



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological field evaluation on land
at Butlers Cottage, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire
November 2011
Accession No:AYBCM:2011.232



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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Butlers Cottage, Liscombe Park, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire	
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken on land at Butlers Cottage, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire in advance of the construction of a new dwelling to replace the existing house. A modern ditch cut through a small pit from which a quantity of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Domestic garden adjacent to existing dwelling	
Future work	No	
Monument type/ period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address	Butlers Cottage, Liscombe Park, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire	
Study area (sq metres)	400m	
OS Easting & Northing	88831 26017	
Height OD	c 125m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council	
Project Design originator	David J Leigh, NA	
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh (NA)	
Project Manager	Iain Soden (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Sir Nicholas Bonsor	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	November 2011	
End date	November 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location Accession no: AYBCM:2011.232	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Pottery sherds (1496g)	None
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	Trial trench log forms (3) plan and section sheets (2) Colour slides (13) black and white contact prints (15) Digital photographs (29)
Digital	NA	Report text and figures

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION ON LAND
AT BUTLERS COTTAGE, LISCOMBE PARK, SOULBURY,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NOVEMBER 2011**

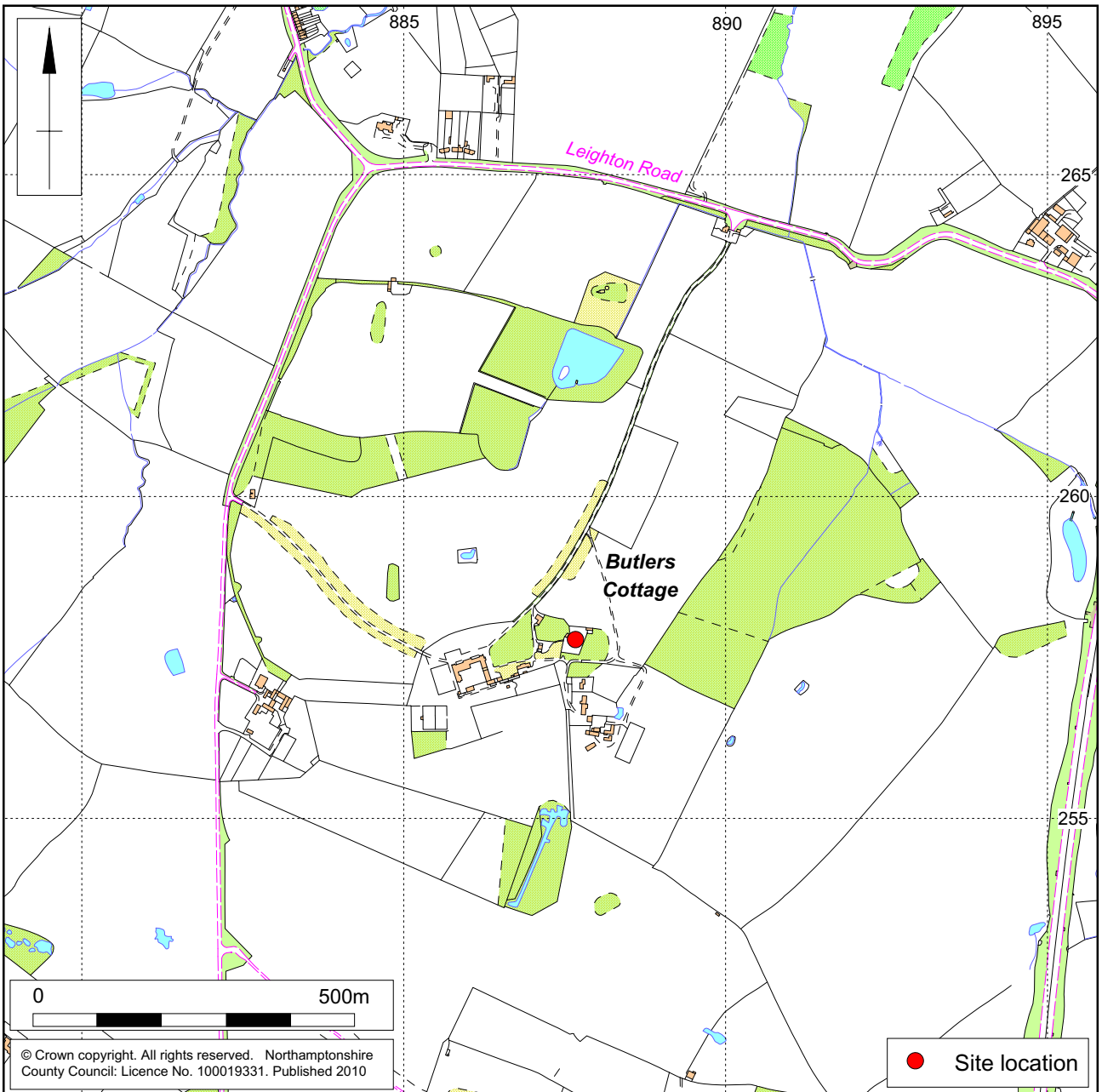
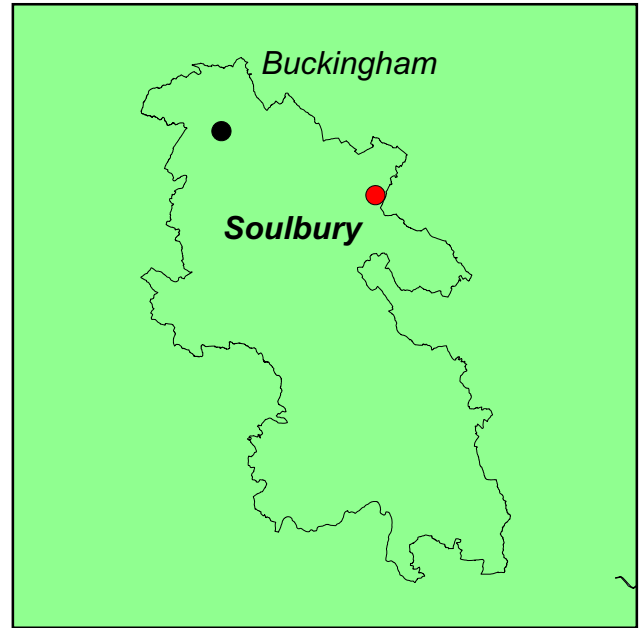
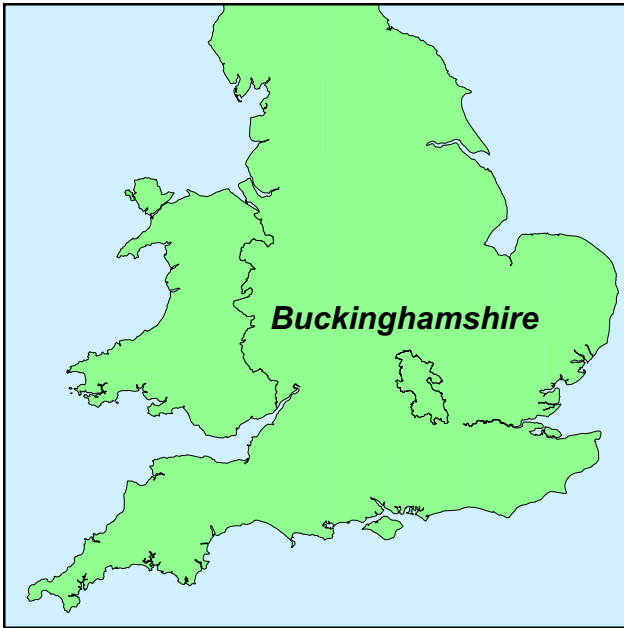
Abstract

In November 2011 an archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Butlers Cottage, Liscombe Park, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire in advance of the construction of a new dwelling to replace the existing house. A ditch containing numerous fragments of modern ceramic building material and corroded metal gutter fittings was recorded cutting through a small pit from which a quantity of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

In November 2011 an archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in advance of construction of a new dwelling to replace an existing on land at Butlers Cottage, Liscombe Park, Soulbury, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 88831 26017; Figs 1 and 2). The work was carried out on behalf of Sir Nicholas Bonsor and followed an approved Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Leigh 2011) prepared in accordance with a brief for archaeological investigation issued by the Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer (APCO), Buckinghamshire County Council in September 2011 (BCC 2011). It adhered to the English Heritage procedural documents *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE: EH 2006) and *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA).

The trial trench evaluation comprised the excavation of three trial trenches located following approval by the APCO. The work was carried out in order to investigate and quantify the archaeological potential within the investigation area and provide information for further targeted investigation if required.



