LAND TO THE REAR OF 11 BERRY CLOSE,

EARLS BARTON,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NGR REF: SP 85204 64084

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
(OASIS ID: 213299)

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PREPARED BY CHRISTER CARLSSON

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Summary

An archaeological investigation was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants for the construction of four new dwellings, including driveways, garages and services on land to the rear of 11 Berry Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire. The investigation area contained archaeological finds and features from the Prehistoric period to the Present. In the north eastern part of the site a number of Prehistoric pits were uncovered. These pits were sealed by a Medieval farming landscape, with plough marks and a boundary ditch. In the southern part of the site a collapsed garden wall and a drainage ditch from the Post Medieval period were representing a later phase of activity in the area. A large assemblage of pottery was also collected from various features, and together with other finds it was used to create a detailed chronology of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The site was located on land to the rear of 11 Berry Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 85204 64084) (Figure 1-3). A large open area excavation was opened up in a green field behind the existing building. The open area investigation covered an area of about 1800m², or ca 60% of the development site. The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1999), as well as discussions with Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Officer at Northamptonshire County Council. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Permission has been granted on appeal (WP/14/00257/OUT) for a new development on land to the rear of 11 Berry Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire. The development comprised the erection of four new dwellings with associated garages, driveways and services.

2.3 The development site was located in the central parts of the village of Earls Barton. It enclosed an area of approximately 3000m^2 at an average height of 97m AOD. The development area consisted mainly of rough grassland. It was bounded by residential development to the north, east and west, and by further rough grassland and a variety of outbuildings in the south. The geology comprised Northamptonshire Sand and Ironstone, with Stamford Member interbedded sandstone and siltstone at the northern end (British Geological Survey).

2.4 The site was situated within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Northamptonshire HER. Therefore, archaeological investigation and

documentation was required prior to the proposed construction works. This condition was attached to the Appeal Decision granted by Wellingborough Borough Council, and was in line with standards described in *NPPF* (2012).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site was located within the historic core of the village of Earls Barton. Archaeological investigations at various locations in the modern settlement have found evidence for human activity from the Iron Age onwards.

3.2 Late Iron Age activity has been recorded a short distance to the south of the site. An archaeological evaluation within the site itself identified a linear feature, which was interpreted as a possible boundary ditch (CA 2012).

3.3 This evaluation also included the land in the south, belonging to 9 High Street, where remains of a Romano-British farmstead were identified (CA ibid).

3.4 The evaluation also identified the remains of a post-built structure within the development area, thought to be of Post Medieval date (CA ibid).

3.5 To the south west of the site was the village church, which retains its Saxon tower, and Berry Mount, a Scheduled Monument. Berry Mount is interpreted as a Norman motte and bailey castle. The bailey may lie to the north of the motte, and is thought to have Saxon origins.

4 AIMS

4.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

* to establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;

* to establish the relationship of any remains found in the surrounding contemporary landscapes;

* to recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;

* to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation;

* to inform a strategy for the recording, preservation and/or management of the identified assets;

* to mitigate potential threats,

* to inform proposals for further archaeological investigations (namely targeted area excavations) within the ongoing programme of research;

* to define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains;

* to interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.

4.2 The investigation also considered the general investigative themes outlined by: *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Ed. Nicholas J. Cooper) Leicester Archaeology Monograph No. 13, *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight, D; Vyner, B; Allen, C. 2012), *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (1997); *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005 - 2010* (English Heritage 2005).

4.3 Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:

*characterisation of the site in the broader landscape;
*characterisation of the activities identified within the site;
*characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

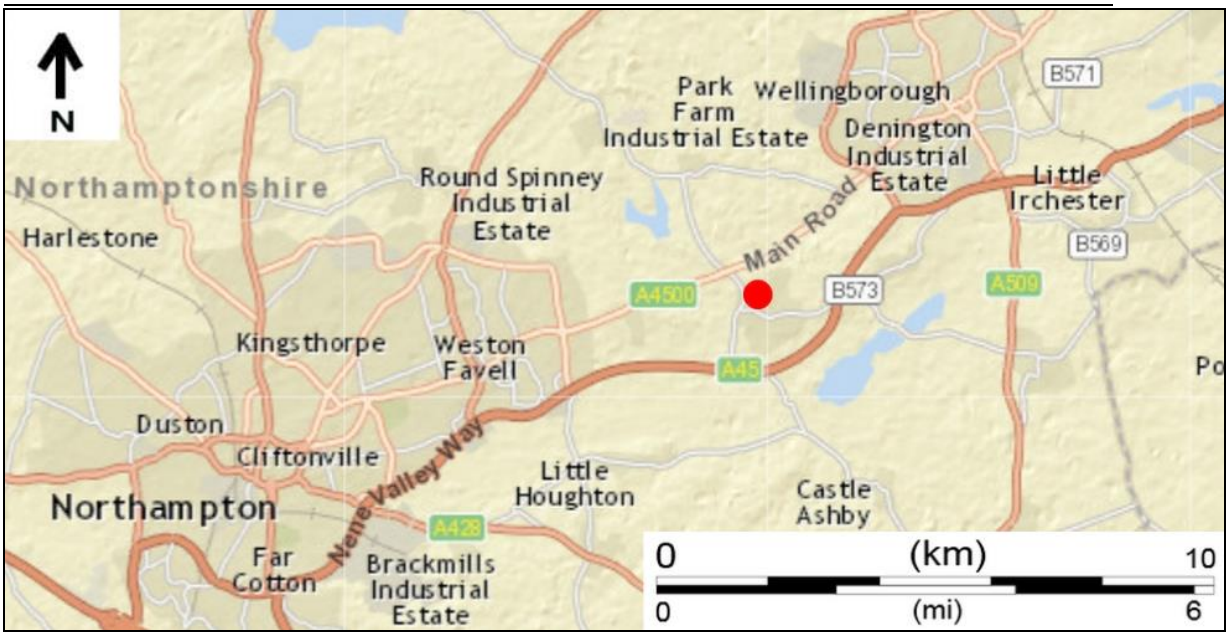

Figure 1. The location of Earls Barton, Northamptonshire, England.

