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Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Ordnance Way, Lower Weedon,
Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire
NGR: SP 62414 59339**

Tim Higgins



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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken on land at Ordnance Way, Lower Weedon, Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 3rd-4th January. The site lies on the edge of modern settlement in an area containing an earthwork that possibly indicates former activity. A total of four trenches were excavated to evaluate the site.

A trench excavated over a possible hollow way located on the western edge contained a ditch cut and land drains suggesting that the earthwork was probably utilised for drainage. The trenches excavated over eroded ridge and furrow remains revealed no archaeological features.

The site archive will be held by ULAS under the temporary accession number NH_WD2013 until a suitable storage space is allocated for its deposition in Northamptonshire.

1. Introduction

Planning permission is being sought for residential development on land at Ordnance Way, Lower Weedon, Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 62414 59339, Fig.1).

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken between 3rd and 4th January 2013. It addresses the requirements of the *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land at Ordnance Way, Weedon Northamptonshire* and the *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation Of Land At Holm Close, Weedon, Northamptonshire* (NCC 10.12.2012 – hereinafter ‘Brief’). A strategy for the work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation, (Clay 2012, hereinafter ‘WSI’). The trial trenching was undertaken to target areas where residential units were proposed and earthworks within the site which may represent medieval activity connected to the historic settlement. The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

The development area lies to the north western edge of Lower Weedon, north of the line of Ordnance Road and south of River Nene. It is bounded by residential development to the east and open fields to the west. It is centred on SP 62414 59339 within an area of c. 0.45 hectares.

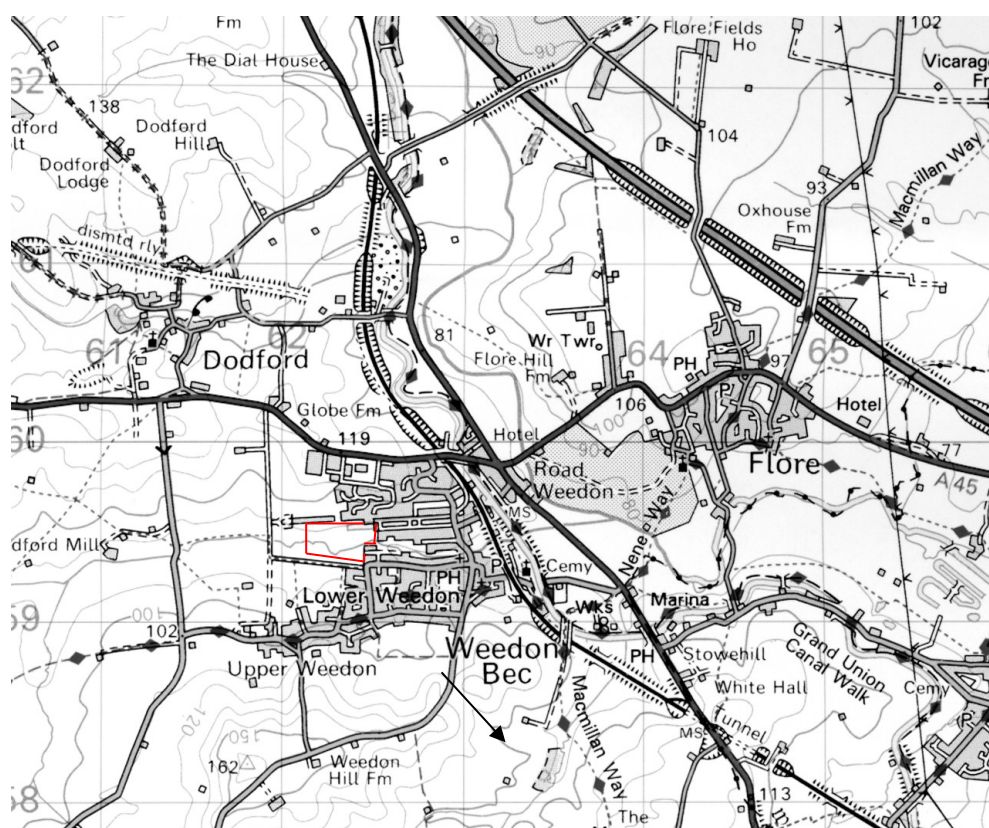


Figure 1: Site location plan

2. Archaeological and Historical background

The Historic Environment Record shows that there are no archaeological sites recorded within the proposed development site itself, although to the west of the application area is a possible hollow way which was thought possibly to be a medieval precursor to Ordnance Road. There is also a bank that has been interpreted as part of medieval defensive ringwork utilising a bend in the river. Remnants of the medieval open field system and ridge and furrow cultivation are also preserved.

