



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological watching brief in Delapre Gardens Delapre Abbey, Northampton August 2011



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Report 11/222

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QUALITY CONTROL

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Approved by	Andy Chapman		14 November

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Archaeological watching brief in Delapre Gardens, Delapre Abbey, Northampton, August 2011	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks connected with a project to repair and reinstate the historic water gardens at Delapre Abbey, Northampton. The watching brief revealed the remains of a 19th-century culvert and levelling layers but no pre-19th century archaeology.	
Project type	Watching brief of groundworks.	
Site Status		
Previous work	Geophysical, topographic, walkover and test pit survey, (<i>Yates et al 2009</i>)	
Current land use	Public gardens	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Delapre Abbey, Northampton	
Post code		
OS co-ordinates	SP 75954 59126	
Area (sq m/ha)	c0.014 ha	
Height aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Amir Bassir	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Northamptonshire Borough Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	22nd August 2011	
End date	2nd September 2011	
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Paper		
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT DELAPRE GARDENS, DELAPRE ABBEY,
NORTHAMPTON
AUGUST 2011**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks connected with a project to repair and reinstate the historic water gardens at Delapre Abbey, Northampton. The watching brief revealed a modern stone-lined culvert in the deeper pump pit. However, the majority of trenching was only 0.6m deep and within disturbed ground, so no earlier features or finds were located.

1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2011, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during groundworks connected with a project to repair and reinstate the historic water gardens at Delapre Abbey, Northampton (SP 75954 59126, Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Northampton Borough Council in accordance with a brief produced by Northamptonshire County Council in conjunction with Northampton Borough Council and a specification produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011) and approved by the Northamptonshire County Council, County Archaeological Advisor.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

Delapre Abbey is located on parkland within the current bounds of the Borough of Northampton, north of Delapre Golf Course, south of the river Nene. The western boundary is formed by London Road and the northern by Ransome Road.

The underlying geology comprises the Lias Group (mudstone, siltstone, sandstone), overlain by glacial sand and gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The earliest activity in the vicinity of the Abbey site is a possible Bronze Age tumuli or burial mound (5022/0/2) and an early Iron Age pit alignment (9607/1/1) (Fig 2).

