



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological watching brief at Ham House,  
Richmond, Greater London, (formerly Surrey)  
November 2011



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

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National Trust event number

ENA6515



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**OAS/S REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Archaeological Watching Brief at Ham House, Richmond, Greater London, (formerly Surrey) November 2011	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken within the gardener's compound in the southern part of the kitchen garden of Ham House, Richmond, Greater London (formerly Surrey) by Northamptonshire Archaeology in November 2011. The watching brief revealed an 18th-century brick drain. No other archaeological features were recorded and no artefacts were recovered.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Previous work	Archaeological evaluations, 1993, 2002, 2011	
Current Land use	Walled garden/gardener's compound	
Future work	Unknown	
Significant finds	18th-century brick drain	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Greater London (formerly Surrey)	
Site address	Ham House, Richmond	
Study area ha	0.11ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TQ 17174 72878	
Height aOD	c6m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Gary Marshall, The National Trust	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Supervisor	Tim Upson-Smith	
Project Manager	Joe Prentice	
Sponsor	The National Trust	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	November 2011	
End date	November 2011	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Paper	NA office	
Digital	1 Disc containing digital photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief at Ham House, Richmond, Greater London, (formerly Surrey) November 2011	
Serial title & volume	12/3	
Author(s)	Tim Upson-Smith	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
HAM HOUSE, RICHMOND, GREATER LONDON, (FORMERLY SURREY)  
NOVEMBER 2011  
National Trust event number ENA6515**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken within the gardener's compound in the southern part of the kitchen garden of Ham House, Richmond, Greater London (formerly Surrey) by Northamptonshire Archaeology in November 2011. The watching brief revealed an 18th-century brick drain. No other archaeological features were recorded and no artefacts were recovered.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The National Trust commissioned Northamptonshire Archaeology to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the re-development of the gardener's compound located at the southern end of the walled garden at Ham House Richmond, Greater London (NGR TQ 17174 72878, Fig 1). The work entailed excavation for the formation of foundations for a new shed (11.2 x 5 x 0.225m), a washing down base (5.4 x 4.4 x 0.225m) and a run-off pit (6.5 x 1.8 x 1.8m), plus several narrower drainage runs.

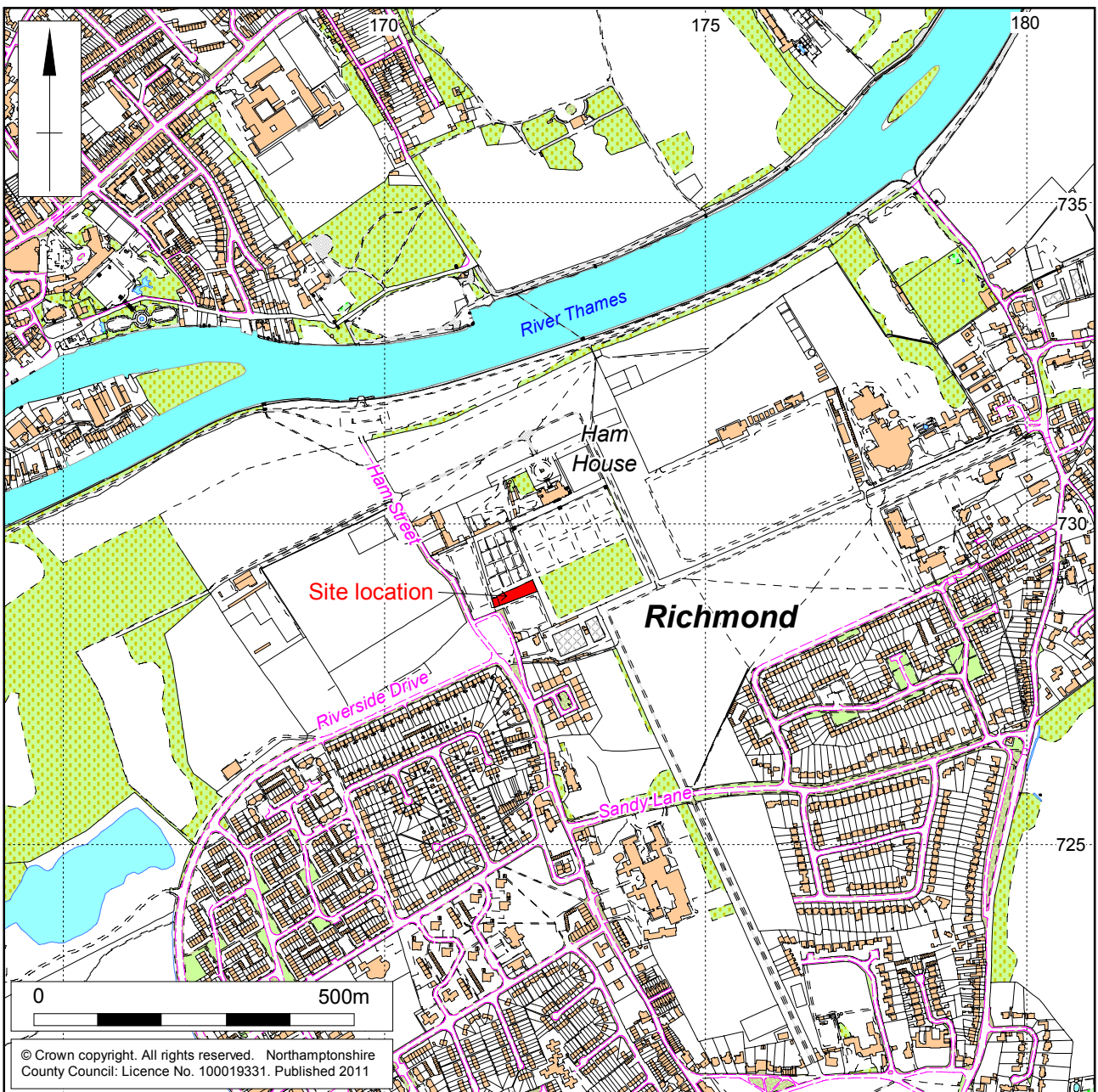
The work was carried out during November 2011.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the south-west of Ham House within the gardener's compound, which occupies the fenced-off southern portion of the walled kitchen garden. The site lies on essentially level ground at c5.86m above Ordnance Datum. To the north of the site the ground gently slopes down to the River Thames. The garden is surrounded by brick walls and currently divided into sixteen plots, six of which are cultivated as vegetable beds, the remainder are laid to grass. They are all separated by gravel paths.

