
Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief

At The Hayloft, Bletsoe

Bedfordshire

November 2005



David J. Leigh

January 2006

Report 05/141

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

t. 01604 700493/4

f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk



STAFF

Project Manager Tony Walsh BA
 Text David J.Leigh BA Hons
 Fieldwork David J.Leigh
 Illustrations Andrew Smith BA Hons

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Tony Walsh		
Verified by	Andy Mudd		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at The Hayloft, Bletsoe Bedfordshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks connected with the construction of a single garage on land at The Hayloft, Bletsoe. The foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 450mm and revealed a hard-standing or driveway of relatively modern date. No archaeological deposits were present and no artefacts were recovered.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Watching Brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	None	
Current Land use	Private driveway/access	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address (including postcode)	The Hayloft, Castlebarns, Coplowe Lane, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire, MK44 1QE	
Study area (sq.m or ha)		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	50251 25829	
Height OD	c57m OD	
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	Tony Walsh	
Sponsor or funding body	Mrs Fiona Webb	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2005	
End date	November 2005	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper	Bedford Museum Accession No: 2005.404	Watching brief forms (2) Colour slides (16) black and white contact prints (16) Digital photographs (8)
Digital	Bedford Museum	Report text and figures

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
4	THE RECORDED EVIDENCE
5	THE SITE ARCHIVE
6	CONCLUSIONS
	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Figures

Fig 1: Location of Castlebarns, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire

Fig 2 Location of groundworks

Plates

Plate 1: View of Castlebarns, Bletsoe from the entranceway

Plate 2: General view of the groundworks area

Plate 3: The north-south foundation trench, viewed towards the north

Plate 4: View west along the southern east-west foundation trench with the lower original ground in the background

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE HAYLOFT,
BLETSOE, BEDFORDSHIRE
JANUARY 2005**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during groundworks connected with the construction of a single garage on land at The Hayloft, Castlebarns, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire, which lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bletsoe Castle. The foundations were excavated to a maximum depth of 450mm and revealed a hard-standing or driveway of relatively modern date below the present metalled surface which extended to the base of the foundation trenches. No archaeological deposits were present and no artefacts were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in November 2005 during groundworks associated with the construction of a single garage on land at The Hayloft, Castlebarns, Coplowe Lane, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 0251 5829: Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Mrs Fiona Webb 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 7th July 2005. It was undertaken in accordance with an approved specification (Leigh 2005).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

The Hayloft is located within the residential development of Castlebarns, which comprise dwellings converted from a former farm and associated agricultural buildings. The new garage is to be tied in to an existing former agricultural building which has been converted into garages (Fig 2). The development area lies at a height of c57m aOD and encompasses an area approximately 25 square metres. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as Boulder Clay and Oxford Clay.

2.2 Historical Background

The development area is located within an area of archaeological interest within the earthworks of Bletsoe Castle which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (HER 308). The complex of Bletsoe Castle is considered to be of major historical importance.

The present complex is Grade II Listed and is believed to date from the 16/17th centuries. It is situated within a square moat *c*25m wide by 3.5m deep with an outer bank 2m high by 5m wide, and there are earthworks connected with medieval and post-medieval garden enclosures. A Grade II Listed stone bridge, dated to the 16th century crosses the moat in front of the building.

The site is originally thought to have been occupied by a Norman Castle and subsequently developed into a medieval moated site. Documentary evidence suggests Bletsoe Castle to have been the birthplace of the mother of Henry VII.

Up until the present development the area of the new garage has formed part of the modern driveway and parking area of Castlebarns. No previous archaeological work has been carried out within the area of development.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the construction of the new garage, 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.

The fieldwork comprised a single visit to the site during the excavation of the foundation trenches (Fig 1; Plate 1). The foundation trenches were excavated using a combination of hand tools and electrical cutting tools. A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, along 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 1999).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The foundation trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 450mm with a maximum width of 450mm. Examination revealed a modern reinforced concrete hard-standing or driveway with kerb-stones at a depth of 430mm below present ground surface. This extended across all of the development area, with the exception of the western half of the southern east-west trench.

Overlying the concrete was grey/brown silt loam containing numerous fragments of modern concrete and fragments of ceramic building material and plastic sheeting. This was 330mm

thick across the area of the concrete hard-standing and extended all the way to the base of the western half of the southern east-west trench.

