

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
LAND AT WILBURY FARM
ARLESEY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

NGR: TL 1903 3318

on behalf of Richard Whitman



David Kaye BA AIFA

March 2009

ASC: 1116 AWF/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	AWF	<i>ASC project no:</i>	1116
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeo12-49711	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	BEDFM 2009.36
<i>County:</i>	Bedfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Arlesey		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Arlesey		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 1903 3318		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 0.42 hectares		
<i>Present use:</i>	Arable		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	New grain store and access road		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	08/503/FULL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Mid Bedfordshire District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	23.02.09-25.02.09		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Bidwells Faulkner 49 High Street Kings Langley Hertfordshire WD4 9HU		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr Richard Whitman Parkside Farm Hadley Wood Enfield Middlesex EN2 8LA		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Lucie Stone (Bidwells Faulkner)		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	David Kaye BA AIFA	<i>Date:</i>	1.03.09
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	1.03.09
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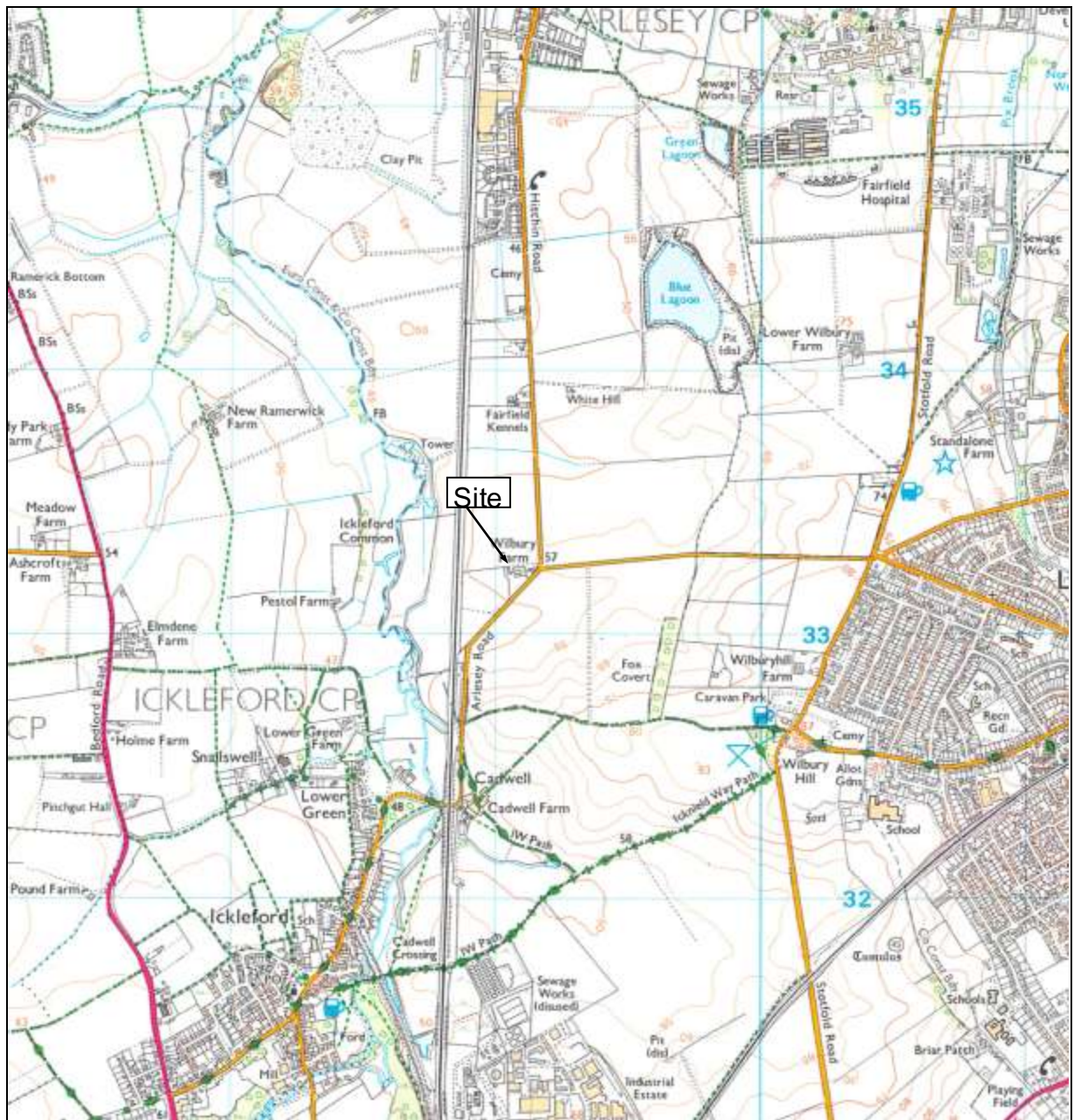


