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Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Watching Brief on land at Sulby Abbey Farm, Naseby Road, Sulby, Northamptonshire, NN6 6JA NGR: SP 65815 80444

Jennifer Browning



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Site Name: Land at Sulby Abbey Farm, Naseby Road, Sulby, Northamptonshire, NN6 6JA NGR:

Grid Ref: SP 65815 80444

Author: Jennifer Browning

Client: Steve Tuck

Planning Ref: DA/2018/1135

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-396183		
	Project Name	Land at Sulby Abbey Farm, Naseby Road, Sulby, Northamptonshire, NN6 6JA		
	Start/end dates	08-06-2020		
	Previous/Future Work	Evaluation		
	Project Type	Watching brief		
	Site Status	SM List Entry Number: 1017186		
	Current Land Use	Residential		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Completed		
Planning Ref.	DA/2018/1135			
PROJECT LOCATION	County	Northamptonshire		
	Site Address/Postcode			
	Study Area	790m ²		
	Site Coordinates	SP 65815 80444		
	Height OD	aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	NCC		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Gavin Speed		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Jennifer Browning		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Steve Tuck		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient		TBC	TBC
	ID (Acc. No.)		ENN109915	ENN109915.
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Summary

This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological watching brief carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during groundworks for a new extension at Sulby Abbey Farm, Naseby Road, Sulby, Northamptonshire, NN6 6JA (SP 65815 80444).

The site is surrounded by the scheduled area of Sulby Abbey and lies c.350m from the main earthworks (HE List Entry No1017186).

No archaeological deposits were encountered during this work.

The archive for the work will be deposited with Northamptonshire Archives (tbc) under Event number ENN109915.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Steve Tuck to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land south of Naseby Road, Sulby, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 65815 80444) (Figure 1).

The fieldwork work was carried out on the 8th June 2020 and comprised archaeological Attendance for Observation, Investigation, and Recording during groundworks (Watching Brief) in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2019), as requested by the Planning Archaeologist at Northamptonshire County Council.

Conditional planning permission has been granted (DA/2018/1135) for the demolition of existing garages and erection of two storey side extension to form ancillary living accommodation and front building alterations to include ground floor porch and lean-to roof extension (Figure 2). A condition (4) of the work is *"No development shall take place within the application area, until the applicant or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with Paragraph 199 of the NPPF"*.

