



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
FOOTBRIDGE OVER GRAND UNION CANAL
STOKE ROAD
BLETCHLEY
MILTON KEYNES**

on behalf of

RPS Planning, Transport & Environment



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October 2004

ASC: 622/BSB/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BSR	<i>Project no:</i>	622
<i>Milton Keynes Event Number:</i>	930		
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire (historic county)		
<i>District:</i>	Milton Keynes Unitary Authority		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Bletchley		
<i>Parish:</i>	Bletchley CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 8808 3242		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.0.6ha		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Pasture / Recreational		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of new footbridge, access route, etc		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	c.0.6ha		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	03/01943/FUL		
<i>Client:</i>	English Partnerships C/o RPS Planning, Transport & Environment Mallams Court 18 Milton Park Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 4RP		
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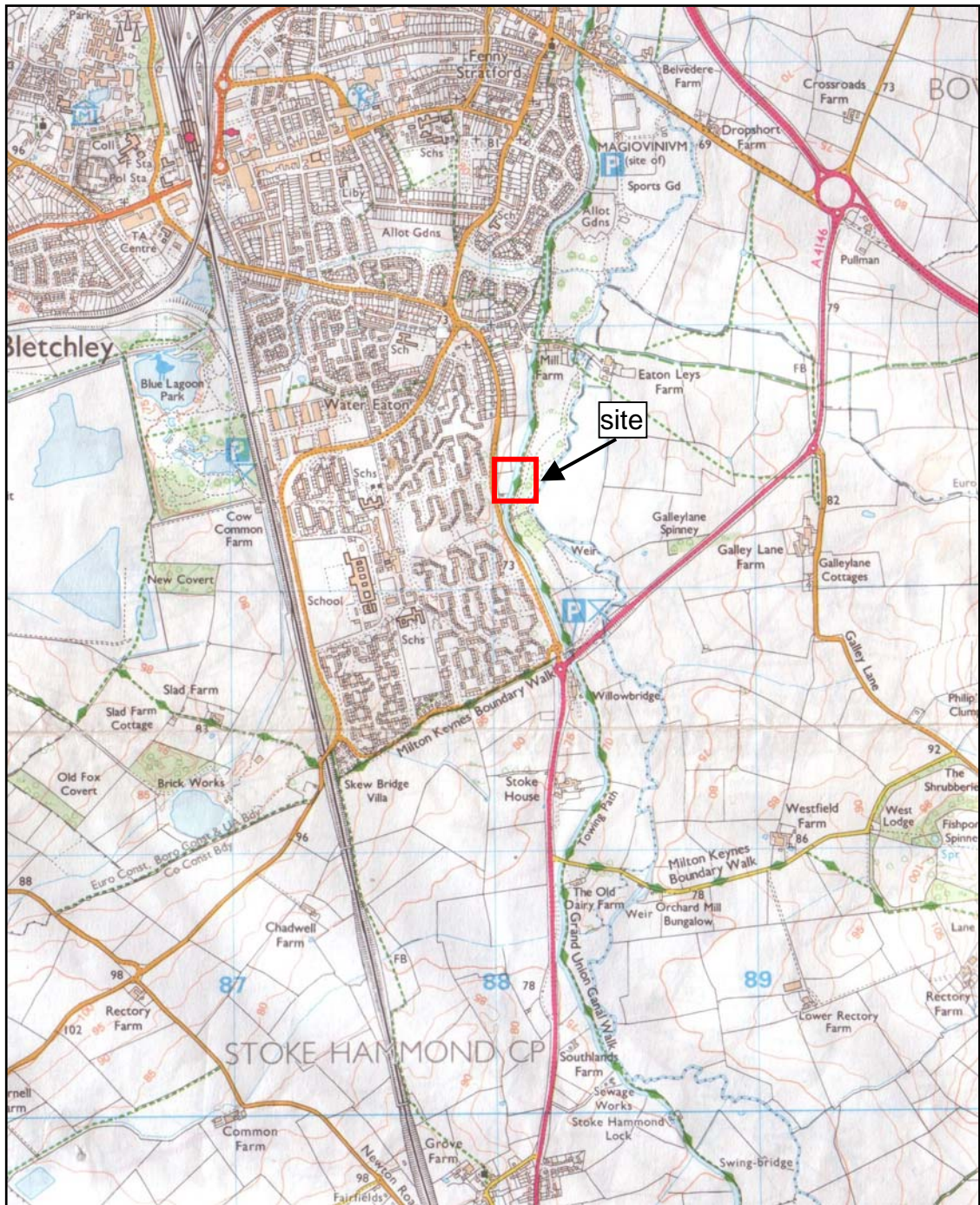


