



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

## Archaeological Investigation at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End, Ravensden, Bedfordshire



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Northamptonshire  
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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Archaeological Investigations at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End, Ravensden, Bedfordshire	
Short description	An archaeological investigation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during August 2010 on behalf of Frances and Jason Stephen. The site was located at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End near Ravensden, Bedfordshire, and comprised a parcel of pasture covering 1.2ha with the area of impact measuring c20m by 10m. A small area measuring 8.7m by 4.75m was excavated to archaeological horizons and the remaining block for the yard was stripped down to 0.2m below current ground level. A road strip measuring 25m by 4m was excavated down to 0.28m. No significant remains were present on the site; the only archaeological feature encountered was a ditch from which a quantity of post-medieval pottery, glass and clay pipe was recovered.	
Project type	Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Pasture	
Future work	None	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval boundary ditch	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End, Ravensden	
Area	1.2ha	
OS Easting & Northing	505670 255430	
Height OD	49m	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Geoff Saunders, Bedford Borough Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Carol Simmonds	
Project Manager	Anthony Maull	
Sponsor or funding body	Frances and Jason Stephen	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	August 2010	
End date	November 2010	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content</b>
Physical	BEDFM 2010.47	1 box of pottery, clay pipe, glass and cbm
Paper	BEDFM 2010.47	1 archive box of index sheets, context sheets, colour slides and black and white contact sheets
Digital	BEDFM 2010.47	Pdf of report, digital photographs, dxf data
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	Archaeological Investigations at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End, Ravensden, Bedfordshire	
Serial title & volume	10/178	
Author(s)	C Simmonds	
Page numbers	20 pages of text and figures	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
AT MANOR FARM COTTAGE, WOOD END  
RAVENS DEN, BEDFORDSHIRE  
AUGUST 2010**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological investigation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology during August 2010 on behalf of Frances and Jason Stephen. The site was located at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End near Ravensden, Bedfordshire, and comprised a parcel of pasture covering 1.2ha with the area of impact measuring c20m by 10m. A small area measuring 8.7m by 4.75m was excavated to archaeological horizons and the remaining block for the yard was stripped down to 0.2m below current ground level. A road strip measuring 25m by 4m was excavated down to 0.28m. No significant remains were present on the site; the only archaeological feature encountered was a ditch from which a quantity of post-medieval pottery, glass and clay pipe was recovered.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an Archaeological Investigation at Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End, Ravensden, Bedfordshire (NGR 505670 255430; Fig 1). The site is located near Wood End approximately 2km to the north-west of Ravensden, Bedfordshire. The site area comprises a parcel of pasture ground of 1.2ha in extent and encompassed a 17th century Grade II listed building.

