



**Archaeological observation, investigation
and recording of land at Nottinghams
Baldock Road, Cottered
Hertfordshire
May 2016**

Report No 16/107

Author: Tim Sharman

Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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Quality control and sign off:

Issue No.	Date approved:	Checked by:	Verified by:	Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	16/06/16	P Chapman	A Bassir	A Chapman	Draft for client review

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-255116	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation, and recording of land at Nottingham, Baldock Road, Cottered, Hertfordshire, May 2016		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out by MOLA Northampton, during groundwork on land at Nottingham, Baldock Road, Cottered, Hertfordshire. A ditch of unknown date and post-medieval and modern floor layers and wall footings were identified. This work followed a scheme of historic building recording of late 19th-century barns and stables which were demolished prior to archaeological observation.		
Project type	Watching Brief		
Previous work	Historic Building Recording		
Current land use	Former barns and stable block		
Future work	None		
Monument type and period	Uncertain, post-medieval and modern		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Hertfordshire		
Site address	Nottingham, Baldock Road, Cottered		
Easting Northing	TL 34185 29285		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.02 ha		
Height aOD	133m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Hertfordshire Historic Environment Advisor		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Tim Sharman (MOLA Northampton)		
Project Manager	Amir Bassir (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	Clare Nash Architects		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	17/05/2016		
End date	19/05/2016		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical		-	
Paper		Watching brief forms, permatrace plans	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Unpublished client report			
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation, and recording of land at Nottingham, Baldock Road, Cottered, Hertfordshire, May 2016		
Serial title & volume	16/107		
Author(s)	Tim Sharman		
Page numbers	13		
Date	16 June 2016		

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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording of land at Nottinghams, Baldock Road Cottered, Hertfordshire May 2016

Abstract

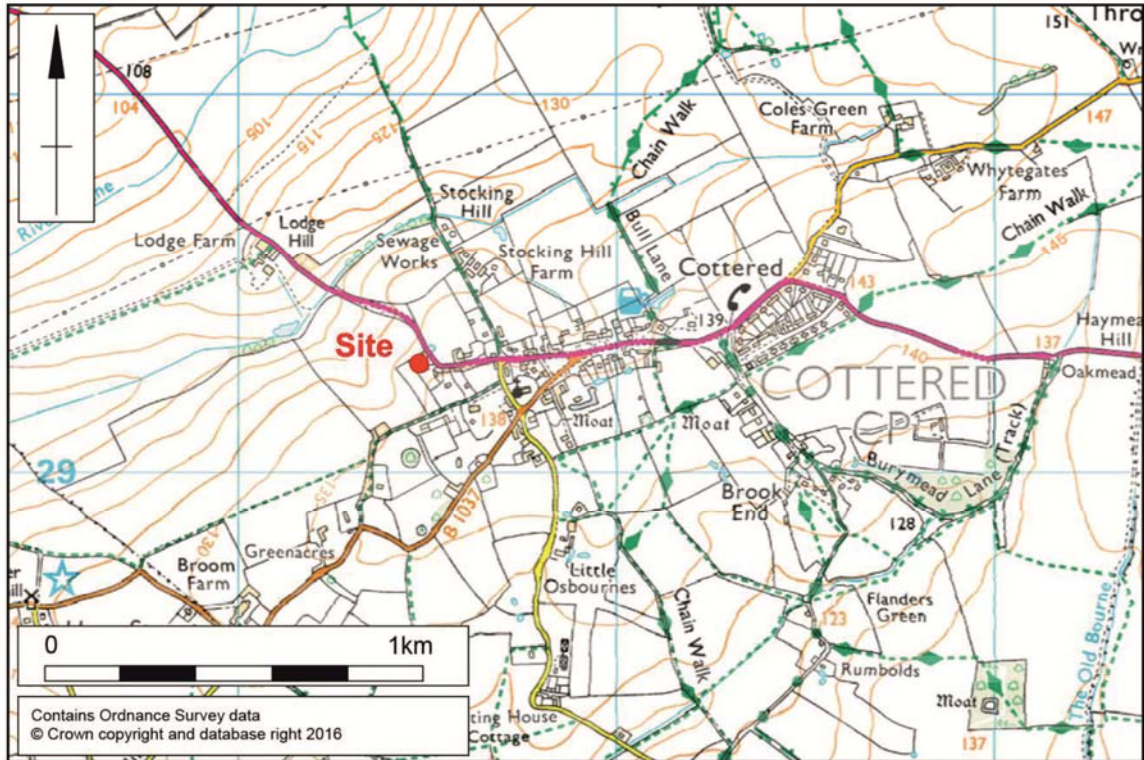
An archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was carried out by MOLA Northampton, during construction work on land at Nottinghams, Baldock Road, Cottered, Hertfordshire. A ditch of unknown date and post-medieval and modern floor layers and wall footings were identified. This work followed a scheme of historic building recording of late 19th century barns and stables which were demolished prior to archaeological observation.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA Northampton had been commissioned by Clare Nash Architecture, on behalf of Mr C Saynor and Ms V Stothard, to carry out a programme of observation, investigation and recording of groundworks on land at Nottinghams, Baldock road, Cottered (NGR TL 34185 29285 Fig 1). Planning consent had been granted for the conversion of stables and adjoining barns into holiday lets and the construction of new structures on the site of demolished former barns and stables which were subject to historic building recording (Bassir and Wolframm-Murray 2016).

