



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation of land at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire



Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton

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**

Chris Chinnock

Report 13/53

March 2013



STAFF

Project Manager: Ian Meadows BA
Text: Chris Chinnock BA, MSc, PlfA
Fieldwork: Chris Chinnock
Luis Huscroft
Illustrations: James Ladocha BA
Specialist Reports: Paul Blinkhorn BTEch
Karen Deighton MSc

QUALITY CONTROL

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

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 145808	
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire		
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Clayson Country Homes to conduct an archaeological trial trench evaluation prior to proposed residential development on the site. Two trenches were excavated. In Trench 1 there was recent robbed garden wall. In trench 2 there was a ditch, dated to the earlier 11th century, which may have been a plot boundary within the late Saxon village.		
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	None		
Current Land use	Gardens		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address (including postcode)	41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire NN6 0QA		
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
OS Grid Ref	SP 82854 63471		
Height OD	90m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Project brief originator	Assistant Archaeological Advisor, NCC		
Project Design originator	NA		
Director/Supervisor	Chris Chinnock		
Project Manager	Ian Meadows		
Sponsor or funding body	Clayson Country Homes		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	01/03/13		
End date	01/03/13		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Animal Bone, Pottery	
Paper	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Site file	
Digital	Northamptonshire Archaeology	Mapinfo plans, Word report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire		
Serial title & volume	13/53		
Author(s)	Chris Chinnock		
Page numbers			
Date	31/3/13		

Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
- 3 BACKGROUND
 - 3.1 Topography and geology
 - 3.2 Historical and archaeological background
- 4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY
- 5 EVALUATION RESULTS
 - 5.1 Trench 1
 - 5.2 Trench 2
- 6 THE FINDS
 - 6.1 The Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn
 - 6.2 The Animal Bone by Karen Deighton
- 7 DISCUSSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Figures

Front cover: Trench 1 looking west with ditch [206] in the foreground

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Trench location plan

Fig 3: Ditches [104] and [206]

Fig 4: Robbed wall foundation [104] looking west

Fig 5: Ditch [206] looking east

Tables

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION OF LAND AT

41 HIGH STREET, ECTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

MARCH 2013

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Clayson Country Homes to conduct an archaeological trial trench evaluation prior to a proposed residential development on the site. Two trenches were excavated. Trench 1 showed evidence of a robbed out garden wall. In trench 2 there was a ditch, dated to the earlier 11th century, which may have been a plot boundary within the late Saxon village.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2013, Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Clayson Country Homes to conduct an archaeological evaluation of land at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 82854 63471; Fig 1).

The site lies within an area of significant archaeological interest and sensitivity. Consequently a programme of archaeological evaluation within the area of the proposed buildings was implemented to meet the requirements of a brief issued by Assistant Archaeological Advisor Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2013) and the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by NA (2013). This report considers evidence from the evaluation.

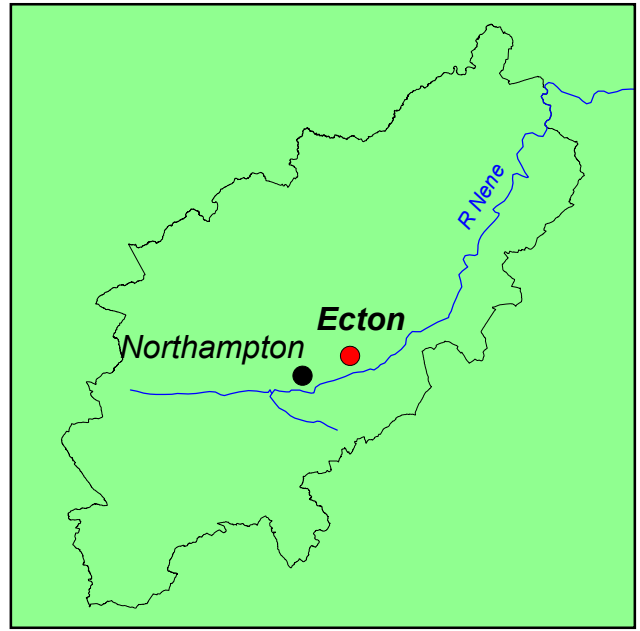
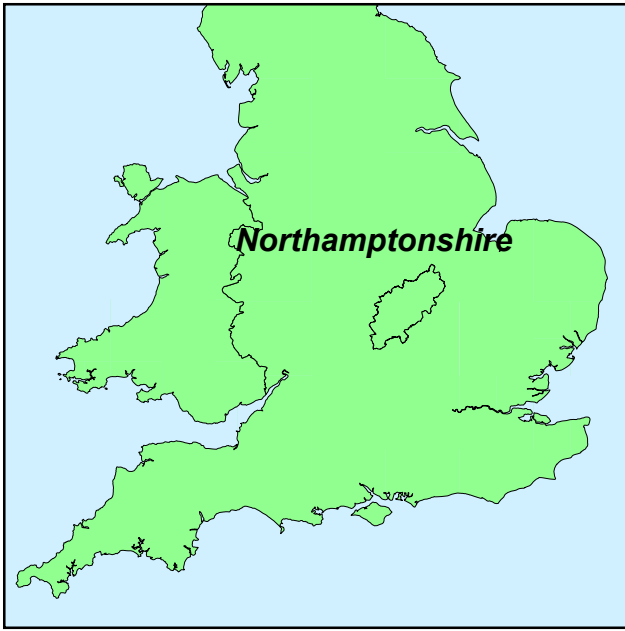
The evaluation comprised the excavation of two trial trenches each 20m long. The fieldwork was undertaken on the 1st March 2013 and the works were monitored by the County Assistant Archaeological Advisor.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation of the site was designed to provide information that will allow for the effective targeting of further investigation of the site, if required, prior to or during the early phases of its development.

