

## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: KING'S RIDE STABLES THERFIELD HEATH HERTFORDSHIRE**

On behalf of King's Ride Equestrian Ltd.



**ELIZABETH GILL BSc PgDip**

**JANUARY 2006**

**ASC: 746/KRS/2**

Letchworth House  
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall,  
Milton Keynes MK6 1NE  
Tel: 01908 608989 Fax: 01908 605700  
Email: [office@archaeological-services.co.uk](mailto:office@archaeological-services.co.uk)  
Website: [www.archaeological-services.co.uk](http://www.archaeological-services.co.uk)



## Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	KRS	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	746
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Therfield		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Therfield		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 32205 39422		
<i>Present use:</i>	Agricultural		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Erection of new ménage, stables, visitors accommodation and associated infrastructure		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	05/1434/1		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	North Hertfordshire		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	10/01/06		
<i>Client:</i>	Tom Beisty: King's Ride Equestrian Ltd.  c/o Savills (L & P) Ltd 132-144 Hills Road Cambridge CB2 2PA		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Will Lusty		
<i>Telephone</i>	01223 347000	<i>Fax:</i>	01223 347111

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Elizabeth Gill	<i>Date:</i>	13/01/06
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

© Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

No part of this document is to be copied in any way without prior written consent.

Every effort is made to provide detailed and accurate information. However, Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies within this report.

© Ordnance Survey maps reproduced with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

ASC Licence No. AL 100015154

## CONTENTS

Summary .....	4
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Aims & Methods .....	6
3. Archaeological & Historical Background .....	7
4. Results. ....	9
5. Conclusions .....	12
6. Acknowledgements .....	13
7. Archive .....	13
8. References .....	14

### Appendices:

1. Trench Summary Tables.....	15
2. Photo List.....	16
3. ASC OASIS Form .....	17
4. SMR Summary Sheet .....	19

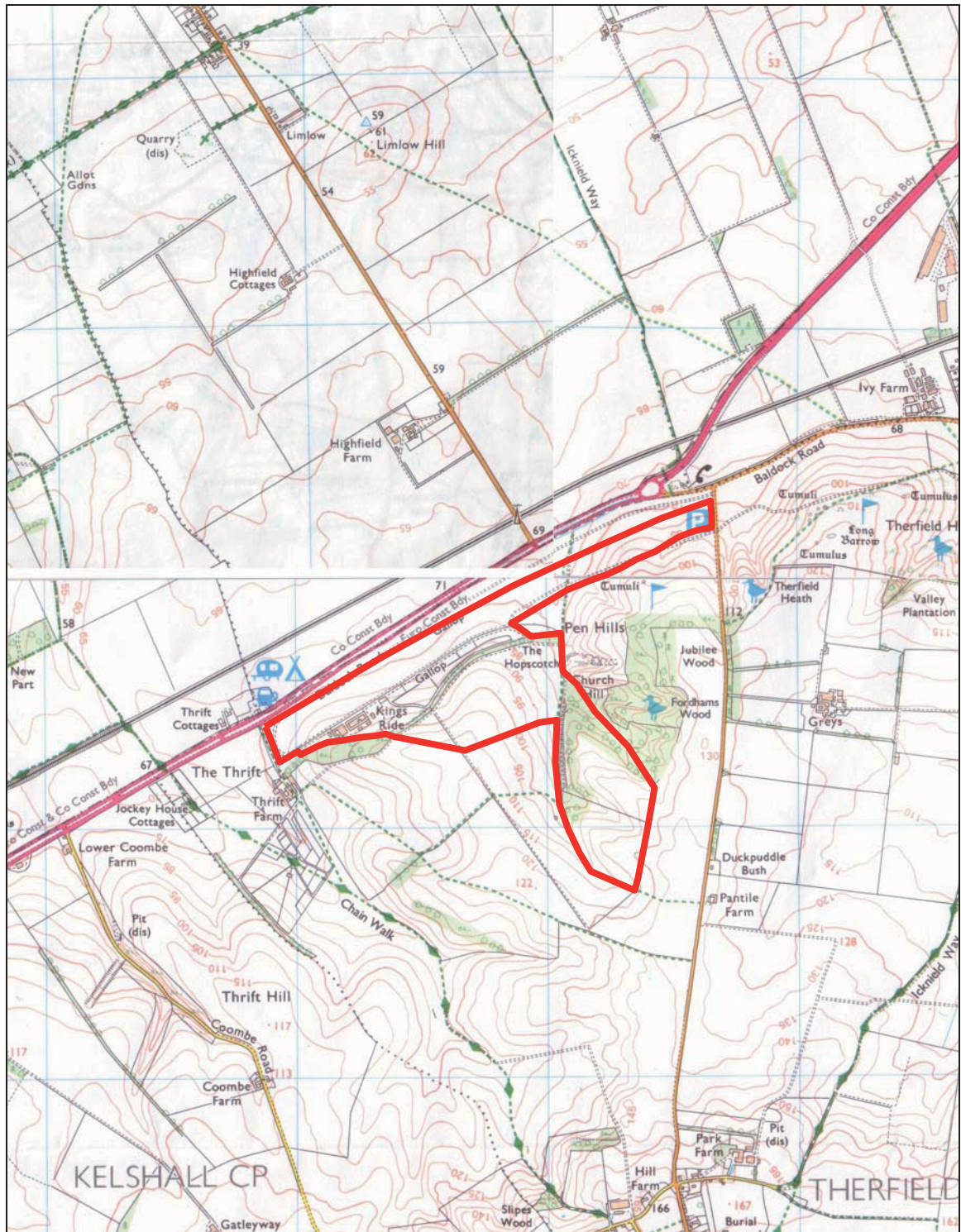
### Figures:

