



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at Boughton Hall Park,
Boughton, Northamptonshire
October 2011



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Northamptonshire
County Council

Joe Prentice

Report 11/216

October 2011



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
OCTOBER 2011**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
BOUGHTON HALL PARK, BOUGHTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
OCTOBER 2011**

STAFF

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QUALITY CONTROL

| | Print name | Signed | Date |
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| Approved by | Steve Parry | | |

OASIS REPORT FORM

| PROJECT DETAILS | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Project name | Boughton Hall Park New Lake | |
| Short description | An archaeological evaluation comprising three trenches was undertaken within the grounds of Boughton Hall Park, Northampton in advance of excavation to create a new lake. The evaluation revealed the presence of an undated ironstone wall and culvert along with modern field drains. | |
| Project type | Trial excavation | |
| Site status | Listed Park and garden, Grade II | |
| Previous work | None | |
| Current Land use | Pasture | |
| Future work | Creation of new lake | |
| Monument type/ period | Post-medieval | |
| Significant finds | No | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | | |
| County | Northamptonshire | |
| Site address | Boughton Hall Park, Boughton, Northampton | |
| Study area | 0.5 hectare | |
| OS Easting & Northing | SP 7537 6647 | |
| Height OD | c 250m above Ordnance Datum | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | |
| Organisation | Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) | |
| Project brief originator | Brief from Assistant Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council | |
| Project Design originator | Joe Prentice (NA) | |
| Director/Supervisor | Joe Prentice (NA) | |
| Project Manager | Steve Parry (NA) | |
| Sponsor or funding body | Mr J Mackaness | |
| PROJECT DATE | | |
| Start date | October 2011 | |
| End date | October 2011 | |
| ARCHIVES | Location (Accession no.) | Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc) |
| Physical | | None |
| Paper | | |
| Digital | | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | | |
| | Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report) | |
| Title | Archaeological evaluation at Boughton Park, Boughton, Northamptonshire | |
| Serial title & volume | 11/216 | |
| Author(s) | J Prentice | |
| Page numbers | Text 6, Figs 11 | |
| Date | October 2011 | |

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Cover photo: Remains of stone wall, looking south-east

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
BOUGHTON HALL PARK, BOUGHTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
OCTOBER 2011**

Abstract

An archaeological evaluation comprising three trenches was undertaken within the grounds of Boughton Hall Park, Northampton in advance of excavation to create a new lake. The evaluation revealed the presence of an undated ironstone wall and culvert along with modern field drains.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mr A J Mackaness (Mackaness Brothers Farms) is proposing to create a new lake at Butchers Field, Boughton Hall Park, Boughton, Northamptonshire (Planning Application (DA/2011/0652, NGR SP 7537 6647, Fig 1). The area was considered to have potential for the preservation of archaeological remains, and a site visit by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor (AAA) had previously identified stonework which was thought may represent evidence of previous activity. As a consequence Briefs for the archaeological evaluation were issued (NCC 2011). In response a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which outlined the aims necessary to fulfil the objectives was prepared (Prentice 2011).
- 1.2 The underlying geology of the area comprises Northampton Sand Ironstones and sandy limestones (British Geological Survey, Sheet 185). The area of the proposed new lake lies at the bottom of a valley aligned east-west. The site of the proposed new lake is located on the south side of a stream which falls from east to west and currently fills another lake located further to the west. The land was laid to grass at the time of the evaluation with a shelter belt of trees located to the immediate north. The land rises relatively steeply to the south.
- 1.3 A single site visit was made on 10 October 2011 to undertake the evaluation. A mechanical excavator supplied by the client was used to open three trenches in locations agreed beforehand within the Brief, although allowance was made in order that a trench or trenches could be moved as deemed necessary dependant on site conditions.

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development site the objectives of the field evaluation were to:
- ◆ Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during the trial trenching evaluation.
 - ◆ Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits.
 - ◆ To provide information as to the archaeological potential within the site, and to provide evidence for further effective archaeological investigation in advance of the

creation of the new lake.

- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

2.2 A basic desk-based assessment was requested and the search has been undertaken using documentary material held at Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) and using digital versions of the 1810 and 1880 Ordnance Survey maps.

3 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

3.1 The area of the proposed new lake lies within the area listed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England (Reference Number GD2325, English Heritage 2000). This records that the Boughton and Pitsford estates were purchased by Thomas Wentworth (1672-1739), Earl of Strafford of the second creation. He was the owner of Wentworth Castle, then known as Stainborough Hall, which he purchased from Lord Ashburnham. The Northamptonshire estates were apparently purchased to provide a convenient half-way house between London and the Yorkshire house. Thomas' son William (1722-91) inherited from his father at the age of eighteen, and like many young men of the period spent two years in Italy on the Grand Tour. After his return to England he developed the surrounding countryside, giving it a medieval flavour by the addition of Gothick ornamentation to several existing buildings, along with the creation of new follies and the creation of lakes.

3.2 Close to the site of the proposed new lake lies a large body of water formed by the damming of the stream which flows from east to west along the valley bottom. The current lake is of twentieth-century date, but apparently occupies the site of pools shown on an estate map of 1794 (Northampton Record Office Map 5313, not illustrated). However, no such pools are indicated on the 1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map of 1810 (Fig 2). If they really had existed a few years earlier (and were not just un-executed proposals) they had either been infilled or had silted up by 1810. The same map shows the area to the north of the present village and Boughton Hall to be apparently open parkland with no dividing hedges.

3.3 By the time of the Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1883 the area is divided by either fences or hedges in almost exactly the pattern found today (Fig 3). The clump of trees to the east is named Butchers Spinney, its present name, and the fields which are currently named Mowing and Butchers are at that date a single larger space. To the west the area where the current lake is situated is shown as an area of marshy ground, but there is no open water.

3.4 The estate remained in the hands of descendants of the Second Earl (who died without heir) until 1927 when it was sold by Sir Richard Granville Hytton Howard-Vyse.

3.5 None of the maps show archaeological or designed landscape features within the area of the proposed new lake although the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that there are possible post-medieval ditches immediately to the south of the proposed new lake, identified through aerial photography (Fig 4, 3382/0/14).

The HER also records a number of other features within the vicinity, but none lie within the area of the proposed new lake and therefore have not been considered here since they would not be affected by its creation.

4 TRIAL TRENCHING

4.1 The trial excavation was undertaken on Monday 10 October 2011. A mechanical excavator was supplied by the client and the three trenches were opened under archaeological supervision (Fig 5). The area of the proposed new lake had previously been stripped of turf and each trench was located to investigate the new lake edges, more specifically an area of stonework identified by the AAA on a previous site visit. That stonework lay along the southern edge of the proposed new feature, and whilst no other possible archaeological activity had been identified, a decision had been made to place the remaining two trenches at the east and west ends of the new feature in order to maximise the investigative coverage of the site. Each trench was a minimum of ten metres in length and 1.5 metres wide.

4.2 Trench one

Located at the western end of the new lake, this trench was 13m long and aligned roughly north-south (Fig 5). The southern end was located to the south of the proposed new lake edge where the land rises slightly (Fig 7). Beneath thin topsoil [101] the natural subsoil was uncovered which comprised a pale brown clay [102]. Into this were cut four modern red ceramic land drains, all aligned roughly south-east to north-west (Fig 5). At the north end of the trench the cap stones of an ironstone culvert or field drain [103] were revealed on a similar alignment. Since the cap stones were *in situ* they were not removed, but recorded intact, since the same feature without the cap stones was uncovered in Trench 2 (see below). The stone culvert was also aligned roughly south-east to north-west which suggests it was constructed for drainage rather than conveyance of running water.

No other features were identified and no dating evidence was uncovered.

