

Late medieval and post-medieval roadside settlement at School Lane, Hartwell

by

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with contributions by Pat Chapman, Ian Meadows and Iain Soden

Illustrations by James Ladocha and Amir Bassir

Summary

Remains of a small late medieval stone building of the 14th–16th centuries were probably part of a lost dispersed settlement alongside a hollow-way, as shown on a map of 1727 and as recorded in survey by the Royal Commission (RCHME) in the 1970s.

Introduction

Background

Northamptonshire Archaeology, now MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) Northampton, was commissioned by Bellway Homes to undertake archaeological mitigation work on a site of proposed development off School Lane, Hartwell, Northamptonshire (NGR SP789503, Fig 1). Geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation (Burke *et al* 2010) were previously undertaken in response to an application submitted by Bellway Homes for new housing and a balancing pond. Following the evaluation, mitigation works were required. Fieldwork was undertaken between November 2010 and April 2011. An Assessment Report and Updated Project Design was produced by Walker and Burke (2012), followed by a client report (Finn *et al* 2015) covering all periods of activity. All works were undertaken in accordance with the Brief prepared by the Northamptonshire County Council Planning authority (NCC 2010).

Location

The development area is located on the eastern edge of Hartwell village within the northern half of an arable field, with the balancing pond extending to the south. The area designated for housing occupies an area of *c.*2.2ha and the balancing pond *c.*0.15ha. The north-western boundary of the site is formed by the Hartwell Church of England Primary School, and a modern housing development. To the north-east is the Community Centre and playing fields. The site is bounded to the south-east and south-west by arable fields.

Topography and geology

The site lies on a superficial geology of Mid Pleistocene glacial till formed of sticky brown to grey clays with clasts of sandstone, ironstone, quartzite and flint. The underlying bedrock is formed of Middle Jurassic Great Oolite group Blisworth limestone formation, not exposed in the development area. The soil type is seasonally waterlogged, and fine iron-stained networks of cracks in the tills on several parts of the site may be caused by frequent drying and shrinkage events (Walker and Burke 2012).

The site slopes down gently from the northern to the southern corner, from about 125m above Ordnance Datum to 116m aOD at the level of the proposed balancing pond.

Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Adam Yates for Northamptonshire Archaeology, acting on behalf of Bellway Homes, who have funded both the excavation and post-excavation programmes. The excavation was supervised by James Burke, with site assistants Adrian Adams, Paul Clements, Sam Egan, Jonathan Elston, Robin Foard, Karl Hanson, Liz Harris, David Haynes, Peter Haynes, Luke Jarvis, Lazlo Lichtenstein, Dan Nagy, Robyn Pelling, Dan Riley, Myk Riley, Heather Smith, Rob Smith, Angela Warner and Yvonne Wolfram-Murray.

The client report for the overall excavations was prepared by Claire Finn and Andy Chapman utilising the assessment report prepared by James Burke and Charlotte Walker (Finn *et al* 2015). The Iron Age and early Roman settlement, which was the main focus of the excavation, is published separately (Finn *et al* 2019, this volume). The medieval and post-medieval aspects of the site were examined and researched by Charlotte Walker and this section has been extracted from the client report and edited for publication by Andy Chapman. The illustrations are by James Ladocha and Amir Bassir. The finds have been examined by Ian Meadows and the tile and other building materials by Pat Chapman.