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The village of Soulbury is located approximately 5km to the north-west of Leighton Buzzard. The development area (hereon referred to as the site) is situated on relatively level ground within Liscombe Park, just to the south-east of the village and encompasses an area approximately 625m (sq).

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel of the Thames Group (BGS Geoindex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



Butlers Cottage, Soulbury, looking north-east Fig 2

2.2 Historical background

The site lies within an area of archaeological interest just to the south-east of the village of Soulbury which is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086AD as *Soleberie* an Anglo-Saxon word possibly meaning stronghold or *Sulla's* gully.

To the west of the site lies the deserted medieval village of Liscombe (Historic Environment Record (HER) No: 010 7604, which is thought to have been abandoned in the middle of the 16th century as a result of emparkement associated with Liscombe House. Earthworks (NMR No: SP 82 NE 27) thought to be associated with the shrinkage of the medieval settlement survive around the area of the parish church of All Saints. All Saints church (NMR No: SP 82 NE31) dates from the 13th century, with later additions and alterations.

Liscombe House (NMR No: SP 82 N67) is of 17th century date and is a Grade II Listed Building which incorporates within it a 14th century chapel, also of Grade II Listing, the chapel being much altered. The park presently surrounding the house is of mostly 18th century date.

No previous archaeological work is recorded as having been carried out within the area of the site. Up to the present application the site has functioned as the garden to Butlers Cottage.

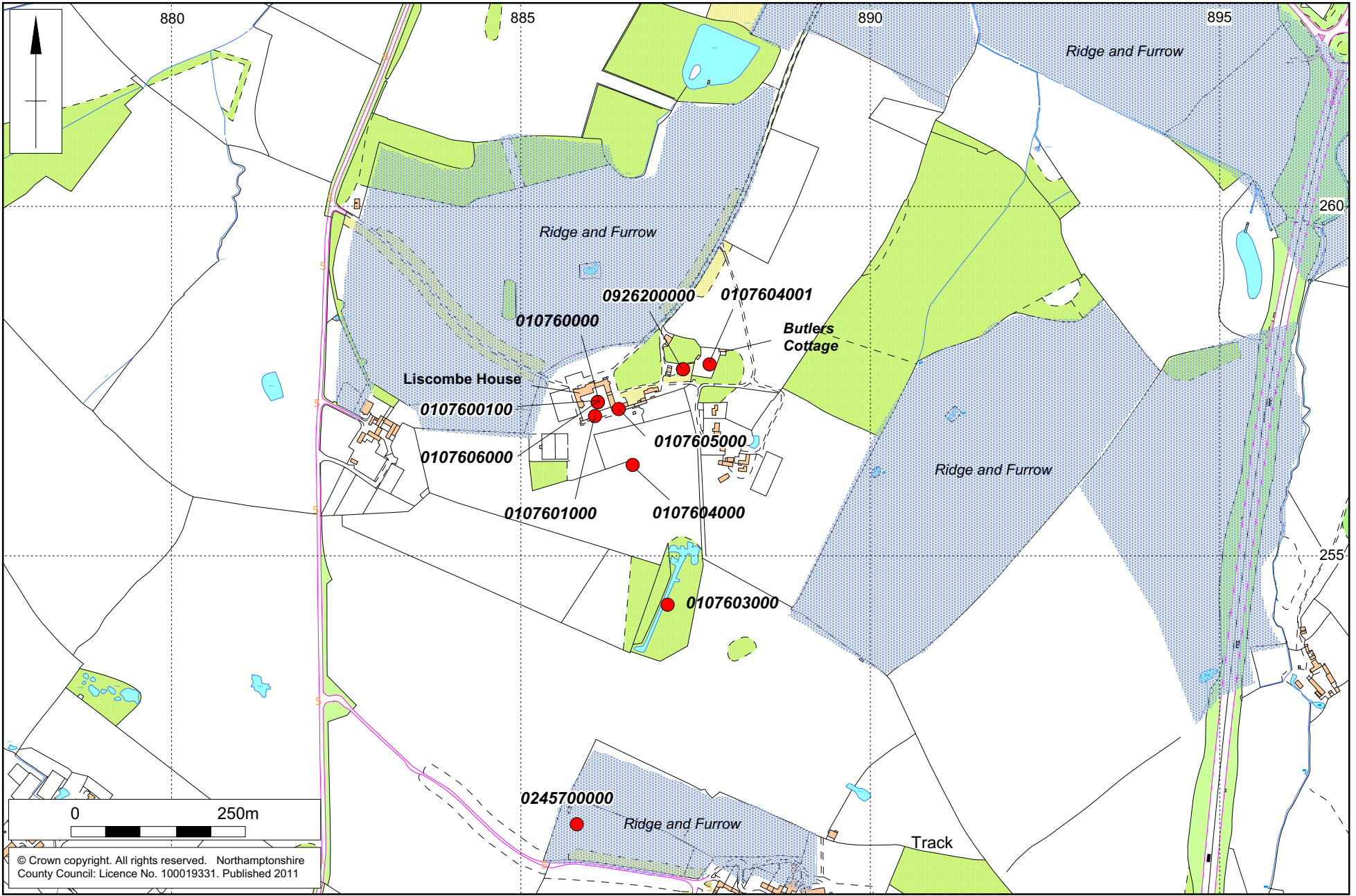
As a requirement of the brief for archaeological work a full search all the information held by Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record Office relating to the site was undertaken, the results of which are set out below.

