



**Archaeological excavation  
and monitoring and recording  
at Biggleswade Golf Driving Range  
Bedfordshire  
November 2014 and March 2015**

Report No. 16/15

Author: Paul Clements

Illustrator: Ian Fisher



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Pottery: Tora Hylton

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS molanort1- 239658</b>	
Project title	Archaeological excavation and monitoring and recording at Biggleswade Golf Driving Range, Bedfordshire, November 2014 and March 2015		
Short description	In November 2014 and March 2015 archaeological monitoring and recording, and small area excavation was undertaken by MOLA Northampton during groundworks for the installation of French drains and bund extension around Biggleswade golf course driving range. The works revealed the two parallel ditches which contained a single pottery sherd dated to the 12th-13th century.		
Project type	Archaeological monitoring and excavation.		
Previous work	-		
Current land use	Golf driving range		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval		
Significant finds	Ditches		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Bedfordshire		
Site address	Biggleswade Golf Driving Range, Sandhills Lane, Biggleswade		
Easting Northing	TL 18090 45010		
Area (sq m/ha)	c 6ha		
Height aOD	c 28m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Central Bedfordshire Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Sam Egan (MOLA Northampton)		
Project Managers	Adam Yates (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	Machin Bate Associates		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	21/11/2014		
End date	31/03/2015		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	(Bedfordshire Museums) BEDFM:2012.45	Pottery	
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Title	Archaeological excavation and monitoring and recording at Biggleswade Golf Driving Range, Bedfordshire, November 2014 and March 2015		
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Author(s)	Paul Clements		
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# **Archaeological excavation and monitoring and recording at Biggleswade Golf Driving Range Bedfordshire November 2014 and March 2015**

## **Abstract**

*In November 2014 and March 2015 archaeological monitoring and recording, and small area excavation was undertaken by MOLA Northampton during groundworks for the installation of French drains and bund extension around Biggleswade golf course driving range. The works revealed the two parallel ditches which contained a single pottery sherd dated to the 12th-13th century.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Machin Bate Associates to undertake archaeological mitigation works during groundworks for the installation of two French drains and extension to the existing bund at Biggleswade Golf Driving Range, Bedfordshire (TL18090 45010, Fig 1), relating to planning consent BC/CM/2009/9. The works comprised open area excavations in areas of tree planting, and strip, map, and record in advance of the excavation for the French drains.

