



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
RESERVE SITE 6
FORTESCUE DRIVE
SHENLEY CHURCH END
MILTON KEYNES**

on behalf of Avebury Direct Procurement



Nigel Wilson HND AIFA

January 2005

ASC: 638/SCE/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	SCE	<i>Project no:</i>	638
<i>MK Event No:</i>	942	<i>Bucks Museum Acc No:</i>	AYBCM 2004.187
<i>Date of fieldwork</i>	12 th - 17 th January 2005		
<i>District:</i>	Milton Keynes		
<i>Area:</i>	Shenley Church End		
<i>Parish:</i>	Shenley CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 8348 3696		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.0.39ha		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Open space which has been used for soil storage		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Sheltered accommodation for the elderly		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	c.0.39ha		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	04/00822/FUL		
<i>Client:</i>	Avebury Direct Procurement Midsummer House Midsummer Boulevard Milton Keynes MK9 3BN		
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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

Summary

During January 2005, a field evaluation was undertaken by ASC Ltd on Reserve Site 6, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes. As Roman and Medieval remains have previously been found in the vicinity plans to develop the site led to an archaeological planning condition being imposed. Five 20m trenches were excavated. Features were identified and excavated in four of the five trenches. Two small ditches were identified in the trenches central to the site. Though no finds to date either of the ditches were found it is likely that they represent post-medieval agricultural drainage or boundary features. Roman pottery was recovered from all the features exposed in the two trenches excavated in the south eastern part of the site. The only significant stratigraphic relationship on the site was a small pit cutting an earlier ditch. Two additional small trenches were cut to try and follow the ditch. These additional slots were able to demonstrate that the ditch terminated just to the south of the original trench. A large gravel or sand extraction quarry c.1.2m deep was also uncovered in this area.

1 Introduction

1.1 During January 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a field evaluation on a site designated Reserve Site 6, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes (NGR: SP 8348 3696 Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by: Avebury Direct Procurement, and was carried out according to a brief (Giggins 2004) prepared by the Milton Keynes Council Archaeologist (MKCA), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2004).

1.2 Reason for Work

Under current planning guidance legislation archaeology can be a material factor in the deciding of planning applications. Planning Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) specifically deals with archaeology. When the Bedfordshire Pilgrim Housing Association (BPHA) submitted plans to Milton Keynes Council (04/00822/FUL) to build 18 2-bedroom flats for the elderly, the MKCA advised the planning department that the area was archaeologically sensitive. In line with the guidance given in PPG16 the MKCA recommended that a pre-determination archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to assess the likely impact the development was going to have on the archaeological resource. This advice was accepted and the BPHA were requested to commission an evaluation. This report details the results of the evaluation

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 The evaluation site is located in the Shenley Church End district of Milton Keynes, at NGR SP 8348 3696 (Fig. 1). The site lies within the civil parish of Shenley Church End, about 0.5km north-east of the parish church, adjacent to the parish boundary with Loughton. Reserve Site 6 comprises a roughly rectangular area of land covering c.0.39 hectares, aligned NW-SE on the south side of V4 Watling Street at its junction with Burchard Crescent, which marks the north-west boundary of the site (Fig. 2). To the south is Fortescue Drive, from which the site is accessed. To the south-east is modern residential development. The site comprises parts of two former fields, separated by a

substantial hedge. Prior to the evaluation the site was used for topsoil storage: a large soil bund was removed to allow the evaluation to take place.

- 1.3.2 The site is located on level ground, at an elevation of *c.*90m AOD. Soils in the area mostly belong to the Hanslope association (Soil Survey 1983, 411d), described as 'slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils. Some slowly permeable non-calcareous clayey soils. Slight risk of water erosion'. The underlying geology comprises Oxford clay.

