



# Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological monitoring at Park Cottage, Canons Ashby,  
Northamptonshire, 2020**

**(SM 13643; NHL no 1015534; Consent S00240297)**

**Undertaken on behalf of Dryden Discretionary Estate**

Iain Soden



# Park Cottage, Canons Ashby

## Archaeological monitoring at Park Cottage, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, 2020

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### Summary

The replacement of an existing septic tank at Park Cottage, Canons Ashby, was archaeologically monitored, as was new attendant pipework and overflow soakaway. No archaeology was present.

### Introduction

Archaeological monitoring took place on the removal of an existing septic tank and the installation of a new one, with attendant pipework and soakaway at Park Cottage, an outlier and former game larder to Canons Ashby House, Banbury Road, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, NN11 3SD (NGR: SP 5862 5087). The existing sewerage arrangements did not meet new legislation. The cottage lies in the purview of the Dryden Discretionary Estate, but was represented by Rachael Hall of The National Trust as agent.

Since the site lies within a Scheduled Monument of Canons Ashby [The remains of a medieval monastery, castle, settlement and fields, post-medieval houses, gardens and park, and a series of five dams, Northamptonshire, (SM 13643; HA 1015534)] the work necessarily carried a need for Scheduled Monument Consent, as indicated by the Dept of Digital, Culture Media and Sport, as advised by Historic England. Consent was forthcoming (Ref S00240297), dated 14 September 2020, but with archaeological conditions addressed by fieldwork and this report. The work was carried out in accordance with a commissioned brief and an approved Written Scheme of Investigation, dated 20 September 2020.

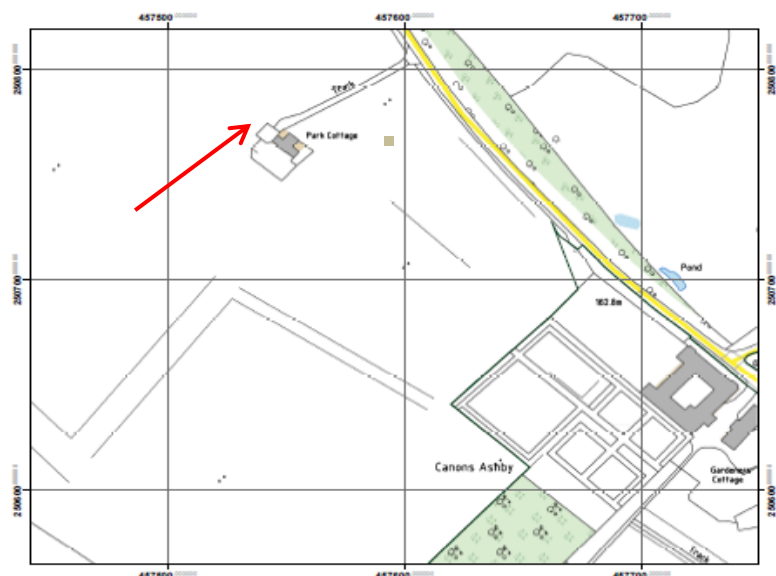


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed), relative to Canons Ashby House; north to top. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020. Map as provided by The National Trust, with thanks

## Fieldwork and Results

Fieldwork took place on the 16 and 17 December 2020 in changeable wintry conditions. The site lies on ground which slopes from north-east to south-west, entirely under a mature tree canopy north-west of and directly adjacent to Park Cottage.

Machine-excavation by specialist groundworks contractors was monitored throughout, with particular regard to excavation in undisturbed ground. Other areas had been previously disturbed by the existing septic tank and related pipework.

Access to the site from the public highway was by an existing trackway, at the end of which a series of boards were put down to minimise rutting from the 3-ton tracked machine and dumper used in the excavations, given the sensitivity of the scheduled site.

The existing septic tank was rectangular, c2m long x 1m wide internally and some 1.6m deep. It was built of two-brick thick side and end walls of Flettons, set upon a c40mm thick concrete base and capped with a c100mm-thick reinforced concrete lid with a cast iron manhole access inset. The foul effluent inlet pipe, connected to Park Cottage, was to be re-used, while the overflow outlet on the west drained off to the north-west. There was no need to trace this old overflow further and it remains *in situ*, now redundant.

Excavation work began at the point furthest from the boards so that the number of long machine-movements were further reduced. Backfilling took place sequentially after each component was dug and constructed. The machine was fitted with toothless buckets in all operations. The work proceeded in the following order:

- Soakaway for overflow
- Pipework to soakaway (outlet)
- Removal of old tank and insertion of new
- Cable connection to Park Cottage.
  - Inlet piping comprised re-use of existing course and materials

The soakaway measured 4m x 3m and was 600mm deep. It cut through c600mm of homogenous topsoil beneath the very rough turf at the very edge of the tree canopy. There was no discernible change to subsoil and natural geology was not exposed by the digging.



Fig 2: The soakaway, newly dug, looking towards Park Cottage; scale 2m

A 12m-long run of pipe-trench was then machine-dug north-eastward to connect with the new septic tank. At its upper end it angled to join the tank overflow outlet. Throughout the trench was 400mm wide and 400mm deep. Natural clay was exposed only towards the upper end where the trench was deepened to meet the level of the tank overflow outlet.



Fig 3: The outlet pipe trench, pipe inserted, looking north

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Before the new tank could be put in, the old one was mostly broken up by the machine and dug out. The redundant south-west wall was left in and this continues to revet the new tank hole, which measures c3m x 2.3m x 1.8m deep. The new tank was lowered in for subsequent concreting.



