



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation on land at  
Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire,  
October 2013



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

Liz Muldowney

Report 13/214

November 2013



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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>Oasis No. 164142</b>	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation on land at Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire		
Short description	Three trenches were excavated within the footprints of the proposed development on land at Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire. A series of extensive, intercutting Romano-British pits were identified as well as a recently backfilled pond.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site Status			
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Light industry		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Romano-British pits; modern pond		
Significant finds	Pottery, animal bone		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire		
Post code	NN7 2JN		
OS co-ordinates	NGR SP 76405 49969		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.17 hectares		
Height aOD	84m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Project brief originator	Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Director/Supervisor	Liz Muldowney (NA)		
Project Managers	Anthony Maull (NA),		
Sponsor or funding body	David Coles Architects		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	29/10/2013		
End date	29/10/2013		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	NA store	Pottery; animal bone	
Paper	ASH STO 13	Site records	
Digital		Survey data, report, photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire, October 2013		
Serial title & volume	13/214		
Author(s)	Liz Muldowney		
Page numbers	14 pages, 6 figs		
Date	November 2013		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LAND AT  
STOKE ROAD, ASHTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
OCTOBER 2013**

**Abstract**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land at Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire. Three trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed structures. An area comprising extensive, intercutting Romano-British pits was recorded in the northern part of the site as well as a recently filled-in pond.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by David Cole Architects to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at Stoke Road, Ashton, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 76405 49969; Fig 1).

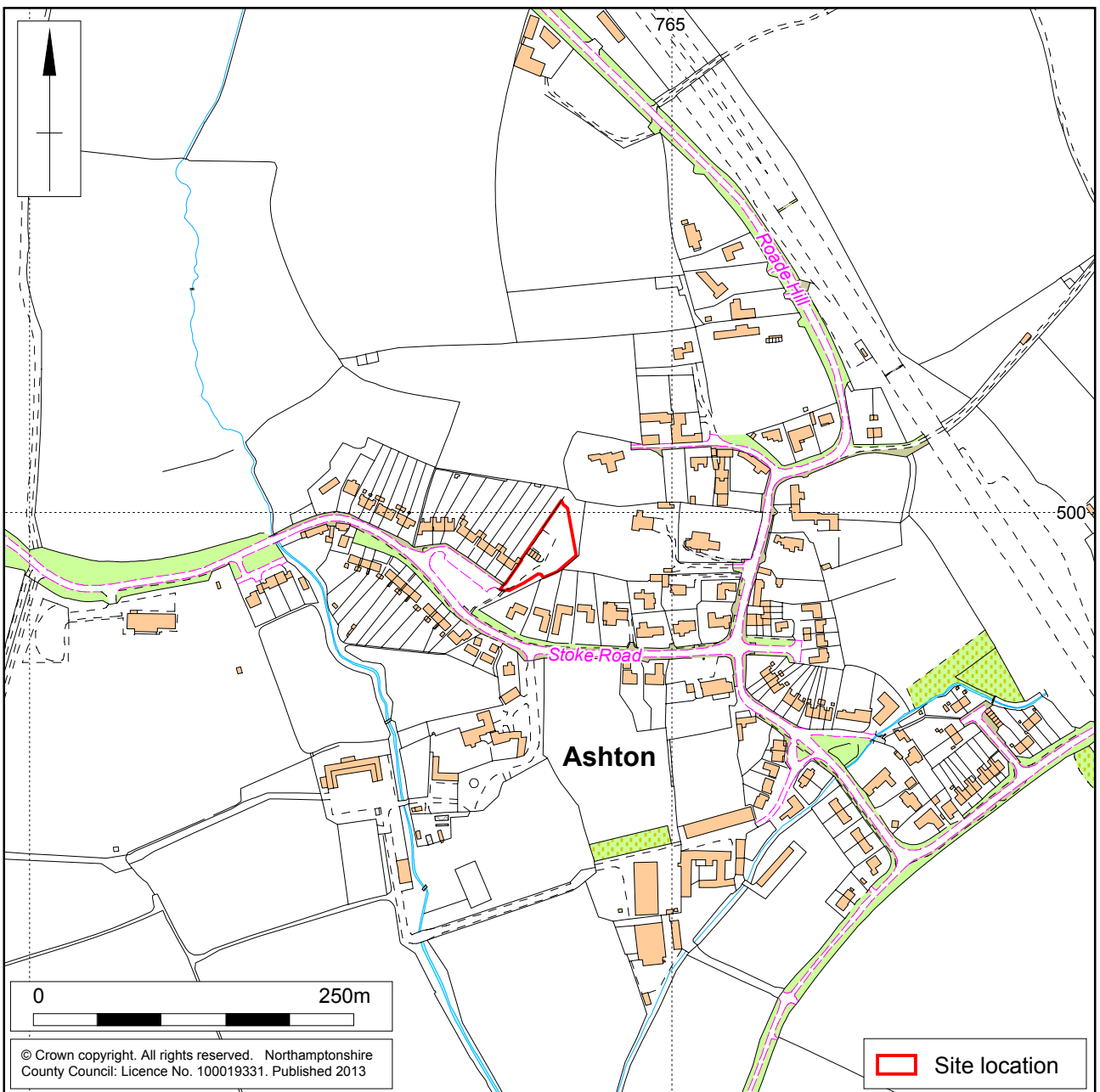
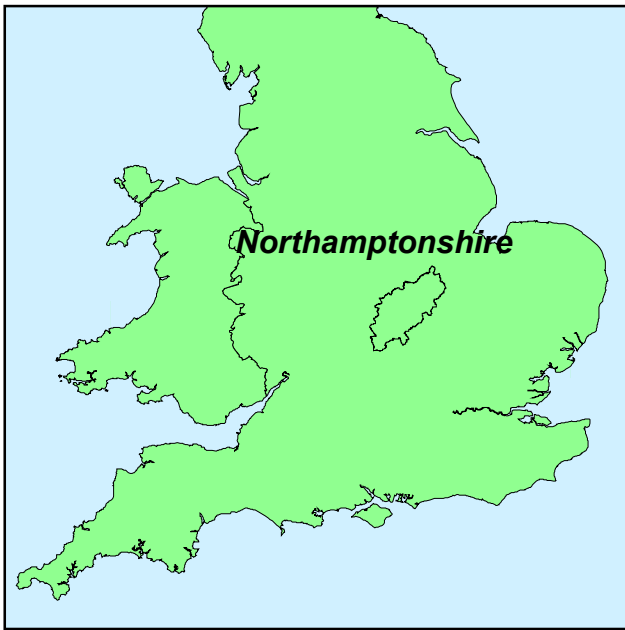
The work was commissioned to assess the archaeological impact of a proposed planning application for residential development. The development area comprises 0.17 ha of land. The trenching was designed to evaluate the footprints of the proposed structures.