The archaeological monitoring works were to ensure that any archaeological remains within the area of the groundworks were appropriately located, defined, characterised, and recorded. Works were undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014a), and to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. This report has been prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: archaeological watching briefs* (CIfA 2014a) and the Historic England (HE) procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015). The work complied with an approved written Scheme of Investigation by MOLA (MOLA 2016).



Site location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The Nottinghams is located at the western extent of Cottered, a linear form village aligned east to west. It has developed along the A507 Baldock Road, which connects the towns of Buntingford and Baldock. The village is located along a ridge of higher ground which slopes northward toward the River Beane and southward towards the smaller Ardley Brooke and The Old Bourne. The Nottinghams marks the far western end of the village, beyond which are enclosed arable fields. The church of St John the Baptist is located a short distance to the east of the site.

The parish of Cottered contains 1,832 acres. Of this about two-thirds consist of arable land and one-quarter of permanent grass. The only piece of woodland in the parish is Drinkwater Wood, which lies to the south-east. The soil is generally heavy on a subsoil of chalk. The River Beane flows through the parish, the western districts of which are liable to floods. In the north-east the land rises as high as 493 ft. above the ordnance datum.

The Roman road known as Stane Street passed through Hare Street, a hamlet on the borders of Cottered and Ardeley, its course being apparently marked by Back Lane, which forms the south-western boundary of Cottered. There is a record of this road in Cottered in 1346, when the 'King's Highway called Stanestrat' is referred to as a boundary.

Cottered lies 3 miles west of Buntingford, in which town is its nearest railway station on the Great Eastern railway, and 6 miles east of the market town of Baldock. The main road which connects these two towns passes through Cottered. Other roads connect it with Throcking and Ardeley.

The village of Cottered lies about three-quarters of a mile north of the Roman road above referred to, around and within a triangle formed by the junction of the roads from Buntingford, Ardeley and Cumberlow Green. The church stands at the south angle of the triangle in a fairly large churchyard with the Lordship to the south-east of it and Cheynes, the manorhouse of Cheyney Cottered, to the south-west. The village is mainly along the road a little to the north of the church. The 18th-century almshouses known as the Town Houses, the village school built in 1829, the rectory and a Congregational mission chapel stand in this road. (VCH 1912)

The site is located on the western side of the A507 where the road passes out of the village and changes alignment to a north-west direction. The property encompasses a linear rectangular plot parallel to the road though separated from it by two smaller properties that abut the road. The farm and associated stables and barns form a semi-enclosed continuous series of ranges with the main extent of the farmhouse facing the road. A central yard is formed between the ranges with a path leading to the road. A square pond, now filled in and grassed over, was formerly situated at the western side of the site. The southern half of the site, now a garden, was likely formerly an orchard or ordered garden with established trees.

The recorded buildings comprised the west range of stables and barns which are to be converted into holiday lets. The Historic Building Appraisal assesses the significance of these buildings as follows: "Their significance is very limited due to their makeshift construction, much-altered state, late nineteenth century date, and very modest form. They are utilitarian structures and do not attain the architectural interest typical of historic timber-framed barns" (BEAMS 2015).

