



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation of land
at Rectory Farm, Great Easton, Leicestershire
October 2012



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 136316	
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Rectory Farm, Great Easton		
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to conduct an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of four trial trenches, on land at Rectory Farm, Great Easton, within an area of known archaeological interest. There were a small number of medieval features, probably dating to the 12th-13th centuries. The medieval activity, which included ditches and pits, suggests that they were part of the rear of plots which may have fronted onto the area adjacent to the church. A number of post-medieval and modern features were also exposed. This activity related to the use of the site as a farmyard for at least the last two hundred years and comprised a former yard surface and the stone foundations of barns.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	DBA (CgMs Consulting 2008)		
Current Land use	Farm yard		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	Medieval/post-medieval		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address	Rectory Farm, Great Easton		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	748m ²		
OS Easting & Northing	SP 849 933		
Height OD	70m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology and CgMs Consulting		
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council		
Project Design originator	CgMs Consulting		
Director/Supervisor	Jonathon Elston		
Project Manager	Steve Parry		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	October 2012		
End date	October 2012		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	X.A100.2012	Pottery, animal bone, glass, cbm	
Paper	X.A100.2012	Record sheets, drawings	
Digital	X.A100.2012	Digital mapping, photos	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT
RECTORY FARM, GREAT EASTON, LEICESTERSHIRE
OCTOBER 2012**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to conduct an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of four trial trenches, on land at Rectory Farm, Great Easton, within an area of known archaeological interest.

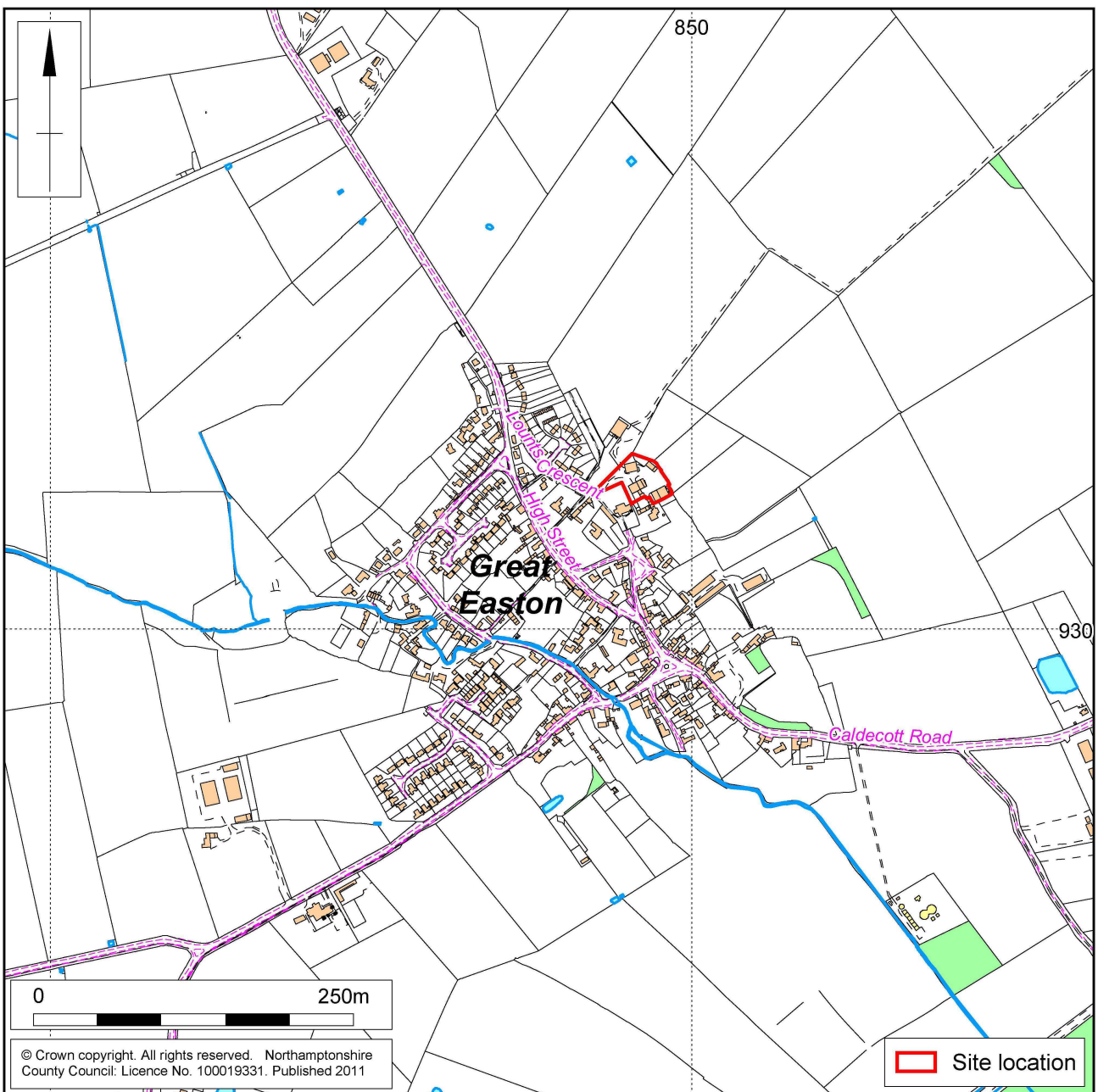
There were a small number of medieval features, probably dating to the 12th-13th centuries. The medieval activity, which included ditches and pits, suggests that they were part of the rear of plots which may have fronted onto the area adjacent to the church.

