



**Archaeological observation, investigation
recording and analysis of land at
33 Brackley Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire
October 2014**

Report No 14/235

Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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The pottery: Tora Hylton

Other finds: Tora Hylton

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-218806	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation, analysis and recording of land at 33 Brackley Road, Towcester October 2014		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA during construction work at Park House, 33 Brackley Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire. Two archaeological features were present comprising one shallow ditch and one small pit both likely to be of Romano-British origin.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	House garden		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Romano-British		
Significant finds	Pottery; cu alloy		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	33 Brackley Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire.		
Easting Northing	SP 68980 48615		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.2 ha		
Height aOD	93m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Sharman (MOLA Northampton)		
Project Manager	Liz Muldowney (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	Mr L Pettit		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	21/10/2014		
End date	24/10/2014		
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Physical		Watching brief forms, permatrace plans	
Paper			
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	BACKGROUND	1
	2.1 Location and geology	1
	2.2 Historical and archaeological background	3
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	3
	3.1 Objectives	3
	3.2 Methodology	3
4	THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE	5
	4.1 Trench 3	5
	4.2 Trench 5	7
5	THE FINDS	8
	5.1 The pottery by Tora Hylton	8
	5.2 Other finds by Tora Hylton	8
6	DISCUSSION	9
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	

Figures

- Front Cover: Front elevation, Park House, 33 Brackley Road, Towcester.
- Fig 1: Site location
- Fig 2: Area of observation
- Fig 3: Trench 2 looking east, showing general stratigraphic sequence
- Fig 4: Plan of Trenches 3-6, with ditch 307 and possible pit 510
- Fig 5: Trench 5, showing pit [510] truncated by wall trench [508]

Tables

- Table 1: Pottery quantification

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Abstract

An archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA, during construction works at 33 Brackley Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire. Two archaeological features were present comprising one ditch and one small pit, both were likely to be Romano-British in date.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mr Lee Pettit commissioned MOLA to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and reporting on land at Park House, 33 Brackley Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 4689 2486; (Fig 1). Planning permission had been granted for the construction of two small extensions to existing buildings and associated works.

A condition on the planning consent stated there was a requirement for archaeological investigation in accordance with Section 12, paragraph 128 and Appendix 2 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). This document had been prepared by MOLA in response to a brief from the Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council setting out the requirements for works.

