



Northamptonshire Archaeology

A programme of archaeological observation and recording
of groundworks on land at Helmdon House 87 Church
Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire
August 2012



Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council

Pat Chapman

Report 12/169

November 2012



STAFF

Project Manager Stephen Parry MA FSA MifA
Fieldwork Chris Jones
Text Pat Chapman BA CMS AlfA
Illustrations Amir Bassir BSc PlfA

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Stephen Parry		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No: 136525	
Project name	Watching brief at Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire		
Short description	Archaeological observation and recording was undertaken during the stripping for an access road and new equestrian ménage at Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. Modern disturbance was noted in the ménage area and earlier made up ground on the access road. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were present.		
Project type	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording.		
Site status	None		
Previous work	None		
Current Land use	Pasture		
Future work	None		
Monument type/ period	-		
Significant finds	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, NN13 5QJ		
Study area (sq metres)	1057sq m		
OS Easting & Northing	SP 5911 4322		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Project brief originator	The Assistant Archaeological Advisor Northamptonshire County Council		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	Chris Jones		
Project Manager	Stephen Parry		
Sponsor or funding body	Mrs E Pitt		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	21 August 2012		
End date	23 August 2012		
ARCHIVES	Location	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	-		
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Watching brief forms (3) Colour slides (14) black and white contact prints (14) Digital photographs (14)	
Digital		Report text and figures	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)			
Title	A programme of archaeological observation, and recording of groundworks on land at Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, August 2012		
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology report 12/169		
Author	Pat Chapman		
Date	October 2012		

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
2.1	Location and topography
2.2	Historical background
3	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
4	THE RECORDED EVIDENCE
5	THE ARCHIVE
6	CONCLUSIONS
	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Figures

Cover: The ménage area being stripped, looking north

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: The location of the groundworks

Fig 3: Topsoil removed from new access road, looking east

Fig 4: Topsoil removed from new access road going into ménage area, looking north

Fig 5: South side of ménage area during stripping, looking east

Fig 6: Representative section through the deposits

Fig 7: Section on south side of ménage area, looking south

Fig 8: Ménage area after stripping, looking south

Fig 9: South end of ménage showing area of disturbance, looking west

Back cover: Topsoil removed from new access road, looking east

**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING OF
GROUNDWORKS ON LAND AT HELMDON HOUSE
87 CHURCH STREET, HELMDON
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
AUGUST 2012**

Abstract

A programme of archaeological observation and recording was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during stripping for an access road and new equestrian ménage at Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire. Modern disturbance was noted in the ménage area and earlier made up ground on the access road. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

