

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

WATCHING BRIEF: BRADWELL ABBEY MILTON KEYNES

National Monument No. 19062

on behalf of Milton Keynes Council



Martin Cuthbert BA

February 2008

ASC: 950/BAG/2

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Site Data

ASC project code:	BAG		ASC Project No:	950		
Event No:	1162		Accession No:	Waiting for response		
County:		Buckingl	namshire (historic cou	inty)		
Village/Town:		Bradwell				
Civil Parish:		Bradwell	Abbey CP			
NGR (to 8 figs):		SP 8268	3947			
Present use:		Car park	, hard surfaced yard a	nd access		
Planning proposal:		Installation of new gas main				
Planning application	ref/date:	Condition of Scheduled Monument Consent				
Local Planning Author	ority:	Milton Keynes Council				
Date of fieldwork:		January 2008				
Client:		Milton K	leynes Council			
		Architect				
		599 Avebury Boulevard				
		Milton Keynes				
		MK9 3HR				
Contact name:		Gareth C	harlson			

Internal Quality Check

Primary Author:	Martin Cuthbert	Date:	21/02/08
Revisions:		Date:	
Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

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

Summary

In January 2008 a watching brief was carried out at Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, during the excavation of three test pits and three trenches, in relation to the laying of a gas main. Two possible walls and adjacent floor surfaces were revealed in a small area within two of the trenches, but no other archaeological features were observed within the test pits or anywhere else within the three trenches.

1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2008 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes. The project was commissioned by *Milton Keynes Council - Architecture MK*, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2007), defined in discussions with Milton Keynes Council's Archaeological Officer (MKCAO), advisor to the local planning authority (LPA), *Milton Keynes Council*, and the regional English Heritage Inspector (EH).

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief has been required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent, in response to proposals for improvements to the existing gas supply to the site.

1.3 Location

Bradwell Abbey is located in the north-west quarter of Milton Keynes, south of the Victorian and later settlement at Wolverton and west of the village of Bradwell, centred on NGR SP 8268 3947 (Fig. 1). The site lies between the West Coast Main Line and Alston Drive (to the east and west respectively) with the modern Bradwell Abbey industrial estate to the south and west. To the north is H3 Monks Way, (A422), one of the main east-west routes through the new city.

1.4 Description

The buildings on site comprise a 17^{th} -century stone-built farmhouse and farm buildings, constructed on the site of a Benedictine priory, founded in *c*.1154 and largely demolished during or shortly after 1526. The site is a scheduled ancient monument and currently accommodates The City Discovery Centre and a number of small businesses.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The Abbey is located on more or less level ground, at an elevation of c.70m OD. The underlying geology of the site comprises Cornbrash limestone, Blisworth clay and Blisworth limestone. The nearest water course, Bradwell (or Loughton) Brook, is now separated from the site by the railway, and its course has been modified.

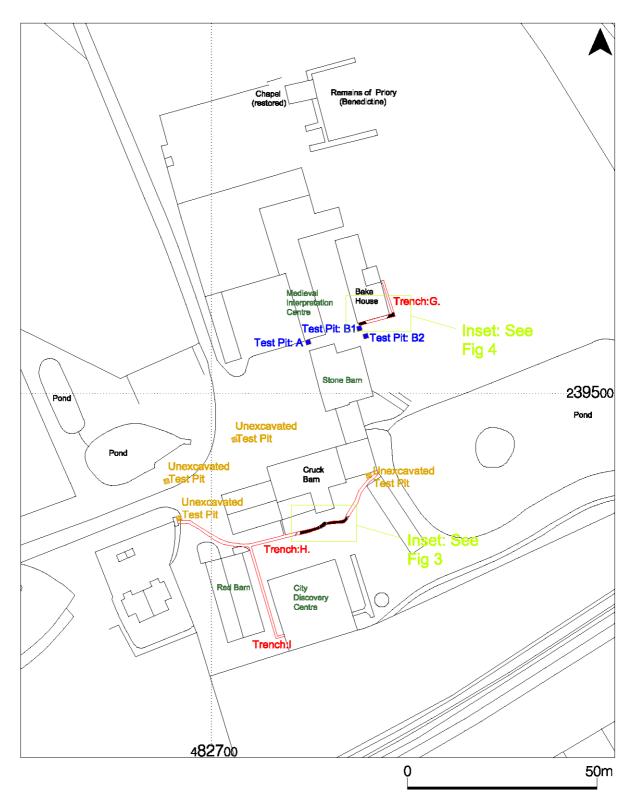


Figure 2: Site plan, showing location and extent of watching brief (scale 1:1,000)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