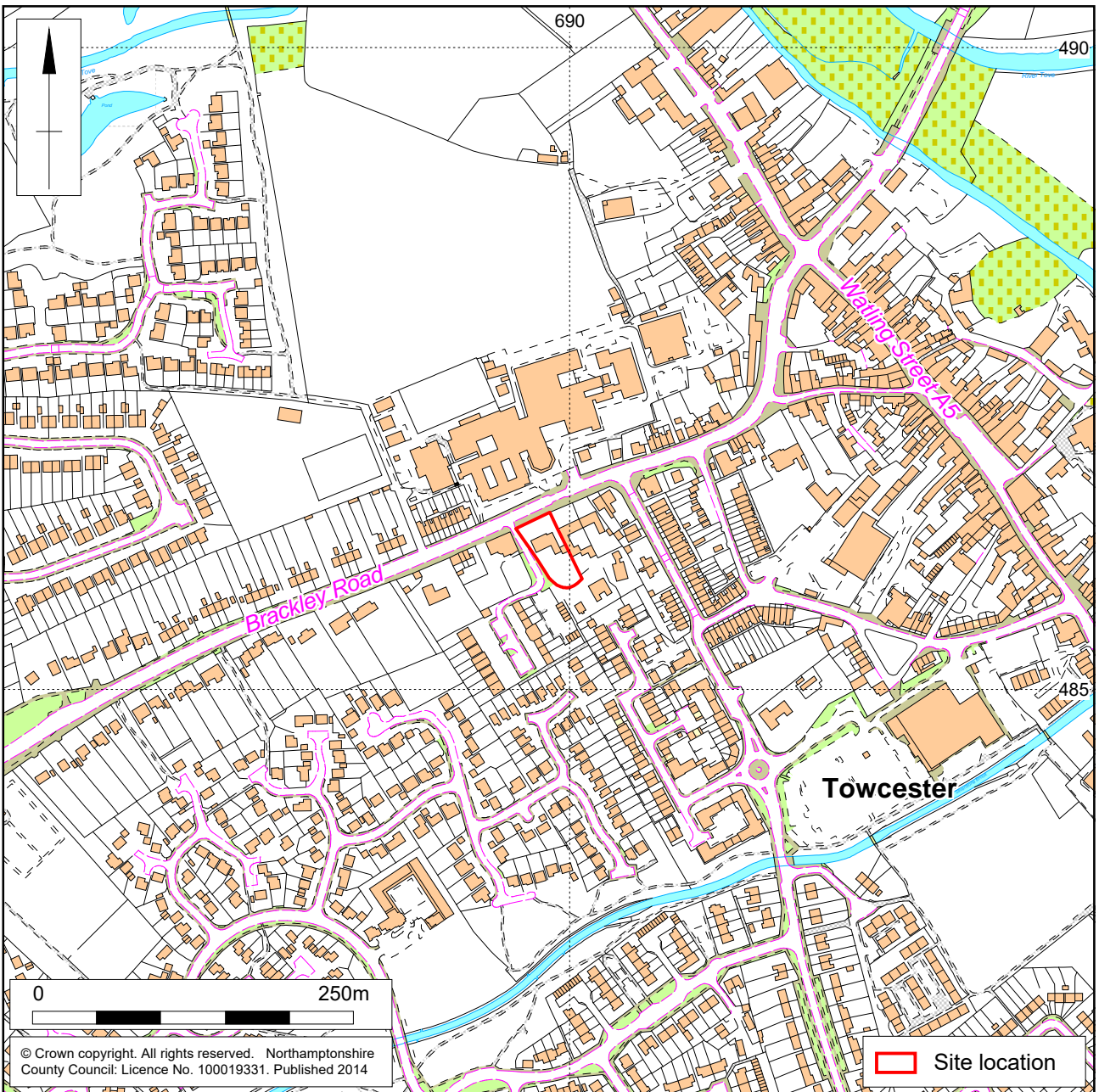
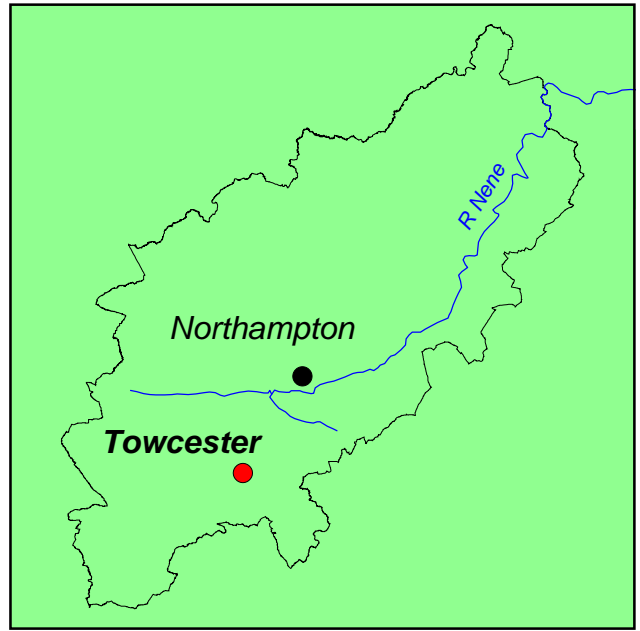
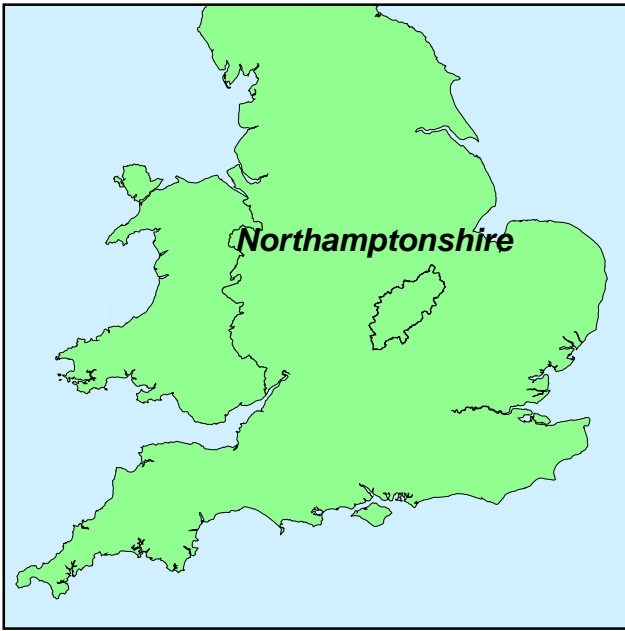
MOLA is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation. This document has been prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008a) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2009).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The site is located to the south of Brackley Road within the town of Towcester (Fig 1). The plot contains a single domestic dwelling.

