Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at

Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold

Bedfordshire

BEDFM 2009.48

October 2009

Jim Brown

October 2009

Report 09/151

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

STAFF

Project Manager	Jim Brown BSc PGDip MIfA
Text and fieldwork	Jim Brown
Illustration	Jim Brown and Amir Bassir BSc
Roman pottery	Tora Hylton
Medieval pottery	Iain Soden BA MIfA

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Jim Brown		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

***OASIS* REPORT FORM**

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire, October 2009	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was conducted at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire in order to observe installation of a concrete raft that would enable preservation of Iron Age and Roman remains *in situ* and to preserve by record the medieval pits and buried soil encountered in other building footings.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Watching brief	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Trial trench excavation (Burke & Bassir 2009)	
Current Land use	Residential	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No	
Monument type/ period	Medieval remains	
Significant finds	Pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	1664 sq m	
OS Easting and Northing	SP 9518 5675	
Height OD	*c*43m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Isabel Lisboa, consultant for Bedfordshire Borough Council	
Project Design originator	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Resolution Homes	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	October 2009	
End date	October 2009	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical	BEDFM 2009.48	Pottery additional to trial trench evaluation
Paper	BEDFM 2009.48	Watching brief monitoring sheets & photographic record
Digital	BEDFM 2009.48	Client report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	An archaeological watching brief at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire, October 2009	
Serial title and volume	09/151	
Author(s)	Jim Brown	
Page numbers		
Date	30th October 2009	

Contents

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT LONGRIDGE, CHURCH WALK, HARROLD BEDFORDSHIRE

October 2009

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was conducted at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire in order to observe installation of a concrete raft that would enable preservation of Iron Age and Roman remains in situ and to preserve by record the medieval pits and buried soil encountered in other building footings.

1 INTRODUCTION

Proposals were presented by Resolution Homes as a planning application at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire (Fig 1; NGR SP 9520 5650). The proposal was for the construction of two dwellings with garages, replacing the existing bungalow and garages.

The archaeological representative of Bedford Borough Council indicated that the site contains important archaeological remains. It was advised that a programme of mitigation should be undertaken to engineer a solution for preservation *in situ* of the known Iron Age and Roman remains by means of a raft foundation design and to preserve by record other remains where they were threatened by the development.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Resolution Homes and approved by the archaeological representative of Bedford Borough Council (Brown 2009). Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute of Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation (RAO No.48). The WSI for the fieldwork and the subsequent programme of post-excavation work was prepared in accordance with current best archaeological practice as defined by the Institute of Archaeologists (IfA 2001, 2008), the *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP 2)* (EH 1991) and the local museum archive requirements (BM 2003).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous archaeological work

Investigations during the 1950s of the gravel workings to the north of the development area revealed extensive evidence for occupation from the Bronze Age through to the Saxon period.

An excavation in the adjacent Bridgman Works identified a spread of archaeological features throughout the development area, including pits and linear ditches ranging in date from the Roman to medieval and post-medieval periods. Preservation in the east of the site contained evidence for industrial activity including a possible corn drying or malting oven.

The area adjacent to Town Farm contained prehistoric and Saxon occupation that included pits, ditches and the remains of a medieval holloway. Preliminary results from the excavation suggest that these deposits may continue into the adjacent area.

Excavations to the south of the High Street at Harrold Priory Middle School identified extensive medieval remains, including evidence of building foundations possibly associated with Harrold Manor.

Trial trench evaluation at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold in July 2009 investigated and confirmed the presence of archaeological features characterising their depth, extent, likely date, state of preservation and recovering finds for assessment (Burke and Bassir 2009). The overall conclusion was a clear survival of Iron Age and early Roman remains at the southern end of the site in a fair state of preservation, with deposits of medieval and post-medieval origin present towards the north of the site. In both cases the remains were indicative of settlement activity. The upper deposits were disturbed by modern tree-planting and service lines.

2.2 Topography and geology

The site lies within the medieval core of the village of Harrold and is set 30m back from the High Street frontage on its south side. Church Walk, a lane of medieval origin, lies 100m to the east and the site of the former manor lies to the west. It was formerly occupied by a 1970s bungalow, driveway and gardens.

The River Great Ouse flows to the south of the village of Harrold. The site is at a height of around 43m above Ordnance Datum. The geology generally comprises Argillic Brown Earths and fine loamy soils over valley gravels (LAT1983; BGS 2001). The latter are derived from the river and overlie Great Oolite Limestone.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

It was the principal objective of the watching brief to monitor the groundwork as development proceeded and to ensure that archaeological remains were preserved *in situ* through application of the proposed raft foundation design. In addition:

- Where finds, features or deposits were encountered unexpectedly that could not be preserved *in situ* it was the purpose of the watching brief to investigate and record those archaeological remains.

