



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological monitoring of new house foundations
at 15 Lumber Lane, Paulerspury, Northamptonshire**

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Summary

A programme of monitoring on new house foundations at 15 Lumber Lane, Paulerspury uncovered a single large pit, truncated by the foundations of a previous dwelling. The pit produced no finds of any description and is thus undated and its former purpose is unknown.

Introduction and Background

The village of Paulerspury lies a few miles south-east of Towcester and is directly linked to the A5, The Watling Street which lies across the north-east side of the village. The village is formed by the gradual coalescence of a number of hamlets or 'Ends' which originate in the medieval period – Pury End, Tew's End, Plumpton End all survive as topographical names. The fluctuating fortunes of the Ends have, however, opened up gaps in the frontages, many of which have been filled by modern development, and this process of infilling continues.

Number 15 Lumber Lane, Paulerspury NN12 7ND is a recent gap in the former discontinuous frontage of the Lane. Until 2018 it contained a single-storey timber-framed former farmhouse, 'Kingston's Bungalow', built in the Post- Second World War period. This was demolished to make way for the present development. The site lies at NGR: SP 7197 4539 (Fig 1).

The development was accompanied by planning conditions for archaeological monitoring during groundworks and a resulting report of the results (S/2019/0538/FUL, conditions 3 & 4). The fieldwork was carried out on 4-5 July 2020, in pursuance of an approved Written Scheme of Investigation. It was carried out by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd in fine weather, and under conditions of social-distancing in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the village having been mapped a number of times since the 18th century, there is no historic map evidence that the plot under scrutiny has been occupied until the 1970s when the previous house, known as Kingston's Bungalow and now demolished, was relatively new.

The archaeology of Paulerspury is best summarised by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England (RCHME 1982, 111-17). Broad map-analysis of the medieval village and its surroundings has been carried out by Partida et al (2013, Map 77M, 77EM).

Excavation in 2012-14 showed that the adjacent site to the east, Kingston's Yard, was a post-medieval farm, while a few plots to the west lay a similar open frontage site shown by excavation to have contained medieval remains (Trimble 2014; Thorpe & Cruse 2014; Fig 1). Together they suggest

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that Lumber Lane was at the very edge of both the medieval and the growing post-medieval Paulerspury.