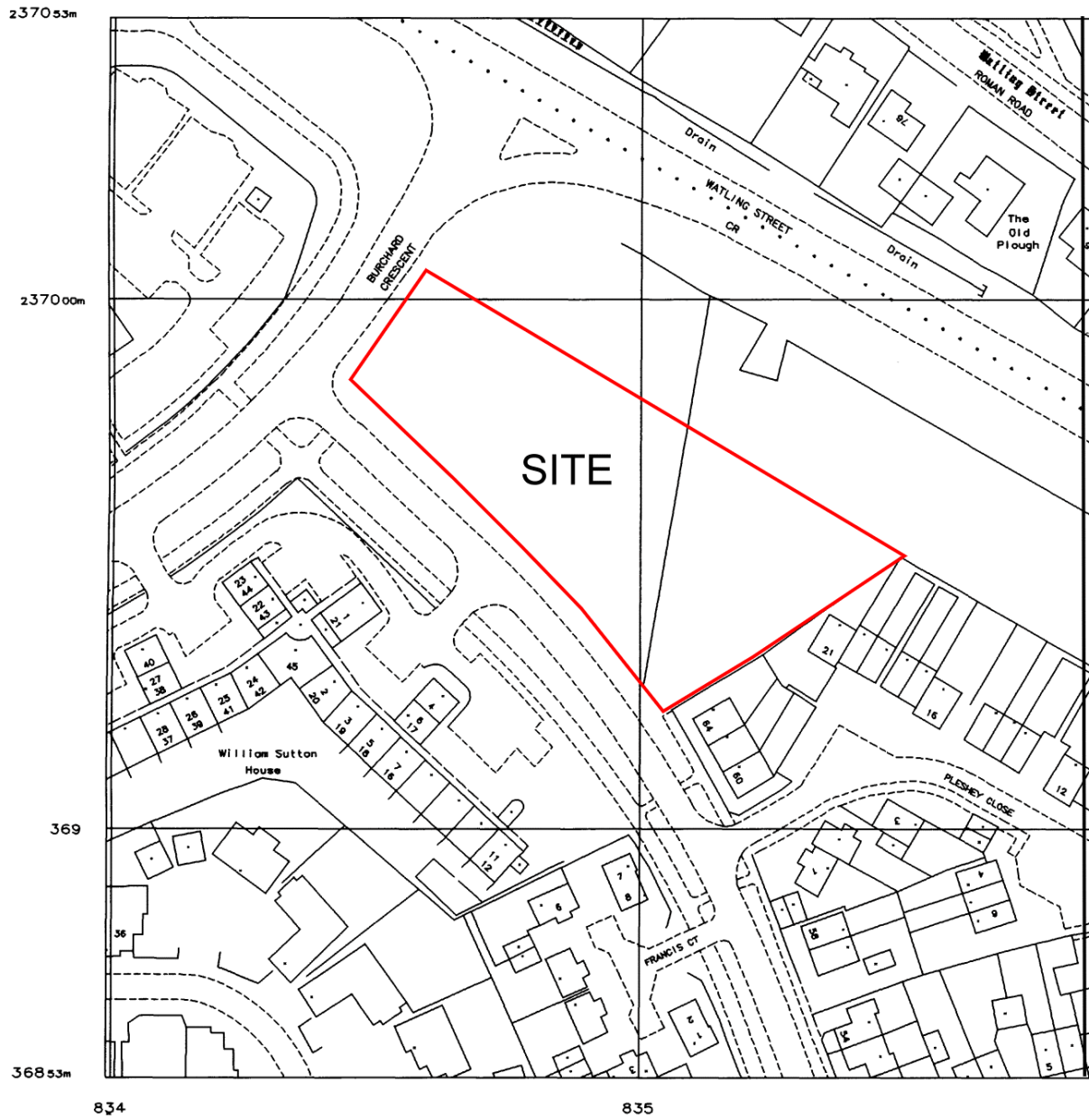


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

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

- To obtain information on the extent and character of the potential archaeology of the development site, together with information on the state of preservation.