All works were undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and followed the Brief issued by Liz Mordue (Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor (Mordue 2013)), and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013).

**2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The development area lies on the north eastern side of Stoke Road, south-west of the Manor and west of the Rectory and church. The development area is currently occupied by a small number of garages and contains some areas of hardstanding. It is bordered by residential properties.

Topographically the site slopes down from north-east to south-west and is at a height of 85m aOD. The geological mapping for the area indicated that the site was on Whitby Formation mudstone (BGS- <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/>). However, examination of recently excavated water table cores revealed that the site was on Upper Lias clay with overlying superficial deposits of glacial till.



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the proposed development area.

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the:

- Location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present at the proposed development site;
- Integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present at the proposed development site.

### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

There are few records for archaeological remains within the village of Ashton, however, this is likely to be a result of a general absence of modern development within the village rather than a true reflection of their potential survival.

There are no known prehistoric finds or settlement locations known within the village. Three Romano-British coins, one dating from Vespasian's reign in the 1st century AD were recovered in about 1948 from near the site of the moated manor (RCHME 1982).

The moated manor lies immediately to the north of the development area, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (1010809). The moat, which has been damaged on the southern side, encloses an oval island on which stands the current manor house. The majority of moated sites within England date from the middle of the 13th century to the middle of the 14th century AD. However, the oval shape of the Ashton moat indicates that it may be of early medieval date. The current manor house dates from the 17th century date.

