UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Gascoigne Building, Oundle School, North Street, Oundle, Northamptonshire, PE8 4AL

NGR: TL 04190 88260

Christopher Naisbitt

ULAS Report No.2020-111

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Grid Ref: TL 04190 88260

Author: Christopher Naisbitt

Client: Oundle School

Planning Ref.: Pre-condition

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No**	universi1-399778		
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation at The Gascoigne Building, Oundle School, Off North Street, Oundle, Peterborough, Northamptonshire (TL 04190 88260)		
	Start/end dates	17th to 26th of February 2020		
	Previous/Future Work	None		
	Project Type	Evaluation		
	Site Status	Scheduled Monument No: SM NN 200, HA 1006619 Ref. S00228990		
	Current Land Use	School grounds, Lawn, Planting, Paved area		
	Monument Type/Period	Structures / Anglo-Saxon, Medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery / Anglo-Saxon, Medieval		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Pre-condition		
	Planning Ref.	N/A		
PROJECT LOCATION	**County**	Northamptonshire		
	Site Address/Postcode	The Gascoigne Building, Oundle School, North Street, Oundle, Northamptonshire, PE8 4AL		
	Study Area	935 square meters		
	Site Coordinates	TL 04190 88260		
	Height OD	*c.*34m AOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Northamptonshire County Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Mathew Morris		
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An Archaeological Evaluation at The Gascoigne Building, Oundle School, North Street, Oundle, Peterborough, Northamptonshire. (TL 04190 88260)

Summary

This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Oundle School (TL 04190 88260) in February 2020, in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the Grade II Listed Gascoigne Building. No other archaeological work was carried out within the proposed development area, however, historical sources suggested that the site may have been the location of a royal Saxon manor. For this reason, the site was designated by Historic England as a Scheduled Monument (No. 1006619). Three trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed development to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the proposed development on such remains could be. Archaeological remains were identified in all three trenches, including pits, ditches, and extensive evidence of structural activity including post-holes and stone walls. The concentration of archaeology in all three trenches was high and the preservation was, overall, quite good. The remains were likely to represent high-status domestic habitation and associated iron working activities of Saxon and medieval date. The identification of Saxon and medieval activity within the footprint of the proposed building was noteworthy. Well-preserved Saxon sites with good artefact and ecofact assemblages are rare and under-represented, and further investigation would significantly add to the regional data set. However, any development of the site will likely have a significant impact on the underlying archaeology and the Scheduled Monument. The archive for the site will initially be held by ULAS and will be transferred, with accession number ENN109826, to the Northants ARC as soon as the facility becomes available.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was commissioned by Oundle School to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at The Gascoigne Building, Oundle School, North Street, Oundle, Northamptonshire TL 04190 88260 (Figure 1). The work was carried out between 17th – 26th February 2020.

The work took place following advice from East Northamptonshire Council, as local planning authority, and Historic England, and was intended to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains could be assessed in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2019). The work was in Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 1006619) and was carried out under Scheduled Monument Consent S00228990.

Location and Geology

Oundle lies in East Northamptonshire, around 14 miles south-west of Peterborough. The proposed development area was located within the grounds of Oundle School, adjacent to the Gascoigne Building and north of St Peter's Church and the historic town centre (Figure 2).

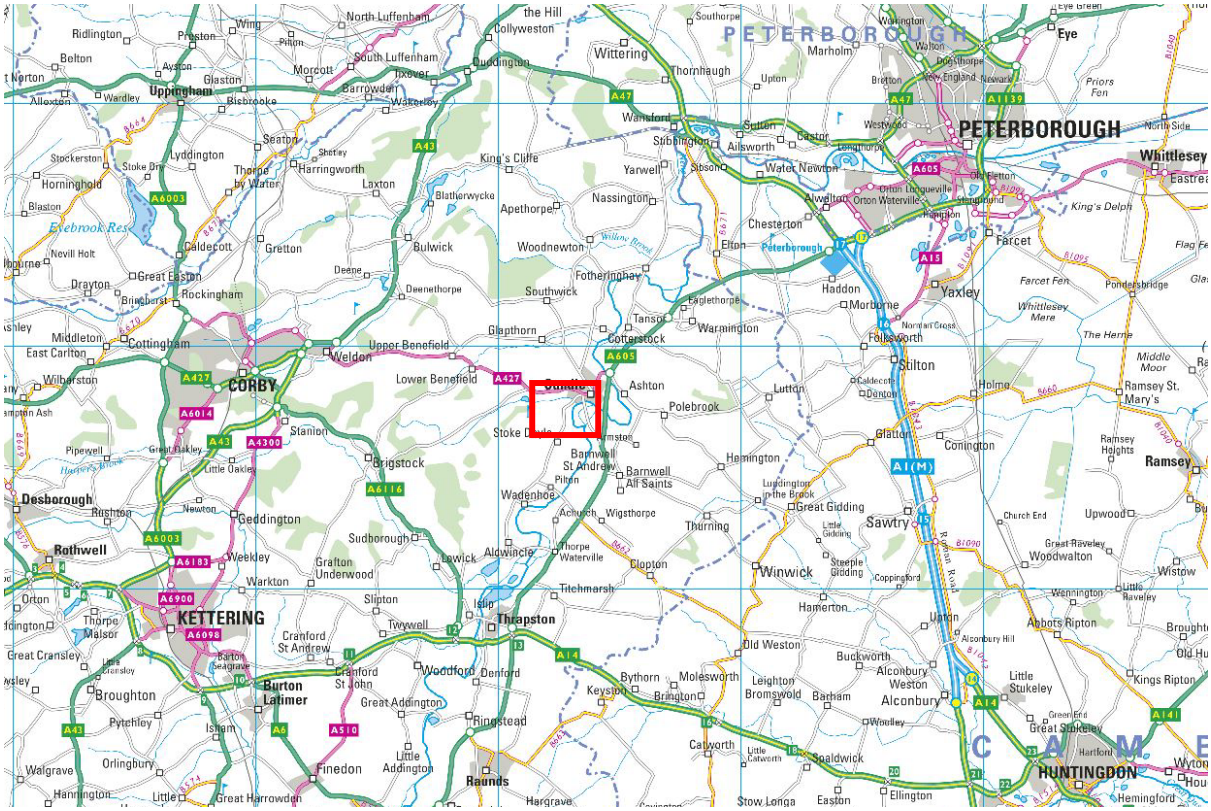

Figure 1: Location of site

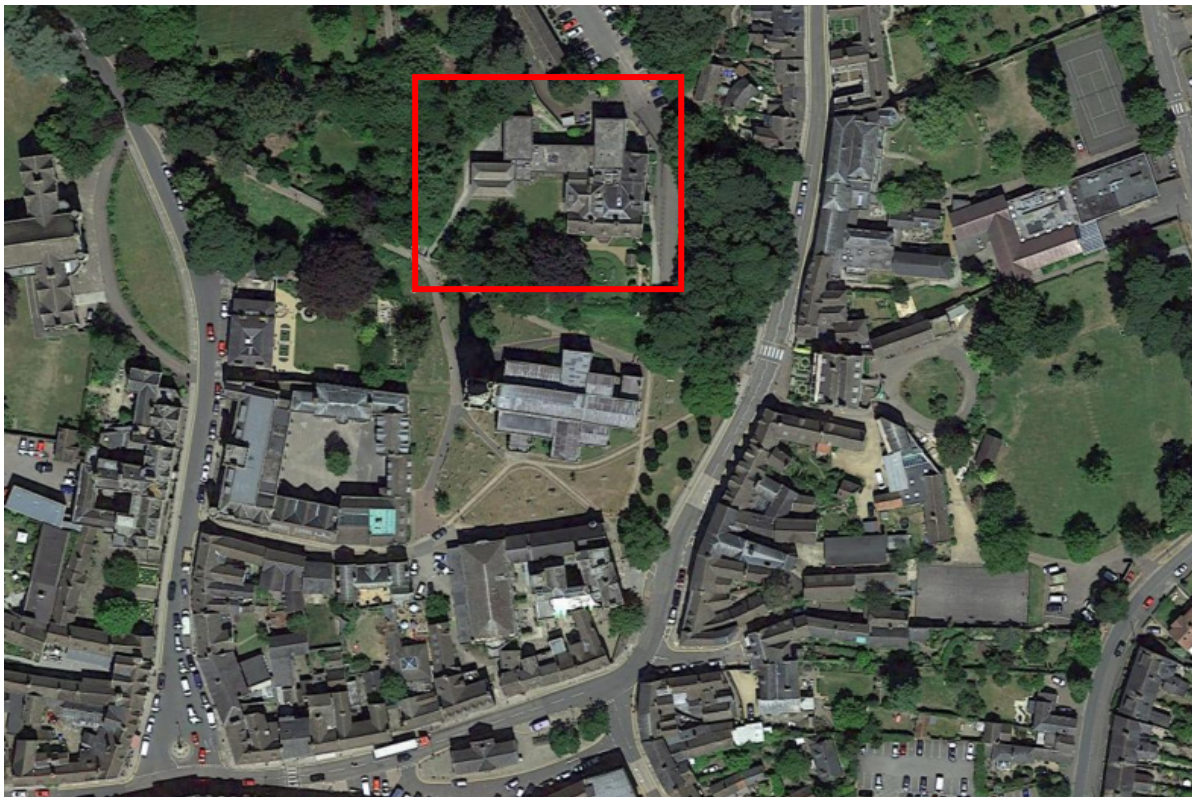

Figure 2: Location of The Gascoigne Building

The evaluation trenches were positioned in order to target the footprint of the proposed concert hall building (Figure 3). The area of investigation consisted of a level area of lawn, a paved area and an area of planting at a height of approximately 34m AOD. The British Geological Survey indicated that the site lay on bedrock of Blisworth Formation Limestone. No superficial deposits were recorded (BGS OpenGeoscience).

Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lay within the historic core of Oundle and within the Scheduled Monument (**1006619**) comprising a Saxon manorial enclosure. The enclosure represents a defended settlement occupied from the 6th to the 10th centuries and probably the location of the provincial capital of Oundle mentioned by Bede.

The site was also in the vicinity of Burystede Manor (Northamptonshire HER ref. **MNN15898**) the late Saxon and medieval manor held by the Abbot of Peterborough. In 1565, the manor comprised a hall, stable and malthouse and lay to the immediate north of the Gascoigne building. A dovecote was also mentioned in the late 13th / early 14th century. St Peter's Church (**MNN107353**) lay directly south of the site and is Grade I listed. It retains Saxon and Norman features but most of the structure dates from the 13th Century.

The Gascoigne building itself is the former late 17th century Rectory associated with St Peter's Church and is Grade II listed (**MNN1372108**).

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- 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 was unknown until archaeological work was undertaken, it was possible to determine some initial objectives derived from the *East Midlands Historic Research Framework* (Cooper 2006, Knight *et al*. 2012, https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/). The HER and the scheduled monument designation both suggested that there was potential for archaeological deposits from the early medieval to post-medieval periods. The evaluation therefore had the potential to contribute to the following research aims:

- *Early medieval.*
    - 6.2 Ritual and belief. 6.4 Rural settlement patterns. 6.6 Industry and trade
- *Medieval*
    - 7.2 Rural settlement. 7.3 Manors & manorial estates. 7.5 Religion. 7.6 Industry and trade. 7.7. The agrarian landscape and food-producing economy.
- *Post-Medieval – Industrial*
    - 8.6 Ecclesiastical buildings, estates and burials.

These research aims were identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. The research aims were re-assessed and updated during the fieldwork.

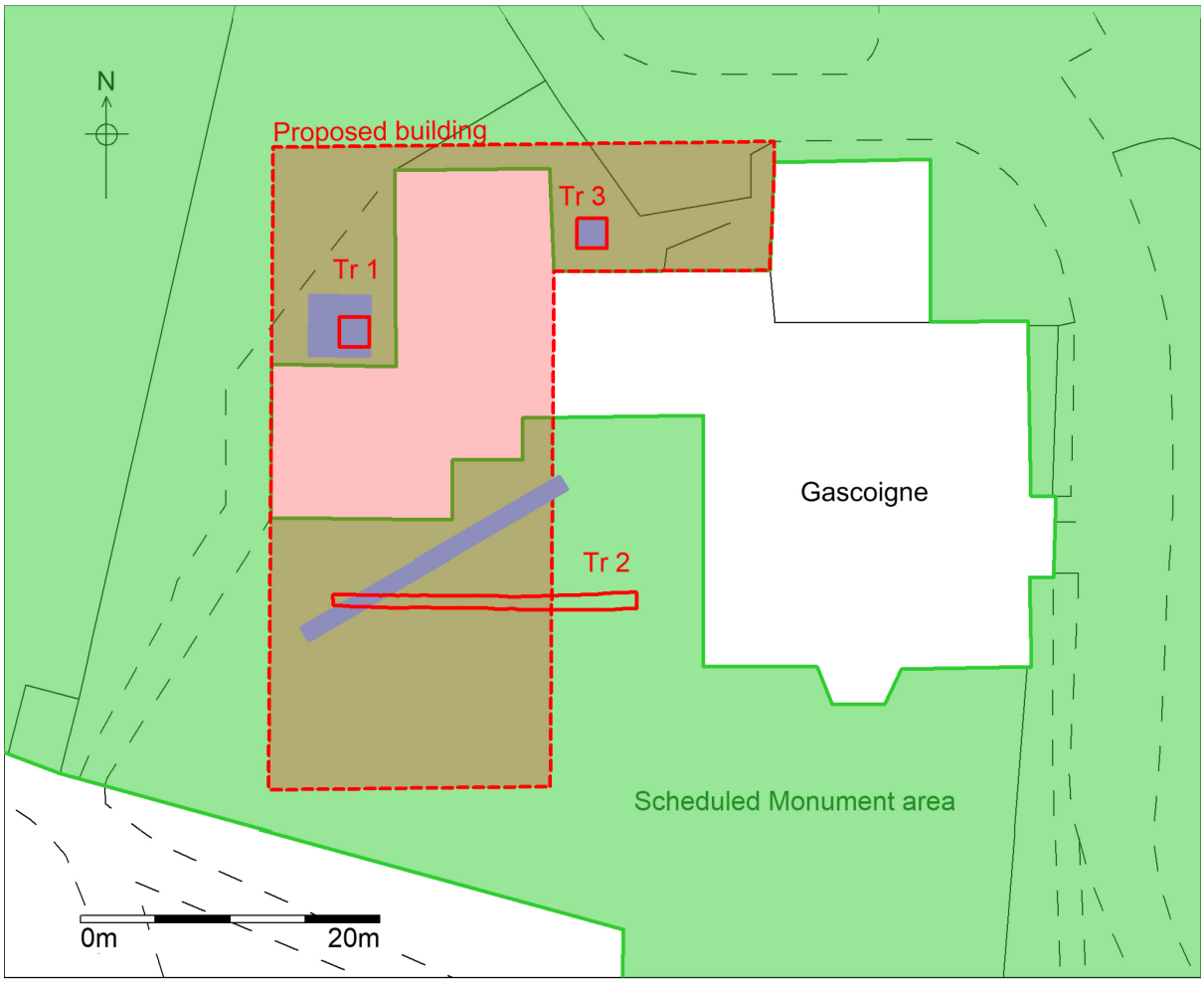

Figure 3: Plan showing proposed trench locations (blue) and excavated trenches (red).

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev. 2014a) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (rev. 2014b). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)* (ULAS 2019) agreed with the East Northamptonshire Council and Historic England. The work was monitored by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Advisor and the Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments. An accession number (ENN109826) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

A total of three trenches were excavated targeting the areas which will be most disturbed by the proposed building works (Figure 3). Trench 1, a 4m square trench in paving, positioned north-west of the building, was reduced to 2m square due to the identification of buried services in this area. Trench 2, a 20m long trench, in lawn south of the building, was excavated slightly further south of its proposed position due also to the presence of buried services. Trench 3, a 2m square trench, was excavated in an area of gravel and planting, to the north of the building.

The excavation of the trenches was carried out using a Kubota U10-3, rubber-tracked mini digger, fitted with a 0.8m wide ditching bucket. An experienced archaeologist supervised the work at all times (Figure 4). Trenches were excavated to the level of the natural sub-stratum or

to archaeological layers, whichever was reached first. All archaeological work was undertaken as specified within the WSI. Each trench was backfilled immediately after its archaeological potential was assessed.

Figure 4: Work in progress excavating Trench 3.

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to the west of the existing buildings in an area covered with concrete paving slabs. During the evaluation, in order to avoid modern services, it was decided that the trench would be reduced in size from 4m square to 2m square. Directly beneath the slabbed surface was a layer of modern hardcore and sand, 0.15m thick, overlying 0.4m of dark brown humic material (1), presumed to be garden soil (Table 1). No finds were recovered from soil (1). No subsoil was present and natural limestone (Natural 1) and an orange clay substratum (Natural 2) were found directly beneath soil (1) (Figure 5). The same natural substratum was recorded in Trenches 2 and 3.

Table 1: Summary of Trench 1.

Length	**Width**	**Area**
2m	2m	4m
Ground Surface	34.08m AOD	
Concrete Slabs	50mm	
Modern Hardcore	0.15m	
Garden Soil (1)	0.4m	
Top of Natural (below ground level)	0.6m	
Base of Trench (below ground level)	0.6m	

Figure 5: Trench 1. Looking west.

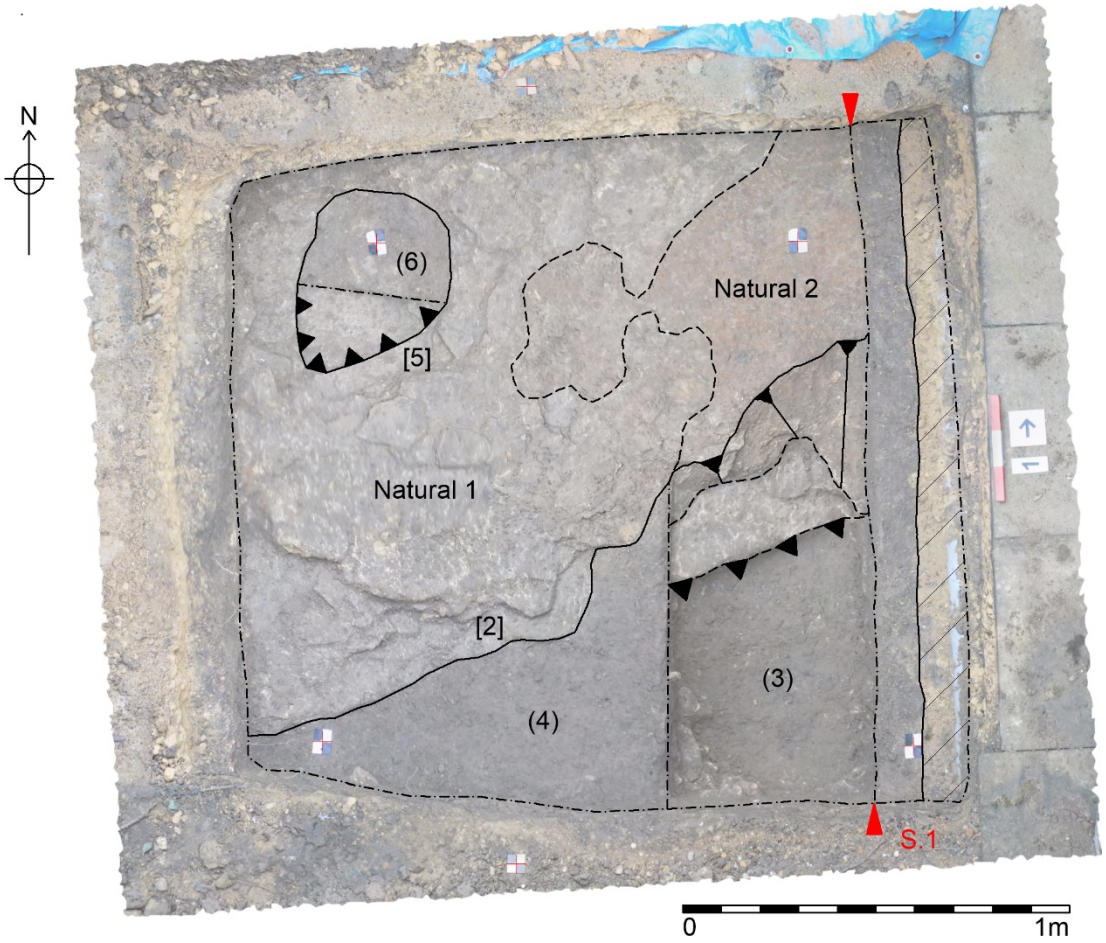

Figure 6: Plan of Trench 1.

