



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Stoke Rochford Hall, Stoke Rochford Near Grantham, Lincolnshire

July - August 2005

LCNCC: 2005.253



Ian Fisher

23rd January 2006

Report 05/135

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House

Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

W. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

t. 01604 700493/4

f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

JANUARY 2006

NGR SK 918 280

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT STOKE ROCHFORD HALL

STOKE ROCHFORD, NEAR GRANTHAM

LINCOLNSHIRE

JULY-AUGUST 2005

REPORT 05/135

STAFF

Project Manager	Anthony Maull Cert Arch
Fieldwork	Ian Fisher BSc
Text	Ian Fisher
Illustrations	Ian Fisher & Jacqueline Harding BA HND

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Anthony Maull		
Verified by	Pat Chapman		
Approved by	Bill Boismier		

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY	3
3	THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE	4
4	THE FINDS	5
5	CONCLUSION	5
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

Figures

Fig 1 Site Location 1:2500

Fig 2 Plan of Stoke Rochford Hall and Location of Watching Brief Areas

Plates

Plate 1 Stoke Rochford Hall

Plate 2 Electricity Cable Trench

Plate 3 Stripping of scaffolding foundation trench – east side of house

Plate 4 Balustrade before removal

Plate 5 Removal of Balustrade

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT STOKE ROCHFORD HALL,
STOKE ROCHFORD, NEAR GRANTHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE
JULY-AUGUST 2005**

ABSTRACT

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during the preparation of land for the construction of scaffolding and the excavation of cable trenches at Stoke Rochford Hall, Stoke Rochford, Lincolnshire. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology between July and August 2005 during the construction of scaffolding and the excavation of an electricity cable trench at Stoke Rochford Hall, Stoke Rochford, Lincolnshire (Fig 1: NGR 4918 3280 (Plate 1)). A photographic record was also kept of the removal of a balustrade which divides two parts of the formal garden.

Rodney Melville & Partners are undertaking architectural repairs following a fire in January 2005 at Stoke Rochford Hall. Essential repairs to the main building entailed the erection of substantial scaffolding. Stable footings were required throughout the duration of the architectural work which was achieved by creating a temporary apron of hard-standing. To facilitate access around the building for equipment and machinery, paths to the south and west of the orangery were widened from 3m to 4m. The new surface cut below the present ground level by 150mm. In addition the watching brief was extended to investigate the excavation of trench to provide an electric supply to the hall (NA 2005).

1.1 Archaeological Background

The present house was built by William Salvin, built between 1841 and 1845. The Hall is Grade 1 Listed (NMR SK92NW 6/164-5; 169; 171) which includes the seats, balustrades and terraces to the east and the former frontispieces of the old stables to the south. The hall is approached from the southern boundary of the park through stone gate piers surmounted by ball finials set beside a stone and slate lodge (Pevsner & Harris 1964, 721).

The park carries a Grade II listing (Registered Parks & Gardens 1989, 1) and is recorded on the

1799 Enclosure Map. Much of the landscape predates Burn's work but the formal garden is contemporary to the house. It was designed by W. A. Nesfield who collaborated with Burn on several occasions (The Gardener 1874). The basic outline of the 1841 garden design remains, although they have been simplified and much of the statuary has gone. The main paths around the formal gardens and the arrangement of the paths and planting beds around the orangery are depicted on the Ordnance Survey of 1891 but are absent from the 1905 edition. An aerial photograph taken in 1999 shows the area of the formal gardens to be heavily planted with mature shrubbery and the eastern lakeside is overshadowed by the screen of trees between the house and modern golf course (<http://multimap.co.uk/static/photoinfo.htm>).

The area affected by the scaffold works is below the south-west front; in the angle formed by the main building and an Orangery. It is formed by a small formal parterre of gravel paths, grass and borders, with clipped yew and box, enclosed to the west by a low retaining wall and to the south by a low balustrade wall (Registered Parks & Gardens 1989, 2; NA 2005).

1.2 Topography and Geology

Stoke Rochford Hall lies north of the village of Stoke Rochford. The estate covers c140ha of park and woodland spanning the width of the valley and includes c11ha of formal gardens. It is bordered to the east by the A1 trunk road, to the south by the village of South Stoke, also known as Stoke Rochford, to the west by a private road to Home Farm and to the north by farmland.

The land is level in the vicinity of the house while the gardens are formed upon a series of broad terraces. Cringle Brook is viewed from the rear terrace to the east of the house where the ground slopes into the valley from c90m to c80m OD. The brook at this point it flows from south to north through a series of artificial ponds. Attached to the south side of the main building is the Orangery that extends onto the southern garden terrace where it overlooks formal gardens comprising terraces with balustrades. The forecourt to the west of the main building is bounded by the north wing and stables. It is flanked by symmetrical lawns containing a 30m tall obelisk and backed by a woodland screen.

