



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Trial trenching on land behind 24 Whittall Street,
Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire**

Joe Prentice and Iain Soden

Email: iain@isheritage.co.uk

Tel: 07742 901760

Website: www.isheritage.co.uk

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Summary

Three archaeological trial trenches found no evidence that the site of a proposed new dwelling was ever the site of archaeological occupation or activity, other than gardening.

Introduction

Archaeological trial trenching was undertaken at the rear (eastern end) of a former garden plot which lies behind 24 Whittall Street, Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 4999 3628; Fig 1).

The site, which lies at c99m above Ordnance Datum, is the proposed location of a single domestic dwelling and the trial trenching was required as a condition applied to the Planning Consent (S/2014/0684 FUL; 0847 RES; Condition 6). Access to the site is from Astrop Road, a modern cul-de-sac which lies to the north of the much older, identically named Astrop Road which is aligned roughly east-west through the village on the south side of a village green.

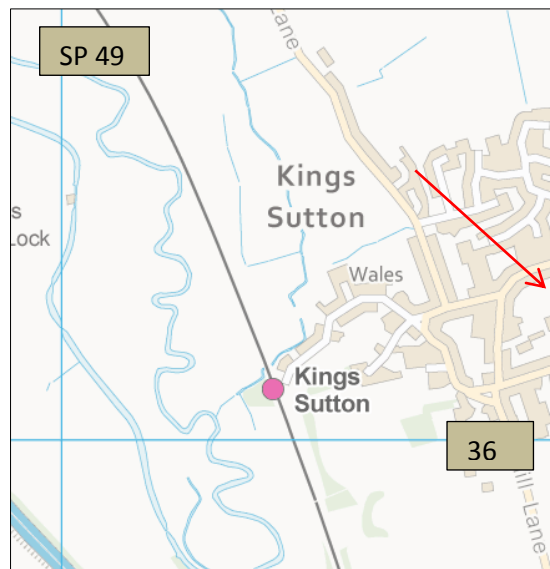


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016

The fieldwork was undertaken on Friday 20 May 2016. The site had been roughly cleared of vegetation and a garden shed prior to arrival. A need to maintain a vehicular access from Astrop Rd and some mature specimen and weed trees restricted the final positioning of the trenches. Decisions on removal of some of the trees had not yet been taken. The weather conditions were fine and dry.

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Background

The village of Kings Sutton lies at the south-west corner of the county of Northamptonshire, close to the border with Oxfordshire. The parish is regarded as being particularly rich in archaeological remains of all periods (RCHME 1982, 92-6).

The site was previously the subject of a Desk-Based Heritage Statement in relation to the foregoing Outline Planning Application (S/2011/1343/OUT; Lisboa 2012). For early periods however, assessment is often unable to rule out potential for survival of archaeological remains pre-dating the origins of a surviving, late Saxon/medieval village layout.

Of the post-medieval period there is no indication that there has been any occupation or other activity on the site under investigation (Lisboa 2012). Map evidence suggests that up until the late nineteenth century the site remained part of the long rear plot to the property to which it belongs to this day (Fig 2).



Fig 2: The site (arrowed) on the Ordnance Survey map of 1885, sheet 62NW;

In 1885 the plot is simply shown planted with a few trees. The far eastern end of the plot has since become the site of a small bungalow. The new building will lie just to the west of that (Fig 3).

Trial trenching

Three trenches were laid out on the site; two were located within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling and its garage, the third was located to the west along the line of the new services to serve the proposed new home (Fig 3).

Each trench was nominally 10m long, but adjustments to account for trees and maintenance of vehicular access were necessary, shortening them a little. Therefore each was deliberately a full 2m wide to ensure that they remained a good sample of the site. Machining was undertaken using a 3-ton 360-degree tracked excavator and deploying a 1.2m-wide bucket under archaeological control.

