



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

An Archaeological Evaluation on a development site at 24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough

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An Archaeological Evaluation on a development site at 24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough

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Summary

Archaeological trial trenches indicate that remains of a potentially 17th-century frontage survive directly below a surface car park at 24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough, but that the rear of the former plot has been probably extensively quarried in the 19th century.

Introduction

Planning permission is sought from Wellingborough Council to redevelop a site at 24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 4QY, to create a block of new apartments, (NGR: SP 88898 68411; Fig 1). The development will involve the loss of a house (no 24) and construction on what has for many decades been the surface car park serving the adjacent *Fox and Hounds*, a 17th-century Grade II-Listed former public house immediately to the east (no 32). The car park was formerly the site of a row of cottages, which, like the public house, can be seen on historic maps of 1886 and 1803. These comprised until demolition nos 26, 28 and 30.

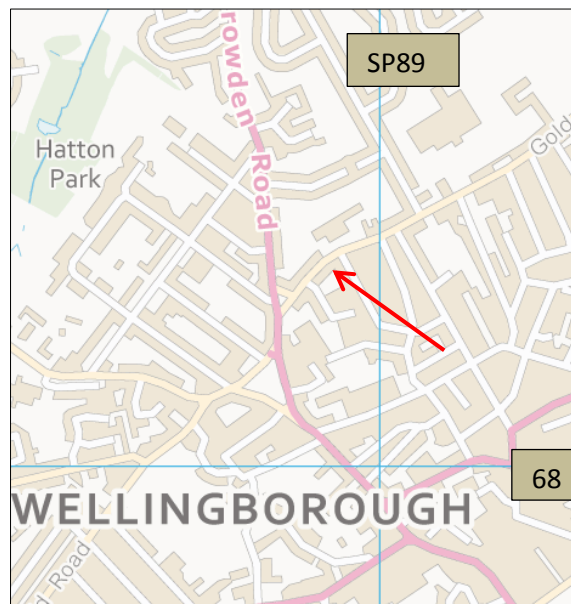


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed).

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24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough

The survival of an historic frontage on Gold Street, which is documented by name from at least 1547, is a possibility in places, and nearby excavations have revealed traces of both medieval and late Saxon occupation, although the vagaries of development has left survival on each plot unpredictable.

The 17th-century date of the Fox and Hounds public house may be significant. It is notable that the frontage in which it once lay, was mapped as continuous by 1803.

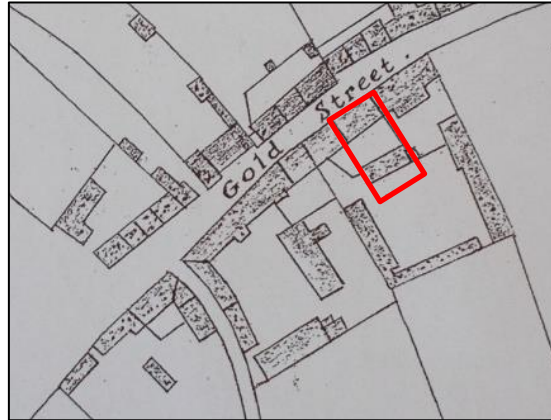


Fig 2: 1803 map of Wellingborough by William James (extract in NRO). The site is approximately within the red line, with the Fox and Hounds to its right.



Fig 3: 1886 first edition Ordnance Survey; sheet 39 NE. The site is arrowed

The site is bounded on the west by an access and south by a boundary continuing that access. On the east lies the Fox and Hounds Public House. The site fronts Gold Street.

Historic Ordnance Survey Maps show that the former frontage buildings were demolished between 1938 and 1958, when the majority of the site became the car park for the Fox and Hounds.

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Accordingly there was a requirement for an archaeological evaluation and any further works pursuant upon that to take place, either as a condition or ahead of determination of the planning application. The pre-determination route was preferred and accordingly an archaeological evaluation took place on 4-5 January 2017 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd, and agreed with the Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council as advisor to the Local Authority.

