

## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**METAL DETECTOR SURVEY AND WATCHING BRIEF:  
JOHN RANKIN INFANT  
& NURSERY SCHOOL  
NEWBURY  
BERKSHIRE**

NGR: SU 4459 1657

*on behalf of Bryden Wood Ltd*



Calli Rouse BA PIFA & Martin Cuthbert BA PIFA

March 2011

ASC: 1395/NJR/2



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## Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	NJR	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	1395
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	Archaeol2-95148	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	NEBYM:2011.6
<i>County:</i>	Berkshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Newbury		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Newbury		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SU 4459 1657		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	660sq m		
<i>Present use:</i>	School grounds		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of a single storey building		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	10/01866/FUL		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	West Berkshire District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	February-March 2011		
<i>Client:</i>	Bryden Wood Ltd 99 Charterhouse Street London EC1M 6HR		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Adam Jordan		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Martin Cuthbert	<i>Date:</i>	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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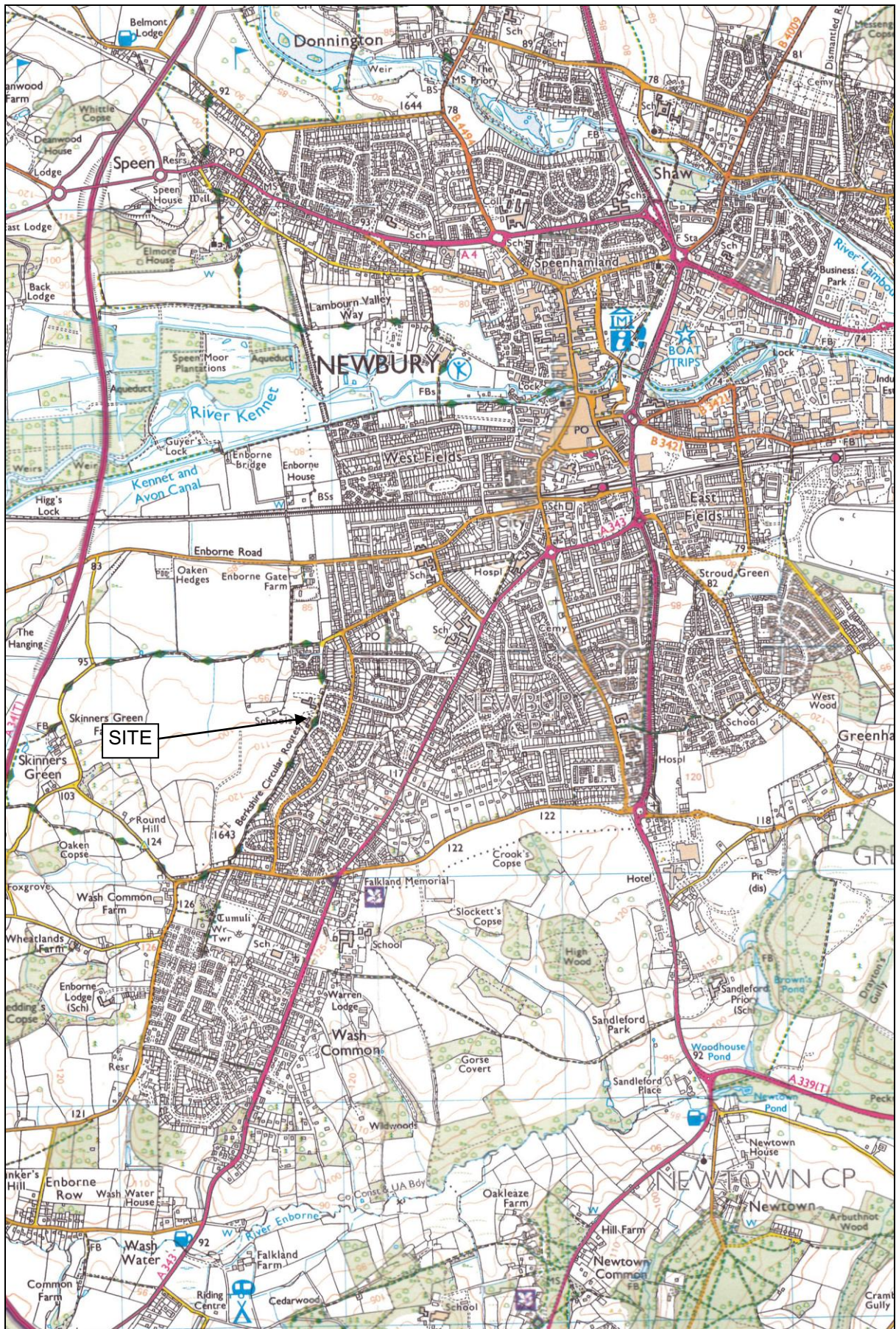