The following information was required to allow the development of a strategy for further investigation of the site:

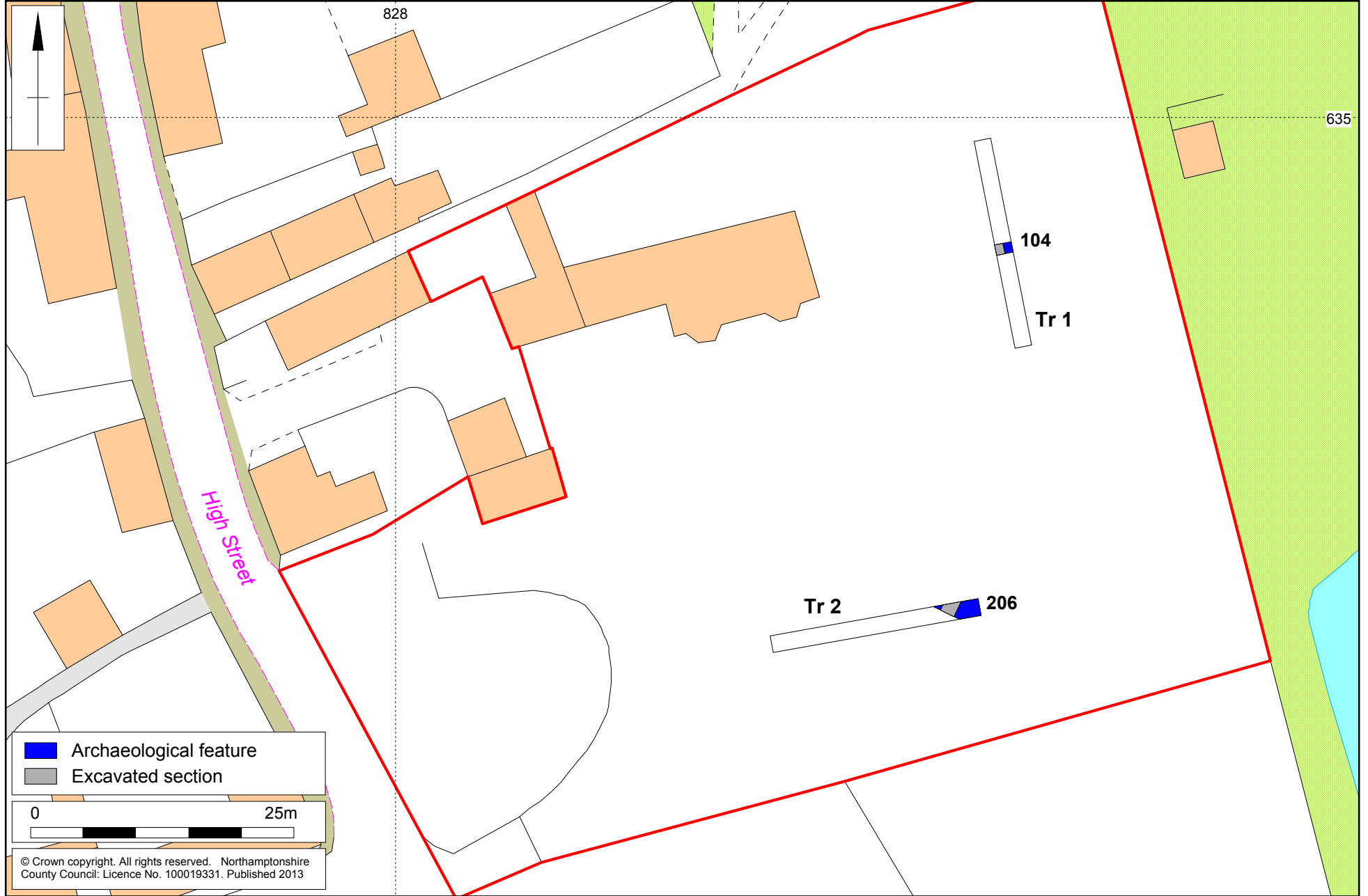
- *The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;*
- *The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.*