In line with the requirements of MKCAO and English Heritage (EH), the aims of the watching brief were:

• to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed by the proposed alterations to services

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the requirements of MKCAO and EH, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), to current English Heritage guidelines (EH1991), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 *Methods*

In line with the requirements of MKCAO and EH, the methods to be adopted for this project were:

- A watching brief on all excavations for trial holes to locate existing services, and trenching for the new gas main.
- appropriate provisions for dealing with any significant archaeology revealed during the watching brief
- preparation of a report, and project archive

2.4 *Constraints*

Four of the six test pits that were to be dug to locate the existing gas feed were not excavated, due to the gas feed being in a different location to what was first expected. The location of these unexcavated test pits is shown in Figure 2

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 **Prehistoric** (before 600BC-AD43)

There is an increasing body of evidence for activity of the prehistoric periods in the Milton Keynes area. There is currently no evidence for prehistoric occupation of the site, but flint scatters have been recorded in the Bradwell Brook valley, and an important late Neolithic to early Bronze Age settlement site was excavated to the immediate north in Stacey Bushes (Green & Sofranoff 1985).

3.2 **Roman** (AD43-c.450)

There is no evidence for Roman occupation on the site. A major Roman road, now known as *Watling Street* runs *c*.1km west of the site, and Roman occupation sites have been found in the vicinity. A native enclosure of Roman date was excavated within the parish at Bradwell Abbey Barn, 1km to the south-west (Niblett 1974), while there is a small villa 1km to the south at Wymbush (Mynard 1987; Zeepvat 1988), and a major villa and mausoleum at Bancroft, 1km to the north (Williams & Zeepvat 1994). Roman tile found at Bradwell Abbey may have been brought to site with building materials salvaged from Bancroft.

3.3 **Saxon** (c.450-1066)

There is no evidence for Saxon period occupation on the site. The nearest Saxon settlement is at Bradwell village, 0.3km to the east.

3.4 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

The Benedictine priory at Bradwell was founded c.1154 by Meinfelin, Baron of Wolverton, who gave land for the abbey to the monks of Luffield Priory (Mynard, Woodfield & Zeepvat 1994, 4). The abbey was initially dependent on Luffield, but obtained its independence in 1189-90 (*ibid*). The establishment was badly affected by the plague in the 14th century, but the chapel of St Mary was founded c.1350, and became a focus for pilgrimage. In 1524 the priory was suppressed after it was granted to Cardinal Wolsey by Sir John Longville. A survey of the priory buildings undertaken in 1526 provides a useful record for interpreting the site.

3.5 **Post-Medieval**(1500-1900)

Following the Dissolution the priory church and other ecclesiastical buildings were demolished, though the chapel of St Mary and some of the farm buildings were retained. In 1543 the priory lands were granted to the Longville family, who were responsible for converting the Prior's lodgings into the nucleus of the present farmhouse. This was further extended in the 17th century by Sir Joseph Alston. Two farm cottages were constructed to the west of the farm complex during the 19th century.

3.6 *Modern* (1900-present)

The farm, known as *Bradwell Abbey Farm*, remained in use until *c*.1971, when it was compulsorily purchased by Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

3.7 Previous Archaeological Work

The site of the priory at Bradwell has been the subject of a number of surveys and relatively small-scale intrusive investigations, most of which are mentioned in Mynard, Woodfield & Zeepvat 1994.

