Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: LAND TO THE REAR OF THE STRAWBERRY TREE RESTAURANT RADWELL ROAD MILTON ERNEST BEDFORDSHIRE

on behalf of Jeff Knowles.

Nigel Wilson HND AIFA

September 2005

ASC: 720/STR/2

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Site Data

ASC site code:	STR	*Project no:*	720
County:	Bedfordshire		
Village/Town:	Milton Ernest		
Civil Parish:	Milton Ernest		
NGR (to 8 figs):	TL 0172 5602		
Extent of site:	*c*.25m x 30m, with extension to north *c*.25m x 5m		
Present land use:	Part of garden of 3 Radwell Road		
Planning proposal:	Erection of a detached bungalow, garage and access		
Local Planning Authority:	Bedford Borough Council		
Planning application ref/date:	03/01530/FUL		
Client:	Petsoe Manor Farmhouse Petsoe End Emberton Olney MK46 5JN		
Contact name:	Jeff Knowles		
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Internal Quality Check

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

Summary

During September 2005, ASC Ltd undertook an evaluation on land to the rear of The Strawberry Tree Restaurant, Radwell Road, Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire. The work was commissioned in advance of developing the land. Four trenches were excavated. A small stone lined oven or kiln was revealed in one of the trenches. Despite total excavation no indication of its date or function was established but it probably pre dates the 19th century. A second scooped area of burning and a shallow east – west ditch or gully was also exposed during the evaluation.

1 Introduction

1.1 In September 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation on land to the rear of The Strawberry Tree Restaurant, Milton Earnest, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 0172 5602: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Jeff Knowles and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2005), and a brief (BCC 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Bedford Borough Council,* by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Bedfordshire County Council Archaeology Office*. The relevant planning application reference is 03/01530/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of a detached bungalow and associated access.

1.3 *Location*

The development site is located in the centre of Milton Ernest, on the southern side of Radwell Road (Fig. 1). The site is surrounded to the west and east by housing, and to the south by fields.

1.4 *Services, Buildings, Access, Etc*

Access to the site is from the north, along a driveway leading off Radwell Road (Fig. 2). Prior to the sale of the site it was part of the rear garden of number 3 Radwell Road. There are no buildings within the boundaries of the garden. Various inspection covers lie across the plot and several defunct service pipes were exposed during the evaluation.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area are of the *Moreton Association*, and the underlying geology consists of Jurassic clay and limestone. The underlying soils are characterised as *well drained calcareous clayey and fine loamy soils over limestone, in places shallow and brashy. Some deeper slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils* (Soil Survey, 1983, 511b). The site lies at an elevation of *c*.45m AOD.