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In February and March 2011 Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd carried out a programme of archaeological works at John Rankin Infant & Nursery School, Newbury, Berkshire for a new school building. A metal detector survey was carried out across the footprint of the new building but no finds of archaeological significance were discovered. This was followed by a programme of monitoring during ground reduction and the excavation of foundation pads holes. A feature, most likely a pond, was seen within a number of pads at the south and west of the site, no archaeological finds were recovered from the up-cast deposits. A post-medieval land drain was sealed by the pond fills, suggesting it is post medieval in date. No other archaeological features or finds were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site.*

## 1. Introduction

1.1 In February 2011 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at John Rankin Infant & Nursery School, Newbury, Berkshire. The project was commissioned by *Bryden Wood Ltd*, and was carried out following discussions with the West Berkshire Archaeological Officer, archaeological advisor (AA) to the local planning authority (LPA), *West Berkshire District Council*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2011).

### 1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Statement 5* (PPS5), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. The relevant planning application reference is 10/01866/FUL.

### 1.3 *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 Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists and is also accredited ISO 9001, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

### 1.4 *The Site*

#### 1.4.1 *Location & Description*

The development site is located within the parish and town of Newbury, to the southwest of the centre of the town, at NGR SU 4459 1657 (Fig. 1)

The site comprised a roughly rectangular area of ground, located between the John Rankin Infant School and the John Rankin Infant and Nursery School. The area to the east comprises residential development, and to the west by school playing fields (Fig. 2).

#### 1.4.2 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area are Unsurveyed, but are likely to belong to the Sonning 2 Association, which are characterised as *well drained flinty coarse loamy and gravelly soils. Associated with slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils, and coarse loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging* over plateau and river terrace drift (Soil Survey 1983, 581c). The underlying geology comprises Quaternary Thatcham Gravel (BGS, Sheet 267). The site lies at an elevation of c.90m.

#### 1.4.3 *Proposed Development*

The proposed development comprised the construction of a new single storey hub and nursery building (Fig. 3).

