



A Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording at The A45/A5 Crossroads Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire August – September 2013

Report No. 14/207

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NGR: SP 6321 5987

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Northamptonshire
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WEEDON BEC CROSSROADS

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS: molanort1-193622	
Project name	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the A45/A5 crossroads at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire		
Short description	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA), on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council between August and September 2013 during groundworks for the redesign of the A45/A5 crossroads at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire. A disturbed stratigraphy was recorded throughout the investigation area. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.		
Project type	A Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording		
Site status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current Land use	Highway		
Future work	Not known		
Monument type/ period			
Significant finds			
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	A45/A5 crossroads, Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire		
Study area (sq metres)	800m		
Easting & Northing	SP 6321 5987		
Height aOD			
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology)		
Project brief originator	The County Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull with David J Leigh		
Sponsor or funding body	Northamptonshire County Council, Highways		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	August 2013		
End date	September 2013		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical			
Paper	MOLA (Northants)	Watching brief forms (6) Photographic record sheets (1) Black and white photographs (10) Digital photographs (29)	
Digital		Report text and figures	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the A45/A5 crossroads, Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton report 14/207		
Author	David J Leigh		
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**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL
OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING
AT THE A45/A5 CROSSROADS, WEEDON BEC
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2013**

Abstract

A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA), on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council, Highways during groundworks for the redesign of the A45/A5 crossroads at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire. A disturbed stratigraphy was recorded throughout the investigation area. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA) between August and September 2013 during groundworks for the redesign of the A45/A5 crossroads at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 6321 5987; Figs 1, 2, 4 and 5). The work was undertaken on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council, Highways and was carried out following pre-application discussions with the County Archaeological Advisor.

