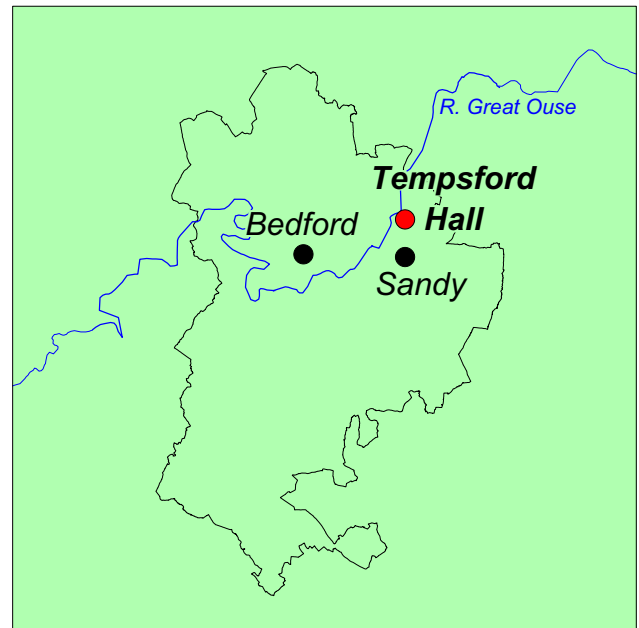
No archaeological deposits were present and only unstratified artefacts were recovered during the metal-detector survey. These varied in date and are indicative of casual losses. The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mauell, A & Chapman A 2005 *A Medieval Moated Enclosure in Tempsford Park*, Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph 5

IFA 2000 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Leigh, D, J 2007 *A specification for an archaeological watching brief on land at Tempsford Hall, Tempsford, Bedfordshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Project Specification



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:10,000

Plan of works Fig 2



Plate 1: The area of the temporary access road prior to stripping



Plate 2: Construction of the newt fence



Plate 3: The temporary access road during stripping



Plate 4: Laying of hardcore along the temporary access road



Plate 5: The area of the temporary works compound



Plate 6: Metal detecting in the area of the temporary compound



Plate 7: The area of the new workshop building



Plate 8: The area of the new office building



Plate 9: The new swale pit



Plate 10: The water pipe trench entering the swale pit