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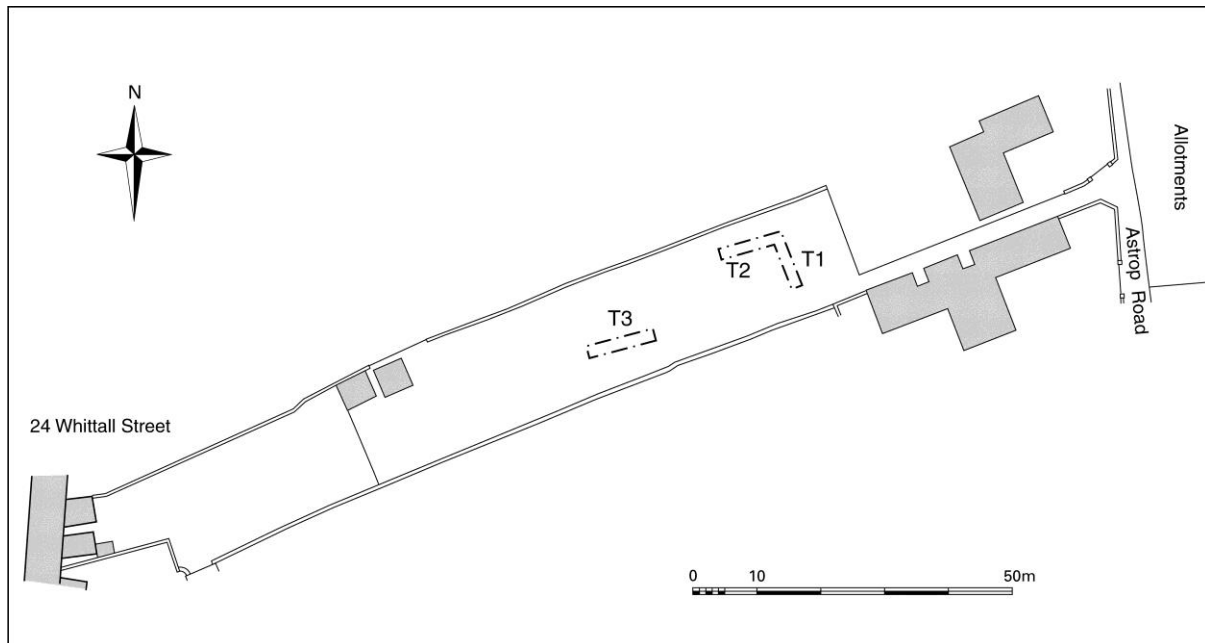


Fig 3: Trench locations (Andy Isham)

Trenches 1 and 2 were set out conjoined so that they formed an L-shape due to the narrowness of the site which needed to maintain vehicular access from Astrop Road.

Trench 1 measured 8.5m x 2m and was aligned roughly north-south across the site. Thin dark brown topsoil (c250mm in depth) was removed to reveal mid-brown subsoil (a further c250mm thick). Beneath this the upper surface of the natural solid geology was revealed. This comprised degraded blocky ironstone rubble of a mid-brown/orange colour (Fig 4). This Jurassic material is variously called locally Northampton Sand with Ironstone in Northamptonshire and Hornton Stone in Oxfordshire. There were no archaeological features cutting either the subsoil or natural geology and apart from a single piece of modern flower pot and a light bulb within the topsoil, no finds were present.



Fig 4: Trench 1 looking north; 2m scale

Trench 2 measured 9.5m x 2m and was excavated in a west-east alignment from the north end of Trench 1 (Fig 3). The excavated trench revealed the same stratification throughout (Fig 5). There were no archaeological features or finds.



Fig 5: Trench 2, looking west; Scale 2m

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Trench 3 measured 10m x 2m and was located to the west of the proposed new dwelling, and was closer to the south side of the plot in order to avoid a group of large trees including a mature walnut tree which occupied the northern side of the site (Fig 3). The same stratification was uncovered and no archaeological features were present (Fig 6).



Fig 6: Trench 3 looking west; scale 2m

Conclusions

Trial excavation conducted within the confines of a long, narrow east-west aligned rear plot to 24 Whittall Street in Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire revealed no evidence of archaeological remains of any period.

A relatively shallow topsoil and the presence of a very small number of modern artefacts suggests that this part of the plot has never been occupied, either in the distant past or more recently. Its location, at the far eastern end of the plot at the furthest distance from the street frontage and the property located there, supports the supposition that this end of the plot was either pasture or orchard.

Map evidence from the late nineteenth-century supports this view. The most likely archaeological evidence associated with street frontage occupation would be expected close to that occupation, perhaps in the form of outlying buildings or rubbish middens and pits. The furthest portion of the back plot might be expected to have been laid to permanent pasture or orchards which would require least attention. It appears that this would seem to have been the case here. Though no fruit trees were present in the area occupied by trenches 1 and 2, there are living mature fruit trees including apple and walnut further west.

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Bibliography

Lisboa, I, 2012 *Heritage statement on 24 Whittall Street, Kings Sutton*, Archaeologica

RCHME 1982 *An Inventory at the historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire; Vol 4: Archaeological Sites in South-West Northamptonshire*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-255000
Project Type	Evaluation
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	Foregoing Heritage Assessment by other agency; no further work
Current land use	Garden
Development type	Domestic
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 4999 3628
Start/end dates of fieldwork	20 May 2016
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	500 sq m



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