



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological excavations in advance of
development at
Church Lane, Deanshanger, Northamptonshire**

July 2012

Church Lane, Deanshanger

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Iain Soden BA MIFA

Summary

Excavation of the footprints of a new house and related garage found the stone foundations of a medieval building and evidence for difficult ground conditions holding back development nearby. A process of alluvial silting brought up levels by the 16th-17th centuries, facilitating eventual cultivation. At the same time the old building had been demolished and maps show the plot then lay empty through the 17th to 20th centuries.

Introduction

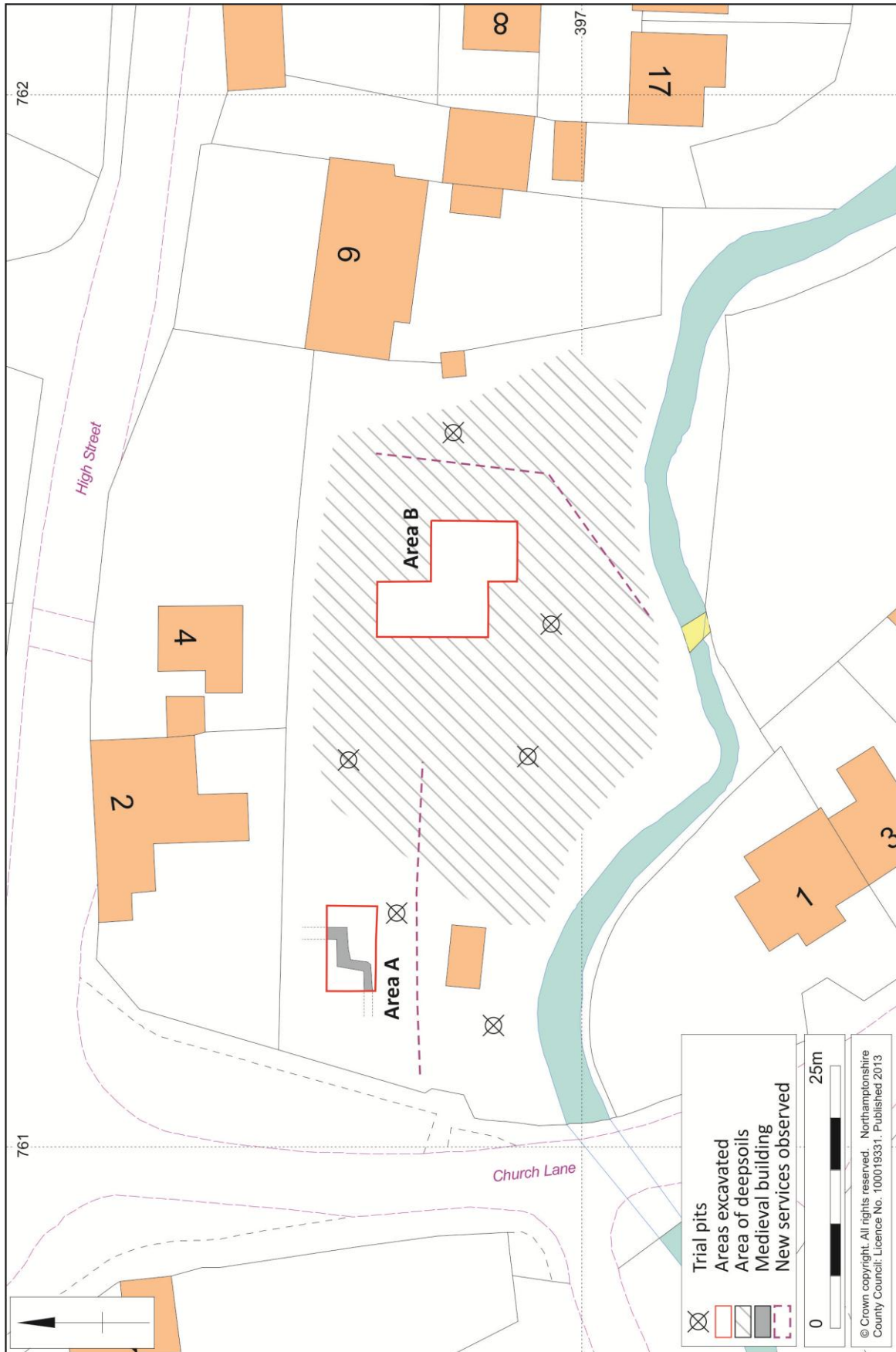
In January 2011, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land immediately to the east of Church Lane, Deanshanger, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 76145 39710; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by the then landowners, Mr P Clarke and Mrs E Lister and was undertaken to inform a planning application (S/2010/1504/FUL) for the proposed development of the land for a single dwelling. The scope of works was outlined in the brief (Mordue 2011) issued by Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCCAAA) and detailed in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011). The results of the evaluation, which comprised two trenches and which encountered medieval and post-medieval remains, were set out in an evaluation report (Foard-Colby 2011). These led to a requirement for further excavation work as a condition of planning consent by South Northamptonshire Council. The site lies at c72m above Ordnance Datum on Jurassic Inferior oolite (limestone), overlain by glacial till (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html) together with silts related to a nearby brook which flows across the site, a small tributary of the River Great Ouse.

