



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

The Roman Villa at Deanshanger,
Northamptonshire

Excavations 2004-2005



Jim Brown

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Report 05/085

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



STAFF

Project Manager	Andy Mudd BA MIFA
Text	Jim Brown BSc PGDip AIFA
Fieldwork	Jim Brown, Ed Taylor BSc, James Aaronson BA & Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed. Deanshanger Village Historical Society
Illustration	Drew Smith BA, Alex Thorne BSc, Leanne Whitelaw BSc & Jim Brown
The pottery	Jane Timby BA PhD FSA MIFA
Ceramic building materials	Pat Chapman BA CMS PIFA
The coins	Ian Meadows BA
Other finds	Tora Hylton
The animal bone	Karen Deighton MSc
Soil samples	Jim Brown
Metal detecting	Steve Critchley BSc MSc

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Andy Mudd		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	The Roman Villa at Deanshanger, Northamptonshire, Excavations 2004-2005	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Excavations confirmed the plan and extent of the southeast side of the Roman villa courtyard, which were addressed together with the unpublished works produced 1957-1996.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Pre-emptive excavation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Brown 2005, Brown 2004, Holmes 1996, Monk 1982, Woods 1972	
Current Land use	School sports field	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No	
Monument type/ period	Roman villa (NSMR 1170/1)	
Significant finds	Roman pottery & metal finds	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	The Sports Field, Kingsbrook School, Deanshanger	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.54 ha	
OS Easting & Northing	47690 23961	
Height OD	70m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Myk Flitcroft, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Andy Mudd, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Andy Mudd, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Northamptonshire County Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2003	
End date	November 2004	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		Pottery, Tile, Animal Bone, Metal Finds
Paper		Site Context Record, Plans & Sections, Photographic Record
Digital		Mapinfo Trench Plans & Client Report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

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THE ROMAN VILLA AT DEANSHANGER, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

EXCAVATIONS 2004-2005

Excavation at Kingsbrook School, Deanshanger examined archaeological remains to the south-east of a Roman villa that was first identified in 1957. Late 1st century to early 2nd century ditch systems were identified in the north-east of the excavated area. In the southern area where truncation was less severe there were two rectangular enclosures dated to the mid-2nd century. Robbed walls dating to the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries defined the south-east corner of the villa courtyard and were aligned on the earlier enclosure pattern. Two circular stone structures, the purpose of which could not be clearly demonstrated by the excavated evidence, were also found.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned on 26th October 2004 to conduct an archaeological excavation on the footprint of a new all-weather football pitch at Kingsbrook School, Deanshanger, Northamptonshire (Fig 1: NGR SP 7684 3957). The work was undertaken at the request of Northamptonshire County Council Property Services in compliance with PPG16 and the archaeological policies of the authority.

The application area lay adjacent to the present school buildings, immediately east and south-east of a Roman villa that was first identified in 1957 when the building work on the original school buildings began (Fig 2).

The project was conducted according to a project design compiled by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2004) and approved by the NCC Historic Environment Team Leader, Myk Flitcroft. Excavation took place between October 2004 and January 2005 after initial geophysical and trial trenching evaluations.

The 2004-5 excavations covered an area of 120m by 60m that revealed the south-east corner of the villa courtyard, its extensions to the east, associated ditches and two circular stone structures. The site was partially obscured by remnant medieval furrows and had been severely truncated by modern levelling. On the whole the remains were poorly preserved. A smaller area, the site of a new Sixth Form Block, was excavated concurrently but revealed no Roman features (Brown 2005).

1.1 Archive

The combined archive will be prepared to the guidelines of the Northampton Borough Museum and transferred to Kingsbrook School for appropriate storage following the completion of the excavation reports and will include the geophysical and trial trenching archive of the preliminary surveys. This will form the basis for an academic learning resource and local historical record for the school and community.

Storage of the archive by the school will be undertaken following the accepted *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage and First Aid for Finds* (Walker 1990; Watkinson 1987). Exhibition of the materials will follow *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* and associated texts given

in the bibliography, as recommended by Northampton Borough Museum (MGC 1992; Pearce 1990; Catling 2004).

1.2 Acknowledgements

Northamptonshire Archaeology would like to thank Deanshanger Village Historical Society, and in particular Jennie Dott, for voluntary involvement in the project fieldwork and for access to unpublished resources. Thanks are also owed to Kingsbrook School, Deanshanger, for involvement in creating an historical learning resource for the community.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous archaeological work 1957-1996

The following comprises a summary of the previous archaeological investigations on the villa site at Kingsbrook School, Deanshanger (Fig 2; Flitcroft 2004; Brown 2004).

In 1957 archaeological investigations were directed by Charles Green on behalf of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, assisted by the County Architect's staff and members of the Wolverton & District Archaeological Society. The excavations revealed remains of the main stone-founded house block and extensive ancillary structures on the north and east sides of a large walled courtyard (Fig 3; NSMR 1170/1/1; 1170/1/3). Further remains were identified in the area outside the courtyard, with evidence for Iron Age settlement on the north side of the courtyard (NSMR 1170/0/1). It was considered by Green that the poor condition of the site prior to the school development was due to medieval ploughing, the earthwork evidence of which was evident at the time of the excavation. It was also reported by the architect and the Clerk of Works that soil had been removed from the site during World War II to construct runways at Silverstone Aerodrome (Monk 1982, 2). Subsequent to the 1957 excavations, the present site was bulldozed for the construction of the school playing fields. Trial trenching in 2004 showed that this had caused considerable damage to archaeological deposits in the north of the site and buried deposits in the south of the site beneath an overburden of re-deposited natural clay and gravel (Brown 2004).

In 1972 excavations directed by Peter Woods took place immediately to the east of the villa and courtyard, exposing further contemporary ancillary buildings, enclosures and structures (Fig 4; Woods 1972; NSMR 1170/0/2; 1170/0/4; 1170/0/5). These excavations were necessitated by the enlargement of the school sports field to include land adjacent to the east that was recorded on aerial photographs held at the SMR (Cover Plate; NSMR 7739/004-9). Specific reference was made to these excavations in the interpretation of the current work.

In 1974-5 the west end of the main villa block was exposed again during construction of a school extension, now used as the maths block, and was investigated by Paul Everson (Fig 2; NSMR 1170/1/1).

Records for the excavations in 1957, 1972 and 1974-5 have not been fully reported and less detail of the archaeological findings was available than would be hoped. A brief note of the 1957 excavation was included in the *Wolverton & District Archaeological Society newsletter* complimenting those involved, but no report was made in the subsequent issues (Mynard 1958). An account of the 1957 excavation with plans and photographs was deposited with the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works together with a brief note in the *Journal of Roman Studies* (JRS 1958). The location and general plan of the complex was recorded amongst the notes held at the Northamptonshire SMR together with the report of the 1972 excavation and the site plan (Woods 1972). A

summary of the 1957 excavations appears in the *Milton Keynes Journal of Archaeology and History* as part of an interim report for the 1972 works conducted at the lower end of the sports field and was subsequently mentioned in *Britannia* (Brown 1974, 8-9; Wilson *et al* 1973, 294). A report for the 1974-5 works appears to have been produced by Paul Everson in October 1975, although whether this was published was unclear (Monk 1982, 53). Records and finds for all these excavations were held by the Northampton Borough Museum at the county store in Daventry (Accession numbers 1995.330; 1995.331).

Aerial photographs of the school, taken in 1990, showed the south-eastern corner of the villa courtyard although these images were obscured by the markings on the sports field (NSMR 7639/004; 7639/005). An apparent linear cropmark was also visible running eastward across the fields towards Passenham which was a sewerage main.

Archaeological evaluation was conducted by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1996 to inform proposals for construction of a classroom extension and associated car-parking facilities directly north-west of the application area (Holmes 1996). The evaluation comprised geophysical survey and three trial trenches. It confirmed the presence of a sparse pattern of small Roman ditches as detected by the geophysical survey in the area of the car park (Fig 5). The evaluation also demonstrated severe truncation of the features. Two of these ditches were subsequently identified and sampled during the present excavation.

2.2 Archaeological work 2004-5

In relation to the current development, preliminary geophysical and trial trenching surveys were undertaken in June 2004. These identified the south-east courtyard walls and a small structure, but the site was shown to be poorly preserved.

The concurrent excavation of the footprint for the Sixth Form block identified a series of cultivation features, although at that time it was not clear whether these were Roman cultivation trenches or medieval furrows (Brown 2005, 8). Subsequent study of the cultivation evidence extending onto the Sports Field site indicated that these were medieval furrows carrying residual Roman material.

The present investigations also showed that the 1950s building work had involved terracing to create a level surface whereby earth was moved from the northern end of the site and deposited in a bank up to 0.6m thick to the south. This dump of material included building stones derived through this process.

2.3 Topography and geology

The Sports field site occupied approximately 0.72ha on a level grassed area between 70m OD in the north and 69m OD in the south.

The British Geological Survey has mapped the school site as lying on a localised outcrop of Boulder Clay above 1st Terrace gravels within a tributary stream valley (the “Kings Brook”) of the River Ouse. The stream, with adjacent surface alluvium, lies to the south of the site. Boulder Clay with glacial gravel was encountered between 69.41m OD in the north of the site and 69.21m OD in the south.

3 OBJECTIVES

The excavations were undertaken with the knowledge that the villa remains had already been severely disturbed by the development of the school. The archaeological objectives were therefore limited to providing as complete a record as possible of the surviving

remains within the 60m by 120m footprint of the sports pitch, with specific attention directed towards planning and dating features relating to the villa complex and recovering viable environmental samples. Following the excavation of the Sixth Form block site with its agricultural features, a secondary objective was to clarify the date of origin for the cultivation evidence (Brown 2005).

4 METHODS

Removal of overburden was carried out using a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Machine excavation was conducted under supervision and ceased when archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural horizons were exposed. Mechanical excavation took place in two stages. After the initial area strip and hand sampling across the site, it became apparent that a substantial overburden of the 1950's redeposited natural gravel and clay remained in the south. A second strip was employed to remove this deceptive mask of deposits after conference with the NCC Historic Environment Team Leader and NCC Property Services. Mechanical excavation was conducted in a manner to avoid damage to archaeological remains and to allow retention of artefacts exposed during machine watching. A scan of all spoil and machined surfaces was conducted using a metal detector.

Potential archaeological features were hand cleaned and partially excavated in order to clarify their nature. A site record was maintained using pro-forma Northamptonshire Archaeology context sheets supplemented by plans, sections and photographs, on both colour and monochrome 35mm film where considered useful and informative. Levels were established in relation to Ordnance Datum and the trench positions recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Bulk environmental samples comprising 20 litres of soil each were retrieved from secure contexts considered likely to produce ecofacts such as seeds, charcoal and bone.

Following the work undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology members of the Deanshanger Village Historical Society undertook further excavations on the site with the principal aim of recovering more datable finds. The stratified pottery assemblages from these excavations are included with the current report.

The post-excavation analysis was directed towards producing the present report without an intermediate assessment stage. The opportunity had been taken to include the unpublished evidence from the previous excavations on the site so as to provide an overview of the findings and to aid interpretations, although none of the previously collected material had been re-examined.

5 EXCAVATED EVIDENCE: ROMAN PERIOD

5.1 General observations

Archaeological features lay directly under the recent imported soil in the northern part of the site and under redeposited clay and gravel in the southern part. There was no surviving stratigraphy and many of the features were very shallow. In the northern part of the site a number of archaeological features, evident on the 1957 excavation plan had clearly been lost (Fig 3). These included the northern corner of the villa courtyard and a stone structure beyond (Figs 6 & 8).

The 1972 excavation immediately to the east of the current excavation provided a broader picture of activity on the site and specific reference to Woods's work has been made in the interpretation of the present results (Figs 2 & 4).

5.2 Summary of chronology

The relatively simple sequence of Roman features examined at the site may be broken down into a series of three of chronological developments based upon the stratigraphic relationships and the dates provided by the pottery (Timby this report):

Phase 1: Roman, late 1st century to early 2nd century AD: pits and ditches with the earliest dating material and stratigraphy (Figs 6 & 7).

Phase 2: Roman, early to late 2nd century AD: a new arrangement of ditch systems and other features laid out prior to the villa courtyard extension with an emphasis on new activity in the first half of the 2nd century (Figs 6-8).

Phase 3: Roman, late 2nd and 3rd centuries AD: features that had been robbed of stone and included the wall of the villa courtyard (Figs 8 & 9).

5.3 Phase 1: Roman, late 1st century to early 2nd century

Ditch 173

Ditch [173] was orientated east to west with a western terminal. It was largely truncated by ditch [164] from Phase 2 on the same course and seems to be a precursor to the arrangement of enclosures here (Fig 6).

Ditch 25

Ditch [25], equivalent to [138], in the northern part of the site was orientated north to south in a 38m long section with a 1.5m staggered break. It measured 1.98m wide by 0.41m deep (Fig 7, Section 11). It was probably related to the early enclosure pattern but does not appear to have linked to any of the ditch systems visible on the 1972 plans and instead extends north of the site. The pottery assemblage was relatively early and also large, suggesting occupation nearby, further evidence of which may have been lost. Three redeposited Iron Age sherds were recovered from this feature.

Ditch 14

In the north-west corner of the site ditch [14] extended 4m into the excavation area that was 0.45m wide by 0.25m deep (Fig 7, Section 10). It was aligned on two pits but no other features of contemporary date survived in that part of the site ([10]; [12]). The continuation of this ditch was observed on the 1996 geophysical survey to extend a further 16m to the north-east beyond the survey limit but appeared to pass to the north of Trench 1 (Holmes 1996, figs 4 & 5).

