

**An Archaeological Evaluation
at The Ridings,
4 Moles Lane, Seaton, Rutland
(SP 9011 9813)**

Gerwyn Richards

For: Mr and Mrs. Cockbill

Planning Application No: FUL/2002/0972/9/MG

Checked by Project Manager

Signed:Date:.....

Name:

**University of Leicester
Archaeological Services**

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

Report 2004-161 2004

**An Archaeological Evaluation at The Ridings, Moles Lane,
Seaton, Rutland (SP 9011 9813)**

Contents

	Summary	1
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Methodology	2
3.	Results	2
4.	Topographical Survey	4
5.	Conclusion	5
	References	

Figures

Figure 1 Site location plan

Figure 2 Detailed Location Plan Showing Ridings Farm

Figure 3 Trench Location and Surviving Earthworks

Appendix The pottery and miscellaneous finds from an evaluation at Moles Lane,
Seaton, Rutland.
D. Sawday

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Ridings, Moles Lane, Seaton, Rutland (SP 9011 9813)

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Cockbill to undertake an archaeological evaluation on ground adjacent to the Ridings, Seaton (NGR SP 9011 9813) in advance of the construction of a tennis court. A previous desk-based assessment, also commissioned by Mr and Mrs Cockbill showed that the site is located within the boundaries of the known Saxon and medieval village and archaeological remains are situated within the vicinity.

Earthworks exist within the field earmarked for development, it is thought that these earthworks may relate to former fishponds in the area, and could be associated with the known fishponds that are extent some 100 metres to the south. Previous evaluation within the area to the north of the site (ULAS Report 2003-161) has revealed archaeological of a possible medieval structure, as well as later Anglo-Saxon and early medieval activity and thus there is high potential for similar remains to exist within the site area.

Two trenches were machine excavated within the development area. Trench 1 was located within the area of least impact to ascertain the depth of any buried archaeology and Trench 2 was located where the greatest disturbance was to occur.

Both trenches failed to uncover any archaeologically significant remains, however a small amount of medieval pottery was recovered from both trenches during machining.

1. Introduction

1.1 University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Cockbill to undertake an archaeological evaluation prior to the construction of a new tennis court at The Ridings, Moles Lane, Seaton (NGR SP 9011 9813). The Ridings is located to the south of the village core on a south facing slope, dropping down into the Welland Valley (Fig. 1), the main complex of farm buildings stands on a natural terrace on the hillside with evidence for some man made terracing also within the area. The underlying geology consists of Northamptonshire Sand Ironstone and possibly Liassic clay (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 157).

1.2 The tennis court is to be built to the east of the existing buildings (Fig.2), a site visit carried out during the preparation of a desk-based assessment (ULAS Report no 2003-161) indicated that the proposed tennis court lies almost totally within a hollow defined by the surrounding slopes, a number of medieval fishponds were also identified, including two approximately 100 metres down slope, to the south. It is possible, therefore, that this hollow may also be a medieval fishpond.

2. Methodology

2.1 Initially two trenches were excavated within the proposed development area; both were excavated by JCB with toothless ditching bucket down to the top of archaeological deposits. Trench 1 was located towards the southern edge of the proposed development, the area where the least amount of earthmoving was going to take place, in order to ascertain the depth of any buried archaeology and whether it would in fact be affected by the ground works within this area.

2.2 Trench 2 was located on the northern edge of the proposed development, where the most ground disturbance was going to take place, the formation level at this end of the site was to be approximately 1500mm below the existing ground level, and any preserved archaeology above this level would, therefore, be affected

3. Results

3.1 Trench 1

Interval	0m	2m	4m	6m	8m	10m	12m
Ground OD	74.23	74.01	73.93	73.85	73.77	73.66	73.50
Topsoil Depth	73.97	73.74	73.58	73.46	73.39	73.24	73.12
Subsoil Depth							
Base of Trench	73.60	73.45	73.24	73.06	72.89	72.74	73.09
Context	001,002,003						

3.1.1 The whole area appeared to be a man made terrace possibly a 'cut and fill', whereby the material excavated from the upslope is moved down slope to create a more level surface. Trench 1 was located towards the southern edge of this terrace, the area within the proposed development where the least earthmoving was going to take place, and aligned approximately north south. The trench was approximately 600mm deep at the southern end, increasing to 1000mm at the northern end as it began to cut into the slope. Overall the trench was 12 metres long and 1500mm wide.