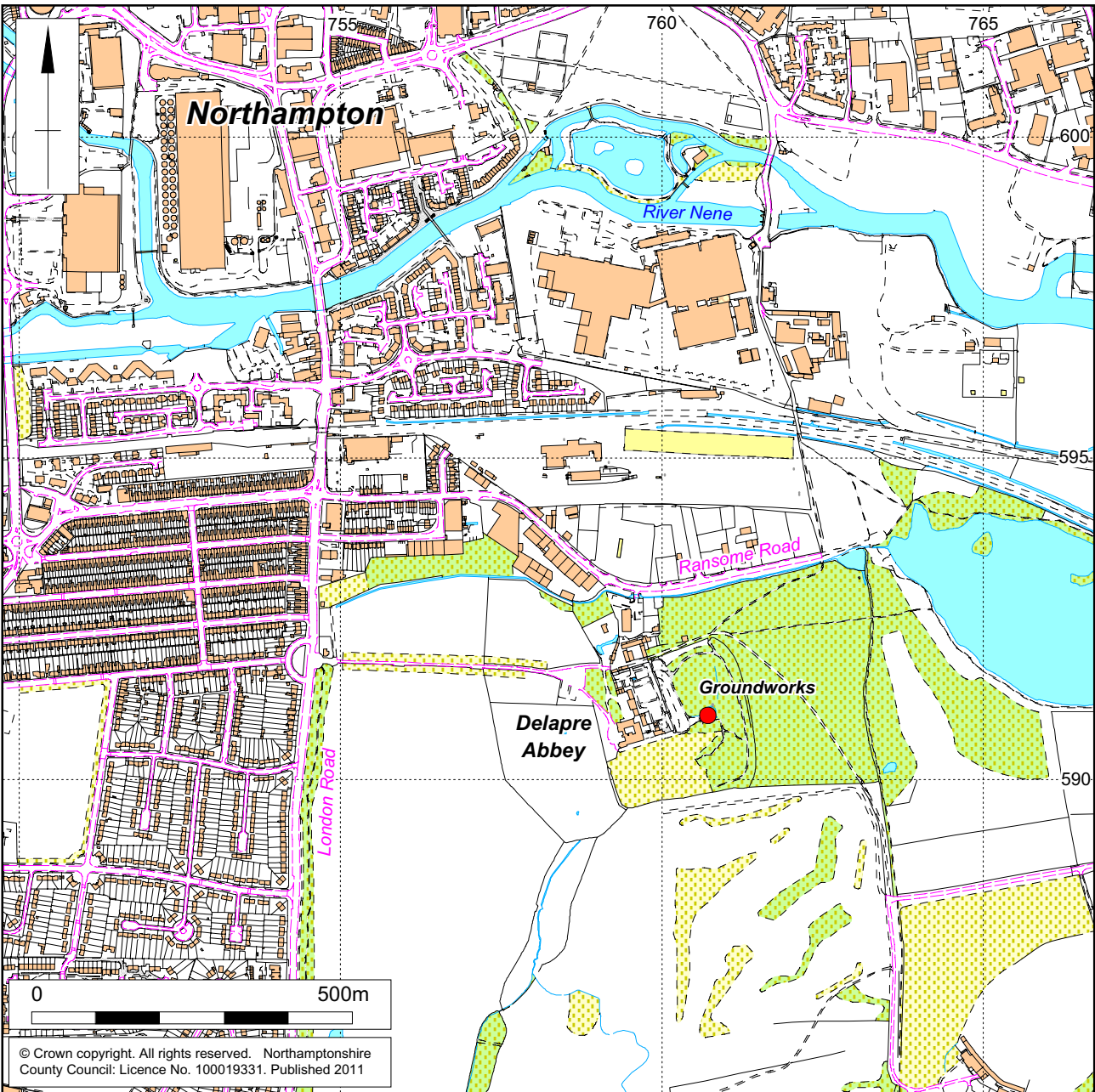
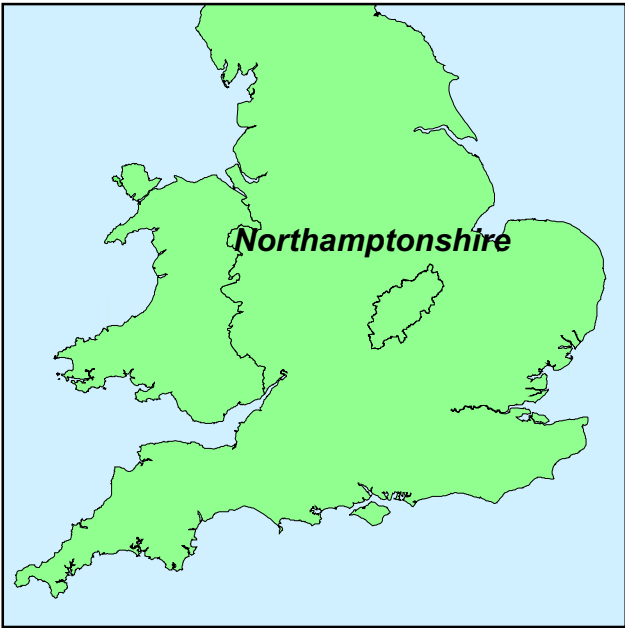
During the Saxon and medieval periods, the Abbey lay within the rural parish of Hardingstone and well preserved ridge and furrow earthworks of an open field system of this date remain within the grounds (5023/1/2).

The Abbey has its origins in a Cluniac nunnery founded in 1145 by Simon de Senlis, Second Earl of Northampton. During the War of the Roses, the Battle of Northampton was fought on land close to the nunnery on 10th July 1460. Evidence suggests a location within the park to the south of the Abbey though early written accounts place the battle on the meadows between the Abbey and the river Nene.

Following its dissolution in 1538, the abbey and its lands were granted to John Mershe, and then acquired by the Tate family in 1548. In the mid 17th century, major alterations and rebuilding works were undertaken, keeping the cloister plan form, resulting in the building of a new house with a central courtyard. In the 18th century, the south range and stable block were constructed. The site was purchased by the Bouverie family in 1764. A new library was added to the south range in the mid 19th century and a conservatory was built in the late 18th to early 19th centuries. An informal garden was created to the east of the walled garden, incorporating water courses, ponds and lakes as well as shrubberies and borders. An ice house on the eastern edge of this garden is present on early maps but has since disappeared.

