



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at
Shropham Quarry Extension, Phases B1 and B2
Shropham, Norfolk
August 2012 and October 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**

Paul Clements and

Adam Yates

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STAFF

Project manager Adam Yates BA MIfA
Text Paul Clements BA and Adam Yates
Fieldwork Paul Clements, John Walford BSc MSc and Adam Yates
Flint Yvonne Wolframm-Murray BSc PhD
Pottery Andy Chapman BSc MIfA FSA
Illustrations Amir Bassir BSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Verified by	Adam Yates		
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS Report form

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS NO: 138653
Project name	SHROPHAM QUARRY EXTENSION PHASES B1 AND B2	
Short description	In August and October 2012 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook archaeological watching briefs on two phases of expansion at Shropham Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk. The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd, acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, and was carried out prior to gravel extraction. The works revealed a field system dated to the late Iron Age or early Roman period within which were a number of shallow pits.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Doyle 2008), geophysical survey (Hadrell 2008), field walking and metal detecting survey (Adams and Brogan 2009), Trial trench evaluation (Carlyle 2011), Archaeological watching briefs (Hogen <i>et al</i> 2007; Barlow 2009; Barlow and Smith 2008; Wolfram-Murray 2011, Wolfram-Murray and Simmonds 2011; Yvonne-Murray, Walford and Simmonds 2012)	
Current land use	Quarry	
Future work	Further phases of watching brief and excavation	
Monument type/ period	Late Iron Age / early Roman field system	
Significant finds	Flint, Late Iron Age / early Roman pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Norfolk	
Site address	Rocklands Road, Shropham, Norfolk	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 98750 94300	
Area	2.1ha	
Height	40m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Norfolk County Council	
Project Design originator	Rathmell Archaeology Ltd	
Director/Supervisors	Paul Clements and Adam Yates (NA)	
Project Managers	Adam Yates (NA), Tom Rees (Rathmell Archaeology Ltd)	
Sponsor or funding body	Breedon Aggregates Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2012	
End date	October 2012	
ARCHIVES		
Archive location: Norfolk Museums	Accession number (August 2012): ENF129553 Accession number (October 2012): ENF130026	
Archive contents	Finds; site records and related documents; digital photographs, digital report copies	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
SHROPHAM QUARRY EXTENSION, PHASES B1 AND B2
SHROPHAM, NORFOLK
AUGUST AND OCTOBER 2012**

Abstract

In August and October 2012 Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook two phases of archaeological watching briefs on two phases of expansion at Shropham Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk.

The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd, acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, and was carried out prior to gravel extraction. Archaeological remains comprised a field system dated to the late Iron Age or early Roman period within which were a number of shallow pits.

1 INTRODUCTION

In August and October 2012, Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on Phases B1 and B2, the extension to Shropham Quarry, Shropham, Norfolk (NGR 598750 294300 Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd, acting on behalf of Breedon Aggregates, in support of consented extraction (Planning ref. C/3/2010/3016).