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:500



Trench locations Fig 2

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Northamptonshire County Council: Licence No. 100019331. Published 2013

The evaluation has been carried out within the parameters suggested by the *East Midlands Regional Research Framework, The Archaeology of the East Midlands: an Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006) and the updated *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for The Historic Environment of The East Midlands* (Knight et al 2012).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

Ecton is a village and civil parish approximately 6 miles east of Northampton. The development area is part of the land at 41 High Street. The site is bounded to the north by the cemetery of the church of St Mary Magdelane, to the west by High Street, to the south by residential property and to the east by Ecton Hall Park. It lies at approximately 90m aOD. The underlying geology is mapped as Northampton Sand Formation with Ooidal Ironstone (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html).

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

Ecton village is part of an area of both archaeological and historical significance. The area for proposed development currently lies within Ecton Hall Park.

The Royal Commission inventory for central Northamptonshire records several undated enclosures, hut circles and probable Roman settlements scattered across the parish. Immediately north of the site and village a 'remarkable complexity of cropmarks' (RCHME 1979: 47) identifies the existence of several prehistoric and Roman settlements. These are grouped as the North Ecton Complex centered at NGR SP 821 653. Given the distribution of enclosures it is highly likely that further prehistoric and Roman settlement lie beneath the current village much of which dates to the 17th and 18th centuries.

Discoveries within the village suggest that the modern village has origins stretching back before its entry in the Domesday Book of 1085AD and into the late Saxon period. Several inhumation burials were discovered in the gardens of Ecton House along with two silver coins (one of Ethelred II, 978AD-1016AD).

The church of St Mary Magdelane which bounds the northern edge of the development dates back to the late 13th – early 14th century. The current Ecton Hall is dated to 1756, built by Ambrose Isted (Pevsner 1961). Earthworks to the south of the site may relate to a possible 18th/19th century ha-ha and park pale.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

The two trenches were excavated using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. Both trenches were 20m long and 1.8m wide. The topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological supervision to reveal natural substrate. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately at the side of the excavated area. All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The excavated areas were cleaned sufficiently to define any features. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures (NA 2011). All deposits were given a separate context number. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained.

The location of the trench was surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies was maintained, supplemented with digital images. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

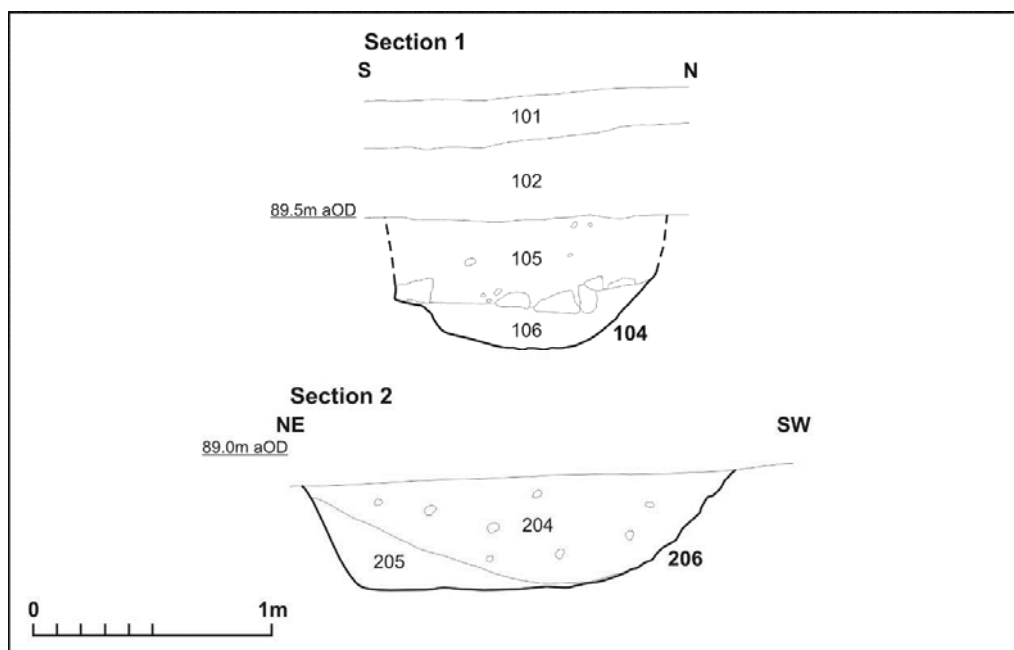
The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised Oct 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the brief issued by the Northamptonshire County Council (NCC 2013) and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013).

