



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological trial trench evaluation at  
74 Main Street, Little Harrowden  
Northamptonshire  
April 2013



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

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Report 13/75

May 2013



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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>Oasis No: 150264</b>
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 74 Main Street, Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire, April 2013	
Short description	In April 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Mr James Luck, at the rear of 74 Main Street, Little Harrowden. A shallow and heavily root-disturbed ditch of possible 1st-century AD date was identified along with two shallow hollows of possible natural origin. These features, and the natural substrate, were overlain by thick layers of subsoil and topsoil which may have been built-up during landscaping of the garden.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Garden	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period		
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	74 Main Street, Little Harrowden	
Easting Northing	SP 87290 71665	
Area (sq m/ha)	1618 sq m	
Height aOD	92m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Director/Supervisor	James Ladocha (NA)	
Project Manager	Jim Brown (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	James Luck (Owner)	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	17/04//2013	
End date	08/05/2013	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeology store	Pottery & animal bone fragments
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at 74 Main Street, Little Harrowden, Northamptonshire, April 2013	
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Author(s)	James Ladocha	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT  
74 MAIN STREET, LITTLE HARROWDEN  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
April 2013**

*Abstract*

*In April 2013, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Mr James Luck, at the rear of 74 Main Street, Little Harrowden. A shallow and heavily root-disturbed ditch of possible 1st-century AD date was identified along with two shallow hollows of possible natural origin. These features, and the natural substrate, were overlain by thick layers of subsoil and topsoil which may have been built-up during landscaping of the garden.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Mr James Luck to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation of the rear of his property at 74 Main Street, Little Harrowden, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 87290 71665, Fig 1). The work was undertaken in advance of development of a new dwelling within the existing rear garden of 74 Main Street, with trenches positioned within the footprint of the proposed building. All work was undertaken to meet the requirements of Northamptonshire County Council Planning, as set out in the briefs (NCC Planning 2012a; b). The Assistant Planning Archaeologist attended the site during the works.

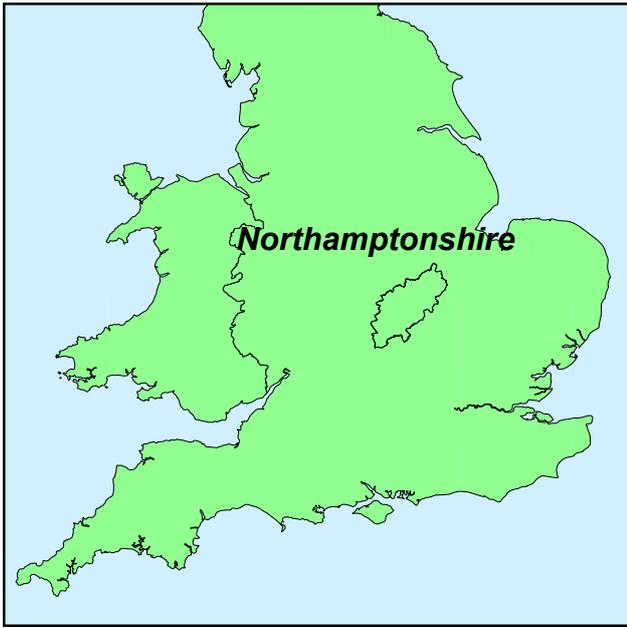
The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Brown 2013). Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation and all works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents of English Heritage (EH 2006; 2008) and the appropriate standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (IfA 2008a-b).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and geology**

Little Harrowden is on the north-west slope of a tributary valley to the River Ise. The development area is located on the north-east end of the modern village, but along its historic High Street, 105m due east of St Mary's Church which dates from the late 12th century. The site area is c0.16ha, comprising a large garden area. The land is bounded to the north-east and south-west by the neighbouring gardens on Main Street, and a pasture field lies to south-east behind the rear of the property. The existing residence at 74 Main Street stands on the frontage. The site is reasonably level, at c92m above Ordnance Datum, lying upon a terrace that overlooks the stream to the south-east.