A number of post-medieval and modern features were also exposed. This activity related to the use of the site as a farmyard for at least the last two hundred years and comprised a former yard surface and the stone foundations of barns.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at Rectory Farm, Great Easton (NGR SP 849 933; Fig 1). The works are being undertaken in response to Condition 11 of the planning consent (09/00044/FUL) which states that mitigation of the impact of the development will be addressed by a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation. The results of the trial trenching will be used to formulate further mitigation strategies. The work has been undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

A total of four trial trenches were excavated between 15-17 October in compliance with a scope of works agreed by CgMs Consulting and Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council and a Project Design compiled by CgMs Consulting (2012). The accession number for this project is X.A100.2012.



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

No early prehistoric archaeology has been identified in the vicinity of the site, although worked flint has been found in the surrounding fields. There is a possible Bronze Age barrow to the north of the village (MLE 1599) and a Bronze Age spearhead found to the north of Great Easton Manor may have been part of a dispersed hoard or burial (MLE 6316).

Iron Age settlement may have been present north of Clarksdale (MLE 15948) and Lounts Crescent (MLE 6473). There are several findspots of Roman material from around the village, indicating settlement in this area. Finds have been made in the churchyard adjacent to the site. Just to the north of the site is the possible course of a possible Roman road aligned towards Medbourne (MLE 2067).

Early Anglo-Saxon activity appears to have been concentrated on higher ground to the east of the village, possibly including the development area. The village of Great Easton is first documented in the Domesday Book in 1086 and was known as *Eastone*. Evidence of medieval activity has been found throughout the village, suggesting that the focus of the village has remained much the same, with the church located slightly to the west of the village core. The older houses in the village are situated on the lower ground to the south and west of the church.

Rectory Farm is present on the 1805 Inclosure Map for the parish, indicating that the site has been a farmyard for at least this length of time. The buildings on the map appear to comprise a long house with barns and hovels. The form of the house may indicate a 17th/18th century date (Dawson 2008).

2.2 Topography and geology

The site is located on the north-eastern edge of the village of Great Easton in Leicestershire. The proposed development area comprises the modern farmyard associated with Rectory Farm. To the west of the farmyard lies St Andrews Church and to the east lies open farmland. The site lies at c70m aOD. The solid geology of the site consists of Upper Lias Clays (British Geological Survey Sheet 185).



Main driveway, prior to excavation of Trench 1 Fig 2

3 OBJECTIVES

The principal aim of the archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality, character, date, state of preservation, depth of burial and extent of the archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts and ecofacts within the area affected by the proposed development. This was to be achieved through trial trench evaluation.

Specific aims were to:

- Examine the potential of the site in its relation to its environment, economy, land use and development from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods;
- Examine evidence from the site for palaeo-environmental and/or economic development.

4 METHODOLOGY

Trial trenches were positioned in accordance with the WSI (NA 2012) and in accordance with the trench plan agreed with the Leicestershire County Council's Archaeological Advisor (Fig 3). Four trenches were excavated. Trench 1 was 24m long, aligned north-east to south-west and located on the grass verge along the driveway, parallel to the north-western boundary of the site. Trench 2 was 7m long, aligned north-east to south-west, adjacent to one of the barns. The orientation of the trench had to be altered slightly to take into account the location of a number of oil tanks adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the barn. Trench 3 was 8m long, aligned north-west to south-east and located adjacent to the north-east boundary of the site. Trench 4 was 5m long, aligned north-west to south-east, adjacent to a further range of barns. This trench was moved slightly to the west to the location in the original trench plan to avoid concrete foundations visible on the ground surface.