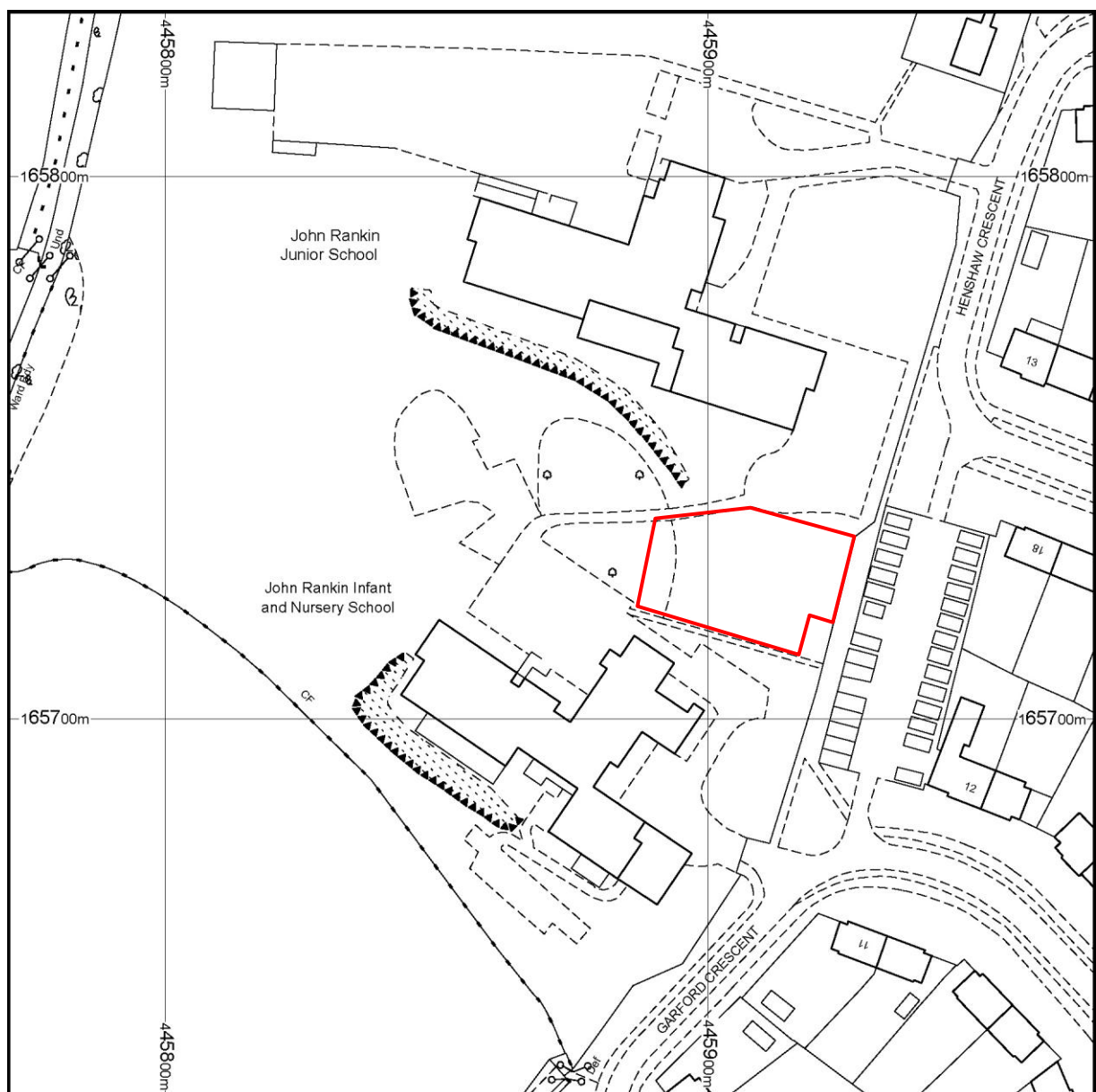


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

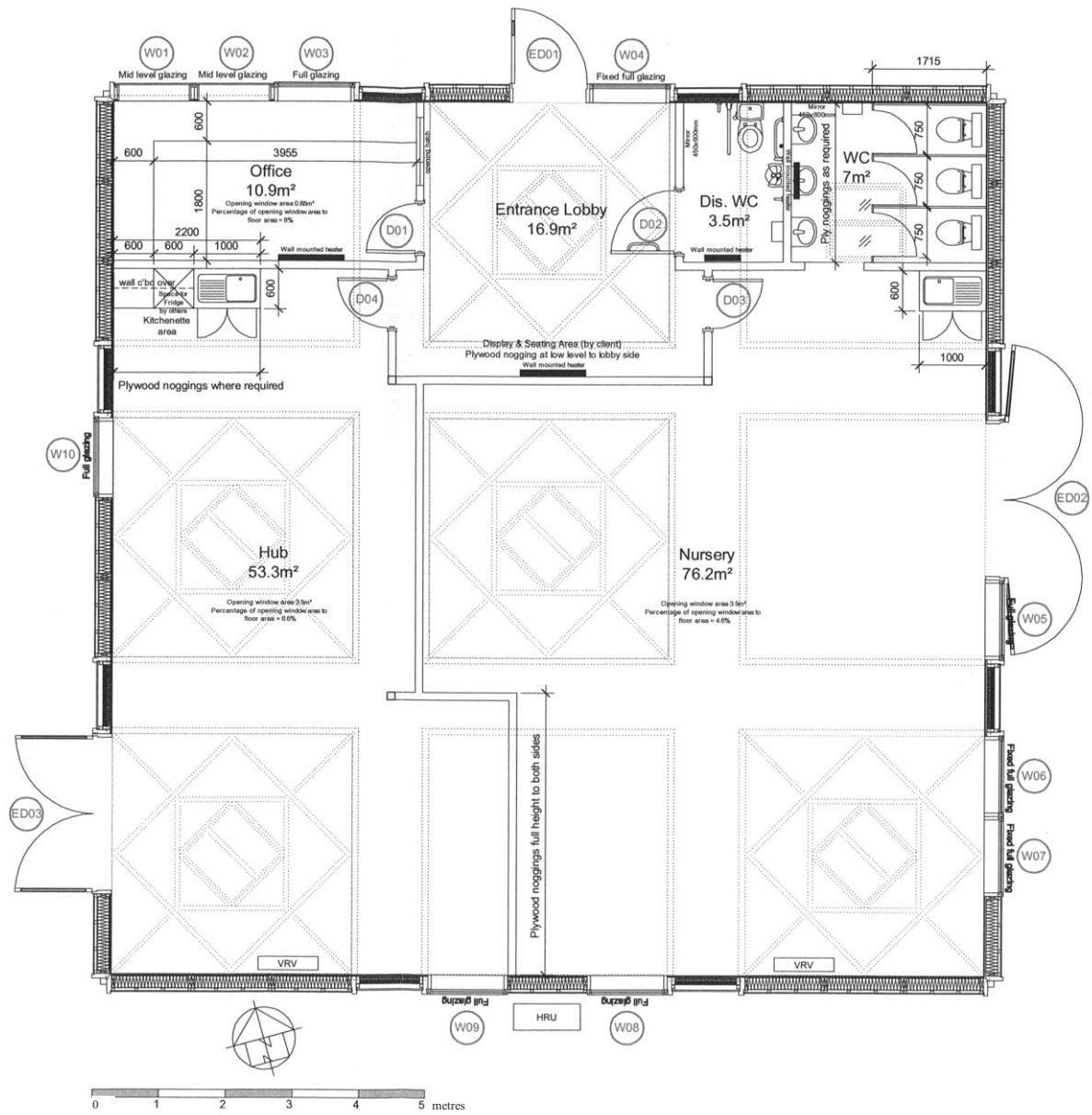


Figure 3: Proposed development (scale as shown)

## 2. Aims & Methods

### 2.1 *Aims*

As described in the project design (Section 3.1), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To recover archaeologically significant metal objects from the subsoil, paying particular attention to artefacts related to the Civil War
- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to have an impact upon archaeological deposits.
- To secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme.
- To secure the analysis, conservation and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site.
- To provide an adequately detailed project report that will place the findings of the monitoring and recording of the development programme in their local and regional context, having made reference to the relevant regional research agendas, and through cartographic, documentary and other research.

### 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), 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*.

### 2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the project design (Section 3.3), which required:

- Metal detector survey of the development site
- Soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision
- A toothless ditching blade shall be attached and used in any areas of machine excavation;
- Inspection of sub-soil deposits for archaeological features;
- The rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits including environmental;
- Sub-soil stripping under archaeological supervision;
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and the subsequent recording/investigation of any exposed archaeological deposits including environmental;
- Examination of spoil-heaps for archaeological material;
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving, and publication.

### 2.4 *Constraints*

No constraints were identified during the metal detector survey or during the watching brief stages.



