



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief
at Well House, The Green, Harrold, Bedfordshire
May-September 2010



Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council

Anne Foard-Colby

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STAFF

Project Management	Joe Prentice
Text	Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed
Fieldwork	Anne Foard-Colby
	Joe Prentice
	David Leigh BA Hons
	Tim Upson-Smith BA Hons PGDip
Pottery	Paul Blinkhorn Btech
Ceramic tile	Pat Chapman BA CMS AlfA
Animal bone	Karen Deighton BSc
Illustrations	Amir Bassir BSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Joe Prentice		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological watching brief at Well House, The Green, Harrold, Bedfordshire, May-September 2010	
An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the digging of the footings and a service trench for an extension to a house. The excavation revealed five probable boundary ditches, three of which were dated to the 12th century. One of the ditches also contained animal bone. A significant amount of 12th to 15th century pottery was recovered from the topsoil. There were four sherds of residual Roman pottery. A small quantity of St. Neots Ware suggests activity beginning in the 11th century, while the majority of the pottery from the ditches dates to the 12th century with a little later medieval material.		
Project type	Watching brief	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Garden and drive to house	
Future work	None	
Monument type and period	Five medieval ditches	
Significant finds	Medieval pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Well House, The Green, Harrold	
Easting Northing	SP 95199 56677	
Area (sq m/ha)	c68sqm	
Height aOD	45m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Bedford Borough Council	
Project Design originator	JSC Consulting	
Director/Supervisor	Anne Foard-Colby	
Project Manager	Joe Prentice	
Sponsor or funding body	Mrs Dagmar Styles	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	07/05/2010	
End date	08/09/2010	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents
Physical	Bedford museum BEDFM:2010.24	Pottery, animal bone, tile
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological watching brief at Well House, The Green, Harrold, Bedfordshire	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
WELL HOUSE, THE GREEN, HARROLD
BEDFORDSHIRE
MAY-SEPTEMBER 2010**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the digging of the footings and a service trench for an extension to a house. The excavation revealed five probable boundary ditches, three of which were dated to the 12th century. One of the ditches also contained animal bone. A significant amount of 12th to 15th-century pottery was recovered from the topsoil. There were four sherds of residual Roman pottery. A small quantity of St. Neots Ware suggests activity beginning in the 11th century, while the majority of the pottery from the ditches dates to the 12th century with a little later medieval material.

1 INTRODUCTION

Between May and September 2010, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) at Well House, The Green, Harrold, Bedfordshire (NGR: SP 95199 56677; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by JSC Consulting on behalf of Mrs Dagmar Styles and was undertaken as fulfilment of a planning condition (10/00040/FUL) for a new extension to the house.

The scope of works was outlined in the brief (Saunders 2010) issued by Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Planning Services and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, prepared by NA (2010).

The objectives of the watching brief were to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits within the application area and to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

