

Marston Grid, Bedfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation, Strip, Map and Record



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**Marston Grid, Bedfordshire:
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**Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation and strip, map and record investigation was commissioned by EDF Energy on the site of a proposed substation and associated works compound (National Grid Reference 500500 243250). No evidence of archaeological activity was encountered.

1.0 Introduction

EDF Energy commissioned a programme of archaeological evaluation for the proposed route of a new power cable between Marston Grid and Upper Shelton. The work encompassed a strip, map and record exercise of the land upon which the contractors work compound was to be sited. The work was in compliance with a request from Bedfordshire Heritage and Environment Service. Between January and March 2009 the strip, map and recording exercise of the compound was completed and two evaluation trenches were located within the development area (Figure 1).

1.1 Location, topography, geology

The development area was located just off the A421 in Bedfordshire, Wootton, (see Figure 2). It was bounded by Hoo Lane to the southwest, the newly constructed A421 expansion project to the southeast and woodland to the north. It was a relatively flat, greenfield site upon which basic scrub and tree removal had already taken place. The underlying geology was Oxford Clay with localised areas of sandy alluvium.

1.2 Archaeological Background

Although there was no specific archaeology expected within the development area the archaeology within the wider landscape, as discussed by Appleby 2008, is varied and wide ranging encompassing Prehistoric, Romano British and Medieval. In the near vicinity, at Wootton, evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British settlements has been found, medieval agricultural practices are evidenced in the landscape and post medieval brick making kilns are also known to have been near by (Appleby 2008).

Next to the development area a recent evaluation in advance of the A421 road project revealed linear boundary ditches of possible Late Iron Age or Early Roman in date (Oxford Archaeology 2009).

1.3 Methodology

The investigation was carried out in accordance with a project specification (Beadsmore 2009) and followed guidelines in the SCAUM manual Health and Safety in Field Archaeology (Allen and Holt 2002). The area was surveyed into the OS Grid using an EDM/GPS. Excavation of all archaeological features was to be carried out by hand and recording to follow a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990), whereby context numbers would be assigned to individual contexts i.e. fill and cut, and feature numbers, (F.) to stratigraphic events. Sections were drawn at 1:10 and base plans at 1:50. This record has been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with MoRPHE (English Heritage 2008) and is being stored at the CAU offices.

A 1.8m ditching bucket was used to remove the overburden from the compound area for the strip, map and recording exercise under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist. Trenches and reception pits for services, all within the development area, were also observed as part of the archaeological monitoring. These were cut

using a 70cm toothed bucket. Two evaluation trenches with a total length of 80m, placed to avoid existing spoil bunds, were located within the development area were excavated by a 360° machine using a toothless ditching bucket.

2.0 Results

2.0.1 Strip, Map and Record

The strip, map and recording investigation extended over an area that was 7740m². Topsoil was removed to an average depth of 20cm (no archaeological features were revealed in this topsoil deposit). The topsoil overlay a subsoil of greyish brown silty clay that extended across the whole area.

2.0.2 Trenches

Trench 1 was 50.2m long and extended across the middle of the development area, oriented northeast to southwest. The subsoil was 22cm deep; the trench contained no archaeological features.

Trench 2 was 30m long evaluation trench, perpendicular to Trench 1 (on a northwest – southeast orientation). The subsoil was 24 cm deep and it also contained no archaeological activity.

Trench 3 was a service pipeline, which measured 88m in length and extended from the access to the development area in the southwest corner, following close to the western edge of the site, but with two easterly extensions (Figure 1). Trench 3 was excavated to a total depth of between 40 and 50cm. The subsoil varied between 20cm and 23cm in depth and no archaeological activity was encountered within the trench.

Trench 4 was a drainage ditch located along the northern boundary of the PDA. This was 70m long with an average of 20cm of subsoil. No archaeological features were discovered.

2.0.3 Test Pits

Two reception pits for services were monitored in addition to the trenching, recorded as Test Pits 1 and 2.

Test Pit 1 was located in the northeast corner of the development area and measured 5m by 7m. It contained the only feature revealed during the archaeological investigations, a single probable tree throw, **F.1**, of unknown date.

F1. Tree throw. No date. Fill [01], cut [02]. Mid grey silty clay fill with no inclusions. 10cm deep and 30cm across a mid grey silty clay fill with no inclusions.

Test Pit 2 was located in the southwest corner of the development area and measured 6m by 4m. The subsoil depth was 30cm deep and no archaeological activity was revealed.