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In October 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd. (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Stoke Road, Bletchley. The site was located c.1km to the south of the site of the Roman town of Magiovinium and immediately south of a field in which a number of Roman coins have been discovered. A total of four machine cut evaluation trenches were excavated and revealed no archaeological features or artefacts. It is believed that the absence of archaeological features and artefacts plus the presence of ridge and furrow combined with current landuse may reflect a longstanding agricultural utilisation of the land.

1 Introduction

1.1 During October 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation prior to the construction of a footbridge spanning the Grand Union Canal at Stoke Road, Bletchley. The project was commissioned by *RPS Transport, Planning and Environment* on behalf of *English Partnerships*, and was carried out according to a brief (PS/537/2/A/C881), prepared by the Archaeological Officer (Giggins, 2004) of *Milton Keynes Council* (CAO), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (Fell, 2004).

1.2 Reason for Work

Planning permission for the development was granted on 27th February 2004 (Application No: 03/01943/FUL). The archaeological work was undertaken to “*evaluate the site before the commencement of development.....in order to establish the areas of archaeological significance*” (Giggins, 2004), thus satisfying the material consideration of the disturbance of archaeological deposits prior to development and, if disturbance or destruction is unavoidable, their preservation by record (DOE, 1990).

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 Location and Extent

The c.0.7ha site was situated on the southeastern periphery of Bletchley in the unitary authority of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1), with its centre at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 8808 3242 (Fig. 2). The site was divided into two distinct parcels of land that were bisected by the Grand Union Canal. The planned development involved the construction of an access road and car park adjacent to Stoke Road, a footbridge, and a footpath and landscaping to the east of the Canal (Fig. 3).

1.3.2 Geology and Topography

The soils of the site comprise the *Sutton 1 Association*, which are described as fine coarse and loamy soils, overlying the terrace gravels of the river Ouzel (Soil Survey 1983, 571u). The western field has a gradual west-east trending slope, which descends c.0.5m from Stoke Road towards the Canal while the area to the east is relatively flat lying at an elevation of c.76m OD.

1.3.3 Site Conditions

The western area was under pasture and was bounded to the west, north and south by hedgerows with the canal delimiting its eastern extent (Plate 1). The eastern area was under short grass with a light cover of immature trees (Plate 2). Physical boundaries did not define its eastern, northern and southern limits although the canal defined its western extent. Both areas contained vestiges of ridge and furrow that was more pronounced in the eastern area and which appears to have been continuous until cut by the subsequent construction of the Canal.