Weedon Bec is the name of the whole parish, within which there are two ancient settlements, Upper Weedon and Lower Weedon. In the Domesday Book there are two Manors located at Weedon. It is not certain that these represent the same settlements; however overseers for the Upper Town and Lower Town undertook the organisation of the Open Fields until about 1625, when reorganisation into one unit seems to have taken place. Until after the Second World War the two settlements were separated by up to half a mile of open agricultural land. The part of the village lying along the main roads, A5 and A45 is known as Road Weedon and developed later. This was probably in response to traffic along the Old Stratford to Dunchurch Turnpike, created by an Act of Parliament in 1706; the first such road in Northamptonshire.

The name Weedon comes from two Anglo-Saxon words: *Weoh*, meaning a Shrine or Holy Place and *Dun*, meaning Hill. The earliest known written occurrence of the name is found in an Anglo-Saxon Charter dated AD 944.

The second part of the name, *Bec*, is the name of a village in Normandy, where there was an important Abbey. Some years after the Norman Conquest the Manor of Weedon was given to the Abbey of Bec and the Abbey became Lord of the Manor. Thus the village became known as Weedon Bec. There were a number of Abbeys and Priors in France drawing rents from English Manors. In 1414 King Henry V ordered these 'Alien Priors' to be taken over and the income transferred to the Crown. In about 1472 the Manor was granted by Henry VI to the newly formed Eton College, who remained Lords of the Manor until changes in the law relating to leasehold property in the 1920s (<http://www.weedonbec-pc.gov.uk/index.asp?page=9>).

3. Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits. In particular these would target the anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed development
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits within the southern area of the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

4. Methodology

The Brief requested a 3% sample by trial trenching that is the equivalent of *c.* four 20m x 1.6m trenches totaling *c.* 130 sq. m. (Figure. 2).

The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeology or natural undisturbed ground was reached, or to a maximum safe depth given the specific site conditions.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeology was observed. Archaeological remains were recorded and sample excavation was undertaken in order to determine the character and date of any remains. Bulk soil samples were taken as appropriate in order to evaluate the environmental potential of the site. Archaeological contexts as a cut are indicated by square brackets e.g. [09], while those that are fills are indicated by round brackets e.g. (07).

The trenches were located using a Topcon Hiper Pro GPS+ RTK System attached to a Topcon FC-100 controller. The data was processed using Topcon Tools GPS+ Post Processing Software and the final plans completed with the aid of TurboCad v.15 design software.

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct (2010) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (2010)*.