Two potential archaeological features were seen cutting the natural geology, ditch [2] and a possible pit or posthole, [5] (Figure 6).

Ditch [2] was found along the south side of the trench running from south-west to north-east and continuing beyond the excavation. A 0.5m wide section was hand excavated to reveal a moderately sloping irregular cut at least 0.48 m deep. This was likely to form one side of the ditch. Two deposits, (3) and (4), were found to fill the ditch (Figure 7 and Figure 8). Fill (3), the lower of the two was a dark orange brown silty clay with small angular limestone pieces and was presumed to derive from the erosion of the feature's sides and/or erosion of upcast back into the ditch. This deposit was at least 0.2m thick. Fill (4), the upper fill, was a 0.38m thick deposit of dark brown/black clayey silt. Limestone pieces were less frequent than in fill (3) and the texture was more friable. Pottery of Saxon and medieval date, with a *TPQ* of *c.* AD 1100-1400, animal bone and iron working residue was found in these deposits, which were likely to have derived from the erosion of the ground surface in antiquity, and included small amounts of domestic and iron working waste.

Figure 7: Ditch [2]. Trench 1. Looking east.

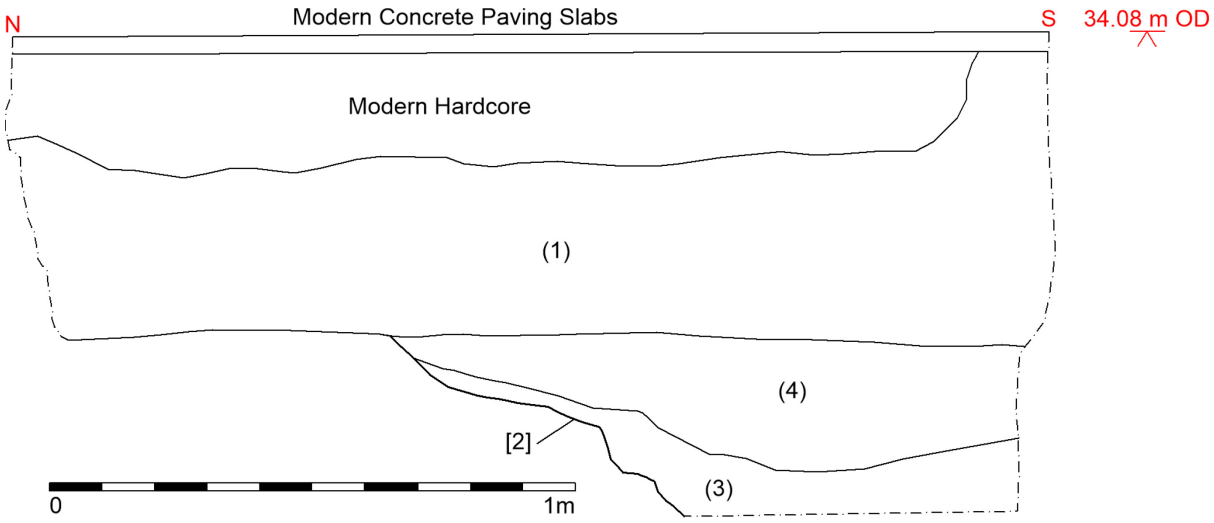

Figure 8: Section 1. Ditch [2]. Trench 1.

Feature [5] was sub-oval and measured 0.61m by 0.42m. A half section revealed a vertical sided cut with a flat base which was 70mm below the surface of the natural limestone into which it was cut. This feature may represent the base of a pit or posthole but may equally be a natural feature. It was filled with a grey brown clayey silt, (6), which was similar to soil (1) from which it was likely to have derived. No finds were recovered (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Feature [5]. Trench 1. Looking north.

Figure 10: Trench 2. Looking west (left) and east (right).

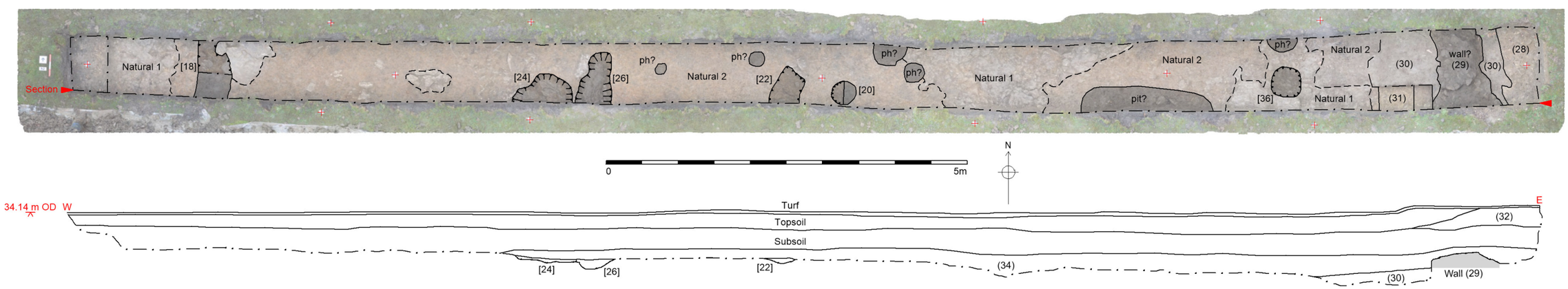

Figure 11: Plan and section of Trench 2.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the south of the existing buildings on an area of lawn. The trench was positioned further south of its proposed location due to the presence of modern services (Figure 10). The eastern end of the trench was positioned to target a visible earthwork consisting of a low bank, up to 3m wide, running along the side of the Gascoigne Building and continuing into the garden to the south for a further 10m.

The trench was found to have a high concentration of deposits and features likely to be archaeological in nature (Figure 11). Probable structural elements, including postholes, linear features and what was likely to be a partially robbed out wall were identified, as well as buried soil layers. A sample of these features and deposits were excavated in accordance with recommendations made by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments. Overall, features were very shallow, probably truncated, and were dug through the orange clay substratum (Natural 2) until they reached natural limestone (Natural 1).

Table 2: Summary of Trench 2.

Length		**Width**		**Area**		
20m		1m		20m		
Ground surface 34.14m OD	**0m (W)**	**5m**	**10m**	**15m**		**20m (E)**
Turf Line Depth	50mm	50mm	50mm	50mm	**Turf Line Depth**	50mm
Topsoil Depth	0.19m	0.22m	0.28m	0.17m	**Layer (32) Depth**	0.4m
Subsoil Depth	0.20m	0.24m	0.33m	0.42m	**Subsoil Depth**	0.3m
Top of Natural (below ground level)	0.44m	0.51m	0.66m	0.64m	**Layer (34) Depth**	0.3m
Base of Trench (below ground level)	0.44m	0.51m	0.70m	0.74m	**Base of Trench**	0.95m

Excavation removed 50mm of modern turf and a 0.2m to 0.3m thick layer of dark brown, silty topsoil (Table 2). Beneath was a mid-brown layer of clayey silt subsoil (33). This was similar to layer (1) in Trench 1 and probably represented the same buried garden soil.

At the east end of the trench, the turf immediately covered a layer of orange gravel (32). This was up to 0.3m deep and extended 0.77m into the trench before feathering out, beneath the topsoil. This gravel was identified as the origin of the visible earthwork and was likely to have been some sort of modern garden feature, terrace or garden path (Figure 12).

Beneath the gravel was a dark brown clayey silt (34). This was up to 0.3m thick and extend from the east end the trench for 14m, before feathering out (Figure 11). Soil (34) contained a small quantity of Saxon pottery and was observed to seal many of the archaeological features. It was similar to soil (13) in Trench 3. Layer (34) was excavated by machine; below it, a number of potential archaeological features and deposits were seen on top of or cutting the natural geology.

At the east end of the trench, feature (29) consisted of small, angular limestone pieces bonded with orange clay (Figure 12). It was 0.9m wide and stood up to 0.3m high. It likely represented a partially robbed-out wall running from north to south. East of the wall, deposit (28), a mixture of orange-brown clay and limestone was likely to represent construction material from the wall

core which was discarded after a robbing event, the more useable building stone having been removed off-site (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Gravel layer (32), wall (29) and soils (30) and (34). Trench 2. Looking south.

Figure 13: Wall (29). Trench 2. Looking east.

Wall (29) sat directly on top of soil (30), a mid-brown silty clay with very small limestone fragments. This extended from beneath the east end of the trench for 2.6m. A 0.3m wide sondage excavated through the layer found it to be 0.3m deep and appeared to fill a shallow depression in the natural. This soil may have represented a levelling or consolidation layer for the wall or may have been the remnant of an earlier bank. It produced a single sherd of Saxon pottery.

Beneath soil (30), was a yellow clay deposit, (31). This was 0.5m wide and at least 0.3m long but was not investigated (Figure 14).

