



Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording at Town Farm, 18 High Street, Brackley, Northamptonshire August - October 2014

Report No. 14/205

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Brackley, Northamptonshire
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS molanort1-193044
Project title	Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording at Town Farm, 18 High Street, Brackley, Northamptonshire, August - October 2014	
Short description	An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken at Town Farm, 18 High Street, Brackley, Northamptonshire between August and October 2014. The work was carried out during excavations relating to residential development of the site. The property has operated as a farm since at least the early 19th century with enclosed kitchen gardens at the western end of the site, an area historically part of former medieval open fields. The monitoring revealed a stratum of make-up and levelling material directly overlying the natural of compact limestone. Remnant garden soil was preserved at the western end of the site. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the excavation.	
Project type	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording	
Previous work	Historic Building Recording (Bassir & Upson-Smith 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Farm with 18th century origins	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Town Farm, 18 High Street, Brackley	
NGR	SP 58560 37120	
Area	3750 sq m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	MOLA Northampton	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire Assistant Archaeological Advisor	
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton	
Director/Supervisor	Amir Bassir, Gemma Hewitt	
Project Manager	Amir Bassir	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr Robert Brown	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2014	
End date	October 2014	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
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Abstract

An archaeological monitoring, investigation and recording was undertaken at Town Farm, Brackley, Northamptonshire between August and October 2014. The work was carried out during excavations relating to residential development of the site. The property has operated as a farm since at least the early 19th century with enclosed kitchen gardens at the western end of the site, an area which occupies former medieval open fields. The monitoring revealed a stratum of make-up and levelling layers directly overlying the natural of compact limestone. Remnant garden soil was preserved at the western end of the site. No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the excavation.