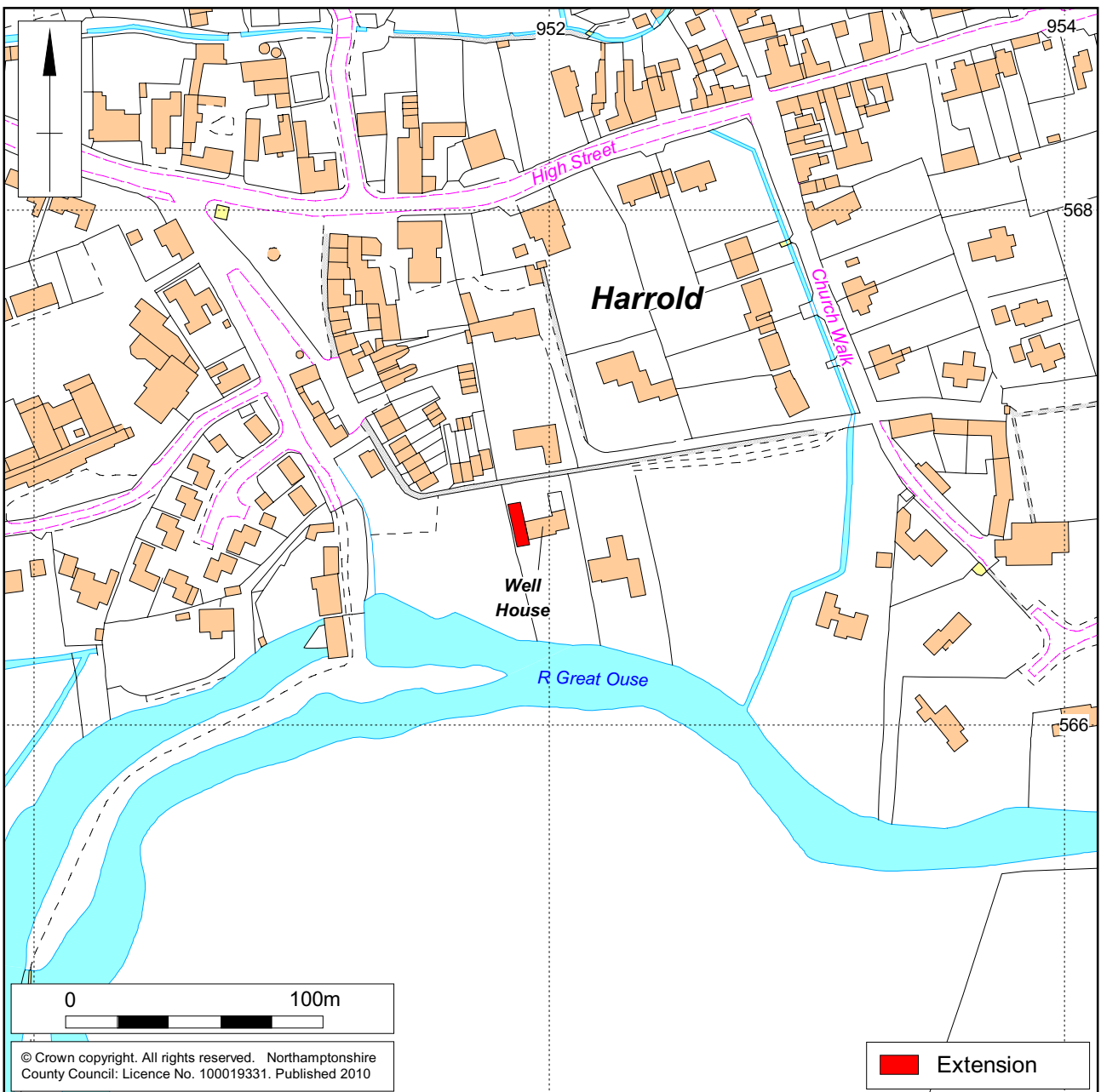
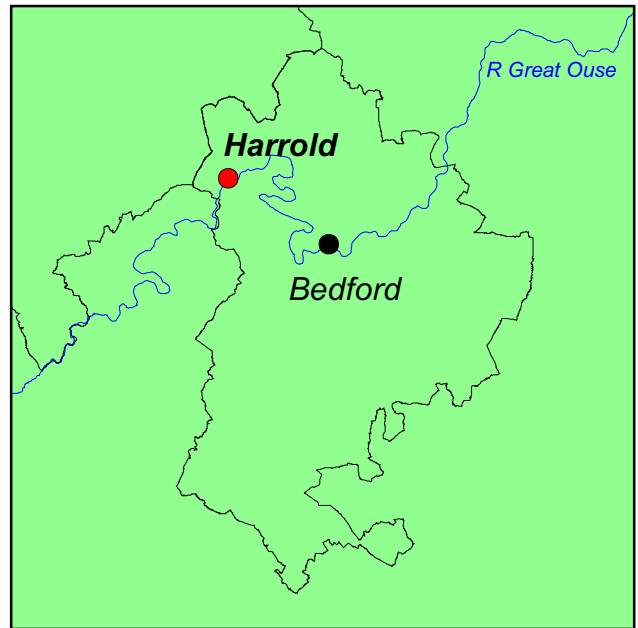
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The footprint of the new extension covers an area of c68sqm within the garden of Well House, which is located on the south-eastern edge of The Green, Harrold. It is bounded to the north and east by housing, to the west by The Green and to the south by The River Great Ouse (Fig 1).