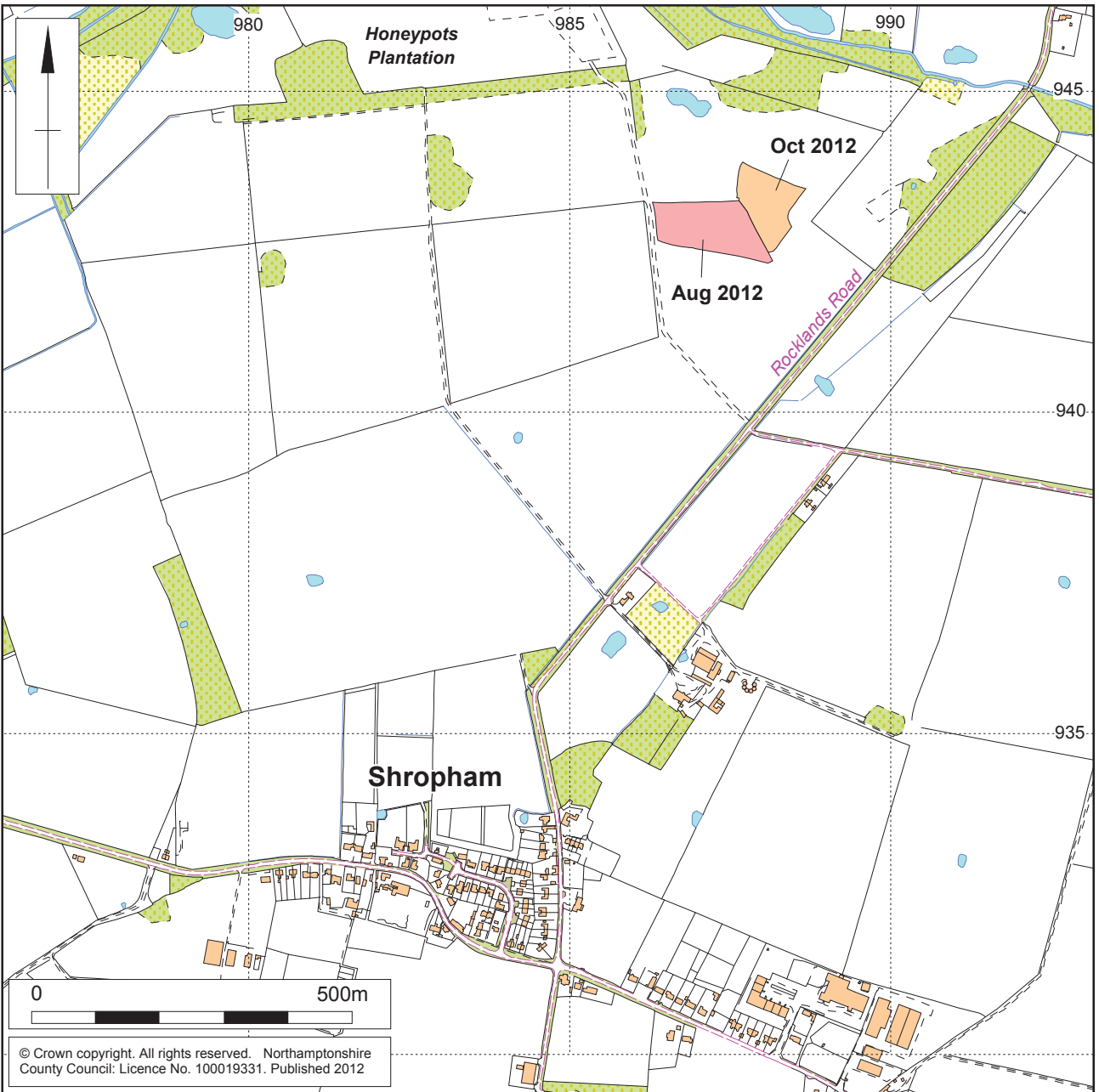
The work was undertaken in accordance with Condition 7 required by the Historic Environment Service of Norfolk County Council, the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd (2012) and the Method Statement compiled by Northamptonshire Archaeology (2012). The Norfolk Historic Environment numbers for the project are ENF129553 and ENF130026.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

Phase B1 and B2 of the new at Shropham Quarry are situated 1km to the north of the village of Shropham in Norfolk. The watching brief encompassed two areas totalling 2.1. The ground slopes from south to north and is bounded to the south and west by previous workings and by arable fields on other sides.

The underlying bedrock belongs to the Upper Cretaceous White Chalk Subgroup, and is locally overlain by sands and gravels infilling glacial outwash channels that were cut by the meltwaters of the East Anglian ice-sheets (BGS 1961). The soils belong to the Worlington Soil Association, which comprise deep well drained sandy soils, in places acidic with sub-surface pan (LAT 1983).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site is situated immediately adjacent to the extensive prehistoric ceremonial, funerary and domestic complex at Honeydots Plantation (Fig 1), which was excavated by Norfolk Archaeology Unit in 2001-3 (HER36218; NAU 2005, NAU 2007) and by Archaeological Solutions Ltd in 2006-7 (HER38228; Hogan *et al* 2007). This site, which is of national archaeological importance, dates from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Sherds of Neolithic pottery (HER9027) and a Neolithic/Bronze Age flint knife (HER20102) were recovered as surface finds. The remains of an overlying Roman agricultural system were also investigated.

Previous archaeological works undertaken as part of the current scheme of comprise a desk-based assessment (Doyle 2008); a geophysical survey (Hadrell 2008); a fieldwalking and metal detecting survey (Adams and Brogan 2009); and trial trenching (Carlyle 2010)

The geophysical survey identified the remains of a complex of enclosures and a possible droveway, interpreted as a prehistoric settlement, and a number of possible archaeological features. Fieldwalking and metal detecting identified two concentrations of burnt and struck flint which corresponded with possible rectilinear enclosures identified by the geophysical survey. Trial trench evaluation identified a number of ditches and pits within the current area as well relating to previous field system, probably dating to the later Iron Age or Roman periods (Carlyle 2010).

