

**Archaeological Monitoring Report:  
Land to the East of Iver, South Bucks, Buckinghamshire**

Site code: CROM 16  
NGR: TQ 04594 80808 - TQ 04563 79067  
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Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd  
47, Manor Road  
Saxilby  
Lincoln  
LN1 2HX

Tel. (01522) 703800  
e-mail [info@pre-construct.co.uk](mailto:info@pre-construct.co.uk)

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## **Summary**

*Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during the groundworks for an underground cable route on land between Thorney and Huntsmoor Park, along the eastern side of the parish of Iver, South Bucks, Buckinghamshire. Four reception pits (for subterranean directional drilling) and four lengths of open trenching were monitored across the c. 1.7km length of new underground cabling.*

*The Buckingham Historic Environment Record (HER) records that the route of the new cabling is located close to the River Colne and a number of smaller tributaries of the River Thames. This area is believed to have been a focus for settlement from the prehistoric period onwards, although currently evidence for this come principally from isolated finds mostly recovered from historic gravel quarrying within the local area.*

*The southern end of the cable route is located close to Thorney Island which is historically recorded as the location of a 9<sup>th</sup> century siege and battle between Anglo-Saxon and Danish forces. The route also passes close to the Grade II Listed stable range at Thorney Farm, and passes under part of the Grand Union Canal and the Great Western Railway which has its own designated Archaeological Notification Area.*

*The archaeological monitoring identified no significant archaeological remains and recovered no artefacts. Many of the monitored areas were characterised by significant deposits of made ground and re-deposited material of the modern era.*



Figure 1: Site location plan at scale 1:10,000. The area of the cable route is marked in red. Monitored Excavations shown in green.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd, were commissioned by ADAS UK Ltd. to undertake archaeological monitoring and recording during the groundworks associated with the installation of new electricity cables, which will replace existing overhead cables, on land to the east of Iver, South Bucks, Buckinghamshire.

Four separate reception pits (for subterranean directional drilling) and four lengths of open trenching were monitored across the c.1.7km length of this project.

The new cable route was located in the vicinity of known heritage assets (see **5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background** below) and therefore archaeological monitoring was undertaken to identify and record any archaeological remains that may have been encountered.

The archaeological monitoring and recording at the site was completed according to a Written Scheme of Investigation (Lane, 2016), and followed current best practice and appropriate national guidance, which at the time comprised:

- NPPF, National Planning Policy Framework, 2012;
- ClfA Code of Conduct (2014 as revised);
- ClfA Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (2014);
- Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE v1.1, 2009, English Heritage).

## 2.0 Site Location and Description (Fig. 1)

The parish of Iver is located at the extreme southeast of the county of Buckinghamshire, within the South Bucks District and includes the separated districts of Iver Village, Iver Heath and Richings Park, all located to the west of the M25 motorway which runs north-south through the parish. The cable route, however, is located to the east of the M25 and west of the River Colne which defines the eastern edge of the parish along the northern part of the cable route.

The southern end of the cable route is located close to the M25 at Mercers Farm and extend approximately due north by a circuitous route, passing under Thorney Mill Road, through the golf course at Thorney Farm and underneath the embanked railway line. The land to the north of the golf course in this area has been extensively quarried for gravel and is now characterised by the flooded former quarry pits, flanking the Colne Brook which flows from south to north and joins the River Colne to the north.

The northern part of the cable route flanks the former quarry pits to the east, which are mostly now fringed by scrub vegetation, and the extensive Iver North Water Treatment Works to the west. It then passes underneath the canal and re-joins the existing above ground cabling within the former quarries south of Huntsmoor Park.

The total length of underground cabling is c. 1.7km and extends from NGR TQ 04563 79067 to TQ 04594 80808. A length of open trenching was monitored at the southern end of the new cable route, south of Thorney Mill Road. Four receiving pits were monitored close to the range of Listed buildings on, and adjacent to, the golf course and three sections of open trenching were monitored east of the Iver North Water Treatment Works along the northern part of the cable route.