- This report confirms the results of the archaeological watching brief, further characterising any remains encountered during the laying of the raft foundation. It highlights any evidence capable of contributing towards the study of the wider historic context of the site and in pursuit of the published regional research agenda priorities (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake *et al* 2007).

3.2 Methodology

The site is divided into two principal areas (Fig 2). Building 1 and its garage lay in an area where modern disturbances have severely truncated medieval and post-medieval deposits both horizontally and vertically before the new development took place. Building 2 lay in an area where the forerunning evaluation identified Late Iron Age and early Roman pits and gullies in a relatively good state of preservation.

The foundations for Building 1 and its garage were cut from the level of the modern ground surface at *c*43.2m above Ordnance Datum to the surface of the natural substrate at between 1.0-1.6m below (front and back cover). The process was undertaken using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.5m wide tooth bucket. All of the foundation trenches were observed by an attendant archaeologist who cleaned and investigated the sides of the footings, relating the extant deposits with the results of the forerunning evaluation Trench 1 (Burke and Bassir 2009).

Representative sections of the sides of the foundation trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features or deposits. A hand-drawn annotated sketch plan of all archaeological features was made to the plan of the foundation design, which is related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were recorded. Recording methodology followed a standard context recording system with unique context numbers assigned to each fill, cut or deposit and recorded on *pro forma* watching brief record sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. A photographic record was made, both in 35mm monochrome film and on colour slides. The record was supplemented by direct annotations of the foundation plan as required. All levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum from the topographic survey supplied by Hinton Cook Architects, a copy of which is retained in the archive.

The whole of Building 2, including its adjoining garage, was seated upon a concrete raft, designed with the specific purpose of preserving the Late Iron Age and early Roman remains *in situ*. The preparation of the engineering level for the concrete raft was observed by an attendant archaeologist.

The topsoil was graded under archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to the required engineering level at *c*43.5m above Ordnance Datum. Surface finds were collected during machine preparation and the area was photographed for recording purposes.

Further monitoring was largely unnecessary, no landscaping works were detailed as part of the building plan, the surrounding garden and parking areas remain at the original level. Service lines connect with the previously existing junctions so that no new substantial main utilities were introduced into the site. Smaller private connecting cables and pipes lie within the upper 0.35m, comprising entirely modern material. New drains were laid to a similar level and were for the most part located in the vicinity of the building footings. Re-excavation of the original drainage catchment pit was inspected and no archaeological deposits or finds were distinguishable with those observed on the site elsewhere. Drainage connections were made at this point.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Building 1 foundations and garage

Building 1

Natural orange gravel was encountered at the base of the foundation trenches at between 1.0-1.6m below ground level. Cut into the gravel was pit [317], located in the north-west corner of the building footprint (Figs 2-3 and 5). The pit was 2m wide and the top of it lay 1.6m below the ground surface, it could not be safely excavated within the foundation base. The shoulder of the pit cut sharply into the gravel at a steep angle and the foundation is laid across its surface rather than cutting into it. The uppermost fill was examined and it comprised soft wet dark bluish-grey clay silt (316) with moderate charcoal flecks. The pit produced two sherds of medieval pottery.

Overlying pit [317] and the natural gravel was a 0.30-0.45m thick layer of mid-brown sandy clay loam (305) containing orange sand inclusions. It is likely to be a buried subsoil layer. Above this was between 0.40-0.55m of dark orange-brown silty clay loam (304). This thick homogeneous buried soil layer was present throughout the foundation trenches as an uneven layer, sloping downwards toward the north-east and disturbed in its upper horizon by modern service lines, drains and the concrete foundation of the former bungalow. It is probably a former garden soil or cultivation deposit and produced six pottery sherds of medieval date.

Above the medieval layers were modern deposits. Mixed orange-brown sandy clay loam (303) with frequent fragments of sandstone and gravel were present between 0.14-0.36m thick across the foundation trenches and up to 0.5m thick beneath the former bungalow (Fig 3). This was a levelling deposit created at the time of the former bungalow and extended across the former building footprint, the parking areas and the edge of, but not the whole of, the garden areas.

