



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at  
Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland  
November 2011-March 2012



**Northamptonshire Archaeology**  
2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



**Northamptonshire  
County Council**

James Ladocha

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**STAFF**

Project manager

Jim Brown BSc PGDip MIfA

Fieldwork, text and illustration

James Ladocha BA

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Jim Brown		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland, November 2011-March 2012	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a watching brief at Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland between November 2011 and March 2012. The work was carried out during the installation of a new water main and associated household connections by Anglian Water Services. A variety of modern layers were encountered but no deposits of antiquity, archaeological features or finds that predated the 20th century were found.	
Project type	Archaeological watching brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Road surface	
Future work	None	
Monument type/ period	Shrunken medieval village	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Rutland	
Site address	Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland	
Study area	1ha overall	
OS Easting & Northing	centred on SP 89310 96440	
Height aOD	c50-55m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Richard Clark, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	James Ladocha, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Anglian Water Services	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	24/11/11	
End date	02/03/12	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location:</b>	<b>Content</b>
Physical	Oakham Museum OAKRM:2011.30	None
Paper		Site monitoring sheets, permatrace plans & sections, site registers, photographic archive, background documents
Digital		Client PDF report
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	An archaeological watching brief at Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland, November 2011-March 2012	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
MAIN STREET, THORPE-BY-WATER  
RUTLAND**

**November 2011 – March 2012**

*Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook a watching brief at Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland between November 2011 and March 2012. The work was carried out during the installation of a new water main and associated household connections by Anglian Water Services. A variety of modern layers were encountered but no deposits of antiquity, archaeological features or finds that predated the 20th century were found.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Anglian Water Services to conduct an archaeological watching brief as part of a water main improvement scheme along Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, Rutland (Fig 1; NGR SP 89310 96440). The scheme involved the open cast excavation of several new manholes, parts of the principal pipe trench and several trench connections to private properties. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Brown 2011) to meet the requirements of the local authority brief, issued by Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological planning advisors to Rutland County Council (Clark 2011).