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In February 2009 ASC carried out a programme of evaluation trenching at Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire, to assess its archaeological potential prior to the construction of a grain store and associated access road.

Seven trenches were opened across the site, within the footprint of the proposed building and road. No archaeological cut features, deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the trenches.

The stratigraphy of the trenches suggests the topsoil on the higher, more exposed ground has been eroded by the wind, and ploughing has homogenised the topsoil and subsoil. At the lower end of the site the soil structure has been maintained, and some colluvial deposits were noted.

1. Introduction

1.1 In February 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Bidwells Faulkner, and was carried out according to briefs (Firth 2008a, 2008b) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Mid Bedfordshire District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *Heritage and Environment Section, Bedfordshire County Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (1116/AWF/1r). The relevant planning application reference is 08/053/FULL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The project was managed by Karin Semmelmann MA MIFA and was carried out under the overall direction of Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is located in the parish of Arlesey, in the administrative district of Mid Bedfordshire, approximately 2.5km south of the village of Arlesey, and centred on NGR TL 1903 3318 (Fig. 1).

The site comprises a sub-rectangular area of c.0.42 hectares immediately to the southwest of Wilbury Farm, and separated from the main buildings by a hedgerow. The site is accessed from Hitchin Road to the east, and Arlesey Road runs southwest to northeast along the southern boundary of the site (Fig. 2). The current land use is arable, and the site adjoins arable fields to the north and west.

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The farm buildings are located on the plateau of a small spur situated on the eastern side of the River Hiz valley. It overlooks the Stevenage to Peterborough railway line and the River Hiz to the west, and the ridge of the Icknield Way to the south. The study area is situated on the southeast-facing slope of the spur, running from the farm buildings at the top, to the Arlesey Road below, a fall of approximately 5m (Fig. 2). The soils of the area belong to the *Wantage 2 Association*, described as “shallow, well drained, calcareous silty soils over argillaceous chalk associated with similar soils affected by groundwater with deeper well drained coarse loamy soils in places and complex soil patterns locally” (Soil Survey 1983, 342d). These overlie an outcrop of glacial chalky sand and gravel within an area of lower chalk (BGS, Sheet 221).

This is manifested on site as natural geology consisting of patches of reddish-brown clay in chalk at the top of the site, giving way to pure chalk at lower levels.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposal development consists of a new grain store and farm access road (Fig. 3).