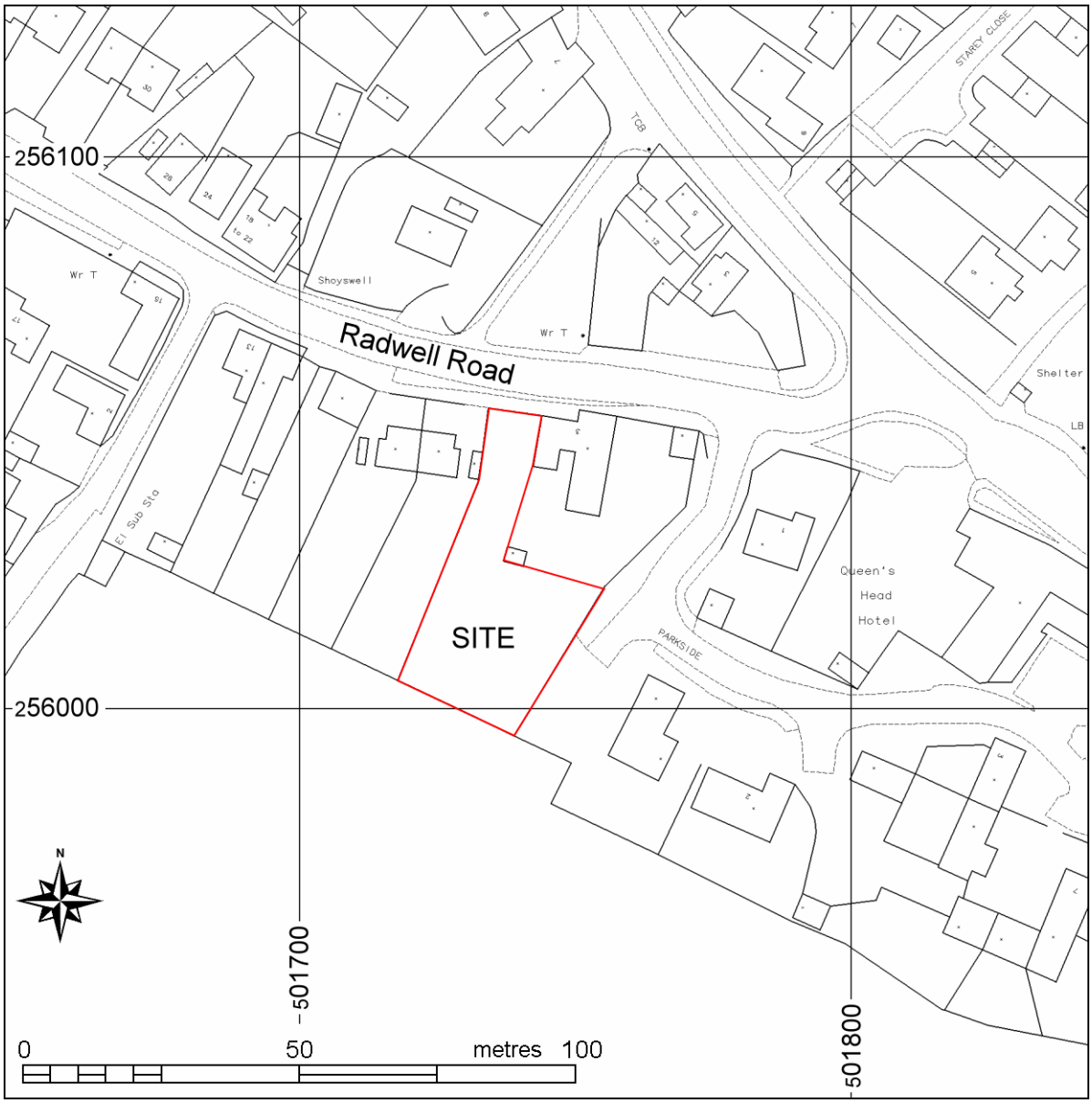

Figure 2: Site plan *(scale 1:1250)*

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 4), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To locate, define and characterise any archaeological remains that exist.
- To undertake an appraisal of the results of the field evaluation leading to the definition of a programme of investigation and recording of archaeological remains that will be unavoidably destroyed by the development.

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual.*

2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 3.7), which required:

- The excavation of a series of trial trenches over an area up to a maximum of 80 metres, with a contingency provision for a further 30 metres of trenching to allow for the further investigation of any significant features or deposits. Proposed trench locations are shown in Fig. 3.
- The trial trenches to be located to define and characterise likely areas of archaeological sensitivity and to confirm the absence of features in areas that appear to be blank. It will aim to achieve comprehensive coverage of the site. The trench layout and the deployment of the contingency allowance will be discussed with and agreed by the County Archaeological Officer before they are implemented
- The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision by a suitable machine fitted with a 1.6m toothless bucket.

2.4 *Constraints*

The four 10m trenches were laid out as described in the project design. A small extension was taken out of the western side of Trench 2 to enable the complete plan of a kiln/ oven to be exposed.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

The Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) maintains a listing of all the known archaeological and historical sites in Bedfordshire, and is used as the primary source for rapid historical research within the county.

3.1 Prehistoric *(before AD43)*

There is no record of any human activity pre-dating the Roman period within the village of Milton Ernest and its surrounding area. The only possible exception is an undated cropmark *c*.700m to the north east of the site, possibly showing a large rectilinear enclosure (HER3309).