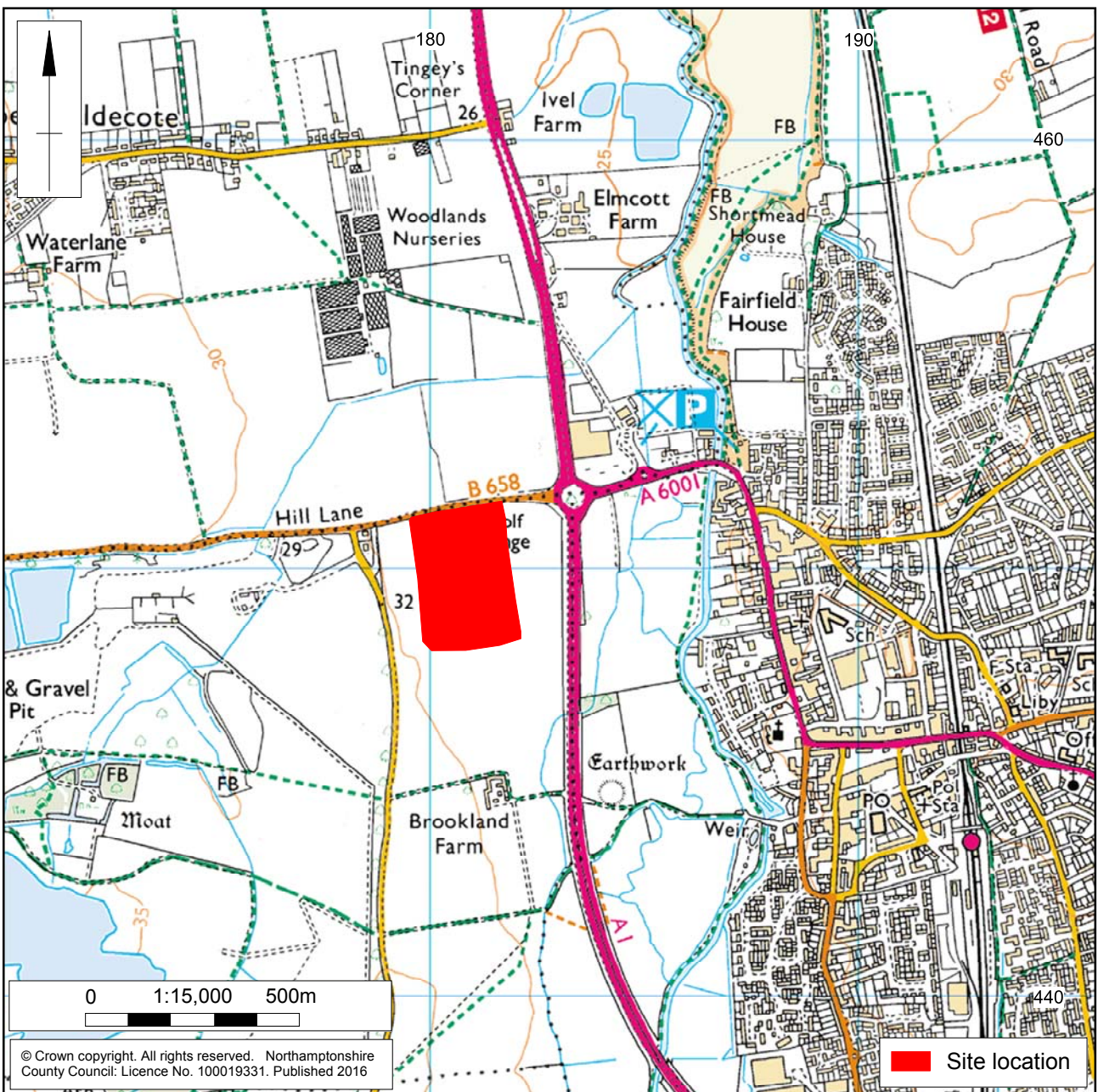
The scope of works was outlined in a Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (MOLA 2014b) following a brief issued by Central Bedfordshire Council. All works were undertaken in accordance with the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage (2014) now Historic England (HE 2015) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a and 2014b).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and topography**

The site is located to the west of Biggleswade on flat ground south of Hill Lane at a height of c 28m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

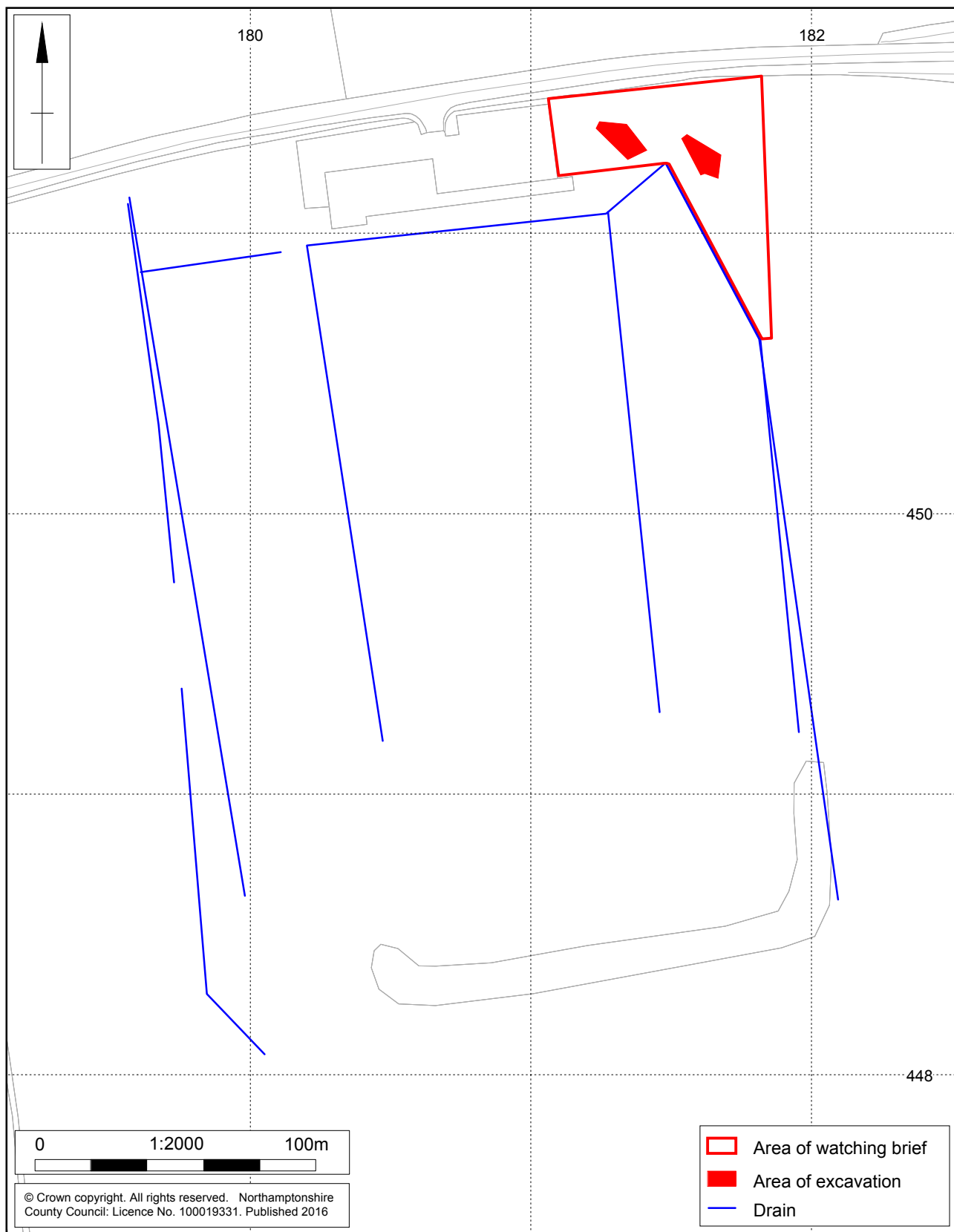
The underlying geology of the site is recorded as Mudstone of the Stewartby and Weymouth Formation overlain by Glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel (BGS 2016). The soils are classified as freely draining slightly acid loamy soils (Landis 2016).