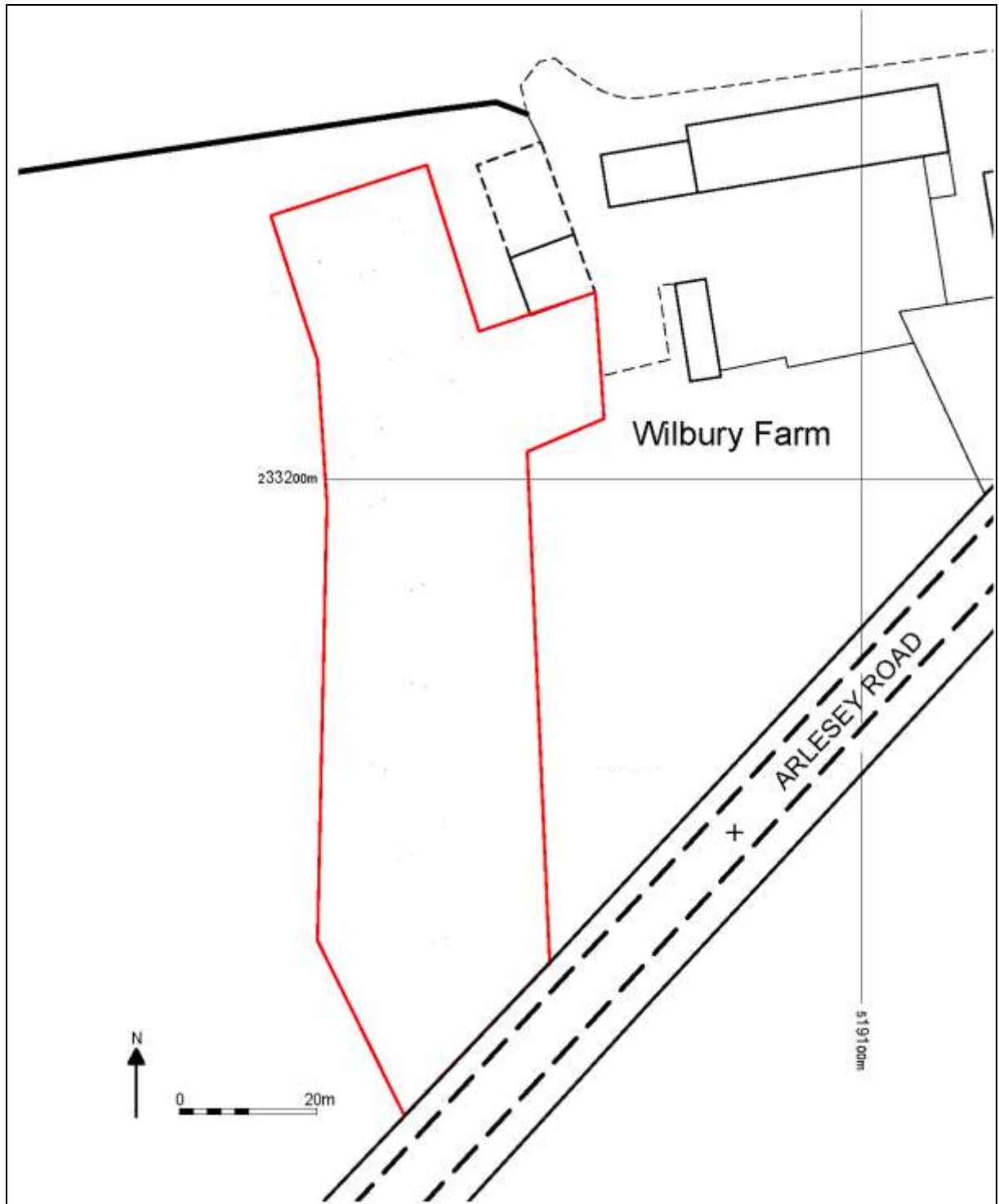


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:750)