In the former garden areas the edge of layer (303) was overlain by dark brown silty clay loam (301) containing frequent root disturbance, charcoal and white flecks of vermiculite, 0.28-0.38m thick. This was modern garden topsoil associated with the former bungalow and where layer (303) was absent it overlay the medieval buried soil (304). At the northern edge of the foundations the topsoil (302) was mounded up towards the plot boundary creating a thicker organic rich compost deposit identified during the evaluation as deposit (101) (Burke and Bassir 2009, 2).

In the former parking areas a bed of yellowish-orange sand (302) that was 0.15-0.18m thick overlay layer (303) and was covered at the surface by light grey bricks (315) laid in an interlocking herringbone pattern (Fig 3).

The garage

Natural orange gravel was encountered at the base of the foundation trenches in the south-west of the footprint only. In the remainder of the garage footprint, overlying the gravel, hard mid-greenish-grey clay (406) with dark smears and chalky limestone flecks lay at the base of the trench. It is not certain whether this was a palaeo-alluvial deposit or the upper fill of a sediment deposit for a large feature such as a pond. The trench depth was between 0.90-1.16m, with a general slope of deposits evident towards the north-east.

In the north-west corner of the garage footprint the clay deposit (406) was cut by pit [405] (Figs 4-5). The pit was 0.78m wide by 0.48m deep, it had sharp steep sloping sides and a flat base, which was 0.52m wide. Its basal fill comprised black silty ash (404) containing charcoal flecks up to 0.18m thick, probably the sweeping from a small fire. It contained a single sherd of medieval pottery. On top of this was a dump of mixed dark greyish-black silty clay (403) containing moderate pebble flint and limestone fragments up to 50mm in diameter, up to 0.30m thick.

Overlying deposit (406) and the top of pit [405] was an uneven layer, between 0.15-0.30m thick, of dark orange-brown silty clay loam (402), the same as layer (304) in the Building 1 footprint. It was overlain by the modern garden soil comprising dark brown silty clay loam (401), between 0.24-0.39m thick, containing frequent root disturbance and flecks of charcoal.

4.2 Building 2 raft preparation level

The preparation of the engineering level for the concrete raft was monitored as it was graded to the necessary height, this comprised little more than ground clearance which cut the surface by little more than 50-100mm, combined with levelling and filling of the former garden pond. Across the whole area the level did not cut below the modern topsoil of the former garden areas (401), described above. Two sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Roman greyware were collected.

5 THE POTTERY

Roman pottery by Tora Hylton

A single rim sherd from a greyware (Bedfordshire Type Series R06) wheel-thrown jar was recovered from topsoil (401) in the Building 2 raft footprint. The rim form suggests a mid- to late 2nd century date.

Medieval pottery by Iain Soden

Subsequent to the material previously reported from the foregoing evaluation, a further 24 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered as shown in Table 1. They have been related to the fabric series established by the former Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS).

Table 1: Medieval pottery

Context	**Shelly Coarseware** Fabric B07	**Harrold/Olney Hyde** Fabric B05	**Sandy (red margins)** Fabric C05
Topsoil (301)	1	2	
Medieval soil (304)	4	1	1
Fill (316) of pit [317]		1	1
Topsoil (401)	1	1	
Medieval soil (402)	4	6	
Fill (404) of pit [405]		1	
Totals	**10**	**12**	**2**

The material shows a strong presence of Shelly Coarseware in the East Midlands tradition. As suggested by the trial trench evaluation, it continues to indicate occupation on the plot in the period *c*1100-1300 (Soden 2009). This is confirmed by the large quantity of other sherds in local fabric types, probably from Harrold/Olney Hyde.

The shelly ware tradition began with St Neot's-type ware which spanned the late Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods and was ubiquitous into the 12th century. Amongst the shelly coarsewares, there are four rim sherds from the medieval buried soil (304 and 402). Three are from small jars or cooking pots, the other is from a wide-mouthed bowl similar to that found in the evaluation and is probably 13th century in date. A large sooted cooking pot sherd from (316) in the Harrold/Olney Hyde tradition has a sagging base which is also suggestive of a 13th-century date, although this characteristic in itself is not conclusive. None of the other sherds are diagnostic.

6 CONCLUSION

The installation of the concrete raft for the purpose of preservation *in situ* has been a success. No Iron Age or early Roman deposits were disturbed during the development works.