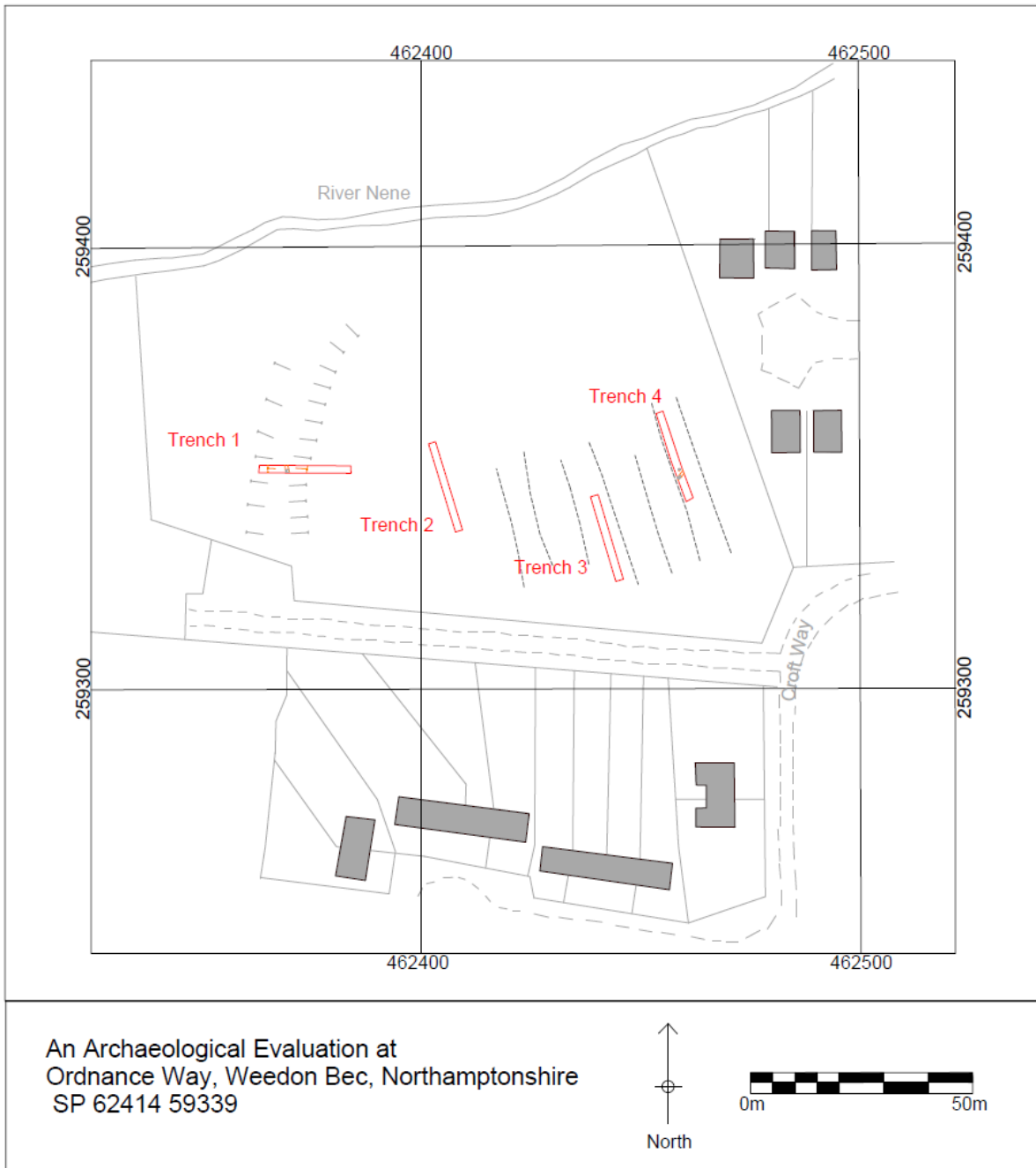


Figure 2: Trench location plan

5. Results

Trench 1

On the western edge of application area the earthwork remains of a possible hollow way runs north towards the river from the line of Ordnance Road then curves to run eastwards parallel with river.

Trench 1 was orientated west to east across the north - south length of the earthwork (Figures 2 and 3). The trench exposed what appeared to be very broad shallow rounded cut [02] located within the potential hollow earthwork. The ditch cut had a steep slope on the west side and more gradual moderate slope on the east side. Both sides break gradually into a broad rounded base. At the centre a small narrow linear groove cut was found running north to south. The linear cut had shallow gradually sloping sides with a rounded base and measured 0.90m wide and 0.23m deep. The narrow linear cut at the centre contained a pale yellow-brown silty-clay fill (01), which contained no finds. Overlying this was a second fill (07) of yellow-brown sandy-clay that contained two sherds pottery of 15th-16th century and 18th-19th century date. No other features were observed cutting the natural substratum within the trench. The ditch was sealed by subsoil (08) that comprised very clean yellow-brown sandy-clay 0.45m deep. The subsoil two contained north to south orientated land drains that comprised narrow linear cuts measuring between 0.30m and 0.90m in width. Both contained a mixture of large water worn pebbles and sub-rounded angular stones and were located within the hollow earthwork feature. The topsoil (09) comprised brown-grey clay loam that measured 0.20m deep.



