



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
at Bell Plantation, Towcester
Northamptonshire
February 2019**

Report No 19/21

Author: Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

Illustrator: Carla Ardis MA



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
at Bell Plantation, Towcester
Northamptonshire
February 2019**

Site code: ENN109373

Accession Number: ENN109373

Quality control and sign off:

Issue No.	Date approved:	Checked by:	Verified by:	Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	19/3/19	C Finn	T Reece	P Thompson	Draft for review

Author: Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Illustrator: Carla Ardis

© MOLA Northampton 2019

MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809 800
www.mola.org.uk
sparry@mola.org.uk

STAFF

Project Manager: Jim Brown BSc PGDip MCIfA
Text: Yvonne Wolframm-Murray BSc PhD
Fieldwork: Yvonne Wolframm-Murray
David Haynes
Rob Pearce
Illustrations: Carla Ardis MA
Worked flint: Yvonne Wolframm-Murray
Pottery: Adam Sutton BA MA PhD
Animal bone: Sander Aerts BA MSc
Tile: Rob Atkins

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-345638	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester, Northamptonshire		
Short summary	MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by Bell Plantation Garden Centre to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on car park on land at the Bell Plantation Garden Centre, Towcester. One trench was excavated of which revealed ditches and pits. Elements from one probable inhumation burial were identified. After approval from the NCAA the burial was left in situ. The features are divided in two groups. The more eastern group, comprising three ditches and two pits, lay on slightly higher, drier ground. The ditches were orientated north to south or north-west to south-east. After a gap the westerly group lay downslope in much wetter conditions. The pottery has given the ditches and pits a tight date span, from the late 1st to the late 2nd century AD.		
Project type	Evaluation		
Site status	NN12 6GX		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Car Park		
Development type	Building		
Future work	Open area and watching brief		
Monument type/period	Roman ditches and pits		
Significant finds	Roman pottery; human remains		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Bell Plantation Garden Centre, Towcester		
Postcode			
OS coordinates	SP 68710 49822		
Area (sq m/ha)	60m ²		
Height aOD	100-105m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology)		
Project Brief originator	Northamptonshire Archaeological Advisor		
Project Design originator	MOLA		
Project Director/ Manager	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
Project Supervisor	Jim Brown		
Sponsor or funding body	Bell Plantation		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date (dd-mm-yy)	11th February 2019		
End date (dd-mm-yy)	13th February 2019		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	MOLA Northampton ENN109373	Pottery, human and animal bone	
Digital		Digital Photographs and Report	
Paper		Context sheets, plans, sections, watching brief records	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph or unpublished MOLA report			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester, Northamptonshire		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton Reports , 19/21		
Author(s)	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
Page numbers	22		
Date	18/03/2019		

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	
2	BACKGROUND	
	2.1	Location, topography and geology
	2.2	Archaeological and historical background
3	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	
4	METHODOLOGY	
5	RESULTS	
6	FINDS	
	6.1	Worked flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray
	6.2	Pottery by Adam Sutton
	6.3	Animal bone by Sander Aerts
7	DISCUSSION	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	

Figures

- Fig 1: Site location and proposed trench
- Fig 2: Car park pre-excavation, looking west
- Fig 3: Ditch [5], looking north-west
- Fig 4: Trench plan
- Fig 5: Ditch [5], looking south-east
- Fig 6: Sections 1 and 2, ditch [5]
- Fig 7: Section 3, ditch [7]
- Fig 8: Ditch [7], looking north with Burial 1
- Fig 9: Burial 1, looking south-east
- Fig 10: Plan of Burial 1
- Fig 11: Postholes [21], [23] and [25], looking north
- Fig 12: Ditch [11] and Pit [9] looking north
- Fig 13: Section 4, ditch [11] and pit [9]
- Fig 14: Feature [13], looking east
- Fig 15: Trench 1, looking east

Table

Table 1: Contextual summary of pottery

Table 2: Quantification of pottery fabrics

Table 3: Number of identified specimens per context/taxon

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester Northamptonshire February 2019

Abstract

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by Bell Plantation Garden Centre to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on car park on land at the Bell Plantation Garden Centre, Towcester. One trench was excavated of which revealed ditches and pits. Elements from one probable inhumation burial were identified. After approval from the NCAA the burial was left in situ. The features are divided in two groups. The more eastern group, comprising three ditches and two pits, lay on slightly higher, drier ground. The ditches were orientated north to south or north-west to south-east. After a gap the westerly group lay downslope in much wetter conditions. The pottery has given the ditches and pits a tight date span, from the late 1st to the late 2nd century AD.