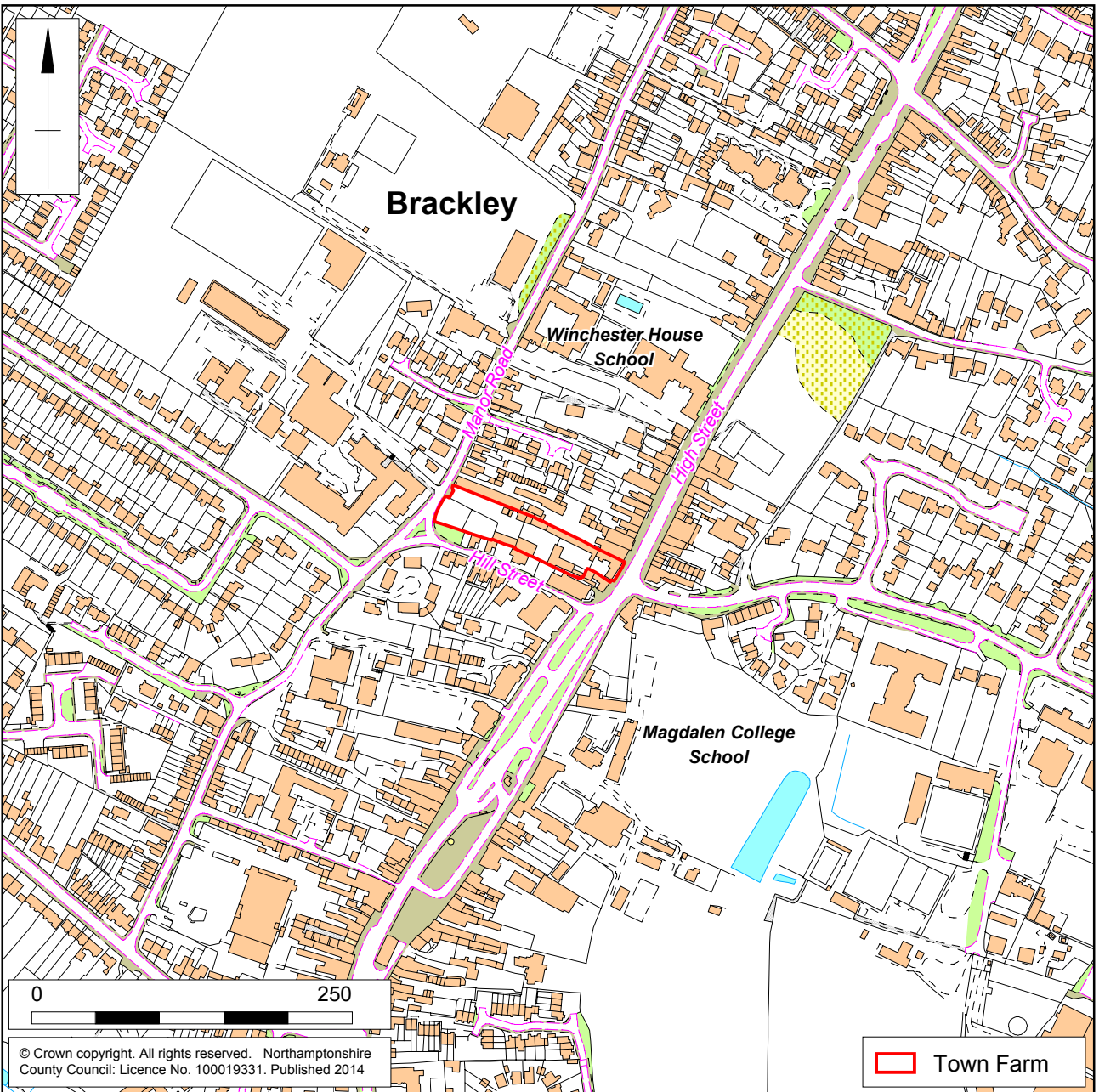
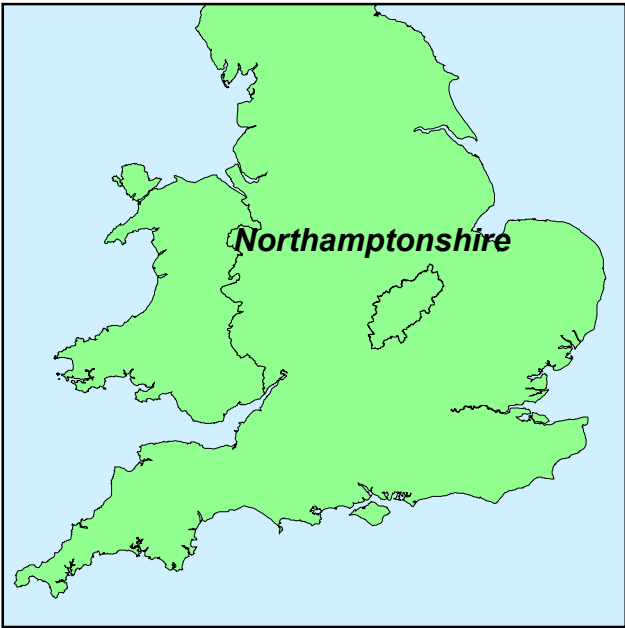
1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Mr Robert Brown to provide archaeological monitoring of works at Town Farm, Brackley Northamptonshire (SP 58560 37120, Fig 1). The work follows a brief for archaeological evaluation issued by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2014) and was carried out in advance of residential development on the site. The work was conducted in two stages; the first was to monitor foundation trenches for new buildings in the former kitchen gardens and the second to monitor the excavation of service trenches stretching the length of the property. Fieldwork was carried out between August and October 2014.

An English Heritage Level 3 archaeological building survey had been carried out by MOLA Northampton prior to the mitigation works (Bassir & Upson-Smith 2014).

Town Farm is an 18th-century farmhouse with numerous barns and stables relating to its former function to the rear. The property is a long, narrow plot, occupying a former burgage. It is located at the intersections of Hill Street, Manor Road and High Street. The western half of the site encloses ground which was formerly part of an open field system known as Castle Fields.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological survey as comprising Middle Jurassic limestone belonging to the Great Oolite Group and mudstone of the Lias Group (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main aim of the investigation was to mitigate the impact of development on any archaeological remains through preservation by record.

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks associated with the construction of the house;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- Recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis;

All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents *The Management of Archaeological Projects* issued by English Heritage (1991), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2006), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2008) and *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2014) .

The monitoring was conducted in two stages; the first was to monitor foundation trenches for new buildings in the former kitchen gardens at the western end of the property and the second to monitor the excavation of a service trench stretching from Manor Road at the west of the site to the farmhouse, with ancillary trenches branching off to other buildings. Excavation was carried out using by a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1m toothless ditching bucket.