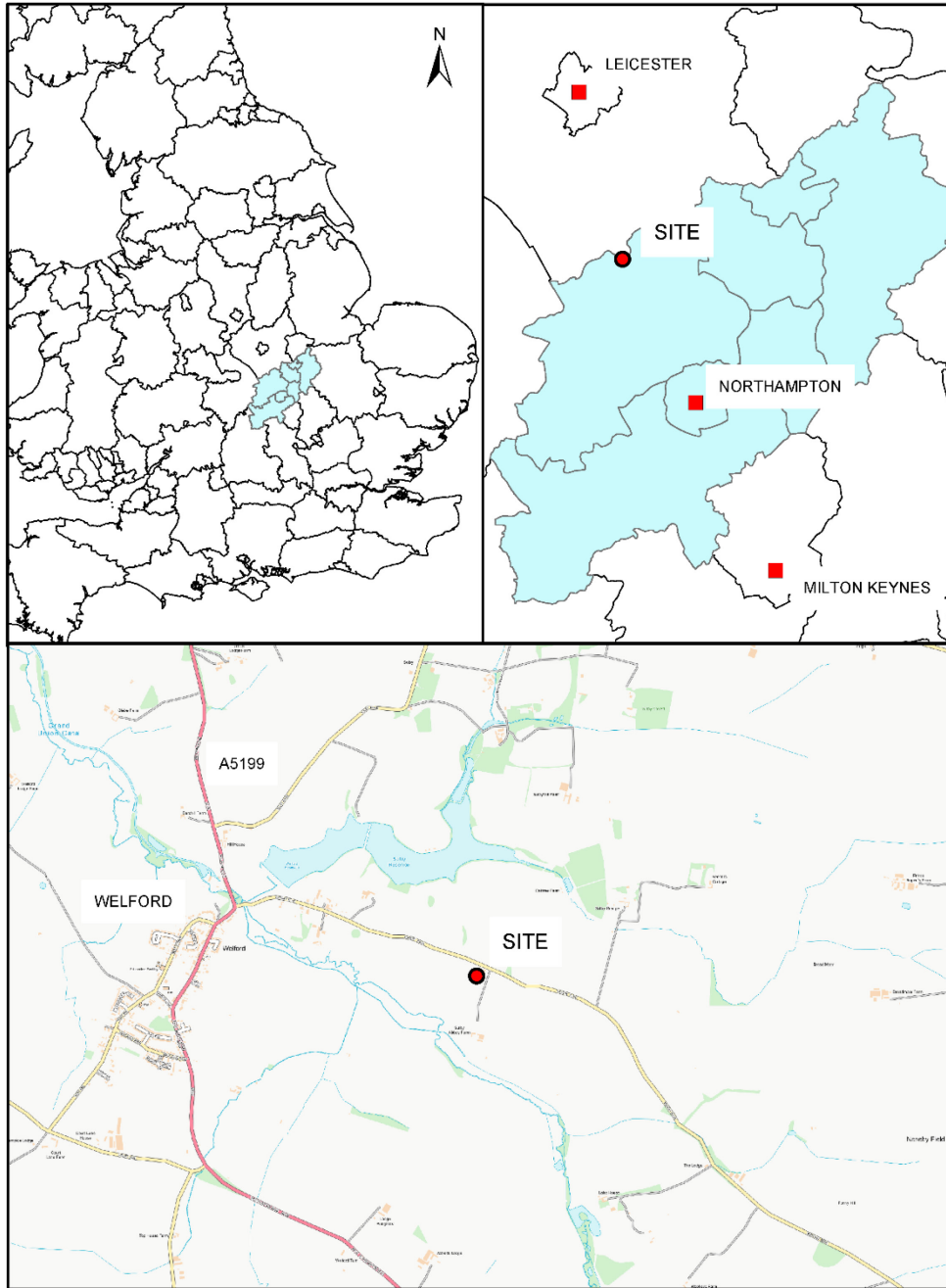


Figure 1 Site Location
Site highlighted

Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] (2020)

