



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

A programme of archaeological works during  
landscape improvements at Langley Park, Wexham  
February 2009 – February 2010



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Joe Prentice &  
David J Leigh  
Report 10/39  
July 2010



**STAFF**

Project Manager Joe Prentice  
Text David J Leigh BA Hons  
Watching brief David J Leigh  
Joe Prentice  
Earthwork and boathouse survey David J Leigh  
Flint analysis William A Boismier BA MPhil MA PhD MIfA  
and Yvonne Wolframme-Murray PhD  
Tiles Joe Prentice and Pat Chapman BA CMS AlfA  
Illustrations Charlotte Walker BSc AlfA  
Project archive Theodora Anastasiadou-Leigh BA MA MA

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Charlotte Walker		
Verified by	Andy Chapman		
Approved by	Stephen Parry		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	A programme of archaeological work during landscape improvement works at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the construction of new footpaths, a new visitor centre and lake clearance works at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire. A GPS earthwork survey was conducted which plotted the probable original lakeside edge. A photographic survey was also undertaken of the 19th/20th century boathouse on the lake edge. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were present.	
Project type	Watching brief – GPS Earthwork Survey – Photographic Survey (level 1)	
Site status	Grade II* Registered Park and Garden	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Country Park	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address	Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire	
OS Easting & Northing	(Centred on) TQ 0087 8183	
Study area (sq.m)	1000m	
Height OD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Buckinghamshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh / Joe Prentice	
Project Manager	William A Boismier, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Langley Park Restoration Project	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	July 2009	
End date	February 2010	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical	Buckinghamshire Museums Acc No: AYBCM:2009.100	Tiles (3) Flint (335)
Paper	As above	Watching brief forms (14) Colour slides (25) black and white contact prints (25) Digital photographs (165)
Digital	As above	Report text and figures

# Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 BACKGROUND
  - 2.1 Location and topography
  - 2.2 Historical background
- 3 METHODOLOGY
- 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE
  - 4.1 The watching brief
  - 4.2 The earthwork survey
  - 4.3 The recording of the boathouse and retaining wall
- 5 THE FLINT by William A Boismier and Yvonne Wolframme-Murry
- 6 THE TILE by Joe Prentice and Pat Chapman
- 7 THE SITE ARCHIVE
- 8 CONCLUSIONS
- BIBLIOGRAPHY

## **Figures**

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Areas of archaeological observation around the lake

Fig 3: Location of the visitor centre and footpaths

Fig 4: The footpaths during construction, looking to the south

Fig 5: The footpaths during construction, looking towards the visitor centre

Fig 6: The area of the earthwork survey, looking towards the lake

Fig 7: The boathouse after initial cleaning

Fig 8: The boathouse after the collapse of the walls

Fig 9: The boathouse after initial cleaning

Fig 10: The floor of the boathouse

Fig 11: The north wall of the boathouse

Fig 12: The south wall of the boathouse

Fig 13: The rear wall of the boathouse

Fig 14: The retaining wall and steps adjacent to the boathouse

Fig 15: The retaining wall, looking to the north

Fig 16: The ridge tile

Fig 17: The flat roof tiles

## **Tables**

Table 1: Summary of worked flint

**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK  
DURING LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS AT LANGLEY PARK,  
WEXHAM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
JULY 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010**

*Abstract*

*A programme of archaeological work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology acting on behalf of Langley Park Restoration Project during landscape improvements at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire. The work comprised a watching brief during construction of new footpaths, a new visitor centre and lake silt clearance. An earthwork survey was also undertaken which plotted the probable original lakeside edge, spot heights relating to original water levels along with a level 1 photographic survey of a 19/20th century boathouse. A number of flints were collected by a member of the public during the footpath works which were subsequently passed to Northamptonshire Archaeology for analysis. A total of 335 flints were collected, of these five were identified as of archaeological interest, one of which being of probable Palaeolithic date.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

A programme of archaeological work was undertaken between July 2009 and February 2010 during landscape improvements at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire (NGR TQ 0087 8183: Fig 1). The work was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Langley Park Restoration Project and followed a specification for an archaeological watching brief (Prentice 2009) approved by the Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer for Buckinghamshire County Council, from here on referred to as the Archaeological Planning Officer. The specification adhered to the procedural document MOrPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