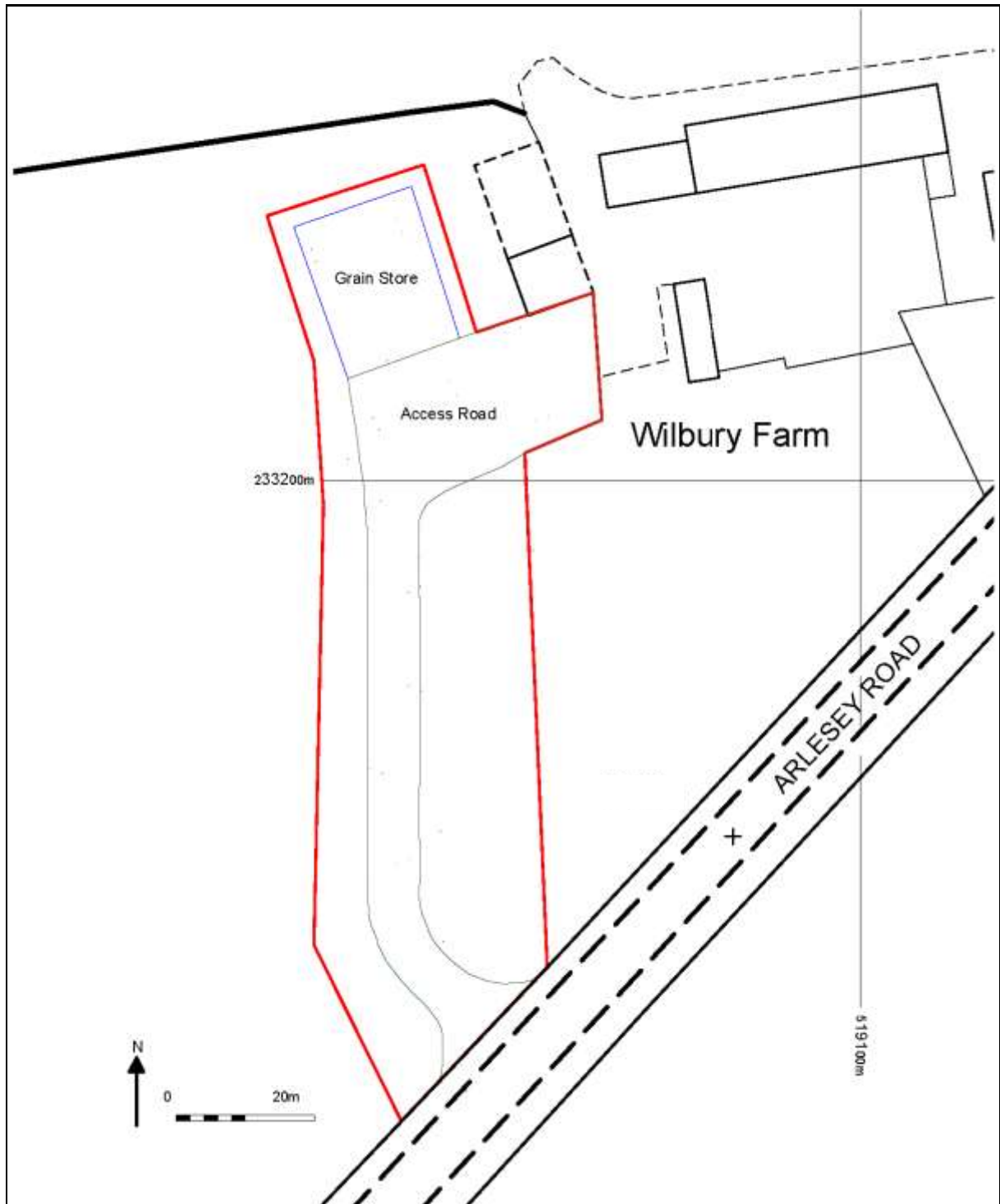


Figure 3: Proposed development (scale 1:750)

