



Northamptonshire Archaeology

An Archaeological watching brief
at Lower Field, off Main Road,
Church Stowe, Northamptonshire



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**Northamptonshire
County Council**

Jim Burke

Report 11/89

April 2011

(Revised May 2011)



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	Lower Field, off Main Road Church Stowe, Northamptonshire.	
Short description	In March 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at lower field, off Main Road, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire. The work was carried out during the construction of a field pond. No archaeological features were encountered. A small number of worked flints, and prehistoric and Roman pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil and remains of subsoil.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	-	
Previous work	Geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation (Burke 2010)	
Current land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/period	-	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Lower Field, off Main Street, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire	
Study area	4.85 hectares	
OS Easting & Northing	46360 25790	
Height OD	93 - 117m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	NCC Archaeological Adviser	
Project Design originator		
Director/Supervisor	Jim Burke (NA)	
Project Manager	Steve Parry (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Sir Peter Elwood	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	28 March 2011	
End date	7 April 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	Project code:CSN 11	
Paper		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An archaeological watching at Lower Field, off Main Street, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire.	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT LOWER FIELD,
OFF MAIN ROAD, CHURCH STOWE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
APRIL 2011**

ABSTRACT

In March 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a watching brief at lower field, off Main Road, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire. The work was carried out during the construction of a field pond. No archaeological features were encountered. A small number of worked flints, prehistoric and Roman pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil and the remains of the subsoil.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2011, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) during the construction of a field pond at Lower Field, off Main Street, Church Stowe, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 6360 5790; Fig 1). The scope of works was outlined in the brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor (NCCAA 2010) and detailed in the specification prepared by NA (2011). The objectives of the watching brief were to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits within the areas of excavation and to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

This report has been prepared to meet the requirements of the brief and complies with Appendix 4 of the English Heritage procedural document *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991), relevant sections of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (EH 2006), and appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA).

2 BACKGROUND

The village of Church Stowe lies within the parish of Stowe Nine Churches in the district of Daventry (approximately 16km to the west of Northampton).

2.1 Topography and geology

The site lies to the north of medieval historic core of Church Stowe, and covers an area of 4.85 hectares. It is situated on a relative steep north-west facing slope above a tributary of the River Nene, with the ground level descending from 117m to 93m aOD.

Prior to development the site was an arable field with several watercourses along the northern and western side.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Possible prehistoric activity has been recorded from aerial photographs to the south and south west of the modern village, approximately 400-450m from the application site. Watling Street follows the route of the modern A5 c 1km to the north-east. To the west of the site a Roman mosaic was discovered in 1699 and approximately 700m to the north-west a Roman villa was discovered in 1996, this has been the subject of an on-going

community excavation project. In the churchyard of St Michael's, carved stone was originally part of a Roman arch, indicating other Roman activity in the vicinity.

A 10th-century charter records the gift by King Eadwig of an estate of five hides to his kinsman Brihthelm, bishop elect of Wells in 956 AD. Its bounds appear to encircle the present-day village of Church Stowe but not Stowe Nine Churches. However, these two territories were amalgamated by Domesday (1086), when the estate was held by Gilbert de Ghent. The tower of the church at Church Stowe is thought to have been built in the period 950-1100 AD, most probably soon after the granting of the charter in 956 AD, but was possibly added to an already existing building possibly relating to a shrine or oratory (Woodfield 1981). The remains of a 'narrow' Saxon church recorded by Sir Henry Dryden in 1860s during restoration may instead relate to this earlier building.

There are a number of medieval earthworks around the church, which include the remains of the early manorial site, a possible motte mound, enclosure earthworks and a fishpond. The remains of an ancient trackway from the church at Weedon and its later diversion are visible to the north. The village has been the subject of an earthwork survey, which, in conjunction with evidence from aerial photographs, has demonstrated the presence of activity around the northern edge of the current settlement. This consists of a number of probable hollow ways and enclosures. One of the hollow-ways was recorded in the field immediately to the south of the application site.