4.3 Trench two

Located on the southern edge of the proposed new lake this trench, 11m long, was positioned to investigate an area of stonework partially revealed during the previous turf removal (Fig 5). The southern edge of the trench lay just up-slope of the proposed new lake edge, and the northern end extended roughly northwards from that point. The ironstone wall [203] was revealed to be aligned in a north-west to south-east alignment and comprised un-mortared stone fragments, all undressed, laid in two neat courses (Figs 6 and 8). It lay directly beneath topsoil [201]. No construction trench was visible which suggests that the wall was trench-built. Individual stones measured up to 400mm in length with larger pieces with relatively straight edges being selected for the outer edges, whilst the core of the wall was filled with smaller, more irregular, fragments. This type of construction is typical of drystone wall construction.

To the north a further modern clay field drain was revealed set in a deep, narrow cut [204]. Each pipe, made of un-glazed red ceramic, was 300mm long and 100mm in diameter (1 foot x 4 inches). Each pipe was simply butted against its neighbour to allow water to penetrate the gaps and then flow away freely down the interior. There was no indication that the pipe trench had been filled with gravel but was simply backfilled with grey clay, presumably the upcast from the digging of the trench.

North of this the ironstone culvert revealed in Trench one was uncovered, here without the capping stones apart from a single stone just outside the western edge of the trench [Figs 6 [206] and Fig 9). The culvert comprised two parallel rows of single, roughly dressed, but un-mortared ironstone pieces laid approximately 200-250mm apart. These two rows of stone formed the sides of the culvert which had been capped with larger, un-

dressed fragments of the same stone although within the trench they were missing. The culvert did not have a stone base and was entirely filled with silty clay [207] indicating that it had not functioned for a considerable length of time. The general lie of the land suggests that the water would have flowed east to west originally.

No other features were uncovered and no dating evidence was found.

4.4 **Trench three**

Located at the eastern end of the proposed new lake, this trench was aligned roughly west-east (Fig 5). Beneath the topsoil [301] and subsoil [302] the trench was excavated approximately 0.5m into the natural clay (Fig 10).

No archaeological features were identified.

4.5 **The stone wall**

Between trenches one and two, along the southern edge of the area previously de-turfed a line of stonework had been revealed (Fig 5). After cleaning by hand this was revealed to be a continuation of the stone wall uncovered in Trench two (Figs 5 and 11). This continuation of the wall, on a very slightly different alignment, comprised the same construction as previously noted. At the north-western end the wall either terminated, turned southwards or had been removed although it is not certain which is the case. Since Trench 1 did not reveal any indication of the wall, or evidence of scattered stonework which might have suggested that it had been partially dismantled, the latter two options seem the most likely.

5 **FINDS**

- 5.1 Apart from modern bottle glass, fragments of which lay across the area previously de-turfed, and the modern field drain previously described, only a single piece of historic pottery was found. The fragment lay on the surface of the de-turfed area close to the stone wall between trenches one and two. This comprises a small fragment of press-moulded plate with slip-trailed white and brown decoration under a clear yellow glaze. This type of slip ware was produced between c1680-1740 in both Staffordshire and Pottersbury, Northamptonshire. The fragment is too small to either date more closely or suggest which production centre is the most likely.

The location of the pottery fragment does not aid the dating of any of the features uncovered, and after identification it was not retained.

6 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The site of a proposed new lake at Boughton Hall Park lies in a valley bottom in an area prone to seasonal flooding (pers. comm. Mr J Mackaness). Historically this area is recorded as being the location of a series of pools or other man-made water features since at least the early eighteenth-century. This form of naturalistic landscape feature became popular at that date, replacing the earlier fashion for formal garden and water features, and was inspired principally by landscape designers such as William Kent and Charles Bridgeman, both of whom worked locally. This implementation of the latest design elements accords well with the known facts of the second Earl's activities at Boughton. However, the eighteenth-century lakes had previously silted-up since at the time of the 1883 Ordnance Survey map they are no longer indicated, although the position of the current lake is shown to be an area of marshy ground.