Figure 2. The Site Location in Earls Barton.

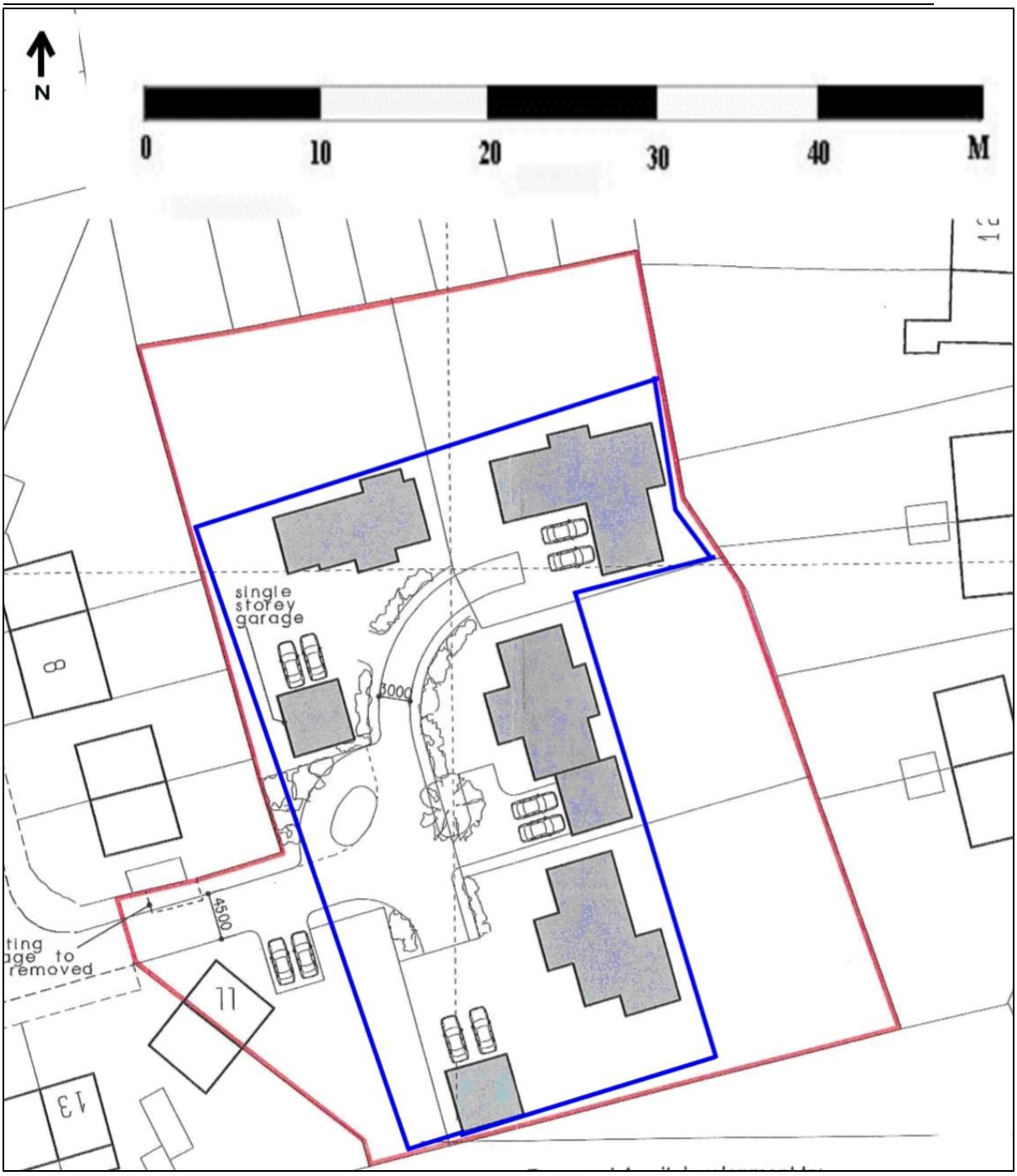

Figure 3. Site Outline (Red) and location of Open Area excavation (Blue).

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Stripping of overburden within the investigation area

The archaeological investigation consisted of the continuous observation of removal of overburden within the investigation area, followed by an open area excavation and recording of any archaeological features that were revealed. The open area investigation was concentrated to areas of archaeological potential, as identified by the Archaeological Evaluation in 2012. The open area excavation covered approximately 1800m^2, or about 60% of the site, while remaining parts were subject to monitoring during landscaping work.

The stripping of overburden was carried out under constant archaeological supervision using a flat bladed ditching bucket. The investigation area was mechanically stripped to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these were not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation was required to sample any features exposed.

The stripping of overburden took into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance. Topsoil and overburden were stored within the development site during the course of the archaeological investigation. Guidance for suitable depths for the stripping was obtained from the Evaluation report.

When archaeological features were encountered they were hand cleaned, investigated and recorded according to the parameters described below. Revisions of the excavation methodology was required in the north eastern part of the site, where a second stripping was needed due to the discovery of a lower level of archaeological features.

The investigation was not carried out at the expenses of the heritage assets within the site.

5.2 Metal Detecting

Thorough metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process. Deeply buried signals were investigated only if agreed as part of the hand excavation programme.

5.3 Hand Excavation

All man-made features were hand cleaned, photographed, excavated and documented. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws) were sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation and feature sampling was sufficient to establish the date, character and relationships with other features. Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features.

For linear features associated with settlement or areas of specific activity, an initial 25% was excavated away from intersections with other features or deposits to obtain unmixed samples of material. Excavation slots were at least 1m in width. Particular attention was given to terminals and intersections, to ascertain stratigraphic and physical relationships. The excavation of linear features was sufficiently sampled to allow an informed interpretation of their date and function.

The investigation provided a full documentation and interpretation of the site's archaeology at no significant cost to the value or integrity of historical remains therein. Judgement regarding the removal of certain structural remains was led by this consideration, and was made in consultation with the Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council.

The developer was informed that provision must be made for delays caused by the need for archaeological recording, or if contingency allowance must be made for more detailed recording of exceptional finds.

5.4 Recording

A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.

Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features etc.) and excavated areas. Excavation plans and sections in the scales 1:10, 1:20, 1:100 and 1:200 were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied in to trench plans/trench location plans, that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably mapped local features (boundaries, buildings, roads etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum. A Hemisphere S320 GPS (RTK) was used during all stages of fieldwork, in order to increase the accuracy of the documentation.

A photographic record comprising monochrome, colour slides and digital photos formed part of the excavation record. Some digital photos were also used in this excavation report (a maximum of two photos per A4 sheet). The photographic record followed the outlines in NAAWG 2014 paragraph A1.10.9 for site photographic guidance.

5.5 Palaeoenvironmental Sampling

The site was situated within an old Medieval village and had, as such, good potential for the preservation of faunal/plant remains and/or waterlogged timber in deeper deposits. For this reason viable baulk samples to characterise soil profiles, as well as plant remains/charred plant remains, molluscs, small faunal remains and pollen sequences, were collected from a representative selection of suitable deposits in accordance with the investigation aims.

Special care was taken to understand the stratigraphy of the site: Were the investigated deposits created in dry or wet conditions, and what can this, in that case, tell us about the development and history of the site? Buried soils and deposits were carefully studied in order to understand the processes behind their creations.

All samples were extracted and recorded in accordance with *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practise of Methods, from sampling and recovery to post excavation* (English Heritage 2011), and in consultation with the appointed Plant Remains and Environmental Samples Expert, Mrs Val Fryer.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Prehistoric Features

The lowest deposit encountered during the investigation was the Natural ground, which consisted of orange brown, firm, Ironstone in the southern and central parts of the site, but white yellow, soft silty sand in the northern and north eastern parts of the site.

Cut into the Natural in the north eastern part of the site were a number of deep pits; [117], [119], [122], [124], [126], [128], [130], [132], [134], [136], [138], [142], [144] and [146] (Figure 4, 5 and 6 and Plan 3). They were all sealed by a younger layer of Medieval plough soil (120) and had very similar fills of pale, soft silty sand with spots of charcoal and worked flint. However, none of them contained any pottery.

Because of their stratigraphic positions deep down in the ground, and the absence of pottery, it was assumed that these pits could be very early in date. The worked flint from the pits suggests they could be Prehistoric, and a Prehistoric date is further supported by the composition of charred plant remains from the Environmental Samples. A longer discussion about the date and function of these pits can be found towards the end of this report. When the first of the pits had been discovered a mini-digger was brought in to remove the Medieval plough soil in order to investigate whether there were further pits present in the north eastern part of the site. In this way a total of 14 Prehistoric pits were eventually found:

Pit [117]

Pit [117] was 0.55m deep and had stepped as well as steep sides and a flat base. It had a fill (116) of light grey, soft silty sand with spots of charcoal. It also had occasional inclusions of animal bones and worked flint. Being the only the 14 Prehistoric pits to contain bones a sample was collected for ^{14}C dating. This sample, however, had a ^{13}C value that was more negative than -21 o/oo. This can indicate the presence of exogenous carbon compounds (like humic acids) that could not be removed by the pretreatments applied. A risk for some kind of old and early contamination was therefore eminent, and it was decided that the sample was not suitable for carbon dating.

Pit [119]

Pit [119] was 0.50m deep and had rounded sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (118) of light brown, soft silty sand with occasional stones and worked flint. As 50% of the pit was in the section of the trench this suggests that further pits might be present outside the development area.

Figure 4. The first of the Prehistoric pits, Pit [117], is visible in the front of the photo. It was discovered close to the northern end of the investigation area, and a mini-digger was brought in to remove the Medieval plough soil which was covering the remaining pits. The Medieval plough marks can be seen on top of the plough soil.

Figure 5. When the Medieval plough soil (120) had been removed a total of 14 Prehistoric pits were discovered.

Pit [122]

Pit [122] was 0.52m deep and had stepped as well as rounded sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (121) of mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint.

Pit [124]

Pit [124] was 0.54m deep and had rounded sides and a flat base. Its single fill (123) consisted of mid grey, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly cut by the Medieval boundary ditch [104] in the southwest.

Pit [126]

Pit [126] was 0.20m deep and had rounded as well as steep sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (125) of dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly truncating pit [128] in the northwest, and must therefore be slightly younger.

Figure 6. Some of the Prehistoric pits were truncating each other, suggesting there was at least two different phases of such pits.

Pit [128]

Pit [128] was 0.62m deep and had vertical as well as steep sides and a flat base. Its single fill (127) consisted of mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly truncated by pit [126] in the southeast and should therefore by slightly older.

Pit [130]

Pit [130] was 0.64m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. Its single fill (129) consisted of mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint.

Pit [132]

Pit [132] was 0.74m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (131) of mid dark brown, soft silty sand with flecks of charcoal and occasional inclusions of worked flint.

Pit [134]

Pit [134] was 0.46m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. Its single fill (133) consisted of mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint.

Pit [136]

Pit [136] was 0.80m deep and had vertical as well as stepped sides and a rounded base. Its single fill (135) consisted of dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly truncated by pit [138] in the southeast and should therefore be slightly older.

Pit [138]

Pit [138] was 0.60m deep and had rounded sides and a rounded base. Its single fill (137) consisted of dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal. The pit was partly truncating pit [136] in the northwest and should therefore be slightly younger.

Pit [142]

Pit [142] was 0.84m deep and had vertical as well as stepped sides and a flat base. It contained the single fill (141) of mid dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly cut by the Medieval boundary ditch [104] in the southwest.

Pit [144]

Pit [144] was 0.56m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. Its single fill (143) consisted of mid dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint.

Pit [146]

Pit [146] was 0.60m deep and had vertical sides and a flat base. It had a single fill (145) which consisted of dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint. The pit was partly cut by the Medieval boundary ditch [104] in the southwest.

6.2 Medieval Features

The features that could be dated to the Medieval period were entirely situated in the north eastern part of the site. They were representing a later phase of human activity, that took place after that the Prehistoric pits had been backfilled. The Medieval features could be linked to farming, and were dated to the 12th- 15th century.