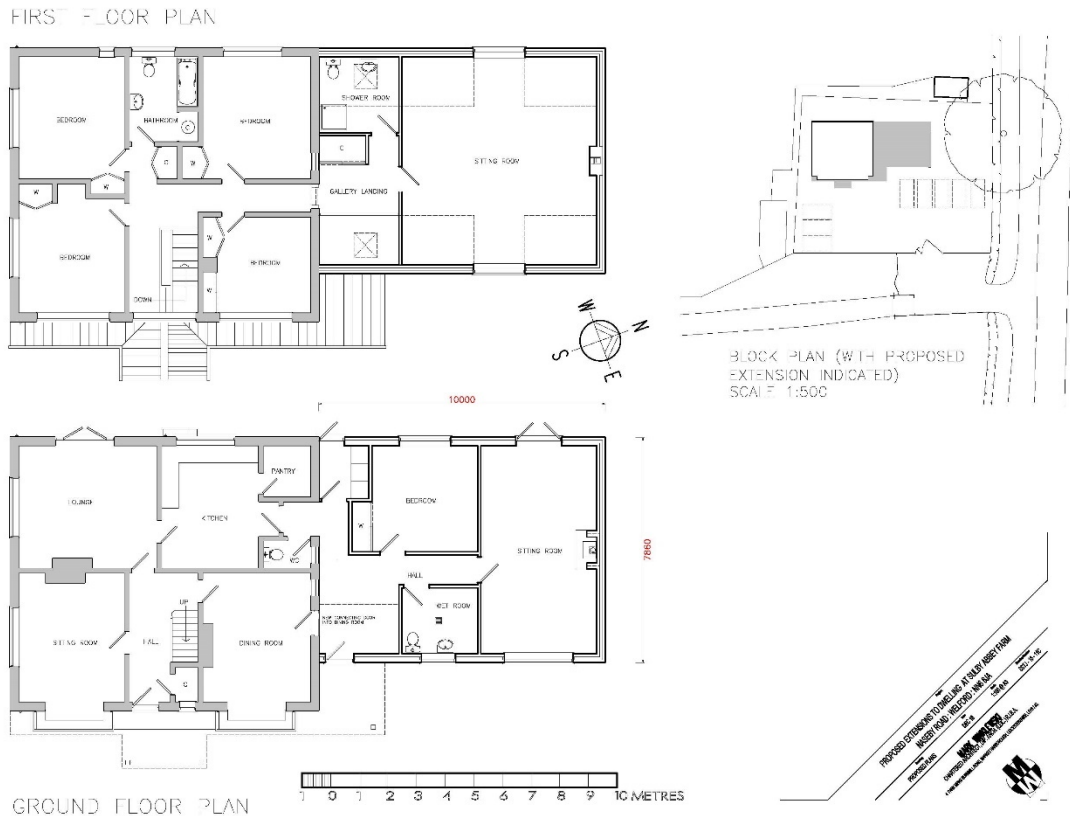


Figure 2: Development plan

Location and Geology

Sulby Abbey Farm lies in the north-west of the county, approximately 1400m east of Welford village, 22km north-west of Northampton (SP 65815 80444). The site lies to the south of Naseby Road on the north-west edge of the village. It is bounded by a road to the north, and open fields to the east, south and west. At the time of the work the development area comprised the footprint of demolished garages, adjoining a 1960s farmhouse, set within a pastoral landscape. The site is accessed from Naseby Road. The development area is approximately 0.25ha and lies at a height of 150m aOD, sloping from south - north.

The British Geological Survey website identifies the bedrock geology of the area as Whitby Mudstone, overlain by mid Pleistocene diamicton till.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The Site lies on land associated with Sulby Abbey, a house of Premonstratensian canons found in 1155 in Welford and shortly thereafter moved to Sulby. The Site itself lies 350m north of the core of the medieval abbey (List entry number: 1017186) and although the extant house is not included in the scheduling, the Scheduled Area lies all around (Figure 3).

Historic England records Sulby Abbey thus:

The monument includes the known extent of the buried and earthwork remains of the Premonstratensian abbey of Sulby, located in a broad valley on either side of the River Avon.

Also included are the earthwork and buried remains of the enclosures, fishponds, watermill and warren associated with the abbey. The abbey, a house of Premonstratensian canons, was originally founded in 1155 in the adjacent parish of Welford, by William de Wideville, who donated the church of Welford and lands in Sulby. The community soon relocated to Sulby and the abbey may have been built on the site of an earlier settlement, recorded in the Domesday Book, which may already have been abandoned by the 12th century. The abbey was favoured by Edward II, who stayed there several times during the 14th century. No more than 13 canons were recorded in 15th century visitations however. The abbey was dissolved in 1538, and the land was occupied by a succession of land owners.

The abbey is approached by a broad track orientated north east to south west, running from Naseby which marks the original entrance. The approach is bounded by a ditch 0.5m deep on the western side, and a bank measuring up to 1.5m high on the eastern side. On either side of the track are the remains of at least five large enclosures, measuring up to 100m wide and 150m long, defined by banks and ditches measuring up to 1m high and 3m wide. The enclosures are believed to be the remains of the stock pens and animal enclosures of the abbey. These are overlain by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation remains, indicating later reuse of the area as arable fields.

The main building complex of the abbey is located at the southern end of the track and includes an area of low earthworks lying to the south east of Sulby Abbey Farm. This area is believed to include the buried remains of the abbey church and cloistral range, although it has been somewhat disturbed by later quarrying and the construction of the 18th and 19th century farm buildings. Medieval tiles and stone foundations have been found beneath and around the outbuildings of the farm, and further remains of the conventual buildings are believed to be located beneath the buildings of Sulby Abbey Farm. Sulby Abbey Farm, which is a Grade II Listed Building, is excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath it is included.