Plate 1 Ditch [02] Trench 1 looking south

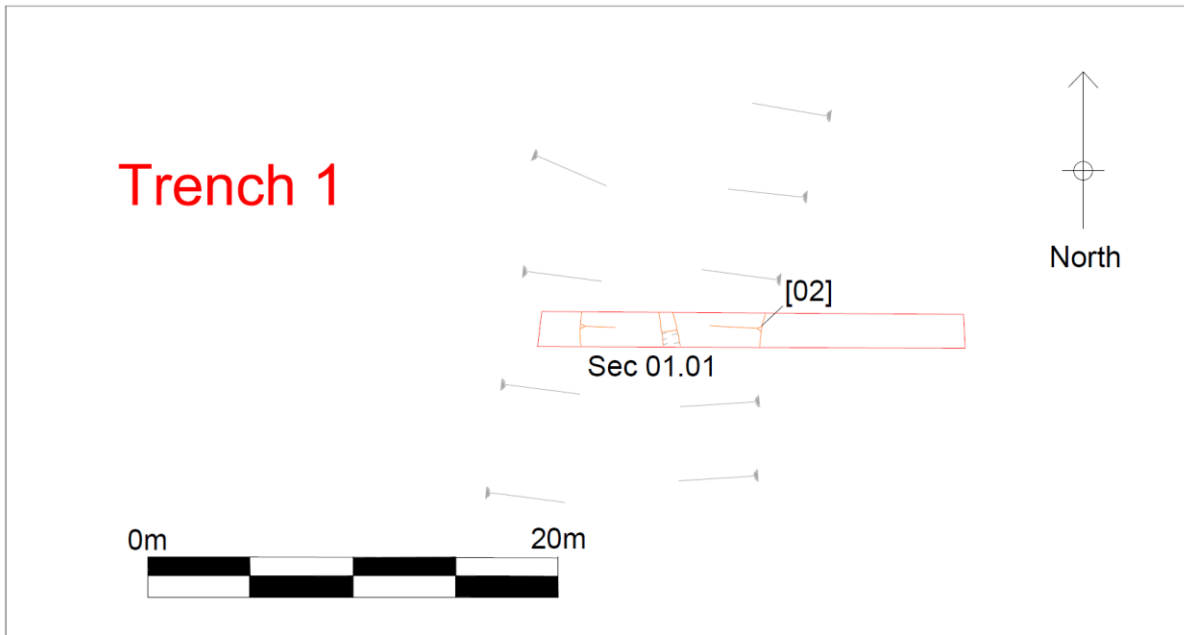


Figure 3: Trench 1

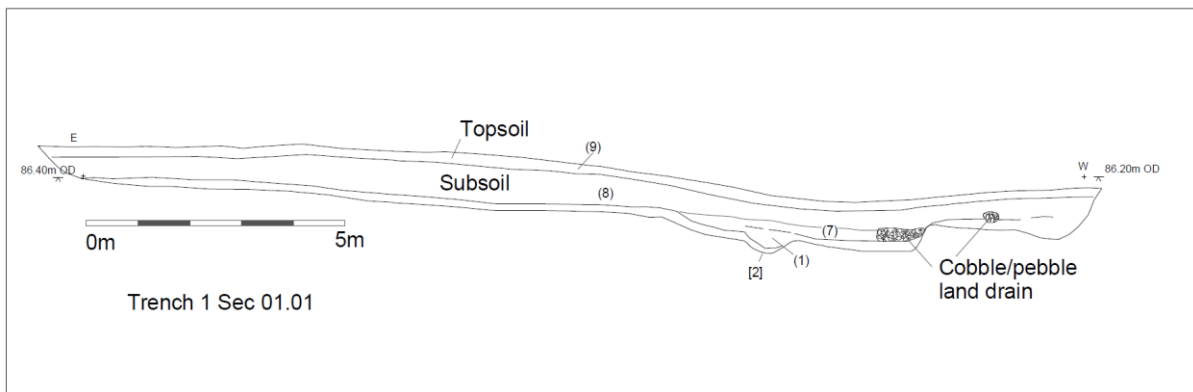


Figure 4: Trench 1 Section 01.01

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located towards the south-west corner of the development area and was orientated north to south (Figure 2). It was excavated on top of eroded remains of ridge and furrow. Within trench 2 no archaeological features were observed. The natural substratum was reached after around 0.60m of topsoil and subsoil was removed and comprised orange brown sandy-clay mixed with abundant large water worn pebbles and small sub-angular stones.



