



**Archaeological observation, investigation
recording and analysis on land at
Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers
Northamptonshire
January 2015**

Report No 15/10

Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrators: Amir Bassir and James Ladocha



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. molanort1-201735	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire		
Short description	An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA Northampton in January 2015 for Higham Ferrers Town Council during the installation of skateboard park at Saffron Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire close to the Scheduled Monument of Saffron Moat. No pre-modern deposits were recorded. Two sherds of pre-modern pottery were recovered.		
Project type	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording		
Site Status			
Previous work	-		
Current land use	Grassed area, part of a recreation ground		
Future work	unknown		
Monument type and period	-		
Significant finds	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	John White Close, Higham Ferrers		
Post code	-		
OS co-ordinates	SP 95845 68727		
Area (sq m/ha)	c 235sq m		
Height aOD	70.1m		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Higham Ferrers Town Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Sharman		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Higham Ferrers Town Council		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	15 January 2015		
End date	20 January 2015		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	MOLA Northampton store ENN 107903	Pottery 2 sherds	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)			
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire		
Serial title & volume	15/10		
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers Northamptonshire January 2015

Abstract

An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA in January 2015 for Higham Ferrers Town Council during excavations for the installation of a skateboard park at Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire close to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Saffron Moat (SM No. 13645). No pre-modern deposits were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Higham Ferrers Town Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording on 15 and 20 January 2015 during groundworks for the the installation of a new skateboard park at Saffron Moat, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (SP 95845 68727, Fig 1). The site lies just to the north of the Scheduled Monument of Saffron Moat (Monument No 13645).

The works were required following a request for a programme of archaeological observation and investigation by English Heritage. A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by MOLA Northampton for the work (Leigh 2015).