The site for the extension lies on mainly level ground at a height of c45m aOD. The garden at the rear of the house slopes down to the banks of the River Great Ouse.

The underlying geology comprises Great Oolitic Limestone or river gravels (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).



Scale 1:2500

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Well House lies close to the medieval core of Harrold village and adjacent to the south boundary of the Harrold Conservation area. The site has not been subject to previous archaeological intervention; however, reference to the Bedfordshire Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) has identified a number of archaeological sites and finds spots in and around the village of Harrold (HER 16942). These include Iron Age and Roman activity to the immediate north of the site at Longridge, identified during an archaeological evaluation (NA, 2009) and in 2002 an evaluation was undertaken to the north-west of the site, which identified the site of a kiln producing local Harrold ware pottery, together with ditches and a gully dating to the 11th to 12th centuries. Further archaeological remains have been identified surrounding the village to the east and north during 20th century quarrying of gravels.

The site of the 19th-century leather working factory of H. Pettit and Co. Goodes lies immediately to the north-west of the site.

An extensive summary of the archaeological and historical background of Harrold was compiled as part of the Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire (Albion Archaeology 2005).

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1884 of Harrold shows the site lay in a field close to the river. The field remained as pasture until the building of Well House.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific aims of the project were to:

- establish the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present on the development site, recovering artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region and to recover any possible palaeoenvironmental deposits to determine local environmental conditions;
- place the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context;
- to define any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork including areas of disturbance and service locations.

4 METHODOLOGY

The footprint of the extension measured 15m long and 4.5m wide (Fig 3). The footings of the building were cut first, using a mechanical excavator and subsequently filled with concrete to the required level. Following this, the ground was reduced to the level of the concrete, in accordance with the excavation plan approved by HETBCC (Fig 2). An east to west aligned service trench was cut approximately 3m to the north of the house.

A 360° tracked mechanical mini excavator fitted with a narrow ditching bucket was used to dig the 0.60m wide foundation trenches for the extension and a wider bucket

to grade the level of the soil. The width of the service trench was 0.45m. The sections were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. Hand-drawn plans of all archaeological features were made at scales of 1:50 and 1:100 which were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard NA procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2006). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of each context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Context sheets were cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and colour slides, supplemented with digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 and 1:20 and related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spoil heaps and features were scanned to maximise the recovery of objects. All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010), *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008) and Northamptonshire Archaeology's *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2006).

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying geology was orange sand with patches of gravel, which was encountered at approximately 0.55m – 0.65m below the modern ground surface. This was observed throughout the footings, and included larger flint cobbles. The subsoil (113) was dark brown-grey-black loam, with gravel pebbles, approximately 0.35m thick and occurred on the far north of the site only. This was overlain by dark brown-black garden soil (101), with gravel pebbles, and pottery sherds dating from the Roman period, and in the 12th to 15th centuries (Figs 2, 4 and 5).