Plate 2 Possible Hollow way (ditch [02]) and Trench 1 looking south-west

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located towards the central part of the development area and was orientated north to south (Figure 2) on top of the eroded remains of ridge and furrow. At the base of the natural substratum comprised orange-brown sandy-clay mixed with abundant large water worn pebbles small sub-angular stones and bands of light brown clay. An irregular amorphous feature was found at the northern end of the trench and when excavated was identified as being natural in origin. The natural substratum was reached after around 0.60m - 0.70m of topsoil and subsoil was removed.

Trench 4

This trench was located towards the eastern boundary of the development site, orientated north to south (Figure 2; Plate 3) and was located on top of the eroded ridge and furrow. The natural substratum was reached after around 0.50m - 0.60m of topsoil and subsoil was removed and comprised bands of yellow-brown clay and orange-brown sandy-clay mixed with gravel.

Within the trench two possible features were observed located towards the centre. The first comprised a narrow linear cut [03] that was irregular in plan and section with diffuse edges and measured 0.65m wide and 0.10m deep. The fill (04) comprised a pale brown clean and sterile sandy-clay. Directly to the north a second feature [05] was excavated, which consisted of small shallow oval feature with gradually sloping sides and a rounded base. The feature measured 0.45m in diameter and 0.08m deep and contained pale brown sandy clay that was clean fill (06). Both features had diffuse edges, were very clean and were probably natural in origin