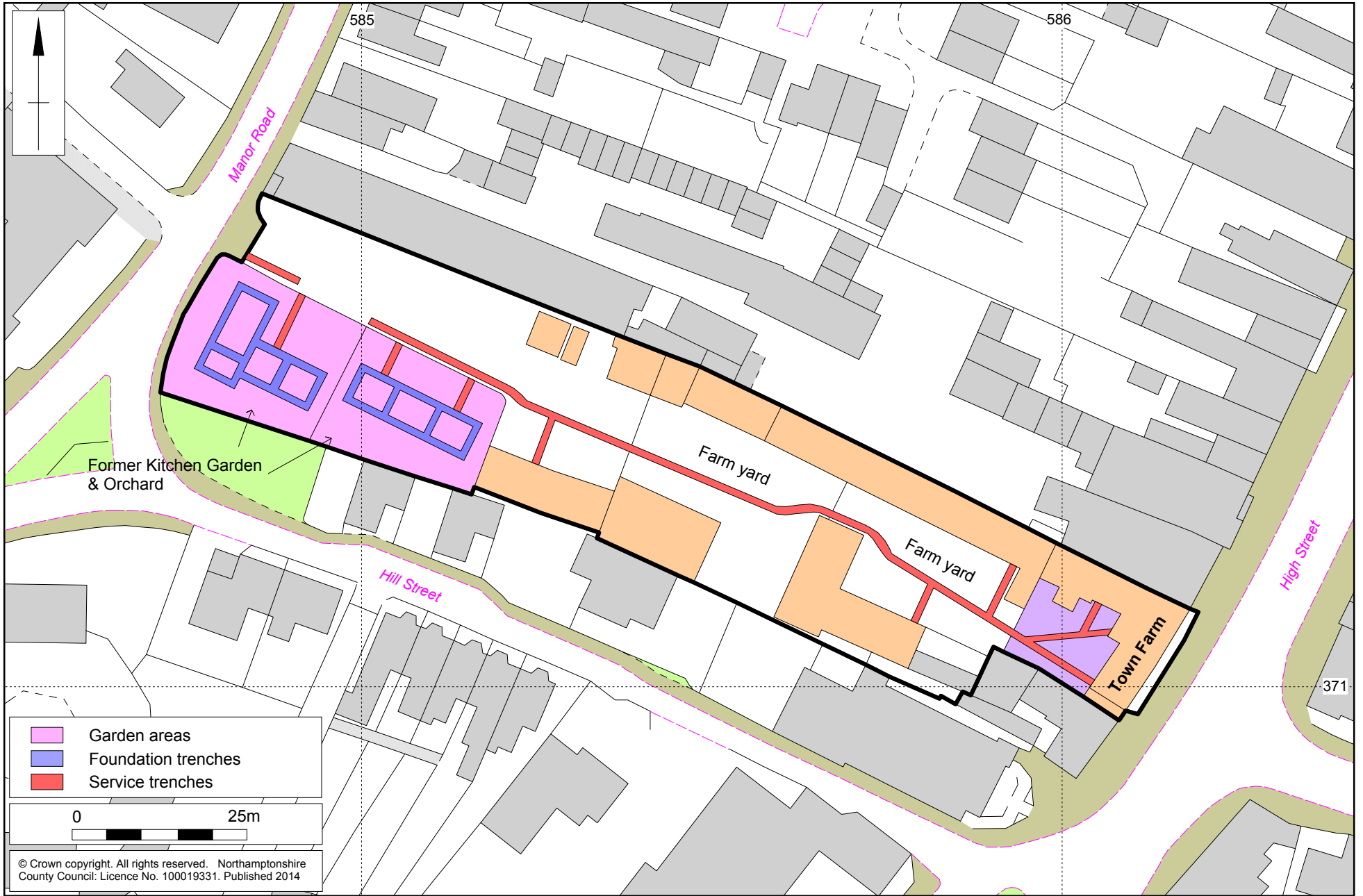
The character, composition and general depositional sequence of the site stratification was recorded on *pro-forma* sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the MOLA Northampton *Archaeological fieldwork manual* (2014).

A photographic record comprising digital images was maintained.

All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive. All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (1991).

