

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
THE HOMESTEAD, CLOTHALL ROAD,
BALDOCK, HERTFORDSHIRE**

on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates



by

Nicholas A Crank BSc AIFA

October 2004

ASC: 607/BTH/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	BTH	<i>Project no:</i>	607
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>District:</i>	North Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Baldock		
<i>Parish:</i>	Clothall CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	TL 2558 3321		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.1.9ha		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Agricultural (farmyard)		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of Steel Framed Grain Store		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	c.22m x c.22m		
<i>Client:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates County Hall Pegs Lane Hertford SG13 8DN		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mr C H A Franklin		
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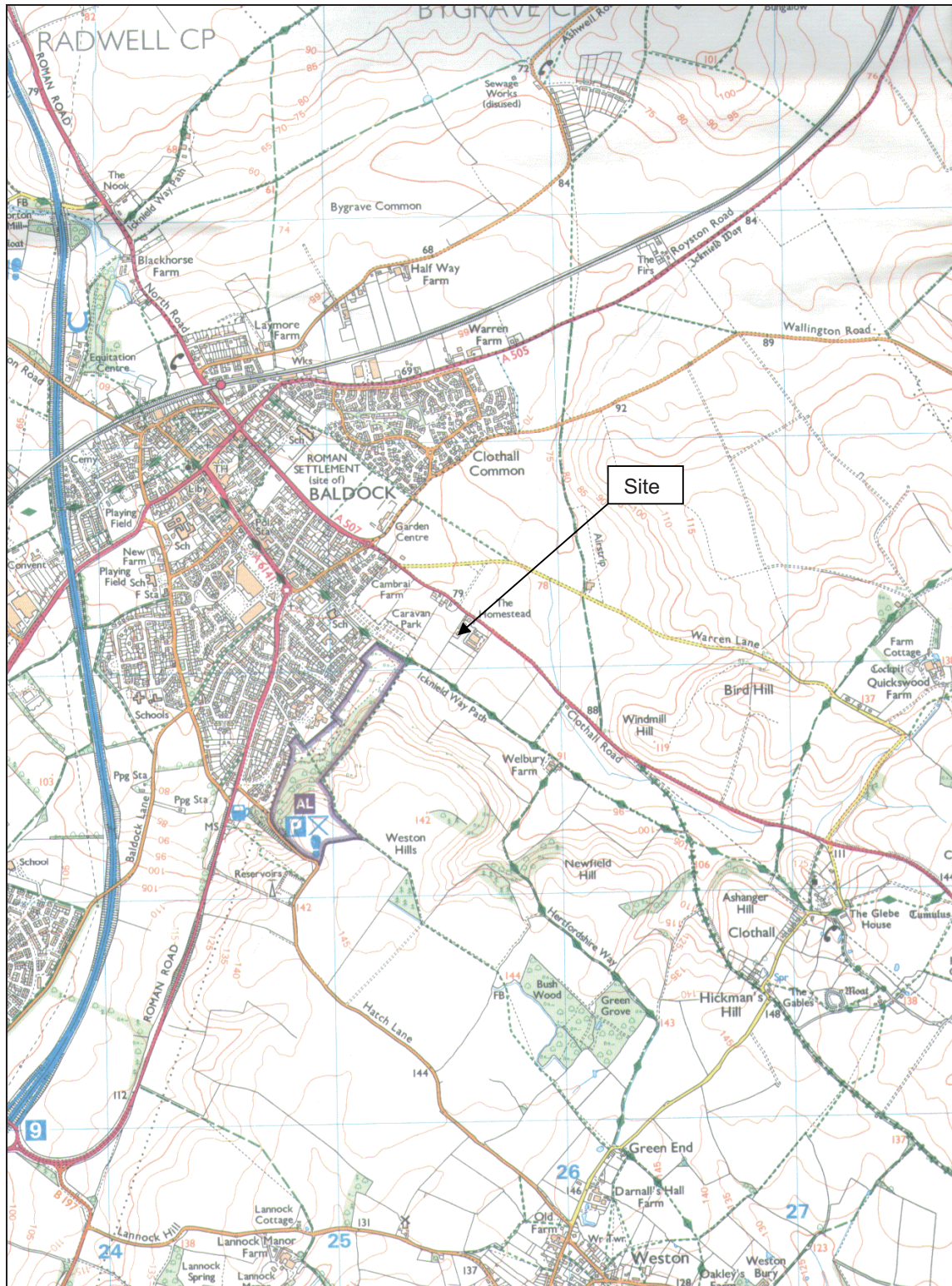


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During October 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at The homestead, Clothall Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for a Grain Store. No archaeological remains were observed during the works.