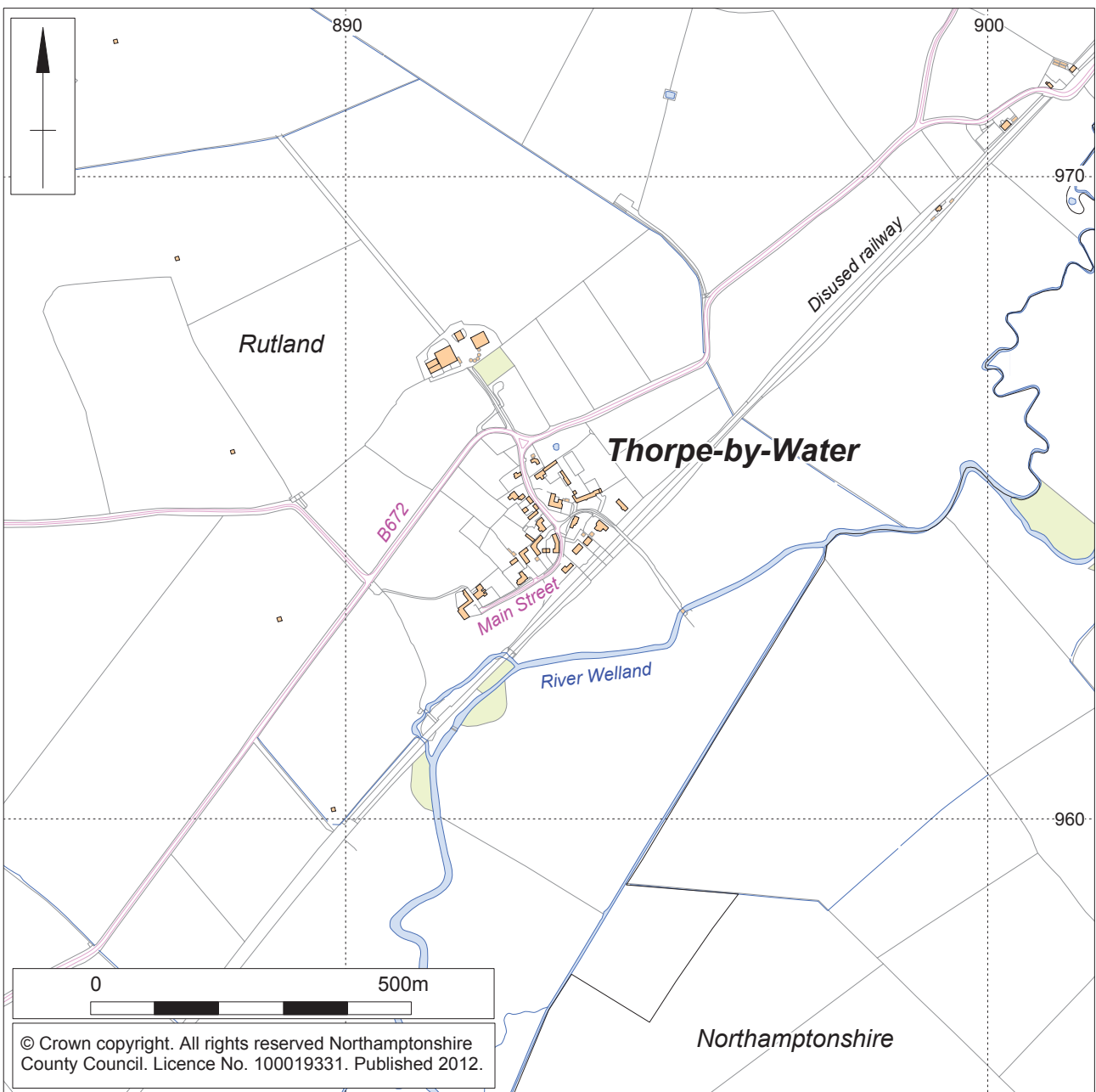
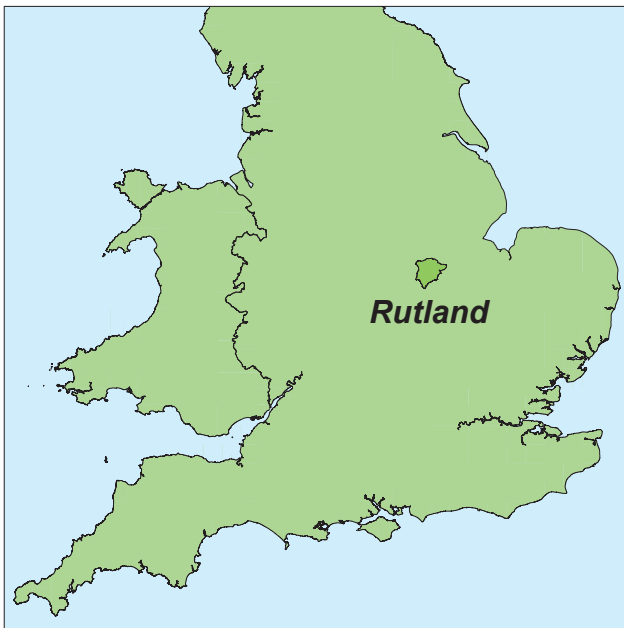
**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Archaeological background**

Thorpe-by-Water is situated in an area of known archaeological activity dating from prehistoric times to the present day. Iron Age and Roman features were uncovered during an earlier archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to The Cutting, Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water (Mudd 2005 and Carlyle *et al* 2011). The village is thought to be a shrunken medieval village with the former extended settlement situated to the east and north-east of the village, and there are extant ridge and furrow cultivation remains to the south, east and west of the village. A dismantled railway line follows the river along the Welland Valley and passes south of the village.

**2.2 Topography and geology**

The village of Thorpe-by-Water is situated on the boundary between Rutland and Northamptonshire. The River Welland flows along the valley eastwards and is immediately to the south of the village. Main Street lies at c50-55m above Ordnance Datum, with the land sloping down towards the river. The superficial geology of the site is Lower Lias Clay, above which soils of the Denchworth association have formed, comprising slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils with fine loamy variations (BGS 2001; Trench 1983).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location

Fig 1

### 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the work was to identify any archaeological remains that may be revealed by the development and then determine and understand the nature, function and character of such remains in their cultural and environmental setting. The objectives were established in pursuit of national and regional research agendas (EH 1991; Cooper 2006)

The specific objectives of the watching brief, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation, were to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of the activity or occupation,
- recover pottery to assist in the development of a type series within the region,
- identify any palaeo-environmental remains for sampling purposes that would help to determine local environmental conditions during antiquity.