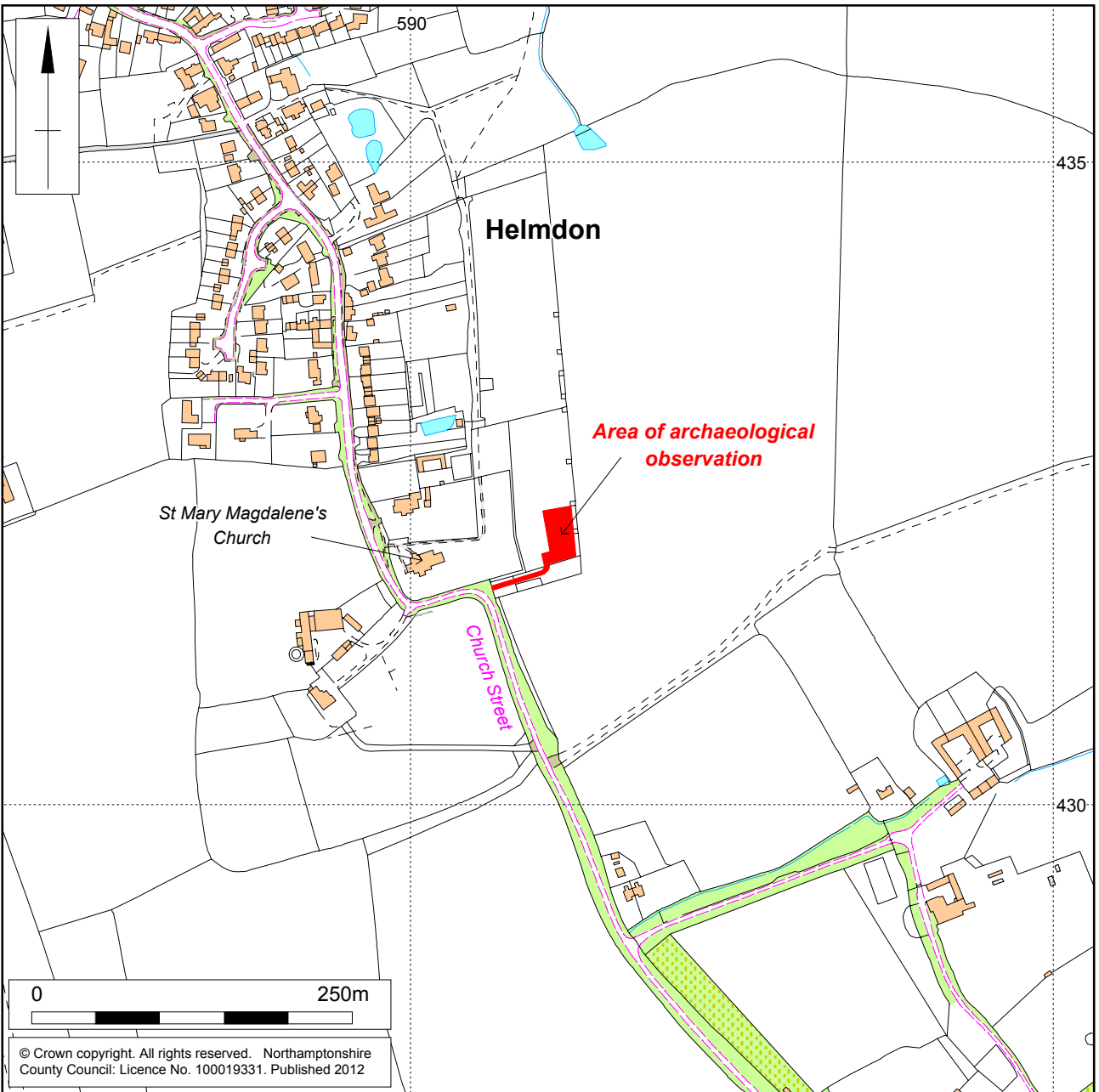
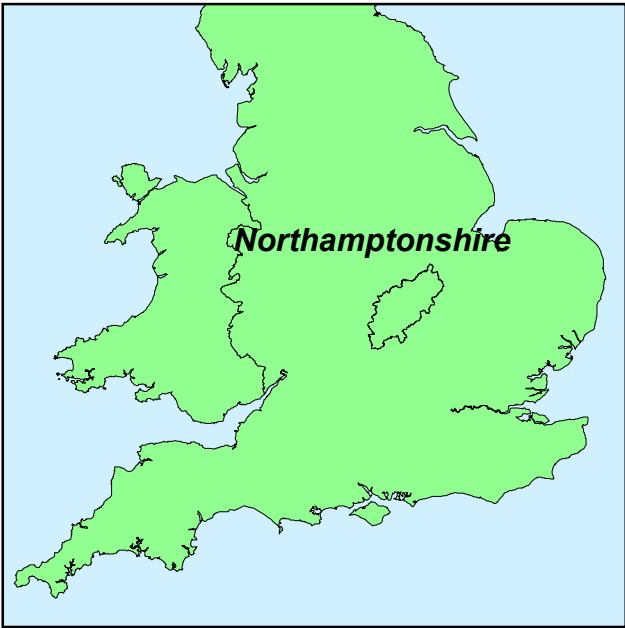
A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in August 2012 during the stripping for an access road and new equestrian ménage on land at Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 59115 43220, Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Mrs E Pitt, following a request for a programme of archaeological observation, by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council. The investigation followed the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008) and English Heritage (EH 2006).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