The underlying superficial deposits consist of river terrace sand and gravels, which overlie the Thames group clay, silt, sand and gravel bedrock geology (<http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex/default.aspx>).



Scale 1:10,000

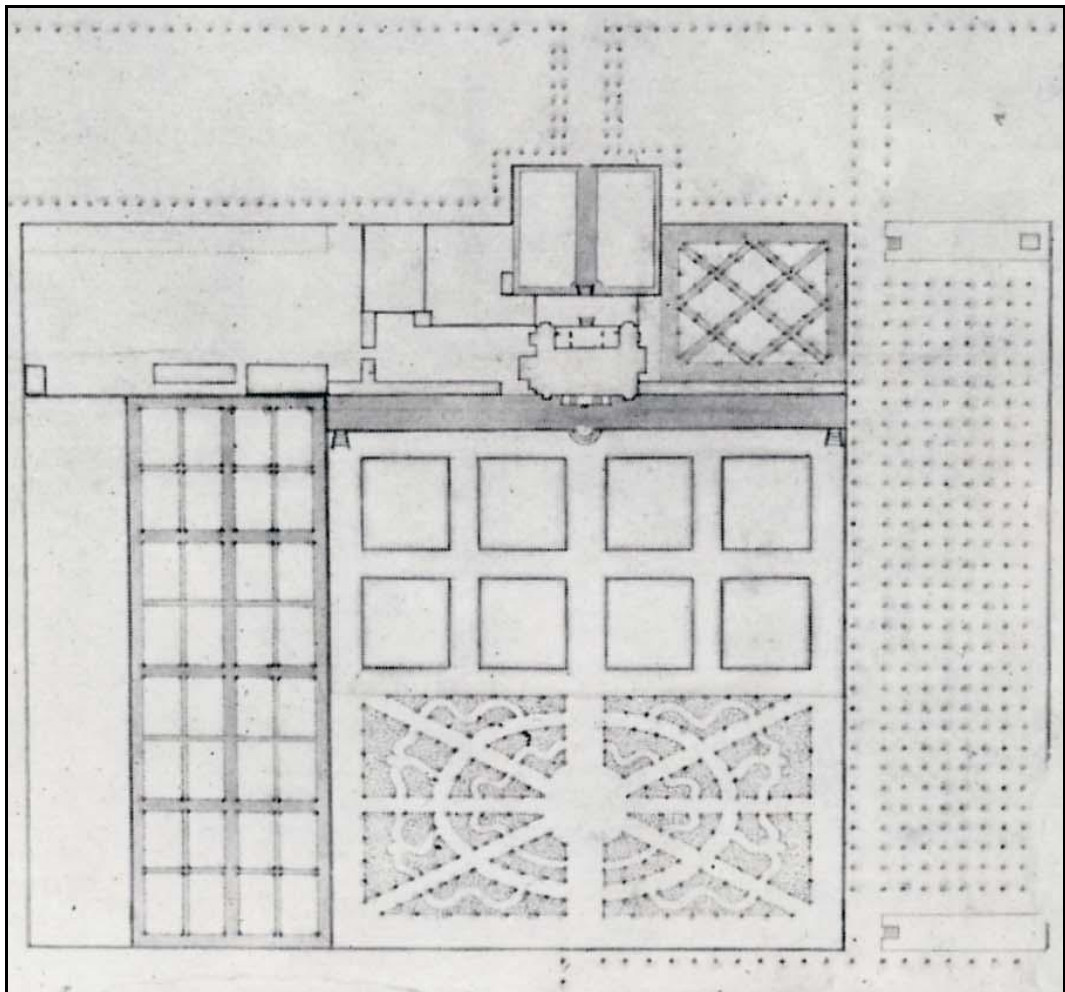
Site location Fig 1



## 2.2 Historical background

Ham House was completed for Sir Thomas Vavasour in 1610, and a plan made by Robert Smythson in 1609 prior to its completion shows it to have been an H-shaped building with an adjoining formal garden scheme (Howes 2002). William Murray, First Earl of Dysart, lived at Ham from 1626 and his daughter lived there after him. She, as Countess of Dysart, married in 1672 (secondly) the Earl, later Duke, of Lauderdale. In the 1670s the house was enlarged and refurbished with a new wing being built to the south and the gardens extended to the south and west.

The First Duke died in 1682 and his widow continued to live there until her death in 1698 when the estate passed to her son the Third Earl of Dysart who, it appears, took little interest in the property. The kitchen garden appears on a map of 1671-2 by Slezer and Wyck which shows the area, to the south-west of the house to be enclosed with walls, and sub-divided into eight plots, each further subdivided into four (Fig 2).

