



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Northamptonshire Archaeology

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
on land adjacent to The Cutting, Thorpe by Water
Rutland**



September 2005

Report 05/121

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	An Archaeological Watching Brief on land adjacent to The Cutting, Thorpe by Water, Rutland	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks connected with the construction of a new house on land adjacent to 'The Cutting', Thorpe by Water, in Rutland. Two shallow ditches were revealed during ground reduction and were traced part of the way across the site. A few sherds of ?late Iron Age and Roman pottery were recovered suggesting that the features were boundaries associated with occupation nearby, although it is not clear where that might be.	
Project type (eg desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Watching Brief Planning Application No: FUL/2005/0355/CC	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	No	
Monument type and period	Ditches	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	Pottery: ?late Iron Age and Roman	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Rutland	
Site address (including postcode)	Plot next to 'The Cutting', Main Street, Thorpe by Water, Oakham, Rutland	
Easting (use numbered 100km grid square no.)	4894	
Northing	2964	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Senior Planning Archaeologist, LCC	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Andy Mudd	
Project Manager	Andy Mudd	
Sponsor or funding body	Wright Investments	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	August 2005	
End date	August 2005	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Rutland County Museum Accession No: 14.2005	Pottery Animal bones
Paper	ditto	Pro forma sheets Colour slides Monochrome negatives
Digital	ditto	Report; text and figures

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND ADJACENT TO 'THE CUTTING', THORPE BY WATER, RUTLAND

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during site levelling and the excavation of wall footings for a new dwelling on a small plot of land adjacent to 'The Cutting', Thorpe by Water, Rutland. The soil strip revealed two shallow, intercutting gullies running parallel in a NE-SW direction. One was traced further SE in the wall footings. Sample excavation yielded a few eroded sherds of coarse pottery of probable late Iron Age date and one securely Roman sherd. The findings add to the evidence of Roman occupation nearby, which was suggested by the pottery from of a watching brief on the adjacent plot in 2003.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on 15th and 16th August 2005 during groundworks connected with the construction of a new dwelling on a small plot of land adjacent to a house called 'The Cutting' on Main Street, Thorpe by Water, Rutland (NGR SK 894964: Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Mr John Wright of 'The Cutting', Thorpe by Water in fulfilment of planning conditions relating to the development (Application Ref. FUL/2005/0355/CC).

The work was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and approved by Richard Clark, Senior Planning Archaeologist, Historic and Natural Environment, Leicestershire County Council. The purpose of the investigation was to monitor the groundworks on the building plot and record any archaeological remains disturbed or exposed.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

The site occupies about 1225 sq m on the south-east edge of the village adjacent to a recently built property called 'The Cutting'. The village lies in the parish of the same name, east of Uppingham and close to the county boundary (Fig 1).

The village sits on a spur of higher ground overlooking the River Welland while a now disused railway cutting defines the southern boundary of the new plot. At the time of fieldwork the land was rough grassland. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey

as comprising Middle Lias Marlstone Rock (BGS Sheet 157, 1978), although excavations showed that the sterile substrate on the site would appear to be Boulder Clay.

2.2 Historical Background

A Desk-Based Assessment was undertaken in 2003 in connection with the development of the adjacent property, 'The Cutting' (NA 2003). This report included an examination of information from the Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and an examination of the parish Tithe Map (1849), and the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps (1886 and 1900) held in Leicestershire Record Office.

Thorpe by Water is thought to be a shrunken medieval settlement and directly opposite the site the manor house, which has a date stone of 1597, lies adjacent to a group of earthworks. There is extensive evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation around the village as a whole, and a hollow way is evident on the north-west side. A 19th-century railway cutting passes through the southern end of the site. Recently, land between the dismantled railway and the River Welland, about 400 m north-east of the site, was assessed through fieldwalking and a large amount of Roman pottery and metalwork were discovered (SMR ref. 89NE.BC).

The Watching Brief undertaken during the development of 'The Cutting' (NA 2003) discovered the eastern terminal of a post-medieval ditch which contained medieval and Roman pottery. The Roman pottery, in particular, was unabraded suggesting the presence of a Roman site nearby.

3 AIMS AND METHODS

The aim of the Watching Brief was to observe the groundworks associated with the stripping of topsoil and subsoil and the excavation of foundations and associated service trenches, to record all archaeological deposits uncovered, and to recover associated archaeological materials.

