

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:  
KIRKDENE  
PITCHCOTT ROAD, PITCHCOTT  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

*on behalf of  
Mr R.J. Hunter*



**Calli Rouse BA PIFA**

**July 2007**

**ASC: 941/PKD/2**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	PKD	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	941
<i>Event No:</i>	N/A	<i>Accession No:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Pitchcott		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Pitchcott		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 7755 2037		
<i>Present use:</i>	Residential		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Erection of replacement dwelling		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	07/00620		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Aylesbury Vale District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	04/07/2007		
<i>Client:</i>	R. J. Hunter Kirkdene, Pitchcott, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4HT		
<i>Contact name:</i>	R. J. Hunter		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Calli Rouse	<i>Date:</i>	12/07/07
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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*Cover: Existing development, looking southwest*

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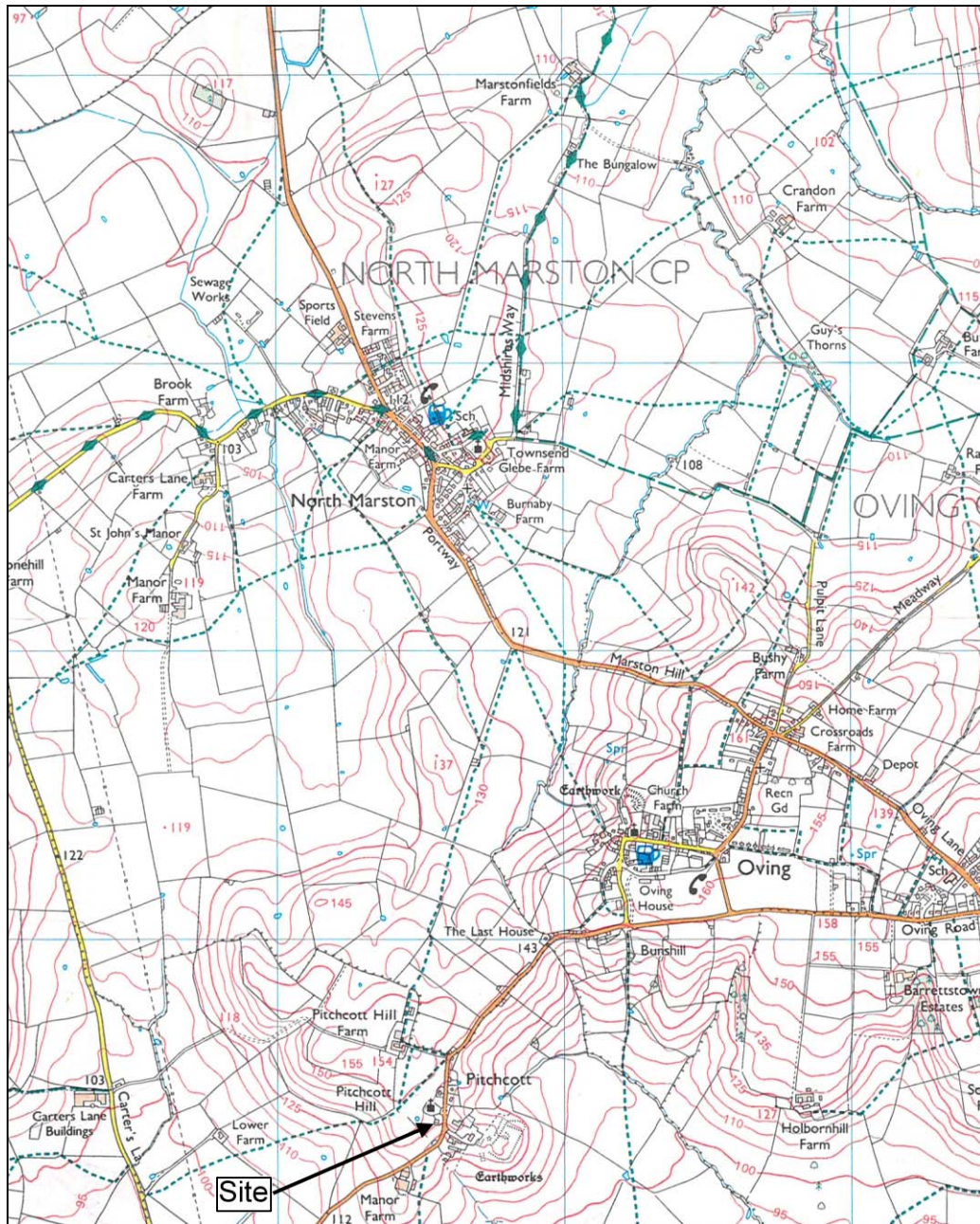


