



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording at St Mary's Primary School, Aston le Walls Northamptonshire



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**Northamptonshire
County Council**

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS NO: 139955
Project name	St Mary's RC Primary School, Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Observation, investigation and recording was undertaken during the construction of a detached classroom at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire. Fragmentary remains of a former building, believed to be 19th century in date, were found during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new classroom. The remains comprised a corner of the brick-built foundations, the brick surface and walls of a possible drain or narrow passageway which appeared to be linked to the fragmentary remains of an ironstone wall. An ironstone yard surface was also seen near the ironstone wall. The pottery was all post-medieval in date.	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	School playground	
Future work	none	
Monument type/ period	19th-century brick walls and foundations, ironstone wall	
Significant finds	19th-20th-century pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	St Mary's RC Primary School, Main Street, Aston le Walls	
Study area (sq metres)	140sqm	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 4973 5082	
Height OD	c 144m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Planning Officer	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Laszlo Lichtenstein	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	GSS Architects	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	4-04-2012	
End date	9-04-2012	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology	pottery
Paper	-	Report text and figures Watching brief forms
Digital		Digital photographs (24)
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at St Mary's RC Primary School, Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire	
Serial title	Northamptonshire Archaeology report, 12/222	
Author	Laszlo Lichtenstein and Pat Chapman	

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING AT
ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
MAIN STREET, ASTON LE WALLS
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
APRIL 2012**

Abstract

Observation, investigation and recording was undertaken during the construction of a detached classroom at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire. Fragmentary remains of a former building, believed to be 19th century in date, were found during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new classroom. The remains comprised a corner of the brick-built foundations, the brick surface and walls of a possible drain or narrow passageway which appeared to be linked to the fragmentary remains of an ironstone wall. An ironstone yard surface was also seen near the ironstone wall. The pottery was all post-medieval in date.

1 INTRODUCTION

Planning permission was granted for the construction of a detached classroom at St Mary's Roman Catholic School, Main Street, Aston le Walls, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 49732 50820; Fig 1). An archaeological investigation was required by the Assistant Planning Archaeologist, Northamptonshire County Council, in a brief issued on the 12 January 2012 (NCC 2012). The work aimed to fulfil the objectives of the brief and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by NA (2012). The archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken between 4-9 April 2012 during the excavation of foundation trenches for the detached classroom.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, topography and geology

The village of Aston le Walls lies 17.5km north-east of Northampton. The works are within the playground to the rear of the school. The site is reasonably level and lies at c 144m aOD. The solid geology of the area is the Marlstone Rock Formation, as recorded by the British Geological Survey (bgs.ac.uk/).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The village is characterised by the survival of medieval settlement earthworks, especially of fishponds, along the northern edge of the modern village. The church and manor lie to the west of the development site, while to the east Banbury Road runs along the line of the Roman road from Wormleighton to Bletchley.

No previous archaeological work is recorded as having been carried out within the site itself.



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the investigation were to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of the activity or occupation on the development site;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- Recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