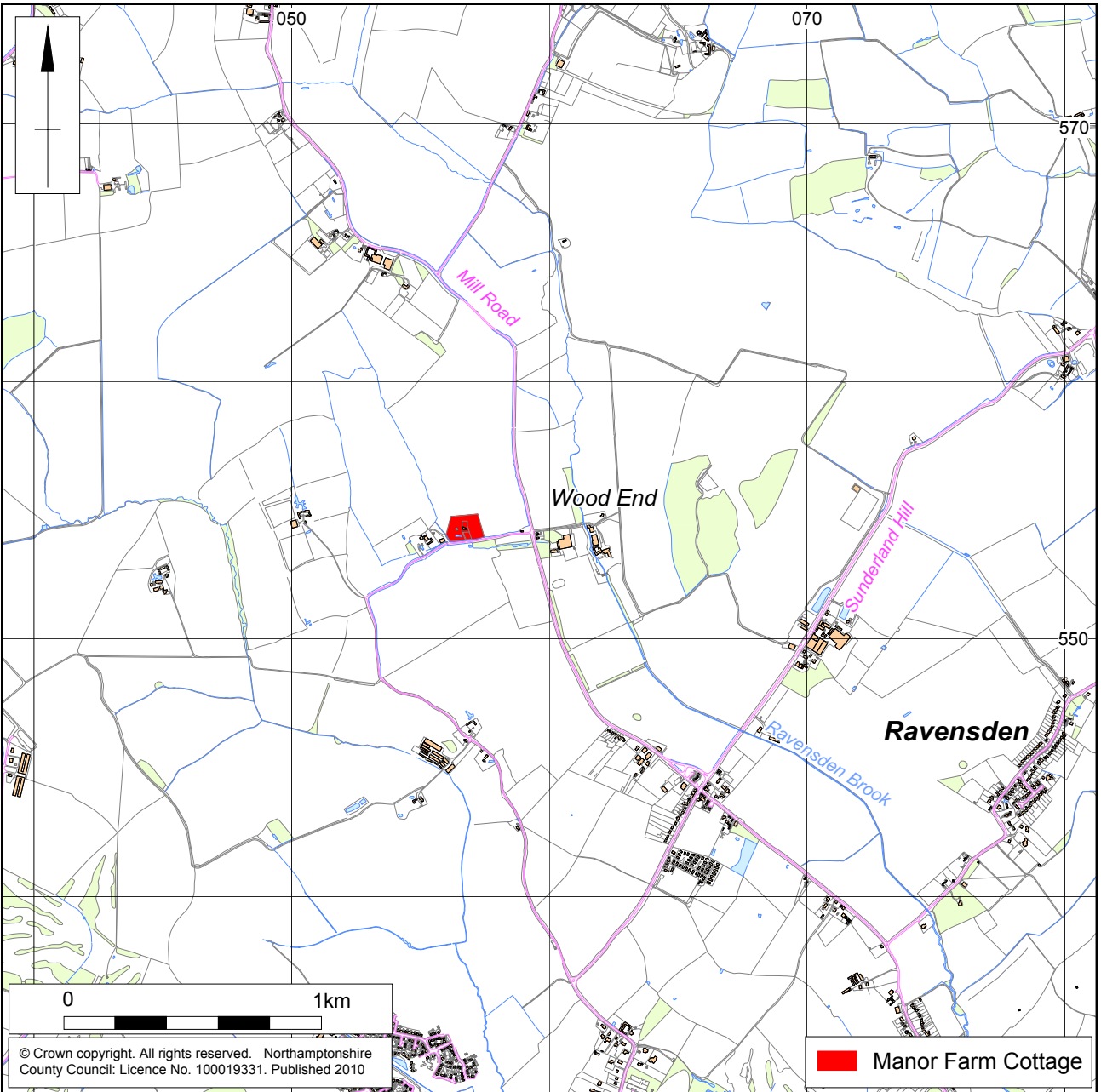
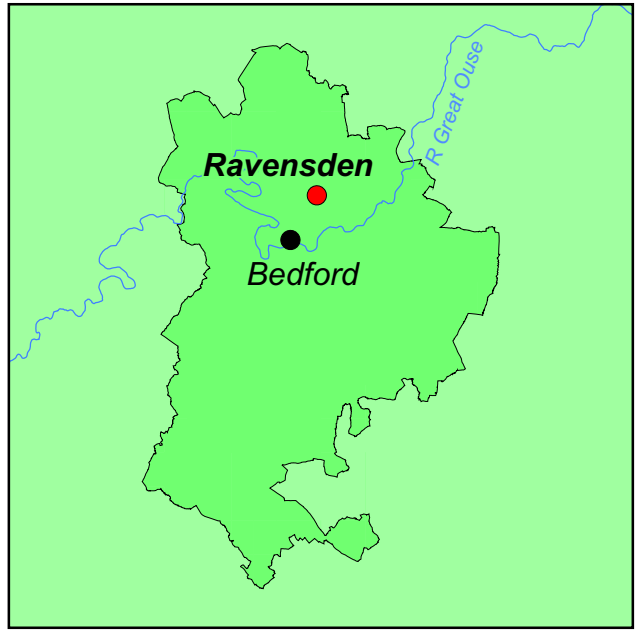
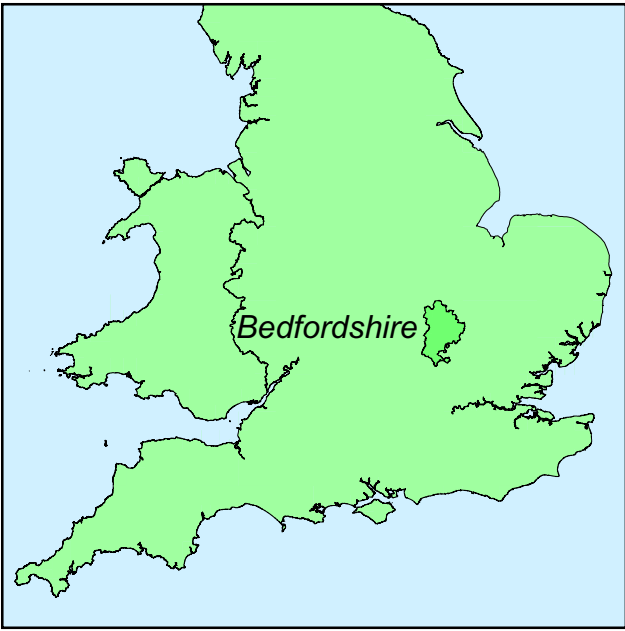
Following submission of a planning application to Bedford Borough Council (10/00087/FUL) by Frances and Jason Stephen an archaeological condition was attached to the proposed works for a new large stable block/field barn, access road and associated yard. The works were undertaken to meet the requirements of a Brief written by the Archaeological Officer for Bedford Borough Council (Saunders 2010) due to the site being located within the environs of the Shrunken Medieval Village of Wood End (HER 17061).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topographic and geological background**

The site at Manor Farm Cottage lies near the village of Ravensden and hamlet of Wood End and approximately 5.5km to the north of Bedford (Fig 1). It is bounded to the south by a minor road linking Wood End with Bedford and to the north and east by open fields. Manor Farm lies to the west. The parcel of land is an irregular-shaped area approximately 1.2ha in extent with the area under investigation located in the southern part of the site adjacent to the minor road.

