



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

An archaeological evaluation on the garden plot of the
former 10 O'Clock Public House, 42 Main Street,
Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire

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Summary

Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching shows that the western portion of the grassed former pub garden of the 10 o'clock public house contains substantial drains of probably 16th century date. Traces of a stone building appear to survive although it is unclear if the drains lie inside or outside it. A pit of medieval date lay nearby, while the rest of the plot contained only a Victorian-20th century rubbish pit and 18th-century quarry pits. A test pit in an adjacent car park showed a change in geology with a likelihood of truncation during its construction. Only the south-western half of the grassed pub garden retains archaeological potential.

Introduction

Planning consent was granted to Seagrave Developments Ltd for the refurbishment of the former 10 o'clock Public House, Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire, together with construction of three new dwellings on the land (garden and car park) attached to the former pub (WP/15/00207). A condition (8) was applied to the consent, for a programme of archaeological work.

In reply to a County Council Brief for evaluation, issued by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor, Liz Mordue and dated 25 June 2015, a Written Scheme of Investigation was compiled by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd, dated 3 July 2015 and approved by NCC.

The approved fieldwork took place on 13, 16 and 17 July in generally good weather and ground conditions, carried out by Iain Soden, Charlotte Walker, Joe Prentice and Danny McAree. The work was monitored by Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council, in a site visit on 16 July.

The site lies on the frontage of the Main Street in the village and is adjacent to the site of the medieval manor house (NGR: SP 8706 7155 Fig 1). It is almost flat, being partly an overgrown pub lawn and partly a tarmac surface car park. The modern ground surface is at approximately 91m above Ordnance Datum. The geology is mapped as Northampton Sand with Ironstone.



Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015

Little Harrowden is a medieval village, perhaps with older origins. It lies within the narrowest parish in the county and may have once been part of Great Harrowden, from which it split off. Very little archaeological work has been done in the village, even in recent years (RCHME 1979, *An inventory of the historical monuments in the county of Northampton, II: Archaeological sites in central Northamptonshire*, 81-3).

The site has supported at least its current buildings since before 1885 (1st edition OS). Before that little is known, although the medieval manor house lies next door. The 1817 Ordnance Survey surveyors drawing suggests the entire evaluation plot lay open at that time, without frontage buildings.

Partida, Hall and Foard (2012, *An atlas of Northamptonshire: the medieval and early modern landscape*, Maps 37M, 37EM) shows the site at the centre of the medieval village envelope which comprised little more than plots leading back from the High street on either side.

Fieldwork (Fig 2)

Four archaeological trenches were dug using a small 360-degree tracked excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological control. Each trench measured 10m long and was 1.5m wide and were laid out to cover the plot and to pick up any former frontage/plot boundaries (Fig 2). They were laid out to avoid mature tree roots on the north and south-west, sheds on the south-west and former children's climbing frames anchored to the ground along the east boundary.

The machine was used to strip down to the level of the natural ironstone geology or the uppermost significant archaeological horizon, whichever was higher. In each case this meant that a depth of fine, loose friable topsoil (1) supporting the overgrown garden turf was removed, to a depth of

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about 250-350mm. Thereafter excavation continued by hand. There were ten archaeological contexts identified in total.