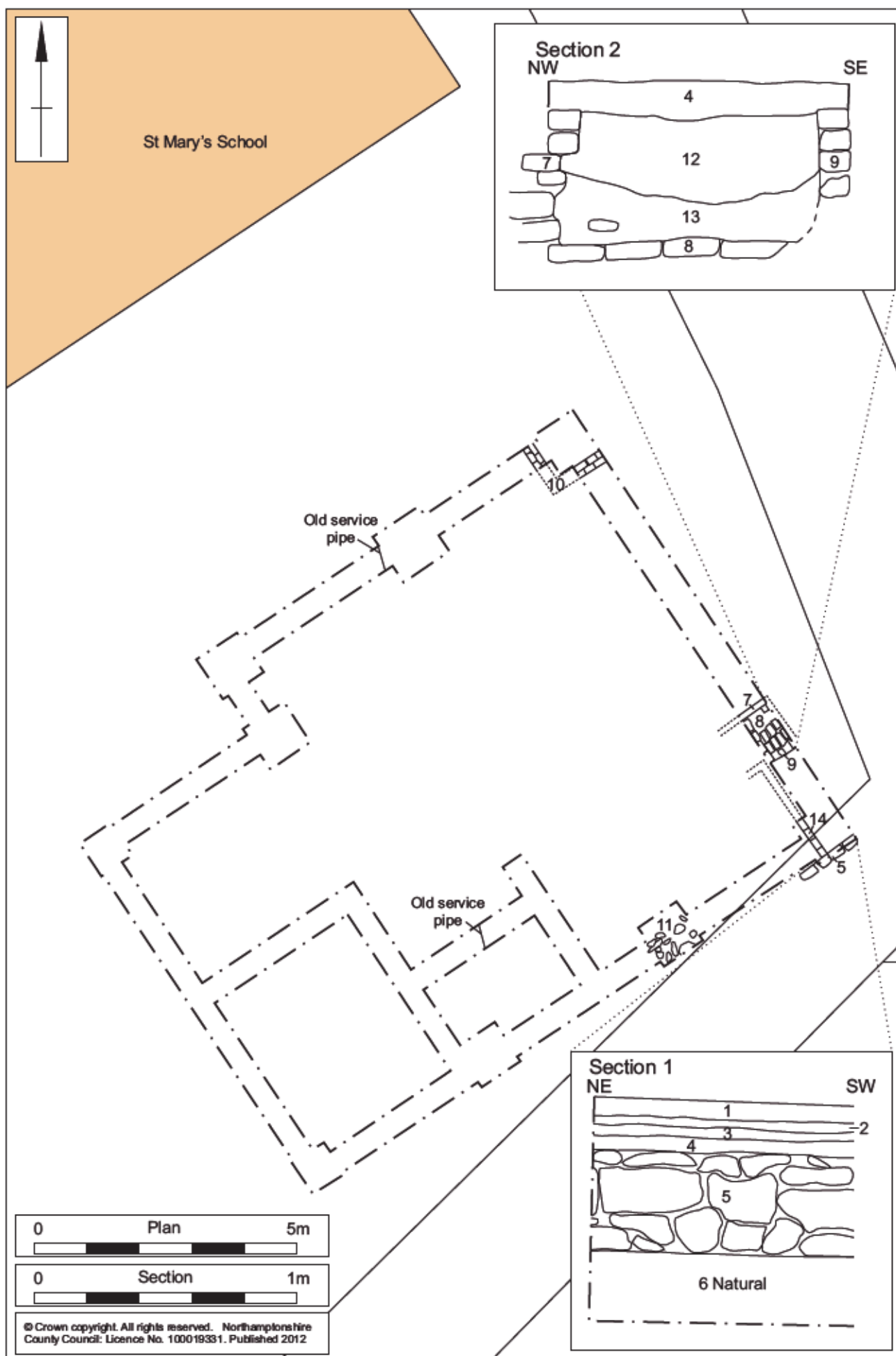
4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 Methodology

The fieldwork comprised continuous monitoring of the excavation for the new detached classroom between 4 April and 9 April 2012. The groundworks were carried out using a mini excavator fitted with a toothed ditching bucket (Fig 2).



The investigation area, the children's playground, looking north-east Fig 2



Scale 1:100 (Plan) & 1:20 (section)

Classroom foundation trenches and wall sections

Fig 3

Observation was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008) and the provisions of the WSI (NA 2012). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

All deposits were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures (NA 2011). All layers and deposits were given a separate context number, described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. A photographic record was maintained comprising 35mm monochrome and colour transparencies, with digital photographs. Modern material was collected, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Unstratified animal bone was not retained. The plan was drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

4.2 Site stratigraphy

The footprint of the new classroom measured 12.50m long by 10m wide. The foundation trenches were 0.45-0.65m wide and, on average, 0.80m deep from the tarmac surface.

The natural substratum was yellow, yellow-brown clay, occasionally clay loam (2), occurring at a depth of 0.45-0.60m below the tarmac surface. Above this was the demolition layer from the earlier building (4), a much disturbed mixed subsoil and topsoil of dark brown-grey silty loam. This mixed layer contained animal bone, glass, post-medieval and modern pottery, including a sherd from a marmalade jar dated 1862, and fragments of building material. An old narrow service pipe crossed the middle of the area, running north to south, but it did not reach the southern trench (Fig 3).

The demolition layer had been overlain by a concrete layer (3), covered by a fine levelling layer (2) of light red well sorted stone (type 1), for the tarmac for the children's playground (Fig 4).



Trench section

Fig 4

4.3 Structural remains

In the south-east corner of the trenches were the remains of an ironstone wall, aligned north-east to south-west and bonded with clay (Figs 3, 5 and 6).

Bonded into the ironstone wall was a brick wall (14). The bottom two courses were header laid with the upper courses stretcher laid, offset from the lower courses. The unfrosted bricks measured 240x120x70mm (9½ x 4¾ x 2¾ inches). These did not appear to be walls of a building.



Ironstone wall (5) and brick wall (14), looking south-east, section 1

Fig 5



Ironstone wall (5) and brick wall (14), looking south-west

Fig 6

Approximately 2m north of the ironstone wall was a brick surface (8), c 0.50m wide between brick walls (7) and (9) (Fig 3, section 2, Fig 7). The bricks were of the same type as wall (14). This area had been filled with a layer (13) containing domestic rubbish such as glass bottles and ceramic jars (Fig 8). That was followed by a layer of greyish-white possible building waste, which was then overlain by the demolition layer (4).



Brick surface (8) and white deposit (12) Fig 7



Discarded domestic bottles and pottery vessels Fig 8

In the north corner of the foundation trench there was the corner of a brick wall (10) that had been laid two bricks wide (Figs 3 and 9). This was possibly a part of the 19th-century building of the same date as the walls and surface further south, the bricks were the same type.