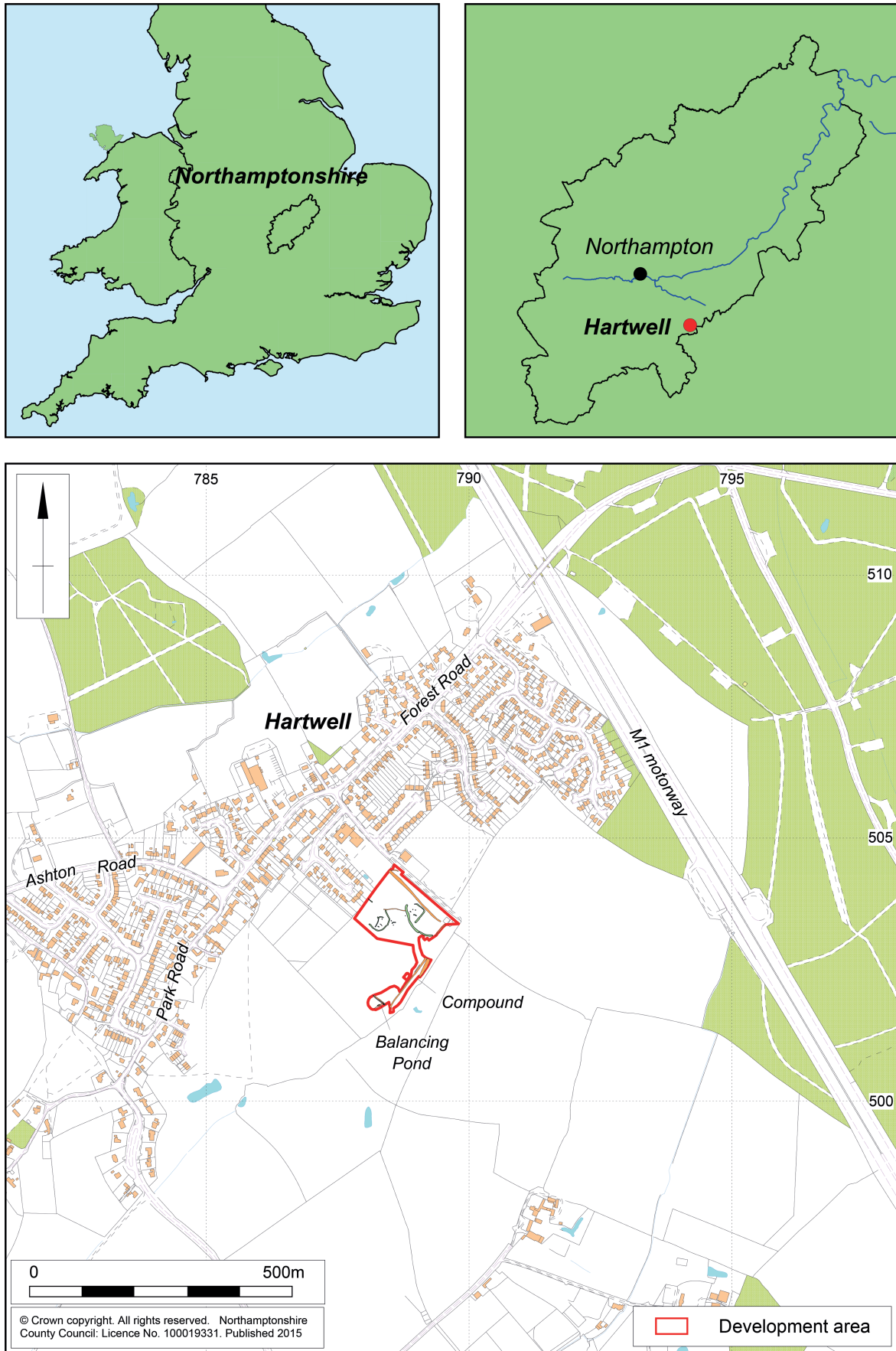


Fig 1: Site location

Historical and archaeological background

The parish of Hartwell lies on the western edge of Salcey Forest and, as was typical for medieval settlement found in areas of historic woodland, it comprised a number of small dispersed settlements. Uniquely for Northamptonshire, the pattern found at Hartwell contains a total of six deserted settlement sites, in addition to Hartwell village which has medieval origins. This settlement pattern is thought to be more characteristic of those found in the claylands of north Buckinghamshire (Hall 1995).

In the medieval period, the main settlement in the parish seems to have been located to the south of present day Hartwell at Chapel Farm (SP78430 48930, HER 4800). A 12th-century chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist lay within this former settlement, but by the mid-16th century it seems to have been entirely abandoned (VCH 2002). A number of other dispersed settlements have also been recorded, ranging between farmsteads to small village

settlements (see HER 4799, 4698 4788, 4796). The earliest medieval pottery from any of these hamlets dates to the 12th or 13th centuries, but earlier habitation is likely (Lewis *et al* 1997). The probable medieval settlement closest to the site is at Elms Farm, 550m to the south-east, a settlement containing medieval hollow-ways, pottery kilns, buildings, water courses and enclosures (HER 4797, SP79144 49781, Fig 1). A large medieval and post-medieval deer park is sited 800m to the west (HER 4794).

