



**Archaeological observation investigation, recording
and analysis at the former Tower Factory
Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire
May to July 2015**

Report No. 15/140

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir



Archaeological observation investigation, Recording and analysis at the former Tower Factory Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire May to July 2015

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molarnort1- 219747	
Project name	Archaeological observation, investigation recording and analysis at the former Tower Factory, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA Northampton during construction works at the former Tower Factory site, Irthlingborough. The site has been heavily disturbed by modern building activity and no pre-modern archaeological deposits or finds were recovered.		
Project type	Archaeological observation, investigation recording and analysis		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Desk-based Assessment (Chapman 2014)		
Current Land use	Brownfield		
Future work	No		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Former Tower Factory, 51 Victoria Street, Irthlingborough		
Study area	2.19ha		
OS Easting & Northing	SP 94214 70376		
Height OD	70m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
Project Manager	Adam Yates		
Sponsor or funding body	Lanchester Land and Planning		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date/End date	May to July 2015		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	IRTFTF15 ENN107906	-	
Paper		Site file, drawings, photographs	
Digital		Mapinfo plans, Word report, photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis at the former Tower Factory, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire		
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Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis at the former Tower Factory Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire May to July 2015

Abstract

Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA Northampton during construction works at the former Tower Factory site, Irthlingborough. The site has been heavily disturbed by modern building activity and no pre-modern archaeological deposits or finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Lanchester Land and Planning to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis during the construction of residential housing on the site of an old leather-dressing factory at 51 Victoria Street, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 94214 70376; Fig 1).

The Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council advised that a programme of archaeological mitigation should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the site (Mordue 2013). This was carried out in order to inform decisions regarding the potential impact of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; DCLG 2012).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) registered organisation. This document was prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Briefs* (CIfA 2014) and the Historic England procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015a).