3.2 Roman *(AD43-c.450)*

Less than 300m to the south west of the proposed development is the site of a possible Roman ford and associated Roman coins (HER1325), while *c*.300m to the east of the site, a dense scatter of Roman pottery was found on Bedford Road (HER1937): (Simco, 1984, 112). Approximately 400m further to the east of the proposed development is the site of a Roman ditch, within which Roman brick was found during the construction of the Milton Ernest Water Pipeline (HER16127) (BCCAS, 95/21).

3.3 Saxon and Medieval *(c.450-1500)*

There is no evidence for Saxon activity within Milton Ernest and its surrounding area. There appears to have been a settlement in the area since the early medieval period, to the east and north east of the current village is the site of a Deserted Medieval Village (DMV), which is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (HER1323). The development site itself falls within the bounds of the medieval village settlement of Milton Ernest (HER17057). To the east of the proposed development, *c*.600m away, pieces of slag (iron smelting debris) thought to date to the medieval period or earlier were dug out of a permanent ley (Hutching, 1969, 75). Closer to the site, at 42 Radwell Road, a medieval Papal Bull of Clement V (1305 – 1314) was found (HER16031) (Beds Arch, 1991,75).

3.4 Post-Medieval *(1500-1900)*

The HER records several sites in the area surrounding Milton Ernest from the post-medieval period. *c*.400m to the north west of the proposed development is a clay pit, recorded in 1708 as 'Claypitt Furlong' (HER9891). Less than *c*.300m to the south of the proposed development is an area marked 'North Warren' and 'South Warren' on the 1803 Enclosure Map (HER9892). The 1803 Enclosure Award also mentions the Milton Ernest Work House (HER1884), which was located close to the proposed development. To the south east of the site, *c*.500m away, is the site of a sand pit, which was marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (HER2981). Post medieval features were also noted during the construction of the Milton Ernest Water Pipeline, which were deemed to be associated with demolished buildings and agricultural activity (HER16128) (BCCAS, 95/21).

There are a large number of Listed buildings within the village of Milton Ernest. Milton Ernest Hall (HER1093) was built 1853-58 by William Butterfield, and is a

Grade I Listed building. There are also several Listed buildings on Radwell Road. 25 Radwell Road, known as Swan House (HER5783), is a Grade II Listed C18 red brick house. 15 Radwell Road (HER5784) dates to the C17 – C18 and is a Grade II Listed building. Most significantly, 3 Radwell Road (HER5785), the building attached to the plot of the proposed development, is also a C17 – C18 Grade II Listed building.

4 Results

4.1 The four 10m evaluation trenches (Fig 3) were mechanically excavated using a JCB 3CX excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The overburden was removed to the top of significant archaeology or the top of the clean natural subsoil. The upper deposits in each trench comprised modern topsoil and dark subsoil to a depth of 400mm below which there was 300mm of dirty dark yellowish brown clay. The undisturbed natural exposed in each trench comprised a yellow or grey clay containing up to 5% calcareous fragments. Areas of very pale yellow sandy clay were also observed.

4.2 Trench 1

This trench was orientated NE – SW. No archaeological features were observed.

4.3 Trench 2

This trench was orientated NE – SW. Rough midway along the trench a small poorly preserved oven or kiln was exposed. This feature was constructed of limestone which had been heavily burnt, only one course of stone survived (Fig 4). Due to the poor level of preservation the original plan was not clear, but it seems to have been a circular structure with an external diameter of 0.8m (0.3m internal). A 0.9m long stokehole was attached to the southern side of the kiln. The base of the kiln comprised *c.*30mm of highly scorched red clay, probably natural in origin. This was considered for archaeomagnetic dating, but was unsuitable due to its limited extent. The natural clay around the feature had also been scorched to a lesser extent for *c.*0.2m.

Running SE – NW across the southern end of the trench a cut, probably a footing trench for a wall, was recorded (Fig 5). The cut was 0.4m wide and 0.3m deep. Itse fill comprised yellow clay and *c.*50% small limestone chippings (maximum size 150x20x30mm).

4.4 Trench 3

This trench was orientated SE – NW. Other than modern services no archaeology was observed in this trench.