- 6.2 The creation of such water features can generally be considered in two main ways. Firstly they have been created purely as elements of a designed landscape on landed estates during this period and secondly as a simple solution to an area of ground continually, or seasonally, wet which cannot be used for agriculture without problems to either crops or livestock. The creation of the historic lakes here may have been a result of a combination of the two since although the Earl is likely to have wanted the latest design elements in his park, the low-lying ground appears to have been the subject of prolonged attempts to improve the drainage as evidenced by the sequence of field drains. Thus the creation of a lake would not only enhance the visual aspect of the landscape but it would remove the possibility of un-productive land which could have a detrimental effect on livestock (especially sheep who are particularly prone to foot rot).
- 6.3 Thus, the current proposal to create a new lake can be seen as a continuation of a process of landscape enhancement which started during the flowering of the one of the greatest periods of landscape design, and which, if carried out, might restore the valley to something akin to its appearance during the middle years of the eighteenth-century.
- 6.4 The stone wall located along the southern limit of the area investigated remains undated, but its shallow foundations and probable relationship to an earthwork feature suggests that it may have formed a simple drystone boundary wall, perhaps relating to an earlier lake, or division of the park. There is no evidence to suggest that it relates to human occupation on the site and the presence of a single, small fragment of late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century pottery is most likely a casual loss or the result of a manure scatter.
- 6.5 It is understood that the client is keen to retain buried archaeological features and is agreeable to moving the footprint of the proposed new lake in order to preserve the section of wall and ironstone culvert *in situ*.

