



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
LAUREL FARM
BOLTER END LANE, WHEELER END
HIGH WYCOMBE
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

NGR: SU 8035 9330

on behalf of Mrs Wendy Pitcher



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA

August 2009

ASC: 1156/HWL/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	HWL	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	1156
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	archaeol2-65564	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	AYBCM: 2009.160
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Wheeler End		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Piddington and Wheeler End		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SU 8035 9330		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	1200 sq. m.		
<i>Present use:</i>	Pasture		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	New manége		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	08/07134/FUL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Wycombe District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	13 th July 2009		
<i>Client:</i>	Wendy Pitcher Laurel Farm Bolter End Lane Wheeler End High Wycombe HP14 3NE		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Wendy Pitcher		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	6 th August 2009
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	David Fell	<i>Date:</i>	6 th August 2009

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CONTENTS

Summary.....	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Aims and Methods.....	7
3. Archaeological and Historical Background.....	8
4. Results and Conclusions.....	10
5. Acknowledgements	13
6. Archive	13
7. References	14

Appendices:

1. ASC Watching Brief Monitoring Sheets.....	15
2. List of Photographs.....	16
3. ASC OASIS Form	17

Figures:

1. General location	3
2. Plan of Laurel Farm.....	6
3. Site Plan.....	12

Plates:

Cover: view of the almost completed topsoil strip looking north

1. New manège in relation to Laurel Farm looking north east	11
2. View north showing extraction pit	11

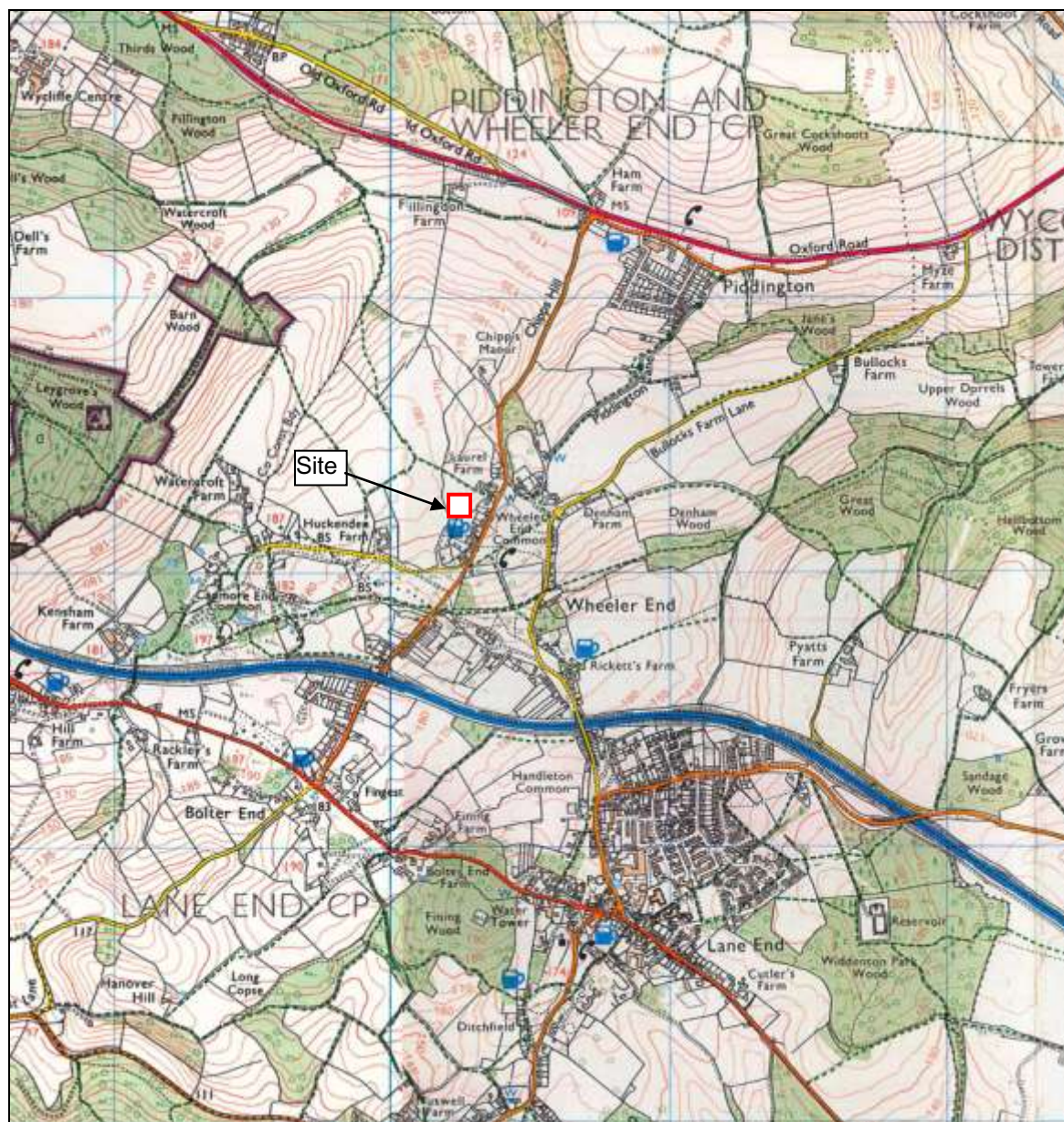


Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In July 2009 a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken on the site of a new manège at Laurel Farm, Wheeler End, Buckinghamshire. Archaeological remains were not observed during the watching brief, but an area of darker soil was present in the south half of the area, which is tentatively interpreted as a modern chalk extraction pit. It is unlikely that the works have had a significant impact on buried archaeological remains.

1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Laurel Farm, Boulter End Lane, Wheeler End, Buckinghamshire. The project was commissioned by Wendy Pitcher, and was carried out according to a generic *brief* prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Wycombe District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2009). The relevant planning application reference is 08/07134/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief 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 of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The project was managed by Alastair Hancock BSC PGDIP 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 Piddington and Wheeler End, in the administrative district of Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). It is situated at the northern end of Wheeler End, on the west side of Bolter End Lane and is centre on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 8035 9330 (Fig. 2).

The manège was constructed in an area of open land, south of the main farm buildings and west of Buis Cottage (Fig. 2, Plate 1).

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area comprise the Marlow Association, namely *well-drained fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils. Some coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging* (Soil Survey 1983, 518e). The underlying geology comprises clay with flints over chalk over chalk (Jarvis et al 1984, 219; BGS, sheet 254). The site is flat and lies at an elevation of *c.*175m AOD.

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposal was for the construction of a manège, extending over a rectangular area measuring 60m by 20m, to the southwest of the existing farm buildings (Fig. 2). The intrusive ground work consisted of mechanised removal of top and subsoil and excavation of individual footings to a depth of *c.*0.9m for perimeter fence posts.



Figure 2: Plan of Laurel Farm (Scale 1:1250)

2. Aims and Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the *brief* (Section 5), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To identify, appropriately investigate and record any archaeological remains revealed by the ground works.

2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute for 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 6), which required:

- Groundworks to be undertaken with an appropriate machine, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.
- A comprehensive watching brief to be carried out during the mechanical stripping of top and subsoil.
- Results of the comprehensive watching brief to be notified to the AA and further watching brief visits to be undertaken to monitor other intrusive groundworks if required.
- If archaeological remains are discovered at any stage of groundworks the AA to be notified.
- Sufficient time to be allowed by the client to allow appropriate investigation of discovered archaeological remains in order that they can be dated, characterised and appropriately recorded.
- If unexpected archaeological remains of sufficient significance should be discovered an appropriate mitigation strategy to be implemented, subsequent to agreement with the AA and the client.
- Finds to be collected and recorded as appropriate.

2.4 *Constraints*

There were no constraints on the implementation of the programme of monitoring and recording.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

HER = Historic Environment Record number

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 while no archaeological remains are recorded for Laurel Farm in the HER, the site offered the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods.

3.2 *Early Prehistoric* (before 600BC)

Human activity in the Chiltern hills dates from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. Settlement may have been concentrated in the river valleys, notably of the Colne, Chess and Ver (Holgate 1995, 7-9).

A number of Neolithic period domestic sites are also known in the region usually on the upper slopes of the Chiltern scarp (Holgate 1995, 11). Flint mining has been identified at Peppard Common, Pitsone Hill and High Wycombe (Holgate 1995, 13) and evidence for the early Bronze Age in the form of burial mounds have been found in a number of clusters along the Chiltern scarp (Holgate 1995, 14). These may be indicative of seasonal grazing and/or demarcations of family or tribal territories.