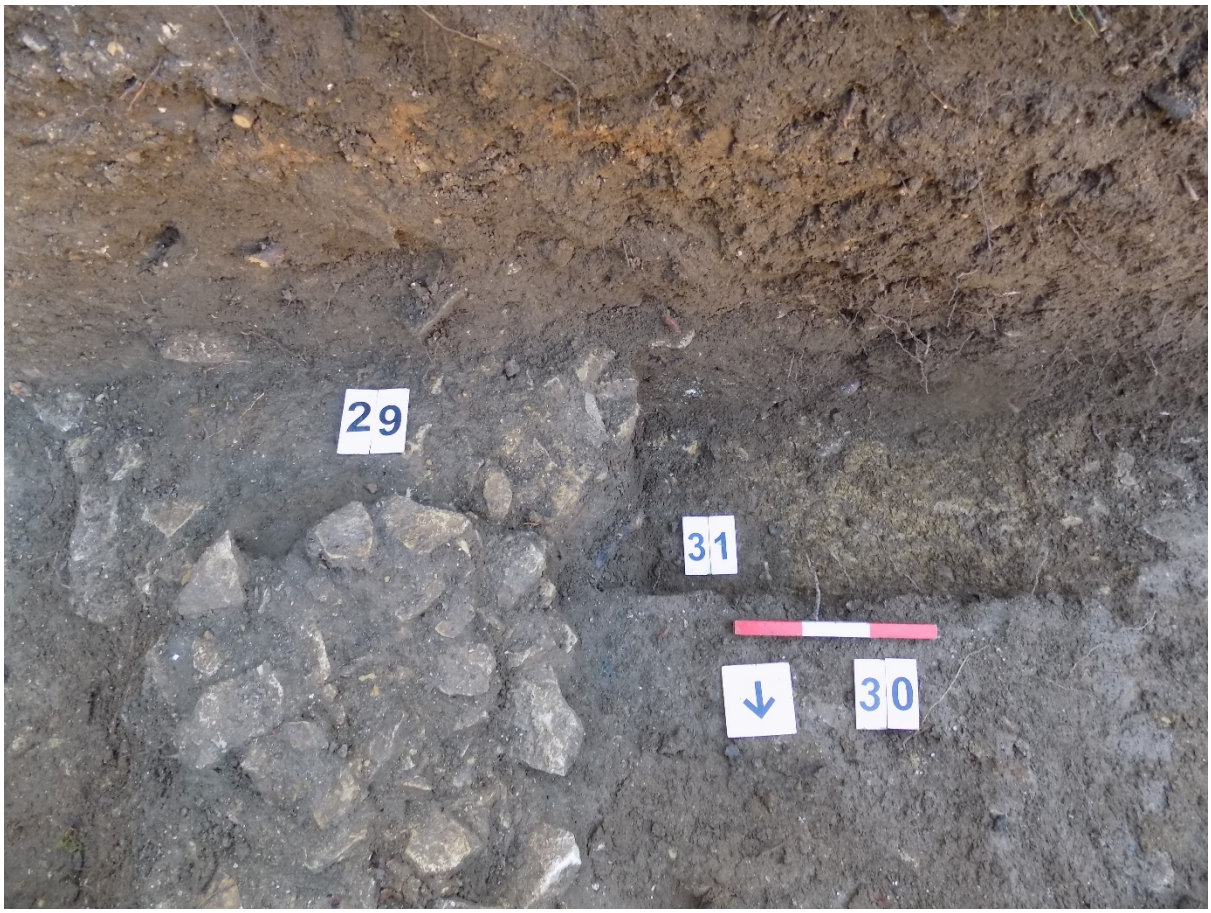

Figure 14: Wall (29), soil (30) and deposit (31). Trench 2. Looking south.

In the centre of the trench *c.*2m west of wall (29), feature [36] initially appeared to be linear in nature, however, excavation revealed that it was more likely to be two postholes, one in the centre of the trench (sample excavated) and one protruding from the north side of the trench (not investigated; Figure 11). A dark grey-brown clay silt (37) filled the sub-square cut, which was 0.4m in diameter and 0.2m deep. Fill (37) was not typical of post packing material and its dark, silty nature might suggest that it derived from the slow decay of a post and/or the subsequent erosion of ground surface material.

Towards the middle of the trench was a cluster of eight features which may have been post-holes and other structural elements. Four were sample excavated. Post-hole [20] was 0.3m in diameter and 50mm deep with shallow, concave sides and a concave base (Figure 15). Dark grey-brown clayey silt with charcoal flecks (21), filled the cut and produced a single sherd of

Saxon pottery. The fill was similar to (37) in posthole [36] and likely derived from similar processes.

Figure 15: Posthole [20]. Trench 2. Looking east.

Feature [22] protruded from the south side of the trench and appeared to be linear, with a somewhat square terminus . It was at least 0.58m long, 0.5m wide and 50mm deep, with shallow, concave sides and a flat base. A dark grey-brown, clayed silt fill (23) was excavated and a small quantity of Saxon pottery was recovered. Although very shallow, probably truncated, this feature may be the remains of a beam slot.

Feature [26] also extended from the south side of the trench. It too appeared linear in plan and shared a similar north/south alignment with feature [22]. The visible element was 0.7m long and 0.48m wide. A dark grey-brown, clay silt with charcoal flecks (27) filled a 0.22m deep cut which had shallow moderately sloping, concave sides and a flat base. The fill produced 11 sherds of Saxon pottery and some animal bone. Presumed to be domestic debris, this material may have been deliberately deposited and suggests the feature was deliberately backfilled (Figure 16).

Feature [24] was immediately west of [26] and again, was only partly visible within the trench. It extended 0.35m into the trench and was 0.9m wide. A dark grey-brown clayey silt (25) filled the 0.12m deep cut with shallow sides and an irregular base. The fill was similar to deposit (27) and produced similar remains including Saxon pottery, animal bone and charcoal flecks as well as a late medieval dress pin. The feature may have been a pit or posthole (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Features [26] and [24] dug through orange clay substratum until they reached natural limestone. Trench 2. Looking south.

Figure 17: Linear feature [18]. Trench 2. Looking south.

Finally, at the west end of the trench, another north/south linear feature [18] was identified. It was at least 0.9m long and 0.4m wide. Nearly 50% of the visible element was excavated, revealing an 80mm deep cut, with moderately sloping sides and an irregular base. A dark grey-brown clayey silt (19) filled the feature and produced animal bone. Feature [18] may represent a beam slot or the base of a ditch. The anthropogenic components of its fill may have arrived by means of deliberate deposition or through accumulation of waste materials after the useful life of the feature finished (Figure 17).

A number of other features in the trench were likely to be of archaeological origin. They were recorded in plan (Figure 11) but were not investigated due to the sampling strategy. All were filled with dark brown-black clayey silt.

Figure 18: Trench 3. Looking North.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 2m square (Figure 18), located in an area of planting and gravel to the north of the existing buildings. Further north, the ground dropped away abruptly to the car park. This trench was found to contain archaeological deposits which sealed the remains of a wall. Other features included a posthole and an unidentified negative feature. These were found in close association with the wall and were likely to be associated with it.

Some truncation of the archaeological deposits had occurred and there were pits containing demolition materials and post-medieval domestic debris. During the investigation, 0.1m of gravel was removed by hand down to a 50mm thick layer of concrete which was removed by

the mechanical digger using a toothed bucket. Immediately below the concrete was a 0.5m thick layer of light brown silty clay (12) which contained small pieces of coal, charcoal and ashy material (Table 3). This appeared to be made ground.

Table 3:Summary of Trench 3

Length	**Width**	**Area**
2m	2m	4m
Ground Surface	34.14m AOD	
Gravel	0.1m	
Concrete	50mm	
Soil (12)	0.5m	
Top of medieval activity (below ground level)	0.7m	
Top of Natural (below ground level)	0.88m	
Base of Trench (below ground level)	1m	

