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Modern living in an historic environment

**An archaeological evaluation at the Old Railway
Club, 38A Broad Green, Wellingborough
Northamptonshire**

2 September 2014

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Old Railway Club, 38A Broad Green, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire

July-August 2014

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Summary

Six evaluation trenches were excavated on land associated with the former railway club at Broad Green, Wellingborough. These suggest a site which has only localised archaeology present. Several postholes in the north-western corner of the site have been dated to the medieval period and indicate a discrete focus of activity. At the north-eastern corner of the site two parallel ditches mark a short surviving alignment of the former course of Outlaw Lane which may originate in the medieval period. Elsewhere on site, there has been considerable disturbance from 19th century quarrying and terracing associated with the construction and growth of a villa, later the railway club buildings, in the 19th - late 20th century.

Introduction

Planning consent is sought from Wellingborough Council for the construction of a Close Care Facility and adjacent Residential Blocks at the junction of Broad Green and Gold Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 8861 8286). The site, which once fronted two former thoroughfares, (Broad Green/Gold Street and Outlaw Lane) lies at the northern end of the medieval core of Wellingborough. The First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1885 shows the site as open, with a large Victorian Villa standing well back from the road. This villa was incorporated into what became the now demolished Railway Club buildings, a massive sprawl of community centre, social club and their associated spaces, still being added to as late as the 1980s. The site appears to have retained no visible early frontage when Wellingborough was mapped as early as 1803. RCHME (1981, 130-1 & fig 100). Partida et al (2012, map 43) see the site as falling between the two.

The topographical history of the plot has been extensively researched in a foregoing Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (ULAS 2014 An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at 38A Broad Green, Wellingborough, Northants, University of Leicester Archaeological Services).

Wellingborough Council, through their partners and planning advisors, Northamptonshire County Council, requested that a field evaluation should take place in order to facilitate an informed decision on the full archaeological implications of the development of the plot.

In accordance with this requirement, the Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council, Liz Mordue, issued a two-part Brief for Archaeological Evaluation of the site, dated 23 May 2014. In answer to this I S Heritage Ltd produced an approved Written Scheme of

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Investigation, dated 8 July 2014, of evaluation work to be undertaken pre-determination in response to that brief.

Evaluation began on 28 July 2014 with the excavation of four trial trenches (1-3, 6), whereupon the work was adjourned for ongoing demolition works. Trial trenching was resumed, and completed, on 19 August.



Fig 1: Site location; Contains Ordnance Survey data ©Crown Copyright and database right 2014

Site location, topography and geology

The site lies c500m to the north-west of Wellingborough town centre at the junction of Gold Street and Harrowden Road in an area known as Broad Green. The site is bounded by residential development to the north, south-west and east and a tiny thoroughfare, Outlaw Lane, to the south-east. The north-western part of the site lies at c80m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), sloping to c77m aOD at the south-eastern corner.

Superficial deposits of Diamicton Till derived from the Oadby Member are recorded in the north-western part of the site; elsewhere none are recorded. Bedrock geology is recorded as sandstones and siltstones of the Stamford Member at the north-west and ironstone of the Northampton Sand Formation at the east and south of the site (British Geological Survey; www.bgs.ac.uk).

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Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological and historical background of the site has previously been discussed (ULAS 2014), from which the following brief synopsis has been drawn.

Late Saxon pottery found in later features immediately north of the site indicates that there was some degree of early settlement in the vicinity.

The site is located in an area of known medieval tenements. The areas of Broad Green and Buckwell End are thought to be the focus of the Earl of Leicester's manor in Wellingborough in the 12th century. Much of the wider area is located on the heavy boulder clay and it has been suggested that they may have originated as greens serving a grazing function around which settlement gravitated during the 11th century.

Recent archaeological excavation on the site immediately to the north at the former Dun Cow revealed a dense concentration of features most likely dating to the 12th-13th centuries. These included rubbish and cess pits, property boundaries and several hearths. The location of the features, away from the Gold Street frontage, suggested another frontage to the south, possibly within the current site.

Further excavation at Buckwell End, c200m to the south-west, found property boundaries dating to the 11th-12th centuries and a well (Chinnock 2014).