Pits 10 and 12

Two sub-circular pits [10] and [12] measured 0.72m across and 1.1m across respectively. These pits produced pottery belonging exclusively to this phase of activity and were located at the northern end of the site, heavily truncated by 1950's landscaping. No clear use was discernable.

Features of this phase also seemed to have been present to the east of the site where Woods described features that he assigned to the immediate post-Boudiccan period, AD 60-90 (Woods 1972, 4-6). His evidence was based principally upon four key contexts in two major ditches spanning the width of the 1972 excavation area from east to west and forming the basis for a system of enclosures (Figs 4 & 6). One of the ditches that he referred to can be identified as ditch [173], although the precision of his dating was not supported by the current excavations. The other ditch was identified as ditch [31], but current evidence suggests that this was slightly later.

5.4 Phase 2: Roman, early to late 2nd century

The majority of the dateable pottery showed that an arrangement of ditches was in continuous use from the end of the 1st century into 2nd century. The ditches formed a series of small enclosures or paddocks matching those shown on the 1972 excavation plan (Figs 4 & 6). Examination of the unpublished report of the 1972 excavation and comparison with the present evidence indicated that the paddocks were probably established during the late 1st century, but were continually maintained and added to until the mid 2nd century (Woods 1972, 6). This accounted for residual material of 1st century date appearing in the later ditches. Ditch [31] contained pottery of probable late 2nd century date which extended the chronology slightly beyond the Trajanic to Hadrianic (AD 90-140) phase suggested by Woods. The current excavation identified two enclosures with a main east to west ditch linking them.

Ditch 164

This broad linear ditch, equivalent to [171], was orientated west to east, forming the southern boundary of Enclosures 1 and 2 (Figs 6 & 7, Section 4-5). In its latest phase it cut both enclosures, but was almost certainly contemporary with them at an earlier stage. The ditch measured 0.8m wide at the western end becoming 1.76m wide towards the east although there was little change in depth. This appears to have been a redefinition of the western boundary of the enclosure and was directly comparable to the recut of Woods principal east to west enclosure ditch (Figs 4 & 6; Woods 1972, 6). The ditch was truncated at the western end by later features relating to the villa courtyard. The ditch profile was flat-based and similar in form to the enclosure ditches described below, although the differences in the upper fill suggested the ditch to have been more heavily maintained. The lower primary fill (163), equivalent to (170), comprised mid greyish brown silty clay with moderate sub-rounded limestone fragments up to 200mm in size, similar to the fill of ditch [31]. The upper secondary fill (162), equivalent to (169), comprised dark brownish-grey silty clay with occasional sub-rounded flint inclusions, probably representing infilling over the long term.

Enclosure 1

Enclosure 1 was a rectangular enclosure measuring 24m from north to south and 26m from east to west. The eastern side was visible on the 1972 excavation plans forming the larger part of the enclosure. The profile of ditch [31] was examined at five points and found to be generally consistent, approximately 1.1-1.2m wide at the top, sharp 70-80° sloping sides, about 0.35-0.4m deep and a flat base about 0.5-0.6m wide (Fig 7, Sections 1-3). The fill comprised compact orangey-grey clay (30) containing frequent fragmented limestone up to 200mm in size. Since limestone was not local to the site it must have been acquired from elsewhere and possibly represents demolition material from a stone structure.

Enclosure 2

Enclosure was roughly rectangular and measured 16m by 14m in size with an entrance in the north-east corner. The east side was formed by ditch [75], (equivalent to [41]), and was 26m long with a northern terminal. The second ditch [177], equivalent to [179], formed the north and west sides of the enclosure. The trapezoidal section profile of the ditches surrounding Enclosure 2 was not as uniform as those for Enclosure 1. There was greater variation in width and depth resulting from greater truncation (Fig 7, Sections 6-7). An overall less uniform plan of both enclosures was indicative of a less formal land arrangement in which Enclosures 1 and 2 had contemporary use.

Gully 39

A curvilinear gully [39] that opened out on the northeast side formed an irregular sub-rounded feature, 8m long by 5m wide, between Enclosures 1 and 2. There was a

posthole [37] within the perimeter. The gully may have been part of a small enclosure like a wattle fenced animal pen.

Ditch 82

Ditch [82], equivalent to [190], was orientated at right-angles to ditch [164], aligned north to south down the western extremity of the excavation area. It was 1.07m wide by 0.41m deep at its most substantial point towards the northern end. The primary fill of this ditch comprised large unshaped limestone fragments up to 280mm in size (81), and were overlain by firm greyish-brown silty clay (80) similar to the other ditch fills. It was likely the stones were placed in the ditch to facilitate drainage, as the ditch was orientated downhill to feed into the brook. It predated ditch [79] which was associated with the enclosure pattern (Fig 7, Section 8).

Ditch 79

There was a 2m break between where ditch [164] was truncated by the later courtyard features and the south-east terminus of ditch [79]. This break between the two ditches marked a change of direction, with ditch [79] extending north-west beyond the excavation area. The profile retained the trapezoidal shape of ditch [164] and measured 0.92m wide by 0.45m deep (Fig 7, Section 8). The primary fill remained consistent firm greyish silty clay (78) as with the other earlier ditches on the site. Close to the break in the southern boundary between ditches [79] and [164] were three postholes; [91], [93] and [95]. Whilst feasibly produced by ramming timber stakes into the ground, these did not appear to be part of a structure and no additional postholes were discovered despite searching the vicinity.

Ditch 16

This ditch lay in the north-west corner of the site. It was orientated north to south and extended into the excavation area from the west by 2m. It turned approximately 90° to the north, orientated south to north, and continued to its terminus at 16m, probably forming the eastern side of a sub-rectangular enclosure. It measured 0.78m wide by 0.33m deep (Fig 7, Section 9). The continuation of this ditch was observed from the 1996 geophysical and trenching surveys to extend further north after a short break of 5m (Fig 5; Holmes 1996, 5).

5.5 Phase 3: Roman, late 2nd and 3rd centuries

The features of this phase comprised the south-east villa courtyard wall [55] and corner structure with other associated walls and other features, some of which had not been previously identified (Fig 8). The most dominant features had been recorded prior to the current excavation from parch-marks, the 1957 excavations, geophysical survey and trial trenching (Fig 3; Brown 2004, figs 2 & 7; Monk 1982). This phase was described by Woods as dating to AD 140-240 and the current excavations suggest that this was approximately correct (Woods 1972, 17-18).

Courtyard Wall 55

A robbed stone wall [55] was uncovered during the evaluation in Trench 3 (Brown 2004, 8; Fig 8). The top of the wall was at OD 70.13m beneath deposits totalling 0.18m thick, comprising limestone blocks between 100-200mm in size bonded with loose whitish-yellow lime mortar in an uneven arrangement. The wall was 0.7m wide with only the bottom 0.23m of stone surviving. It formed the south-east corner of the courtyard perimeter with the main length of wall aligned north to south and turning 90° to the west before exiting the excavation area. Within the corner of the courtyard was situated an ancillary building measuring 11m by 8m, excavated by Green in 1957 (Fig 3). The surviving walls of the building were identical to those of the courtyard and seemed to have been contemporary. No interior features were evident and the associated rubble from the wall collapse or anticipated occupation deposits on the inner (north)

side of the wall were likely to have been removed in 1957. The indication was that truncation at the northern area of the site that removed much of the surviving wall was to a depth exceeding 0.42m.

Pit 197

Immediately south of the courtyard wall was a large square pit [197] (Plate 1; Fig 9, Section 14). The pit interior was 1.6m square in plan, 3m when the exterior stonework was included, and 0.54 m deep with near-vertical sides and a flat base. The pit was bounded on its north side by the courtyard wall [55] and on its west side by a line of faced stone [194]. Stone arranged on top of the pit, along the south and east sides, had been robbed away, although the yellowish-orange gravel bedding mortar remained (195). The pit comprised frequent large shaped limestone blocks up to 350mm across, sufficient for masonry stone either fallen or placed as hard core fill with greyish-blue silty clay (196) filling the gaps. The faced stone [194] and its gravel mortar bedding deposit (195) sat upon the pit fill (196) suggesting that the stone within the pit formed a foundation base of a substantial square structure against the side of the southern courtyard wall (Fig 8). This feature was not observed during the 1957 excavations (Fig 3).

Walls 45 and 57

Parallel to the east courtyard wall [55] and offset to the east by approximately 2m was a second, robbed wall [57]. This robber trench was aligned north to south, measuring 27m long from the south-east corner of the courtyard to the point where the wall turned at 90° and extended eastwards as wall [45]. The surviving robber trench was 0.57m wide by 0.21m deep, had sharp steep sides and a narrow flat base filled by compact dark bluish-grey clay (44) and frequent pieces of fragmented limestone up to 150mm in size and flakey lime mortar. Wall [45] extended eastwards for 32m before terminating (Fig 9, Section 12). Together, walls [57] and [45] formed the west and north sides of an ancillary enclosure that seems to have been part of an extramural villa landscape.

This ancillary enclosure measured 28m north-south and 32m east-west, it was larger and more uniform than its predecessors, possibly intended as a replacement for Enclosure 2 (Fig 8). Ditch [164] may have been partially reused on the southern side since the upper, secondary fill (162), was sufficiently different in its composition to the primary ditch fill (163) and contained later material than the basal deposits (Fig 7; Timby, this report; Chapman, this report). No ditch was observed on the eastern side with contemporary material for this phase of activity although ditch [31] was at least late 2nd century in date and could have been contemporary. The fact that the enclosure was not attached to wall [55] suggests that there was a narrow, intentionally created pathway between the two.

Post holes 27 and 29

Positioned on the alignment of wall [45], immediately to the east were two discrete postholes, [27] and [29] (Fig 8). Posthole [29] was severely damaged by later activity. The postholes were similar in form, square, approximately 0.5m across and 0.3m deep, filled with compact dark brownish-black silty clay, (26) and (28), with large unshaped limestone packing stones up to 280mm in size. No other postholes were present and if of genuine Roman extraction they may have been the footings for gate posts or a timber arch.

Ditch 166

Ditch [166], equivalent to [185] and [187] was aligned east to west, south of and parallel to the earlier enclosure ditch [164] and the southern wall of the courtyard [55]. It was 56m long and terminated at the eastern end. Its profile was similar to that of the earlier ditches, with the familiar steep sides and flat base forming a regular trapezoidal shape (Fig 9, Sections 13 & 15). The fill comprised greyish-brown silty clay (165) with infrequent charcoal flecks and occasional gritty inclusions. The ditch had the same

orientation as the westward extension of what was interpreted as a large D-shaped cattle enclosure in the 1972 excavations, and it aligned on the northern side of this enclosure (Fig. 2; Woods 1972, 17). The dating of D-shaped 'cattle enclosure' was comparable to that of ditch [166], both being of late 2nd or 3rd century usage.

Ditches 68 and 140 and the area of pits

In the north-east corner were two ditches, [68] and [140], extending eastward outside of the excavation area. The two ditches were part of a broad area of pits that Woods observed extending west of his excavation, and which had been observed in 1957 as an area of large black patches that were not at that time investigated (Woods 1972, 24). The features were interpreted as having been dug for the purpose of quarrying gravel for the construction of the villa (Woods 1972, 23). Pottery from their infilling indicated a late 2nd century date.

Structures 4 and 133

In the north-east area of the excavation were two substantial circular stone structures, [4] and [133]. Structure [4] was investigated and recorded intensively whilst its counterpart [133] was sampled and partially excavated to confirm that they were identical.

Structure [4] was the same as the 'oven' examined in 1957 (Plate 2). It was constructed from large limestone blocks up to 470mm by 260mm by 200mm in size to form a circular shape 3.64m in diameter, with a 'wall' 0.9m wide and 0.3m deep, only one course of which survived. The stone had been shaped roughly and arranged in a non-uniform manner, without bonding material, and with no apertures or facing of stone (Fig 10). Structural integrity was low requiring little effort to dislodge the stones, suggesting a makeshift structure, and evidence of intense heat was observed throughout the structure, even in the middle of the wall, but not in the natural gravel below or surrounding it.

The profile of the section, once excavated, was broad and shallow cut into the natural gravel by no more than 0.3m and slightly stepped in the centre (Fig 10). The stonework [4] had been laid directly onto the natural base arranged in the same non-uniform manner visible in plan. Patches of material strongly similar to the vesicular clay (21) were found between some of the stones but did not constitute a bonding material. There was no evidence for a substructure in the form of vents, flues or a firing pit.

Structure [133] was of the same construction with considerably more collapse around it and three to four courses survived, again without apertures (Fig. 8). However, the stonework had not been fire reddened, and this suggested that a firing process was not integral to the structure's use, at least not to the degree shown by [4], and may have been the result of the demise of structure [4]. It was constructed from large limestone blocks up to 450mm by 280mm by 210mm in size to form a circular shape 3.58m in diameter, with a 'wall' 0.7m wide and 0.5m deep.

The interior of both features was comparable, containing a thick deposit of pinkish sandy clay (21) and (69), with occasional groups of small gravel inclusions that were largely sterile of charcoal but contained a few fragments of fired clay. Only in [4] was this overlain by a thin lens of firm mottled bluish-grey and pinkish-red sandy clay containing charcoal flecks and grit. It was 1.83m wide and 0.07m thick, and probably deposited after the demise of the structure. By comparison structure [133] was constructed at the base of a large pit [132], 0.6m deep, within the area of possible quarrying identified by Woods (Fig 4). It was possible that these features were in some way related to the construction of the villa or other buildings as part of the processing of quarried material. Potential quarry material may either have been the terrace gravels

found in the north of the site or the fine reddish-brown gritty clay observed in patches of periglacial deposits, perhaps the source of the pinkish-red sandy clay, (21) and (69).

