



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at  
The Nags Head Inn, High Street  
Farndon, Chester  
Accession no. CHEGM 2010. 31



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
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Report 10/179

October 2010



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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified and approved by	W A Boismier		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Farndon, High Street	
Short description (250 words maximum)	In October 2010, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Rofft Developments Ltd at the Nags Head Inn, High Street Farndon, Chester. Four evaluation trenches were positioned across the proposed development area, two 10m long and two 5m long. A modern pit was the only feature. No archaeological artefacts pre-dating the post-medieval period were recovered from any of the trenches.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Trial Trench Evaluation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	None	
Current Land use	Arable and tarmac car park	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	None	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Cheshire	
Site address (including postcode)	The Nags Head Inn, High Street, Farndon	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.15ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letters)	341255, 354570	
Height OD	c22.48m OD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Julie Edwards, CWaC	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	WA Boismier	
Sponsor or funding body	Rofft Developments Ltd	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	27. 10. 2010	
End date	28. 10. 2010	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical	CHEGM 2010.31	None
Paper	CHEGM 2010.31	Evaluation pro forma sheets, context sheets, colour slides, black and white contact prints, digital photographs, plans and section drawing
Digital	CHEGM 2010.31	Report text and figures
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at the Nags Head Inn, High Street, Farndon, Chester	
Serial title & volume	10/179	
Author(s)	Christopher Jones	
Page numbers	14 text x 7 figures	
Date	11.11. 2010	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT  
THE NAGS HEAD INN, HIGH STREET  
FARNDON, CHESTER  
OCTOBER 2010  
Accession no. CHEGM 2010. 31**

**Abstract**

*In October 2010, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Rofft Developments Ltd at the Nags Head Inn, High Street Farndon, Chester. Four evaluation trenches were positioned across the proposed development area, two 10m long and two 5m long. A modern pit was the only feature. No archaeological artefacts pre-dating the post-medieval period were recovered from any of the trenches.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Rofft Developments Ltd have applied for outline planning permission for the construction of residential homes immediately to the rear of The Nags Head Inn, Farndon, Chester (Planning Ref 10/11517/FUL, NGR 341255 354570, Fig 1).

The programme of archaeological investigation, as outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; NA 2010) involved the excavation of four trenches in the proposed development area. Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Rofft Developments Ltd, to undertake the archaeological trial trench evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report.