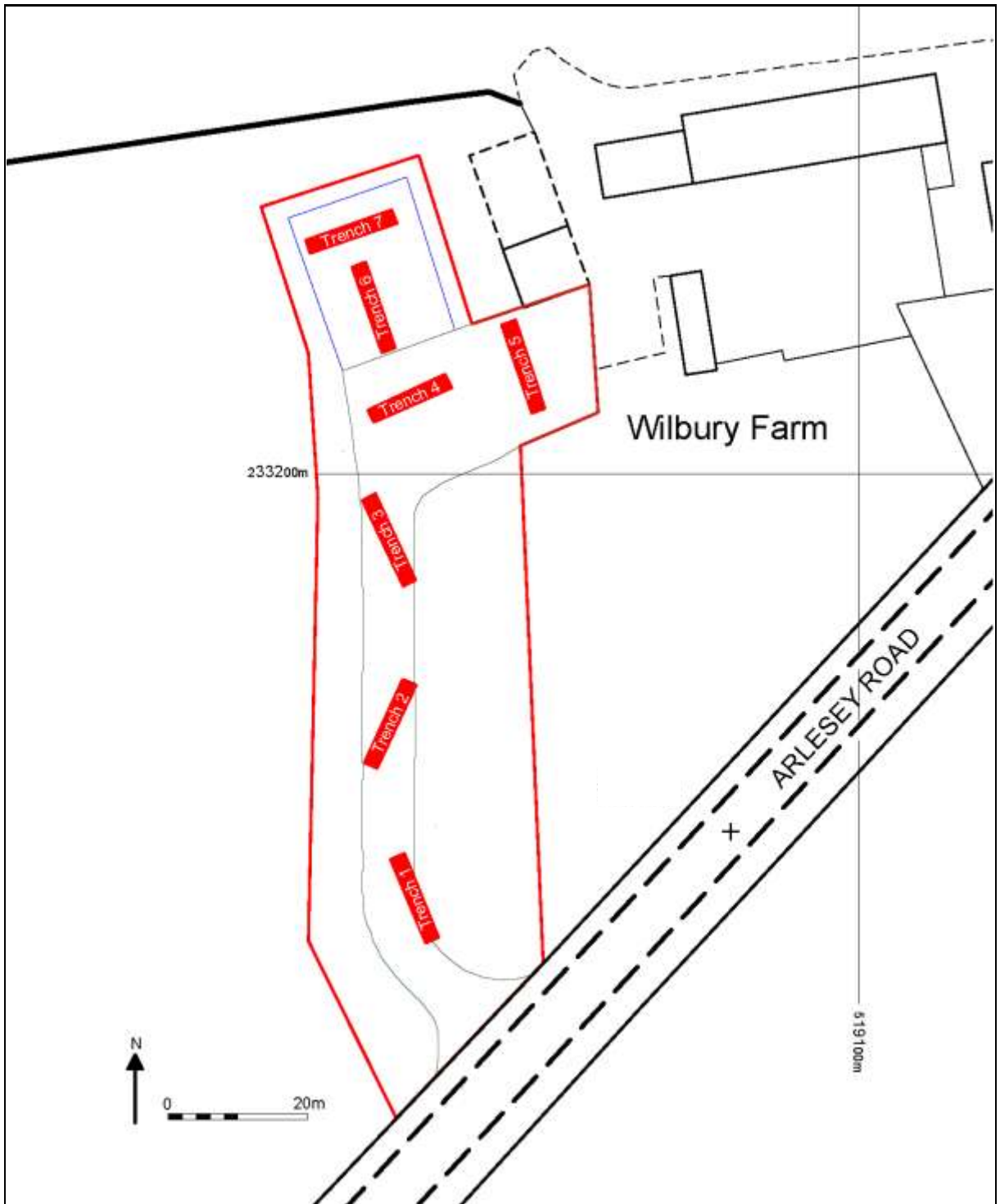


Figure 4: Trench location 1:750)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 2), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the location, extent, nature, integrity, state of preservation and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the contemporary landscapes
- To recover artefacts to assist in the development of the regional type series
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine past local environmental conditions
- To examine the results of the evaluation within their local and regional context (e.g. Oake *et al* 2007)

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), to English Heritage guidelines (EH 1991, EH 2006, EH 2008), 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), which required:

- A maximum of 170 square metres of trenching, equating to seven trenches, each 1.8 × 13m
- A contingency for an additional 50 square metres of trenching to further investigate any significant features or deposits
- Preparation of a detailed report and ordered archive

ASC's general evaluation methodology is described in detail in Sections 3.4 *et seq.*

2.4 Constraints

Due the presence of a substantial pile of scrap metal, Trenches 6 & 7 had to be relocated approximately 4m further south than originally proposed.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. The site lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

This section has been compiled with information from Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and other readily available sources.

CUCAP = Cambridge University Collection of Air Photos

BCAS = Bedfordshire County Archaeological Service

3.2 *Prehistoric & Iron Age* (before AD43)

Little systematic archaeological survey has been carried out in the Arlesey area. Wilbury hillfort, *circa* 1km southeast of the site was excavated in the 1930s and 1940s (Webley 2007). Extensive archaeological investigations carried out at the Fairfield Hospital, *c.*2km north-east of the site, between 1997 and 2003, revealed evidence of Iron Age and Roman settlement, including enclosure ditches, ring-gullies for several round houses and a cremation cemetery (Webley *et al* 2007).

Aerial photographs have revealed a number of cropmarks around Wilbury Farm, including HER16813, interpreted as a triple ditch on a NW-SE alignment running from the river Hiz towards the Icknield Way. A number of other triple ditches are known from the wider area, also on a NW-SE alignment, including Dray's Ditches (HER113), which still exists in part as an earthwork outside Streatley.