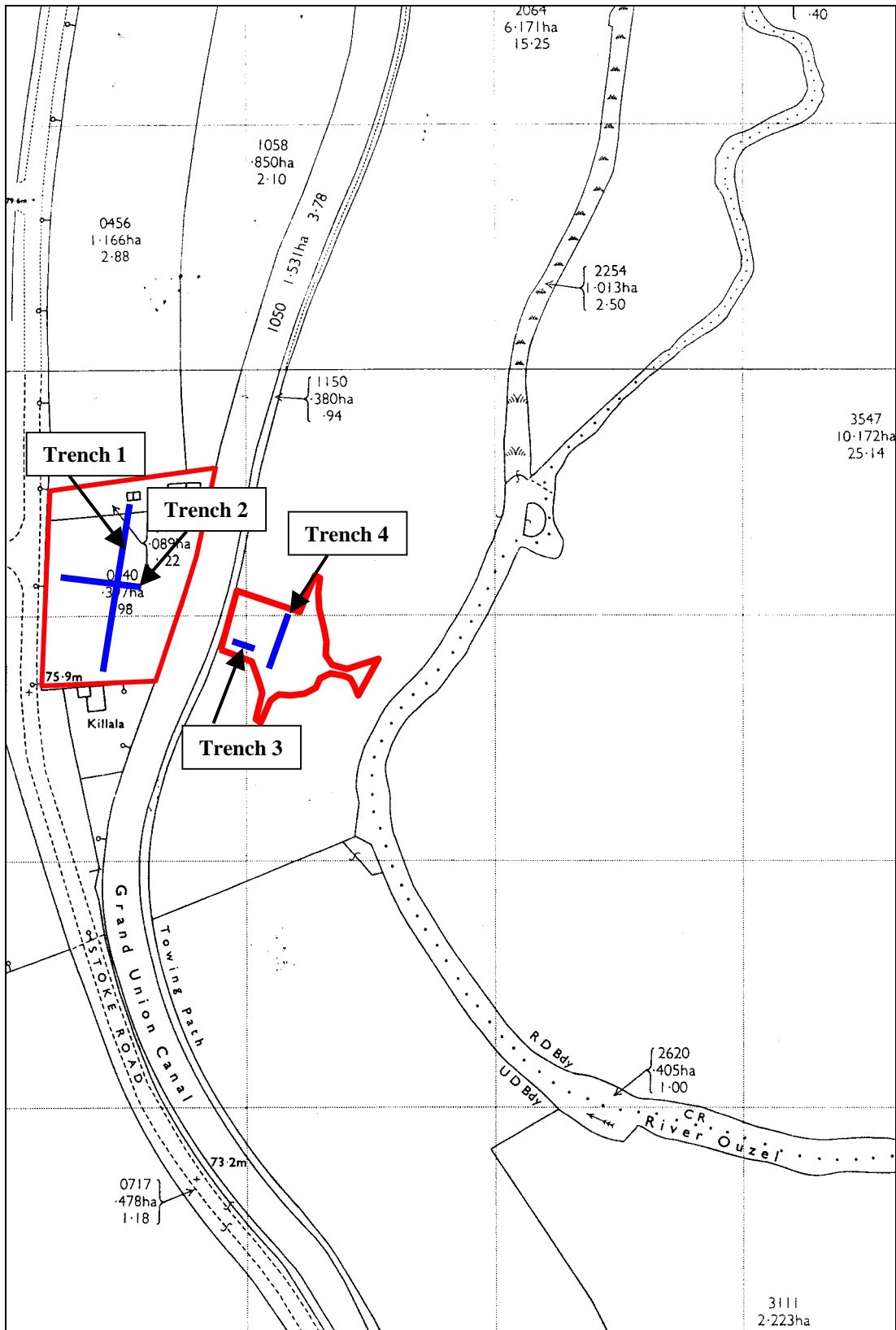


Figure 2: Site plan showing trench locations (scale 1:2500)