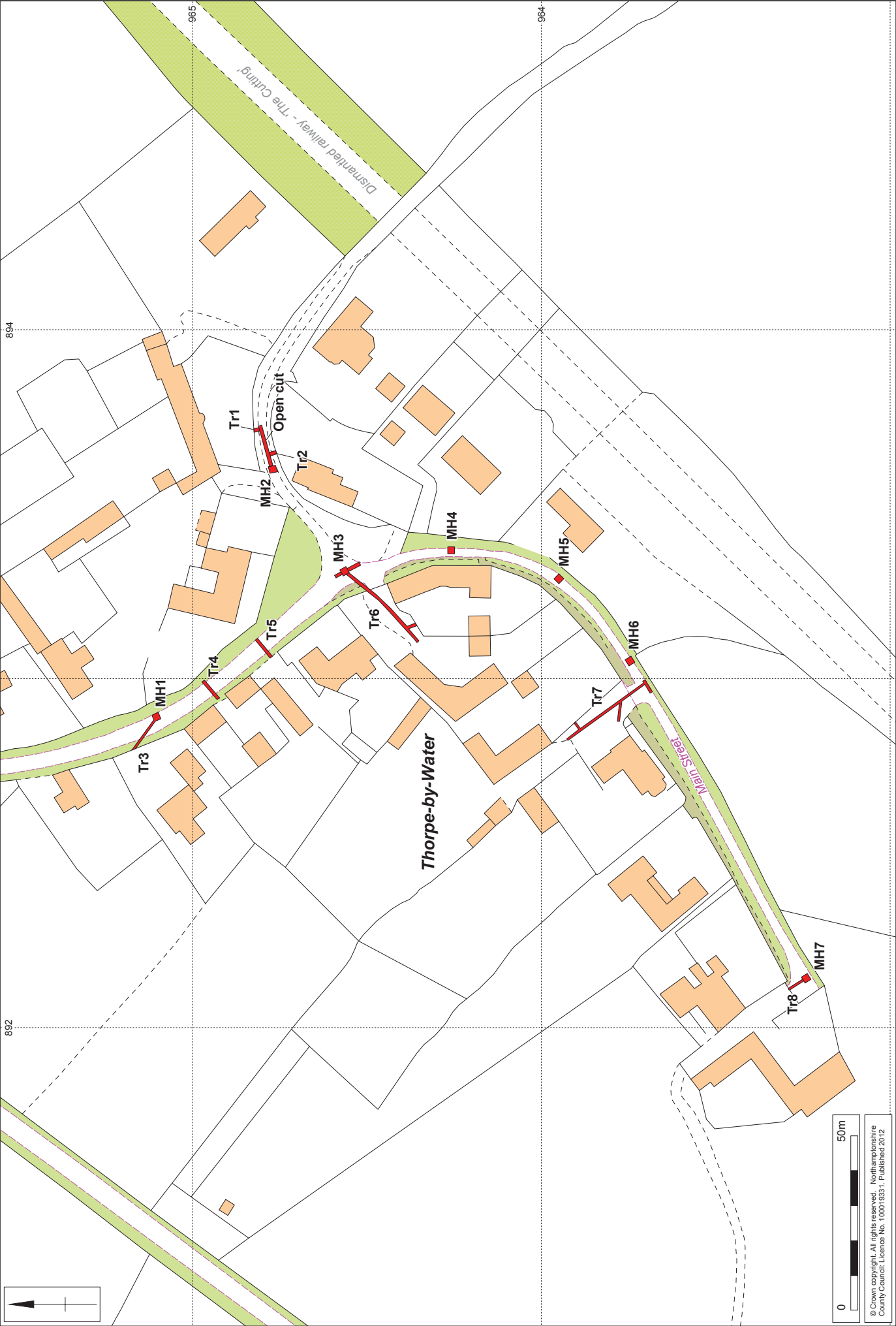
In light of the overall lack of archaeological evidence it was not possible to advance the specific objectives of the project.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

Seven manholes were excavated with the majority of the new water main laid by drilling between these manholes. A 12m section of the water main was laid by open cut excavation to the east of manhole (MH) 2; this replaced the initially proposed MH1. In addition eight trench connections were also excavated from the new water main to property boundaries (Fig 2). All excavations were conducted using a mechanical excavator with a 0.40m, or 0.65m, wide toothless ditching bucket. The manholes were 2.0m long by 2.0m wide, excavated to an average depth of 4.0m. Trenches were, on average, 1.0m deep by 0.6m wide. Site visits were conducted at regular intervals whenever the site contractor gave notification of their intention to conduct mechanical excavation.

Potential archaeological features and deposits were cleaned using a trowel within the confines of the excavation. All recording on site followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording methods (NA 2011). A full photographic record comprising both 35mm monochrome negatives and colour transparencies was maintained, supplementing digital photographs which form the principal photographic record for the purpose of this report. Scale map plots were produced using mapinfo 8.0 software from Ordnance Survey data and annotated with reference to the *pro-forma* watching brief record sheets in order to track the progress of the excavations. This was supplemented with sketches as necessary.

