

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
KINGSBURY PUBLIC REALM PROJECT
AYLESBURY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

on behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council



Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA

July 2004

ASC: 567/AYK/02

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	AYK	<i>Project no:</i>	567
<i>SMR reference / Event No:</i>			
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>District:</i>	Aylesbury Vale		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Aylesbury		
<i>Parish:</i>	St Marys (ancient parish)		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 8185-1386		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	2470 sq. m.		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Paved public open space and roads		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Refurbishment of public space/road		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	Entire area		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Tba		
<i>Client:</i>	Aylesbury Vale District Council Department of Environment and Planning 66 High Street Aylesbury Bucks HP20 1SD		
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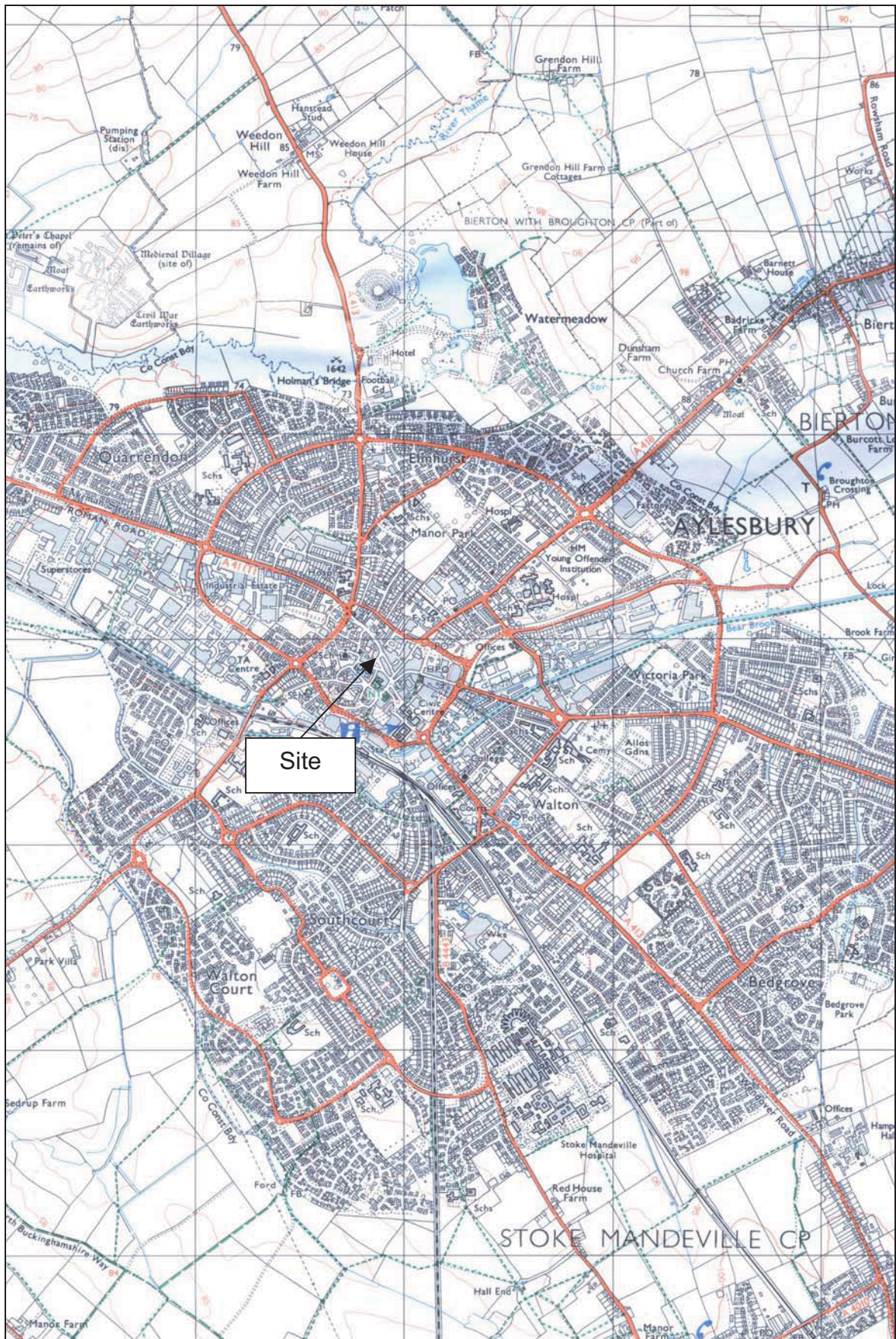