Sealing this across all of the area of the foundation trench was a modern metallised surface, up to a maximum thickness of 100mm.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive comprises:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	2
Colour slides	16
Black and white contacts and negatives	16
Digital photographs	8

6 CONCLUSIONS

Across most of the development area modern hard-standing material was revealed. This was of modern reinforced construction and suggest that this area was in use up until relatively recently and was utilised by heavy machinery or vehicles probably connected with the former agricultural use of Castlebarns. With the subsequent change of use this was left in-situ rather than being removed and has been simply overlain by the present driveway.

The extent of the former hard-standing is defined by the material in the western half of the southern east-west trench. This material appears to have been used to level up this area to the same height as the new driveway. This is borne out by the ground to the west of the development which lies approximately 350mm lower and appears to be original ground.

No archaeological deposits were revealed and no artefacts were recovered, but in view of the shallow nature of the groundworks it is not possible to say that archaeological deposits are not present sealed beneath the former hard-standing.

The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IFA 1999 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* Institute of Field Archaeologists

Leigh, D, 2005 *Specification for an archaeological watching brief at the Hayloft, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire* Northamptonshire Archaeology Specification for archaeological work

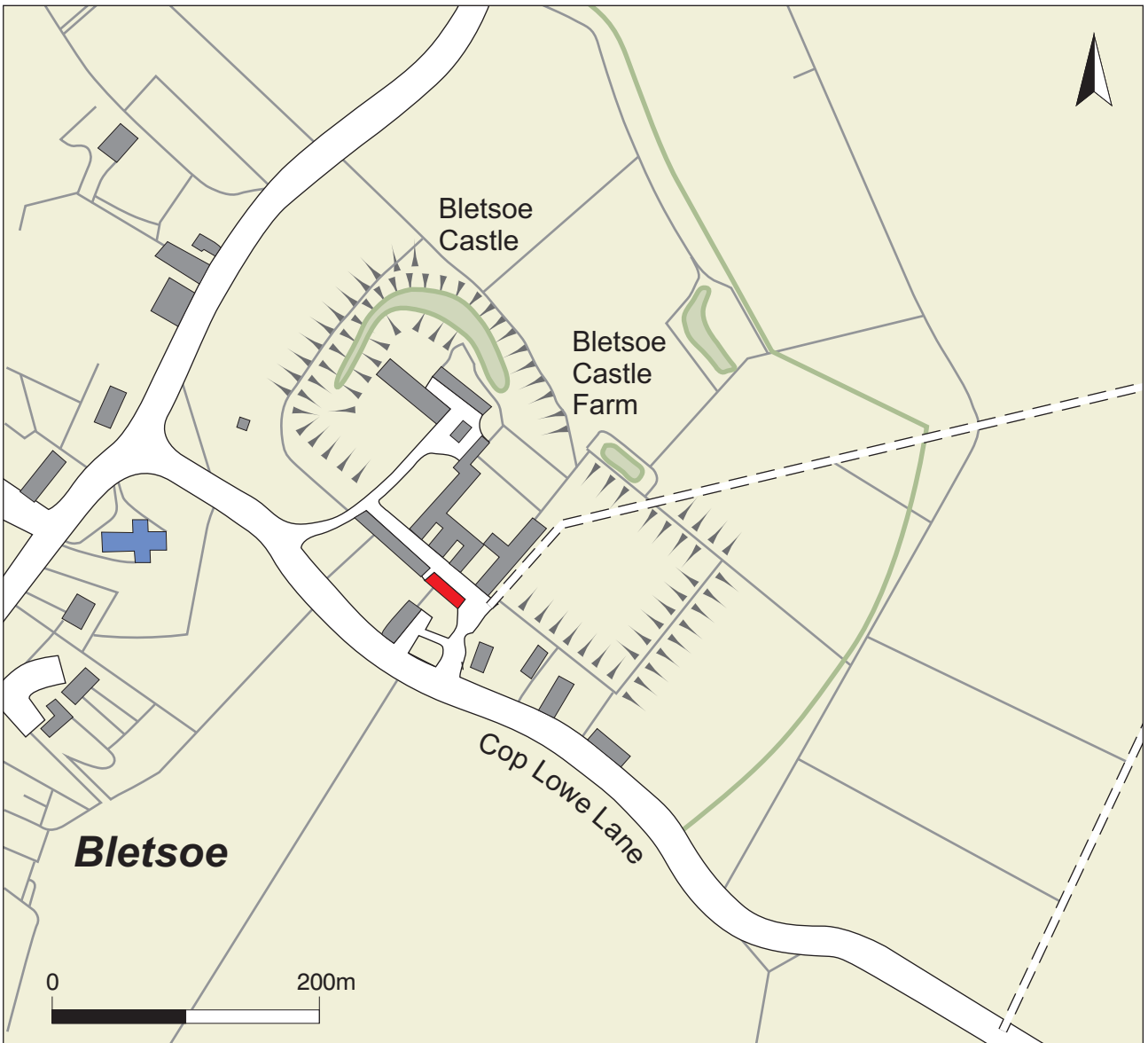


Fig. 1

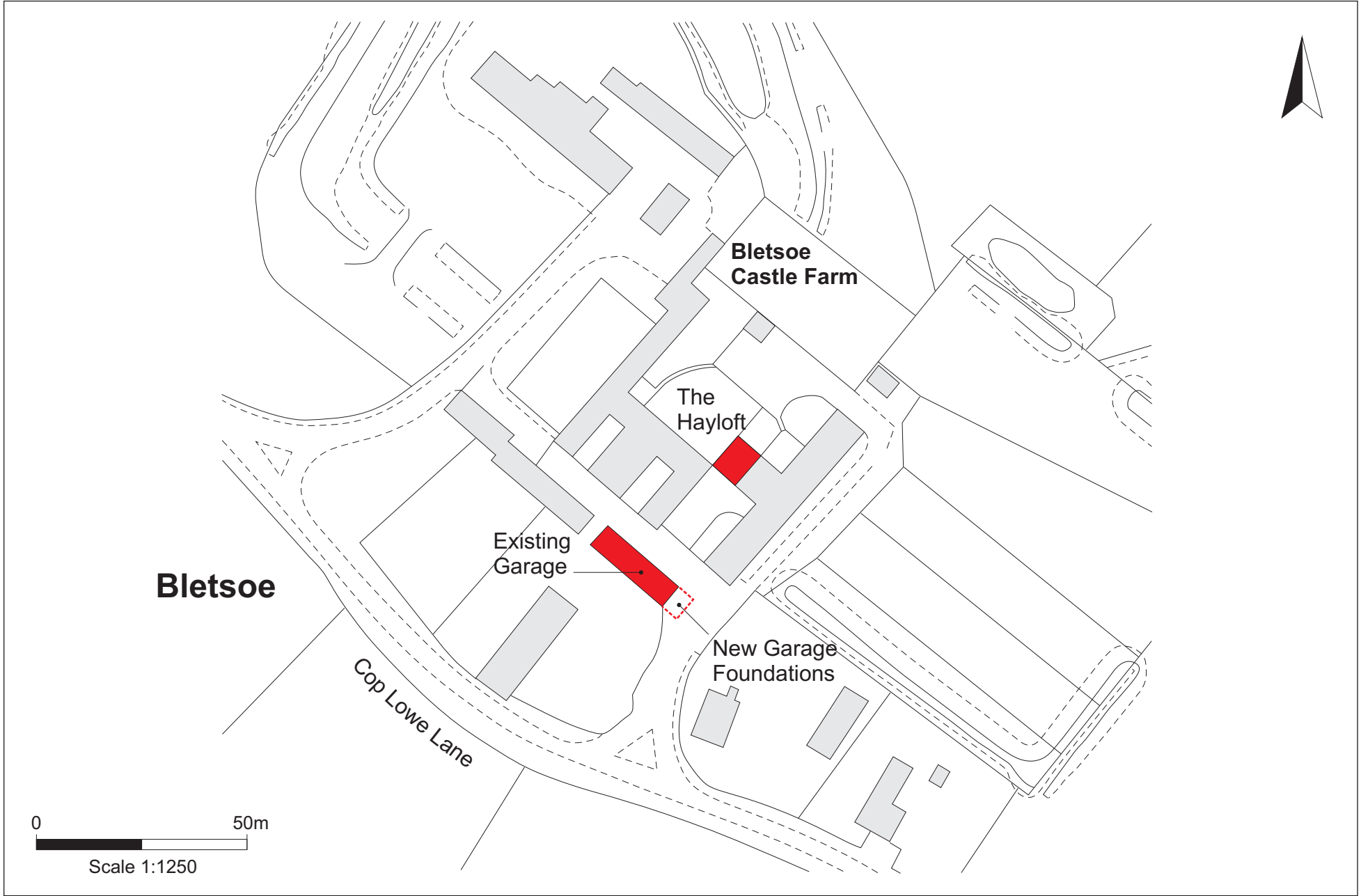


Fig 2

Scale 1:1250



Plate 1: View of Castlebarns, Bletsoe, Bedfordshire



Plate 2: General view of the groundworks area



Plate 3: The north-south foundation trench, viewed towards the north



Plate 4: View along the southern east-west foundation trench with the lower original ground in the background