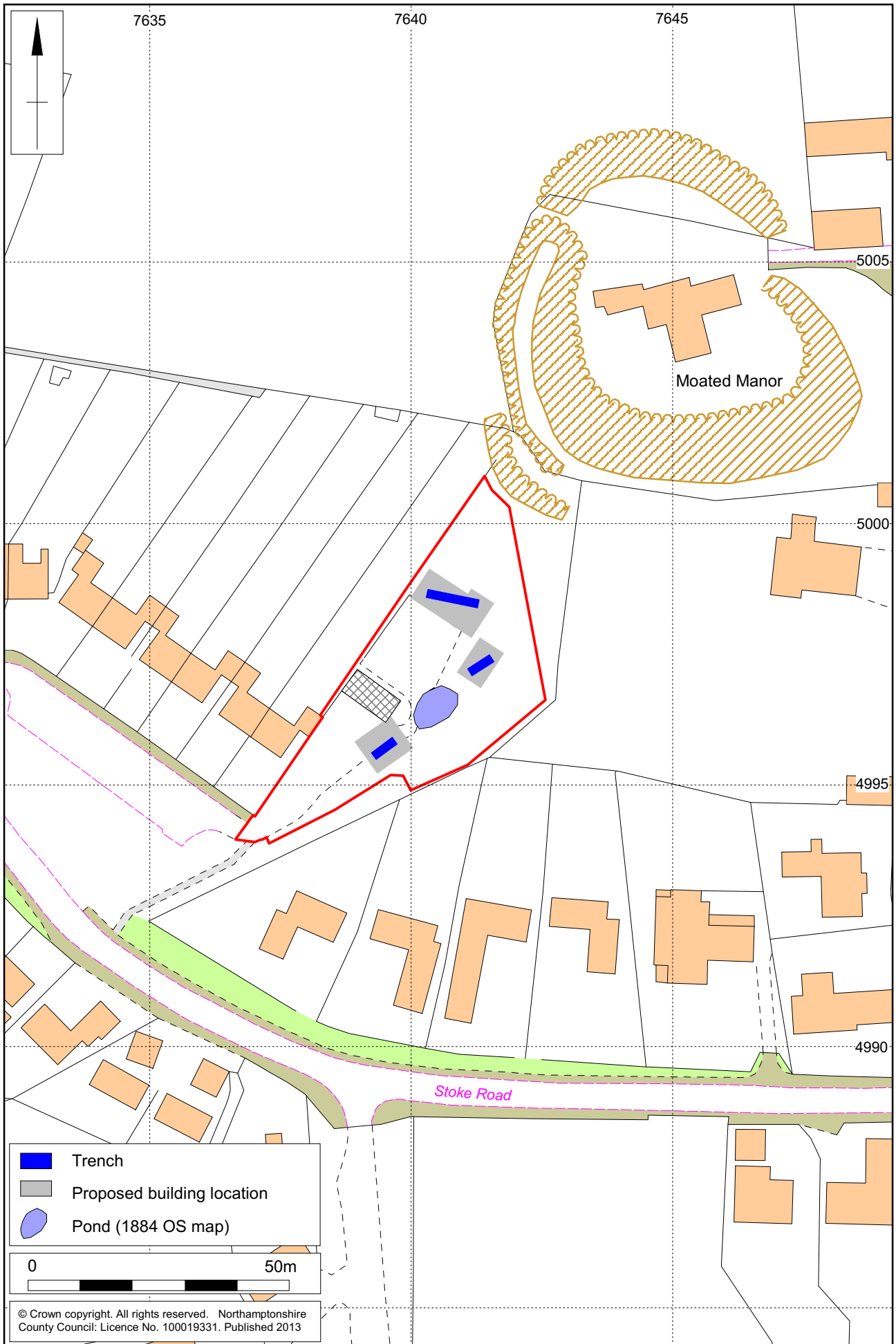
A map of 1768, held by the National Records Office, shows two ponds to the south of the moat (RCHME 1982). One pond continued the line of the southern arm of the moat and the other was approximately 70m to the south of the moat. The southernmost pond would now be within the garden of a property fronting on to Stoke Road to the south of the development area.

### 5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A programme of evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013) in response to brief provided by the Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor. This required the excavation of three trenches, two long and one 10m long, all sited to investigate the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains within the development area. (Fig 2).