The solid geology of Stoke Rochford comprises Jurassic Limestone; the drift geology consists of Boulder Clay and Morainic Drift (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>). The soils on the site are of Elnton 1 Association and comprise shallow well drained brashy calcareous fine loamy soils over limestone, some similar deeper soils and some non-calcareous and calcareous clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983, Sheet 4, Eastern England) (NA 2005).

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the archaeological watching brief were as follows:

- To undertake a photographic record of the existing garden prior to ground works commencing, including photographs of the balustrade prior to its removal;
- To identify, characterise, record and date, any garden features or deposits exposed during ground works;
- To provide detailed information on the presence or absence, area of extent, depth of burial and degree of survival for those archaeological features and deposits;
- To create an archaeological archive of information that will serve to inform any future work within the grounds or reinstatement of the gardens about the house, as yet undetermined.

Specific attention was also focused on identifying evidence for features and deposits that may have represented the original formal gardens laid out as part of the works by William Burn between 1841 and 1843. This included:

- Recording surfaces which may have constituted the earlier paths, steps, changes in level, the positions and extents of planting beds adjoining the paths and any edging materials that they may have had;
- Assessing the earlier layout flanking the doorway of the east front and the top of the steps leading from the rear terrace (NA 2005).

2.2 Methodology

The fieldwork comprised several site visits to monitor and record the ground works. The watching brief lasted from July to August 2005.

Scaffolding was erected, encasing the hall to protect it whilst repairs were conducted. Due the large scale of the scaffolding required, the ground around the hall was prepared to accommodate the foundations. This was in the form of two parallel linear trenches to act as a 'hard standing'. The

trenches were cleared of loose gravel (gravel paths) and grass. The inner trench was excavated down to a depth of 0.10m.

A mini digger fitted with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket was used to prepare the land for the construction of the scaffolding (Plate 3). Initially, the loose gravel path was removed followed by the grass. Where the scaffolding required deeper foundations the topsoil and subsoil, and any other material, was excavated.

In addition a watching brief was conducted on all service trenches excavated whilst on site. This included an electricity cable trench and a BT cable trench (Plate 2). The electricity cable ran from the Hall to the sub-station. The BT cable trench ran parallel to the drive leading to Stoke Rochford Hall and extended across the playing fields. Both cable trenches were excavated with a 0.4m wide toothed bucket down to the desired depth and backfilled once the cable had been laid.

A photographic record on both colour and monochrome 35mm film was maintained of the removal of the balustrade (Plates 4 & 5).

A site record was maintained using standard Northamptonshire Archaeology *pro-forma* record sheets supplemented by scaled plans and sections. A photographic record on both colour and monochrome 35mm film was maintained. A single continuous context numbering sequence was employed with each archaeological feature receiving separate context numbers. The levels were related to the Ordnance Datum.

3 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The initial clearing of loose gravel, grass and vegetation from the trenches did not reveal any features. In the areas of grass and vegetation, topsoil was revealed (Fig 2). Where gravel was removed from the paths compacted gravel was encountered underneath. To the south and north of the hall, paving slabs were removed. In both instances a bed of cement/mortar was found underlying the paving slabs.

In the trenches created to provide foundations for the scaffolding, topsoil and subsoil were excavated to a depth of 0.10m and revealed natural limestone. This was evident in all the trenches around the house except to the south of the hall where subsoil was still visible. No other features were visible at this depth.

At the front of the hall, an area of tarmac (17m x 6m) was stripped. This was excavated down to a

depth of 0.05m where hardcore was encountered. This was not excavated any deeper as it served as adequate foundations for the scaffolding.

Both the electricity cable trench and BT cable trench (Fig 2) were excavated to a depth of 0.50m. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. Topsoil was 0.15-0.20m in depth while subsoil was 0.20-0.25m thick.

4 THE FINDS

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

5 CONCLUSION

During the scaffolding ground works, there was the potential to identify earlier garden features and deposits relating to the former gardens of the hall. However, due to the limited depth of the ground works within the vicinity of the hall, no features or deposits were encountered or evidence of the earlier layout.

The greater depth of the electricity and BT cable trenches had the best potential to identify former garden features and deposits. The trenches were located adjacent to the garden wall and ran through an area of trees. No features or deposits were found.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AEA 1995, *Working papers of the Association for Environmental Archaeology, Number 2: Environmental evaluations, September 1995*, Association for Environmental Archaeology

CCML 1994 *Conditions for the acceptance of archaeological archives*, City & County Museum of Lincoln

Country Life 1901 *Country Life* **10**, 9 November, 592-7

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage

EH 2002 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to Theory and Practice for Methods, from sampling to post-excavation*, English Heritage

IFA 1999 *By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

NA 2005, *Stoke Rochford Hall, Stoke Rochford Near Grantham, Lincolnshire NGR 4918 3280, Specification for archaeological watching brief*, Northamptonshire Archaeology 2005