### **3.0 Topography and Geology**

The cable route is located within the broad, shallow Colne Valley which is orientated on a north-south alignment and is characterised by numerous small meandering streams formerly surrounded by widespread agricultural land. Although the area is now extensively developed with a historic canal and railway crossing the route and the M25 flanking the route to the west. Similarly, much of the area to the east, around the River Colne, is now covered by artificial lakes the by-product of sand and gravel extraction throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The cable route follows the valley floor between the 25m and 30m OD contours.

Solid geology in this area is recorded as consisting of clays, silts and sands of the London Clay Formation which is overlain by a drift geology of sands and gravels of the Shepperton Gravel Member with clay, silt, sand and gravel alluvial deposits. (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

### **4.0 Planning Background**

The project comes under the Permitted Works and does therefore not require planning permission although the monitoring scheme fulfils obligations to the historic environment as described in Section 38 and Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. The current scheme will replace existing overhead cables with below ground ones following a similar route.

### **5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The earliest evidence for human activity within the immediate area consists of worked flint dated to the Lower to Middle Palaeolithic recovered from gravel workings at Reed's Pit northwest of the cable route. A single polished stone axe, dated to the Neolithic has also been recovered from the Colne Brook nearby and close to the northern end of the cable route.

Evidence of actual occupation consisting of artefacts, deposits and features have been identified at Thorney Farm Gravel Pit west of the southern part of the cable route. This has been dated to the Iron Age and Roman periods and indicates a settled and farmed landscape by this time.

Thorney Island, located to the south of the cable route is historically recorded at the site where Danish forces were besieged by Anglo-Saxon forces during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Domesday survey of the late 11<sup>th</sup> century records the presence of a mill at Thorney and fisheries belonging to the settlement at Iver.

Along the cable route there are three significant historic site, all still in use, these include the Grade II Listed stable range at Thorney Farm, now part of the golf club. The Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal which crosses the cable route near its northern limit and the Great Western Railway – Maidenhead to Paddington, which crosses through the middle of the cable route.

Numerous 20<sup>th</sup> century gravel pits and the location of a Second World War anti-aircraft battery at Iver Brickyards are also located near to the cable route.

### **6.0 Methodology**

The archaeological monitoring too place in accordance with the WSI prepared by PCAS (Lane, 2016).

The archaeological monitoring comprised the monitoring of excavation of a length of open trenching at the southern end of the cable route, four receiving pits located around the Listed stable range within the golf course and three areas of trenching between the railway and canal east of the Iver North Water Treatment Works.

Excavations were undertaken using a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth 0.75m bucket. The open trenching width was generally c. 0.75m wide and all excavations were c. 1.7m deep. The size of the individual receiving pits and the length of open trenches varied throughout.

All deposits observed were recorded on standard PCAS context recording sheets, and the progress of the groundworks noted on standard PCAS site diary sheets. Sample sections were recorded at a scale of 1:20. A digital photographic record was maintained throughout and a selection of these images are reproduced in this report.

The monitoring took place intermittently between 18/07/16 and 29/7/16 and comprised five separate site visits. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken by L. Brocklehurst, M. Rowe and S. Savage.

## 7.0 Results (Fig. 2-5)

### *Excavation 1 – open trenching south of Thorney Mill Road (TQ 04563 79330 - TQ 04610 79370)*

Approximately 90m of open trenching was monitored at the southern end of the cable route. The trenching had a maximum depth of c. 1.8m and was excavated through five distinct layers (100-104) all five were observed to contain modern waste and demolition material and as such this area appears to consist of entirely modern made ground to a depth of over 1.8m. No archaeological features or deposit were observed and no natural geological deposits were encountered at this location.