The earliest detailed map of the site is the 1803 survey of the town. No buildings are shown within the site, although an earlier alignment of Outlaw Lane doglegs into the north-eastern corner. By 1886 a substantial villa with associated gardens occupied the north-western part of the site, with a meadow/pasture in the eastern part. A former brickworks and pits are marked to the south of the site. The eastern boundary of the site was relocated to the west between 1926 and 1967. The modern buildings formerly associated with the Railway Club, and now demolished, were constructed between 1983 and 1993 and incorporated the 19th-century villa at their core.

Methodology

Initial excavation took place in level spits with the aid of a 12-ton 360-degree mechanical excavator fitted with a wide, toothless ditching bucket. Upon exposure of the natural geology or the uppermost significant archaeological horizon (reckoned on this site to be remains demonstrably pre-dating 1803), whichever was the higher, excavation continued by hand.

A total of six trenches were excavated, in locations agreed in the foregoing Written Scheme of Investigation. The base of each trench was cleaned by hand in order to facilitate recognition of archaeological features. Sections were cleaned by hand in order to best appreciate the later formation processes which make up the site and to provide context for any features to which they might relate.

Features were assigned individual consecutive numbers, grouped by trench, with appropriate cross-referencing where horizons relate across from trench to trench.

Finds were collected by context and processed for specialist assessment, in order to provide corroborative dating for the site and any related socio-economic data which might be forthcoming.

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Trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:50 in order to plot and illustrate features encountered relative to each-other and the site. Individual sections of features were drawn at a scale of 1:20 where photography was insufficient to show their discernible constituents. Photography was two-fold in its approach, being digital and colour for reporting purposes, with complementary black-and-white negative film with contact sheet for archiving purposes.

On completion of the fieldwork, the trenches were backfilled with their original up-cast and the surface lightly compacted to restore the ground level.

The levels of the archaeology on the site were determined relative to a pre-determined height for the development (a temporary benchmark – *Fox 4*), and related by Dumpy-Level. These were later converted to accord with an OS Benchmark near the site.