2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the Brief (Section 5), amended by agreement with MKCA, the methods to be adopted for this project were:

- A programme of machine trial trenching, amounting to 4% of the site area (c.156 square metres, or c.100 linear metres of trench, 1.6m wide)
- Provision for further trenching, amounting to 1% (39 square metres, or 25 linear metres), to investigate potentially significant discoveries.
- Hand investigation and recording of any archaeological features or deposits revealed, sufficient to determine their date, function, state of preservation and likely significance
- Preparation of a report (this document)
- Preparation and deposition of the project archive

2.3 Standards

The work conforms 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*.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 6.1 There is little evidence of prehistoric activity in Shenley parish, though a few flints of Neolithic or Mesolithic date have been found during the excavation of later sites. At Furzton Lake, 2km south-east of the evaluation site, excavations by the former Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit (MKAU) revealed a small farming settlement of early-mid Iron Age date (Croft & Mynard 1993, 134).
- 6.2 In the Roman period the Milton Keynes area fell within the *civitas* (tribal area) of the *Catuvellauni*: the nearest towns were *Magiovinium* (nr Fenny Stratford) to the south, and *Lactodorum* (Towcester) to the north-west. The road linking them follows the present alignment of London Road, c.80m north-east of the evaluation site. During road construction in the 1950s, Roman pottery and coins were found on the line of the present V4 Watling Street, c.150m north-west of the site (Mynard 1987, 24, MK77). More recently, the brief notes that development of William Sutton House, to the south-west of the evaluation site, revealed a Roman ditch, and a Roman spoon and coin were found during metal detector surveys.
- 6.3 Relatively little is known about Saxon settlement and activity in the Shenleys. The name Shenley (*scienan-liage*, i.e. 'bright clearing') could indicate a new Saxon settlement in a wooded area (Croft & Mynard 1993, 134). Saxon artefacts found in the parish seem to fall into three clusters, centred on Shenley Church End, Shenley Brook End, and the deserted settlement of Westbury, which lies midway between the two. Excavation of the latter by MKAU also revealed a group of 7th-century burials, and pits used for flax retting (*ibid.*).
- 6.4 The Domesday Survey (1086) records four separate holdings in Shenley, two in Church End and two in Brook End. Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods the evaluation site was open farmland: evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing on an east-west alignment was recorded there by MKAU (*ibid.*, fig. 54). The brief notes that, in 1692, the west part of the site formed part of *Odels Close*, while the east part was within *Gunns Middle Close*. Metal detector surveys in the area have recovered several 14th-century coins and a post-medieval spoon. Late medieval ditches were revealed during development on the William Sutton House site (above).

4 Results

- 4.1 Five 20.0 x 1.6m trenches (Fig 3) were mechanically excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Each trench was cut to the top of the natural strata or upper archaeological deposit depending upon which was encountered first.
- 4.2 The natural strata across the site comprised blue clay with some pockets of yellow sandy clay and gravel towards the south eastern end of the site.
- 4.3 Trench 1 was orientated SE – NW. The profile exposed in the section was a mixture of interleaving re-deposited clay bands (Plate 1) especially at the north western end of the trench. This soil profile probably reflects dumping and landscaping when Burchard Crescent was constructed. No archaeological features were observed.
- 4.4 Trench 2 was orientated SW –NE. Two linear features were identified in this trench. Ditch 201 was orientated NW – SE with a maximum width of 1.0m. the sides were angled at about 60° to a flat base. Though no dateable material was recovered from the fill it is likely that the ditch is of no great age and represents modern agricultural activity. The only other feature in this trench was a small ‘V’ shaped linear feature (202) orientated NW- SE, c.0.2m wide with very steep straight sides. Again this is almost certainly a modern agricultural feature.
- 4.5 Trench 3 was orientated SE –NW. Three features were identified, though all undated it is likely that they were all agricultural in nature. Feature 301 was orientated NE-SW and was c.1m wide. The gentle sloping sides merged with the flat base. This feature may be the base of a plough furrow. Ditch 302 was also orientated NE – SW, and was the most substantial feature in Trench 3, measuring 1.2m in width with a depth of c.0.4m. The sides were angled at about 50° to the flat base. Sitting in the upper fill of Ditch 301 was a secondary cut (304). This cut contained a red ceramic field drain c.100mm in diameter. Broken sections of an oval ceramic pipe (100 x 60mm) were also observed in the upper fill of 304. The irregular shape of this earlier pipe suggests that it was hand made, dating from the early 19th century. Feature 303 was aligned in the same direction as Cut 202 and is almost certainly a modern field drain.
- 4.6 Trench 4 was orientated SE – NW. Three features were identified in this trench. Scoop 401 was an oval shaped depression in the natural c.0.4 x 0.2m across, with a maximum depth of 0.2m. This feature is likely to be natural in origin. Cuts 403 and 405 (Fig 4) have been securely dated to the Roman period (Appendix 3). Initially Ditch 405 was cut into the natural. The surviving side was angled at 45° to the flat base. Some time after Ditch 405 had silted up Pit 403 was cut. This pit was sub circular (2.0m diameter) and had steep sides to a flat base.
- 4.7 Two additional short trenches were excavated around Trenches 4 and 5 (4a & 4b) to confirm the nature and alignment of Cut 405. Trench 4a displayed a natural profile with the topsoil sitting on the clean natural. Trench 4b located the end of a feature, presumably Cut 405, indicating that 405 is either the end of a ditch or a large shallow pit.