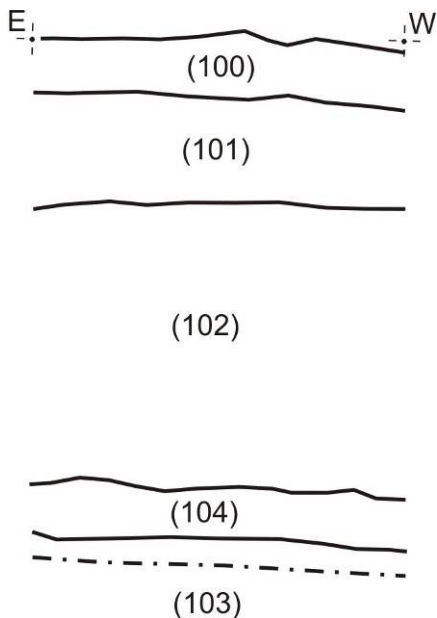


Figure 2 / Plate 1: Excavation 1 open trenching south of Thorney Lane representative section (1:20) and corresponding plate. Approximate location TQ 04601 79319.

**Excavation 2 – receiving pit on golf course south of the Listed buildings (TQ 04594 79688 - TQ 04593 79686)**

There was no access to this pit due to safety considerations. The excavation of a receiving pit at this location identified the natural mid orange clay (202) at c. 0.45m below the existing ground level. This was sealed by a distinct subsoil (201), described as mid grey clay, which had a depth of c. 0.15m which in turn was sealed by the topsoil (200) which was c. 0.3m thick and recorded as dark brown humic soil. A modern backfilled pit [204] was also observed, but as it had modern plastic material within its backfill (203) it was not further recorded. No archaeological features or deposit were observed.



Plate 2&3: Looking north towards Excavation 2, and below, modern pit in section.





**Excavation 3 – receiving pit on golf course north of the Listed buildings (TQ 04647 79811 - TQ 04640 79813)**

There was no access to this pit due to safety considerations, and much of the pit was shored immediately after excavation. Exactly the same sequence of topsoil (206) over subsoil (207) over natural clay (208) was also recorded at this location as for Excavation 2, although additionally the topsoil here was sealed by a layer of hardstanding (205). No archaeological features or deposit were observed.



**Excavation 4 – receiving pit on golf course north of Excavation 3 (TQ 04663 79818)**

The natural clay (211) was encountered at c. 0.7m below the existing ground level, sealed by c. 0.4m of subsoil (210) which in turn was sealed by c. 0.3m of modern hard standing (209). No archaeological features or deposit were observed.

**Excavation 5 – receiving pit on golf course north of Excavation 4 (TQ 04674 79852)**

There was no access to this pit due to safety considerations. The natural clay was only observed at one end of the pit where it had been truncated by a modern feature/deposit (212) which contained modern demolition material and was not further recorded. No archaeological features or deposit were observed.



Plate 5: Modern demolition material in Excavation 5

**Excavations 6 & 7 – open trenching north of railway (Trench 6: TQ 04613 80174 - TQ 04619 80154, Trench 7: TQ 04622 80169 - TQ 04628 80150)**

Two lengths of open trenching were monitored at this location. Trench 6 was c. 20m long and Trench 7 was c. 15m long. These two trenches were only c. 5m apart and ran parallel with each other. The maximum depth of both trenches was 1.6m.

However, despite their relative proximity to each other they revealed a different sequence of deposits.

Plate 6: Area of Excavation 6 & 7.  
Machining of Excavation 6  
underway.



The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 6 was a mottled dark grey/mid orange-red brown slightly sandy silt (603) which was over 0.1m thick and extended below the limit of excavation. This was sealed by c. 0.25m of mid red-brown slightly sandy fine silt (602), which in turn was sealed by c. 0.45m of a similar sediment which containing frequent small river gravels (601). These three deposits appear to be consistent with natural riverine deposits. They were in turn sealed by c. 0.8m of modern dumped material (600) which included some demolition material and appeared to be part of an extensive surface deposit which covered much of cable route at this location.