3.0 Discussion

No archaeological activity was encountered during the archaeological investigations or within the evaluation trenches. Potentially, because the subsoil was not removed during the majority of the groundworks, archaeological features could have been preserved beneath this layer. The trenches, which were excavated to assess the potential survival of archaeological features within the development area, however, revealed no archaeological activity. The results from this programme of archaeological investigations are compatible with the localised nature of previous prehistoric and Roman discoveries within the area, including the results obtained by Oxford Archaeology (2009) nearby. Evidence of medieval agricultural practises has not survived and the post-medieval brickworks located nearby (Appleby 2008) did not extend far enough along Hoo Lane to affect the development area.

Acknowledgements

Cambridge Archaeological Unit was commissioned by EDF Energy, and over-seen by Bedfordshire Heritage and Environment Services. The project was managed by Emma Beadsmoore and Jane Matthews was the site surveyor and illustrator.

References

Allen, J.L. and A. Holt. 2002. *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology*. London: SCAUM.

Appleby, G. 2008. *Power cable from Upper Shelton to Marston Grid, Bedfordshire; An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*. Cambridge Archaeology Unit Report No. 857.

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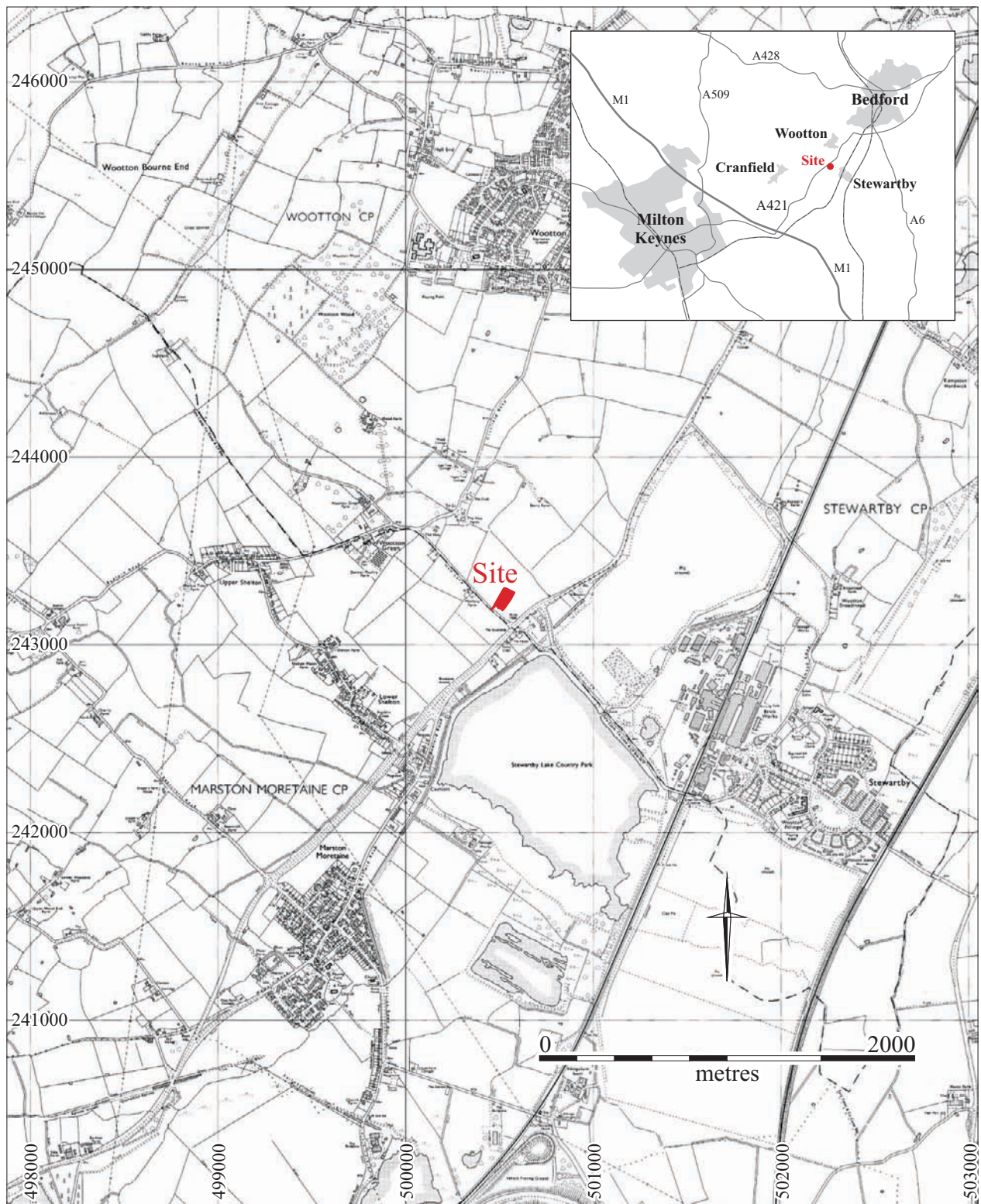