The ground rises above Ravensden Brook towards a terrace standing at about 50m aOD. Manor Farm Cottage is sited mid way up the terrace with the minor road to the south. The ground slopes evenly down to the road with an access road leading north from the road to the cottage. The area under development is at the base of the slope on flatter ground. The underlying geology comprises Oxford clays overlain by Diamicton tills (BGS GeolIndex).



Scale 1:25,000

Site Location Fig 1



General view of the excavated area and the topsoil strip, looking south-west Fig 2

## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

A search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Wood End and Ravensden lists a number of sites within a 1k m radius of the site dating from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. The point, line and polygon data are provided below (Tables 1 and 2) and accompanying Figure 3.

Table 1: Monuments and buildings

HER	Name	Mon Type
93	Moat, Grays Hill Farm	Moat
319	Ravensden Grange (site of)	Building, Grange, Site
580	Cropmarks, south-east of Brook Farm	Agricultural building, Building, Enclosure?
583	?Moat, Manor Farm	Moat
608	Slag Patch, south of Red Gate Farm	
715	Ridge and Furrow Ravensden historic parish	Ridge and Furrow, Site
728	Roman Road	Road
2711	Slag Patch, south-west of Red Gate Farm	
2713	Concentrated Slag Patch, south-west of Red Gate Farm	
2715	?Moat with medieval, Iron Age & Roman pottery, Wiseman's End	Moat
2722	Roman pottery, south-east of Red Gate Farm	
2724	Cropmarks & Slag, south-east of Red Gate Farm	Enclosure
2732	Slag Patch, south-west of Brook Farm	
3271	?Moat Traylesfield Farm	Building, Moat, Windmill, Manor House, Fishpond
5876	Manor Farm, Wood End	Building
5879	Graze Hill Farmhouse, Graze Hill	Building
5880	Grays Hill Farmhouse, Graze Hill	Building
7035	Ravensden House Grounds	
9540	Barn to rear of Graze Hill Farmhouse Graze Hill	Barn

HER	Name	Mon Type
9544	Ravensden House, Wood End	Building
9545	The Lodge to Ravensden House Thurleigh Rd	Gate Lodge, Building
9547	1 & 2 Wood End Cottages	Building, Estate Building
9549	Shelter Shed to Grays Hill Farm Graze Hill	Agricultural Building, Animal Shed
9553	Brook Farm Wood End	Building
9560	Manor Farm Cottage, Wood End	House
9562	Cottage, corner of Thurleigh Road & Wood End	Building
9563	Barn Manor Farm Wood End	Barn
9564	Barn & Cowshed Traylesfield Farm Wood End	Animal Shed, Barn
9565	Barn & Loose Boxes Traylesfield Farm Wood End	Agricultural Building, Animal Shed, Barn
9566	Traylesford Farmhouse, Wood End	Building
9598	Stables Ravensden House	Stable, Building
13195	Great Wood, Ancient Woodland	Wood
14060	Cropmarks, Ravensden	Linear feature
15236	Inscribed Brooch	
15952	Romano-British Brooch, Ravensden House	
16604	?Cropmark, north-west of Highfield Farm	Enclosure
16607	Cropmark, south of Outfields Farm	Boundary
16609	Cropmark ,north of Manor Farm, Graze Hill	Enclosure
16637	Cropmark , north-east of Manor Farm, Graze Hill	Enclosure
17061	Wood End medieval settlement	Deserted Settlement
18881	Romano-British occupation, south-west of G range Farm	Ditch, Pit, Gully

Table 2: Other archaeological work

EvUID	Name
EBD431	The Anglian Water pipeline from Clapham to Ravensden; archaeological watching brief and excavation (Mason 2007)