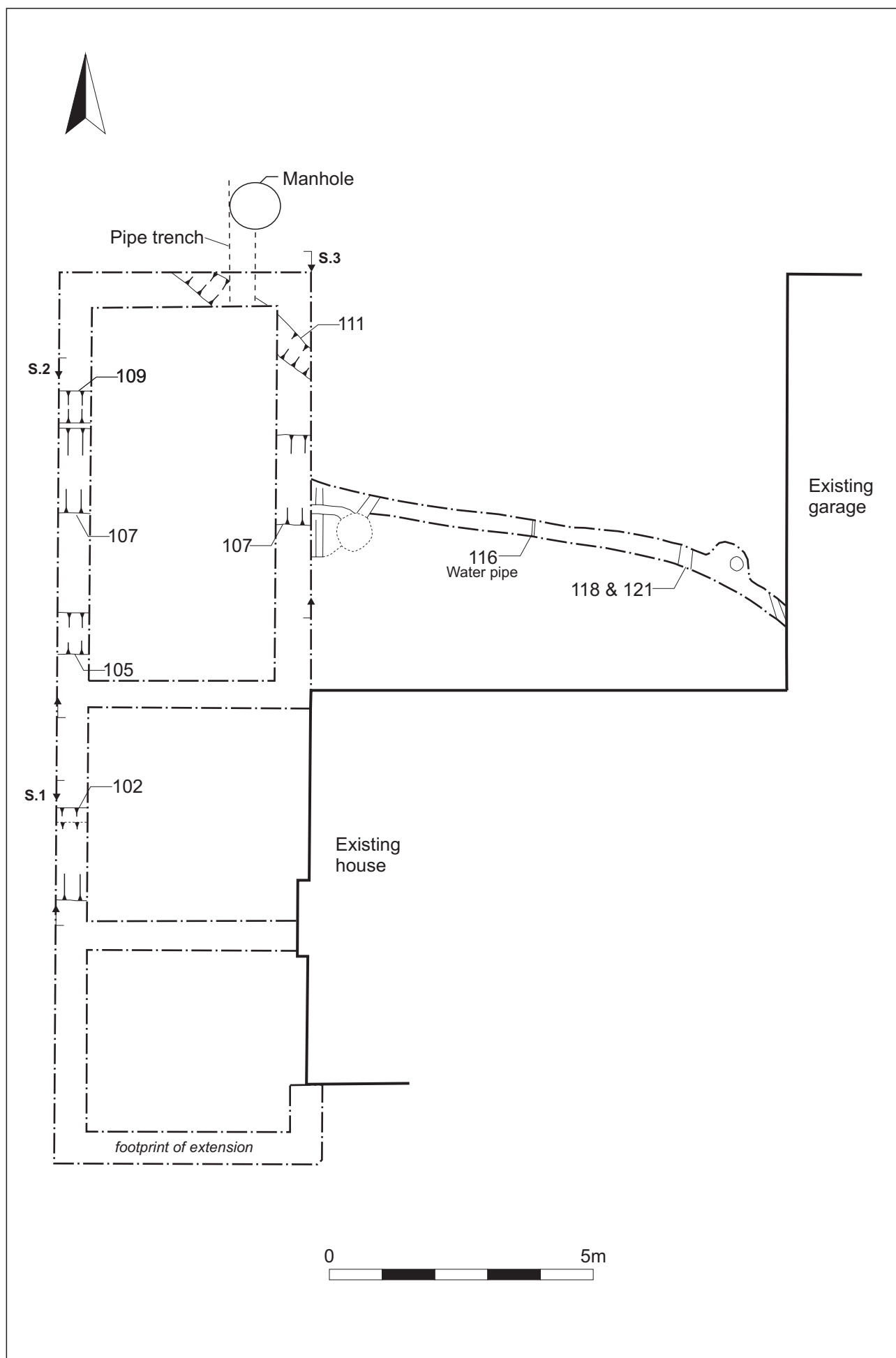
5.2 The archaeological evidence

On the west side of the extension footings, four ditches [102], [105], [107] and [109] respectively, were aligned east to west (Fig 3). The southernmost ditch [102] had a wide and shallow upper profile, which broke on the north edge at mid point to a steep U-shaped base, 1.80m wide and 0.72m deep (Figs 2 and 8, section 1). The silty loam fill (103) contained three sherds of 12th-century pottery.



Footings trench, west side, ditch [102], looking west

Fig 2



Scale 1:100

Watching brief area, plan of features Fig 3

On the same alignment, 5.5m to the north, was a similar ditch [107] with a wide U-shaped profile, 1.40m wide 0.50m deep (Figs 4, 7 and 8, section 3). It was observed in the east side foundation trench to continue on an east-west alignment. It was also observed in an east to west aligned service trench (Fig 3) which cut the mid-dark, grey-brown, clay loam fill (108) (114). The fill contained a single, residual, sherd of Roman pottery and twenty-eight sherds of 12th-century medieval shelly ware pottery.



Footings trench, west side, ditch [107], looking west Fig 4

Two undated ditches [105] and [109] were also on the same alignment (Figs 3, 5, 6 and 8, Section 2). Cut midway between the two larger ditches was a U-shaped ditch [105], 0.92m wide 0.52m deep. The mid brown-grey clay loam fill (106) contained infrequent gravel; there were no finds present. Parallel to this ditch, and to the north, a U-shaped ditch [109] was 0.70m wide, 0.38m deep. It was filled with mid brown-grey clay loam (110); there were no finds present. Neither of these two ditches were present in the east side footings, it is therefore possible that they terminated before that point.