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In the spring and early summer of 2004 ASC Ltd undertook an archaeological watching brief on the re-furbishment of Kingsbury Square in Aylesbury. Although much of the work was superficial in character, the construction of the water feature required a greater depth of excavation. The northern part of this system was observed and this revealed the presence to two ash and cess filled pits. Neither of these pits contained dating evidence though their presence is likely to pre-date the development of the square in the medieval period.

1 Introduction

1.1 Between the months April and late June 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site in Kingsbury Square, Aylesbury (NGR SP 81852-13868: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Martin Dalby of Aylesbury Vale District Council, and was carried out according to a brief (Radford 9/3/04) prepared by the Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (ASC:567/AYK/01).

1.2 *Reason for Work*

The work was required in order to record any archaeological features that might be exposed and/or damaged during the construction phase of the project.

1.3 *Setting*

1.3.1 The site is situated in the medieval core of the ancient market town of Aylesbury (NGR SP 818-138). The triangular area amounts to 0.247 ha (0.61 acre) and is defined by a variety of post-medieval buildings with access obtained from the north (Pebble Lane and Buckingham Street), from George Street to the west and to Market Square to the south.

1.3.2 The site is essentially flat (*c.* 90m AOD) but there is a very gentle slope from north to south. The bedrock geology of the site is Amptill Clay, Kimmeridge Clay and Corralain. The superficial deposits are boulder clay and morainic drift (Soil Survey 1983). These soils have almost certainly been truncated and then built up by urban deposits.

1.3.3 The highways of the site were originally tarmac and flanked by pavements, with a paved central area containing a kiosk, bicycle rack, bus shelters and payphones.