4.5 Trench 4

This trench was orientated NE – SW. Sealed by the upper deposits two archaeologically significant features were identified. Towards the southern end of the trench a small 0.4m wide gully (Fig 5) was cut into the natural. This gully was orientated E – W and had a depth of *c.*0.2m. Its fill comprised mid brown clayey silt with occasional fragments of limestone. The second feature a sub-circular cut *c.*1.4m in diameter was 0.2m deep (Fig 5). The base of this feature was almost flat. Itse fill comprised mid brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks. On its base was a 20mm layer of burnt red clay, possibly indicating that this feature was related to another furnace.

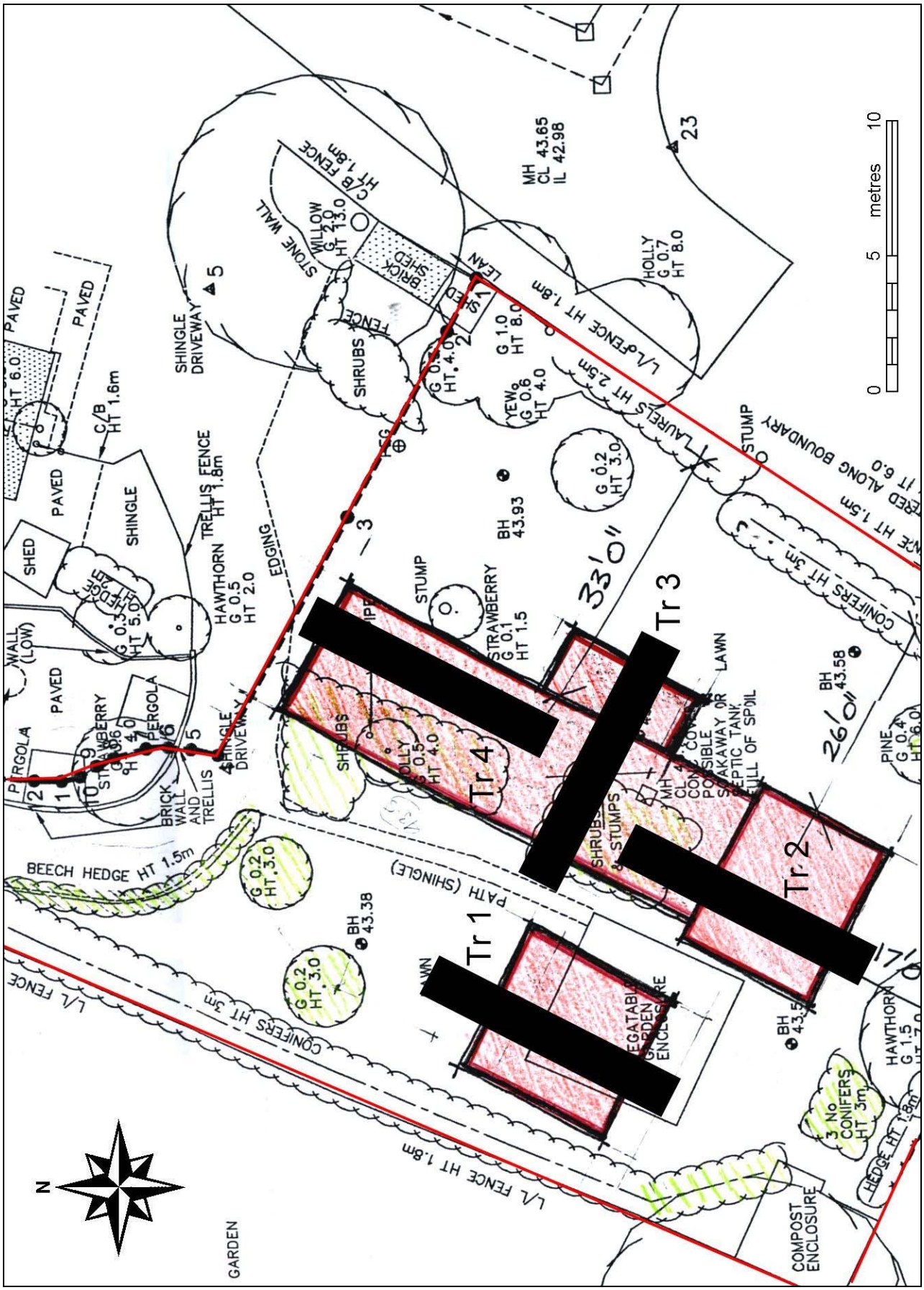

Figure 3: Development proposal and trench location plan (scale 1:200)

