



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation on land at  
the former Manor House, Chancery  
Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire.  
NGR: SP 9964 7876**

Andrew Hyam



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Manor House, Chancery Lane,  
Thrapston, Northamptonshire**

**NGR: SP 9964 7876**

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## **An Archaeological Evaluation on land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire.**

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### **Summary**

*An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between the 23rd and 26th of October 2012. The proposed development site was occupied until recently by a nursing home built in the 1970s which in turn replaced the former Manor House. Due to the location within an area of archaeological interest, the County Archaeological Advisor has requested that a staged programme of archaeological investigation takes place to identify and locate any archaeological remains that may be affected by the development. The first stage of this work is an archaeological field evaluation*

*Three evaluation trenches were excavated across the proposed development site in areas both within and outside the footprint of demolished buildings which recently occupied the site. The central areas of the site have been heavily disturbed by the 1970s building and its demolition although small areas of undisturbed natural substrata were noted along the southern and western boundaries. An undated feature was noted in the western trench. The southern trench contained an undated ditch and gully along with a second century Roman feature.*

### **Introduction**

In accordance with NPPF (Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment) this document forms the report for an archaeological field investigation (evaluation) on land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire, NGR: SP 9964 7876. It is intended that this programme of archaeological fieldwork will provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets which may be present on the site in order that the potential impact of any future development on such remains may be assessed by the planning authority. The work has been commissioned by CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of East Northamptonshire District Council and followed that specified in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work on Land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire* (hereinafter WSI).

## **Background**

As noted in the ULAS WSI and in the Northamptonshire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire* and *Brief for the Archaeological Evaluation of Land the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire* (NCC 23.08.2012) the village of Thrapston lies approximately 12km to the west of Kettering and 14km to the south-east of Corby (Fig. 1). The proposed development area lies within the north-west corner of Thrapston. It sits within a residential area to the north of the High Street. The western boundary of the site is formed by Chancery Lane with Manor Close wrapping around the north and eastern sides and the Bullring is to the south (Fig. 2). The site is centred on NGR SP 9964 7876. The development site is roughly rectangular in shape and covers an approximate area of 0.25ha. It is relatively flat at an average height of around 30m above OD and has a very slight slope down to the north and west towards the River Nene terrace (Figs 3 and 4). The site was until recently occupied by a nursing home which was built in the 1970s and was demolished nearly two years ago. At the time of the evaluation all traces of the nursing home, which stood within a concrete apron, had been removed leaving an open area of grass in the middle of the site with low trees and shrubs around the perimeter.

Before the erection of the nursing home a small-scale rescue excavation revealed evidence of Saxon burials. There is also some potential for Roman and medieval activity.