Two further supplementary specifications were issued to encompass additional archaeological works. These comprised a specification for an earthwork survey and a specification for a Level 1 photographic building recording. The specification for the earthwork survey (Leigh 2009) was approved by the Archaeological Planning Officer on the 11th August 2009 and adhered to the English Heritage procedural document *Alidade and Tape* (EH 2002) and the former Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in England document *Recording Archaeological Field Monuments* (RCHME 1999). The specification for a Level 1 building recording (Leigh 2010) was approved by the Archaeological Planning Officer on the 1st March 2010.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and topography**

Langley Park is situated in South Buckinghamshire on the north-eastern outskirts of Slough approximately 3km from the town centre and encompasses an area of approximately 160ha. The park is an area of woodland and open grassland and lies within a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden. The site is located on ground sloping gently up to the north-east.

The underlying geology has been mapped by The British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Boyn Hill gravels of the River Thames (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>).

### **2.2 Historical background**

The medieval deer park is documented from 1202 onwards and has been the subject of previous research (Howes 2001). Sections of the deer park boundary survive as bank and ditch earthworks (park pale) around the edge of the present park, particularly on the eastern side in a car park area. This is outside the medieval deer park boundary, but is shown as being sited within a later post-medieval extension shown on a map of 1762. Further medieval remains are present to the south of the park including fishponds and associated earthworks and a moated site.

A deer park is first recorded at Langley Marish in 1202, continuing in use throughout the middle ages. Sir John Kederminster was appointed Chief Steward of the Manor of Langley Park and shortly after 1603 replaced the hunting lodge with a house (English Heritage 1999). In 1626 the park and manor were granted to Sir John, ceasing to be crown property. The park was sold in 1738 to Charles Spencer, third Duke of Marlborough who used it as a hunting lodge until 1756 when it was demolished to make way for a new house designed by Stiff Leadbetter. The park was landscaped in the late eighteenth century by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown for the fourth Duke. An entry in a Blenheim account book indicates a contract worth £2,810.00. It is thought that Brown created the present lake on the site of an earlier formal canal (Phibbs 2006). On the north-eastern bank of the lake lie the remains of a 19th/20th century boathouse.

Langley Park House is a Grade II\* Listed Building, nine other buildings or structures within the park are also listed. During World War Two Langley Park was used as a

training base and munitions dump. In 1945 the house was sold to Buckinghamshire County Council. The park is currently an open public park.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

Prior to commencement of the fieldwork phase of the watching brief the site had to be cleared of munitions left over from the military usage of the site. This work was carried out by Bactec International Ltd and Ramora UK Ltd.

The fieldwork comprised visits to the site during the construction of the new footpaths and the visitor centre along with the removal of silts from the lake. In addition to the watching brief an earthwork survey was undertaken using a Leica Global Positioning System (GPS) to record an area adjacent to the lake prior to the deposition of lake silts. The survey also plotted in the probable position of the original lake edge following separate investigations by Debrois Landscape Survey Group who were also responsible for the historical report submitted as part of the park restoration (Phibbs 2006). A level 1 photographic survey was undertaken of a 19th/20th century boathouse that is located on the north-eastern bank of the lake. It was subject to partial dismantling and reconstruction.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). Northamptonshire Archaeology standard Health and Safety Guidelines were followed and a full Risk Assessment was produced prior to the commencement of the archaeological investigation.

### **4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE**

#### **4.1 The watching brief**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of new footpaths, visitor centre and the excavation of silts from the lake. The objectives of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the construction of the new footpaths, visitor centre and the removal of silt from the lake, and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered



- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis

Approximately 3,500sq m of new footpaths were constructed which extended across the park from the visitor centre to the northern end of the lake (Figs 3, 4 and 5) and measured approximately 3.0m wide and were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m below present ground level.

The natural substratum was encountered 0.20m below present ground level and comprised pale grey/brown silt clay and gravel containing numerous irregular stones and flint fragments. This was overlain by grey/brown silt loam topsoil, up to 0.20m thick, containing numerous irregular stones and occasional flint fragments. A number of modern ceramic land-drains were noted cutting across the line of the footpath.