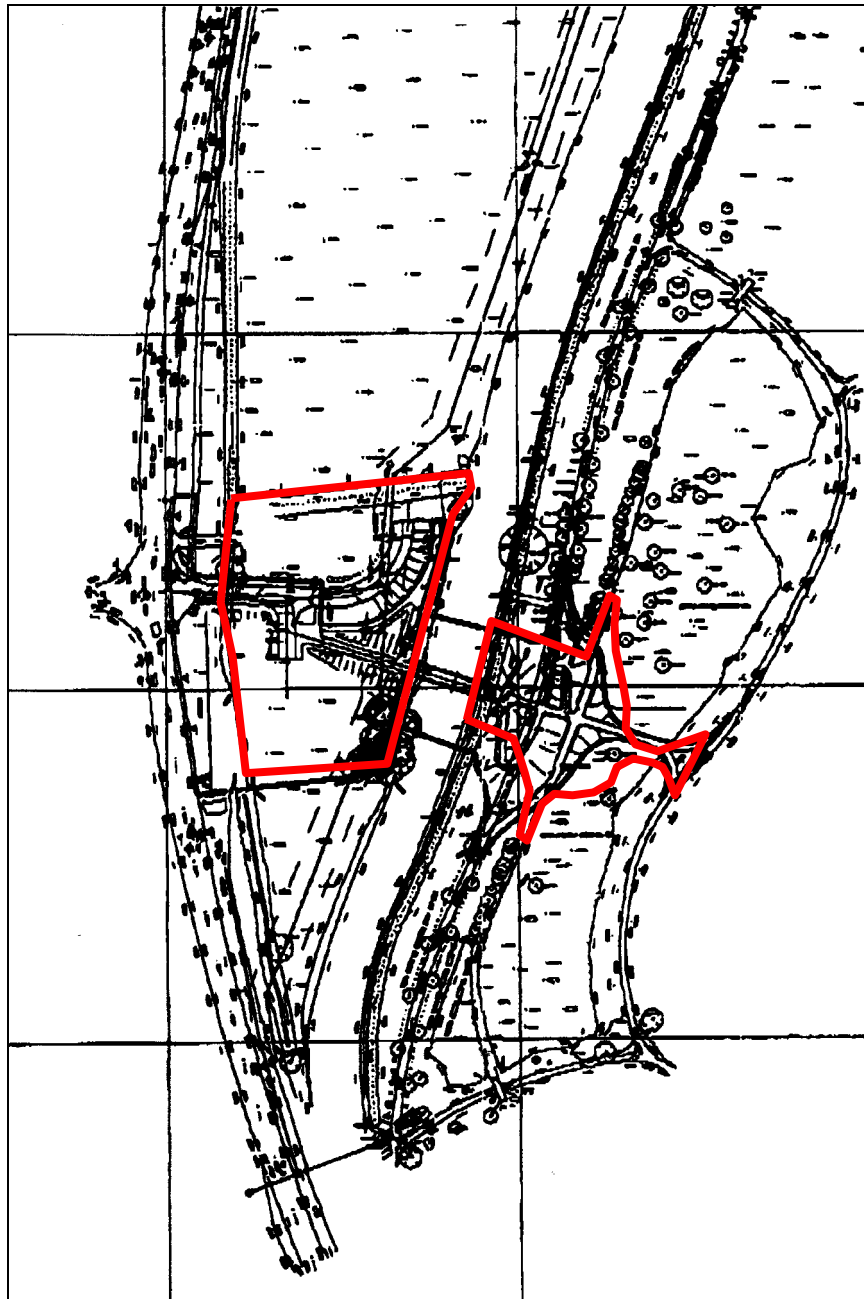


Figure 3: Site plan showing proposed development (scale 1:1250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 5), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To obtain information on the extent and character of any archaeological remains that may be present
- To obtain information on the state of preservation and relative quality of any archaeological remains present

2.2 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 1.2 and 5.7), which required:

- Excavation of archaeological trial trenches
- A minimum of 140m of trenches, not less than 1.4m wide. The four, (1 x 70m, 2 x 30m, 1 x 10m), trench locations are shown on Figure 2
- A contingency for an additional 20m of trenching

The above methods are described in detail in Sections 2.4 *et seq*, below.

2.3 *Standards*

The work was carried out in conformity with the requirements of the *Brief*, the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), and the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.4 *Methodology: Evaluation*

2.4.1 Excavation of topsoil and overburden from the four trenches was carried out under close archaeological supervision using a *JCB*, fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket.

2.4.2 Where necessary subsequent cleaning and excavation was carried out by hand according to ASC's *Operations Manual*. The size and orientation of the evaluation trenches plus the strata present were recorded using ASC's *Trench Record Sheets*. A comprehensive photographic record of the evaluation trenches was made using black and white photographs and a digital camera.

2.4.3 The site archive will be submitted to Buckinghamshire County Museum on completion of the reporting stage.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Introduction

Bletchley is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance. The development area lies on the south-eastern outskirts of the modern town and is c.1km to the south of the site of the Roman town of *Magiovinium*, with a number of archaeological sites of other periods recorded within the surrounding area. The evidence, which is summarised below, indicated that the development had the potential to reveal archaeological features of a variety of periods although the focus of attention was likely to lie in the Roman period.

3.2 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

Although artefacts and features of this period have not been discovered at the site disparate prehistoric finds are known from the Ouzel valley.