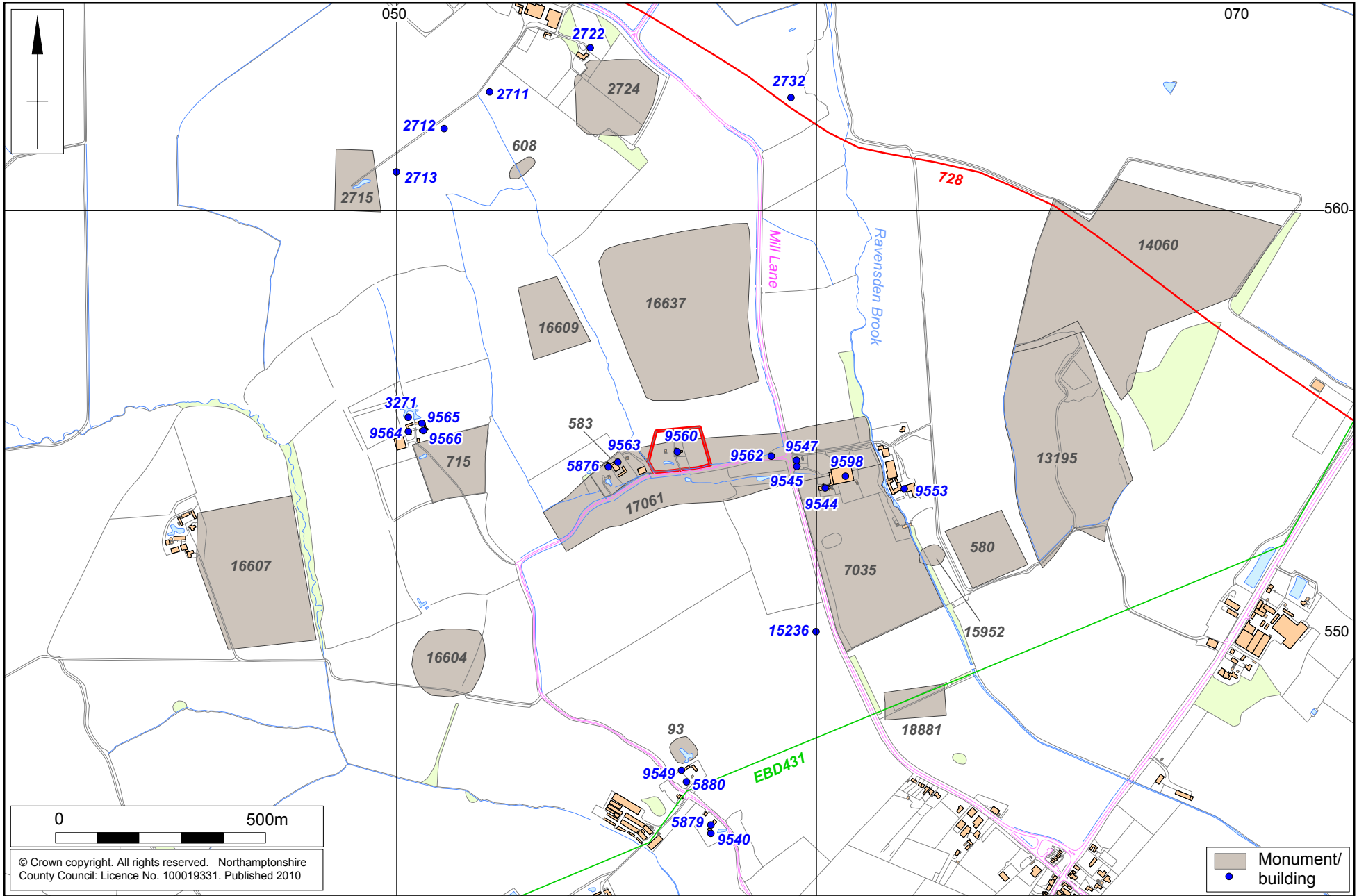
The site lies within an archaeological sensitive area dating from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. Briefly, one of the principal types sites are a series of cropmarks probably of prehistoric or Roman date identified principally through aerial photography, including (HER 580, 14060, 16607, 16609 and 16637). A course of a Roman road between the small Roman town of Sandy and S harnbrook lies to the north-east (HER 728). There is evidence for early and later industrial activity with the identification of slag scatters (field walking) to the north of the development area (HER 2711, 2712, 2713) and slag found with Roman and medieval pottery around a moated enclosure (HER 2715).

Aside from the aerial photographs and the fieldwalking the only recorded archaeological intervention is situated 0.7km to the south of the site, undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology during works in advance of the laying of a new Anglian Water pipeline (Event EBD431). During the course of a Watching Brief and excavation a late Iron Age and a Roman site (HER 18881) were identified (Mason 2007). Although the features were not domestic the quantity of the pottery assemblage suggested occupation nearby. Evidence of Roman gravel extraction was also found.



