

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**STRIP, MAP & SAMPLE EXCAVATION:
BIGGEN FIELD
GRANBOROUGH
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

NGR: SP 7630 2626

on behalf of Mr Graham Ostler



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

June 2009

ASC: 1193/GBF/2



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



Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	GBF	<i>ASC project no:</i>	1193
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-62149	<i>Accession no:</i>	AYBCM: 2009.105
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Granborough		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Granborough		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 7630 2626		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.10 × 20m		
<i>Present use:</i>	grassland		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of barn		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	09/00196/APP		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Aylesbury Vale District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	June 1 st to 2 nd 2009		
<i>Client:</i>	Graham Ostler The Mead Mill Lane Chalfont St Giles Buckinghamshire HP8 4NR		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Graham Ostler		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	11 th June 2009
------------------------	-----------------	--------------	----------------------------

<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
-------------------	--	--------------	--

<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	11 th June 2009
---------------------------	-------------	--------------	----------------------------

© 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	7
3. Archaeological & Historical Background	8
4. Results	9
5. Conclusions	12
6. Acknowledgements	13
7. Archive	13
8. References	14

Appendices:

1. List of Photographs.....	15
2. ASC OASIS Form	16

Figures:

1. General location	3
2. Site plan	6
3. Plan of excavated area	10

Plates:

Cover: View west of newly stripped area of the barn

1. Site prior to stripping from north, showing distinct change in level	5
2. Footprint of proposed barn, looking west.....	11
3. North-west foundation pit.....	11
4. South-east foundation pit.....	11