Earthworks along the south-eastern edge of the development area were identified from aerial photography (HER 4732). These were previously thought to be part of the medieval field system, but are in fact the remains of a hollow-way aligned north-east to south-west, with associated co-axial plot boundaries and building platforms (Fig 2 & RCHME 1982), probably the medieval settlement of Hartwell Green (HER 4732). The development site and its surrounding fields were under ridge and furrow cultivation, probably during the late medieval period (Fig 2). Ridge and furrow cultivation strips were confirmed during



Fig 2: Settlement remains near Hartwell Green, b (site location in red) (RCHME 1982, fig 72)



Fig 3: Grafton Estate map, c.1727
(approximate site location in red)

the trial trenching and excavation on this site, and can also be seen on aerial photographs centred on the village, although little now survives on the ground (5242/0/7, 8594/0/4, 5242/0/1–4) (RCHME 1982, 80).

A number of properties along the hollow-way were recorded on the Grafton Estate map of 1727 and these form one of the dispersed settlements within the parish (Fig 3). By this date, the development site lay at the juncture of four fields. Town Field had been divided into two parts, and the site lay within the eastern part, within the *Tom Stockin* furlong (Hall 1995). The *Stockin* name indicates that the area was an assart, or clearance, from the forest.

Hartwell was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1828 (RCHME 1982, 80). The Ordnance Survey surveyors map produced in the early 19th century still shows the hollow-way, but only two properties survive at this date. By the late 19th century, the hollow-way and one of the properties had disappeared (Walker and Burke 2012, 3).

The late medieval and post-medieval settlement

Late medieval activity (14th-16th centuries)

The earliest evidence of medieval activity was a possible plot boundary, dated to the 14th-16th centuries. The remains of a small stone building lay south of the boundary, and were probably part of the small dispersed settlement located along the length of the hollow-way (Fig 4). It is possible that it was the northernmost element of a small group of buildings shown on the map of 1727.

The hollow-way

A former hollow-way 90/1304 was aligned north-east to south-west and was up to 7.0m wide by 0.73m deep (Fig 5). The earliest surviving deposit was hard greyish-brown

clay overlain by a layer of gravel in a sandy clay matrix. Both of these layers may have served as make-up or leveling layers for a trackway surface of angular pieces of limestone and cobbles, some of which appeared to have been burnt (1305). Overlying the stone were disuse layers of silt and clay (1306) that infilled the hollow.

No dating evidence was recovered, but the hollow-way is likely to have been in existence from at least the medieval period. The layers of make-up and hard-core probably dated to the post-medieval period, having been laid down to provide a firmer surface.

The hollow-way is depicted on the map of 1727 (Fig 3), but had fallen out of use by the late 19th century. At its south-west end it met up with the road from Hartwell Green to Hanslope and at its north-east end it joined another former road which linked Hartwell to Elms Farm.

Possible settlement remains

Late medieval activity dating to the 14th to 16th centuries was concentrated at the south-eastern corner of the site, adjacent to the trackway (Fig 4). There were two parallel ditches, aligned north-west to south-east, perpendicular to the trackway.

The southern ditch, 324, was 1.68m wide by 0.45m deep with steep edges and a flat base. To the south-east, a dry-stone wall 323, 0.43m wide by 0.48m high, constructed from roughly-coursed limestone and sandstone, sat on the base of the ditch (Figs 6 and 7). To the north-west the wall and ditch were truncated by the end of a clay foundation 303, and while the ditch continued to the north-west the wall terminated at this point.

Six metres to the south-west there was a rectangular stone-flagged surface 306, 4.90m long and 2.70m wide (Fig 8). It lay at a slight angle to wall 323 beside a shallow linear gully, 303, filled with light brown clay containing some stones. This was perhaps the foundation for a cob or rubble wall, which may have abutted stone wall 323 to the north to form the north-western corner of a small cottage or hovel. The limestone flags were irregularly-shaped, but with a flat upper surface and tightly fitted together, perhaps forming the external threshold for a doorway. A small group of four postholes to the east may relate to structures within the building. No pottery was found in association with these features.