1 Introduction

1.1 During October 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site at The Homestead, Clothall Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 2558 3321: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates, and was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (Crank, 2004).

1.2 Reason for Work

As the development is within an area of known archaeological potential, the Hertfordshire County Council County Archaeological Office (HCC CAO) recommended that a watching brief should be undertaken, to enable archaeological monitoring of the groundworks. This advice was accepted and a condition requiring a watching brief to be commissioned was placed on the development.

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 The site is situated to the southwest of Clothall Road (A507) *c.* 1km southeast of the centre of Baldock and comprises a rectangular plot *c.* 1.9ha in area.

1.3.2 The site is located on the boundary of two soil associations: *Upton 1* and *Swaffham Prior*. *Upton 1* is defined as 'shallow well drained calcareous silty soils...On moderately steep, sometimes very steep land. Deeper fine silty calcareous soils in coombes and dry valleys'. *Swaffham Prior* is defined as 'well drained calcareous coarse and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble'. The underlying geology in the area is chalk and chalky drift (Soil Survey 1983). The site itself appears to have been levelled. However, its immediate surroundings slope slightly upwards to the southeast at an elevation of between *c.* 80 – 85m AOD.

1.3.3 The site is currently occupied by a residential house 'The Homestead' in addition to a number of assorted farm buildings, including the grain store, which the proposed development will replace. No services are known on the site with the exception of an overhead cable marked on the development plan. Access is gained via Clothall Road to the northeast.

1.3.4 The Roman small town of Baldock grew from a cluster of farmsteads, enclosures and trackways established in the pre-Roman Iron Age. Its situation on good farmland, combined with its position on the important prehistoric route of the Icknield Way made it a natural focus for early settlement (Niblett 1995, 52).

Excavations in advance of development between 1968-72 focussed on the area to the northeast of Clothall Road (A507) and the Icknield Way (A505), *c.* 700m northwest of the present site. These revealed extensive cemeteries skirting the Roman town from which almost 2000 Romano-British graves were excavated, in addition to several wells, corn drying kilns, enclosure ditches, and houses of both native and Roman type. Evidence for ironworking and other craft production was also recovered (Niblett 1995, 53; Stead & Rigby 1986, 83-89).

Following the decline of the Roman town at Baldock the area does not come to prominence again until the founding of the settlement at the end of the 12th century by the Knights Templars. It was granted to them in *c.* 1140 by Gilbert de Clare, earl of Pembroke (Page 1908, III, 66). The new settlement was located at the intersection of two Roman roads with its market at the western end of White Horse Street. The church (St Mary's) and market constituted the core of the medieval town which lay *c.* 1km northwest of the present site (Hunn 2001, 8).

The development site is situated on the line of a Roman road (Clothall Road), however its positioning in relation to the core of the Roman town is peripheral. Similarly, it is also located well outside the core of the medieval town.

- 1.3.5 It is proposed to demolish an existing grain store and construct a new steel framed grain store in its place.