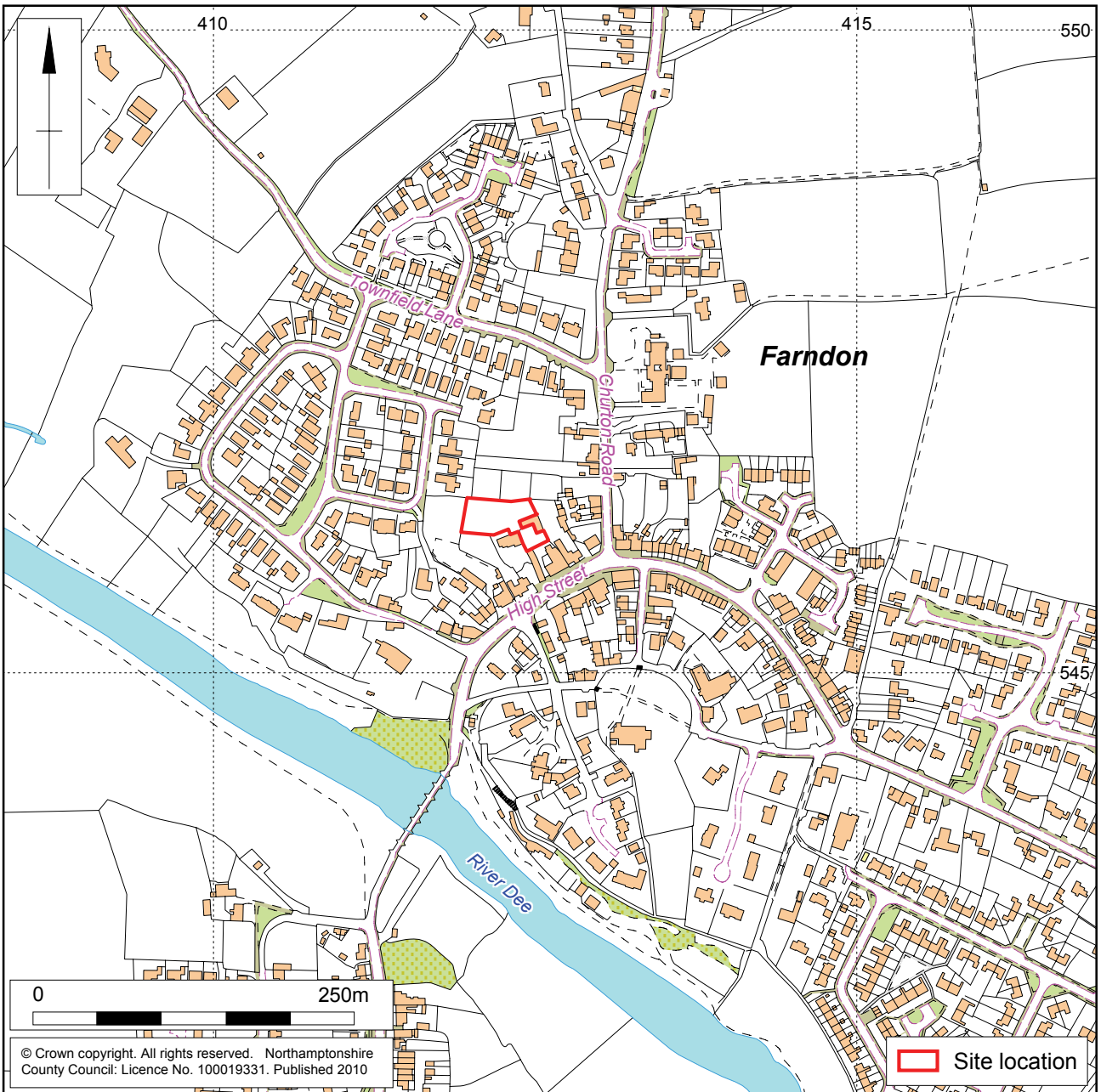
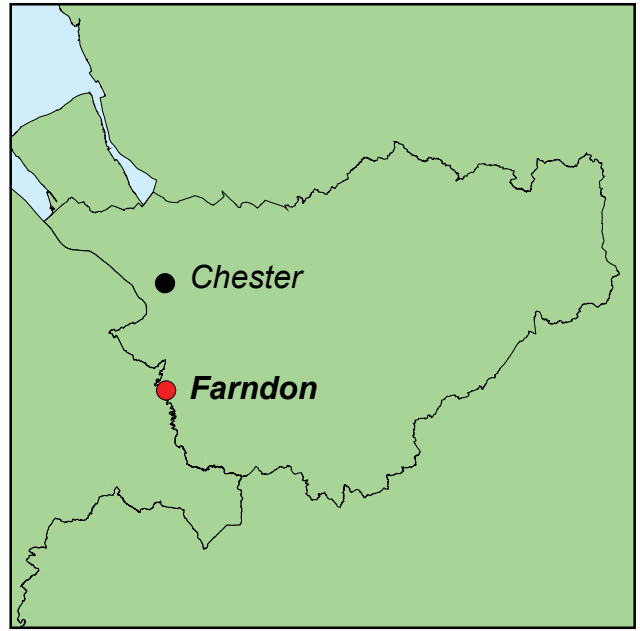
This report has been prepared in accordance with the WSI (NA 2010) and *Management of Archaeological Projects* (EH 1991, appendix 4: assessment report specification), *The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (EH 2006) and by the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* and the *Code of conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008, 2010).

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Location, topography and geology**

The settlement of Farndon lies in the south-western corner of the county, 12km south of Chester. It is sited c 25m above Ordnance Datum on a slight bluff overlooking the river Dee, which forms the boundary between the county of Cheshire and the Welsh district of Wrexham (formerly Denbighshire). Farndon in its immediate context is surrounded by the low-lying Cheshire Plain; further afield are the foothills of the Welsh mountains 11km to the west and the Mid-Cheshire Ridge 7km to the east.