Medieval remains of ridge and furrow were noted across the site and were sampled in the northern part. Each furrow had a shallow U-shaped profile with a fill of mid grey-brown silty clay.

Post-medieval/modern activity (18th to 19th centuries)

Boundary ditch 316 was aligned parallel to the hollow-way, and a few metres to the west (Fig 4). The ditch was 1.90m wide by 0.60m deep with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 9). The compact dark brown silty clay fills contained pottery dating to the 18th or 19th centuries, as well as clay tobacco-pipe, brick and tile (Fig 9). The trackway continued in use until at least 1835 (RCHME 1982), although many of the buildings that had once stood along it had disappeared by this date.

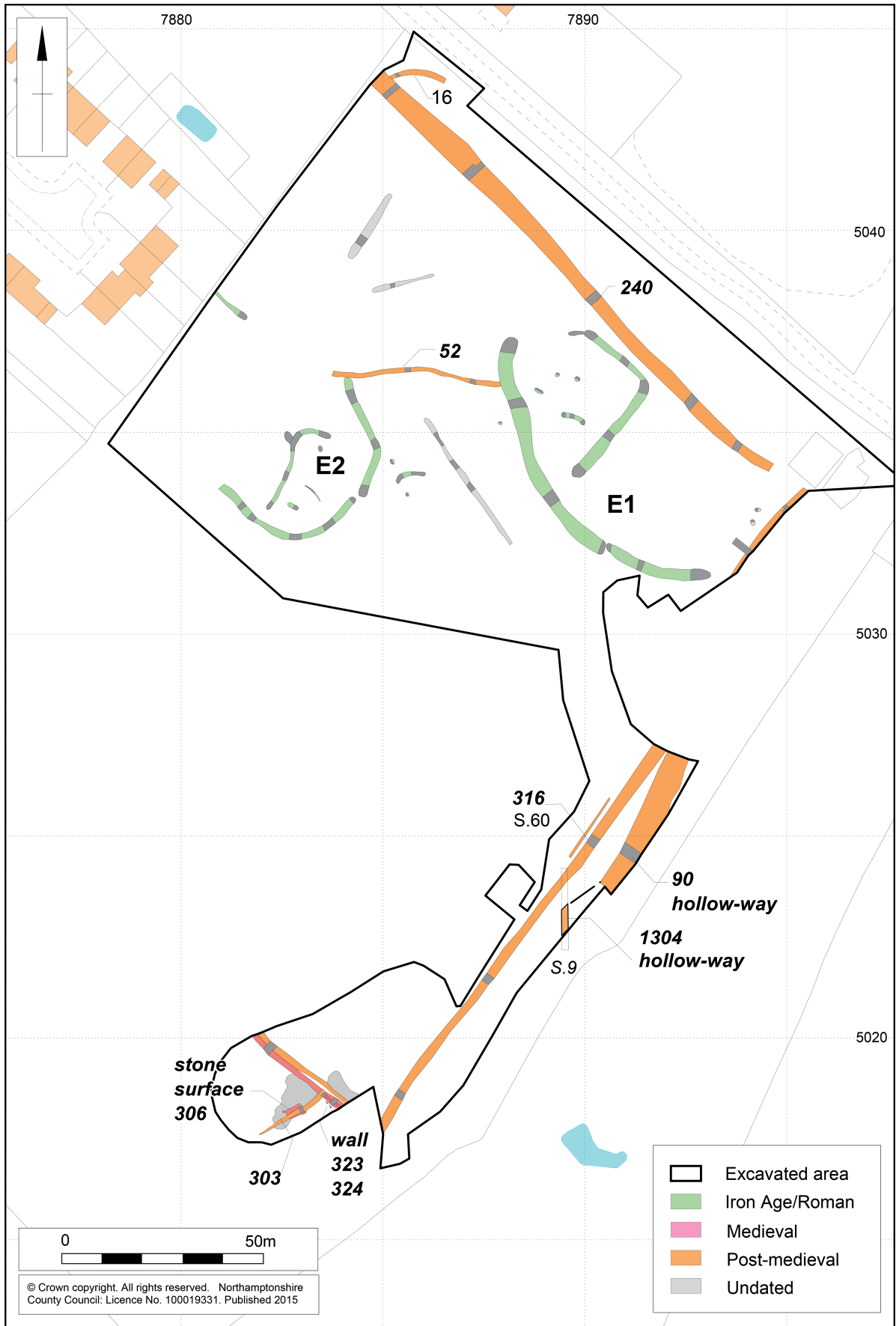


Fig 4: General site plan

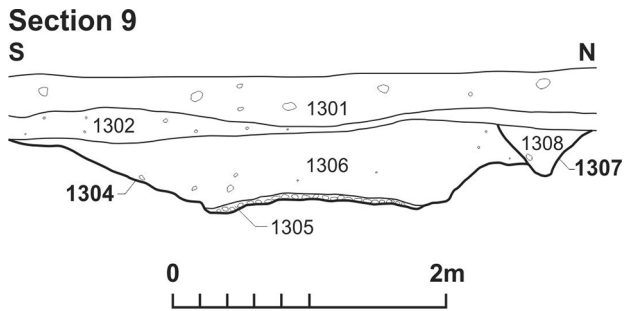


Fig 5: Section of hollow-way 1304

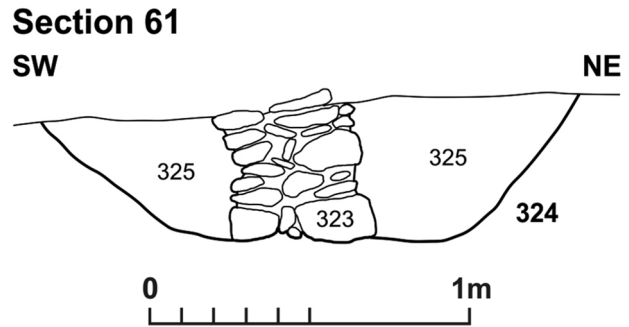


Fig 7: Section of ditch 324 and wall 323



Fig 6: Wall 323 set in ditch 324

Some 15m to the west, ditch 303, which truncated the remains of the flagged surface 306, was 1.40m wide by 0.30m deep, on a roughly parallel alignment to boundary ditch 316 (Figs 4 and 8). The upper fill of the ditch contained large quantities of demolition material, including stone and mortar, testifying to the continuing abandonment and demolition of the buildings during the 19th century.

At the northern end of the site, ditch 240, 3.08m wide by 0.76m deep with a wide U-shaped profile, was aligned north-west to south-east (Fig 4). This ditch may have been a boundary ditch running parallel to the trackway from Hartwell to Elms Farm.