The existing gas supply to Bradwell Abbey was installed in the early 1980s as part of a programme of refurbishment. At that time the buildings were occupied by the MKDC Archaeology Unit (MKAU). A watching brief was maintained on the refurbishment works by MKAU staff. No formal report was produced, but a record of this probably survives in the MKAU archive.

More recently, a watching brief was carried out by ASC when the gas meter cupboard at the end of the entrance drive at the Abbey was relocated, and a gas supply was provided to the farm cottages (Fell 2003). Nothing of significance was revealed on that occasion.

4 **Results**

4.1 Three test pits and three trenches were excavated with a mini digger prior to the laying of the gas main (Fig. 2). Each trench had a different stratigraphic make-up. Throughout the site there was a large amount of ground disturbance, probably due to levelling for the present surfaces and modern buildings. No archaeological finds or pottery, other than a few limestone building fragments, were observed in the spoil from the test pits and trenches, which was visually scanned.

4.2 *Test Pit A* (Plates 2 and 3)

This was 3.5m in length, 0.6m wide and 0.5m deep, and was located against the south wall of the interpretation centre (Fig. 2). On excavation, the wall footings on the north side of the trench were noted to be *c*.200mm deep. Beneath the modern concrete surface was *c*.100mm depth of redeposited topsoil, overlying *c*.200mm of brick rubble. It was evident that this pit was largely located on the line of the gas main installed in the 1980s.

4.3 *Test Pits B1 & B2* (Plates 3 & 4)

Two pits were excavated at the south end of the bakehouse to locate the existing main (Fig. 2). Below the modern concrete, Pit B1 revealed 300mm depth of rubble overlying natural orange clay. Below the modern concrete in Pit B2 was 500mm depth of redeposited topsoil, overlying natural orange clay. Both pits were excavated within areas previously disturbed by the laying of the original gas main, and no archaeological remains were observed.

4.4 *Trench G* (Plates 15-18)

This section of pipe trench extended from Pit B1 around the south and east sides of the bakehouse (Figs 2 and 3). At the west end of the trench an area of limestone cobbles was revealed at a depth of 0.5m, while an area of flatter larger stones by the south-east corner of the bakehouse may represent a wall footing. Mortar and further stones could also be seen in section at the east end of the trench.

4.5 *Trench H* (Fig 2 & 3; Plates 5-13)

Trench H was c.0.3m wide, 0.4-0.6m deep and c.50m long. It ran east-west through the south farmyard, to the south of the cruck barn. Excavation revealed possible structural remains (Plates 9,11 & 13) as well as a possible cobbled (Plates 8, 9 & 12) and mortar (Plate 10) surfaces. These were located to the immediate south of the extant cruck barn midstrey.

The structural remains comprised a possible north-south stone wall footing, aligned with the west wall of the midstrey. The footing was c.1.6m in width. To the west was a cobbled surface, at least 5m in width, and to the east was a mortar surface of similar extent.

No other archaeological finds or features were observed throughout the rest of Trench H. The revealed soil profile consisted of:

• *c*.0.2m of modern aggregate

- *c*.0.2-0.3m of gravel and brick rubble.
- natural mid brown clay.

A number of modern service trenches were also encountered (Plate 7).

4.6 *Trench I* (Plate 14)

This trench was c.0.3m wide, c.0.5m deep and c.20m long and ran southwards from Trench H, entering the Discovery Centre near its south-west corner (Fig. 2). No archaeological finds or features were observed. The revealed soil profile consisted of:

- *c*.0.1m of modern aggregate
- *c*.0.4m of dark brown mixed silty loam (made up ground) with slate inclusions.
- natural mid brown clay.