Scale 1:750

The areas of archaeological observation Fig 2



3 HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

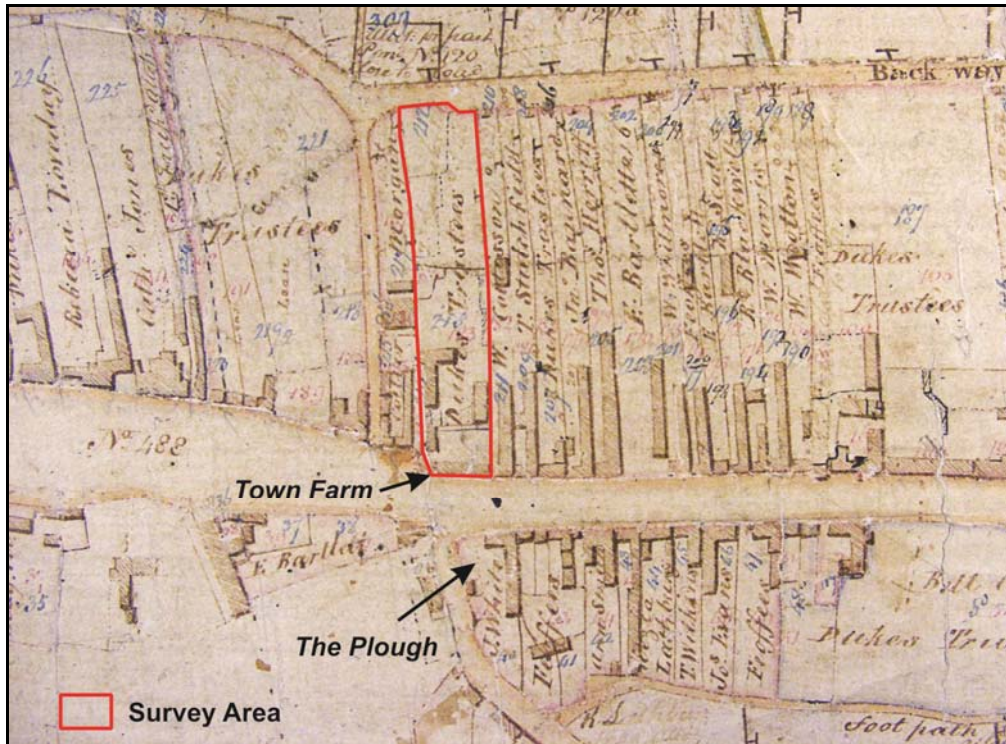
Brackley lies in the south-west of the county astride the main medieval road from Oxford to Northampton and is one of two planned towns in Northamptonshire in which an urban settlement was constructed on a new site away from an existing village. In 1086 Brackley was an agricultural village, with two manorial holdings and appears to have been an estate and ecclesiastical centre. Within a century of the conquest, the new town was created and the original village was thereafter known as the Old Town. Subsequently Brackley profited from the wool trade, becoming the second wealthiest town in the county by the 14th century.

The New Town appears to have been laid out around a new market place that was established along the Oxford to Northampton road. By the late medieval period, at which time a change in the wool trade saw a concentration on the Cotswold wool towns, Brackley's commercial base collapsed. The town went into rapid decline, falling back on its lesser function as a purely local market centre, a role which continues to this day.

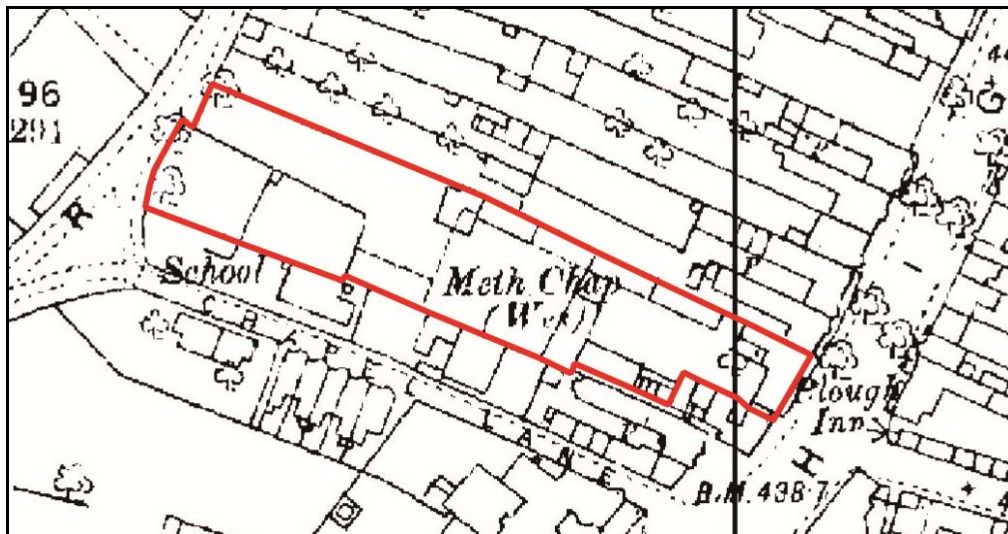
The survey area is located on the eastern extent of the New Town and partly incorporates a former area of open fields known as Castle Fields, which existed west of the town prior to Inclosure in the 18th century. Due to modern expansion of Brackley, Town Farm is now central to the town.