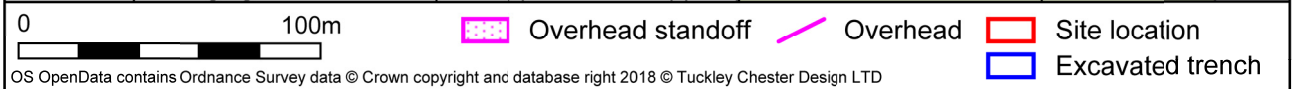
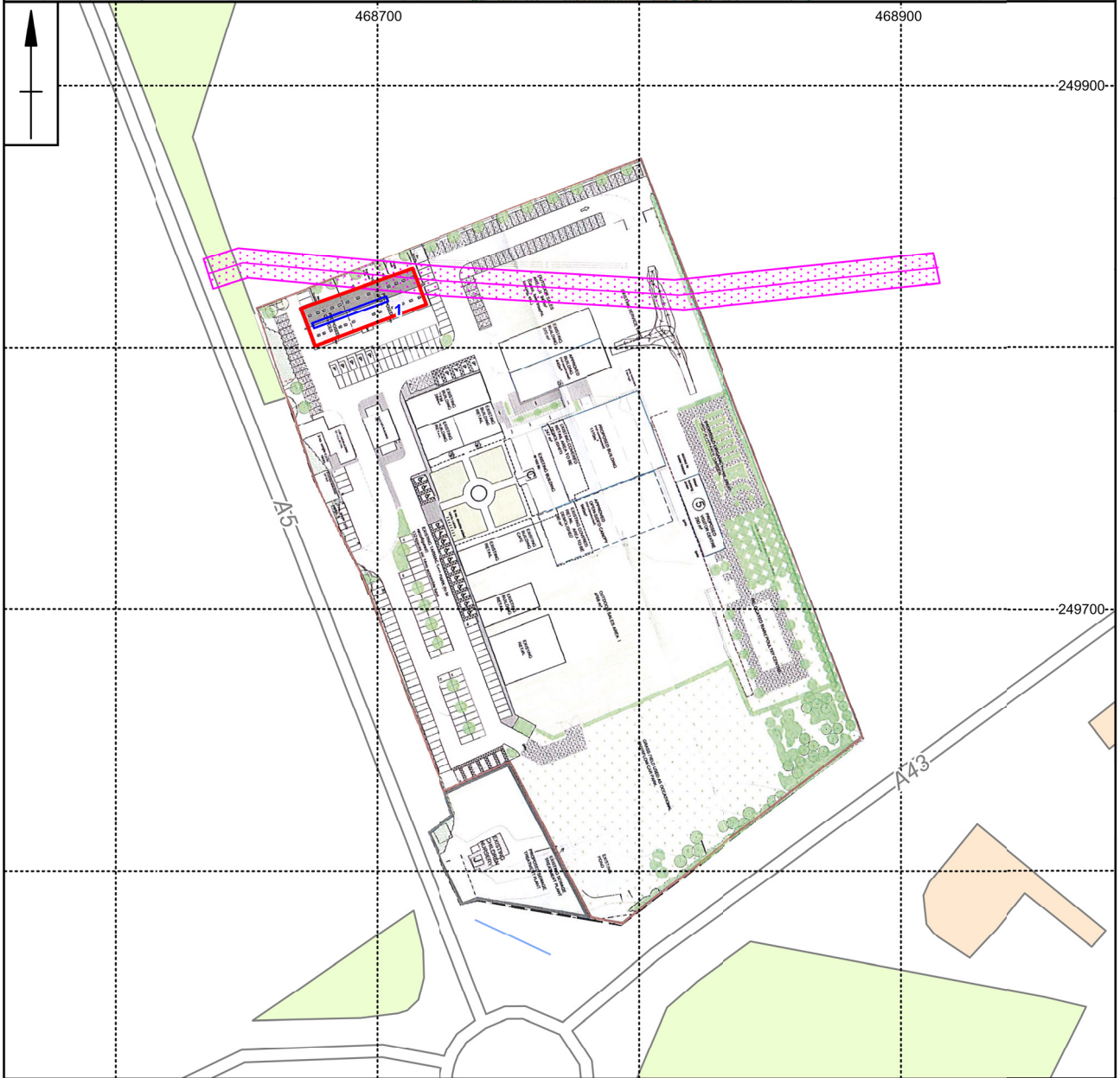
1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) Northampton was commissioned by Bell Plantation Garden Centre to undertake a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 68710 49822, Fig 1). This was carried out in advance the construction of a proposed veterinary building.

Under the archaeological advice of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2018a-b) a programme of archaeological works was undertaken to ensure satisfactory archaeological investigation and recording to provide further information to the authority and inform upon the needs of any potential mitigation should a planning application go ahead. The work was carried out in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by MOLA outlining the proposed methodology for the archaeological works (MOLA 2019), and all works were undertaken in accordance with this approved document. MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation, and all works were undertaken according to the CIfA *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b). The project was managed in accordance with the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (HE 2015) and the *Northamptonshire Archaeological Archives Standard* (NAAWG 2014).

The Event number for this work is **ENN109373** and was used as the site code.



Scale 1:2500

Site location and proposed trench Fig 1

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

NCC Planning determined that the study area had the potential to contain remains that would inform upon the extent and development of the northern suburb to the Roman town of *Lactodorum* (NCC 2018a-b).

Further information was required on the archaeology within the proposed development area before a planning application could be determined, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The purpose of the archaeological excavation was to determine and understand the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeology revealed within its cultural and environmental setting. In particular the investigation aimed to determine:

- the location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present, and;
- the integrity and state of preservation of such deposits, where found.

Specific research objectives were drawn from the national and regional research framework documents where relevant (<https://researchframeworks.org/emherf/>, accessed 30/01/2019; Knight *et al* 2012). The site is situated close to Watling Street and other archaeological work revealing human remains. The current work may contribute the study of human remains and burial, and urbanisation especially in relation to roads during the Roman period.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Location, topography and geology

The site is to the north-east of Watling Street, Towcester, Northamptonshire (Fig 1). The proposed development area is within the existing Bell Plantation Garden Centre, at its north-west end within an area of surfaced car park (Fig 2). The site is bounded to the north and east by pasture and to the south by the A43 dual carriageway. The western boundary is with the A5 (Watling Street) and is bordered by a stand of trees.