All trenches were backfilled with their up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical digger.

5 EVALUATION RESULTS

Trench 1 was located in the northern half of the site, perpendicular to the cemetery wall for the church of St Mary Magdelane. A linear feature aligned east – west across the trench is interpreted as a probable robbed out garden wall foundation. A pottery fragment from the fill dates from the 11th century AD but is probably residual in this context.

Trench 2 was placed towards the south of the site. A wide, shallow bottomed ditch at the eastern end of the trench [204] was aligned north-west to south-east, and is dated to the first half of the 11th century by the pottery recovered.



Ditches 104 and 206 Fig 3

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned east-west. This area was fairly level. The area has been landscaped into a flat lawn at some stage; this was evident at the southern end of the trench where the level had been built up to create the present surface.

The natural substrate (103) was mid-orange ironstone with silty clay, occurring at approximately 0.88m below ground level. The subsoil (102) was 0.60m thick and consisted of mid-brown silty clay with ironstone inclusions throughout, overlain by topsoil (101) 0.28m thick, of dark brown/black silty loam.

A linear feature [104] aligned east – west and 1.0m wide by 0.55m deep with steep sides and a flat base, was recorded in the centre of the trench (Fig 4). The large rough ironstone boulders in the feature and throughout the immediate subsoil suggest that this may have been a crude garden wall (Fig 4). If correct then the depth of the feature would have supported a wall of some height. The alignment of the wall corresponds roughly with the front of the current 17th century house on the site.



Robbed out wall foundation, looking west. Fig 4

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned east-west.

The natural substrate (202) was mid-orange ironstone with silty clay occurring 0.35m below ground level. The subsoil (202) was 0.20m thick and consisted of mid-brown silty clay with ironstone inclusions throughout, overlain by topsoil (201) 0.15m thick, of dark brown/black silty loam.

One ditch [206], aligned roughly north-west by south-east, and lay at the east end of the trench (Fig 5). It was 1.82m wide and of 0.47m deep (Fig 5). Both the lower silting fill (204) and upper deposition (205) contained pottery and animal bone. The pottery has been dated to the first half of the 11th century.



Ditch [206] looking east. Fig 5

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 18 sherds with a total weight of 142g. It was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire county ceramic type-series (cts), as follows:

F100: T1(1) type St. Neots Ware, AD900-1100. 1 sherd, 3g
F130: Northampton Ware, 10th – early 11th century. 3 sherds, 23g
F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware, AD1000-1200. 13 sherds, 114g
F1000: Misc. 19th and 20th century wares. 1 sherd, 2g

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 sites in and around Northampton.

The sherds are generally in good condition, and appear reliably stratified. The Northampton Ware assemblage includes a base sherd from fill 205 which is typical of the tradition, being fairly thick, crude and knife-trimmed (Denham 1985, 55). The St Neots Ware group from fill (204) includes rimsherds from jars and an inturned-rim bowl, and a base sherd from a large jar was noted in fill (205). These are all typical of the tradition (ibid. 46). Both groups from ditch [206] seem most likely to date to the first half of the 11th century.

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

Fabric type	F100 T1(1) St Neots		F130 N'pton ware		F200 T1(2) St Neots		F1000 Misc p-med'l		Date
	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	
102/subsoil	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	19th century
105/104	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	11th century
204/206	--	--	2	7	10	60	--	--	E 11th century
205/206	1	3	1	16	2	53	--	--	E 11th century
Total	1	3	3	23	13	114	1	2	

6.2 Faunal Remains by Karen Deighton

Approximately 500 grams of animal bone were recovered from three contexts; 105 the upper fill of a robbed out wall, 204 the upper fill of a ditch and 205 the lower fill of the same ditch, during the course of excavation. All contexts were Saxo-Norman in date. This material was analysed using standard zooarchaeological methods in order to determine the taxa present and the state of preservation.