3 METHODOLOGY

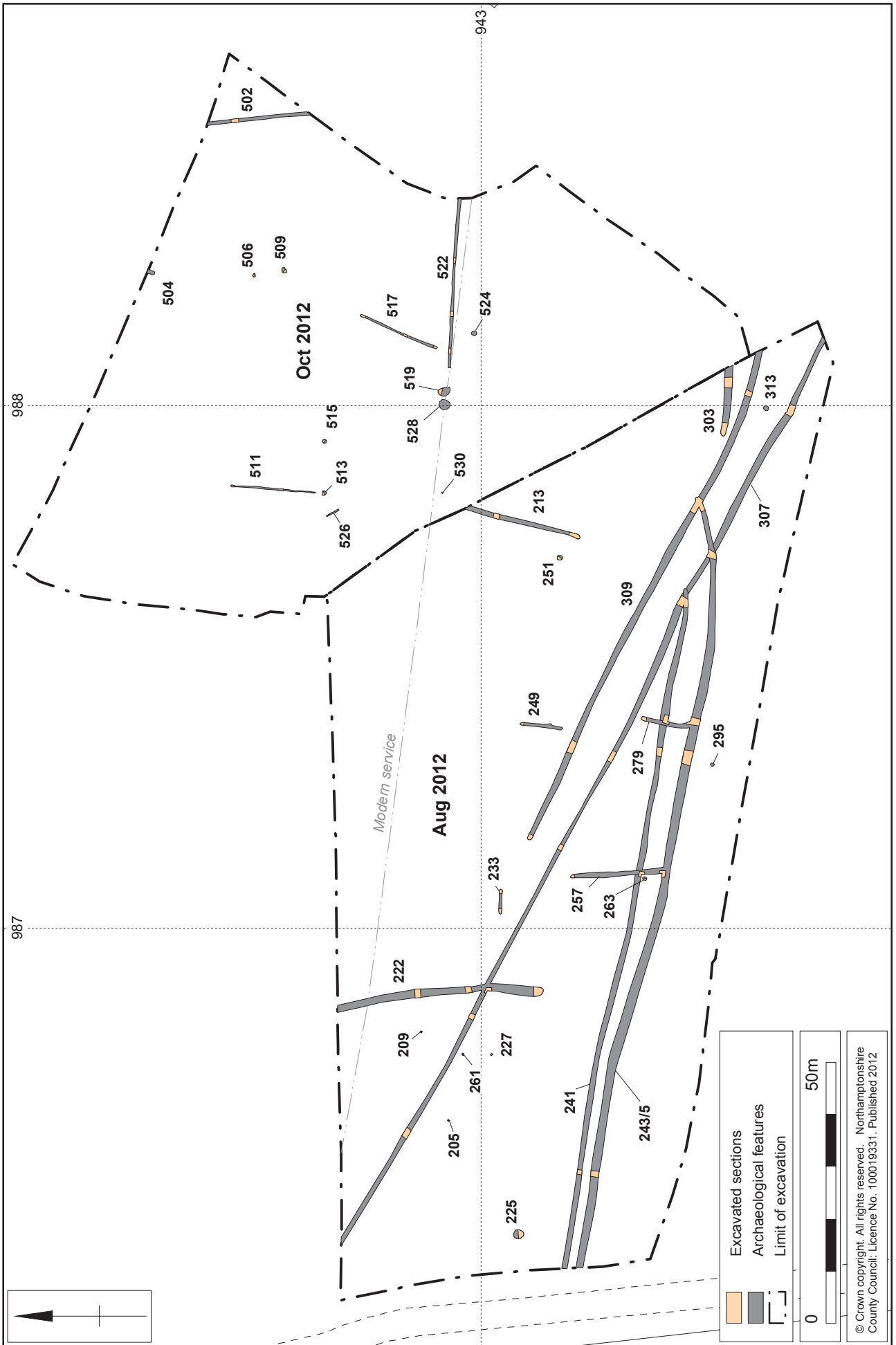
Removal of topsoil and subsoil was undertaken with a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision. Excavation proceeded to the archaeological horizon or, where this was absent, the natural substrate.

All significant features were plotted by a survey grade GPS Leica System 1200, to a tolerance of +/-0.05m related to the Ordnance Survey national grid and Ordnance Datum.

All potentially significant features were investigated by hand to determine their date and character and the exposed portions of each were fully excavated. Recording followed standard NA procedures (NA 2011). All archaeological features were given a unique context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Finds were collected from the individual deposits and appropriately packed and stored in stable conditions, by context. Soil samples were taken from a number of the more significant features.

A photographic record was made on 35mm monochrome and colour film, with supporting digital photographs. The field data has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

All works were carried out according standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011), the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008) and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2002).



Scale 1:1000

Plan of the excavation areas Fig 2

4 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The remains identified comprised a number of ditches and shallow gullies probably forming part of a field system. Although all the features appeared to be broadly contemporary, this field system had undergone at least one phase of modification, although the ephemeral nature of these features and the similarity of the fills made determining stratigraphic relationships difficult and in many cases impossible. Although several sections were excavated across each linear feature and individual cut and fill numbers assigned, only one cut number is referred to in the text below and accompanying illustrations for ease of understanding. Fills are described but no individual context numbers are referred to unless a specific attribute is being defined.