Plate 3 Trench 4 looking north



Plate 4 Trench 4 Linear feature [03] looking east

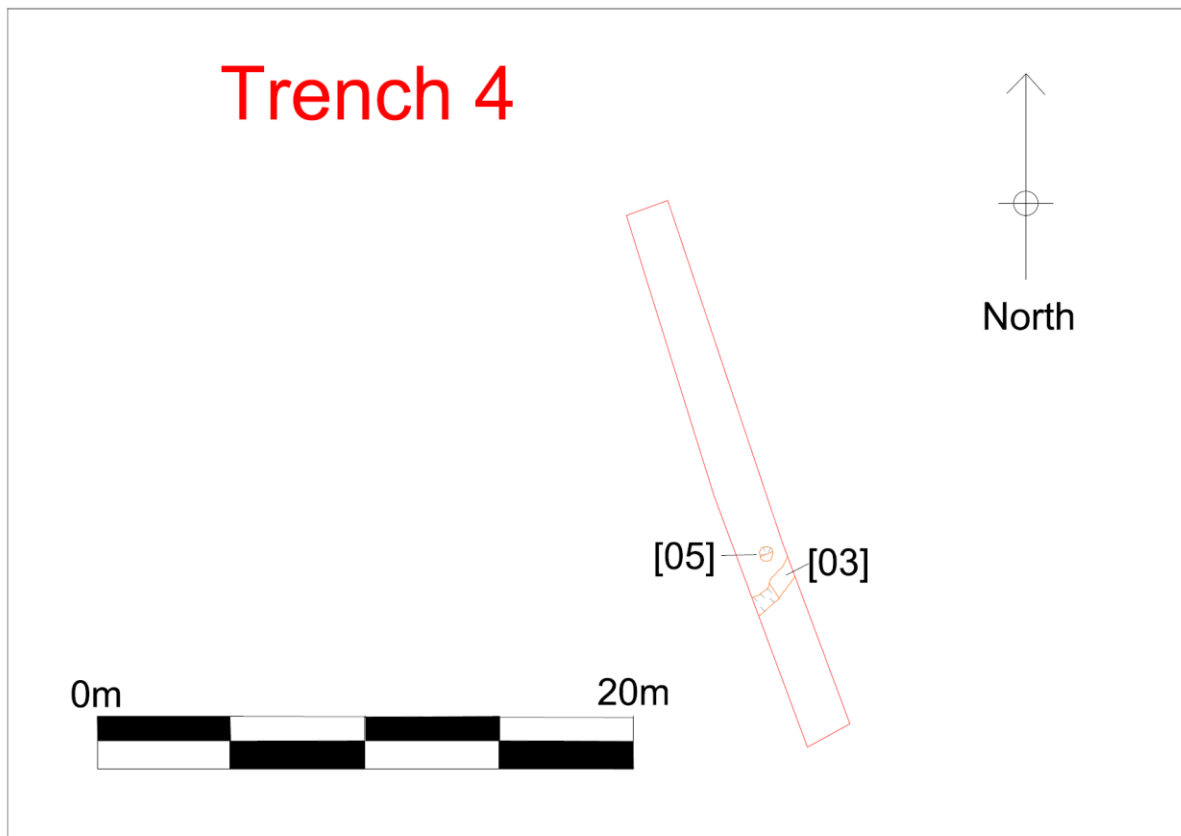


Figure 4: Trench 4

Trench Descriptions

Trench	Orientation	Length(m)	Average depth (m)	Notes description	Minimum depth to archaeology or natural substratum
1	East to west	19.00m	0.90m	Possible ditch located on west side. Two stone filled land drains	0.60m natural
2	North to South	20.00m	0.55m	No features	0.45m natural
3	North to South	20.00m	0.68m	Root disturbance seen at northern end of the trench	0.60m natural
4	North to South	20.00m	0.65m	Probable natural features found at the centre of the trench	0.50m natural

