

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:  
BP SERVICE STATION  
BRACKLEY, NORTHANTS**

*on behalf of  
BP Oil UK Ltd*



**David Fell BA MA MIFA**

**November 2003**

**ASC: BFS03/1**

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 site code:</i>	BFS03	<i>Project no:</i>	504
<i>County:</i>	Northamptonshire		
<i>District:</i>	South Northamptonshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Brackley		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 593 385		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Commercial filling station		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extension ands additional facilities for an existing filling station		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	S/2001/1159/P		
<i>Client:</i>	BP Oil UK Ltd C/o Global Alliance Witan Gate House 500-600 Witan Gate Milton Keynes MK9 1ES		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mike Bird/Martin Morrell		
<i>Telephone</i>		<i>Fax:</i>	

### Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	David Fell	<i>Date:</i>	21 November 2003
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<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 .....	5
1. Introduction .....	5
2. Aims and Methods .....	8
3. Results. ....	9
4. Conclusions .....	13
5. Acknowledgements .....	14
6. Archive .....	14
7. Bibliography .....	15

### Appendices:

1. Field monitoring Sheets.....	23
2. SMR Summary Sheet .....	24

### Figures:

1. General location .....	3
2. Site plan .....	4

### Plates:

1. Aerial photograph of the site .....	6
2. General view of the site during the stripping operations.....	10
3. View showing the site in relation to the existing buildings .....	10
4. Ditch (1).....	11
5. Pit (2).....	11
6. Pit (3).....	11
7. The copper-alloy buckle .....	12