Also present were a number of shallow pits, many containing charcoal and at least one of which was clay lined and may have been associated with water heating perhaps for cooking. A number of discrete clusters were apparent ranging, from 2 pits to 7 pits in extent, although there were also isolated examples. Whilst no direct relationships between the field system and pits was present, in at least two occasions the pits and ditches respected each other, and it is likely that they belonged to the same phase of activity.

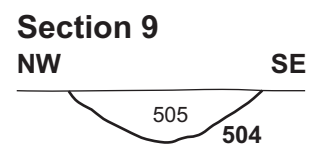
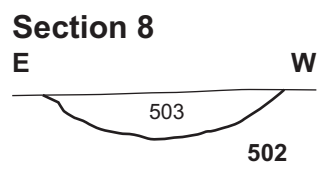
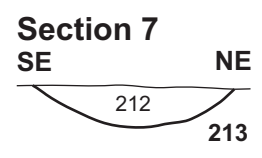
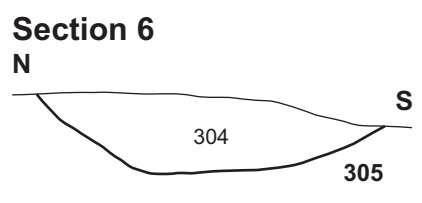
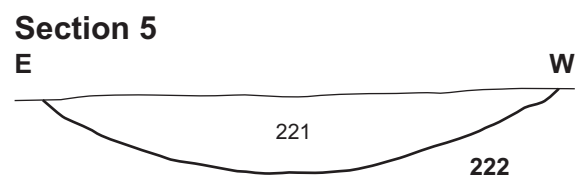
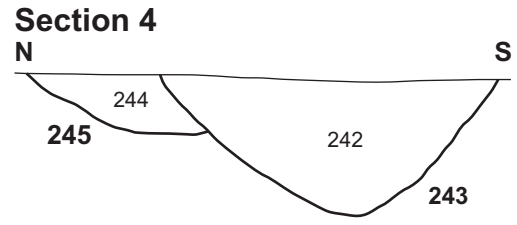
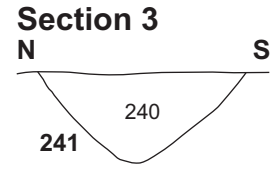
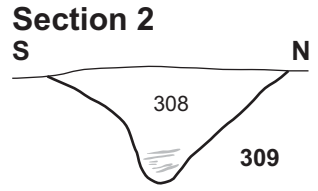
4.1 General stratigraphy

The natural geology was variable, but generally a light yellowish or orangish brown silty sand with angular and rounded flint gravel and larger nodules of flint. Mid red-brown silty sand subsoil, with frequent small to large rounded and angular flint fragments, was intermittently present. Elsewhere, the natural was directly overlain by up to 0.6m of homogenous grey-brown sandy ploughsoil containing a moderate amount of natural flint gravel. Within the ploughsoil bands of gravel had been deposited, presumably to aid agriculture and drainage.