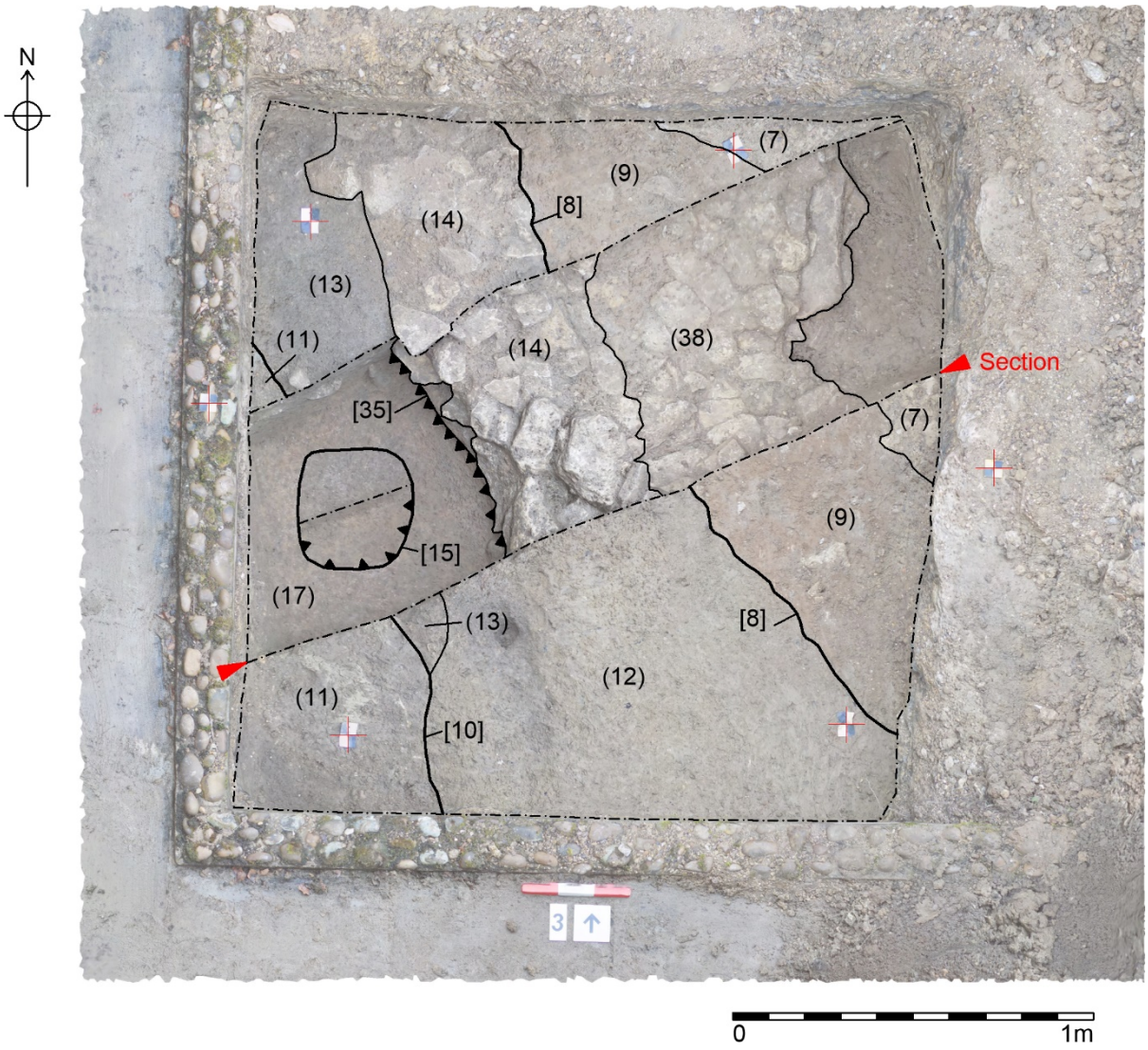

Figure 19: Plan of Trench 3.

Two features cut layer (12), pits [8] and [10] (Figure 19). Pit [8] was visible in the north-east corner of the trench and contained two fills. The lower fill (9) was orange clay containing 18th-century pottery and glass. Above, fill (7) was primarily demolition materials including plaster,

mortar and pieces of ceramic building material. Pit [10] could be seen in the south-west corner of the trench and contained a mixed fill of gravel and blue clay (11). Both features appeared to be modern.

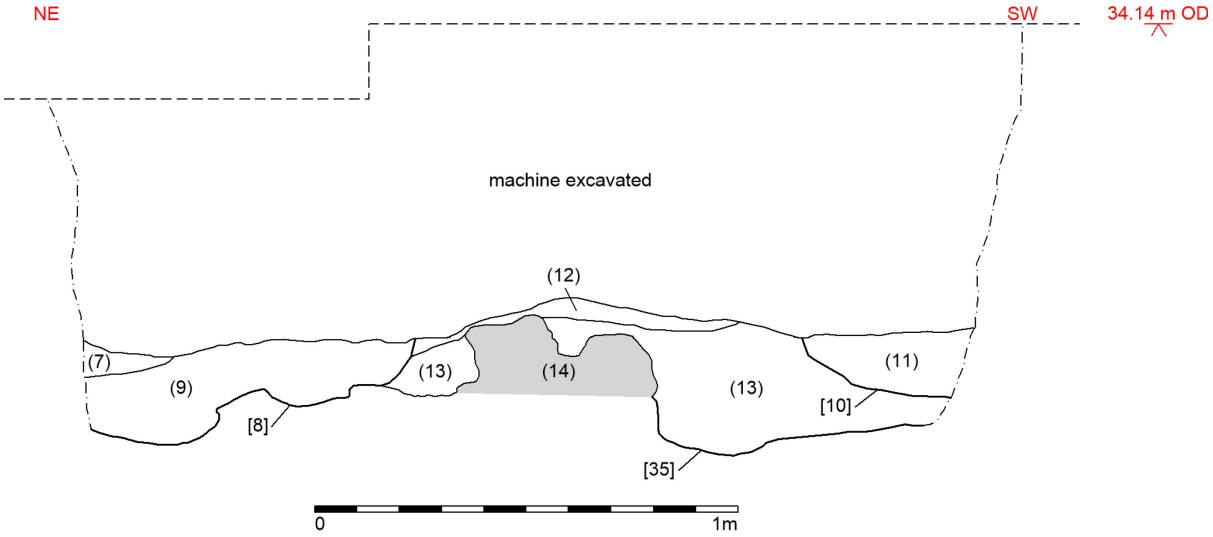

Figure 20: North-facing section across Trench 3.

Beneath layer (12) was dark brown-black clay silt (13), observed 0.7m below the modern ground surface. Excavation of a sondage across the trench found that soil (13) was similar to soil (34) in Trench 2, and produced a similar assemblage of finds including animal bone, iron working residue and pottery dated to *c.* AD 1150-1400.

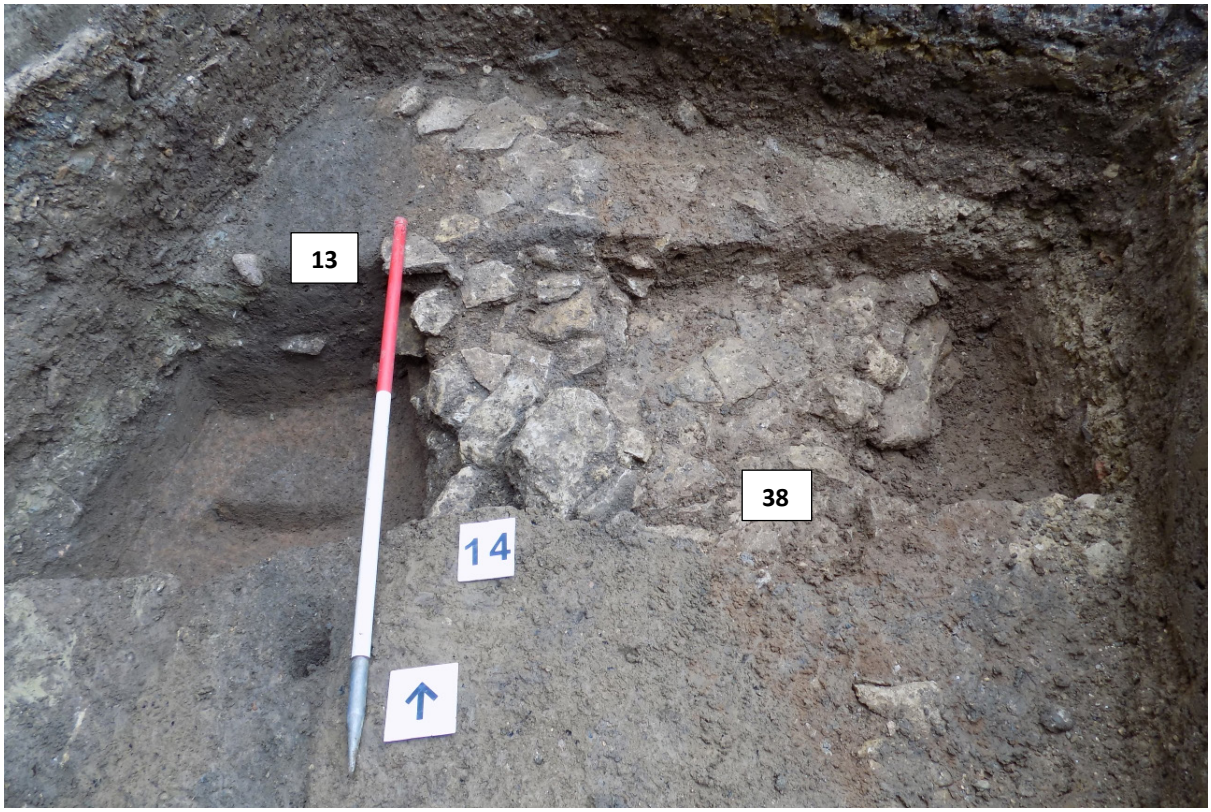

Figure 21: Wall (14) and layers (13) and (38). Trench 3. Looking north.

Soil (13) covered feature (14) which appeared to be the remains of a wall running from north-west to south-east. The wall was constructed in a similar manner to wall (29) in Trench 2 -

limestone with orange clay bonding material. However, the level of preservation in this trench was better. The masonry was rough and uncoursed and may have been wall core, with the facing stones removed, or foundation. The masonry stood 0.3m high, was 0.6m wide and was at least 1.3m in length (Figure 21).

North-east of the wall and stratigraphically earlier than it was a jumbled layer of orange clay and limestone (38). This was at least 0.7m wide, 0.8m long and 0.16m deep. It sat directly over the orange clay substratum (Natural 2), 1m below the modern ground surface and may be the foundation for wall (14) or the remains of an earlier masonry structure.

To the south-west, wall (14) sat directly on top of orange-brown clay (17), thought to be a mixed horizon of natural clay and soil. It produced a single sherd of medieval pottery with a *TPQ* of *c.* AD 1100-1400. A distinct, vertical cut [35] ran alongside the wall to a depth of 0.12m below its base. This appeared to be contemporary with the wall and may have been associated some sort of sunken featured structure (Figure 20). At its base was a possible post-hole [15] with a sub-square cut with shallow sides and a flat base, 0.35m in diameter and 80mm deep (Figure 22). It was filled with mid-grey-brown clayey silt (16) filled the feature and produced a single sherd of Saxon pottery.

Figure 22: Posthole [15]. Trench 3. Looking north west.

Finds

Ceramics *Deborah Sawday*

The assemblage was made up of 43 pottery sherds, weighing 231 grams, giving an average sherd weight of approximately 5.4 grams, Thirty three sherds, weighing 167 grams, with an average weight of just over 5 grams are in early or middle Saxon mineral or shell/limestone tempered fabrics, save for the two sherds discussed below which may be prehistoric or middle Saxon in date. However, the Saxon sherds are dated from c.400/450 to 850 AD; no co-joining fragments were found. All the Saxon material is represented by body sherds, save for the jar rims in contexts 4 and 27, which are similar to those recorded at Raunds (Blinkhorn 2009 fig.10.1.6 and fig.10.1.7).