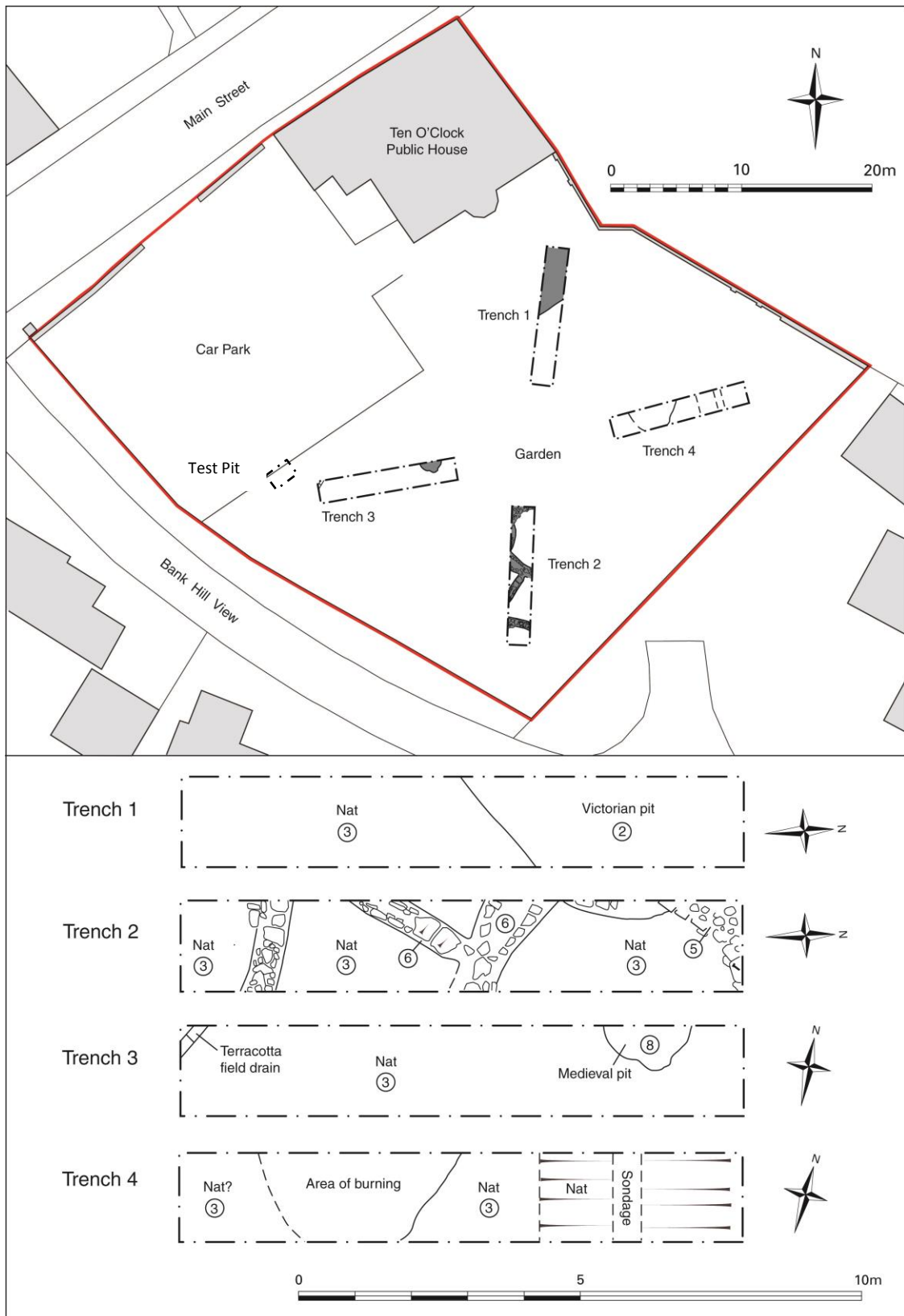


Fig 2: The site and excavations (Andy Isham)

Results

Trench 1 contained a large pit (at 90.54m aOD) from the surface of which spilled quantities of Victorian –early 20th century pottery, bottle glass, tile, clay tobacco pipe fragments, 12-bore cartridge cases and other well-dated detritus. This was sufficiently close to the back of the former Public House to be associated with its use during the first half of the 20th century. No further excavation was undertaken on this well-dated feature. Finds were not retrieved.



Fig 3: Trench 1, looking north-east; scale 1m. The large modern pit is in the background, just beyond the scale

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Trench 2 contained a layer or hardstanding of crushed ironstone and the occasional piece of limestone, directly at the base of the topsoil. This was undated and machining continued through it to expose a configuration of stone-lined drains directly beneath, set into the natural geology (90.16-90.26m aOD).



Fig 4: Trench 2 looking south-west; scale 1m. Drains criss-cross the trench

The drains were generally constructed of rough-hewn blocks of Northampton Sand with ironstone, with the occasional block of limestone. They were capped with flat blocks of limestone, and one or two pieces of probable Collyweston tile-stones.

At the south end of the trench lay a right-angled alignment of stonework which may be another drain, but also has the characteristics to have been the corner of a building (Fig 6).

There were two individual small copper-alloy stud-heads found, one from the construction of a drain ((7) -not the drain interior), the other from the stonework at the trench-end [5]. One is flat headed, roughly circular and decorated with a simple Star-of-David motif, the other is a plain, convex circle. They have either lost their pins/shanks or this has been bent over. Both may be from upholstery or leather-work and are commensurate with early post-medieval furniture decoration or coachwork/livery stiffening.