Subsequent to the purchase of the land by Mr C Wynne-Williams for his new home, Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd was engaged to carry out the works required as a condition. These comprised open-area excavation of the new house footprint and the nearby detached garage, carried out in July 2012, and follow-up watching brief on a sewer diversion and alterations to the house footprint. The work was subject to a brief for archaeological excavation (Mordue 2012) and a pursuant Written Scheme of Investigation (IS Heritage 2012). The areas were labelled Area A (the garage) partly subsuming the former evaluation Trench 1 and Area B (the house), partly subsuming the former evaluation Trench 2. The set-piece excavation took place in July 2012 in fine weather and ground conditions.

A programme of observation and recording followed the set-piece excavation, and accompanied the diversion of the existing sewer near the house and the introduction of services from Church Lane. This took place in October and December 2012 in both dry (sewer) and very wet (new services) weather and variable ground conditions.

All works were carried out in accordance with agreed methodologies.

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Scale 1:500

Fig 1: The site and fieldwork.

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mr C Wynne-Williams for his commission for this work and his forbearance during the phases of fieldwork. My gratitude goes to Ross Ingham and Rachel Swallow for their site skills; to Jim Burke for his survey work and to Amir Bassir (both of Northamptonshire Archaeology) for matching that to my site plans.

Historical Background

Previous excavation in Deanshanger has been largely concentrated since the 1950s on the considerable Roman presence to the east of the village and the Roman Villa there which lay adjacent to a Roman road which met the Watling Street at nearby Stony Stratford (Brown 2006, 63-80). The medieval and later village has been little covered during the same period of enquiry.

General observers are agreed that the core of the medieval village lies at the eastern end of the High Street and the almost-parallel Little Deanshanger Street to the south, at a junction by the Green, a prominent characteristic when entering the village from the principal route from the east. The site which is the subject of the current fieldwork and report lies at the west end of the block which is sandwiched between these streets which lie to either side of a brook. In a 1566 field book the south side of the High Street, five plots lay to the west of the stream, with another next to the stream; on the north side of Little Deanshanger Street lay twelve plots including, at the western end, a granary on the site of a former horse mill (www.le.ac.uk/elh/whittlewood/deanshanger; 2001).

Directly to the east of the site lies a building often known as Home Farm, probably of the 17th century, but not present on a village map of c1608. It was depicted on all subsequent historic maps from 1772 and in 1843 was labelled as Carr's Farm. It survives today as 6 High Street (MK19 6HB) and is Listed Grade II.

Deanshanger during the later medieval period was considered to be one of a number of villages which lay within the Royal Forests, in this case Whittlewood Forest (Pettit 1968, 142). It had been so since Edward I (1272-1307) granted it to his foresters of Whittlebury, the de Haustede family. It later passed to the Cope family with whom it devolved until its return to the crown in 1540 (Riden 2002, 216-9). As part of the forest, it was tightly controlled and its growth may have been stunted by the restrictions of forest law, which could be strict and put many off.

During the medieval period, the site most likely belonged to one of the two principal landowners in Deanshanger, either the Manor (most likely) or possibly the Premonstratensian Priory of Snelshall, Bucks.

The history of the manor throws little light on the site, however, and neither of the antiquarian county histories is of help (Bridges, 1791 [writing c1720] and Baker, 1835). The manor in the 13th century belonged to William Earl Ferrers (Earl of Derby) and his aunt Letitia, sister of Robert Ferrers. It was taken into Crown hands in 1266 when Robert was dispossessed following his rebellious stance in support of Simon de Montfort the younger and it passed to the Crown. Descending by Royal grant with the de Haustede and Cope families to 1540, it then reverted once more to the Crown. It is better documented in 1599 when the Crown sold it outright to Henry Best and Robert Holland, Gentlemen of London, (*Northants Notes and Queries*, Old Series 5, 172). It subsequently came into

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the hands of Sir Ralph Winwood, who was Secretary of State to James I and who spent most of his time on foreign service, particularly Paris. In 1619 Winwood sold it for life to Sir Robert Spencer of Wormleighton, including numerous village properties (*Northants Notes and Queries*, Old Series 6, 87; NRO YZ 4578). Such absentee landlords were a recipe for dilapidation on the one hand and presented an opportunity for unrestricted growth on the other.