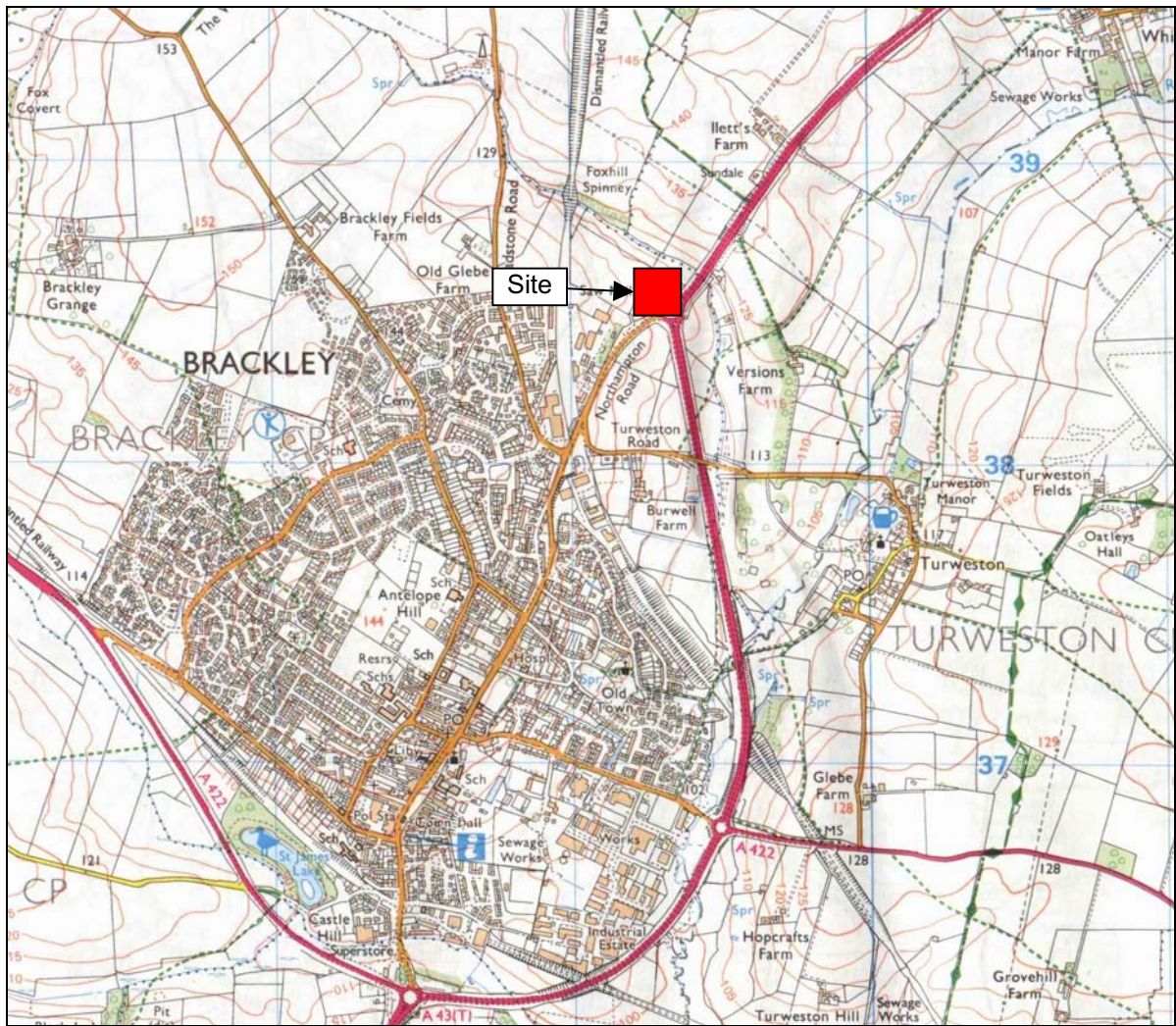


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

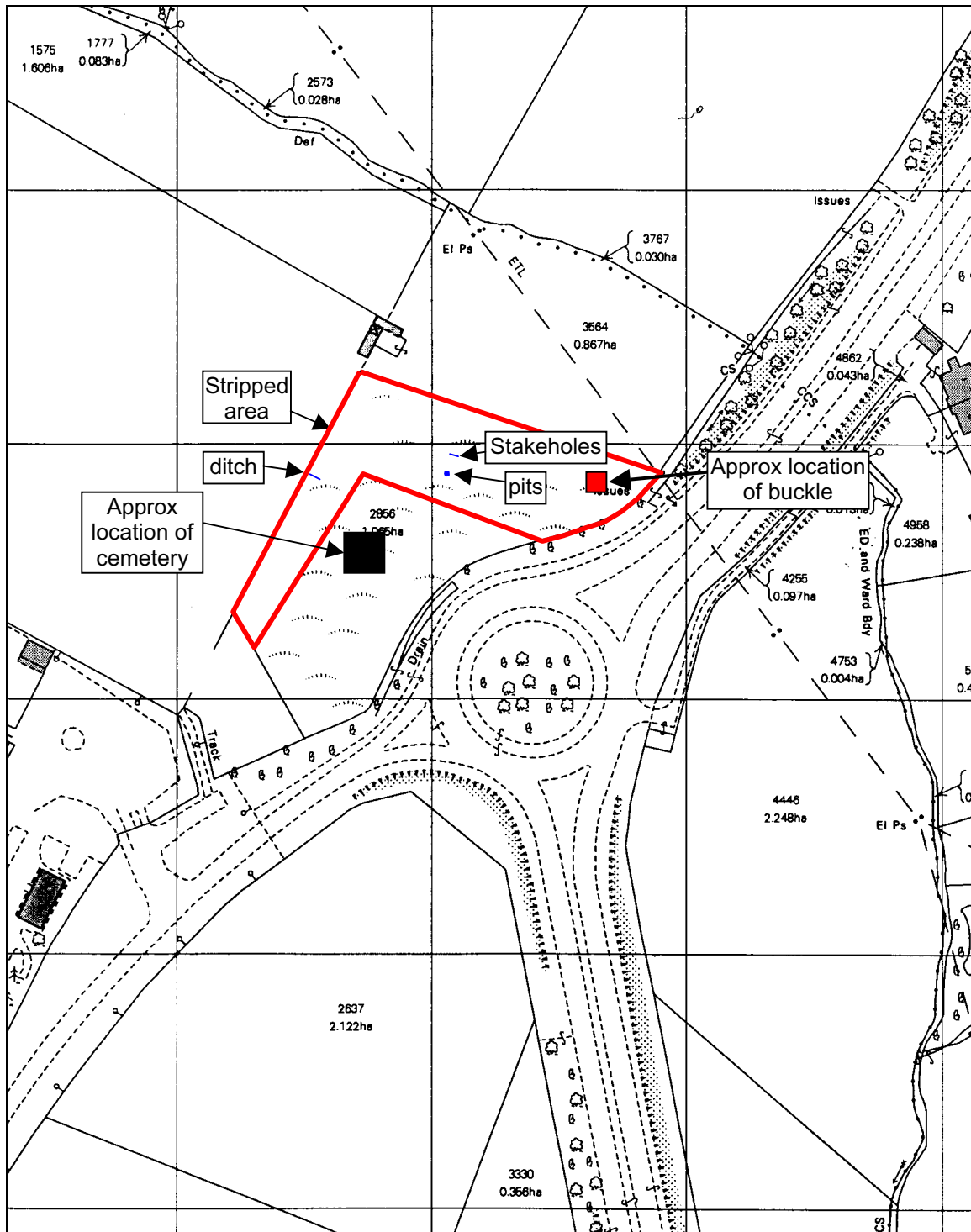


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:2,500)

## Summary

*A watching brief and metal-detector survey were undertaken in September 2003 on a site near Brackley, Northamptonshire. The work was undertaken because the site was adjacent to an area known to contain human burials and settlement features, of possible Iron Age date. The watching brief revealed a small number of undated archaeological features and a 16<sup>th</sup> century copper alloy buckle. No further burials were observed.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 During September 2003 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site at Brackley, Northamptonshire (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Global Alliance* on behalf of *BP Oil UK Ltd*, and was carried out according to the Northamptonshire *brief* for archaeological watching briefs prepared by the County Archaeology Office (CAO), and a standard method statement prepared by ASC.

### 1.2 *Reason for Work*

The watching brief was necessary because a filling station is to be extended and the works had the potential to damage or destroy archaeological remains on the site (Cadman 1990).