In 1957, Green identified structure [4] as a corn-drying oven and marked it on the plan in relation to the villa (Fig 3). Corn-drying is a low temperature process that does not produce evidence for intense heat throughout. Woods hypothesised in 1972 that this may have been a smaller version of the type of corn-dryer excavated at Great Casterton 1951-53, although it was not clear that he was referring to structure [4] since he described it as having a pitched stone floor edged with flat slabs, which structure [4] did not have (Woods 1972, 1-2). In any case the structure lacked the sub-floor flues and stokehole of the Great Casterton oven and corn dryers of other forms (Corder 1961, 19-25). During the 1957 excavations little attention was paid to features external to the villa courtyard, no finds were retained for them and none of the building materials were kept (Monk 1982, 2). Greens' daybook mentioned a long oval spill of bricquetage that he felt was indicative of a flue, but lying as it did across the line of the medieval ridge and furrow he suspected the dome of the oven to have been demolished and scattered (Monk 1982, 54).

6 MEDIEVAL CULTIVATION

In the southern area of the site, where truncation of archaeological features was less, a good proportion of the former soil deposits survived above the level of the Roman archaeology. The spread that had to be machined away, (85) and (86), extended throughout the southern area, forming made ground up to 0.2m thick and comprised firm blueish-grey silty clay that had been considerably disturbed by the 1950's earthmoving. The lower horizons of this deposit filled furrows in the natural that cut across the Roman features on a north-west to south-east alignment, becoming more seriously truncated at the northern end until the furrows were no longer visible (Fig 11). Several of these were sampled to address the date and nature of the cultivation following observations in the area of the Sixth Form block (Brown 2005). The profiles of these features were generally broad, shallow, with flat bases and poor definition (Fig 9, Sections 15-18). No evidence for postholes was encountered and the sides were indefinable. Given the stratigraphic relationships above and below, together with the excavated profiles, it was thought that Roman finds from these deposits were residual within an area of medieval ridge and furrow.

7 POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN DRAINAGE

Three post-medieval gullies, probable drainage channels, were observed cutting the top of the furrow alignment (Fig 11). Gully [53] was 21m long aligned north-north-east to south-south-west terminating at both ends. Gully [33] cut across this perpendicular to it, aligned west-north-west to east-south-east, and was 49m long extending out of the excavated area to the east. It was joined part way along its course by gully [51] that was 16m long and formed a curving hook at its terminal end. These all contained residual Roman material.

After the school was built the surface of the field had been reinstated with imported topsoil, comprising loose dark blackish-brown silty loam (1) between 0.1m and 0.14m thick, devoid of Roman material.

8 THE FINDS

8.1 The pottery by Jane Timby

The excavations produced a modest assemblage of some 1071 sherds of pottery weighing c13.2 kg, with an estimated vessel equivalence (EVE) of 8.86. With the exception of four sherds of Iron Age date and two of post-medieval date the entire group dated to the Roman period. The sherds were in relatively good condition, with an overall average sherd weight of 12g and a few instances of joining sherds from single vessels. For Roman material, which was usually quite robust, it was quite fragmented which was typical with waste material from disturbed contexts.

The sherds were sorted into broad fabric categories according to the type and density of the inclusions in the various pastes. Named or traded wares were coded following the system advocated in the National Roman fabric series (Tomber and Dore 1998); the remaining wares were coded by colour, surface finish and dominant inclusions. Rim sherds were coded according to form. The assemblage was fully quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalence (EVE) and the data entered onto an Excel spreadsheet, a copy of which was deposited with the site archive.

Description of fabrics and forms

Iron Age

Four handmade bodysherds, all in sandy fabrics were recovered from the site, probably Iron Age in date. One sherd from gully [35] had internal wiping marks, the other three sherds, probably from one vessel came from ditch [25]. In both cases the sherds appeared to be residual.

Romano-British

Imports

Samian: Some 46 sherds of samian were present, mostly of Central Gaulish origin. With the exception of several sherds from a Dragendorff 37 decorated bowl from feature [197] and a bowl, Dragendorff 36 with a barbotine decorated rim, most of the pieces appeared to be from plain vessels that included forms Dragendorff 18/31, 31, 33 and 27.

Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1): Two small sherds were recorded, one from a medieval furrow [43], the other from spread deposit (71), both residual. (Tomber and Dore 1998, 127).

Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (OXF RS): Two sherds were present, one from a bowl Young (1977) type C45. (Tomber and Dore 1998, 176).

Verulamium white ware (VER WH): Two sherds from ditch [25]. One vessel was stamped by the potter Albinus (Fig 12, 7), one of the most prolific mortarium makers in Britain (Hartley 1972, 372). The stamp was impressed across the flange near the spout and had no border. Albinus was thought to have been active in the period AD60-90 (Hartley 1984, 282). A mortarium fragment of a similar type was recovered with the same stamp during the 1972 excavations (Woods 1972, 4). (Tomber and Dore 1998, 154).

MORT: An unknown mortaria. The sherd of mortaria was recovered from posthole [029] with a stubby thickened flange. Moderately soft, pale orange, fabric with pale grog clay pellets. Possibly it once had a red colour-coated surface. The interior surface had small (less than 1 mm), polished, rounded quartz trituration grit. The fabric was probably 3rd century.

Local / unknown wares

Buff sandy wares (BUFF): Medium buff sandy wares, probably flagon.

Black sandy wares (BW): Various medium to fine sandy black wares with grey cores. Vessels included rolled rim necked jars, necked jars/bowls, a flanged bowl, a cordoned bowl and lids (Fig 12, 9-10). One sherd from ditch [25] had incised 'London-style' decoration whilst a sherd from pit [12] had comb-impressed decoration.

Blackened whitewares with sandy fabric (BWHGR): A single sherd of white sandy ware with a blackened exterior was noted.

Sandy grog-tempered wares: Various sandy grog-tempered wares dominated the assemblage. These varied from oxidised wares (OXGR), pale grey wares (GYGR), black wares (BWGR), oxidised wares with a black exterior surface (BOXGR) and handmade storage jars (GRSJ). The pastes were all moderately hard with a sandy feel and contained varying quantities of sub-angular and rounded clay pellets/grog. The oxidised wares were the most common accounting for 21% of the total assemblage by sherd count. Vessels were heavily dominated by jar forms and included versions with narrow necks, everted rims, triangular rims, neckless versions, lid-seated jars and lids. A small number of bowls were also evident (Fig 12, 1-3).

'Belgic' grog-tempered wares (GROG): A soapy dark brown grog tempered ware. Five sherds were present from a single handmade lid-seated jar from ditch [173].

Grog and shell-tempered ware (GRSH): As GROX but with added sparse fossil shell fragments.

Grey or orange sandy wares (GW/ OW): Medium sandy, wheelmade grey or orange wares. Greyware vessels included jars with rilled surfaces and triangular rims, narrow necked jars (Fig 12, 8) and a bowl imitating a Dragendorff 30 form. The oxidised wares included lid seated jars, beakers and bowls/dishes (Fig 12, 9).

Fine grey/ oxidised ware (GYF/ OXIDF): A very fine grey or orange ware. Most of the greyware sherds came from a single vessel from ditch [25] with barbotine dot decoration. The oxidised wares included a ring-necked flagon, a necked everted rim jar and a beaker.

Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LNV CC): Some 21 sherds of colour-coated ware were present, 13 of these were from a single beaker decorated with a barbotine hunt scene from ditch [31] along with a plain-rimmed dish. (Tomber and Dore 1998, 118).

Lower Nene Valley reduced ware (LNV RE): A well-fired pale grey ware with lighter cores. Vessels included dishes with stepped profiles imitating moulded forms (Fig 12, 4), a ring-necked flagon, jars and curved rim dishes.

Oxidised colour-coated ware (OXIDCC): Three sherds of an oxidised sandy ware were recovered with traces of a colour-coat from ditch [16].

Shelly ware (SHELL1-3): Shelly wares formed a substantial part of the assemblage, 20.5% by sherd count. These included handmade (SHELL1) and wheelmade (SHELL2) dense shelly wares typical of the midlands and a sandy ware with sparse fossil shell (SHELL3). Vessels were mainly limited to jars, both lid seated and necked types, with expanded rims (Fig 12, 5-6).

White sandy ware (WW): A pimply white sandy ware, probably part of the Lower Nene Valley series.

Discussion

Stratigraphically the site divided into three Roman phases (Phases 1-3). The earliest material came from ditch features [14] and [173], and two pits, [10] and [12]. Together with those found to be residual in later features these comprised a total of 158 sherds, 1283g. The latest material appeared to comprise 14 sherds of LNV CC, which was unlikely to date much before the late 2nd century. These sherds came from ditch [31] and included 13 sherds from a barbotine decorated hunt cup and a plain-rimmed dish. Ditch [31] produced most of the pottery allocated to this phase, some 123 sherds. The much smaller groups from ditches [14], [173] and pit [10] could have potentially been late 1st or early 2nd century comprising mainly shelly or grog-tempered wares. Pit [12] would appear to be more likely to date after the 2nd quarter of the 2nd century with sherds of LNV RE. Sherds of LNV RE retrieved from gullies [33] and [35] were residual, disturbed from the top of Roman features by post-medieval drainage channels and were likely to have been dragged from the fill of ditch [31].

The pre-courtyard ditch systems produced the largest assemblage of pottery with some 797 sherds weighing c10 kg. Sherds of LNV CC and LNV RE were still present but in relative terms formed a smaller percentage of the assemblage, which was dominated by black sandy wares, 24.5% by sherd count, shelly wares (23.1%) and oxidised grog-tempered wares (22.2%). Overall the assemblage appeared to contain wares spanning the later 1st to mid- and later 2nd centuries with the greater emphasis on the first half of the 2nd century when the majority of the paddock enclosures were recut (Woods 1972, 6-9).

The largest single assemblage came from ditch [25] with some 560 sherds, some 70% of the phase 1 assemblage (Fig 12). Of note in this group were ring-necked flagons and moulded dishes in grey sandy ware (LNV RE) and oxidised wares, black wares with London-style and comb impressed decoration, barbotine dot decorated fine greyware beaker, some samian, several lid-seated shelly jars and the stamped Verulamium mortarium. A single sherd of LNV CC was present, given the extensive disturbance of ditch [25] by later quarrying activity it was likely that the ditch was probably abandoned by the mid 2nd century and that the LNV CC was intrusive.

A spread deposit, later identified as a medieval furrow (71), produced a further sherd of LNV CC and a small piece of DOR BB1. Other sherds of LNV CC came from post-medieval drainage gully [35] (Residual), ditch terminus [57] (Phase 3) and the upper fill of ditch [164] (Phase 2).

The foundation pit [197] and the courtyard walls produced a modest assemblage of 74 sherds, over half of which was samian (Phase 3). Of the samian, 38 sherds came from just two vessels; a decorated bowl, Dragendorff 37; and a dish Dragendorff 18/31-31. The latest sherds appeared comprise a single piece of LNV CC, an unknown mortaria and a possible sherd of OXF RS suggestive of a 3rd century date. Clearly much of the material was 2nd century so it was possible that this may have been an intrusive piece introduced during the backfill of the 1957 excavation or a potential demolition date associated with robbing of the walls. The high percentage of samian suggested a fairly high status establishment but this so skewed the overall totals that little else could be deduced from the overall group.

The remaining Roman assemblage came from post-Roman cultivation and the levelling deposits of the 1957 sports field terrace. This included sherds of the same form and

fabric range as the stratified material. Of particular note was a grey grogged ware pedestal foot from the medieval furrows.

Looking at the assemblage overall samian was quite well represented at over 4% by sherd count suggesting that at some point in its history the occupants enjoyed Roman style decoration. The forms were dominated by jars at 65.4% (based on rim EVEs) followed by bowls/dishes at 22.1%. The remaining 12.5% was divided between mortaria, cups, beakers, flagons and lids. The higher status suggested by the samian was tempered by the complete lack of other continental imports. It was a pattern further emphasised by the low incidence of regional imports and appeared highly indicative of a reliance on locally produced ceramics.

There was probably some Iron Age occupation in the locality but the main phase of Roman occupation indicated a hiatus in the late 2nd century. There was little or no evidence of 4th century material suggesting a relatively short lived occupation during the latest phase but the sample was quite small and could be misleading.

Catalogue of illustrated vessels (Fig 12)

- 1 Wide-mouthed bowl with everted rim. Fabric: GRSH. Pale orange surfaces.
- 2 Wide-mouthed shallow bowl with everted rim. Fabric: OXGR.
- 3 Bevelled rim jar. Fabric: OXGR.
- 4 Shallow dish with internal moulding. Fabric: LNV RE.
- 5 Lid-seated jar. Fabric: SHELL2.
- 6 Lid-seated jar. Fabric: SHELL3.
- 7 Verulamium stamped mortaria. Fabric: VER WH.
- 8 Narrow necked jar. Fabric: GW.
- 9 Oxidised sandy bowl with rouletted decoration. Fabric OXID.
- 10 Wheelmade cordoned bowl with a sooted interior. Fabric BWGR.
- 11 Lid. Fabric: BW.

8.2 The ceramic building materials by Pat Chapman

Roman roof tile

This was a very fragmentary assemblage comprising 114 mainly abraded sherds that weighed 3462g. The largest number of sherds came from fill (80) of ditch [82] (Phase 2), comprising nearly three-quarters of the whole. The largest sherd was part of a *tegula* from context (162), ditch [164] (Phase 2), measuring 110mm by 80mm by 20mm thick and 39mm at the flange. Nearly half of the assemblage comprised fragments measuring no more than 30mm by 30mm by 20mm, many being smaller.

The only identifiable fragments were of six *tegulae*, eight *imbrices* and a fragment of either a *pilae* or brick; there was no box flue tile. The tile fragment from pit [66] had been deliberately cut into a triangle with a base of 90mm and two equal sides of 100mm. The fragment from (99), the modern disturbance, had been cut into a small rectangle, c35mm by 25mm, with chamfered sides, possibly for use in a mosaic.