2.3 Historic Environment Record data by Pat Chapman

All relevant information was obtained electronically from the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record, who indicated that a personal visit was not required. The records demonstrated that this is an archaeological designated area with particular importance for the medieval and post-medieval periods (Fig 3).

Table 1: Historic Environment Record (HER) data

SMR no LBSUID	NGR	Description, building designation status	Date
0107604001	SP 88770 25774	Butlers Cottage , may be on a platform defined by a scarp on south & east sides (Farley, 1991)	Medieval?
0107600000 Listed grade 2* 350801	SP 88610 25720	Liscombe House Mid 17th century, altered late 17th & late 18th centuries.	Medieval and post-medieval
0107600100	SP 88610 25720	Liscombe, the main manor of Soulbury seat of ancient family of Lovett	Saxon manorial origins
0107601000 Listed grade 2 350803	SP 88606 25700	The chapel, incorporated into the house as billiard room in the 19th century	14th century
0107602000	SP 8862 2713	Ha-ha ditch in front of house	19th century to modern
0107603000	SP 8871 2543	Possible moat or fishpond recorded in field survey	Medieval and/or 18th-century fishpond or moat
0107604000	SP 8866 2563	Deserted medieval settlement, earthworks no longer survive. Mesolithic flint blade and medieval pottery sherd from kitchen garden.	Medieval
0107605000 Listed grade 2 no: 350801	SP 88640 25710	Former coach-house. Late 18th century, altered & extended early 20th century.	Late 18th century
0107606000	SP 8861 2572	Extensive parkland, now much reduced	18th century
0245700000	SP 88580 25116	Medieval to post-medieval windmill mound recorded in field survey and on aerial photographs	Medieval
0926200000	SP 88732 25767	Site of former gravel pit shown on 19th-century maps	19th century



Prehistoric to Roman

There have been no recorded features from these periods, although a Mesolithic flint blade was recovered from the kitchen garden of Liscombe House.

Saxon

There is a historical reference for this period relating to Liscombe (*Lychescumbe*, *Lyscumb*), the main manor of Soulbury (*Soleberie*), which was held before the Conquest by 11 freemen, otherwise known as sokemen (www.british-history.ac.uk).

Medieval

In 1192 Ralt Gibwin had a knight's fee in Liscombe and Soulbury. By 1199 Philip Maunsel was connected to Soulbury and Liscombe and the Maunsel family maintained their fee until 1250 when Geoffrey Maunsel confirmed the manor to Paul Pever for an annual rent of gold spurs, and his son John Pever held the lordship of Soulbury and Liscombe until at least 1284. However, at some point after this the manor of Liscombe passed to the Lovett family, as a licence was granted to Robert Lovett in 1304 to found a chantry in the newly-built chapel (HER 0107601000) for the manor house (www.british-history.ac.uk).

The deserted medieval village settlement (HER 0107604000) c 100m to the south of Liscombe House was presumably attached to the medieval manor of Liscombe, but the earthworks have since been levelled. This was noted in an earthwork survey carried out by Mike Farley in March 1991, who also indicated that Butler's Cottage, to the east of the house, seemed to lie on a possible medieval house platform; perhaps an ancilliary building for the medieval manor (Farley 1991). It is possible that a feature described as possible fishponds (HER 0107603000), lying a further c 300m south of the House may also have been part of the manorial system.