### 1.3 *Setting*

#### 1.3.1 *Location and description*

The site is situated in Brackley, in the administrative district of South Northamptonshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey national grid reference (NGR) SP 593 385 (Fig. 1). The site lies *c.*1km northeast of the centre of Brackley at the junction of Northampton Road and the A43 Brackley bypass and comprises a former open area on the northeast side of a filling station and service area.

#### 1.3.2 *Geology and topography*

The natural soils were concealed over much of the site by redeposited material. The underlining natural soils comprised the *Aberford Association*; namely shallow well drained fine loamy soils over limestone (Soil Survey 1983, 511a). The natural drainage of the area is dominated by the river Great Ouse, which flows from north to south *c.*1km east of the site. An un-named stream which flows into the river passes *c.*200m northeast of the site. The site is essentially flat and lies at an altitude of *c.*125m.



**Plate 1:** Aerial photograph of the site (*not to scale*)

### 1.3.3 *Existing buildings and access*

The garage extension was constructed on former open ground, adjacent to the forecourt of the filling station. Access is from the southeast, off a roundabout on the A43 Brackley bypass.

### 1.3.4 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

Brackley is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance and discoveries of a variety of periods have been made in the area (*e.g.* RCHM 1982). The focus of interest for the current project was the Iron Age and Saxon periods (Cadman 1990).

A number of prehistoric remains have been found in the Brackley area, including a barbed and tanged arrowhead on the west side of the parish, and an Iron Age gold coin also (RCHM 1982, 21).

The BP Filling Station was built in 1990 and the construction works disturbed a small cemetery (Cadman 1990). Six semi-complete human inhumations were rapidly excavated and recorded. Some of the graves contained Iron Age pottery sherds. A number of pits and miscellaneous other features were also recorded.

Brackley was also occupied during the Roman period and a site of period has been identified c.700m south of the site in Brackley town centre. Further evidence of Roman occupation has also been recorded on the west side of the town (RCHM 1982, 23).