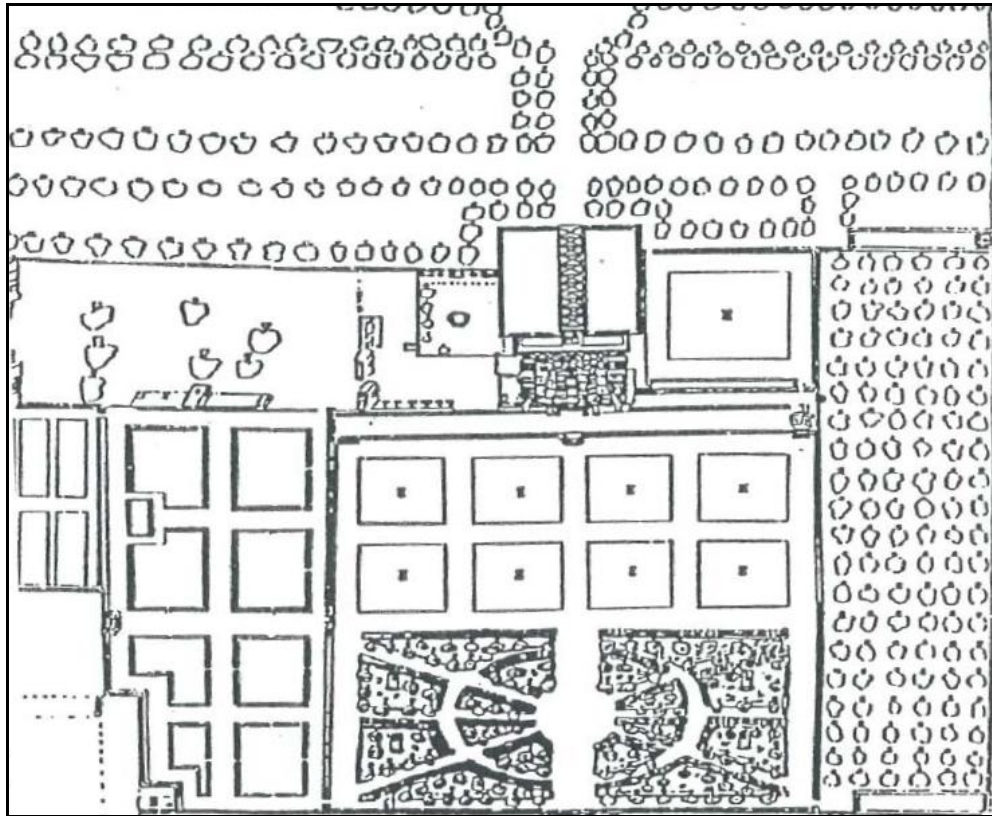


Slezer and Wyck plan, c1671-2

Fig 2

The Third Earl's grandson, the Fourth Earl, inherited in 1727 and repaired the house and, it is thought, also undertook work within the gardens. The Helmingham plan of c1730 shows the walled garden with the eight main plots, though on this plan the south-west corner has been truncated by the stepping-in of the walls at that point, apparently for paths which existed on the outside at that time (Fig 3).

Towards the north-west the two northernmost plots on that side have also had either a further, smaller, bed cut into them, or perhaps more likely, a building constructed there. A birds-eye view, published in *Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1739, shows a more schematic version of the garden, with neither the cut-away section of walls at the south-west or the probable building towards the north-east (not illustrated). It is not known for certain which is the more accurate of the two.