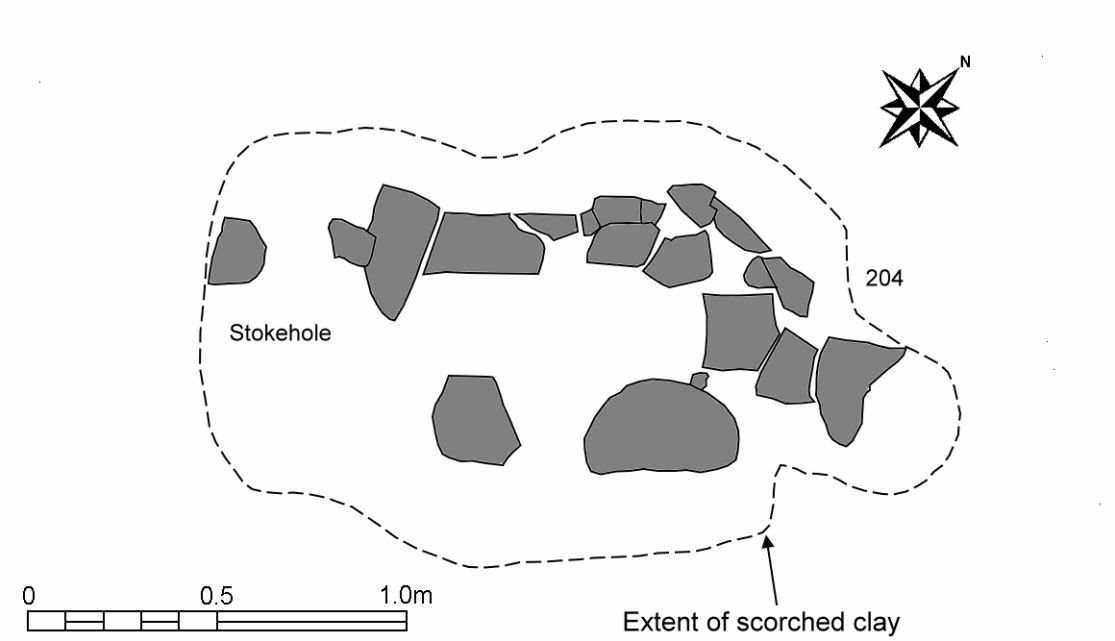

Figure 4: Plan of oven/ kiln 204 (*scale 1:20*)

