



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

A programme of archaeological investigation during  
drainage works at Quinton House School  
Upton, Northampton  
August to September 2012



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

Pat Chapman

Report 12/184

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS NO. 136476</b>	
Project title	A programme of archaeological investigation during drainage works at Quinton House School, Upton, Northampton		
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Cognita Schools to undertake a watching brief during the excavation of a waste water drainage pipe trench along the earthworks of Upton deserted medieval village, Northampton. A pronounced scarp associated with the earthworks was recorded. There was also an area of rabbit burrow disturbance, and modern disturbance near the school buildings. No finds or deposits associated with the medieval village were recovered.		
Project type	Watching brief		
Site Status	Scheduled Monument (SM165)		
Previous work	Yes		
Current land use	Pasture		
Future work	No		
Monument type and period	Deserted medieval village		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Quinton House School, Upton Lane, Northampton		
Postcode	NN5 4UX		
OS co-ordinates	SP 7192 5976		
Area (sq m/ha)	c 400sq m		
Height aOD	70-80m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	Pat Chapman, Steve Parry, Jason Clarke		
Project Manager	Steve Parry		
Sponsor or funding body	Cognita Schools		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	23/8/2012		
End date	31/9/2012		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	NA store		
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Client report (NA report)			
Title	A programme of archaeological investigation during drainage works at Quinton House School, Upton, Northampton August – September 2012		
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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
2.1	<b>Topography and geology</b>
2.2	<b>Historical and archaeological background</b>
2.3	<b>Recent archaeological work</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY</b>
3.1	<b>Objectives</b>
3.2	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>THE WATCHING BRIEF</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>

## Figures

Front cover: New fencing enclosing the village earthworks, looking north

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Trench location

Fig 3: New fencing enclosing the village earthworks, looking north

Fig 4: Waste water drainage trench under excavation, looking north

Fig 5: Typical trench section at the south end, looking west

Fig 6: Trench section in the northern end of the field, looking east

Fig 7: Rabbit burrows in the side of the trench, looking west

Fig 8: The trench cut through the scarp, looking east

Fig 9: The scarp, dipping to the south (right), looking east

Fig 10: The scarp, looking south

Fig 11: Disturbed ground, looking north-east

Back cover: The excavated drainage trench, looking north

**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION DURING  
DRAINAGE WORKS AT QUINTON HOUSE SCHOOL  
UPTON, NORTHAMPTON  
AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2012**

**Abstract**

*Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Cognita Schools to undertake a watching brief during the excavation of a waste water drainage pipe trench along the earthworks of Upton deserted medieval village, Northampton. A pronounced scarp associated with the earthworks was recorded. There was also an area of rabbit burrow disturbance, and modern disturbance near the school buildings. No finds or deposits associated with the medieval village were recovered.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Cognita Schools to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation during drainage works at Quinton House School, Upton Lane, Northampton (NGR SP 7192 5976, Fig 1). Earthworks relating to the remains of the deserted village of Upton (Scheduled Monument 165) have been recorded adjacent to the proposed route of the drainage cut, although the route itself runs along the back of the closes, alongside a new fence apparently erected to define and protect the earthworks.

In accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012), Northamptonshire County Council required that the impact of development on heritage assets present on the site were mitigated through a programme of archaeological investigation, leading to analysis and publication of the results. The scope of these works was set out in a brief prepared by the NCC Archaeological Advisor (2012) and the methodology was defined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2012).