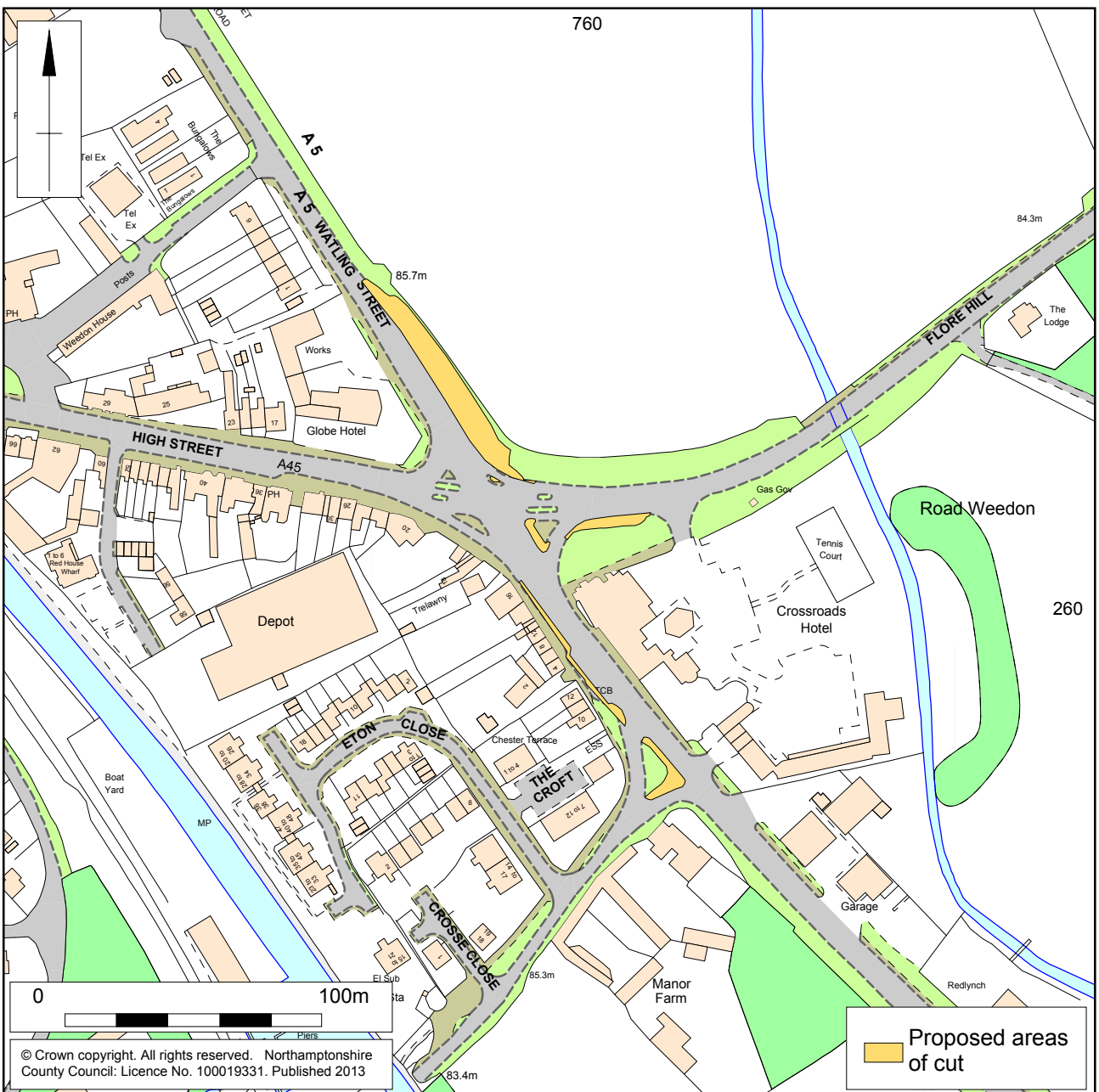
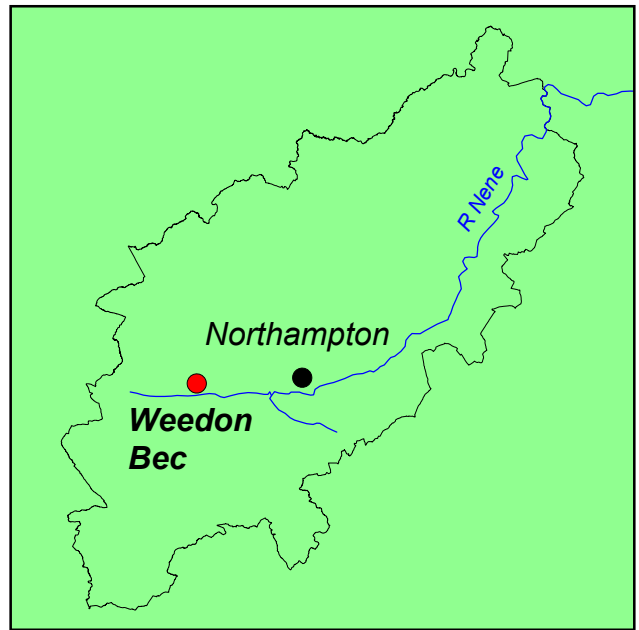
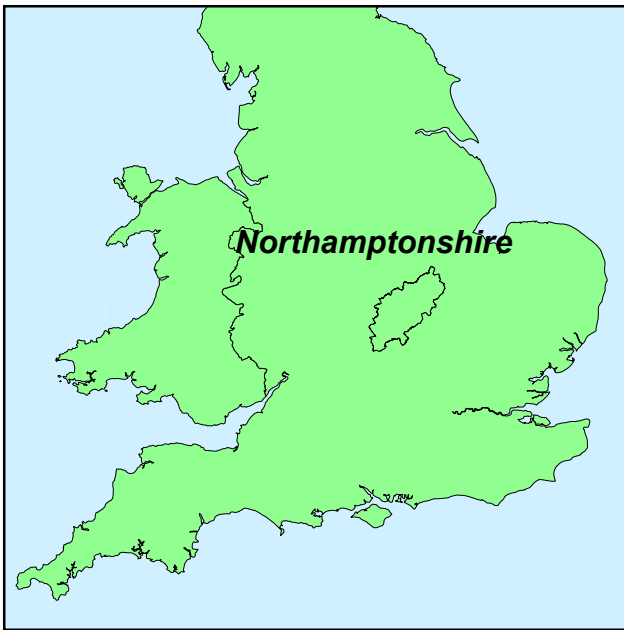
It adhered to the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012) and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Leigh 2013) and the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) along with the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