Medieval Plough Soil (120)

The Medieval plough soil (120) was up to 0.58m thick and consisted of grey yellow, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of charcoal, animal bones, stones, pebbles, flint and Medieval pottery. A large number of plough marks were running SE-NW across the surface. Sherds of Shelly Coarseware from 1100-1400 A. D. were present in the plough soil and are likely to date the Medieval farming activity. The plough soil also contained a few sherds of residual Iron Age pottery.

Boundary ditch [104]

The boundary ditch [104] was up to 0.60m deep and had V-shaped sides and a pointed base. It had a single fill (103) consisting of dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of animal bones, slag, pottery and bronze. The pottery consisted of a few sherds of Midland Purple Ware that can be dated to ca. 1450-1600 A. D. This pottery is likely to date the backfilling of the boundary ditch during the Late Medieval period. The discovery of a well preserved crotal bronze bell in the ditch also suggests a Late Medieval date. The fill also contained a few sherds of residual Iron Age pottery.

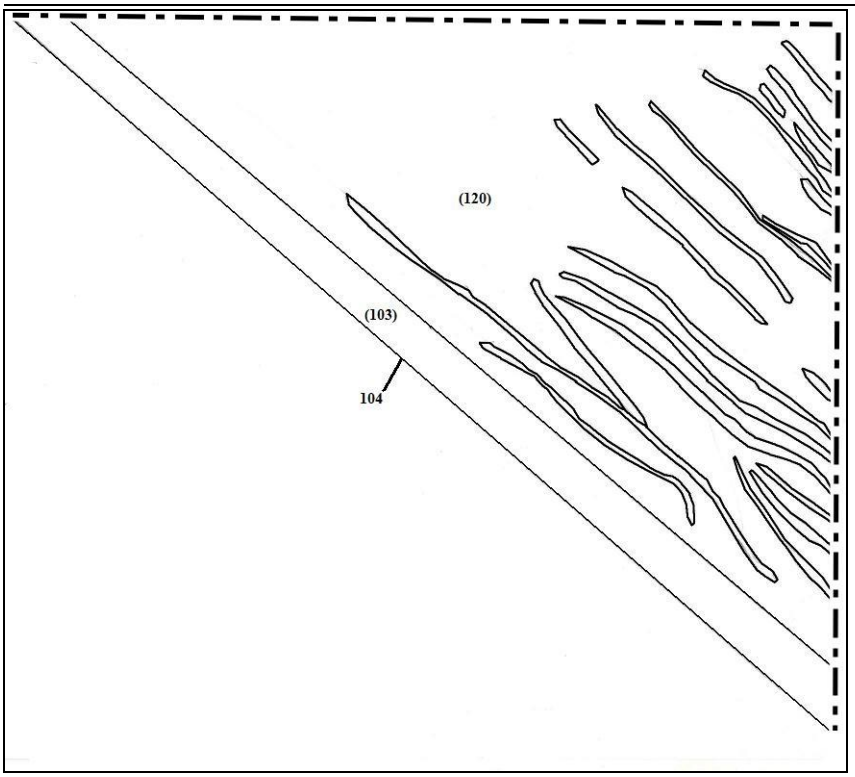

Figure 7. Detailed drawing of the plough marks in the Medieval plough soil (120). The plough marks were contemporary with the boundary ditch [104].

Figure 8. The Medieval boundary ditch [104] before excavation. The plough marks can be seen on top of layer (120) to the east of the ditch.

Figure 9. The ditch [104] with its single fill (103) contained Late Medieval finds.

6.3 Post Medieval Features

The Post Medieval features that were discovered during the investigation were almost entirely concentrated to the southern part of the site. This would suggest that they were linked to the present, and still inhabited, farmhouse in the south. The earliest of the Post Medieval features are likely to be the ditch [113] and the damaged garden wall [107] (108).

Damaged garden wall [107] (108)

The foundation trench [107] for the damaged garden wall (108) was 0.17m deep and had rounded sides and a rounded base. Where the wall had been plundered there was a 0.15m thick fill (106) of dark brown, plastic silty clay. The lower parts of the damaged garden wall (108) had been preserved in the southwest corner of the site. Parts of the collapsed wall could be seen as a 0.25m deep and 10m long rectangular spread of mortar and limestone fragments (105) across the southern part of the site.

The ditch [113]

The ditch [113] was 0.43m deep and had sloping sides and a rounded base. The upper, secondary fill (111) was 0.18m thick and consisted of mid grey brown, soft sandy silt with moderate inclusions of small stones. The lower, primary fill (112) was 0.25m thick and consisted of mid yellow brown, soft sandy clay with occasional Ironstone and pebbles. The fill (111) contained a piece of Midland Purple Ware from ca. 1450-1600 A. D., as well as a piece of a tobacco clay pipe.

Shallow ditch [110]

The youngest of the Post Medieval features in the southern part of the site was the shallow ditch [110]. This ditch was only 0.08m deep and had rounded sides and a rounded base. Its single fill (109) consisted of mid grey, soft silty clay with occasional charcoal. This shallow ditch was overlaying all other features in the south.

Rubbish pit [115]

The rubbish pit [115] was the only Post Medieval feature in the northern part of the site. It was cutting through the subsoil, and had therefore been excavated from a higher level than the Prehistoric pits in the same area. The pit was 0.32m deep and had rounded sides and a rounded base. Its single fill (114) consisted of a mixed fill of yellow grey, soft silty sand with occasional inclusions of bricks, china, animal bones and charcoal.

Subsoil (102)

Overlaying all features within the site, except for the rubbish pit [115], was the up to 0.69m thick Subsoil of red brown, plastic, silty clay with occasional roots, small stones, slag and Iron Age pottery.

Topsoil (101)

Overlaying the Subsoil was the up to 0.31m thick Topsoil of dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots, small stones, tobacco clay pipes and Post Medieval pottery.

Figure 10. The spread (105) from garden wall (108) was visible as a rectangular area of limestone and mortar across the southern part of the site.

Figure 11. The ditch [113] with its two fills (111) and (112) contained Post Medieval finds.

7 FINDS

In total 26 find posts were recovered from various contexts during the archaeological investigation. The dominating category was the pottery, consisting of in total 7 posts (Some of which were very large and consisted of several sherds) or ca 80% of the collected material. The remaining finds consisted of iron slag, animal bones, bronze items and worked flint.

The Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 177 sherds with a total weight of 2,445g. It consisted of Iron Age, Medieval and Post Medieval wares. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Iron Age Pottery

The Iron Age assemblage consisted of 160 sherds with a total weight of 1,990g. The following fabrics occurred:

F1: Coarse Shell. Sandy matrix. Moderate to dense shell platelets up to 5mm. Rare to sparse sub-angular red ironstone up to 1mm. 84 sherds, 948g.

F2: Quartz and Ironstone. Sparse to moderate iron-rich sandstone fragments up to 2mm and sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm. Rare burnt-out organic material. 72 sherds, 1014g.

F3: Fine Shell and Sand. Fine sandy matrix, rare to sparse sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, rare sub-angular black iron ore of the same size, sparse shell platelets up to 2mm. 4 sherds, 28g.

The assemblage represents just a few vessels, and mainly comprises fragments of two jars, indicating that it is a primary deposit, and that there was Iron Age activity within the immediate vicinity of these excavations.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the area, and largely reflects the local geology. Shell-tempered wares in particular are very typical of middle-late Iron Age pottery in the region (eg. Harding 1975). All the sherds of fabric F1 were from the lower body of a single vessel, a large jar. It was very low-fired and nearly all the shell had leached out due to the soil conditions, meaning that large portions of it had disintegrated, but some of the surviving sherds suggested that it had a diameter somewhere in the region of 400mm, and there were traces of vertical wiping or scoring on the outer surface.

Most of the sherds in fabric F2 from context (102) are from a single vessel. It was partially reconstructable, had a rim diameter of 220mm, and was around 40% complete. It is very similar in form to a vessel from the middle Iron Age site at Twywell, Northamptonshire (Harding 1975, Fig. 24 no. 4) and more generally very like a number of sherds from a middle to late Iron Age site at Grendon Quarry, c 2km south-east of Earl's Barton (Morris and Jackson 1995, 15). A further six sherds from here, in the same fabric but from a different vessel, exhibit light vertical scoring, suggesting that they too are of middle Iron Age date (Elsdon 1992). Similar pottery also occurred at Twywell (Harding 1975, Fig. 23). Overall, the pottery has many characteristics typical of the middle-late Iron Age in the region (Knight 2002, 131-2), and thus the assemblage is probably of 6th/5th - 1st century BC date.

Medieval and Later Pottery

The Post Roman assemblage comprised 17 sherds with a total weight of 455g. It was all Medieval or later. It was recorded using the conventions of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

F330: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 3 sherds, 137g.
F403: Midland Purple Ware, AD1450-1600. 9 sherds, 108g.
F417: Nottingham/Derby Stoneware, 1700-1900. 1 sherd, 3g.
F421: Frechen/Cologne Stoneware, AD1550-1750. 1 sherd, 17g.
F426: Iron-Glazed Coarsewares, *c* late 17th-18th century. 3 sherds, 190g.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region (eg. Blinkhorn 2010). All the sherds were in fairly good condition, other than the fact that the calcareous inclusions had leached out of the shelly wares. Two of the three sherds of this type were plain body sherds, but a large fragment of a jug handle was also present, suggesting a date of the 12th century, as such vessels became less common in shelly ware after the introduction of various glazed wares in the 13th century. The Midland Purple Ware is

all very hard-fired, and mainly from large vessels, suggesting it is of Post Medieval date.

A single complete clay tobacco pipe bowl occurred in the topsoil layer (101). It is an early "long bowl" type, with milling around the rim and a rounded spur. It is most likely of late 17th-early 18th century date (Ayto 2002, 5), and thus broadly contemporary with some of the Post Medieval pottery.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	F1		F2		F3		F330		F403		F421		F417		F426		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
101									5	84			1	3	3	190	U/S
102	84	948	71	1003													MIA
103			1	11					3	21							M15thC
105											1	17					M16thC
111									1	3							M15thC
120					4	28	3	137									12thC
Total	84	948	72	1014	4	28	3	137	9	108	1	17	1	3	3	190	

The Environmental Samples and Plant Remains (By Val Fryer)

Introduction and method statement

Excavations at Earls Barton, undertaken by Independent Archaeology Consultants (IAC), recorded a number of pits of probable Prehistoric date in addition to features containing Iron Age, Medieval and Post Medieval pottery. Samples for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblages were taken, and twelve were submitted for assessment, eleven from the Prehistoric pit fills and one from a ditch of Late Medieval date.

The samples were bulk floated by IAC and the floats were collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried floats were scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed in Table 1. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (2010). All plant remains were charred. Modern roots were also recorded and removed.

Results

Charcoal/charred wood fragments are present throughout, although rarely at a high density. Much of the material is somewhat rounded and abraded, possibly suggesting that it had been exposed to the elements for a prolonged period prior to inclusion within the feature fills. Other plant macrofossils occur very infrequently. However, occasional cereal grains (including specimens of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and possibly rye

(*Secale cereale*)) are recorded along with small fragments of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) nutshell.

Fragments of black porous material are present within all but three of the assemblages studied. Although some may be residues of the combustion of organic remains at extremely high temperatures, most are distinctly hard and brittle, probably indicating that they are bi-products of the combustion of coal, small pieces of which are also recorded. Both residues and coal fragments are most likely to be intrusive within the feature fills, being derived from either the spreading of night soil/midden waste during the Medieval/Post Medieval periods or the use of steam implements of the land during the early Modern era. Other remains are scarce but do include small fragments of bone, some of which are burnt/calcined.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the assemblages from Earls Barton are all extremely small (i.e. <0.1 litres in volume) and sparse, with most being composed of little other than fragments of charcoal/charred wood. It is thought most likely that the few remains which are recorded are all derived from scattered refuse/midden waste, all of which was probably accidentally incorporated within the feature fills. Although very limited in composition, these assemblages are largely typical of samples of Prehistoric date, with numerous parallels recorded across East Anglia and the east Midlands area.

As none of the current assemblages contain a sufficient density of material for quantification (i.e. 100+ specimens) no further analysis is recommended. However, a summary of this assessment should be included within any publication of data from the site.