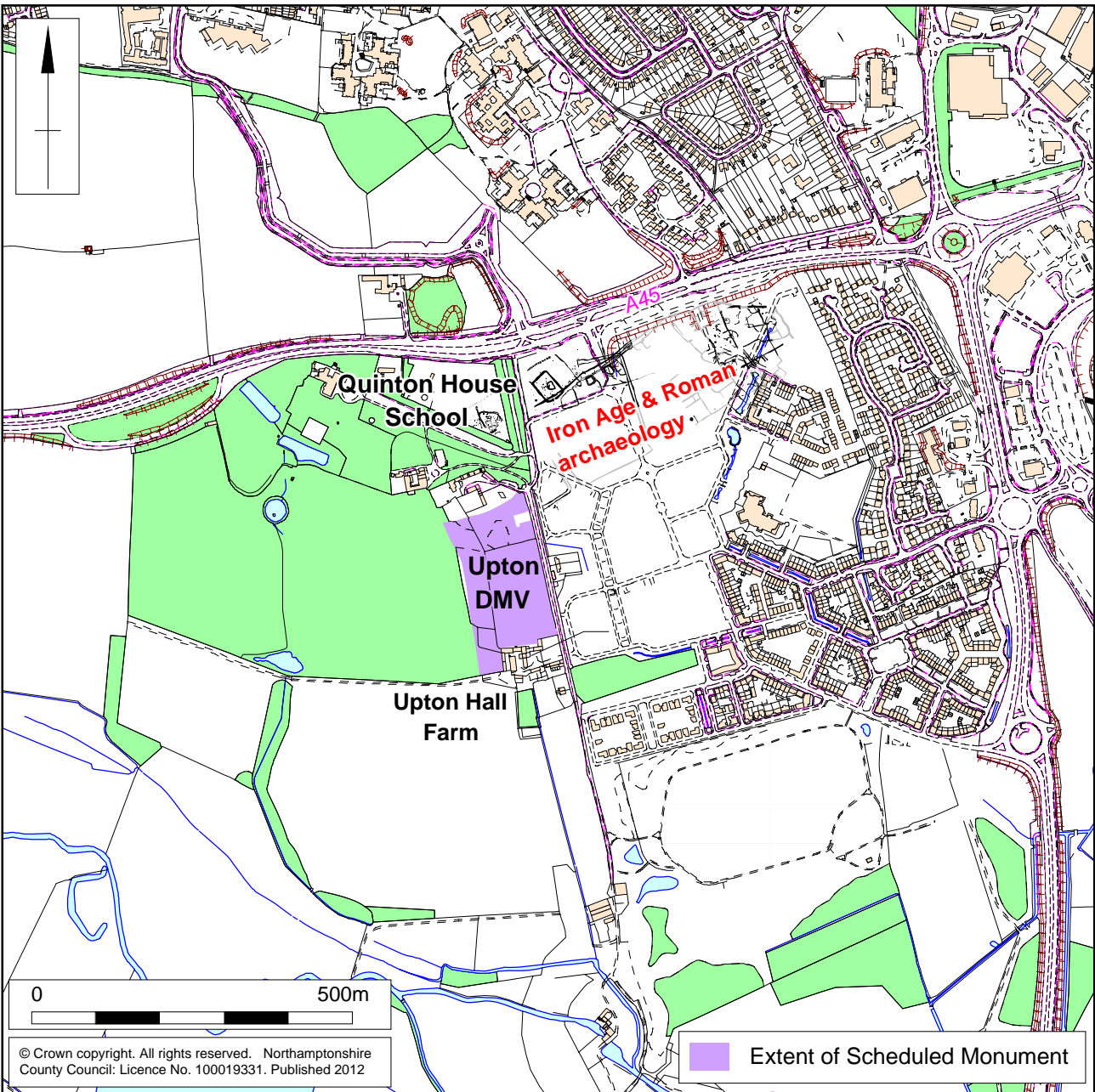
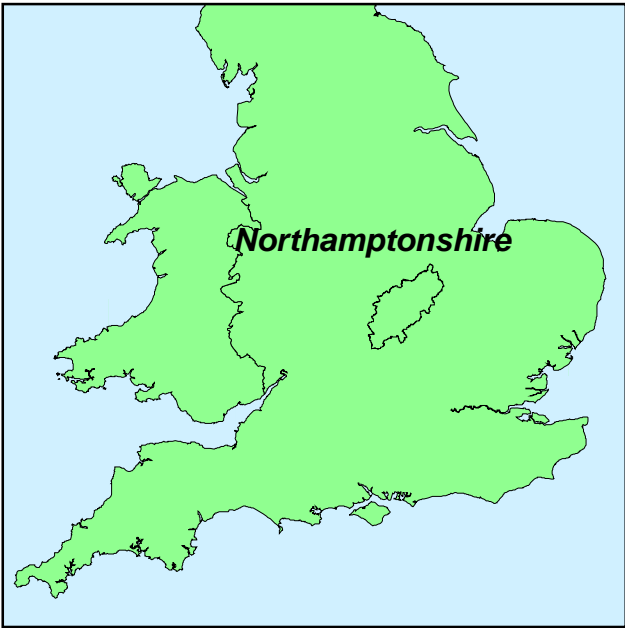
**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Topography and geology**