Possibly in line with this regime, and the gradual relaxation of forest law in the 16th-17th centuries, the population of the village began to show considerable growth, from 136 in 1576 to 548 in 1670 as other nearby villages struggled (Pettit, 1968, 142). In 1635 there were only 12 free tenants, however.

Snelshall Priory owned lands and property in Deanshanger from the 13th or early 14th century. Individual properties are mentioned in the Charters of the Cartulary of the Priory but none is clearly identifiable to the current development site (*Bucks Record Soc* 9 (1945), docs 107, 152-4, 156-9). Two (156 & 158) do include the grants to the Priory of meadows in the village, but these cannot be stated with confidence to include the site. The better candidate is the latter by William de la Grene to Snelshall Priory, described as 'meadow of Deanshanger, in the main meadow on the western side.' The witnesses to the deed included John of the Mill of Wyke. Document 159 then notes the grant to the Priory (by the same William de la Grene), of 12d rent, payable to Walter, son of John the Miller in respect of a messuage and croft (house with land) which William once held of the Priory. Nothing is known of the mill. The Prior had a right of distraint if the tenant defaulted on the rent (ibid doc 159). The Priory was dissolved in the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539.

The village was Inclosed by Act of Parliament in 1772 (NRO ZA 8805). In 1800 the canal was pushed through the village and an iron works began to be exploited to the north of the village in 1818. By 1860 the population had passed 1000 for the first time.

Any search for Medieval and Post-medieval Deanshanger is hampered by the fact that '*domestic and industrial infilling and suburban expansion has masked almost all evidence of earlier arrangements*' (www.le.ac.uk/elh/whittlewood/deanshanger; 2001).

The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record reflects the paucity of previous work in the environs of the current site. Nearby plots have certainly produced occasional medieval artefacts (HER 1176/0/0) and there have been intermittent observations of a gully here or a quarry pit there, with related dating, but none have direct bearing upon this site as they lie in adjacent or nearby plots. The current site has seen no previous intervention (Foard-Colby 2011, 3).

Historic maps

There survives an unusually full sequence of clear historic maps from c1600-1884, which cover the site and show it in detail, if not always with cartographic precision. Relevant photographic extracts of all of them, made for this specific planning research, are reproduced below with the site marked in red in varying detail as the map allows. None reflect existing legal boundaries. The maps are ©*Northamptonshire Record Office* so are not for publication.

A map of c1725, itself a copy of one of c1608, shows the village and the wider area of the medieval managed woodland of the Whittlewood forest (NRO Map 4210). All Deanshanger is shown and, although stylistic, the site too, marked by the stream, which seems to cross what is now Church Lane in a ford, not a bridge. A building is shown adjacent to the stream on its south side, differentiated

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from other local properties by being un-coloured. It is unclear whether this is significant or is merely a cartographer's omission. The manor house is shown at the foot of the picture.

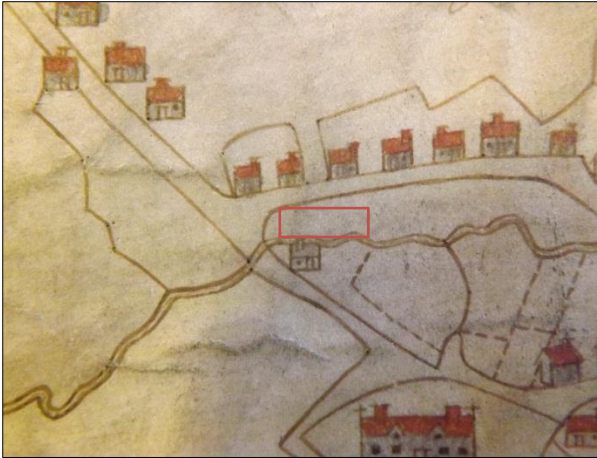


Fig 2: Map of c1608 (1725); NRO map 4210

The entire village and its related fields were next depicted at Parliamentary Inclosure in 1772-3, while a related plan was also made of the village and the various plot ownerships within (NRO Maps 3635 and 3636). The site is seen at that time as being part of Plot 35, belonging to *John Clark Baker*.