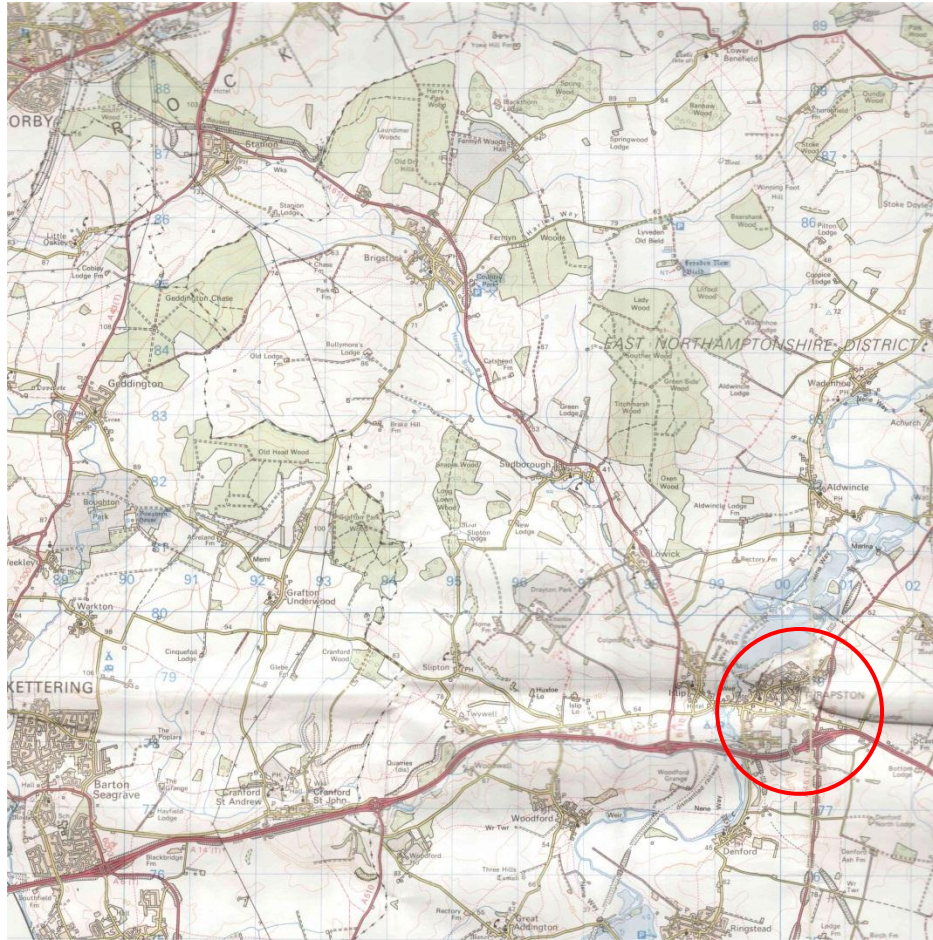


Figure 1. Thrapston location  
Ordnance Survey licence no. AL100029495

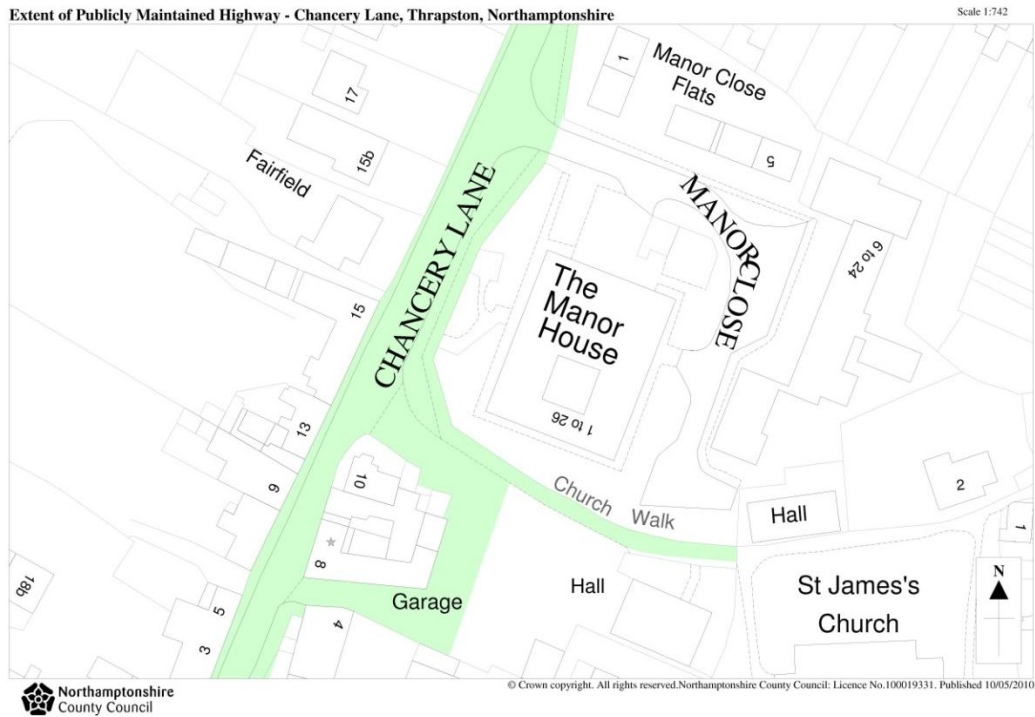


Figure 2. Site location  
Source: Northampton County Council



Figure 3. Development site  
Looking south-east



Figure 4. Development site  
Looking north-west

## Objectives

As identified in the ULAS Design Specification for archaeological work the main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- 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 any archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that can demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

## Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

Three 30m long by 1.6m wide trenches were proposed in the ULAS WSI and were initially located to target areas which were likely to have been left undisturbed by modern building work and services. However, due to the presence of apparently live sewers and drains the trenches had to be moved slightly from that specified (Fig. 5). This resulted in the trench running diagonally across the site being placed within the footprint of the former building.

