



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at
8 Princes Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire
November 2011



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SITE NAME: 8 Princes Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire
ACCESSION NUMBER: LUTNM 2011.88
OASIS REFERENCE NO: Northamp 3-116919
NATIONAL GRID REF: TL01613 22184
CLIENT: Red River Corporation Ltd
CONTRACTOR: Northamptonshire Archaeology
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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS:	Northamp3-116919
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 8 Princes Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated a single trial trench at 8 Princes Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire in advance of the proposed construction of a house. A pit of potential medieval date was revealed. No further archaeological features were present.
Project type	Evaluation
Previous work	unknown
Future work	unknown
Monument type and period	A medieval pit
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Bedfordshire
Site address	8 Princes Street, Dunstable
OS coordinates	TL01613 22181
Height	150m aOD
Area ha	0.5ha
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Archaeology Team Central Bedfordshire Council
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith BA, PGDip
Project Manager	Adam Yates
Sponsor or funding body	Red River Corporation Ltd
PROJECT DATE	
Start date	November 2011
End date	November 2011
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT 8 PRINCES STREET, DUNSTABLE, BEDFORDSHIRE

Abstract

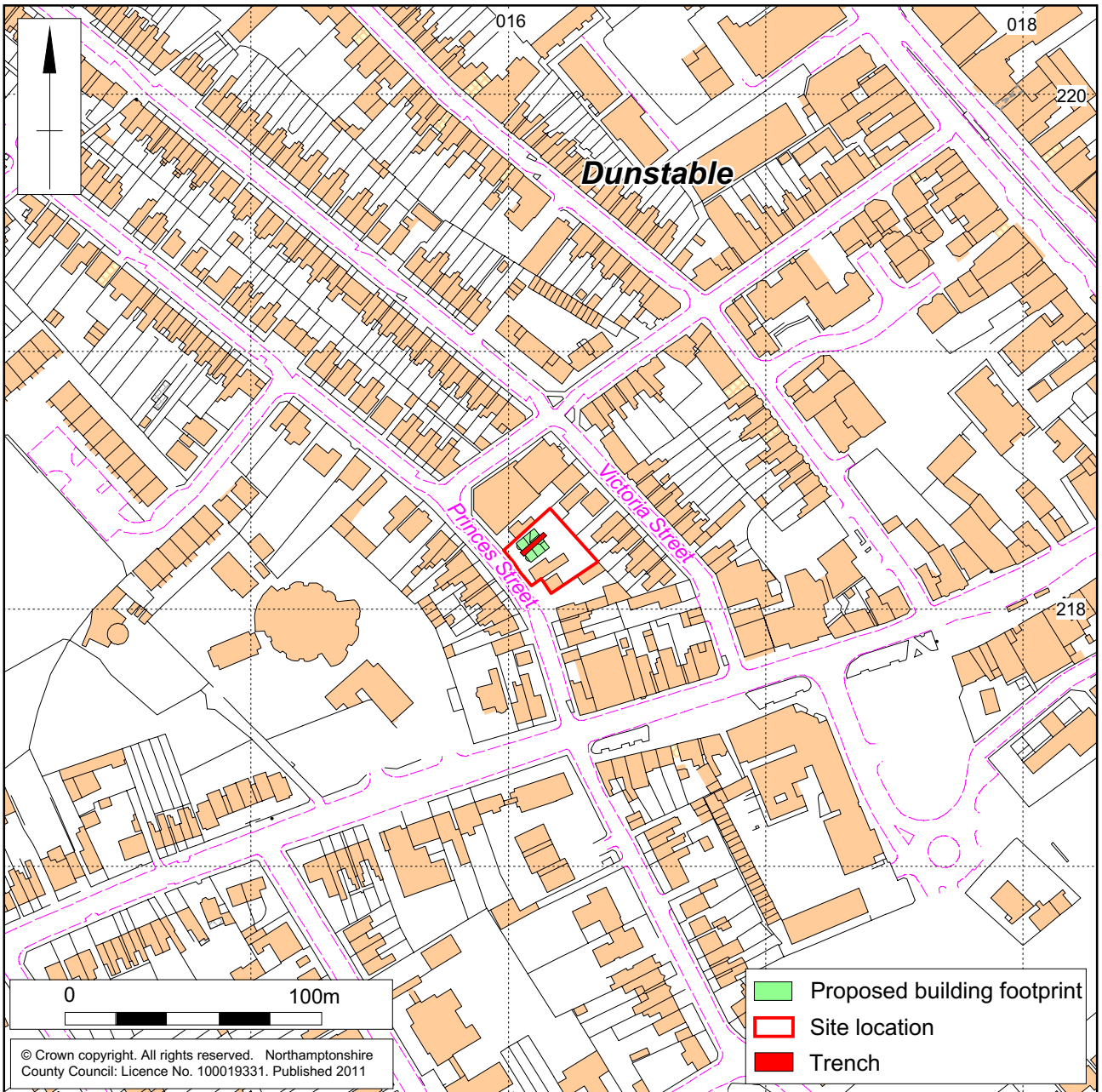
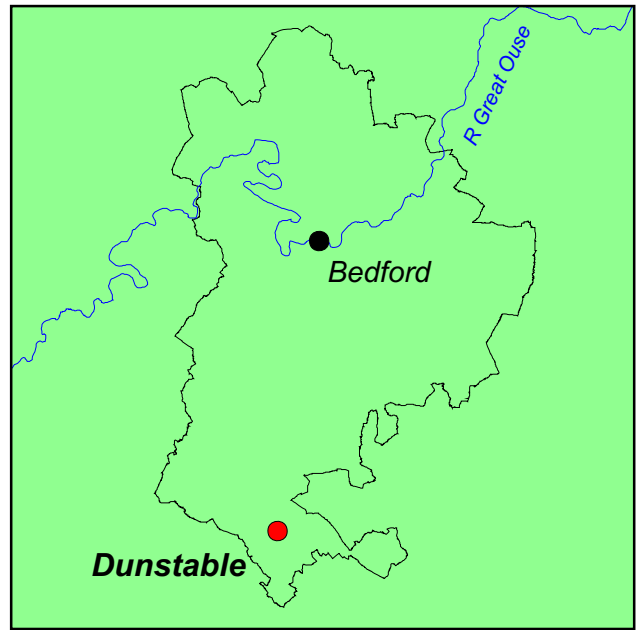
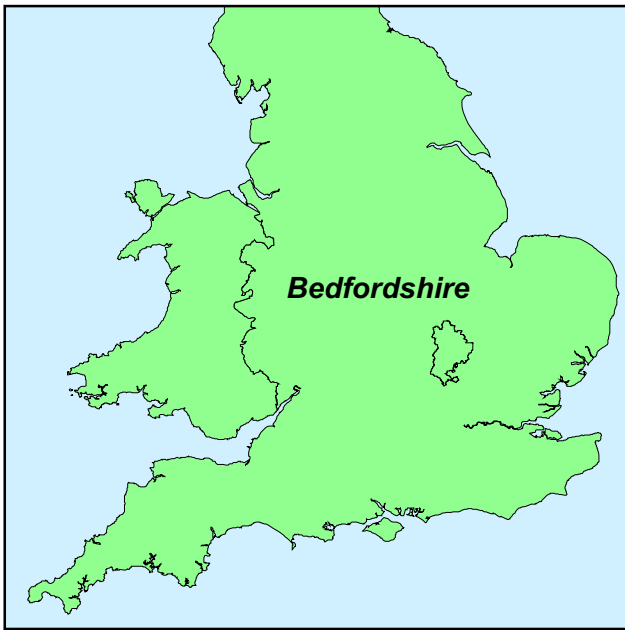
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1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology were commissioned by Red River Corporation Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation, which was required to assess potential disturbance to archaeological deposits, on the proposed development at 8 Princes Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire (TL01613 22184, Fig 1). The work was undertaken in compliance with the brief issued by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), in line with policies HE6.1 and HE6.2 of PPS5: Planning & the Historic Environment (CBC 2011) and the subsequent WSI prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011).