The Watching Brief was undertaken at a 'comprehensive level' during the initial stripping of topsoil and subsoil to make the site level, and subsequently during the excavation of the wall footings for the new building. In addition, the site of the proposed septic tank was stripped of overburden under archaeological observation.

The service drains were to be excavated at a later date and were not observed since it was judged that they would yield little additional archaeological information. This variation to the Project Design was agreed with the Senior Planning Archaeologist, LCC.

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The footprint of the building – an irregular area up to 25 m long and 15 m wide – was levelled using a 360° mechanical excavator equipped with a large toothless bucket. As the ground sloped naturally NW-SE this entailed removing a greater depth of soil from the northern part of the site, and resulted in the exposure of the sterile clay substrate only within a strip about 10 m wide running N-S (Fig 2). Elsewhere the subsoil was not entirely removed.

The wall footings and the chimney stack foundations of the new building were excavated using a 0.5 m wide toothless bucket to depths of between about 1.0 m and 2.5 m.

4.1 Archaeological features

The natural geology consisted of a dirty yellow clay or clayey silt with occasional pebbles. It was observed to have post-medieval pottery (not retained) embedded in it so it appears to have been somewhat disturbed.

Gully 3 cut the natural substrate and ran NE-SW across the northern part of the site. It was 0.8-1.0 m wide and 0.3-0.4 m deep with a markedly asymmetrical profile consisting of an almost vertical southern edge and a shallower northern edge. Its single fill (4) was a hard light grey clayey silt with abundant limestone fragments and some cobbles. Some of the smaller stones were burnt red. Three sherds of pottery and some fragments of animal bones were recovered from the two sections excavated. These would appear to be late Iron Age or Roman in date.

The gully was traced for 11 m across the stripped area and identified in the SW footing. It was fairly straight but may have curved slightly to the south.

Gully 5 ran on the same alignment as Gully 3 but it was not clear whether it was earlier or later. It ran from an eastern terminal, but was only traced for 5 m and did not appear in the SW wall footing, so it may have terminated before then or have been truncated. It was about 2 m wide and 0.3 m deep with a broad flat base. The fill was very similar to that in Gully 3, but generally stonier. It yielded two small sherds of pottery which are likely to be late Iron Age or Roman.

The gullies were sealed by a compact grey clay-silt subsoil (2) which contained some modern material.

4.2 Pottery

by Margaret Darling

The pottery amounted to six sherds, weighing 67g from three deposits. No problems are anticipated for long term storage. The pottery has been archived using count and weight as measures according to the guidelines laid down for the minimum archive by *The Study Group for Roman Pottery*. The archive record, below, will be curated for future study.

All are body sherds, four of shell-gritted fabric, one vesicular, and a single grey quartz-gritted. The shell-gritted sherds are typical of such fabrics from South Lincolnshire and further south, containing fossiliferous shell and punctate brachiopods, while the nature of the lost inclusions in the vesicular sherd is uncertain, but possibly fossiliferous limestone from similar clay beds as the shell-gritted fabrics; all also contain red-brown clay pellets.

The only shelly-gritted sherds with any possibly diagnostic feature are two joining oxidized body sherds from **Gully 3 (Context 4)** with a trace of a possible cordon. The vessel form is unknown, and it is uncertain whether this was a wheel-thrown or hand-made vessel. Hand-made shell-gritted vessels continue from the Iron Age into the Roman period in the area, leaving the Roman date tentative. If earlier it would belong to the late Iron Age.

Gully 5 (Context 6) contained only a single shell-gritted body sherd which had been heavily burnt on the interior. While such burning is relatively common in the Iron Age, the thickness of the sherd and character suggest this is of Roman date.

The only possible dating came from the unstratified **context 2 (subsoil)**, where the nature of a thick grey body sherd from the basal zone of a vessel, and traces of burnished line decoration suggest this is possibly from a wide-mouth bowl, and more likely to date to the later 3rd to 4th centuries.

The evidence from the ditches is inconclusive, and it is possible they are of a ?late Iron Age date. The unstratified sherds belong the later Roman period.