Topsoil or modern overburden was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All spoil heaps were inspected for unstratified archaeological material. All trenches were intended to be excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits. However in some cases (see below) the loose nature of the overburden and made ground made the trench edges dangerous and the presence of adjacent sewers or concrete foundations prevented stepping the edges.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Each trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. One longitudinal face and the base of each trench was recorded in this way. Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would also be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench



mark. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital and black and white 35mm photographs were taken throughout the evaluation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

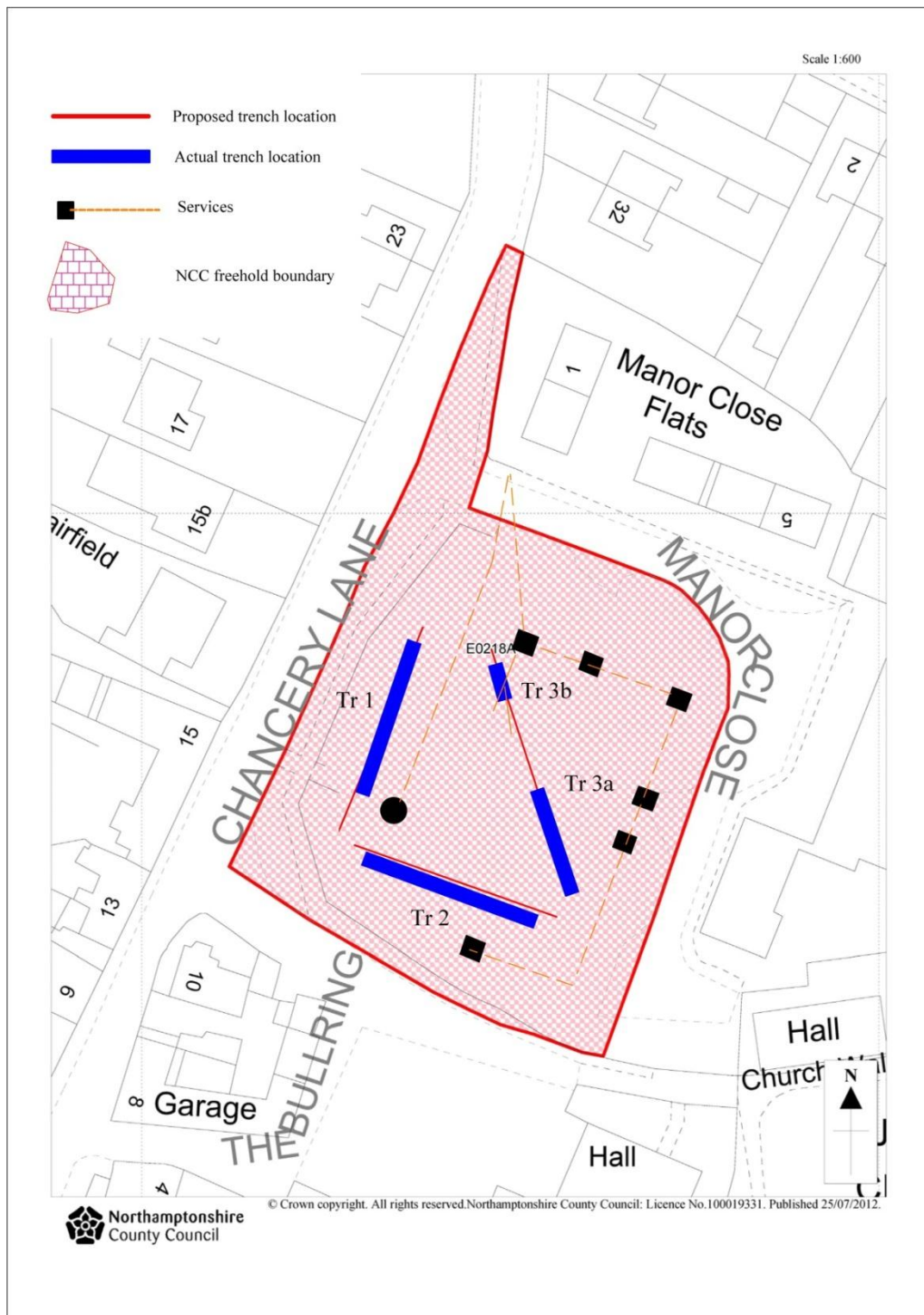


Figure 5. Trench locations  
Modified from Northamptonshire County Council map

## Results

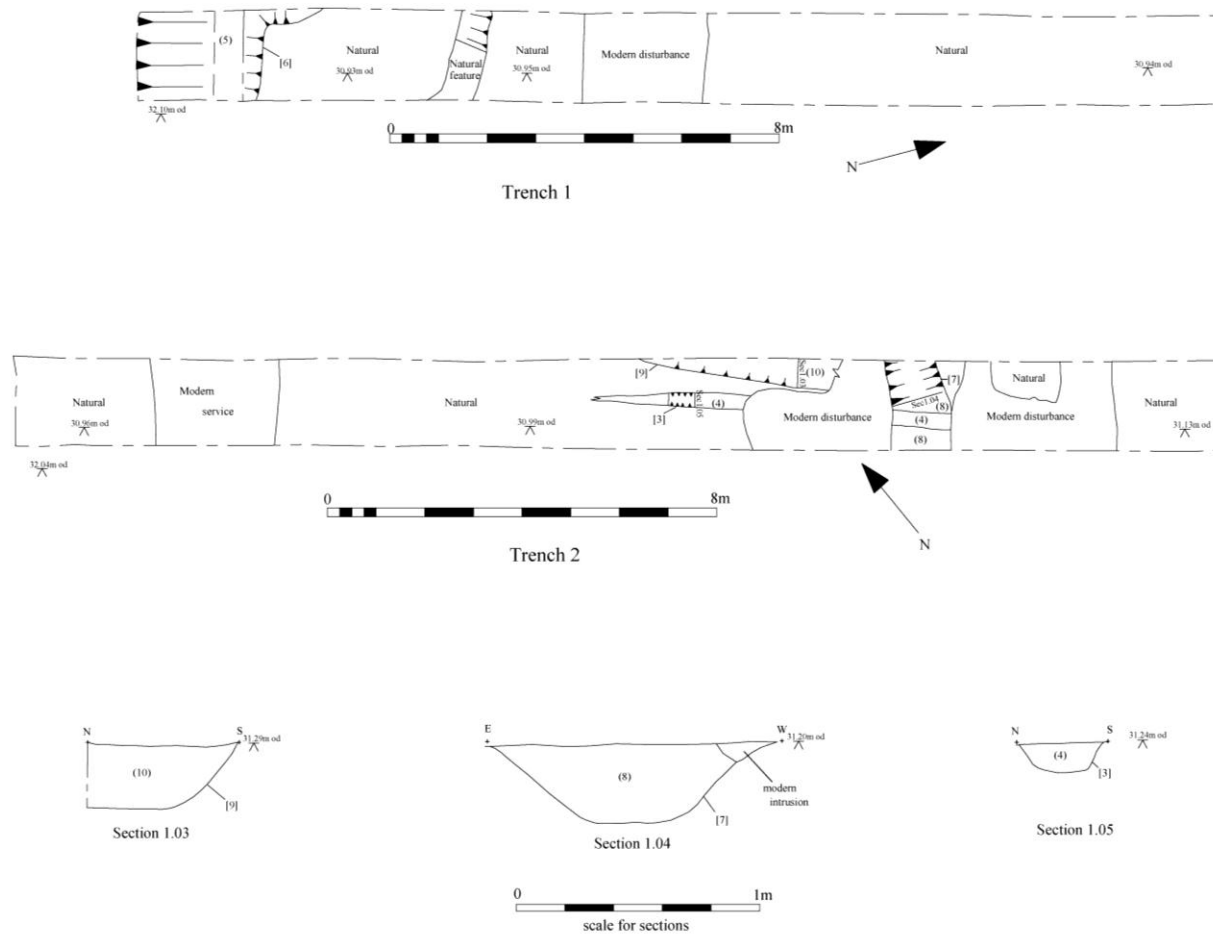


Figure 6. Trenches 1 and 2 plans

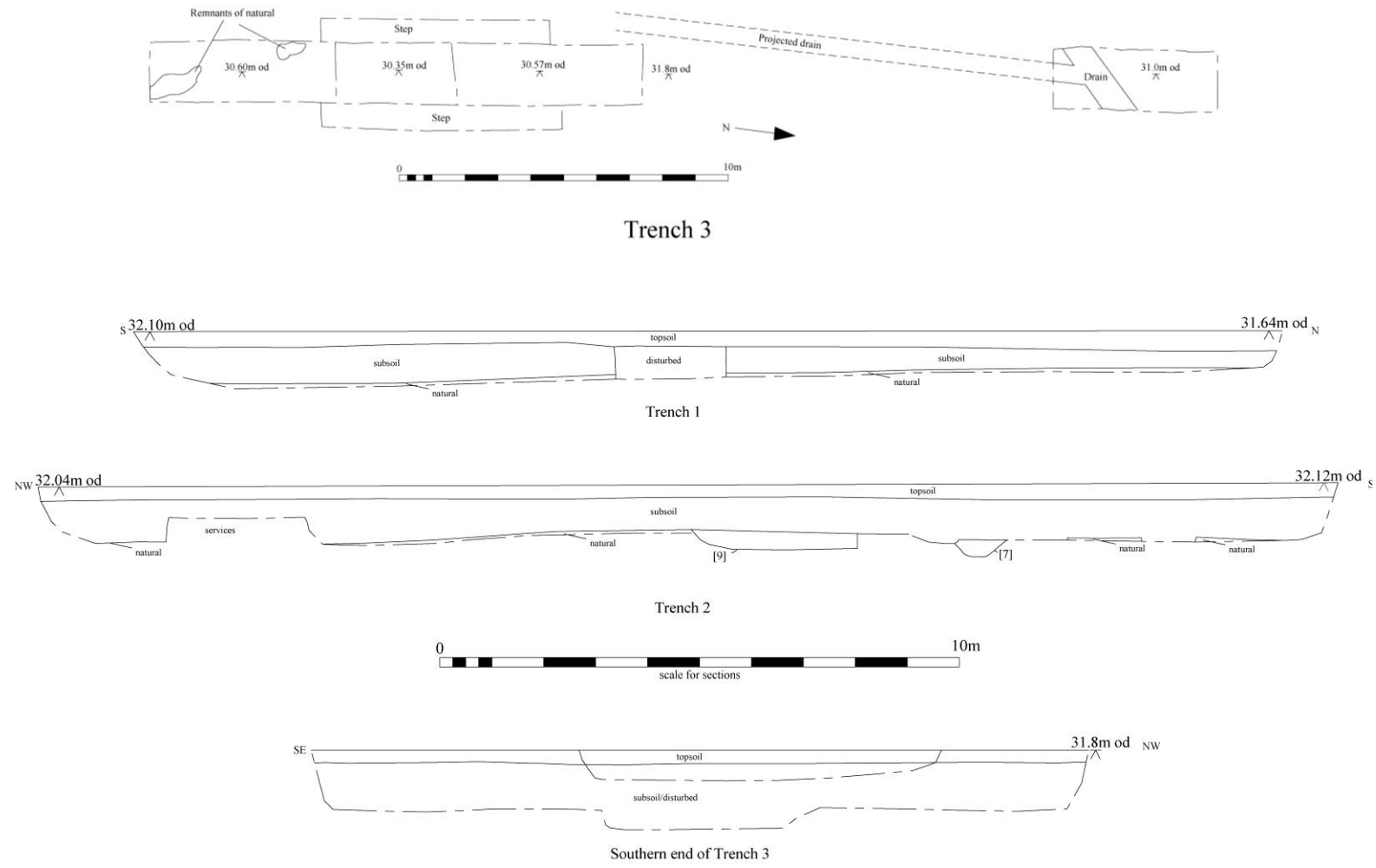


Figure 7 Trench 3 plan and trench sections

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was located on the western border of the development site in between the Chancery Lane footpath and a buried north to south BT cable (Fig. 5). This trench was the only trench which lay outside the footprint of the building and its surrounding concrete