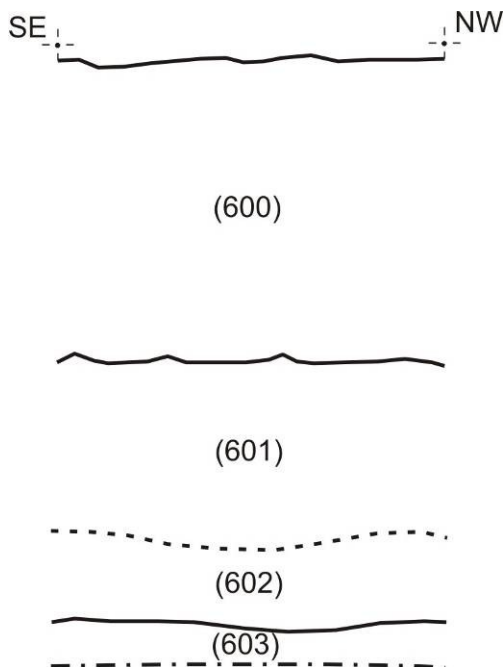
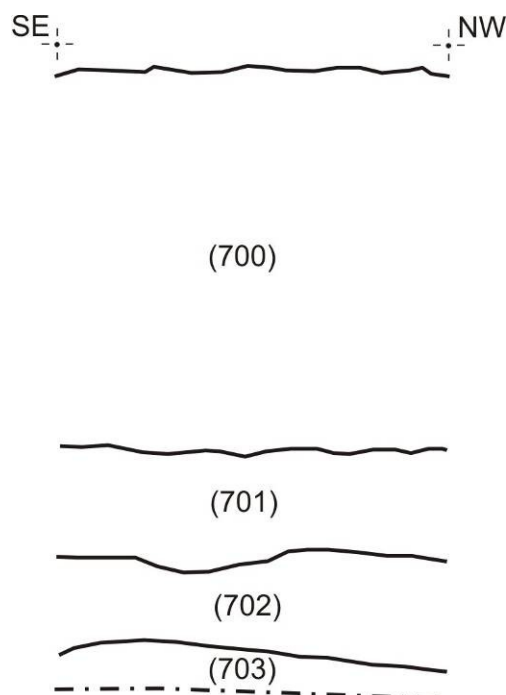


Figure 3 / Plate 7: Representative section from Excavation 6 (1:20) and corresponding plate. Approximate location TQ 04617 80157.

The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 7 was a mid-brown fine silt-clay with common small river gravels (703). This was over 0.1m thick and extended below the limit of excavation. It was sealed by c. 0.25m of mid orange-brown sand and gravel (702), which in turn was sealed by c. 0.3m of mid-brown fine silt-clay with frequent small river gravels (701). As with adjacent Trench 6 these apparent riverine deposits were sealed by c. 1m of modern dumped material and hard standing (700).

The lower deposit encountered in these two trenches appeared to be entirely natural water lain deposits despite their diversity over a relatively short distance, which may have been the product of a meandering river system which eroded and re-deposited material with some frequency.