A collection of flints were collected by a member of the public who initially thought them to be a form known as “tribrachs” a find of which would be considered to be of national importance. As a result, these were passed to Professor William Scott Jackson of Oxford Strategic Consulting and Dr Julie Scott Jackson Director of PADMAC Unit, Oxford University prior to them being passed to Northamptonshire Archaeology. Subsequent analysis revealed five flints showing evidence of human manipulation, the remainder being natural gravel flints. The exact location of the find spot is not known, however, it is believed to have originated from the northern boundary of the park.

The area of the new visitor centre was observed during groundworks. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 0.10m below present ground level. This was overlain by relatively thin topsoil, 0.10m thick, containing irregular stones and occasional fragments of modern bottle glass.

Archaeological observation was carried out during the excavation of silts from the lake. The stratigraphic sequence comprised grey/black silt mixed with decomposed vegetative matter. This extended throughout the area of the lake and sealed natural orange/red gravels containing occasional flint fragments.

No archaeological deposits were present within the investigation area.

## 4.2 The earthwork survey

An earthwork survey was carried out of an area encompassing approximately 50m by 30m (Figs 2 and 6) in advance of the spreading of silts excavated from the lake along with a number of plots locating the probable position of the original lake edge and heights relating to the boathouse and the lake outlet. The survey was undertaken using a Leica System 1200 survey grade and all points were surveyed and related to Ordnance Survey National Grid. Readings were taken at a maximum of 1.0m intervals. Tops and bottoms of slopes were plotted along with spot heights across the investigation area in order to generate a contour plot.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- ◆ Identify earthwork remains within the survey area
- ◆ Allow informed mitigation of the surviving earthwork remains within the investigation area
- ◆ Provide an understanding of the surviving earthwork remains and their relationship to the formalised landscape
- ◆ Ascertain the probable original water level in the lake
- ◆ Ascertain the probable original depth of water within the boathouse

The survey included all features within the investigation area of potential or confirmed connections with the formalised landscape layout. The area was walked over in regular transects approximately 1.0m apart in order to identify any discrete features. The area of investigation contained undulating grassland with moderate tree cover.

The earthwork survey recorded the form of a circular mound reputed to lie over the grave of one of the 3rd Duke of Marlborough's favourite horses (Scott Wilson 2006) and a shallow depression of indeterminate form (Fig 2). The survey was primarily intended to record the features prior to the spreading of silts across the area and no further post-survey analysis was carried out to ascertain the function or origin of the earthworks recorded.

An outline of the probable original lake edge (Fig 2) was plotted following stakes positioned by Debrois Landscape Survey Group. In addition the position of two gravel beaches located along the western edge of the lake were plotted. These have subsequently been disregarded as being of no archaeological significance, clearly having derived from erosion of the lake edge by watering livestock.

A number of spot heights were collected from the water outlet at the southern end of the lake and from the base of the boathouse along with a set of steps in the retaining wall on the eastern edge of the lake adjacent to the boathouse to ascertain the probable original water level of the lake which was approximately 31.80m aOD (Fig 2).

### **4.3 The recording of the boathouse and retaining wall**

The boathouse was cleared of rubbish and rubble and the interior was washed out (Figs 7 and 9). A level 1 photographic survey was then undertaken. The objectives of the building recording were to:

- ◆ Record photographically the fabric of the boathouse
- ◆ Record photographically any salient features present in order to determine the functionality of the boathouse, including probable water levels within the structure
- ◆ Ascertain a probable date for the construction of the boathouse

The boathouse is located on the north-eastern bank at the northern end of the lake approximately 250m west of Langley Park House. At the time of the survey the boathouse was in a ruinous state having suffered some collapse of masonry due to root activity (Fig 8). The boathouse measured approximately 10.0m long by 3.42m wide, the highest section of the surviving masonry stood approximately 1.0m high. It was constructed of red bricks each measuring approximately 220mm long by 110mm wide and 70mm thick bonded together with grey/white Portland Cement. The walls of the boathouse were constructed using English Garden Wall Bond (Figs 11 and 12) whilst the floor was of Stretcher Bond, sloping down to the centre approximately 0.10m (Fig 10).