The land slopes downwards to the south-east at 105–100m above Ordnance Datum and is on the northern side of the Tove Valley on a spur between two streams. The western stream has its source in Cold Higham and the eastern stream rises at Caldecote.

The geology of the valley sides is of the Whitby Mudstone Formation, a sequence of clay formerly known as Upper Lias Clay (BGS 2019). Northampton Sand with ironstone, Inferior Oolite Limestone and outcrops of cornbrash and clay may also be expected on higher ground overlain by patches of glacial boulder clay. The soils of the valley side are of the Wickham 2 association, comprising seasonally waterlogged fine loamy clay with patches of calcareous soil (LAT 1983, 711f), which form over Jurassic, or Cretaceous clay and mudstone.



Car park pre-excitation, looking west Fig 2

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

The historical and archaeological background is reproduced from the WSI (MOLA 2019). Pottery of middle–late Iron Age and Roman date has been found in the vicinity of Bell Plantation.

Iron Age settlement existed at the bend of the River Tove on the north side of Towcester. Remains of settlement, accompanied by dark “Belgic” style pottery, were identified during excavations near Bury Mount (Audouy 1984, 25). It is likely that the town may have begun as a Vicus, a small civilian settlement, and became a point in need of defence when it became a focus for Roman political and economic activity. It has been suggested that it was the stage for significant disturbances which were part of widespread conflagrations in the area during second part of the 2nd century AD (Woodfield 1995, 140-143). The burgeoning Roman town of Lactodorum (Towcester) was located on the Watling Street (A5), a major Roman military route built between London and the legionary fortress at Wroxeter, near Shrewsbury. It may have been used as a staging post during periods of military activity and a likely target for localised insurrection.

A number of small excavations and trial trench evaluations have been undertaken in the area. A number of Roman inhumation burials, pottery, coins and a 1st-century brooch were discovered during construction of the former Central Woolgrowers (now occupied by Aldi), to the south (RCHM 1982). Excavations in 2011 investigated a small enclosure immediately behind the former Roman Watling Street frontage to the north of the Roman town (Brown 2011). The enclosure was roughly rectangular, formed by a subdivision of longer continuous ditches that lay perpendicular to Watling Street. The impression was of a property package, perhaps one of several extending along the roadside. Within the enclosure lay a possible ancillary yard building such as a pig sty. A neonate piglet was recovered nearby. The principal pits in the immediate vicinity contained fairly large unabraded Roman pottery sherds in utilitarian forms, suggestive of food consumption, which date predominantly from the late 1st–2nd centuries AD.

The pottery was accompanied by an equal quantity of animal bone, likely to be the product of food preparation.

Detailed investigative work was undertaken prior to the construction of the petrol filling station on the south side of the A43 roundabout. A long trench excavated along the length of the Watling Street frontage showed that there had been fairly dense occupation and despite severe truncation the foundations of at least one 2nd-century building was observed (HER 726/20/1).

At Mandalay House to the north-east of Watling Street, small areas of hard standing were found in trial trenches (Soden 1993). Excavations prior to the construction of the A43 bypass revealed a number of ditches that delineated long parcels of land. Buildings positioned on the frontages appear to have been used as smithies, while the rears of the plots were probably used as paddocks (Woodfield 1995). To the east of Watling Street a watching brief and salvage excavation were carried out during groundworks at Tove Valley Business Park (Lewis 2004). A number of heavily truncated ditches and pits may represent the peripheral back plot areas of properties fronting onto Watling Street.

4 METHODOLOGY

One trench, 30m long and 2m wide, was excavated within the proposed development. The trench was positioned to avoid the overhead cables at the north-eastern corner of the site (Fig 1). This included a 10m exclusion zone.

The trench was located in using Leica Viva Survey Grade RTK GPS using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum. Machine excavation was undertaken under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. The trench was excavated by machine fitted with a toothless bucket a minimum of 2m wide, to reveal archaeological remains or where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons.

The trench was cleaned sufficiently and the archaeological features were investigated unless otherwise agreed. Discrete features were half sectioned and slots excavated through linear features were a minimum of 1m in width.

All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of evaluation were fully recorded, and all paperwork and plans displayed the Event Number (ENN109373) for the site. Recording followed standard fieldwork procedures (MOLA 2014). All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on pro-forma trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council and the client were informed immediately upon the discovery of human remains. The remains were investigated sufficiently to confirm identification and then left *in situ*, as it was specified out in the WSI (MOLA 2019), to be lifted during further work and the application of a burial licence.

Archaeological features were plotted on pro-forma trench plans at a scale of 1:50. The ditch section with human remains was planned in greater detail at 1:20 scale. Sections or profiles through features and areas of complex stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:10. All levels will be related to Ordnance Datum.

A photographic record was maintained by high resolution digital photography exceeding 12 megapixels. Overall shots of the site were taken prior to excavation and after excavation. Overall shots of each trench were taken together with detailed shots

of individual features and feature groups as appropriate. All photographs, except general site shots or specific shots for publication included a north arrow and suitable photographic scale.