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In July 2007 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire, in advance of the demolition of the existing house, and the construction of a replacement dwelling. Two trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building, but archaeological remains were not observed in either trench. The only feature observed was a large modern quarry pit that appears to be at least as wide as the current house on the site.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 7755 2037: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr R.J. Hunter, and was carried out according to a brief (Radford 2007) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Aylesbury Vale District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Brown 2007). The relevant planning application reference is 07/00620.

### 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 replacement dwelling.

### 1.3 *Location*

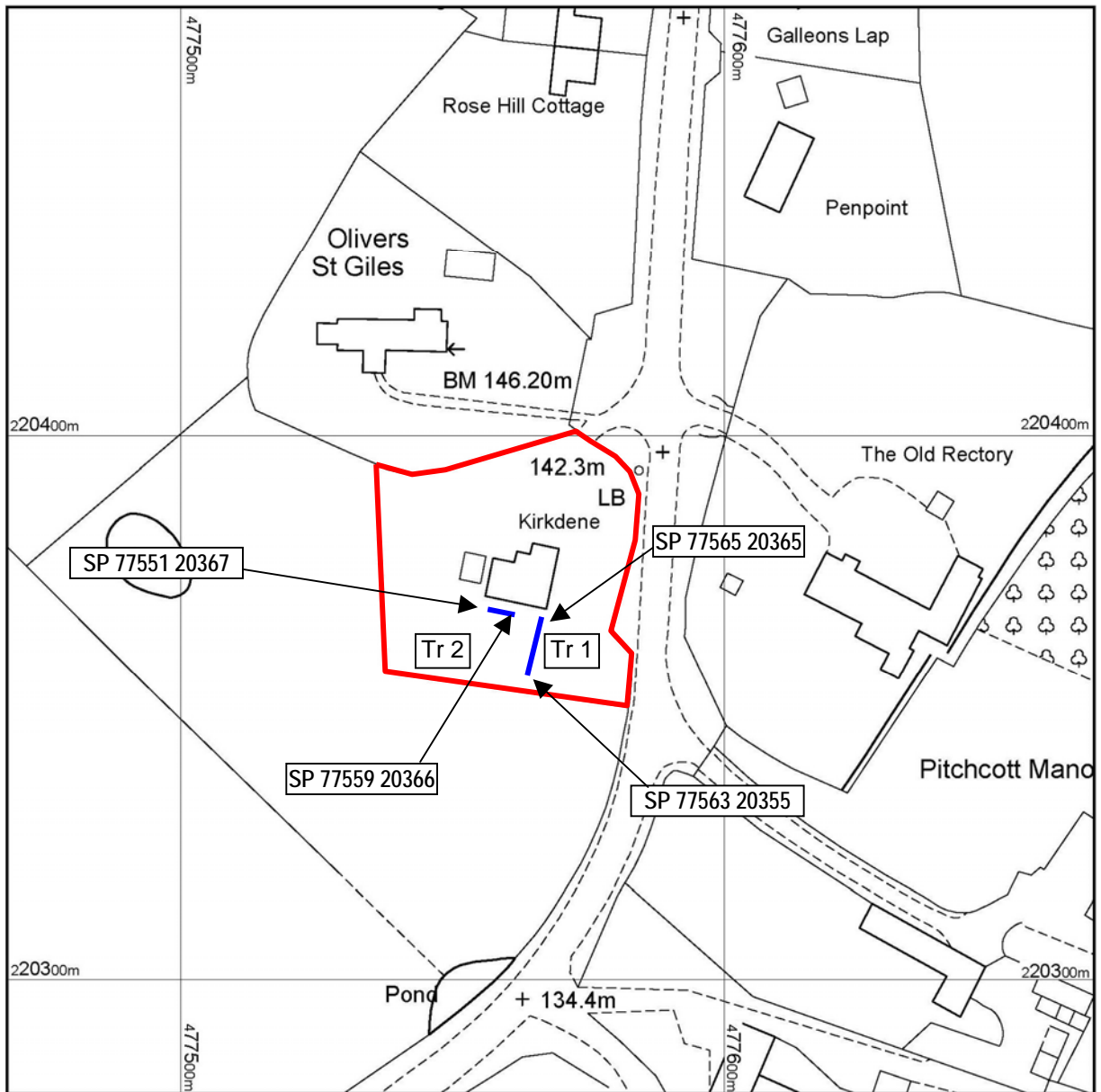
The site is located in Pitchcott, approximately 6 miles NWN of Aylesbury, in the administrative district of Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). Pitchcott itself lies on the upper slopes of the southeast side of Pitchcott Hill commanding scenic views of Aylesbury Vale. The proposed development is situated at Kirkdene on Pitchcott Road, centred on NGR SP 7755 2037 (Fig. 2).