3.3 Iron Age (600BC-AD43)

Late Iron Age settlement is known from the Lakes Estate, Bletchley (CAS no. 303500000) and also near Mill Farm, to the northeast of the site. Further settlement of the period has been recorded at Saffron Gardens c.1km north of the site. Late Iron Age pottery has also been recorded in a field on the east side of Stoke Road, immediately north of the site (CAS 305501001).

3.4 Roman (AD43-c.450)

The area was of considerable importance during the Roman period, notably due to the existence of a major road, now known as *Watling Street*, which passed c.1.5km northeast of the site. The road and river valley attracted settlement during this period and the small Roman town of *Magiovinium* was situated c.1km north of the site (Neal 1987). A number of Roman coins have been recorded in the field immediately north of the site (CAS 305500000).

3.5 Medieval (c. AD450-1500)

Recorded archaeology of the early, mid and late Medieval periods is sparse in the immediate environs of the development area, although east-west aligned ridge and furrow cultivation strips were extant at the site at the time of the archaeological evaluation.

3.6 Post-Medieval (AD1500-1900)

The site is bisected by the Grand Union Canal. This was opened in 1797 as the *Grand Junction Canal*, which extended as far as Fenny Stratford and was a major impetus to the economic development of Bletchley and the surrounding area. The works associated with the canal may have caused localised disturbance to the site, but the area has probably always comprised open ground. It is shown on the Bletchley tithe map (1813), and comprised two separate land parcels. The same layout is recorded on the 1885 edition Ordnance Survey map.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

The results are given for each individual trench. Figure 2 shows the trench numbering, relative location and their orientation. All depths are given in metres measured from the ground surface.

4.2 Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Dimensions: 70.0m x 1.6m

Alignment: N – S

Stratigraphy: (0.00 = ground level)

0.00 – c.0.07m	turf and topsoil; mid greyish brown humic silt
0.07 – c.0.20m	subsoil; mid reddish brown with moderate (<0.02m) subangular limestone and flint inclusions
0.20m +	natural; mid brownish orange silty clay with frequent (<0.20m) subangular chalk and flint inclusions. Occasional subrounded pebbles (<0.60m) of varying lithologies and discrete lenses of orange sand were also noted

Present in the natural and running E – W across the width of the trench, c.10m from its northern end was a feature c.0.20m wide and c.0.07m deep. It was filled with mixed top / subsoil and a small amount of redeposited natural and was visible against the natural as a dark reddish brown fill. No finds were discovered within the fill although its steep sides and uneven base suggest that it is probably a relatively modern field drain (Plate 3).

No other archaeological features or finds were encountered within this trench.

4.3 Trench 2 (Plate 3)

Dimensions: 30.0m x 1.6m

Alignment: E – W

Stratigraphy: (0.00 = ground level)

0.00 – c.0.07m	turf and topsoil; mid greyish brown humic silt
0.07 – c.0.20m	subsoil; mid reddish brown with moderate (<0.02m) subangular limestone and flint inclusions
0.20m +	natural; mid brownish orange silty clay with frequent (<0.20m) subangular chalk and flint inclusions. Occasional subrounded pebbles (<0.60m) of varying lithologies and discrete lenses of orange sand were also noted at the downslope (eastern) end of the trench.

No archaeological features or finds were encountered within this trench.

4.4 Trench 3 (Plate 4)

Dimensions: 10.0m x 1.6m

Alignment: E – W

Stratigraphy: (0.00 = ground level)

0.00 – c.0.20m	turf and topsoil; mid greyish brown humic silt
0.20 – c.1.00m	subsoil; mid reddish brown, no inclusions
1.00m +	natural; mid brownish orange silty clay with frequent (<0.20m) subangular chalk and flint inclusions.

No archaeological features or finds were encountered within this trench.

4.5 **Trench 4** (Plate 5)

Dimensions: 30.0m x 1.6m

Alignment: N – S

Stratigraphy: (0.00 = ground level)

0.00 – c.0.20m	turf and topsoil; mid greyish brown humic silt
0.20 – c.0.60m	subsoil; mid reddish brown, humic silty clay, no inclusions
0.60m +	natural; mid brownish orange silty clay with frequent (<0.20m) subangular chalk and flint inclusions.