Scale 1:12,500

Historic Environment Record data Fig 2

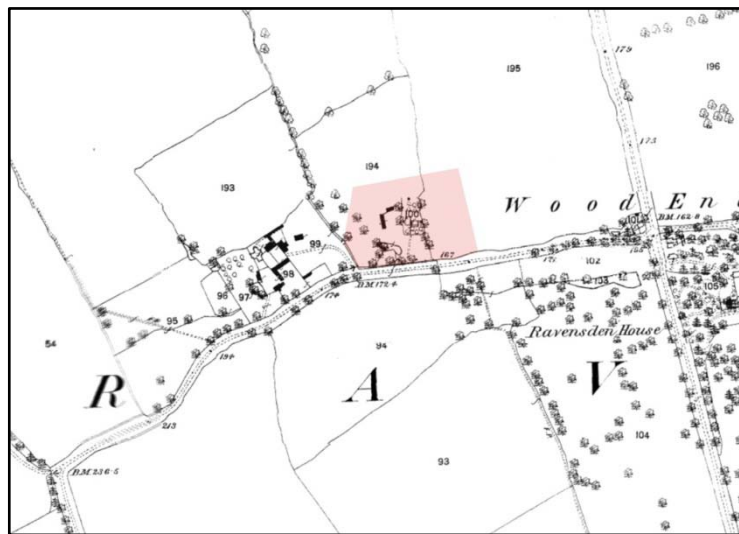


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Within the application area itself, an entry for a Shrunken Medieval Village (SMV) of Wood End (HER 17061) has been recorded as well as a 17th-century timber-framed cottage (HER 9560). A number of other medieval sites defined by moated enclosures have also been listed in the area, including HER 93 at Gray's Hill Farm 0.7km to the south of the site.

Ravensden House, a 19th-century house (HER 9544) with associated landscape gardens (HER 7035) have also been recorded. Other buildings within the area include 1 and 2 Wood End Cottages (HER 9547) and The Lodge (HER 9545).

Analysis of the first edition Ordnance Survey (1883-4 Bedfordshire, 25") indicates that much of the surrounding area around the development area comprised regular-sized fields (Fig 4). The cottage is shown with a second building, aligned north to south, to the west.



Excerpt from the first edition Ordnance Survey (1883-4 Bedfordshire) Fig 4

In recent years the land has been under plough, only being converted to pasture within the last five years.

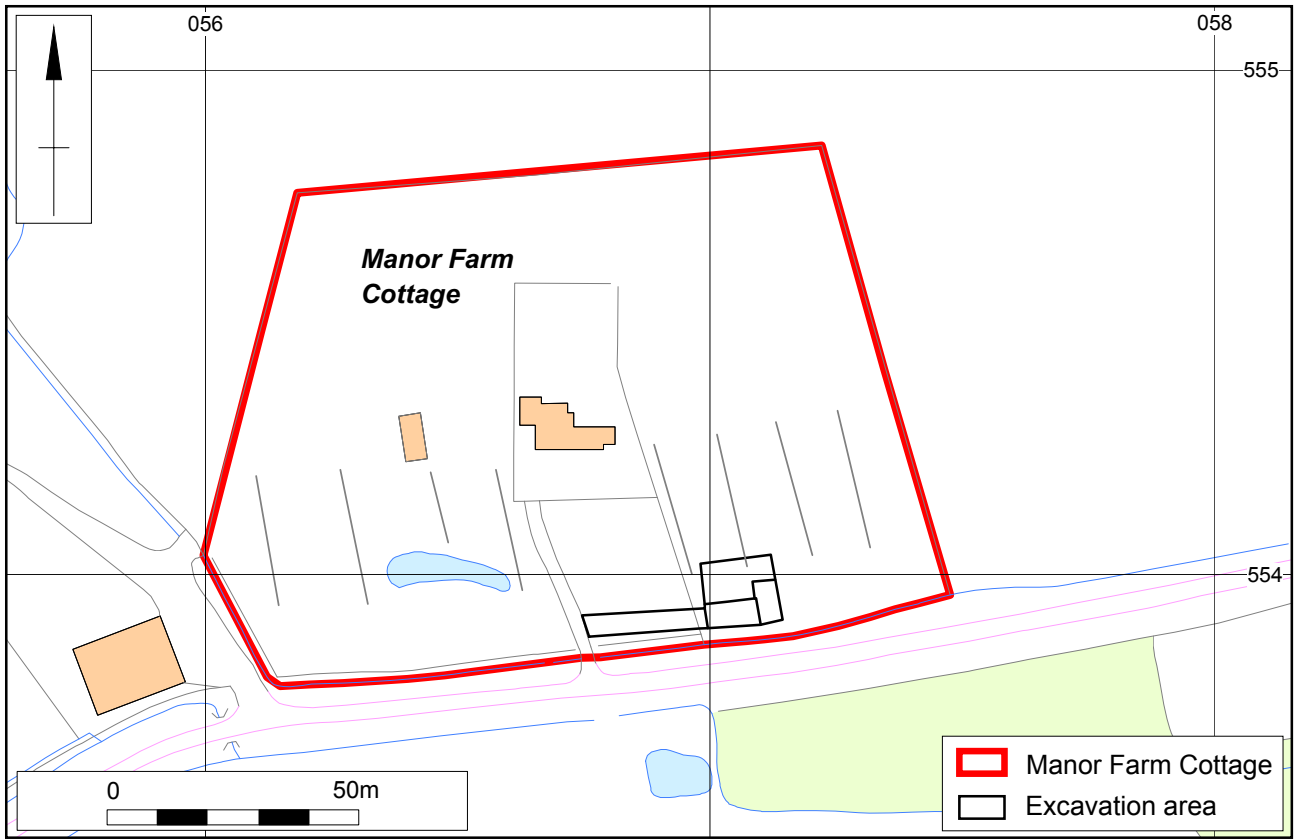
### 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The archaeological work aimed to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (Saunders 2010; Simmonds 2010).