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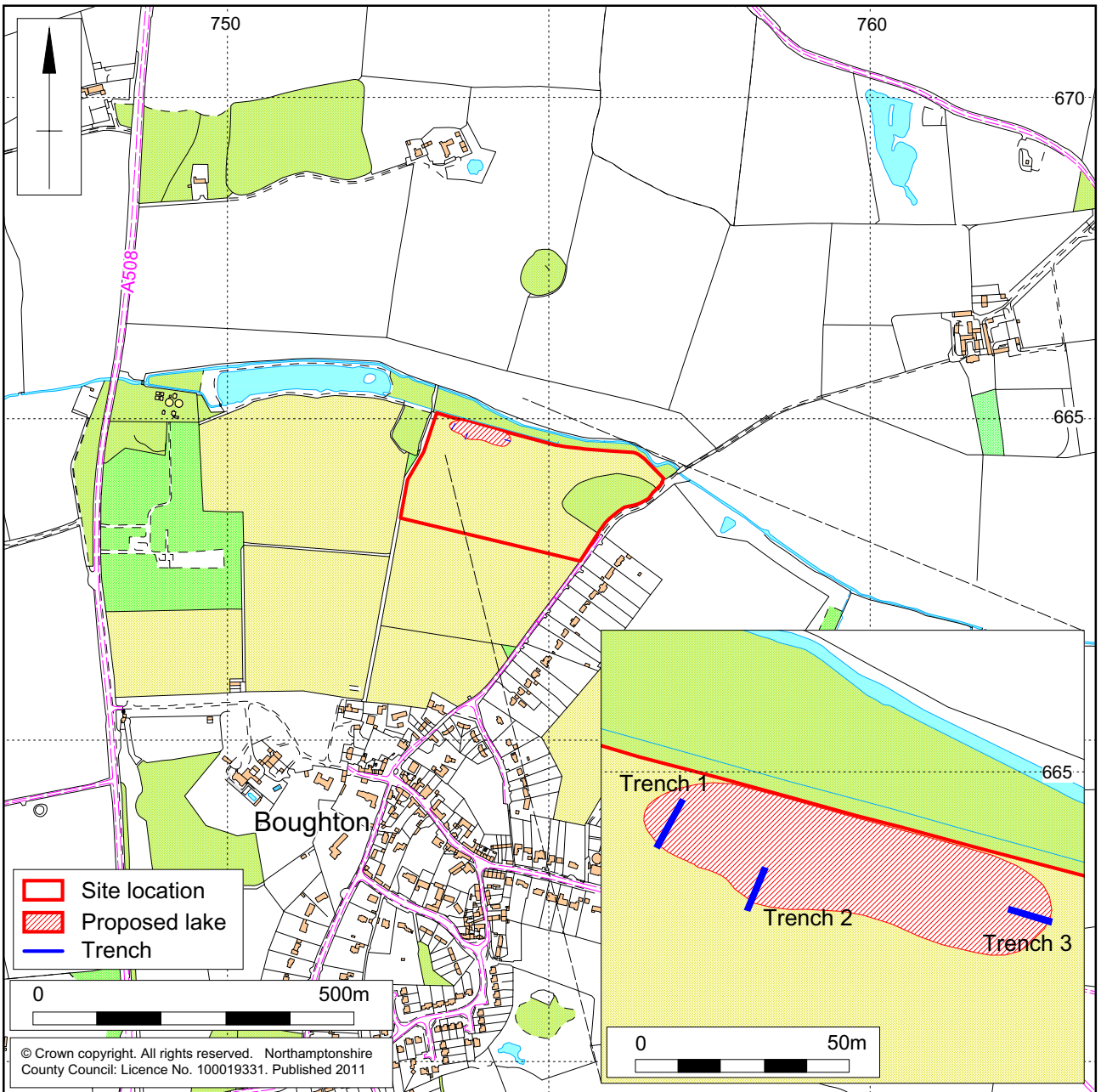
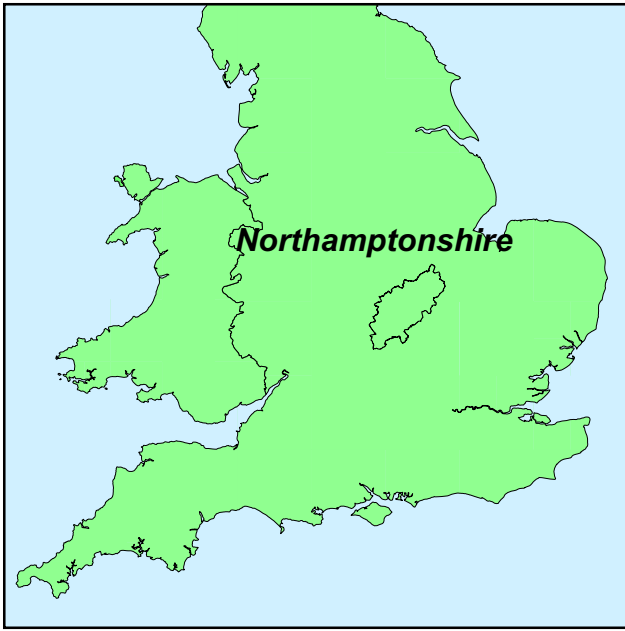