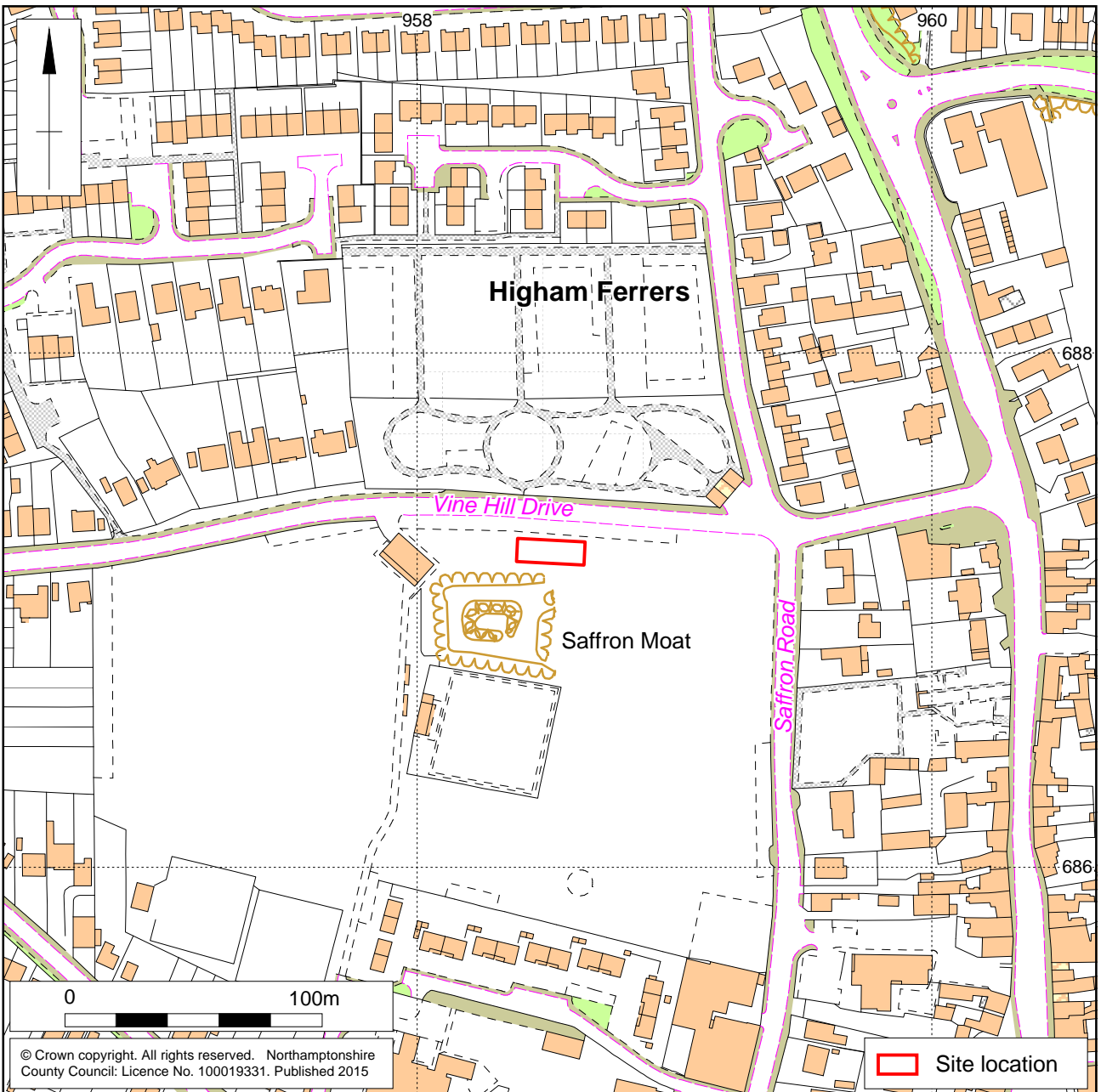
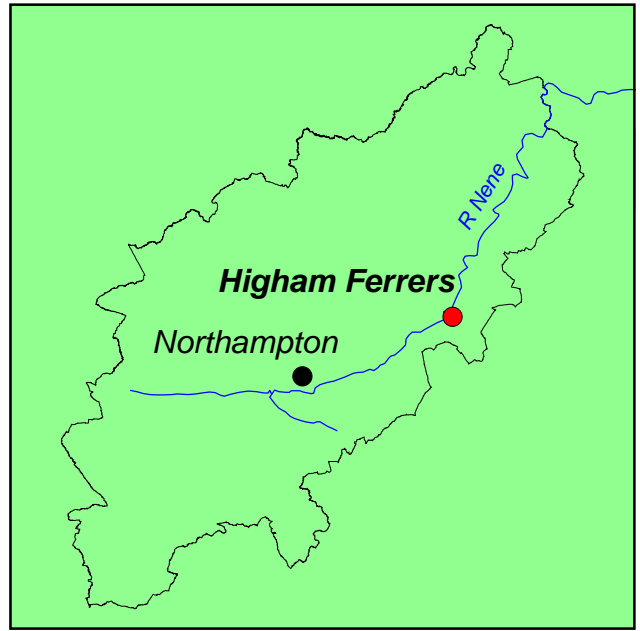
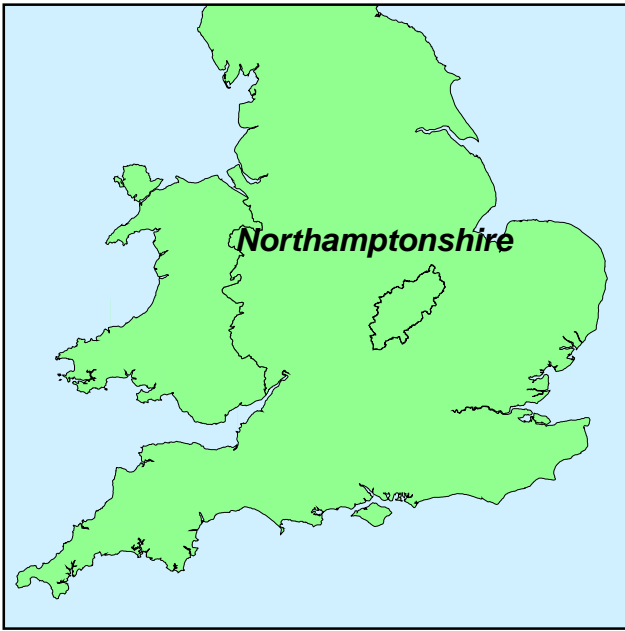
MOLA Northampton is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) registered organisation. The work was carried out in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2015) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2009).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The town of Higham Ferrers lies approximately 10km north-east of Wellingborough and 26km north-east of Northampton in the County of Northamptonshire. The investigation area is located within the town on land adjacent to the Scheduled Monument of Saffron Moat, forming a part of the Saffron Road Recreation Ground on relatively level ground at a height of 70.1m aOD.

The site is bounded on the northern side by Vine Hill Drive and by the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Saffron Moat to the south. On the western edge is a car park and to the east is the Saffron Road Recreation Ground. The site is located within a grassed area.



Scale 1:2,500

Site location Fig 1

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising Northampton Sand and Gravel (BGS Geindex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geindex>).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site lies within the town of Higham Ferrers on land immediately to the north of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Saffron Moat (Scheduled Monument No: 13645).