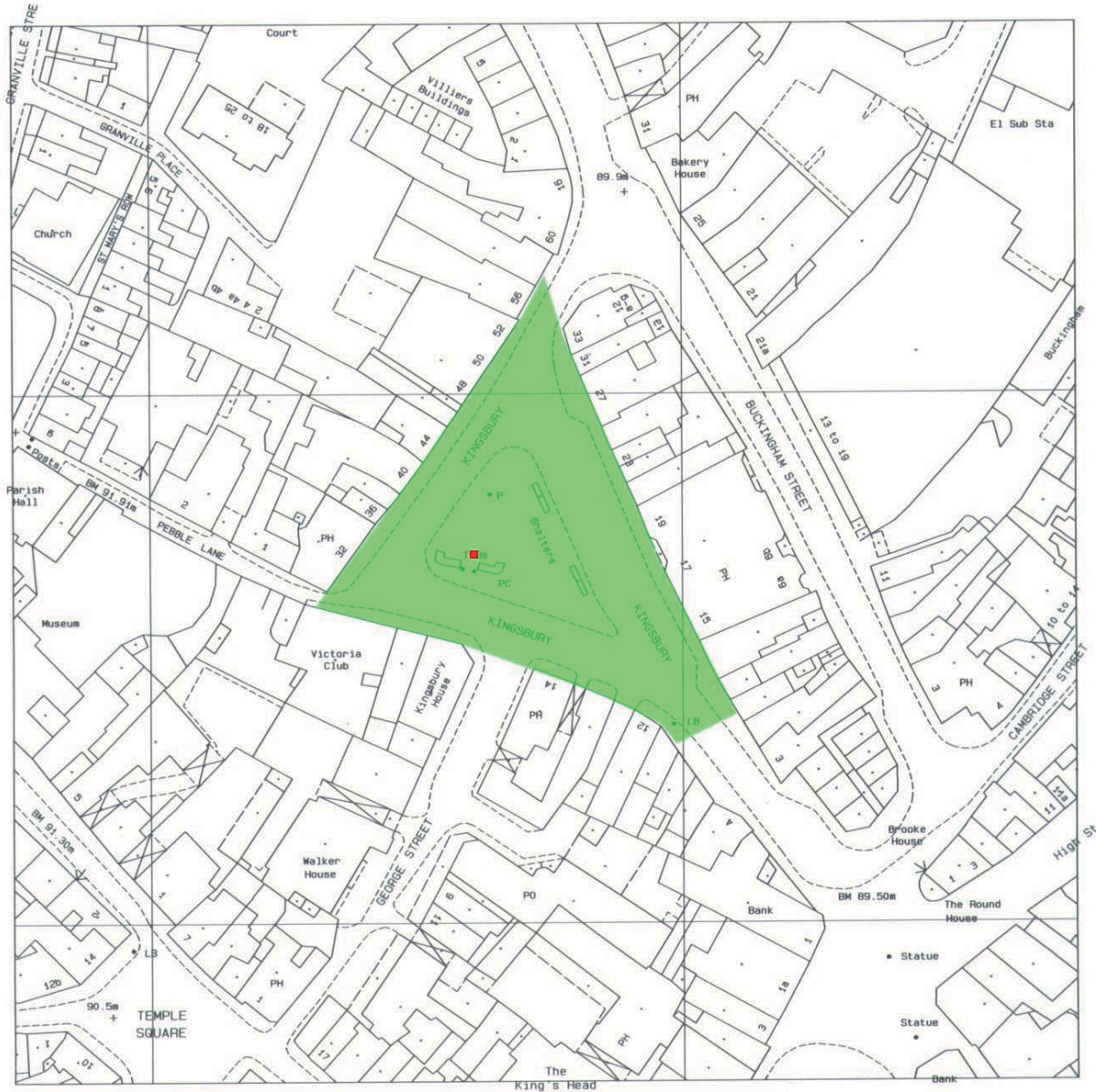


Figure 2: Site plan and location of pits (shown in red) scale 1:1250

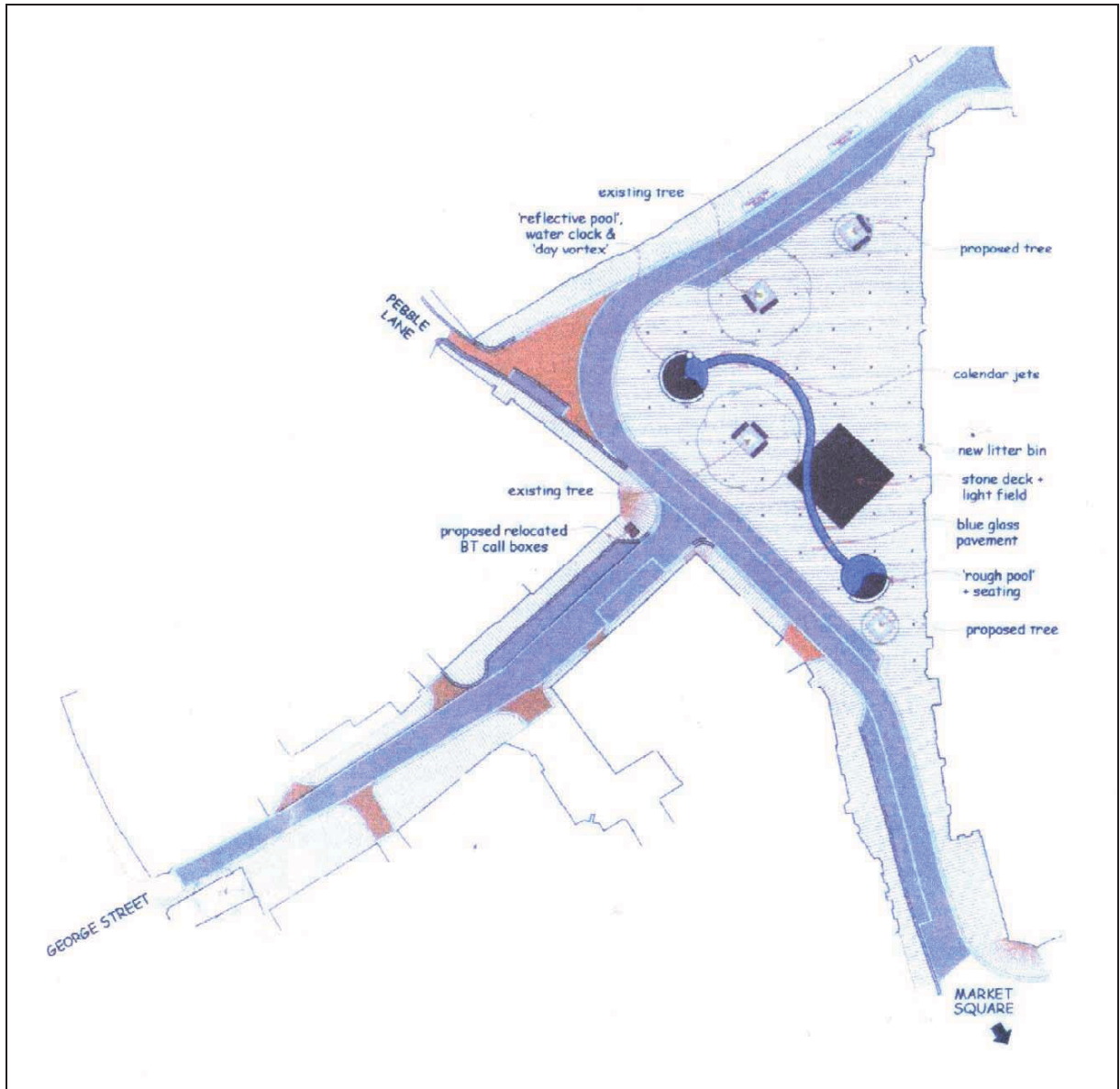


Figure 3: Proposed development (not to scale)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief , the aims of the watching brief were:

- To identify and record any important archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks and record the depth and extent of any made ground or recent disturbance.

2.2 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief , which required:

- An archaeologist will be present during the ground works required for the new service trench, tree pits and pool foundations.
- Any resurfacing works that requires further reduction of ground levels will also be subject to an intensive watching brief.

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

3.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC)

There are no known settlement sites belonging to this period and much of the evidence is the result of stray finds. For example, Bronze Age implements have come from Tindal Hospital and bronze axe head from Market Square (Birch 1975, 14).

3.2 Iron Age (600BC-AD43)

The site lies in close proximity to an Iron Age hillfort (CAS6743). Excavations in advance of development produced evidence of middle Iron Age settlement at George Street (SP 81851386) and an Iron Age ditch was recorded at 31/33 Kingsbury.

3.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

Roman settlement is known in the immediate vicinity of the development site, with the excavation of 1st century AD Roman occupation at 13-19 Buckingham Street.