2 BACKGROUND

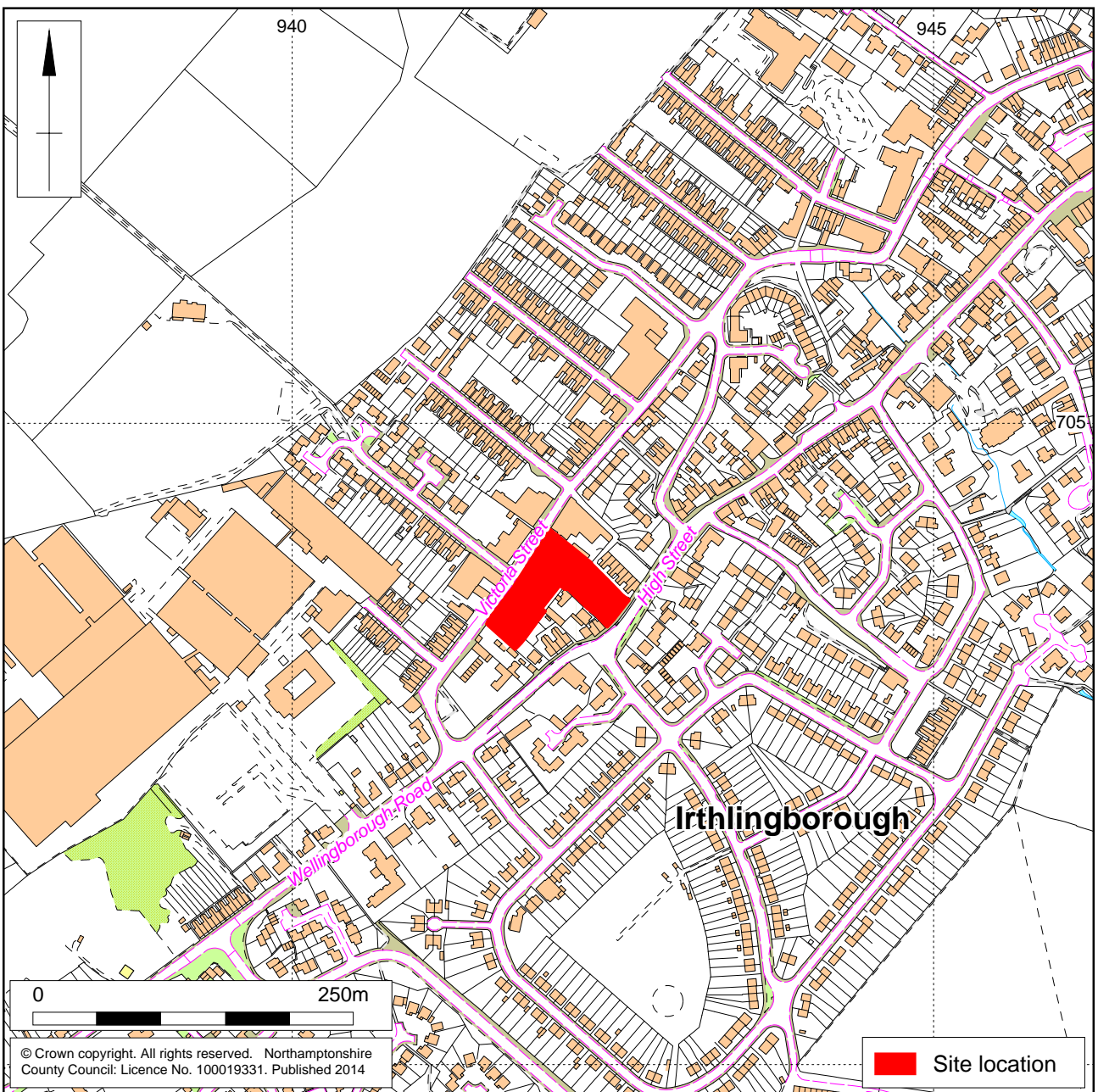
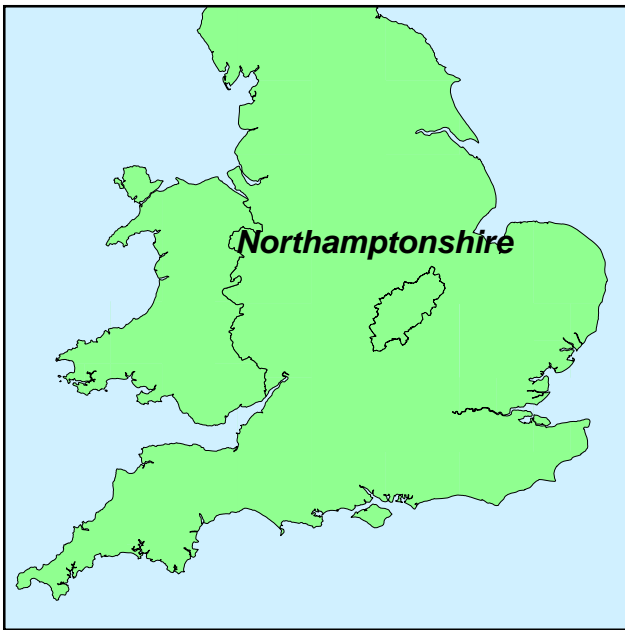
2.1 Location and topography

Irthlingborough is located on the west side of the Nene Valley, 4km north-east of Wellingborough and 2km north-west of Higham Ferrers. The Tower Factory site (henceforth 'the site') is located south-west of the town centre on an L-shaped parcel of land covering 2.19ha between Victoria Street to the north-west and Wellingborough Road to the south-east (Fig 1). It lies at c70m AOD.

The local bedrock geology is recorded as Lias Group - Mudstone, Siltstone, Limestone and Sandstone. (BGS: mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home). No superficial deposits have been recorded at the site as it lies within an urban area.