Footings trench, west side, ditch [105], looking west Fig 5



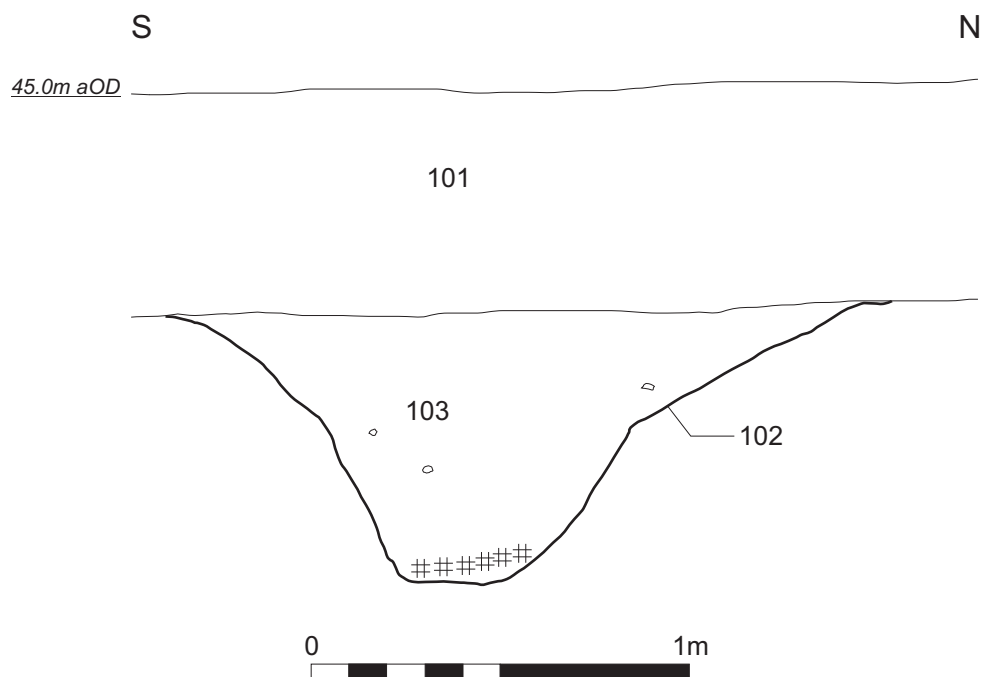
Footings trench, west side, ditch [109], looking west Fig 6

A north-west to south-east aligned ditch [111] was present in both the north and east footings trench and continued beyond the limit of excavation. It was a V-shaped ditch, 0.60m wide and 0.60m deep (Figs 3, 7 and 8, Section 3). The dark, brown-black silty sandy loam fill (112) contained a single residual sherd of Roman pottery dated to the 1st to 2nd century AD, and thirty-two sherds of medieval shelly ware pottery and animal bone.