Previous trial trenching evaluation (NA 2010) found an isolated tree throw, which contained charcoal and prehistoric pottery. The charcoal is consistent with the burning *in situ* of the stump as part of land clearance, the prehistoric pottery could indicate refuse disposal or the refuse generated by the short-term activity.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the work, as outlined in the brief, was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any archaeological remains in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the investigation were to:

- Observe the groundworks for the new lake and associated groundworks.
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits.
- Collect artefacts to help assist in the development of the type series in the region.
- Examine the archaeological resource within the area the new lake
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

4 GEOLOGICAL SURVEY by Steve Critchley

The southern part of the site at the base of slope, the geology consists of beds belonging to the Whitby Mudstone Formation (WMF) for about the first third of the site the rest being underlain by beds of the Marlstone Rock Formation (MRF). Towards the northern part of the site there is a small isolated outcrop of the WMF lying on the ridge.

These two beds belong to the Lower Jurassic Lias Group. The older MRF consist of sandy shelly ooidal ferruginous limestones with interbedded calcareous sandstones and subordinate ferruginous mudstones. The green mineral within the limestone would likely originate in these beds and contains a mineral called Berthierine, an iron silicate mineral formed under marine conditions with prevailing low oxygen levels. It is readily altered to iron carbonates during diagenesis and with later weathering to iron oxides.

The WMF is composed of dark grey fossiliferous mudstones and siltstones with occasional calcareous sandstones and limestone nodules at some horizons. A fossiliferous limestone is often present at its base above the MRF. Outcrops are generally extensively weathered with a few meters of a brownish grey clay.

5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

5.1 Methodology

The area of the lake was surveyed by the principal contractor and marked out with grid pegs to establish the outline limit of the lake. Site clearance began on the upper north-west slope of the site (mainly in an anti-clockwise orientation). Overburden was removed under archaeological supervision, using two tracked D5 bulldozers fitted with front toothless scrapers; areas that needed further investigation were cleared with the 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket to expose the first significant archaeological level, or in the absence of archaeology, the underlying geological.

Cleaning of exposed surfaces, hand excavation and recording progressed in accordance with the requirements of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and guidance for Archaeological Watching briefs* (IfA 2008).

5.2 General stratigraphy

The bedrock, which varied around the site, was encountered at 0.20m to 0.30m below ground level. The overlying topsoil and subsoil have merged over a period of time, due to deep ploughing; plough scars were evident across the whole area, which were mostly removed to clarify the geology. The plough scars containing coal and coke, suggesting that the field may have been steam ploughed in the late 19th / early 20th century. Various stone, terracotta and plastic land drains were also noted across the site.

Tree throws were noted, mainly in the northern part of the site. Sample excavation was carried out on some of the tree throws, which were archaeologically sterile. The remains of medieval plough and furrow, were present across the southern part of the site.

Unstratified pottery from the Iron Age, Roman, post-medieval and modern periods was found across the site; the Iron Age and Roman pottery was mostly located at the northern end of the site, together with the worked flint. A fragment of a riveted toe/heel iron was recovered from the modern field drain together with a small horseshoe, both dating from the 17th -19th centuries.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 Worked flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Six pieces of worked flint were recovered assemblage comprises from the interface between the subsoil and the underlying bedrock. The flints recovered consist of four waste flakes, of which two were broken, and two broken waste blades (Table 1).

The condition of the assemblage is good, with flints showing post-depositional edge damage ranging from occasional to frequent nicks on the edges. Patination is present on both blades and one of the flakes, ranging from a partial to a complete white discolouration of the surface.

The raw material, (which is likely to be locally sourced) is vitreous flint, mid to dark coloured greys and browns. The cortex present on the dorsal surface of the pieces ranges from light to mid brown in colour and generally has a smooth, rolled and weathered surface. One flint has a chalky cortex.

The worked flints are not directly dateable but their technological characteristics suggest a broadly Neolithic to Bronze Age date.

