



Northamptonshire Archaeology

A programme of archaeological observation, investigation
and recording on land at the former Gasworks site
Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk
July 2012 - December 2013



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. 186166	
Project title	Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording on land at the former Gasworks site, Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk		
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between July 2012 and December 2013 for The Sirius Group, during groundworks connected with remediation works at the former gasworks site, Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk. Two burials and an archaeological deposit were recorded in the north-western part of the investigation area. The remainder of the plot had been heavily disturbed by the gasworks.		
Project type	Archaeological watching brief		
Site Status	-		
Previous work	1957 archaeological work		
Current land use	Former Gasworks		
Future work	unknown		
Monument type and period	-		
Significant finds	Two burials (left in situ)		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Norfolk		
Site address	Bury Road, Thetford		
Post code	-		
OS co-ordinates	TL 8692 8248		
Area (sq m/ha)	1183sq.m		
Height aOD	15m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Project brief originator	Senior Historic Environment Officer, Norfolk County Council		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh and John Walford		
Project Managers	Anthony Maull supported by David J Leigh		
Sponsor or funding body	Sirius Remediation		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	July 2012		
End date	December 2013		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	ENF 129437	-	
Paper	Norfolk Museum	Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording on land at the former Gasworks site, Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION
AND RECORDING ON LAND AT THE FORMER GASWORKS SITE
BURY ROAD, THETFORD, NORFOLK
JULY 212 - DECEMBER 2013**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between July 2012 and December 2013 for The Sirius Group, during groundworks connected with remediation works at the former gasworks site, Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk. Two burials and an archaeological deposit were recorded in the north-western part of the investigation area. The remainder of the plot had been heavily disturbed by the gasworks.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by The Sirius Group to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and reporting on land at the former gasworks site, Bury Road, Thetford, Norfolk (NGR TL 8692 8248, Fig 1).

The works were required by the Senior Historic Environment Officer, Norfolk County Council in line with to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012). A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology for all phases of work (Leigh 2012). The aims of the works were to ensure that any archaeological remains within the area of proposed ground works are located and recorded.

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) registered organisation. This document was prepared in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2009).