Medieval and post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of 82 sherds of pottery were recovered from twelve contexts (Table 1). They comprise 14 different fabric types, and have a total weight of 3.3kg. The pottery is summarised in Table 1; correlated, where possible, to the Northamptonshire County Type series (CTS).

The assemblage comprises a small concentration of medieval wares, probably of the 14th-16th centuries, with most of the remainder being of 18th to 19th-century date. The total weight of the assemblage is dominated by the very large sherds from a pancheon, a robust (Staffordshire) vessel-type which often breaks easily into large, durable pieces.

The medieval and early post-medieval material is generally sparse, but the concentration of pieces from the

Table 1: Medieval and post-medieval pottery by type and context

Fabric type	Fabric code	No.	Weight (g)
14th–16th centuries			
Potterspurry ware	329	16	233
Brill/Boarstall ware	324	1	2
Medieval coarseware	360	2	4
Glazed red earthenware	407	1	23
Midland Black ware	411	2	20
Sub-total		22	282
18th-19th centuries			
Mocha	432	2	55
Blue shell-edged pearlware	419	2	20
Creamware	415	9	173
Black basalt ware	431	2	5
Underglaze transfer printed earthenware	416	12	93
Church Gresley-type stoneware	1000	5	77
English Stoneware flask	1000	3	62
White glazed earthenware	1000	2	4
Pancheon	426	23	2503
Sub-total		60	2992
Total		82	3274



Fig 8: Flagstone surface 306 and clay foundation 303, looking south-west

Section 60

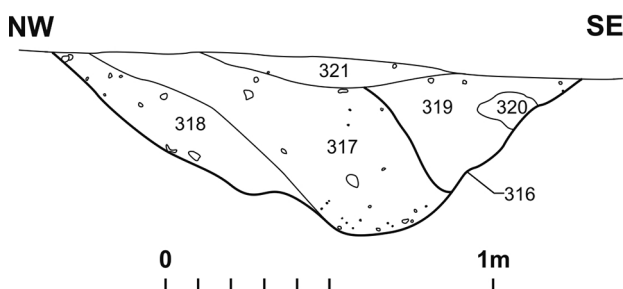


Fig 9: Section of ditch 316

fill (325) of ditch 324 suggests that there was occupation nearby. The sherds are clean, of moderate size and weight, and relatively unabraded. Their origin in the influential Potterspurty industry is as might be expected in this area.