As suggested by Trench 1 during the trial trench evaluation, the majority of remains of medieval and post-medieval origin were heavily disturbed by the construction of the former bungalow. Two medieval pits were identified within the footings of Building 1 and its garage. The pits are likely to represent low intensity rubbish disposal in the rear of properties fronting onto the High Street, 30m to the north. The principal deposit that survived was a medieval buried soil, dated *c*1100-1300 by the pottery from within it. This is an extensive deposit and may indicate that the area of ground was either open space or an undeveloped rear tenement plot. It is possible it was cultivated during the medieval period given its rich organic loamy content and absence of building materials.

Anticipated deposits of early post-medieval origin were absent above the medieval buried soil. These had been replaced by modern levelling layers, garden soils and parking surfaces during the construction of the previous bungalow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BM 2003 *Preparing archaeological archives for deposition with registered museums in Bedfordshire,* Bedford Museum

BGS 2001 *Solid Geology Map - UK South Sheet*, 1:625,000 scale, British Geological Survey

Brown, N, and Glazebrook, J, 2000 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties - 2 Research Agenda and Strategy,* East Anglian Archaeology, Occ Pap, **8**

Brown, J, 2009 *A Written Scheme of Works for an archaeological watching brief at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfordshire,* Northamptonshire Archaeology

Burke, J, and Bassir, A, 2009 *An archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Longridge, Church Walk, Harrold, Bedfrodshire,* Northaptonshire Archaeology report, **09/104**

EH 1991 *Management of archaeological projects*, second edition (MAP2), English Heritage

Glazebrook, J, 1997 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties - 1 Resource Assessment,* East Anglian Archaeology, Occ Pap, **3**

Gurney, D, 2003 *Standards for the Field Archaeology in the East of England,* East Anglian Archaeology, Occ Pap, **14**

IfA 1994 (revised 2001, 2008) *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief,* Institute for Archaeologists

IfA 2001 (revised 2008) *Standards and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials,* Institute for Archaeologists

LAT 1983 *Soils of Southern England and Wales,* **4**, Scale 1:250 000, Lawes Agricultural Trust

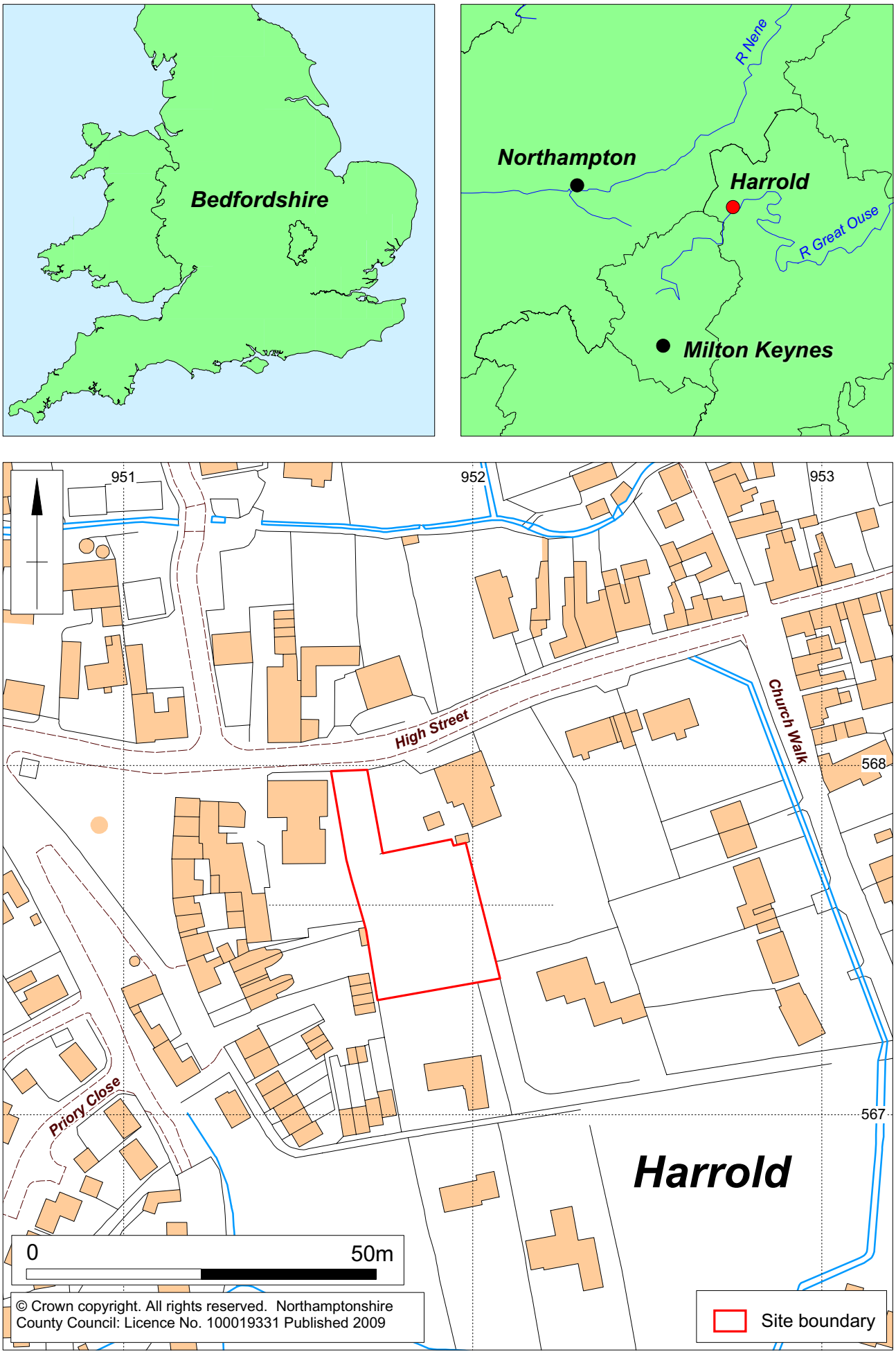
MGC 1992 *Standards in the Museum care of Archaeological Collections,* Museums and Galleries Commission

