



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**An archaeological evaluation on land adjacent  
to 84 East Street, Long Buckby,  
Northamptonshire, April 2014**

**12 May 2014**



# Land adjacent 84 East Street, Long Buckby

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## An Archaeological Evaluation on land adjacent to 84 East Street, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire

April 2014

Iain Soden BA MIfA

### Summary

Archaeological trenching probably demonstrated the far western extent of the medieval hamlet of Cotton End, now part of Long Buckby. A plough-dispersed probable roadside midden marked the boundary of settlement and agriculture. No structures were present although the vestiges of the midden produced a notable assemblage of 13<sup>th</sup>- to 14<sup>th</sup>-century coarseware pottery from as many as seven vessels.

### Background

Planning consent is sought by Mr D Underwood from Daventry District Council for the construction of three houses on farmland adjacent to 84 East Street, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 6390 6785; Application DA/2014/0257; Fig 1). The site lies on boulder clay at 151.2m above Ordnance Datum.



Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data ©Crown Copyright and database right, 2014.

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The site, which fronts the historic main through-road to Northampton (B5385) on its north, lies at the eastern extremity of this linear village, at the junction with the formerly discrete hamlet of Cotton End. The First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1885 shows the site as open, as it remains today. However, it may have been part of the hamlet of Cotton End as indicated by former earthworks noted by the RCHME (1981, 130-1 & fig 100). Partida et al (2012, maps 43) see the site as falling between the two.

Daventry District Council, in concert with Northamptonshire County Council, 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. In accordance with this requirement, the Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council, Liz Mordue, issued a Brief for Archaeological Evaluation of the site, dated 9 April 2014. This was reflected in a Works Specification by IS Heritage for works which were carried out on 30 April 2014.

The land is today pasture, and slopes gently down from south to north, ending in a mature but neatly-laid hedge with a gated access. The grassed frontage between the hedge and roadside kerb, has been reduced and cut away, possibly in recent times.

The site retains no indications of old earthworks, although a general rise in the ground level may be noted just to the east of the site.

### **Fieldwork**

In accordance with the brief and specification, a series of four trenches were machine dug to the level of significant archaeology or the natural ground surface, whichever was the higher (Fig 2). Three trenches lay in the locations of the proposed new houses (Trenches 1-3), while the fourth trench lay along the proposed new access road (Trench 4). Trench 4 was crossed by a live electricity and water main put in in the 1970s, but this was deeper than the depth of the archaeological trench. The earthwork of its backfilled trench may still be discerned on the site.

Trenches 1-3 each measured 5m x 1.6m and Trench 4 measured 20m x 1.6m (Fig 3).