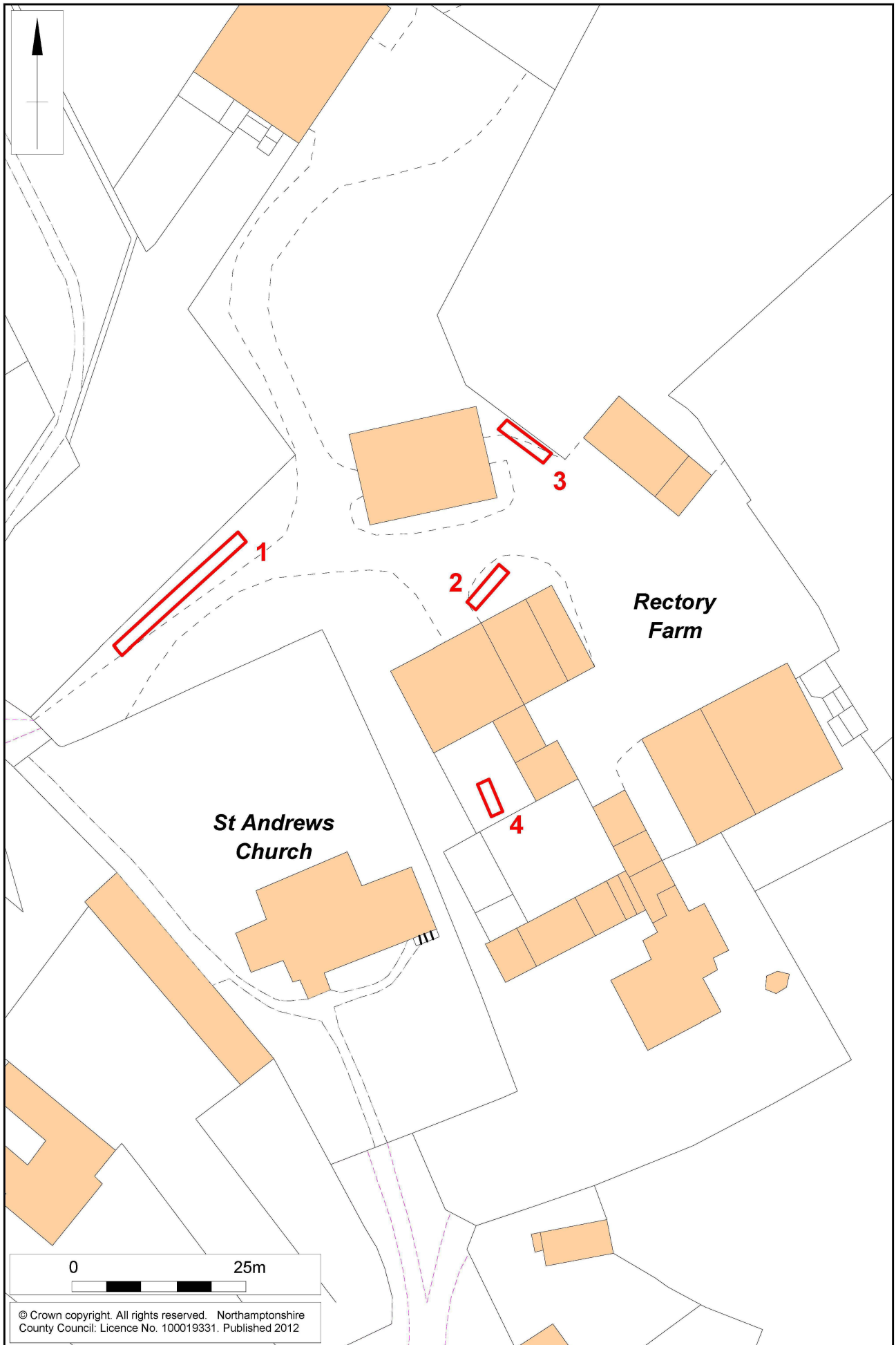
Trenches were set out in the specified positions using hand tapes. Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket to reveal archaeological remains or, where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons. All works were monitored by an archaeologist. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil.