The origin of Brackley is not fully understood but several stray finds of the Saxon period have been found in the town centre (*ibid*). A settlement had developed by the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is mentioned in the Domesday survey, where it is referred to as *Brachelai* (Morris 1979, 224).

The modern town probably developed from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was a planned settlement laid out west of the original village, on the Oxford to Northampton Road.



## **2 Aims and Methods**

### **2.1 Aims**

The aims of the watching brief were:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains
- To secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site

### **2.2 Methods**

The methods employed during the watching brief were:

- Observation of soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision, on an intermittent basis;
- Inspection of sub-soil for archaeological features;
- The excavation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits;
- Sub-soil stripping under archaeological supervision;
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and the subsequent recording of any exposed archaeological deposits;
- Rapid examination of spoil heaps for archaeological material;

### **2.3 Standards**

The work conforms to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), Northamptonshire County Council's *Policy and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork Projects in Northamptonshire*, and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

### 3 Results

- 3.1 The watching brief took place during the groundworks phase of construction and five separate visits were made. Stripping of the topsoil and overburden was monitored, as were ground reduction operations on the northwest side of the site and the excavation of footings.
- 3.2 A ditch (ditch 1) was recorded on the northwest side of the site (see reverse of monitoring sheet 22/09/03). This was not fully visible in plan but showed clearly on the west limit of excavation where ground reduction had produced a vertical section through the natural strata. It was aligned northwest to south east and had a 'V' shaped profile. It was 1.2m wide and 0.8m deep (Plate 4). It was filled with dark brown silty clay, containing occasional charcoal flecks. No dating evidence was present.
- 3.3 The original soil in the north part of the site was covered by a deposit of modern overburden, probably laid down during the construction of the original filling station in 1990. Removal of this material was monitored and a group of archaeological features, comprising two pits and a line of stakeholes (?) was revealed.
- 3.4 Two pits were observed in the centre on the northern stripped area *c.*24m from the southern boundary. The first of these pits (2) was circular in plan and was 0.5m wide and 0.15m deep (Plate 5). It was filled with a deposit of mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal, but no dating evidence was present. Another ditch (3) was situated *c.*0.5m east of ditch (2). This was oval in shape (Plate 6) and 0.15m deep. It contained four unworked ironstone blocks and was filled with material identical to that in pit (2). A few fragments of burnt ceramic building material were present, but no dating evidence could be obtained.
- 3.5 A short alignment of small subcircular features was present *c.*4m northwest of the pits. Five individual features were present and while they were irregular in shape and may be natural features within the soil, they are interpreted as possible postholes. The alignment was 3m long and ran northwest to south east. No dating evidence was obtained.
- 3.6 *The metal detecting survey*
- 3.6.1 The watching brief was undertaken in co-operation with a metal detector enthusiast, Mr J Possinger. Mr Possinger had discovered the cemetery during the original construction of the filling station and contributed to the present archaeological works by undertaking a metal detector survey during the soil stripping operations.
- 3.6.2 A post-medieval buckle was retrieved from the east side of the site during the metal-detector survey (Fig. 2). The buckle was of copper alloy and had a figure of eight loop. It was probably originally gilt but with the exception of two very small areas, this is no longer present. The buckle is probably 15<sup>th</sup> century in date (Marshall type IIIC, 35) and will be returned to the landowner.



**Plate 2:** General view of the site during the stripping operations



**Plate 3:** View showing the site in relation to the existing buildings



**Plate 4:** Ditch (1) *scale = 1m*



**Plate 5:** Pit (2) *scale = 50cm*



**Plate 6:** Pit (3) *scale = 50cm*



**Plate 7:** The copper-alloy buckle (*scale = 10cm*)

## 4 Conclusions

### 4.1 Confidence Rating

The conditions for the watching brief were good and full co-operation was received from the site contractors and agent. The archaeologists were kept fully informed of the stripping programme and a high degree of confidence is attached to the results of the watching brief.

### 4.2 Conclusions

The watching took place on an intermittent basis and archaeological features were successfully identified. A small concentration of features was present in the north part of the area, comprising an alignment of stakeholes and two pits. A ditch was also observed on the northwest side of the site. In addition, a 16th century copper alloy buckle was found on the east side of the site during the metal-detecting survey.