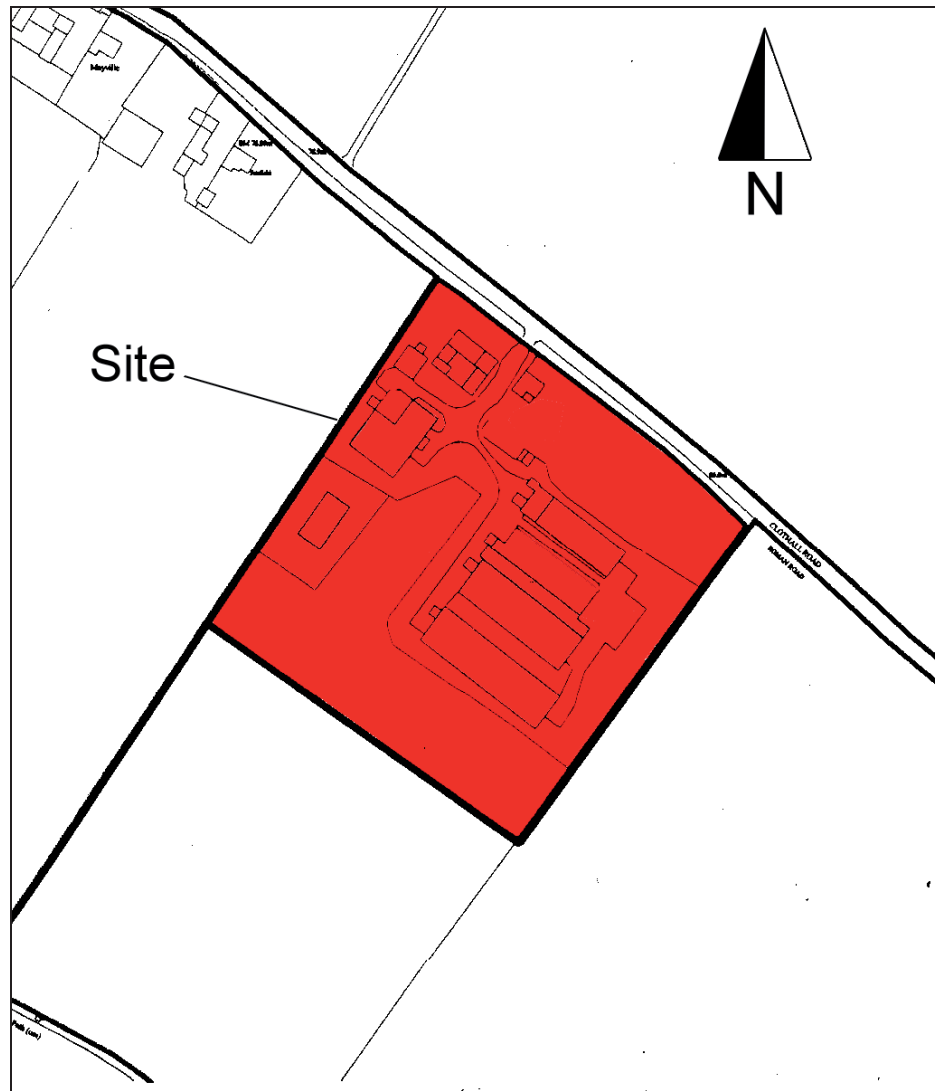


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:2500)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As agreed with HCC CAO the aims of the watching brief shall be:

- To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks.

2.2 Methods

As agreed with HCC CAO a standard watching brief methodology was adopted for this project.

- The watching brief shall focus on the excavation of the pad foundations for the new grain store.

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the requirements of HCC CAO, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Results

- 3.1 The groundworks observed comprised the cutting of 18 pits to receive the concrete pad foundations (Fig. 3, Plates 2 & 3). The pits were each c.1.3m x c.1.0m in area and varied in depth from 1.6m to 0.75m depending on the amount of modern made ground encountered.
- 3.2 Sample sections were recorded for pits 1 to 6, these being representative of the general stratigraphy observed in pits 7 to 12 and 13 to 18. These are reproduced fully in Appendix 1. Sample sections from pits 1 and 6 are shown below:

Pit 1

0.00 – 0.70m	L100 Topsoil over loose brick and chalk rubble – Modern made ground
0.70 – 1.15m	L101 Firm mid orangey brown silty clay with occasional chalk gravel – Modern made ground
1.15 – 1.35m	L102 Mid brown sandy silt loam – Original topsoil layer
1.35 – 1.60m	L103 Light brown sandy silt with occasional chalk pebbles – Subsoil layer

Pit 6

0.00 – 0.08m	L104 Concrete Slab
0.08 – 0.40m	L102 Mid brown sandy silt loam – Original topsoil layer
0.40 – 0.70m	L103 Chalk – Natural bedrock

- 3.3 Observation of the foundation pits indicated that the area of the new grain store had been subject to extensive levelling on its northwestern side with made ground deposits of over 1m being present sealing the original topsoil. The made ground was found to diminish towards the southeast where the pre-existing concrete slab directly overlay the original topsoil. The undisturbed chalk solid geology was observed on the southeastern side of the plot. All the pits were examined for archaeological features and the excavated spoil scrutinised for artefacts but none were observed.
- 3.4 ***Archaeological impact of the development***

The watching brief revealed that the area of the new grain store had been subject to substantial levelling particularly on its northwestern side. This levelling is probably related to the construction of the pre-existing grain store on the site during the 1950s (pers. comm. C. Franklin). No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief and no artefacts recovered. In addition no disturbance to the natural strata was observed. As a result it is considered unlikely that archaeological remains survive within the area of the new build and consequently the archaeological impact of the development has been minimal.

3.5 ***Confidence Rating***

Due to the favourable weather conditions and lighting combined with the full cooperation of the client and contractors a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the watching brief.