The work was carried out in fine weather conditions by Iain Soden and Joe Prentice of Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd.

Fieldwork methodology

Two trenches were machine-dug under archaeological control, and using a 5-ton tracked 360-degree machine fitted with a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket (and a smaller toothed bucket for digging through tarmac).

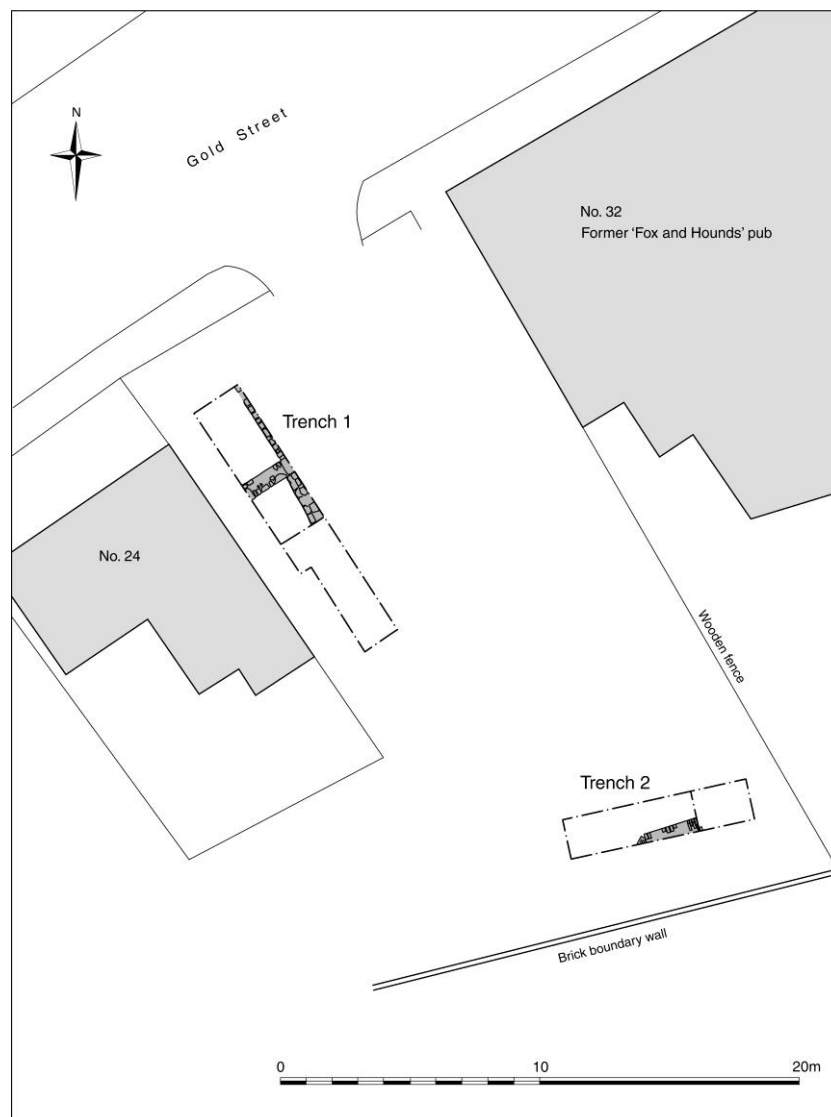


Fig 4: Trench locations with summary of structural remains found

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Trench 1 measured c11m x 1.5-2m wide and was aligned roughly north to south at the north-west corner of the plot.

Trench 2 measured c8.5m x 1.5m wide and was aligned roughly east to west close to the southern boundary of the site, beyond which there was a steep modern walled drop to a car park.



Fig 5: View looking south-east across Trench 1 (foreground) and Trench 2 (background); scales 2m and 1m

Spoil was stored adjacent to the trenches and was returned to them at the end of evaluation, tracked-in to restore the ground level.

The evaluation was monitored on 5 January by Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor with Northamptonshire County Council.