Fig 3: The village generally at Inclosure 1772 (NRO Map 3635)

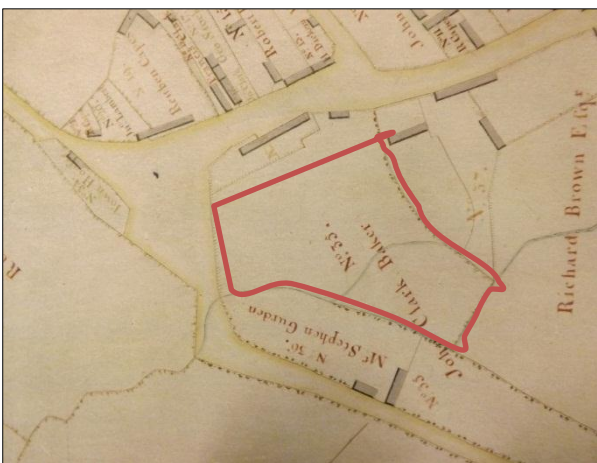


Fig 4: The village and site in detail at Inclosure 1773 (NRO Map 3636)

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Fig 5: The site on a map of 1843 (NRO Map 2666). Church Lane is labelled (out of shot) as Hospital Lane, in reference to the former Fever Hospital further along the lane on the east side. It still stands, converted to houses.

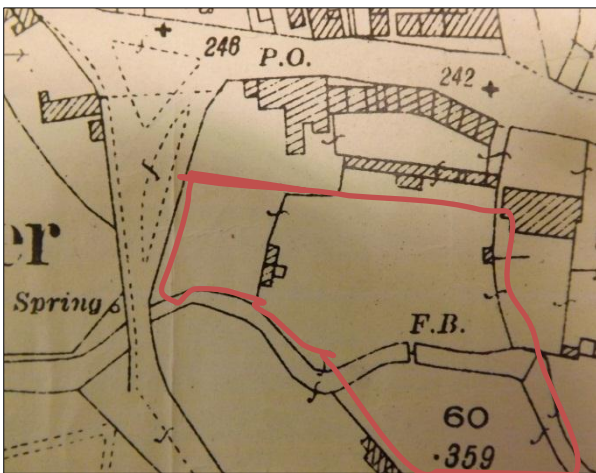


Fig 6: The site depicted on the 25" Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1884 (NRO Map 2654). Structures at the centre of the site, not depicted previously (and therefore probably built 1843-84), were of stone and brick and survived as derelict, part-ruined sheds, with timber alterations, until 2012.

The site is almost as seen in 2012 and the extent of plot ownership lies across the brook, although no construction or archaeology took place south of this watercourse.

The excavations

Methodology

Following the two trenches dug by way of evaluation, a series of geotechnical test pits were excavated across the site, north of the brook (Figs 1 and 7). These were monitored archaeologically and the probable extent of deep soils was noted.



Fig 7: Geotechnical test-pitting; in the background is the Grade II-Listed 6 High Street.

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Thereafter, but before the start of development, two areas were laid out and then stripped by a JCB machine down to archaeological levels under the control of an archaeologist. These comprised:

Area A, partly subsuming the earlier *Trench 1*. This rectangular area, which measured 8m x 4.75m, constituted the footprint of the new garages.

Area B, almost wholly subsuming the earlier *Trench 2*. The area in plan comprised two juxtaposed rectangles, which measured approximately 10m x 5m and 8m x 5.5m, constituted the footprint of the new house.

Upon exposure of the significant levels all subsequent excavation and cleaning was by hand.

To these areas was added a subsequent programme of observation and recording, which took place alongside ground-works to divert an existing sewer outside the house footprint and then to provide consumer connections to the mains services in Church Lane.

Results

Area A (Fig 9)

The area around the former *Trench 1* was opened out using a JCB-type excavator to the size of the new garages for the property. This included the eastern end of *Trench 1*, which had previously located a medieval wall constructed of roughly coursed limestone.

Beneath approximately 500mm of loamy topsoil (1) lay the natural buff-white calcareous clay (10). There was no intervening subsoil.

Into the clay had been cut a shallow, vertical-sided trench with a flat base. This was a construction trench into which had been laid the rubble foundation of a wall [7], some 1m wide, and which filled its construction trench entirely (Fig 8). This wall turned at 90-degrees before returning a second and a third time to the west and south and west again, its final turn being and that which had been exposed previously in evaluation [104], also in a construction trench [106], narrower and here separable from the wall edge. From the clay-bonded wall matrix on that occasion had come medieval pottery.