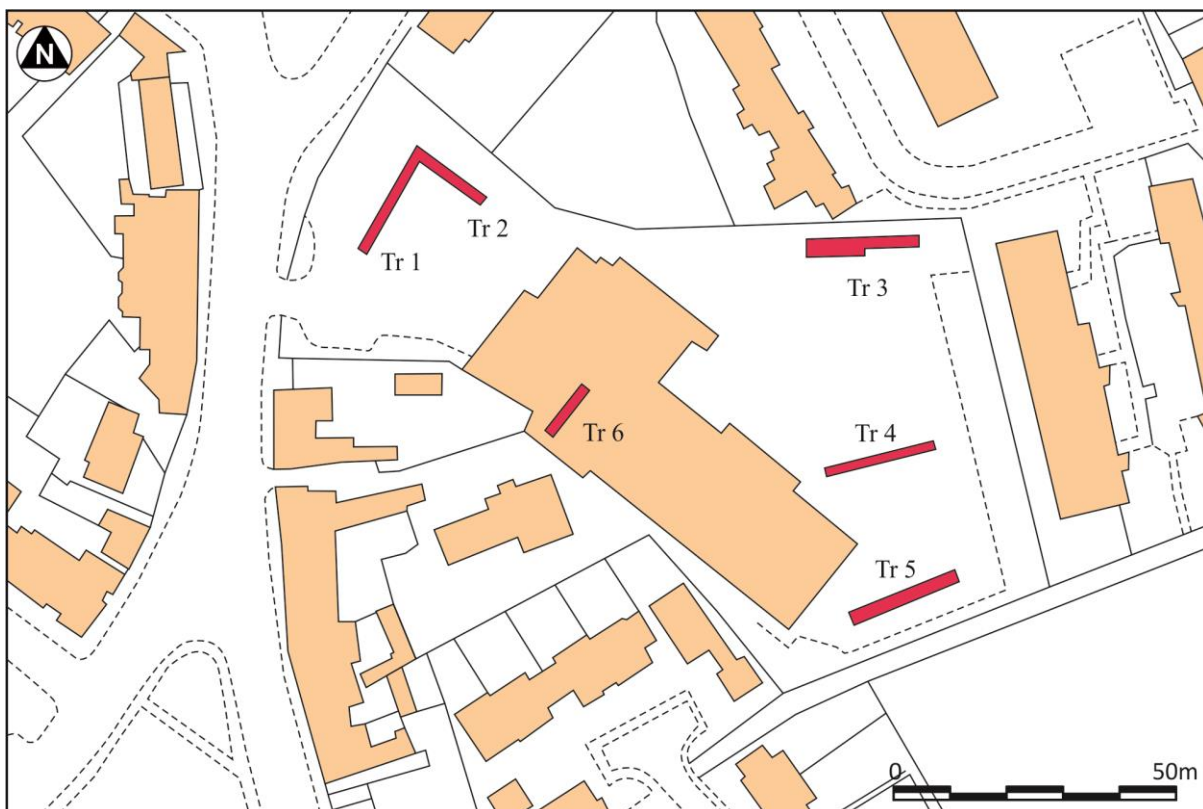


Fig 2: Trench location plan

Results

Trench 1 was dug to test any former Broad Green frontage, with which it was designed to lie parallel. The trench measured 21m by 1.8m and its exact location, aligned north-south, was determined by the frontage lime trees which form the edge of a local authority Conservation Area. Thus the trench was laid out to lie clear of the tree canopies and their root systems so as to leave them undisturbed.

Cutting down through the modern car park tarmac and its sub-base (101, 102, 103, 107), the trench encountered a thin squashed vestige of subsoil and a sandy clay subsoil which deepened towards the south (105, 106). Relating to these was a c1m-wide gravel path with ceramic edging tiles, each with three simple lunettes (104); these were set on dry-laid bricks. This path made an acute angle to

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the frontage which relates to the 1st and 2nd editions of the Ordnance Survey, which marks it out as the former front path to the Victorian Villa, before it became the recently-demolished Railway Club.

There were no other features in Trench 1 of archaeological origin. The subsoil (109), thickening downslope to the south, was devoid of finds of any description and so is reckoned to be a naturally-occurring layer, here with no archaeology surviving cut into it before the Victorian period. There was no residual pottery or any other finds predating the 19th century.



Fig 3: Trench 1, devoid of pre-19th-century features or finds, looking south-west. Note the geology changes abruptly to clay close to Trench 2, nearest the camera; scale 1m

Trench 2 was dug to address any potential rear-wings to a putative Broad Green frontage which may have existed. It measured 15m by 1.8m and was aligned east-west, and joined to the north end of Trench 1 to which it was perpendicular.

Beneath the ubiquitous Tarmac of the Car Park (201) and its sub-base (202), lay a rolled, compacted former garden soil (203) over very wet and root-rich clayey subsoil (204). Sealed below this was a configuration of archaeological features which were cut into a discrete but extensive deposit of

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natural clay (205). The natural geology had changed from sandy clay to thick, buttery buff/grey clay close to the north end of Trench 1. This clay was present throughout Trench 2.