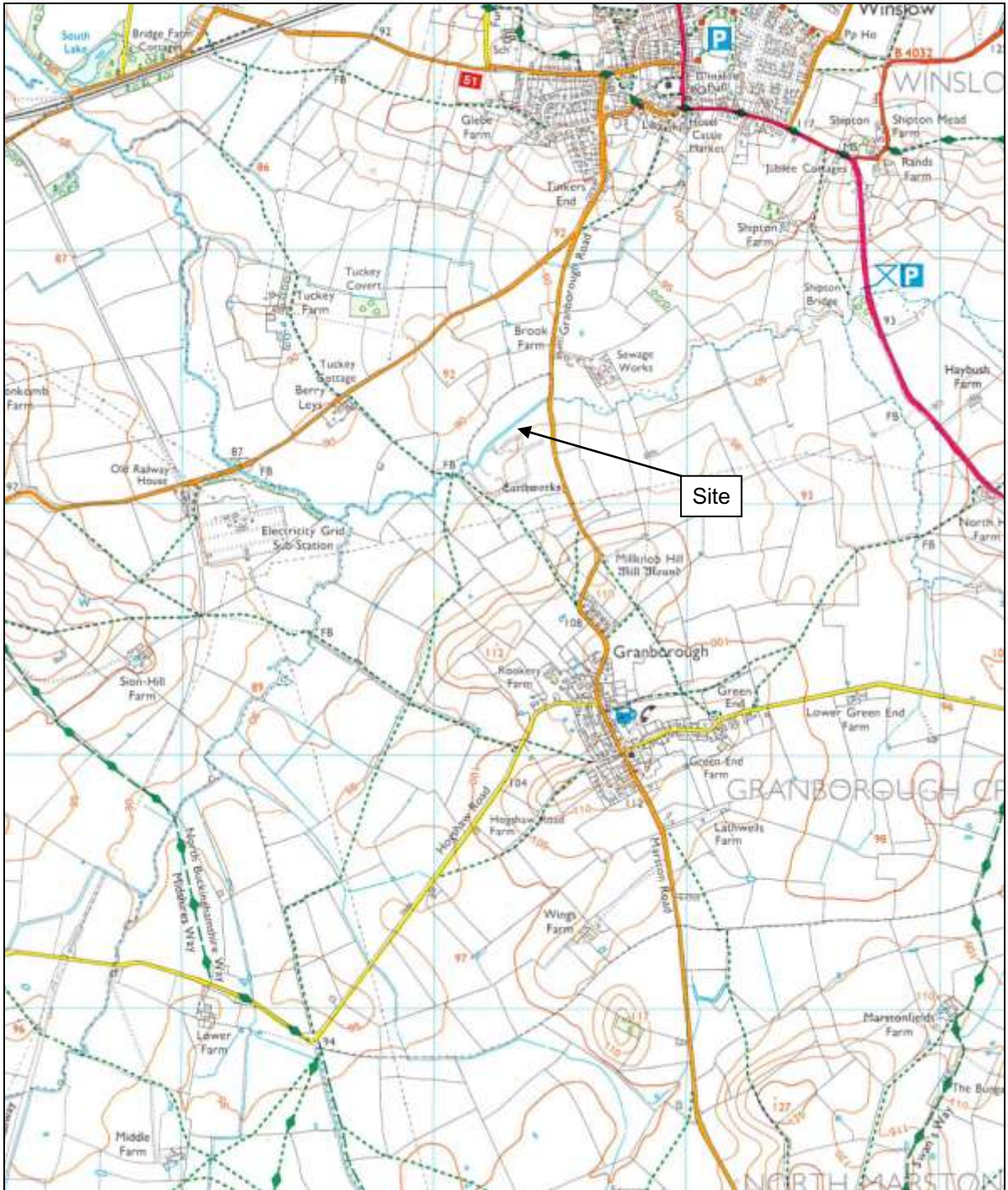


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In June 2009 a 'strip, map and sample' excavation was undertaken at Biggen Field, Granborough, Buckinghamshire, during construction of a new barn, adjacent to the earthwork site marking the deserted medieval village of Biggen. The footprint of the structure was excavated down to the top of the subsoil under archaeological supervision, and the excavation of two foundation pits was monitored. No archaeological features or deposits were located, and no medieval artefacts were observed. The archaeological impact of the development is therefore considered to be negligible.

1. Introduction

1.1 In June 2009 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy* (ASC) carried out a strip, map and record excavation at Biggen Field, Granborough, Buckinghamshire. The project was commissioned by Graham Ostler, and was carried out according to a brief (Alqassar 2009) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (Aylesbury District Vale Council), by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Fell 2009). The relevant planning application reference is 09/00196/APP.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This excavation 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 Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The project was managed by David Fell BA MA MIFA, and the fieldwork by Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is situated near Granborough, in the administrative district of Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). It lies to the north of the village, on the west side of Granborough Road and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 7630 2626 (Fig. 2). The development site is situated in the north part of a complex of earthworks, immediately to the south of the Claydon Brook. The proposed building is located on the south side of an existing building and covers an area of c.230 sq m. The south side of the development area is bounded by a distinct change of level, marking the north edge of the surviving earthworks of *Biggin Manor* (Plate 1: Para. 3.4, below).

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The site is on more or less level ground at an elevation of *c.*90m AOD, to the south of a brook that rises to the east of Granborough village, and runs in a south-westerly direction past the site, following a straight course that could be artificial. The natural soils of the area comprise the *Denchworth Association*, namely slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils (Soil Survey 1983, 712d). The underlying geology comprises Weymouth Member Mudstone (BGS, Sheet 219).

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

This involves the construction of a barn, measuring *c.*18.5 × 9.15m.



Plate 1: Site prior to stripping from north, showing distinct change in level.