The extensive survival of the ridge and furrow earthworks of the medieval field cultivation system, as seen on the aerial photograph taken in 1946, is an indication of the intensive arable economy of the manor during the medieval period.

Post-medieval

The present Liscombe House was built in the 16th century, perhaps incorporating some of the earlier build, and altered in the 17th century. During the 18th century further alterations to the house were carried by Sir Jonathan Lovett, the coach house (HER 0107605000 listed grade 2) was built, and extensive parkland created with the house at the centre. A substantial moat feature shown on the the 1769 Lovell Estate map may have been created from fishponds its present size appears to be much reduced.

During the 19th century the medieval chapel was incorporated into Liscombe House as a billiard room, now disused, after being utilised as a laundry and storeroom. A ha-ha ditch was excavated along the front of the house and faced with concrete (HER 0107602000). At some point in the 19th century Liscombe House changed ownership from the Lovett family.

A mound (HER0245700000) has been recorded c 500m south of Liscombe House. The *Parish Survey of Soulbury, Bucks, for County Museum, Aylesbury* (Lowther, P, nd SBC 8006) describes a mound surrounded by a ditch. The mound is known and mapped as Mill Hill, and as such it is believed to be a windmill mound of unknown date.

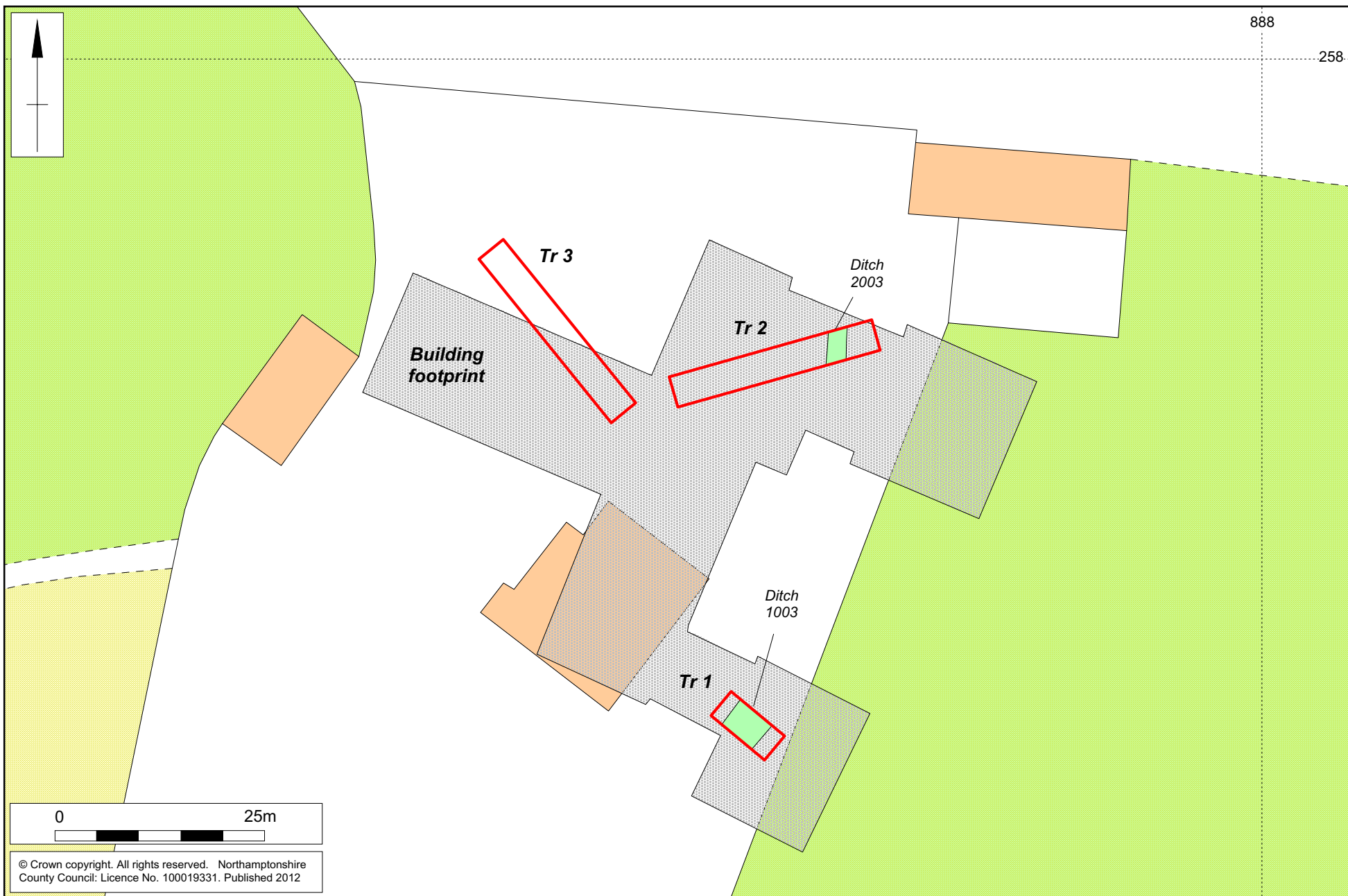
The site of a gravel pit is shown on 19th-century maps, in the vicinity of the manorial buildings (HER0926200000).