### 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 readily available sources.

#### 3.2 **Prehistoric** (before 600BC-AD43)

Evidence for human activity in the Newbury area dating to the Palaeolithic period exists in the form of a number of flint artefacts, as would be expected in a river valley, but there is no evidence for settlement during this period. In contrast, there is significant evidence for Mesolithic activity c.0.75km to the north of the site, and the presence of Mesolithic hunters in the Kennet valley is well established (OA 2005, 8). After this activity in the Newbury area seems to decrease, with the only significant later prehistoric site being the Iron Age farming settlement at Enborne Gate Farm, c.1km to the west of the development site (*ibid*).

#### 3.3 **Roman** (AD43-c.450)

There does not seem to have been a settlement at Newbury during the Roman period, although a number of finds dating to this period have been found in the historic core of the town, mainly in the form of single coins or pieces of pottery. This may be due to the concentration of archaeological investigation in the centre of the town.

#### 3.4 **Saxon - Medieval** (c.450-1500)

Newbury is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although there is a record of a manor in the area known as *Ulvritone*. Its precise location has never been confirmed (Morris 1976). The settlement at Newbury was established by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and grew in significance in the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century when the castle there was besieged by King Stephen.

The development site is located c.0.75km to the southwest of the core of the medieval settlement.

#### 3.5 **Post-Medieval** (1500-1900)

There is little evidence for urban expansion at Newbury during the early post medieval period, but by the 16<sup>th</sup> century it had developed into a prosperous settlement, with its economy based largely on the wool trade (OA 2005, 13).

Newbury was a significant location during the Civil War. The First Battle of Newbury took place in 1643, and the development site is located within the battlefield (Bryden Wood, 2010). The battle took place between the main Parliamentary field army, and the main Royalist army. It was here that the Earl of Essex achieved his only major military success, which ultimately marked the turning point of the whole war. The exact battlefield extents are unknown, but it is thought that the northern and eastern parts have now been built over ([battlefieldstrusts.com](http://battlefieldstrusts.com); Bryden Wood 2010).