Saffron Moat itself comprises a moat, 12m wide encircling an island approximately 20m square. It is believed to have been constructed in the 16th century as part of the fishpond supplying fish for the nearby Chichele College. The name Saffron Moat refers to the former Saffron Close field, in which it lay.

Chichele College (Scheduled Monument No: 22702), currently in the care of English Heritage, lies approximately 150m to the east of the site. It was founded as a college for secular canons by Archbishop Chichele in the 15th century. The canons helped to raise money by growing the types of crocus from which saffron, a useful dye, is obtained.

Approximately 0.5 km to the east lies the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Castle Fields (Scheduled Monument No: 13607) located in the outer ward of a former motte and bailey castle. It comprises a large L-shaped moat, up to 30m wide and 2.5m deep, thought to be former fishponds, nearby is a substantial irregular mound of spoil, which documentary sources suggest was once used as a rabbit warren during the late medieval period (RCHME 1975, 55).

The castle is recorded as having been constructed by William Peverel who had been granted the manor of Higham Ferrers shortly after the Norman conquest of 1066AD. The monument appears to have originally comprised two baileys along with a keep defended by a deep moat (Kerr 1925).

To the south of the castle is located the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, a Grade I Listed Building (No: 23252) which dates from the 13th/14th centuries with later additions.

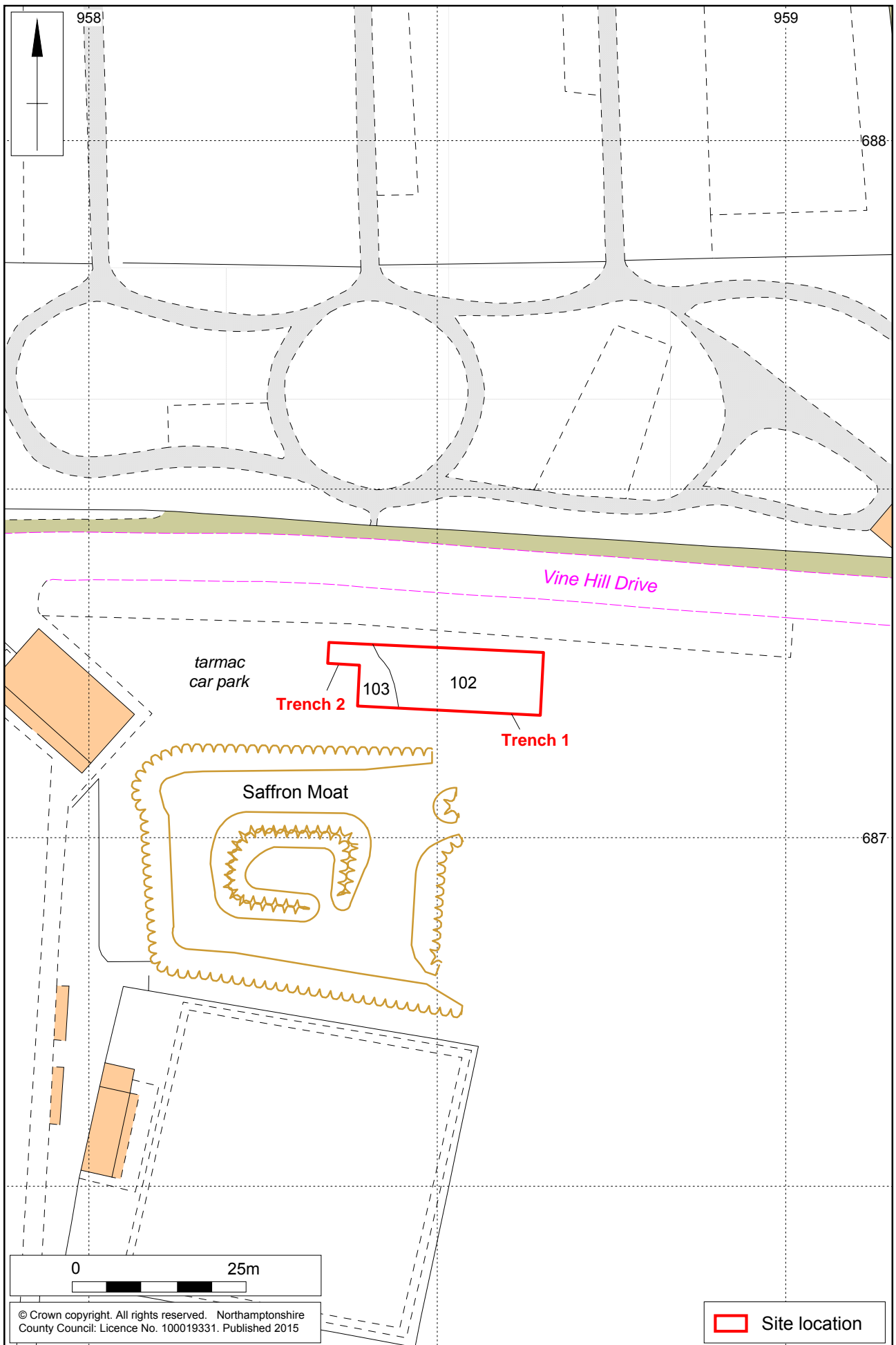
Up to the present application the investigation area has functioned as a BMX track for local residents. No previous archaeological investigations are recorded as having been carried out within the investigation area.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- ◆ Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the construction of the new dwelling and any associated groundworks;
- ◆ Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits.