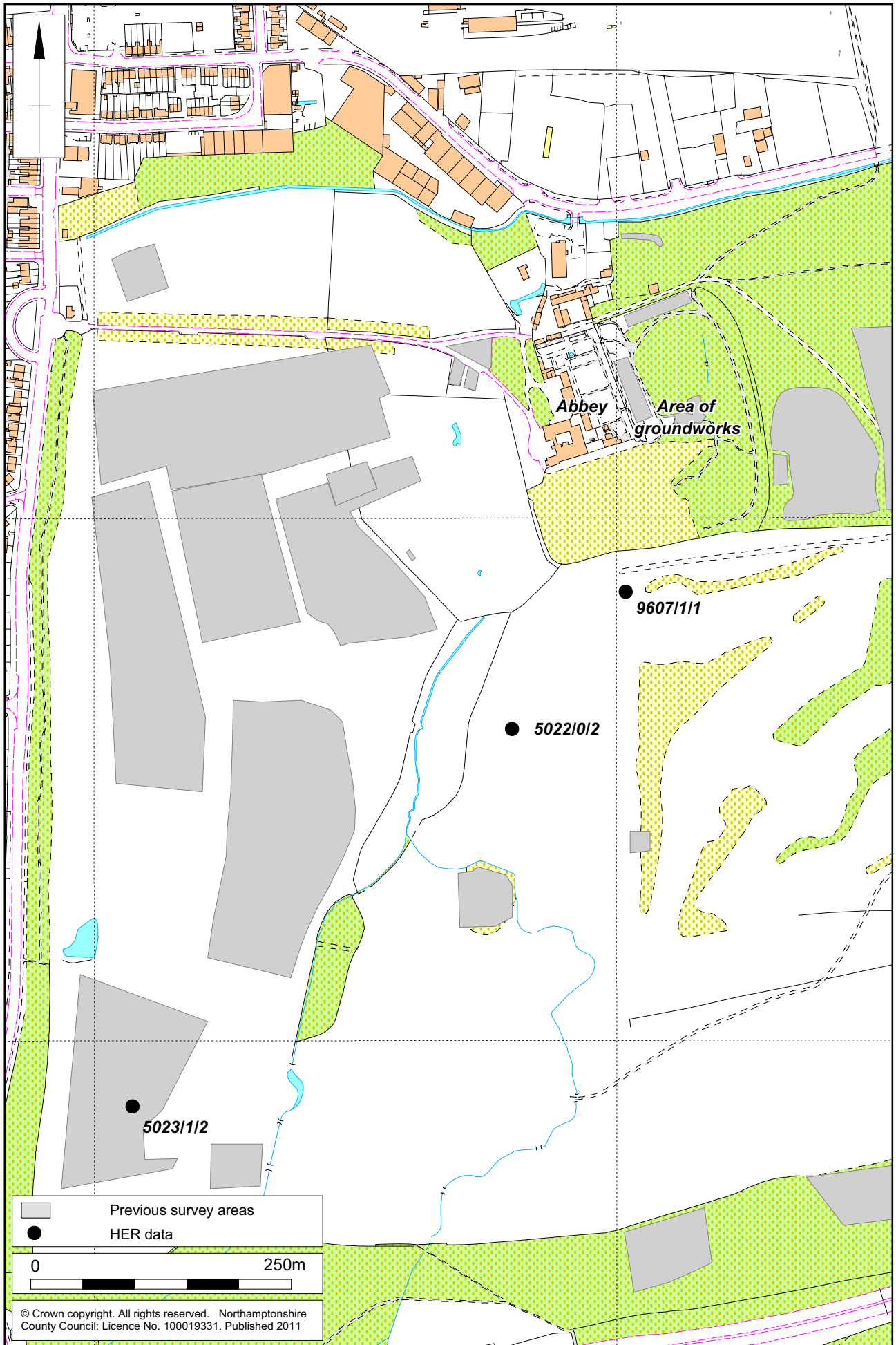
Delapre Abbey was requisitioned by the War Office during the Second World War and in 1946 the house and grounds were purchased by the Northampton Corporation. The buildings housed the Northamptonshire County Record Office between 1958-1992 during which time extensive alterations to the house were carried out until it was listed in 1968.

Northamptonshire Archaeology (*Yates et al 2009*) carried out a geophysical survey, topographic and walkover survey as well as test pitting throughout the grounds of the Abbey, which shows extensive survival of the surrounding medieval landscape.