No archaeological features or finds were encountered within this trench.



Plate 1. Western area looking west



Plate 2. Eastern area looking east



Plate 3. Trench 1, Field Drain

5. Conclusions

5.1 *Confidence rating*

The confidence rating for the recognition of archaeological deposits on this site was good. The weather was fine during fieldwork and the differing strata were easily distinguished.

5.2 *Conclusions*

The lack of archaeological features and finds in the four trenches suggests that this area may have been at the periphery of Roman activity associated with *Magiovinium* and the later development and expansion of the town of Bletchley. It seems probable that past landuse over the majority of the site has always been agricultural. The presence of ridge and furrow illustrates that this land was under the plough during the Medieval period and incorporation into earlier agricultural regimes cannot be discounted. The proximity of the River Ouzel and the presence of deep silty soils in Trenches 3 and 4 suggests that the eastern area may have been unsuitable for regular agricultural or other use until it was properly drained. It is therefore unlikely that large quantities of archaeological features are present on this site.

6. Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Martin Connell of RPS Planning, Transport and Environment for commissioning this work. Thanks are also due to Brian Giggins the CAO of Milton Keynes Council and Ray Dark of Milton Keynes Parks Trust for enabling access. The site team consisted of Nick Crank BSc AIFA and the author.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. 4 Trench record sheets
6. List of photographs
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Buckinghamshire County Museum*. The Accession Number for the site is 2004.162

7.3 Details of the excavation will be entered in the on-line "OASIS" database maintained by ADS at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>

8. Bibliography

DOE 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning*. HMSO

Fell D 2004 *Canal Footbridge, Stoke Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes: Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation on behalf of RPS Planning, Transport and Environment*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd.


Giggins B 2004 *Footbridge over Grand Union Canal, Stoke Road Bletchley. Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*. Milton Keynes Council.


IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.


IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.


Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	70.0m	Width	1.60m	Depth	0.40m
	Levels					
	Trench base north		m OD			
	Trench top north		m OD			
	Trench base south		m OD			
	Trench top south		m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	SP 88056 32444	S	88048 32376		
	Orientation		North to South			
	Reason for Trench		General Evaluation			
	Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
100	Layer	Mid greyish brown humic silt. Topsoil	-	70	-	
101	Layer	Mid reddish brown humic silty clay. Subsoil	-	130	70	
102	Layer	Mid brownish orange silty clay. Natural	-	200+	200	

Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	30.0m	Width	1.60m	Depth	0.30m
	Levels					
	Trench base north		m OD			
	Trench top north		m OD			
	Trench base south		m OD			
	Trench top south		m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	SP 88062 32411	W	88030 32414		
	Orientation		East to West			
	Reason for Trench		General Evaluation			
	Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
200	Layer	Mid greyish brown humic silt. Topsoil	-	70	-	
201	Layer	Mid reddish brown humic silty clay. Subsoil	-	130	70	
202	Layer	Mid brownish orange silty clay. Natural	-	100+	200	

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	10.0m	Width	1.60m	Depth	1.00m
	Levels					
	Trench base north		m OD			
	Trench top north		m OD			
	Trench base south		m OD			
	Trench top south		m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	SP 88110 32392	W	88100 32395		
	Orientation		East to West			
Reason for Trench		General Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
300	Layer	Mid greyish brown humic silt. Topsoil	-	200	-	
301	Layer	Mid reddish brown humic silty clay. Subsoil	-	800	200	
302	Layer	Mid brownish orange silty clay. Natural	-	-	1000	

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	30.0m	Width	1.60m	Depth	0.60m
	Levels					
	Trench base north		m OD			
	Trench top north		m OD			
	Trench base south		m OD			
	Trench top south		m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	N	SP 88124 32394	S	88117 32375		
	Orientation		North to South			
Reason for Trench		General Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
300	Layer	Mid greyish brown humic silt. Topsoil	-	200	-	
301	Layer	Mid reddish brown humic silty clay. Subsoil	-	400	200	
302	Layer	Mid brownish orange silty clay. Natural	-	-	600	