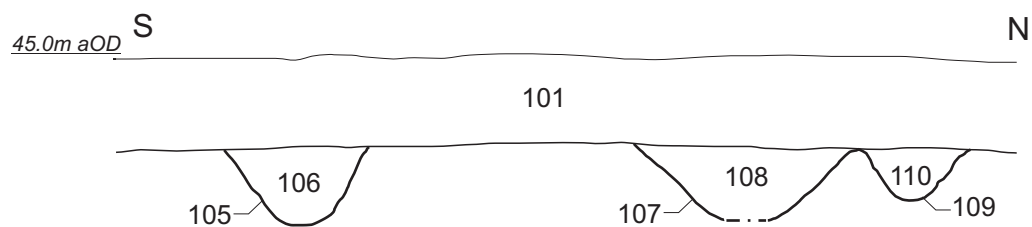


Footings trench, east side, ditches [111] and [107], looking south Fig 7

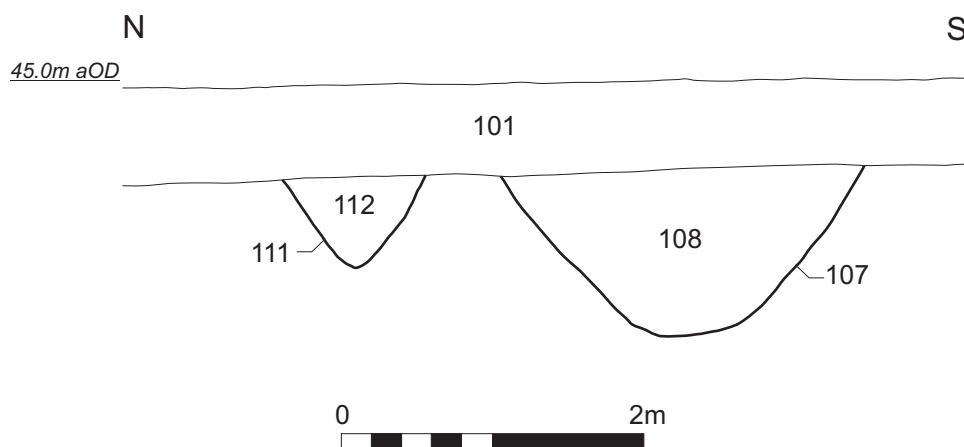
Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



An east to west aligned, service trench, located 3m to the north of the original house cut a dark brown-black sandy clay loam (114) which produced 15 sherds of 12th-century pottery (Fig 9). It is likely, given the east-west alignment of a ditch [107] observed in the east footings, that the service trench cut the ditch fill along the length of this ditch (Fig 3). The fill was overlain by the gravel drive (115), which was 0.08m thick. The ditch (107) was cut by a modern, north to south aligned water pipe trench [116] which was 0.30m wide and 0.18m deep, by a north to south aligned foul water pipe trench [118] and a water pipe trench with stop cock [121] .



General view of east to west service trench to north of house, looking west Fig 9

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 216 sherds with a total weight of 2,694g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 2.20. It was largely of medieval date, although a few sherds of residual Romano-British material were also present.

All the wares are types which are well-known in the region. Where appropriate, the codings and chronology of the Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service type-series (eg Baker and Hassall 1977) were used, as follows:

B01A: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware cAD1000-1200, 3 sherds, 139g, EVE = 0.16.

B07: Medieval Shelly Ware: AD1100-1400, 207 sherds, 2449g, EVE = 2.04.

C10: Potterspury Ware: mid 13th – 15th centuries, 2 sherds, 26g, EVE = 0.

In addition, four sherds (80g) of Romano-British material were noted. It comprised Grey- and Grog-Tempered wares of probable 1st – 2nd century AD date.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. All the non-residual pottery comprised fairly large sherds in good condition, and appears reliably stratified.

The assemblage, typically for Harrold, is dominated by the products of the local pottery industry, which produced shelly wares from the 12th – 14th centuries at a number of sites in and around the village (eg. Hall 1971). Medieval pottery from other sources is somewhat rare, with the only other types noted being St. Neots ware, which largely pre-dates the start of the industry, and Potterspury ware, of which there were just two sherds. The St. Neots ware assemblage is all of 11th – 12th century date, comprising Denham's type T1(2) (*ibid* 1985). This is typified by generally larger vessels than the earlier products of the tradition, and this is the case here, with the single jar and bowl rims present all being at the larger end of the size-range distribution for such vessels in this ware.

The shelly ware assemblage is fairly typical of the 12th – 13th centuries. The range of vessel types is entirely restricted to jars, large bowls and jugs, with jar comprising 56.4% (by EVE) of the Shelly Ware assemblage, bowls 24.5% and jugs 19.1%. The main support for the given dating is the presence of a jug with a stabbed and thumbled handle which is typical of the period. No decorated sherds were present, apart from a single bodysherd with thumbled applied strip decoration, probably from a storage jar.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	RB		B01A		B07		C10		
Context/cut	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
101 topsoil	2	9	1	23	131	1311	2	26	U/S
103/102			2	116	1	18			12th century
108/107	1	21			28	454			12th century
112/111	1	50			32	461			12th century
114/104					15	205			12th century
Total	4	80	3	139	207	2449	2	26	

6.2 Ceramic material by Pat Chapman

There are two small sherds of roof tile, although there are no nibs or pegholes present. The tiles are 13mm thick and made from a hard fine sandy silty clay fired to shades of orange. One sherd has some small flint and other calcareous inclusions and black flecks and is slightly vesicular, the other sherd has less inclusions and is not vesicular. This tile could date from the medieval to the late 18th century.