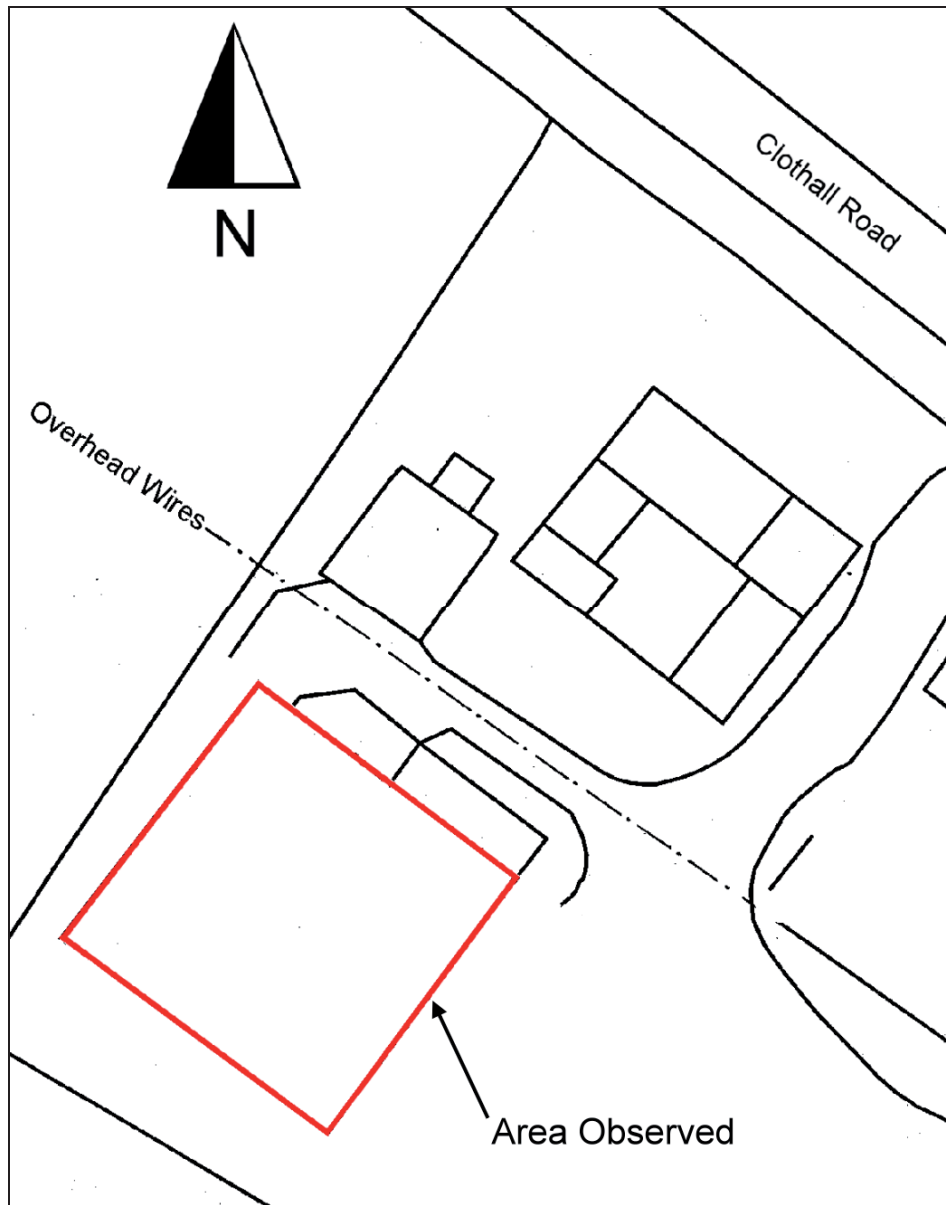


Figure 3: Area of Observation (Scale 1:500)



Plate 1: Site Prior to Development (looking west)