Upton, formerly a separate hamlet, now lies within the Borough of Northampton, c 1.5km to the west of the town.

The site lies south of the A45 (Weedon Road) and to the west of the new housing development at Upton (Upton Sustainable Urban Extension). The northern part of the drainage run lies within the grounds of Quinton House School and the southern end lies adjacent to Upton Hall Farm. The site slopes gradually to the south towards the River Nene; the ground at the north lies at c 80m aOD and at the south c 70m aOD.

The underlying geology of the site is composed of Glacial Lake Clays overlain by drift deposits of sand and gravel.



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The area around Upton has been the subject of intense archaeological investigation since 1965, comprising fieldwalking, geophysical survey, evaluation and open area excavation. Most of the works have been as a result of the western expansion of Northampton.

### ***Prehistoric***

Large quantities of Mesolithic flint have been recovered from a wide area around Duston and it remains one of only two sites in the county known in national literature (Wymer 1977). There are also large numbers of Neolithic flint, though little evidence for settlement. Excavations in the vicinity have found only limited evidence of human activity during these periods.

An early Bronze Age cremation burial of an adult within an inverted collared urn was found during flood attenuation works close to the River Nene between Upton and Kislingbury (Foard-Colby 2008). This apparently isolated burial was radiocarbon dated to 1980-1750 cal BC at 95% confidence.

Groups of small pits and postholes containing quantities of pottery dating to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age have been found at c 250m and c 150m to the north-east of the current development area respectively (Walker and Maull 2010; Walker and Foard-Colby 2007).

A number of pit alignments, usually dated to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, have been recorded. Pits on a north-east to south-west alignment were recorded c 270m to the north-east of the current development area (Walker and Maull 2010). This alignment was radiocarbon dated to the 4th to 3rd centuries BC, indicating that the pits were still open at the beginning of the middle Iron Age. The same alignment was also observed during archaeological excavation at Quinton House School (Walker and Foard-Colby 2007). Two further pit alignments have been recorded c 1km to the west, during the construction of the Cross Valley Link Way (Carlyle 2010) and at Upton Park (Mason 2011).

To the north-east a middle to late Iron Age settlement comprising several enclosures of varying sizes and plan forms, and a possible roundhouse, were set alongside a linear boundary ditch parallel to an earlier pit alignment (Walker and Maull 2010). A further enclosure, dating to the later middle Iron Age, was excavated in the grounds of Quinton House School to the north (Walker and Foard-Colby 2007). Within the enclosure were the remains of a possible roundhouse, as well as two further structures which were set within sub-divisions of the larger enclosure.

Undated features, including ditches and pits, found during trial trench excavation immediately to the south of Upton Hall Farm may also date to the prehistoric period (Mason 2011).