The specific objectives of the project were to identify:

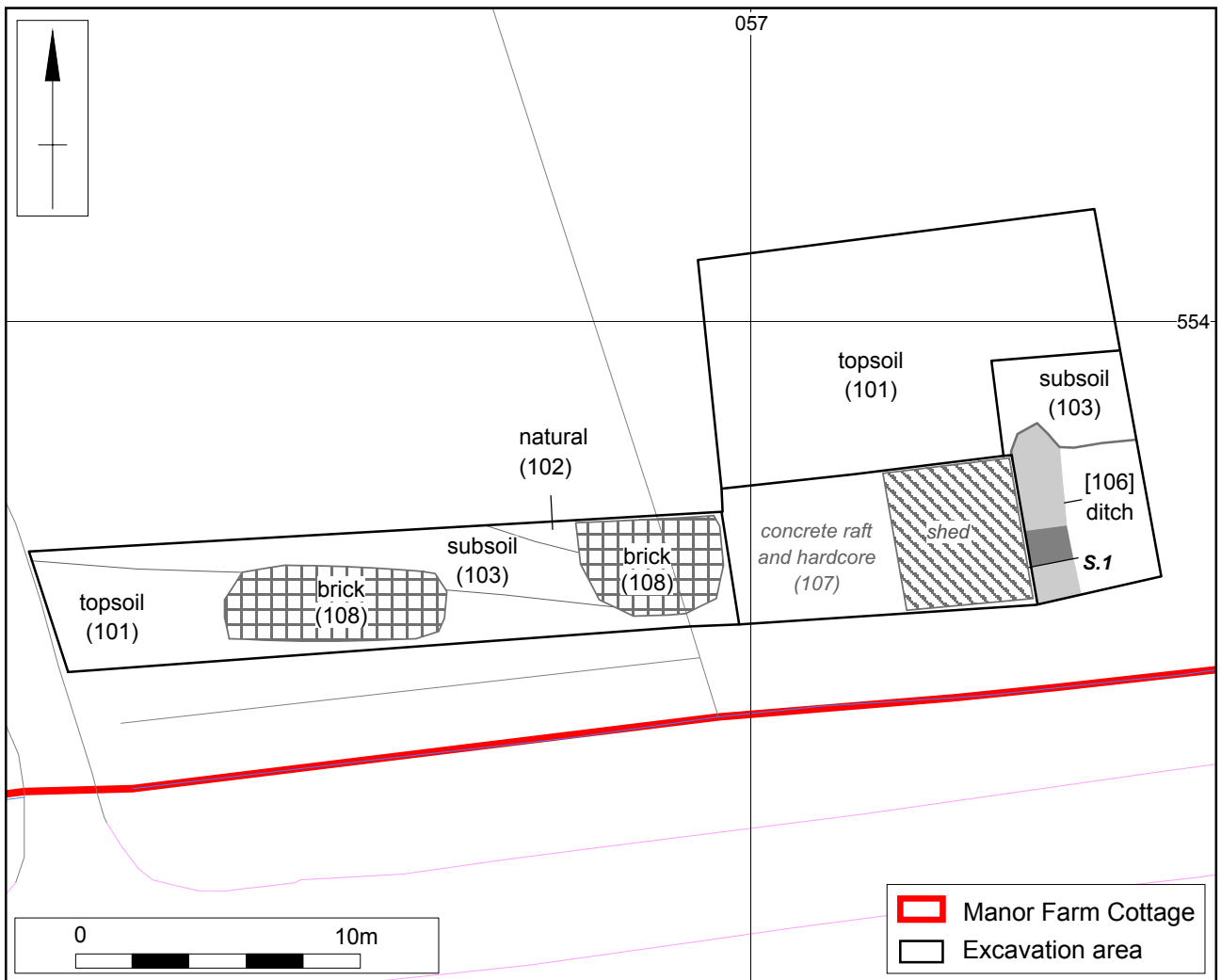
- Medieval activity associated with the shrunken settlement of Wood End and the moated site at Manor Farm
- Activity associated with the multi-period remains that are recorded in the area surrounding the development area