1. General location .....	3
2. Site plan.....	5
3. Site drawings showing Ditch.....	10

### Plates:

*Cover:* Horse looking out over the evaluation site.

1. View from the evaluation site looking northeast towards the ride.....	11
2. The northwest facing section of Trench 1 .....	11
3. West facing section through linear 204 .....	11



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



## Summary

*In January 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd. (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at King's Ride Stables, Therfield Heath, Hertfordshire. The site was situated within an area of archaeological and historical significance, and had the potential to reveal evidence of multi-period activity. Two machine cut evaluation trenches were excavated, revealing a single section of ditch. Two sherds of pottery found within it strongly suggest a Post-Medieval, possibly even relatively modern date for this feature.*

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2006 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at King's Ride Stables, Therfield Heath, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 32205 39422 Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Kings Ride Equestrian Ltd, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (746/KRS/1), and a brief (Batt 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *North Hertfordshire District Council*, The relevant planning application reference is 05/1434/1.

1.2 *Planning Background*

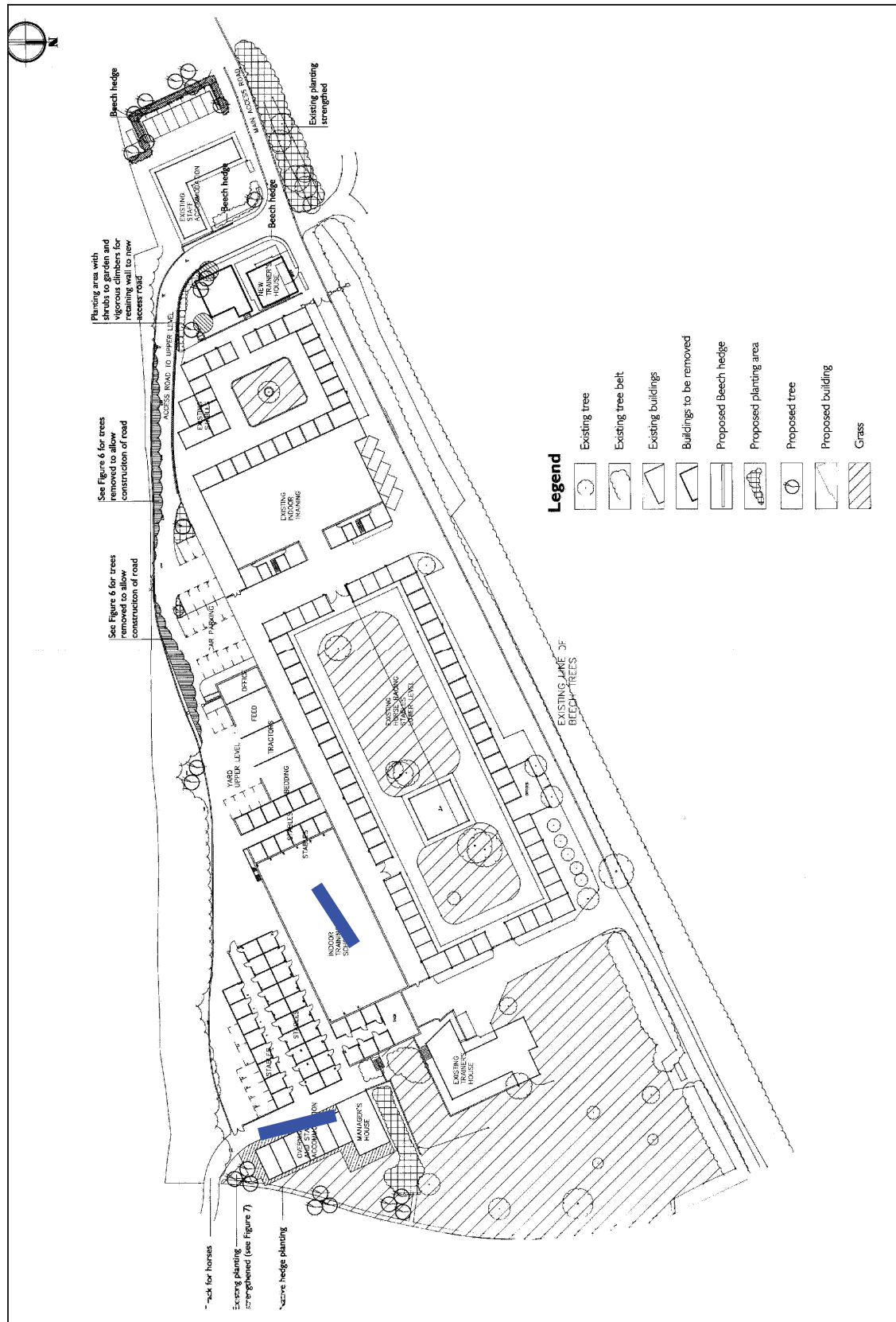
This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of new ménage, stables, visitor's accommodation and associated infrastructure