The trench layout had to be varied on site from the agreed plan to accommodate the presence of two ground water bore holes and to avoid damaging access to the gated part of the site (Fig 2). The trenches were set out using differential GPS (Leica System 1200); any trenches that were altered from the original plan were subsequently resurveyed.

All trenches were excavated using a JCB excavator, fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, operated under constant archaeological supervision.



Scale 1: 1000

Trench locations Fig 2



The excavation and recording were carried out in accordance with NA guidelines and all records were created using NA pro-forma (NA 2011). Photographs were taken of all relevant deposits on 35mm monochrome print film, high resolution digital images were also taken. Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

The trenches were excavated to the top of the natural geological horizon or the upper archaeological levels whichever was the highest. Trench 2 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6m; no natural geological horizon was observed as this trench was sited over a deep, extensive feature. Excavation stopped at this point due to the loose nature of the material removed.

Levels in metres above Ordnance Datum were established for all trenches using GPS and for all excavated features using a dumpy level from a temporary bench mark (TBM) established using GPS.

Artefacts were recovered from individual contexts and stored and packed according to type. Modern artefacts were recorded in Trench 2 but were not retained.

All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991).

## **6 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

The natural horizon, where observed, was a light yellowish-orange sticky sandy clay with frequent small flint gravel and chalk flecks .

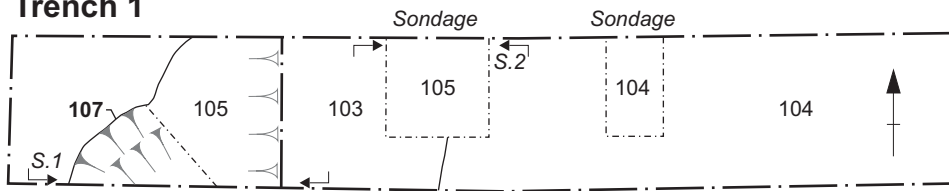
### **6.1 Trench 1**

This trench was located towards the northern side of the development area, within an area of cleared scrubland. It was 10m long and upto 0.74m deep (Fig 3).

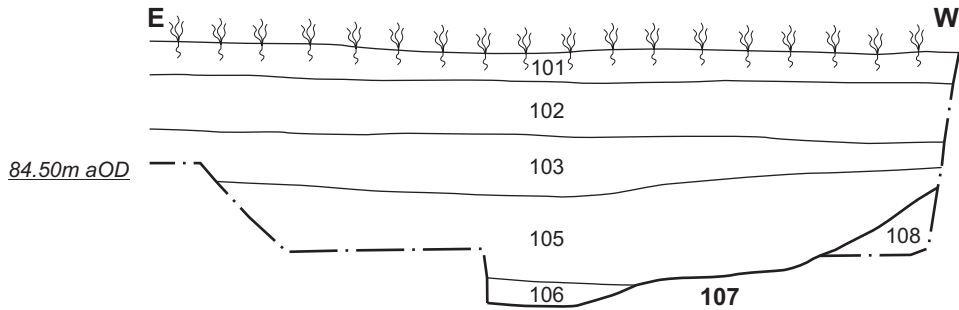
The latest layer (101) was 0.14m thick, dark brownish-grey friable silty clay topsoil. It contained significant quantities of building rubble and modern domestic debris and showed signs of having been recently reworked. It sealed subsoil (102) which was mid yellowish-grey, friable silty clay measuring 0.20m in depth.

The removal of this layer revealed a series of overlapping deposits that extended across the full length of the trench (Fig 3 and Fig 4). A machine cut sondage 0.38m deep was excavated at the western end of the trench, through these deposits to determine the nature of the archaeology. At this depth part of at least two intercutting pits was observed. The excavated pit [107] was in excess of 1m long and 0.9m wide with a relatively steep western side and a stepped, flattish base (Fig 3, Section 1). The upper sides of the pit were beyond the limits of the trench. The lowest fill was a light brownish-grey firm silty clay with frequent small snails associated with wet ground (106). This was sealed by firm mid brownish-grey sandy clay with frequent orange mottles, measuring 0.3m deep (105). This fill contained 14 sherds of abraded Romano-British pottery dating from the 2nd century AD, four fragments of indeterminate animal long bone and a moderate quantity of snails, both of the large garden variety and the very small snails associated with wet ground. Fill (105) extended for at least 5m from the western end of the trench.