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General stratigraphy

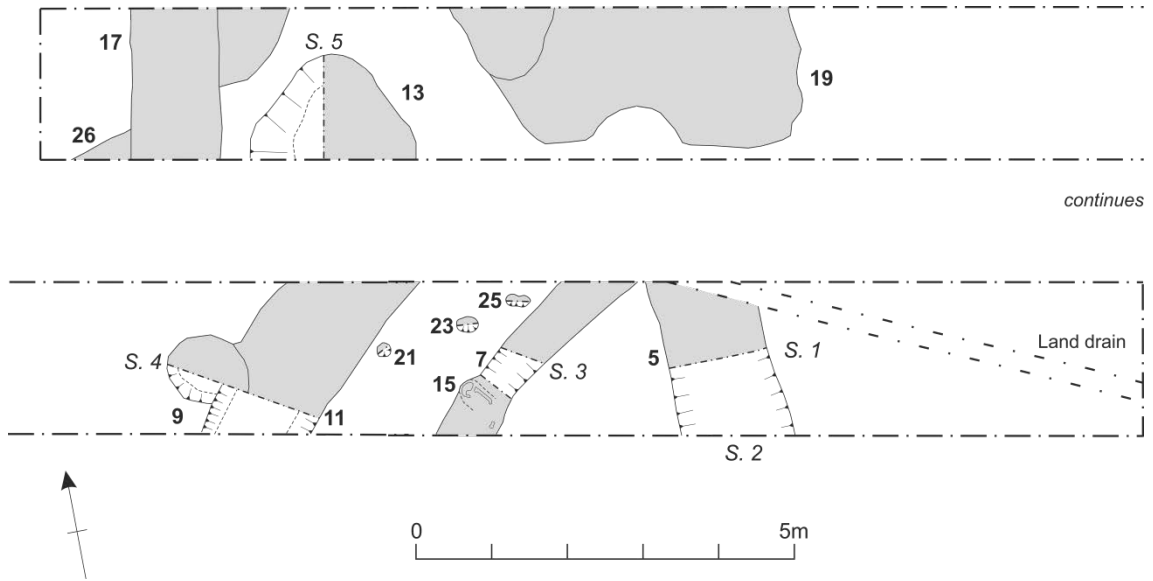
The natural sub-strata was mid yellow-brown silty clay with occasional stones of varying size in the eastern end of the trench. At the western end of the trench the clay has very frequent stone inclusions (3). The natural had been slightly truncated when the topsoil and subsoil were removed in preparation for the hard-core, which was compact brown silt with very frequent stone, brick, tile, concrete, and wood inclusions (1). The surface of the carpark was mid-grey course gravel (2).

5.2 The archaeological remains

Archaeological features comprised four ditches, two pits, two unidentifiable features, and a possible well (Fig 3). Ditch [5] was orientated north-west to south-east and was 1.21m wide and 0.20m deep with a flattish base (Figs 4, 5 and 6). It had a dark brown silty clay fill (4), which was firm with occasional small ironstone inclusions. Roman pottery dating to the mid to late 2nd century AD and animal bone was recovered from the fill.