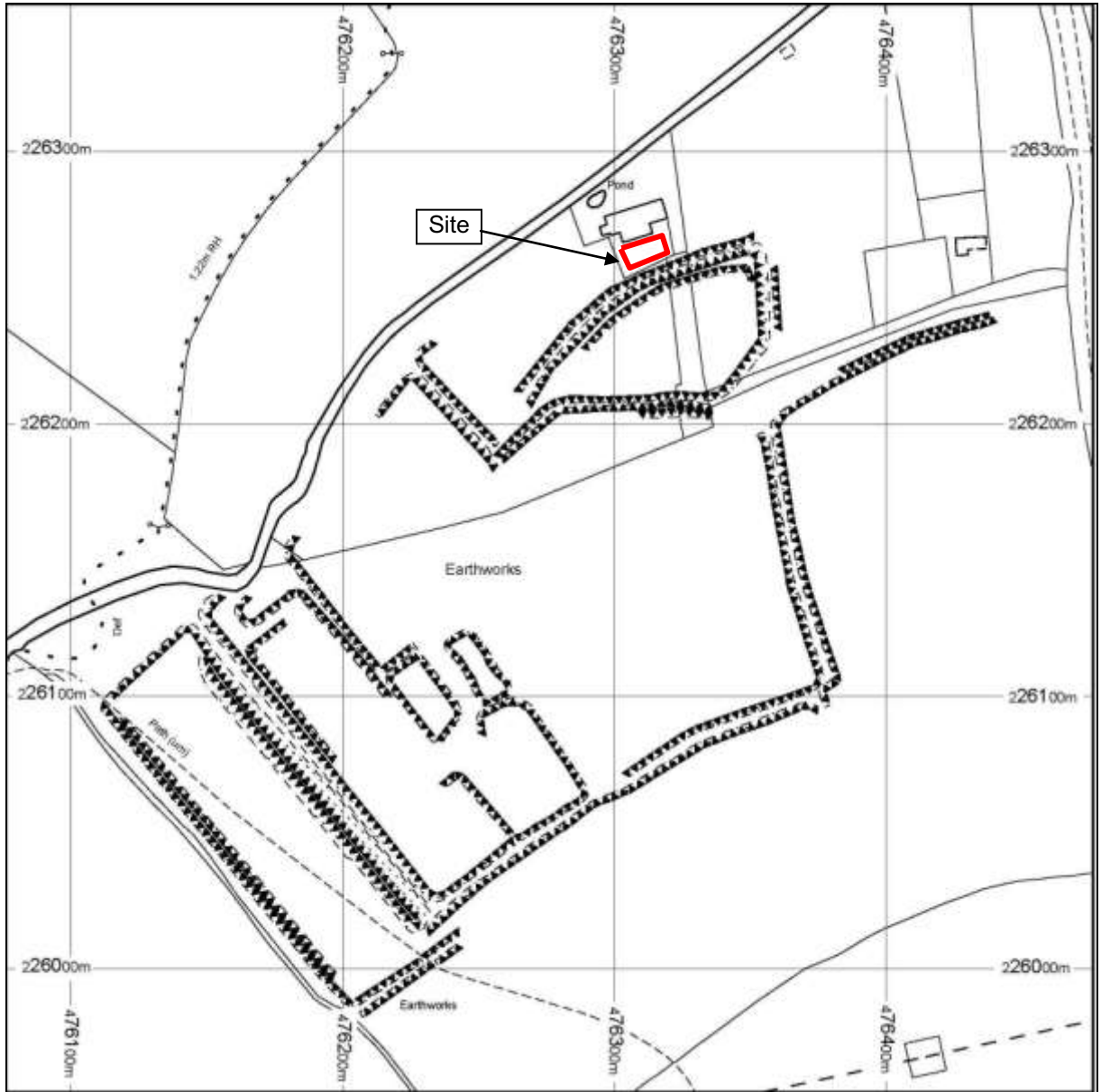


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:2,500)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section E), the aims of the excavation were:

- To establish whether there is evidence for medieval occupation in this area in associated with relation to the adjacent earthworks
- To establish whether there are any remains from other periods surviving on the site

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, which required:

- Removal of the 'overburden' from within the footprint of the proposed development under archaeological supervision.
- Identification and initial cleaning of any archaeological features present
- Preparation of an initial site plan
- Investigation of any archaeological remains present

2.4 *Constraints*

There were no constraints imposed on this project during the course of the fieldwork.

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 the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.2 No archaeological work has taken place in this area of Granborough, but published historical accounts (*e.g.* Page 1927; Sheahan 1861) indicate that the area offers considerable potential for archaeological and historical study. The area lies on the Buckinghamshire claylands, and recent archaeological fieldwork north of the development site at Tuckey Farm, Winslow (Hunn 2007) and Verney Road, Winslow did not produce evidence for archaeological features. Significant features of the Roman period have been recorded on other projects in the area, notably along the Hardwick to Marsh Gibbon pipeline, indicating the potential for the recovery of significant archaeological remains in the area.