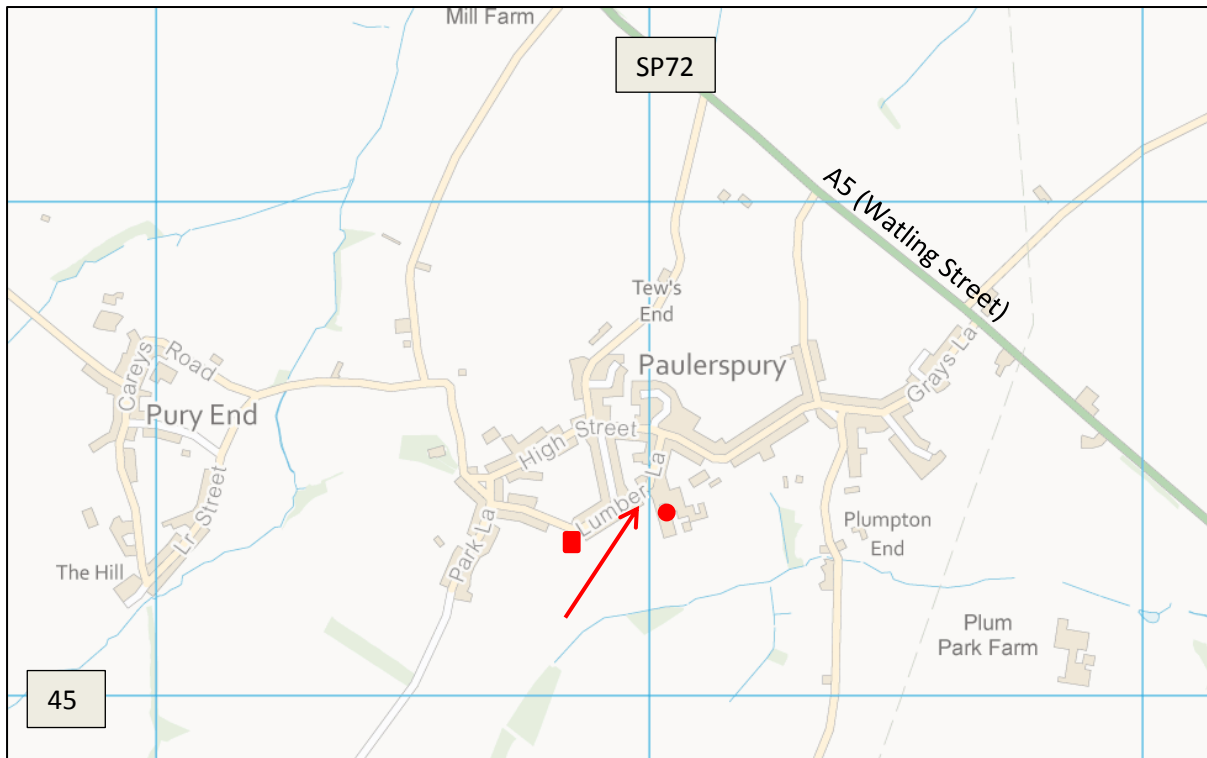


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020. The post-medieval Kingston's Farm is shown as a red dot, while the nearby medieval site is as a red square.

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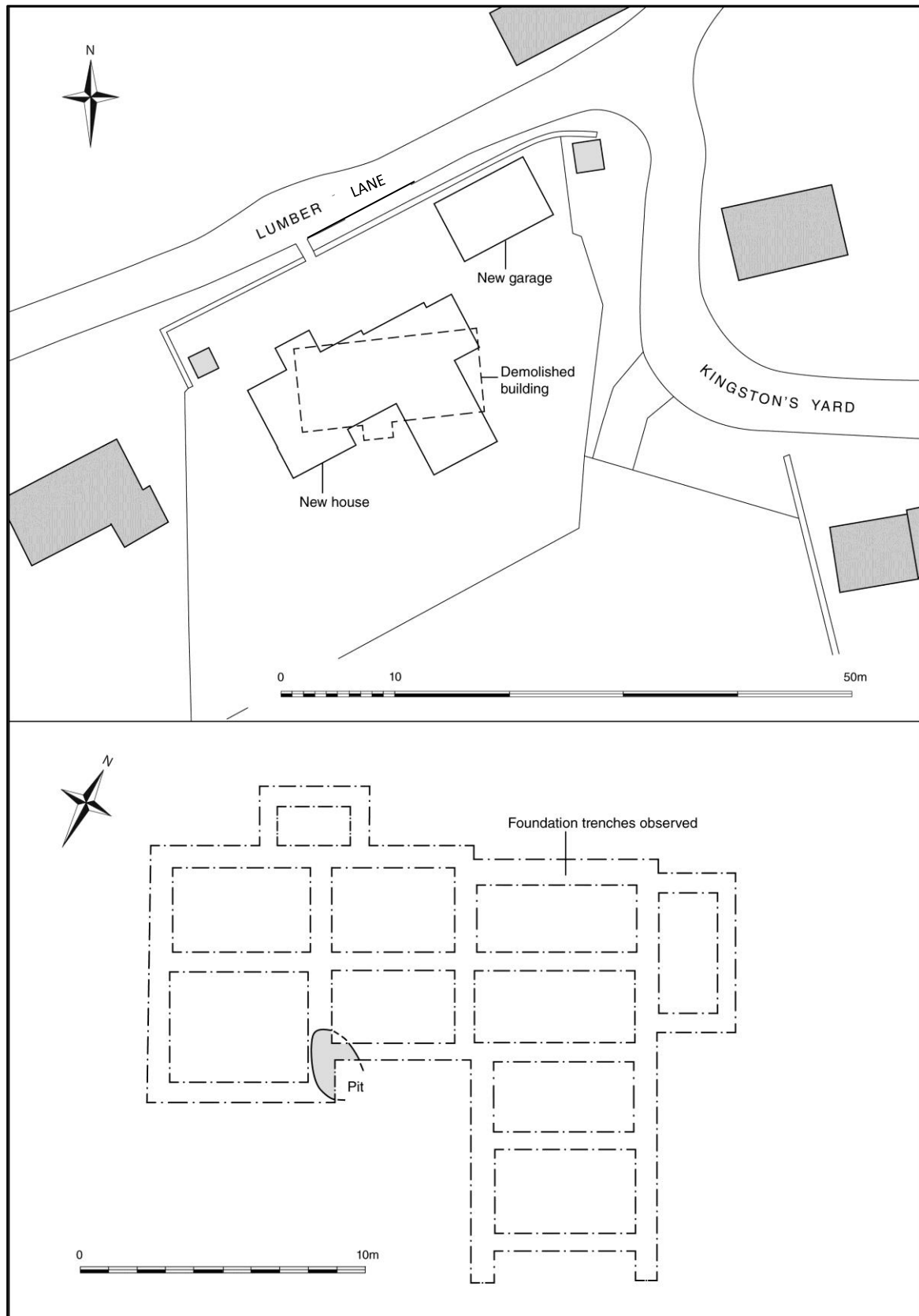