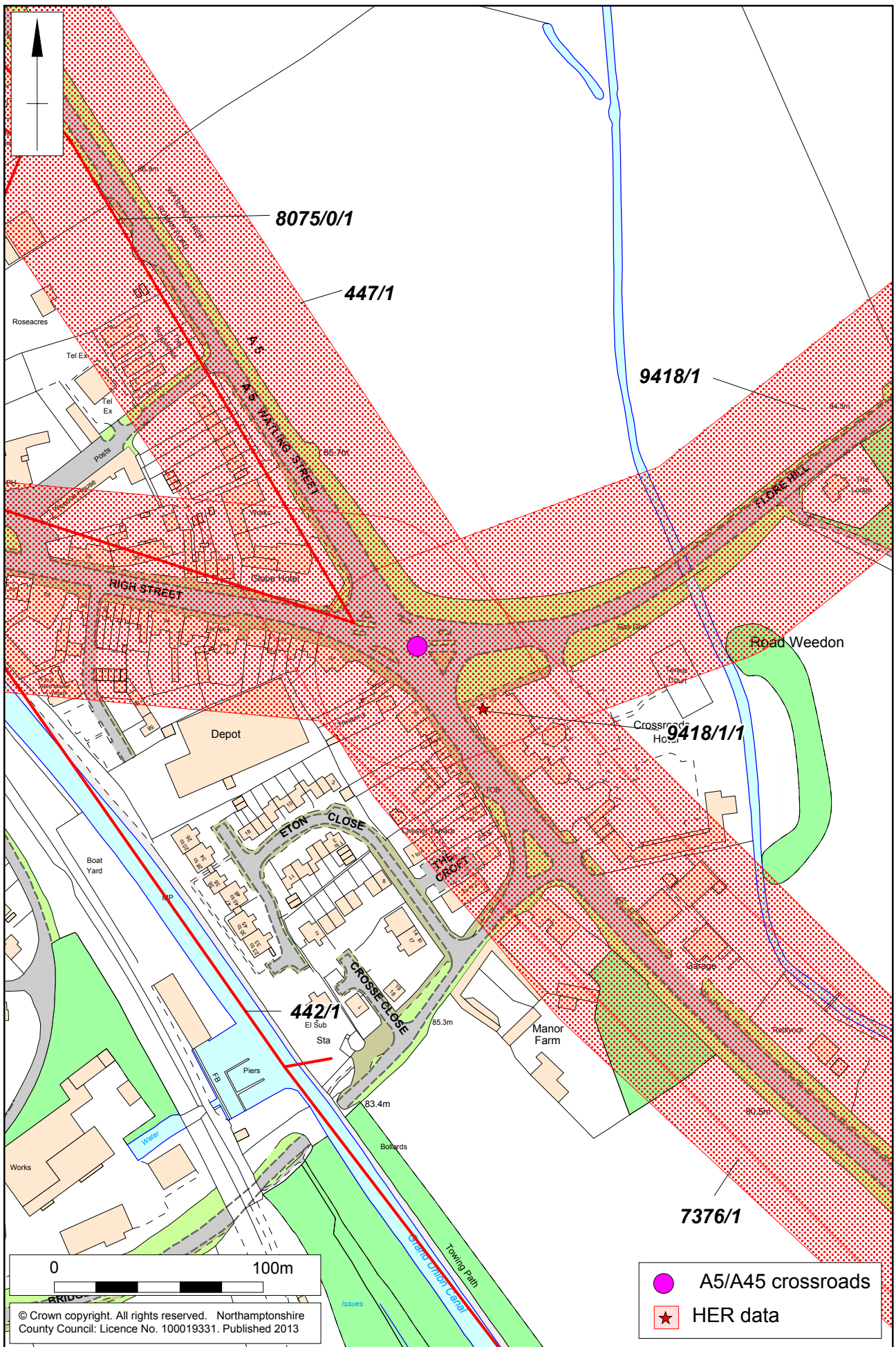
The A45/A5 crossroads lies on the north-eastern edge of the village of Weedon. The former Globe Hotel lies to the south-east and is now a mini supermarket and the Crossroads Hotel. The land to the south-west is occupied by housing and an industrial unit and to the north-east is an arable field.