3.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

In the middle Saxon period the Iron Age hillfort was refortified and the hilltop reused as a cemetery, as revealed at George Street. There has been a wealth of human remains from the area of the development site, including skeletons discovered in the museum garden, Pebble Lane (Rockwood and Church Row) and Temple Square. At the Victoria Club, Kingsbury, human remains were seen to be disturbed by post-medieval pits and are likely to be Saxon. Other human bones associated with the Saxon Minster have been discovered at 2 & 4 Castle Street.

3.5 Medieval (1066-1500)

The Domesday survey records Aylesbury as an important royal manor, which is believed to have stood at the northeast end of Kingsbury. It is traditionally the site of the Royal residence used by Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet kings. *'The ancient manor house was situate on the upper or north east part of kingsbury and extended almost the whole range of it'* (Gibbs 1971, 427). As a royal manor, the town enjoyed the same rights as tenants of the crown such as separate representation before justices and exemption from trial by jury or combat (Birch 1975, 59). By 1227 the town was represented as a borough and vill by its own jury at the eyre (Beresford & Finberg 1973, 70). Twelfth-century historical references mention it having an Inn or Hospitum. St Johns Leper Hospital (CAS0316), indicated by deeds to be located at the Market Square also has 12th-century origins and some of the human remains in the area (CAS4703) are likely to be associated with this site.