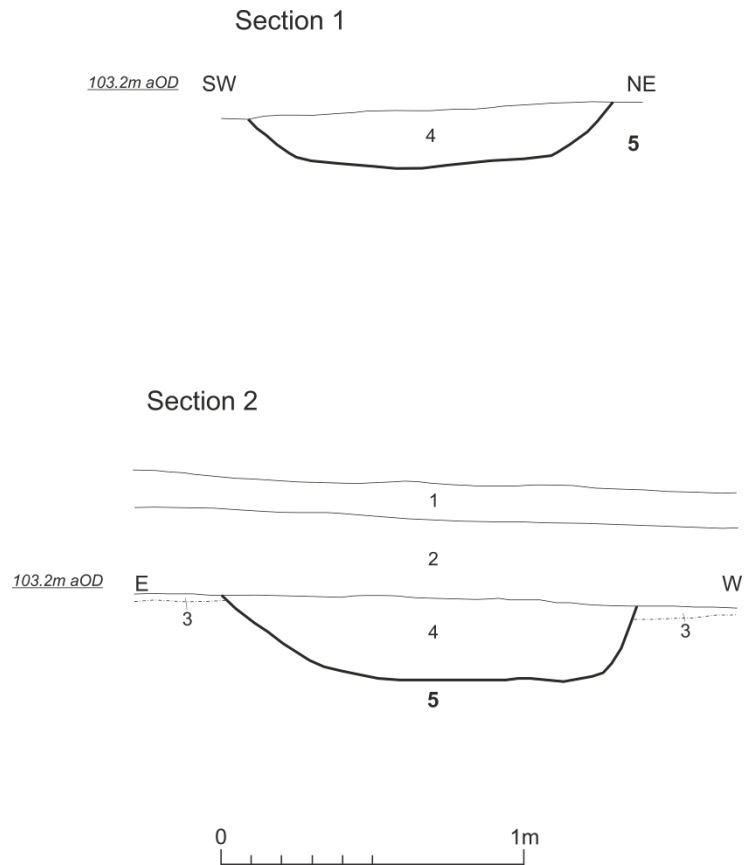
Ditch [5], looking north-west Fig 3



Trench Plan Fig 4



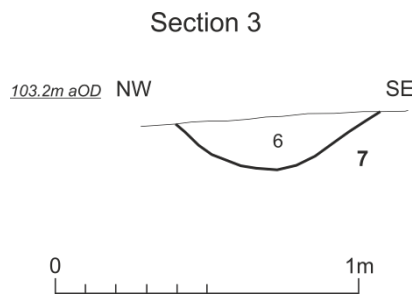
Ditch [5], looking south-east Fig 5



Sections 1 and 2, ditch [5] Fig 6

Crossing the trench north to south, ditch [7] appeared to converge with ditch [5] beyond the north-eastern edge of the trench (Fig 4). Ditch [7] was 0.65m wide and 0.17m deep with a concave profile and base (Fig 7 and 8). The mid yellow-brown silty clay fill (6) had frequent small ironstone inclusions. The fill yielded mid to late 2nd-century AD pottery and animal bone.

Ditch [7] was cut by a pit [15], which was not fully distinguishable from the ditch fill. Pit [15] was possibly oval in shape and orientated east to west (Fig 4), it measured approximately 0.79m long and 0.30m wide. The dark grey-brown silty clay fill (14) had frequent small stone inclusions. Within Pit [15] was Burial 1, recognised from the surviving elements of the skull and possibly one humerus. Once this was identified the bones were photographed and recorded, and left *in situ* (Figs 9 and 10). This was agreed with the CCA in line with the WSI, and the human remains will be lifted during a subsequent phase of archaeological works.



Section, ditch [7] Fig 7

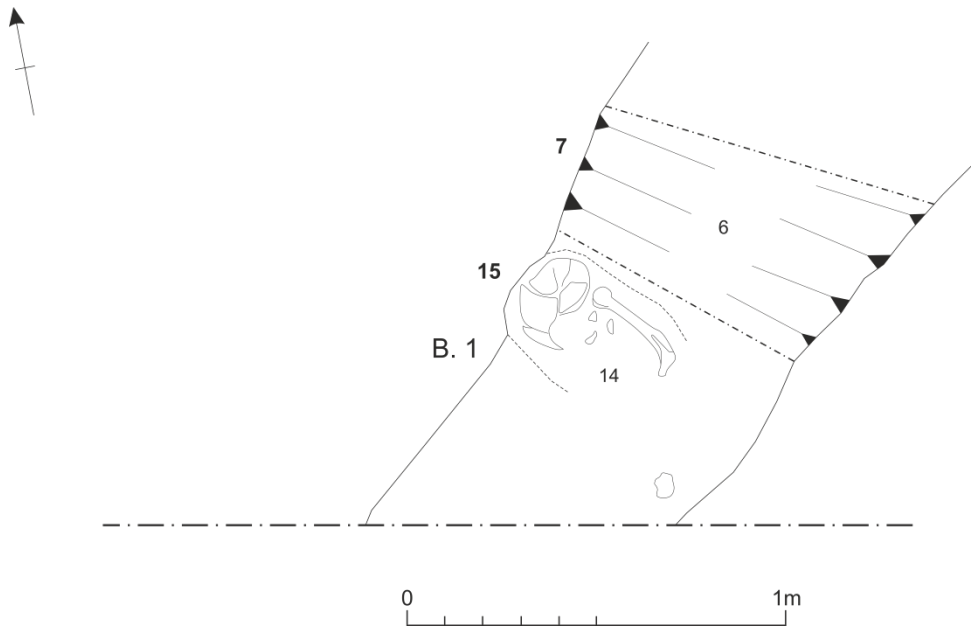


Ditch [7], looking north with Burial 1 Fig 8



Burial 1, looking south-east Fig 9

Between ditches [7] and [11] were three small postholes, aligned in a north-to-south alignment (Figs 4 and 11). Postholes [21], [23] and [25] were elliptical in shape with irregular sides with concave or uneven bases (Figs 2 and 9). They measured between 0.15m and 0.32m wide and between 0.04m and 0.08m deep. The pits had dark grey-brown silty clay fills (20), (22) and (24), which contained occasional small ironstones. Pit [26] also contained a modern plastic-coated wire.



Plan of Burial 1 Fig 10



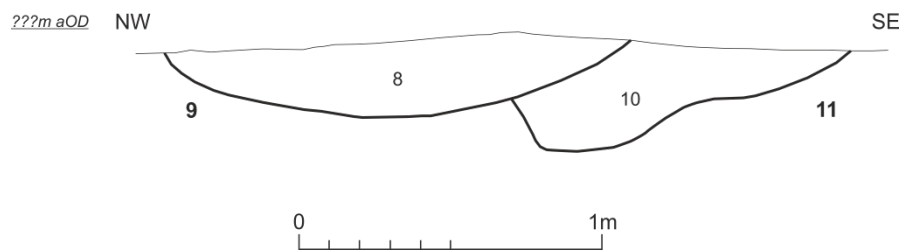
Postholes [21], [23] and [25], looking north Fig 11

Around 0.50m to the west of the postholes were a ditch and a pit. Ditch [11] was aligned parallel with ditch [7] and was 1.12m wide and 0.36m deep with sloping sides and an uneven, flat base (Figs 4, 12 and 13). It had a silted fill (10) of dark orange-brown silty clay with occasional small ironstone inclusions. The pottery was dated to mid to late 2nd century AD and one undiagnostic piece of tile. A small amount of cattle teeth fragments and animal bone was recovered. The ditch was cut by pit [9] on its western side. The pit had gently sloping sides with a concave base, it measured 1.54m wide and 0.25m deep. It had a dark brown silty clay fill (8), which contained small ironstone inclusion and late 1st to 2nd century AD pottery along with further cattle teeth fragments and animal bones.