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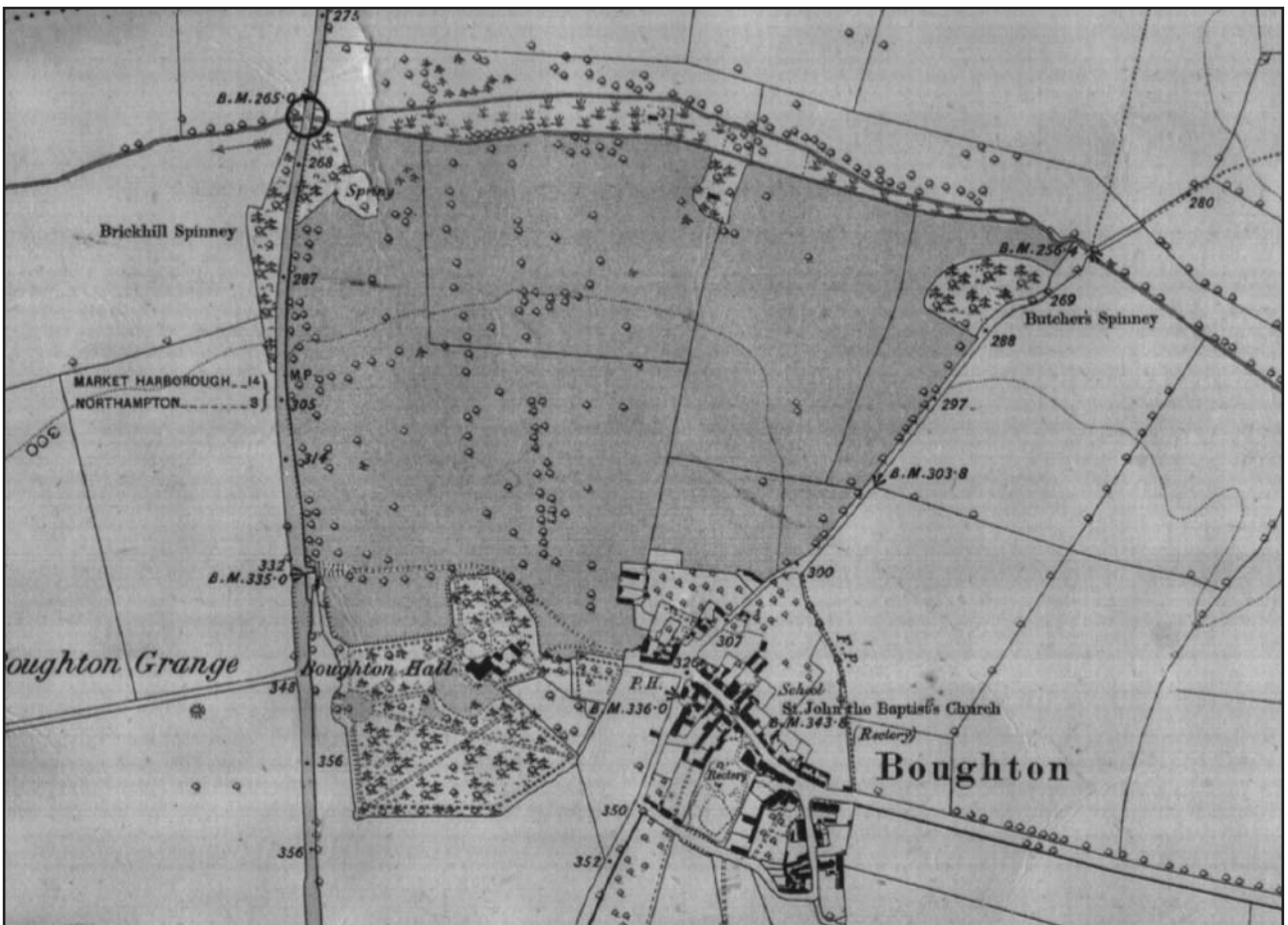