Archive Database

Cxt	Fabric	Form	Manuf +	Ve	Altn	D?	Details	Lnk	Sherd s	Weigh t
002	GREY	B?	BS?	-	-	-	BS THK;TRACE BURNISH SCROLL? BWM?	-	1	25
002	VESIC	BD?	-	-	ABR	-	BS PROB BASE FRAG;GRY VESIC;RB CORT;LTBN EXT;RB CLAY PELLIS;?LOST CALC?	-	1	13
002	ZDATE	-	-	-	-	-	3-4C?	-	-	-
004	SHEL	-	WM?	1	-	-	BSS J;GRY;RB CORT/SURFS;F.COMM.SHEL;PROB WM;TRACE CORDON?;PUNC.BRACH?	-	2	14
004	SHEL	-	-	-	-	-	BS GRY;BN CORT;GRY/BN;F.COMM SHELL;PUNCT.BRACH	-	1	5
004	ZDATE	-	-	-	-	-	ROM?	-	-	-
006	SHEL	CLSD ?	-	-	V.BUR NT	-	BS GRY;BURNT DEP INT	-	1	10
006	ZDATE	-	-	-	-	-	ROM?	-	-	-

4.3 Animal bones

by Karen Deighton

Eighty-one grams of animal bone was recovered by hand from two contexts during the course of excavation. The material was scanned to ascertain the condition of the bone, the species represented and the potential for further analysis.

Preservation was reasonable with moderate fragmentation and little sign of surface abrasion. Three instances of canid gnawing were noted. Flaking of the outer surface of the bone was noted on one element from context 4. This is usually associated with rapid drying out following waterlogging.

Context 4 (Ditch 3)

Gallus (chicken) Proximal femur

Ovicaprid (sheep/goat) Maxillary molar

Sus (pig) Radius shaft

Bos (cow) Scapula fragment

Indeterminate long bone shaft fragment

Context 6 (Ditch 5)

Ovicaprid (sheep/goat) proximal scapula fragment

With such a small amount of material the potential for further analysis is severely limited. Therefore no further work is envisaged.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive (Rutland C C Museum Accession Code 14.2005) comprises:

RECORD	NUMBER
Pottery	1 bag
Animal bones	1 bag
Record forms	12
A2 drawings	2
Colour slides	11
Black and white contacts and negatives	10
Digital photographs	9