Ditch [11] and Pit [9], looking north Fig 12

Section 4



Section 4, ditch [11] and pit [9]

After a gap of around 7m, in the western half of the trench was a large feature interpreted as a possible well [19]. The pit was approximately 4.40m (Fig 4). It had a mid to dark orange and brown silty clay fill (18); from its surface a 2nd-century AD sherd was recovered. A possible pit was cut into its north-western edge. Neither feature was excavated, as agreed with the CCA.

Near the western end of the trench was a semi-circular feature [13] protruding from the baulk, measuring 2.10m wide and 0.18m deep (Fig 4). It had gently sloping sides with

a flattish base (Fig 14). Its silted fill (12) was dark grey-brown silty clay with frequent small ironstones. No finds were recovered. Not enough was exposed in the evaluation to determine if it was a pit or the terminus of a ditch.



Feature [13], looking east Fig 14

At the western end of the trench was a feature [26], similar in nature to feature [13], due to the constraints of a trench it was not possible to clarify what it was. Feature [26] was cut by ditch [17], which crossed the trench north-west to south-east (Fig 2). The ditch was filled by a dark silty grey fill (16), from the surface a Roman pottery sherd dating to the mid to late 2nd century AD was collected. The features were not excavated at this stage as agreed with the CCA.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Worked flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

One residual flint flake was recovered as a residual find from fill (6) in ditch [7]. The squat flake measures 35mm long and 21mm wide. The raw material is mid-grey vitreous flint with mid brown cortex.

6.2 Pottery by Adam Sutton

The Towcester Bell Plantation site produced 129 sherds of pottery weighing 1,437g and equating to 0.56 EVEs. This small group derived from six independently-numbered contexts (Table 1) and was moderately-to-highly fragmented, with a mean sherd weight of just 11.1g. All of the pottery dates to the Roman period, and in fact appears to all date to a relatively restricted period likely in the mid-to-late second century AD. Pottery was recorded to analysis standard at the level of a 'Basic Record' as recommended by joint PCRG/SGRP/MPRG standards (Barclay *et al* 2016, 16-17). Local and regional fabrics were coded using the system devised for Northamptonshire, based on the fabric series developed for the site at Ashton (Aird and MacRobert 1987), while

NRFRC codes (Tomber and Dore 1998) have been used for imported fabrics. Forms were recorded using a simple vessel-type classification system supplemented with descriptive terms. Pottery was quantified using the measures of sherd count, weight, and Estimated Vessel Equivalent (EVE) by summation of surviving rim circumference. A copy of the pottery record has been provided to project management to be deposited with the digital archive.

Table 1: Contextual summary of pottery

Context	Count	Count%	Weight (g)	Weight (g)%	EVE	EVE%	TPQ	EDC
4	26	20.2%	151	10.5%	0.03	5.4%	MC2	M-LC2
6	15	11.6%	42	2.9%	0.08	14.3%	MC2	M-LC2
8	3	2.3%	61	4.2%	0.07	12.5%	LC1	LC1-C2
10	76	58.9%	1141	79.4%	0.33	58.9%	MC2	M-LC2
16	1	0.8%	5	0.3%	0.05	8.9%	MC2	M-LC2
18	8	6.2%	37	2.6%		0.0%	EC2	C2
Total	129	-	1437	-	0.56	-	-	-

Most of the pottery found was in coarse, grog-tempered fabrics, many of which are the kinds of sandy grog-tempered wares known to have been common locally during the later first and second centuries (Northants. fabrics AC and AD; Towcester fabric 35a: Brown and Woodfield 1983, 80) and which Timby (2007) has proposed are an intermediate step in the potting tradition which led from late La Tène 'Belgic' wares of the Late Iron Age to the soft pink grog-tempered wares of the late Roman period. Some typologically earlier 'Belgic' wares were amongst the assemblage also, with the rim of one storage jar that had been modified in antiquity so that it could fit a lid. A single sherd of likely pink grog-tempered ware (fabric A2) was also identified in context (10). Greywares appeared in a mixture of fabrics, with a significant proportion of those identified being of likely Upper Nene Valley origins (i.e. produced in kilns in the Northampton area, e.g. Ecton (Johnston 1969), Delapré (Woodfield 2010), etc.: Northants. fabrics C4 and C11). Much of the colour-coated assemblage is likely to also be local, these being in silty-textured orange or buff fabrics unlike those produced at the Lower Nene Valley or Oxfordshire potteries, for example. Only one sherd may in fact be LNV CC (fabric D1/D15), this being from context (10). Five sherds of oxidised ware and ten sherds of black-burnished wares were also recovered, much of the latter being original Dorset BB1. A single sherd of samian was recovered: a rim sherd of a Dragendorff 33 cup in likely Les Martres fabric.