- 4.8 Trench 5 was orientated SW –NE. Towards the SW end of the trench there was a large cut feature (11.5m diameter), with a maximum depth of 1.2m below ground level (Fig 5 & Plate 2). The extent of this feature indicates that it was probably a quarry pit for the extraction of sand or gravel. All the pottery recovered from the quarry pit fills has been dated to the mid to late 1st century AD.

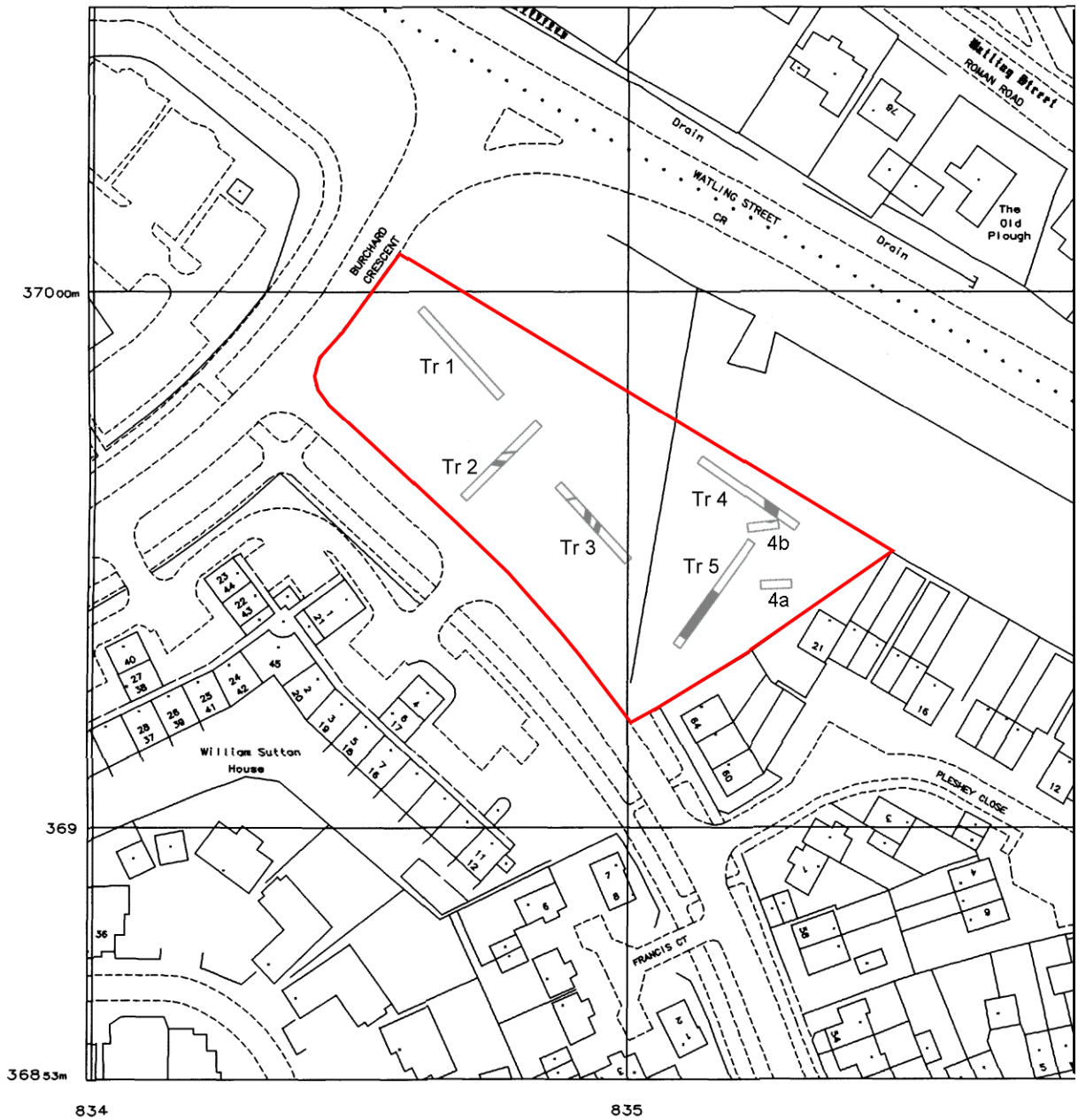


Figure 3: Trench locations (Scale 1:1250)

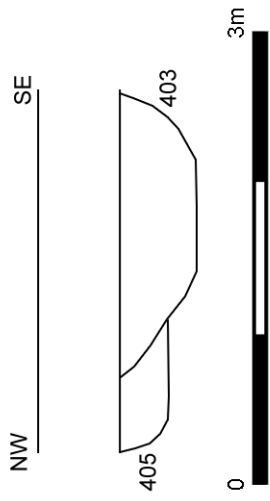


Figure 4: Section across Pit 403 and Ditch 405 (Scale 1:50)

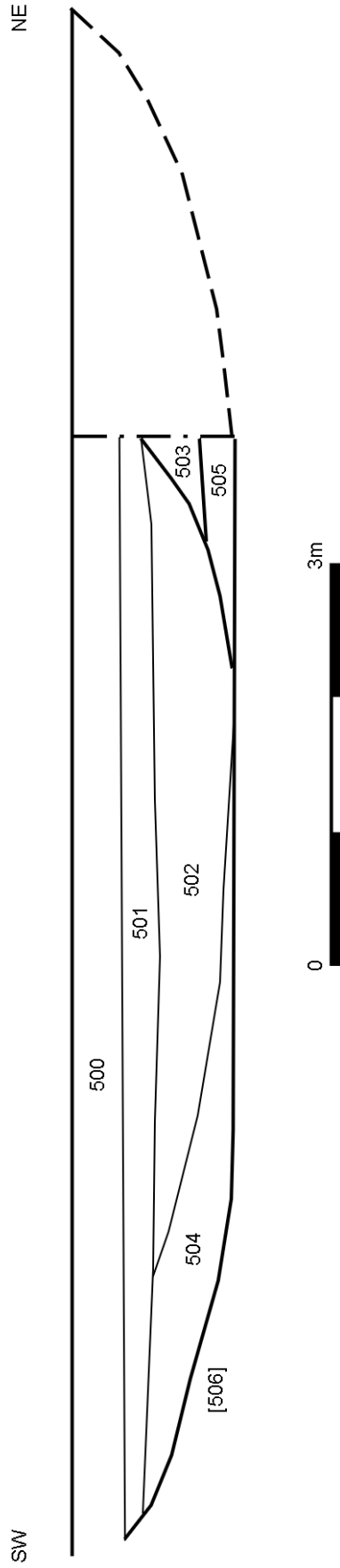


Figure 5: Section across Quarry 506 (scale 1:50)