An oak sill beam 3.02m long by 0.2m wide and 0.10m thick, extended across the full width of the rear of the boathouse (Fig 13). The beam lay approximately 0.36m above the floor. Directly below the beam was a roughly square aperture in the brickwork. This measured approximately 0.20m deep by 0.27m wide, and may have been an inlet for water from the drainage ditch behind the boathouse. Levels taken on the floor suggest that the maximum depth of water in the structure was 0.72m.

Due to the poor state of preservation, no indication as to the original height of the boathouse was available, nor was there any evidence of the original access into the boathouse. Three roof tiles were collected from rubble within the interior, although no evidence of roof timbers or construction methodology was present.

A brick-built retaining wall extended from the western side of the boathouse up towards the northern end of the lake. This was constructed in English Garden Wall Bond using bricks similar to those used in the boathouse. The wall was of double brick thickness approximately 0.22m thick and was a maximum of 1.0m high. Adjacent to the boathouse four stone built steps were set into the wall, the lowest being 31.89m aOD, approximately 0.09m above the water level in the lake (Figs 2, 14 and 15).

## **5 THE FLINT by William A Boismier and Yvonne Wolframme-Murry**

In total 333 pieces (6883g) of flint and two pieces (70g) of burnt flint were collected. Out of these, five worked pieces of flint were noted, the remainder were natural gravel flints. The five artefacts comprised of flakes, of which two were broken, a summary is to be found in Table 1 below.

Post-depositional edge damage was present on all artefacts consisting of frequent nicks and crushing of the edges; two flints also had worn and rolled dorsal ridges and surfaces. Patination was present on one of the flints, which was a slight discolouration of the surface. The raw material was an opaque flint ranging from light cream to mid greyish brown. The cortex present on the dorsal surfaces of two flakes was a light brown or grey.

The worked flint is not directly dateable but the technological characteristics suggest that the heavily rolled and patinated primary flake, with cortex on the entire dorsal surface, to be of a Palaeolithic date. For the remaining four flakes a broadly Neolithic to early Bronze Age date can be proposed. No further work is recommended.

Summary of worked flint: Table 1

Flake/Blade	Portion	Period	Material	Cortex	Patination	Comments
Flake	Whole	Neolithic	opaque mid brownish grey	no	no	heavy edge damage
Flake	Whole	Palaeolithic	opaque light cream	light brown	heavy	Primary flake, 81mm x 45mm, surfaces are very rolled and worn
Flake	Whole	Neolithic	opaque mid brownish grey	light grey	no	heavy post-depositional edge damage, squat flake
Flake	Distal	Neolithic	opaque mid light greyish brown	no	no	heavy post-depositional edge damage, hinge termination
Flake	Distal	Neolithic	opaque mid greyish brown	no	no	worn dorsal ridges, post-depositional edge damage
Natural						328 pieces, 6883g
Natural						2 pieces, 70g

## 6 THE TILE by Joe Prentice and Pat Chapman

Three tiles collected during the cleaning of the inside of the boathouse comprised two flat roof tiles and one ridge tile.

The ridge is an almost complete angle open roll top ridge tile, with the crest tops broken off (Fig 16). It is made from mauve-brown clay fired to a blue-black surface. The basic ridge is 450mm long, 260mm wide at the base and 100mm high internally from base to apex and 17mm thick (17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 4 inches x <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches) the angle of the apex being 105°. Above the apex of the ridge is the open roll top, 50mm (2 inches) in diameter, with a 17mm wide opening along the top into which the length of decorated crest, made separately, was slotted and cemented in. The complete crest is 310mm (12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches) long, about two-thirds of the length of the ridge tile, comprising two peaks separated by a shallow concave curve and surviving to 60mm (2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches) high. Only the part of the next crest survives, to the edge of the tile.

The flat tiles comprise one plain and one decorative (Fig 17). The plain tile is made from hard coarse sandy orange clay with occasional calcareous inclusions. It measures 245 x 155 x 12mm (9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches) and has two closely spaced

slightly offset 12mm square peg-holes. The decorative tile has been cut as a fish scale and has been fired to blue-black, similar to the ridge tile. The tile is longer and wider than the plain tile, but thinner, measuring 260 x 160 x 10mm, though the scale is 68mm of that length and 130 wide (10¼ x 6¼ x ¾ inches; scale 2⅝ x 5⅛ inches). There are two oval peg-holes 10 x 15mm, but there are also three nibs, equally spaced, which have been sheared off. This type of tile began to be used during the 19th century, when the introduction of machinery greatly increased output, and tiles could be cut to order, surviving catalogues show these as part of their selection (van Lemmen 2003, 9-11).