4.2.1 The archaeological features observed during the works did not contain datable material and their chronology could not be established. They are of similar character to features recorded during the salvage excavations in 1990 (Cadman 1990). These revealed archaeological features extending to the southern limit of the present area and the two groups may be contemporary.

4.2.2 A substantial area to the north of the graves discovered during 1990 was monitored during the watching brief but no evidence for further graves or human bone was found. It is unlikely that human burials were present within the stripped area and the cemetery recorded in 1990 is unlikely to have extended beyond the area identified during the original excavation on the site.

## 5. Acknowledgements

- 5.1 The writer is grateful to Mike Bird and Martin Morrell of *Global Alliance* for commissioning the watching brief on behalf of *BP Oil UK Ltd*. The co-operation and assistance of the site manager Mr Glen Yeo is also gratefully acknowledged. Mr Myk Flitcroft of Northamptonshire County Council acted as curatorial monitor
- 5.2 The metal-detecting survey was undertaken by Mr Jim Possinger and the watching brief fieldwork by David Fell BA MA MIFA and Joe Abrams BA AIFA of *ASC Ltd*. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

## 6. Archive


- 6.1 The project archive will comprise:
1. Brief
  2. Project Design
  3. Initial Report
  4. Clients site plans
  5. Site Monitoring Sheets
  6. List of photographs/slides
  7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 6.2 The archive will be deposited with an appropriate museum. At the present time the archive is stored at the premises of *ASC Ltd*.

## 7. Bibliography

- Allen J L & Holt A St J, 1986 (with later updates) *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology*. Standing Conference of Unit Managers (London).
- Cadman G 1990 *Brackley. BP Filling Station; Archaeological Salvage Excavation. Preliminary Archive Report* Northamptonshire County Council.
- Ferguson L.M. & Murray D.M. 1997 *Archaeological Documentary Archives: Preparation, Curation and Storage*. Institute of Field Archaeologists' Paper 1 (Manchester).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Marshall C 'Buckles Through the Ages' in *Treasure Hunting*. July 1986
- Morris J (ed) 1979 *The Domesday Book. Northamptonshire*. History from the Sources. Phillimore
- NCC 1995 *Policy and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork Projects in Northamptonshire*. Northamptonshire County Council
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).




### Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>	
Project Name: <b>BP FILLING STATION BRACKLEY</b>		Project Code: <b>BF502</b>	Date of visit: <b>10/9/03</b>
Location: <b>BRACKLEY</b>			
Client/Developer: <b>GLOBAL ALLIANCE</b>			
Architect:			
Site Manager/Farmer: <b>SLEW YED</b>		Phone:	
Development Type:			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Foundations	<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Roads	<input type="checkbox"/> Levelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Quarrying		<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <b>light drizzle, but other wise good</b>			
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)			
<b>ground clearance commenced on the north side of the fire exit</b>			
<b>Good quality machinery revealing make up ground. Disturbed topsoil and subsoil strata.</b>			
<b>No trace of archaeological remains observed.</b>			
<b>Discuss situation with site manager. They will be progressing over the next few days. I will call on Monday 14/9 AM.</b>			
<b>Have consultation with David Davis(?) - Basis H&amp;S rep.</b>			
Arrive 11:40 Dept. 12:15			
Comments:			
Completed by: <b>AF 10/09/03</b>			
For sketch plan, use reverse			


ASACFM26, revised 1999



 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>			
Project Name: <b>BP SERVICE STA, BRACKLEY</b>		Project Code:		Date of visit: <b>17/09/03</b>	
Location:					
Client/Developer					
Architect:					
Site Manager/Farmer:			Phone:		
Development Type:					
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <b>Direct sunlight</b>					
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)					
<p>Machining continuing on north side of the filling station                  All topsoil now being removed to depth 600-700mm approx                  Most material being removed is redeposited - hard core and                  relevel soil - probably put down when the filling station was                  constructed.                  Natural strata being revealed beneath redeposited material.                  No remains present.                  No further work is away on west side of filling station.</p>					
On site <del>10.30 to 11.30</del> 9.30 - 10 am					
Comments:					
<p>Works will continue in northern area. Another visit necessary                  18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> Sept                  Area of trees to be removed on west side of filling station -                  probably next week - will require visit.</p>					
Completed by: <b>DF 17/09/03</b>					