Plate 1: Re-deposited clay (Trench 1)



Plate 2: Field ditch 201 (Trench 2)



Plate 3: Field drain 202 (Trench 2)



Plate 4: Ditch 302 (Trench 3)



Plate 5: Pit 403 and Ditch 405 (Trench 4)



Plate 6: Quarry Pit 506 (Trench 5)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The results of the evaluation largely confirm what was already known about the the more recent history of the site, when it was open agricultural land. The ditches and land drains observed in Trenches 2 and 3 are typical of this land use pattern. Of more interest are the feature observed in Trenches 4 and 5.
- 5.2 The large pit in Trench 5 probably represents a gravel or sand extraction quarry used to obtain building material. This is unlikely to have been carried far so one can suggest that the material extracted has been used locally. As all the pottery recovered from this feature dates to the 1st century AD It is likely that this is when the quarry was originally opened. The inclusion of one piece of high status Samian ware possibly indicates that a habitation site lies in the area.
- 5.3 The ditch and pit in Trench 4 are again indicative of a 1st or early 2nd century habitation site lying close by, probably to the E or S, closer to the Roman road now know as Watling Street.

5.4 *Confidence rating*

The evaluation was carried out under good weather conditions and the machining was done to a high standard it is possible to say that a high confidence rating of 4.5 out of 5 can be given to the findings of this project.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Averbury Direct Procurement for commissioning the evaluation. Brian Giggins the MKCA prepared the brief and monitored the project on behalf of Milton Keynes Council. Andy Fawcett examined the pottery and wrote the pottery assessment. The project was under the overall management of Bob Zeepvat BA, MIFA who also prepared the project design. Nigel Wilson and David Fell undertook the fieldwork.

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. Finds records
7. Finds
8. Sample records
9. Site record drawings
10. List of photographs/slides
11. Colour slides
12. B/W prints & negatives
13. Original specialist reports and supporting information
14. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum
Accession Number: AYBCM 2004.187.


8. Bibliography

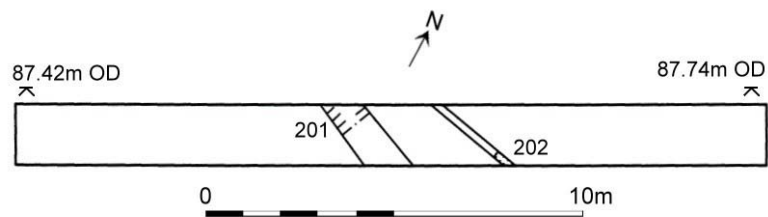
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- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Mynard, D.C. (ed.), 1987 *Roman Milton Keynes*. Buckinghamshire Archaeol. Soc. Monog. Ser. **1** (Aylesbury).
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).


Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

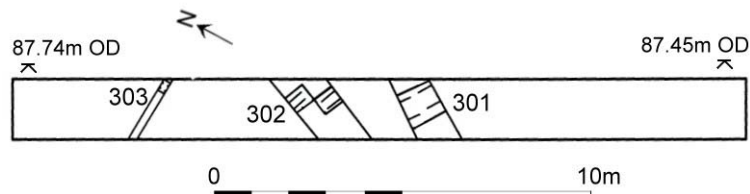
Trench 1											
						Max Dimensions (m0)					
						Length	22.30	Width	1.60	Depth	0.70
						Levels					
						Trench base NW			84.57m OD		
						Trench top NW			85.21m OD		
						Trench base SE			86.52m OD		
						Trench top SE			87.22m OD		
						NGR Co-ordinates					
						NW	0 83461 36997		SE	83476 3698	
						Orientation			NW - SE		
Reason for Trench			Pattern of evaluation trenches								
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)					
200	Layer	Mixed interleaved re-deposited blue and yellow clays.		>1600	700	0-700					
201	Layer	Natural clay		>1600		700-					