There were two main fabrics. One was orangey-brown silty clay, sometimes with a broad medium grey core with inclusions of some fine crushed grog and occasional gravel up to 8mm long. The other was pinkish-brown fine sandy clay, slightly streaky, also with an occasional broad medium grey core and some fine crushed grog inclusions. The other two fabrics were of orange sandy clay and a medium to dark reddish brown either silty or sandy clay. Two *imbrex* fragments from the fill of ditch [82] were in a silty brown fabric with a blackened, perhaps painted, upper surface.

As the assemblage was so fragmentary no attempt was made to compare the tile with that from neighbouring villas between eight and twelve miles to the north, such as Wootton, Piddington or the Romano-British settlement at Quinton.

Table 1: Roman tile quantification

Context/feature	Phase	Sherd no	Weight (g)	Comments
24/ditch 25	1	7	114	1 imbrex, 1 tegula
44/robber trench 44	?	2	35	
57/robbed wall 57	3	1	14	
60/part of 57	3	1	29	
65/pit 66	?	1	134	Tile cut as triangle
74/ditch 75	2	3	83	1 possible tegula
80/stone drain 82	2	71	1658	5 imbrex, 1 brick/pilae
94/posthole 95	2	1	119	1 imbrex
98/made ground	-	4	141	Groove on surface, typical of tegula
99/made ground	-	1	27	Tile fragment cut as small rectangle
107/made ground	-	1	41	
156/medieval furrow	-	8	91	
162/ditch 164	2	1	298	1 tegula
169/ditch 171	?	1	30	
176/ditch 177	2	1	74	1 tegula
178/ditch 179	?	1	96	1 tegula
Totals		105	2984	

Brick

The corner of one brick was found in ditch [82]. It was 43mm thick and well abraded. It had orange coarse sandy fabric with inclusions of some fine crushed grog and occasional gravel up to 10mm in length.

Fired clay

This small assemblage of 32 fragments, weighing 1847g, contained two distinct types of fired clay. The material from context (69), in the circular stone structure [133], was reddish-brown friable vesicular clay with occasional groups of small gravel inclusions or individual flint up to 30mm long. This group comprised four large amorphous lumps, the largest measuring 100mm by 130mm by 40mm, with the rest being considerably smaller pieces. These were the only finds discovered within the feature.

The remaining fired clay from ditches [25] and [79] was typically hard fired to a reduced grey with a dull red surface and some flint inclusions up to 5mm long. The red surface was fairly smooth and the edges were defined. The material contained small impressions left by organic constituents and was most likely from a structure.

8.3 The other Roman finds by Tora Hylton & Ian Meadows

The excavation produced 18 Roman and post-medieval finds, in four material types; copper alloy, iron, lead and glass. Each object has been described and measured, and a descriptive catalogue is retained in the site archive. The majority of finds were recovered from Roman features, while a small number of post-medieval finds were recovered from furrows and the modern overburden.

Roman Finds by Tora Hylton

With the exception of the four coins (above), twelve objects were recovered from stratified Roman deposits. Those of specific interest included a copper alloy brooch and two iron knives. In addition there were six nails, two fragments of undiagnostic vessel glass and a lead pot repair.

The brooch, a “dragonesque” fibula was incomplete, one terminal was missing (Plate 3). It was recovered from ditch [25], context (24) (Phase 1). It comprised a plain plate with two arms forming a zoomorphic S-shape. The pin, now missing, would have been attached to the neck, and the presence of a small scar on the chest indicated that there would have been a link between the chin and chest, helping to secure the pin in place. The brooch was decorated with a circular motif flanked by two recessed panels which would originally have been inlaid with enamel. Stylistically dragonesque brooches displayed Celtic traits and they were in use cAD 50-150. They were predominantly found in northern Britain and were thought to have been manufactured in England, although they have been recorded as far away as Hungary, France and Germany (Hattatt 1982, 153).

The iron knives were recovered from the fills of ditches [16] and [68] (Phases 2 & 3). One was complete, it had a short wide symmetrical blade which widened slightly along its length and then curved inwards towards the tip. It resembles Mannings’ Type 21 (Manning 1985, fig 29, 21). A similar example was recovered from Bancroft Villa, Milton Keynes (Skinner 1994, fig 164, 219). The other knife was incomplete. The back of the blade was horizontal and the cutting edge was damaged, but it appeared to display similarities to Mannings’ Type 11 (Manning 1985, fig 28, 11a, b).

The coins by Ian Meadows

Four Roman coins were retrieved. They were all common examples of 3rd century issues. The number of barbarous copies was typical of the period when the need to maintain money supply allowed the mass production of irregular issue for circulation. The individual coins were in their day of little value and their loss a frequent occurrence.

SF 3 An AE 3 flan probably of the third quarter of the third century. The obverse preserved little of the legend around the radiate head. The reverse was illegible beyond a standing figure. Context (65), fill of quarry pit [66].

SF 5 An AE4 barbarous copy of a third century radiate coin probably dating from the later third century. The coin was nearly completely illegible other than the radiate crown on the obverse face. Context (19), fill of medieval furrow [20].

SF 8 An AE3 barbarous radiate. Probably a copy based on a prototype of Tetricus I. Context (76), fill of medieval furrow [77].

SF 10 An AE3 coin probably a CONSECRATIO issue of Claudius II Gothicus struck after his death in AD 270. Context (85), modern overburden from 1950s building work.

8.4 The post-medieval finds by Tora Hylton

Post-medieval finds included a copper alloy ring fitting and an elliptical weight perforated for suspension. These were recovered from the modern overburden.

9 THE FAUNAL REMAINS by Karen Deighton

One archive box of animal bone (45 identifiable fragments from 18 contexts) was collected by hand and from the sieved soil samples. The species represented comprise cow, horse, sheep/goat and chicken. The assemblage was too small for statistical analyses or any hypotheses to be made regarding bodypart representation. The material represented a small assemblage of common Roman domesticates.

Preservation

A high level of canid gnawing was present (noted on 26% of bones), which could suggest that smaller bones were under-represented in the assemblage. Only one instance of butchery was noted. The assemblage was subject to fairly high fragmentation and only eight complete bones survived. Two fresh breaks were observed indicating fragmentation during or after excavation. No evidence of burning was present, suggesting this was not a preferred method of disposal.

Taxonomic distribution

Table 2: Animal species present

Species	Quantity
Equus	7
Bos	21
Ovicaprid	8
Gallus	3
Large ungulate	6
Total	45

The assemblage was dominated by cattle (Bos), followed by smaller numbers of sheep/goat (Ovicaprid), horse (Equus) and chicken (Gallus). Unusually no pig was observed. The canid gnawing was the only evidence for dogs on the site.

Ageing

Two neonatal elements were observed; a bos distal metatarsal and proximal tibia, both from context (24), fill of ditch [25]. Three cattle mandibles were recovered, but only one could be assigned to a single age group (30-36 months).

Discussion

Cattle would have provided meat, milk and traction. Sheep and goats were kept for meat, milk and wool. Chicken, a late Iron Age introduction, was used for eggs and meat. The restricted ageing data from the site precluded determining the nature of the husbandry for any of these species. Horse was used for transport and hides, although no skinning evidence was observed here. The dominance of cattle was typical for the Roman period and was thought to be linked to an intensification of cereal production (Grant 1989). Other Roman sites at Bicester Park and Wootton Fields School, Northampton also showed a dominance of cattle (Deighton 2004; 2005). Bicester Park had no pig, whilst Wootton had only 1.8% of the species. Comparisons were tentative due to the small sizes of the assemblages involved but the pattern at Deanshanger was familiar and reminiscent of these other sites in the county. The lack of wild species suggested no reliance on wild resources and was not unusual for the Roman period.

10 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE by Jim Brown

A total of 220 litres of samples were collected by hand from eleven separate contexts. The full amount of all of these samples were processed using a siraf tank fitted a 500 micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting floats were dried and examined with a stereo microscope at 10x magnification.

Results

One float produced a single charred seed from context (71), the upper fill of pit [136] that lay within an area of other pits interpreted as gravel quarry pits (Woods 1972, 23-24). The seed was a cereal grain, identified as spelt wheat (*Triticum Spelta*). The condition of the grain was highly abraded. The taxon was typical of cereal crops cultivated in Roman Britain for human consumption but as a lone ecofact does not constitute sufficient evidence to support arable cultivation at the villa. Consequently evidence for cultivation or indeed any anthropogenic activity is inconclusive. The taxa shed little light on the nature of the environment as it was an entirely domesticated crop and has not survived amongst the wild flora to the present day.

A total of 3g of charcoal were recovered from four of the eleven sampled contexts, these were: fill (24) of ditch [25], fill (15) of ditch [16], fill (71) of pit [136] and fill (169) of ditch [171]. All of the charcoal was highly abraded and fragmentary. Given the poor distribution of charcoal amongst the sampled features it was not thought that further analysis would contribute greatly in the form of reliable data.

Samples taken from structures [4] and [133] did not produce any ecofactual material. The overall pattern of survival for environmental evidence on the site was poor. There were no sign of waterlogged features on the site and the soil pH appeared to vary between the limestone from the villa structures and the natural acidic gravels.

11 DISCUSSION

11.1 Dating

While four sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from the excavations these were all residual in Roman features and no Iron Age occupation was identified. On present evidence the site therefore appears to have been first occupied in the Roman period, although it was possible that Iron Age occupation lay not far away. There was no confirmed record of Iron Age occupation under the later villa building and it was not known whether the circle of postholes mentioned by Green in his daybook of the 1957 excavation were of 1st century (or even earlier) date, but the presence of 'Belgic'-type handmade calcite-gritted pottery would seem to indicate early domestic type structures in this area pre-dating the recorded stone buildings (Woods 1972, 12; Monk 1982, 3).

The evidence of both finds and site layout indicated a relatively short period of Roman occupation, a conclusion which was supported by Woods in the 1972 excavation. The finds from Green's excavation presented more problems of interpretation as many were apparently discarded or have since been lost (Monk 1982, 3). The dating of the colour-coated wares, however, suggested occupation in the late 3rd to 4th centuries at the villa residence itself (Monk 1982, 54-5). Whether or not this was the case, it was clear that most of the site was occupied continuously from the late 1st century AD through to a point in the 3rd century. The pottery from the current work suggested that occupation may have ceased in the earlier 3rd century although the coins were later 3rd century issues and occupation of some sort seems to have continued into the third quarter of that century (Timby, this report; Meadows, this report).

It was unclear whether a hiatus in the 3rd century was part of a wider pattern. At Bancroft villa (Milton Keynes) a discontinuity in occupation was identified at this time, although the villa was rebuilt in the 4th century (Williams & Zeevat 1994). Not far away at Hill Farm, Haversham, much smaller excavations indicated a cessation of occupation at a probable villa in the late 2nd or 3rd century (Mudd 2005).

The earliest identifiable occupation involved the laying out of the pattern of enclosures. Woods identified a 'post-Boudiccan' phase (AD 60-90), although this specific evidence was not encountered in the present excavations since most of the ditches investigated had been maintained well into the mid- 2nd century. It was not clear whether a villa building was present at this time but it was worth noting that roof tile was found in Phase 1 which suggests that a Roman-style structure was present somewhere on the site (Ditch [25]).

The earliest recorded dwelling on the site appeared to have been the large roundhouse excavated by Woods and dated AD 90-140. It was the largest and earliest of three such dwellings, with evidence for two hearths and substantial domestic materials. Structures of this type were commonly found on villa estates until well into the 2nd century and there was no reason to suppose it was a direct precursor to the villa building. It was more likely to have been a dwelling for agricultural labourers.

There can be little doubt that a villa-style building was present in Phase 2 in the 2nd century, before the courtyard wall and associated structures, since there was abundant roof tile and also limestone rubble from features of this phase. Most of the enclosure ditches in the current excavation belonged with this phase. The stone foundation of the villa courtyard and associated features was ascribed to Phase 3 (late 2nd century onward). Some of these foundations cut the earlier enclosure ditches, and it seemed likely that Enclosure 1 was replaced by a larger walled enclosure. It was also possible that the major east-west boundary ditch [164], which aligned precisely on the courtyard wall, and perhaps also Enclosure 2, continued to be maintained.

It would seem from dated finds in the robber trenches that the courtyard wall and ancillary walls had been dismantled by the end of the 3rd century and possibly earlier than that. The marked change may indicate the demise of the farming economy of the villa since there was no evidence that any of the enclosures or ancillary structures were in use. It was not clear why this happened, but it would seem that the change was quite sudden and distinct. The evidence for robbing of stone gave the impression that stone was needed for works elsewhere and was taken from redundant structures implying decay. No 4th-century pottery was recovered during the current excavations and a mere handful of sherds were recovered from a single ditch in the 1972 excavations. Yet the pottery from the main villa building, excavated in 1957, included a significant assemblage of what was identified as late colour-coated wares showing that the villa was still occupied (Monk 1982, 54). The nature of the occupation appeared to have been rather different than before but the evidence on which to base any further speculation was lacking.

11.2 Nature and layout of features

At its height, in the mid- to late 2nd century, the layout of the villa, courtyard and associated enclosures had many typical features of design which were intended to show off the principal façade of the residence and demarcate space for domestic and non-domestic living. The east-facing villa and courtyard were arranged quite symmetrically, and the pattern of enclosures, which were the principal features of interest further east, clearly respected both the alignment and symmetry of the principal dwelling. Since the enclosures were demonstrably earlier than the villa courtyard, it was likely that they were laid out with respect to an earlier version of the villa complex, although it was not

impossible that the final layout of the villa was actually determined by the existing enclosures.