To the south of Sulby Abbey Farm is a complex of small fishponds and associated water management features. Two water courses flow east to west along the valley. The northernmost of these, which occupies the lowest point of the valley, is believed to represent the original course of the River Avon. The southernmost channel was constructed when the river was diverted by the canons to create a leat higher up the valley side, in places occupying a cutting up to 4m deep. During the 19th century, the northern channel was straightened and modified, in order to act as a feeder for the Grand Union Canal system. The remains of a large earthen dam, measuring up to 2.5m high and 8m wide, orientated north to south, cross the valley floor. The dam originally retained a large shallow pond located to the south east. This was partly modified when the canal feeder passed underneath the dam. To the west of the dam are at least three smaller interlinked ponds which are believed to have acted as stew ponds for fish breeding. The ponds are up to 0.5m deep and have been partly infilled, but survive as waterlogged buried features. Two further ponds to the north of the river have been infilled but also survive as below ground features, together with a third located to the west of Abbey Farm. Immediately to the south east of the dam, and to the south of the River Avon is a waterlogged area including a large earthen platform measuring up to 25m square, which is believed to be the location of a watermill. To the south east of the River Avon the land rises and includes an area of earthwork enclosures defined by remnant banks and ditches, and partly overlain by medieval ridge and furrow cultivation remains. The south easternmost enclosure is believed to be the remains of a rabbit warren and includes a long earthen mound or pillow mound measuring up to 20m long and 4m wide, as well as a series of other lower mounds. To the south of the River Avon, occupying the break of slope on the rising ground, is a banked and ditched

linear feature, measuring up to 8m wide, orientated north west to south east and surviving for over 500m. This is believed to represent part of the boundary of the abbey precinct incorporating a perimeter road. A shallow hollow way orientated north to south and surviving for 200m runs from the boundary, through the medieval ridge and furrow, towards the south. Sulby Abbey Farm and all modern surfaces and fences are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Northamptonshire indicates that there are numerous other archaeological sites in the area, including prehistoric activity, notably a Bronze Age burial site 680m to the south-west (MNN3861) and early prehistoric settlement close to the River Avon 700m to the west (MNN3642, 143609). A Romano-British settlement is recorded 860m to the south-east (MNN3862).

The field to the west of the site is marked as containing ridge and furrow (MNN133325), and within an area of a possible deserted late Saxon village ('Little Sulby', MNN424). Early OS maps suggest that the site the site has been fields on the edge of the village of Welford from the 19th century onwards.

Archaeological trial trenching took place directly to the northwest in 2019 (Flavell 2019). This work identified an alignment of five undated post holes parallel to the road, which appeared to pre-date the ridge and furrow (ENN109452).