Each trench was hand cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological remains present. Sufficient features were sampled by hand to determine their date and character. Discrete features (pits and postholes) were subject to 50% excavation. Linear features were examined by the excavation by sections of a minimum of 1.0m in width and 20% of their length. Excavation did not compromise the integrity of the archaeological record. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were recorded following standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). Trenches with archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50, the trench sections and profiles through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Levels were related to the Ordnance Datum.

Artefacts were collected from archaeological deposits but unstratified bone and modern material was not retained. Soil samples were taken from dateable contexts with the potential for the preservation of charcoal and carbonised plant remains. The sampling strategy conformed to English Heritage guidelines (EH 2002).

Photographs were taken as 35mm monochrome negatives, colour transparencies and digital photos as a supplement for reporting purposes. A photographic record of vehicle movements and reinstatements was maintained. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned by metal detector.

The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised Oct 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Project Design prepared by CgMs Consulting (CgMs Consulting 2012).



Scale 1:750 (A4)

Trench location plan Fig 3

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General comments

The natural geology was largely consistent across the site, comprising grey-yellow clay with blue mottling and patches of orange sand. Subsoils were present in only Trench 1 and comprised mid grey-brown silty clay. Elsewhere there was evidence of colluvial deposits in Trench 2 and demolition and make-up layers in Trenches 2, 3 and 4. The topsoil deposits were generally 0.30-0.40m thick consisting of dark brown clay loam.

Archaeological features were found in all the trenches, although most relate to the post-medieval use of the farmyard (Fig 3). There may be some evidence of prehistoric tree clearance, although there was no evidence to confirm the date.

5.2 Trench 1

There was a rectangular or square pit, [109], 4.10m long and at least 0.90m wide and 0.60m deep (Fig 4). It had sharp corners with steep sides and a relatively flat base. It was filled with a compact mid yellow-green silty clay with brown mottling (108). A small amount of pottery from the fill suggests that it was backfilled during the 13th century.

A feature, [104], at the south of the trench was sub-circular, 2.25m long, at least 1.35m wide and 0.10m deep. The sides and the base of the pit were irregular indicating that it could have been a tree-bole rather than a pit. There were further tree-boles at the north and south of the trench. No dating was recovered from the tree-boles, although a number of fragments of animal bone were found in the fill. A possible gully, [107], was, in fact, a natural hollow.

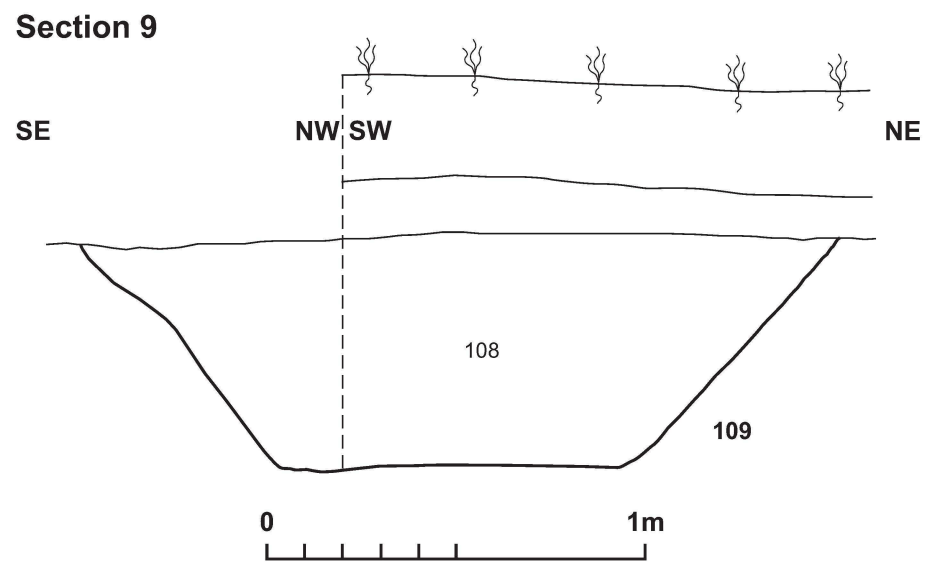
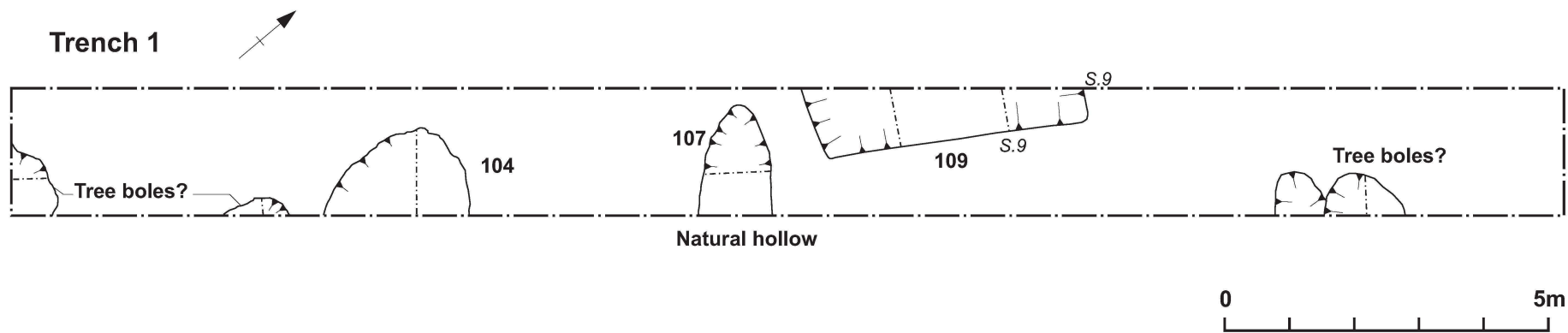
5.3 Trench 2