1.3 *Location and Description*

The site is situated at Therfield Heath, in the administrative district of North Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). The proposed development comprises the construction of a new ménage, stables and visitors accommodation to an existing equestrian centre at the base of the scarp slope south of Royston. Landscape improvements comprising tree planting, the creation of new tracks and rides and the conversion of arable land to grassland will take place on higher land to the south

1.4 *Geology & Topography*

The site is situated on and above the scarp slope of the Chiltern Hills. The land on the ridge above the slope has a maximum elevation of c.125m and is divided by a number of minor dry valleys, which drop to the base of the scarp, which has an elevation of c.75m. The soils of the area comprise the *Upton 1 Association*; namely shallow well-drained calcareous silty soil over chalk (Soil Survey 1983).



**Figure 2:** Plan showing trench locations and proposed site of new buildings (*not to scale*)

## **2 Aims & Methods**

### **2.1 Aims**

As described in the brief (Section 3.5), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological deposits liable to be threatened by the proposed 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**

In line with the requirements of the brief, the methods adopted for this project were:

- Desk based assessment (incorporated in the Project Design);
- Trial trenching with at least 5% of the evaluated area sampled, utilising trenches of 1.5-2m wide and up to 10m long;
- Preparation of a report (this document);
- Deposition of the project archive.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

The following summarises the findings of the desk-based assessment carried out for the area of proposed development as the earliest stage in the evaluation (Fell 2005). N.b. SMR= Sites and Monuments Record and SAM= Scheduled Ancient Monument.

#### 3.1 Prehistoric *(before 600BC)*

The proposed area of development is within c.1km northeast of an extensive group of barrows (prehistoric burial mounds), and to the southeast, a second group of barrows lie within c.300m of Thrift Farm (SMRs 2492, 2493, 2560, 2565, 2566 and 7825).

#### 3.2 Iron Age *(600BC-AD43)*

To the West of the evaluation site, a major Iron Age monument consisting of a north-south ditch alignment traverses the existing ride. This is known as the Mile Ditches (SMR 2207; SAM 125).

#### 3.3 Roman *(AD43-c.450)*

A small Roman town is known to have existed at Baldock, which is c.10km southwest from the site of the evaluation. This is the nearest sizeable Roman settlement to the evaluation area.

#### 3.4 Saxon *(c.450-1066)*

There is limited evidence for Saxon activity in the immediate area surrounding King's Ride. In the wider area, one of the prehistoric barrows c.1km northeast of the site was found to contain secondary interments and a spearhead, all of Saxon date (SMR 40; SAM 20635). The village of Therfield, centred south of the evaluation area probably began to develop during this period, as did the nearby town of Royston.