Scale 1:15000

Site Location Fig 1





Scale 1:1500

Areas of archaeological observation Fig 2



## 2.2 Historical background

As part of the Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (MOLA 2014b) a historical search was undertaken. The findings have been reproduced here.

The development area lies within a rich archaeological landscape of regional importance. Extensive investigations to the west of Gypsy Lane at Broom Quarry (Cooper and Edmonds 2007); cropmarks visible on aerial photographs and upstanding earthworks all reveal a palimpsest of activity in the immediate vicinity of the site .

Within the bounds of the development area there are a number of linear, rectilinear and curvilinear cropmarks visible on aerial photographs.

The most substantial of these is a broad curvilinear feature, possibly representing a paleochannel, approximately 80m wide which crosses the site from north-east to south-west and is also visible in the neighbouring field to the north. To the west of this is a less substantial linear features aligned north-east to south-west and to the east there are a number of faint linear features aligned north-west to south-east.

In 2001, archaeological investigations were carried out on land between the development area and Gypsy Lane as part of the Biggleswade Reinforcement Water Main scheme (Wilson and Zeepvat 2010). The area was designated for detailed examination because of the existence of cropmarks, but no archaeological features or artefacts were revealed following topsoil stripping.

### ***Neolithic***

Assemblages of worked flint and Neolithic pottery were recovered from pits, tree throws and from later features during excavations at Broom Quarry to the west of the site at Gypsy Lane (Cooper 2004), Brookland Farm (Cooper 2004)) and Ash Covert (Cooper 2004). Further west, Neolithic features were also recorded at Hill Lane (Mortimer 1997) and at King's Hill, a large C-shaped ditch (Mortimer 1997) was found to be a long-lived feature with probable Early Neolithic origins.

### ***Bronze Age***

Bronze Age activity is well represented in the vicinity of the development area. At Broom Quarry extensive Bronze Age remains were revealed during excavations between 1996 and 2005. These are summarised and subject to analysis and discussion in Cooper and Edwards (2007). They include ring ditches, barrows, a double-ditched boundary, a cremation cemetery and post-built roundhouses.

To the south of the site there are two possible Bronze Age barrows visible as cropmarks. Adjacent to these, a third barrow is overlain by a ringwork and bailey castle.

### ***Iron Age***

Broom Quarry Iron Age activity was concentrated at the sites at Gypsy Lane and Hill Lane. At Gypsy lane there was an Early and Middle Iron Age system of enclosures, a roundhouse and pit groups which produced evidence of metal working. Further west at Hill Lane there were numerous Early and Middle Iron Age pits, many of which were clayed lined and contained burnt stones.