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:5000

Historic Environment Record (HER) data and previous survey area Fig 2

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the watching brief were to:

- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks;
- Determine and record the extent, character and state of preservation of any surviving archaeological deposits.

Groundworks were carried out using a mini excavator with a 0.5m wide ditching bucket to remove overburden to the required depth for the development. The area was cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features.

Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2006). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the 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 or 1:20, as appropriate and related to Ordnance Survey datum

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010) and *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 1994, revised 2008).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

A total length of c236m of machine cut trenches, 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, were observed (Fig 3). In addition, a pump pit measuring 4.0m by 2.3m and roughly 3m deep was excavated at the eastern extent of the groundworks. The shallow depth of the trenches meant that the archaeological horizon was not encountered. Only in the pump pit (Figs 3, 4 and 5) did the excavation have sufficient depth to reach natural.

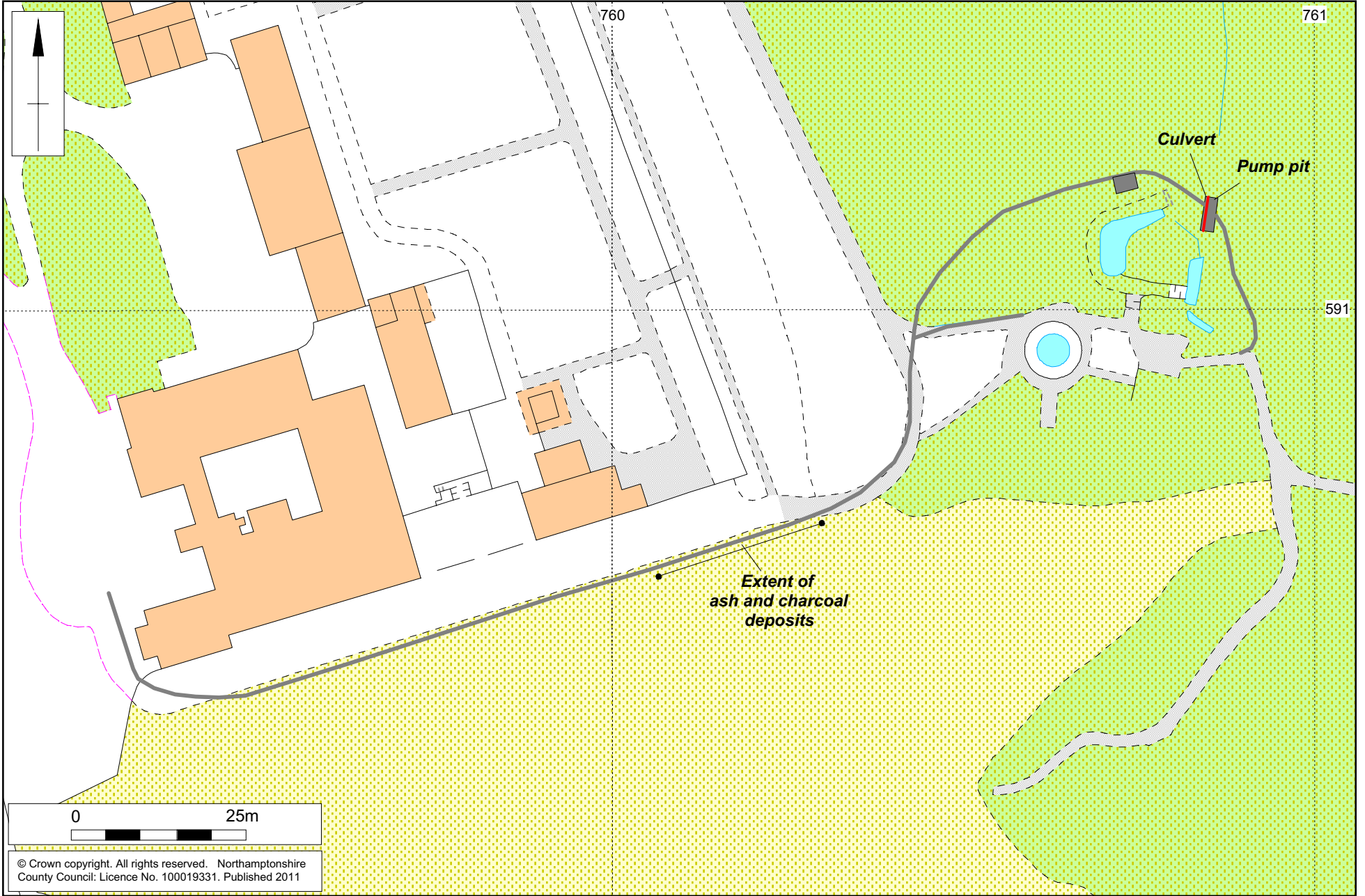
The natural substrate seen in the pump pit was encountered at a depth of c0.8m and consisted of yellow-orange sandy clay and ironstone overlying blue lias clays at a depth of c1.6m. The sequence of soils seen in the trenching was a layer of re-deposited natural sandy clay and ironstone overlain by a dark brown topsoil (0.15-0.3m thick) of sandy silt (Fig 4). This re-deposited material was laid down in the mid 19th century during landscaping and the creation of the watercourse. It was shown to be 0.7m deep where the full extent was seen in the pump pit.