Catalogues survive from a number of 19th and early 20th century brick and tile works. These include that of the Barham Brothers located in Bridgewater Somerset, Maw and Company of Jackfield in Shropshire and the Haunchwood Brick and Tile Company Limited in Stockingford, Warwickshire.

The tiles collected from the boathouse are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date and of a standard form, however, the ridge tile has the interesting feature of having an open roll in order to insert the decorative crest of choice.

## 7 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	14
Roof tiles	3
Flint	335
Colour slides	25
Black and white contacts and negatives	25
Digital photographs	165

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

The programme of archaeological works undertaken at Langley Park revealed no significant archaeological deposits. The collection of flints recovered from the area of the new footpath were mostly naturally rolled and flaked, only five were found to be worked and do not indicate the presence of an archaeological site in the near vicinity.

The survey of the boathouse indicates a 19th/20th century date for its construction. Presently it is unclear if the boathouse will be rebuilt completely or if partial reconstruction only is to be carried out.

The programme of archaeological works was carried out under favourable circumstances and the results are considered to be reliable.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BCC 2009 *Brief for an archaeological watching brief, Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire*, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological service

BCM 1999 *Procedures for the deposition of archaeological archives*, Buckinghamshire County Archive

BGS 2009 [www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html), British Geological Survey website

EH 1999 *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England: Buckinghamshire*

EH 2002 *With Alidade and Tape, Graphical and plane table survey of archaeological earthworks* English Heritage Procedural Document

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MORPHE*, English Heritage Procedural Document

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

Leigh, D J, 2009 *Specification for an archaeological landscape survey at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire* Northamptonshire Archaeology

Leigh, D J, 2010 *Specification for a Level 1 Building Recording at Langley Park Boathouse, Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire* Northamptonshire Archaeology

Howes, L , 2001 *Langley Park, Buckinghamshire: Archaeological Resource Survey and Action Programme*, unpublished report for Buckinghamshire County Council