In the 20th century the parkland has been reduced and over 50% of the original area is now under arable.

Scale 1:250 (A4)

The location of the trial trenches and recorded features

Fig 4



3 OBJECTIVES

The aims of the trial trench evaluation, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Leigh 2011), were to:

- ◆ Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during the trial trench evaluation,
- ◆ Determine and record the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits and to retrieve all datable artefacts,
- ◆ Provide information as to the archaeological potential within the site, and to provide for further effective archaeological investigation either in advance of, or during early construction phases,
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

4 THE TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

4.1 Methodology

The fieldwork comprised the excavation of three trial trenches in accordance with the trench plan approved by the APCO (Fig 4). The trenches were located in relation to the Ordnance Survey mapping using a Leica GPS survey instrument.

The trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket (Fig 5). Topsoil and subsoil were removed to expose the upper strata of the natural substratum and stored separately. Once opened, each trench was recorded in accordance with standard NA procedures (NA 2006).

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 trial trench evaluation was carried out in accordance with the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008a) and *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010).



General view of the excavation of the trial trenches Fig 5

4.2 The excavated evidence

Three trial trenches were excavated within the site to investigate that archaeological potential within the site. The trenches were sited predominantly within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling, although trench 3 was re-orientated slightly to allow safe machine movement and to avoid existing services.

4.3 Trench 1

Trench 1 (Figs 5 and 11) was aligned approximately north-west south-east and was excavated adjacent to the front porch of the cottage, due to the limitations of space the trench was shortened, with the agreement of the APCO, to 3.30m in order for it to fit between the existing cottage and associated services and the eastern boundary of the site.

The stratigraphic sequence comprised a natural substratum of mid orange-brown compact clay, encountered at a depth of 124.98m aOD. This was cut by a ditch (1004) set on an approximate north-south alignment measuring 1.90m wide by 0.40m deep (Fig 7 and 11). The sides were irregularly concave in profile falling to a concave base. The fill (1005) comprised firm grey-brown silt loam, containing numerous fragments of modern brick and Marley roof tile along with occasional small fragments of plastic and

a fragment of corroded iron gutter fitting (not retained). At the base of the ditch the truncated remains of a small pit [1007] were recorded. This comprised a shallow depression with an irregularly cut base, approximately 0.15m in diameter. It was filled with firm grey-brown silt loam (1006), containing occasional irregular stones and a small quantity of medieval pottery along with a single sherd of Roman pottery.



Trench 1, looking south-east Fig 6

The modern ditch was sealed by mid grey-brown silt loam subsoil, up to 0.42m thick, which contained frequent fragments of modern ceramic building material, corroded metal fittings and very occasional small plastic fragments. This in turn was overlain by grey-black silt loam topsoil, up to 0.20m thick, containing occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material and small sherds of modern glass.



Trench 1, north-east facing section Fig 7

4.4 Trench 2

Trench 2 (Figs 8 and 11) was aligned approximately east-west and measured 10m in length.

