

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief  
at Main Street and Washdyke Road  
Owston, Leicestershire  
November 2006



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	An archaeological watching brief at Main Street and Washdyke Road, Owston, Leicestershire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the excavation of trenches for electric cabling on land beside Main Street and Washdyke Road, Owston. One trench was excavated from the south of Palmer Cottages in Main Street and terminated 150m to the west along Washdyke Road. Another trench was excavated from the entrance to Manor Farm yard along the footpath and across the carriageway of Main Street to the grass verge at the junction with Cox's Lane. Further trenches for service cables were cut across Main Street from Hill Close Farm and across the unmade track to the east of Main Street to the Old Byre. Evidence of an earlier cobblestone road surface in Main Street was exposed in the trenches. No other archaeological remains were present.	
Project type	Archaeological Watching Brief	
Previous work		
Future work	No	
Monument type and period	Cobblestone road surface	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Main Street, Owston	
Easting	477500	
Northing	307800	
Height OD	163.7m sloping down to 152.4m AOD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation		
Project brief originator	Richard Clark, SPA Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Danny McAree MA MBA PG Dip PIFA	
Project Manager	Iain Soden BA MIFA	
Sponsor or funding body	Central Networks	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	November 2006	
End date	November 2006	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		
Paper		1 Plan, 10 sections, 17 Colour Slide and B/W photographs, 1 Contact Print.
Digital		Digital copy of report and Figures



**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT MAIN STREET AND WASHDYKE ROAD, OWSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE**

**NOVEMBER 2006**

*Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the excavation of trenches for electric cabling on land along Main Street and Washdyke Road, Owston. Trench 1 extended 150m east along Washdyke Road cutting across Main Street and continuing south along the grass verge and carriageway of Main Street to the electricity junction box immediately south of Palmer Cottages. Trench 2 extended 35m along the footpath to the west of Manor Farm cutting across Main Street to terminate on the grass verge at the junction with Cox's Lane.*

*Further trenches for service cables were cut across Main Street from Hill Close Farm and across the vehicle access to the east of Main Street at the Old Byre. Other domestic services were connected via sub surface bored cables.*

*Evidence of an earlier cobblestone road surface in Main Street was exposed in the trenches. No other archaeological remains were present.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of Central Networks (formally East Midlands Electricity) during the excavation of cable trenches on land alongside Main Street and Washdyke Road, Owston (NGR: SK 775 078, Fig 1).

The work was undertaken in response to an application by Central Networks and approved by Harborough District Council to replace existing overground electric supply cable and poles with underground cable. The works complied with a condition for archaeological attendance and investigation as required by a brief issued by the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council (Clark 2006) and the specification prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (McAree 2006).

The purpose of the watching brief was to identify and record archaeological deposits exposed during the works.

## 1.2 Location and Topography

The works were located within the village of Owston and extended along Main Street and Washdyke Road and included the provision of three low voltage underground services to houses in Main Street, a single cottage in Cox's Lane and a barn off Washdyke Road (Fig 2).

The surface soils have been mapped by the British Soil Survey of Great Britain as comprising loam overlaying heavy clays with occasional intrusions of sand and gravel.

The junction of Main Street at Cox's Lane is located at 163.7m AOD sloping down towards Washdyke Road to the north of the village at 152.4m AOD.

## 1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

The name Owston is derived from Old English and is made of two elements, a personal name, *Oswulf*, and *tun*, meaning farmstead, settlement, place or land (English Place Name Society).

Owston was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as *Osuluestone* in the Gartree 'Wapentake', the Danelaw equivalent of the Saxon 'Hundred'.

The King's sister, Countess Judith held land at Owston. Her tenant, Grimbald, is recorded as having 7 caracutes of land. Prior to the conquest, there had been 12 ploughs working the estate. At the time of recording there was 2 ploughs held in demesne. 15 villans and 3 bordars had a further 6 ploughs. There was 1 Frenchman who had 1 plough and 3 bordars. There were 30 acres of meadow and woodland 5 furlongs long and 1 furlong broad. It had been worth 50 shillings in the reign of King Edward the Confessor, it was judged to be worth 60 shillings at the time of the Domesday Survey.

A caracute (from the Latin *caruca* – plough) was notionally the area that could be ploughed by an eight strong team of oxen. It is variously described as caracute, ox-gang or ploughland and was the equivalent for tax assessment of the *hide* used elsewhere in the Domesday returns.