The town began to expand again towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it became a regular overnight stop on the journey between London and Bath, which was gaining popularity as a health resort (OA 2005). In 1841 the railway line from London reached Newbury, c0.6km to the north of the development site. This was the catalyst for the expansion of the town to the south.

### 3.7 **Modern** (1900-present)

During the modern period the town has continued to develop to the north and south, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map, published in 1904, shows that a school building had been constructed on the site.

## 4. Results

4.1 The development covers an area of *c.*660sq m, and replaces part of the current school grounds (Fig. 2). In addition to the overall site ground reduction, foundation pads were also excavated across the footprint of the new building.

### 4.2 *Metal detector survey*

The development area was subject to a metal detector survey prior to any groundworks. A variety of modern debris was recovered from the turf and topsoil but nothing of archaeological significance was discovered.

### 4.3 *Excavated areas* (Fig 4, Plates 1-6)

4.3.1 The development area is located on a steep incline so the site was levelled prior to construction. Approximately 1m of ground reduction took place at the south of the development area whilst no ground reduction was necessary at the north. The area was covered with mid brown silty clay mixed with yellow clay with brick and other modern debris, identified as a layer of modern made ground. A layer of dark brown silty clay loam, probably the original buried topsoil (Plate 1) was exposed in the south-east corner of the site at a depth of *c.*0.8m. This was subsequently metal detected but no artefacts were recovered. The rest of the ground reduction did not breach the layer of modern made ground.

4.3.2 Holes for 16 foundation pads were excavated across the development site. They were 0.8m - 1.6m wide, 1m - 1.8m in length, and 0.8m deep. Pads at the north of the site were located outside the reduced area. The stratigraphy consisted of modern turf, over the original buried topsoil layer which in turn covered the natural orange clay (Plate 2). Pads to the east revealed a similar stratigraphy, the original topsoil being covered by modern made ground (Plate 3).

4.3.3 The stratigraphy revealed by excavations for the pads to the south and west consisted of modern made ground over two distinct organic cess layers. The upper deposit consisted of 0.2m of mid brown soft-friable organic silty clay over 0.2m of blue-grey firm organic silty clay, which in turn covered the natural orange clay (Plate 4). A possible cut for this cess filled feature was seen in the south-west corner pad hole (Plate 5). A 19<sup>th</sup> century drain was seen within one of the southern pad holes and it was potentially sealed by the upper cess layer (Plate 6). All the upcast deposits were visually scanned and thoroughly metal detected. No archaeological finds were discovered during any stage of work.