Fig 2a (top): The new-build superimposed on the previous (demolished) house footprint (Andy Isham after Roger Coy Partnership survey) and

Fig 2b (bottom): The monitored house-trenches with the single pit location (Andy Isham)

Fieldwork

The fieldwork comprised archaeological monitoring of a 180-degree excavator, for the most part fitted with a 600mm-wide toothless bucket, digging the foundation trenches which had been marked out prior to arrival on site (Fig 2b). The work was directed by the applicant.

Most trenches were 600mm wide but a few were slightly wider, at 750mm. They were dug to a depth of at least 800mm and the sub-floor areas within the house footprint were also reduced as the process stepped across the site from west to east. A similar ring-trench was dug under the perimeter of the detached garage.



Fig 3: View of the foundation-digging looking east, uncovering a concrete foundation slab at depth

Throughout the process it was clear that the previous building, the so-called Kingston's Bungalow (located on Fig 2a), although it had comprised only a single storey and was predominantly timber-framed, benefitted from concrete strip-foundations which were of greater mass than either had been anticipated or might have been required for such an apparently insubstantial structure. Most of its walls had rested upon concrete-filled hollow blockwork which in turn stood on 500mm-wide concrete strips, each being c100-150mm thick, and which were set 500mm deep in the ground, within ragged former machine-dug trenches (probably once dug with a toothed bucket). The largest was a 2m x 2m square slab of c150- to 200mm-thick concrete on which had stood the brick footing of the former bungalow chimney (being uncovered in Fig 3).

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The natural geology (Blisworth Limestone overlain by Oadby Member Diamicton) at its shallowest was a mere c100mm below the modern ground surface nearest Lumber Lane. This deepened to the south because the surface had been intensively and extensively disturbed by the footprint of the former bungalow, in places to a depth of c500mm. Outside the former footprint the less-disturbed geology lay closer to the surface.

Observations recorded a single archaeological feature – an undated pit some 1m across, lying at the junction of two foundation trenches (Fig 2b). Only its lower 300mm had survived since its location coincided with one of the bungalow concrete strips and the trench in which it lay.

The pit fill (Fig 5) comprised grey-brown silty clay, mottled in the manner of soils which are periodically and seasonally wet, then dry out, graduating to black at the base where it was probably anaerobic. The sides, where they could be observed, were moderately gently-sloping. There were no finds of any description.



Fig 4: The site at the end of fieldwork, looking north-west. Extensive disturbance left many corners collapsing.



Fig 5: Truncated pit fill at the base of a west-facing section; Scale 1m

Conclusions

No evidence has survived that the plot enjoys any great age, nor was even occupied before the modern period. A single undated pit was recorded which can only be said to predate the former twentieth-century bungalow demolished ahead of the present development.

That pit may rest within a wider post-medieval landscape of the former Kingston's Farm on the east. Alternatively it may rest with older elements of the medieval village, of which excavated evidence has been found a little further away along Lumber Lane to the west. In the absence of dating and any finds, the evidence is equivocal.

Constructing the former bungalow had been strikingly destructive of its footprint, such that the only pit found had lost some 500mm of its upper portion (leaving only the 500mm of the basal fills untouched). Across the area a similar level of disturbance indicates that any potential archaeological feature of less than 500mm depth would have been lost when the bungalow was constructed.

No features were present in those portions of the new house of 2020 which projected out beyond the footprint of its predecessor. No features were present in the adjacent new garage footprint.

Bibliography

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RCHME 1982 *An inventory of the historical monuments in the county of Northampton; Vol IV: Archaeological sites in South-west Northamptonshire*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England, HMSO

Thorpe S, and Cruse G, 2014 *Nos 1, 2 and 3 Lumber Lane, Paulerspury: archaeological excavation, observation and recording*, Network Archaeology report LLP36/report/v1.0

Trimble R, 2014 *Archaeological evaluation on land at Kingston's Farm, Lumber Lane, Paulerspury, Northamptonshire*, APS Report 38/14

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Appendix *OASIS data*

Project Name	15 Lumber Lane, Paulerspury
OASIS ID	399286
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No/No
Current land use	Derelict
Development type	Domestic dwelling
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 7197 4539
Start/end dates of fieldwork	4-5 July 2020
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	400sq m



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17 July 2020