### 1.4 *Description*

Access to the site was from Pitchcott Road along a driveway, which also shares access with Olivers St. Giles Church, which is now a private house (CAS2920) (Fig. 2). The church is the closest building to the site.

### 1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The natural soils are likely to comprise the Evesham 2 Association, consisting of “*Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. Some slowly permeable seasonally water logged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils. Landslips and irregular terrain locally*”. This overlies a geological structure Jurassic and Cretaceous clay (Soil Survey 1983; 411b). The site lies at c.142m OD.



**Figure 2:** Site plan showing trench locations (*scale 1:1250*)

## 2 Aims and Methods

### 2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 8), the aims of the evaluation were:

**Stage 1** Trial trenching should aim to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains (and associated paleo-environmental deposits) within the area of study. In this case the following specific objective was identified:

- To establish whether there was evidence for Saxon or medieval activity in this area.

**Stage 2** (if this is required) should, subject to the results of the trial trenching seek to establish, as far as is practical, the chronology, plan form and function of archaeological features affected by development and interpret the results in terms of the documented historical and historical topography of Pitchcott.

### 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), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

### 2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 8), which required:

- Two trenches, totalling 17.6 sq m, were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building (Fig. 3)
- Subject to the results of the trial trench results a contingency for the stripping the whole house footprint was allowed.

### 2.4 Constraints

The existing building had yet to be demolished when the evaluation took place, so the trench had to be moved from an east-west alignment within the main wing of the proposed development to a north-south alignment, within the footprint of the proposed development's southern wing.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

SMR = Sites and Monuments Record

- 3.1 The earliest evidence of human activity in the parish of Pitchcott consists of the Roman road, Viatores Route 173 (SMR 2035). Visible surface signs indicate that this was not a large road and so was secondary to the great military ways. It runs in a roughly northeasterly direction, approximately parallel with the Fosse Way. There is no evidence of other Roman activity here and seems to be no settlement in this area until the medieval period.
- 3.2 There is no mention of any settlement at Pitchcott in the Domesday Book but it gets its first mention in 1086 when it was “apparently assessed under Miles Cripin’s land in Waddesdon Hundred” (Page, 1969). The oldest building that remains in Pitchcott is St. Giles’ Church (SMR 2920) where the nave possibly dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the chancel to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Various additions have been made to it during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and a stone above the south porch is inscribed ‘1662’, for which Page (1969) suggests may have been “a repair of damage done during the Civil War”. It was further restored in 1863-4. Since the last service in 1974 it has been converted for residential purposes.
- 3.3 There is evidence that Pitchcott was once much larger than the village that survives today. To the south and south east of the village there are many earthworks that form a “recognisable complex of house platforms and tracks” (SMR 0715). There may also be some house platforms to the north and west of the church but subsequent quarrying makes distinguishing the precise extent of the medieval layout very difficult. The quarries themselves are “probably 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century” (Pevsner and Williamson 2000). In any case the indication is that the village has shrunk considerable since its hey day.
- 3.4 “In the reign of King Henry the III [1216-72] the *manor* belonged to the Earl of Cornwall” (Sheahan, 1862) and after which it was held by the Vernon family for many generations. Yet the earliest evidence for a manor house is that of the one still standing with the date of 1657 on the northeast wing (SMR 11505). This Grade II listed building was constructed by the Saunders family, to which the Manor was conveyed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. There may however be earlier parts to the building but unfortunately they are “covered in cement, and little can be said of them” (Page, 1969). The manor house also underwent further modifications completed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