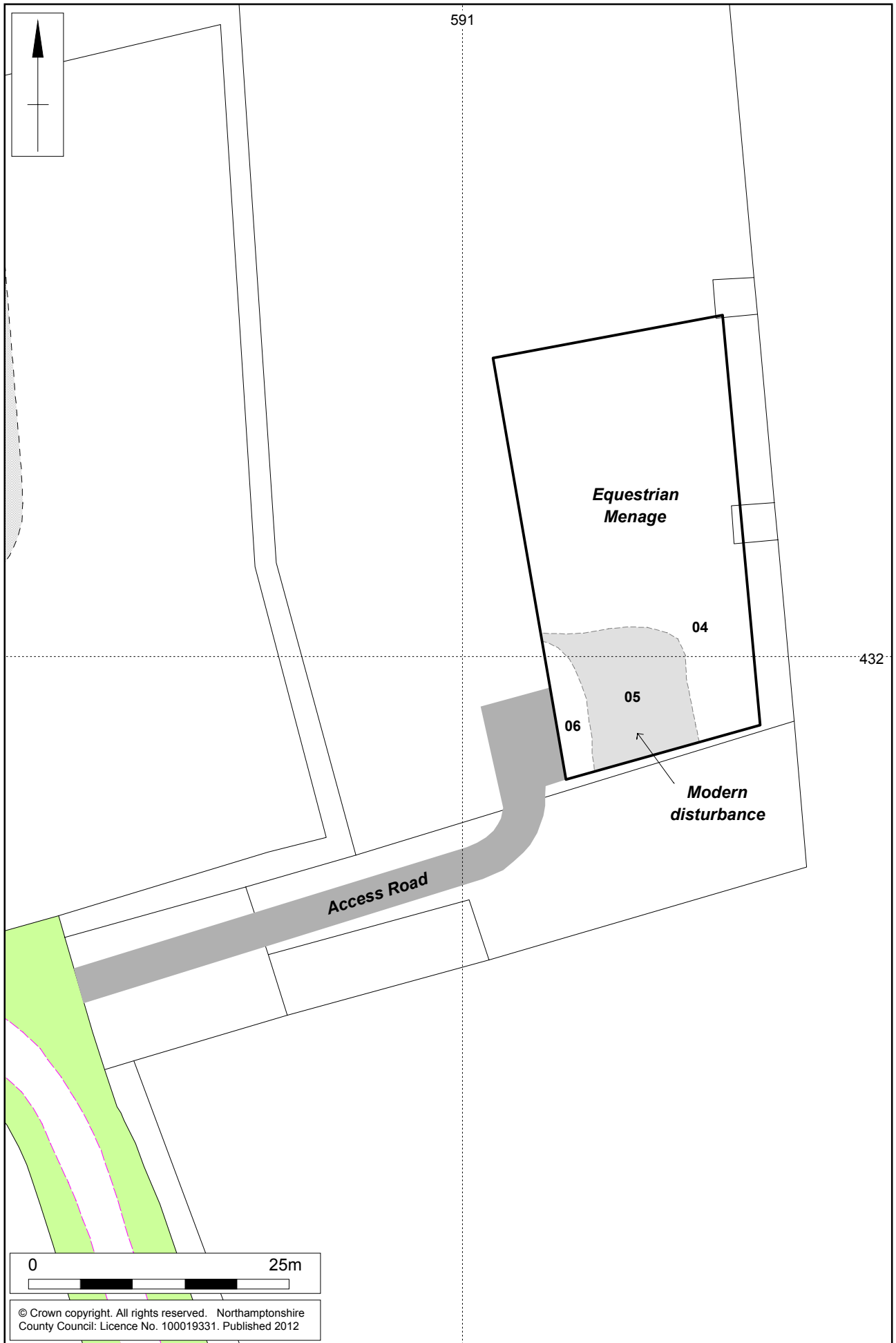
The village of Helmdon lies approximately 19km to the south-west of Towcester. The development area lies on ground sloping gently down from south to north at an approximate height of 150m aOD. The development site lies to the east of the church of St Mary and the churchyard, and is currently pasture.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising Whitby and Rutland Mudstone Formations overlain by Glacial Sand and Gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:500

Location of the groundworks Fig 2

2.2 Historical background

The site lies within an area of archaeological interest. There is evidence of settlement in the surrounding area during the Romano-British period in the form of a well, dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, discovered during quarrying. Associated with this were traces of a corn dryer. A Roman coin was found in the grounds of Helmdon House in the 1940s.