The underlying solid geology consists of Bunter Pebble Beds, above which are drift deposits of alluvium ([bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex](http://bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex)). The soils developed on these deposits are largely brown sands and brown earths (Furness 1979, 73-82).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

## 2.2 Archaeological background

The proposed development lies within the Farndon Area of Archaeological Potential, as defined by the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (CCC 2003a and b) and recorded in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

Although medieval sources call Farndon a 'royal town', the surviving structure and layout of the settlement indicate a possible early origin as a monastic site centred on the church and churchyard. At Domesday Farndon was held by the Bishop of Chester. By 1102 the Bishopric was moved to Coventry. The area north of the High Street, in which the site lies, lies outside the monastic enclosure in an area designated as medieval tenements. The area is a tightly packed area of settlement clustered along the street frontage. The density may suggest that space was at a premium during the medieval period and the irregular nature of the boundaries suggest that the tenements were laid out in an *ad hoc* arrangement rather than being planned (CCC 2003a). There may have been a medieval market in the town; although there is no documentary evidence, the noticeable widening of the High Street in this area is a characteristic of medieval street markets.

There were ten inns in Farndon in c1650, indicating considerable passing trade in the town, but by 1780 this had reduced to five and by the middle of the 19th century there were only three. The Nags Head was a coaching inn from at least 1827 and also appears to have been a farm belonging to the Barnston Estate; the manor of Farndon was held under lease from the bishopric by Roger Barnston in 1816 (CCC 2003a). The Barnston Estate sold the inn to Border Brewery in 1948.

## 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Objectives

The proposed development site lies to the rear of the Nags Head Inn which fronts onto the historic High Street, potentially the location of an early street market. The proposed development will affect both the frontage and the back plot of the site which appear to have remained relatively undeveloped in the post-medieval period. The site lies in Archaeological Character Zone 2 of the Assessment Strategy for Farndon (CCC 2003).

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were specified in the WSI (NA 2010):

General aims:

- To establish the nature and extent of any archaeological deposits present
- To establish the archaeological and historical sequence, character, date and function of any such deposits at the site
- To interpret the archaeological potential of the area to be disturbed within its local, regional and national archaeological context.

### 3.2 Methodology

All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents *The Management of Archaeological Projects* issued by English Heritage (1991), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*, (2006) English Heritage and the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008) and *Code of Conduct* (2010).

The trial trenching comprised the excavation of four trenches, located on land at the rear of the Nags Head. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were positioned on the back plot of the site and Trench 4 towards the frontage to provide a full coverage of the development area (Fig 2).

The trenches were excavated by machine using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket to reveal archaeological remains or, where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons. The machining was monitored at all times by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. Excavation did not proceed beyond safe working depths (approx 1.2m). The trenches and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