Other cropmarks have been interpreted as enclosures. HER16814 (SE of the site) and 16815 (SW of the site) are both curvilinear in plan, and HER15819 (NE of the site) is almost square with rounded corners. However, none of these cropmarks are particularly well defined on the aerial photographs of 1996. A circular cropmark (HER7612) noted immediately west of the site on aerial photographs by CUCAP in 2002 is doubtful, and may represent modern horse training activity (Stephen Coleman pers. comm.).

3.3 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

A small amount of Roman pottery, and a possible trackway of Roman date, were found during the excavations at Fairfield Hospital (HER16801: Webley *et al* 2007). A scatter of discrete sub-rectangular enclosures visible on aerial photos to the west of the hospital (HER16812) may also represent Roman settlement activity. Other chance finds of Roman date are recorded from the area, including a Roman amphora 0.5km SW of the site (HER3638) and a possible Roman occupation site 1.5km NNW of the site, on the crest of a hill (HER1895).

The HER records that fragments of Roman amphorae were found at Two Chimneys Sand Pit, 1.5km east of the site, in 1937 (HER508). Evaluation trenching in advance of a proposed new cemetery at this site found a small amount of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery, as well as an undated ditch and posthole, but no Roman artefacts (BCAS

2001). It is possible that any Roman occupation evidence at the site had been lost to quarrying activity (*ibid*).

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

The HER records that a number of spearheads and other weapons were found in association with human remains during work on the Great Northern Railway in 1849 (HER507). These have been interpreted as representing a Saxon cemetery, although the extent of this site is unknown, and there is some doubt over its exact location. *Etonbury* or *Stonbury* earthworks close to Arlesey Station, c.4km north of the site, may be a Danish fortification but was partly destroyed when the railway was constructed (Page 1908).

3.5 **Medieval** (1066-1500)

The manor of Arlesey was held by Alestan of Boscombe in 1086, when it had a mill worth 10s and a market worth the same. The manor was held by Stephen in 1270, when he was granted the right to hold a fair, but after his death the manor passed to the bishop of Coventry and Litchfield.

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

Arlesey was inclosed by Act of Parliament in 1804 (Page 1908). A section of double plate rails were observed east of the Great North Railway, close to the county boundary in 1967 (HER1522); this has been interpreted as a railway siding connecting the former Three Counties Station to the clay and gravel pits to the northeast.

3.7 **Modern** (1900-present)

The chief industries in Arlesey parish in the early 20th century were brickmaking and cement production, both of which have left traces in the landscape, including the large artificial lake known as the Blue Lagoon c.1km northeast of the site, formerly a clay pit (Fig. 1).

4 Results

4.1 *General*

Seven trenches 13m by 1.8m were located within the footprint of the proposed grain store and access road. The natural geology consisted of chalk, with reddish brown to orange clay patches present in the trenches towards the top of the site.

Two possible features were investigated in Trenches 3 and 4. However, both proved to be variation in the natural geology. No archaeological cut features, deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the trenches.

The stratigraphy of the trenches indicates there has been some elemental erosion, leading to a thinning of the topsoil on the higher, more exposed part of the site, and a deepening of the sub-strata on the lower slope, as the result of colluvial deposition (Plates 1 & 2). A combination of modern ploughing techniques and the reduced thickness of the topsoil, has led to its homogenisation with the subsoil, and whilst trial trenches only sample a small percentage of the site, it seems likely that this process may have occurred across much of the plateau the farm is located on.

Detailed information regarding the trial trenches and their contents appears in Appendix 1.