The Saxon finds occurred exclusively in contexts 16, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30 and 34, and are presumed to be residual in contexts 3, 4 and 13, where they were found with medieval coarse shelly ware, Saxo Norman St Neots ware, and Stamford ware. Most of the Saxon material occurred in context 27, the assemblage of 11 sherds and included two of the jar rims noted above. The only finds from context 17 was a sherd of medieval oolitic ware dating from c. 1100 to 1400, and from context 9, part of bowl in white salt glazed stoneware, dating from 1720 to 1780.

Methodology

The pottery was examined using a hand lens only, hence the fabrics are not characterised in any detail. However, most of the sherds are reduced and, as at Burystead, tempered with fine sand or a coarse temper of crushed minerals. Eight of the sherds are in a shell or limestone fabric. Two sherds are of note: one which is c.10mm thick, from context 23, is in a coarse mineral and shell tempered fabric and is possibly a Middle Saxon Ipswich ware. Another shelly fragment in context 34 shows evidence of light scoring on the upper oxidised surface and may be a prehistoric scored ware.

Table 4: The pottery and tile by context.

Context	Trench	Feature	no	gr	Period	Fabric	Comments
Pottery							
3 [2]	1	Ditch	1	3	Medieval 1100-1400	Fine shell	hard fired thick walled
3 [2]	1	Ditch	1	3	Saxon	Fine/mica	Burnished exterior
4 [2]	1	Ditch	2	12	Saxon	Fine/mica	Burnished exterior
4 [2]	1	Ditch	1	11	Saxo Norman 800-1200	St Neots	Jar everted rim
9 [8]	3	Pit	2	15	Post med 1720-1780	Stoneware	bowl white salt glazed
13	3	Soil	1	16	Medieval 1100-1400	Shelly coarse	Necked jar rim
13	3	Soil	2	5	Medieval 1100-1400	Shelly coarse	
13	3	Soil	1	2	Medieval 900-1200	Stamford	White bodied
13	3	Soil	1	1	Medieval 1150-1250	Stamford	Copper glaze
13	3	Soil	2	7	Saxon	Shelly coarse	
16 [15]	3	Post-hole	1	2	Saxon	Fine/mica	
17	3	Soil	1	11	Medieval 1100-1400	oolitic	Hand made
21 [20]	2	Post-hole	1	2	Saxon	Fine/mica	burnished
23 [22]	2	Beam-slot	1	14	Saxon	Coarse rock tempered	Thick walled – possibly middle Saxon Ipswich ware

Context	Trench	Feature	no	gr	Period	Fabric	Comments
23 [22]	2	Beam-slot	1	4	Saxon	Coarse/mica	
23 [22]	2	Beam-slot	1	11	Saxon	Coarse rock tempered	
25 [24]	2	Post-hole	7	20	Saxon	Fine/mica	Body/rim
25 [24]	2	Post-hole	1	9	Saxon	Coarse/limestone/shell	
27 [26]	2	Linear	2	11	Saxon	coarse	Rim, (Blinkhorn 2009 fig 10.1.6)
27 [26]	2	Linear	1	1	Saxon	fine	
27 [26]	2	Linear	1	9	Saxon	Shell/limestone	
27 [26]	2	Linear	1	1	Saxon	fine	
27 [26]	2	Linear	6	47	Saxon	Shell/limestone	Rim (Blinkhorn 2009 fig 10.1.7)
30	2	Soil	1	4	Saxon	Fine/mica	
34	2	Soil	1	3	Saxon	Shelly/mica	Partially oxidised, ext scored, pos. Prehistoric
34	2	Soil	1	6	Saxon	Coarse/mica	burnished
34	2	Soil	1	1	Saxon	Fine/mica	burnished
Floor tile							
33	2	Subsoil	2	85	Medieval	oolitic	Green glazed

Figure 23: Dress pin with wound wire head. Length 25mm.

Other finds *Nicholas Cooper*

A copper alloy dress pin with a wound wire head was also recovered from Sample 4 from posthole (25) [24] (Figure 23). Pins of this kind became very common during the later medieval period, 14th-15th centuries, for tightly bound hairstyles and the attachment of veils. It would therefore suggest the context dates to that period rather than the Middle Saxon as suggested by the pottery.

A single flint flake and six fragments of post medieval or modern bottle glass (Table 5) were also found.

Table 5: The other finds

Flint	Number
(34)	1 flake
Metal	
(25)	1 Cu alloy dress pin
Glass	
(6)	6 bottle glass post medieval/modern

Iron Working Residue *Nicholas Cooper & Rachel Small*

A small assemblage of 377g of iron working residues was hand collected from contexts (4), (13), (17) and (34) - Table 6. Residues were also extracted from all seven bulk soil samples.

Methodology

Hand collected material was examined in hand specimen and additional material was extracted from the coarse and fine fractions of bulk soil samples and examined under low power microscopy.

Table 6: Semi-quantified assessment record of iron working residues from bulk soil samples.

Context	Date	Sample part	Coarse fraction assess	Fine fraction assess
Tr.3 (13) layer	Medieval	1.2	2	2
Tr.1 (4) [2] ditch	Medieval	2.1	2	2
Tr.2 (19) [18] linear	Probably Saxon	3.1	1	2
Tr.2 (25) [24] posthole	Mid Saxon+	4.1	1	2
Tr.2 (27) [26] linear	Saxon	5.2	1	2
Tr.2 (21) [20] posthole	Saxon	6.1	2	2
Tr.2 (23) [22] terminus	Saxon	7.1	2	2

Key: 1 = 0-10 items, 2 = 10-50 items, 3 = 50+ items

Analysis

The hand collected fragments from (13) totalling 244g are the most informative about iron smelting activity in the medieval period, including a fragment of iron tap slag (Figure 24) and a fragment of iron slag from a hearth or furnace (Figure 25).

The material extracted from the bulk soil samples was semi-quantitatively assessed, as shown in Table 6. All seven samples produced results; in many cases containing between 10-50 items, indicating smelting and/or forging during both the Saxon and medieval periods.

The material from the coarse fractions predominantly comprised more fragments of iron slag indicative of smelting and forging, whilst the fine fractions produced mainly flakes of hammerscale, indicative of forging, which were noticeably larger from Saxon context (23).

Figure 24: Iron tap (smelting) slag from (13) showing flowing appearance on top (left) and density in section (right).

Figure 25: Iron hearth or furnace bottom from (13) showing bubbly upper surface (left) and flat, rough underside (right). Its flat, thin appearance means that it might be from the side wall, possibly from around a blow hole.

Statement of potential

Iron working during the Saxon and medieval periods was a significant industry in the East Midlands, in areas such as Rockingham Forest, but is poorly understood, and therefore, any opportunity to study stratified evidence of it in detail is worth pursuing (Vince 2006, 178). During the medieval period, evidence is known for iron working in Oundle Wood (Lewis 2006, 205), and the opportunity here to see if this activity extends back into the Saxon period is an important one. Further field work is likely to uncover evidence with significant research potential.

The Animal Remains *Jennifer Browning & Rachel Small*

The trial trenching produced a hand-recovered assemblage of animal bone numbering 78 fragments. Further bones were retrieved from the bulk environmental samples. The animal bones were catalogued and assessed to evaluate preservation and variety, which will provide an indication of the faunal potential, should the site progress to excavation.

Table 7: Provenance of bones.

Context & sample	Cut	Feature	Hand-recovered	CF >4mm	FF <4mm	Flot
(3)	[2]	medieval Ditch	5			
(4), Sample 2	[2]	Saxon Ditch	10	Y		Y
(13), Sample 1		Soil (medieval)	17	Y		Y
(17)		Soil (medieval)	2			
(19), Sample 3	[18]	Linear undated	2	Y		
(23), Sample 7	[22]	Saxon beam-slot		Y		
(25)		Post hole (Saxon)	7			
(21), Sample 6	[20]	Saxon post-hole		Y		
(27), Sample 5	[26]	Linear (Saxon)	28	Y	Y	Y
(30)		Soil (Saxon)	7			

Provenance

Bones were recovered from ditches, layers and post-holes dating from the Saxon to the medieval period (Table 7). This reflects the type of features on the site but also suggests that there is good potential for bone survival within them.

The Assemblage

Surface condition was assessed, following Harland *et al.* (2003), Although none of the bones were in 'excellent' condition, 59% of the assemblage was in 'good' condition ('lacks fresh appearance but solid; very localized flaky or powdery patches'), with 40% in a 'fair' state and only a single bone in poor condition. This permitted identification and examination for butchery marks, pathologies and other modifications. Two bones were gnawed, including a cattle scapula, gnawed by dogs and a goose fircula, with smaller punctures probably from a cat. An undiagnostic calcined bone was present in context (27) and there were further burnt fragments among the sieved samples, suggesting that waste from hearth was incorporated into the feature fills.

Sheep and goat bones are difficult to separate, however, since sheep are more common in archaeological assemblages of these periods, the term 'sheep' will be used in this report. As well as the main domestic stock - cattle, sheep and pig - a cat humerus, domestic fowl and goose were also present in the hand-recovered assemblage (*Table* 8). The environmental samples produced bones from fish, including herring, eel and cyprinids (freshwater fish), as well as wild birds, amphibians and rodents and remains of egg shell (Table 9 to Table 11).

As it is a small assemblage, ageing evidence was limited, however all cattle epiphyses were fused (n=4). There was only one example each for sheep and pig: both were fused. However, a pig mandible fragment appeared juvenile and foetal mammal bones were noted among the coarse fraction (Table 9). A pig mandible from context (13) had an erupting third molar and was classed as sub-adult (after O'Connor 2003, 160 table 31).

Butchery, in the form of chop marks was noted on cattle, large mammal and medium mammal bones from contexts (13) and (27).

A small, smooth, circular bulge was noted on the distal end of a goose radius from context (27). The bone shaft was not distorted and it may represent a condition such as an ossified haemotoma.