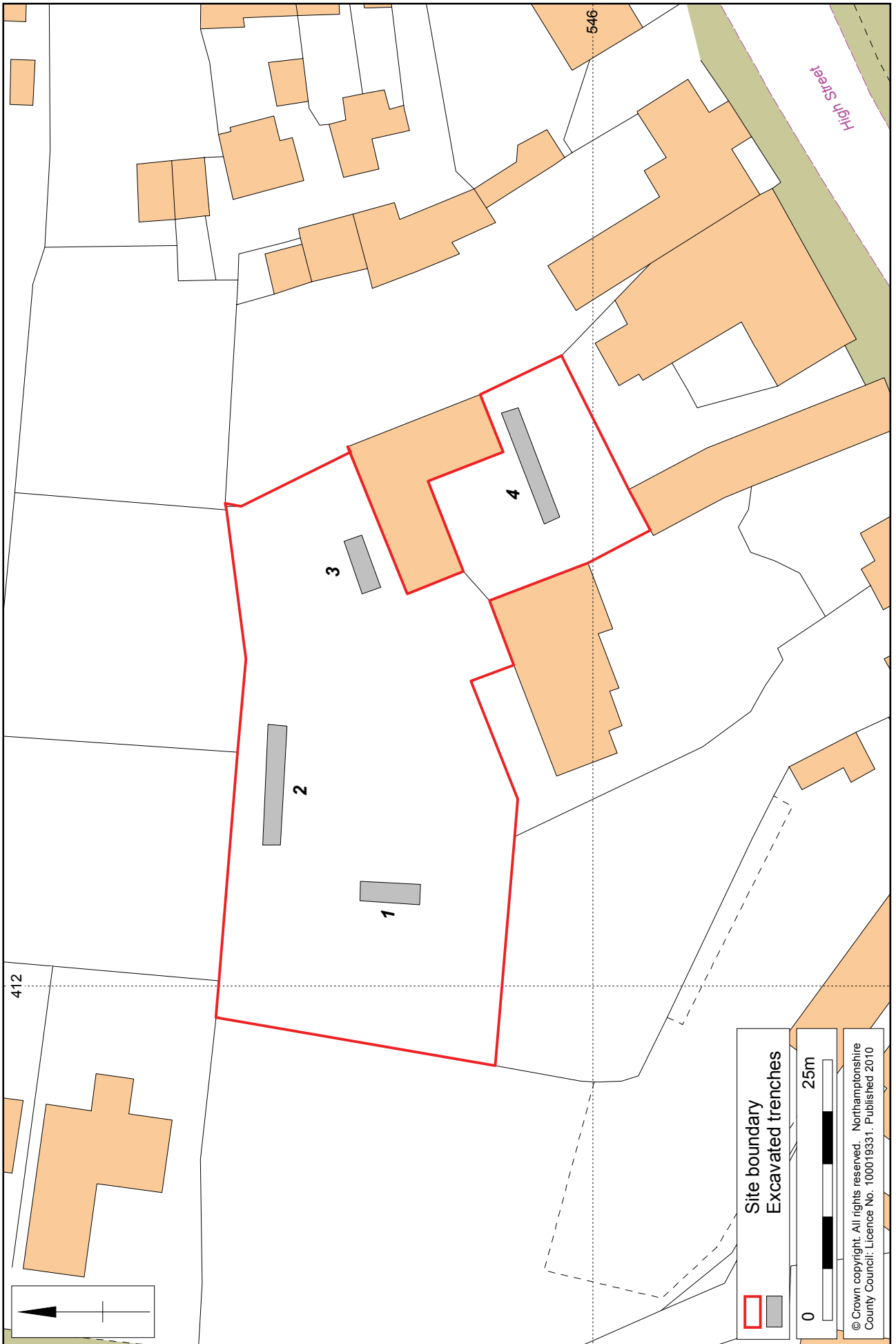
All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of evaluation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures. All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

Trenches were plotted at a scale of 1:50. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and related to Ordnance Datum. A comprehensive set of levels were also taken across the site.

A photographic record was maintained using 35mm colour slide and black and white film supplemented by digital photography. Overall shots of the site were taken prior to excavation and after backfilling. A comprehensive photographic index was maintained.

The field data will be compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing, to be deposited at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester with the accession number CHEGM.2010.31.



