



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological evaluation on land at Salem  
House, Salem, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire**

**July 2013**



# Salem House, Long Buckby

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## Archaeological evaluation on land at Salem House,

### Salem, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire

July 2013

Iain Soden BA MIfA

#### Summary

The site is believed to lie within or at the edge of the medieval and potentially earlier hamlet of Salem, part of what became Long Buckby. Two evaluation trenches totalling 17m length found no evidence for any previous occupation on the site, and revealed only a depth of horticultural/agricultural tilth over natural geology. The site is believed to lie at the very margins of historic settlement.

#### Introduction

Planning consent is sought from Daventry District Council by Mr and Mrs Burnett of Tiverton, Devon, for the construction of a single dwelling in a garden behind Salem House, Harbidges Lane, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 6230 6750; Application DA/2013/0360). The site lies at 131m above Ordnance Datum at the top of 'Salem', an historic but little-understood dependent medieval hamlet and possible precursor of Long Buckby, lying west of Long Buckby castle. Further west lies Murcott, another medieval dependent hamlet, of which a few properties survive.

Daventry District Council, in concert with Northamptonshire County Council, have requested that a pre-determination field evaluation should take place upon the plot and the proposed development in order to facilitate an informed decision on the full archaeological implications of Planning Consent being given. The scope of works was outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation issued by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd and agreed by Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCCAAA). The results of the evaluation are set out in the present report.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Allen for allowing access to their orchard for the work to take place. Thanks to Northamptonshire Archaeology for making reports on their work in Long Buckby available.

#### Background

The site of Salem House and its garden, lie on the west side of Harbidges Lane, Long Buckby, a roughly north-south-aligned cul-de-sac which skirts the western edge of the medieval former Long Buckby Castle, for some of its length probably on the line of the castle defences (Fig 1). Stretching south and west beyond the castle, the lane then makes a circuitous route to (and probably through) Salem, a former hamlet within Long Buckby, from which it has barely been separated for the last century or more (RCHME 1981, 128-135). It is considered to be a possible pre-cursor to what became Long Buckby and is considered to have potential to retain pre-Conquest remains. One branch, which is today a miniscule footpath, leading west from a dog-leg in Harbidges Lane, was once part of the main route from Cambridge to Coventry (Foard and Ballinger 2000).

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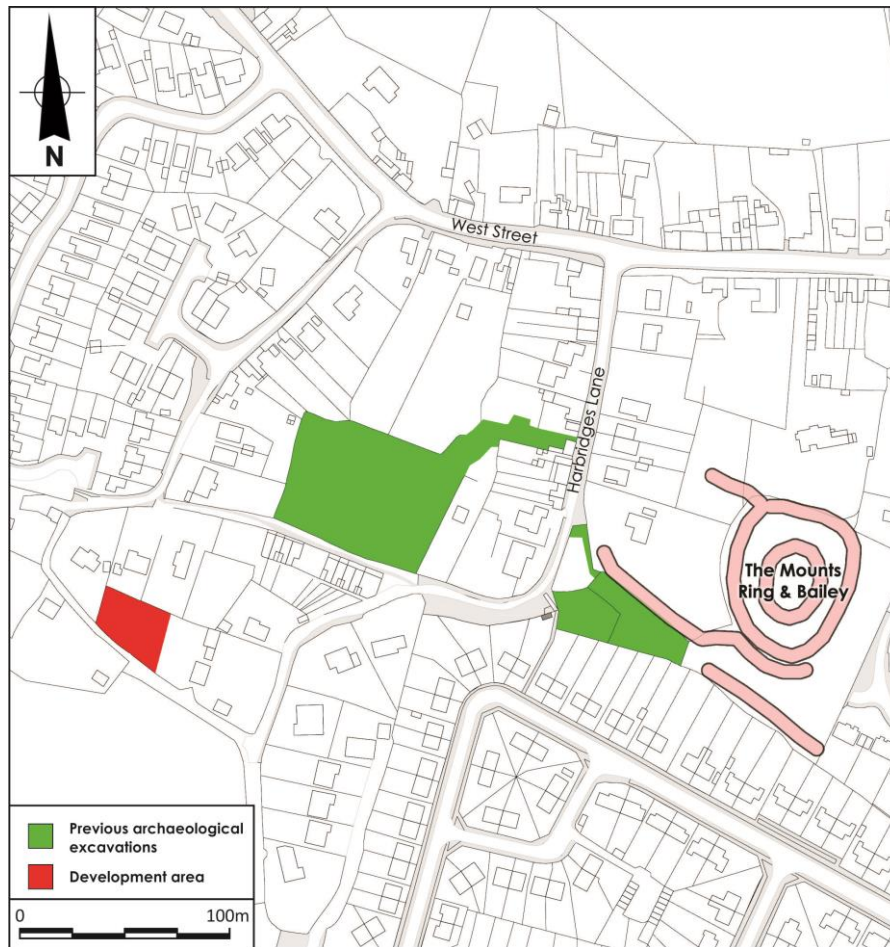