## 4 Results

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following paragraphs provide a summary of the results of the trial trenches. Detailed information regarding the trial trenches and their contents appears in Appendix 1.

### 4.2 Trench 1 (Figure 3: Plates 1, 2 and 4)

4.2.1 Trench 1 was a 9.6x 1.4m linear trench, excavated within the footprint of the proposed development, at a right angle to the existing building. The natural strata (107) in this trench comprised mid grey brown clay, and was present at a depth of 0.5m at the southern end of the trench.

4.2.2 A large pit [106] dominated the northern end of the trench. It extended for a distance of 5m and was situated at a depth of c 0.62m. A 3.8m wide sondage was excavated into the pit and the fill (105) comprised a mid yellow brown sandy soil with frequent inclusions of limestone blocks, modern tile and brick. One complete brick was recovered from the fill of the quarry pit, and was dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*pers. comm.* Bob Zeepvat). The pit was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m, at which point excavation was stopped due to health and safety reasons. It is interpreted as a modern quarry pit and is not archaeologically significant.

4.2.3 Directly above the quarry pit, and throughout the trench, was a 0.19-0.22m thick layer of chalky stones (104) that may represent an earlier surface, possibly that of an earlier farmyard (*pers. comm.* R.J. Hunter). Above this at the northern end of the trench, over the quarry pit, was a 0.07m thick layer of dark brown silty soil (103). Overlying this was a layer of yellowy brown silty soil (102), 0.14m thick with tile or brick inclusions. This layer was only observed above the quarry pit. The uppermost layer throughout the trench was 0.1-0.4m of dark brown silty topsoil.

### 4.3 Trench 2 (Figure 3: Plate 3)

4.3.1 Trench 2 measured 3x1.4m, and had a maximum depth of 0.4m. Excavation was stopped when a layer similar to that of the quarry pit in Trench 1 was observed.