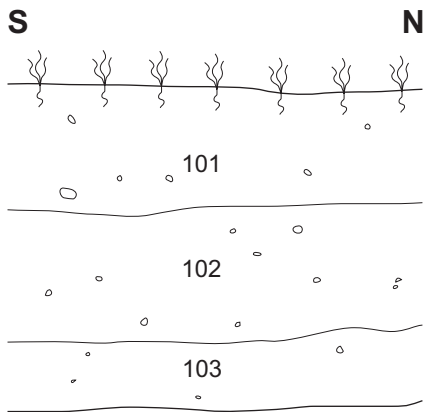


Scale 1:500

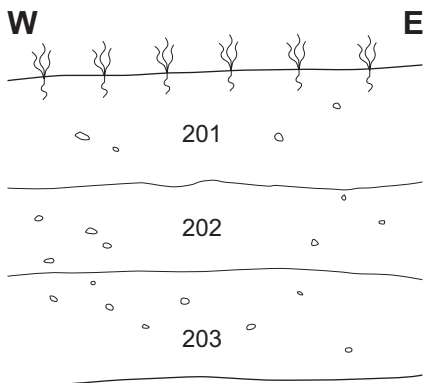
Trench location plan Fig 2

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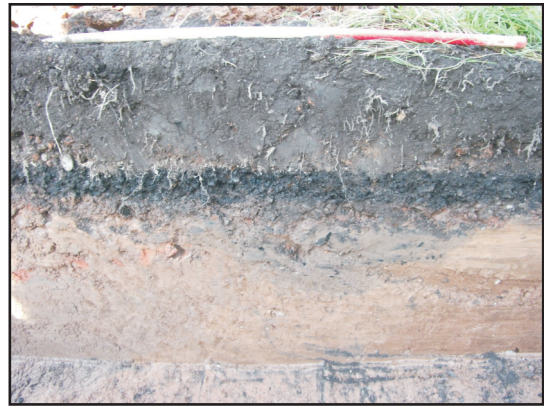
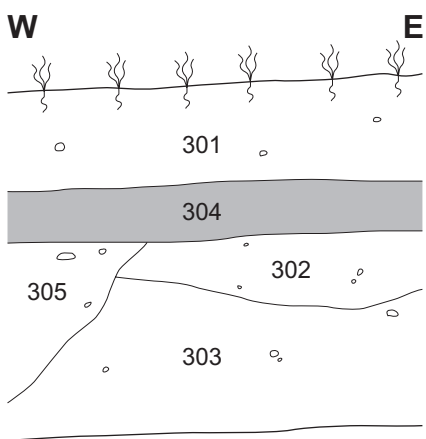
**Trench 1: Section 1**



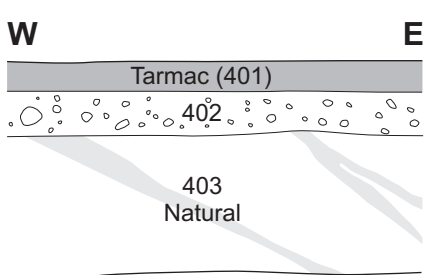
**Trench 2: Section 2**



**Trench 3: Section 3**



**Trench 4: Section 4**



## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

### 4.1 Introduction

The topsoil and subsoil were removed to reveal archaeological remains or where absent to the natural. The topsoil was stacked separately from the subsoil and other deposits. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification of any features. Trenches 2 and 4 were 10m by 1.8m and trenches one and three 5m by 1.8m. There were no archaeological features or artefacts present in any of the four trenches.

### 4.2 Trench 1

Trench 1, on the back plot, was aligned north south and was 5m long by 1.80m wide. The clay/sandstone natural (103) was overlain by subsoil (102) up to 0.27m thick, comprising light brown clay. The topsoil (101) was a dark brown loam, up to 0.36m thick. Few inclusions were noted in either the subsoil or the topsoil (Fig 3; Section 1, Fig 1).



Trench 1, looking north Fig 4

### 4.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned east to west within the backplot and was 10m long by 1.80m wide. The clay/sandstone natural (203) was overlain by subsoil (202) up to 24m thick, comprising light brown clay. The topsoil (201) was a dark brown loam, up to 0.28m thick (Fig 3; Section 2, Fig 5).



Trench 2, looking east Fig 5

#### 4.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned north-east to south-west within the back plot and was 5m long by 1.80m wide. The clay/sandstone natural (303) was overlain by subsoil (302) up to 0.10m, comprising light brown clay. A modern pit [305], 3.00m wide and 0.43m deep and cut through both the subsoil and natural, was recorded at the west end of the trench (Fig 3; Section 3, Fig 6). The subsoil was directly overlain by a modern tarmac layer (304) 0.18m thick, indicating the original topsoil was likely to have been removed as part of an earlier levelling of the site. The topsoil (301) was a dark brown loam up to 0.22m thick.



Trench 3, looking north-east Fig 6

#### 4.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned north-east to south-west in the frontage and was 10m long by 1.80m wide. The sandstone natural (403) was overlain by subsoil (402) up to 0.15m thick, comprising light brown sand clay mixed with hardcore. Overlying the subsoil was a tarmac layer (401), 0.15m thick, which was part of the Nags Head Inn car park. No topsoil was present (Fig 3; Section 4, Fig 7).