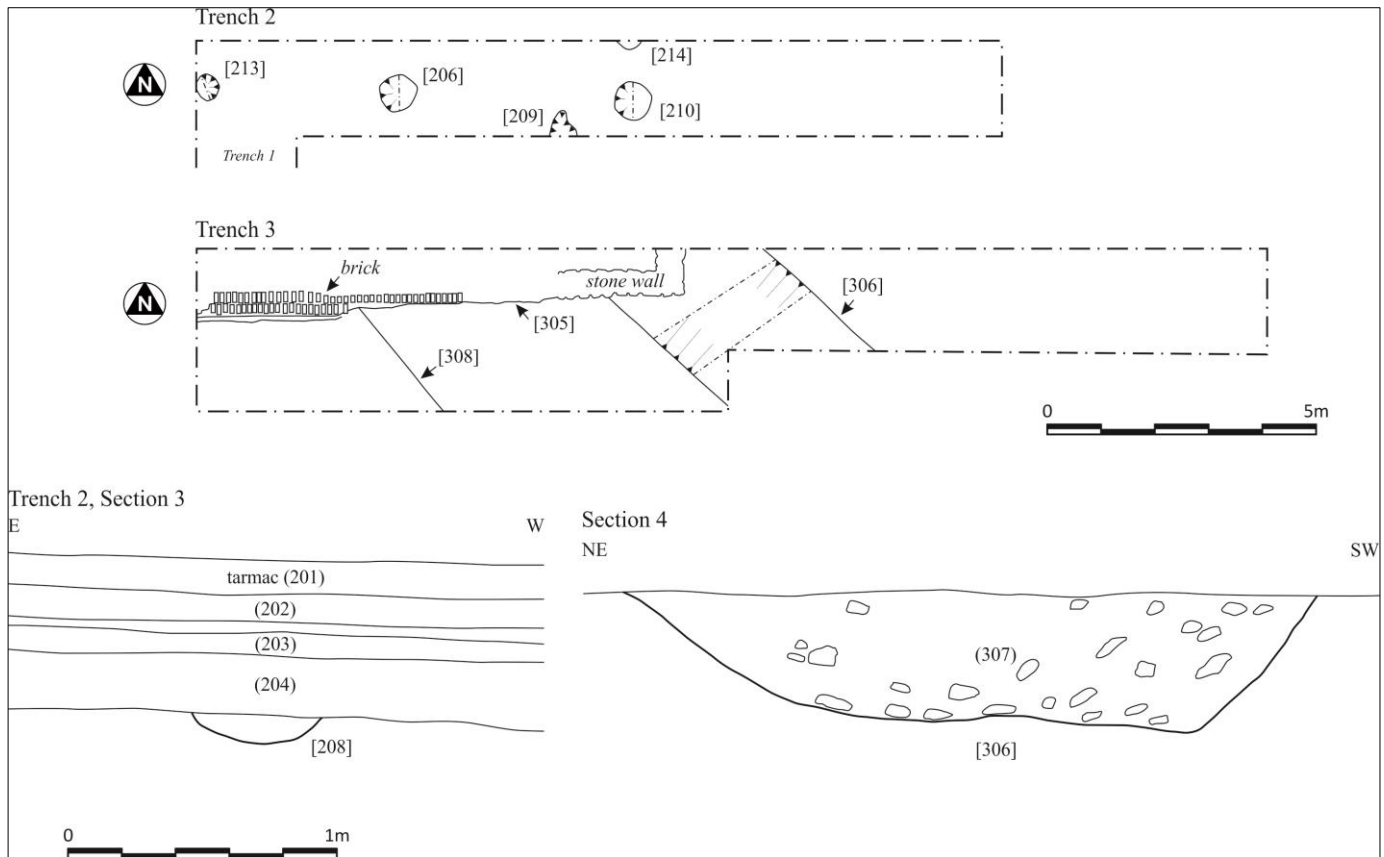


Fig 4: Plans and sections, Trenches 2 and 3 (section numbers relate to site records)

The configuration of archaeological features comprised an apparent row of pits (probably post-holes) (206, 210, 213). A fourth post-hole (209), not in line, lay partly under the southern section (Fig 4: Trench 2, Section 3), while another probable post-hole, at right angles to the line of three, was only just exposed from under the northern section (214).

The fills of post-holes 209 (208) and 210 (211) both produced relatively large numbers of exclusively medieval pottery, while the fill of 213 produced medieval pottery and a single sherd of Victorian pottery.

There were no occupation surfaces present. The average depth in this trench to these archaeological features was c600mm.



Fig 5: Pit [210], looking south-east: Scale 0.5m

Trench 3 was dug to assess the survival of any remains which might be associated with the former dog-legging course of Outlaw Lane, mapped in 1803 and apparently a remnant of an earlier layout. It measured 20m by 1.8m, widening to 3m for 10m at the eastern end, and was aligned roughly east to west.

Beneath the tarmac (301) and sub-base (302) lay a thick accumulation of sticky, clayey sub-soil (303), apparently disturbed and re-deposited. It was traceable right down to the natural Northampton Sand with Ironstone geology (304), the third geology encountered in three separate trenches.

Within the thickness of this sub-soil was a dry-stone foundation (305) within a barely-discernible construction trench. This foundation supported a brick superstructure, all buried, which appears to belong to a former villa outbuilding close to the end of a row of Victorian houses beyond the site, all now lost. It is discernible on the early OS maps in the foregoing desk-based assessment.