#### 3.5 Medieval *(1066-1500)*

During this period, the proposed area of development is likely to have been open land. The name 'Therfield Heath' appears in later medieval documents and the area is denoted as common land (SMR 12453).

#### 3.6 Post-Medieval *(1500-1900)*

The village of Therfield was enclosed in 1848 and the enclosure map (not illustrated) shows that the layout of Therfield Heath has changed little since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 3.7 Modern *(1900-present)*

Though the landscape has not undergone any major change since the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of minor modifications were carried out in the immediate vicinity of Thrift Farm including the removal of a track leading from the farm to the woodland



and the enclosure of a small area of land on the south side of the wood *c.*300m east of the farm. These are shown in the 1924 Ordnance Survey map for this area. The bungalows and stables that currently occupy the area to the north and northwest of the evaluation site were constructed during the 1970's.

## 4 Results

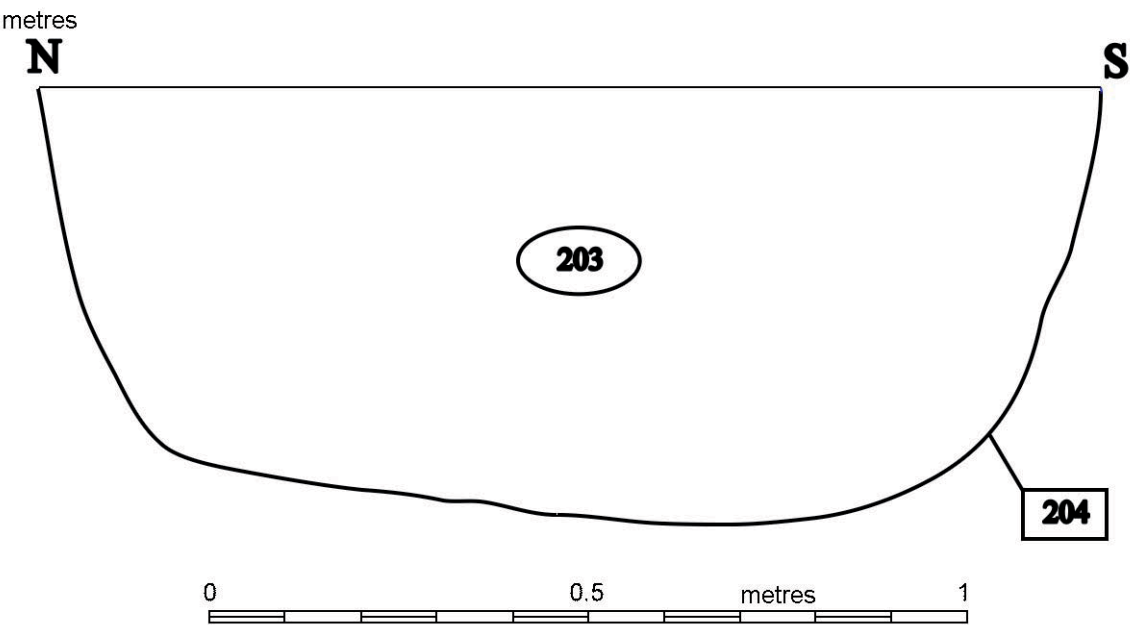
4.1.1 The following section of this report provides a summary of results from the trial trenches. A full, illustrated description of the trenches can be found in Appendix 1.

### 4.1.2 Trench 1

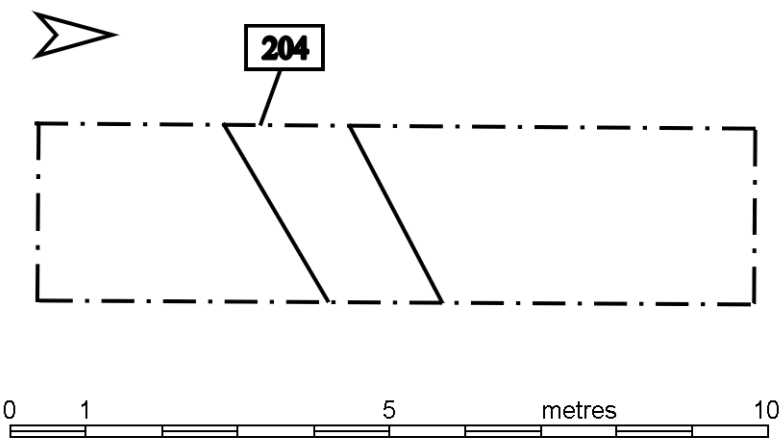
The trench was machine stripped of topsoil to a level of c.0.43m, onto the natural chalk. The trench was aligned northeast southwest and was 2.50m wide by 10m long. Bioturbation of the topsoil due to animal burrowing was observed in the evaluation area, but none was seen in the stripped area of natural. There were no archaeological finds or features observed in this trench.