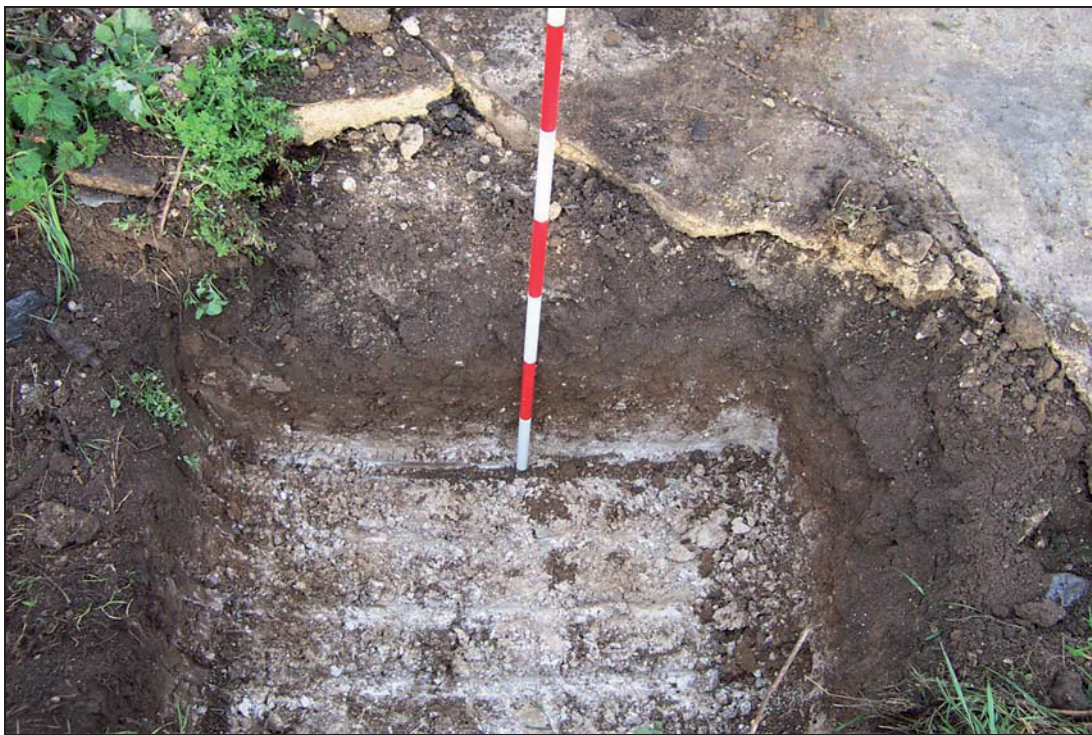


Plate 2: Foundation Pit 6 (looking northwest)



Plate 3: Foundation Pit 1 (looking northwest)

4. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Charles Franklin of Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates for commissioning the watching brief. We would also like to acknowledge the co-operation of the groundwork contractor Mr Mark Preece of MK Preece Excavations Ltd. Thanks are also due to Mr Jonathan Smith of HCC CAO who acted as curatorial officer.

The fieldwork was undertaken for ASC Ltd by Nicholas A Crank BSc AIFA. The report was prepared by Nicholas A Crank and edited by David Fell MA MIFA.

5. Archive

5.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. Finds records
7. Finds
8. Site record drawings
9. List of photographs/slides
10. B/W prints & negatives
11. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

5.2 The archive will be deposited with North Herts. District Council Museums Service.

6. Bibliography

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No.14
- Crank N.A. 2004 *The Homestead, Clothall Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire: Project Design for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. BTH/01. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd
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- 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)*.
- Niblett R 1995 *Roman Hertfordshire*. Dovecote Press (Wimborne)
- Page, W. 1912 *The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire*. Dawsons of Pall Mall. (Folkestone & London).
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Stead I.M. & Rigby V 1986 *Baldock: The Excavation of a Roman and Pre-Roman Settlement, 1968-72*. Britannia Monograph Series No. 7 (London)

Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD**

Project: THE HOMESTEAD,		Project No/Code: 6071BTH	Sheet: 1 of 1
CLOTHALL RD, BALDOCK		Date of visit: 26/10/04	
Client/Developer H.C.C.			
Contact: C. FRANKLIN		Phone: 01992 556 230	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 8.15	Finish: 4.00	
Completed by: NAC			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: COOL, CLEAR, DRY.			
Observations: EXCAVATION OF TEST PIT / STATION BASE 1 of 18. IN W CORNER OF PLOT REMAINDER TO BE SET OUT / EXCAVATED DURING COURSE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW. MET C. FRANKLIN (CLIENT) & CONTRACTOR MARK PREECE. ^{MARK PREECE} SEE OVER FOR SECTION OF BASE EXCAVATION. 1. _{EXCAVATION}			
NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES OBSERVED / FINDS RECOVERED.			
Comments:			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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PTO

BASE 1

- L100 0.00-0.70m TOPSOIL OVER LOOSE BRICK & CHALK RUBBLE - MADE GROUND
- L101 0.70-1.15m firm MID ORANGEY BROWN SILTY CLAY & CHALK GRAVEL (MOD) - MADE GROUND
- L102 1.15-1.35m ORIGINAL TOPSOIL LAYER - MID BROWN SANDY SILT LOAM
- L103 1.35m* - 1.60m+ SUBSOIL LAYER - LIGHT BROWN SANDY SILT, OCC. CHALK PEBBLES.