The site lies at approximately 133m above Ordnance Datum on ground which rises towards the south-east, away from the lower lying valley of the River Beane, c850 to the north-west. The underlying geology of the area has been mapped as comprising Upper Cretaceous chalk, overlain by superficial deposits of glacial till, sand and gravel (BGS 2016).

2.2 Historic background

The Nottinghams farmhouse is a Grade II listed building (ref:159842) and the listing description is as follows:

House. C17, walls heightened and flatter pitched roof early C19 Timber frame on red brick sill, roughcast, with weatherboarded 1st floor to rear wing and its ground floor cased in red brick. Slate roof. A 2-storeys, 3-cells, central chimney, lobby-entry plan house facing E with 2-storeys rear wing projecting at NW. The front has 3 windows to each floor. Small-paned 2- and 3- light flush casement windows (renewed) and a half-glazed panelled door in a moulded surround with flat hood on shaped brackets. C19 bargeboards with pendants to ends and dripboard across gable over the wallplate ends.

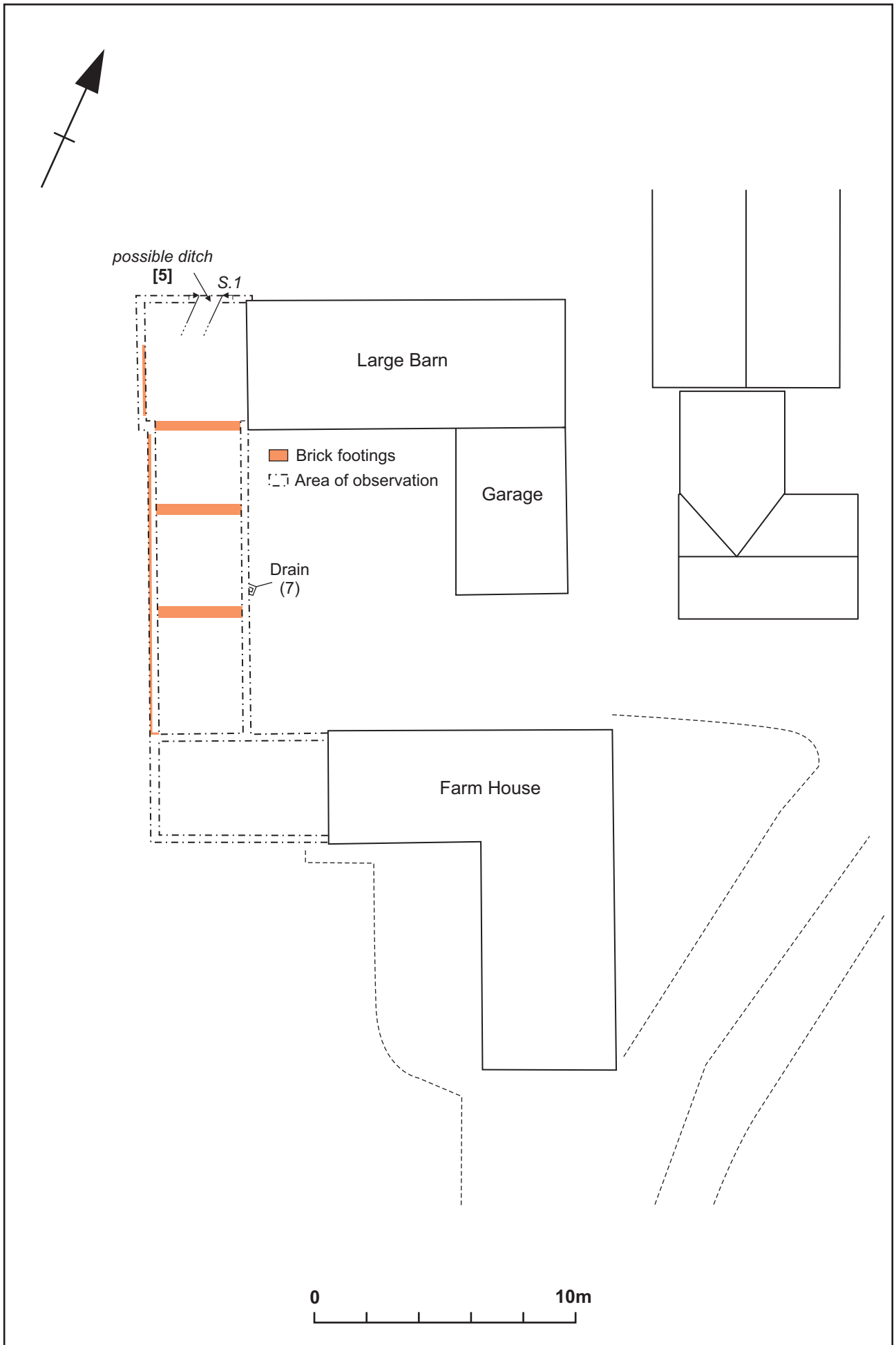
The Cottered Parish plan of 1807 (not reproduced) shows the farmhouse as comprising a north-south and an east-west range joined at the north-east corner and forming an inverted L plan. A smaller annex extends the north-south range to the south. A T-plan outbuilding was to the north of the farmhouse alongside two smaller outbuildings which were contained within an enclosed area to the north-east of the farmhouse.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (not reproduced) shows a considerable change in the site's layout. Of the three outbuildings on the map of 1807, only one was still present, though it is possible that the original structure may have been rebuilt on