### 4.1.3 Trench 2

Topsoil was removed by machine to a depth of 0.54m, onto natural chalk. The trench lay along a north-south alignment and was 2.30m wide by 9.40m long. A linear feature (204) was observed, running on a northeast-southwest alignment approximately 5.30m away from the northern end of the trench. A subsequent excavated segment of this, placed next to the eastern baulk revealed a 'u' shaped profile filled with a single deposit of dark brown silty loam mixed with lumps of chalk (203) This feature cannot be securely dated with the two sherds of post medieval ceramic found within the deposit due to the percentage revealed and excavated and the level of animal burrowing that has occurred in the immediate area surrounding the trench. However, the uniform profile and loose, topsoil rich nature of the deposit suggest a relatively modern date for this feature.



West facing section through Ditch A



Plan of Trench 2 showing location of Ditch A

**Figure 3:** Site drawings showing Ditch A



Plate 1: View from the evaluation site looking northeast towards the ride



Plate 2: The northwest facing section of Trench 1



Plate 3: West facing section through linear feature [204]



## **5. Conclusions**

### **5.1 Confidence Rating**

The confidence rating for the recognition of archaeological deposits on this site was good. The weather was dry but overcast and the stratigraphy was simple and well defined.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

The overall results for this evaluation indicate that the proposed area of development is unlikely to be an area of intense past human activity. This view is certainly supported in the southwestern area of the site by the relatively undisturbed nature of the stratigraphy in trench 1 and the observation that no archaeological deposits were present.

The linear feature found in trench 2 is on a southwest-northeast alignment and appears to be running towards the woodland that exists to the north of the evaluated area. It is possible that this ditch represents a post-medieval, if not relatively modern hedge line, grubbed up during the original development of the stable complex during the 1970's.

Although the number of archaeological features observed during this evaluation was relatively low, it should be remembered that the excavated trenches only represent a small sample of the total area. It is possible that further archaeological remains exist outside these investigated areas.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

The writer is grateful to Mr Will Lusty of Savills (L & P) Ltd, Cambridge for contacting ASC Ltd. on behalf of King's Ride Equestrian Ltd.

The input of Mrs Kate Batt, Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council is also acknowledged. The fieldwork was carried out by Karin Semmelmann BA MA PIFA and Elizabeth Gill BSc PgDip. David Fell BA MA MIFA, who also managed the project, wrote the Project Design and Desk Based Assessment on which this report has drawn.

## **7. Archive**

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design and Desk Based Assessment
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 North Hertfordshire Museums.

## 8. 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. English Heritage (London).

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)*.


### *Secondary Sources*

Fell, D. 2005. *King's Ride Stables, Therfield Heath, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation* (ASC: 746/KRS/1)

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

## Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
		Max Dimensions				
		Width	2.50m	Length	10m	
		Depth	0.43m	Level (top)		
		NGR Co-ordinates				
		NE-TL32272/N39408		SW-TL32259/39402		
Orientation		Northeast to southwest				
Reason for Trench		General evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Layer	Dark brown silty loam	-	-	-	
102	Layer	Light greyish brown chalk	-	-	-	

Trench 2						
		Max Dimensions				
		Width	2.30m	Length	9.40m	
		Depth	0.55m	Level (top)		
		NGR Co-ordinates				
		North-TL32323/39506		South-TL32328/39407		
Orientation		North-south				
Reason for Trench		General evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
201	Layer	Dark brown silty loam	-	-	-	
202	Layer	Light greyish brown chalk	-	-	-	
203	Deposit	Dark brown silty loam mixed with a high percentage of chalk lumps (+40%)	140	60	-	
204	Cut	Linear feature with vertical sides and a flat/irregular base.	140	-	60	



## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: King's Ride Stables				SITE NO/CODE: 746/KRS/2
Shot	B&W	Slide	Digital	Subject
1			✓	Trench 1, looking NE, 2x1m scales
2			✓	Trench 1, looking SW, 2x1m scales
3			✓	Trench 1, NW facing section, 1x1m scale
4			✓	Trench 2, looking south, 2x1m scales
5			✓	Trench 2, west facing section through linear feature [204] 1x1m scale
6		✓		Trench 1, looking SW, 2x1m scales
7		✓		Trench 1, looking NE, 2x1m scales
8		✓		Trench 1, NW facing section, 1x1m scale
9		✓		Trench 2, looking south, 2x1m scales
10		✓		Trench 2, looking north, 2x1m scales
11		✓		Trench 2, west facing section, 1x1m scale
12		✓		Trench 2, west facing section through linear feature [204] 1x1m scale
13		✓		Trench 2, west facing section through linear feature [204] 1x1m scale
14	✓			Trench 1, looking SW, 2x1m scales
15	✓			Trench 1, looking NE, 2x1m scales
16	✓			Trench 1, NW facing section, 1x1m scale
17	✓			Trench 2, looking south, 2x1m scales
18	✓			Trench 2, looking north, 2x1m scales
19	✓			Trench 2, west facing section, 1x1m scale
20	✓			Trench 2, west facing section through linear feature [204] 1x1m scale
21	✓			Trench 2, west facing section through linear feature [204] 1x1m scale

## Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS						
Project Name:	King's Ride Stables					
Short Description:	<i>In January 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd. (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at King's Ride Stables, Therfield Heath, Hertfordshire. The site was situated within an area of archaeological and historical significance, and had the potential to reveal evidence of multi-period activity. A total of two machine cut evaluation trenches were excavated, revealing a single section of ditch. Two sherds of pottery found within it strongly suggest a Post-Medieval, possibly even relatively modern date for this feature.</i>					
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	DBA✓	FW	Geophys	Survey	Bldg Rec	Post-Exc
	WB	Strip&Rec	Trenching✓	Test pits	Exc	Other
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none		Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)		none	
Current land use:	agricultural		Future work: (yes / no / unknown)		unknown	
Monument type:	-		Monument period:		-	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	-					
PROJECT LOCATION						
County:	Hertfordshire		OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)		TL 32205 39422	
Site address: (with postcode if known)	King's Ride Equestrian Centre, Therfield Heath, Near Royston					
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c.550 sq. m		Height OD: (metres)			
PROJECT CREATORS						
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd					
Project brief originator:	North Hertfordshire District Council		Project design originator:		David Fell BA MA MIFA	
Project Manager:	Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA		Director/Supervisor:		Karin Semmelmann BA MA PIFA	
Sponsor / funding body:	King's Ride Equestrian Ltd.					
PROJECT DATE						
Start date:	10/01/06		End date:		13/01/06	
PROJECT ARCHIVES						
	Location (Accession no.)		Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)			
Physical:	-		-			
Paper:	North Hertfordshire Museums		Brief, PD and DBA, report, site records, photographs			
Digital:	North Hertfordshire Museums		PD and DBA, report, photographs			

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation: King's ride Stables		
Serial title & volume:	Archaeological Services and Consultancy Report 746/KRS/2		
Author(s):	Elizabeth Gill BSc PgDip		
Page nos		Date:	

## Appendix 4: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: King's Ride Equestrian Centre, Therfield Heath, near Royston,		
County: Hertfordshire		District: North Herts.
Village/Town: Therfield		Parish Therfield:
Planning application reference: 05/1434/1		
Client name, address, & tel. no Tom Beisty, Kings Ride Equestrian Ltd, 35 Manor View, Finchley, London N3 2ST		
Nature of application: Erection of new ménage, stables, visitors accommodation and associated infrastructure		
Present land use: agricultural		
Size of application area: c.550 sq. m		Size of area investigated: c.47 sq.m
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 32205 39422		Site code: 746/KRS/2
Site director/Organization: Bob Zeepvat / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Archaeological Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 10/01/06	Finish: 13/01/06
Curating museum: North Hertfordshire Museums		
Related SMR nos: -		Periods represented: Post-Medieval/Modern
Relevant previous summaries/reports		
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> <i>In January 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd. (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at King's Ride Stables, Therfield Heath, Hertfordshire. The site was situated within an area of archaeological and historical significance, and had the potential to reveal evidence of multi-period activity. A total of two machine cut evaluation trenches were excavated, revealing a single section of ditch. Two sherds of pottery found within it strongly suggest a Post-Medieval, possibly even relatively modern date for this feature.</i></p>		
Author: Elizabeth Gill BSc PgDip		Date: 13/01/06