The geology of the wider area is mapped as Upper Lias Clay with Oolitic Limestone outcrops forming the ridges along the valley sides (BGS 2001), localised Northampton sand with ironstone is also expected (NCC Planning 2012a; b). This would be typical of the varied geology along the Jurassic ridge through Northamptonshire. The soils are of the Banbury (544) association, comprising brashy well drained coarse and fine loamy ferruginous soils with some deep clayey soils (LAT 1983).



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1

## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The Royal Commission survey notes eight sites of archaeological significance within the parish of Little Harrowden (RCHME 1979, 81-82). Archaeological features were identified from aerial photographic evidence comprising:

- a 30m diameter ring ditch to the south-west of the village,
- a complex of small rectangular enclosures, hut circles, a pit alignment and other boundary ditches in the east of the parish, overlooking the River Ise,
- further enclosures to the north of Hill Top Road,
- a prehistoric pit alignment to the south-east of Hill Top Road,
- a large rectangular enclosure and associated ditches at the north-east end of Main Street, which is associated with medieval pottery.

Medieval remains were identified as a series of closes on the south-east side of the village, extending from the rear of properties along Main Street, down into the tributary valley. A large mound on the north-east side of the village, 30m in diameter and 0.5m high, has been ploughed producing limestone roof slabs and tiles of the Lyveden type and suggesting the presence of a former building. Medieval and post-medieval pottery has been recovered.

The fields were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1781, traces of former ridge and furrow cultivation are still present within parts of the parish.

The Historic Environment Record was consulted for an inventory of all recorded events and monuments within 250m radius of the proposed development site. Rather than identifying sites it is perhaps more indicative of the general lack of work conducted in the parish to investigate the sites known from the Royal Commission survey. The concentration of listed buildings are testimony to the historic focus of this part of Main Street.

*Table 1: Historic Environment Record references*

<b>Period</b>	<b>HER Ref.</b>	<b>Event or monument</b>
prehistoric	3627	cropmarks
Bronze Age	9705	worked flint and bronze palstave, 1985-94 investigations
Saxon	7277	pottery found in 1983
medieval	3629	St Marys, Little Harrowden, religious and funerary activity
	9705	ditches below terrace, 1972 trial excavations
	5136	ridge and furrow, open fields project
post-medieval	3629	97 Main Street, early 18th-century thatched house, restored
	3629	house & barn, mid-18th century, altered late 19th century
	3629	manor house & barn, dated 1570, altered 17th-18th centuries
	3629	98 Main Street, former public house, mid-18th century
	3629	2 Main Street, former school, mid-19th century

### **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

The principal aim of the archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality and extent of the archaeological resource and to inform further decisions regarding the archaeological mitigation strategy for the site.

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was stated in the briefs supplied by the local authority (NCC Planning 2012a; b). The general purpose was to understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, specifically:

- establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site;
- recover artefacts to assist in development of the type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains if they were encountered.