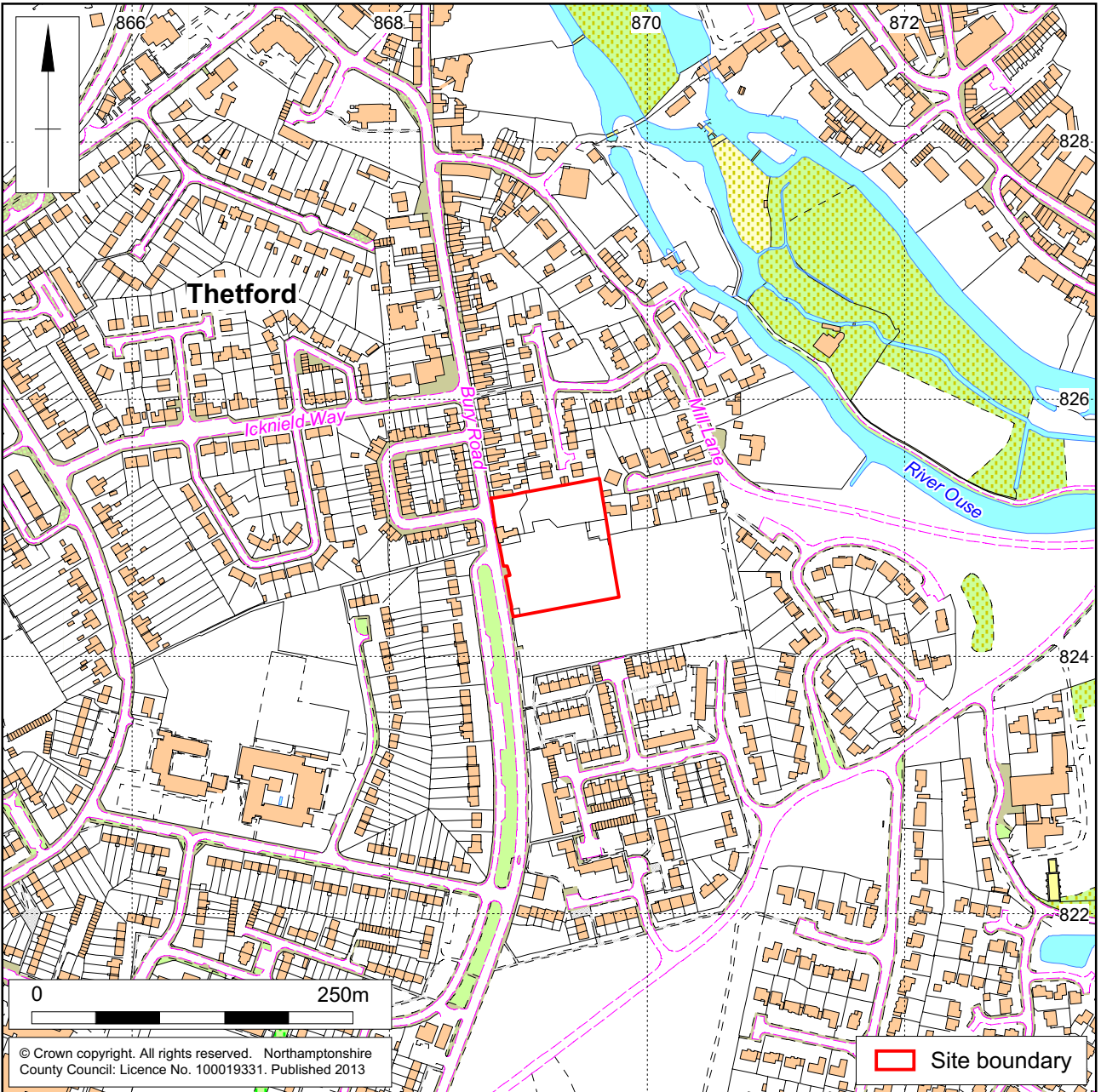
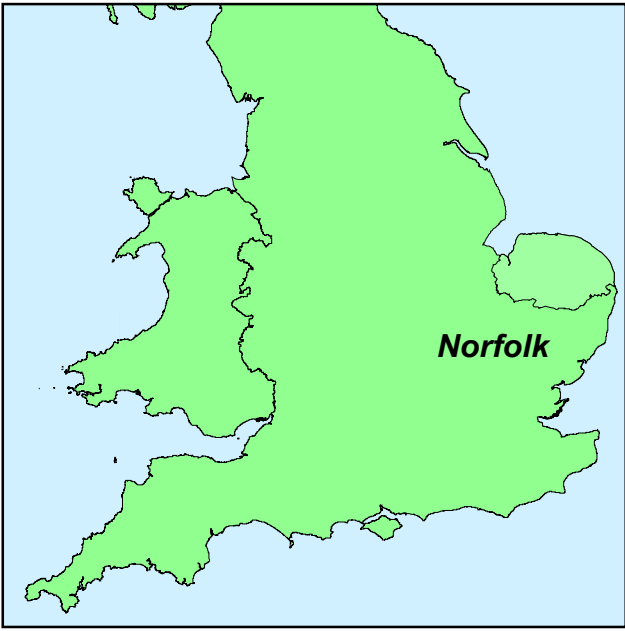
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The site lies on the south side of the Little Ouse River within the town of Thetford. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Valley Gravels (BGS Geindex <http://www/bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>). Evidence from previous investigations suggests that these are overlain in places by considerable deposits of made ground (Atkins Heritage 2007).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site lies within an area of archaeological interest, to the north, south and west lie the site of St Etheldreds Church and Saxon settlement remains, a Scheduled Monument (1022-MNF1022). Thetford town centre contains several Listed Buildings and is a designated Conservation Area.



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

Previous archaeological work within the investigation area and its immediate environs has comprised archaeological investigations in 1957 which revealed evidence of a possible Saxon church in the northern part of the site which is believed to be St Edmunds Church (5868-MNF5868). Five burials were recorded which are believed to pre-date the church. Subsequent discoveries of human remains were made during the 1960's and 1970's.