7 THE ANIMAL BONE by Karen Deighton

A total of 31grams of animal bone was collected by hand from three contexts during the course of the watching brief.

Preservation was moderate with heavy fragmentation but a low level of surface abrasion. There was no evidence for butchery or burning.

The taxa observed were as follows:

Context 101 Male pig (*Sus*) canine

From the fill (112) of a ditch [111], Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) ulna with canid gnawing. A large ungulate long bone fragment.

From the fill (114) of a ditch, horse mid-shaft metacarpal fragment

Unfortunately the amount of material is too sparse to allow any statements on the animal economy to be made. The ditch fills were dated to the 12th century

8 DISCUSSION

The watching brief on the extension to Well House, Harrold has demonstrated the survival of five medieval ditches, three of which were dated to the 12th century AD, and consistent with the site situated in the medieval settlement core of Harrold.

The function of the ditches is likely to have been as boundary ditches; the orientation of four of the ditches was east to west, and parallel to an existing boundary to the north. A total of 78 sherds of pottery from three ditches [102], [107] and [111] consisted of medieval shelly ware (Harrold ware) dated to the 12th century.

The topsoil also contained 131 sherds of the medieval Shelly ware pottery. Pottery from a later date was not present in the topsoil, suggesting that the field identified on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey may well have remained as pasture for a considerable time; possibly since the 15th century until the construction of the present house in the late 20th century.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions /thickness (m)	Artefact type
101	Layer	Topsoil, dark black-brown garden soil	0.55 - 0.70m thick	1st to 2nd century Roman pottery and 11th to 15th century medieval pottery and animal bone
102	Cut of ditch/pit	Linear, E-W, with U-shaped profile, flattish base	1.80m wide 0.72m deep	
103	Fill of [102]	Dark grey-black silty loam with gravel, charcoal		12th-century pottery
104	Layer	Natural orange silty sand with pockets of gravel		
105	Cut of ditch/pit	Linear, E-W, steep sided U-shaped profile	0.92m wide 0.52m deep	
106	Fill of ditch [106]	Mid brown-grey clay loam with infrequent gravel		
107	Cut of ditch	Linear, E-W, wide U-shaped profile	1.4m wide 0.50m deep	
108	Fill of [107]	Mid brown-grey clay loam with infrequent gravel		12th-century pottery
109	Cut of ditch/pit	Linear, E-W, with U-shaped profile	0.70m wide 0.38m deep	
110	Fill of [109]	Mid brown-grey clay loam with infrequent gravel		
111	Cut of ditch	Linear, NW-SE, V-shaped profile	0.60m wide 0.60m deep	
112	Fill of [111]	Dark brown-black sandy loam with re-deposited natural chalk & gravel pebbles		12th-century pottery and animal bone
113	Layer	Subsoil, dark brown-grey-black loam	c0.35m thick	
114	Fill of ditch [107]	Same as fill (108)		12th-century pottery and animal bone
115	Layer	Gravel surface of drive	0.08m thick	
116	Cut	Service trench for water pipe	0.30m wide, 0.20m deep	
117	Fill of [116]	Modern cast iron water pipe and backfill		
118	Cut	Service trench for foul water	0.30m wide, 0.50m deep	
119	Lower fill of [118]	Modern ceramic foul water pipe encased in concrete	0.30m wide 0.20m thick	
120	Upper fill of [118]	Dark brown-black sandy clay loam	0.30m wide, 0.30m thick	
121	Cut	Service trench for water pipe and stop cock	0.80m wide, 0.60m deep	
122	Fill of [121]	Water pipe with back fill of dark brown-black sandy clay loam		



Northamptonshire County Council

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Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council