apron and roadway. A number of trees were located at the northern end of the specified trench location but, as the excavator bucket was 1.9m wide it was decided to shorten the trench length whilst achieving the same area. The trench had a maximum depth of 1.10m and minimum depth of 0.95m. A dark brown clay loam topsoil with an average depth of 0.31m was removed to reveal a fairly disturbed mid brown clayish silt subsoil with a depth ranging from 0.3m to 0.7m. A modern feature, possibly a service pipe, ran across the centre of the trench from east to west cutting through the subsoil and into the natural substrate. A metal drinks can and other modern building materials were observed within this cut.

The natural substrate consisted of an orange brown clayish sand with small fragments of ironstone or limestone gravel type material (Fig. 8). Towards the north end of the trench the natural became much higher in sand content. At the southern end of the trench an L-shaped feature (5) [6] ran across the trench and into the southern baulk (Fig. 9). The feature had a mid grey brown clay silt fill from which a fragment of possible sheep bone was recovered. The north edge of the feature was quite shallow but became much steeper as the edge turned to the north. Because only a small portion of the feature was visible it was not possible to identify what it was although it is possible that it is two intercutting features with similar fills. A strip of darker natural running from east to west was identified during machining as a possible linear feature, however excavation revealed this to be a natural feature possibly related to geological action when the sand and gravel was laid down.