It was interesting to observe that the Phase 3 enclosure wall [45] aligned precisely on a possible gatehouse structure in the courtyard wall that was recorded in 1957 but since destroyed and also with a circular water feature just beyond (Fig 3). The rectangular structures on outer corners of the courtyard cannot be ascribed a specific function but may have been designed for storage, as well as for aesthetic effect. The attached stone base may have been needed to support a corner tower.

The occupants of the villa would have enjoyed a prospect from the top of the hill viewing the land to the east. A clear division of space would have been evident to anyone walking from the villa to the lower fields as they passed first from the villa building into the immediate courtyard. It was unclear what the courtyard space was used for, it may have contained a formal garden or alternatively more practical features related to the activities of the household. There may have been a kitchen garden, a water source and ground for keeping small stock such as chickens or geese.

Beyond this was an ancillary yard space associated with the management of the land surrounding the villa. This linear progression appears to reflect the concept of inner and outer enclosures found, for instance, at Gorhambury villa (Neal et al 1990). Here, from the late 1st century onwards, the outer enclosure (A) contained paddocks flanking an axial trackway which stretched over a 150 m from the villa itself. Enclosure A also contained buildings of circular and rectangular form (Neal et al, op. cit. figs 47, 56, 73 & 96).

Outside the villa courtyard at Deanshanger, on the lower ground to the east, lay numerous enclosures with means to shelter and water livestock, a pond liable to flooding, land suitable for pasture, at least one rectangular building with an apsidal end and three circular houses incorporating elements of both timber and stone in their structures (Fig. 2; Woods 1972, 13-14, 17-22). It was probable that the houses were the homes of people in the service, or kinsmen of, the villa owners and possible that they were mainly involved in the care of the livestock. The largest of the roundhouses was of a type similar to those excavated at Williams Way, Wollaston, being the same size, 12.2m in diameter (BNFAS 1972, 37-38). The site was identified as a small Romano-British farmstead of low standing.

There was little doubt that the enclosures were for agricultural tasks connected with the economic basis of the villa, but there was no direct evidence for their functions, and comparable instances of this ladder-like pattern connected to a villa are uncommon. It was possible that the enclosures were horticultural or other specialist agricultural plots. Walled kitchen gardens were identified from archaeobotanical remains at Bancroft villa, Milton Keynes, lying some distance from the main villa residence (Williams & Zeevat 1994, fig. 66 Enclosure 1208; fig. 86 Enclosure 990). By their position and size these seem to have been economic ventures rather than providing produce for immediate domestic consumption. At Deanshanger, it was alternatively possible that the enclosures were for livestock; horses, cattle, sheep/goats and chickens were among the animal bones recovered or they may have served a mixed farming economy.

Agricultural features on the 1972 site included a T-shaped corn-drying oven on the southern side of the site and on the northern edge a large stone-founded building interpreted as a barn with an annexe (Woods 1972, 22-23, 25-27). The walls of the 'barn' were uniformly 0.7m thick with two courses of stone and completely without a tumble of stone, suggesting that they were dwarf walls acting as sills in support of a timber upper structure (Woods 1972, 25).

11.3 Circular stone structures

The purpose of the circular stone structures [4] and [133] was unclear but they did not possess either the form or the residue deposits associated with corn-drying ovens, lime-kilns or similar features. There was no evidence for a substructure in the form of vents, flues or a firing pit and the absence of heat-reddened stone in structure [133] suggested that high-temperature processes were not carried out in the normal course of events. The evidence for fire in structure [4] may have resulted from an accidental conflagration, although this perhaps implies that there was a substantial superstructure capable of being ignited such as a hayrick. The only clue to the purpose of these structures appears to be the pinkish sandy clay contained within them and a small amount of fired vesicular clay which appeared to have come from a structure, possibly a dome, but which was found mixed into the deposit. Although the function of the structures remains elusive, it seems possible that the pinkish clay deposit was a residue. It was tentatively suggested that such material could be used as a constituent of a mortar paste or plaster and that the fired clay found within it may have been one of the ingredients used to provide a temper in the mixing process, although no similar product was recovered during excavation. To resolve this conundrum, further examples from other, better preserved, villa sites need to be identified.

11.4 Material goods and contacts

The finds from the site provided the most information with regard to the status of the villa and the contacts that it had. Of these the pottery was the most ubiquitous. Assemblages were collected from the excavations in 1957, 1972, 1974-5, 1996, and 2004/5 but comparisons of the data by quantification were made problematic by the different excavation strategies employed and removal of a large proportion of material prior to the more recent archaeological surveys.

The overall impression from the current excavations re-iterates the conclusion reached by Monk that the villa was not a luxurious establishment. With the exception of the samian, which was perhaps surprisingly common there was no continental imported pottery discovered in the current work and only three sherds recovered in 1957 from the villa itself; one piece of Spanish amphora, a piece of North Gaulish fabric and a piece of Cologne fabric (Monk 1982, 54; Timby, this report). The samian was all of common vessel types, generally undecorated and lacking unique character. The sherds recovered in 1957 numbered 52 (around 23 vessels), of which three were decorated. This represented 5.9% of the total number of 877 sherds from the excavation, a not dissimilar proportion to the 2005 assemblage (Monk 1982, table 2). Monk also noted the dominance of the local pottery fabric types amongst the assemblage as was confirmed in the current excavations (Monk 1982, 55-56; Timby, this report). This may be largely attributed to the widespread availability of local ceramic goods since the region had one of the densest distributions of early Roman pottery kilns in the country. The regional imports were for the most part Oxfordshire and Nene Valley wares.

Non-pottery finds were sparse. There were small quantities of roof tile but no box flue tile or tesserae, and only one fragment of a possible *pila* or brick. There was a lack of vessel glass, or personal possessions such as brooches, pins and beads, and very few coins. The finds from the earlier excavations have not been systematically quantified and an appraisal of them was not possible. Woods, however, noted the presence of several additional items such as a few pieces of box-flue tile, a dolphin brooch, two iron fire-dogs, an iron tyre, a quernstone and several oyster shells. Green also recorded oysters and a fragment of glass bowl. None of these objects were remarkable and do not alter the picture of a relatively mundane villa establishment.

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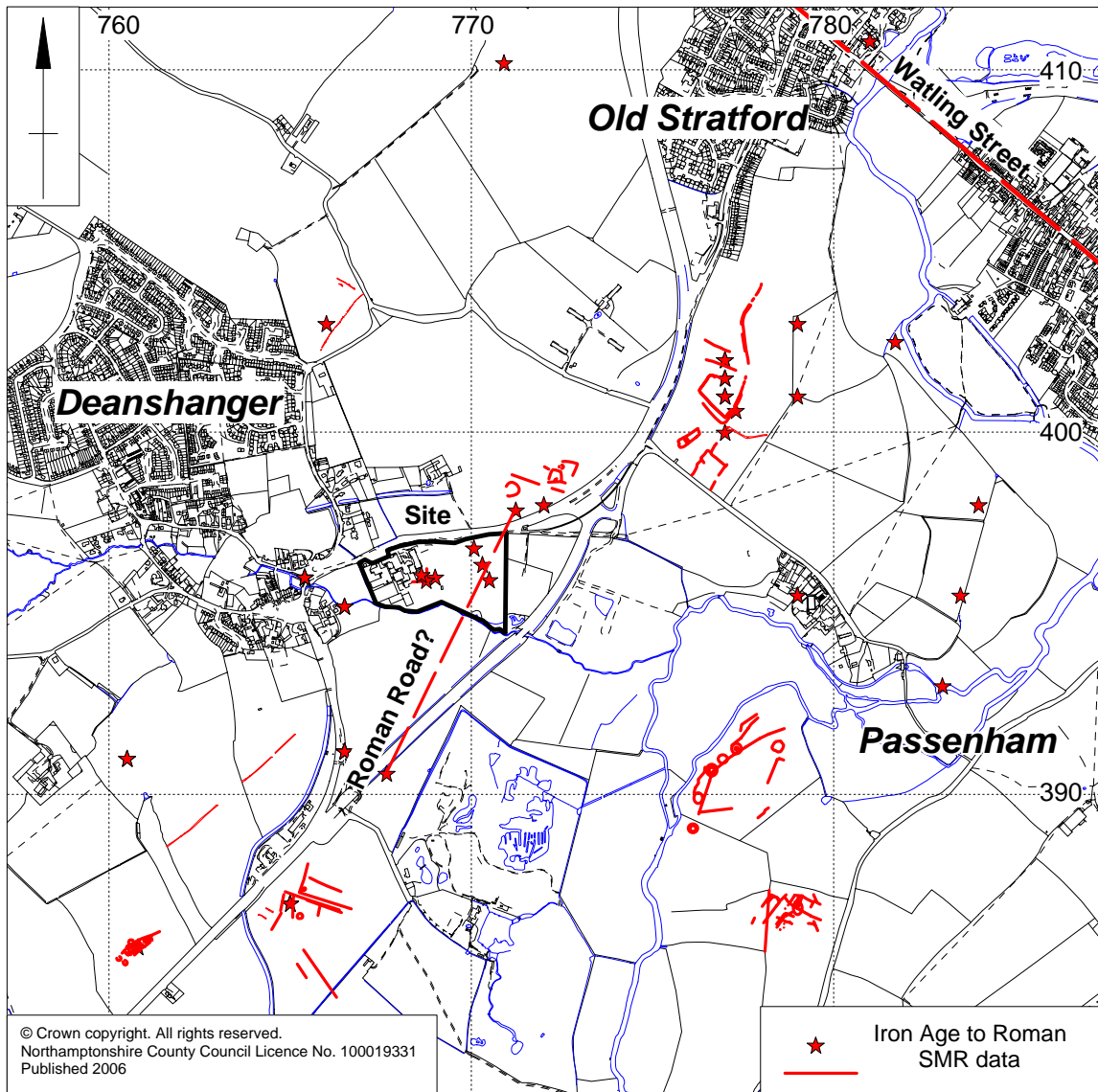
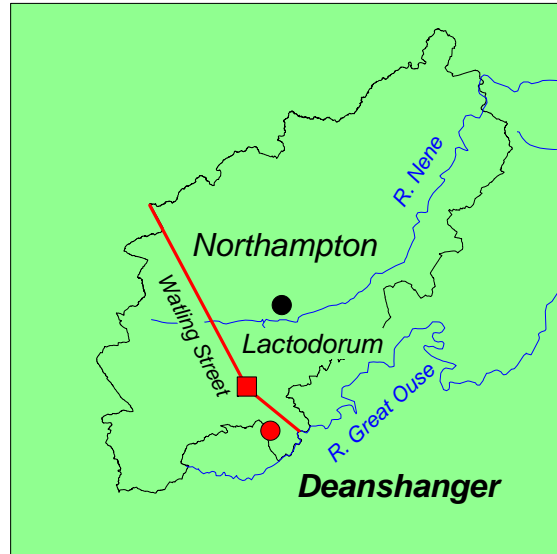
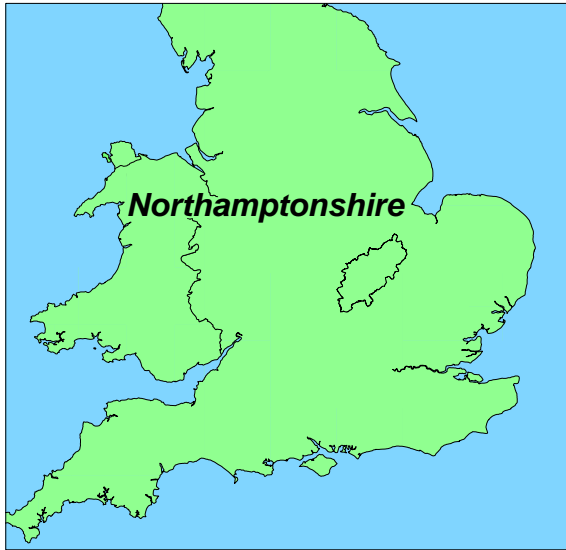
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Scale 1:20,000