Kingsbury was then incorporated into the medieval and post medieval town. The town of Aylesbury was centred on the present market square during the medieval period. 31 Kingsbury, a Grade II listed building, has medieval origins. At 60 Kingsbury, a chalkstone clunch corbel from the 15th century was discovered. Medieval pits and wells were excavated at 13-19 Buckingham Street. Medieval activity and pottery was recorded at 31/33 Kingsbury. Evidence for considerable medieval activity was recorded at George Street itself.

3.6 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The post-medieval period was represented by pits and from the late 17th century, by buildings at George Street. Here 18th century outbuilding footings were seen to underlie the present street, indicating the earlier street was narrower. Nos 5 & 7, 14, 44, and 60 Kingsbury are historic buildings dating from the 17th/18th centuries.

3.7 Modern (1900-present)

The area of Market Square and Kingsbury had attained their present limits sometime during the medieval period. The earliest maps of the early and mid 19th century demonstrate that these early town squares have remained the same for at least the last two centuries.

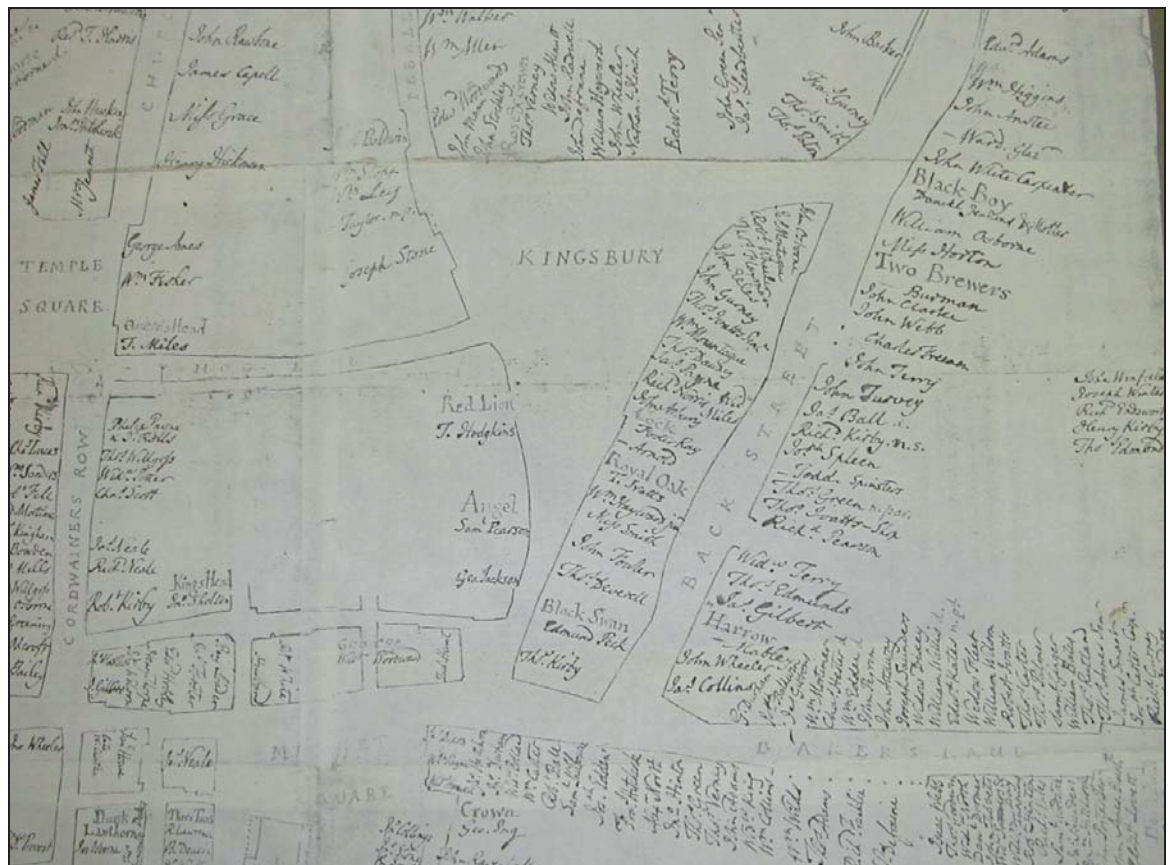


Figure 4: Kingsbury in 1809 (BRO: Ma/11/5LR)