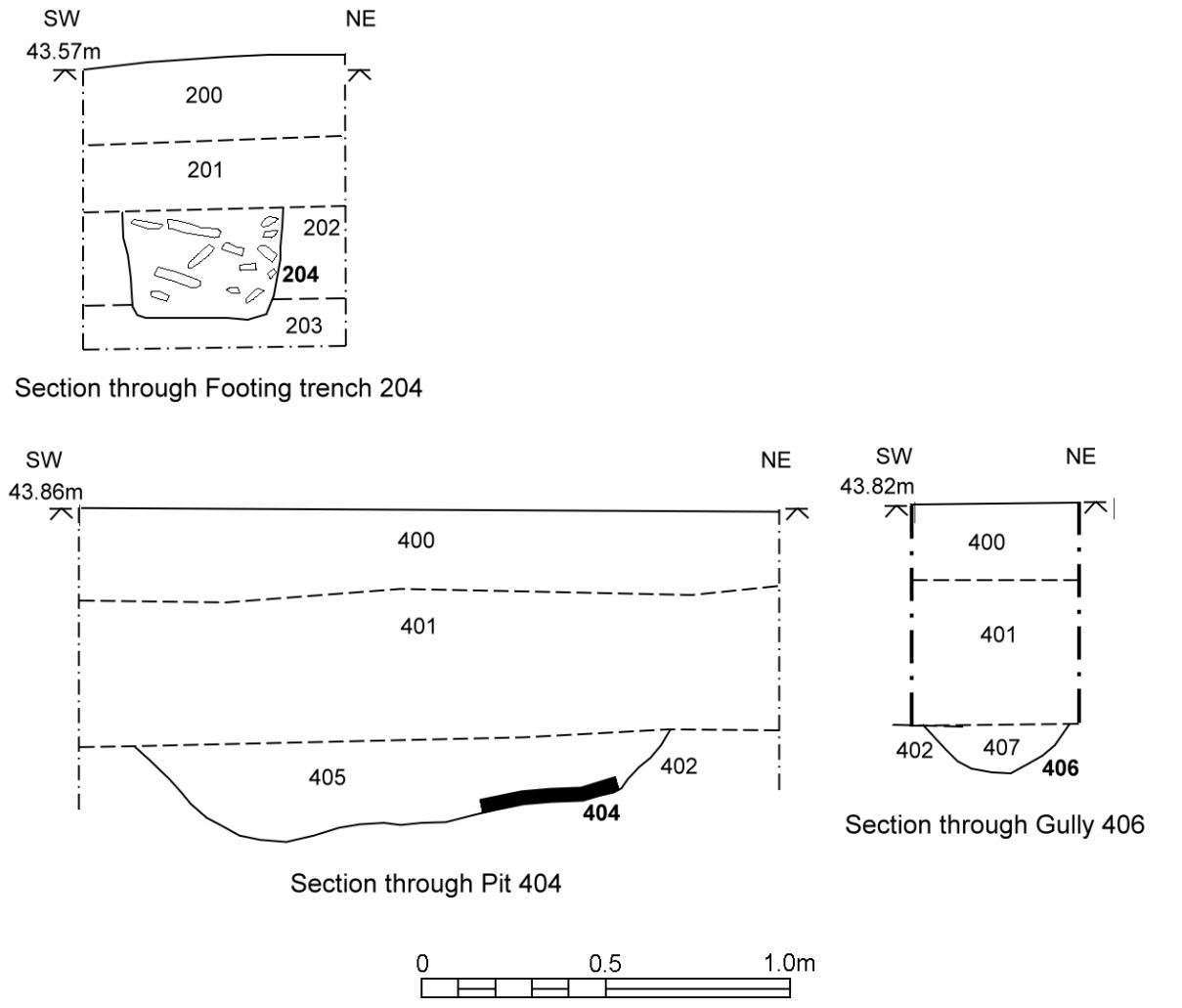

Figure 5: Sections (*scale 1:20*)

Plate 1: Oven/ kiln 204

Plate 2: Section through the oven/ kiln

Plate 3: Wall footing 205

Plate 4: Gully 405

Plate 5: Scoop 404

5. Conclusions

5.1 The current project has examined a vacant plot to the rear of 3 Radwell Road. Prior to the start of the evaluation a number of inspection chambers were identified across the site, indicating the potential for finding modern drains during the trenching. Two such drains were exposed in trench 3.

5.2 The depth of modern overburden (*c.*400-450mm) was unexpected and probably indicates that the land has been deliberately built up sometime during the last 200 years. This would explain the depth below current ground level that the archaeology was encountered.

5.3 Though undated the stone-built kiln/ oven constructed of stone exposed in Trench 2 was sealed by the modern overburden and is therefore likely be pre 18th century, possibly medieval. Though 600m away the presence of iron slag demonstrates that iron working was taking place during the medieval period in Milton Ernest. Whilst form is often a good indication of function, so little remained of the kiln in Trench 2 it would be unwise to try and attribute it to any definite process, but it must have been generated considerable temperature considering the area of scorched clay surrounding it. However from the available evidence it seems unlikely that this kiln is related to metal working as no slag or other metal working debris was found during the evaluation. This lack of evidence to indicate what the kiln was being used for possibly indicates that it was being used as a heat source for a process involving liquids rather than producing goods such as metal objects or pottery.

5.4 The probable wall footing in Trench 2 might be related to a structure associated with the kiln but only further work would be able to confirm this.