Key to Table

x = 1 – 10 specimens xx = 11 – 50 specimens xxx = 51 – 100 specimens xxxx = 100+ specimens
cf = compare fg = fragment b = burnt
Prehist = prehistoric L.Med = Late medieval

Context No.	**116**	**118**	**121**	**123**	**127**	**131**	**133**	**135**	**141**	**143**	**145**	**103**
Feature type	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Pit**	**Ditch**
Date	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**Prehist.**	**L.Med.**
Plant macrofossils												
Secale cereale L. (grain)												xcf
Triticum sp. (grain)						x						
Cereal indet. (grains)					xcffg			x	x			
Corylus avellana L.			x		x				xcf	x		
Charcoal <2mm	xx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx	x	xx	xxxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	x
Charcoal >2mm	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx		xx	xxx	xxx	xx	xx	x
Charcoal >5mm	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Charcoal >10mm			x						x			

Charred root/stem				x						x		
Other remains												
Black porous 'cokey' material	xx	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Black tarry material	x										x	
Bone	xx			xb								
Small coal frags.	x	x		x	x						x	x
Sample volume (litres)	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**
Volume of flot (litres)	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**	**<0.1**
% flot sorted	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

The Animal Bones (By Tania Kausmally)

Animal bones were present in three contexts: The fill (116) in the Prehistoric pit [117], fill (103) in the Medieval boundary ditch [104] and fill (114) in the Post Medieval pit [115]. In the first case the bones come from a horse, especially parts of the lower legs and the spine were preserved. As pit [117] is thought to be Prehistoric it is likely that the partly preserved horse is contemporary with the fill in the pit, even if the bones could not be used for carbon dating.

In the two other cases all bone fragments were from cows, and shall probably be seen as domestic waste. In the fill (103) the bones were found together with fragments of Late Medieval domestic pottery, and some bones have cut-marks from slaughtering or food preparation. The bones are therefore likely to be from the Late Medieval period. In fill (114) the bone fragment gives a similar impression, even if they are of a Post Medieval date.

The Flint (By Carl Persson)

A number of residual flint cores and flakes were present in the Prehistoric pits. Most fragments show signs of having been worked and bulbs are visible on a number of surfaces. As flint was running out of fashion with the introduction of metals in the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods the flint from the Prehistoric pits is likely to be from the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age periods.

An important question is whether the flint was already present within the area when the pits were excavated, and then ended up in the pits during their backfilling, or if the flint is actually contemporary with the pits themselves. A longer discussion about this chronological problem can be found towards the end of this report.

Even if flint was used for making fire, and in flintlock guns, well into the 19th century the flint from Earls Barton is considerably older. It was found in secure contexts deep down in the ground. The Prehistoric pits were all sealed by the Medieval plough soil (120), and the flint is therefore likely to represent the earliest signs of human activity in the area.

The Slag and Bronze

Slag was found it two different contexts: The Subsoil (102) and the fill (103) in the Medieval boundary ditch [104]. In both cases the slag is very heavy and rusty, indicating that the slag has a high degree of iron left in it. This may indicate that it comes from a rather primitive form of iron production. Considering that Iron Age pottery was found in the Subsoil it is possible that the slag is from this period, but more likely maybe is that the slag is Medieval, as very similar slag was found in the Medieval boundary ditch.

A crotal bronze bell was also found in fill (103) in the Medieval boundary ditch [104]. The bell was very well preserved and has a design that can date it to the 15th or 16th century. Such bells were often used as decorations on clothes, horses or various other items.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The archaeological investigation at 11 Berry Close in Earls Barton, Northamptonshire revealed that there has been human activity in this old village since Prehistoric times. This indicates that people have lived in the area for several thousand years. Previous archaeological investigations at various locations in the modern settlement have found evidence for activity from the Iron Age onwards.

8.2 The open area investigation in May 2015 came across evidence for an Iron Age settlement in the area, as 2kg of Iron Age pottery was collected from the subsoil in the northeastern part of the site. An Iron Age settlement is therefore likely to have been located in a close proximity to the open area excavation. As mentioned above Iron Age activity has been recorded at Mallards Close about 250m northeast of the site.

8.3 The Iron Age settlement at Mallards Close was superseded by a Romano-British settlement, comprising a stone-walled enclosure that may have surrounded a villa built in the mid 2nd century A. D., but a number of other Iron Age sites in the area were still occupied in the Roman period.

8.4 The absence of Roman features and finds within the investigation area in May 2015 is therefore relevant: The 2012 evaluation was able to show that a Romano-British farmstead existed about 50m to the south of the site. It is therefore likely that the Romans, when they came to Britain with their continental culture, decided to abandon some of the old Iron Age settlements that surround Earls Barton in favor of the new location closer to the River Nene and High Street.

8.5 When it comes to the Prehistoric pits uncovered in May 2015 a few words must be said about their date, shapes and functions in order to put them in the correct context in the surrounding and changing landscape. All pits were

sealed by the Medieval ploughsoil, but none of the pits contained any pottery what so ever. As several Iron Age sherds were found in the slope in the north eastern part of the site it seems strange that no pottery ended up in the pits. Iron Age pottery was for example found in the backfilled Medieval boundary ditch, but not in any of the pits.

8.6 The most likely reason for this is that the pits had already been backfilled when the Iron Age pottery was spread down the slope. The fills in all pits were very homogenous and none of the pits had more than one single fill. The edges of the pits were also very straight, and showed no signs of having collapsed. This indicates that the pits had not been left open to silt up over a longer period of time. They had rather been used over a relatively short time span and then deliberately backfilled.

8.7 The pits are with other words likely to predate the nearby Iron Age settlement that produced the pottery. But exactly how old are the pits, and can the flint from the pits actually be used to date them? A possibility is of course that the Bronze Age/Neolithic flint was already present in the area and just ended up in the pits during the backfilling. Residual Neolithic flint has previously been found in the area, but could not be linked to specific archaeological features (Chapman and Atkins 2005, p. 11).