3.3 A grant of land is mentioned at Granborough along with Redbourn, Langley and *Thwangtune* in the mid 11th century from Aethelwine Niger to St Albans abbey (Sawyer 1968, 358, no. 1228). It has its own entry in Domesday Book (Morris 1978, section 8.1). Interestingly, there is no mention of any swine renders, implying that there was no woodland at that time (Reed 1979, 82).

3.4 The development site is significant as it is adjacent to an earthwork complex, thought to be the site of a manor or farmstead known as *Biggin Manor*, which was held by the Abbey of St Albans (HER 75700). Little is known of the origins of the site, but a reference dated 1302 refers to a landholding in *Biggeng* in Granborough (Page 1927). In the mid 14th century *Gesta Abbatum* it is referred to specifically as '*maneria de Byggyng*' (Riley 1869, 349). Further references suggest that it served as a monastic grange or farmhouse and contained a chapel (HER 75701; Sheahan 1861).

3.5 The earliest relatively detailed map of the area is the *Salden map*, compiled in 1599. This was drawn at a small scale, but shows the development site as an enclosure, on the south side of Claydon Brook, with two buildings in the centre (HER 75704). A windmill, now surviving as a mound known as *Millknob Hill*, is shown to the south of the development site (HER 10900). Three buildings are shown on Jeffrey's map of Buckinghamshire (1770), and the area is labelled '*Biggin*', but Bryant's map of Buckinghamshire (1824) does not indicate buildings or features on the site.

3.6 The present building on the site adjacent to the proposed development, a barn, is modern. The area currently comprises open land and the manor site survives as a group of earthworks (HER 75702; 75703; RCHM 1911, 120). These have not been surveyed in detail, but the HER records the presence of at least four house platforms.

4. Results

4.1 *Site Stripping*

Over a period of two days, the footprint of the new barn ($c.9 \times 18\text{m}$) was mechanically reduced by $c.250 - 300\text{mm}$ (Fig. 3), under archaeological supervision. The turf and topsoil covering the site were together $c.100 - 120\text{mm}$ deep. Beneath the topsoil was brown, stoneless natural clay (Mun 10 YR 4/3). The reduced surface was machined cleanly. No features were observed within the stripped area (Plate 2). Examination of the topsoil for finds revealed tile, slate fragments, pottery and an iron door handle, all of 19th or 20th-century date. None of this material was retained.

As no archaeology was revealed on the site, it was not necessary to proceed with the subsequent mapping and sampling stages of the excavation.

4.2 *Foundation Pads*

In the absence of any archaeological features or deposits within the stripped area, a watching brief was maintained on the excavation of the first two pits for the foundation pads for the barn, in order to confirm that the clay encountered during stripping was an undisturbed natural deposit. The pits were located at the north-west and south-east corners of the reduced area (Fig. 3). Each was about one metre square, and 1.0 – 1.4m deep. Both pits were cut through the same amorphous, uniform brown, stoneless clay (Plates 3 & 4). At a depth of 0.6m the clay showed signs of a greyish blue colour, indicative of it being ‘gleyed’. No finds were recovered from either pit.