A sandstone-lined water channel or culvert was revealed in the pump pit at a depth of 0.7m, cutting the natural (Figs 3, 4 and 5). It was c0.8m wide and 0.5m deep, partially silted up and contained very modern debris, such as drinking straws and bottle caps. This culvert led to the existing watercourse on a north-south alignment and the end of the culvert could be seen some metres away, still open and functional. The culvert was sealed by a layer of mid 19th-century re-deposited natural material.

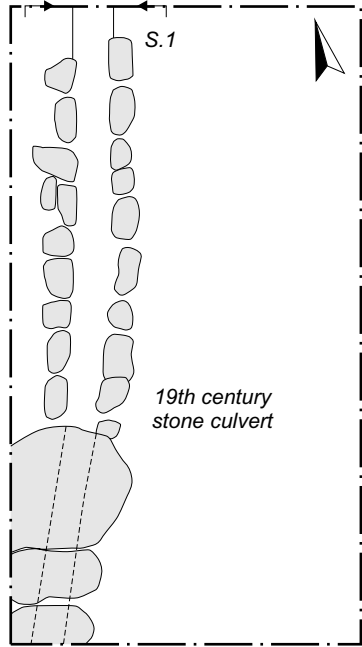
Modern deposits of ash and charcoal with mixed modern debris were encountered underlying the topsoil and path to the south of the abbey walled gardens (Figs 3, 4 and 6). These were probably levelling layers for the construction of a path.

Scale 1:750

The watching brief area Fig 3

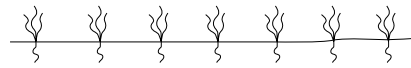


Plan of the pump pit



Section 1

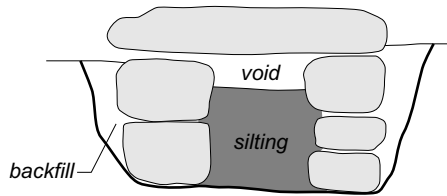
WNW ESE



topsoil



made ground



natural



Typical section in trenches



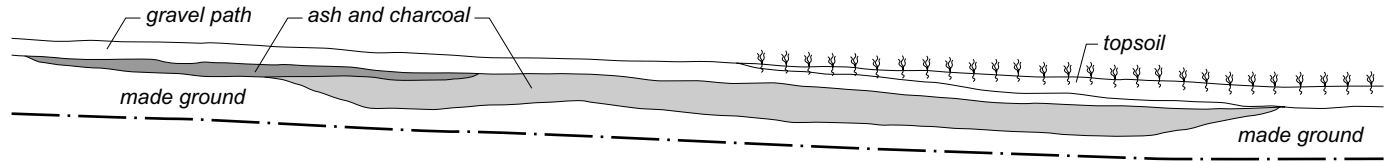
topsoil



made ground



Section through gravel path and levelling layers





The culvert in the pump pit, looking south-west Fig 5



The path and levelling layers, looking north-west Fig 6



General view of the excavations to the south of the pump pit, looking south Fig 7



General view of the excavations to the south of the walled garden, looking north-east Fig 8

5 DISCUSSION

No pre-19th century archaeological features or artefacts were uncovered during the groundworks. The general depth of excavation did not reach the archaeological horizon except in the pump pit, where a 19th-century culvert was found. The development area does not appear to have impacted on undisturbed soils. The extensive landscaping and disturbance of the 19th century has likely left very little archaeological remains in the area of groundworks.

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