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation (RAO No.48). All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents of English Heritage (1991; 2002; 2006) and the appropriate standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (IfA 2008; Gurney 2003). Where appropriate the research frameworks set out for the East of England and its wider region may be applied (EH 1997; Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake *et al* 2007; Medleycott 2011).

Luton Museum has assigned an accession number for the works (LUTNM 2011.88). This served as the site code.



Scale 1:2,500

Site Location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, geology and topography

The development area is located in the north-west quadrant of Dunstable, on the east side of Princes Street (NGR TL 01613 22184) comprising an area of approximately 0.5ha. The site is situated within the urban centre on level ground at c150m above Ordnance Datum, it is currently occupied by a former nursing home building and its garden. The underlying geology comprises White Chalk, subgroup chalk (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/>).

2.2 Archaeological background

Dunstable is a Roman town (*Durocbrivae*; HER135; 11284) that may have developed around the point where the prehistoric Ickniel Way (HER 353) met with the Roman Watling Street (HER 5508). The town may have been a local administration centre or a staging post. There is no evidence to date for a military connection. The Antonine Itinerary records a stopping post along Watling Street twelve Roman miles north from *Verulamium* (St Albans). Archaeological investigations suggest that the core of the Roman town radiated out from the crossroads, estimated at up to 400m. The sub-surface archaeological remains recorded to date include; cobbled road surfaces, wells, timber buildings, boundary features (including ditches), industrial activity and a large late Roman cemetery (HER 11284) in the south-west quadrant of the town (Albion 2003).