Table 1: Summary of worked flint

Flake/ Blade	Portion	Material	Cortex	Patination	Comments
Blade	Distal	Vitreous		Heavy	Small blade
Blade	Distal	Vitreous dark grey	Light brown	Slight	Chalky cortex
Flake	Distal	Vitreous dark grey-brown	Light brown		Post-depositional edge damage
Flake	Proximal	Vitreous		Heavy	Post-depositional edge damage
Flake	Whole	Vitreous mid brown	Light brown		Post-depositional edge damage
Flake	Whole	Vitreous mid brown-grey	Mid brown		Post-depositional edge damage

6.1 Prehistoric Pottery by Andy Chapman

Four sherds, weighing 18g, of hand-built pottery were recovered from the subsoil. All are in a fine, hard sandy fabric, with a dark grey core and dark grey to dark brown surfaces. They are all small plain body sherds, offering no diagnostic features, but they are most likely to date to the middle Iron Age.

The trial trenching had produced 40 small sherds, weighing 70g, from a single vessel in a leached shelly fabric. Due to the lack of diagnostic features, this material was only broadly dated to middle Bronze Age to Iron Age.

Given the small size and the lack of diagnostic features in both groups of pottery, it is not possible to say anything more specific. The two groups could be contemporary, but in different fabrics, sandy and shelly, both of which occur in middle Iron Age material in Northamptonshire, but this cannot be said with any certainty.

6.3 Roman Pottery by Tora Hylton

A single sherd of Roman pottery, weighing 5g, in a sandy greyware fabric was recovered from the topsoil. The sherd is undiagnostic and difficult to date with any certainty, the fabric type suggests that it may date to the 2nd - 3rd century, AD.

6.4 Post-medieval Pottery by Iain Soden

Fifteen sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered but all were unstratified. They comprise, Midland Black ware (CTS 411), Feathered Slipware (CTS 409), Underglaze transfer-printed earthenwares (CTS 416) and 19th-century mass-produced industrial wares (CTS 1000). They have no intrinsic value and have been discarded.

6.5 Metal Objects by Tora Hylton

There are two unstratified finds.

A shoe patten is incomplete, with just part of the ring and the perforated terminal for attaching the patten to the sole of a wooden clog surviving. The patten would have been worn as an overshoe in wet and muddy conditions (raising the clog above the mud and dirt), (Grew and de Neergard 1988, 91). The piece is too small to determine whether it is part of a crinkled, oval or circular patten, but such objects were in use from the 17th until the c19th century (Tyrrell 1994, 71).

A complete horseshoe is an example of a keyhole shoe. The shoe is fullered (a marginal groove close to outside edge of the shoe) and the internal edge of the shoe is shaped like a keyhole. Horseshoes of this type were chiefly used on draught horses and they date to the 17th-18th centuries.

7 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological features were encountered during groundworks within the area of the pond. The geology across the site was highly variable, with alternating bands of sandstone, mudstone, oolitic limestone and a siliceous intrusive deposit.

Most of the flint, the prehistoric pottery and the Roman pottery was found in the northern part of the site, near a natural ridge that crossed the area east to west. It was in this area that Iron Age pottery was recovered from a tree throw during the trial trench evaluation (NA 2010).