Fig 1: Site location and Long Buckby castle 'The Mounts ring and bailey': Salem may be said to stretch west and south from Harbidge Lane

Consultation of old Ordnance Survey maps shows that in 1885 the garden plot which is the subject of the application was open ground, just as it is today. Salem House, to which it belonged, stands to the east. Today, Salem House carries a gable-mounted date-stone of 1879, while nearby Field House, to the south-west is dated by decorative brickwork on its gable to 1864 (Fig 3 for their locations).

The site lies on high ground overlooking Salem. The hamlet once had its own church, St Gregory's, which appears to have been independent of Long Buckby Parish Church, St Lawrence's. Apocryphal stories in the village tell of the common discovery of human remains in Salem, although it is not easy to ascertain from folk memory where these bones have been dug up (ibid, 133). The Royal Commission depicts the site in 1981 as lying very close to earthworks just to the south (op cit, fig 101), some of which can still be seen on aerial views, such as Google-Earth. The suggested extent of the medieval village from all previous research has been most recently depicted by Partida et al (2013, Map 43M)

Long Buckby Castle, also called 'The Mounts' is a post-Conquest Ring and (possibly double) Bailey, the baileys of which have been encroached upon by housing since the 19th century. The ring and its immediate area are a Scheduled Monument (No 13666). The castle has been the subject of a

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number of archaeological excavations since the 1950s, including on the west side by the present author in 2002 (the smaller 'green' site in Fig 1; Atkins and Soden 2002).

Recent excavations in 2013 have confirmed that domestic archaeological remains, separate from the castle, do survive on currently vacant plots at the mid-point of Harbidges Lane (the larger 'green' site on Fig 1; Chinnock 2013).

At its northern end, Harbidges Lane retains along its western frontage two post-medieval Grade II listed buildings, the 'Old King's Head' and the 'Old Engine', both erstwhile public houses, while building recording in 1986 noted a 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century cruck frame in a now demolished cottage at 10-12 Harbidges Lane (South Midlands Archaeology 1986, 76-7). This strongly suggests that the course of Harbidges Lane, skirting the edge of the former castle bailey, is relatively unchanged since the later medieval period.

## Objectives

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was as follows:

- To better understand the nature, function, character and layout of the plot in its cultural and environmental setting at the edge of the historic settlement and within the Saxo-Norman and medieval landscape.
- To record the extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present
- To prepare sub-surface data to facilitate decisions on the desirability of the development and advance further strategies for preserving significant deposits or features, either in the ground, if possible, or excavating them in further fieldwork.

## Research Agenda

The work was carried out with due regard to best archaeological practice and in particular with relevance to the Late Saxon and Medieval periods and medieval rural Northamptonshire in the East Midlands research agenda and strategy (Knight et al 2012) and its precursor (Cooper 2006).

## The excavations (Figs 2, 3 and 4)

Two trenches were machine-dug using a tracked machine deploying a flat, toothless ditching blade under archaeological control.

Trench 1 measured 12m long x 1.6m wide and was aligned roughly east-west on the footprint of the proposed house along the existing hill-slope. Beneath turf and topsoil, with some broken brick just below the turf, was unbroken natural geology.

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Fig 2: Trench 1, looking east; scale 1m