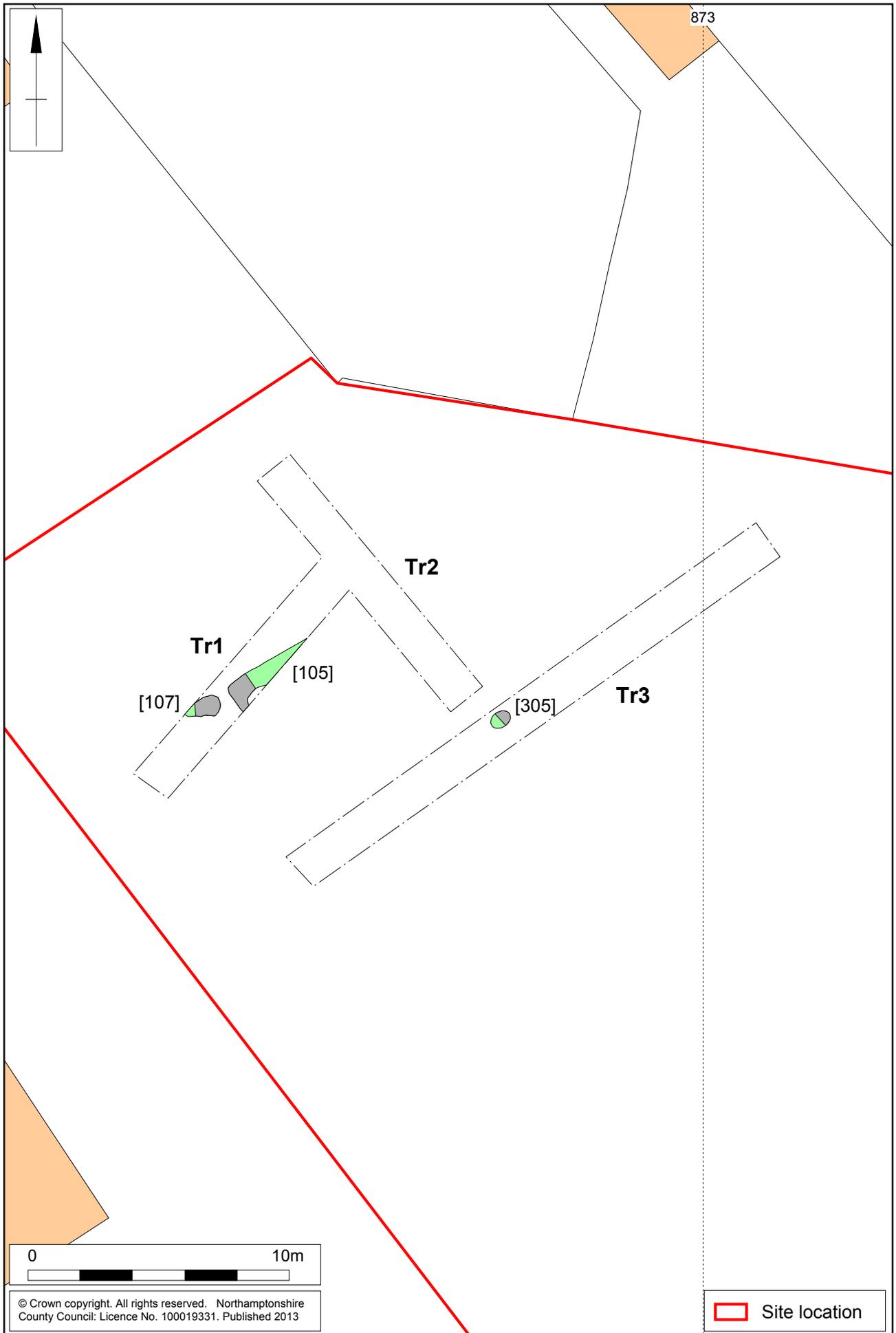
The excavation was carried out within the parameters suggested by the published research priorities set out for the East Midlands (EH 1997; Cooper 2006; Knight *et al* 2012).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Three trial trenches were excavated in reference to a trench plan prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and approved by Northamptonshire County Council Planning. Any subsequent adjustments due to constraints were undertaken with their consent.

Two of the proposed trenches measured 12.5m long by 1.80m wide, with the third 25m in length. However, due to space constraints on site all three trenches had to be shortened. Trenches 2 and 3 were reduced to 11.5m and 22m long respectively, and had to be shifted slightly to avoid trees. Trench 1 was shortened to 11m long and had to be moved to the south to avoid an area of trees and a man-hole but was still within the footprint of the development (Fig 2). Trenches were located using a Leica system 1200 GPS.

A 3CX wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide ditching bucket was used to remove topsoil and subsoil to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. Deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard NA procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2011). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Contexts were cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs. Photography was with 35mm black and white film, supplemented with digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 and related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to maximise the recovery of metal objects.



Scale 1:200

The excavated trenches Fig 2



Trench 1, looking north-east Fig 3



Shallow ditch, [105], looking north-east Fig 4



Trench 2 section, looking north-east Fig 5

#### 4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate was encountered within all three of the excavated trenches. This consisted of mid brown-orange sandy clay mixed with ironstone and was between 0.58m and 0.65m below ground level. There was frequent root disturbance from the surrounding trees and vegetation (Fig 3).

Trench 1 exposed the corner of a possible shallow ditch, [105], which ran north-east to south-west and possibly turned to the south-east (Figs 2-3). Ditch [105] measured 0.60m wide by 0.15m deep, and had a roughly flat base, whilst the sides were steep and quite clearly defined. However, the southern edge had a large amount of root disturbance, obscuring the features true profile. This disturbance coupled with the relatively small area exposed made it difficult to know whether the feature turned or terminated within the trench. The feature was filled by mid orange-brown silty loam, (104), which contained a single sherd of 1st-century AD pottery and two small fragments of animal bone (Fig 4).