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: THE HOMESTEAD, CLOTHALL RD, BALDOCK		Project No/Code: 607 1 BTH	Sheet: 1 of 1
Client/Developer H.C.C.		Date of visit: 27/10/04	
Contact: As Before		Phone: AS	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 8.30	Finish:	
Completed by: NAC			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: DRY & OVERCAST. WINDY			
Observations: OBSERVED REMAINING BASE EXCAVATIONS. SIZE OF PADS = 13x10m. Depth from 13-0.75m getting shallower NW-SE IN LINE WITH MADE GROUND LEVELLING. <u>SEE OVER</u> FOR SAMPLE SECTIONS 2-6. SAMPLE SECTIONS 1-6 ARE FOR BASES 1-6 BUT SAME GEN. STRAT. OBSERVED FOR BASES 7-12 & 13-18. NO ARCH. FEATURES OBSERVED NO ARTEFACTS RECOVERED. SPOIL EXCAVATED SCANNED FOR FINDS NO PRE-20TH MATERIAL OBSERVED. NO EVIDENCE FOR INTRUSIVE DISTURBANCE TO CHALK/SUBSOIL IN THE PAST OBSERVED.			
Comments:			

03
02
01
00
075

For sketch plan, use reverse

P10 · ©ASC, 2003

(SS.2)

- L101 0.00 - 0.20m Concrete Slab + Hardcore
 L102 0.20 - 0.50m Brick + Chalk Rubble - Made Ground
 L101 0.50 - 1.00m Firm MID ORANGEY BROWN SILTY CLAY & CHALK GRAVEL - MADE GROUND
 L102 1.00 - 1.1m ORIG. TOPSOIL (AS BEFORE)
 L103 1.1 - 1.2m+ SUBSOIL - AS BEFORE.

(SS.3)

- L104 0.00 - 0.18m Concrete Slab
 L101 0.18 - 0.8m As Before - ~~None~~ MODERN BRICK RUBBLE (Occ.)
 L102 0.8 - 1.0m ORIG. TOPSOIL (AS BEFORE)
 L103 1.0 - 1.1m+ SUBSOIL (AS BEFORE)

(S.S.4)

- L104 0.00 - 0.15m CONCRETE SLAB
 L105 0.15 - 0.2m HARDCORE - CLINKER BASE.
 L106 0.2 - 0.25m CRUSHED CHALK LAYER
 L101 0.25 - 0.6m AS BEFORE - NO BRICK RUBBLE
 L102 0.6 - 0.75m AS BEFORE
 L103 0.75 - 1.00m+ AS BEFORE

(SS.5)

- L104 0.00 - 0.10m CONCRETE SLAB
 L105 0.10 - 0.23m AS ABOVE
 L106 0.23 - 0.30m AS ABOVE
 L102 0.30 - 0.53m AS BEFORE
 L103 0.53 - 0.85m AS BEFORE
 L107 0.85 - 0.9m+ NATURAL CHALK.

(SS.6)

- L104 0.00 - 0.08m CONCRETE SLAB
 L102 0.08 - 0.40m AS BEFORE
 L103 0.4 - 0.70m AS BEFORE
 L107 0.7 - 0.75m+ NATURAL CHALK

Appendix 2: SMR Summary Sheet

Site name and address: The Homestead, Clothall Road, Baldock, Herts		
County: Hertfordshire	District: North Herts	
Village/Town: Baldock	Parish: Clothall CP	
Planning application reference:		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates County Hall Pegs Lane Hertford SG13 8DN		
Nature of application: Construction of New Grain Store		
Present land use: Farmyard		
Size of application area: c.22m x c.22m	Size of area investigated: n/a	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 2558 3321	Site code: BTH 04	
Site director/Organization: Nick Crank / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Watching Brief		
Date of work:	Start: 26/10/04	Finish: 27/10/04
Curating museum:		
Related SMR nos: ---	Periods represented: None	
Relevant previous summaries/reports None		
Summary of fieldwork results: <i>During October 2004 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on a site at The homestead, Clothall Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire. The project was undertaken during the excavation of foundations for a Grain Store. No archaeological remains were observed during the works.</i>		
Author: N.A.Crank	Date: 27 th October 2004	