4 Results

- 4.1 The area of the deepest excavations at the northern end of the water feature was observed (Appendix 1). This was located approximately 28m WNW from the junction of Pebble Lane with Kingsbury Square (NGR SP 81852-13868). The area observed measured 8m by 2.5m and was no more than 1.6m deep (Plates 1-10). The upper 0.6m of ground was, as would be expected, artificially made up as follows:

On the south side of the pool.

[7] modern make-up 0.24m deep.

[6] tarmac 0.16m deep.

[5] cobbles 0.12m deep.

[4] concrete 0.15m deep

Below 0.6m the ground was mainly undisturbed natural (Portland limestone of the Aylesbury Series) through which several intrusive features had been cut :

[3] brown, disturbed soil containing clay pipes

[2] pit 0.9m wide and of unknown depth; almost identical to [1] (see below).

[1] pit 1.3m wide and of unknown depth. It was filled with a series of smooth, ashy like layers (Plate 8) that had the consistency of peat. Some were reddish pink, grey and some dark. At least 23 'lenses' were seen. No finds were recovered though reddish fired clay was noted. On troweling in front of the section a dark grey deposit (Mun 2.5Y 4/1) with streaks of olive brown (Mun 2.5Y 4/3) was observed (Plate 10). The fill was smooth and silty but also slightly fibrous containing small animal bones. The pit extended 1.1m into the pool or stream area.

On the opposite side of the section a brick built drain was noted running NW-SE (Plate 3). It was 0.5m wide and 0.4m high with an internal width of 0.3m x 0.3m. The drain was bonded with mortar and the bricks were unfrogged (225mm x 110mm x 56mm). Almost certainly of 19th century date.



Plate 1: View north into foundation of water channel



Plate 2: View of natural ground



Plate 3: Detail of brick built drain looking north



Plate 4: View north showing foundation of main water tank



Plate 5: View looking south to Market Sq showing position of two pits.