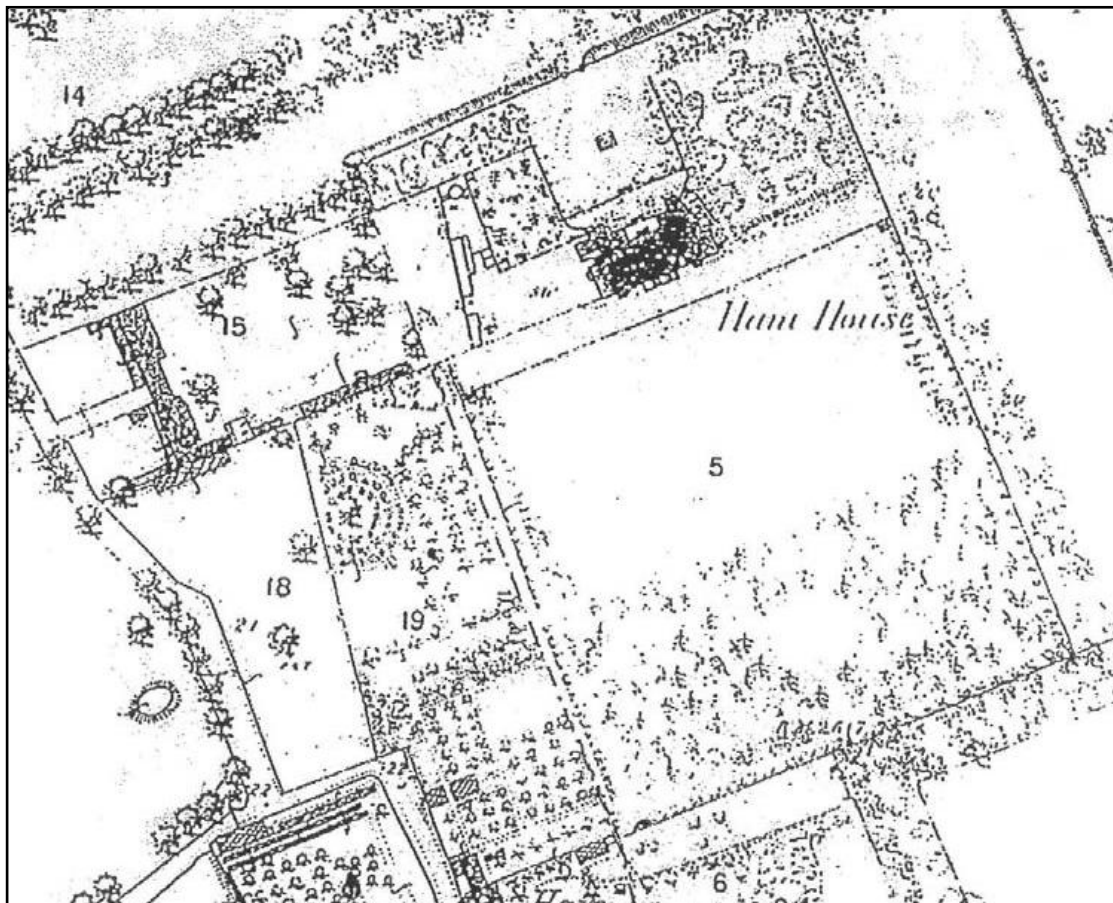


Helmingham plan, c1730

Fig 3

By the 1770s, when formal gardens had become unfashionable, there appears to have been a scheme of works to remove walls and linear paths to create a less formal area, although it appears that generally the layout of the walled garden was retained (Howes 2002). There do not appear to be plans of the walled garden from this period, and the next depiction is on the Ordnance Survey map of 1863-66, revised 1884 (Fig 4). This shows the area to be less formally set-out with rows of (fruit?) trees and glass houses towards the south-west corner. Towards the north-west is a circular Rose Garden, curiously placed asymmetrically to one side against the west wall, the reason being that it may have developed around a pre-existing older tree.





Ordnance Survey map of 1863-66, revised 1884

Fig 4

The property came into the possession of the National Trust in 1948 from Sir Lionel Tollemache and Mr Cecil Tollemache, following the death of Sir William John Manners Tollemache, eccentric and last Earl of Dysart, in 1935. It was first leased to the Ministry of Works and maintained in close consultation with the Victoria and Albert Museum. In 1975 a large private donation enabled the Trust to undertake a large-scale restoration of the gardens, and in 1992 the Victoria and Albert Museum returned the house into the care of the Trust.

Previous archaeological excavations within the garden identified curving planting beds for the latter along with linear features which appear to relate to the division of the area into plots (Howes 1993 and 2002). These excavations revealed that the surviving archaeological remains were deeply buried and were not likely to be disturbed by the digging of the four plots currently under vegetable cultivation. The excavations of 1993 also uncovered high quality garden urn fragments, the first time such decorative pieces had been discovered from a secure archaeological context (Currie 1995). Two trial trenches were dug across the site of the rose garden in 2002 and a group of six small test pits in the north-east corner of the garden were monitored in 2004. A trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2011, within the walled garden, no archaeological features were observed (Prentice and Upson-Smith 2011).

Ham House is a Grade I Listed Building, the gardens are listed on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest as Grade II\*.

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The general aim of the investigation was to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of the activity or occupation on the development site

More specifically the aims were to:

- Understand the garden history and development, in relationship to the pre 17th-century garden layout
- To integrate the results with previous work undertaken in the walled garden.

The archaeological investigation consisted of the continuous observation of ground reduction and excavations for footings and drains, followed by the investigation and recording of any archaeological features that were revealed.