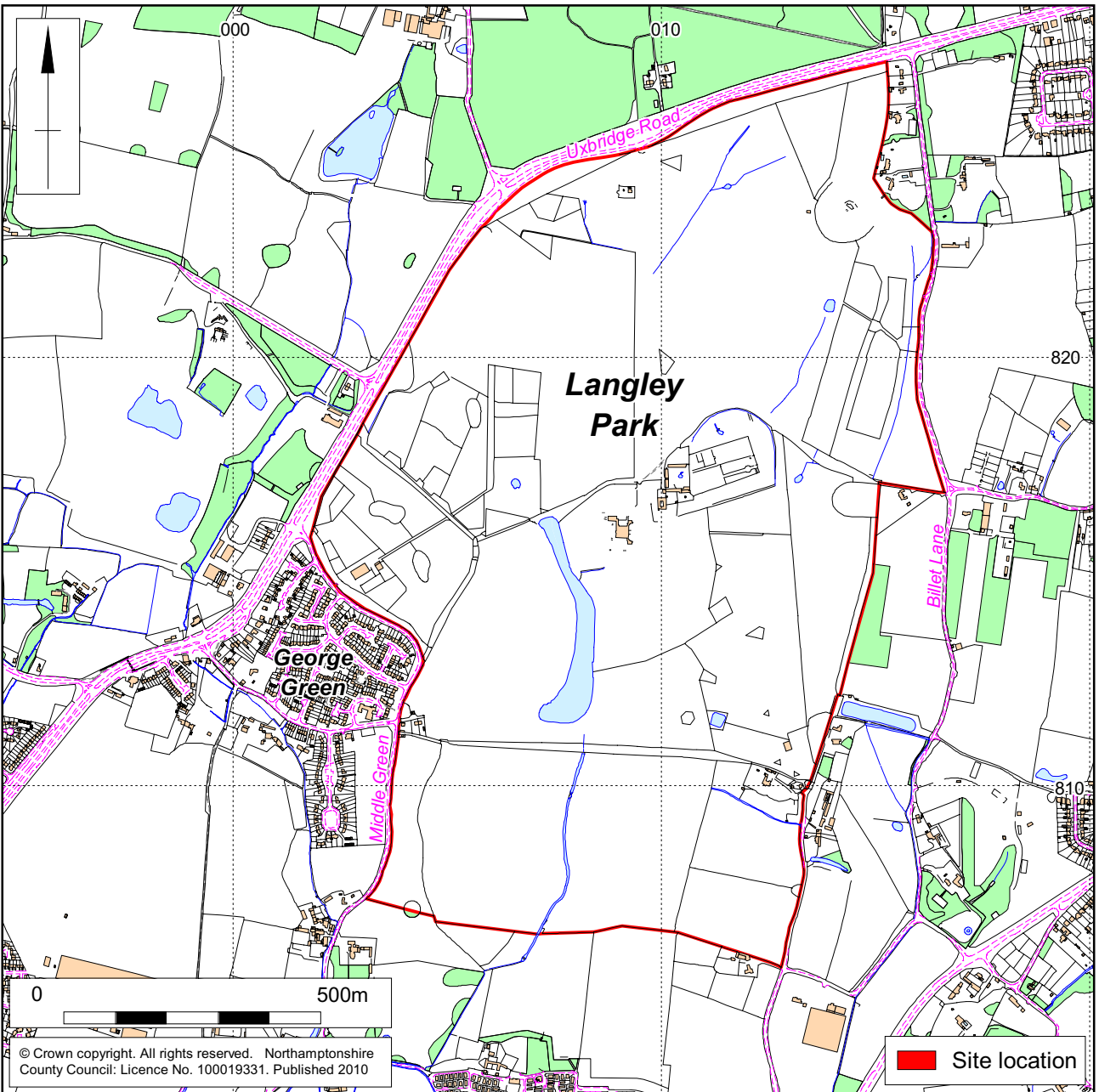
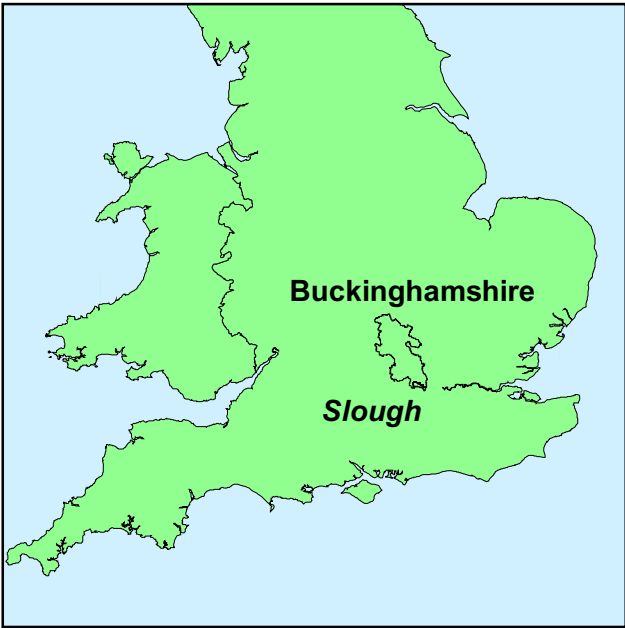
Phibbs, J, 2006 *Debois Landscape Historic Review and Earthworks Survey*, unpublished report for Buckinghamshire County Council

Prentice, J 2009 *A written scheme of investigation for an archaeological watching brief at Langley Park, Wexham, Buckinghamshire* Northamptonshire Archaeology

Scott Wilson Limited 2006 *Langley Park, Buckinghamshire. Langley Park Restoration Stage II HLF Archaeology*