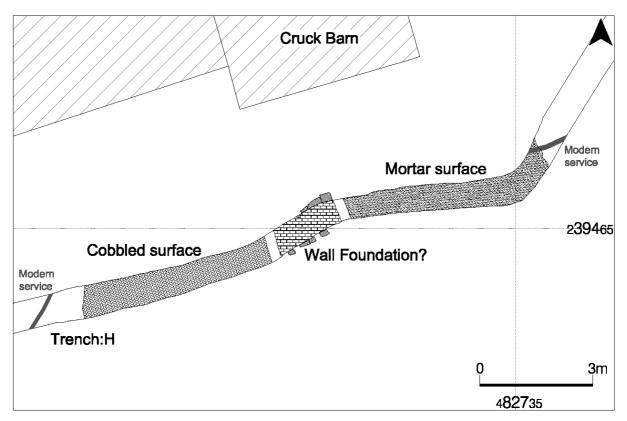


Figure 3: Trench H, detail (scale 1:100)

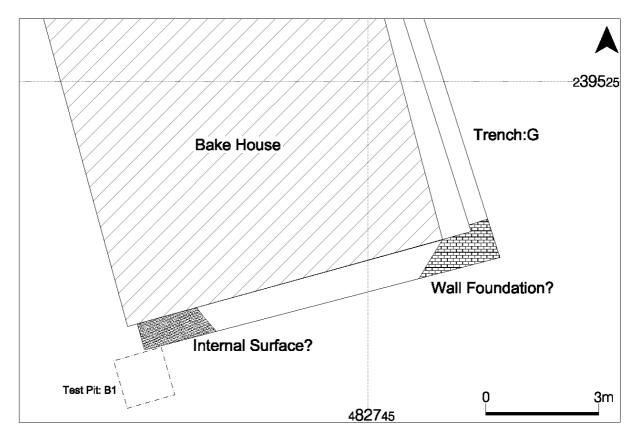


Figure 4: Trench G, detail (scale 1:100)



Plate 1: General view-Test pits A & B, facing W.



Plate 3: Test pit B1, facing N



Plate 5: Trench H East end, facing NE.



Plate 2: Test pit A, facing W.



Plate 4: Test pit B2, facing N.

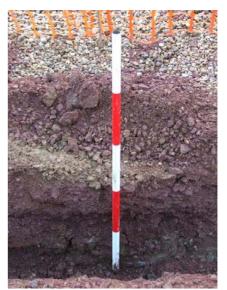


Plate 6: Trench H-East end section, facing NW



Plate 7: Centre of Trench H showing services, facing W



Plate 8: Trench H cobbled surface in section, facing N.



Plate 9: Trench H cobbled surface and structural remains, facing N..



Plate 10: Trench H mortar surface, facing N



Plate 11: Possible structural remains, facing S..



Plate 12: General shot showing cobbled surface and possible wall, facing NW.



Plate 13: Alignment of Cruck barn and possible wall structure in foreground, facing N (note different thickness of Cruck barn walls)



Plate 15: Trench G, facing North



Plate 17: Smaller stoned area in Trench G, facing West



Plate 14: Trench I, facing S



Plate 16: Corner of Trench G, facing South



Plate 18: Section showing mortar above larger stones in Trench G, facing East

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The conditions for the evaluation were good and the work took place in generally dry but overcast weather conditions. Full co-operation was received from the contractors and a high degree of confidence is attached to the results of the evaluation.
- 5.2 Archaeological finds or features were not observed in Test pits A and B and, as both trenches were re-excavated pipe trenches, therefore only containing modern deposits and the gas main itself.
- 5.3 The topsoil and the majority of the subsoil in the area of the monitored groundworks within Trench H appear to have been removed and levelling material deposited during construction of the nearby 20th century buildings. However Trench I's topsoil remains although is still highly disturbed with modern waste material. This may also be due to its close proximity to the 20th century buildings.
- 5.4 Both discoveries in Trench G and H were not of surprise due to their close proximity to the still standing Benedictine abbey buildings, although the potential relationship with the wall found in Trench H and the Cruck barn were. The direction and significance of the possible wall and floor surface within Trench G cannot be determined due to the restraints of the size of the pipe Trench.
- 5.5 Even with the large amounts of modern disturbance archaeology was still recovered at a high stratigraphic level, with possible wall and floor surfaces in Trenches G and H.

6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Milton Keynes Council. Thanks are due to the contractors laying the gas main for their co-operation and assistance. The project was monitored by Nick Crank, the Milton Keynes Council Archaeologist, to whom thanks are also due for his input and advice.

Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA managed the project for ASC and Martin Cuthbert BA and Calli Rouse BA PIFA carried out the fieldwork. The report was prepared by Martin Cuthbert BA and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise:
 - 1. Project Design
 - 2. Initial Report
 - 3. Clients site plans
 - 4. Site Monitoring Sheets
 - 5. List of photographs
 - 6. B/W prints & negatives
 - 7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with Milton Keynes Sites and Monuments Record.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

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- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct.
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Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

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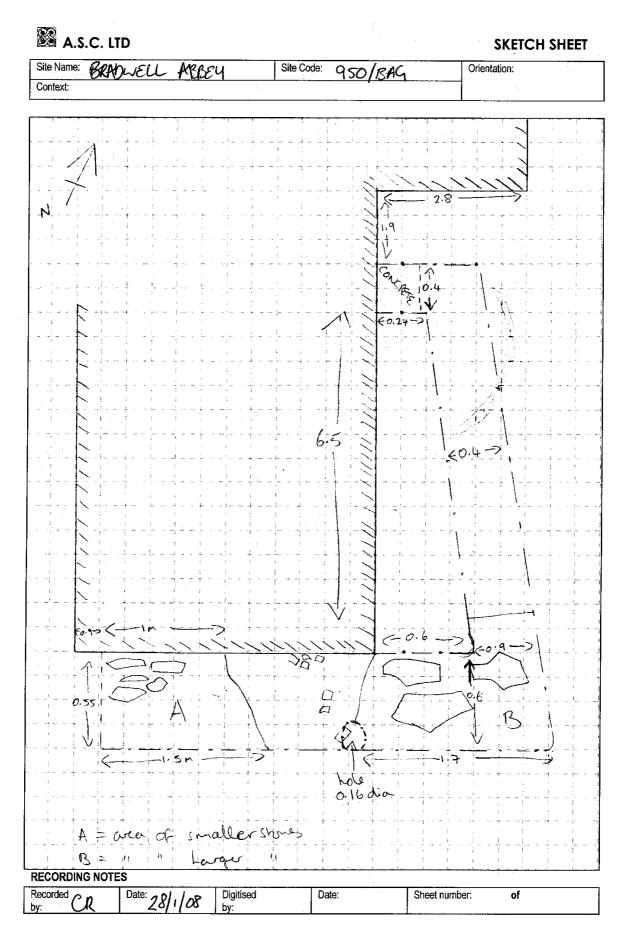
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Project: Bradwell Addrey	Project No.		Sheet: of
	Date of visit:	11/108	
Client/Developer			
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit Start: 0845		Finish: 09	45.
Completed by:			<u>,</u>
	opment Type:		
Footings Services Roads Levelling	Quarrying Pi	pelines Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions:			
	- 11 a		
Observations:		Manata - Mari - Mari - Jana - Ja	
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Visit: CD [106. Client/Developer Contact: Phone: Duration of Visit Start: 14:00 Finish: 16:00 Completed by: Footings Services Roads Levelling Quarrying Pipelines Other (specify): Site & weather conditions: Uny + clear. Observations: Wall observed in torn off fife trench.(G) continueed clearing + recording needed on monday CA[107. Hello!! whoevers doing this no Photos-derths-drawings have been taken yet. e.TO 4 Sketch. P.T.O 4 Sketch.	Project: 950 BAG Bradwell Abbey		
Client/Developer Contact: Duration of Visit Start 14:00 Completed by: Development Type: Footings Services Roads Levelling Quarrying Pipelines Other (specify): Site & weather conditions: Jry + clear. Deservations: wall observed in torn off fife trench (E) continued clearing + recording needed on mondary 28/107. Hello!! whoevers doing this no Photos-darths - drawings have been taken yet. (TO 4 Sketch.	1	Date of visit: 25	108
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	PTO 4 Sketch.		
	Comments:		