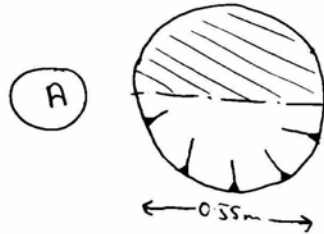
For sketch plan, use reverse

ASACFM26, revised 1999

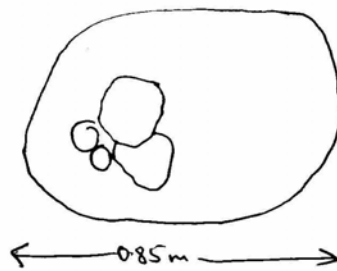
 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>			
Project Name: BP FILLING STATION BRACKLEY		Project Code: BFs 03		Date of visit: 19/09/03	
Location: BRACKLEY, off A43 Bypass					
Client/Developer GLOBAL ALLIANCE					
Architect: SE					
Site Manager/Farmer: Glen Yebo			Phone:		
Development Type:					
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) slightly overcast					
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)					
Arrive site @ 9:30 Excavation on north side of filling station largely complete - though may require lowering in places. Two possible pits and an uneven alignment of post holes then rapidly excavated and recorded. Excavation now commenced west of the filling station. Ground is sloping down in direction of filling station. Some artificial build up. Buried soil - during 1990s construction of BP station. No remains present.					
Depart site c10:45					
Comments: Another visit required on Monday 22/9					
Completed by:					

For sketch plan, use reverse

ASACFM26, revised 1999




150mm deep  
fill is mid greyish brown  
silty clay with occasional  
charcoal.



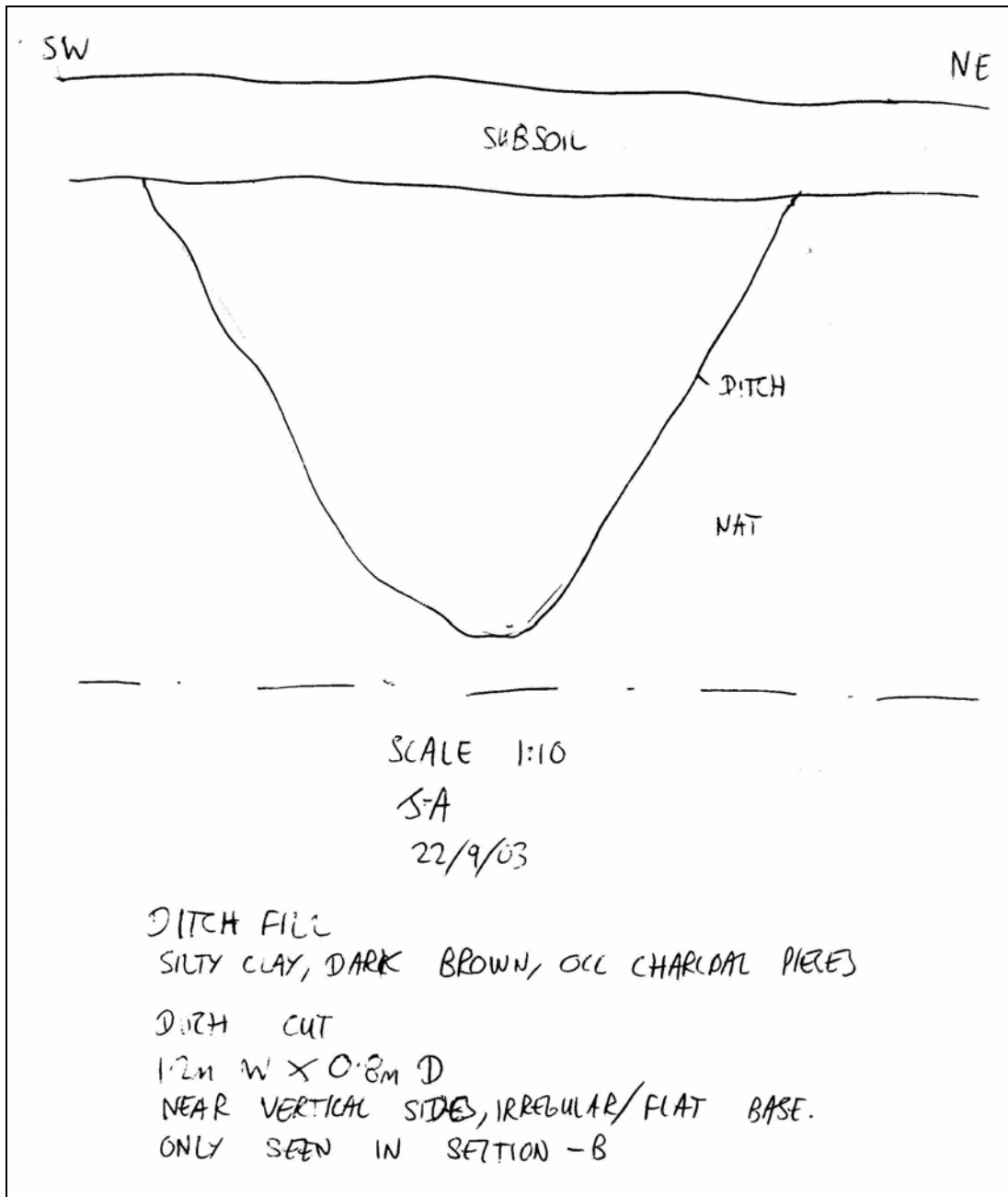
150mm deep  
mid greyish brown silty  
clay fill.  
occasional charcoal + burnt  
ceramic building material