The site lies at approximately 93m aOD. The bedrock geology comprises Whitby Mudstone Formation - Mudstone. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2014).



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2. Historical and archaeological background

The survey site lies within an area of known archaeological interest. There are a number of reported finds and archaeological assets within close proximity. These records, derived from the Historic Environment Record (HER), include Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon period finds and sites.

A middle Iron Age farmstead (MNN6623) was recorded 400m to the south of the site, which lies to the west of the defences of the Roman town of Lactodorum (MNN3659) and the subsequent Saxon burh. It lies close to two Roman roads, Watling Street (MNN11430) is 250m to the east and the Alchester Road (Margery road 160a, MNN48515) is recorded just to the south. Towcester became a Saxon burh (MNN3660) and the development site is also within the confines of this later urban settlement.

According to documentary and map evidence, Park House, 33 Brackley Road was erected on a 'green-field' site around 1847 for Mr Thomas White Gurney (Giggins 2014).

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:

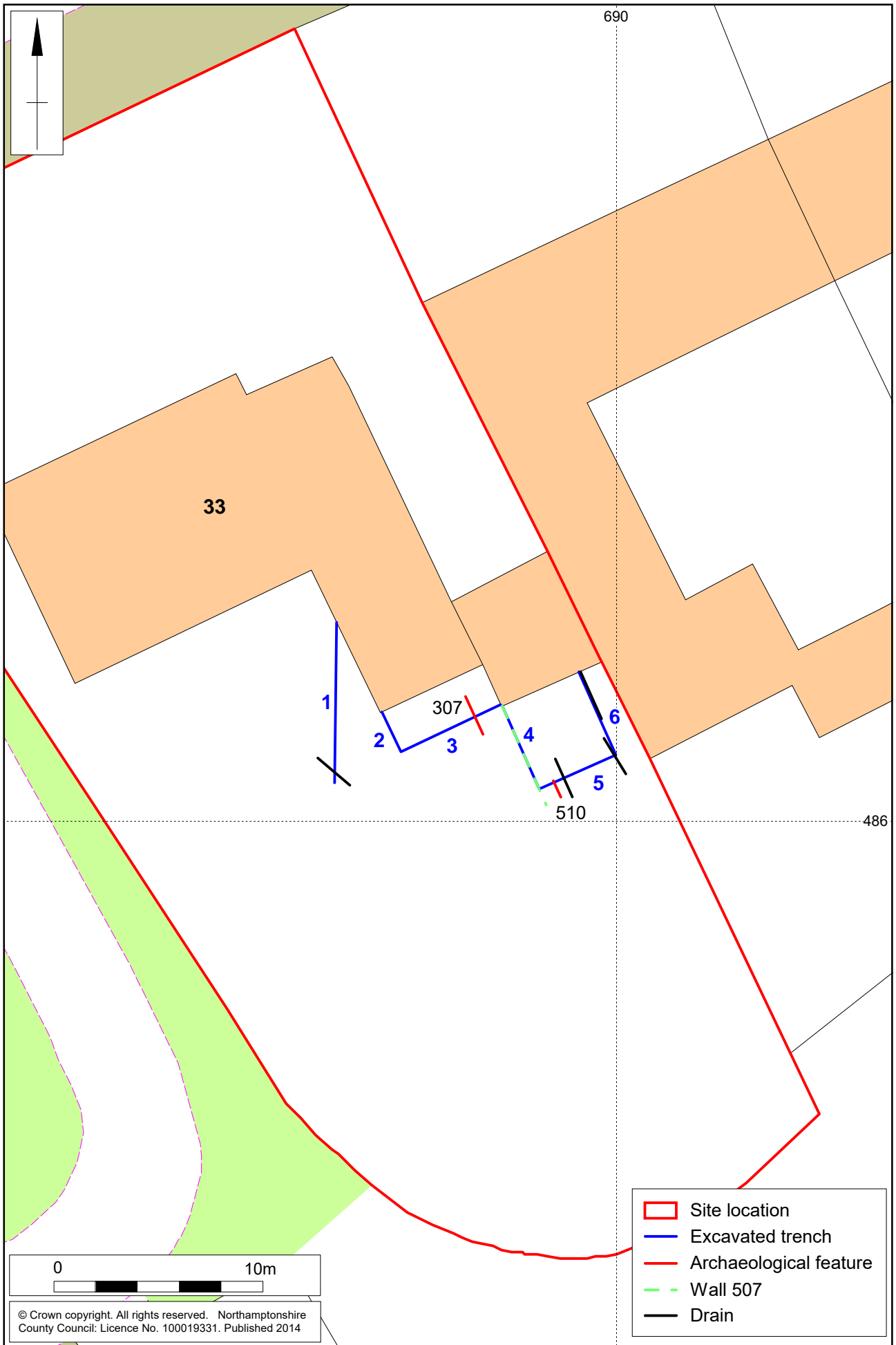
- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during any invasive construction activities within the development area;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