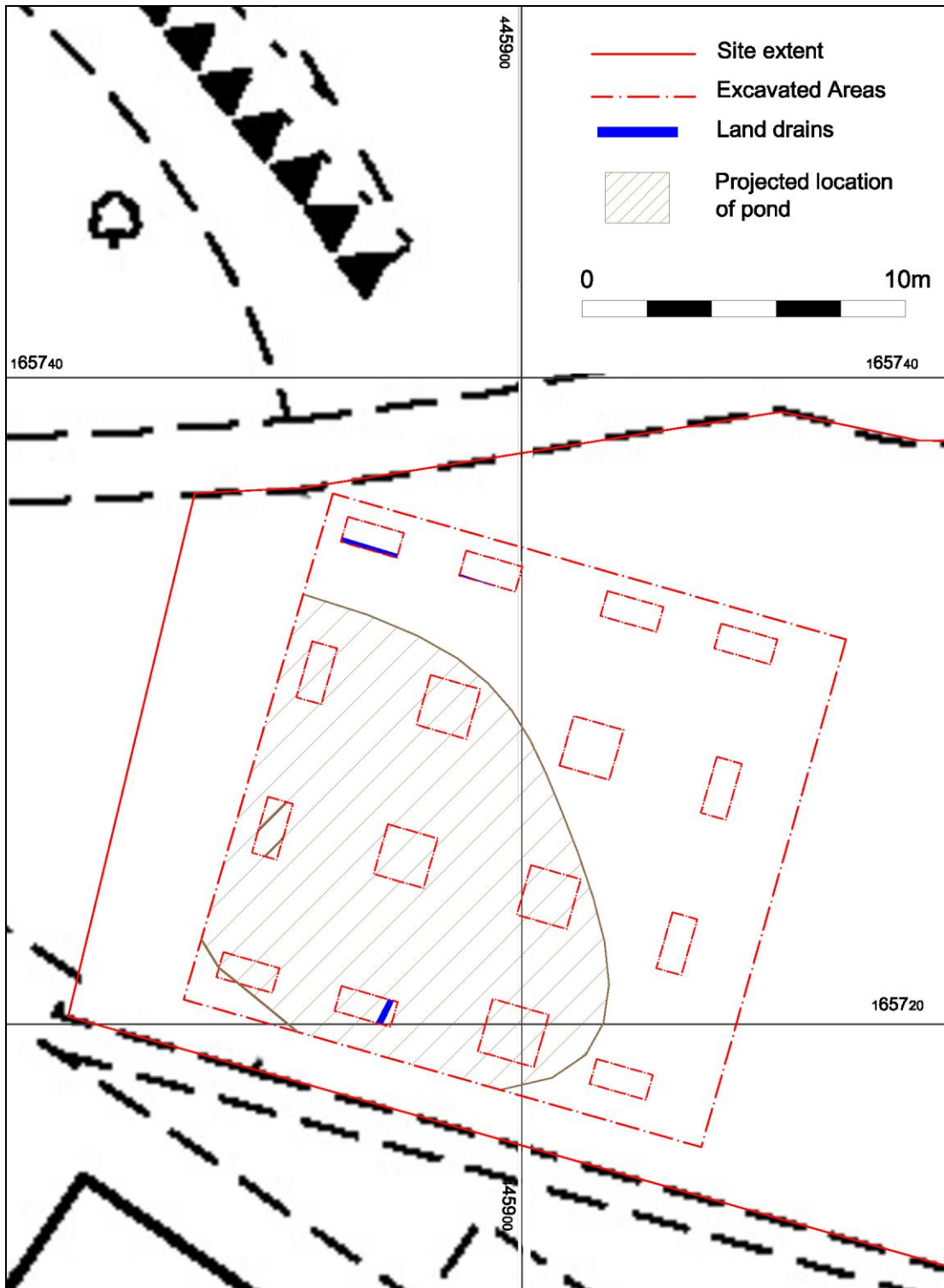


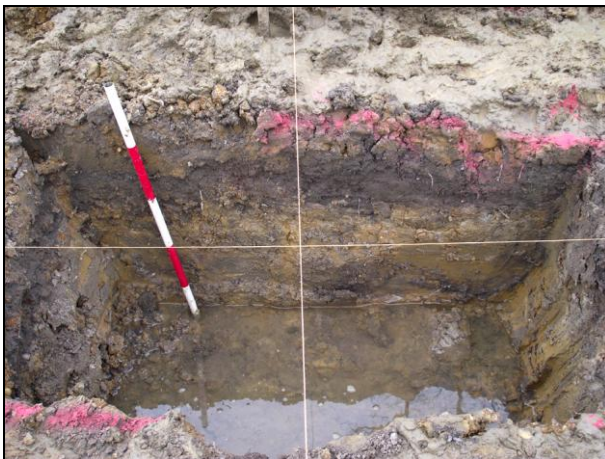
Figure 4: Excavated areas (scale 1:200)



**Plate 1:** Site reduction highlighting buried topsoil layer, 1x2m scale



**Plate 2:** Typical pad hole located at the north of site, 1m scale



**Plate 3:** Typical pad hole located at the east of site, 1m scale



**Plate 4:** Cess layers within western pad hole, 1m scale



**Plate 5:** Possible cut of cess filled feature within south-west pad hole, 1m scale



**Plate 6:** Cess layers covering land drain? 1m scale

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The metal detector survey carried out prior to excavation was unsuccessful due to the large build up of modern made ground
- 5.2 The organic cess fills of the feature discovered within excavations for the foundation pads suggest it is a pond or cess pit. A possible cut for this feature was seen only within the south-western corner pad. The full extent of the feature is unknown although a projected location can be established by the pads that do and do not contain the cess layers (Fig 4).The cess layers appear to cover a post-medieval field drain suggesting that the feature is post-medieval in date.
- 5.3 No further archaeological features were observed in the excavated areas. While the existence of individual, isolated archaeological features, away from excavated areas cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of archaeological features or artefacts are present on the site. It is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains.
- 5.4 **Confidence rating**  
On-site conditions for the archaeological works were good and the work took place in dry weather. Good co-operation was received from the contractors and a high degree of confidence is attached to the results of the archaeological works.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by *Bryden Wood Ltd*. The writer is grateful to Adam Jordan for his assistance. The project was monitored by Duncan Coe, West Berkshire Archaeological Officer on behalf of the local planning authority. Thanks are also due to the on site contractors.