Where the wall returned further north, the majority of the foundation stone had been robbed away in a later wide robbing trench dug after the wall was taken down (8). This had also been the location of an old, dead tree taken out for the current works, and it may be that the stone robbing took place to facilitate root growth when the tree was originally planted. Its fibrous roots had worked their way throughout the robber trench fill which was much wider than the wall at its corner. The robbing trench had not been noted at evaluation and its edge approaching the former evaluation trench was very indistinct.



Fig 8: The un-robbled wall foundation [7] at its most north-easterly turn, looking west; scale 1m

The wall found in the current excavations was wider than that in the southerly return found in evaluation. It also utilised many more stones and fewer flat blocks. This difference may reflect some form of change in the structure, or the slightly higher survival of that further south may denote the superstructure proper. With so little surviving, however, it is not possible to conjecture further.

Pottery found in association with the wall during evaluation strongly suggests that it was built during the medieval period, after 1250 but before 1500. Pottery from the surface of the reduced wall foundations suggests that nothing of it remained upstanding much after c1700. The building may have been a standing ruin for some time before that.

The body of the wall foundation was investigated further but was found to comprise only a single course of tumbled rubble-stone.

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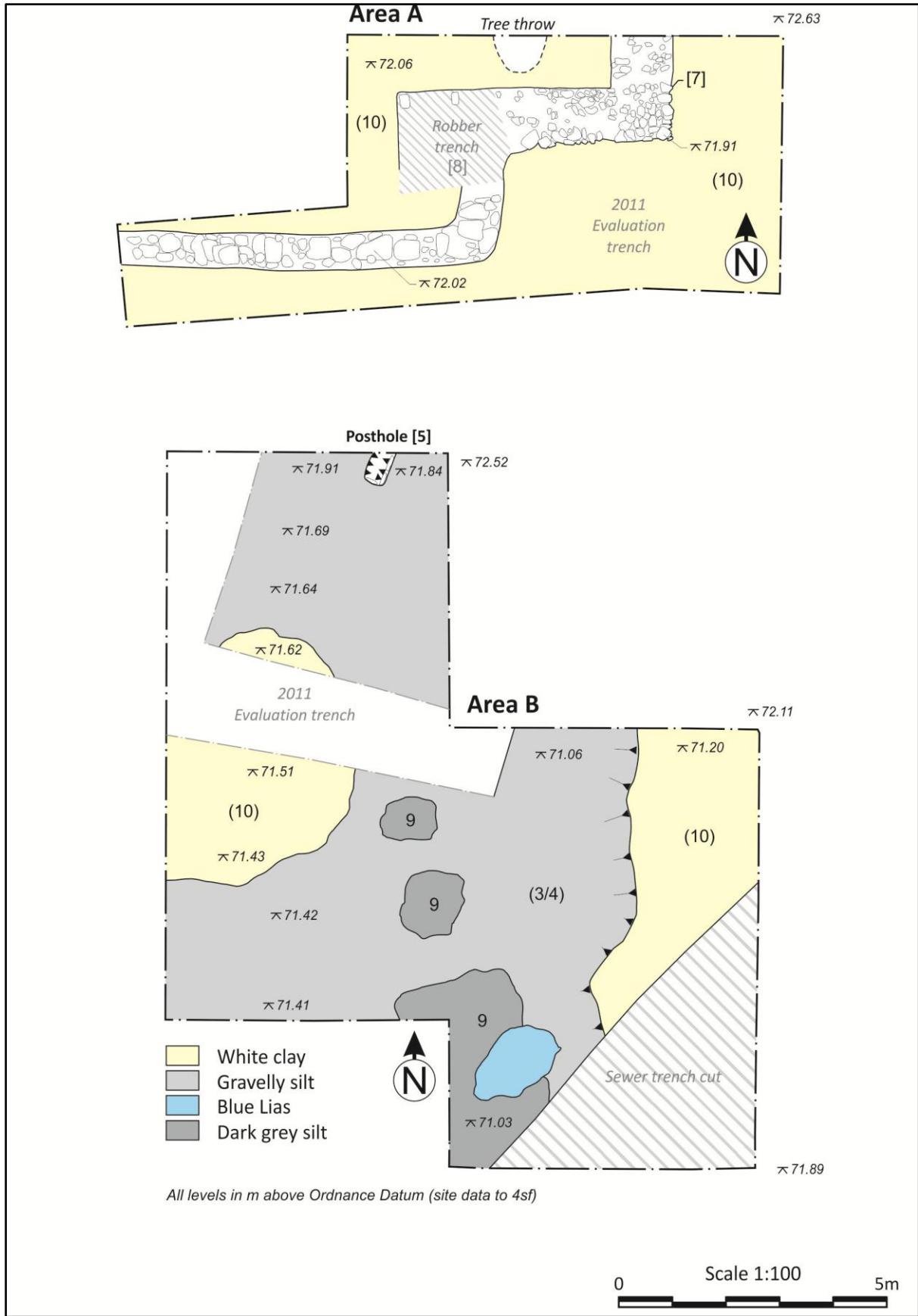