The stratigraphic sequence comprised natural substratum (2005) of mid orange-brown compact clay, encountered at a depth of 124.78m aOD. This was cut by ditch (2003), which was aligned approximately north-east south-west, the sides of which sloped to an irregular flattish base. It measured 1.10m wide by 0.20m deep (Figs 9 and 11). and was filled by mid-dark grey-brown silt loam (2004) containing occasional irregular stones and two small fragments of modern ceramic building material.

This was overlain by mid grey-brown silt loam subsoil (2002), up to 0.20m thick, containing occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material. This in turn was sealed by grey-black silt loam topsoil (2001), up to 0.11m thick.



Trench 2, looking east Fig 8



Trench 2, west facing section of ditch 2003 Fig 9

4.5 Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 10) was aligned north-west south-east and measured 10m long. The natural substratum was encountered at a depth of 124.43m aOD and comprised mid orange-brown compact clay. This was overlain by mid grey-brown silt loam subsoil, up to 0.18m thick and containing occasional small fragments of modern ceramic building material and two modern round head wire nails. This was overlain by grey-black silt loam topsoil, up to 0.32m thick, containing occasional irregular stones and very occasional small fragments of modern glass.



Trench 3, looking north-west Fig 10

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The pottery by Rob Perrin

A single truncated pit [1007] was recorded in trench 1 from the fill (1006) of which 120 sherds weighing 1496g were recovered as follows:

Table 2: Pottery

FABRIC	Number of sherds	Weight	Rim%
Grogged?	1	6	
Dark grey	5	90	7
Gritty pale grey	113	1370	45
Grey	1	30	
Totals	120	1496	52

All of the grey ware can be classified as Medieval Reduced Ware of 13th/14th century date, despite the variations in colour. The gritty pale grey sherds are from a single large, globular jar with very short neck and thin, flat topped rim curving back over body of the vessel. The dark grey sherds are from a curved sided, flat topped bowl which has traces of a residue on the lower part of the internal surface. The other Medieval Reduced Ware sherd is a body sherd, probably from a jar, with external horizontal shallow grooves or rilling.

The possible grogged ware sherd is in a hard dark brown ware with an oxidised internal surface and is probably Roman dating to the 1st century AD.

7 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Trial trench log forms	3
Plan and section sheets	2
Pottery	1496g
Colour slides	13
Black and white contacts and negatives	15
Digital photographs	29

Upon completion of the final consolidation of the site archive arrangements will be made for deposition with Buckinghamshire County Museum under accession number AYBCM:2011.232.

8 CONCLUSIONS

A total of three trial trenches were excavated to assess the archaeological potential within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling. Within trench 1 the truncated remains of a small medieval pit of probable 13th/14th century date was recorded. This had been cut by a modern ditch of unknown function which lay on a north-south alignment which extended through trench 2 out of the investigation area.

With the exception of the small pottery assemblage collected from trench 1 no further deposits or artefacts were present suggesting that no significant archaeological deposits lie in the immediate vicinity of the site.

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Archaeology

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX BY TRENCH

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	3.30m x 1.8m NW-SE		125.08	0.62m, 124.46m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1001	Topsoil	Grey-brown silt loam	0.20m thick	Modern CBM
1002	Subsoil	Mid grey-brown silt loam	0.42m thick	Modern CBM
1003	Natural	Mid orange-brown compact clay	-	-
1004	Ditch	Cut of modern ditch	-	-
1005	Fill of 1004	Mid-dark grey-brown silt loam	0.40m deep	Modern CBM and occasional plastic frags
1006	Fill of possible pit	Mid – dark grey-brown silt loam	0.40m deep	Medieval and Roman pottery
1007	Possible pit	Cut of probable medieval pit	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	10m x 1.8m SW -NE		124.96m aOD	0.32m, 124.64m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
2001	Topsoil	Grey-black silt loam	0.10m – 0.11m thick	-
2002	Subsoil	Grey-brown silt loam	0.20m thick	Modern CBM
2003	Ditch	Cut of modern ditch	-	-
2004	Fill of ditch	Mid-dark grey-brown silt loam	0.20m deep	Modern CBM
2005	Natural	Mid orange-brown compact clay	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	10m x 1.8m NW-SE		125.02m aOD	0.50m, 124.52m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
3001	Topsoil	Grey-black silt loam	0.25m – 0.32m thick	Modern CBM and modern nails
3002	Subsoil	Grey-brown silt loam	0.18m thick	Occasional small frags of modern CBM
3003	Natural	Mid orange-brown compact clay	-	-



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