To the west of [105] lay a probable natural hollow [107]. This was roughly oval in plan, but extended beyond the trench, with a poorly defined profile due to root disturbance (Figs 2- 3). The hollow was filled by mid grey-brown clay loam, mottled with orange patches, which was very similar to the overlying subsoil.

The only other feature of possible archaeological note was a very shallow roughly oval shaped pit, [305], located in trench 3. Pit [305] was 0.5m long by 0.37m wide, but only 0.05m deep, with a flat base. As with hollow [107] its fill was very similar to the overlying subsoil and the feature may have been natural in origin.

In all three trenches the natural substrate and features, were overlaid by a layer of mid orange-brown clay loam subsoil (102/202/302) with frequent ironstone fragments, 0.27-0.36m thick. This was overlain by mid grey-brown silty loam topsoil (101/201/301) with occasional small sub angular stone and ironstone inclusions, 0.28-0.36m thick. Both of these layers had frequent root disturbance (Fig 5). The topsoil contained a small amount of 19th- and 20th-century pottery with one fragment of residual late medieval pottery. A number of iron nails were also found with a metal detector.

## **5 THE ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY**                      identification by Rob Perrin

A single body sherd was recovered from the fill, (104), of ditch [105]. The sherd is grog-tempered, although there are some bits of shell, and the fabric is one that is common in the late Iron Age and into the Roman period, suggesting a 1st-century AD date. The sherd is likely to be from a jar.

## **6 THE FAUNAL REMAINS**

Two small fragments of animal bone were recovered from the fill, (104), of ditch [105]. The bone was of indeterminate taxa and form, and weighed only 1g.

## **7 DISCUSSION**

The trial trenches identified a possible shallow 1st-century AD ditch and two further features that may be natural in origin. These were heavily disturbed by root intrusion. The natural substrate, and features, were overlain by thick layers of subsoil and topsoil.

The depth of the topsoil, subsoil, and reasonably level garden to the edge of the property, where the ground slopes away into the valley, suggests that the garden may have been landscaped. If this is the case then the topsoil, including the associated finds, may have been imported.

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## APPENDIX: CONTEXT INDEX

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	11m x 1.80m SW-NE	487283 271673	92.05m aOD	91.44m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type Feature &amp; type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown silty loam	0.30m thick	
102	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown clayey loam, frequent ironstone	0.31m thick	
103	Natural substrate	Mid brown-orange sandy clay mixed with ironstone		
104	Fill of 105	Mid orange-brown silty loam	0.60m wide 0.15m thick	Roman pottery, animal bone
105	Ditch cut	Very shallow, disturbed wide U-shaped profile, orientated NE-SW, possibly turning 90° to SE	0.60m wide 0.15m deep	
106	Fill of 107	Mid grey-brown clay loam	0.70m wide >1.40m long 0.12m thick	
107	Root bole/ natural hollow	Shallow, poorly defined hollow, roughly oval in plan	0.70m wide >1.40m long 0.12m deep	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	11.5m x 1.80m NW-SE	487287 271677	92.09m aOD	91.49m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type Feature &amp; type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown silty loam	0.30m thick	
202	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown clayey loam, frequent ironstone	0.31m thick	
203	Natural substrate	Mid brown-orange sandy clay mixed with ironstone		

74 MAIN STREET, LITTLE HARROWDEN

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural</b>
3	22m x 1.80m SW-NE	487293 271672	91.87m aOD	91.26m aOD
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type Feature &amp; type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
301	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown silty loam	0.32m thick	
302	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown clayey loam, frequent ironstone	0.29m thick	
303	Natural substrate	Mid brown-orange sandy clay mixed with ironstone		
304	Fill of 305	Mid grey-brown silty loam	0.37m wide 0.50m long 0.05m thick	
305	Pit/natural hollow	Very shallow, disturbed wide U-shaped profile, oval in plan	0.37m wide 0.50m long 0.05m deep	



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