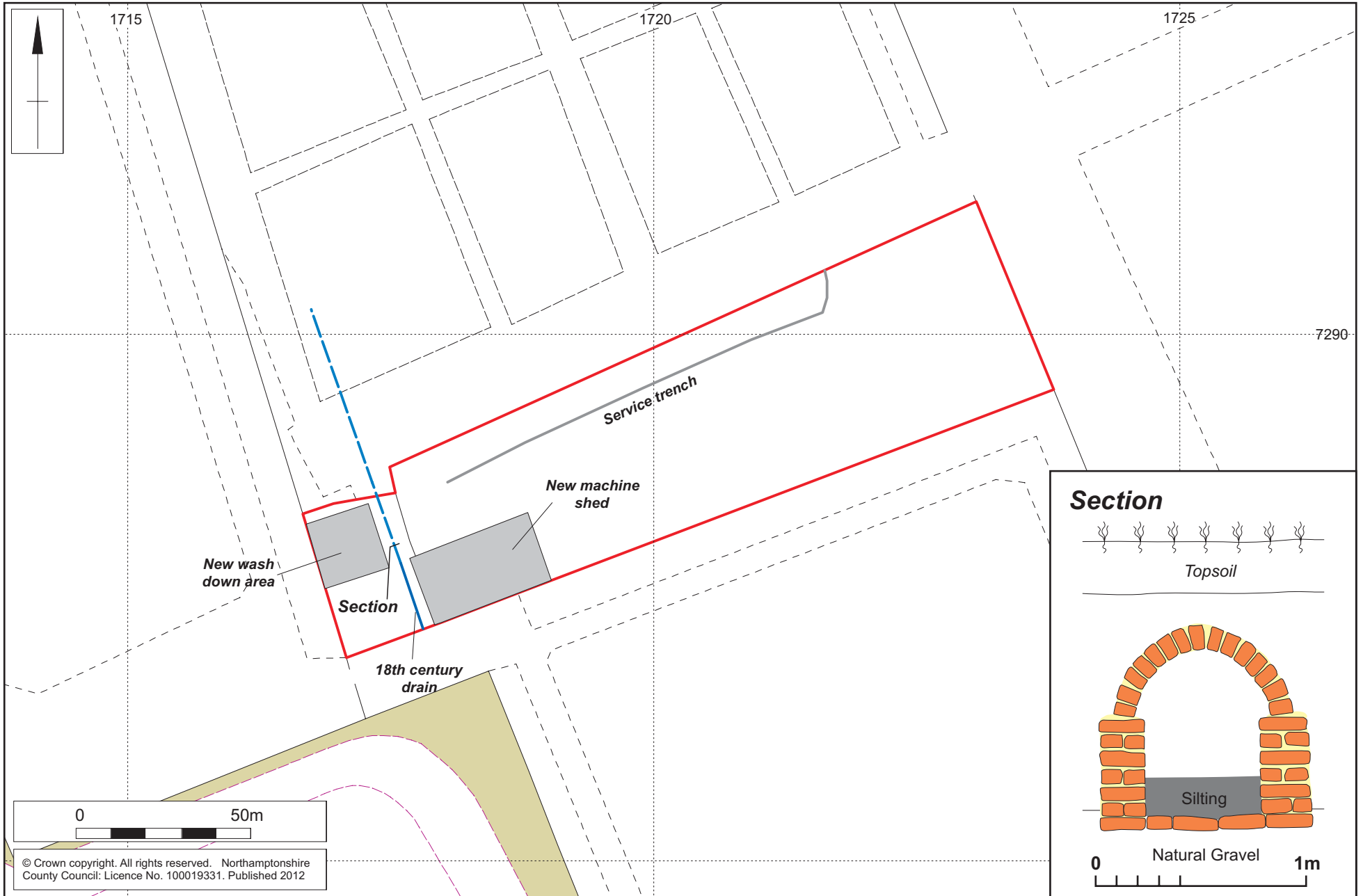
The archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the watching brief were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire procedures (NA 2006) and the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (NA 2011).

All works were carried out accordance with the *Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct* (1985, revised 2010) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2008). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

### 4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

The watching brief viewed the ground reduction for the new machine shed and the wash down area, in these areas only c0.25m of modern made ground was removed. The excavation of the service trench was 0.5m deep through an orange-brown sandy loam overlain by c0.2m of modern made ground comprising gravel and leaf mould. No archaeological features were observed (Fig 5).

In the area of the new water treatment tank an 18th-century arched brick drain was exposed, aligned north-south (Figs 5 and 6). The exposed length of drain had been pierced by three postholes in relatively recent times. Where the drain crossed the boundary of the site to the south and under a trackway, the top of the arch had been knocked in and the drain filled. Going north into the walled garden area the drain was still open with only c0.10-0.15m of silting in its base. The drain was constructed from unfroged red bricks measuring 220mm by 98mm by 60mm (8 5/8" by 3 7/8" by 2 3/8"), bonded with a pale buff coloured lime mortar. The amount of mortar between the joints on the inside (intrados) of the arch would indicate that the drain arch was made from the outside by centering over a former, where it was not possible to tidy the inside joints (Fig 7). As the bricks forming the arch were plain, the mortar forms the wedge and acts as the voussoir. The side walls of the drain retain an internal lip and it is likely that the former for the arch sat upon this until the mortar hardened and it would then be moved along so that the next section of the arch could be constructed. The former would have been set on wedges which when the mortar had hardened would allow for it to drop so that it could be moved along with ease (Frost 1954).



Seven metres of the drain were removed as part of the works, in the position of the new water treatment tank, with the remainder being left *in situ*.

No further archaeological features were observed during the watching brief.



The 18th-century drain, looking north

Fig 6



The inside of the drain, looking north

Fig 7

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief demonstrated that there is at least c0.2m of made ground in the areas of the gardener's compound where excavations took place. The watching brief also revealed a previously unknown 18th-century brick drain, which may relate to the possible rectangular water feature in the western part of the walled garden shown on the Helmingham plan of c1730 (Fig 3). The fall of the drain was to the north and the River Thames.

The purpose of the feature remains unclear; it may have acted as a culvert taking water to the possible water feature shown on the 1730 plan, from ponds/water source to the south of the walled garden boundary. Whatever its purpose it is a major feat of construction and water engineering and opens the possibility of more targeted work to trace its route through the garden and to trace its origins south of the boundary.

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