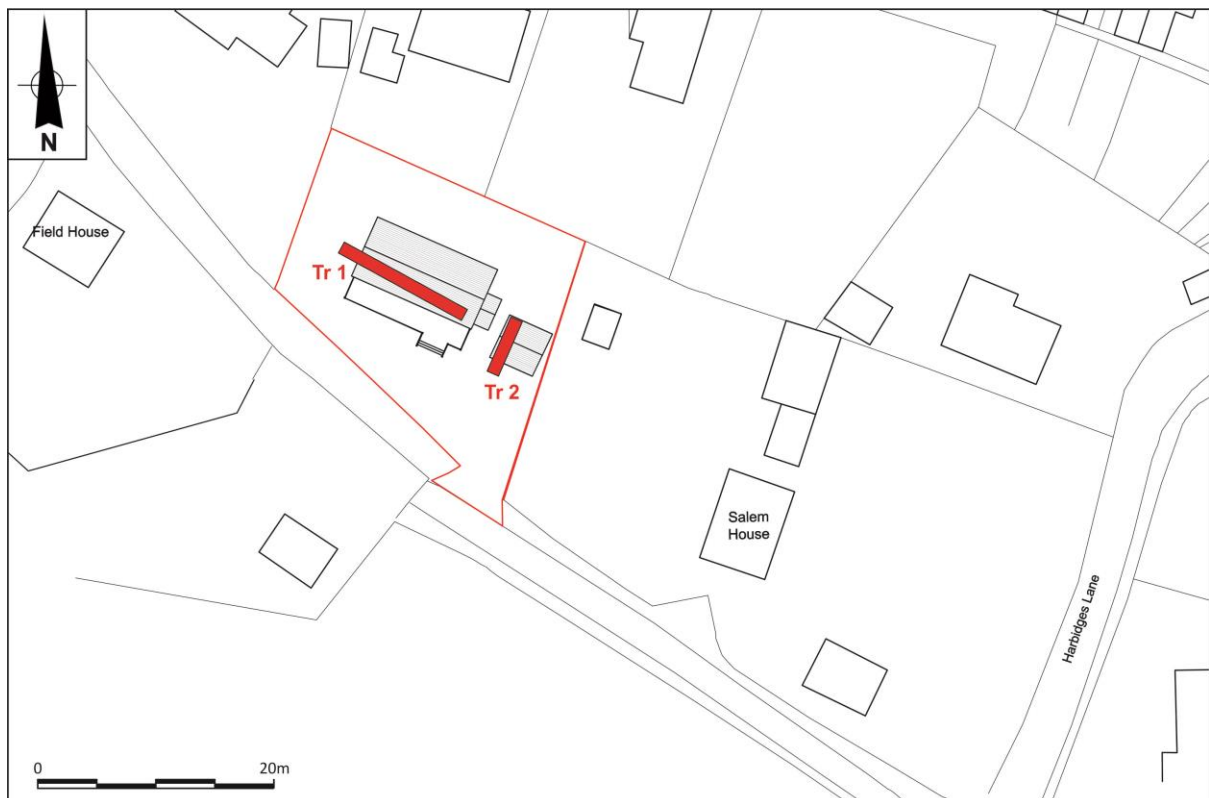


Fig 3: The site and evaluation trenches; also proximity of the dated Salem House (1879) and Field House (1864)



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Trench 2 measured 5m long x 1.6m wide. It was aligned north-south, down the slope, on the footprint of the proposed detached garage which is to lie next to the house. The topsoil was slightly thicker than in Trench 1, 500-600mm thick, lying directly over natural geology. It was equally devoid of finds and no archaeological features were present.



Fig 4: Trench 2, looking north; scale 1m

### Results

The deposits stripped by the machine under archaeological control were consistent throughout. In each trench the medium brown, friable topsoil supporting turf and the occasional patch of broken bricks was 300-600mm thick, becoming stonier at depth. Beneath this lay natural geology which comprised a dark orange sandy clay containing pebbles, flint and occasional water-worn cobbles.

The natural geology was unbroken by any archaeological features and there was no pottery of any date, or other finds, present in the soil above.

## Conclusions

Although the site is agreed by archaeologists working locally to lie at the edge of the medieval village of Long Buckby, and potentially within the foregoing former hamlet of Salem, this site in particular has produced no evidence of related occupation or indeed of any previous occupation or land-use other than horticulture/agriculture.

It is suggested that, just as the current road layout concentrates upon houses fronting Harbidges Lane and the nearby Holmfield Terrace, once part of the main route from Cambridge to Coventry, so too were the historic frontages connected with the thoroughfares. Thus the area trenched for this evaluation lies sufficiently back from that frontage to have been garden or orchard during the medieval period, just as it is today. The absence of any pottery or other finds of any date suggests an area of open, unoccupied ground, probably tilled but no more.

## Bibliography

Atkins R, and Soden I, 2002 *Archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 33 Grasscroft, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report

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ISHeritage

19 August 2013



# Salem House, Long Buckby

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## Appendix 1: OASIS data

Project Name	Salem House, Long Buckby
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-232068
Project Type	Trial trench evaluation
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	Not known
Current land use	Garden
Development type	Development- single house
Reason for investigation	NPPF
National grid reference	SP 6230 6750
Start/end dates of fieldwork	July-August 2013
Archive recipient	-
Study area	-