4 CONCLUSIONS

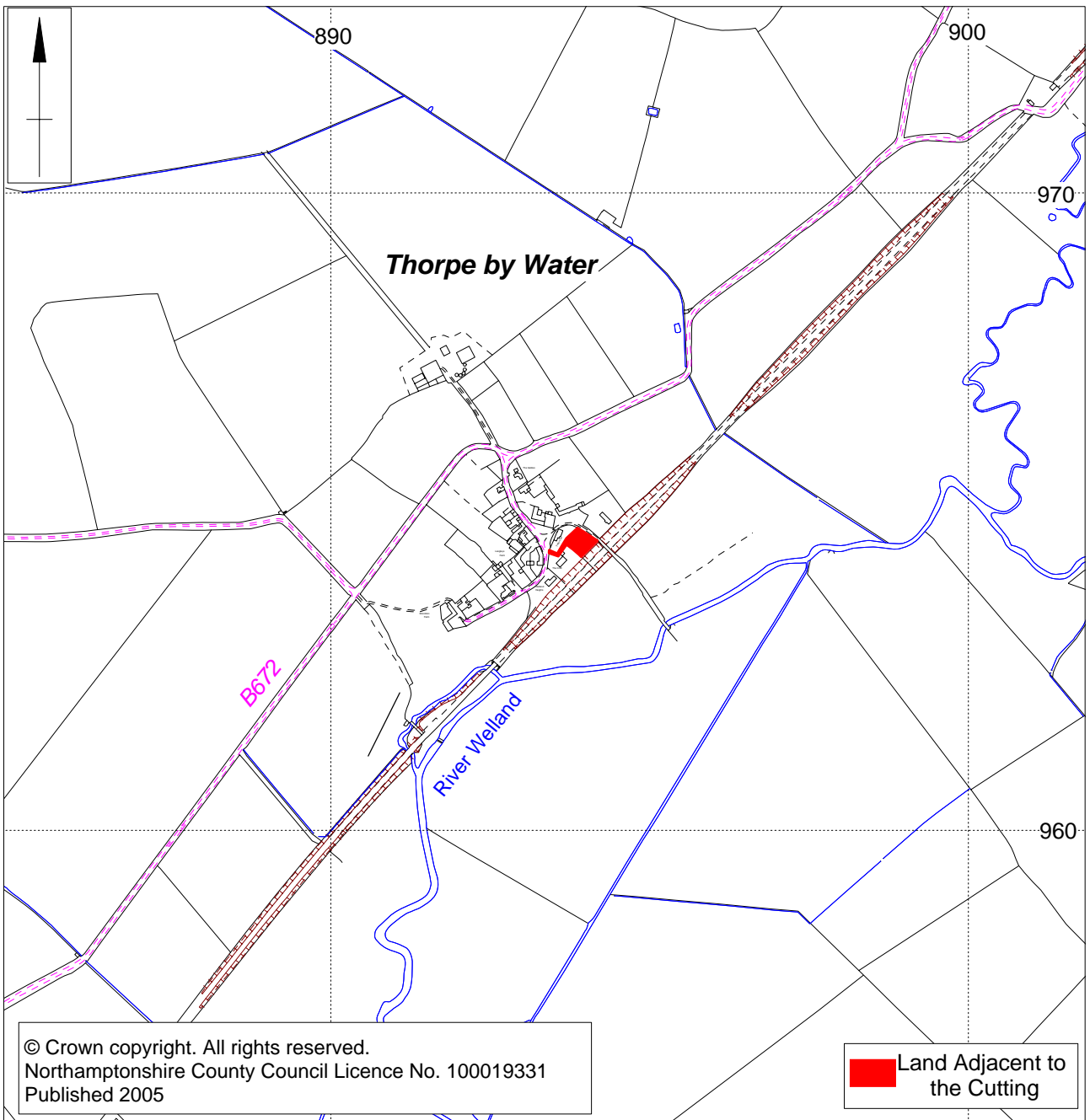
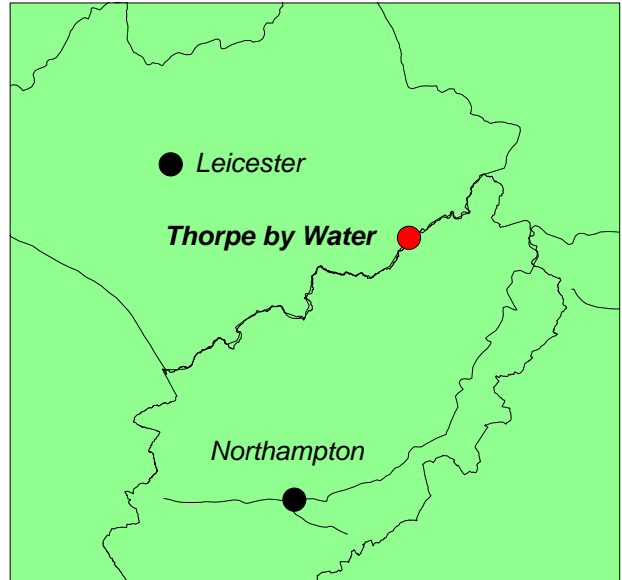
Two shallow gullies of probable Late Iron Age or Roman date were found crossing the site for an unknown distance. They contained just a few small fragments of abraded pottery and are probably peripheral boundary features related to occupation a short distance away. There were a few superficial sherds from nearby, but nothing of significance in the other areas which were disturbed below the level of subsoil, and, although the unrecorded presence of other features is possible, it does not appear likely that these would have been densely distributed or prolific in terms of finds.

It is not clear why these archaeological features contained limestone fragments, which are not local, but it is possible that stone-built structures using imported material were located nearby.

The presence of (redeposited) Roman pottery in the adjacent property (NA 2003) supports the proposition of a nearby late Iron Age/Roman site, although it remains unclear where this focus of occupation lay. It would seem to be unrelated to the recorded site to the NE, which is 400 m distant, and it is possible another site lies under the present village, or in the field to the south where it is likely to have been at least partly damaged by the railway cutting.