3.3 *Iron Age* (600BC-AD43)

During the Iron Age, the Chilterns lay within the tribal territory of the *Catuvellauni*. This period is poorly represented in the area and evidence is largely limited to individual findspots. An Iron Age or possibly Roman brooch, button and a loop fastener have been recorded c.1.2km to the northeast of the site (HER 5540).

3.4 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

The Chiltern hills were of considerable importance during the Roman period (Radford and Zeepvat 2009; Niblett 1995). The settlement pattern of the area is not understood in detail but it has been postulated that the area was traversed by a road linking *Londinium* (London) with the south midlands (HER 439903; Morris *et al* 1970).

A number of villas have been recorded in the Chilterns and it has been suggested that sites of this type may be spaced every 2 to 3km along the Chiltern valleys (Branigan 1967, 139). No settlement sites of this period are known at Wheeler End, but a number of artefacts have been recorded, notably coins c.650m to the south of the farm (HER 1200 and 2466) and a number of brooches (HER 5509) and a bracelet (HER 5511) to the north.

3.5 *Saxon and Medieval* (c.450-1500)

Little is known of the origin of the settlement at Wheeler End. The name is not included in the Domesday survey (1086) and the area probably formed part of the manor of West Wycombe and which was held by the Bishops of Winchester (Page 1925, 135-40). The area now occupied by Laurel Farm probably formed part of the open field land of West Wycombe.

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

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid 16th century the manor was granted to Sir Henry Seymour (*ibid.*). It was sub-let to Sir Robert Dormer in 1552 and passed to the Dormer family in 1600 who held it until 1670. At the end of the 17th century it was held by the Dashwood family.

The settlement at Wheeler End was in existence by the 18th century and is shown on *Jeffreys Map of Buckinghamshire*, which was published in 1770. The earliest building is Chipps Manor, built in 1733 (HER 13108) and located 200m northeast of the site. Other buildings of note are the Workhouse, instituted in 1754 (HER 13127), Chipps Cottage (HER 13126), which dates from the 17th century and the farmhouse at Bullock Farm (HER 13107).

A number of quarries operated in the area south of the site during the 19th century (*e.g.* HER 8801). Examination of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map has shown that field boundaries surrounding the site have remained largely unaltered since the late 19th century.

3.7 **Modern** (1900-present)

Much of the locality of Wheeler End remains part of the Dashwood estate. The present holding of Laurel Farm once formed part of the estate but was sold off in the 1920's due to death duties (W. Pitcher *pers. comm.*).

4. Results and Conclusions

4.1 Results

- 4.1.1 A single visit was made to the site on 13th July 2009. The entire footprint of the ménage was stripped in a single day revealing that the topsoil was c.250 to 300m deep
- 4.1.2 A linear feature, c.0.6m wide, traversed the site from southwest to northeast (Fig. 3). It is interpreted as a modern service run and is not archaeologically significant.
- 4.1.3 A variation in the colour of the subsoil was noted in the southwest part of the site (Fig. 3; Plate 2). In this area the soil was significantly darker in colour and contained patches of chalk. The full extent of this feature is not known as it extended beyond the stripped area but it was at least 35m across. No artefacts were present. The feature was visible only at the formation level of the manège and it was not possible to investigate this further. The feature is interpreted as either a chalk extraction pit, or a natural variation in the subsoil.

4.2 Conclusions

- 4.2.1 The entire footprint of the new ménage was monitored, but no archaeological remains were observed. The only features present were a modern service run and an area of slightly darker soil at the south end of the area. The latter is tentatively interpreted as a modern chalk extraction pit or a natural soil variation.
- 4.2.2 No significant archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief and it is unlikely that the works have had a significant impact on archaeological remains.
- 4.2.3 *Confidence Rating*
The work was undertaken in good weather conditions. Full co-operation was received from the site contractors and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.