Part of wall foundation (10) Fig 9

In the southern trench was an ironstone surface (11), possibly the remains of an old yard (Figs 3 and 10).



Ironstone surface Fig 10

5 THE POST-MEDIEVAL POTTERY by Iain Soden

A total of 58 sherds, weighing 2,420g, were recovered from three contexts. Eighteen types are represented, spanning from c1700 to c1900 or slightly later. All are very fragmentary and useful only for dating.

Table 1: Quantification of post-medieval and modern pottery

Pottery/ context type	CTS	Date	Demol'n layer 4 No/wt(g)	stone surface 11 No/wt(g)	Layer 13 No/wt(g)	Total No/wt(g)
Midland Purple	403	1450-1700	1/54	-	-	1/54
Feathered slipware	425	1680-1740	1/19	-	-	1/19
Notts stoneware	417	1700-1800	1/7	-	-	1/7
Blue shell edged pearlware	419	1790-1820	1/19	-	-	1/19
Sprigged china	1000	1830-50	-	-	2/23	2/23
Mocha	432	1830-50	2/32	1/2	3/155	6/189
Midland black	411	1650-1800	1/30	-	-	1/30
Caneware		1850-1920	1/42	-	-	1/42
Underglaze transfer printed earthenware	416	1800-1940	1/11	2/30	7/163	10/206
Stoneware marmalade jar	1000	1860-1900	-	-	8/860	8/860
Pancheon	426	1800-1900	-	-	3/202	3/202
Stoneware cider jar	1000	1890-1920	-	-	1/104	1/104
Brown earthenware	1000	1903-	-	-	1/88	1/88
Transfer vase	1000	1890-1930	-	-	2/127	2/127
White earthenware	1000	1800-1930	4/48	2/5	6/305	12/358
Banded slipware	1000	1850-170	-	-	2/34	2/34
Yellow glazed earthenware	1000	1700-1850	-	-	1/37	1/37
Moulded figurine	1000	1800-1900	-	-	1/23	1/23
Total	-	-	13/262	5/37	40/2121	58/2420

Layer (13) is dated by the incorporation of some transfer- or stamp-dated examples:

Three sherds of the stoneware marmalade jars (from three examples) bear the prize-winning exhibition dates of 1862 and 1873. The brown earthenware base, probably from a teapot, bears the stamp MADE IN ENGLAND, indicating a date after 1903.

The types from layers (4) and (11), though not quite so precise, also suggest a date around the same time, in the early 20th century.

All of the recovered items are of 19th and 20th century date, apart from three residual sherds of early post-medieval date. No archaeological artefacts of an earlier date were present in these fills.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Fragmentary remains of a former building, believed to be 19th century in date, were found during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new classroom. These comprised a corner of the brick-built foundations, the brick surface and walls of a possible drain or narrow passageway which appeared to be linked to the fragmentary remains of an ironstone wall. This wall may have been along a plot boundary and the ironstone yard surface a former entrance.

The classroom area had been much disturbed during the demolition and levelling of the former building and the demolition layers contained post-medieval and modern pottery, as well as glass and fragments of building materials from the 20th century.

The building remains were only seen along the eastern and southern edges of the classroom area, suggesting that most of the building remains lie further east.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IfA 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*, Institute for Archaeologists

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NA 2012 *Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works at 5 Church Street, Charwelton, Northamptonshire*

NCC 2012 *Brief for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication of works on land adjacent to 5 Church Street, Charwelton, Northamptonshire*

Watkinson, D, and Neal, V, 1998 *First Aid for Finds*, (3rd edition), Rescue and the Archaeology Section of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation

APPENDIX: CONTEXT LIST

Context	Type	Brief description	Date
1	Tarmac layer	Surface of the children's playground area, 0.08-0.1m thick	Modern
2	Levelling layer	Light red, well sorted levelling stone. Type I stone (builders material)	Modern
3	Concrete layer	Light yellow lean mix (concrete) layer, (builders material), 0.04-0.05m thick	Modern
4	Demolition layer	Light yellow lean mix (concrete) layer, (builders material), 0.04-0.05m thick	Early 20th century
5	Stone wall	Ironstone wall with clay bounding agent. length>1.5m, wide>0.2m, 0.42m deep	Post-medieval?
6	Natural	Light yellow-brown clay, clay loam	-
7	Brick wall	Brick wall with (8)	19th-20th centuries
8	Brick surface	Brick surface of drain or passage	19th-20th centuries
9	Brick wall	Brick wall with (8)	19th-20th centuries
10	Brick wall	Brick wall foundations	19th-20th centuries
11	Stone surface	Ironstone surface	Post-medieval?
12	Building waste layer	Whitening, building waste, rubbish layer	19th-20th centuries
13	Layer	Brown-red silty loam, building waste, rubbish layer	19th-20th centuries
14	Brick wall	Wall associated with ironstone wall	19th-20th centuries



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