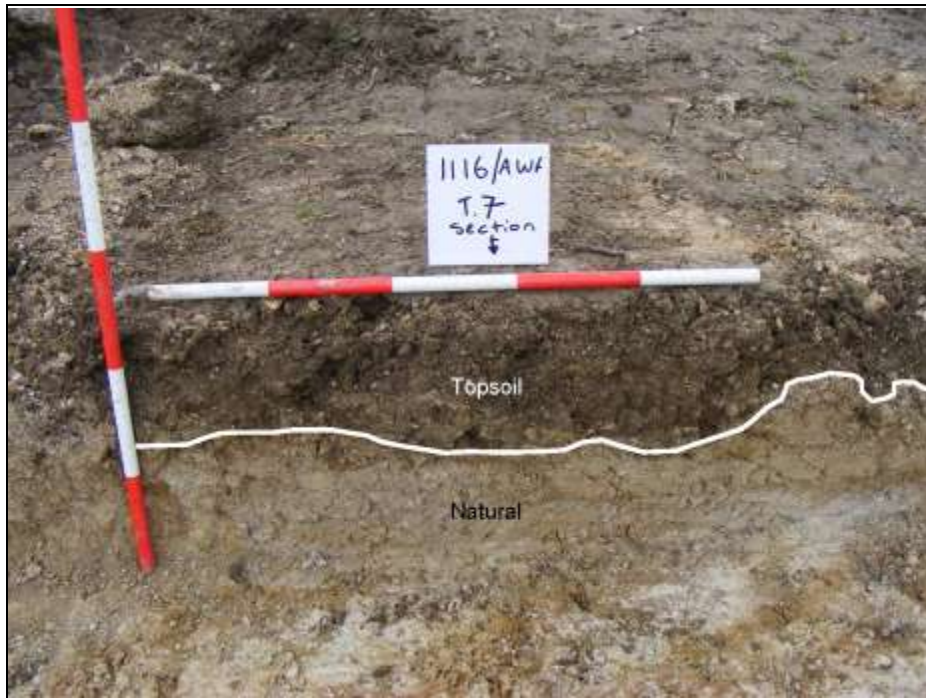


Plate 1: Stratigraphy of Trench 7



Plate 2: Stratigraphy of Trench 1

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Wilbury Farm is located in a relatively rich archaeological environment, within sight of the Icknield Way and adjacent to other known features. However, no archaeological deposits, artefacts or cut features were observed in the evaluation trenches. While the existence of individual isolated features away from the trenches cannot be specifically excluded, it is unlikely that they are present in large numbers. Therefore, it is improbable that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.

The absence of archaeology on the site suggests the area is beyond the limits of settlement. This may be a result of the site's exposed aspect, and the consequent development of the adjacent land, which lies within the lee of the ridge to the south.

5.2 *Confidence Rating*

With the exception of having to relocate Trenches 6 & 7 approximately 4m south of their proposed position, no factors hindered the evaluation, which took place during fine, dry weather. A high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Bidwells Faulkner. The writer is grateful to Richard Whitman for his assistance. The project was monitored by Hannah Firth of the Heritage and Environment Service, Bedfordshire County Council, on behalf of the local planning authority, Mid Bedfordshire District Council.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann MA MIFA, and the fieldwork was carried out by David Kaye BA AIFA and Martin Cuthbert BA. The report was prepared by David Kaye and edited by Bob Zeepvat, BA MIFA.

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 Bedford Museum (BEDFM 2009.36).

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, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- Firth, H. 2008a *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land to the side of Wilbury Farm, Hitchin Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire* (Bedfordshire County Council)
- Firth, H. 2008b *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land to the side of Wilbury Farm, Hitchin Road, Arlesey, Bedfordshire* (Bedfordshire County Council)
- IFA 2000a Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2001 Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Richards, J. 2008 *Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation: Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire* (ASC Report 1116/AWF/1r)


Secondary Sources


- BGS British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, *Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Soil Survey 1983 1:250,000 *Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).


Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables


Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.48
	Levels					
	Trench base northwest		50.02m OD			
	Trench top northwest		50.52m OD			
	Trench base southeast		49.58m OD			
	Trench top southeast		50.03m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation		NNW-SSE			
	Reason for Trench		Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
101	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.30	
102	Layer	Subsoil	>1.8	>13	0.15	
103	Layer	Colluvial	>1.8	>13	0.03	
104	Layer	Chalk Natural	>1.8	>13	-	


Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.48
	Levels					
	Trench base northeast		51.13m OD			
	Trench top northeast		51.59m OD			
	Trench base southwest		50.64m OD			
	Trench top southwest		51.09m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation		NE-SW			
	Reason for Trench		Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
201	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.20	
202	Layer	Subsoil	>1.8	>13	0.18	
203	Layer	Colluvium	>1.8	>13	0.10	
204	Layer	Chalk Natural	>1.8	>13	-	