Results

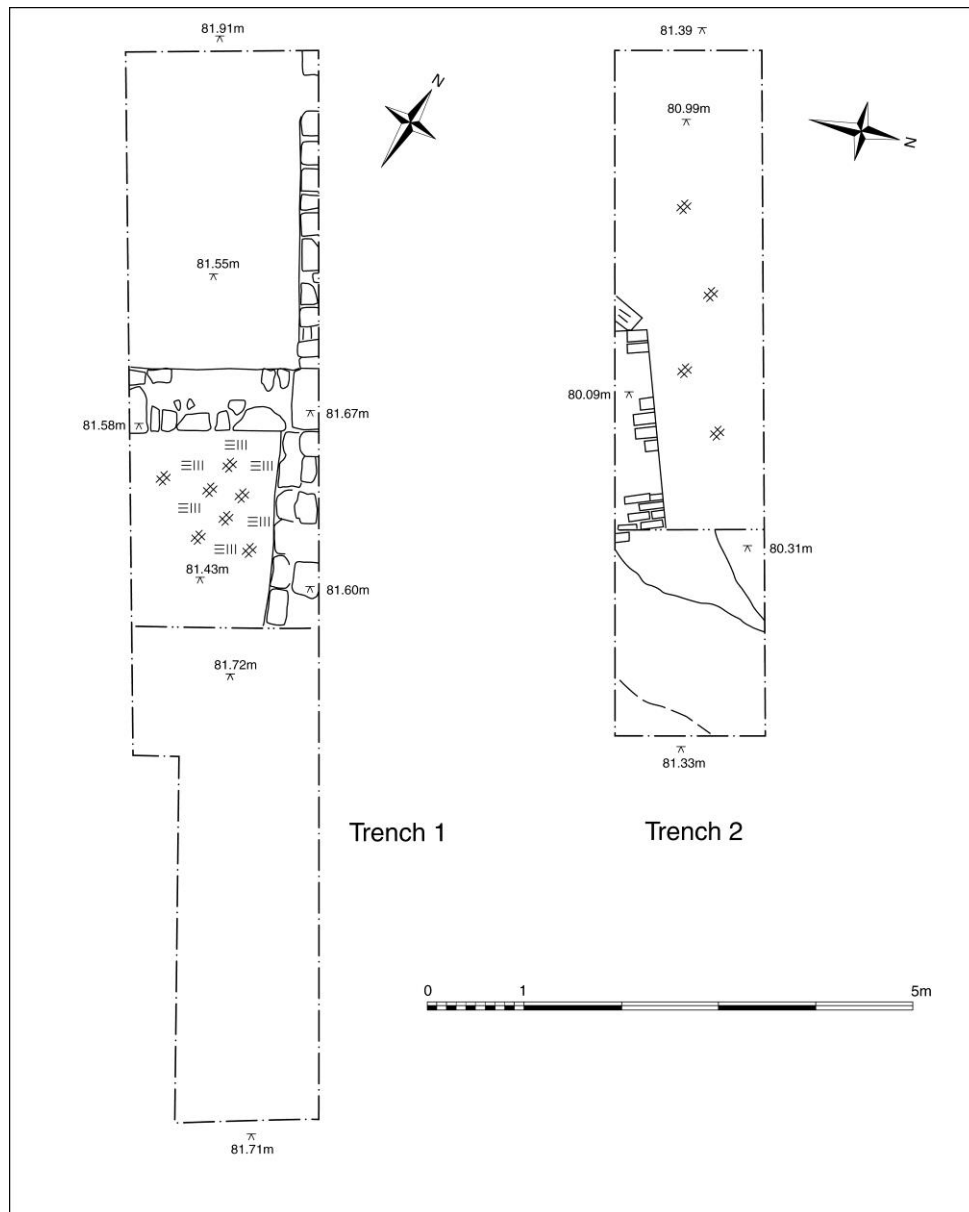


Fig 6: Trench plans with remains encountered and OD levels

Trench 1

In Trench 1 undisturbed archaeological levels lay directly beneath the car park tarmac and its road-stone sub-base, which directly overlay stratified archaeology concentrated at the frontage.