Further objectives included:

- Establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes.
- Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.
- Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.

3.2 Methodology

Recording followed standard MOLA 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. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and digital images.



Scale 1: 250

Area of observation Fig 2

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2014) and *Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

Within the observation area, five footings trenches for the construction of two separate small extensions to existing buildings and one service trench were observed in generally good weather conditions on four separate occasions during October (Fig 2). Due to a lack of suitable access for a mechanical excavator, the groundworks for the building extensions were undertaken by hand. The groundwork areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, if present.

The footing and service trenches associated with the new development are briefly described below:

Trench 1:

This service trench was dug to the west of the footings trenches within the garden. The trench was approximately 8m long by 0.4m wide by 0.3 - 0.5m deep and ran in a north to south direction.

Trench 2

This trench ran from the south-west corner of the Park House Annexe in a roughly north to south direction (Fig 3). The trench measured 2.5m long by 0.4m wide by 1.05m deep.



Trench 2 looking east, showing general stratigraphic sequence Fig 3

Trench 3

This trench ran in a roughly east to west direction from the south end of Trench 2 to the south-west corner of the adjoining garage. The trench measured 4m long by 0.4m wide by c.1.05m deep.

Trench 4

Trench 4 ran in a roughly north to south direction from the south-west corner of the adjoining garage. The trench measured 4.3m long by 0.4m wide by c.0.9m deep.

Trench 5

This trench ran at a right angle to Trench 4 in a roughly eastwards direction measuring approximately 4m long by 0.4m wide by c.0.9m deep.

Trench 6

This trench ran parallel with trench 4 approximately 4m to the east. The trench measured approximately 4.3m long by 0.4m wide by c.0.9m deep.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