A.S.C. LTD ARCHAE	DLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project: BRADWELL ABBEN	Project No/Code: Sheet: 950 / BAG of			
	Date of visit:			
Client/Developer				
Contact:	Phone:			
Duration of Visit Start: 9.45 an	Finish: 130 pm			
Completed by:				
Developm	ant Type:			
	rrying Pipelines Other (specify):			
Site & weather conditions:				
Dry overcat Surry				
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Observations: Cleared J recorded	call (s) in noe			
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* Smaller spines @ U Cu	d of trench, lager			
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Small hole 30 cm + ,	- detty 16 cm in diareter			
noted on S side & d. sheet	trench see sheke			
sheet	,			
Comments:				
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* ON Shetch, smalles shoes nearhed 'A' larger neshed 'B'				



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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAM	/IE: Bradv	well Abbe	sy SITE NO/CODE: 950/BAG		
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject		
1	\checkmark	~	Test Pit A		
2	\checkmark	~	Test Pit B1		
3	\checkmark	~	Test Pit B2		
4	✓	✓	Trench H		
5		✓	General Shot Test Pits A and B		
6		✓	General Shot Test Pits A and B		
7		✓	General Shot Test Pits A and B		
8		✓	General Shot Test Pits A and B		
9		✓	General Shot Test Pits A and B		
10	✓	✓	Entry Point		
11	✓	✓	Trench H		
12	✓	✓	Trench H		
13	✓	✓	Trench H		
14	✓	✓	Trench H		
15	✓	✓	Trench H East End section		
16	✓	✓	Trench H West End section		
17	✓	✓	Far East end of mortar in Trench H		
18	✓	✓	Wall in trench H		
19	✓	✓	Wall and cobbled surface in Trench H		
20	✓	✓	Stone surface		
21	✓	✓	Stone surface		
22	✓	✓	Stone Surface and Wall		
23	✓	✓	Stone Surface and Wall		
24	✓	✓	Stone Surface and Wall		
25	\checkmark	~	Showing relative position of trench to wall		
26	\checkmark	~	Showing relative position of trench to wall		
27	\checkmark	~	Trench H		
28	\checkmark	~	Trench I		
29	\checkmark	~	Trench I		
30	\checkmark	~	Trench H		
31	\checkmark	~	Trench I section		
32	\checkmark	~	Trench I section		
33	\checkmark	~	Trench G stone areas		
34	✓	✓	Smaller stones in trench G		
35	\checkmark	~	Larger stones in trench G		
36	\checkmark	~	Larger stones in trench G		
37	✓	✓	Hole in trench G		
38	✓	✓	Trench G blank end		
39		~	Mortar above larger stones in section in Trench G		
40		\checkmark	Trench G section - showing concrete slab.		

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS					
Project Name:	Bradwell Abbey				
Short Description:	In January 2008 a watching brief was carried out at Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, during the excavation of three test pits and three trenches, in relation to the laying of a gas main. Two possible walls and adjacent floor surfaces were revealed in a small area within two of the trenches, but no other archaeological features were observed within the test pits or anywhere else within the three trenches.				
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief				
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	SAM	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)			
Current land use:	Abbey Grounds	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	No		
Monument type:	Benedictine Abbey	Monument period:	Medieval-Post Medieval		
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	N/a				
	PROJECT	LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	8268 3947		
District:	Milton Keynes	Parish:	Bradwell Abbey		
Site address: (with postcode if known)	City Discovery Centre Bradwell Abbey Milton Keynes MK13 9AP				
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	N/a	Height OD: (metres)	<i>с</i> . 70m		
PROJECT CREATORS					
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd				
Project brief originator:	N/a Project design originator: ASC Ltd				
Project Manager:	Bob Zeepvat	Director/Supervisor: Martin Cuthbert			
Sponsor / funding body:	Milton Keynes Council				
PROJECT DATE					
Start date:	08/01/08	End date:	28/01/08		
PROJECT ARCHIVES					
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)			
Physical:	N/a	N/a			
Paper:		Report			
Digital:	igital: CD Containing photos and report				
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)					
Title:	Watching Brief Report, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes				
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 950/BAG/2				
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA				
Page nos	Date: 20/02/08				