Plate 1: The site in relation to Laurel Farm looking north east



Plate 2: View looking north showing possible 'extraction pit'

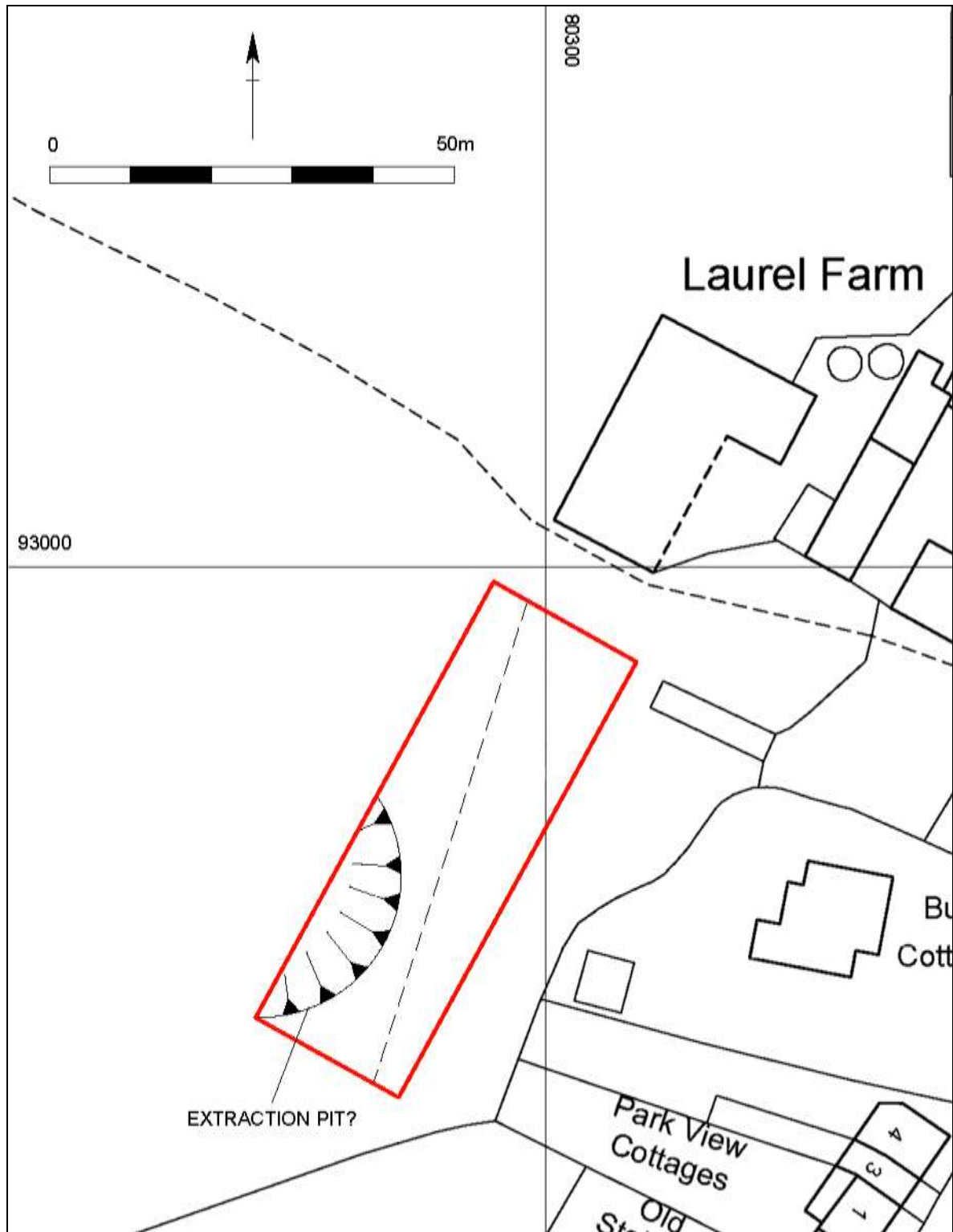


Figure 3: Site Plan (scale as shown)

5. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mrs Wendy Pitcher of Laurel Farm, for commissioning the project and the co-operation of the groundworks contractor, Mr George Cheshire is also gratefully acknowledged. Ms Ruth Beckley of the *Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service* acted as curatorial monitor, on behalf of the local planning authority.