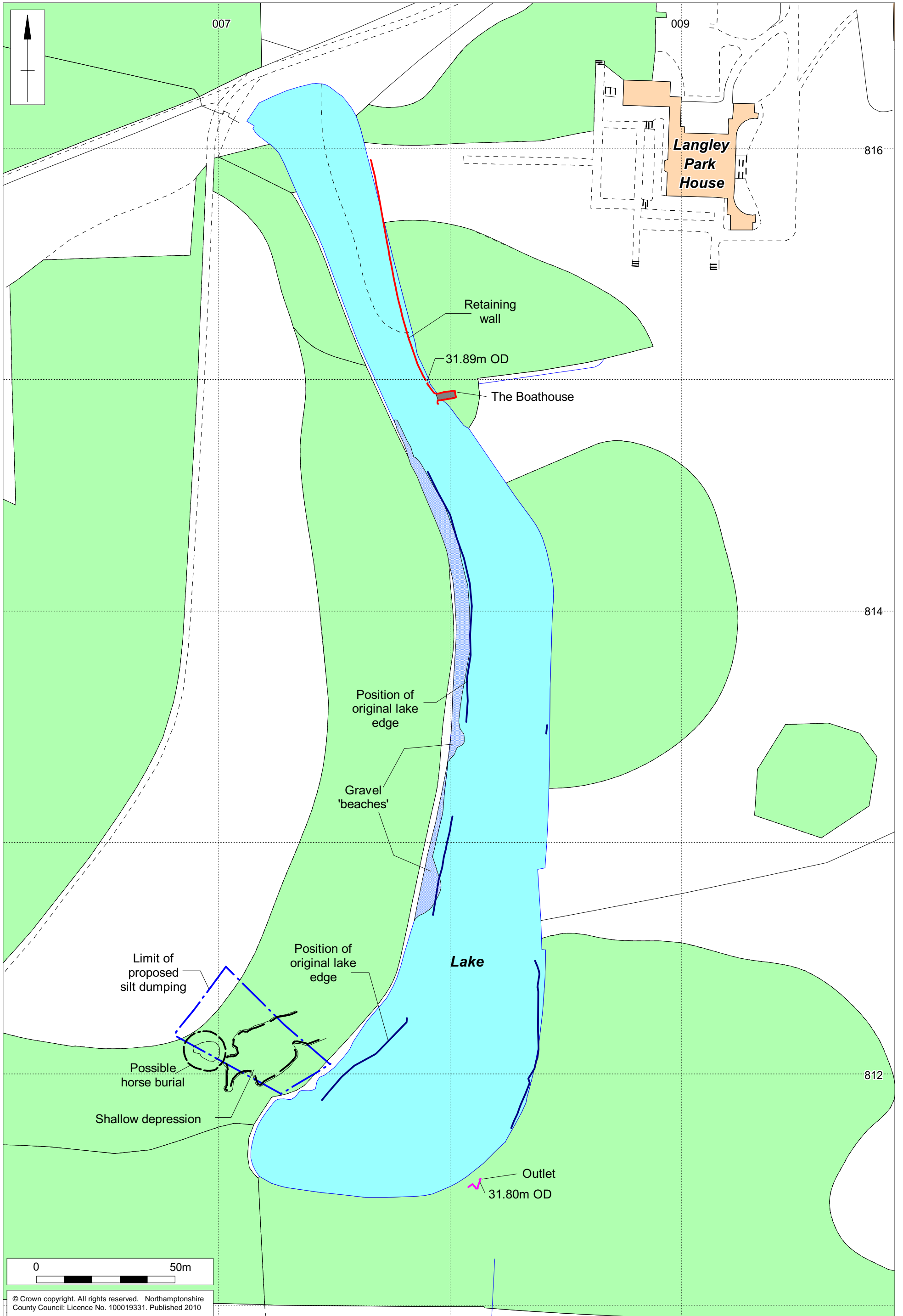
Van Lemmen, H, 2003 *Ceramic Roofware*, Shire Publications Ltd, **420**