8.8 In order to date the pits more closely we need to discuss their functions and shapes: Most of the pits at Earls Barton were circular in plan, but many of them had nearly vertical sides and flat bottoms. There are also a few examples of "beehive" shaped pits with undercut sides. Such pits are typical for Iron Age settlements in Britain and have been found at archaeological excavations all over the country in the last 50 years. Iron Age storage pits have in recent years been studied by Barry Cunliffe:

"Large pits have long been known to be a characteristic of the British Iron Age. Originally they were thought to be habitations, but since the 1930s they have been assumed to have served as grain silos" (Cunliffe 2007).

8.9 Cunliffe has in recent years also studied the Iron Age storage pits from Danebury Ring Hillfort in Hampshire:

"The great majority of the pits were circular in plan and were of two sub types: cylindrical pits with near vertical sides; and beehive pits with undercut sides causing the pit to widen out at the bottom. There were more than four times as many beehive pits, 72 per cent of the total, as there were cylindrical pits. Most of the pits had been left open after use and had become filled with a mixture of rubbish, together with silt and chalk eroding from the sides. In this process the upper part of the pit walls had usually crumbled away, completely altering the profiles, but a few, by virtue of their sheltered positions and very rapid filling, had preserved their profiles exactly as they were when originally dug" (Cunliffe 2013).

8.10 Towards this discussion it is likely that the pits at Berry Close are a cluster of Iron Age storage pits that slightly predates the nearby Iron Age settlement. But can the pits be older than the Iron Age? A recent example of a Bronze Age storage pit was excavated by Wessex Archaeology at the former Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton, London (WA 1999). Bronze Age storage pits are however rare, and no such pits are known from the Earls Barton area and no Bronze Age pottery was found during the 2015 investigation.

8.11 More likely, therefore, is that the pits uncovered during the excavation are storage pits from the early Iron Age and that they were excavated, used and backfilled over a relatively short period of time, just before the Iron Age settlement had expanded and its broken pottery spread over the area. An Iron Age date of the pits at Berry Close corresponds well with the results from the excavation at Mallards Close, which was conducted by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2005 some 250m northeast of the site:

"Late Iron Age and early Roman enclosures and a Roman walled enclosure were investigated in an open area excavation. The small, square Iron Age enclosure was surrounded by a deep ditch with a narrow western entrance, conforming to the Wootton Hill type, but it was probably part of a more extensive settlement. The enclosure contained **several deep storage pits**, some of which held deposits of selected finds including a quern and antler working debris. The enclosure was in use from the 1st century BC to the mid-1st century AD, when it was encompassed within a more complex system of shallower ditches that formed a new enclosure" (Chapman and Atkins 2005).

8.12 It is also of interest to discuss the results of the 2015 investigations in regards to the later history of the village. It is likely that a Saxon settlement was situated closer to the village church in the south west, which still retains its Saxon tower. Saxon burials have been recorded in the cemetery, suggesting that the church may have had an earlier Saxon precursor. Saxon settlement remains have been investigated ca. 400m to the west of the site, but no evidence for Saxon activity was uncovered during the 2015 investigations.

8.13 In the southwest is also Berry Mount, a Scheduled Monument interpreted as a Norman motte and bailey castle. The bailey may lie to the north of the motte, and is thought to have Saxon origins. Pottery from the Norman period was found during the investigation in May 2015 in the fill (103) in the boundary ditch [104] in the north eastern corner of the investigation area. However, there is no evidence for any substantial Medieval activity in the area between Berry Mount and the Medieval boundary ditch.

8.14 Other Medieval remains in the village include the possible site of a 15th century Manor House, with associated fishponds and the remains of an open field system. The long, narrow field within the site, therefore, possibly preserved the boundaries of a Medieval burgage plot. There was, however, little evidence to support this theory during the 2015 investigation.

8.15 The Post Medieval features that were uncovered in the southern part of the investigation area are likely to belong to activity in the area during the last 400 years. The garden wall (108) and the ditch [113] in the south can most likely be linked to the existing farm.

8.16 Further archaeological investigations in Earls Barton will hopefully be able to contribute with additional information regarding the long and fascinating history of the village. It would be of great scientific interest to obtain a better picture of the various Prehistoric settlements that once existed in the area.

9 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records	Finds

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants.

The archive will be transferred to:

The Archaeological Collections for Northamptonshire County Council.

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APPENDICES

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context nr	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
(101)	0.31	Topsoil. Dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots and small stones. Inclusions of Post Medieval pottery and tobacco clay pipes	(102)	-
(102)	0.69	Subsoil. Red-brown, plastic silty clay with occasional roots and small stones. Inclusions of Iron Age pottery and slag	(103) (105) (106) (108) (109) (111) (114) (120)	(101)
(103)	0.60	Fill of ditch [104]. Dark brown, soft silty sand. Inclusions of animal bones, slag, Medieval pottery and bronze	[104]	(102)
[104]	0.60	Cut of ditch [104]	(123) (145) (141)	(103)
(105)	0.25	Spread from collapsed garden wall. Occasional limestone and mortar. Inclusions of Late Medieval pottery	Natural	[110] (102)
(106)	0.15	Fill of plundered foundation trench for wall (108). Dark brown, plastic silty clay	[107]	(102)
[107]	0.15	Cut for foundation trench of wall (106) and (108)	Natural	(106) (108)
(108)	0.15	Section of garden wall. Limestone and mortar	[107]	(102)
(109)	0.08	Fill of shallow ditch [110]. Mid grey, soft silty clay with occasional charcoal	[110]	(102)
[110]	0.08	Cut of shallow ditch [110]	(105)	(109)
(111)	0.18	Secondary fill of ditch [113]. Mid grey brown, soft sandy silt with moderate inclusions of small stones. Inclusions of Post Medieval pottery and tobacco claypipes	(112)	(102)