The Historic Environment Record (HER) records the discovery of human burials during the 19th century, c30m to the north-west of the proposed development (HER122). At least one of these burials was within a lead coffin and accompanied by Roman pottery. The exact location is unknown.

Durocbrivae is likely to have entered decline some time from the 5th century AD following the official withdrawal of Roman rule from Britain. Saxon activity has been identified at Marina Drive in the north-west part of the modern town (HER152), but there is no evidence for continuity between Roman and Saxon settlement.

The proposed development lies within the medieval town of Dunstable, which was founded by Henry I, cAD1119 (HER16986). The town was organised in burgage plots, which are the forerunners of the modern property boundaries. Medieval features including kilns, pits and ditches dating to this period have also been recorded in the town (Albion 2003). Henry I also had a royal residence at Dunstable on the northern side of Church Street (HER 148). Documentary sources suggest it was situated on the opposite side of Church Street to the Augustinian Priory, founded by Henry in 1131-2 (HER 131).

A Dominican Friary was later founded cAD1259 by Henry III and Eleanor of Provence (HER141), dedicated to St Mary. The Friary was situated on the western side of High Street South.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The aim of the archaeological evaluation as stated in the brief (CBC 2011) was:

- *to determine and understand the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;*
- *to examine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.*

The excavation was carried out within the parameters suggested by the published research priorities for the East of England and its wider region (EH 1997; Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake *et al* 2007; Medlycott 2011).

Possible questions may include and relate to:

- The Roman to Anglo-Saxon transition
- Chronology
- Industry (Roman and medieval periods)
- Urban settlement
- Material culture and environmental evidence

Additionally:

- Recovering artefacts to assist in the development of material studies within the region
- Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

Due to the limited nature of the archaeological remains observed in the evaluation, the site has not been able to answer any specific research questions, but the evaluation was able to answer the general aims of the project as outlined in the brief.

3.2 Methodology

A single trial trench was excavated, across the footprint of the proposed house, (Figs 1 and 2). It was accurately measured in and marked out prior to the commencement of work using known points mapped by the Ordnance Survey.

The trench was excavated by machine using a toothless bucket under the direction of an experienced archaeologist to a single discreet feature and undisturbed natural horizons.

The trench and spoil heap were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. No finds were recovered.

The trench was cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of the feature. The single discrete feature was half sectioned and fully recorded.

Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2006). The trench was planed at a scale of 1:50. A section of the feature was drawn at a scale of 1:10. All levels were related to Ordnance Datum.

Digital photographs formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, these were supplemented with 35mm monochrome negatives, and colour transparencies in the traditional manner.

The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

4.1 Trench 1

The single trench, 12m long by 2m wide, was located in the garden of 8 Princes Street; it was aligned north-east south-west (Fig 2). Natural chalk was exposed at a depth 0.8m below present ground surface (149.3m aOD). A single circular pit [104] cut the natural. The pit was 0.55m in diameter by 0.15m deep with a shallow curving profile. The fill (105) comprised firm light grey loam with frequent chalk fragments. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of the pit, suggesting that the pit may be of medieval or later date.

The natural was overlain by c0.5m of mid-grey-brown chalky loam subsoil (102), which was overlain by c0.3m of dark-grey loam topsoil (101) at 150.10m aOD.

4.2 The pottery by Iain Soden

A single un-diagnostic body sherd of Hertfordshire Grey Ware pottery, weighing 3 g, was recovered from the fill (105) of pit [104]. The pottery dates to between the 12th and 14th centuries.