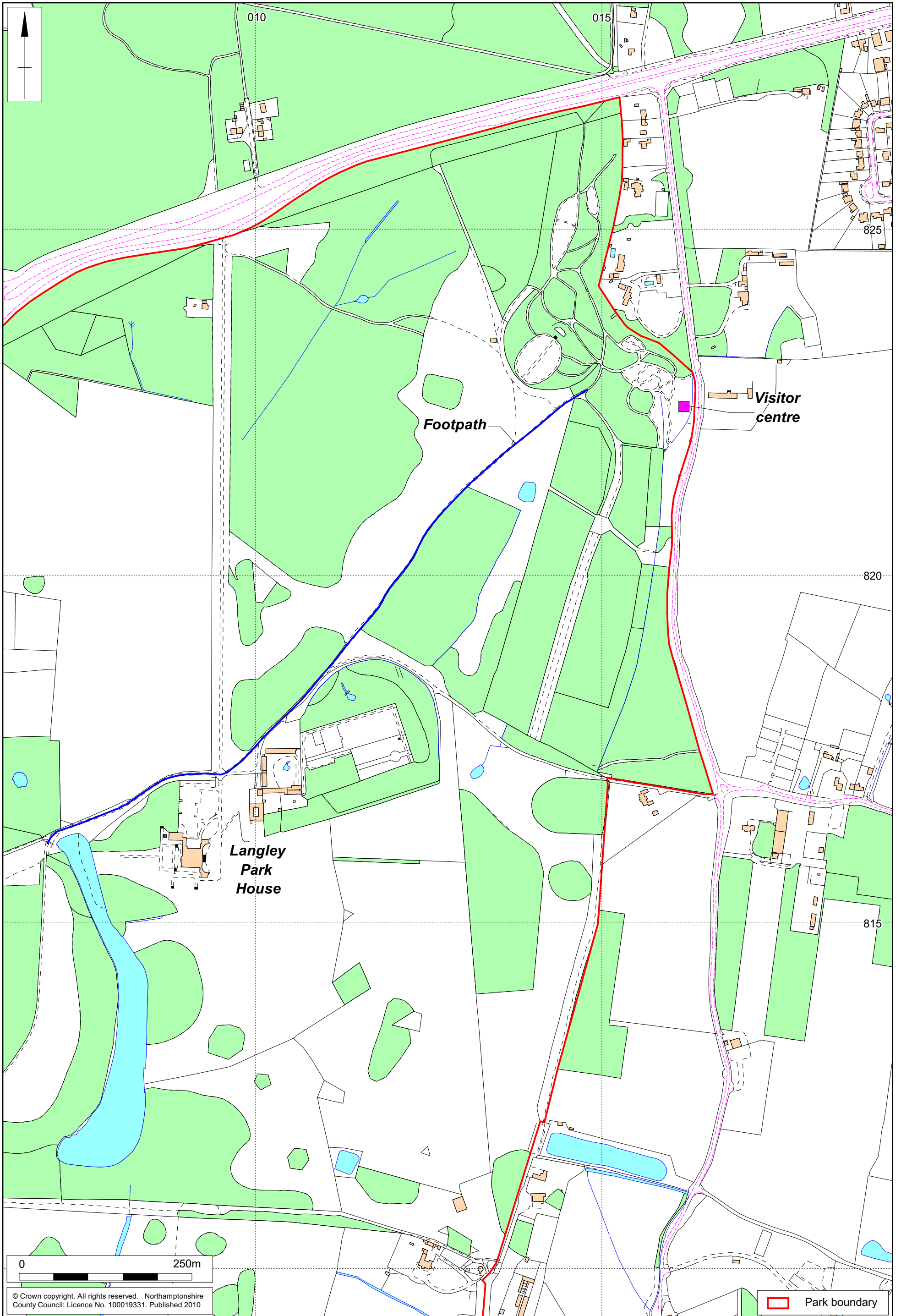




Scale 1:15,000

Site Location Fig 1





Scale 1:5,000

Location of visitor centre and footpaths Fig 3



The footpaths during construction, looking to the south: Fig 4



The footpaths during construction, looking towards the visitor centre: Fig 5



The area of the earthwork survey, looking towards the lake: Fig 6



The boathouse after initial cleaning: Fig 7



The boathouse after the collapse of the walls: Fig 8



The boathouse after initial cleaning: Fig 9



The floor of the boathouse: Fig 10



The north wall of the boathouse: Fig 11



The south wall of the boathouse: Fig 12



The rear wall of the boathouse: Fig 13





The retaining wall and steps adjacent to the boathouse: Fig 14



The retaining wall, looking to the north: Fig 15



The ridge tile: Fig 16



The flat roof tiles: Fig 17



Northamptonshire County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

**Northamptonshire Archaeology**  
2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council