A desk-based assessment made of the adjacent site and its environs was undertaken by Atkins Heritage (Atkins Heritage 2007) which aimed to quantify the archaeological resource within the site and surrounding area utilising the records held in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record. The subsequent watching brief carried out at 113 Bury Road, recovered a small amount of human remains and late Saxon pottery in test pits (Upson-Smith 2007).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed investigation area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundworks;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The investigation area comprised a roughly rectangular area of c 33sqm (Fig 2). A mechanical excavator was used for the removal of soil and the natural substratum down to foundation depth, up to 4m deep. The remediation works comprised the treatment of the contaminated soils by a '*Stabilisation and Solidification*' process on site (National Grid information leaflet).



Investigation area, looking south-west

Fig 2

The watching brief was carried out in three phases between July 2012 and December 2013. The first phase of remediation works comprised the excavation of test trenches across the site to ascertain the extent of any contamination present (Fig 3). The second phase of remediation works comprised the excavation of up to 4m of material from the area of the north-west corner of the site and the removal and excavation of two metal tanks located on the southern edge of the site. The third phase comprised the observation of the opening and emptying of the liquor tank, the structure staying in place (Fig 4).

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of stratification was recorded on Northamptonshire Archaeology watching brief sheets. All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the Northamptonshire Archaeology *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2011). A photographic record was maintained, consisting of digital images, colour slide and black and white photographs. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive site archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (2009).

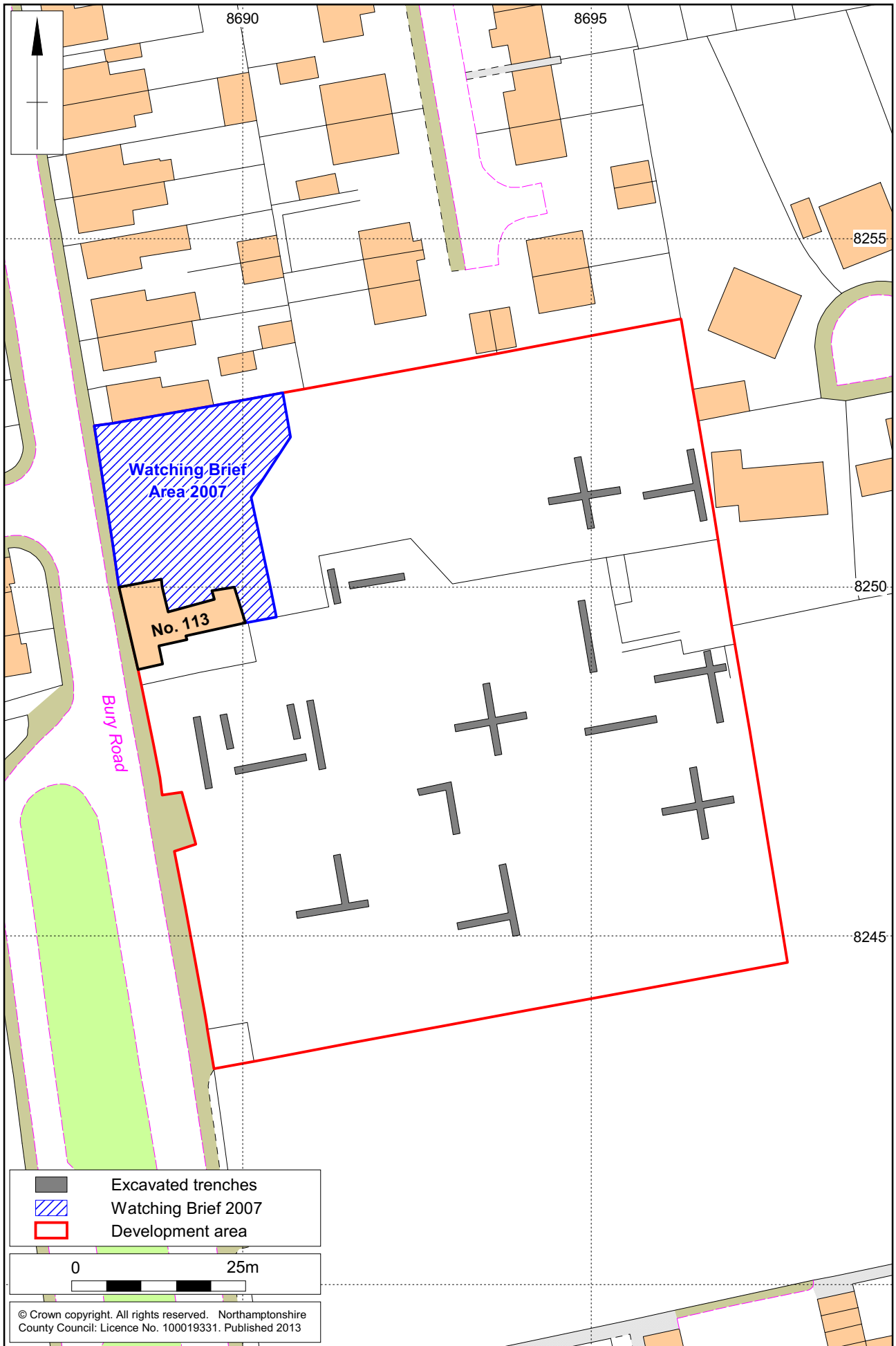
4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate comprised light orange-red gravel sand, which had been truncated by the gasworks (Fig 5).