Trench 4, looking north-east Fig 7

## 5 THE FINDS

### 5.1 The post-medieval pottery by Iain Soden

A total of 24 sherds of unstratified post medieval pottery was recovered in eight types from two trenches. Together they weigh 173g. The pottery recovered is as follows:

*Table 1: Pottery by trench, sherd count and weight*

Type/context	Forms	Date	Trench 1	Trench 2	Total
Midland Blackware	Jar	C18th	2/20g		2/20g
Tin-glazed earthenware	-	C18th	1/1g		1/1g
Creamware	Plate	C18th	2/6g		2/6g
Bone china	-	C19th	1/2g		1/2g
Church Gresley Cornishware	?Jug	1864-present	1/2g	1/5g	2/7g
Church Gresley-type stoneware	?mixing bowl	C19-present	1/5g	1/20g	2/25g
Plain white glazed earthenware	Plate	C19-20th	2/11g		2/11g
Underglaze Transfer-printed earthenware	Plates	C19-20th	7/26g	5/75g	12/101g
<b>Total</b>			<b>17/73g</b>	<b>7/100g</b>	<b>24/173g</b>

For the most part the sherds are not diagnostic, being body sherds and particularly small in both size and weight (23g from Trench 1 and 7g from Trench 2).

This small assemblage indicates occupation nearby since probably the second half of the 18th century. It is typical of domestic pottery from any small town or village of the period and contains no types of intrinsic interest. A common reliance on probable Staffordshire products and Derbyshire products is seen here.

The assemblage is not of further intrinsic interest and may be considered for discard.

### 5.2 The clay pipe by Tim Upson-Smith

Three fragments of clay pipe stem were recovered from the spoil heaps, two from Trench 1 and one from Trench 2. The fragments from Trench 1 are 30mm and 20mm long respectively, the shorter length is 17th century in date and the other piece is 19th century in date. The fragment from Trench 2 is 77mm long and dates to the 19th century.

All of the fragments are abraded and are of limited use in dating the site as they are unstratified. The pipes were dated by using the pipe bore diameter which is a broadly accurate method, although closer dates can be achieved by using bowls if these are present.

These finds will be discarded prior to archiving unless otherwise instructed.

### 5.3 The small finds by Tora Hylton

No archaeological artefacts pre-dating the post-medieval period were found in any of the four trenches excavated.

A total of eight items dating to the post-medieval and modern period were retrieved when the spoil heaps were metal-detected. These were as follows:

**Trench 1:**

Two fragments of H-sectioned window lead (off-cuts)

One rectangular sectioned iron bar forged at right angle, a fitting of unknown use

**Trench 2:**

One strip of sheet lead (off cut)

One metal alloy key plate from lock mechanism

One copper alloy button with four holes

One lead shot (Diameter: 11mm), size suggests that it would have been used with a pistol. Impact mark on surface

One tapered bar with square-rectangular cross-section and forged at right angles (possible structural fitting).

These finds will be discarded prior to archiving unless otherwise instructed.

## 6 DISCUSSION

No archaeological remains from the medieval period were found in any of the four excavated trenches, despite the development area lying in an area of archaeological importance as defined in the Cheshire Historic Towns review (CCC 2003b). It is possible that medieval settlement remains were concentrated on the frontage of the property and the area to the rear was not subject to intensive activity. There was a single modern pit which may be related to rubbish disposal prior to tarmac being laid down.

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**Appendix 1: Context list**

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>Date</b>
101	Layer	Topsoil; 0.36m thick	-
102	Layer	Subsoil; 0.27m thick	-
103	Layer	Natural clay/sandstone	-
201	Layer	Topsoil; 0.28m thick	-
202	Layer	Subsoil; 0.24m thick	-
203	Layer	Natural clay/sandstone	-
301	Layer	Topsoil; 0.22m thick	-
302	Layer	Subsoil; 0.10m thick	-
303	Layer	Natural clay/sandstone	-
304	Layer	Modern tarmac; 0.22m thick	Modern
305	Cut	Pit	Modern
306	Fill	Fill of 305	Modern
401	Layer	Modern tarmac; 0.15m thick	Modern
402	Layer	Subsoil; 0.15m thick	-
403	Layer	Natural sandstone	-



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