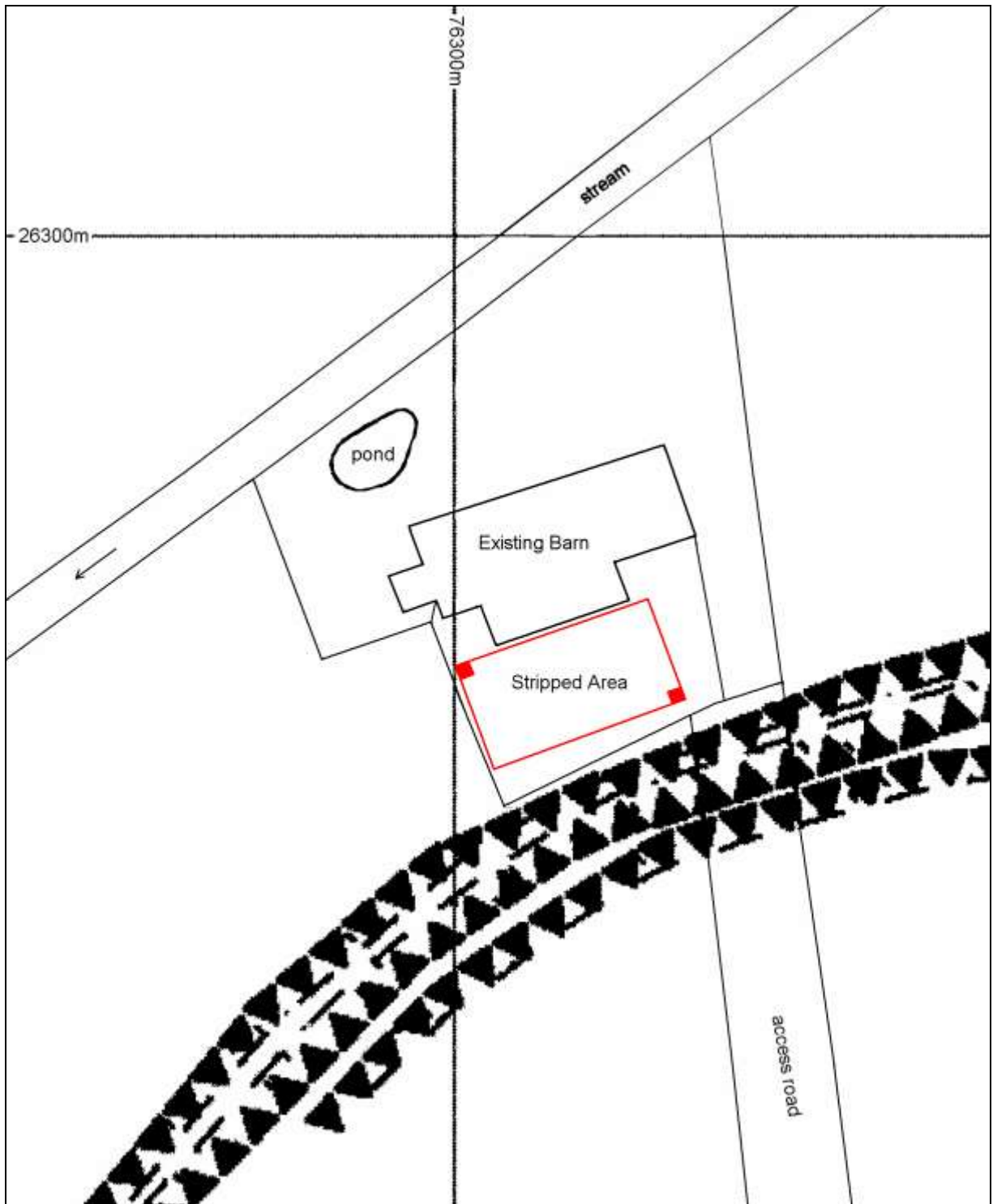


Figure 3: Plan of excavated area (scale 1:500)



Plate 2: Footprint of proposed barn, looking west (*scale = 2m*)



Plate 3: North-west foundation pit (*scale = 1m*)



Plate 4: South-east foundation pit (*scale = 1m*)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The initial phase of the strip, map and sample excavation did not reveal any features or finds of archaeological significance within the area of the new barn. It is possible that this narrow strip of land between the surviving earthwork and the stream was once meadowland, possibly liable to flooding, and was never developed as part of the manor complex. The historic landscape characterisation map for the area of Winslow parish to the north of the stream shows the adjoining area as meadow, and the unusually straight course of the brook as it passes the site may be the result of attempts to improve its flow and to prevent flooding on the manor site. Flooding is also attested by the presence on the development site of gleyed clay, characteristic of periodic waterlogging.
- 5.2 Based on the results of the excavation, the impact of the present development on the archaeology of the area has been minimal

5.3 *Confidence Rating*

The excavation was carried out in dry and sunny conditions, and full co-operation was provided by the contractors. A high confidence rating is therefore assigned to the results.