Stripped area, August 2012

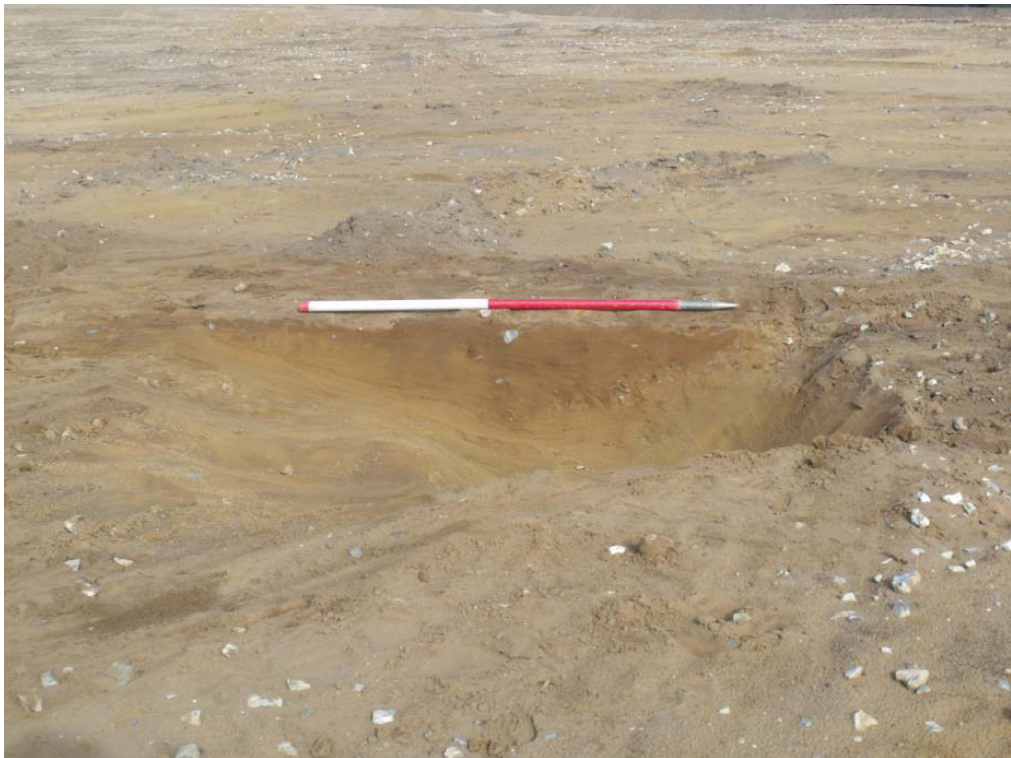
Fig 3



4.2 Field System 1

The earlier phase is represented by ditches [307] and [309]. These comprised two parallel sinuous features 6-8m apart aligned west north-west to east south-east, possibly forming a trackway or either side of a substantial hedge. The northern ditch [309] did not extend across the full width of the excavated area, although it is possible that gully [233] forms part of an intermittent continuation of this feature.

Ditch [307] was up to 1.2m wide and 0.4m deep, with shallow sloping sides and a concave base (Fig 4 section 1, Fig 5). The fills comprised dark orange-brown silty sand with occasional gravel and a small quantity of bird bones from the fill (306). Four pieces of worked flint were recovered from sections along this feature - fills (217) and (318). Ditch [309] was 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep with steeply sloping sides to a concave base (Fig 4, section 2), filled with reddish brown silty sand containing gravel.



Ditch [307] looking north-west

Fig 5

4.3 Field System 2

Parallel ditches [241] and [243/5] were cut on a roughly east-west alignment between 3-6m apart (Fig 6). These terminated at their eastern ends where they met ditches [309] and [307] respectively. Two shallow spurs [257] and [279] led northwards from ditch [243/5] cutting ditch [241], perhaps suggesting that [243/5] was a later replacement for [241]. These spurs formed two small paddocks within the angle formed by the [243/5] and [307].

Ditch [241] was 0.70m wide and 0.3m deep with a V-shaped profile, with a fill of orange-grey sandy clay (Fig 4, section 3). Ditch [245] was only partly apparent, much of it having been removed by later recut [243] (Fig 4 section 4). Ditch [245] was 0.45m wide and 0.20m deep with a fill of dark red brown silty sand comprised of 10% small and medium sized gravels. Ditch [243] was up to 1.10m wide and 0.40m deep with a v shaped profile continuous along its length, with a fill of with mid reddish brown silty sand with up to 10% small and medium sized gravel. Four pieces of worked flint were recovered from sections along ditch [243] - fills (242) and (314), including a late

Mesolithic / early Neolithic end/side scraper and a late Neolithic / early Bronze Age end scraper.



Ditches [241] and [243/5] looking east

Fig 6

Ditch [257] was 0.5m wide and 0.28m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flat base, with a fill of mid orange-brown silty sand containing gravel. Ditch [279] was 0.46m wide and 0.2m deep with a concave profile, with a fill of dark orange brown silty sand containing gravel.

A number of other ditches, largely discontinuous, formed further parts of the field system. These either had no direct relationship with the principal axial ditches or where they did, the fills were too similar to determine stratigraphic relationships. Ditch [222] would seem to be likely to be part of the second phase of field system on morphological grounds. Ditch [222] was up to 1.70m wide and 0.25m deep, with a shallow U-shaped profile filled with dark orange-brown silty sand containing occasional gravel, terminating to the south in a rounded terminal (Fig 4, section 5). One of the section excavated across this feature produced a sherd of late Iron Age / early Roman pottery and four pieces of worked flint including a core fragment from fill (219).

The remaining ditches and gullies [213] [249] [305] [502] [504] [511] [517] and [522] were all very ephemeral, generally no more than 0.3-0.6m wide and 0.1-0.2m deep (Fig 4 sections 6, 7 8 and 9). They had a fairly consistent clean homogenous fills of orange-brown silty sand containing occasional gravel. The features were generally on rough east to west or north to south alignments, in common with ditches [241] and [243/5], and are assigned to this later phase.



Ditch [222] looking north

Fig 7

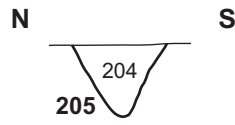
4.4 Pits and other features

There was a general scatter of pits across the stripped area, a number of these were isolated features, although some were clustered together. Within the northern part of the stripped area it was noticeable that a number of the pits were paired ([506] and [509]; [513] and [515]; and [519] and [528]). To the south most of the pits were isolated, with the exception of a cluster of four small pits or postholes towards the north-west corner ([205] [209] [216] and [227]).