Fig 2: The trenches, view looking east; scale in Trench 1 foreground, 1m

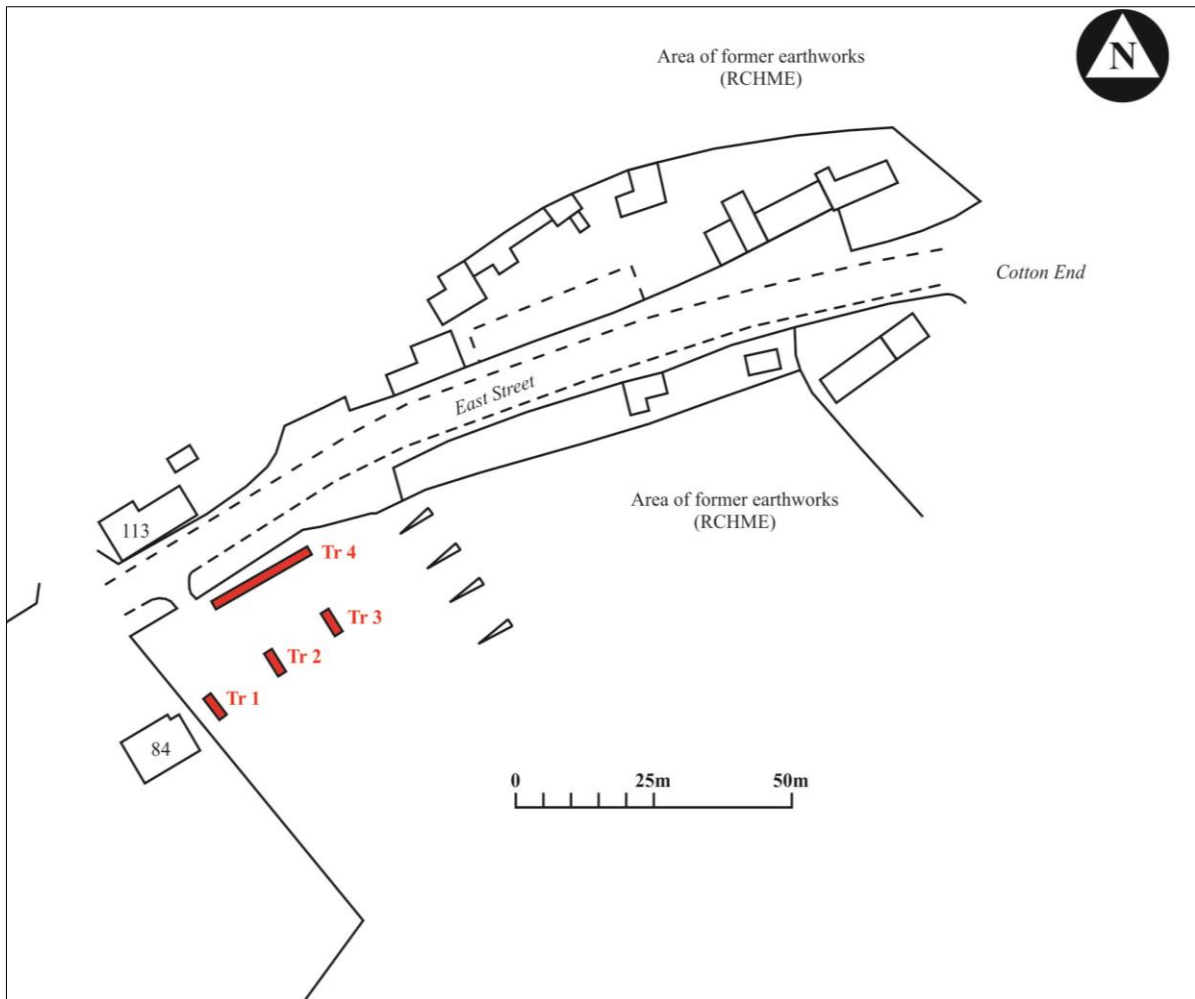


Fig 3: The site with the layout of trenches

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## Results

In all four trenches there was thick, dark grey/brown loamy topsoil beneath the turf, in total some 300mm thick (1). The land was apparently ploughed in 1970, according to the landowner. From the base of the topsoil in Trench 1 came an almost illegible halfpenny of George III (1760-1820).

In each case beneath this topsoil was a 100mm- to 200mm-thick subsoil (2) which was probably plough-accumulated and was a uniform light brown-ochre colour. Its cleanliness and colour indicated that it had not been turned over for some time. At its base lay a number of stones, at the very extremity of the habitual ploughing-depth. Also at this depth in trenches 2, 3 and 4 were a few scattered sherds of medieval pottery.

This was the extent of remains in Trenches 1, 2 and 3, in which there was no other stratification.

In Trench 4, the base of the subsoil overlay a mixed layer of stony clay with fragments of ironstone impressed into it (3). It was also marked by a couple of short 'streaks' of the ochre sub-soil, possible plough-share cuts where the habitual north-south ploughing had given way to turning the plough at the field-boundary.



Fig 4: Opening Trench 4



Fig 5: Trench 4, looking East; scale 1m.

This insubstantial horizon, c500mm below the turf, appeared to be little more than a dirty interface with the natural clay and contained, as noted above, numerous pieces of ironstone, including one or two protruding larger fragments (Fig 5, foreground). Amongst these, and squashed onto the stone and the natural clay along the trench, was a scatter of medieval pottery, some groups from single substantial vessel-parts squashed *in situ*.