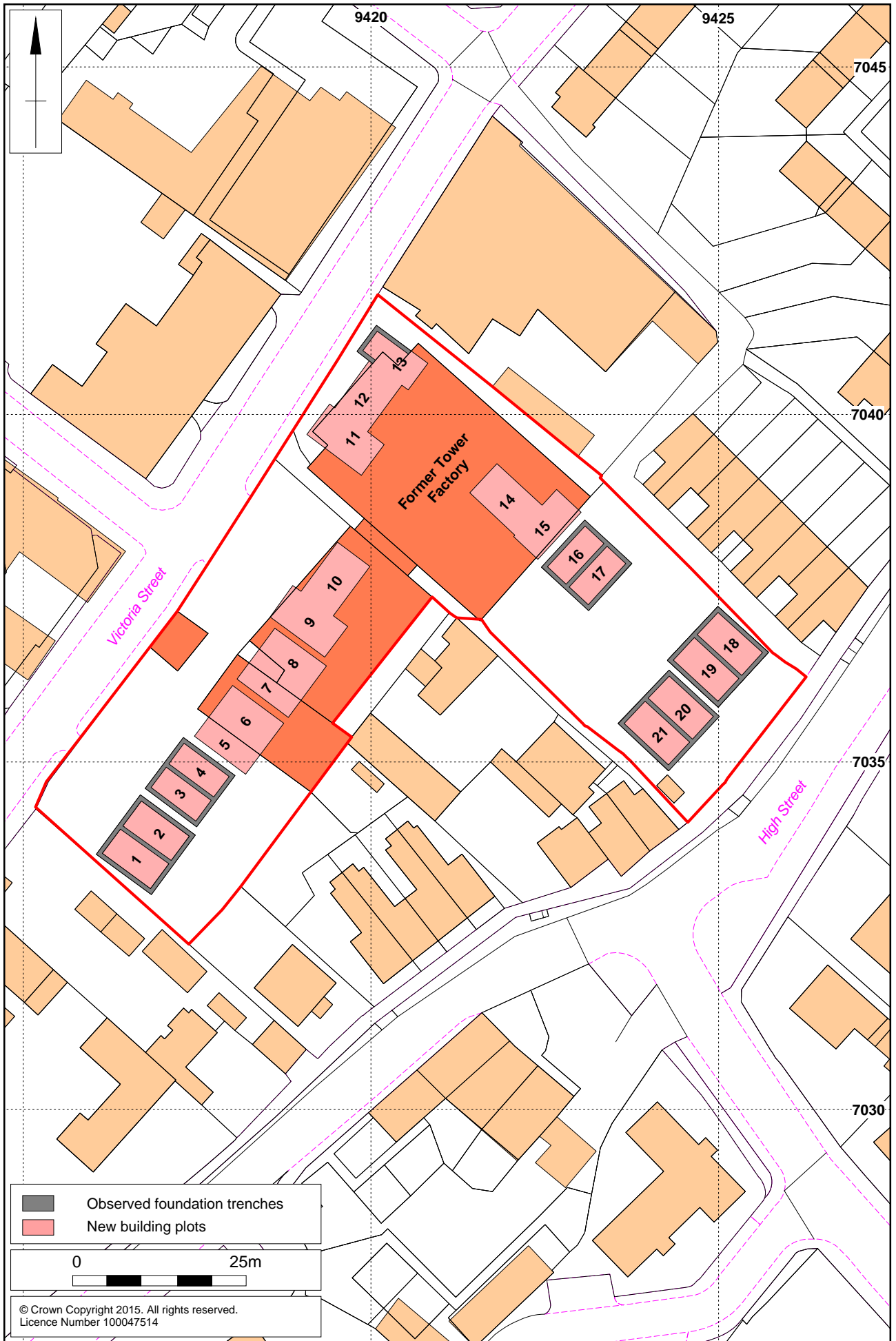
2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Part of an Iron Age settlement comprising pits and a roundhouse ring ditch within a small rectangular enclosure was excavated at Lime Street c 750m north-east of the development area (Chapman *et al* 2003). Further afield, 2.5km to the west there is an Iron Age hill fort thought to have been occupied through to the middle Saxon period (Parry 2006).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:750

Site plan Fig 2

Evidence of the Roman occupation along the Nene River valley is well documented with villas and settlements such as Irchester Roman town located c 4.5km to the south-west. Excavations at Lime Street c 750m north-east of the site, discovered some minor ditch systems and a group of small pits of Roman date (Chapman *et al* 2003). Within 1km of the development site there is the location of a potential late Iron Age/Roman settlement with works in 1969 discovering Roman pottery within ditches, pottery kilns and a corn drying oven (NMR number: SP 97 SW 7).

There is little evidence in the immediate vicinity for the Saxon period. Roughly 1.5km south-east, beyond the river lies the proposed location for a tribute centre for a middle Saxon royal estate of the 8th century. Saxon Irthlingborough would most likely have been associated with this structure up to its destruction in the 9th century. After which the area became occupied by a scatter of farmsteads (Hardy *et al* 2007).