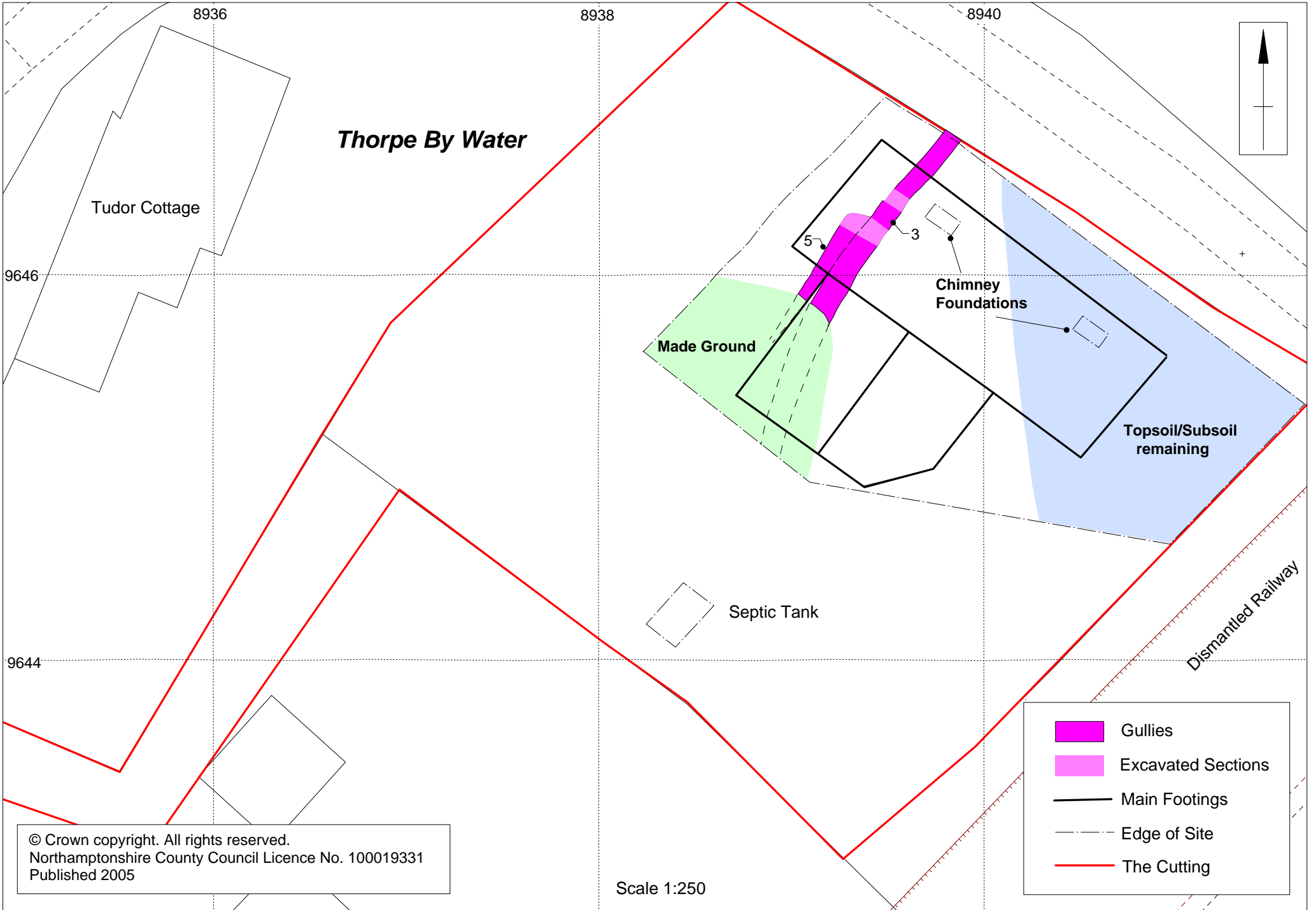
REFERENCES

NA 2003 *The Croft, Thorpe by Water, Oakham, Rutland: Archaeological Watching Brief*,
Northamptonshire Archaeology client report, 31/7/03

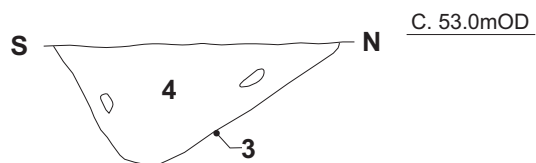


Scale 1:1000

Fig. 1



Section 1



Section 2

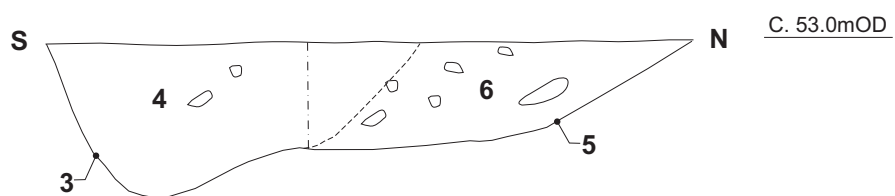


Fig. 3



Plate 1 Gully 3 (Fore) and Gullies 3 and 5 (Rear) looking SW