### ***Roman***

At around the time of the Roman Conquest in 43AD, the Iron Age settlement to the north and west was abandoned. The landscape was reorganised in the early Roman period (Walker and Maull 2010). The earliest activity comprised at least two double-ditched rectilinear enclosures, perhaps forming part of a wider field system. A small group of pits lay just to the south of one of the enclosures (Dawson and Leigh 2011). During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD an area to the north-east of the current site was developed, the earliest features comprising a pottery kiln and possible potter's workshop. This was replaced by a series of field systems. Further excavation by Northamptonshire Archaeology of the Iron Age and Roman activity to the north-west of the site has been completed in early 2012.



The Roman settlement at Duston, to the east of Upton, originated during the 1st century AD and was focussed on two roads, one originating from *Bannaventa* (Whilton Locks), c 10km to the north-west and the other from *Lactodorum* (Towcester), c 15km to the south. It eventually became one of the more significant undefended nucleated settlements in the county, although the layout and nature of the settlement is poorly understood as much of it was destroyed during quarrying of the area in the 19th and 20th centuries. Further sporadic Roman activity has also been recovered to the south of the site. A series of ditches, probably related to cultivation, and a metalled trackway aligned east-west, were observed during trial trench evaluation (Mason 2011).

### **Saxon**

Early/middle Saxon settlement features have been found to the north of the current site. A large sunken-featured building (SFB) was found during the widening of the A45 in 1965. The building contained more than 60 loomweights and was interpreted as a weaving shed rather than a domestic building; it was eventually destroyed by fire (Jackson *et al* 1969). More evidence of SFBs and posthole buildings were found during evaluation about 200m further north (Shaw 1990). These features may form separate elements within a dispersed settlement pattern. Excavation in the former walled garden of Upton Hall to the west of the site before the construction of the new sports field recovered some Saxon pottery (Walker and Foard-Colby 2007). The Saxon settlement may have been a direct antecedent of the medieval village.

### **Medieval**

Well-preserved earthwork remains of the deserted medieval village of Upton lie immediately to the east of the site and consist of a central hollow-way, bounded to the east and west by short closes (Scheduled Monument 165). The eastern side of the site once had a narrow backlane (RCHME 1985, 69). The earthworks are cut through at their northern end by garden remains relating to the Hall, and any relationship between the church and village has been lost. Excavations within the grounds of Quinton House School recovered remains of medieval boundary ditches, dated to the 13th to 16th centuries, which may form the north-eastern boundary of the village. There was a later hollow-way and a late medieval stone building containing a stone-lined pit (Walker and Foard-Colby 2007).

### **Post-medieval**

A number of post-medieval quarry pits were identified at the western end of the site. The post-medieval Upton Mill is situated to the south of the village remains.

## **2.3 Recent archaeological work**

A watching brief was carried out in 2007 during the dismantling and rebuilding of a boundary wall to the east of the deserted village, the removal of fly-tipping waste within the area of the village and the demolition of derelict buildings (Leigh 2007). No archaeological finds or features were present.

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Objectives

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- Identify, investigate and record any archaeological deposits exposed during the cutting of the drainage run;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits within their cultural and environmental setting;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