Fig 4: Breaking the old septic tank, here the reinforced concrete lid. In the background stands the new tank



Fig 5: The hole for the new tank complete, with new tank *in situ*

The topsoil was again some 650mm thick, hereabouts riven by a mass of tree roots. Directly beneath this was buff clay which extended to c1m below the ground surface. Underneath lies blue/gray lias-type clay.

A shallow trench was machine-dug from Park Cottage to the new tank. It was 300mm wide and c400mm deep for related cabling for the new tank. It followed the line of the existing foul-inlet trench and a little to the north-east; it lay entirely within topsoil.

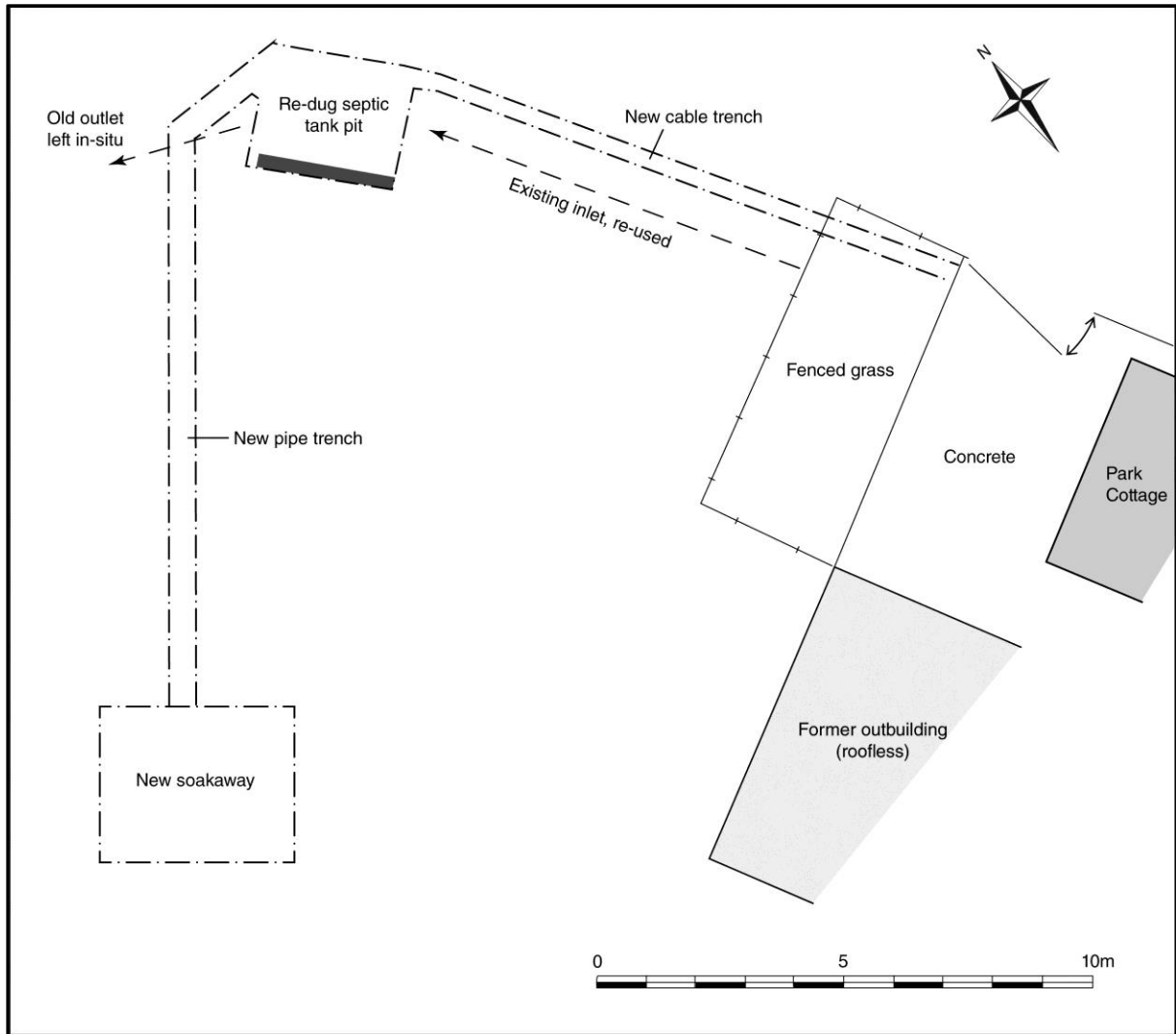


Fig 6: The various interventions relative to Park Cottage and its former outbuilding (Andy Isham)

## Conclusions

Care was taken to re-use existing disturbance for new works wherever possible. Where excavation unavoidably took place in newly-disturbed ground, no archaeology was present.

Running boards minimised surface ground disturbance by machine- and dumper-movements.

Unusually thick topsoil hereabouts ensured that little of the underlying naturally geology was seen. This topsoil thickness provides a potentially-useful protective blanket for any archaeology in the vicinity for future land management with respect to the scheduled status of the plot. However, just how far this thick topsoil extends outward in any direction is debateable.

No archaeology was disturbed by the new works and none was present where previous septic tank construction had disturbed the ground.

Part of the old tank remains *in situ*, as does the inlet pipe and parts of the former outlet.

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## Appendix

### *OASIS data*

Project Name	Park Cottage, Canons Ashby
OASIS ID	411700
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	Parkland
Development type	Domestic groundworks
Reason for investigation	SMC
National grid reference	SP 5862 5087
Start/end dates of fieldwork	16-17 December 2020
Archive recipient	National Trust
Study area	100 sq m



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5 January 2021