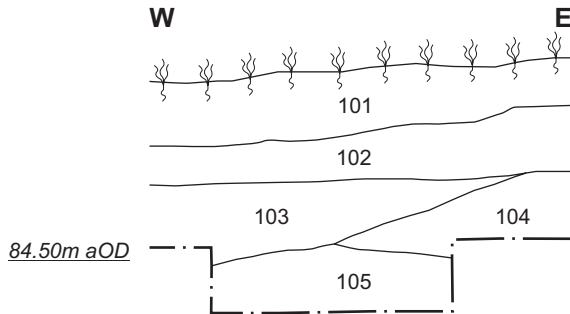
### Trench 1



### Section 1



### Section 2



It was sealed by dark brownish-grey friable clay silt (104) that extended for 5.3m from the eastern end of the trench, surviving to a depth of 0.20m+. Four sherds of abraded Romano-British Harrod ware pottery, dating from the 2nd century AD and three small fragments of non-diagnostic animal bone were recovered from the deposit. It is likely that this material was the fill of another overlapping pit, the limits of which were beyond the trench.

This fill was sealed by layer (103), light greyish-yellow silty clay with the appearance of redeposited natural clay. This deposit extended from the western end of the trench for 4.5m before petering out, at its deepest it was 0.26m deep (Fig 3, Section 2). It is likely to have been deliberately deposited to seal the pits and level the area once the lower fills had settled (Fig 4).



Trench 1, showing sealing layer (103) over pit fills, looking east Fig 4

## 6.2 Trench 2

This trench was located towards the western side of the site and it was 5m long and up to 1.62m deep (Figs 2 and 5).

The latest layer (201) was reworked topsoil, and was the same as layer (101) in Trench 1. Below this was a mixed deposit of dark greyish-brown friable silty clay and redeposited light yellowish-orange sandy clay (202), 1.22m deep. Fragments of ceramic drain, machine made brick, modern glass bottles and domestic/light industrial debris were observed throughout the layer.

This layer sealed a partially exposed layer of gleyed dark brownish-grey waterlogged plastic clay with frequent lenses of decayed organic material (203), in excess of 0.20m deep. This deposit had the appearance of a pond fill and the layer above was presumably deposited in the later part of the 20th or early 21st century to level the area. The full extent of this possible pond was not established within the confines of the evaluation. Local residents provided information that there had been a pond on the site but were unsure of when it was filled in. There are no ponds shown on the later 20th-century Ordnance Survey maps for the area.



Trench 2 showing pond backfill (202), looking south-west Fig 5

### 6.3 Trench 3

This trench was located in the southern part of the development area; it was positioned 1m to the south-east of its planned position in order to avoid damaging the access way into the northern, gated part of the site (Fig 2 and 6). It was 5m long and 0.36m deep.

The latest layer (301) was a shallow deposit of reworked topsoil 0.12m deep. This sealed a dump of redeposited natural clay mixed with modern building debris and lenses of greyish silt and gravel (302), 0.24m thick, overlying the natural horizon (303). Late 20th-century Ordnance Survey maps show a block of garages here and it is possible that the dump of building debris (302) derived from their construction and or demolition.



Trench 3, looking north-north-east

Fig 6

## 7 THE FINDS

### 7.1 Pottery by Tora Hylton

Eighteen sherds of Roman pottery with a combined weight of 64g were recovered from two deposits in Trench 1 (104 and 105). With the exception of one rim sherd, this small fragmentary assemblage comprises undiagnostic body sherds. The sherds are generally small and display signs of abrasion and wear and the average sherd weight is low at 3.5g. The range of fabrics represented suggests a 2nd century AD date for the assemblage. Late Roman fabrics are not represented and there are no imported wares.

The assemblage comprises locally produced domestic wares which are dominated by shell-gritted and greyware fabrics. The shell-gritted wares are most certainly sourced from a group of kilns sited 2km south-west of the village of Harrold in south-east Northamptonshire. The only diagnostic sherd is from a Harrold ware jar with a simple outcurved rim (Brown 1994, fig 26, 70), the form suggesting a 2nd century AD date. All other fabric types are represented by undiagnostic sherds.