The archaeological investigation was undertaken in accordance with current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance* (IfA 2008), *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010) and the procedural documents of English Heritage (EH 1991; 2006).



Scale 1:1000 (A3) Location of manholes and lateral connections Fig 2

## 5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

### 5.1 Manholes and water main open cut



Manhole 5 section, looking north-west Fig 3



Manhole 6 section, looking north-west Fig 4

Manholes 1, 2, 4, 5, and the open cut from MH2 all revealed similar sections (Fig 3). The natural substrate was mixed mid brownish-orange and mid greyish-blue clay with some bands of orange sandy clay and ironstone. These bands tended to become more frequent at greater depths. This was overlain by a compacted hardcore layer of sub-

angular stone (<0.2m in length), 200-400mm thick, mixed with mid orangey-brown sandy clay, which contained occasional brick fragments. The tarmac road surface was laid directly over this and was 100mm thick.

MH6 revealed a slightly different stratigraphy. The natural substrate was overlain by a make-up layer of mid greyish-brown sandy clay mixed with patches of redeposited natural clay and frequent stone inclusions, 400-500mm thick. The same road surface (hardcore under tarmac) overlaid this (Fig 4). MH6 was located towards the base of a gentle incline in the road and this make-up layer may have been deposited to decrease the incline when the road was laid.

Two of the seven manholes were excavated with the use of shuttering and these manholes (MH3 and MH7) were fenced off making a detailed study of their stratigraphy impossible. However, trenches excavated directly from these manholes provided a record of their stratigraphy, see Trenches 6 and 8 below.

The excavation of the manholes suggested that prior to the laying of the modern road surface the area was stripped down to the natural substrate to allow for a more stable base. This would have truncated any archaeological remains or deposits within the road corridor.

## **5.2 Lateral connections**

### ***Trenches 1 & 2***

Trenches 1 and 2 connected the open cut water main trench to the surrounding property boundaries. Trench 1 was 1.5m wide and Trench 2 was 1.0m wide, both were 1.0m deep. Within the road corridor the stratigraphy was the same as that of the open cut but on the verge it changed slightly. The natural was overlain by a make-up layer of mid greyish-brown silty clay, 300mm thick, with frequent sub-angular stones and brick fragments. In both trenches this was cut by existing service lines, the backfill of which was similar to that of the make-up layer. The surface was overlain by 0.1m of dark brownish-grey silty clay topsoil (Fig 5).

### ***Trench 3***

Trench 3 headed north-west from MH1 to a property boundary. It was 0.6m wide and sloped up from 1.4m deep at MH1 to 1.0m deep at the boundary wall. The road make-up is the same as that of MH1. However, when the trench crossed the edge of the property driveway there was a thin lens of yellow sand and gravel over which a slab of concrete 1.5-2.2m wide by 150mm thick, was laid. According to the homeowner the concrete was laid during the building of the property and extends all the way up the drive. This is abutted to the north-west by a layer of orangey-brown sand and gravel, 250mm thick, which deepens at the boundary wall and appears to have been used as both a hardcore layer for the pavement and backfill for the 0.4m deep concrete foundation of the boundary wall. This layer was cut by a BT cable trench. There was also a storm drain, 0.8m deep, and a water pipe, 0.9m deep, the backfill of which was sealed by the concrete and road hardcore respectively. Road tarmac covered the concrete and pavement hardcore (Fig 6).



Trench 1, looking north Fig 5



North-west end of Trench 3, looking north Fig 6

### ***Trenches 4 & 5***

Trenches 4 and 5 were of the same stratigraphy as the surrounding manholes. Trench 4 was 1.3m deep and the hardcore layer narrowed from 280mm thick, in the road, to 0.16m in the pavement/driveway. The tarmac also thinned from 100mm to 70mm thick. Trench 5 was 1.1m deep and the layers were of a more consistent depth comprising hardcore, 250mm thick, and tarmac, 90mm thick. A storm drain and water pipe were observed in both trenches and are probably a continuation of those seen in Trench 3.

### ***Trench 6***

Trench 6 headed south-west from MH3 onto a small access road/driveway where it turned slightly westward and continued towards a property boundary (total length c29m). There was also a small 2.5m spur heading south-east to another property boundary near the end of the trench (Fig 2). Two other slots were excavated from MH3; these were to allow access for the pipe drilling machine. The south-eastern slot and the initial part of Trench 6 both revealed the same stratigraphy as the majority of the other manholes. Natural substrate was overlain by hardcore, 350mm thick, and tarmac, 110mm thick.