3.1.2 Approximately 250mm of dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil was removed, revealing a horizon of orangey brown silty clay subsoil. A clearly visible pit was observed at this level and a rapid examination indicated that it was a burial of a foal, almost certainly modern in date. Because of the location of the trench on a slope, it is possible that this subsoil is a colluvial layer; this build up of soil is caused by material moving down slope and can potentially mask deeper archaeological remains. It was decided to excavate this subsoil to below the formation level of the tennis court to ensure there were no archaeological remains below this subsoil. A further 250mm was excavated revealing nothing of archaeological significance and excavation ceased, however, clear bedrock was not exposed and it is likely that this subsoil is indeed colluvium and deeper archaeological remains may well occur within this area.

3.1.3 Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from this trench (see appendix).

3.2 Trench 2

Interval	0m	2m	4m	6m	8m	10m	12m	14m	16m	18m
Ground OD	75.14	75.10	75.19	75.22	75.20	75.15	75.30	75.35	75.31	75.32
Topsoil Depth	74.59	74.44	74.45	74.49	74.47	74.47		74.61	74.61	74.71
Subsoil Depth										
Base of Trench	74.26	74.28	74.32	74.39	74.39	74.34		74.61	74.56	74.62
Context	001,002									

3.2.1 The second trench was located approximately 6 metres north; upslope of trench 1, the trench was aligned east west, perpendicular to trench 1. There was an earthen ridge marking the northern most extent of the terrace clearly visible and the trench was sited immediately behind this ridge to assess its nature. The trench was approximately 700mm deep at the western end increasing to 900mm at the eastern end and overall 18 metres long and 1500mm wide.

3.2.2 Approximately 300mm of dark greyish brown topsoil was stripped, once again revealing a horizon of orangey brown subsoil, there was, however, a slight change in soil colour apparent at this level, suggesting a possible archaeological feature. However hand cleaning of the area indicated that it was a change in the colour of the subsoil. A narrow slot was machine excavated through these deposits and undisturbed grey clay was encountered at 73.12m OD.

3.2.3 Nothing was observed within the trench to indicate the nature of the ridge, but once again there did appear to be a considerable build up of colluvium, so the possibility of deeper archaeological remains cannot be ruled out. However, the formation level for the tennis court will not reach this level.

3.2.4 Nothing of archaeological significance was, therefore, observed within the trench. A number of sherds of medieval pottery were recovered during machining which were residual and not from any identifiable context (see appendix). It is most likely that these sherds were deposited on site as a result of nearby medieval occupation.

4. Topographical Survey

4.1 The brief for archaeological work supplied by the Senior Planning Archaeologist recommended the completion of a programme of topographic survey to record the standing earthworks both within the development area and in the immediate vicinity. This was undertaken using an electronic distance measurer (EDM) linked to a hand held data logger, the computer generated plan is included (Fig.3).

4.2 The surviving earthworks correspond closely with those recorded by Hartley (1983) however, number 9, Moles Lane has since been built, destroying any earthworks in the northeast corner of the site. The surviving earthworks probably represent the remains of terraces cut into the slope; in all there are four distinct

terraces, the most obvious of which lays exclusively within the proposed development area, immediately to the east of the farm buildings.

4.3 It is approximately 25metres by 34metres in size with an obvious earthen ridge on the northern edge; the western edge has probably been truncated by the construction of the easternmost stables at The Ridings during the later decades of the nineteenth century. To the east the terrace slopes gradually up towards the sunken route of Moles Lane before a sudden break in slope creates a second smaller terrace, approximately 6metres by 17metres, which borders Moles Lane.