5 CONCLUSION

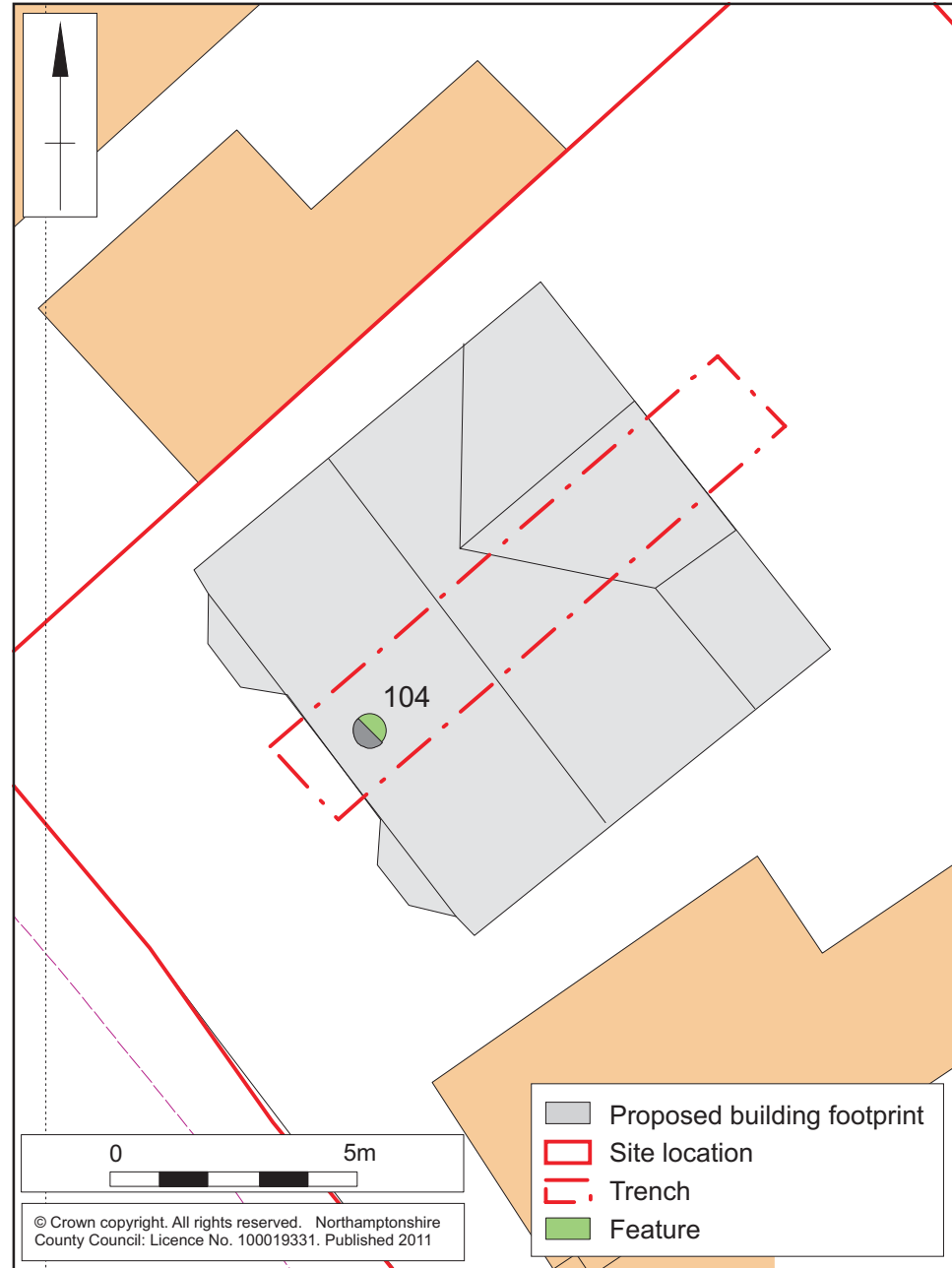
A small shallow pit lay at the south-western end of the trench. A single sherd of medieval pottery from the fill suggests that the pit is of medieval or later date. No other archaeological features were observed. The archaeology and natural chalk geology was overlain by between 0.79-0.90m of subsoil and topsoil.

No evidence was found within the trench for Roman activity or for any continuation of the nearby Roman cemetery into the development area.

Scales, Plan 1:150, Section 1:10

Trench 1 with pit 104

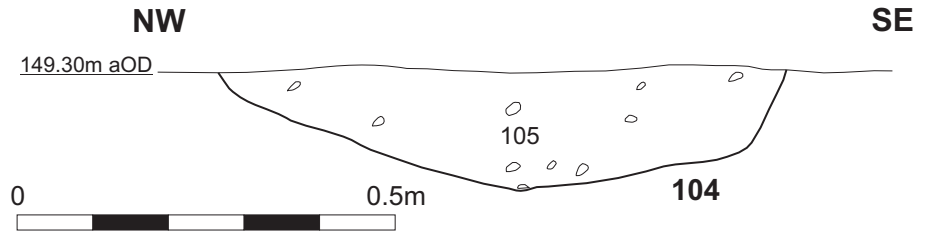
Fig 2



Trench 1, looking north-east



Pit, 104, looking north-east



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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	12m x 2m NE-SW	TL01613 22184	150.05m aOD	0.87m, 149.18m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Dark grey loam with occasional small stones and chalk fragments	0.24-0.32m thick	-
102	Subsoil	Mid grey-brown chalky loam	0.42-0.51m thick	-
103	Natural	Chalk	-	-
104	Cut of pit	Circular with shallow sloping profile	0.75m diameter 0.15m deep	-
105	Fill of pit [104]	Light grey chalky loam with frequent chalk fragments	0.15m deep	Single sherd of medieval pottery