The crossroads lie at c85m above Ordnance Datum. The superficial geology comprises glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel and the underlying solid geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising Interbedded Siltstone and Mudstone of the Dyrham formation, whilst (BGS Geindex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



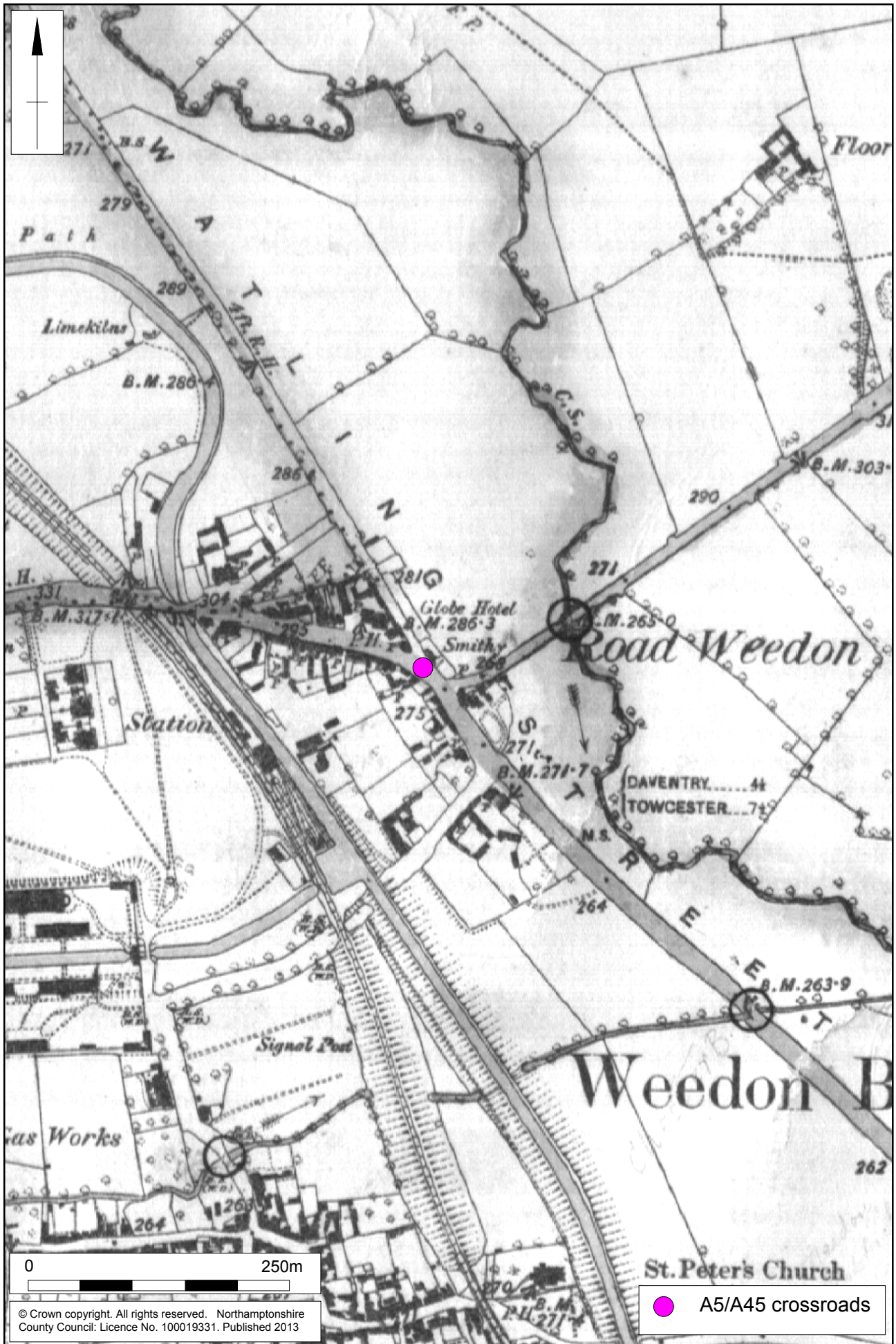
Scale 1:2,500

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:2,500 (A4)

Historic Environment Record (HER) data Fig 2



Scale 1:5,000 (A4)

First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1880s Fig 3

2.2 Historical background

The site lies within an area of archaeological interest (Fig 2). The A5 follows the alignment of a Roman road known as Watling Street (HER 447/1). It was an important communication route and may have been one of the more significant boundaries during the conquest and consolidation of lowland Britain, suggesting it had an origin in the mid-late 1st century AD (Flitcroft and Taylor 2004).