5.5 Burning deposits in the base of the shallow scooped feature exposed in Trench 4 may also indicate some form of light industrial process taking place on the site, but a single area of burning must not be considered adequate to interpret the function of a partially exposed feature in the base of an evaluation trench. The gully observed in Trench 4 also remains enigmatic both in terms of function and date.

5.6 Whilst it cannot be definitely stated that the features exposed in Trenches 2 and 4 are contemporary, it is clear that they had all been sealed by the deposit of rich dark soil covering the entire site.

5.7 Confidence rating

The evaluation was undertaken by an experienced team working under favourable weather conditions, therefore a high confidence rating can be applied to the results.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Jeff Knowles for commissioning the evaluation. We would also like to thank Martin Oake, for preparing the brief and monitoring the fieldwork on behalf of Bedford Borough Council. Steve Coleman at the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record, assisted in the historic background search. The project was managed by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA, and the fieldwork was carried out by Nigel Wilson and Nick Crank.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site records
6. List of photographs/slides
7. Colour slides
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum, under accession number BEDFM 2005.307.

9. References

Standards & Specifications

ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England.* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition.* English Heritage (London).

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Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

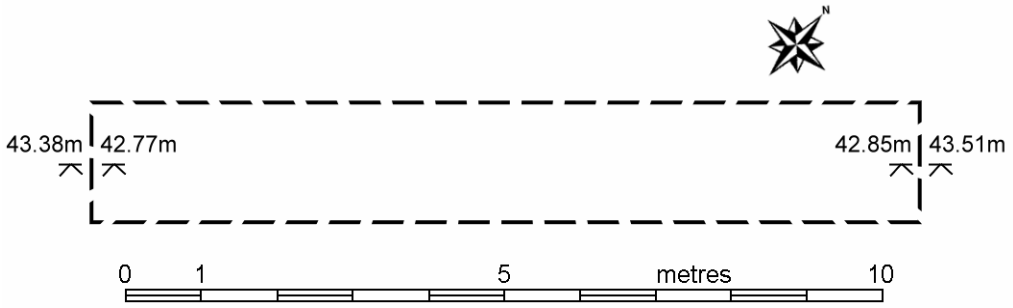
Trench 1

Max Dimensions					
Length	11.0	**Width**	1.6	**Depth**	0.7

Levels	
Trench base north	42.85m OD
Trench top north	43.51m OD
Trench base south	42.77m OD
Trench top south	43.38m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NE	TL 07729 56020	**SW**	TL 07724 56010
Orientation		NE – SW	
Reason for Trench		General evaluation (garage plot)	

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
100	Layer	Dark humic topsoil	>1600	250	0-250
101	Layer	Dark humic soil very mixed with charcoal and some crushed brick fargments	>1600	150	250-400
102	Layer	Dark yellowish brown clay. Dirty natural	>1600	300	400-700
103	Layer	Natural clay yellow/ grey some areas of very pale yellowish sandy clay.	>1600		>700



Trench 2

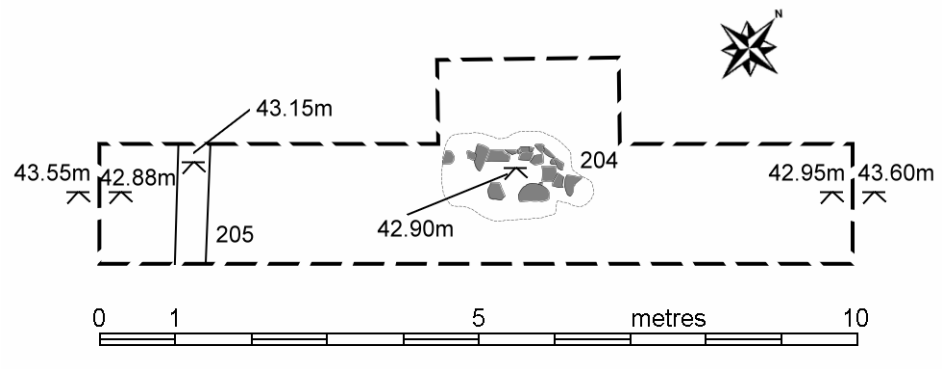
Max Dimensions					
Length	10.0	**Width**	1.6	**Depth**	0.9