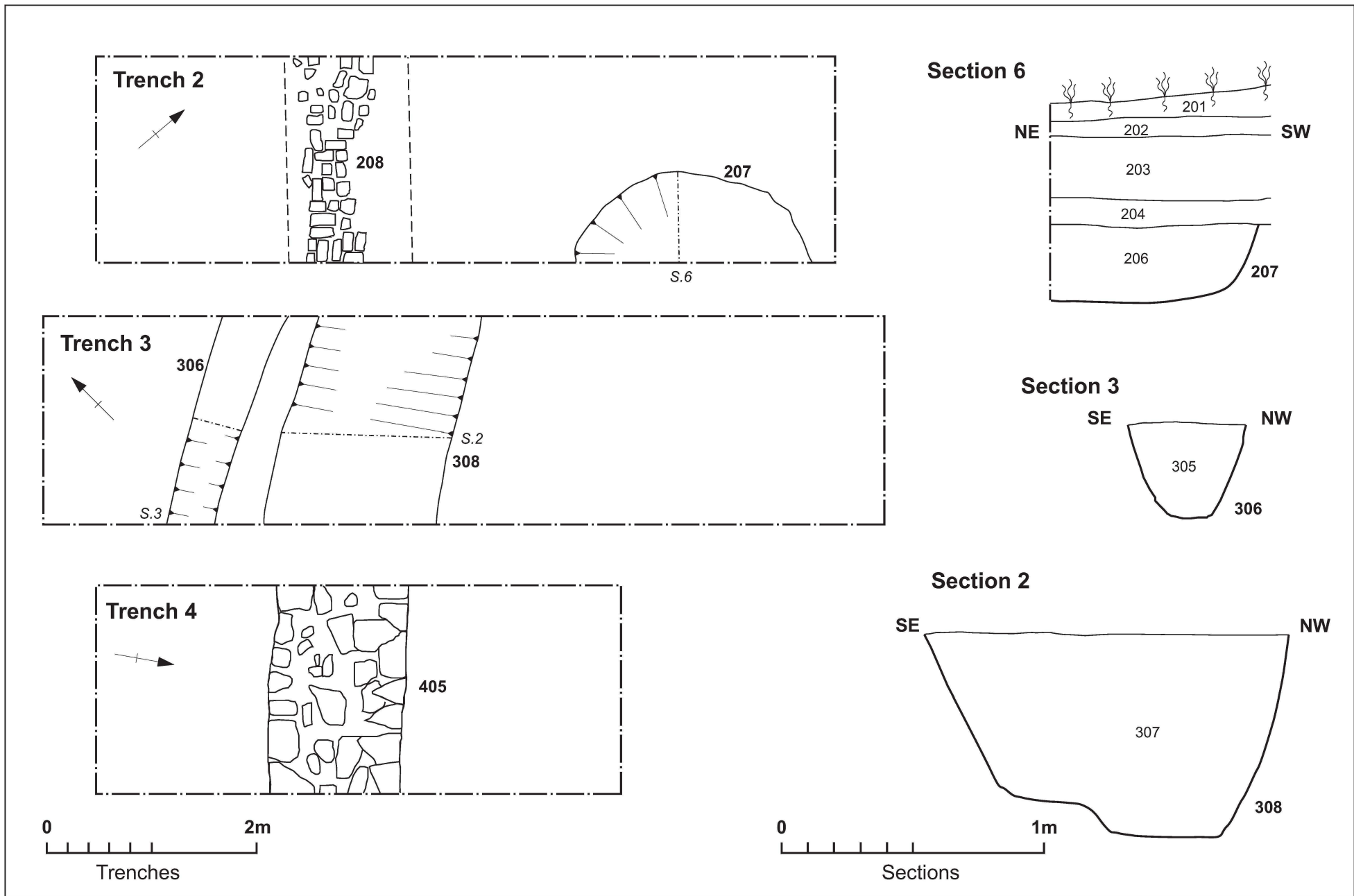
There was a sub-circular pit [207] which was 2.25m long, at least 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep (Fig 5). The light grey silty clay (206) contained few inclusions. It was sealed beneath rubble layer, (204), which was itself sealed beneath a layer, (203), of mottled dark grey-brown silty clay, which may have had a colluvial origin. Glass found in layer (204) probably dates to the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