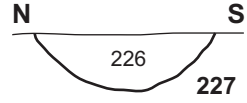
Posthole [205] was 0.30m wide by 0.24m deep. It had steep cut sides and a sharp concave base (Fig 8 section 10). It was filled with loose dark grey-brown silty sand (204) that contained infrequent angular gravels and charcoal flecks. Pit [209] was 0.35m wide and 0.08m deep with a bowl shaped profile. It was filled with loose dark grey brown silty sand (208) that contained very infrequent flecks of charcoal. Pit [216] was 0.35m wide and 0.12m deep, with concave edges and a rounded base. The fill was loose mid orange brown silty sand (215). This was overlain by loose very dark grey brown silty sand (214). Circular pit [227] was 0.60m wide and 0.18m deep with concave edges and a rounded base (Fig 8, section 11), filled by loose very dark grey silty sand (226), which was slightly ashy containing few charcoal flecks and one late Neolithic / early Bronze Age flint scraper.

Large circular pit [225] located towards the western edge of the watching brief area had a diameter of 1.80m and was 0.36m deep with sharp cut edges and a base that gently sloped down to the west (Fig 8 section 12). Its lower fill was dark reddish silty sand (224) overlain by loose black ashy sand (223) containing up to 50% mixed sized burnt stone and fire cracked flint.

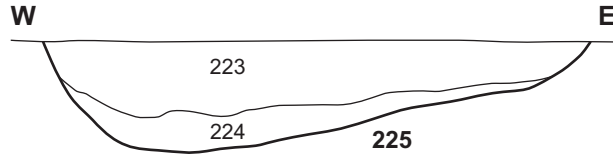
Section 10



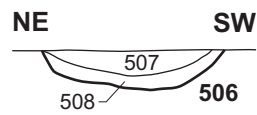
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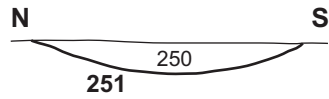
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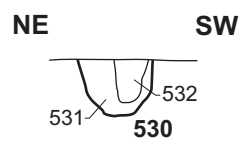
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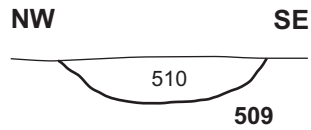
Section 13



Section 16



Section 15



Section 17



Ovoid pit [251] was aligned north to south with a shallow bowl-shaped profile (Fig 8, section 13). It measured 0.88m long and 0.60m wide and 0.12m deep. It was filled with dark grey, almost black, silty sand which contained a large amount, 20%, burnt stone and fractured flint.

Circular pit [263] had a diameter of 0.85m and was 0.15m deep with a bowl shaped profile that on the northern edge shallowed with a single large flat burnt stone at the base. The fill (262) was very dark grey-brown silty sand which contained 1 large burnt stone and 5% charcoal flecks.

Ovoid pit [313] was 0.40m long, 0.35m wide and 0.08m deep aligned north to south, filled with very dark grey silty sand (312) which contained occasional charcoal flecks and two unworked burnt flints.

Circular pit [506] was 0.30m across and 0.12 deep, with a bowl-shaped profile (Fig 8, section 14, Fig 9). The basal fill comprised lining (508), stiff mid yellow-brown clay, overlain by backfill of loose mid-dark brown sandy loam (507) with occasional small charcoal flecks. Six metres to the south was circular pit [509] 0.70m in diameter and 0.15m deep (Fig 8, section 15), with shallow sloping sides and a flat base. The fill of loose mid-dark grey brown sandy loam (510) contained charcoal, and produced 5 sherds of late Iron Age pottery, four of which were from a decorated burnished globular bowl. The clay lining of pit [506] indicates that it was intended to hold small quantities of water, perhaps for cooking. The fill of nearby pit [509] may comprise waste from this process including charcoal and broken pottery.



Clay-lined pit [506] looking south-east

Fig 9

Circular pit [513] was 0.8m in diameter and 0.13m deep and bowl shaped in profile. The fill of loose mid-dark grey-brown sandy loam (514) included charcoal and clasts of mid yellow-brown clay. Nine metres to the east was square pit [515], 0.7, across and 0.11m deep with sloping sides and a flat base, with a fill of loose dark grey sandy loam (516) containing frequent charcoal. The clay clasts within fill (514) of pit [513] were very similar to clay lining (508) of pit [506], and may represent the remnants of such

after removal. It seems likely that this pair of pits ([513] and [515] also represent the remnants of a cooking process, with one pit for water heating the other for debris. Four metres to the south-west of these was shallow gully [526], 4m long with rounded terminals, 0.15m wide and up to 0.10m deep. The fill was loose dark grey sandy loam (527) containing charcoal. This may represent the remnants of a temporary structure such as a wind break designed to provide shelter.

Circular pit [524] was 0.80m in diameter and 0.10m deep, with shallow sloping sides and a flat base, filled with loose dark grey sandy gravel (525) containing charcoal.