Cropmarks to the south of the development area may represent a series of Iron Age enclosures.

### ***Roman***

Roman activity is less well represented in the immediate vicinity than earlier periods. However, a wider view of the local landscape reveals that the development area lies at

the northern end of a series of Romano-British sites stretching 3km along the western edge of the Ivel valley (Cooper and Edwards 2007).

### **Saxon**

Saxon appropriation of Bronze Age monuments as a focus for burial is well documented. At the King's Hill site at Broom quarry Saxon burials were found in close proximity to Monument III and a Saxon post-built structure was located close to Monument II.

### **Medieval**

To the south of the site there are earthworks and cropmarks relating to a ringwork and bailey castle which is situated on a low gravel island. Excavation in the 1960s suggested 12th-century origins.

## **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Objectives**

General aims were to:

- Put in place a series of measures to mitigate the impact of the development on the archaeological resource;
- Ensure the preservation *in situ* of those archaeological remains that will not be directly impacted by the development;
- Where the development will have a damaging impact on archaeological remains to ensure that they are adequately investigated and recorded in during groundworks associated with the French drain.

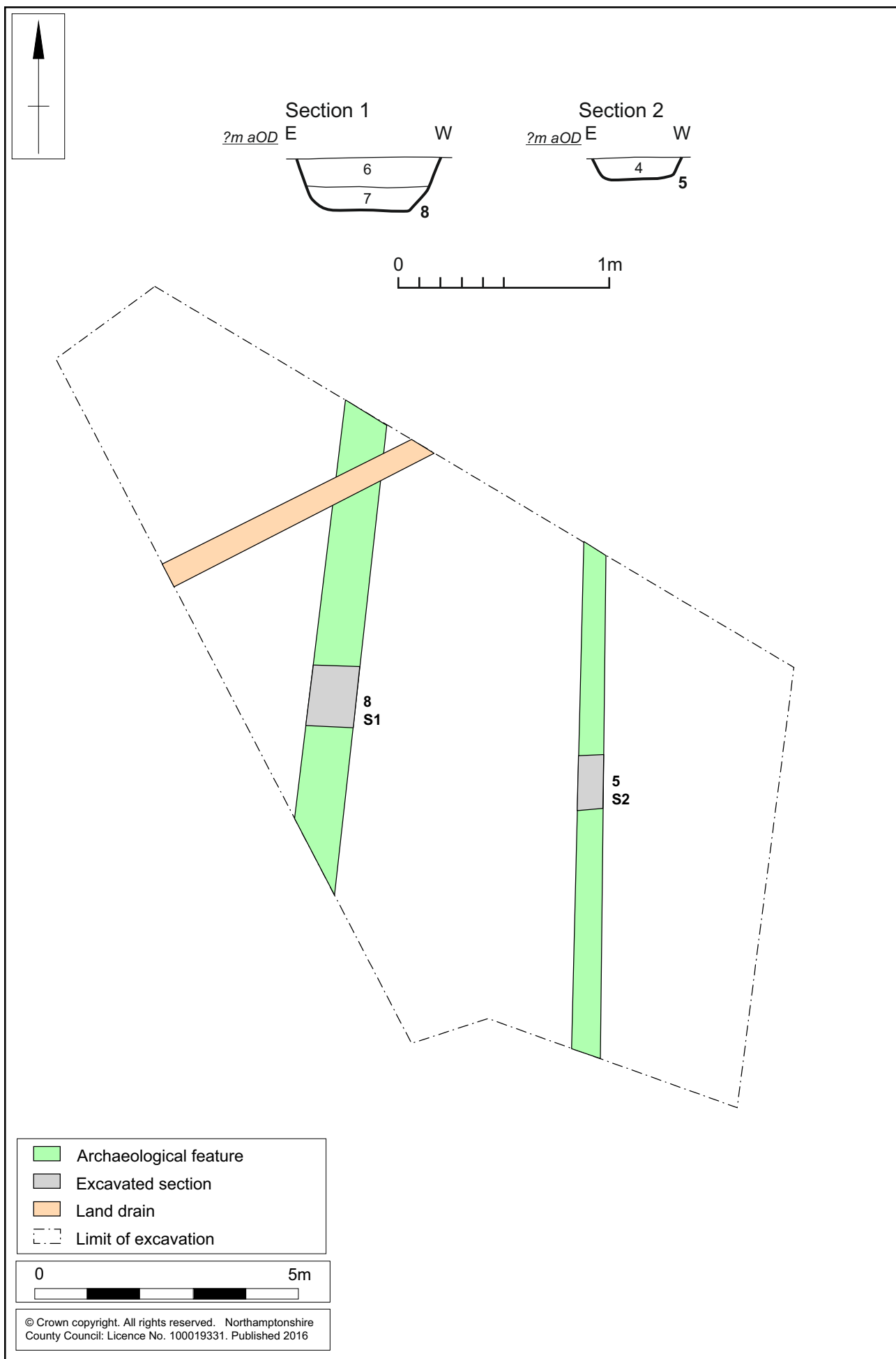
The specific aims of the project were to:

- Determine the character, date and function of any archaeological remains associated with the cropmarks within the development area and to understand their relationship with the Broom Quarry findings;
- Understand the relationship between any archaeological remains and the crop marks of possible prehistoric features to the south;
- Contribute to the understanding development of farming, settlement and the role of monuments and burial practices in Bronze Age society (Brown and Glazebrook 2000, 10-12; Oake 2007, 10-11; Medlycott 2011, 15-21);
- Contribute to understanding of landscape development, settlement patterns and continuity in the later Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods (Oake 2007, 10-11);
- Investigate for any evidence for the Late Iron Age/Roman transition period (Medleycott 2011, 31);
- Recover evidence for the paleo-environment and paleo-economy of the remains;
- Characterise the spatial organisation and landscape of the Neolithic/Bronze Age Ivel Valley;
- Identify the presence of Neolithic/Bronze Age settlements from apparently ephemeral remains;
- Understand the nature and distribution of rural river valley settlements.

### 3.2 Methodology

The works comprised areas of open area excavation in advance of tree planting and, strip, map and record in advance of French drain construction. All works followed the Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (MOLA 2014b). All groundworks were excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to remove overburden to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first, under continuous archaeological supervision. The excavation area was cleaned sufficiently to define features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological remains present. A hand-drawn plan of all archaeological features was made at scale 1:50 and was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the Fieldwork Manual (MOLA 2014a).

Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets which include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the Fieldwork Manual (MOLA 2014a). All works were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014b). Photography was with 35mm black and white film, and digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 and related to Ordnance Survey datum.



Scale 1: 100

Area of archaeological observation Fig 3

## 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

### 4.1 General site stratigraphy

The underlying geology was encountered at 0.40m below the modern ground surface. It comprised pale yellow with patches of light grey silty-clay. It was overlain by mid orange-brown silty-clay subsoil, 0.04m thick, containing occasional small, sub-rounded stone. This was overlain by dark grey-black silty-clay topsoil, 0.35m thick. No archaeological features were identified within the trenches for the French drains.

### 4.2 The archaeological evidence

Two parallel ditches, 4m apart, aligned north to south, were identified within the eastern open area excavation (Fig 3). Ditch [5] was 0.40m wide and 0.10m deep, with steep sides. The ditch gradually accumulated mid grey-brown silty-clay (4), most likely under watery conditions, from which a sherd of 12th-13th century pottery was recovered.

Ditch [8] had a U-shaped profile, 0.70m wide and 0.26m deep, with steep sides. A natural, water lain, deposit of silty clay (7) lined the base of the ditch. This was overlain by further natural silting of mid grey-brown silty clay (6).



Ditches [5] and [8], looking south Fig 4



General view of ditches [5] and [8], looking south Fig 5





French drain construction trench, looking south Fig 6

## **5 THE POTTERY** by Tora Hylton

One medieval pot sherd was recovered from Ditch [5]. The sherd, weighing 30g, is an abraded base sherd from a wheel thrown vessel (cooking pot) in a shell-tempered fabric (Bedfordshire Fabric Type B7 – Baker 1979). The fabric is hard/coarse to touch and it has been fired to an orange/red colour with a grey core. A 12th-13th century date is suggested.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The works identified no archaeological features within the trenches for the French drains and no residual finds were recovered from the topsoil or subsoil of these areas.

Within the small open area two parallel ditches were identified. A sherd of 12th-13th century pottery was recovered from the western ditch. Although limited to a small area these ditches may tenuously be interpreted as a trackway relating to the features visible on aerial photographs within the vicinity of the groundworks.

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