North of the site, earthwork survey and excavation carried out in 1994 to the rear of 47-55 Church Street confirmed the presence of boundary ditches dating from the 11th-15th centuries, but no significant settlement remains (Holmes and Soden 1994). A medieval spearhead was found to the south-east of the site. Excavation and a watching brief at Manor Farm, about 200m south-west of the development area found banks and ditches associated with the medieval Overbury Manor, the banks had been denuded and the ditches infilled in the post-medieval period (Holmes 2000). The present church of St Mary the Virgin dates from the 13th century with 17th-century additions and alterations. It was restored between 1718 and 1725.

An archaeological watching brief undertaken at 47-55 Church Street in 2008 revealed no archaeological remains (Leigh 2008).

No previous archaeological work is recorded as having been carried out within the site, up to the present application the site has comprised an area of pasture land.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the programme of archaeological observation were to:

- ◆ Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits exposed during the groundworks for the new ménage and access road;
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts;
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The fieldwork comprised three visits during the three days of stripping for the access road and excavation of the area for the ménage (Fig 2). The groundworks were carried out using a tracked 360° excavator, fitted with a toothless bucket, and a dumper truck.

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 (NA 2011). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The access road, 3m wide, was stripped of 0.10m of topsoil down to previous made ground, possibly from an earlier path or trackway (Figs 3 and 4).



Topsoil removed from new access road, looking east Fig 3



Topsoil removed from new access road going into ménage area, looking north Fig 4

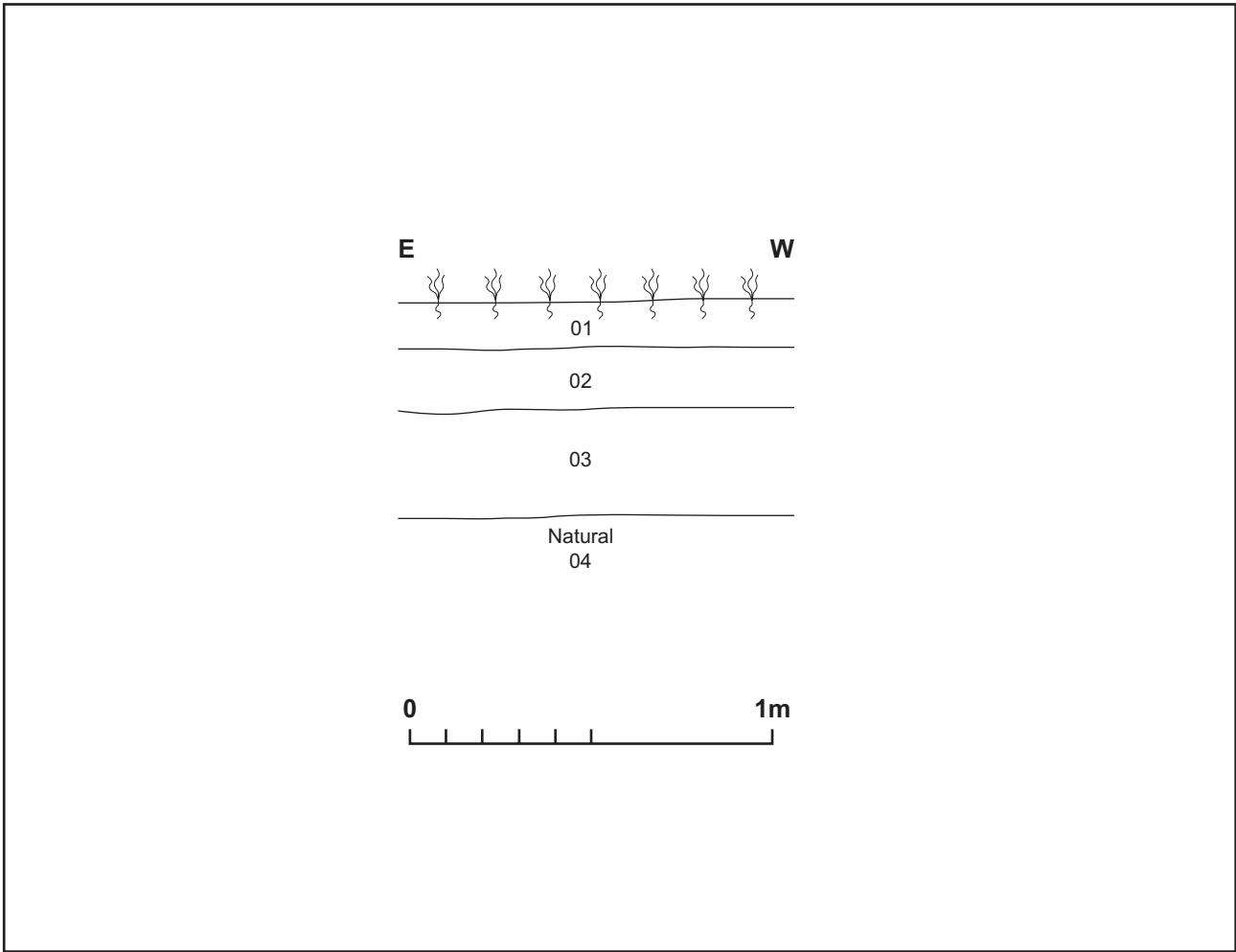
The ménage area was stripped onto the natural, 0.60m below the present ground surface (Figs 5, 6 and 7). The natural in most of the area comprised sand and gravel mixed with clay including frequent flint and stone (4). In the far south-west side the natural comprised light brown and white clay with large blocks of limestone (6).