The national framework for research is set out by English Heritage (EH 1991 and 2006). The local and regional research frameworks are set out by Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (1997), Medlycott and Brown (2008) and Oake *et al* (2007).



1:1500

Manor Farm Cottage and the area of investigation Fig 5



1:250

The area of investigation Fig 6

In the Brief and Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) it was suggested that the site had the potential to add to our knowledge of:

- The origins of the Shrunken Medieval Village (SMV) of Wood End; its nature, change over time and quality of survival
- The reasons for the decline of the SMV of Wood End with reference to the economic decline and agricultural recession in the 14th century, which were linked to the outbreaks of plague and depopulation of the countryside (Oake *et al*, 2007).

If the investigation produced evidence relevant to other objectives identified in the published Research Frameworks then they would be added to the objectives included in WSI during the course of the project.

The proposed development was located in the southern part of the site. It comprised an access road, yard area and stable/barn building. The proposed plot encompassed 0.04ha with the footprint of the proposed building measuring c20m by 10m (Figs 5 and 6).

The areas of intervention were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket removing the topsoil and/or any subsoil to the formation levels as listed below or the first significant archaeological horizon. Any archaeological features beneath the formation level were to be preserved and left *in situ*. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil.

The formation levels as indicated in communication with the client comprised:

- The concrete platform for the new structure- between 0.35m and 0.45m below present ground level to allow for hardcore and concrete
- The yard area- 0.2m
- The access road- 0.25m

The area of the concrete platform was excavated to a depth of 0.5m which coincided with the level of natural substrate and archaeological remains. The yard area when stripped was reduced to 0.2m and only impacted on the topsoil level. The access road was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.28m.

The areas of intervention were cleaned sufficiently to define features where necessary and planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections were drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and related to Ordnance Datum and a comprehensive set of levels were taken across the site. The excavation area, topsoil strip and spoil were scanned using a metal detector.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide film was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology *pro-forma* sheets.

All works were conducted in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, revised 2008) and *Code of Conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (1985, revised 2010), and the English Heritage document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (2006). The archives will be prepared according to Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) standards (2007).

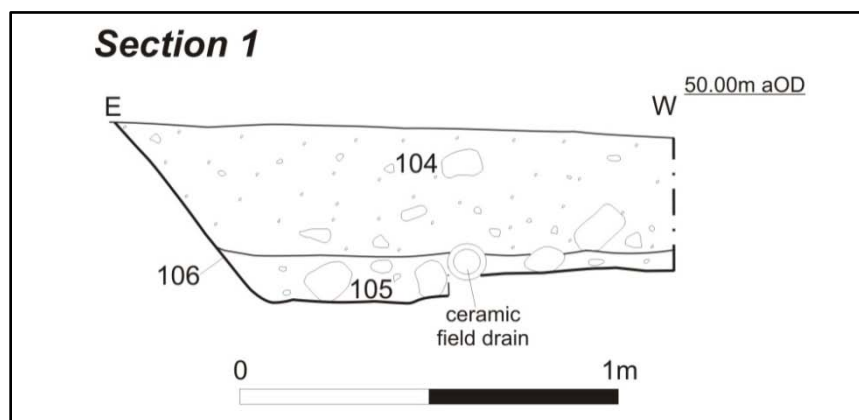
#### 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate (102), generally encountered between 0.4 - 0.5m below current ground surface, comprised glacial tills of hard yellowish brown clay with limestone and flint nodules. Subsoil (103) comprised dark orange-brown sandy clay with limestone and flint nodules. The subsoil was well-developed to the north at the base of the slope. Topsoil (101) comprised compact dark brown clay with medium sized limestone and flint fragments. An existing concrete raft lay on top of a hardcore layer (107).



The area of investigation, looking south-west Fig 7

Adjacent to the east side of the existing shed was a ditch [106] that cut the natural soils (Fig 7). It was aligned north to south and measured 1.48m wide by 0.50m deep (Fig 8, section 1). Its basal fill (105) was a compacted dark grey clay mottled with orange clay with large rounded stones, overlain by firm dark grey clay mottled with orange silty clay (104), which produced finds including a single sherd of post-medieval pottery, a clay pipe stem and a glass bottle neck. The upper fill of the ditch was sealed by subsoil (103). A ceramic field drain lay along the base of the ditch, however, no visible cut for the field drain could be seen in section.