Fig 5: Trench 2, Drain 6, cap removed and contents sectioned, looking north-east; scale 300mm



Fig 6: Trench 2, Feature 5, looking south. This may be the corner of a building; scale 1m

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Trench 3 contained a modern land drain at one end, with a single 1m-diameter pit part-exposed at the other (8; Fig 7). The surface of this pit spilled out 21 sherds (220g) of Shelly Coarseware medieval pottery, roughly dated between c1200 and 1500. Since it was so well dated by this abundance of pottery, it was not further investigated. It lies at 90.42m aOD.



Fig 7: Trench 3, pit 8, looking west; scale 1m

Trench 4 contained a substantial disturbance into the natural geology, with one edge apparent in the trench (9). This was sampled using the machine, and within a matrix of shattered ironstone fragments was a single large sherd from the base of a Midland Blackware Tyg (an upright tankard) of the 17th-early 18th century. This disturbance was tested to a depth of c1.4m but not bottomed. It is considered to be a post-medieval or later quarry pit, its surface at 90.37m aOD (Fig 8).

Nearby was an admixture of clays and ironstone pieces, some scorched red (but not burnt *in situ*), together with spreads of mortar, which are believed to be the backfill of a second such quarry pit at 90.57m aOD(10; Fig 8). From close to the edge was derived a broken, square copper alloy buckle of post-medieval form, with iron pin. It was not further investigated.



Fig 8: Trench 4, looking east. Quarry pit [9] in distance; surface of another [10] closer to camera; scale 1m. A ridge of natural geology survived between them.

Test Pit

A single test pit was machine-dug in the rear of the tarmaced car park which lies to the side of the former public house, and closer to Main Road. It lay closest to Trench 3.

The tarmac was laid on a sub-base of scalpings and other rubble c200mm thick. This lay directly on top of thick redeposited blue-green clay, which was at least 500mm thick. The frost- and cultivation-shattered surface of natural ironstone geology, seen elsewhere in all the other trenches, was absent.

Two possibilities exist: That in the short distance between Trench 3 and the car park, the geology changes abruptly, or that in constructing the car park, the builders have reduced the surface and imported clay as a thick base layer. The starkly different materials involved and the absence of even patches of clay anywhere else or clay lumps in the backfill of quarry pits in Trench 4, make the latter interpretation far more likely. It is thus doubtful whether the car park retains potential to preserve any archaeology, since the clay is so thick and represents a substantial depth difference in respect of the rest of the site.

Conclusions

The garden topsoil was clean throughout and may indicate that the plot was deliberately landscaped and the material imported for the public house. It contained no residual material of any date.

The evaluation has shown that medieval remains in the form of a single pit survive within the south-west part of the former garden (Trench 3). Such remains may otherwise be sparse.

Early post-medieval stone-built drains survive under a possible hardstanding or floor at the south end of the plot (Trench 2). These may lie beneath a building or under a courtyard adjacent to a building. Other than higher-status buildings, such drainage was usually only provided in the case of industrial needs (with no such evidence here) or expensive ancillary structures, such as stables (since horses were more prized than all other stock). While no clear identification is currently possible, the proximity of the medieval manor house facilitates a tentative manorial function as an interpretation for these drains. The stony layer encountered above them may be a courtyard/hardstanding or an internal floor; in this respect the evidence is equivocal.

18th- 19th-century quarry pits and a 19th-20th-century rubbish pit comprise the only features in the north-eastern half of the site (Trenches 1 and 4).

The test pit in the car park indicated a very different geology, and appears to represent truncation and the import of a thick layer of clay for the creation of the car park.

As a result it is considered that only the south-western half of the grassed garden site (Trenches 2 and 3) contains potential to retain a short sequence of medieval-early post-medieval occupation or use. This may include a stone-built structure.



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

10 August 2015

Appendix 1

OASIS data

Project Name	Former 10 o'clock, 42 High St, Little Harrowden
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-228569
Project Type	Evaluation (Trial Trenches)
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	None/second phase conditioned fieldwork
Current land use	Disused Public House and garden
Development type	Residential
Reason for investigation	Planning condition
National grid reference	SP 8706 7155
Start/end dates of fieldwork	13/07/2015 – 17/07/15
Archive recipient	-
Study area	0.12ha