Levels	
Trench base north	42.95m OD
Trench top north	43.60m OD
Trench base south	42.88m OD
Trench top south	43.55m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
NE	TL 07734 56013	**SW**	TL 07730 56004

Orientation	NE – SW
Reason for Trench	General evaluation (main plot)

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
200	Layer	Dark humic topsoil	>1.6	250	0-250
201	Layer	Dark humic soil very mixed with charcoal and some crushed brick fargments	>1.6	200	25-450
202	Layer	Dark yellowish brown clay. Dirty natural	>1.6	400	450-850
203	Layer	Natural clay yellow/ grey some areas of very pale yellowish sandy clay.	>1.6	-	>850
204	Structure	Oven/ kiln	900	100	750-850
205	Cut	Footing trench for wall.			



Trench 3

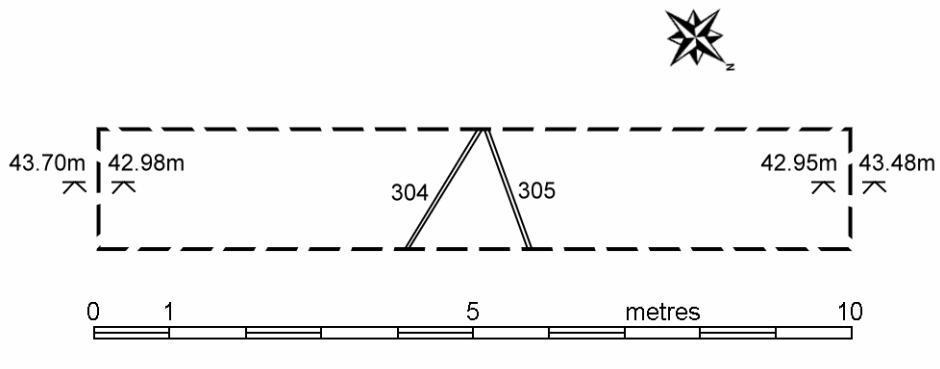
Max Dimensions					
Length	10.0	**Width**	1.6	**Depth**	0.8

Levels	
Trench base east	42.98m OD
Trench top east	43.70m OD
Trench base west	42.95m OD
Trench top west	43.48m OD

NGR Co-ordinates			
SE	TL 07740 56011	**NW**	TL 07731 56016

Orientation	SE - NW
Reason for Trench	General evaluation (main plot)

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
300		Dark humic topsoil	>1.6	250	0-250
301		Dark humic soil very mixed with charcoal and some crushed brick fragments	>1.6	150	250-400
302		Dark yellowish brown clay. Dirty natural	>1.6	300	400-700
303		Natural clay yellow/ grey some areas of very pale yellowish sandy clay.	>1.6		>700
304		Sectional pipe (modern)			450-550
305		Jointed pipe (modern)			700-850



Trench 4

Max Dimensions					
Length	10.0	**Width**	1.6	**Depth**	0.75

Levels			
Trench base north	43.18m OD		
Trench top north	43.91m OD		
Trench base south	43.18m OD		
Trench top south	43.79m OD		

NGR Co-ordinates			
NE	TL 07741 56024	**SW**	TL 07737 56015

Orientation	NW - SE
Reason for Trench	General evaluation (main plot)

Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
400	Layer	Dark humic topsoil	>1.6	250	0-250
401	Layer	Dark humic soil very mixed with charcoal and some crushed brick fargments	>1.6	150	250-400
402	Layer	Dark yellowish brown clay. Dirty natural	>1.6	250	400-650
403	Layer	Natural clay yellow/ grey some areas of very pale yellowish sandy clay.	>1.6	-	>6500
404	Cut	Sub-circular scoop,.	1400	250	650
405	Deposit	Mid brown clayey silt with occ. Charcoal flecks . Burnt area (red) at north.			
406	Cut	Gully orientated E - W	400	200	650
407	Deposit	Mid brown clayey silt with occ. Fragments of limestone.