The project was managed for ASC by David Fell BA MA MIFA. Fieldwork was carried out by Martin Cuthbert BA PIFA, David Fell & Calli Rouse BA PIFA. The report was prepared by Martin Cuthbert & Calli Rouse and 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 Monitoring Sheets
6. Site record drawings
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum.

## 8. References

### *Standards & Specifications*


- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2011 *Project Design for Metal Detector Survey and Watching Brief: John Rankin Infant & Nursery School, Newbury, West Berkshire* ASC Ref: 1392/NJR/2

### *Secondary Sources*

- Battlefieldstrusts.com
- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Bryden Wood 2010 *EcoCanopy – John Rankin Hub/Nursery Building Archaeological Statement* Bryden Wood 27/09/2010
- Morris J, 1976 *The Domesday Book*. Berkshire section. Phillimore
- Oxford Archaeology 2005 *Newbury Historic Character Survey Assessment Report* OA/5354
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).



# Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

 <b>A.S.C. LTD</b>		<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD</b>				
Project: John Rankin School NEWBURY		Project No/Code: 1395 1 NJR		Sheet: of		
Client/Developer		Date of visit: 21/2/11				
Contact:			Phone:			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 6.30 AM		Finish: 10.30 AM			
Completed by: CR						
<b>Development Type:</b>						
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
<b>Site &amp; weather conditions:</b> WET						
<b>Observations:</b> ARRIVED ON SITE AT 8AM. NO WORKERS. FOUNDATIONS LAID OUT, NO EXCAVATION HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT						
<b>Comments:</b>						



A.S.C. LTD

WATCHING BRIEF RECORD

Project: JOHN RANKIN SCHOOL		Project No/Code: 1395 / NJR	Sheet: of
NEWBURY		Date of visit: 22 Feb 2011	
Client/Developer			
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 9:30 am	Finish: 4:00 pm	
Completed by: DAVID FELL			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify): Ground reduction
Site & weather conditions: Drizzle. Wet and site very muddy.			
Observations: Arrived on site and ground reduction had just commenced. Observed the removal of approx 8 sq m of soil from the south west corner of the building footprint. The material comprised compacted layer of bright orange/yellow clay. Occasional fragments of obviously modern brick & tile fragments were present and the material appears to be modern. It may have been laid down when the school was built during the 1950s/60s(?) An organic rich brown topsoil layer was present at a depth of c.1m. This was left in-situ as it was at the base of the level required for the new building. Work ceased at 3pm due to the site being too wet.			
Comments: Further visit required to monitor remainder of strip and excavation of footings.			

For sketch plan, use separate sheet

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Project: John Rankin School, Newbury.		Project No/Code: 1395 NJR	Sheet: of
Client/Developer		Date of visit: 23/2/11	
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 9:30am	Finish: 2:30	
Completed by: M.C			
<b>Development Type:</b>			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
<b>Site &amp; weather conditions:</b> very wet			
<b>Observations:</b> Continuation of initial ground reduction c.- 1m-1.5m of made ground onto original topsoil level. 1m - E end 1.5m - W end. metal detected spoil heaps and original topsoil when revealed. no archaeological artefacts recovered.  original topsoil rarely breached. email to be sent to Duncan Coe explaining situation. Further work pending.			
<b>Comments:</b> Further work pending dependant on response from AA-Duncan Coe. excavation of footing pads to take place next week c.- 28th Feb. Monitoring of these required. Ring Friday 25/2/11 to see when digging of pads happens.			