Lying on top of the colluvial layer was the remnants of a former yard surface, [208], which was composed of whole and broken bricks and sandstone fragments, all irregularly laid in a single layer.

5.4 Trench 3

There was a ditch [308] aligned north-east to south-west, 1.50m wide and 0.80m deep, with a wide U-shaped profile (Fig 5). The fill was mid to dark grey silty clay with occasional stones and charcoal. No finds were present, but there was a strong chemical odour from the fill.







Ditch [308] and gully [306], looking north-east Fig 6

Parallel to the ditch was a narrow gully, [306], which was 0.40m wide and 0.38m deep with a U-shaped profile. A tiny sherd of residual Romano-British Samian ware was present in the fill as well as an equally tiny sherd of 12th-century shelly ware. It is possible that both the ditch and gully were medieval boundaries.

Sealing the ditches was a thick layer of dark brown-grey silty clay [303], which may have been colluvial in origin.

5.5 Trench 4

A wall [405] was aligned east to west and was 1.3m wide. It was constructed of larger blocks of sandstone on the outer faces of the wall with a rubble core. The wall appeared to be bonded with clay. No dating material was recovered in association with the wall, but it is likely to be the remains of one of the barns that were demolished fairly recently since the remains were so close to the current ground surface.



Wall [405], looking south-west Fig 7

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The medieval and post-medieval pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 11 sherds weighing 148g. It was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows

EA10: Modern earthenwares, 1800+. 5 sherds, 123g.

LY3: Lyveden/Stanion 'B' ware, 1200-1400. 1 sherd, 13g.

LY4: Shelly wares, 1100-1400. 1 sherd, 2g.

ST: Stamford ware, 900-1150. 2 sherds, 4g.

In addition, the following, not covered by the Leicestershire type-series was also noted:

OOL: South Lincs Oolitic Ware, 12th – 14th century (Blinkhorn 2010). Pale grey fabric with abundant greyish limestone ooliths up to 2mm, rare to moderate limestone up to 1mm, sparse flint and/or haematite up to 0.5mm. Ooliths on surface often white in colour. Vessels usually jars with thickened everted rims. 1 sherd, 4g.

A single sherd of residual Roman Samian Ware (2g) also occurred. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of contemporary sites in the region, and indicates that there was activity at the site in the late Saxon and early medieval periods. The evidence for the former comes in the form of the two sherds of Stamford Ware, both of which are unglazed and reduced, which is typical of the 10th-century

products of the industry (Kilmurry 1980). One of the sherds is from the rim of a small jar with a lid-seated profile, to which the same comments apply. The sherds are all small, but are all in reasonably good condition, so are presumably the product of secondary deposition.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	RB		ST		OOL		LY4		LY3		EA10		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
108	-	-	2	4	1	4	-	-	1	13	-	-	13thC
202	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	108	19thC
206	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	15	19thC
305	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	12thC
Total	1	2	2	4	1	4	1	2	1	13	5	123	

6.2 Ceramic building material by Pat Chapman

Roman

One fragment of *tegula* roof tile, weighing 140g, came from fill (108) pit [109]. The fabric is very hard reddish sandy clay. The body is 23mm thick, the flange is 45mm high and 25mm wide with a flat top.