Fig 9: The excavated areas A and B, with previous evaluation trenches.

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Area B (Fig 9)

In this area, that of the new house, the former evaluation Trench 2 was almost wholly subsumed in the excavation. A JCB-type machine was deployed to strip off the topsoil and other overburden down to the significant archaeology or the natural geology, whichever was the higher. In this instance both occurred at virtually the same horizon.

The turf gave way to a 300mm-thick loamy topsoil (1), which overlay a considerable build-up of a medium brown silty, sticky alluvium (2) which contained pottery, animal bone and a scatter of stones at its base (Figs 10 and 11). This was a water-lain deposit averaging 700mm in thickness and was homogenous, with no apparent disturbance other than evidence for worm activity. The base of this layer was cleaned off and removed by hand, producing a scatter of medieval pottery, which was more numerous at the north, where the natural clay beneath was at its highest. Pottery occurrence thinned out the further south that work progressed.



Fig 10: Area B, looking south directly after machining and cleaning; natural clay showing through. Note groundwater to the top left, closest to the stream and adjacent to a modern sewer trench



Fig 11: Removing the base of the alluvium (2), the horizon producing medieval pottery

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Beneath this accumulation lay a silty grey layer which contained numerous shell fragments and which quickly became swamped by rising groundwater (3). This was the equivalent of layer 206 in the foregoing evaluation. There was no further dating from this layer, but evaluation had recorded sherds of medieval Potterspury ware (c1250-1500) from layer 206.

Interspersed at the same level in this area was a further layer, of reddish brown gritty sand material, and also quickly submerged in rising groundwater (4). This equated to layer 207 in evaluation. It produced no further dating material but evaluation had found a single sherd of medieval pottery from it.

In the rising groundwater the depths were not explored further, other than to confirm in (rapidly-swamped) sondages the widespread presence of dark grey silt below (9). This was the layer 208 from evaluation, taken in 2011 to be the basal silt of a pond or possibly a quarry pit [209].

The edges of this silt demarked the highest points of the natural geology, here a buff-white silty calcareous clay (10), the colour of which reflected the washing out of the natural salts in repeated inundations. In one place a patch of Jurassic Blue Lias clay was also exposed.

The edge of the undisturbed natural geology describes the arc of a former slow-running watercourse, or the ponding accumulation of overbank deposits, laid down in repeated inundations. The water-quality seems to have been sufficiently maintained and oxygenated by being replenished to support varied species of molluscs noted in evaluation.

At the north end of the area lay the only discrete archaeological feature present amidst these layers of accumulation. This was a rectangular post-hole (400mm x 300mm), vertical-sided, silt-filled to a depth of 250mm and retaining its edge-packing of numerous thin, flat limestone slabs [5] (Fig 12). Its stone-lined base stopped squarely on the natural calcareous clay (10) which showed the natural geology here to lie at 71.59m above Ordnance Datum.



Fig 12: the limestone-packed post-hole [5] from above, north to top; scale 30cm

This post-hole marked the very edge of historic occupation on the plot, the (probably) southernmost limit of any structure. Its fill produced a single sherd of late Potterspury ware, probably 17th century, which must have been deposited in there after the post was withdrawn.

At the south east the area was destroyed by an existing deep sewer trench, subsequently diverted.

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Subsequent Observations

Adjacent to Area A further archaeological observation took place for the introduction of services from Church Lane past the garage, in terrible winter conditions (Fig 13). This found the natural ground surface was close to the surface, just like in Area A, but no further archaeology was encountered, suggesting that the structural remains found in Area A and the foregoing evaluation trench relate to a former building which had its interior to the north and west of that area (away from the stream-course), not the north, south and east. The garage foundations were laid out and concreted, enabling a glimpse once more at the area already recorded in Area A.