Beneath the building and cut into the natural geology lay angled across the trench the parallel courses of two in-filled ditches (306 and 308), the latter not excavated as it lay too close to the end section of the trench. Ditch 306 was 500mm deep, 2.6m wide and flat bottomed (Fig 4: section 4). It contained a dark brown, sandy, slightly humic soil with numerous ill-sorted fragments of ironstone (307). From the fill also came a few fragments of medieval pottery.

It is believed that these two parallel ditches formed the roadside ditches of the former Outlaw Lane, mapped in 1803, but, on the evidence of the pottery, dating to some centuries before that. The lane probably acted as a green lane, providing access to the fields, and its dog-legging course related to an old field-layout which predated the 1803 Inclosure of the land. The ditches may have taken many

centuries to silt up and be lost. They were clearly lost by the time the outbuilding was constructed over the ditches sometime in the last quarter of the 19th century.

There were no occupation features related to the ditches, nor any metallurgy surviving between them.



Fig 6: Trench 3, with sectioned ditch [306] and wall [305], looking west; Scale 1m

Trench 4

Trench 4, measuring 20m x 1.8m, was excavated to assess the potential for archaeological remains close to the eastern boundary of the site. Historic maps indicate that this boundary was only created between 1926 and 1967; prior to this the boundary lay much further eastwards close to Alliance Terrace.

Beneath the modern crushed hardcore (401) and a layer of clean crushed limestone (402) that had probably formed a sub-base for the former car-park surface, there was a probable former topsoil/garden soil (403), very compacted and becoming significantly deeper at the eastern end of the trench.

Below the topsoil layer was a homogenous orange-brown sandy silt subsoil (404) with occasional large pieces of ironstone and frequent smaller fragments, which extended across the entire trench. A single animal bone was found in this layer, which was up to 0.60m thick. Below this layer was a similar light/mid orange-brown sandy silt (405) with occasional small pieces of ironstone; towards the west of the trench the small pieces of ironstone became more frequent. The horizon between

(404) and (405) was very diffuse. Truncating (405) was a trench for a salt-glazed pipe. Layer (405), though very similar in composition to the natural geology observed in Trench 1, was more loosely packed and was likely to have been quarry backfill. A sondage at the eastern end of the trench confirmed that this layer extended to at least 1.70m below the current ground level.



Fig 7: Trench 4, looking east; Scales 1m

Trench 5

Trench 5 was dug along the southern site boundary, parallel with the remaining course of Outlaw Lane, in order to assess the potential for any former building frontages along this lane. The trench was aligned north-east to south-west and was 21m long and 1.8m wide.

Beneath the modern demolition rubble (501) and crushed limestone (502) was a layer of dark grey-black clayey silt, which was 0.2-0.6m thick, a buried topsoil/garden soil. Underlying the topsoil was a diffuse layer of mid orange-brown sandy silt (503), up to 0.60m thick. It overlay mid orange-brown cornbrash natural geology (505) at the eastern end of the trench. A possible quarry-pit (509) lay partially within this part of the trench. There was frogged brick and early 20th century pottery in the

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fill. There was a large feature in the western half of the trench, likely to be another quarry pit. Pit 507 was at least 12.50m wide, extending beyond the western edge of the trench. The fills were mixed, comprising apparently dumped deposits of mid grey-brown silty clay as well as discrete patches of clay, sand and cornbrash, all similar to the natural geology, but with occasional pieces of 19th century pottery and brick/tile as well as animal bone (noted, but not retained for archive). A sondage at the western end of the trench failed to find the base of the feature at 1.70m below current ground level.

Partially truncating the quarry infill was a modern service trench (still live).



Fig 8: Trench 5, looking south-west: Scale 2m

Both trenches 4 and 5 were located in the southern part of the site which lay at a significantly lower level than the northern part; there was a steep 2m drop which indicated that this part of the site had been terraced (Fig 9). Houses along the south-western boundary were situated at a higher level and a concrete retaining wall edged the site (Fig 10). The original surface of much of this area has been significantly reduced with the result that there is considered to be little/no archaeological potential.