Post-medieval

A fragment of moulded brick, weighing 70g, made in fine orange silty clay, came from subsoil (102). The curved edge and shallow groove suggests it was originally from a moulded window or door surround, probably 19th century in date.

One complete brick came from the former yard surface (208). This is an unfrogged brick, 220mm long by 110mm wide and 75mm thick (8½ x 4½ x 3 inches), made from fine silty sandy orange-pink clay. There is white lime mortar, with traces of grey Portland cement, on all sides except for one surface. The presence of both mortar and cement, together with the size of the brick, suggests that it was made, probably locally, early in the 19th century. The brick was then reused at a later date as cement began to be widely available from about the middle of that century.

6.3 The post-medieval glass by Tora Hylton

Two fragments of vessel glass were recovered from layer [204]. Both pieces join together to form part of the base from a large clear 'kilner' type glass bottle. The base measures c 107mm in diameter and although incomplete, part of the mark is evident on the underside - "... T & Co", "...AKERS", 6515, CASTLEFORD

Glass jars were manufactured in Castleford, Yorkshire from c1829 until the 1980s. It is possible that the manufacturer is E. Breffit & Co, proprietors of the Aire and Calder Glass Bottle works who were in business during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and manufactured jars for bottling fruit, jam etc.

6.4 The nails by Tora Hylton

Four iron nails were recovered from the fill of pit [109], and together with the small fragment of *tegula*, suggests that they too may be Roman in date. Two of the nails are complete, both are clenched (indicating that they have been used) and measure c70mm in length. Both nails have flat sub-circular heads and typologically they represent Manning's Type 1b nail (1985). The other two nails are incomplete; they survive to a length of c38mm, the terminals of both shanks are missing and what remains of the heads suggests that they too represent Mannings Type 1b nail. Nails of this type may have had any number of uses, but these examples are relatively small and may have been used for light structural fixings.

6.5 The animal bone by Dr Stephanie Vann

An assemblage of 37 fragments was recovered from pits of medieval to post-medieval date, and consisted of cattle, ovicaprid, bird and large mammal.

Method

The assemblage was subjected to macroscopic examination. Species identification was undertaken at a context level. Fragments of mammal bone that could not be attributed to a taxonomic group equal or lower than genus were categorised as either 'large mammal' or 'medium mammal'. A summary of the results is presented in Table 2. Fused and unfused elements were recorded. There were no bones suitable to be measured and there were no mandibles suitable for dental wear to be recorded.

Results

Preservation of the animal bone at this site was moderate to good. Fragmentation was moderate and surface abrasion was moderate with bone exhibiting signs of erosion, weathering and other taphonomic damage in some instances. Fragmentation was the result of both old and fresh breaks. There was evidence of butchery on three bones. There was no evidence of burning, gnawing or pathology.

Table 2: Total number of fragments per species per context

Context	Bos Cattle	Ovicaprid	Large Mml	Bird	Unid
104	2	0	21	0	0
108	2	1	6	1	4
Total	4	1	27	1	4

The total number of fragments was 37, of which 33 (89 %) were identifiable. The species present were cattle, ovicaprid (sheep/goat), bird and large mammal (most likely cattle). There was no evidence of other domestic mammals, wild mammals, or fish remains.

Discussion

Whilst it is true that the small size of the assemblage makes it difficult to draw any significant conclusions, there is nothing about it that is in any way extraordinary for a domestic assemblage of the medieval – post-medieval period. Cattle and ovicaprids are regularly exploited during this period as can be seen from the medieval – post-medieval layers at Causeway Lane, Leicester (Gidney 1999) where domestic animals, especially cattle and ovicaprid, form the majority of the

assemblage. Similar patterns can be seen at other sites of this period such as Exeter (Maltby 1979). The dominance of such remains within the assemblage from Great Easton is therefore not unusual. The good survivability of large, strong bones such as those of cattle does also need to be taken into consideration, however, as this dominance may be a reflection of preservation rather than husbandry practices at this site.

No elements showed unfused epiphyses. The fusion of the distal scapula would indicate an animal of more than 7 – 10 months of age (Reitz and Wing 1999). The fusion of the acetabulum would indicate an animal of more than 6 – 10 months of age (Reitz and Wing 1999). These are both classified as early fusing elements.