Scale 1: 750

Area of archaeological observation Fig 2



Trench 1, general view looking west Fig 3

- ◆ Recover any artefacts that may assist in the development of pottery type series within the region;
- ◆ Establish the relationship of any archaeological deposits within the wider contemporary landscape;
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

3.2 Methodology

Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (2014). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. The photographic record comprised 35mm black and white film and digital images.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014) and *Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

The development site comprised an area of c 235m² (Fig 2). The watching brief, it was undertaken on 15 and 21 January during the groundworks associated with the new skateboard park. The preparation for the skateboard park comprised the removal of the topsoil and some subsoil in a trench (T1) 26m long by 9m wide to a depth of approximately 0.35m aligned in an east to west direction (Fig 3). A small access trench (T2) measuring 5m long by 3m wide was excavated in an east to west direction from the western edge of Trench 1 to the eastern edge of the Recreation Ground tarmac car park (Fig 4).



Trench 2, general view, looking south-east Fig 4



Trench 1, layer (103) looking north-west Fig 5

The groundworks were undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for

Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2014).

Although much of the soil was to be removed from the site, a proportion was to remain on site to form bunds at the sides of the new skateboard park.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate was not revealed within the two trenches. In Trench 1, at 0.35m below the surface the subsoil (102) comprised a layer of yellowish-brown sandy clay loam with numerous small ironstone pebbles mixed with occasional medium-sized fragments of ironstone and limestone. This subsoil was extant throughout all but the westernmost part of the trench base. Towards the eastern end of Trench 1 two sherds of pottery were recovered from this layer.

At the western end of the trench a 0.1m thick layer of yellowish-brown clay loam with numerous small to medium sized fragments of ironstone (103) was uncovered at 0.25m below the surface (Fig 5). This layer appeared to continue westwards into Trench 2 where it was extant throughout the floor of the trench (203). In Trench 1, layer (103) appeared to be partly overlying the subsoil (102).

In both Trench 1 and Trench 2, the topsoil (101)/(201) comprised a 0.25m thick layer of loose dark brown loam with occasional small to medium-sized fragments of ironstone and limestone. Overlying the topsoil was a layer of turf.

5 THE POTTERY by Tora Hylton

Two sherds of pottery weighing 18g were recovered from the subsoil (102). This small group comprises a base angle in medieval shelly coarseware (CTS 330), dated AD 1100-1400, and an undiagnostic body sherd in a Midland Black type fabric (CTS 411), dated AD 1500-1700.

6 DISCUSSION

No pre-modern deposits were recorded during excavation works.

The layer containing ironstone fragments at the western end of the Trench 1 and throughout Trench 2, may be associated with levelling works from the construction of the car park close by or alternatively it may be associated with a former BMX course which partly occupied the site. According to anecdotal evidence from a local passer-by the BMX course also utilised part of the adjacent Saffron Moat.

The two sherds of pottery, one medieval the other post-medieval, recovered from the subsoil close to the eastern end of the trench may indicate the presence of archaeological features beneath the subsoil. However, due to the relatively shallow nature of the trench, it was not possible to reach a depth below the surface where archaeological features might be revealed.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
1	25.5m x 9m East - West			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Layer	Dark brown loam with a few small limestone pebbles	0.25m thick	—
102	Layer	Yellowish-brown sandy clay loam with numerous small ironstone and limestone pebbles	At least 0.1m thick	2 sherds of pottery
103	Layer	Yellowish brown sandy clay loam with numerous small – medium sized fragments of ironstone.	0.1m thick	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment			
2	5m x 3m East - West			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Layer	Dark brown loam with a few small limestone pebbles	0.25m thick	—
203	Layer	Yellowish brown sandy clay loam with numerous small – medium sized fragments of ironstone.	0.1m thick	—



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