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Two machine-cut sondages were dug to further characterise this horizon. These confirmed that although marked by the stone and the pottery, it did not really constitute a layer of its own but was largely ephemeral at the surface of the natural clay, despite being widespread. No cut features were present.

### Pottery

A total of 86 sherds of medieval pottery in six types, weighing 915g were recovered from two horizons, comprising topsoil (unstratified) and an 'interface' in Trench 4, squashed upon the natural geology and overlain by the subsoil or old ploughsoil. Relatively few vessels are represented, in a limited range of types.

The pottery was as follows:

Type	CTS	Production date	Tr2 u/s	Tr3 u/s	Tr4 u/s	Tr4 nat interface	Vessels from Tr 4	Total
Lyveden/Styanion A	319	c1150-1400				4/14g	1	4/14g
Misc sandy coarseware	360	c1100-1400				2/11g	1	2/11g
Potterspury ware	329	c1250-1500	6/51g		6/65g		1	12/116g
Shelly coarseware	330	c1100-1400	1/6g	2/27g	2/13g	48/579g	1 wide-mouthed bowl	53/625g
"	330					9/100g	1	9/100g
Nuneaton B?	346	c1250-1400				2/8g	1	2/8g
Potters Marston type?	?	c1250-1400				4/41g	1 jug	4/41g
Total			7/57g	2/27g	8/78g	69/753g	7	86/915g

The pottery, which is dateable generally to the period c1100-1400, is perhaps not atypical of a local agricultural holding, the best comparison being that of Daventry's St John's Square excavated in the 1990s (Blinkhorn, P, 'Late Saxon and Medieval Pottery' in Soden 1996-7, 73-9).

The unstratified sherds in Trenches 2, and 3 may derive from ploughing off the top of the extensive but vestigial deposit found throughout Trench 4. This comprised parts of seven vessels which had been squashed on top of the natural clay geology, which was itself riven by a number of plough-marks. The most distinctive vessel was a wide-mouthed bowl, a type illustrated in Blinkhorn from Daventry (ibid 78, fig 20, no 40). Blinkhorn has considered these to have been a locally-recognised dry measure-vessel, perhaps for grain.

The average sherd weight from this interface (107g before breakage; 10.9g had they been dispersed) strongly suggests that they have not been disturbed after initial deposition. As such this deposit appears to be the surviving base of a medieval midden deposit of household and stable refuse, dumped at the roadside and later ploughed repeatedly into the field as manuring. There are

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probably sherds scattered from this all through the ploughsoil and a long way across the field. The field was last ploughed in 1970 when the present owner arrived on the land.

The vestiges suggest the deposit was laid down in the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century. There are notably no later medieval types. All of the pottery is very badly water-abraded, and the shelly inclusions in the fabric are almost all distinctively dissolved out by groundwater. The Lyveden/Stanion sherds retain a few oolites only. The possible Nuneaton type retains only the last vestige of a green glaze. It is a poorly-preserved assemblage in an interesting location and suggests middening from a nearby cottage in the adjacent Cotton End hamlet.

### Conclusions

The field has been cultivated since perhaps the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was last ploughed in 1970. No archaeological features were present and there is no indication that there was ever a road-side plot or other house or structure here, perhaps reinforcing the view of Partida et al (2012, Map 43) that the site falls between the two medieval settlements of Buckby (not called *Long* Buckby until c1600) and Cotton End.

The spread of squashed, partly un-dispersed pottery on the natural clay and a scatter of similar sherds elsewhere in the subsoil suggests that there once existed a midden or rubbish tip at the roadside, which was gradually spread onto the field, partly deliberately perhaps, but also by continued ploughing. This would have been mainly of organic matter from nearby Cotton End cottages and stables, but would also have included domestic refuse, all that remains, concentrated at the former base of the heap. This tip probably dates from the period c1250-1400, and the small number of vessels remaining, represent only the basal, first tip; subsequent debris, if it was ever much added-to (the greater volume of the heap) was probably largely organic and was almost certainly scattered by the plough throughout the later soils.



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## Bibliography

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