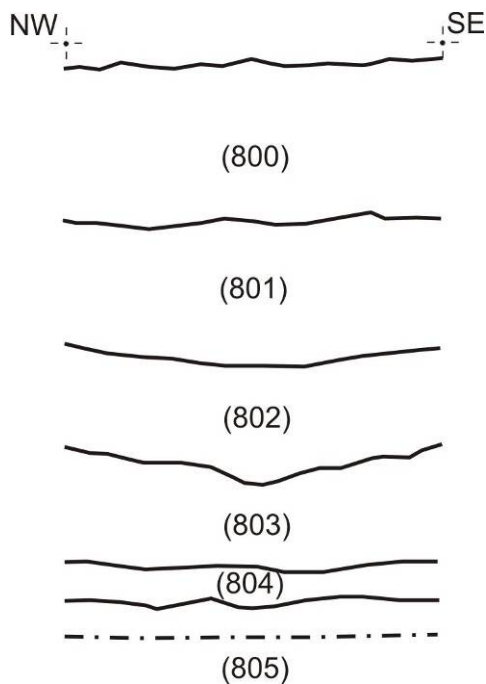
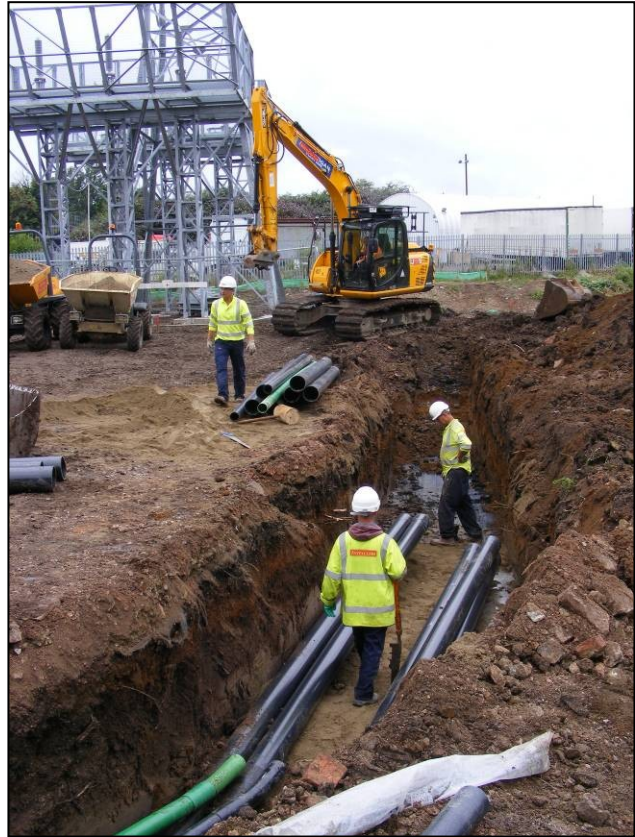
Top right: Figure 4: Representative section of Excavation 7. 1:20. Approximate location TQ 04626 80153.

Above: Plates 8 & 9: Representative section of Excavation 7 and Trench under excavation.

**Excavation 8 – open trenching south of the canal (TQ 04487 80379 - TQ 04519 80359 / TQ 04512 80355)**

Approximately 35m of open trenching was monitored at the northern end of the cable route. This had a maximum depth of c. 1.7m and was excavated through six distinct layers (800-805). The earliest deposit encountered was a mid grey-brown silt with frequent small chalk fragments and small wood particles and root fragments (805). This was sealed by c. 0.15m of mid brown slightly sandy silt with frequent small wood particles (804). This layer was in turn sealed by c. 0.3m of mottled dark grey/mid orange fine silt-clay with occasional small chalk fragments (803). These three deposits appear to be more ancient riverine deposits.

Deposit (803) was sealed by c. 0.35m of mid brown slightly sandy silt with occasional lenses of yellow brown clay and small river gravels (802). This was sealed by c. 0.45m of mid brown slightly sandy silt with occasional small river gravels (801). Both of these deposit were heavily root disturbed and appeared to be a deep, settled subsoil and topsoil respectively. These were sealed by c. 0.4m of modern crushed stone and re-deposited/levelling material (800).



Top right: Working shot Excavation 8.

Above: Figure 5 / Plate 10: Representative section from Excavation 8 (1:20) and corresponding plate. Approximate location TQ 04511 80370.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The archaeological monitoring did not identify any significant archaeological horizons. Excavation 1 was located in an area of modern made ground, possibly backfill within a former quarry, Excavations 2-5 recorded an un-remarkable sequence of deposits with only little modern disturbance and Excavations 6-8 appeared to be located within a former river channel. However, their proximity to the historic quarry site may provide an alternative explanation in the form of rejected material from quarrying.

## 9.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The archaeological monitoring identified no significant archaeological activity, identifying only natural geology and redeposited material. The methodology employed resulted in little or no delay to the planned sequence of construction works.