4.4 The apparent truncation caused by the buildings within The Ridings means that it is impossible to establish the relationship between the terrace and the farm buildings; it is possible that this terrace is contemporary with the modern farm buildings. A wall of coursed limestone rubble, probably eighteenth or nineteenth century in date marks the southern edge of the terrace and is likely to be contemporary with earlier phases of The Ridings.

4.5 The second terrace is upslope from the first terrace with clearly identifiable earthen banks on the northern and southern boundaries. This terrace appears to consist of two semi-square terraces, the first slopes up south to north immediately north of the development area and the second slopes up west to east towards Moles Lane.

4.6 The final identifiable terrace consists of a small semi-square terrace on the very northern edge of the site, approximately 12metres by 24metres. There is a clear earthen bank on the southern edge and a wall of coursed limestone rubble to the north, it is likely that this terrace originally continued further east but has been destroyed by the construction of number 9, Moles Lane.

4.7 A closer examination of the site revealed that a sewer trench crosses the site on a north-northwest, south-southeast alignment, a similar alignment as some of the terraces. There is a clear difference in vegetation cover, suggesting possible recent ground disturbance, possibly a temporary working easement excavated during the construction of this sewer. If this is the case then the change in ground level between the terrace within the development area and the terraces to the east may be the remains of this easement and creating an artificial terrace.

4.8 It is impossible to accurately date these earthworks, only to record their current condition. The medieval pottery recovered from trench 2 suggests nearby medieval occupation, and it is possible, therefore, that these higher terraces are medieval in date. Unfortunately there is no way of establishing the relationship between the terrace most affected by the development and the nineteenth buildings within the curtilage of The Ridings, however, it is very likely that this terrace is contemporary to the nineteenth century re-development of The Ridings.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Although nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during this evaluation a number of important archaeological issues were clarified, most notably that the terrace immediately adjacent to The Ridings is not the remains of a medieval fishpond and is probably related to the nineteenth re-development of The Ridings. The medieval pottery recovered indicates nearby medieval occupation, perhaps even on the site currently occupied by the modern farm.

5.2 No definitive dating evidence for the earthworks was recovered, so it impossible to establish the exact origins of the earthworks. An examination of the 1886 Ordnance Survey suggests that the area was being used as an orchard at the time and it is unlikely that an orchard would require the terracing currently visible so it is possible that these earthworks are at least pre-nineteenth century in date, it is likely that they are contemporary with The Ridings, but a medieval origin cannot be ruled out for at least some of the earthworks.

5.3 Excavations did indicate a considerable build up of colluvium on site; and it is possible that this build up of material could mask deeper archaeological remains. The construction of the tennis courts, however, will not involve excavations to a sufficient depth to affect any potential surviving remains. This colluvial build up must, however be considered should any further, deeper excavations take place on site.

References

- Gnanaratnam, A. 2001 *An Archaeological Evaluation at West Farm, Main Street, Seaton, Rutland (SP 9005 9823) ULAS Report Number 2001-184*
- Hartley, R.F. 1983 *Medieval Earthworks of Rutland*, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service, Archaeological Reports Series No 7.
- Meek, J. 2003 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for The Ridings, Moles Lane, Seaton, Rutland (SP 9011 9813) ULAS Report Number 2003-161*