the same footprint. The farmhouse appears to have been widened along both of its ranges. Three ranges of outbuildings (stables and barns) were arranged in a continuous C-plan with a yard formed between them.

The outbuilding within the enclosure to the north-east of the farmhouse was demolished by 1898 and a new structure, the current adjacent property was built within the enclosure. Some additional internal partitioning and rearrangement of internal layout is also evident at this time within the stable and barn ranges.

A number of the outbuildings were destroyed by fire in 1879. In that year Jane Barnes was tried for starting a fire at Nottinghams, where she was a domestic servant, destroying the wood and slate wheat barn, the stables, and other buildings. Evidently some of the outbuildings were rebuilt and altered after the fire (Beams 2015).



Scale 1:200

Area of archaeological observation Fig 2

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the main objective of the investigation was to determine and understand the nature, function, and character of an archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting. More specifically, the work has:

- Identified, investigated and recorded all archaeological deposits exposed during the excavation of the house footprint and access road, plus associated below groundworks;
- Determined and recorded the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Created a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

3.2 Methodology

All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents Historic England's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2014a) and *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2014b).

The observation work took place on 17th and 19th May 2016 in generally good weather conditions. The groundwork areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features, where present.

Recording followed standard MOLA Northampton procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 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 comprises digital images and 35mm black and white film.

The observation area comprised an area of relatively flat land on the western side of the Nottingham yard and was located within the footprints of the demolished former stable buildings and barn extensions, measuring approximately 24m long by 8m wide and aligned north-south. Within the observation area five connected footing trenches were excavated within the footprint of former 19th century barns and stables (Fig 2).

The natural substratum was removed within the footings using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.4m bladed bucket operated under constant archaeological supervision.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The footings trenches were excavated to a depth of 1m below a prepared, machine-stripped surface following the removal of the modern concrete floors of the stable and barns.

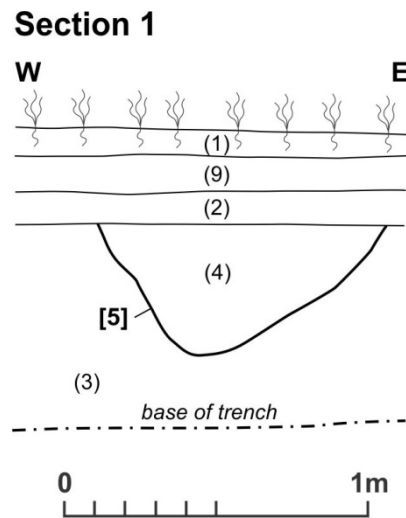
The natural substrate (3) consisted of compacted orange-brown clay with some small to medium-sized chalk and flint inclusions and was present throughout each of the footings trenches. Within the centre of the observation area, a band of orange brown

clay containing a higher concentration of flint inclusions was noted, which would appear to have been a slightly more “gravelly” form of the natural substrate. No subsoil or topsoil was extant within any of the trenches, however, immediately to the south of the observation area, a layer of subsoil (2) and topsoil (1) was noted within the edge of the adjacent garden which had been scraped at an angle of approximately 45° prior to the excavation of the footings trenches (Fig 5).