A rough rule of thumb is that a caracute (or hide) was the equivalent of 120-150 acres of land, depending on the yield of the soil.

Grimbald's holding of Countess Judith's land would thus equate to between 850-1050 acres (345-425 ha) of mixed arable, pasture, common land, waste and scrub with 30 acres of meadow and about 70 acres of woodland.

Meadowland was of particular value as it provided pasture and more importantly hay to

over-winter animals. Woodland provided shelter and pannage (acorns, beech mast or nuts to feed animals, particularly pigs in autumn) as well as wild game, birds, firewood, fruit and berries.

Only heads of household were recorded in the survey so the villans and bordars listed represent 21 families working the land. Between them they had access to nine eight-ox plough teams to till the available arable land. The demesne land was worked on behalf of the feudal lord or tenant, the remainder was held in return for a rent paid in labour or a proportion of crops, produce or livestock. The 'Frenchman' referred to in the record probably relates to a low ranking soldier who had been granted land in recognition of his services during the Norman invasion or in the fighting to secure the country in the aftermath of William's success at the Battle of Hastings.

In 1161, the entire Owston estate was given by Robert Grimbold (no doubt a scion of the Grimbold recorded in the Domesday Survey) for the foundation of an Augustinian Abbey. The foundation charter required that the canons of Owston should live according to the rule of Haughmon Abbey, Shropshire. Haughmon seems to have followed the normal rule of St Augustine and there is no reason to believe that Owston was not an Augustinian House of the normal type.

The only endowments mentioned in the foundation charter are the vill (estate) and a church at Owston. No church or priest was recorded in the Domesday Survey so it is possible that the first church was only established in the late 11th or early 12th century. By 1166, the abbey had acquired the churches of Burrough, King's Norton and Slawston in Leicestershire, North Witham, Lincolnshire and Tickencote, Rutland.

By 1166 the abbey had also acquired almost half of the Newbold Saucy estate as a gift from Robert, son of Osmund, who held it from Ansketil (de Saucy), a tenant of Ives de Harcourt (The Harcourt family held land at Saussaye (Eure) in Normandy and it is likely this is the source of the Saucy part of the Newbold estate name).

Henry II granted the church at Medbourne, Leicestershire, to the abbey conditional on the death of the incumbent. The abbey were unable to exercise their rights to the church and in 1253 Henry III declined to confirm the advowson to the abbey and the grant was lost. A moiety of the advowson of Withcote, Leicestershire was received in the late 12th century. In 1203, the abbey laid claim to the advowson of Gumley but were forced to yield their claim. Slawston church was appropriated before 1258 and the church at King's Norton in 1340/41.

The manor of Muston was obtained around 1341 as the endowment of a chantry in the conventual church. At about the same time the manor of Normanton was granted to the abbey on condition they supplied two secular chaplains to celebrate services at Bytham



Castle.

The abbey remained one of the smaller and poorer Augustinian houses. In 1440 there were fifteen canons. The visitation recorded that the net annual income was £40 but that the abbey was 100 marks (£66) in debt. By 1530, there were only four priests in the house and the abbot was ordered to increase this by at least another four. In 1534 eleven canons acknowledged royal supremacy over the church. In 1535, the abbey income was only £161.14s. 2d. and it was listed among the smaller religious houses. In 1536 there were only six canons in the house when the abbey was dissolved. The buildings were recorded as being in good condition but only partially complete, perhaps reflected in the net revenue from the Dissolution, which was only £86. 0s. 3d.

After the Dissolution the whole Newbold estate later passed to John Harrington, Lord of Owston manor. When he died in 1614, he held the estate as tenant in chief from the king and thereafter it passed down with the manor of Owston.

The present church of St Andrews is a remnant of the abbey and dates to the late 12th century at the earliest, with much of the surviving building being from much later. Most of the fabric of the abbey buildings has been stripped from the site and largely re-used in the buildings and walls of the village. Medieval worked stone and ashlar blocks can be identified in a number of the boundary walls and re-used in parts of the modern houses.

Two sets of earthworks representing the remains of the remainder of the coventual buildings of the abbey are located respectively 100m and 300m to the south-west. In addition there are the distinct earthwork remains of probable fishponds immediately to the west of the church and extending some 500m north to south either side of the Washdyke Road.

Further to the west, about half way between Owston and Knossington, there is a large sub-rectangular moated site, 125m by 110m overall with a large enclosure attached to the southern side. The site now known locally as 'Oliver Cromwell's Castle' was probably a moated grange owned by Owston Abbey.