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Furthermore, both Trenches 4 and 5 were located in an area of former quarrying, likely to have been undertaken during the early-mid 19th century.



Fig 9: The southern part of the site, showing the terraced ground level, looking south-east



Fig 10: The concrete retaining wall along the south-eastern boundary

Trench 6 was dug under the footprint of the former club buildings in order to assess what potential might remain there after that incremental development of the 1980s and after the 2014 demolition contract.

A single trench was aligned north-south and measured 10m by 1.80m (Fig 11). The uppermost metre comprised compressed and compacted 2014 demolition rubble, under which lay further layer of disturbed sandy clay containing 19th and 20th century pottery. Excavation was therefore curtailed as the potential of this area was felt to have been severely reduced or was absent.



Fig 11: Trench 6, looking north. Scale 1m

Finds

Pottery

A total of 93 sherds were retrieved from stratified contexts in Trenches 2 and 3, weighing 1404 grammes, and present in a probable nine basic types or fabrics.

In so far as was possible, they were matched to published examples of the Northamptonshire Medieval and later pottery County Type Series (CTS). The medieval types present were very badly affected by water-damage (they all derive from impermeable clay-based features dug on clay), making definitive identification to type difficult and in many cases tentative. What is clear is that the majority of wares present belong to the Northamptonshire shell-tempered traditions beginning c1100 and continuing well into the 14th century.

Types deriving almost certainly from the large production centre at Lyveden/Stanion are present, as are those from further afield in Brill/Boarstall, Bucks, but in small quantities. Most, however, lack the definitive characteristics which tie them to those centres, and are rather part of a 'tradition'.

Glazing, almost always green in these cases, is widespread, making a date after c1250 likely.

The post-holes in Trench 2 are likely to date to the period c1250-1400, while the ditch in Trench 3 contains material which is less distinguishable and is merely 'medieval'. There is no definitive late medieval type present which can be dated after c1450 and there are no fine wares. This is a simple, workaday domestic assemblage with jugs, bowls and cooking pots represented.

Types present by context and classed by type/fabric.

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Type/context	209	211	213	215	303	307	Total
?Stamford ware	1/6g						1/6g
319 Lyveden/Stamion A ware		1/16g		1/9g			2/25g
320 Lyveden?Stamion-type ware		14/377g					14/377g
Water damaged, glazed ware		16/250g					16/250g
324 Brill/Boarstall-type ware		5/62g					5/62g
329 Potterspury-type ware		11/130g					11/130g
330 Shelly Coarseware	15/187g	8/57g		1/40g		2/19g	26/303g
Misc medieval sandy wares		12/90g					12/90g
Victorian table ware			1/8g		5/153g		6/161g
Totals	16/193g	67/982g	1/8g	2/49g	5/153g	2/19g	93/1404g

The numbers present suggest that the pottery derives from contemporary domestic activity nearby, present in sufficient quantities to suggest that the post-holes in Trench 2 are not far from a focus of domestic occupation. Due to water-damage, they are not well-preserved.

The fragments in the ditch in Trench 3 suggest that the silting of that ditch may have begun as early as the medieval period, although it does not indicate that it had been fully filled up in that period as its distance from later, mapped occupation foci largely militates against later rubbish deposition which might otherwise accompany a slow demise.

Animal bone

A few stratified fragments of animal (food) bone were recovered alongside the pottery in Trench 2. These were mainly chips and butchered fragments indicative of table-waste. They were largely not identifiable to species, but again their state of preservation, comminuted and butchered size, suggests that a focus of occupation (and consumption) is not far away from Trench 2.

Conclusions

No evidence for a Broad Green frontage

There is a notable absence of any features or even occupation debris of any type in Trench 1, suggesting perhaps that any historic Broad Green frontage was discontinuous or was even non-existent (at least on this side of the green). While Trench 1 was dug a little way back from the current frontage in order to preserve the root-systems of the street trees of the Conservation Area, the absence of any pre-Victorian pottery in this trench is seen as significant, suggesting that if a frontage *had* existed (and Trench 1 would have been in a *usually rubbish-strewn and pitted* back yard), it has been dug away in the Victorian era villa, for which garden-path remains were present. The thick subsoil directly beneath the garden path was devoid of any finds whatsoever, further reinforcing the idea of former open space, largely unoccupied until the 19th century.