Posthole [530] was 0.25m across and 0.17m deep (Fig 8, section 16). The primary fill comprised loose mid-dark grey sand (531) containing occasional charcoal. The post pipe was 0.10m in diameter and 0.14m deep, filled by loose dark grey sandy loam (532) with common charcoal fragments.

Circular pits [519] and [528] were the most substantial features seen on site, although [528] was not excavated as it was bisected by an active service (irrigation pipe). Pit [519] was 1.30m in diameter and 0.60m deep with steeply sloping sides and a concave base (Fig 8 section 17). The basal fill of dark grey-brown sandy gravel (520) containing charcoal flecks overlain by mid brown sandy gravel (521) with occasional charcoal. A sherd of late Iron Age or early Roman pottery was recovered from fill (520). Pit [528] was 1.4m in diameter, the upper observed fill comprising mid brown sandy gravel (529) very similar to (521).

Other features investigated on site included tree throws. One of which [295] produced flint and an iron nail fragment and two pieces of worked flint from its upper fill (292).

5 FINDS

5.1 The worked flint by Yvonne-Wolframm-Murray

In total 14 pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from Iron Age, undated and unstratified contexts. The flint comprised one core fragment, ten flakes, and three scrapers (Table 1).

Table 1: Quantification of worked flint

Description	Whole	Fragment	Heat treated	Total
Flake	7	3	-	11
Core	-	-	1	1
Scraper, end/side	1	-	-	1
Scraper, end	-	1	-	1
Scraper, side	1	-	-	1
Total	9	4	1	14

The condition of the assemblage was good. The flint showed very little post-depositional edge damage in the form of occasional nicks. Patination was present on three flakes ranging from a slight discoloration to heavy patination. One flint had also been carefully heat treated.

The raw material comprised of light grey-brown to dark grey coloured opaque and the occasional vitreous flint. The quality of the raw material is mixed, with the flint displaying occasional hackly fractures. There was one flint present of high quality. Cortex was typically of light to dark brown in colour with a generally smooth, rolled and

weathered surface. The raw material was likely to have been derived from local gravel deposits.

The one core fragment, which had one remaining striking platform was of a high quality flint raw material. This had been carefully heat treated notable for the glossy surface and slight red tinge of the cortex.

The assemblage included eleven flakes, of which three were broken; some with cortical and wide striking platforms. There were three scrapers, of which one was broken. The end scraper had semi-abrupt retouch on the distal end, with one lateral edge broken off. The side scraper was abruptly and semi-abruptly retouched on one lateral edge and the end/side scraper had been retouched on the distal end and one later edge.

The technological characteristics of the assemblage suggest a broad Neolithic to early Bronze Age date with the flakes and scrapers, the soft hammer struck heavily patinated flake suggests a possible early Neolithic component.

Table 2: Worked flint catalogue

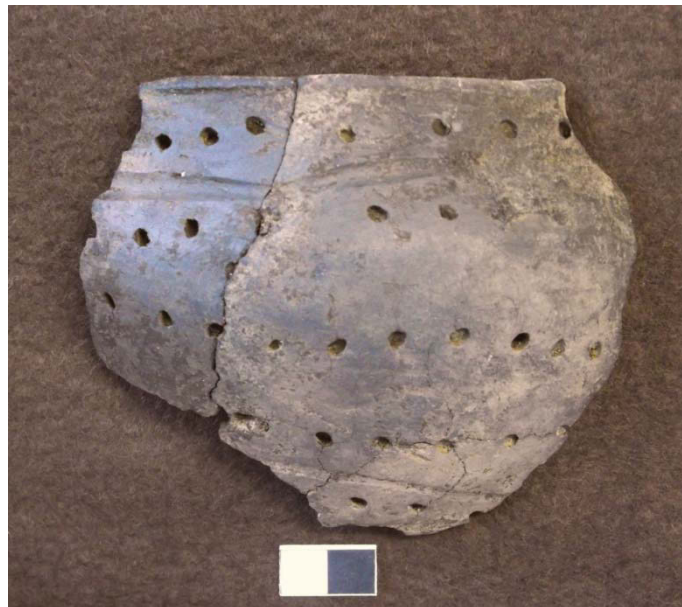
Context	Feature	SF	Type	Portion	Tool	Period	Comments
219	Ditch 222	8	Flake	Whole	-	-	cortical striking platform
219	Ditch 222	7	Flake	Whole	-	-	wide striking platform
219	Ditch 222	10	-	Fragment	Core	-	gentle heat treatment; reddish cortex in places, shiny surface
217	Ditch 307	3	Flake	Proximal	-	-	overshot termination
217	Ditch 307	4	Flake	Whole	-	-	broad striking platform; slight patination
217	Ditch 307	5	Flake	Whole	-	-	wide cortical striking platform
217	Ditch 307	6	Natural	-	-	-	-
226	Pit 227	11	Flake	Whole	Scraper, end/side	Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age	abrupt and semi-abrupt retouch on lateral edge and distal end
242	Ditch 243	13	Flake	Proximal	-	-	post-depositional edge damage
286	Ditch 243	14	Flake	Whole	-	Late Mesolithic/ Early Neolithic	diffuse bulb of percussion - soft hammer; hinge termination; heavy patination
292	Tree throw 295	15	Flake	Distal	-	-	post-depositional edge damage
292	Tree throw 295	16	Flake	Whole	-	-	post-depositional edge damage; slight patination
314	Ditch 243	17	Flake	Whole	Scraper, end	Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age	retouch on distal end of flake, post-depositional damage on lateral edge removing some of the retouch
U/S		19	Flake	Whole	Scraper, side	Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age	abrupt and semi-abrupt retouch on one lateral edge
U/S		20	Flake	Whole	-	-	hinge termination