A former Anglo-Saxon charter boundary lay in the north-western corner of the crossroads, part of a grant by King Edmund to Bishop Aelfric Brenting in 944 AD (HER 8075/0/1). The present road (A45) which leaves Watling Street at Weedon to run to Coventry and Daventry was in existence by AD 944 and was called a Ridgway (Brown et al 1977). The road's importance grew in the medieval period as Coventry's influence extended.

The early history of Weedon shows that a moiety (half) of the manor of Weedon was given to the abbey of Bec Hellouin, Normandy, during the reign of Henry II. They possessed the entire manor before the end of his reign. The village was henceforth known as Weedon Bec. When the so-called 'alien priories' were suppressed in 1414 and their lands confiscated, all the English possessions of the abbey, including Weedon, devolved to the crown. By the end of the 15th century the manor had been granted to the provost and fellows of Eton College, who remained as lords of the manor through to the 19th century.

The Old Stratford to Dunchurch Turnpike, which utilised Watling Street before turning onto the current A45 at Weedon, was created by 1710 and was one of the earliest turnpikes in the country (HER 7376/1). The Warwick to Northampton road was created in the middle of the 18th century. It passed through Weedon and became the current A45 (HER 9418/1). A former tollhouse built by the Trustees of the Warwick to Northampton Turnpike in 1860 was incorporated into the north-west end of the Crossroads Hotel (HER 9418/1/1). It replaced an earlier toll-house.

The presence of these major routes facilitated development away from the original medieval cores of Upper and Lower Weedon along the road and included a number of inns. This part of the village is still known as Road Weedon.

Cartographic evidence from the 19th century shows that development along the roads was largely confined to the western side (Soden et al 2008). The less developed land north-east of the road junction included a smithy and a hotel (Fig 3).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the archaeological investigation were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks for the new crossroads and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered;
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts;
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and digital format was kept. The written record used MOLA pro-forma sheets, (MOLA 2014). The programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

The fieldwork was undertaken between August and September 2013 during groundworks for the redesign of the crossroads. The groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a combination of toothed and toothless buckets (Fig 6) and supplemented by hand excavation. The work comprised excavation on the north-east side of and parallel to the present highway to allow widening of the highway to take place.



View of the crossroads, looking south Fig 4



View of the crossroads, looking west towards Daventry Fig 5

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The area of the new compound

The area of the new compound (Fig 7) was stripped of up to 0.30m of plough-soil comprising grey-brown sandy loam, containing occasional irregular stones and very occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material. A layer of crushed hardcore was then spread across the area to create a temporary hard-standing.

The groundworks remained entirely within the ploughsoil horizon. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were present.

4.2 The new crossroads

In order to create the new crossroads, an area adjacent to the present carriageway was reduced to formation level to allow the widening of the highway and the installation of new drainage (Figs 8 and 9).

The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of approximately 2m below present ground level and comprised orange-brown sand and gravel. This was overlain by modern overburden up to 1.9m thick comprising grey-black sandy loam and contained numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and metallic debris. This in turn was sealed by grey-brown sandy loam topsoil, containing litter from passing traffic.



The groundworks in progress, looking north Fig 6



Stripping the area of the new compound, looking north Fig 7



Excavation of the old highway ditch, looking north Fig 8



Excavation of the old highway ditch, looking north Fig 9

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	6
Photographic record sheets	1
Black and white photographs	10
Digital photographs	29

There is currently no appointed archive store in Northamptonshire. The project archive will be consolidated and prepared for deposition and will be held by MOLA (Northants).

6 CONCLUSIONS

A disturbed stratigraphy was recorded throughout the investigation area. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

The results of the archaeological investigation clearly indicate that in the area of the crossroads, the present highway lies on ground built up approximately 2m above the original ground level. This was probably to counteract a natural depression at the base of Flore Hill which is subject to occasional flooding.

The groundworks did not extend into the area where the former smithy is believed to have been located and no evidence of this structure was present.

The archaeological investigation was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

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