Table 8: Summary of taxa identified in each context.

Context	cattle	sheep/ goat	pig	cat	domestic fowl	goose	*Total identified*	lge mml	med mml	unident	Total
3	1						***1***	1		3	5
4		1					***1***		9		10
13	2	1	1			1	***5***	10	2		17
17		1					***1***		1		2
19							***0***	1	1		2
25	2						***2***		5		7
27	4		1			2	***7***	10	11		28
30		2	1	1	1	1	***6***		1		7
Total	**9**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**4**	***23***	**22**	**30**	**3**	**78**

KEY: Lge mml= large mammal (indeterminate cattle/horse/red deer size) and Med mml (sheep/goat/pig/dog size).

Table 9: Bones in the coarse fraction >4mm.

Sample/part	Bone	Burnt Bone	Fish Bone	Notes
1.2	2	1	0	Bone inc. foetal medium mammal thoracic vert, bird sternum, humerus, medium mammal mandible frag
2.1	2	1	0	Pig astragalus, pig premolar tooth frag, medium mammal pelvis, juvenile bird coracoid, rodent? Vert
3.1	1	0	0	Bone all frags. Lots of oyster frags - assumed majority fossilised
4.1	2	1	0	Bone frags.
5.2	2	1	1	Pike and eel vert. Eel dentary. Crushed fish vert. Passeriform bones inc. radius, ulna, coracoid, tarsometatursus, humerus. Large bird digit, medium mammal skull frags and vert, cattle tooth frags
6.1	1	0	0	Bone frags.
7.1	1	1	0	Bone frags. Oyster frags assumed fossilised.

KEY: 1 = 0 - 10 items; 2 = 10-50 items; 3 = 50 + items.

Table 10: Bones in the fine fraction <4mm.

Sample/part	Small Bone	Fish Bone	Fish Scale	Notes
1.2	0	0	0	Scanned. Shell = egg.
2.1	1	0	0	Scanned..
3.1	0	0	0	Scanned. Lots of oyster frags - assumed majority fossilised .
4.1	1	0	0	Scanned. Small bone inc. amphibian. Shell = egg
5.2	0	1	1	Scanned. Fish = rib/fin/spine.
6.1	0	0	0	Scanned. Very small c. 10 ml?
7.1	0	0	0	Scanned. Oyster frags assumed fossilised.

KEY: 1 = 0 - 10 items; 2 = 10-50 items; 3 = 50 + items.

Table 11: Bones in the flot.

Sample/part	Small Bone	Fish Bone	Fish Scale	Notes
1.2	1	1	0	Rodent bones and cyprinid vertebrae
2.1	1	0	0	Rodent bones
3.1	0	0	0	
4.1	1	1	0	1 x cyprinid vertebrae
5.2	1	0	1	Passeriforme bird bone +. Small = rodent
6.1	1	0	0	
7.1	0	0	0	

KEY: 1 = 0 - 10 items; 2 = 10-50 items; 3 = 50 + items.

Archaeological Context and Potential

The site lay within the historic core of Oundle and within a Scheduled Saxon manorial enclosure, representing a defended settlement occupied from the 6th to the 10th centuries and probably the location of the provincial capital of Oundle mentioned by Bede. The site was also in the vicinity of Burystede Manor, which in 1565, the manor comprised a hall, stable and malthouse and lay to the immediate north of the Gascoigne building. A dovecote was also mentioned in the late 13th / early 14th century. This archaeological context elevates the assemblage and is reflected in the range and variety of bones recovered, which include birds

and fish, as well as mammals. There is also evidence for cat and commensal species, such as rodents. Wild birds may reflect both diet and the local environment.

Saxon bone assemblages are rare and the quality of this one, including evidence for red and white meat, birds, eggs and fish, suggests a rich diet. The study of bone assemblages of this date is needed to address a current gap in the evidence (Monckton 2006, 286). If further excavation produced greater quantities of material, it could be compared with sites such as Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (Albarella and Johnstone 2000) and Flixborough (Loveluck and Dobney 1998), considered a higher status site, as well as more recent work carried out by Holmes (2014).

The Plant Remains *Rachel Small*

A total of seven samples were taken from linear features, pits, postholes and a layer. These features dated to the mid-Saxon and medieval periods. This report presents an assessment of the charred plant remains recovered from the samples, together with a discussion of what this can potentially tell us about past diet, crop husbandry strategies and environment at the site. Other finds recovered from the samples are discussed in their relevant specialist reports.

Methodology

The samples were processed in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm sieve. The flotation fractions (flots) were left to air dry and then sorted for plant remains and other artefacts under an x10-40 stereo microscope. The heavy residues were also air dried and then passed through a 4mm sieve. The over 4mm fraction was sorted in its entirety for plant remains and artefacts. The under 4mm fractions were scanned and subsequently sorted for animal bones. Plant remains were identified by comparison to modern reference material available at ULAS and their names follow Stace (1991). All fragments were counted, except for very small poorly preserved fragments of cereal grains.

Results

Charred plant remains were present in all of the samples except for sample 4 which was taken from a possible the fill **(25)** of pit/posthole **[24]**. These were recovered from the flots, none were present in the heavy residues. The plant remains recovered were of good preservation. They were generally present in low numbers; the highest quantity was equivalent to three items per litre and was recovered from an upper fill **(4)** of ditch **[2]** dating to the medieval period (see Table 12).

The mid-Saxon samples contained a small number of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum* spp.) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) grains, and a possible rye (*Secale cereale* L.) grain. A barley rachis internode was identified in sample 7 which was from the fill **(23)** of a possible beam slot **[22]**. Small fragments of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana* L.) were also present in two samples. Only two types of wild seed were identified: large grass (Poaceae) and timothy (*Phleum* spp.)

The medieval samples contained marginally more remains. Free-threshing grains were most commonly identified alongside a barley and oat (*Avena* spp.) grain, the latter could be of the wild or cultivated variety. A free-threshing wheat rachis internode was also present in layer **(13)**. Wild seeds identified included: vetch (*Vicia* spp.), ribgrass (*Plantago lanceolata* L.), goosefoot (*Chenopodium* spp.) and large grass.

Table 12: Charred plant remains recovered from the flots.

Sample	**1**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Context	13	4	19	27	21	23
Cut	N/A	2	18	26	20	22
Trench	3	1	2	2	2	2
Feature type	Soil layer	Ditch	Linear	Possible linear	Posthole	Possible terminus of linear feature
Period	Medieval	Medieval	Probably Saxon	Saxon	Saxon	Saxon
Grain						
***Avena* sp. (oat)**		1				
***Hordeum vulgare* L. (barley)**		1	1			1
cf. *Secale cereale* L. (rye)						1
***Triticum* sp. free-threshing (wheat)**	8	12		3		3
Indet. cereal	1	4	1			
Chaff						
***Triticum* sp. free-threshing (wheat) rachis**	1					
***Hordeum vulgare* L. (barley) rachis**						1
***Corylus avellana* L. (hazelnut)**					1	1
Wild seed						
Poaceae (grass) large	2	3		1		
Vicia/Lathyrus (Vetch/vetchling)	1					
***Vicia* sp. (vetch)**		1				
***Plantago lanceolata* L. (ribgrass)**		1				
***Chenopodium* sp. (goosefoot)**		1				
***Phleum* sp. (timothy)**			1			1
Total	**13**	**24**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**8**
Volume (L)	7	9	5	8	1	5
Items per litre	2	3	1	1	1	2

*Note: no plant remains were present in sample 4, which was taken from the fill (25) of pit/posthole [24], and was six litres in volume dating to the mid-Saxon period.

Discussion

The charred plant remains present from both periods are indicative of domestic waste from preparing and consuming food that accumulated in small quantities. If further excavation is undertaken at the site, sampling is highly recommended for charred plant remains. Environmental evidence is generally under-represented for the Saxon period and material from a high-status site would significantly add to the regional data set (see Monckton 2006, 279). This could provide insight into differences between high and low status diets and the timings of the introduction of free-threshing wheats (bread and rivet wheat) (*Ibid*.).

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the investigation found that the concentration of archaeological features and deposits in all three trenches was high (Figure 26) and that their preservation was, on the whole, quite

good. A relatively large amount of Saxon and medieval pottery was recovered and most of the features examined yielded dateable material.