Oake, M, Luke, M, Dawson, M, Edgeworth, M, and Murphy, P, 2007 *Bedfordshire Archaeology - Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy,* Bedfordshire Archaeology monog, **9**

Soden, I, 2009 Medieval and post-medieval pottery, in J Burke and A Bassir 2009, 6

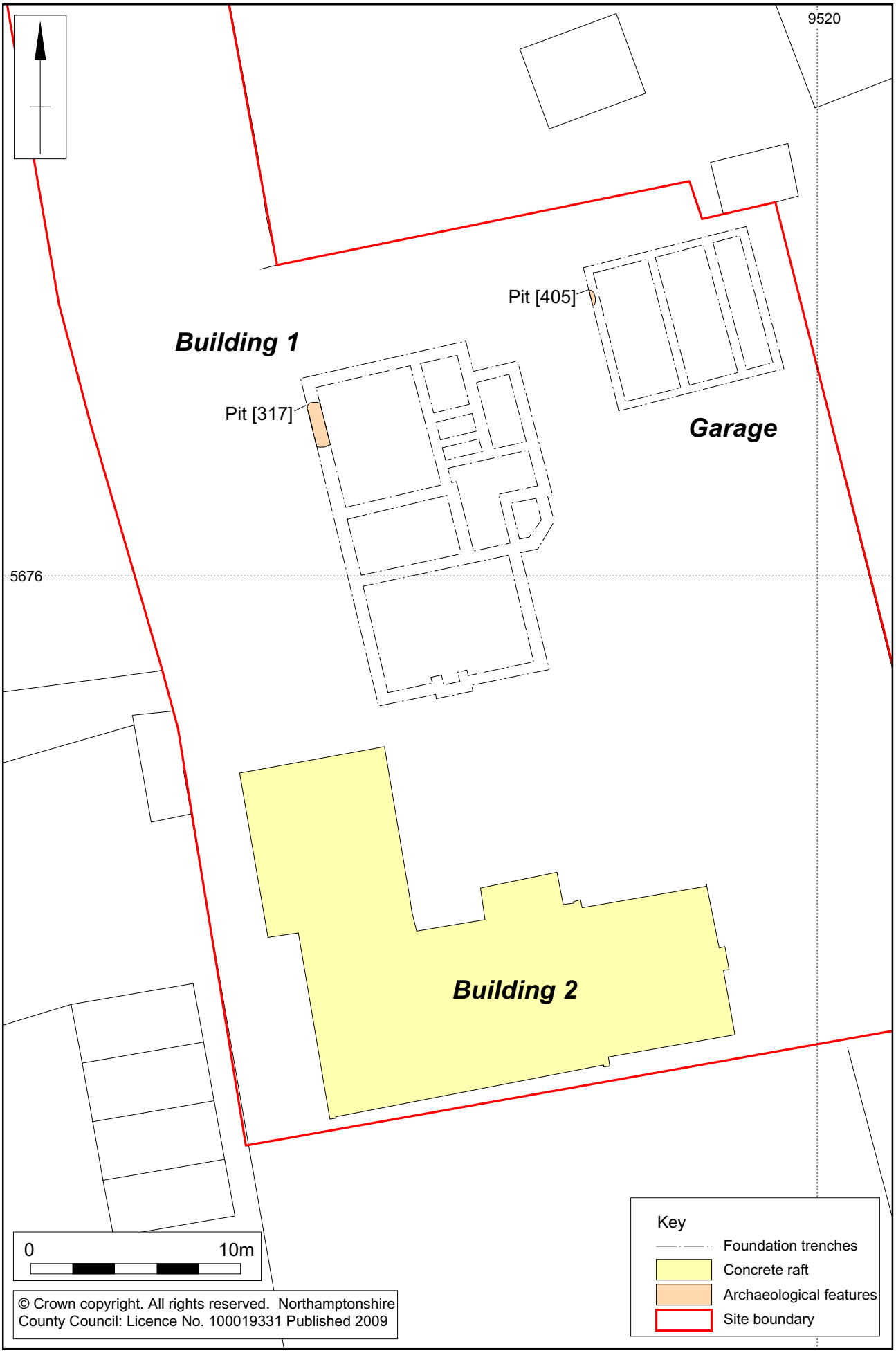
Walker, K, 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage,* United Kingdom Institute for Conservation