Within the area of observation, the following features were recorded.

4.1 The ditch

Within the northernmost footing trench, a possible linear ditch of unknown length [5] was noted running in a north to south direction (Figs 2, 3 and 4). The ditch was 0.95m wide by 0.45m deep with a V-shaped profile. The western side of the ditch sloped more steeply than on the east. The fill (4) consisted of a yellow-brown sandy clay loam with occasional flint pebbles. No dating evidence was recovered from the ditch fill.



Section across ditch [005] Fig 3



Ditch [5], looking north Fig 4

4.2 The late post-medieval floor layers

Two former floor layers were noted within the footprint of the former stable block (Figs 6 & 7). The lowest, (8), consisted of a layer of flint nodules and chalk rubble which had been placed directly above the natural clay (3). The uppermost layer (9) consisted of a compacted layer of grey-white chalk rubble with a few tiny pebble inclusions. Within the former stable block, layer (9) appears to have been directly overlain by the modern layer of concrete which had been recently removed during the demolition of the building. Layers (8) and (9) also appear to have underlain the layer of modern concrete which was extant throughout the stable yard (Fig 7).

4.3 The late post-medieval brick footings

The brick footings of the former stables (Fig 8) were noted to be still *in situ* at least two brick courses deep. They were a mixture of frogged and un-frogged bricks and following the same alignment as the machine-cut footings for the new building, particularly on the western and southern sides. The brick footings for the cross-walls of the former stables were also visible (Fig 9) and did not appear to have cut through the former floor layers (8) and (9), suggesting that the earlier stable floor was constructed just after the walls.

4.4 The late post-medieval drain

Just to the east of the eastern wall of the former stables and half way along its length was a vertical, brick-lined drain [7] (Fig 10). A channel set within the modern concrete of the stable yard fed into the drain, suggesting it had been in use until the recent demolition of the stables. The fill (6) consisted of a dark grey silt with modern inclusions such as plastic litter.



Southern part of site, looking south-east Fig 5



Layer (8) with overlying layer (9) partly removed, looking north Fig 6



Late post-medieval surface (9) beneath modern concrete, looking east Fig 7



Western side of site, brick footings and flint floor foundations, looking north Fig 8



Footings of former stable cross-wall, looking east Fig 9



Drain [7] looking east Fig 10

5 DISCUSSION

The observation work identified a possible small ditch [5] of unknown date running beneath the western extension of the northernmost barn. No artifacts or dating evidence was recovered from this feature. The brick footings and brick-lined drain appear to post-date the fire of 1879 which destroyed the stables leading to their rebuilding soon after.

The flint layer (8) may have been a sub-base for the rammed chalk floor (9) which appears to have been spread throughout the area of the stables and stable yard prior to the construction of modern concrete floors and surfaces throughout the buildings and stable yard respectively.

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MOLA Northampton

16 June 2016

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Area	Length, width & alignment			
Site	c24m long x c7m wide North to south			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts
1	Layer	Dark grey-brown sandy loam topsoil with frequent small pebble inclusions.	c0.3m thick	Modern pot sherds (not retained)
2	Layer	Yellow-brown sandy clay loam subsoil with frequent flint inclusions	c0.3m thick	-
3	Layer	Orange-brown clay with occasional flint and chalk inclusions	At least 0.8m thick	-
4	Fill of ditch	Yellow-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small pebble inclusions	0.45m deep	-
[5]	Cut of ditch	Linear ditch with a U-shaped profile	0.95m wide by 0.45 deep	-
6	Fill of drain	Dark grey-silt	c 0.7m deep	-
[7]	Drain structure	Brick-lined square-shaped vertical drain.	c 0.7m wide by c 0.7m deep	-
8	Layer	Compacted layer of large flint and chalk nodules	c 0.1m thick	-
9	Layer	Compacted layer of grey-white chalk	c 0.15m thick	-



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