The project was managed for *ASC Ltd* by Alastair Hancock BSC PGDIP MIFA. Fieldwork was undertaken and the report prepared by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA and edited by David Fell BA MA 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
7. Black and white photographs
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

6.2 The archive will be deposited with *Buckinghamshire County Museum* (AYBCM: 2009.160).

7. References

Standards & Specifications

- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- 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)*.
- Rouse, C. 2009 *Laurel Farm, Bolter End Lane, Wheeler End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Project Design for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd: **1156/HWL/1**

Secondary Sources

- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
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- Holgate, R (ed) 1995: *Chiltern Archaeology: Recent work. A handbook for the next decade*, 3-16. The Book Castle. Dunstable.
- Jarvis, M.G., Allen, R.H., Fordham, S.J., Hazelden, J, Moffat, A.J. and Sturdy, R.G. 1984: *Soils and their use in South east England*. Lawes Agricultural Trust (Harpenden).
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- Niblett R, 1995 *Roman Hertfordshire*. Dovecote Press
- Page, W (ed) 1925: *Victoria History of the County of Buckinghamshire*. **3**, 135-40. Dawson's of Pall Mall (London).
- Radford D & Zeepvat R J, 2009 'Roman Buckinghamshire' in Thorpe D (ed.) *An Archaeological Research Framework for Buckinghamshire. Collected papers from the Solent-Thames Research Framework*. Buckinghamshire Papers no. **15**. Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Williams A & Martin GH (eds) 2002 *Domesday Book: a Complete Translation*. Penguin (London).

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD				
Project: Laurel Farm, Wheeler End Lane High Wycombe		Project No/Code: 1156 1HWL		Sheet: 1 of 2		
Client/Developer: Wendy Pitcher		Date of visit: 13/7/09				
Contact: George Chestnise		Phone: 07860-558412				
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10am	Finish: 6.05pm				
Completed by: JAA						
Development Type:						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Other (specify): ground reduction						
Site & weather conditions: Sun cal. rain.						
Observations: <p>Abandoned area 20m x 60m in which the 'topsoil' was removed and 3cm subsoil. Between 200 and 350m depth. This revealed a mostly pebbly clay throughout the area. The only exception to this was a possible Service trench (N-S) outside the site and the circular depression of a possible old 'chalk extraction pit'. This was approximately 35m in diameter and extended into the orange area by about 9m. The fill was similar to the surrounding area except that it contained occasional patches of chalky ground.</p>						
Comments: <p>The site has no other archaeological features present. No artefacts were retrieved.</p>						

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Laurel Farm, Bolter End Lane, Wheeler End, Bucks			SITE NO/CODE: 1156/HWL
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		8970	Start of topsoil strip looking south
2		8971	Site in relation to Laurel Farm looking north east (plate 1)
3		8972	Working view looking west
4		8973	Detail of ground surface looking south
5		8974	Extraction pit in relation to menege looking south east
6		8975	Working view looking north east
7		8976	Working view looking south
8		8977	The site in relation to the landscape
9		8978	Rear of Laurel Farm looking east
10		8979	Working view looking south
11		8980	Working view looking north (cover)
12	Yes	8981	View north showing extraction pit (plate 2)
13		8982	Reduced area showing line of modern service trench
14		8983	Sub-soil reduction looking south
15		8984	Detail of subsoil looking south
16		8985	Detail of subsoil looking west

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Laurel Farm, Wheeler End		
Short Description:	In July 2009 a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken on the site of a new manège at Laurel Farm, Wheeler End, Buckinghamshire. Archaeological remains were not observed during the watching brief, but an area of darker soil was present in the south half of the area, which is tentatively interpreted as a modern chalk extraction pit. It is unlikely that the works have had a significant impact on buried archaeological remains.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none
Current land use:	Horse paddock	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	no
Monument type:	none	Monument period:	none
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	Possible modern extraction pit (?)		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SU 8035 9330
District:	Wycombe District Council	Parish:	Piddington and Wheeler End
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Laurel Farm, Boulter End Lane, Wheeler End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP14 3NF		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	1200 m sq	Height OD: (metres)	176.0m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	Generic brief	Project design originator:	Calli Rouse
Project Manager:	Alastair Hancock	Director/Supervisor:	J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Wendy Pitcher		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	13/7/09	End date:	13/7/09
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	Bucks County Museum (AYBCM: 2009.160)	none	
Paper:		yes	
Digital:		Yes	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: laurel Farm, Boulter End Lane, Wheeler End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1156/HWL/2		
Author(s):	J.R. Hunn		
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