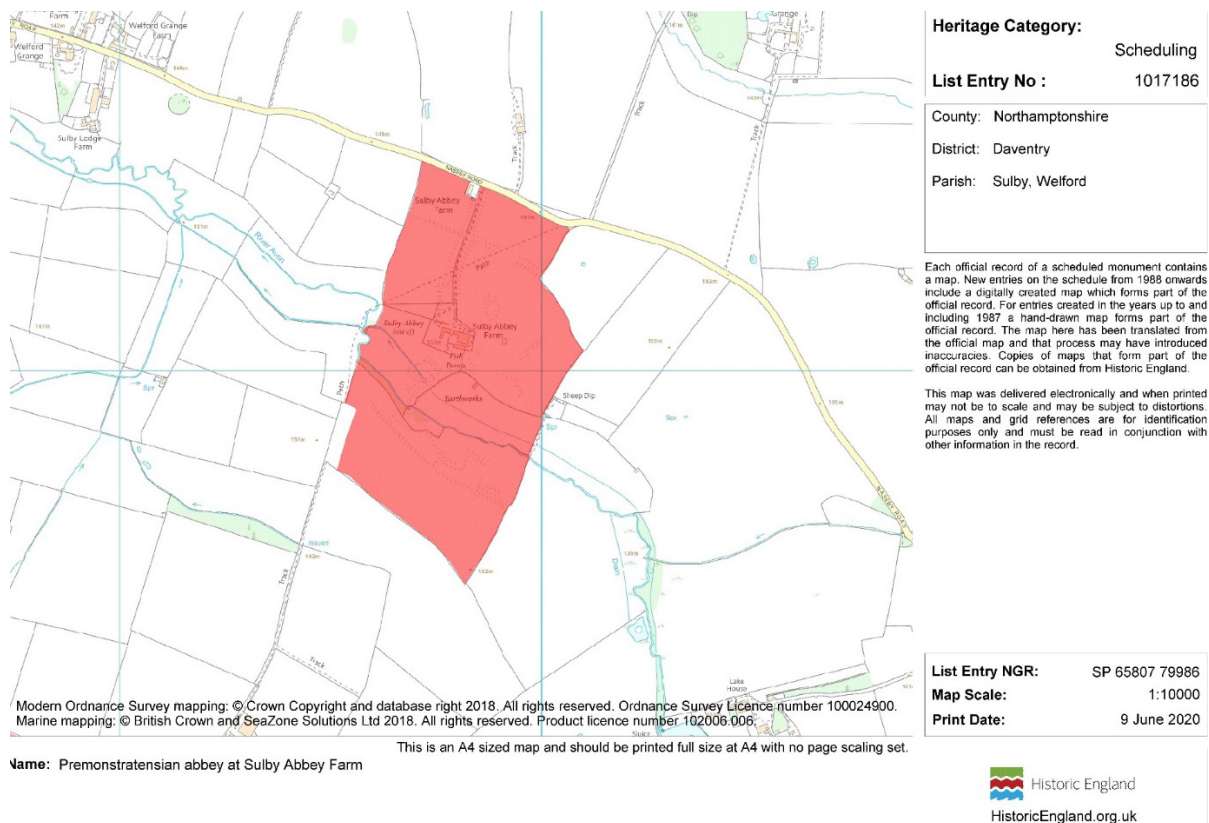


Figure 3: Scheduled Area, Historic England., List Entry 101718

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work are:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to assess the impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage and to help formulate a mitigation strategy
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

Research Objectives

While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from the *East Midlands Heritage* research agenda:

(Cooper 2006; Knight *et al.* 2012,

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/>).

The HER suggests that there is potential for archaeological deposits from the medieval and post-medieval periods. The evaluation therefore has the potential to contribute to the following research aims:

- *Early Medieval*. 6.4 rural settlement patterns, 6.7 agricultural economy and rural landscape.
- *High Medieval*. 7.2 Rural settlement, 7.7 the agrarian landscape and food-producing economy.
- *Post-Medieval*. 8.3 Agricultural landscapes and the food-producing economy, 8.4 Rural settlement patterns and building traditions.

These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. The research aims will be re-assessed and updated during the course of the fieldwork.

Methodology

Work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b) and adhered to their Code of Conduct (2014a).

The project involved the observation of groundworks across the area as shown on the plan. These included the excavation of foundation trenches down to a depth of c. 1m below the ground surface.

Excavation was carried out by the client's contractor with a JCB JS 130, using a ditching bucket for scraping the area between the trenches and a narrow, toothed bucket for excavation of the foundation trenches. The machine did not track over any surfaces until the area had been inspected for archaeological remains. The stripped ground surface was examined, excavation of the trenches was observed and their sides and bases checked.