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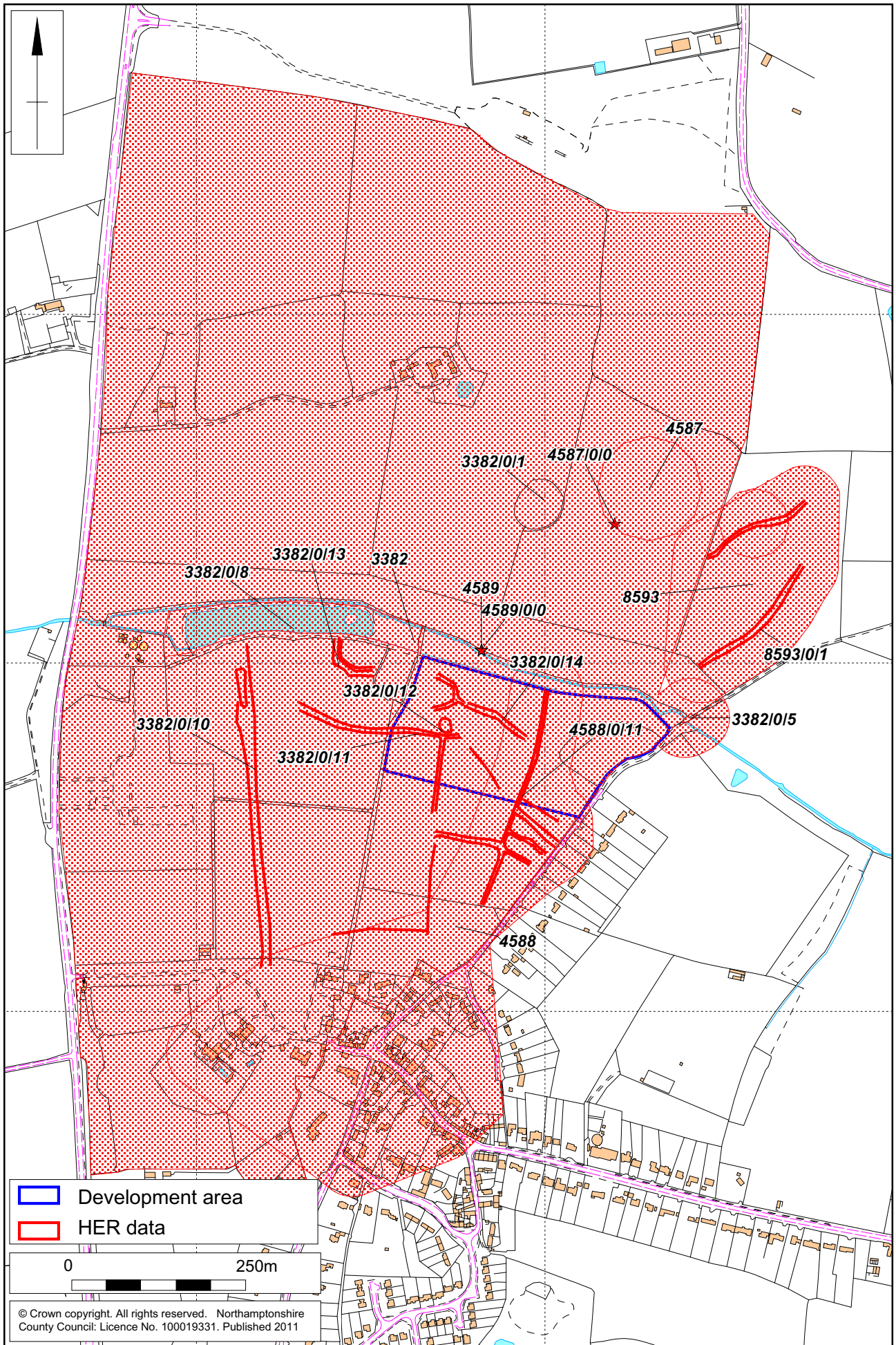
Site location Fig 1