Pevsner, N, & Harris, J, 1964 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, Penguin

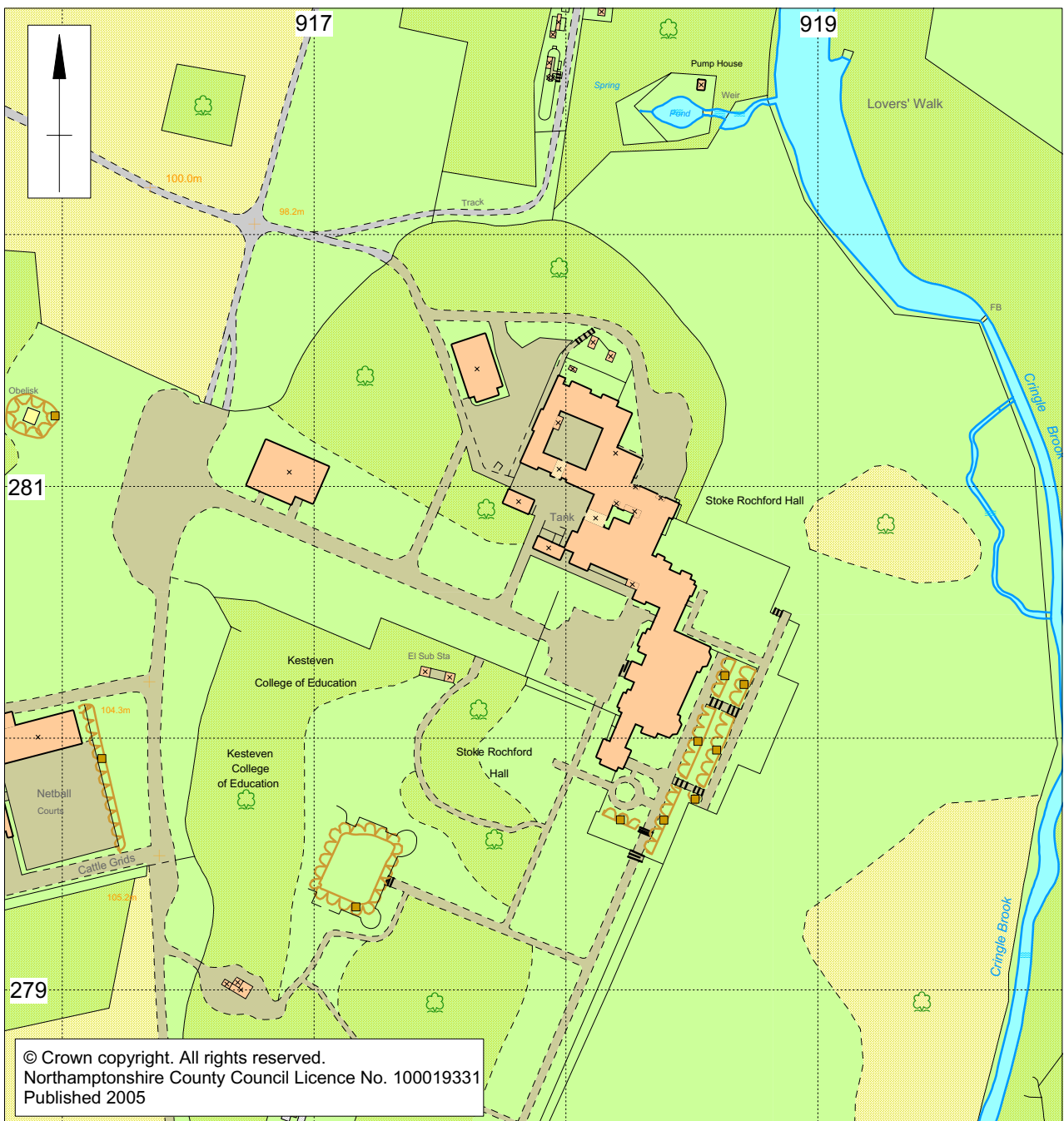
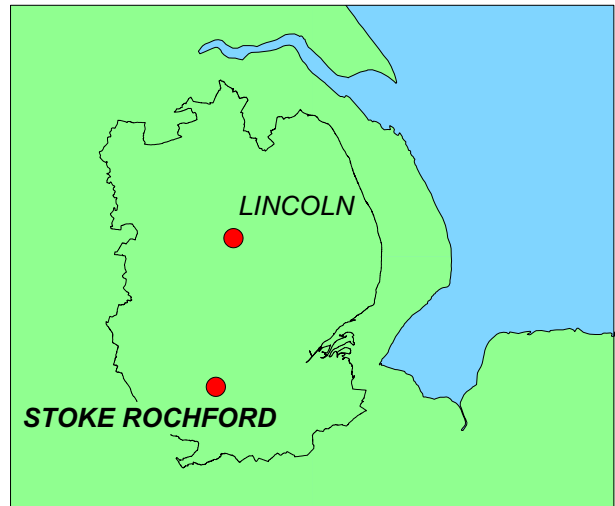
Registered Parks Gardens 1989

Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983, Sheet 4, Eastern England

The Gardener 1874

UKIC 1998 *Guidelines for the preparation of archives for long term storage*, United Kingdom Institute for Conservation

Watkinson, D, & Neal, V, 1998 *First Aid for Finds (revised 3rd edition)*, United Kingdom Institute for Conservation



Scale 1:2500

Fig 1

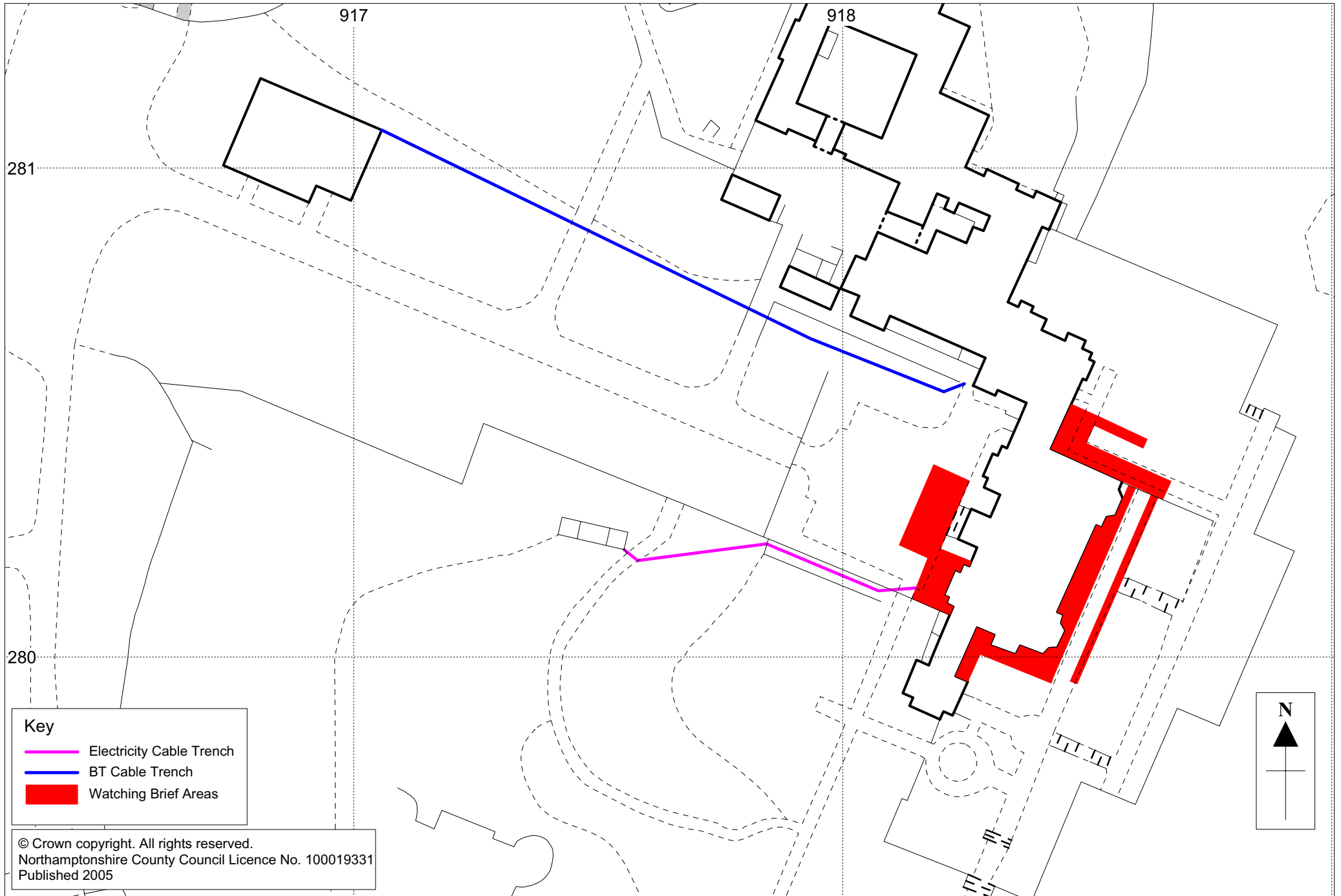


Fig 2



Plate 1: Stoke Rochford Hall



Plate 2: Electricity Cable Trench



Plate 3 Stripping of scaffolding foundation trench – east side of house



Plate 4 Balustrade before removal



Plate 5 Removal of Balustrade