Overlying these was a natural layer (3), 0.40m thick, of dark brown clay with isolated stones.



South side of ménage area during stripping, looking east Fig 5

The subsoil (2) was light brown clay, 0.10m thick, overlain by dark grey-brown clay loam topsoil (1), 0.10m thick and containing modern rubble (Fig 7).



Scale 1:20

Representative section through the deposits Fig 6



Section on south side of ménage area, looking south Fig 7



Ménage area after stripping, looking south Fig 8

In the south-western part of the area post-medieval/modern disturbance comprising waste consisting of glass, plastic, brick and metal mixed with topsoil (5) had been cut into the natural (Figs 8 and 9). Tree stumps were machined out.



South end of ménage showing area of disturbance, looking west Fig 9

Soil from the higher southern end was dumped at the northern end of the development area to level up the ground. No archaeological features were seen in the development area.

5 THE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	3
Colour slides	14
Black and white contacts and negatives	14
Digital photographs	14

The archive will be held with Northamptonshire Archaeology until such time as a suitable depository has been appointed.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Earlier made ground along the route of the new access road indicates a previous trackway. There has been disturbance in the field where the equestrian ménage is to be developed as shown by the large area of dumping and the rubble in the topsoil. However, no archaeological features or artefacts were present within the investigation area.

The archaeological observation was carried out in dry, clear weather, and the results are considered to be reliable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EH 2009 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, English Heritage

Holmes, M, and Soden, I, 1994 *Archaeological evaluation at Helmdon, Northamptonshire, April 1994*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, **874**

Holmes, M, 2000 *Manor Farm, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, archaeological recording action, June 2000*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, **2782**

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*, Institute for Archaeologists

Leigh, D J, 2008 *An archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of 47-55 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, **08/073**

Mordue, L, 2012 *Brief for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works on land at the rear of Helmdon House, Helmdon, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire County Council

NA 2011 *Archaeological fieldwork manual*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

NA 2012 *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication during groundworks on the land at the rear of Helmdon House, 87 Church Street, Helmdon, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

Websites

www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home British Geological Survey (accessed 02/10/2012)



Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology



Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council