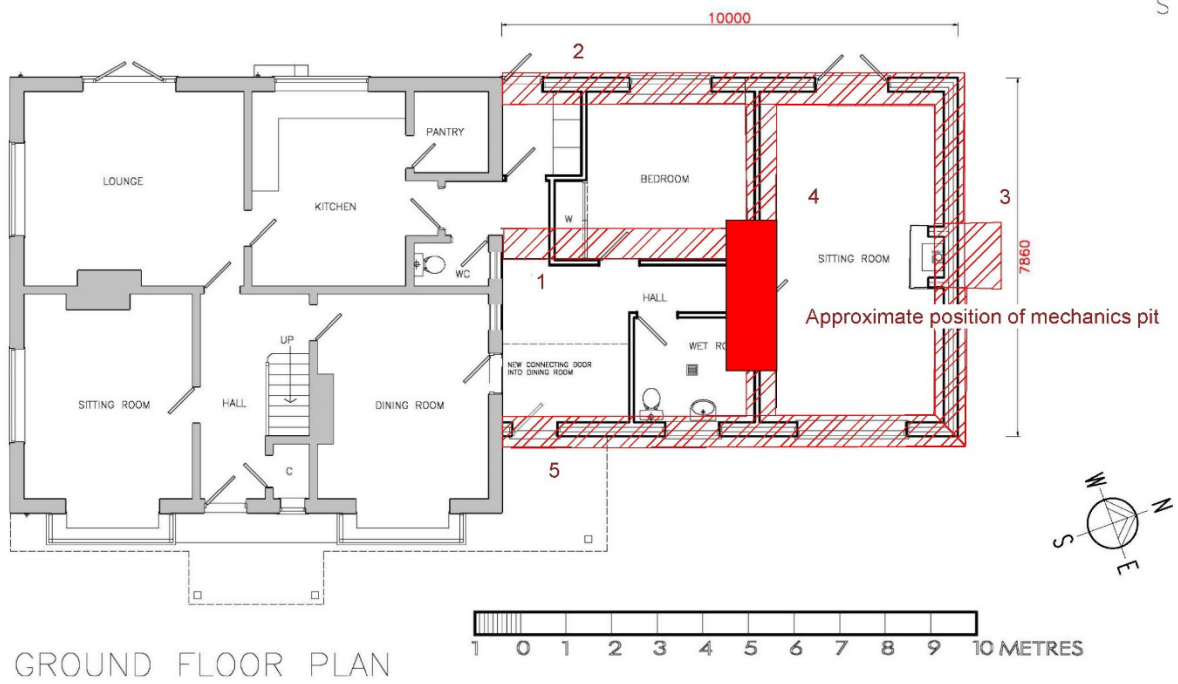
A photographic and written record of the investigations was maintained, upon which this report is based.

Results

The former garage had been demolished and removed from the development area prior to arrival, leaving the remains of the soils below the garage floor. These consisted of reddish brown silty clay subsoil with brick rubble pressed into the top 0.20m. A machine scrape of this level revealed slightly cleaner reddish brown silty clay with irregular dark grey patches caused by tree/shrub root disturbance. Some of the roots were still present, particularly round Trench 2 (Figure 4). There were also the fragmentary remains of a northeast-southwest aligned land drain. No archaeology was observed.

The foundation trenches were excavated through this level into a smooth yellowish orange silty clay, which extended c.0.8m below ground level. A change was observed at the base of the trenches. The clay became thicker, shifting to a yellow/blue colour and contained frequent chalky stones. The same strata, maintained in level bands, was observed in all trenches except Trench 5, on the south-eastern side. Darker clay, with a waterlogged appearance was noted in the side of the trench while the base came down to a mix of red sandy clay with dark grey patches.

The centre of the development area was affected by a brick-lined pit, which had been backfilled with modern rubble. The rectangular pit appeared to be approximately 3 x 1.5m and was recognised as a mechanics pit in the floor of the demolished garage (Figure 4; Figure 8). It affected the foundation trenches down to their base in this location.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 4: Trenches observed and location of ground disturbance (based on client's plan)



Figure 5: Looking north across the site, prior to excavation



Figure 6: Trench 2, on the northern side of the plot, looking southeast, showing roots in the subsoil above clean natural subsoil



Figure 7: Northern corner of the excavation, showing natural strata.



Figure 8: The remains of the brick-lined mechanic's pit in the side of the trench (arrowed).
Looking southeast



Figure 9: Looking south over the completed foundation trenches

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits were observed during the course of this watching brief, which primarily revealed undisturbed natural strata. The main earthworks of Sulby Abbey lie approximately 350m to the south and the area round the site is under ridge and furrow, suggesting that it was agricultural land during the operation of the abbey. No continuation of the line of undated post holes identified during previous archaeological work, which may be pre-medieval (Flavell 2019) was seen during the watching brief.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Northamptonshire Archives (tbc|) under Events number ENN109915, and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report
- Watching brief notes
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 DVD digital photographs

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Mr and Mrs Tuck (and family) and the machine driver, Ryan, for their help and cooperation during this watching brief. The project was managed by Dr. Gavin Speed.

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