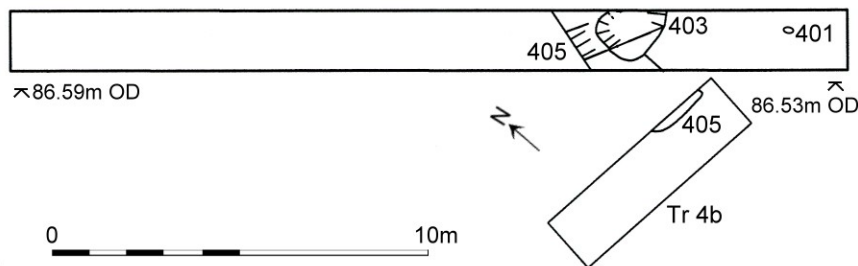
Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	19.80	Width	1.60	Depth	0.65
	Levels					
	Trench base SW		86.77m OD			
	Trench top SW		87.42m OD			
	Trench base NE		87.11m OD			
	Trench top NEh		87.74m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	SW	83468 36961	NE	83483 36975		
	Orientation		SW - NE			
Reason for Trench		Pattern of evaluation trenches				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
200	Layer	Topsoil	>1600	600	0-600	
201	Cut	Field boundary/ drainage ditch	1000	300	600-900	
202	Cut	Field drain	200	200	600-800	
203	Fill	Fill of [201], grey green silty clay with some iron staining	1000	400	600-1000	
204	Fill	Fill of [202]dark reddish brow silty clay	200	200	600-800	
205	Layer	Natural blue clay	>1600		600-	




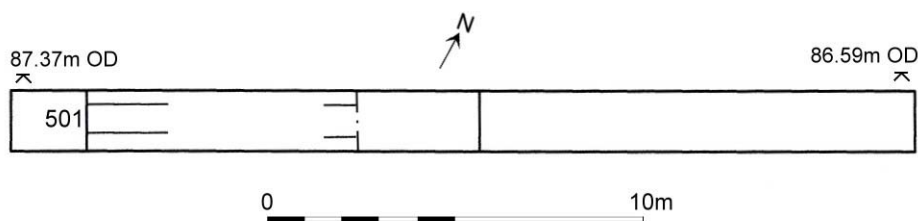
Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	19.40	Width	1.60	Depth	0.65
	Levels					
	Trench base NW		87.09m OD			
	Trench top NW		87.74m OD			
	Trench base SE		86.87m OD			
	Trench top SE		87.45m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NW	83486 36965	SE	83500 36950		
	Orientation		NW - SE			
Reason for Trench		Pattern of evaluation trenches				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
300	Layer		>1600	650	0-650	
301	Cut	Shallow scoop, base of plough furrow?	1200	200	600-800	
302	Cut	Ditch	1200	400	600-1000	
303	Cut	Land drain	200	200	600-800	
304	Cut	Land drain (ceramic pipe) above [302]	200	150	600-750	
305	Fill	Fill of 301, reddish brown silty clay	200	200	600-800	
306	Fill	Fill of 302, dark reddish brown silty clay	1200	400	600-1000	
307	Fill	Fill of 303, very dark reddish brown silty clay	200	200	600-800	



Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	22.10	Width	1.60	Depth	0.60
	Levels					
	Trench base NW		85.86m OD			
	Trench top NW		86.59m OD			
	Trench base SE		85.91m OD			
	Trench top SE		86.53m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NW	83818 36967	SE	83531 36956		
	Orientation		NW - SE			
Reason for Trench		Pattern of evaluation trenches				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
400	Layer	Topsoil with grass cover	>1600	500	0-500	
401	Cut	Shallow scoop probably natural	400	150	500-650	
402	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty clay				
403	Cut	Roughly circular pit	2000	500	500-1000	
404	Fill	Dark yellowish born silty clay some areas of yellow clay				
405	Cut	Segment of ditch or pit terminating in Trench 4b	1800	300	500-800	
406	Fill	Dark yellowish brown silty clay.				
407	Layer	Natural yellow clay				