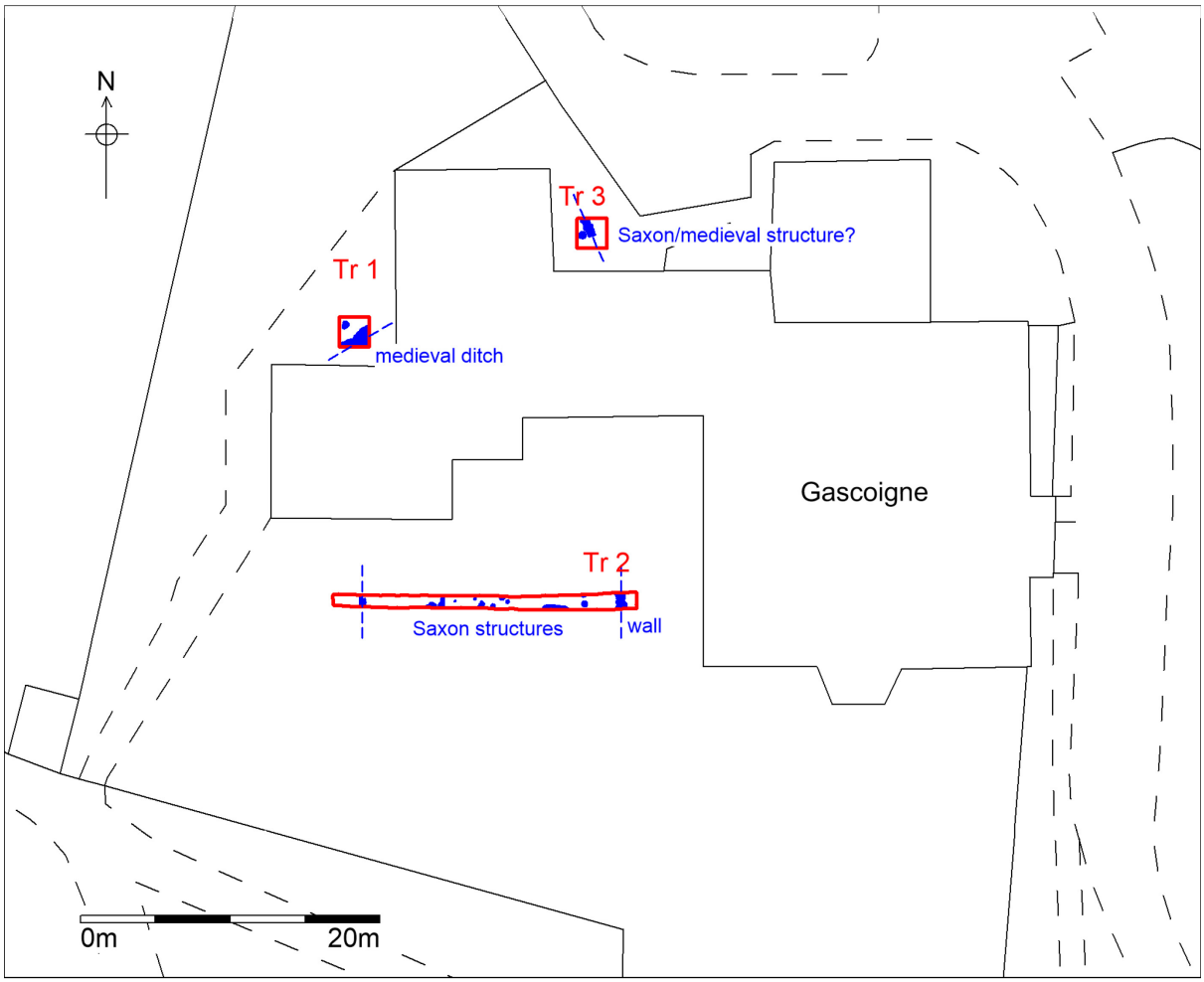

Figure 26: Plan showing the main Saxon and medieval features.

Two features of note were identified in Trench 1: a possible posthole or the base of a pit, which remained undated, and part of a large ditch. Pottery from the ditch gave its infilling a *TPQ* of the 12th – 14th century but the range of material spanned both the Saxon and medieval period. A thick layer of garden soil was found to seal the archaeological remains.

Trench 2 revealed a high concentration of deposits and features, all probably of Saxon date. For the most part, these appeared to be structural elements: post-holes, linear features and what was likely to be a partially robbed out wall, as well as buried soil layers. A sample of these features and deposits was excavated in accordance with recommendations made by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments. Although many of the features were extremely truncated, many produced pottery, animal bone, charred plant remains and iron working residue. A dark, humic soil also containing Saxon pottery sealed many of the features. This in turn was sealed by a thick layer of garden soil, similar to that seen in Trench 1.

The presence of a later medieval dress pin in one of the 'Saxon' features is problematic and would suggest that it was of later date than the pottery suggested. However, the feature appeared to be securely stratified with other Saxon features beneath a soil layer which also only produced Saxon pottery. No other medieval finds were recovered from these features. Therefore, the pin's presence is more likely to be a result of contamination, either from

bioturbation or during the excavation of the trench/feature, perhaps dropping down from a higher garden soil layer as the trench was being dug.

The remains of a wall was identified in Trench 3. This was constructed from similar materials to the wall in Trench 2 but preservation was better. Soil containing Saxon and medieval pottery, with a *TPQ* of the late 12th – 14th century, covered the wall, whilst a post-hole next to it, at the base of a sunken feature, produced a single sherd of Saxon pottery. This group of features was possibly related and part of some larger structure. Some truncation of the archaeological deposits had occurred in this trench through post-medieval and modern pitting.

Most of the features in the three trenches represented habitation and associated domestic and iron working activity, both smelting and forging, dating to the early to middle Saxon period (*c.* AD 450-850). Much of this appears to relate to timber structures but the presence of crude stone walls in Trenches 2 and 3, both of which remain undated but could be contemporary with the post-holes, is unusual and quite rare for Saxon structures. Animal bones and charred plant remains are well-preserved, including evidence for red and white meat, birds, eggs and fish, and show a diverse diet, typical of a high-status site. This activity is probably earlier than or contemporary with the earliest known mention of Oundle, recorded by Bede in reference to St Wilfred, Bishop of York, who was reputedly visiting a monastery in the town when he died in AD 709.

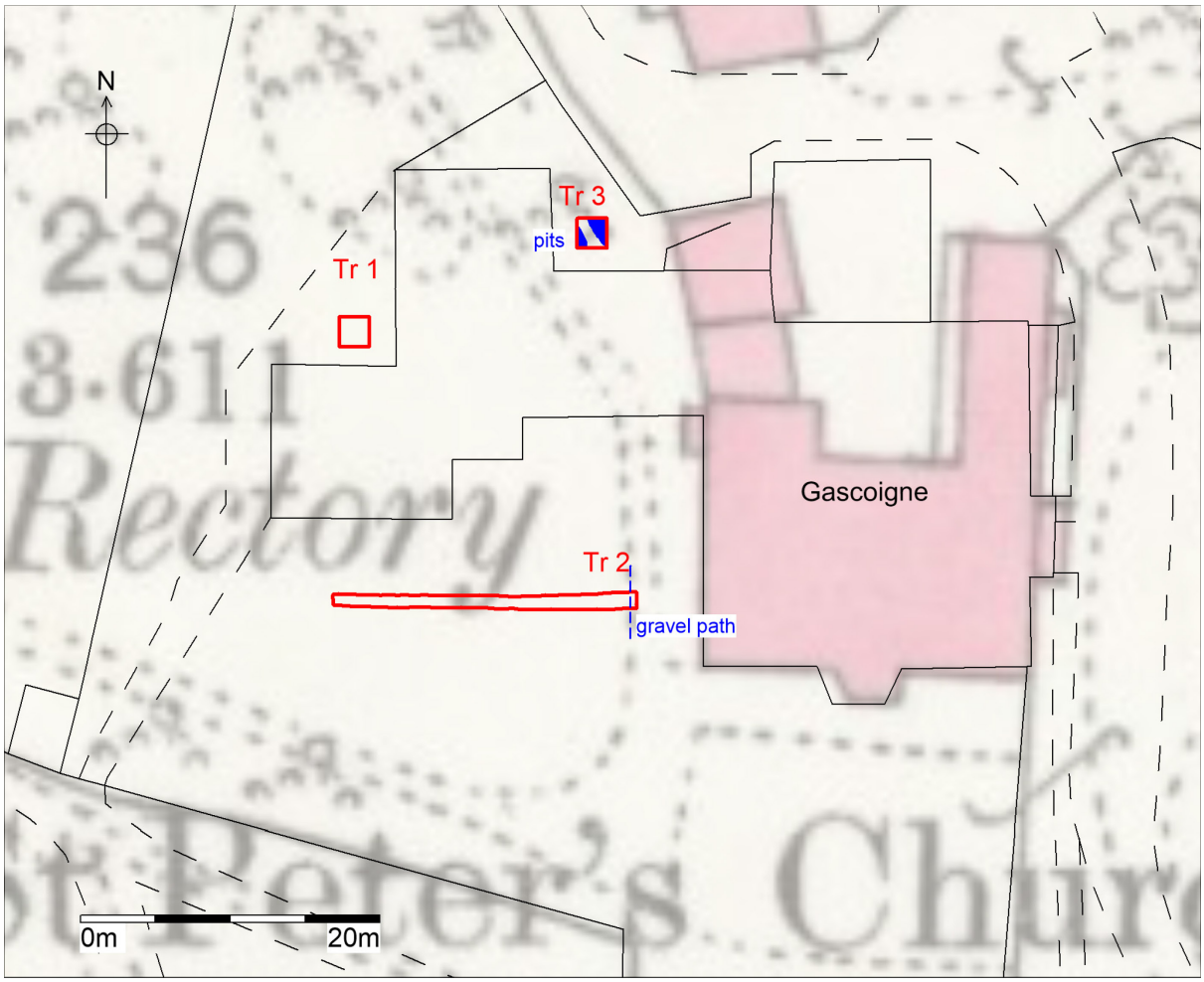

Figure 27: Plan showing the main post-medieval features.

Background map: 1st edition (1886) 25" Ordnance Survey map of Northamptonshire (Sheet XIX.5).

Later Saxon and medieval activity, dating to the 9th-14th century, also appears to be present. No evidence was recovered that suggested this continued beyond the 14th century but this can probably be related to Burystede Manor, the late Saxon and medieval manor held by the Abbot of Peterborough. Noticeably, medieval activity was only observed in the two northern trenches (1 and 3) close to the documented location of some of the manor buildings.

Later activity and thick garden soils were of 18th-century date or later and were probably associated with the Gascoigne building, the late 17th century Rectory for St Peter's Church (Figure 27). The first edition 25" Ordnance Survey map of Oundle (published in 1886) shows the area investigated to be garden to the west of the Rectory and a raised gravel path observed at the east end of Trench 2 coincides with a path through the garden.

The identification of Saxon and medieval activity within the footprint of the proposed building is noteworthy. Well-preserved Saxon sites with good artefact and ecofact assemblages are rare and under-represented, and further investigation would significantly add to the regional data set. However, any development of the site will likely have a significant impact on the underlying archaeology and the Scheduled Monument.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will initially be held by ULAS and will be transferred to the Northants ARC as soon as the facility becomes available with accession number ENN109826. It consists of the following: an unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No, 2020-111), a site indices, trench recording sheets, context sheets, orthomosaic photographs of trenches (plans & sections), CAD plans, digital photographs with contact sheets, and finds (flint, pottery, glass, industrial residues, animal bone etc.)

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

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