5.2 The prehistoric pottery by Andy Chapman

The fill (510) of pit [509] produced five sherds of pottery, weighing 280g, from two vessels, both in a hard sandy fabric, 8-9mm thick, containing fine quartz grains.

Four of the sherds are from a single globular bowl, 150mm diameter at the rim and 185mm diameter at its broadest point (Fig 10). The vessel is dark grey to grey-black throughout, with a burnished external surface. It has a simple rounded rim, slightly beaded along part of the circumference. The surface is decorated with at least five horizontal but meandering lines of incised circular to oval points, made with a blunt implement 3mm in diameter, with the points set 12-18mm apart while the lines vary from 15-23mm apart. Below the rim and on the lower body there are similarly horizontal but meandering shallowly-incised grooved lines, with the groove also highly burnished, and made using a blunt implement. A single plain body sherd, probably from the same vessel, suggests that the decoration did not extend onto the lower body just above the base. There is also a single large plain body sherd from a vessel with a grey-black core and internal surface and an oxidised, dark brown external surface.

The curvilinear decoration on a burnished grey-black globular bowl indicates a date in the late Iron Age, the 1st century BC.



Late Iron Age burnished and decorated globular bowl from pit [509]
(Scale 20mm) Fig 10

From the fill (520) of pit [519] there is a single plain body sherd weighing 16g in a hard sandy fabric containing fine white quartz grains and the occasional piece of angular flint. The sherd provides few diagnostic features, but the well-sorted inclusions and the well-finished surfaces suggest that it is from a vessel at least wheel-finished. A late Iron Age or early Roman date within the 1st century AD seems most likely.

From the fill (219) of ditch [222] there is a single plain sherd, weighing 5g, from the neck of a vessel in a hard sandy fabric, with a grey core and brown surfaces, and a burnished external surface. A late Iron Age to early Roman date is most likely.

5.3 Other finds

Other finds from the site comprised an iron nail fragment from tree throw fill (292), six pieces of bird bone from fill (306) of ditch [307] deriving from a medium-sized fowl, and a 1799 copper penny of George III from the subsoil.

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief works at Phases B1 and B2 at Shropham Quarry have confirmed the results of the evaluation, identifying a field system dated to the late Iron Age or early Roman periods. There was a good correspondence between the features seen during the trenching and the watching brief, demonstrating that the results of the evaluation in this part of the site are reliable.

The correspondence between the two phases of watching brief was less good, with two linear features identified in August 2012 which should have extended into the October works not being detected, although this may be at least partly due to the ephemeral nature of the gullies present and the apparent discontinuous nature of many of the features present on site. In comparison between the two areas, it was noticeable that the features in the northern part of the site excavated in October were considerably shallower than those seen in the southern part excavated in August, perhaps indicating a greater degree of truncation. Even allowing for this the ditches would not have been sufficient in themselves to confine livestock or to keep animals out of areas of arable cultivation, and it is likely that they would have been re-inforced with banks and/or hedgelines.

The field system appears to have undergone at least one phase of modification in the development of the field system, with a re-alignment towards an more east-west / north-south orientation. This may reflect the similar orientation for the enclosure ditches excavated nearby at the multi-period settlement site at Honey pots which dated from the early / middle Iron Age to the Roman periods (NAU 2007). The artefactual data from the features excavated was sparse in the extreme, mostly comprising residual flint with only a handful of pottery sherds and animal bone fragments. This indicates that whatever activities were being undertaken, they did not involve significant levels of artefact deposition. The indications from the Honey pots excavation are that a mixed economy existed in the middle Iron Age and may have continued into the late Iron Age, and there is nothing in the evidence from the current site to contradict this.

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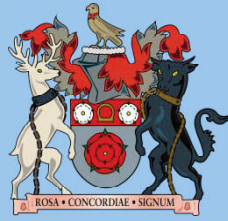
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Northamptonshire County Council

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



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County Council