**Plate 1:** Trench 1 showing sondage through Pit [106] (*Scale = 1m*)



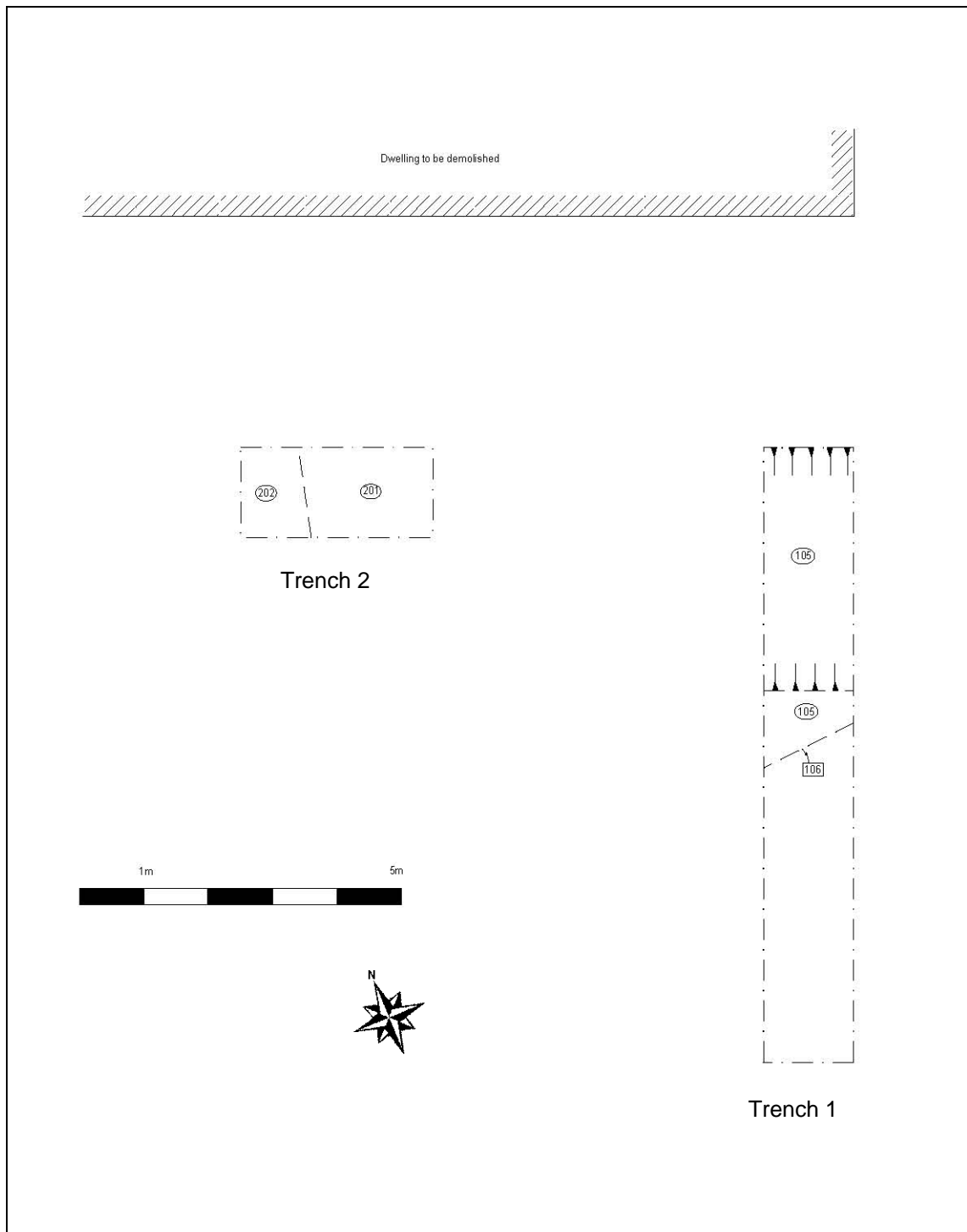
**Plate 2:** Trench 1, looking northeast (*Scale = 1m*)



**Plate 3:** Trench 2, looking northwest, (*Scale = 1m*)



**Plate 4:** Trench 1, section of Pit [106], looking southwest, (*Scale = 2m*)



**Figure 3:** Trench Plan (Scale = 1:100)

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Documentary references record the presence of ‘recognisable...house platforms and tracks’ (Section 3). The development is on the edge of an escarpment, an ideal settlement location, and nearby fields still exhibit evidence of having been settled in the past.
- 5.2 No evidence of settlement was observed within the trial trenches. A substantial pit [106], filled with modern building debris (105) was present in both the trenches. It is interpreted as a modern quarry pit and is not archaeologically significant. It is likely to have substantially damaged or destroyed any archaeological remains which may have existed on the site.
- 5.3 While the presence of individual, isolated archaeological remains, away from the quarry pit and trial trenches cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large quantities of archaeological features or artefacts are present on the site.
- 5.4 *Confidence Rating*

The evaluation was carried out in sunny conditions, and full co-operation was received from the client. A high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr R.J. Hunter for commissioning the project, and for providing and operating the plant. Thanks are also due to David Radford of *Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service* for monitoring the project, and to Julia Wise of the *Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record*. For providing access to the SMR data.

The project was managed by David Fell MA MIFA. The fieldwork was carried out by Dr Jonathan Hunn MIFA, Calli Rouse BA PIFA and Caroline Barclay MA. This report was prepared by Calli Rouse and edited by David Fell.

## 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. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Buckinghamshire County Museum*.