(A) is 24 m west of east side of site.  
(B) is ~~50m~~ 0.5m east of A

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>				
Project Name: BP FILLING STN, BRACKLEY			Project Code: BFS03		Date of visit: 22/9/03	
Location: BRACKLEY, NORTHANTS.						
Client/Developer: GLOBAL ALLIANCE						
Architect:						
Site Manager/ Farmer: GLEN YEO				Phone:		
Development Type:						
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: RAIN						
Observations: ARRIVE 3:55PM DEPART 4:30 PM - WATCHED EXC OF ROAD ON WEST L.O.E OF SITE. ONE UNDATED DITCH OBSERVED IN SECTION OF L.O.E. SEE SKETCH OVER. THIS WAS SEALED BY TOPSOIL. - DATE UNKNOWN BUT V. SMALL FRAGS OF <del>CHAR</del> CHARCOAL OBSERVED. MAY BE OF CONSIDERABLE ANTIQUITY.						
Comments: FURTHER GROUNDWORKS DUE IN SW CORNER OF SITE. DAVE TO LIASE WITH GLEN AS GROUNDWORKS PROPOSALS MAY CHANGE.						
Completed by: SOE ABRAMS						

For sketch plan, use reverse

©ASC, 2000



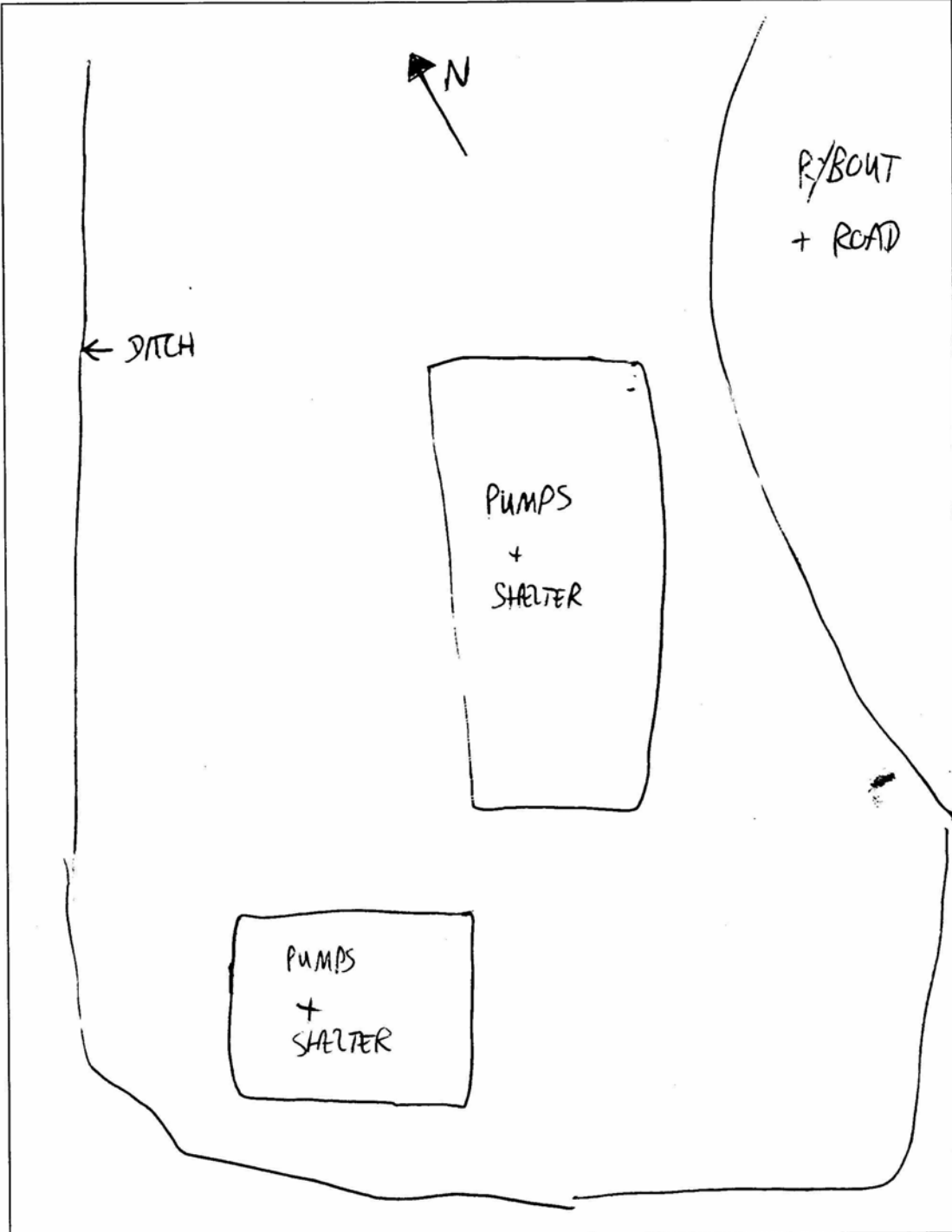


A.S.C. LTD

CONTINUATION SHEET

Site Code:	Co-ordinates:	Continued from Sheet Number:
Sheet Type:		

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by:	Date:	Checked by:	Date:	Entered by:	Date:
--------------	-------	-------------	-------	-------------	-------

©ASC 2000



**Appendix 1: SMR Summary Sheet**

SMR Record Number 5938005	Parish Brackley	Site Name BFS03
Date of Fieldwork Sept 2003	Grid ref. SP 593 385	Fieldworker David Fell, Joe Abrams Jim Possinger
Sponsor BP Oil UK Ltd	Activity Watching brief & metal detector survey	
Landowner name/address BP Oil UK Ltd?		
Finds location N/a Landowner	Finds Destination Landowner	
Records location ASC Ltd	Records Destination Archive	
Finds Quantity N/a	Records Quantity	
<p>Summary of Results</p> <p>A watching brief and metal-detector survey was undertaken in September 2003 on a site near Brackley, Northamptonshire. The work was undertaken because the site was adjacent to an area known to contain human burials and settlement features, of possible Iron Age date. The watching brief revealed a small number of undated archaeological features and a 16<sup>th</sup> century copper alloy buckle. No further burials were observed.</p>		