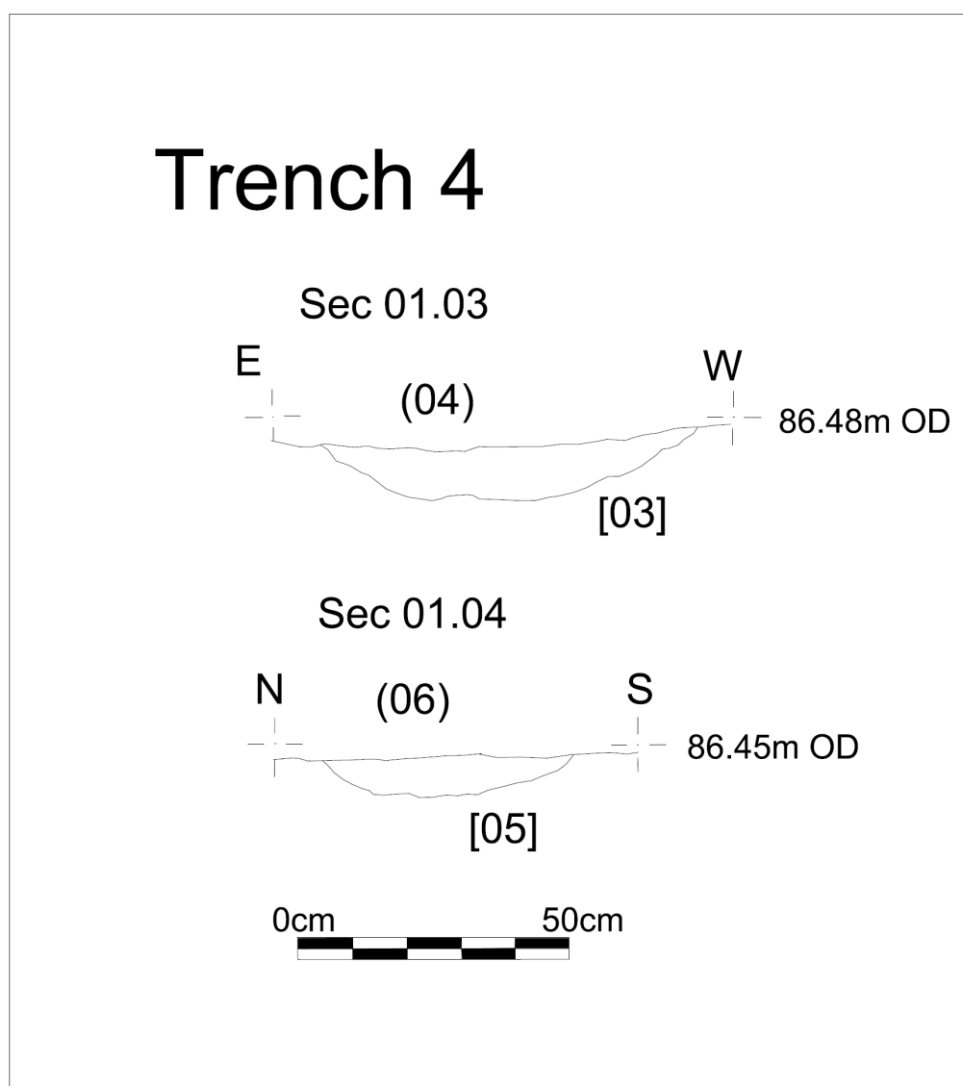


Figure 5: Trench 4 Sections

6. The Post-Roman Pottery

Deborah Sawday

The pottery, two sherds, weighing 238 grams, was catalogued with reference to the guidelines set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group, (MPRG 1998), (MPRG, 2001) and the Northamptonshire fabric series Northamptonshire Anglo-Saxon and Medieval County Ceramic Type-Series.

The results are given below (table 1). Cistercian ware is found on most of the sites of this period in the county, and the other ware is generally ubiquitous in post medieval and modern contexts.

Table 1: The pottery by fabric, sherd numbers and weight (grams) by context.

Context	Fabric/Ware	Nos	Grams	Comments
7 T1	CTS 404 – Cistercian ware/Late Medieval Transitional Ware	1	20	Base of an internally lead glazed hollow ware vessel, the glaze firing dark brown over the sandy red body. Possibly a cup, dated c.1470-1550.
7 T1	CTS 427 - Local Coarse ware	1	218	Base of an internally slipped and glazed wide mouthed bowl or pancheon, 18th-19th C.

7. Discussion

Only one out of the four evaluation trenches (Trench 1 Figure 2) contained identifiable archaeological deposits. The evidence recorded from the evaluation indicates probable medieval and post-medieval activity in the form of a ditch and eroded ridge and furrow from pre-enclosure field systems. The position of the possible hollow way also suggested that a potential earthwork platform may have been present to the south-east overlain by the ridge and furrow. However, the trial trenches undertaken within this area suggests that the possible platform was a natural promontory which was cut by ridge and furrow.

The earthwork to the west was thought to be a hollow way possibly associated with the putative platform. However it now seems more likely that it may be a silted up ditch that relates to some form of boundary drainage activity for fields. The ditch is perhaps a continuation of a north to south boundary ditch located to the south-west of the development. A possible date for the ditch remains uncertain but pottery dating to the 15th-16th century and 18th-19th century was found within the upper fill.

The northern half of the development area appears to be on a natural incline down towards the river edge

8. Archive and Publication

The site archive will be held by ULAS under the temporary accession number NHWD 2013 until a suitable storage space is allocated for its deposition in Northamptonshire. The content of the paper archive consists of:

1 Unbound A4 copy of this report
4 A4 Trench recording sheets
1 A4 Context summary sheet
9A5 Context Sheets
1 A4 Photo record sheet
1 A4 Drawing Record
4 A2 Plan and section drawing sheets
Black and white contact print 19 Black and white picture negatives
A4 Colour digital contact print 1 CD of 19 digital photos
2 pottery sherds

A record of the project will be submitted to the Oasis project under the code. Oasis is an online index to grey literature reports. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in *Northamptonshire Archaeology* in due course.

9. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author, assisted by Jon Coward. Dr. Patrick Clay managed the project. The pottery was identified by Deborah Sawday.

10. Bibliography

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Northamptonshire Anglo-Saxon and Medieval County Ceramic Type-Series

www.weedonbec-pc.gov.uk Weedon Bec Parish Council *History of Weedon Bec*. Reproduced with permission from Mike Rumbold of the Weedon Bec History Society from a document of April 2003. Accessed 25.01.2011.

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