Figure 8. Trench 1  
Looking south. 1m scale



Figure 9. Trench 1. Feature [6]  
1m scale

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was placed towards the southern edge of the development site just to the north of an east to west sewer and to the west of another sewer pipe running around the north-east corner of the site. It would appear that the trench location should be just outside the footprint of the former nursing home but still underneath part of the surrounding concrete road. Again a 1.9m wide bucket was used to the original specified length was reduced from 30m to 25m giving a slightly improved safety margin to avoid the sewer pipes. The trench had a minimum depth of 0.84m and a maximum of 1.10m. An average depth of 0.22m of topsoil was removed to reveal a very disturbed layer of subsoil or made ground consisting of a quite loose silty clay with lots of modern building material throughout. A possible modern service pipe set in concrete was encountered at 0.6m near to the west end of the trench which was avoided and left in place. The natural substratum consisted of an orange brown clayish sand with some gravel (Fig.10). A number of modern intrusions and disturbed areas cut into the natural but three archaeological features were also observed.

Running from east to west along part of the length of the trench was a narrow gully [3] (4) (Fig. 11). This had a maximum width of 0.30m and a maximum depth of 0.12m. Two areas of modern activity towards the eastern end of the trench appear to have cut across it. Gully [3] appears to be heavily truncated fades out to nothing at its western end but does however cut across north to south ditch [7] at its eastern end before being cut by a modern pipe. In profile the gully had a flat base with matching sloping sides. It contained a mid grey brown sandy silt fill (8) from which no dateable finds were recovered.

To the east of gully [3] was a small ditch [7] measuring 1m wide and 0.35m in depth running from north to south across the trench (Fig. 12). As mentioned this was cut by

gully [3] and by later modern disturbances to the east and west. It had a fairly wide flat base and shallow sides with a mid orange brown sandy silt fill (8). No dateable material was recovered from this feature.

Extending out from the northern baulk to a maximum width of 0.6m and sandwiched between gully [3] to the south and a modern intrusion to the east was a 3.5m long feature of indeterminate overall shape [9] but which could be the edge of a shallow pit (Fig. 13). Excavation revealed it to be a flat bottomed feature 0.26m deep filled with a mid brown sandy silt (10). A single sherd of Northamptonshire Shelley ware and two sherds of grey ware were recovered from this fill. The grey ware is likely to be Upper Nene Valley grey ware from the second century. The Shelly ware has a wider date range but is also likely to be from the same period (pers comm. E Johnson). A sheep tooth and bone were also found in fill (9).