Fig 1 Site location map

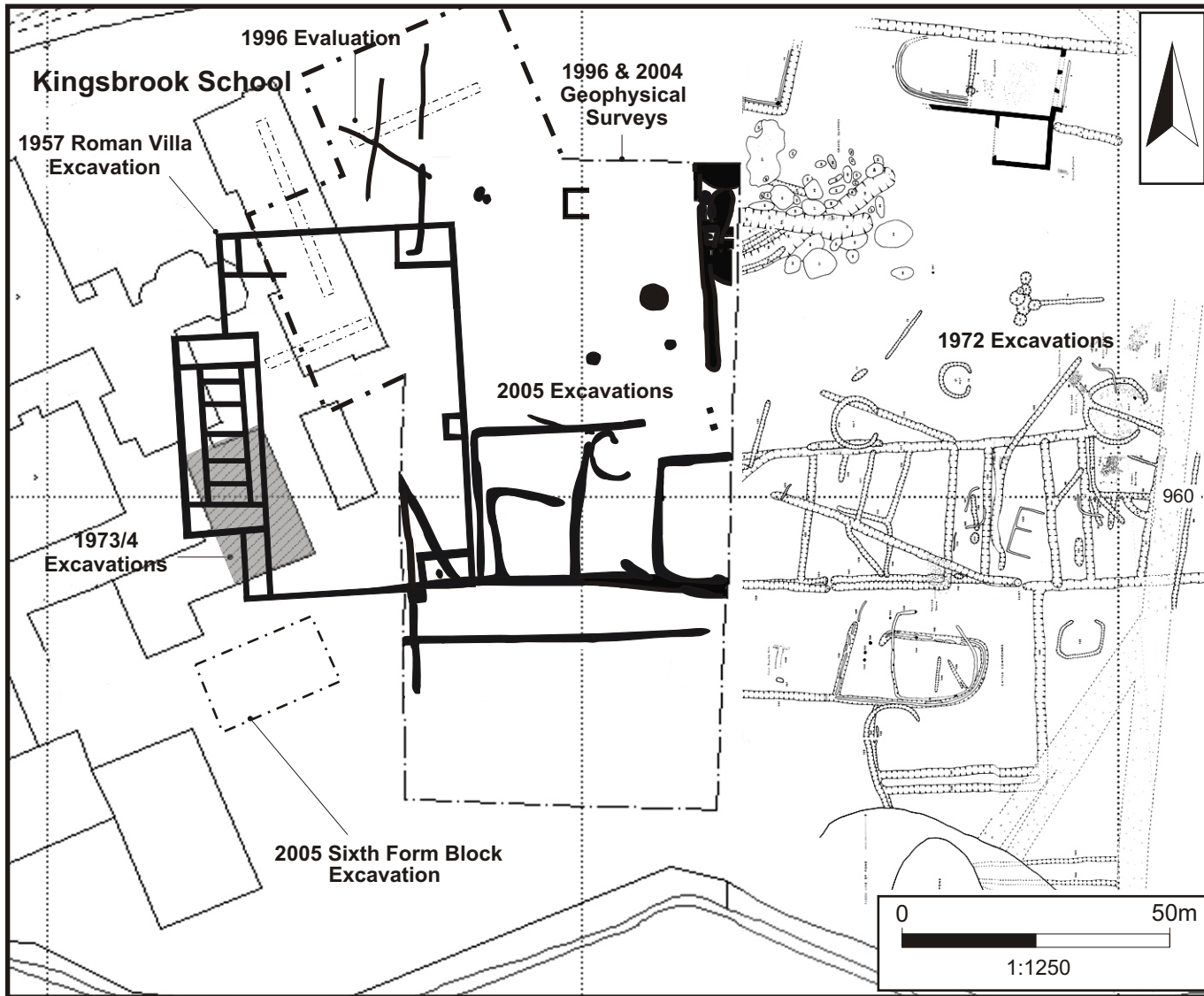


Fig 2 Plan showing areas of previous archaeological investigation

Plan of 1957 excavation (after Green)

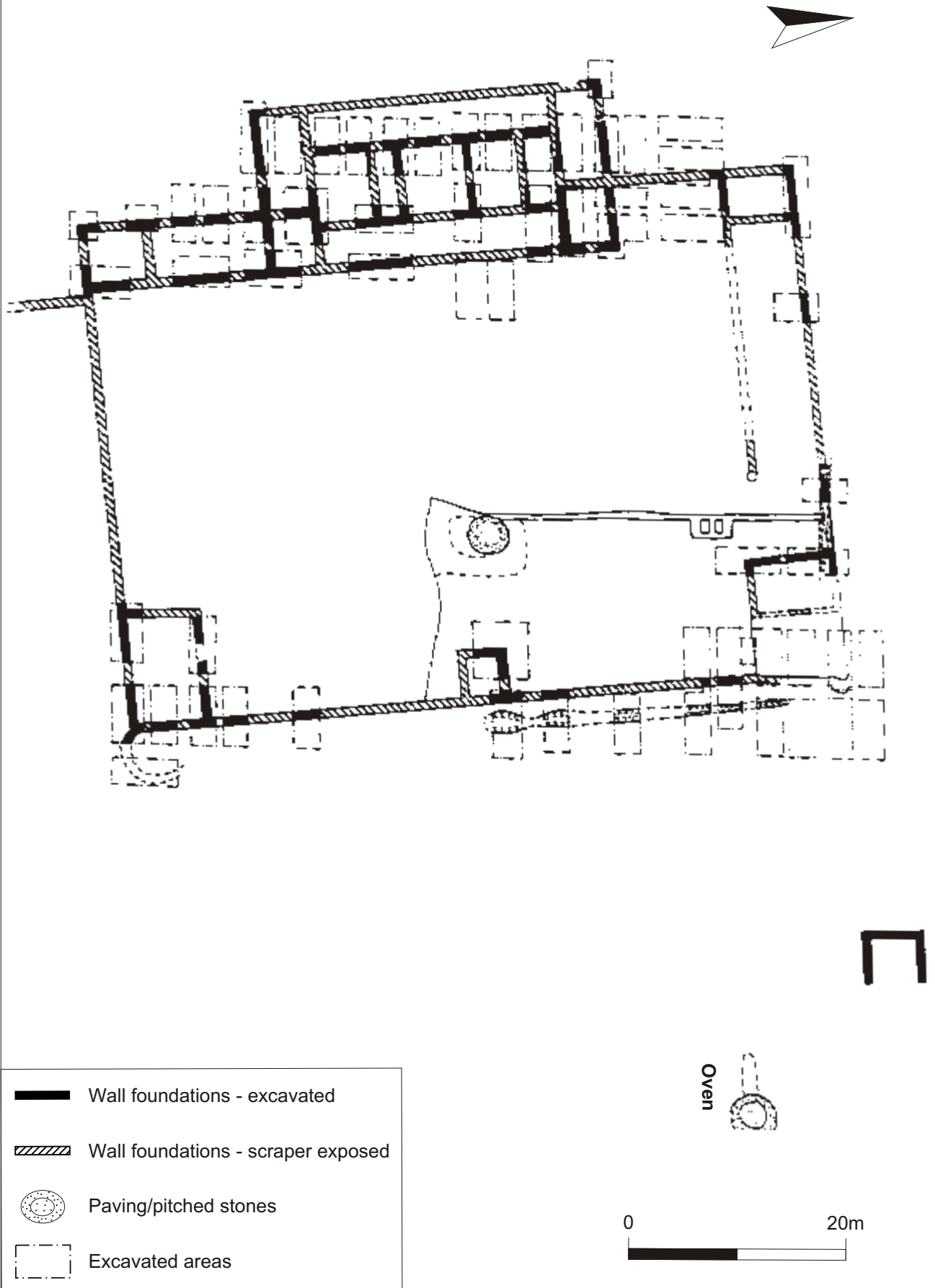


Fig 3 Plan of the 1957 excavations (after Green)

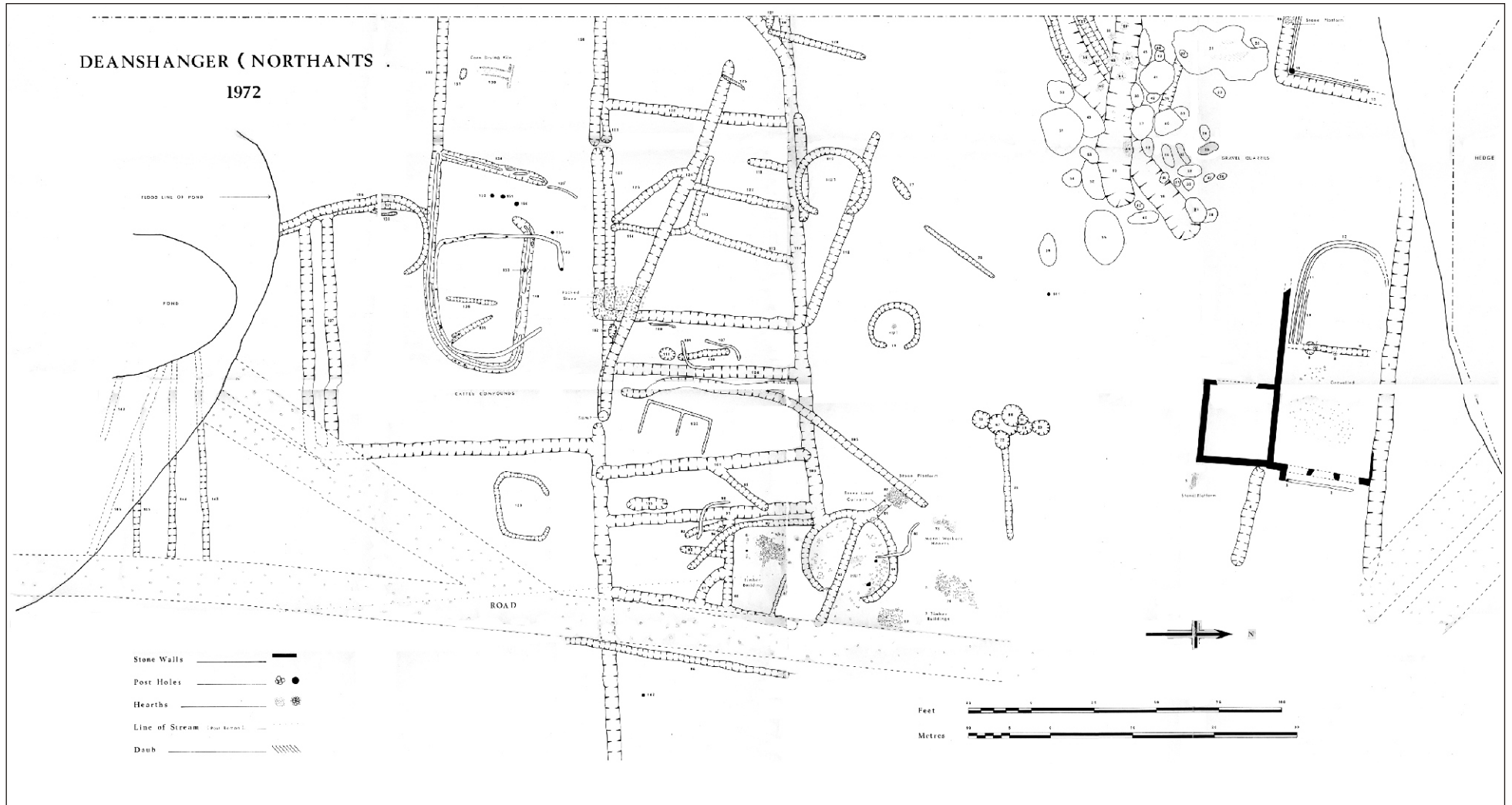


Fig 4 Plan of the 1972 excavations (Woods)

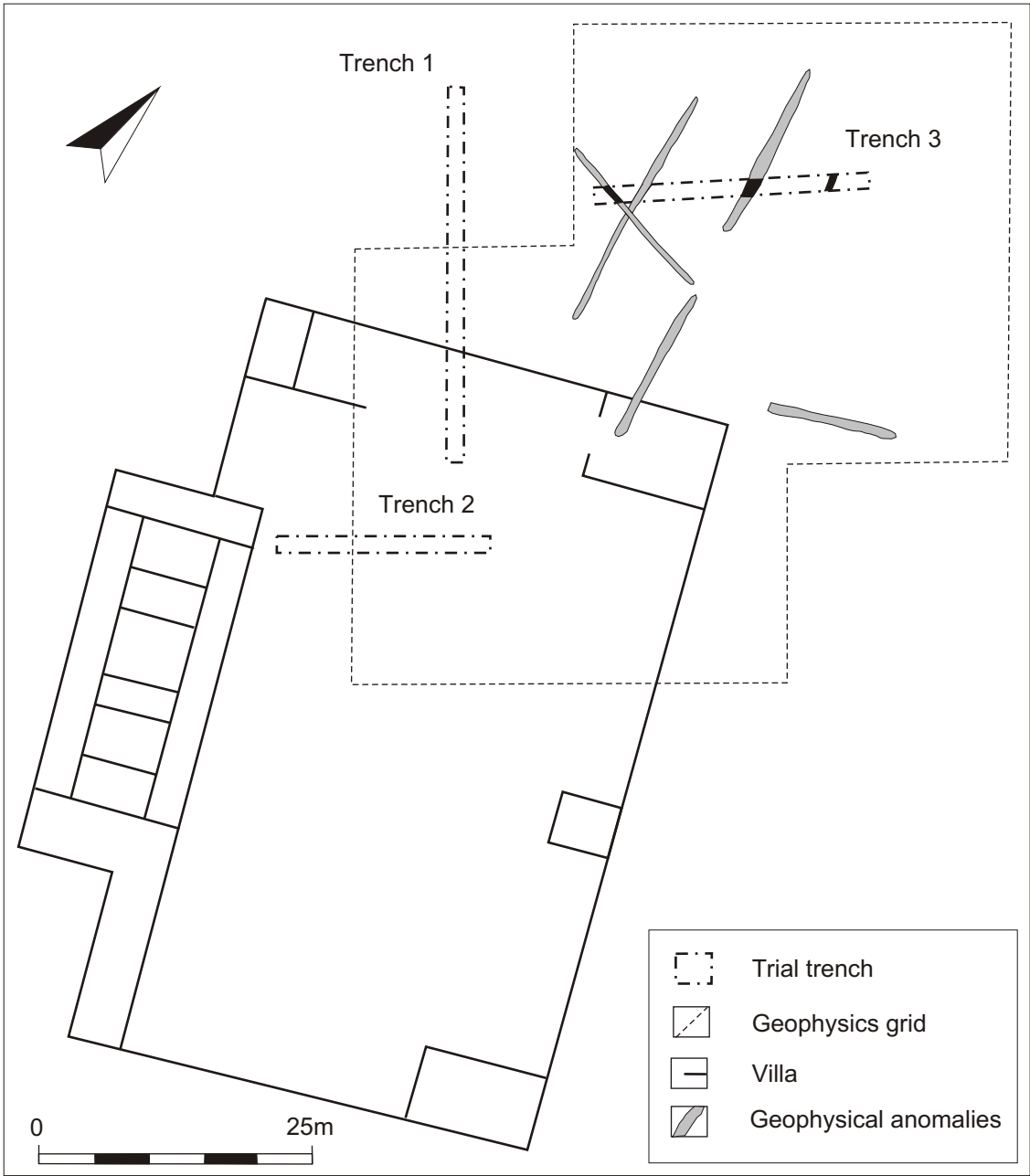


Fig 5 Plan of the 1996 evaluation (Holmes)