Watkinson, D, 1987 *First Aid for Finds*, 2nd edition, United Kingdom Institute for Conservation



Scale 1:1500

Site location Fig 1

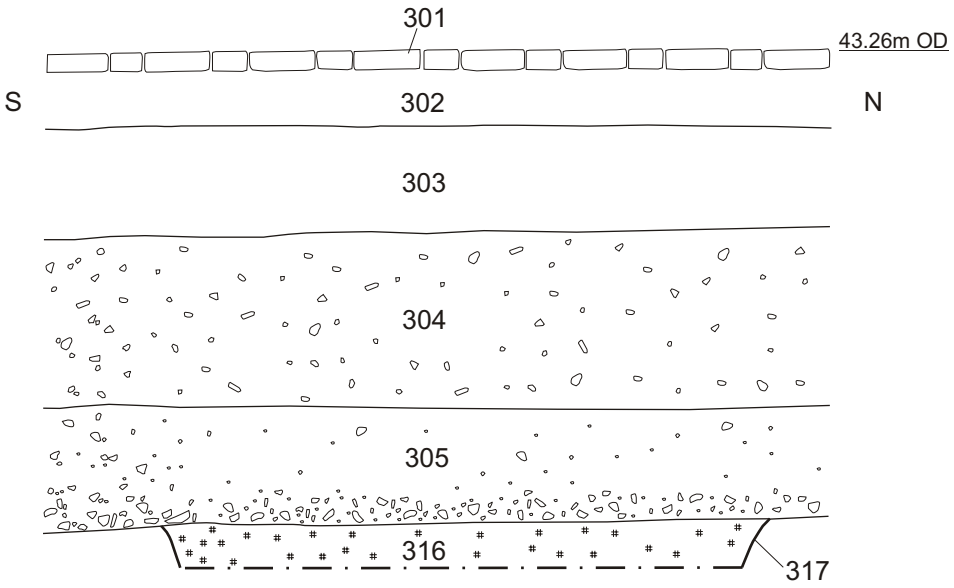


Scale 1:250 Archaeological features Fig 2

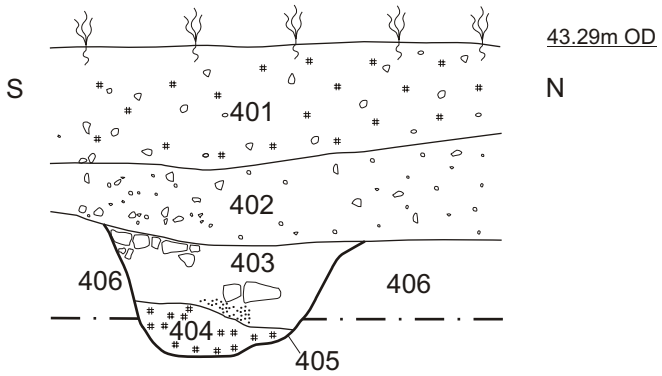
Pit [317] within the foundation of Building 1 Fig 3

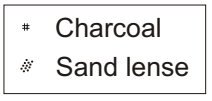
Pit [405] within the foundation of the garage Fig 4

Section 1



Section 2





Archaeological sections Fig 5

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
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

Registered Organisation IfA

Northamptonshire County Council