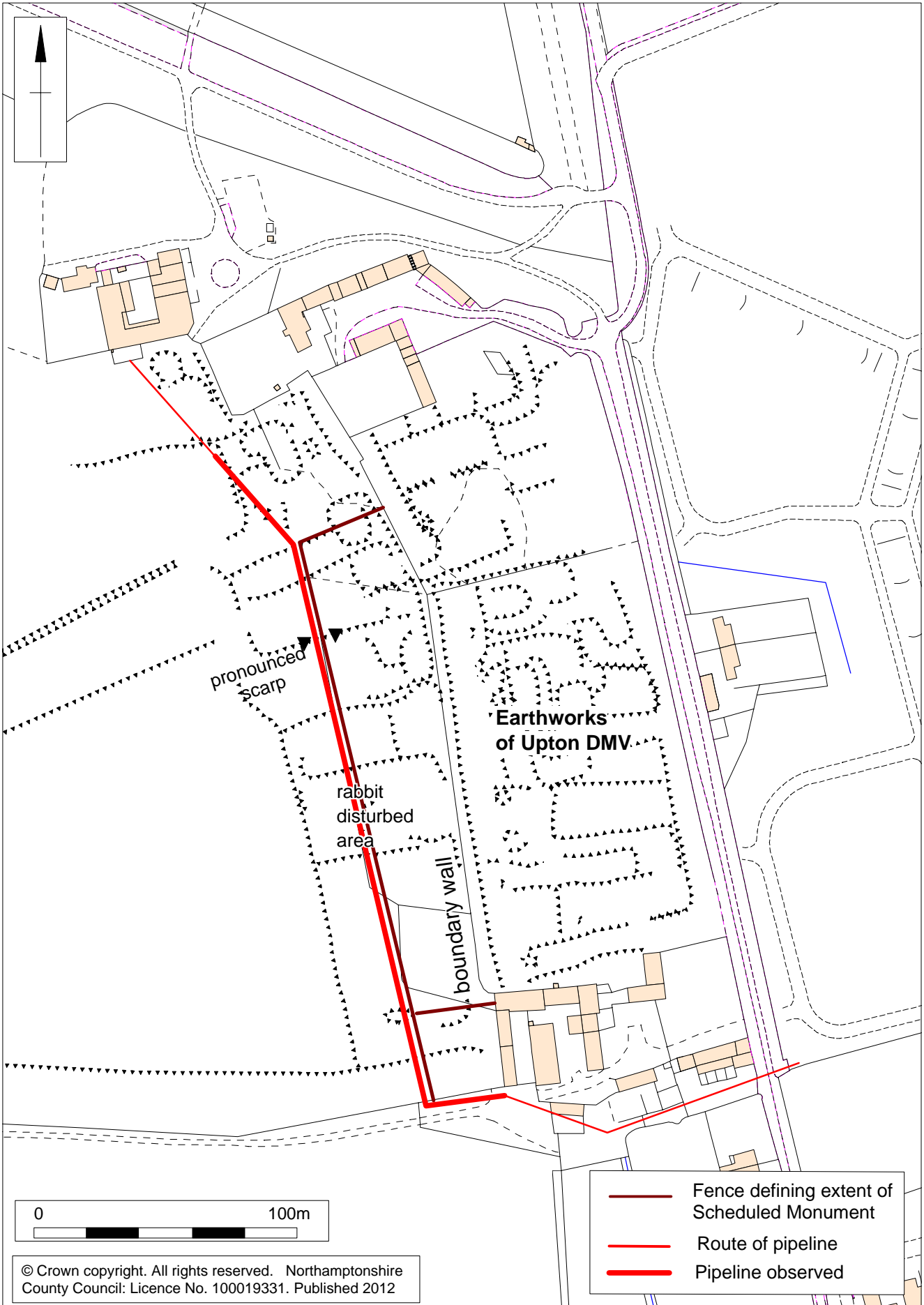
Specific research objectives were drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents (English Heritage 1991, Cooper 2006 and Knight *et al* 2012), but these further objectives were not appropriate as no archaeological deposits were found.

#### 3.2 Methodology

The work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of conduct* (IfA 2010); and English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MoRPHE* (EH 2006). The archaeological investigation comprised the observation and investigation of any archaeological remains exposed during the creation of the drainage run. A small 360° tracked excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, 0.80m wide, was used for the removal of topsoil and subsoil and some natural substratum to the required depth for the pipeline or identified archaeological deposits had they been present.

All deposits were described on *pro-forma* watching brief sheets to include details of deposits and their relationships, following standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). The photographic record comprised 35mm monochrome negatives, colour transparencies and digital photographs.

A summary of the watching brief will be published in CBA South Midlands 2013 and the report will be published on ADS through OASIS.