The draft pre-Inclosure map of 1830 (Fig 3) depicts a number of the buildings still standing on the site. The walls enclosing the kitchen gardens are present at the western end of the site. The layout of the site as it currently exists has largely remained unchanged with a track leading from Manor Road at the east, alongside the garden walls, across the farmyard and toward the farm house.

By the time of the first Edition Ordnance Survey of 1884 (Fig 4), the farm has been expanded substantially with the construction of a Kitchen, Rear Hall and Bathroom to the rear of the farmhouse and the addition of Pigsties, Stables and Cart Shed to the west.



Draft Inclosure map of Brackley, 1830 Fig 3



First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 Fig 4

4 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Footings trenches for two new dwellings were excavated in the former kitchen gardens at the western end of the site in an area formerly part of a medieval open field system (Figs 2, 5 & 6). Cartographic evidence shows that the kitchen gardens and their enclosing walls have existed since at least 1830. The excavations in this area revealed a stratigraphy of garden soils overlying a natural of compact pale yellow limestone (Fig 7). The kitchen gardens formerly contained a number of fruit trees, the roots of which have caused wide spread root disturbance and mixing of the strata in this area. The trenches were 1m wide and excavated to an average depth of 0.7m. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded in the footings trenches. Archaeological finds were limited to fragments of abraded post-medieval pottery and brick or tile.

A service trench was excavated from Manor Road at the western end of the site, leading towards the farmhouse at the east. The trench branched out at intervals to allow for the installation of services to the two new dwellings as well as the barns and stables which are to be converted into housing (Fig 2). To the west, the trench was excavated through a track which runs alongside the enclosing wall of the former kitchen gardens (Figs 8-9). The property is divided by a stone wall that separates the kitchen gardens at the west of the site from the barns, stables and other farm buildings which occupy the east. Passing through the dividing wall, the trench was excavated through the former farmyard, an area which has been re-surfaced, stripped and partially concreted over in the past (Fig 10). Excavations here revealed a stratigraphy of mixed make-up and levelling layers, truncated by ceramic field drains, directly overlying the natural limestone (Figs 11-15). Closer to the farmhouse, mixed garden soils were excavated in an area until recently occupied by flower beds and lawn (Figs 14-15). The excavations revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Occasional fragments of post-medieval, brick, tile and tobacco pipe stem were recovered from the levelling layers. These were not retained.



The footings trenches, looking south-east Fig 5



The footings trenches, looking south-west Fig 6



Representative stratigraphy across the foundation trenches Fig 7



The excavation of the service trenches, looking west Fig 8



The service trenches, the stratigraphy alongside the former kitchen garden walls Fig 9



The excavation of service trenches across the former farmyard Fig 10



The stratigraphy across the former farmyard Fig 11



The service trench alongside the barns, looking east Fig 12



The service trenches at the east of the site, looking east Fig 13



The service trenches, looking west from the farmhouse Fig 14



The stratigraphy towards the eastern end of the site Fig 15

5 DISCUSSION

The archaeological monitoring did not reveal any surviving archaeological features or deposits within the area affected by the development works. Given the nature of the site and historic function of the property, this is perhaps to be expected. To the west of the site, the footings trenches were located in the former kitchen gardens, an area heavily disturbed by root activity and cultivation. At the centre of the site and towards the east, the service trenches were excavated through the former working farmyard, an area which has been formerly stripped to natural and surfaced with mixed levelling material. Closer to the farmhouse, the trenches were dug through the former garden. Occasional finds of fragmented post-medieval pottery and tobacco pipe stem were recovered from the mixed surfaces but these were not retained.

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