Figure 1. Location map

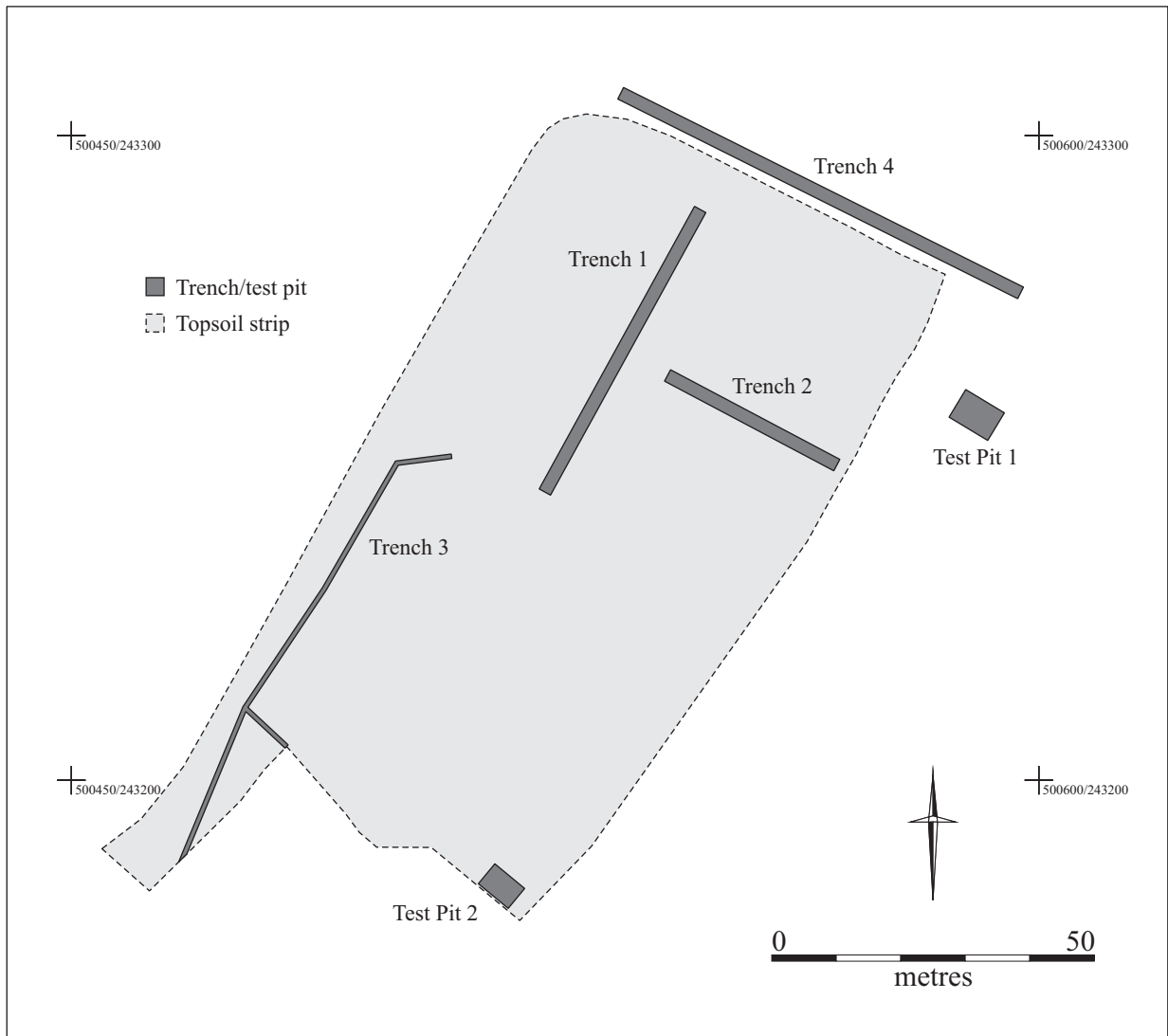


Figure 2. Site plan

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Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Strip, Map and Record at Marston Grid, Bedfordshire
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation and monitoring on the site of a proposed substation and associated works compound. No archaeological evidence was encountered.
Project dates	Start: 01-01-2009 End: 30-03-2009
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 2 - Vacant land not previously developed
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Recorded Observation"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE MARSTON MORETAINE Marston Grid
Postcode	MK43 0RF
Study area	7740.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 500500 243250 51 0 51 53 48 N 000 10 51 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 38.00m Max: 38.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Hayley Roberts
Type of sponsor/funding body	Electricity Authority/Company
Name of sponsor/funding body	EDF Energy

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Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Survey","Text"
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Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

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