## 10.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS Ltd would like to thank ADAS UK Ltd. for commissioning this work. Thanks go also to Instalcom and O'Connor Utilities Ltd for their assistance on site.

## 11.0 Site Archive

The project archive is currently held at the offices of PCAS Ltd. in Saxilby, Lincolnshire while being prepared for deposition. The prepared archive will be deposited at the Buckinghamshire County Museums Service under the unique accession number AYBCM : 2016.89.

## 12.0 References/Bibliography

Lane, A, 2016, *Land to the East of Iver, South Bucks, Buckinghamshire: Specification for a Scheme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. PCAS ref 1730

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<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/>

## Appendix 1: Context Summary

### Excavation 1

Context	Type	Description
100	Layer	Mid grey silty clay. Topsoil. 0.2m
101	Layer	Mid yellow brown silt with frequent modern waste material. Dumped material. 0.3m
102	Layer	Mid-dark grey/black silty clay with frequent modern waste material. Dumped material. 1m
103	Layer	Mid-dark blue grey clay with frequent modern waste material. Dumped material.
104	Layer	Black silt with frequent modern waste material. Dumped material. 0.2m

### Excavation 2

Context	Type	Description
200	Layer	Dark brown humic soil. Topsoil. 0.3m
201	Layer	Mid grey clay. Subsoil. 0.15m
202	Layer	Mid orange clay.
203	Layer	Mid brown gravelly clay with modern waste material. Dumped material. 3m x 1.5m
204	Layer	Cut of modern pit. 3m x 1.5m

### Excavation 3

Context	Type	Description
205	Layer	Hardstanding. 0.2m
206	Layer	Dark brown humic soil. Topsoil. 0.15m
207	Layer	Mid grey clay. Subsoil. 0.15m
208	Layer	Mid orange clay.

#### Excavation 4

Context	Type	Description
209	Layer	Hardstanding. 0.3m
210	Layer	Mid grey clay. Subsoil. 0.4m
211	Layer	Mid orange clay.

#### Excavation 5

Context	Type	Description
212	Layer	Mid-dark grey humic clay with frequent modern waste material. Dumped material. >1.3m

#### Excavation 6

Context	Type	Description
600	Layer	Re-deposited soil, crushed chalk and building demolition material. Dumped material. 0.8m
601	Layer	Mid red brown slightly sandy silt with frequent small river gravels. Riverine deposit? 0.45m
602	Layer	Mid red brown slightly sandy silt. Riverine deposit? 0.25m
603	Layer	Mottled dark grey/mid orange-red brown slightly sandy silt. Riverine deposit? >0.1m

#### Excavation 7

Context	Type	Description
700	Layer	Re-deposited soil, crushed chalk and building demolition material. Dumped material. 1m
701	Layer	Mid brown fine silt-clay with frequent small river gravels. Riverine deposit? 0.3m
702	Layer	Mid orange brown sand and gravel. Riverine deposit? 0.25m
703	Layer	Mid brown fine silt-clay with common small river

		gravels. Riverine deposit? >0.1m
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#### Excavation 8

Context	Type	Description
800	Layer	Re-deposited soil, crushed stone. Dumped material. 0.4m
801	Layer	Mid brown slightly sandy silt loam with frequent root disturbance and occasional small stones. Topsoil. 0.45m
802	Layer	Mid brown slightly sandy silt with occasional clay lenses. Subsoil. 0.35m
803	Layer	Mottled dark grey/mid orange fine silt-clay with small chalk fragments. Riverine deposit? 0.3m
804	Layer	Mid brown slightly sandy silt with frequent small wood particles. Riverine deposit? 0.15m
805	Layer	Mid grey brown silt with common small chalk fragments and root and other wood particles. Riverine deposit? >0.1m



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<a href="#">View 2</a>	2	Alison Lane	<a href="mailto:alison@pre-construct.co.uk">alison@pre-construct.co.uk</a>	17 October 2016
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