Two articulated human skeletons were partially uncovered on the northern edge of the investigation area, c 2m below the current ground level. Two skulls and an arm bone were exposed. The burials were in mid brown sandy silt deposit, it was not possible to discern any grave cuts. The human bone was left *in situ* and covered. The skeletons were overlain by a layer of dark grey-brown silty loam. Two pottery sherds were noted within the layer but not retained due to potential contamination of the soils (Fig 6).

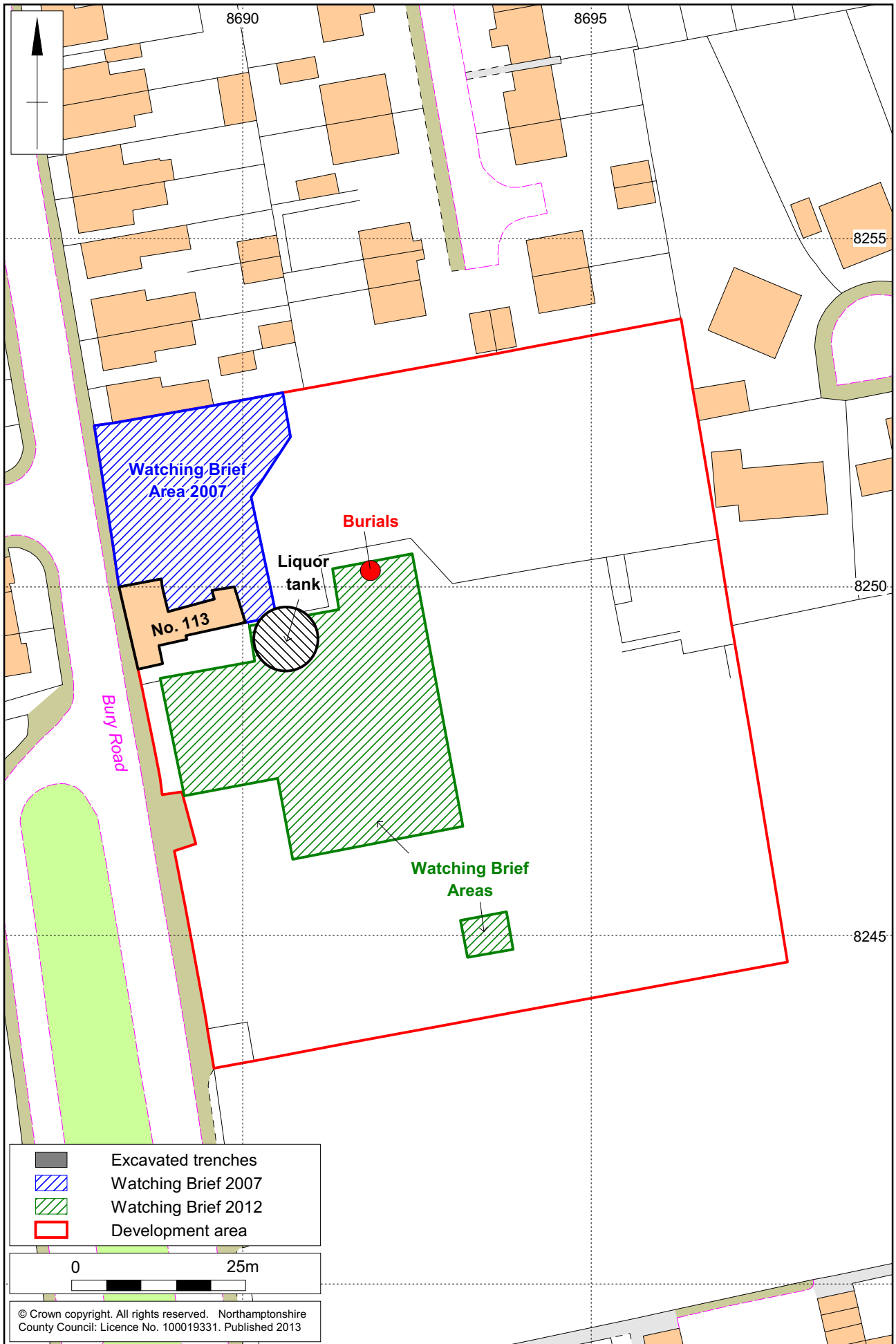
A deposit, dark grey-brown silty loam was observed, c 2m below the current ground level, containing frequent animal bone fragments and pottery sherds. This deposit was intermittently observed in the western part of the watching brief area, c 1m thick. The top of the deposit was disturbed and/or truncated. Due to contamination and safety of the trenches the deposit was not investigated. Bone and pottery was recorded but not retained due to contamination.