Trench 5						
	Max Dimensions					
	Length	23.90	Width	1.60	Depth	0.55
	Levels					
	Trench base SW		86.84m OD			
	Trench top SW		87.37m OD			
	Trench base NE		85.91m OD			
	Trench top NE		86.59m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	SW	83509 36933		NE	83523 36953	
	Orientation			SW - NE		
Reason for Trench			Pattern of evaluation trenches			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
500	Layer	Dark yellowish brown loam, with grass over	>1600	350	0-350	
501		Yellowish brown silty clay	5500	300	350-650	
502		Yellow/ orange sandy gravel, more clay than above	6000	600	650-1200	
503		Dark yellowish brown silty clay	>800	400	500-900	
504		Dark yellowish brown silty clay	>5500	500	600-1100	
505		Yellowish brown silty clay	>1600	250	950-1200	
506	Cut	Quarry pit	1040	950	350-1200	
507	Layer	Natural, yellowish brown silty clay with some gravel	>160		350-550	



Appendix 2: Finds Concordance

Context	Pottery		Bone		Flint (no)	Shell (g)	Stone (no)	Other Finds	
	(no)	(g)	(no)	(g)				Type	(no)
403	1	5							
406	16	445							
408	25	325	1	5					
501	3	40							
502	2	30							
504	2	15							

Appendix 3: Specialist Reports

The Roman Pottery

A. R. Fawcett

A total of 48 sherds with a weight of 820g have been recovered from evaluation work at Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes. The overall condition of the pottery may be described as slightly abraded and is therefore considered to be in its original place of deposition (diagnostic survival rate is average).

The pottery is divided into two distinctly dated groups, the pit (late 1st to mid/late 2nd century AD) and the quarry feature (mid to later 1st century AD).

The pit may indeed be dated inside the 2nd century AD if the Horningsea identification is correct. The remaining fabrics are what one might expect to find at this period and within this geographical area.

The quarry feature contains a mixture of early Roman fabrics as well as the indigenous grog tempered style that straddles the conquest period. Finally dating is confirmed by the presence of a Drg27 cup fragment from La Graufesenque in southern Gaul (France). This is an early version of the style, with defined curves and strong internal grooving alongside a matt brown surface finish.

Archive

403 Topsoil: Late 1st to 2nd century AD

HAD RE1	1	7g	ND, (earlier fabric version) abr
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406 Pit (upper): Late 1st to mid/late 2nd century AD

GRS/VER WH/HAD OX UNS SH	16	433g	Mortaria x1, ND jar sherds x1 sli
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408 Pit (basal): Late 1st to mid/late 2nd century AD

VER WH/UNS SH/PNK GT HOR RE/BSW/GRS	24	290g	Dish flat rim x1, Jar x1, ND flagon sherd x1 sli
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501 Quarry (upper): Mid to later 1st century AD

SOB GT/BSW	3	40g	Jar x2, sli
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502 Quarry (intermediate): Mid to later 1st century AD

BSW	2	31g	Jar neckless x1 sli
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504 Quarry (basal): Mid to later 1st century AD

SOB GT/LGF SA	2	19g	Cup Drg27 (early version) x1 sli
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Key

BSW – Black surfaced/Romanising grey ware

GRS – Unsourced sandy grey ware

HAD OX – Hadham oxidised ware

HAD RE 1 – Hadham reduced ware category 1

HOR RE – Horningsea reduced ware

LGF SA – La Graufesenque samian ware

PNK GT – Pink grog tempered ware, UNS SH – Unsourced shell tempered ware

SOB GT – Southern British grog tempered ware

VER WH – Verulamium region white ware

Abbreviations

Abr = abraded, sli = slightly abraded, ND = non-diagnostic.

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