The post-medieval material dates to the late 18th and 19th centuries, suggesting that there was contemporary domestic occupation in the near vicinity. It includes a large pancheon from ditch 303, which would be at home in the dairy or kitchen of a farm or the pantry or kitchen of a domestic home. Also from ditch 303 is the majority of a creamware bedpan, a common form in this fabric, and also indicating that a home lay nearby. The occurrence of Black Basalt and Blue shell-edged pearlwares in small quantities might suggest a family with an awareness of fashion in the late 18th century, as both were distinctive and highly sought after during the 1770s and 1780s.

Medieval and post-medieval building material by Pat Chapman

Roof tile

There are twelve sherds of ceramic roof tile, weighing 700g. The sherds are 12–15mm thick in a very hard slightly coarse red-brown to orange-brown clay. Three come from furrows, and six from the fill of land-drains and a gully. One sherd, from the topsoil has a remnant peghole, 11mm square.

Brick

Eight brick fragments, weighing 3.1kg, come from four contexts. Approximately half a brick from the fill of ditch 240, is 110mm wide by 65mm thick ($4\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches), made from hard coarse red-brown clay. The header has been highly vitrified to a glassy surface from exposure to very high or prolonged high temperatures. Four fragments come from the fill of ditch 316. Two are 60mm thick ($2\frac{3}{8}$ inches), one is a sandy dark orange the other is hard fine orange-brown. The remaining two pieces are fine sandy red-brown and orange-brown. A brick from the fill of ditch 316 has closely-spaced rough diagonal scoring on the header and one stretcher. This brick measures 100mm wide and 63mm thick ($4 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches). It is made with sandy dark red-brown clay and has the remnants of a wide frog. A very small sandy orange fragment comes from the fill of a land-drain.

These brick fragments can only be dated broadly to the 18th to 20th centuries.

Plaster

Two fragments of quite soft fine white lime plaster, weighing 158g, were recovered from the clay foundation 303. One piece, 32mm thick, has a smoothed flat surface. The other piece is irregular in shape, 60x55x40mm, with one area of flat surface to a possible right-angled corner.

Post-medieval finds

by Ian Meadows

Several different medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered. The most commonly found objects were various types of dress accessory. These include a post-medieval cast copper alloy looped button (SF1), and another copper alloy button (SF20) of the same period, this time spherical, came from the fill of ditch 240 at the northern end of the site. The fill of a modern land drain also produced a copper alloy button (SF34), decorated with white metal coating and on the outer slightly convex surface was a lion or large dog, possibly a Talbot, statant on a wreath surmounted by a crown. This button may have been part of the uniform worn by a retainer or member of a hunt.

Two small fragments of post-medieval buckles include part of the copper alloy tongue (SF8), 20mm long, 4mm wide and up to 2mm thick, displaying the characteristic curvature of a buckle that has been used with a strap or belt. A small corner of a square or rectangular cast copper alloy hat or shoe buckle (SF7), may date to the 18th century

In addition to the dress accessories, several other pieces of material culture were recovered. An illegible, possibly cast, base metal coin-type object has a bust on one face and an unclear motif on the reverse (SF3). The piece has a sub-square perforation in the centre, suggesting it was once fixed to something as a decorative element. This possibly dates to the 19th century.

A post-medieval bone cutlery handle with part of the iron tang embedded (SF35) was found in a land drain.

The final piece from this group is a bundle of pieces of lead window came, including at least two strips twisted together (SF38), with a total length of about 140mm.

These pieces, probably from domestic dumping, were found in the fill of post-medieval ditch 303, which cut the flag-stoned surface 306.

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