The truncated natural substrate, and the dark archaeological deposit, were overlain by layers comprising modern building materials, concrete, hardcore, gravel and re-deposited natural substrate. Typically these deposits extended 2-3m and on occasion to c 4m below current ground level. Remnants of buildings and pipes were also uncovered. Most of the layers were contaminated with bitumen, hydrocarbons, tar and cyanide. The site was covered by reinforced concrete slabs, asphalt or crushed hardcore (Figs 7 and 8).



Scale 1:750 (A4)

Location of the test trenches and Watching Brief Area Fig 3



Scale 1:750 (A4)

Location of remediation works and burials Fig 4



Stratigraphy showing modern layers with the natural substrate, looking north Fig 5



Burials with overlaying archaeological deposit and modern layers, looking north Fig 6



Disturbed stratigraphy and contaminated deposits, looking west Fig 7



Disturbed stratigraphy, looking south Fig 8

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive that will be prepared and consolidated for deposition. It will be deposited under the accession number ENF 129437 in Norfolk Museums.

Table 2: Summary of the site archive

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	21
Sketch plan	4
Plans/Sections	2
Registers	7
Context registers	9
Burial record forms	2
Digital photographs	390
Colour slide	21
B&W film	21

6 DISCUSSION

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out during the three phases of the remediation works at the former gasworks site. In the north-western area of the investigation area two burials and an archaeological deposit, intermittently preserved, containing pottery was recorded up to two meters below the current ground level. Due to contamination the precise make-up of the deposit could not be assessed and artefacts could not be retained. Across the remainder of the gasworks site, heavily disturbed ground to a depth of up to 4m was recorded.

These archaeological deposits were located to the south of the watching brief undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2007 (Fig 2). Human bone and late Saxon pottery was recovered from test pits. Previously a burial had been recorded at 113 Bury Road (Upson-Smith 2007).

It is thought that the church of St Edmund was situated on the northern part site of the gasworks, where the 1957 excavations recorded a church building of a possible Saxon date, however, the five human burials uncovered were thought to predate the building. Work undertaken within the gasworks site in the 1960's and 1970's revealed further human bones.

Previous and current archaeological work carried out at the site of the former Gasworks and 113 Bury Road suggest the preservation of archaeological remains and deposits in the northern and western parts of the site potentially associated with a medieval cemetery.

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