(112)	0.25	Primary fill of ditch [113]. Mid yellow brown, soft sandy clay with occasional Ironstone and pebbles	[113]	(111)
[113]	0.43	Cut of ditch [113]	Natural	(112)
(114)	0.32	Fill of Modern rubbish pit [115]. Mixed fill of yellow grey, soft silty sand with occasional bricks, china, animal bones and charcoal.	[115]	(102)
[115]	0.32	Cut of Modern rubbish pit [115]	Natural	(114)
(116)	0.55	Fill of Prehistoric pit [117]. Light grey, soft silty sand with spots of charcoal with occasional inclusions of worked flint and animal bones	[117]	(120)
[117]	0.55	Cut of Prehistoric pit [117]	Natural	(116)
(118)	0.50	Fill of Prehistoric pit [119]. Light brown, soft silty sand with occasional stones and worked flint	[119]	(120)
[119]	0.50	Cut of Prehistoric pit [119]	Natural	(118)
(120)	0.58	Medieval plough soil in the north eastern part of the site. Grey yellow, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal, bones, stones, pebbles, pottery and flint. Visible plough marks running SE-NW across the surface	(116) (118) (121) (123) (125) (127) (129) (131) (133) (135) (137) (141) (143) (145)	(102)
(121)	0.52	Fill of Prehistoric pit [122]. Mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[122]	(120)
[122]	0.52	Cut of Prehistoric pit [122]	Natural	(121)
(123)	0.54	Fill of Prehistoric pit [124]. Mid grey, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[124]	(120) [104]
[124]	0.54	Cut of Prehistoric pit [124]	Natural	(123)
(125)	0.20	Fill of Prehistoric pit [126]. Dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal	[126]	(120)

[126]	0.20	Cut of Prehistoric pit [126]	(127)	(125)
(127)	0.62	Fill of Prehistoric pit [128]. Mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[128]	[126]
[128]	0.62	Cut of Prehistoric pit [128]	Natural	(127)
(129)	0.64	Fill of Prehistoric pit [130]. Mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[130]	(120)
[130]	0.64	Cut of Prehistoric pit [130]	Natural	(129)
(131)	0.74	Fill of Prehistoric pit [132]. Mid dark brown, soft silty sand with flecks of charcoal and occasional worked flint	[132]	(120)
[132]	0.74	Cut of Prehistoric pit [132]	Natural	(131)
(133)	0.46	Fill of Prehistoric pit [134]. Mid brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[134]	(120)
[134]	0.46	Cut of Prehistoric pit [134]	Natural	(133)
(135)	0.80	Fill of Prehistoric pit [136]. Dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[136]	[138]
[136]	0.80	Cut of Prehistoric pit [136]	Natural	(135)
(137)	0.60	Fill of Prehistoric pit [138]. Dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal	[138]	(120)
[138]	0.60	Cut of Prehistoric pit [138]	(135)	(137)
(139)	-	Void	-	-
[140]	-	Void	-	-
(141)	0.84	Fill of Prehistoric pit [142]. Mid dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[142]	(120) [104]
[142]	0.84	Cut of Prehistoric pit [142]	Natural	(141)
(143)	0.56	Fill of Prehistoric pit [144]. Mid dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[144]	(120)
[144]	0.56	Cut of Prehistoric pit [144]	Natural	(143)
(145)	0.60	Fill of Prehistoric pit [146]. Dark brown, soft silty sand with occasional charcoal and worked flint	[146]	(120) [104]
[146]	0.60	Cut of Prehistoric pit [146]	Natural	(145)
Natural 1	-	In the south and central part of the site. Orange brown, firm, Ironstone	-	(105) [107] [110] [113]
Natural 2	-	In the north eastern part of the site. White yellow, soft silty sand	-	[104] [115] [117]

				[119] [122] [124] [126] [128] [130] [132] [134] [136] [138] [142] [144] [146]

FINDS LIST

Find nr	Context	Material	Object	Description	Period
1	(102)	Fired clay	30+ sherds of pottery	About 1 kg of Mid Iron Age pottery	Mid Iron Age
2	(102)	Fired clay	30+ sherds of pottery	About 1 kg of Mid Iron Age pottery	Mid Iron Age
3	(103)	Fired clay	3 sherds of pottery	Midland Purple Ware	1450-1600
4	(120)	Fired clay	3 sherds of pottery	Shelly Coarseware	1100-1400
5	(105)	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Frechen/Cologne stoneware	1550-1750
6	(111)	Fired clay	1 sherd of pottery	Midland Purple Ware,	1450-1600
7	(101)	Fired clay	3 sherds of pottery	Midland Purple Ware, Nottingham/Derby Stoneware and Iron-Glazed Coarsewares	1450-1600, 1700-1900, 1600-1800
8	(116)	Flint	2 flint flakes	Flakes from struck flint	Prehistoric
9	(118)	Flint	5 flint flakes	Flakes from struck flint	Prehistoric
10	(121)	Flint	4 flint flakes and 1 core	Flakes and core from struck flint	Prehistoric
11	(123)	Flint	4 flint flakes	Flakes from struck flint	Prehistoric
12	(127)	Flint	12 flint flakes and 1 core of flint	Flakes and core from struck flint	Prehistoric
13	(129)	Flint	6 flint flakes and 4 cores of flint	Flakes and cores from struck flint	Prehistoric
14	(131)	Flint	2 flint flakes	Flakes from struck flint	Prehistoric
15	(133)	Flint	1 flint flake	Flake from struck flint	Prehistoric
16	(135)	Flint	1 core of flint	A core of struck flint	Prehistoric
17	(141)	Flint	3 cores of flint	Corse of struck flint	Prehistoric
18	(143)	Flint	1 flint flake	Flake from struck flint	Prehistoric
19	(145)	Flint	2 flint flakes	Flakes from struck flint	Prehistoric
20	(116)	Bone	10 bones from a horse	A part of a horse skeleton	Prehistoric?
21	(111)	Fired clay	1 stem from a tobacco clay pipe	A piece of a stem from a tobacco clay pipe	1600-1800 A. D.
22	(101)	Fired clay	1 piece from a tobacco clay pipe	Piece of a bowl from a tobacco clay pipes	1600-1700 A. D.
23	(103)	Bronze	1 bronze bell	A well preserved crotal bell from a dress	1400-1600 A. D.
24	(103)	Bone	30+ bones from cows	Domestic waste from cows	1450-1600 A. D.

25	(103)	Slag	1 piece of slag	The piece is very heavy and rusty. Possibly early slag	1450-1600 A. D.
26	(102)	Slag	3 pieces of slag	All pieces are very heavy and rusty. Possibly early slag	Iron Age-Medieval