Preservation was moderate with only a low level of surface abrasion and a high level of fragmentation, with most material at the cylinder or fragment level. Fragmentation consisted of old breaks. The old breaks could have been the result of butchery, trampling or compaction following burial. Canid gnawing was also noted on approximately 50% of the fragments, which attests to the presence of dogs or foxes

at the site. Furthermore the high level of canid gnawing could suggest that bone had laid exposed for some time before burial.

The bones consisted of the following:

- (105) Partial cattle horncore, sheep/goat maxillary molar, one large ungulate rib.
- (204) Sheep/goat metatarsal shaft, sheep/goat distal tibia (fused), fragment of a cattle scapula, three cattle mandibular molars (in wear) with associated mandible fragments and large ungulate long bone fragments.
- (205) A fragment of sheep/goat tibia shaft.

Little can be said of the animal economy of the site due to the paucity of material available other than that it involved cattle and sheep/goat.

7 DISCUSSION

A concern at the outset of this project was the possible presence of burial earth and/or burials associated with the cemetery of the church of St Mary Magdelane immediately to the north. Both trenches showed no evidence for this and the current boundary seems to accurately reflect the extent of the cemetery.

The feature recorded in Trench 1 seems to be a robbed wall foundation for a crude garden feature. The cut is aligned east-west and matches the orientation of the 17th century house immediately to the west. One small fragment of pottery which has been broadly dated to the 11th century was found in the lower fill of this robber trench. It is suggested by the author that this small fragment is probably residual and therefore does not provide a reliable date for the feature.

The wide shallow bottomed ditch in Trench 2 (Fig 5) can be dated much more confidently to the early 11th century due to the good amount of pottery recovered. The presence of such a substantial feature in the centre of the village highlights the Saxon origins of the current settlement. This is further strengthened by the discovery of late Saxon burials in the gardens of Ecton House which lies less than 200m to the north.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cooper, N, 2006 *The archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda*, University of Leicester monog, **13**

Denham, V, 1985 The Pottery in JH Williams, M Shaw and V Denham *Middle Saxon Palaces at Northampton* Northampton Development Corporation Monog Ser **4**, 46-64

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers Guide*, English Heritage

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, Institute for Archaeologists

Knight, D, Vyner, B, and Allen, C, 2012 *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for The Historic Environment of The East Midlands*, Nottingham University monog, **6**, and York Archaeological Trust

NA 2011 *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

NA 2013 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

NCC 2013 *Brief for the archaeological field evaluation at 41 High Street, Ecton, Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire County Council

Pevsner, N 1961 *The Buildings of England: Northampton*, Penguin

RCHM(E) 1979 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton*, Archaeological Sites in central Northamptonshire **2**, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)

WEBSITES

www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html

Appendix: Context Inventory

Trench 1	Length, Width & Alignment 20mx1.8m N-S		Surface Height 90.37m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.88m 89.49m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Dark brown/black silty loam, extensive root intrusion. Occasional pea gravel and flint.	0.28m thick	
102	Subsoil	Mid brown friable silty clay. Occasional ironstone inclusions.	0.60m thick	Pottery
103	Natural	Mid orange ironstone rubble with silty clay.	0.15m thick	
104	Robbed foundation trench	Linear feature with steep sides and flat bottom	1.0m wide, 0.54m deep	
105	Fill of trench [104]	Mid brown/orange silty clay with occasional ironstone throughout.	1.0m wide, 0.37m deep	Pottery, Animal bone
106	Fill of trench [104]	Firm, light orange/brown clay silt with occasional charcoal.	1.0m wide, 0.23m deep	

Trench 2	Length, width & alignment 20m x 1.8m E-W		Surface Height 89.17m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.35m 88.82m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
201	Topsoil	Mid-dark brown silty loam. Root intrusion throughout, occasional pea gravel and flint.	0.15m thick	
202	Subsoil	Mid brown silty clay, ironstone inclusions throughout.	0.20m thick	
203	Natural	Mid orange ironstone rubble with silty clay.	0.10m thick	
204	Fill of ditch [206]	Firm mid brown silty clay with ironstone inclusions throughout.	1.82m wide, 0.45m thick	Pottery, Animal bone
205	Fill of ditch [206]	Mid-dark brown, firm silty clay with heavy ironstone inclusion throughout.	1.82m wide, , 0.27m thick	Pottery, Animal bone
206	Ditch	Wide, shallow bottomed linear ditch. Most likely a boundary ditch. Aligned north-west to south-east.	1.82m wide, 0.47m deep	Pottery, Animal bone



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



CONTRACTORS HEALTH & SAFETY ASSESSMENT SCHEME
Accredited Contractor
www.chas.gov.uk



**Northamptonshire
County Council**