Plate 6: View of pit 1 & 2



Plate 7: Location view of pit 1

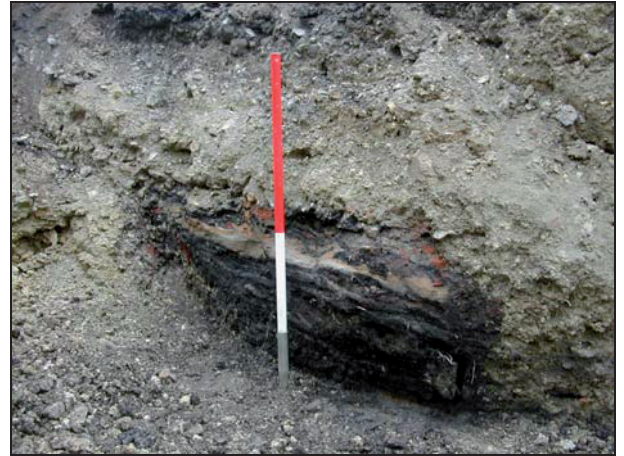


Plate 8: Detail of pit 1

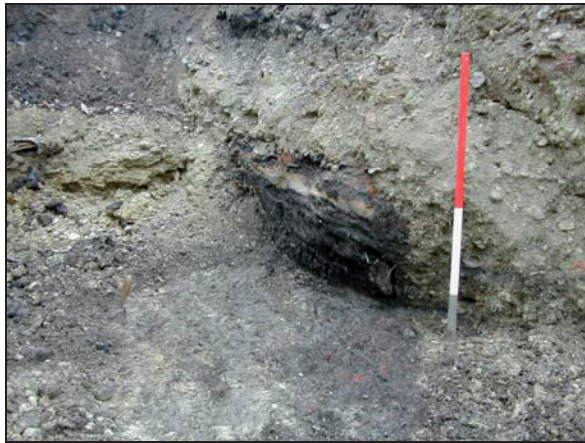


Plate 9: Pit 1 and foreground cleaned up



Plate 10: Detail of cess-like material

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Despite the very restrictive nature of the observations contained within this report the presence of two, albeit undated pits, is of interest. Although, the pits cannot be closely dated it is likely that they pre-date the formation of the open area of Kingsbury Square. The amount small fragments of burnt clay in the fill of the pits hints at a possible prehistoric date. The absence of finds, apart from small animal bones, might also support this inference, though the author was not present when the water channel was being excavated so was not able to inspect the spoil. The presence of so many small layers of ash in the pits supports the suggestion that the pits were being used for the deposition of human waste.
- 5.2 The discovery of the pits does highlight the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits at a relatively shallow depth. Much of the 0.6m overburden consists of comparatively modern material and suggests that present ground levels are not that different from the medieval period. In consequence of this, archaeological deposits are possibly more exposed to superficial, though episodic damage.
- 5.3 The opportunity to study the use of Aylesbury's open spaces in the past is comparatively rare. In addition, given that they are some of the town's oldest topographic features the presence of archaeology suggests that they have a high potential to reveal significant information on the urban development of the town. However, the presence of the two pits suggests that an opportunity to obtain meaningful data has been lost, though hopefully, not irretrievably.
- 5.4 Though these observations can be ascribed a high degree of confidence, much of the remaining area was not observed due to factors beyond the author's control.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Martin Dalby who, on behalf of *Aylesbury Vale District Council* commissioned this project. Also thanks to David Radford and Julia Wise of *Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service* for their advice and to the staff of the Buckinghamshire Record Office. Thanks are also due to Dennis O'Sullivan, the site agent, for his co-operation during site visits. Finally, my thanks to my colleague, bob Zeepvat for editing this report.

7. Archive

7.1 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/slides
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum.

8. Bibliography

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- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).



A.S.C. LTD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project Name: <i>Kingsbury</i>		Project Code: <i>567 AYK</i>		Date of visit: <i>27/4/04</i>	
Location: <i>Aylesbury</i>					
Client/Developer: <i>Aylesbury Vale District Council</i>					
Architect:					
Site Manager/Farmer: <i>James O'Sullivan</i>			Phone: <i>07734-894580</i>		
Development Type:					
Foundations	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Other:
Site conditions (weather, ground condition, etc) <i>Dull but dry.</i>					
Observations made: (e.g. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil descriptions, archaeological features)					
<p><i>Observed the main post/water foundation which was approximately WNW - ESE (slightly curved). It measured 8m by about 2.5m wide and was no more than 1.6m deep.</i></p> <p><i>The intact chalky limestone was seen in places at 9 x 20" cutting down and two pits on the South Side of the post. They were similar in character being 1.3m and 0.9m wide respectively and about 1m below modern ground level and of unknown depth.</i></p> <p><i>Both were filled with a series of smooth ash like layers that had the consistency of peat. Some were reddish pink, grey and some dark in the latter most one [1] at least 23 bones were seen. No finds were recovered. Reddish fired clay was noted on trenching in front of the Series of [1] a dark grey (2.5/4) with much streaks of olive brown (2.5/4/3) was seen. Smooth & Silty but slightly fibrous - almost certainly human waste 'shit'. Pit extends 1.1m into post area. Fragments of small animal bone noted. See over for sketch.</i></p> <p><i>Banks drain - arched and bonded with mortar (handmade 225 x 110 x 56 mm) in fragment.</i></p>					
Comments:					
<i>Archaeology seen in section in form of pits - 'core' but unexcavated.</i>					
Completed by: <i>JMH</i>					

For sketch plan, use reverse

ASACFM26, revised 1999