The pottery all fits within a chronological range in the mid-to-late 2nd century AD. The late-1st to 2nd-century date-range of the grog-tempered coarsewares has already been mentioned, and the two rims found in fabric AD are both of the lid-seated type which characterises this period. Finds of black-burnished ware in three of the six contexts likely push the dates for these groups into the mid-second century (TPQ cAD 120), while the limited finds of pink grog-tempered ware (A2) and possibly also Lower Nene Valley colour-coats (D1/D15) may push the dates even further forward to the later second century. The attribution of the samian cup to a Les Martres source would not disagree with these dates.

In the context of the understanding of Roman Towcester, this group is far too small to provide the basis for an assessment of site function or status, and is dwarfed by the far larger groups from other Towcester sites such as the Grammar School site and the Alchester Road suburbs (Brown and Alexander 1982; Brown and Woodfield 1983). However the tight chronological range of the assemblage will no doubt be of importance for understanding the nature of occupation in this part of the extramural settlement of the town.

Table 2: Quantification of pottery fabrics

	Count	Count %	Weight (g)	Weight (g)%
Black-burnished	10	7.8%	57	4.0%
C8	7	5.4%	25	1.7%
C21	3	2.3%	32	2.2%
Coarseware	2	1.6%	17	1.2%
CD	2	1.6%	17	1.2%
Colour-coated	7	5.4%	28	1.9%
D21	1	0.8%	10	0.7%
D15	3	2.3%	9	0.6%
D1/D15	2	1.6%	4	0.3%
?LMV SA	1	0.8%	5	0.3%
Greyware	30	23.3%	326	22.7%
C10	12	9.3%	211	14.7%
C18	2	1.6%	20	1.4%
C31	1	0.8%	4	0.3%
C4	9	7.0%	69	4.8%
C5	5	3.9%	20	1.4%
C16	1	0.8%	2	0.1%
Grog-tempered	68	52.7%	937	65.2%
A	9	7.0%	248	17.3%
A2	1	0.8%	41	2.9%
AD	55	42.6%	624	43.4%
A1	3	2.3%	24	1.7%
Oxidised	5	3.9%	43	3.0%
D	5	3.9%	43	3.0%
Shelly	7	5.4%	29	2.0%
B3/4	7	5.4%	29	2.0%
Grand Total	129	100.0%	1437	100.0%

6.3 Animal bone by Sander Aerts

A small animal bone assemblage comprising of 28 fragments was hand-collected. The remains were poorly preserved and heavily fragmented. Unidentifiable remains were attributed to size categories large mammal (i.e. cattle-sized) and medium mammal (i.e. sheep-sized) where possible. The identifications are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of identified specimens per context/taxon

Context	Cattle	LM	MM	Unid
4	7	4	-	11
6	1	-	-	1
10	1	2	1	-

The only identifiable remains comprised of cattle molar (fragments) from fills (4) in ditch [5], (6) in ditch [7] and (10) in ditch [11], and a second phalanx from fill (4) in ditch [5]. No butchering marks, gnawing marks or other taphonomy was observed. No further work is currently required on this assemblage.

6.4 Tile by Rob Atkins

A fragment of tile (28g) from fill (10), ditch [11] is undiagnostic. It is in a hard orange sandy fabric which had been sanded.

7 DISCUSSION

The evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester has revealed evidence for the survival of ditches and pits. A disturbed inhumation uncovered, which burial was not fully excavated and left *in situ* after agreement from the client and CCA. The remains comprise skull and a possible humerus; it is uncertain how many more bones are present. It appears that a pit was dug into the ditch. Further stage in the archaeological works will be able to assess extent and completeness of the remains. Human remains had been found previously to the south and they represent further human burials near Watling Street.

The features are divided in two groups. The more eastern group (Features [5], [7], [11], [9], and [15]) lay on slightly higher, drier ground; the ditches are orientated north to south or north-west to south-east. After a gap the westerly group (Features [19], [13] and [17], and two further pits) lay downslope in much wetter conditions. Features comprised a possible well [19], feature [13] may be a ditch terminal or a pit, and there is ditch [17] cutting another feature. The postholes may be the remains of a modern fenced post line.

The finds (pottery and animal bone) are not indicative of the function of the site. The pottery sherds recovered from the features have a tight chronological range within the mid to late 2nd century AD. No recuts of the features were recorded; suggesting the activity uncovered in the Trail Trench may be short lived. Also the date range puts the site roughly contemporary with or to its later stages of activity found closer to Towcester.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aird, P, and MacRobert, E, 1987, 'Ashton. *The Roman pottery*', Unpublished Level 4 report submitted to Northamptonshire County Council.

Audouy, M, 1984 Bury Mount, in C Woodfield 1992, 25-29

BGS <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/lexicon>, accessed 30/01/19

Barclay, A, Knight, D, Booth, P, Evans, J, Brown, DH, and Wood, I, 2016, *A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology*, PCRG/SGRP/MPRG Joint Paper.

Brown, AE, and Alexander, JA, 1982, Excavations at Towcester 1954: the Grammar School Site, *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **17**, 24-59.

Brown, AE, and Woodfield, C, 1983, Excavations at Towcester, Northamptonshire: The Alcester Road Suburb, *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, **18**, 43-140.

Brown, J, 2011 *Roman extramural settlement along the Watling Street, Towcester, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, **12/5**

Cifa 2014a *Code of Conduct*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

Cifa 2014b *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

HE 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, Historic England

Johnston, DE, 1969, Romano-British pottery kilns near Northampton, *Antiquaries Journal* **49**, 75-97.