6 Acknowledgements

The excavation was commissioned by Graham Ostler. The writer is grateful to Garry Williams, the contractor for his co-operation and assistance. The project was monitored by Eliza Alqassar of BCAS on behalf of the local planning authority.

The project was managed for ASC by David Fell MA MIFA. Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA undertook the fieldwork and prepared the report, which was 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. List of photographs
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum (AYBCM: 2009.105).

8 References

Standards & Specifications

- Alqassar, E 2009 *Brief for Archaeological Excavation: Land off Winslow Road, Granborough, Buckinghamshire*. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service.
- EH 1991: *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- Fell, D 2009 *Biggen Field, Granborough, Buckinghamshire: Project Design for Strip, Map & Sample Excavation*. ASC doc. ref. **1193/GBF/1**.
- IFA 2000: 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)*.

Secondary Sources

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Hunn, J R 2007 *Archaeological Evaluation: Tuckey Farm, Winslow, Buckinghamshire*. ASC report **898/WTF/2**.
- Morris, J (ed) 1978: *Domesday Book Buckinghamshire*. Phillimore (Chichester).
- Page, W (ed) 1927 *The Victoria History of the County of Buckinghamshire 4*. Dawsons of Pall Mall (London).
- RCHM 1911 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Buckinghamshire. 2*. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England).
- Riley, H T 1869 *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani, vol. III*. Rolls Series (London).
- Sawyer, P H 1968 *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An annotated list and bibliography*. Royal Historical Society (London).
- Sheahan, J J 1861 *A History and Topography of Buckinghamshire* (Chicheley).
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Youngs, F A 1980 *Guide to the Administrative Units of England. Volume I: Southern England*. Offices of the Royal Historical Society (London).

Appendix 1: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Biggen Field, Granborough			SITE NO/CODE: 1193/GBF
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		8619	Site prior to stripping from north, showing distinct change in level
2		8620	View WSW along previous boundary
3		8621	View north to existing barn complex along access track
4		8622	View ENE along track to existing barn
5		8623	View north to barn site
6		8624	View north during excavation of the footprint of the barn
7		8625	View west of initial strip on north side of the site
8		8626	View north east of topsoil being removed
9		8627	View west of newly stripped area
10		8628	Material being delivered to the site
11	1	8629	View of the cleared footprint of new barn looking west
12	2	8630	View south west of the site
13		8631	View of existing site
14		8632	Adjacent field to the east looking east
15		8633	Adjacent field to the east looking NNE
16		8634	Foundation pit in the north west corner
17		8635	Foundation pit in the south east corner

Appendix 2: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Biggen Field, Grandborough, near Winslow, Buckinghamshire		
Short Description:	In June 2009 a 'strip, map and sample' excavation was undertaken at Biggen Field, Granborough, Buckinghamshire, during construction of a new barn, adjacent to the earthwork site marking the deserted medieval village of Biggen. The footprint of the structure was excavated down to the top of the subsoil under archaeological supervision, and the excavation of two foundation pits was monitored. No archaeological features or deposits were located, and no medieval artefacts were observed. The archaeological impact of the development is therefore considered to be negligible.		
Project Type:	'Strip, map and sample' excavation		
Site status:	none	Previous work:	none
Current land use:	grass	Future work:	None anticipated
Monument type:	none	Monument period:	none
Significant finds:	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 7630 2626
Site address:	Biggen Field, Grandborough, near Winslow, Buckinghamshire		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	c.200 sq m	Height OD: (metres)	c.90m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Eliza Alqassar, BCAS	Project design originator:	David Fell
Project Manager:	David Fell	Director/Supervisor:	J. R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Graham Ostler		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	June 1 st 2009	End date:	June 2 nd 2009
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Buckinghamshire County Museum (AYBCM: 2009.105)	none	
Paper:		Brief, project design, report, site records, photos, plans	
Digital:		CD with all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Strip, Map & Sample Excavation: Biggin Field, Granborough, Buckinghamshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Report ref: 1193/GBF/2		
Author(s):	Jonathan R. Hunn		
Page nos	16	Date:	17.06.2009