*Table 1: Pottery quantification*

Fill/cut Roman Pottery fabric	104/unknown		105/pit 107	
	Sherds	Weight (g)	Sherds	Weight (g)
Grog/shell tempered wares	--	--	1	5
Grog tempered wares	--	--	3	3
Shell-gritted ware (HAR SH)	4	25	5	11
Misc Greywares	--	--	4	13
Misc Sand-tempered ware	--	--	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>38</b>

\* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection

### 7.2 Animal bone by Liz Muldowney

A small quantity of non-diagnostic animal bone was recovered from two pit fills in Trench 1 (104 and 105).

*Table 2: Animal bone quantification*

Context	Feature	No	Weight (g)	Notes
104	Unknown	3	10	Small non-diagnostic fragments including elements of long bone.
105	[107]	4	9.5	Non-diagnostic long bone fragments

## 8 CONCLUSION

The trench evaluation has produced evidence for some intercutting Romano-British pits in the northern part of the development area, elsewhere the site has been subject to modern reworking.

The group of intercutting pits partially observed in Trench 1 have been dated to the 2nd century AD in the Romano-British period. Although all the pottery was abraded no later Romano-British forms were present and therefore a mid Roman date is likely. The full form and function of this pit group could not be determined within the confines of the evaluation; however, the presence of the wet land snails and the concreted lower fills suggests that the pits had been water-filled though possibly only seasonally. This would have allowed the fills to dry out and compact in drier months. It is not known whether the Romano-British coins found in the middle of the 20th century were from the southern side of the moated manor, and therefore possibly associated with the pits identified here.

No archaeological deposits predating the modern period survived in Trench 2 because of the presence of the recently backfilled deep pond. The full extent of this feature was not established; reworking of the topsoil and levelling of the area had removed all surface traces. There is no map evidence for a pond in this area in the 20th century; a pond is shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map, slightly to the south-west of Trench 2 (Fig 2).

No archaeological features were recorded in Trench 3; the construction and subsequent demolition of a block of garages in this part of the site appears to have caused minimal below ground disturbance.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	10m x 1.6m, E-W	476407 249985	84.96m	0.74m deep 84.22m aOD
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Dark greyish-brown friable silty clay; frequent brick, tile, concrete and plastic debris	0.14m thick	
102	Subsoil	Mid yellowy-grey silty clay	0.20m thick	
103	Redeposited natural layer	Light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.25m thick	
104	Fill	Friable dark greyish-brown clay silt	0.20m+ deep	Pottery, animal bone
105	Fill of Pit 107	Firm mid brownish-grey silty clay, mottled orange	0.23m deep	Pottery
106	Fill of Pit 107	Light yellowish-grey silty clay	0.09m deep	
107	Pit	Form in plan not fully seen, steep sides and a stepped, flattish base	1.0m+ long 0.9m+ wide 0.48m deep	
108	Natural layer	Light orangey-yellow sandy clay, frequent small flint fragments, frequent chalk flecks	-	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	5m x 1.6m, NNW-SSE	746413 249972		1.64m deep
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Dark greyish-brown friable silty clay; frequent brick, tile, concrete and plastic debris	0.20m thick	
202	Made ground	Mixed friable mid greyish-brown silty clay and light brownish yellow silty clay with frequent building debris	1.22m thick	
203	Pond fill	Gleyed dark brownish-grey sticky clay with moderate lenses of dark grey waterlogged organic material	0.20m+ deep	

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height (aOD)</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural (aOD)</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>5m x 1.6m, NNW-SSE</b>	<b>476395 249957</b>	<b>83.31m</b>	<b>0.36m deep 82.95m aOD</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
301	Topsoil	Dark greyish-brown friable silty clay; frequent brick, tile, concrete and plastic debris	0.012m thick	
302	Made ground	Light greyish-yellow silty clay with moderate building rubble and lenses of gravel	0.24m thick	
303	Natural layer	Light yellowish-orange plastic sandy clay with frequent chalk flecks and flint gravel		



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