Remnants of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were detected during a geophysical survey located just north-west of the development site, beyond Victoria Street. This strongly suggests that the area was once cultivated using the open field farming system (Butler 2010). This indicates that the area has a history of farming up to the early 19th century (Ballinger 2000).

In the late 19th century, Irthlingborough had developed from a large village into a small town. This was spurred by industrial developments, mostly in relation to the nearby boot and shoe trade that was active in much of the county. The development site itself is the former location of *Tower Factory* (MNN100904). Other such industrial units within Irthlingborough include the Leather Dressing works to the east of the site (MNN100911) and the now demolished Progressive Leather Works, recorded as Atlanta Works to the north (MNN100910).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In order to mitigate the impact of development upon any archaeological remains present, a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication was carried out as advised by the NCC AAA.

The specific aims of the project were to:

- mitigate the impact of the construction process on any remains through a programme of preservation by record.
- establish the relationship of any excavated remains to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recover artefacts from any excavated remains to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains from any excavated features to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.

The national research context for the works is provided by English Heritage (1991 and 1997) and regionally by Cooper (2006) and Knight, D, Vyner, B, and Allen C (2012) and will be referred to as required.

3 Methodology

The archaeological works consisted of the continuous observation of groundworks in areas of potential archaeological survival, comprising those areas outside the former building footprints and areas of former landscaping. In practice this comprised Plots 1 to 5, part of Plot 13 and Plots 16 to 21 (Fig 2).

Archaeological observation of the excavation of the footings for the above plots was carried out, after the demolition of the factory and its associated buildings and after the site had been cleared and levelled.

Ground reduction was undertaken with a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.6m wide toothed bucket and ceased at the formation level. In practice this varied between 0.5m and 2.1m. In places, the ground around the individual plots was also reduced as needed.

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of stratification was recorded on MOLA watching brief sheets. All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the MOLA *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2014). A photographic record was maintained, consisting of digital images and black and white photographs. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive site archive.

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The natural geology consists of Cornbrash Limestone towards the south-east, and was observed in Plots 18 to 21. Silty grey brown natural clay was encountered to the north and south-west in the remaining observed plots. The natural was reached in all observed plots between 0.20m and 1.20m.



Foundation trench 2, looking north-east Fig 3

The natural was directly overlain in all observed plots by a modern deposit which contained modern brick rubble, fragments of concrete, plastics, iron piping and lengths of wire.



Foundation trench 20, looking south-east Fig 4

A section of brick wall was identified between Plots 19 and 20. This comprised seven courses of mortared brick overlain by rubble. The bricks are unfrogged and constructed in the Stretcher coursing pattern. This feature lies on a thin layer of concrete, and is surrounded by loose brick and mortar fragments.



Foundation Trench 21, stratigraphy looking south Fig 5

Apart from the extensive root damage to the natural in Plots 18 – 21, no other deposits were observed and no archaeological features were present.



Overview of the foundation footings for plots 1 and 2, looking north-west Fig 6

5 DISCUSSION

The observed deposits at all locations on site indicated that the soil had been heavily disturbed. The soils being filled with modern material associated with building demolition which most likely originates from the demolition of the Tower Factory. The disturbed soils lay directly upon the natural geology which suggests that the land has been razed, thus removing the soil horizon that would normally be present. This is evidence of extensive groundworks and landscaping which was probably carried out prior to the construction of the now demolished Tower Factory.

The natural terrain on the site slopes southwards, but present ground surface is level. This is most evident to the south-east where the ground is approximately 9m higher than Wellingborough Road. The observed excavations here contained the thickest deposits overlying the natural.

The area between Plots 19 and 20 contained the base of a foundation wall. The bricks making up the wall are un-frogged, indicating a pre-20th century date for their production. The foundations correspond well with the location of a series of houses that were present on the site until at least 1976, and are traceable through historic Ordnance Survey Maps to the 1880s. The un-frogged bricks suggest the houses predate the earliest available mapping.

The site contained no surviving archaeological deposits beyond the construction and demolition of the Tower Factory. This structure, when built required such earthworks that the ground here has been heavily worked thus removing the possibility for the preservation of pre-modern artefacts.

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WEBSITES

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