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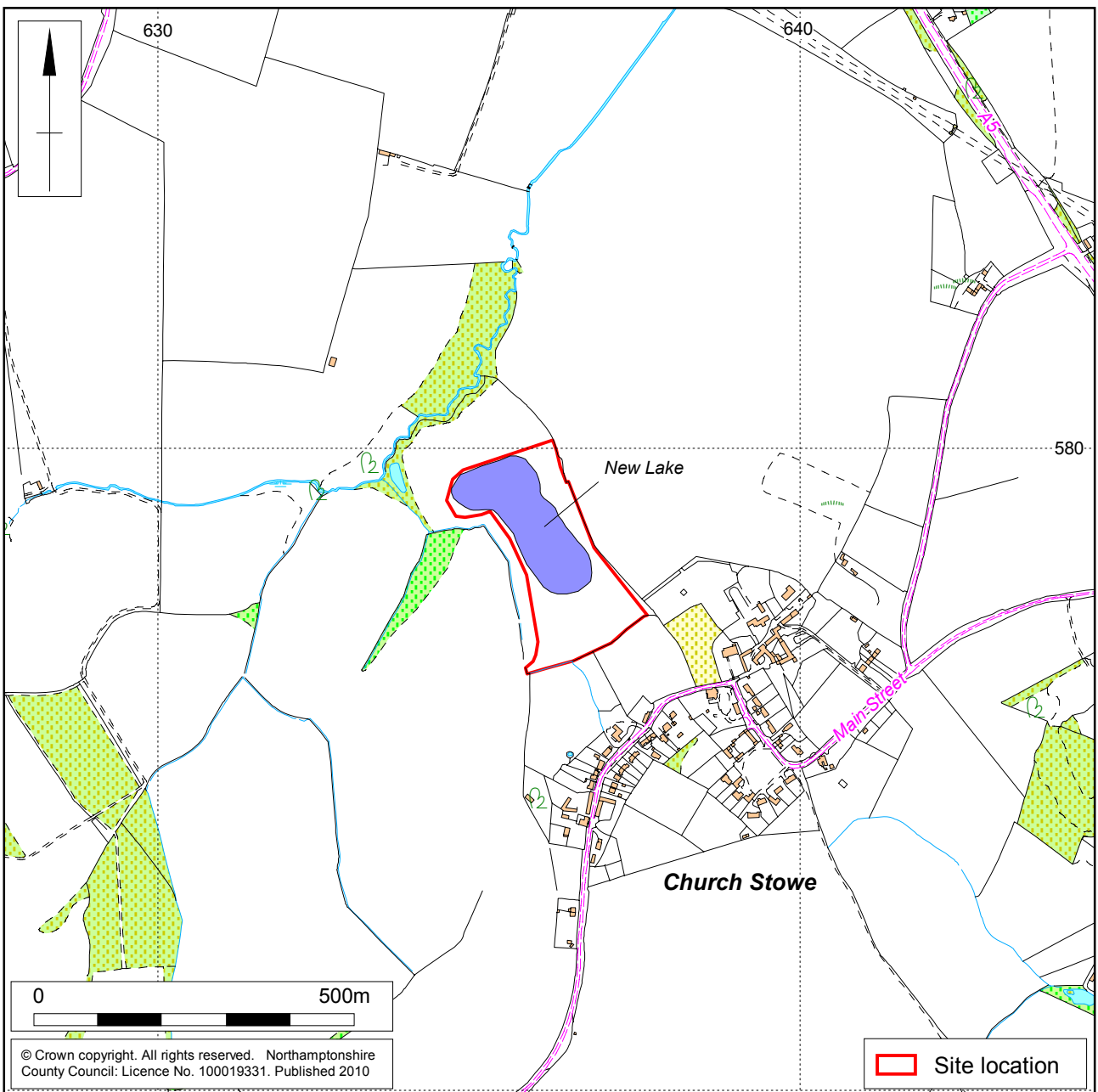
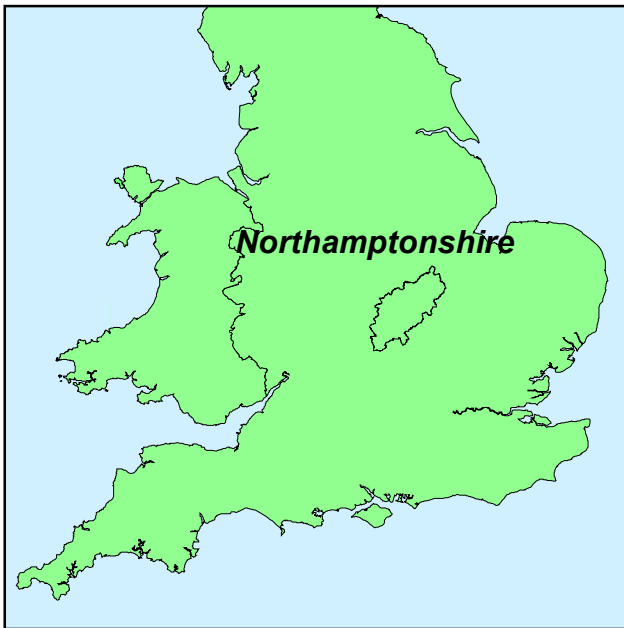
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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY

Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown clay loam, frequent chalk, charcoal flecks, flint.	0.20-.30m thick	Flint, Iron Age, Roman and post medieval pottery.
102	Natural			---



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



General view of the site, at the start of the excavation Fig 2



General view of the site, post-excavation Fig 3



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Construction of the new pond, Viewed from the church yard at Church Stowe.

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