Knight, D, Vyner, B, Allen, C, 2012 *East Midlands Heritage: An updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*, University of Nottingham and York Archaeological Trust

LAT 1983 Soils of Eastern England, Sheet 4 (1:250,000), *Soil Survey for England and Wales*, Lawes Agricultural Trust

Lewis, B, 2004 *Archaeological watching brief at Tove Valley Business Park, Towcester*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, unpublished client report

MHCLG 2019 *National Planning Policy Framework*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

MOLA 2014 *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual*, Museum of London Archaeology

MOLA 2019 *Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bell Plantation, Towcester, Northampton Shire, January 2019*, Museum of London Archaeology

NAAWG 2014 *Northamptonshire Archaeological Archives Standard*, Standards Working Party, Northamptonshire Archaeological Archives Working Group

NCC 2018a *Brief for the archaeological field evaluation of land at the Bell Plantation, Watling Street, Towcester, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire County Council Planning

NCC 2018b *Brief for a programme of archaeological investigation of land at the Bell Plantation, Watling Street, Towcester, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire County Council Planning

RCHME 1982 *An inventory of the historical monuments in the County of Northampton: Volume IV Archaeological sites in south-west Northamptonshire*, Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England, HMSO, 158-160

Timby, J, 2007, 'The Iron Age and Roman Pottery' in *A Mudd Iron Age and Roman Settlement on the Northamptonshire Uplands: Archaeological work on the A43 Towcester to M40 Road Improvement Scheme in Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Monograph, **1**, 88-118.

Tomber, R, and Dore, J, 1998, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook*, MoLAS Monograph 2

Soden, I, 1993 *An Archaeological Evaluation at Mandalay House, Towcester, Northants, 1993*, Northamptonshire Archaeology unpublished client report

Woodfield, C, 1995 New thoughts on town defences in the western territory of the Catuvellauni, in A E Brown (ed) 1995, 129-146

Woodfield, P, 2010, The Delapre Roman kiln field, Northampton, *Northamptonshire Archaeology* **36**, 97-112

MOLA
19 March 2019

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Alignment, Length & width		Surface height	height of natural
1	E-W 30mx2m		103.79m aOD	103.25m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1	Hardcore	Compact mid brown silt with very frequent stones, with brick, tile, concrete etc. inclusions	0.26m-0.35m deep	-
2	Surfacing	Mid grey course gravel of small to medium stones	0.11-0.19m deep	-
3	Natural	Compact mid yellow-brown clay with occasional stones of varying size	-	-
4	Fill of [5]	Firm dark brown silty clay	1.21m wide 0.20m deep	pottery
5	Cut of ditch	Linear, NW-SE, flattish base	-	-
6	Fill of [7]	Hard, mid yellow-brown silty clay, very frequent small to medium irregular ironstone inclusions	0.65m wide 0.17m deep	Pottery, animal bone
7	Cut of ditch	Linear, north-east to south-west, 40° sides and concave base	-	-
8	Fill of [9]	Firm, dark brown silty clay, occasional small, angular ironstone	1.54m wide 0.25m deep	Pottery
9	Cut of pit	Elliptical, slightly curved sides with a slightly curved and uneven base	-	-
10	Fill of [11]	Firm, dark orange-brown sandy silty clay, occasional to moderate small ironstone inclusions	1.12m wide 0.36m deep	Pottery, animal bone
11	Cut of ditch	Linear, north-east to south-west, straight sides stepped on south-east side, flattened and uneven base	-	-
12	Fill of [13]	Firm, dark grey-brown silty clay, frequent small to medium irregular ironstone inclusion, occasional charcoal fleck	2.10m wide 0.18m deep	-
13	Cut of feature	Semi-circle, gently sloping sides and flattish base	-	-
14	Fill of [15]	Firm, dark grey-brown silty clay, frequent small stone, no clear boundaries	c0.30m wide	Human bones
15	Cut of pit	Oval, northwest to south-east, not fully excavated	-	-

16	Fill of [17]	Medium, dark grey silty clay, occasional small ironstone	c1.10m wide	pottery
17	Cut of ditch	Linear, north to south, Not excavated	-	-
18	Fill of [19]	Medium to firm, mid to dark mixed orange-brown silty clay, moderate sand and ironstone inclusions	c4.0m wide	pottery
19	Cut of feature	Irregular outline, not excavated	-	-
20	Fill of [21]	Medium dark grey-brown silty clay, occasional small ironstone	0.18m wide 0.05m deep	-
21	Cut of posthole	Elliptical, slightly curved and uneven sides, convex base	-	-
22	Fill of [23]	Medium dark grey-brown silty clay, occasional small ironstone inclusions	0.24m wide 0.09m deep	-
23	Cut of posthole	Irregular ellipse, slightly curved and uneven sides, uneven base	-	-
24	Fill of [25]	Medium dark grey-brown silty clay, occasional small ironstone inclusions	0.32m wide 0.04m deep	Plastic coated wire (not retained)
25	Cut of posthole	Irregular ellipse, uneven sides and base	-	-



Trench 1, looking east Fig 15



MOLA
Kent House
30 Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5DQ
01604 809800
www.mola.org.uk
business@mola.org.uk