The contents of Trench 1 fell into three distinct zones:

The northern half of the trench contained three stone wall foundations which derive from the former frontage building. These comprise the western edge of a wall, most of which lay outside the trench, a south-eastern extension which terminates at the mid-point of the trench, and a narrow foundation lying at right-angles to the others, which is aligned south-west, towards the side of the

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adjacent property, no 24 Gold Street. The junction of the three walls lay at 81.67m above Ordnance Datum, the highest point of the structural remains.

All three foundations were of either Northampton Sand with Ironstone or a fossiliferous limestone, or a mixture of both. None contained any brick.

In the angle of two of the foundations, at the frontage, was natural or re-deposited natural sand and gravel at a level of 81.55m above Ordnance Datum. However, in the angle of the other two of the wall foundations lay a 150mm-thick deposit of dark soils with concentrations of ash and burnt material, some quite intensely scorched. None appeared to have been burnt *in situ*, however, and it could represent the rakings-out from a hearth or oven. No pottery or other dating material was present. The material petered out close to the end of the stone foundations and appeared to lie on an edge of natural clay which angled down sharply towards the south-west.

The southern half of the trench comprised a dark clayey soil with numerous mixed clay lumps and ironstone pieces. Amongst it lay a single line of brick, perhaps demarking a path edge or a horticultural order. The soil here was reduced by machine and was noted to become stickier with clay content, but was equally mixed at depth. The machining stopped at 0.8m depth without the layer showing any signs of further change. It produced a number of sherds of 19th-century pottery throughout (not retained). This area is considered to comprise a poor-quality garden soil, making use of earlier quarry backfill, all of the 19th century.



Fig 7: Trench 1, looking south. Note burning in the angle of two of the foundations; scales 2m and 1m

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Trench 2

Under the tarmac and road-stone the trench contained a 200mm-thick spread of very hard industrial slag, which comprised siliceous lumps from the base of a furnace, typical of steam engines. This overlay a discrete un-mortared brick floor or hard-standing which extended beyond the trench. The whole lay at a height of c81m above Ordnance Datum.

Alongside the brick floor was an unbroken 200mm-thick deposit of coal-ash and cinders which appeared to form a wider hard-standing. This contained 19th-20th-century pottery and a ceramic electrical socket fitting (not retained).

At one end of the trench a machine-dug sondage was cut to a depth of 1m below the modern ground surface to test the underlying stratification. This was found to comprise successive layers of clay, rubble and topsoils tipping down in a south-easterly direction. These are confidently interpreted as imported quarry-fills, which have been noted elsewhere in the near vicinity behind Gold Street.

The basal layer of the fills, where tested at 1m below the modern ground surface, still contained 19th-century pottery and clay tobacco-pipe stem pieces in some numbers, a not uncommon find on former public house sites. None of the finds were retained.



Fig 8: Trench 2, looking west; scales 2m (horizontal) and 1m (vertical). Note the dark soil at 1m depth, which produced 19th century pottery and clay tobacco pipe.

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Conclusions

Trench 1 shows that there is at least the outline of the historic frontage surviving directly below the car park tarmac and road-stone sub-base, as high as 81.67m above Ordnance Datum. Exact dating was not forthcoming but it is likely to be the same frontage as was mapped in 1803 and shares a common origin with that of the 17th- to 18th-century Fox and Hounds next door.

Former quarrying appears to have extended almost up to the rear of the frontage building, probably during the 19th century.

Trench 2 shows that considerable quantities of 19th-century quarry backfill has made up the rear portion of the site which had been previously reduced. It is felt to have no potential to contain stratified earlier material.

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	24-32 Gold Street, Wellingborough
OASIS ID	iainsode1-274227
Project Type	Evaluation
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	Yes
Current land use	Surface Car Park
Development type	Residential
Reason for investigation	Pre-determination by agreement
National grid reference	SP 88898 68411
Start/end dates of fieldwork	4-5 January 2017
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive
Study area	c600 sq m



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

23 January 2017