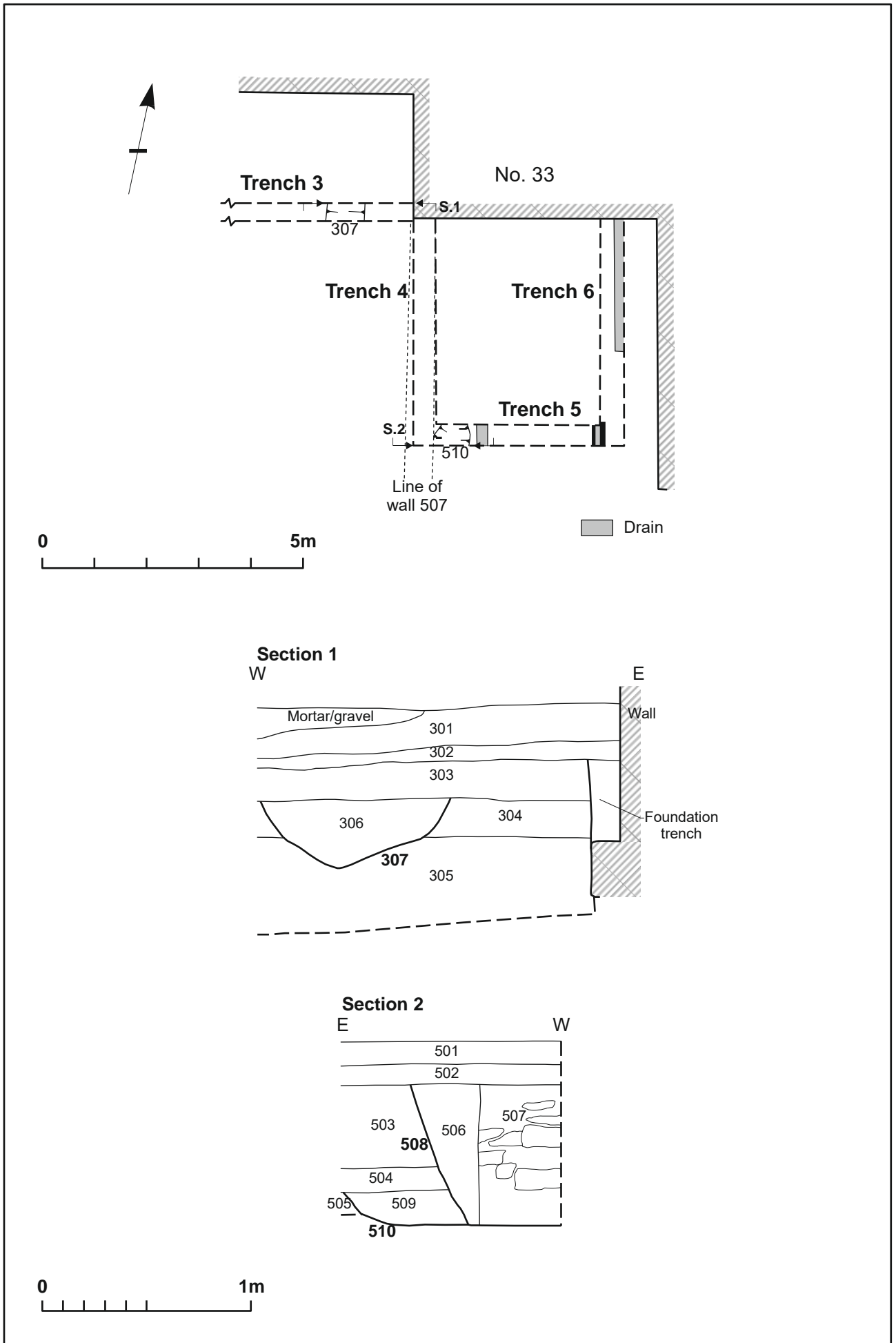
Archaeological features were encountered in Trenches 3 and 5, elsewhere only later post-medieval and modern services and wall footings associated with the present dwelling, Park House, were observed.

The general stratigraphic sequence observed in the footing trenches was as follows: the natural substrate was generally a yellowish-brown sandy clay with numerous small chalk and flint pebbles inclusions. Overlying this natural layer was an 0.2m thick layer of dark-yellowish brown sandy clay above which was approximately 0.15m layer of yellowish-brown clay containing a large amount of post-medieval and modern building rubble and mortar overlying this was a c0.15m thick layer of dark yellowish-brown sandy clay subsoil. The garden soil was 0.15m thick dark grey loam.

4.1 Trench 3

In Trench 3 there was a shallow ditch [307] 0.60m wide and 0.30m deep (Figs 2 and 4) aligned roughly north to south. It cut a clayey layer (304), of uncertain derivation, which overlay the natural layer (305). The ditch fill contained two sherds of non-closely datable Romano-British pottery and a damaged copper alloy rod fragment which may have been part of a hair pin. The ditch was sealed by a layer containing post-medieval and modern building rubble (303) which suggests that the previous top and subsoils had been removed during the construction of the present house and the upper Romano-British activity horizon was exposed.

During the excavation of Trench 3, two unstratified sherds of pottery were recovered from the vicinity the ditch these comprised the neck of a 1st to 2nd century AD Romano-British flagon and a small sherd of post-medieval Midland Purple Ware pottery derived from the disturbance caused by the construction of the mid-19th century house.