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.45
	Levels					
	Trench base northwest		52.14m OD			
	Trench top northwest		52.54m OD			
	Trench base southeast		51.69m OD			
	Trench top southeast		52.18m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation		NW-SE			
Reason for Trench		Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
301	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.2	
302	Layer	Colluvium	>1.8	>13	0.1	
303	Layer	Chalk & Clay Natural	>1.8	>13	-	

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.48
	Levels					
	Trench base northeast		53.01m OD			
	Trench top northeast		53.63m OD			
	Trench base southwest		52.65m OD			
	Trench top southwest		53.13m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation		ENE-WSW			
Reason for Trench		Evaluation				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
401	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.20	
402	Layer	Subsoil	>1.8	>13	0.14	
403	Layer	Chalk & Clay Natural	>1.8	>13	-	

Trench 5						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.75
	Levels					
	Trench base northwest		53.37m OD			
	Trench top northwest		54.12m OD			
	Trench base southeast		53.02m OD			
	Trench top southeast		53.56			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation			NNW-SSE		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
501	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.25	
502	Layer	Subsoil	>1.8	>13	0.40	
503	Layer	Chalk & Clay Natural	>1.8	>13	-	

Trench 6						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.68
	Levels					
	Trench base northwest		53.19m OD			
	Trench top northwest		53.81m OD			
	Trench base southeast		53.06m OD			
	Trench top southeast		53.81m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation			NNW-SSE		
Reason for Trench			Evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)	
601	Layer	Topsoil	>1.8	>13	0.25	
602	Layer	Subsoil	>1.8	>13	0.25	
603	Layer	Colluvium	>1.8	>7.0	0 - 0.18	
604	Layer	Chalk & Clay Natural	>1.8	>13	-	

Trench 7						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	13	Width	1.8	Depth	0.40
	Levels					
	Trench base northeast			53.46m OD		
	Trench top northeast			54.08m OD		
	Trench base southwest			53.15m OD		
	Trench top southwest			53.52m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	Orientation			ENE-WSW		
Reason for Trench						
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Width (max: m)	Length (max: m)	Depth (BGL: m)
701	Layer	Topsoil		>1.8	>13	0.20
702	Layer	Chalk & Clay Natural		>1.8	>13	-

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire			SITE NO/CODE: 1116AWF
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
001	√	√	Trench 1, facing northwest
002	√	√	Trench 1 section, southern end, facing southeast
003		√	Trench 1 section, northern end, facing southwest
004	√	√	Trench 1 section, northern end, facing southwest
005	√	√	Trench 2, facing northeast
006	√	√	Trench 2 section, facing southeast
007	√	√	Trench 3, facing northwest
008	√	√	Trench 4, facing northeast
009	√	√	Trench 5, facing northwest
010	√	√	Trench 6, facing northwest
011	√	√	Trench 7, facing northeast
012	√	√	Trench 7 section, facing southeast
013		√	Wilbury Farm House, facing southwest

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire		
Short Description:	<p>In February 2009 ASC carried out a programme of evaluation trenching at Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire, to assess its archaeological potential prior to redevelopment. Seven trenches were opened across the site, within the footprint of the proposed grain store and access road. No archaeological cut features, deposits or artefacts were observed in any of the trenches.</p> <p>The absence of archaeology on the site suggests the area is beyond the limits of settlement. This may be a result of the site's exposed aspect, and the consequent development of the adjacent land, which lies within the lee of the ridge to the south.</p>		
Project Type:	Trial Trenching		
Site status:	None	Previous work:	None
Current land use:	Arable farm land	Future work:	Unknown
Monument type:	-	Monument period:	-
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Bedfordshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 1903 3318
Site address:	Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c. 0.42 hectares	Height OD: (metres)	
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Bedfordshire County Council	Project design originator:	ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA	Director/Supervisor:	Karin Semmelmann MA MIFA
Sponsor / funding body:	Bidwells Faulkner		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	23.2.09	End date:	25.02.09
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Bedford Museum (BEDFM 2009.36)	None	
Paper:		Site plans, site records, site record drawings	
Digital:		CD containing digital images, list of photographs, B/W prints & negatives, project design, report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation: Land at Wilbury Farm, Arlesey, Bedfordshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1116/AWF		
Author(s):	David Kaye BA AIFA		
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