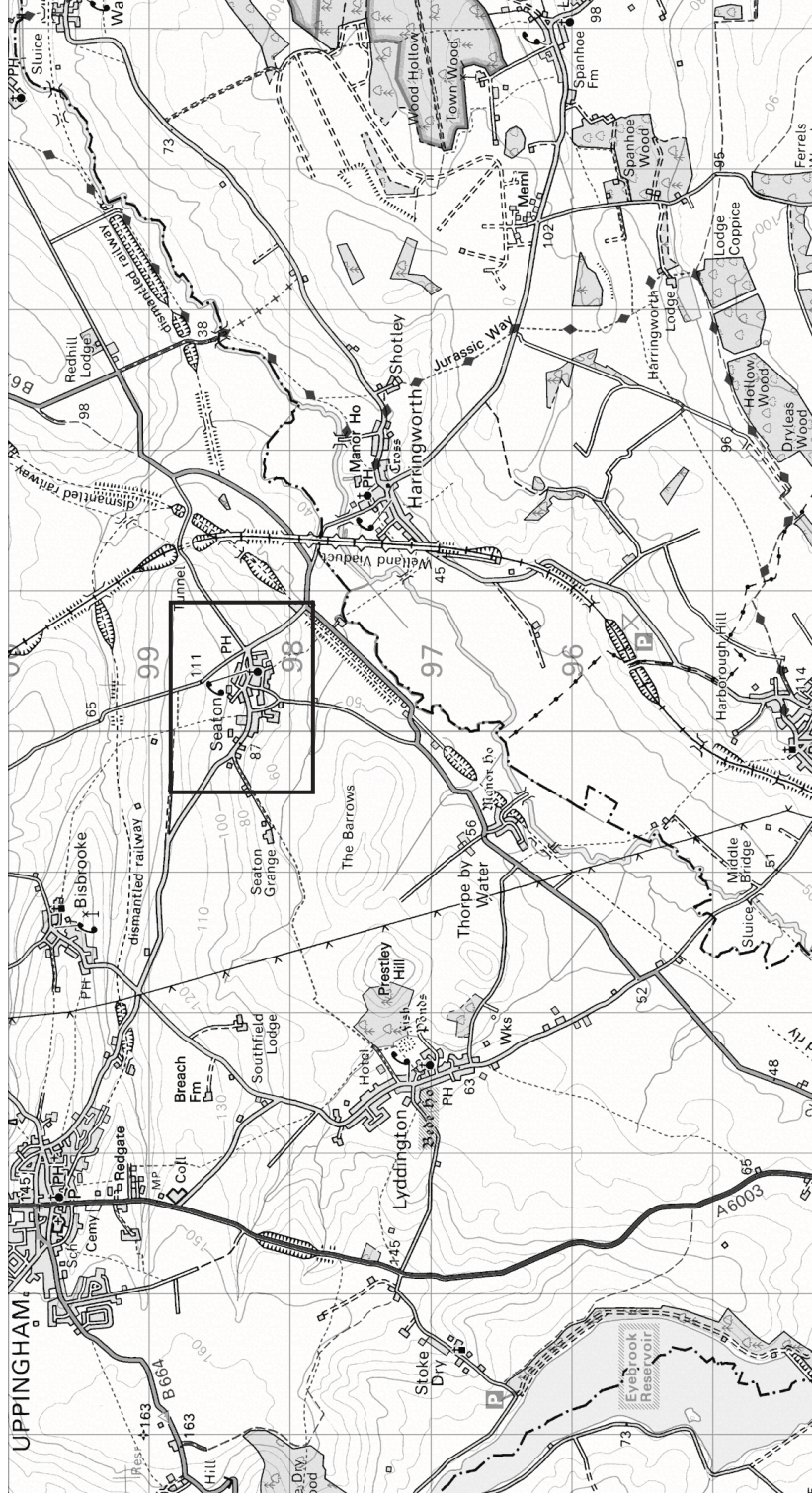


Figure 1: Location Plan

Reproduced from Landranger 1:50 000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey

On behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100021186

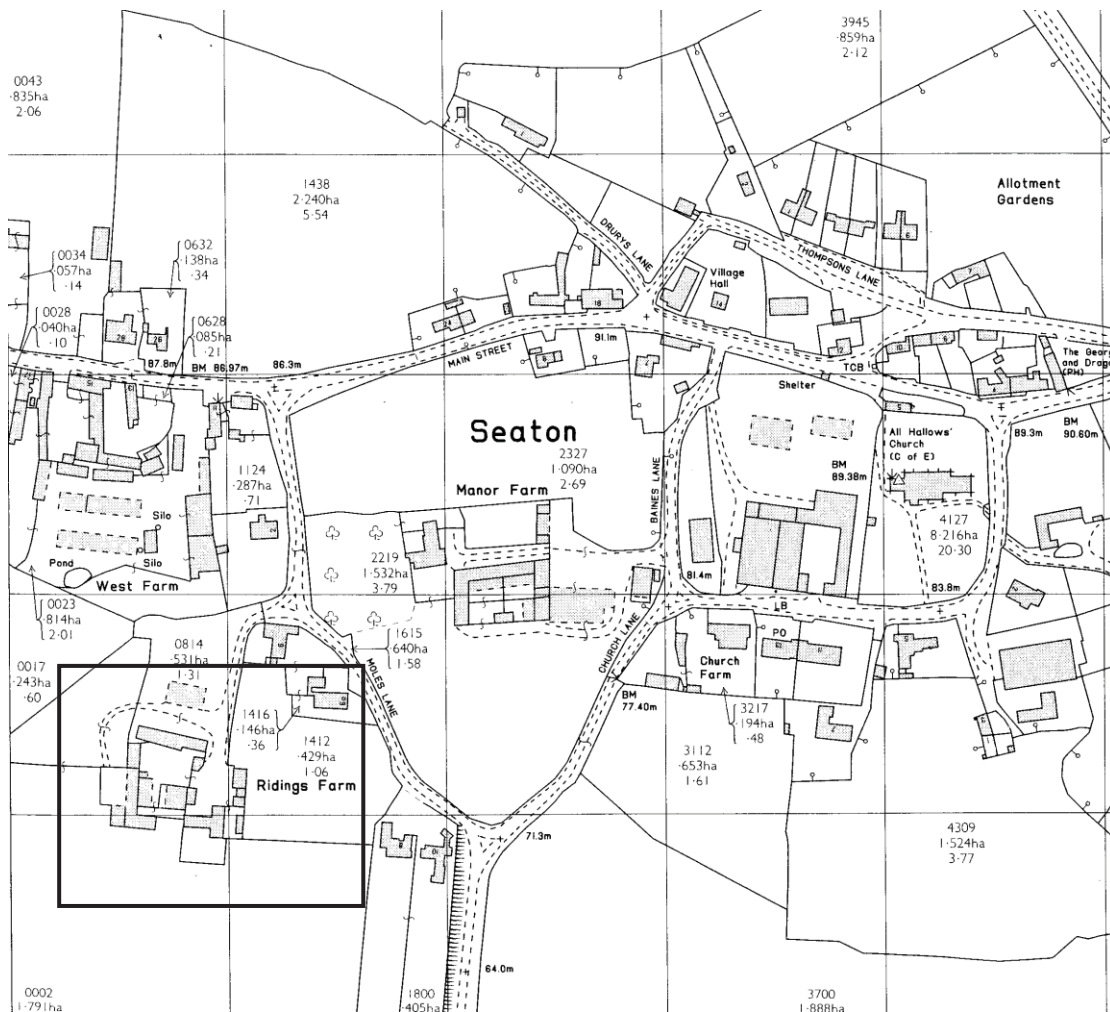


Figure 2: Detailed Location Plan Showing Ridings Farm

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey

On behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100021186

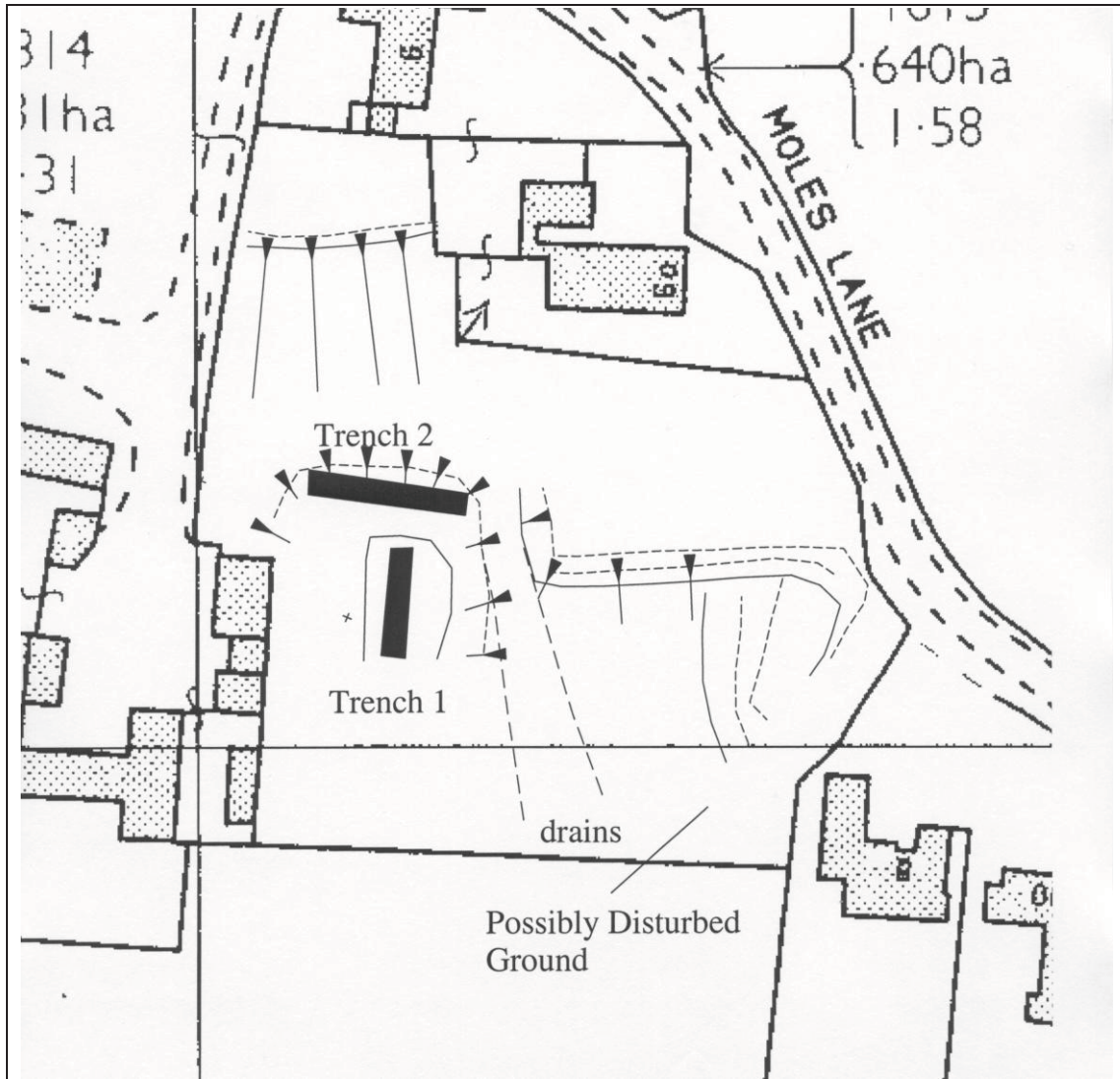


Figure 3 Location of Trenches, Surviving Earthworks and Area of Possibly Disturbed Ground.

Appendix

The pottery and miscellaneous finds from an evaluation at Moles Lane, Seaton, Rutland.

D. Sawday

All the pottery recovered during the evaluation, nine sherds, weighing one hundred and three grams, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999).

Although it is all from unstratified contexts, the pottery does provide some evidence of activity in the area from the eleventh or twelfth to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. The lack of abrasion and the relatively large average sherd weight of almost eleven and a half grams, suggests that relatively undisturbed archaeological deposits may survive in the vicinity.

Bibliography

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999. 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**, 165-213.

Site/Parish: Moles Lane, Seaton, Rutland. Accession No/ Doc Ref : RT02.2004/Seaton3: Material: Pottery Site Type: s. boundary of village	Submitter: G.R: Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 27.04.04 Method of Recovery: evaluation
---	--

context	fabric/ware	sherd nos.	weight grams	comments
U/S Tr.01	ST3 – Coarse Stamford ware	1	12	c. 900-1050+
U/S Tr. 01	ST2 – Fine Stamford ware	1	10	c. 1050-1200+
U/S Tr. 01	LY1 – Oolitic Stanion Lyveden type ware	2	26	Glazed, 13 th –14 th C.
U/S Tr. 02	ST3	3	25	c. 900-1050+
U/S Tr. 02	ST2	2	30	c. 1050-1200+