1810 Ordnance Survey preparatory map Fig 2



1883 First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey map Fig 3



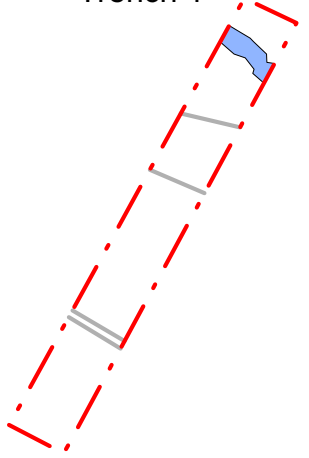
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Historic Environment Record (HER) data Fig 4

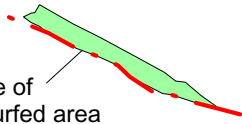
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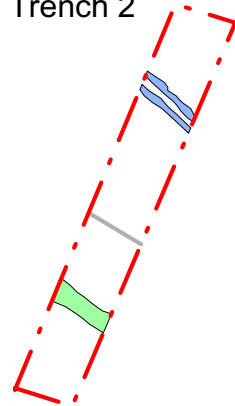
Trench 1



Edge of de-turfed area



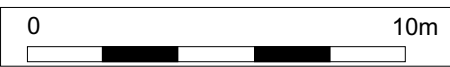
Trench 2



- Wall
- Culvert
- Field drain

Trenches 1 & 2

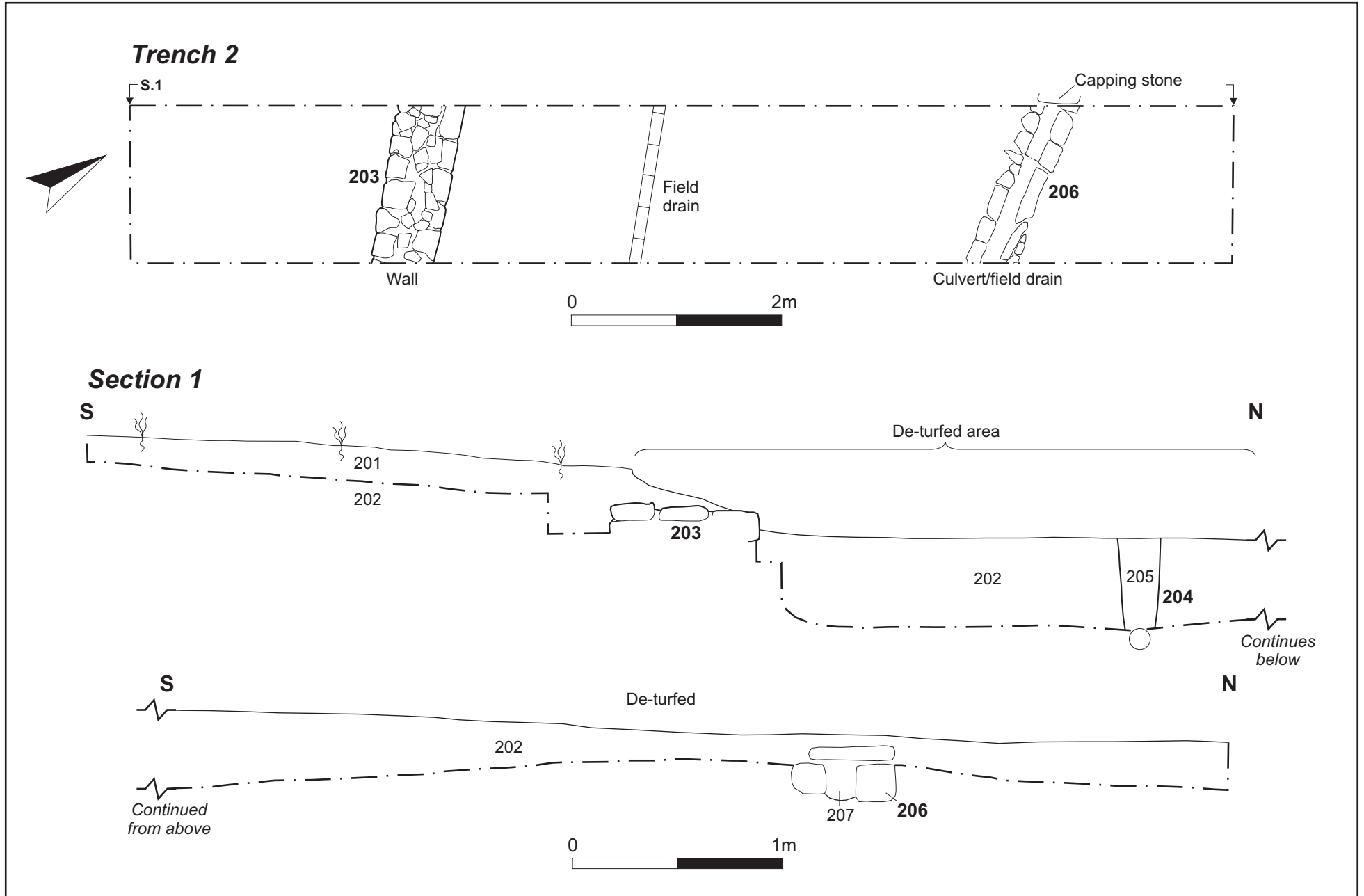
Fig 5



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Scale 1:50 (plan) & 1:25 (section)

Plan and section of Trench 2 Fig 6





Trench one, looking south Fig 7
with culvert [103]



Trench two, looking north-east with Fig 8
wall [203] in the foreground



Trench two, ironstone culvert [206], Fig 9
looking north-west



Trench three, looking west Fig 10



The stone wall between trenches one and two, looking south-east Fig 11



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