Fig 13: Garage foundations, remnant medieval wall foundation in centre. Scale 1m

Archaeological observation was also maintained during the diversion of the existing sewer on the plot, the original trench of which had cut through the south-eastern corner of Area B. The same deep homogenous silty soils which characterised that area were further encountered, down to Blue Lias clay, and no surfaces or occupation horizons were present (Fig 14). No further work was required.



Fig 14: Cutting the new sewer trench south of Area B; stream and bridge behind to left

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Finds

There were few finds from the site.

A small fragment of un-dateable window glass from the robbing trench [8] in Area A might suggest that the building which once stood there had glazed windows, but could easily have also been imported onto the site during the period after the building was lost. A small quantity of food-bone was recovered from topsoil and subsoil but this was not retained as it could not be closely dated and as such it could not infer diet or husbandry for any specific period.

Pottery

Covering all excavations on the site, a total of 73 sherds were recovered in 10 fabrics and types and weighing in total 2,439 grams. They indicate activity at the site from the 13th to the 19th centuries and provide dating for episodes of change at the site.

The types present overall (related to the County Type Series) were as follows:

- 329 Potterspur Ware c1250-1500 & 17th century
- 330 Shelly Coarseware c1200-1500
- 365 Late medieval reduced wares c1400-1500
- Greyware Similar to (365) c1400-1500
- 407 Glazed Red earthenware c1500-1650
- 417 Nottingham Stoneware c1700-1800
- 426 Midland Blackware c1600-1800
- Blue shell edged pearlwares c1780-1820
- 1000 Industrial types C19th

The following is a collation of those sherds found in the present excavations (highlighted yellow below) added to those found previously in the evaluation by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2011. This gives as complete a picture as possible, albeit a view restricted by the small numbers involved in total.

Type /context	102	105 /106	A 8	B 1/201	B 2	204 /205	206 /209	B 6	207 /209	210 /211	Total
329	1/27	11/119			10/115		3/163		1/15		26/439
329 (C17)				2/43				1/3		9/1486	12/1532
330		1/13	2/40	1/11	14/221	2/40					20/325
365		1/7									1/7
Greyware					4/56						4/56
407			2/7	1/16							3/23
Blue shell edge				1/34							1/34
417 Notts			1/1								1/1
426			1/1								1/1
1000				2/9+2/12							4/21
Total	1/27	13/139	6/49	9/125	28/392	2/40	3/163	1/3	1/15	9/1486	73/2439

The pottery recovered, by fabric type and code and context, with weight in grams

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Environmental sampling

There were no further contexts exposed which warranted environmental sampling as this had already been carried out in evaluation (Foard-Colby 2011, 12). No distinctly different suitable deposits were present in the wider excavations. Deposit 207 at that time had been sampled and was now re-located as layer 4 in Area A. Assessment had concluded that the majority of mollusc species present were those which prefer moist or wet environments, such as marshes, with a range of molluscs present indicative of some standing water. In addition a range of dry-land species were indicative of the ground drying out and which then no longer favoured the wetland species. Pottery found in relation to this during evaluation suggested that the change from wet to drier took place in the 16th century.

Conclusions

The understanding of this site's development has only been possible with the interaction of numerous aspects of the archaeological discipline: historical documents and maps, targeted fieldwork, pottery dating and environmental data. If there had been a paucity or absence of one or more of these, a coherent story might not have emerged. It may perhaps be seen as a useful indicator for other plots in a similar topographical location, at least in Deanshanger.

In the medieval period, from about 1250 onwards, the western end of the plot was occupied by a stone-founded building of unknown extent and probably fronting Church Lane where it crossed the brook, probably in a ford. It had substantial stone walls and may have had either stone or a timber-framed superstructure, both raw materials being in plentiful local supply at the time. No floors had survived. This building was ruinous and largely robbed away for its building materials certainly by 1700, and the absence of any upstanding building at all on the map of 1608 suggests it had gone completely by then, so had enjoyed a potential life of, at most, some 350 years. Demise in the later 16th century might suggest a link with a former monastic owner at Snelshall Priory, but which has not been proven unequivocally. The 1733 map notes that it was held at that time by John Clarke Baker. The Clarke family had in fact acquired at least some of the former Snelshall properties in 1681-2 but what this actually included is unclear, as is how much they retained for any length of time (Riden 2002, 219). The association with that family's name on the Inclosure Map of 1773, is of more than passing interest, however.