Scale 1:20 Ditch [106], Section 1 Fig 8

The access road to the west of the excavation area was stripped done to a maximum depth of 0.28m below ground level. Natural substrate, subsoil and topsoil were seen at the base of the stripped area. Two areas of brick rubble (108) seen on the surface were recorded along the access strip (Figs 6 and 8). The glacial tills were exposed closer to the surface against the northern edge of the slope with a more developed topsoil to the south.



The access road being stripped, with an area of brick rubble in the middle of the frame, looking west Fig 9

## 5 The Finds

### 5.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised two sherds with a total weight of 33g. Both sherds were in Red Earthenware, Bedfordshire County type-series fabric P01, and dated to the 16th – 19th century (Baker and Hassall 1977). The pottery occurrence was as follows:

Topsoil 101: 1 sherd, 17g

Context 104: 1 sherd, 16g

Both are in fairly good condition. The fabric is a very common find in the region, and the sherds appear most likely to be of 16th – 17th century date.

### 5.2 Bottle glass and clay pipe by Tim Upson-Smith

A single bottle neck and three clay pipe stem fragments were recovered from the latest fill (104) of ditch [106]. The bottle neck is blown pale green glass; the shape of the neck would indicate that it dates from the early part of the 19th century. The three clay pipe stem fragments measure between 29mm and 36mm in length, the diameter of the bore would suggest a late 18th century or early 19th century date.

The finds would suggest that the ditch was in-filled in the first half of the 19th century.

### 5.3 Ceramic roof tile by Pat Chapman

There are five small sherds, weighing 122g. The sherd from the topsoil is 11mm thick and made from fine slightly sandy orange clay. The four sherds from upper fill (104) of ditch [106] are made from coarser sandy orange clay and are 14mm thick. One of these sherds has a vestigial peghole, another sherd has mortar on one side and a greyish surface on the other. These sherds come from roof tiles that could date from the 14th or 15th centuries up to the 19th century, before machine-made tiles became common.

#### 5.4 Metal detecting finds

During a metal detecting survey of the excavation area, topsoil strip and the spoil a number of ferrous signals were identified. One of the signals related to a Victorian iron cleat nail from the topsoil (101). These finds were not retained.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological investigation succeeded in identifying and investigating a ditch of post-medieval date. However it does not match any of the boundaries seen on the 1880s Ordnance Survey. The artefacts found within it suggest a 19th century date. The presence of a ceramic field drain at the base of the ditch suggests that it may have been drainage along the edge of a south facing field, the ditch appears to be more substantial than would be expected to hold a field drain.

No other archaeological features were found to be associated with the Shrunken Medieval Village (SMV) of Wood End, suggesting that the principal area of settlement may lie to the east near Ravensden House or around Manor Farm. The complete absence of medieval remains mean that the research questions such as the origins, development and decline of the SMV cannot be covered within this scope of works.

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**Appendix 1: Concordance of contexts**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Artefacts</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>
101	Topsoil. Compact (very dry conditions) dark brown clay with medium sized limestone fragments (5%), and medium-sized flint nodules (5%). Clear horizons	Victorian iron cleat nail (not retained), pottery, tile	0- 0.31m
102	Natural. Hard yellowish-brown clay (glacial tills) with limestone (5%) and flint nodules (10%). Cut by [106]		@ 50m aOD
103	Subsoil. Firm dark orangey-brown sandy clay with few small sub-angular limestone and flint nodules. Clear horizons. Seals fill (104)		Between 0.1m and 0.2m thick
104	Upper fill of ditch 106. Firm dark grey mottled with orange silty clay. Inclusions comprise small sub-angular limestone (2%), flint nodules (2%), large stones and cobbles (5%). Overlies fill (105)	Pottery, clay pipe, tile, glass bottle	1.48m wide, 0.38m thick
105	Lower fill of ditch 106. Compact dark grey mottled with orange clay with large rounded stones. A ceramic field drain lies at the base. Overlain by 104.		1.2m wide, 0.12m thick
106	Ditch cut. Linear ditch cut aligned north to south. Flat bottomed with steep sloping sides (60°), sharp breaks of slope. Filled by (105) and (104)		5m long (visible), 1.48m wide and 0.5m deep
107	Hardcore layer and concrete raft. Hardcore comprises a crushed white limestone. Modern		Hardcore is 5m wide, 0.1m thick
108	Brick rubble layer. Layer seen in access strip area on surface and during strip. Frog bricks average size 0.22m x 0.11m x 0.065m		



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