The skeletal elements represent a variety of parts of the body, including the axial skeleton (scapula and pelvis), the feet (metatarsal and astragalus) and the limbs, although the majority of the latter elements are too fragmented to be identifiable as anything more than fragments of long bone shaft. This distribution pattern, combined with the presence of a cut mark and two potential chop marks, may indicate that this is normal butchery waste, rather than the result of some other industrial process.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The two residual Roman finds indicate a low level of activity in the area, as shown by other Roman finds nearby.

The evaluation has some found evidence of medieval activity at the site probably dating to the 12th-13th centuries. It is possible that the activity represents back-plot activity of properties located on the western edge of the site adjacent to the church.

Later activity is related to the use of the site as a farmyard for at least the past two hundred years and comprised the remains of a former brick and stone yard surface and a wall of one of the former stone barns.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLES

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	24m x 1.8m NW-SE	SP 84870 93233	71.43m aOD	0.40m, 71.03m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Dark brown-black silty loam	0.20m thick	—
102	Subsoil	Friable mid yellow grey silty clay with orange patches	0.20m thick	Brick
103	Natural	Compact grey/yellow clay, patches of blue clay and areas of orange sand	—	—
104	Fill of 105	Dark grey-brown silty clay	0.10m thick	Animal bone
105	Pit?	Sub-circular, irregular bowl-shaped profile	2.25m long; at least 1.35m wide; 0.10m deep	—
106	Fill of 107	Mid orange-brown clay	0.25m thick	—
107	Natural hollow	Oval, bowl-shaped profile	0.95m long; 1.00m wide and 0.25m deep	—
108	Fill of 109	Mid yellow-green silty clay with brown mottling	0.60m thick	Animal bone; nails, Roman tile, medieval pottery Sample 2
109	Pit	Sub-rectangular with wide U-shaped profile, flat base	4.10m long; at least 0.90m wide and 0.60m deep	—
110	Fill of 111	Loose dark grey-brown loamy silt	0.25m thick	—
111	Tree-bole	Irregular, sub-circular with irregular, bowl-shaped profile	1.40m long; at least 0.80m wide and 0.25m thick	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	7m x 1.8m NE-SW	SP 84915 93234	69.40m aOD	0.74m, 68.67m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Topsoil	Dark brown-black loamy clay	0.20m thick	—
202	Rubble layer	Mixed rubble layer with topsoil	0.20m thick	Post-med Pottery
203	Layer	Mottled dark grey-brown silty clay	0.24m thick	—
204	Layer	Light grey-brown silty clay with 50% sandstone fragments	0.10m thick	Glass
205	Natural	Compact grey/yellow clay, patches of blue clay and areas of orange sand	—	—
206	Fill of 207	Light grey silty clay with brown mottling	0.30m thick	Post-med pottery
207	Pit	Sub-circular, steep edges with flat base	2.25m long; at least 0.90m wide; 0.30m deep	—
208	Surface	Former yard surface (19th century?), composed of broken brick and sandstone	At least 2.00m long; 0.50m wide; 0.12m deep	Pottery, brick

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	8m x 1.8m NW-SE	SP 84920 93254	70.00m aOD	1.15m, 68.85m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Topsoil	Dark brown-black loamy clay	0.40m thick	—
302	Layer	Mottled yellow-grey sandy clay	0.15m thick	—
303	Layer	Dark brown-grey silty clay	0.60m thick	—
304	Natural	Compact grey/yellow clay, patches of blue clay and areas of orange sand	—	—
305	Fill of 306	Mid/dark grey silty clay	0.38m thick	Roman and medieval pottery; Sample 1
306	Gully	E-W aligned, U-shaped profile	0.40m wide; 0.38m deep	—
307	Fill of 308	Mid/dark grey silty clay	0.80m thick	—
308	Ditch	NE-SW aligned, U-shaped profile with uneven base	1.50m wide; 0.80m deep	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	5m x 1.8m NW-SE	SP 84915 93204	69.70m aOD	0.35m, 69.35m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
401	Layer	Mixed redeposited natural clay- mottled orange-brown	0.25m thick	—
402	Layer	Dark grey silty clay	0.10m thick	—
403	Natural	Compact grey/yellow clay, patches of blue clay and areas of orange sand	—	—
404	Wall foundation trench	Unexcavated	—	—
405	Wall	ENE-WSW aligned, sandstone wall. Larger blocks forming outer surfaces, rubble-filled core, clay bonding	1.3m wide	—



Northamptonshire County Council

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