Figure 10. Trench 2  
Looking west. 1m scale



Figure 11. Trench 2. Gully [3]  
Looking east. 40cm scale



Figure 12. Trench 2. Ditch [7]  
Looking south-west. 1m scale. Note gully [3] cutting across ditch to south of scale





Figure 13. Trench 2. Feature [9]  
Looking east. 1m and 40cm scales. Gully [3] to right of picture, ditch [7] at top

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was placed diagonally across the centre of the site avoiding live services running around the boundaries. Removal of approximately 0.22m of topsoil revealed a heavily disturbed overburden full of modern material. At the south-east end of the trench areas of disturbed natural substratum were encountered at 1.15m below current ground level. Approximately 5m from the south-east end the disturbed ground became deeper and, despite stepping the trench edges, natural was not seen even at 1.45m below current ground level. This level of disturbance was observed for a total of 15m whereupon it was agreed that the trench (labelled at this point as Trench 3a) would be started again at the north-west end as Trench 3b (Figs. 14 and 15). This was begun but at 0.71m below current ground level a modern service was seen extending southwards across the trench from a nearby manhole cover. This service also appeared to branch

and run towards the northern end of Trench 3a. Further excavation of this trench was then abandoned. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.



Figure 14. Trench 3a  
Looking north. 1m scale.  
Disturbed natural in foreground at 1.1m below current ground level.



Figure 15. Trench 3b  
Looking south. 1m scale  
Note drain cut across trench. Trench 3a at top of picture

## **Discussion**

The results of the evaluation suggest that undisturbed natural does indeed survive around the outer edges of the site and between the multiple service pipes and cable which enter and surround the site. It would appear that the 1970s building and its subsequent demolition has effectively destroyed any surviving archaeological features or deposits which may have been present.

The undefined and undated feature in Trench 1 is difficult to discuss as only a small part of it was visible at the end of the trench. It is possible that it is two features sharing a similar fill. The rest of the trench is quite empty and the presence of trees at each end may well indicate that the area has been disturbed by root activity.

Much of Trench 2 is badly disturbed by modern activity but the area of archaeological activity near to the eastern end indicates that small pockets do survive in this area. The gully [3] and ditch [7] were undated but the possible pit [9] contained probable 2nd century Roman pottery although both the grey ware and Shelly ware have quite broad date ranges.

The heavily disturbed Trench 3 shows that this area of the site has been badly disturbed down to, and below, the level of the natural substrata. The results also suggest that not all of the service pipes are shown on the available service plans.

## **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

3 ULAS pro forma trench recording sheets,

6 context recording sheets,

1 A3 drawing sheet,

2 contact sheets of 43 digital photographs,

29 35mm black and white photographs – contact sheet and negatives,

CD of digital photographs

## **Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication the Northamptonshire Archaeological Journal in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

## **Bibliography**

Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists).

Northamptonshire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) 2012 *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire*

Northamptonshire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) 2012 *Brief for the Archaeological Evaluation of Land the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire*

ULAS. 2012 Design Specification for archaeological work *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work on Land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire.*

### Appendix 1. Trench details

Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Max depth (m)	Min depth (m)	Comments
1	22.0m	1.9	1.10	0.95	Undated feature [6]
2	25.0	1.9	1.10	0.84	Undated gully [3] Undated ditch [7] 2nd century feature [9]
3	15 + 5	1.9	1.45	1.15	Heavily disturbed. No Archaeology

### Appendix 2. OASIS information

Project Name	Land at the former Manor House, Chancery Lane, Thrapston, Northamptonshire
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	No previous work.
Current Land Use	Former residential care home
Development Type	Unknown
Reason for Investigation	As a condition
Position in the Planning Process	
Site Co ordinates	SP 9964 7876
Start/end dates of field work	23rd to 26th October
Archive Recipient	NCC
Study Area	0.25ha

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