Scale 1:100 & 1:25

Plan of Trenches 3-6, with ditch 307 and possible pit 510 Fig 4

4.2 Trench 5

A small, probably sub-circular, pit [510] was identified close to the junction of footing trenches 4 and 5 (Fig 4). It was 0.7m wide and 0.18m deep and was cut into the natural clay layer (505), although undated it contained a small amount of oyster shell and was sealed by clayey layer (504) which was the same as layer (304) in Trench 3. This layer was sealed by the construction/demolition layer (503/303), this was in turn truncated by a wall foundation trench [508]. The remains of the wall within this trench were sealed by the recent garden soil layers (502) and (501).

In Trench 4 a modern lead pipe was noted running in an E-W direction and a Post-medieval wall footing (507) ran along the same alignment as the trench. This wall was also noted in Trench 5 where a total of 10 contexts were recorded: Layers (501 – 505) were identical to layers (401 – 405) in Trench 4. Wall (507) was recorded in the west end of the trench (Figs 6 and 7) as was a foundation cut (508) which contained a mid-brown, silty clay fill (506). Close to the base of the trench and cut by (508) was a shallow, roughly elliptical pit (510) which contained a dark grey, silty clay fill (509). An oyster shell was recovered from the fill (509). Two modern ceramic drainage pipes were noted cutting across the line of the trench.



Trench 5, showing pit [510] truncated by wall trench [508] Fig 5

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The pottery by Tora Hylton

Four sherds of Roman and post-medieval pottery with a combined weight of 70g were recovered. Where possible the sherds have been classified according to the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998) and the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type series (Blinkhorn 1996).

There are three sherds of Roman pottery; two small undiagnostic body sherds in grog-tempered and sand-tempered fabrics were recovered from the fill of a shallow ditch [306]. A neck from a single-handled flagon in Lower Nene Valley White ware (LNV WH) was recovered from unstratified deposits within Trench 3. Stylistically the form of the neck is not dissimilar to an example from Orton Hall Farm (Perrin 1996, Fig 83, 90). A late 1st to early 2nd century AD date is suggested for the assemblage.

The post-medieval sherd is a base/body sherd of Midland Purple (CTS 403) which dates from c1450-1600.

Table 1: Pottery quantification

Fill/cut	306/307		Trench 3 U/S	
	Sherds	Weight (g)	Sherds	Weight (g)
Roman Pottery fabric				
Grog-tempered ware	1	3.2	-	-
Whiteware (LNV WH)	-	-	1	47.7
Sandy ware - oxidised	1	0.6		
Post-medieval pottery				
Glazed earthenware, c. 1600-1750	-	-	1	54.2
Staffordshire Slipware (feathered), c. 1680-1730)	1	1.6	-	-
Imported Wares				
Midland Purple (CTS 403)	-	-	1	18.5
Total	2	3.8	1	66.2

5.2 Other finds by Tora Hylton

A damaged copper alloy rod fragment, 65mm long, was recovered from the fill of ditch [307]. It has a circular cross-section, 2mm diameter, and is slightly tapered. It is possible that it may be part of a shaft from a hair pin or similar object.

Two oyster shell fragments were recovered from the fill of pit [510] in footing trench 5.

6 DISCUSSION

A ditch and pit, both likely to be Romano-British in date, were identified during the monitoring of the footings trenches. Although the pit was not dated, oyster shell is a common domestic waste product within Romano-British settlements and the pit was sealed by a layer that was in turn cut by the ditch. The ditch contained small quantities of Romano-British pottery dating from the late 1st century to early 2nd century AD.

Post-medieval and modern disturbances were encountered in all the trenches, particularly Trenches 4 and 6 where the new footing trenches coincided with previous interventions removing all trace of earlier stratigraphy. The modern wall footing in Trenches 4/5 may correspond to a former garden wall shown on the 1900 Ordnance Survey map (Giggins 2014).

The works associated with the construction of, and modification to, Park House from the middle of the 19th century onwards had affected survival of archaeological remains in this area. However, it is clear that the plot was in use in the Roman period, although it is not possible to specify the scale or extent of this activity.

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