An archaeological focus

Several postholes dating to the period c1250-1400 were found at the north-western corner of the site (Trench 2) indicating a discrete focus of activity perhaps broadly related to that found on the adjacent site to the north. This focus seems to comprise remains of a building since a row of post-holes, with possible outliers, was present. There was no evidence of floors surviving, but the post-

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holes were found entirely upon a discrete island of clay, with other, more permeable geologies to the south and east. It is considered that a focus of activity may exist on the current site which lies astride the current Trench 2.

Outlaw Lane

Roadside ditches associated with the former course of Outlaw Lane were found at the north-eastern corner of the site in Trench 3. Pottery evidence suggested that they probably began to silt up during the medieval period. However, the relative paucity of finds from the fill of the excavated ditch suggests that the lane at this point lay some distance from settlement and probably served as a green lane into the fields. Outlaw Lane was in use until at least 1803 and probably until the later 19th century. During this period, when the town began to experience rapid expansion, a new layout was imposed with the construction of Knight Street.

The terrace in the site just south-east of Trench 3 left no potential for these ditches to have extended more than a further c5m across the site in that direction before being lost in quarrying.

Quarrying

Much of the southern part of the site, from Trenches 4, 5 and 6 appears to have been disturbed by 19th century quarrying (perhaps served in part by a dwindling stub of Outlaw Lane), and/or terracing related to the late 20th century construction of the railway club buildings. There therefore appears to be no archaeological potential anywhere south of the terrace which continues to demarcate the two portions of this site.

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Appendix

Table of contexts by trench

Trench	Context no	Equivalent?	Identity	Pottery	Bone	Other	Context date
1	101	201	Tarmac of Car Park				Modern
	102		Car park sub-base				Modern
	103		Blinding layer for Car Park				Modern
	104		Sandy gravel path			Y	19 th century
	105		Old Topsoil				19 th century
	106		Subsoil				Pre-19 th century
	107	202	Car park sub base				modern
	108	203	?Buried topsoil				Post-medieval
	109	204	Subsoil				-
	110	205	Natural geology (Clay)				-
2	201	101	Tarmac of Car Park				Modern
	202	107	Car Park Sub-base				Modern
	203	108	?Buried topsoil				Post-medieval
	204	109	Subsoil				-
	205	110	Natural geology (clay)				-
	206		Pit/ post-hole cut				?Medieval
	207		Fill of pit /post-hole 206		Y	Y	?Medieval
	208		Pit/post-hole cut	Y	Y		Medieval
	209		Fill of pit/post-hole 208	Y			Medieval
	210		Cut of pit/post-hole				
	211		Fill of pit/post hole 210	Y			Medieval
	212		Cut of pit/post-hole				
	213		Fill of pit/post-hole 212	Y			Victorian
	214		Pit/post-hole				Unexcavated
3	301	101,201	Tarmac				Modern
	302	102, 202	Car park sub-base				
	303	106,204	Subsoil/accumulation	Y	Y		Post-medieval
	304	110,205	Natural geology (NSI)				-
	305		Stone and brick structure				19-20 th century
	306		Cut of flat-bottomed ditch				Medieval and later
	307		Fill of ditch 306	Y	Y		Medieval and later
	308		Cut of ditch parallel with 306 (unexcavated)				?Medieval and later
4	401	501	Rolled demolition rubble				2014
	402	502	Crushed limestone				Modern
	403	503	Buried topsoil				
	404	504	Possible subsoil				
	405	505	Quarry backfill				
5	501	401	Rolled demolition rubble				2014
	502	402	Crushed limestone				Modern
	503	403	Buried topsoil				
	504	404	Subsoil				
	505	405	Natural				
	506		Fill of pit 507	Y		Y	19-20 th century
	507		Cut of large quarry pit				19-20 th century

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	508		Fill of pit 509	Y		Y	19-20 th century
	509		Cut of pit				19-20 th century
6	601		Rolled demolition rubble				Modern
	602		Sandy clay with pottery				19-20 th century



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