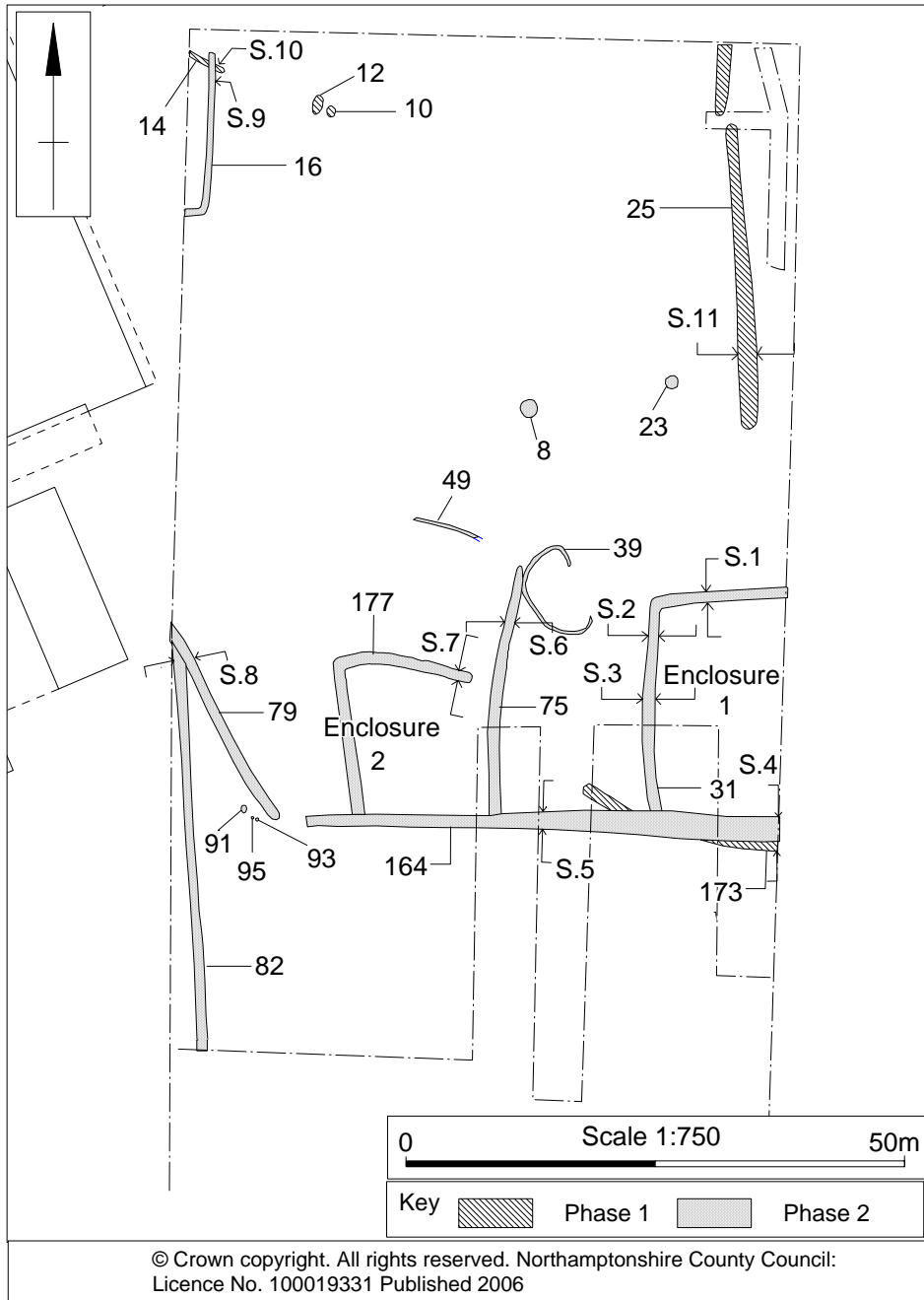
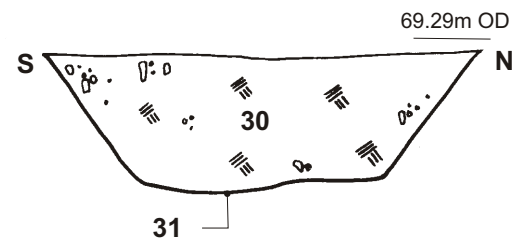
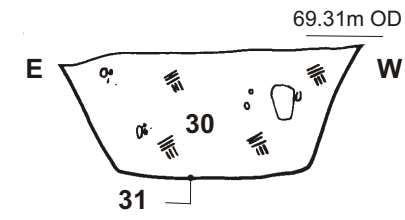


Fig 6 Archaeological features: Phases 1 & 2

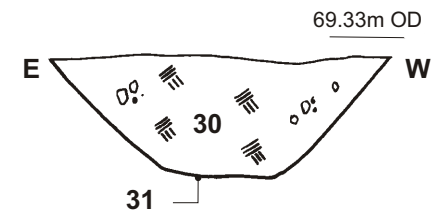
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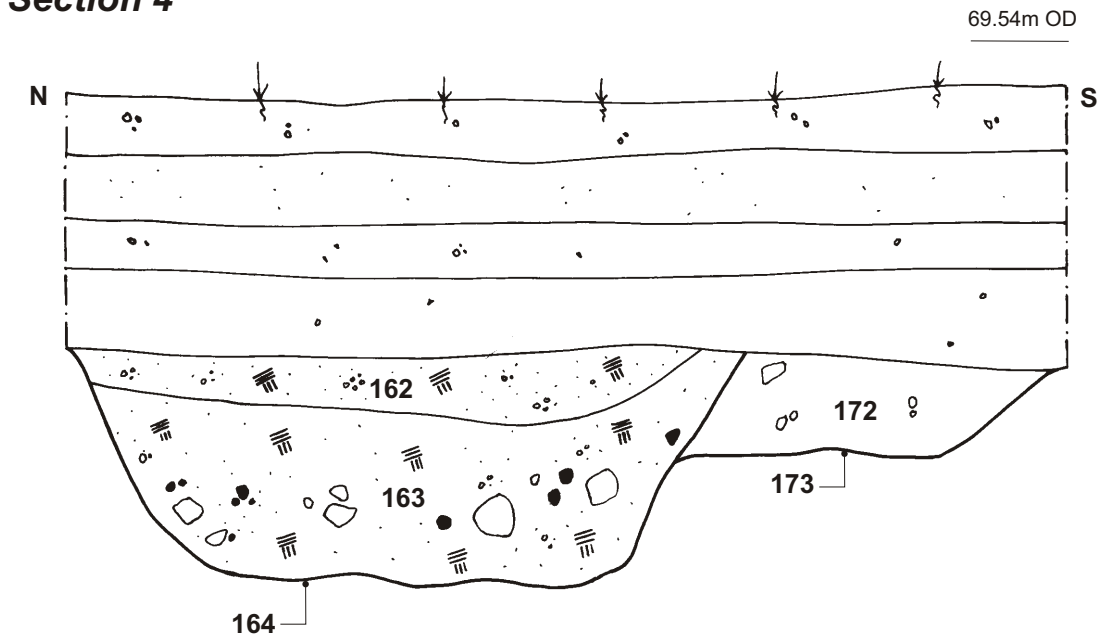
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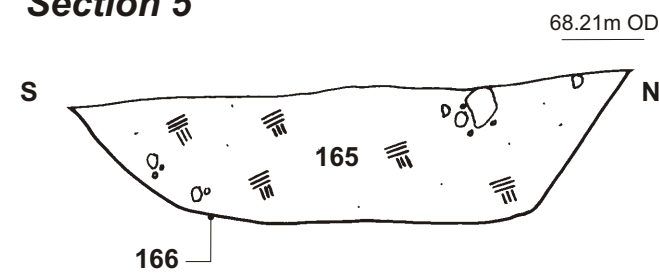
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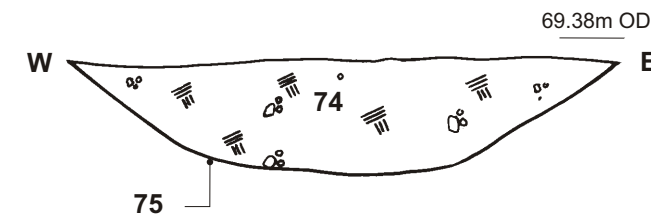
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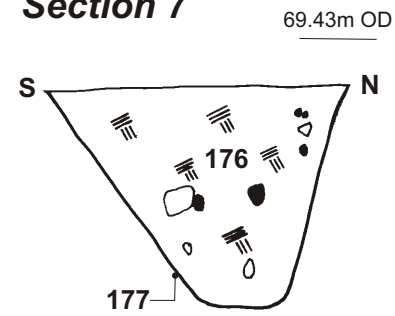
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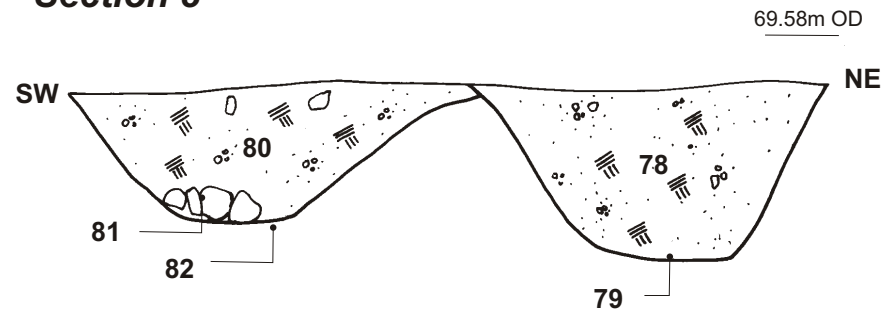
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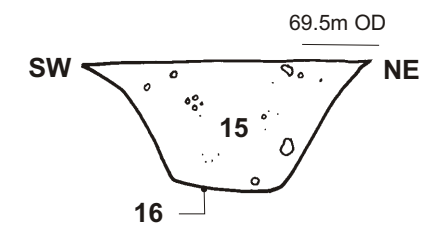
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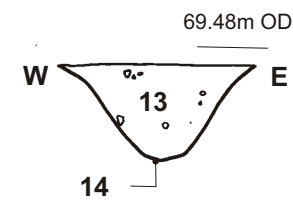
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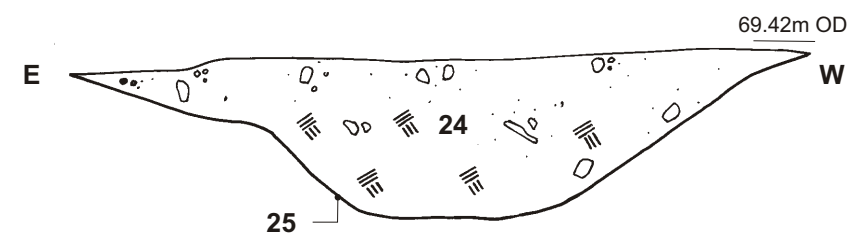
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Section 10



Section 11



Key






-  Clay
-  Silt
-  Limestone
-  Charcoal
-  Gravel with Flint



Fig 7 Archaeological sections: Phases 1 & 2

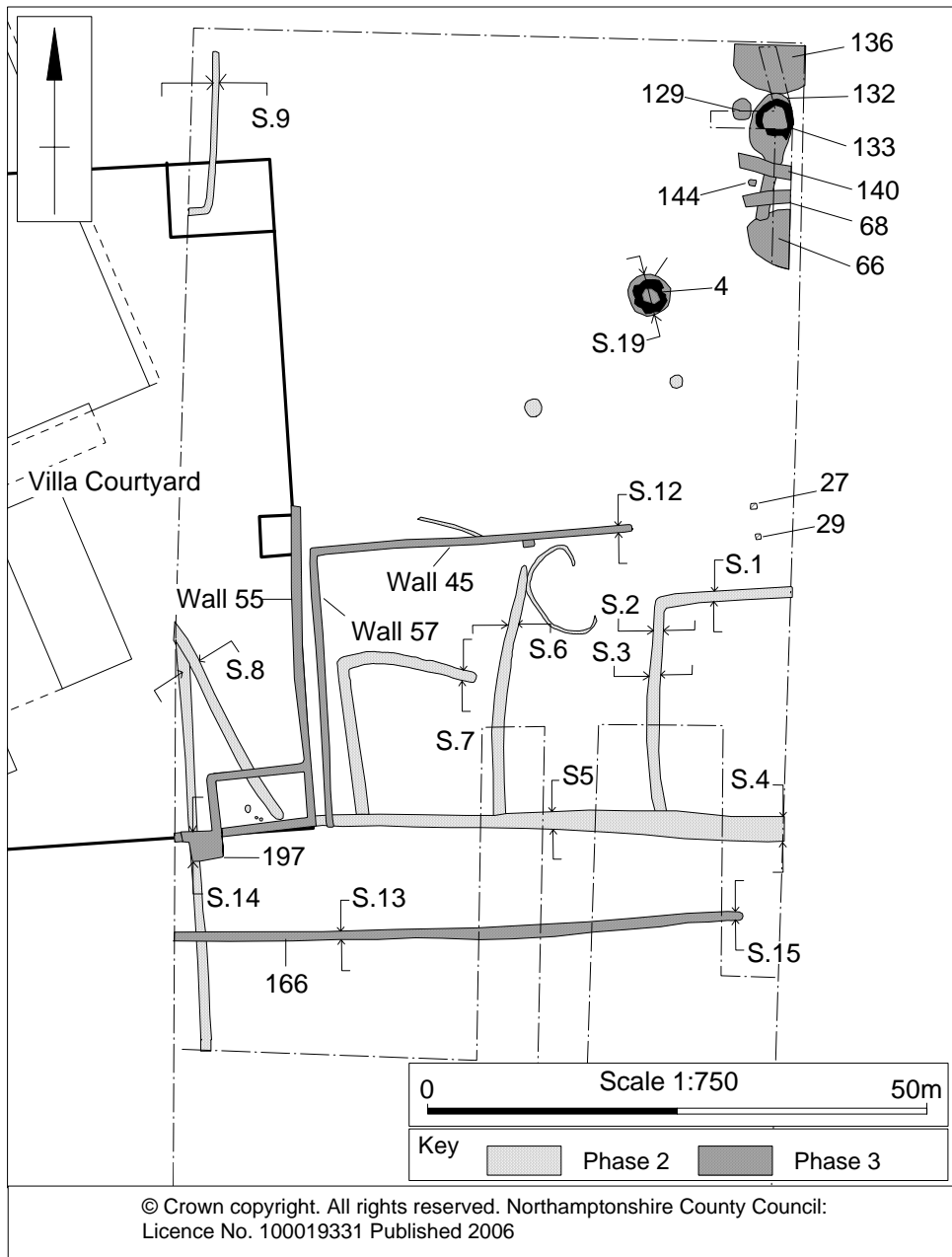
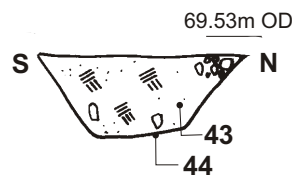
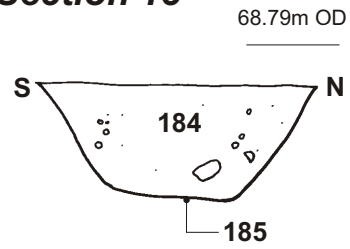