Trench 6 within the access road, looking west Fig 7

Trench 6 was 1.35m deep at MH3 and sloped gently to 0.90m at the south-west end. As the trench passed from the road to the pavement, and the start of the access road, the hardcore layer thinned to 200mm thick and the storm drain and water pipe from Trenches 3-5 were observed. Once on the access road the trench was crossed by numerous services at a slight angle to the trench for c12m. There were no distinct cuts for the majority of these services which had been cut through disturbed ground and backfilled with their own upcast. This heavily disturbed layer overlaid natural and was similar to the road hardcore layer, comprising mid greyish-brown sandy clay with frequent large stones and cobbles, 300-350mm thick. This was overlain by small brick and tile fragments mixed with red sandy clay, 70mm thick, across the extent of the

access road. Light yellowish sand and gravel, 60mm thick, lay above the brick, onto which 70mm of tarmac was laid (Fig 7).

### ***Trench 7***

Trench 7 was excavated to the south-west of MH6 and consisted of a slot aligned south-west to north-east, 3.2m deep, and the mains connection which stepped up to 2.0m deep and headed north-west from this slot. The trench crossed Main Street and headed up a driveway/access road which had quite a steep incline, 0.9m deep at the north-west end. There were also two spurs to different property boundaries (Fig 2).

Trench 7 largely consisted of two make-up layers, the earlier of which overlay the natural substrate and was the same greyish-brown sandy clay as seen in MH6. This extended for the length of the trench and undulated between 160-300mm thick. The upper make-up layer was found only within the access road. This was mid greyish-black sandy clay with some patches of greyish-brown sandy clay and contained frequent brick fragments, stone and charcoal lenses. There were also a number of quite large concrete, and reinforced concrete slabs, one of which was over 1.0m long by 0.3m thick. The layer also contained modern pottery, glass and plastic coated wire which were not retained. The layer undulated between 200-500mm thick and was probably related to the building of the house to the south-east of the trench in 1985. The layer thinned out towards the boundary wall of the north-eastern spur and towards the house in the western spur; therefore, it may have been deposited to build up the access road to a similar level of that of the surrounding properties. This layer was overlain by yellowish-orange sand and gravel and topped with tarmac (Fig 8). Within the road the make-up layer was overlain by hardcore and tarmac as seen in the manholes, which thinned out as it reached the access road. As with Trench 6 this deposit was disturbed by numerous services.



Section within the access road of trench 7, looking south-west Fig 8

### ***Trench 8***

Trench 8 headed north-west from MH7 towards a property boundary and shallowed from 1.65m at MH7 to 1.30m at the north-west end. Natural substrate was not encountered within the trench, instead the base of the trench was within a layer of dark bluish-grey sandy clay with occasional charcoal lenses and stone, and very occasional brick fragments. This layer was at least 700mm thick and thickened to the north-west, overlain

by mid greyish orange-brown sandy clay which was redeposited natural clay. The clay was 150-400mm thick providing a leveling layer for upper deposits. Overlying this was hardcore, 330mm thick, similar to that found within the manholes and was slightly more yellow in colour. This was overlain by a 180mm thick layer of greyish-brown sandy clay with frequent stones and occasional charcoal flecks on to which the tarmac was laid (Fig 9). The property to the south-west of the trench was a converted barn and farmyard and this access has been redeveloped several times.



Section of Trench 8, looking north-east Fig 9

## 7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief identified no features, deposits or finds of antiquity. Within the road corridor the excavations were characterised by the natural substrate overlain by the road surfacing layers. It is likely that the area was reduced down to natural prior to the road being laid, which probably resulted in the disturbance and truncation of any archaeological remains. The exception to this is at the south-west end of Main Street where the road surface has been laid over farmyard levels. Where the trenches extended beyond the road corridor, onto small access roads, the excavations revealed make-up layers that were heavily disturbed by modern services.

This watching brief has demonstrated that there was no survival of archaeological remains within the road corridor of Main Street, Thorpe-by-Water, in the areas excavated. The merit of undertaking watching briefs within this kind of environment needs to be weighed against their location and extent. Although this watching brief was largely negative it is impossible to say what may be discovered when virgin ground is excavated and they are therefore still of benefit. However, once the extent of modern deposit has been demonstrated and it is clear that archaeological deposits are unlikely to be found, a more flexible brief would permit a change to a less intensive watching brief.

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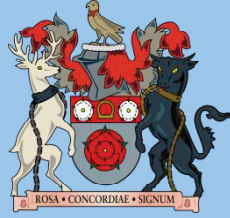
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2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

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