Scale 1:2000

The observed length of pipeline Fig 2

**4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

A stone boundary wall runs north-south along the line of the central hollow-way (Fig 2). Most of the earthworks west of the boundary wall had been enclosed within a wooden fencing quite recently, with additional electric fencing along the top, to create a series of paddocks for horses (Fig 3). The drainage trench was excavated from south of the boundary wall by the stables of Upton Hall Farm, then northwards on a line centred 1.20m to the west of the fence (Figs 2 and 4). The trench was 0.80m wide, widening to a 1.0m square at the manholes, which were set at intervals of approximately 54m. The trench was 1.20m deep at the southern end and up to 1.60m deep at the northern end.



New fence enclosing the village earthworks, looking north Fig 3



Waste water drainage trench under excavation, looking north Fig 4



Observation of the drainage works began on Thursday, August 30, at the southern end on the track past the stables to the boundary wall. No trenching was done on Friday 31 August due to the weather. Observation of the rest of the trench was carried out on 3-7 September.

The track south of the boundary wall was 0.30m deep, comprising ironstone and large brick fragments with a surface of small gravel and stone chippings. Between the track and the wall the trench was 1.0m deep, exposing the interface between the sand and gravel with clay natural and the subsoil, a mid brown clayey loam, 0.70m thick, with very few inclusions. The dark brown loam topsoil was 0.30m thick. The wall foundations were 0.50m below the ground surface.

North of the boundary wall in the pasture field, the orange sand and gravel natural, with occasional patches of brown clay, lay at depths varying between c 0.60m and 1.00m below the ground surface in the southern 130m of the trench. In the northern half of the trench, the underlying blue and brown tenacious natural clays were exposed at intervals below orange sand and gravels. The sand and gravels in the northern area, which included pebbles/cobbles up to 80mm in diameter, rose to 0.30-0.40m below the surface at the top of the field near the school.

The subsoil in the southern half of the field was a mid brown loam with very few inclusions, and varied between c 0.30-0.70m below the ground surface. In the northern half of the field the subsoil included the occasional small rounded boulder up to 200mm in diameter.

The overlying topsoil was a dark brown loam virtually free of all inclusions and typically c 0.30-0.40m thick, merging imperceptibly with the subsoil (Figs 5 and 6).



Typical trench section at the south end, looking west (scale 1.0m) Fig 5





Trench section in the northern end of the field, looking east Fig 6

About 100m north of the wall was an area of rabbit disturbance extending eastwards under the fence and some burrows were exposed in the sides of the trench (Fig 7). No rabbits were seen but their droppings were lying on the backfilled trench on the following days.



Rabbit burrows in the side of the trench, looking west Fig 7

To the north of the rabbit disturbance, the trench cut through a scarp associated with the back closes, aligned east to west (Fig 2). Natural brown clay was exposed at a



depth of 0.70m on the brow of the scarp, overlain by a lens of subsoil with frequent pebbles at the top of the scarp (Figs 8-10).



Drainage trench cut through the scarp, looking east Fig 8



The scarp, dipping to the right (south), looking east Fig 9





The scarp, looking south Fig 10

The area between the north-west corner of the fence and the wastewater tank had been disturbed in the past (Fig 11). Three narrow iron pipes, 8mm in diameter, crossed the trench within an area of general irregular disturbance. The pipes were left in place.



Disturbed ground, looking north-east Fig 11

No features were seen either in the base or the sides of the trench. The upcast spoil was examined and the only artefacts noted, but not collected, were one fragment of a deep frogged London brick, stamped LBC, and seven small abraded fragments of animal bone no more than 100mm long, all from the topsoil in the southern half of the field.



#### 4 DISCUSSION

There were no features or deposits along the line of the pipeline. The topsoil and subsoil were notable for being almost free of inclusions along the length of the trench. Modern disturbance was noted near the school buildings.

The weather conditions were wet and overcast on August 30, otherwise clear and bright with occasional cloud.

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