Further east the lie of the land was probably dominated by repeated inundations from the stream to the south within a hollow into which the stream banks overflowed. During the medieval period these flooding episodes ensured that semi-aquatic mollusc species colonised the area. Gradually the hollow, which contained slow or totally still water, silted up. What washed in could not wash out again. Replenished less and less by fresh water, it became marsh, and then slowly dried out, enabling mollusc-species of drier ground to supplant their aquatic cousins. By the end of the medieval period some form of occupation was able to spread as far as the pond's northern edge, the silts having dried out and become sufficiently packed down to enable the ground to be used. A single rectangular post-hole was the excavated evidence for this, lined in stone to provide additional support in the still-comparatively-soft ground. This was removed during the 17th century when pottery of that date found its way into the base of the redundant post-pipe. By the 19th century the

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area, its surface now built up considerably by the accumulations and no longer flooded regularly, was finally cultivable on a semi-permanent basis.

A series of levels were taken to show the natural fall of the land where these inundations took place. This showed the oldest alluvial silts lying between 71.91m at the north and 71.41 at the south, a slope involving a drop towards the stream of 0.5m over some 8m distance (Fig 9).

Where the natural ground was noted (71.59 at the base of post hole [5] and lower than 71.03 at the southern end) this showed that these oldest, basal silts remain a further 300mm – 400+mm thick, from north to south. Above this the gradual silt accumulation was responsible for the majority of some 900mm of further build-up in ground level over some 400 years. Only when the upper levels had sufficiently dried out and were no longer replenished by overbank washes, was the land cultivable.

Therefore during the medieval period only the western end of the plot was occupied, any use of the land further east only being possible in the period from the 16th-17th centuries. In the medieval period this wetter ground would have only been usable (and then only carefully) by livestock, as it would have supported lush meadow-type vegetation.

Regular inundation and overbank washes such as were experienced here, may have been the result of management, or more specifically, *mis-management* of water mills. A similar situation of overbank flooding can be seen on a grand scale on the main channel of the Great Ouse, downstream on back-plots off the main street in Buckingham (McAree 2011). Again, excavation showed that example to have been addressed in the 16th century when the banks, regularly compromised, were freshly built up and revetted. In order to prepare for milling, the waters of streams and leats and mill-ponds (if they had them) were carefully backed up by closing sluices, thereby flooding meadows upstream and feeding the vegetation. When the water was released and milling took place, the water-meadows were drained and the freshly watered grasses were ideal for fattening livestock.

However, known from documented difficulties and litigation, there were occasions all across the country of unconnected millers failing to co-ordinate with other mills up- and down-stream, particularly at prime harvest periods and at times of heavy rains, and taking no notice of the working patterns of other types of water-powered mill, such as fulling mills, whose timetables were different again; the effect was of unexpected floods and a great deal of damage to land and property. Sometimes only concerted manorial instruction could sort the situation such as in the civic coercion of three former monastic mills along the edge of Coventry to co-ordinate more closely, following litigation against one of them for property damage in 1540-41 (Fox 1946, 242 and n2). It is to be noted, perhaps, that although there are no known records of a water-mill at Deanshanger (there was a 15th-16th century horse-mill, gone by 1566; Riden 2002, 226), this does not preclude the existence of a water-powered example, and the poor survival of Snelshall Priory Records (with the above-mentioned John and Walter the Millers [p4]) does not militate against any argument for the existence and role of one or more such mills.

In the mid-16th century when many mills suddenly were no longer managed by their former monastic overlords, it took sometimes years for the new, fragmented secular ownerships to settle down. Re-sales were common. This was similar for many former monastic lands and absentee secular landlords (as was the case at Deanshanger) might only exacerbate a process of gradual decay

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by an absence of land and property management. Some mills also turned out to be financially unviable without their previous monastic safety-net. Coinciding as this did with a huge deterioration in climate to cold and wet (the so-called little ice age of late in the 16th century), some mills were completely lost at this period. Other, former corn mills converted for fulling, failed to survive a disastrous slump in English cloth production of the 16th century.

It is distinctly possible that, whatever the reason for the abandonment of the building on the west of the plot, the repeated inundations to the east were related to poor water-management, whether up- or down-stream, close by or at some distance. It is ironically the period of increasing water stability as a direct result of potentially fewer mills and better co-ordination of the survivors' activities. Certainly similar problems were being encountered and addressed downstream in Buckingham itself. What in Deanshanger had been a wholly unpredictable watercourse which might overtop its banks became a steep-sided and more regular cutting through old silts, more foreseeably rising and falling with the seasons, to be watched carefully in heavy weather. Only at that point was the ground beyond its banks more reliably usable most of the time.

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