Project: <b>John Rankin</b>		Project No/Code: <b>1395 1NJR</b>		Sheet: <b>of</b>		
		Date of visit: <b>28/2/11</b>				
Client/Developer						
Contact:			Phone:			
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: <b>9:30</b>		Finish: <b>5:00 pm</b>		
Completed by: <b>M.C</b>						
<b>Development Type:</b>						
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <b>wet</b>						
Observations: <p>whole area has now had initial ground reduction.  only the southern side reaches the original topsoil level, revealed earlier in the project.  The whole area was metal detected <del>but</del>  The area, apart from the southern side, is still into made ground  arrived on site at 11:00am excavation of the pads didn't take place until 14:30  PAD (2) = 100mm - of made ground  200mm - of dark brown grey smelly organic water-born material, partly silty clay, &amp; soft.  400mm - of blue-grey-organic smelly silty clay, firm  100mm - of orange-grey blue clay, firm, poss natural.  (See sketch for pad (2)) P.T.O.  Pad (2) = 0.8m wide X 1.6m long X 0.75m deep</p>						
Comments:						

Project: John Rankin School, Newbury		Project No/Code: 1395 NJR	Sheet: of
		Date of visit: 3/3/11	
Client/Developer			
Contact:		Phone:	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 09:00	Finish:	
Completed by: M.C			
<b>Development Type:</b>			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry, wet underfoot			
Observations: cess layers in pads = 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 9, 5, 1. original topsoil onto natural = 13, 14, 15, 11. Tf 11 = example • 300mm made ground see below for Tf 4, 8, 12+ 16 • 300mm dark brown-grey compacted silty clay with roots (original topsoil). • natural orange, red mottling from sticky clay.  Pipe seen running E-W in Tf 5 - large 200mm diameter red clay land drain. cess - top dark brown layer covers land drain suggesting cess is later, cuts primary blue cess. Pipe N-W in Tf 4+8 cutting made ground. Tf 4, 8 + 12 <sup>16</sup> = 200mm new topsoil over <sup>200mm old topsoil</sup> onto natural further down slope so install ground reduction didn't take place.			
Comments:			

## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: John Rankin Infant and Nursery School				SITE NO/CODE: 1395/NJR
Shot	Film/Neg	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	1/20	✓	✓	General site shot during ground reduction
2	1/19	✓	✓	Buried topsoil layer, 1x2m scale
3	1/18	✓	✓	Cess layers in southern pad hole 1x1m scale
4	1/17	✓	✓	Cess layers covering land drain within southern pad hole, looking south, 1x1m
5	1/16	✓	✓	Possible cut of cess filled feature within south-west pad hole, 1m scale
6	1/15	✓	✓	Pad hole to the north, looking north, 1m scale
7	1/14	✓	✓	Pad hole to the east, looking east 1m scale
8			✓	General site shot
9			✓	General site shot
10			✓	General site shot
11			✓	General site shot
12			✓	General site shot during ground reduction
13			✓	Buried topsoil layer, 1x2m scale
14			✓	Completed site reduction
15			✓	Completed site reduction
16			✓	Completed site reduction
17			✓	Cess layers in western pad hole, 2x1m scale
18			✓	Possible cut of cess filled feature within south-west pad hole, 1m scale
19			✓	Pad hole to the east, looking east 1m scale

## Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	John Rankin School, Newbury	OASIS reference:	Archaeol2-95148
Short Description:	In February and March 2011 Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd carried out a programme of archaeological works at John Rankin Infant & Nursery School, Newbury, Berkshire for a new school building. A metal detector survey was carried out across the footprint of the new building but no finds of archaeological significance were discovered. This was followed by a programme of monitoring during ground reduction and the excavation of foundation pads holes. A feature, most likely a pond, was seen within a number of pads at the south and west of the site, no archaeological finds were recovered from the up-cast deposits. A post-medieval land drain was sealed by the pond fills, suggesting it is post medieval in date. No other archaeological features or finds were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site.		
Project Type:	Metal detector survey, Watching brief		
Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None	Site status: (eg. none, SAM, listed)	None
Current land use:	School grounds	Future work: (yes/no/unknown)	Unknown
Monument type:	None	Monument period:	None
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	West Berkshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SU 4459 1657
Site address: (+ postcode if known)	John Rankin Infant & Nursery School, Newbury, West Berkshire,		
Study area: (sq. m. / ha)	660 sq m	Height OD: (metres)	c.90m OD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	N/a	Project design originator:	ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	David Fell, BA MA MIFA	Director/Supervisor:	Martin Cuthbert BA PIFA
Sponsor / funding body:	Bryden Wood Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	23-02-2011	End date:	03-03-2011
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	West Berkshire Museum	none	
Paper:		Site records, report, photographs	
Digital:		CD-ROM with copies of all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Watching Brief: John Rankin Infant and Nursery School		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1295/NJR/2		
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA PIFA & Calli Rouse BA PIFA		
Page nos	22	Date:	09-03-2011