Fig 8 Archaeological features: Phases 2 & 3

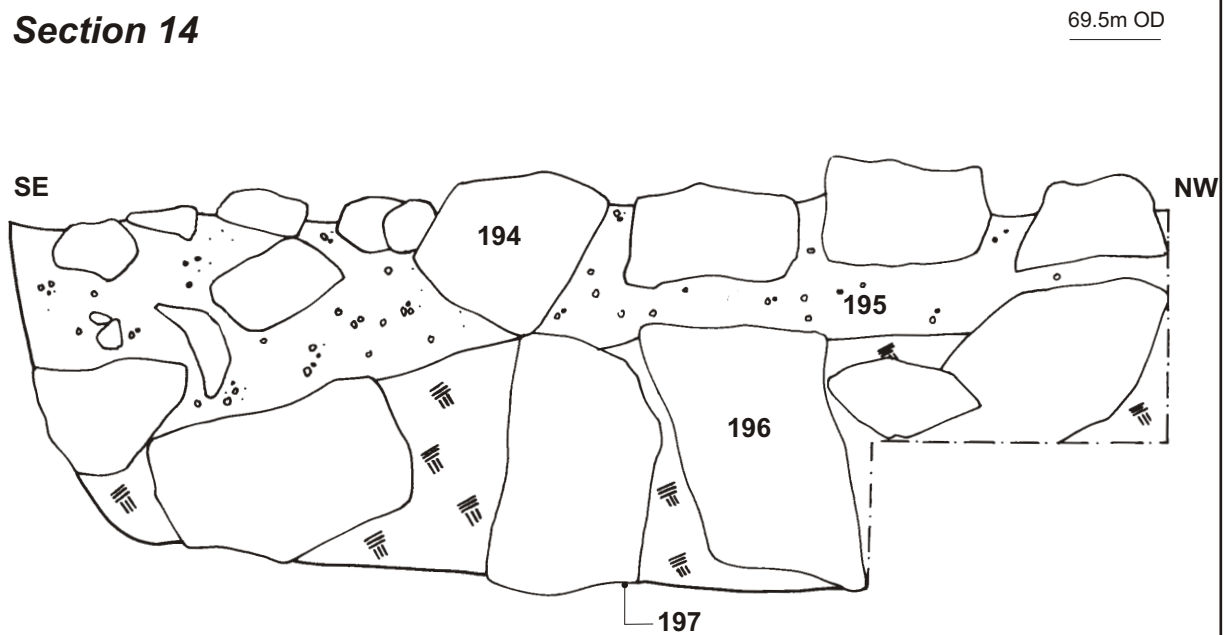
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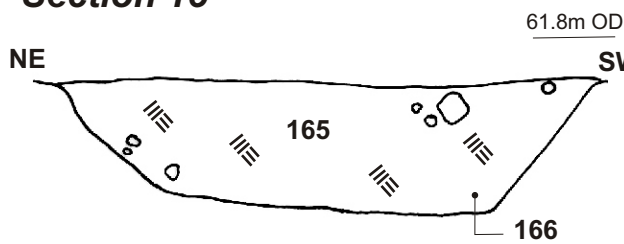
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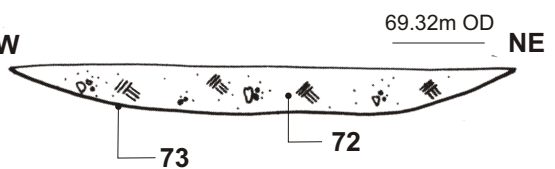
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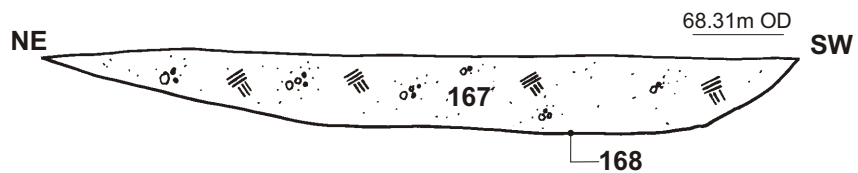
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Section 17



Section 18

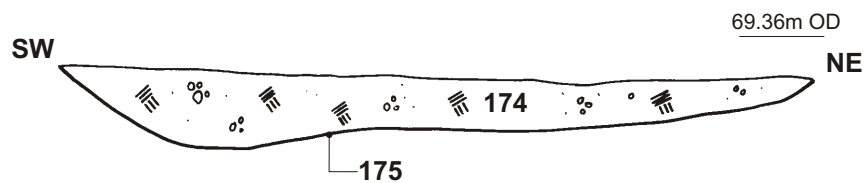


Fig 9 Archaeological sections: Phase 3 & medieval

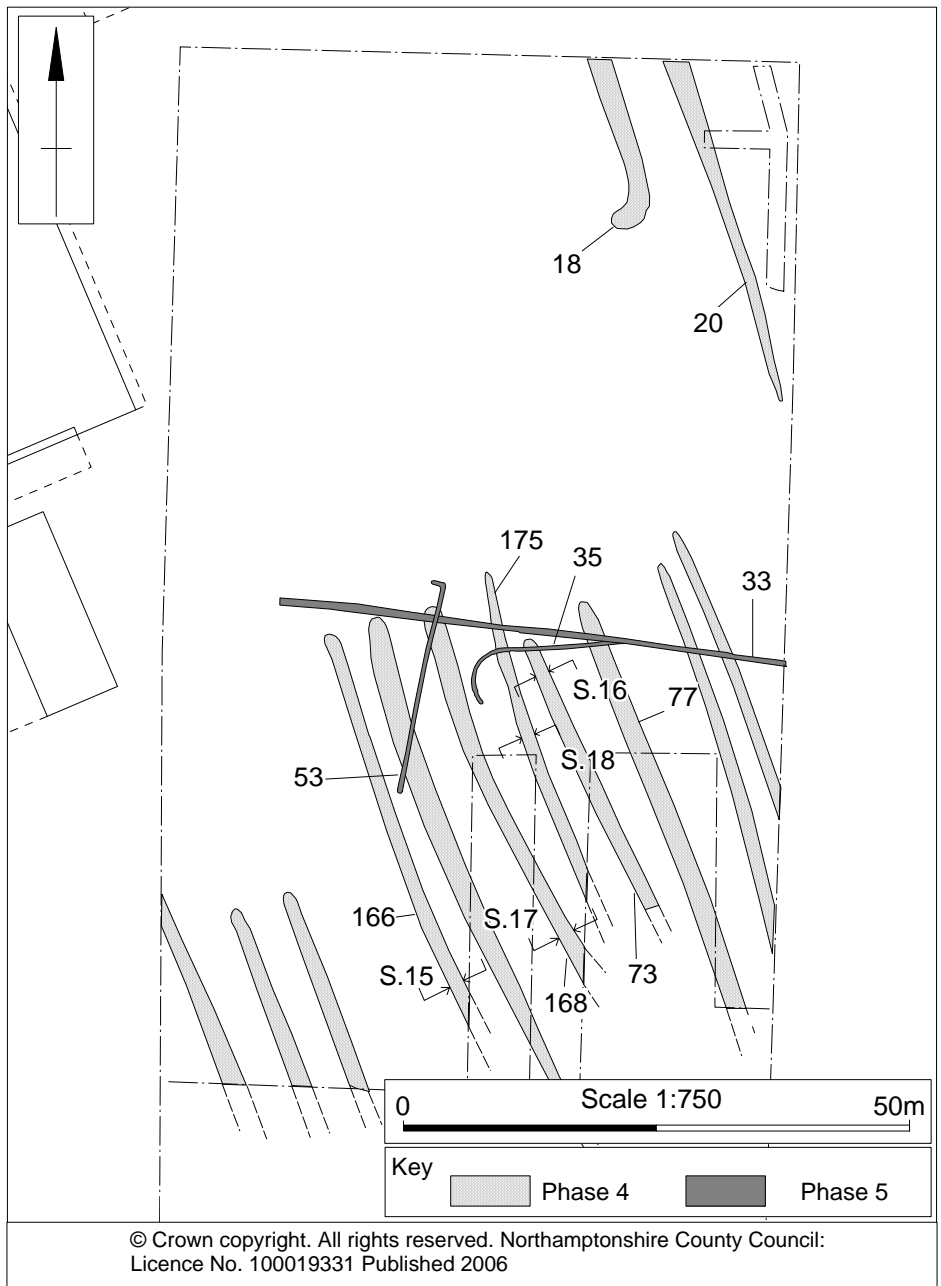


Fig 11 Archaeological features: medieval & post-medieval



Plate 1: Stone-filled foundation pit [197]

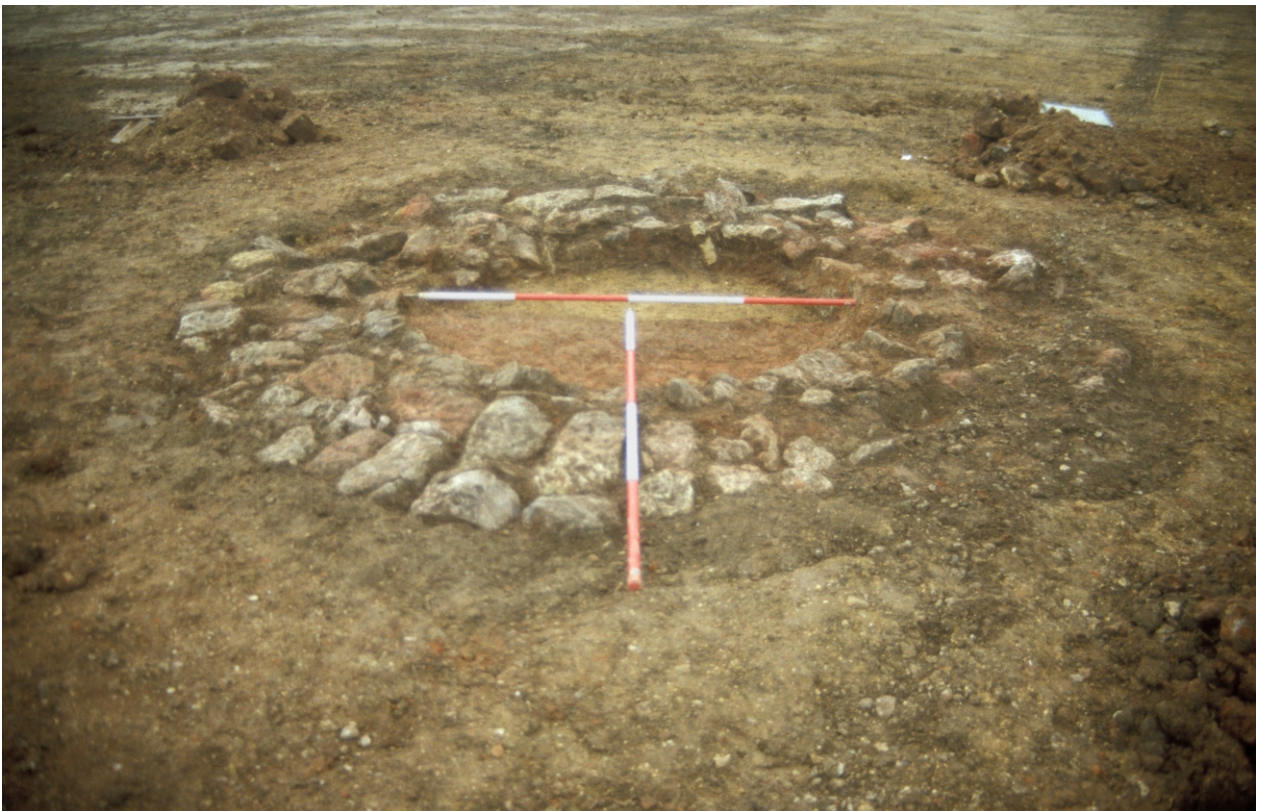


Plate 2: Circular stone structure [4]



Plate 3: "Dragonesque" fibula brooch