## 8. References

### *Standards & Specifications*

Brown, R 2007 *Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire* ASC/941/PKD/1

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).*

Radford, D 2007 *Brief for an Archaeological Evaluation at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire* Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service

### *Secondary Sources*


Page W. 1969 *The Victoria History of the County of Buckingham* 4 Dawsons of Pall Mall (London)

Pevsner N. & Williamson E. 2000 *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* Penguin Books


Sheahan J.J. 1862 *History and Topography of Buckinghamshire* Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts (London)

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

## Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	<b>Max Dimensions (m)</b>					
	<b>Length</b>	9.6	<b>Width</b>	1.4	<b>Depth (max)</b>	1.4
	<b>Levels</b>					
	<b>Trench base north</b>		140.01m OD			
	<b>Trench top north</b>		141.37m OD			
	<b>Trench base south</b>		140.05m OD			
	<b>Trench top south</b>		140.58m OD			
	<b>NGR Co-ordinates</b>					
	<b>NE</b>	SP 77565 20365		<b>SW</b>	SP 77563 20355	
	<b>Orientation</b>			NE-SW		
<b>Reason for Trench</b>			Within footprint of proposed development			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
101	Layer	Dark brown silt. Topsoil	1400+	400	-	
102	Layer	Yellowy brown sandy soil with tile/brick inclusions	1400+	140	400	
103	Layer	Dark brown silty soil	1400+	70	540	
104	Layer	Chalky stony layer – possible rough surface	1400+	190	610	
105	Fill	Mid yellow orange brown sandy soil with frequent limestone, tile and brick inclusions	1400+	780	800	
106	Cut	Cut of possible quarry pit. Top of cut observed at 0.5m below ground level. Overall depth not excavated.	1400+	Not fully exc	620	
107	Layer	mid grey brown clay. Natural strata	1400+		c.500	



<b>Trench 2</b>						
	<b>Max Dimensions (m)</b>					
	<b>Length</b>	3	<b>Width</b>	1.4	<b>Depth (max)</b>	0.5
	<b>Levels</b>					
	<b>Trench base east</b>			140.88m OD		
	<b>Trench top east</b>			141.31m OD		
	<b>Trench base west</b>			140.86m OD		
	<b>Trench top west</b>			141.31m OD		
	<b>NGR Co-ordinates</b>					
	<b>E</b>	SP 77559 20366		<b>W</b>	SP 77551 20367	
	<b>Orientation</b>			E-W		
<b>Reason for Trench</b>			Looking for continuation of quarry pit			
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description and Interpretation</b>	<b>Max Width (mm)</b>	<b>Max Thckn (mm)</b>	<b>Depth BGL (mm)</b>	
201	Layer	Dark brown silt . Topsoil	1400+	400	-	
202	Fill	Mid yellow orange brown sandy soil with frequent limestone, tile and brick inclusions	1400+	Not excavated	400	

## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott			SITE NO/CODE: 941/PKD
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		✓	Existing Development, looking southwest
2		✓	Finds from probable quarry pit [106]
3		✓	Trench 1, working shot
4	✓	✓	Section of probable quarry pit, looking southwest, 2m scale
5		✓	Trench 2, Working shot
6	✓	✓	Trench 1, looking southwest, 1m scales
7		✓	Trench 1, looking southwest, 1m scales
8	✓	✓	Trench 1, looking northeast, 1m scales
9		✓	Trench 1, looking northeast, 1m scales
10		✓	Section, Trench 1, 1m scale
11	✓	✓	Trench 2, looking northwest, 1m scales
12		✓	Trench 2, looking northwest, 1m scales

### Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire		
Short Description:	<i>In July 2007 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire, in advance of the demolition of the existing house, and the construction of a replacement dwelling. Two trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed building, revealing a probable modern quarry pit that appears to be at least as wide as the current dwelling on site.</i>		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Trial Trenching		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None
Current land use:	Residential	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	No
Monument type:	-	Monument period:	-
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 7755 2037
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)		Height OD: (metres)	142
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	David Radford	Project design originator:	Ralph Brown
Project Manager:	David Fell	Director/Supervisor:	David Fell
Sponsor / funding body:	Mr R.J. Hunter		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	04/07/2007	End date:	04/07/2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Buckinghamshire County Museum	-	
Paper:		Brief, Project Design, Report, Site Record Sheets	
Digital:		CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation at Kirkdene, Pitchcott Road, Pitchcott, Buckinghamshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC/941/PKD/2		
Author(s):	Calli Rouse		
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