Immediately to the east of the church lies a stone built house of probable 18th century date, formerly the Vicarage but now oddly known as the Priory. It contains two carved stone door frames of 15th century design, almost certainly derived from the demolished abbey buildings.

Recent work to landscape and terrace the garden of the house in 2005 uncovered a number of skeletons, all laid in straight rows and aligned east to west.

These almost certainly formed part of the graveyard of the abbey and were located immediately to the east of the surviving abbey church. The skeletons were not excavated but

were re-interred and the landscaping abandoned.

Manor Farm lies to the south and east of the church. It was originally the manor house with gardens and an orchard between it and the Vicarage (now the Priory). Since the 1960s, the orchard and gardens have been largely levelled and graded to create a large working yard with several large agricultural and storage buildings built along a wide concrete access and turning area.

Remnants of sand and gravel workings are visible in the fields to the south and west of Manor Farm. Fieldwalking in the fields around the village has recovered some Anglo-Saxon pottery together with a range of medieval material. About a kilometre to the north of the village in Fifty Acre Field, Iron Age and Roman pottery has been recovered.

The Leicestershire County Historic Environment Records (HER) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) holds no other information directly related to the areas subject of the watching brief.

Owston is an area of high archaeological potential with the detailed layout of the abbey buildings still to be established, the core of the medieval village to be mapped and assessed and with field walking finds indicating sustained occupation and activity in the area over an extended period.

No previous archaeological work has been carried out within the area of the proposed cable trenches.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

Two trenches were required to lay in new underground cable along the length of Main Street and Washdyke Road, Owston. Trench 1 extended 150m east along Washdyke Road cutting across Main Street and continuing south along the grass verge and carriageway of Main Street to the electricity junction box immediately south of Palmer Cottages (Fig 2). A short length of open trench was also cut across Main Street from the south corner of Hill Close Farm to the open trench in the verge to the east of the carriageway (Fig 2).

Trench 2 was located on the footpath to the west of Main Street and commenced at the north side of the access into Manor Farm yard and extended 35m south to the south entrance to Manor Farm before cutting across Main Street to the grass verge at the junction with Cox's Lane (Fig 2).

All other cables were installed using sub surface drilling. Bored cables were inserted below

Main Street from the grass verge at Cox's Lane to Manor Farm, across Cox's Lane to the Cottage, and across Main Street to the Old Byre opposite Manor Farm yard and were not subject to archaeological supervision (Fig 2)

The trenches were excavated using a 1 ton mini excavator equipped with a 300mm toothless excavating bucket. All excavation was supervised by an archaeologist; this included the supervision of topsoil, subsoil, hard surfaces and overburden removal until archaeologically sensitive deposits, natural horizons or the required depth for the cable trench was reached. All deposits were examined sufficiently to identify their nature. Context details are included in the trench descriptions and in a context list at Appendix A. Recording was supplemented by a 1:1000 plan of the trench locations and section drawings (at 1:20) of 1m sections at intervals along the length of the trench or across discrete features as appropriate. A photographic record in black and white, colour slides and digital images of the trenches was completed.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1 was excavated along the southern edge of Washdyke Road for 150m east from a point opposite a set of brick-built barns north of the road to the junction with Main Street to the east (Fig 2).

It continued across the carriageway of Main Street and then turned south extending 75m to a modern electricity junction box to the south east of Palmer Cottages.

The trench was located in the grass verge as close as possible to the road edge except where it cut through the carriageway itself at the junction of Washdyke Road and Main Street and outside Palmer Cottages where the modern driveways had removed the grass verges (Fig 2).

A short ancillary trench for a new domestic service cable was excavated from the south corner of Hill Close Farm, across Main Street to join with the main trench on the east verge of the road (Fig 2)

The natural was compact orange/brown sandy clay (01) containing sub-rounded coarse grit and gravel up to 40mm. This blended with a covering of sub soil of stiff grey-brown/orange-yellow sandy clay (02) containing sub-rounded grit and gravel up to 40mm. This layer varied between 100mm-150mm where exposed along the length of the trench.

To the west of the entrance to St Andrew's Church in Washdyke Road, a 'V' shaped ditch

[04] up to 1m wide and exposed 0.45m deep cut the natural and sub-soil. It was aligned parallel to Washdyke Road and was filled with dark grey/brown sandy silt clay and sandy clay loam (05) containing fragments of ironstone and limestone up to 300mm long. There were pockets and lenses of fine silty sand and coarser gritty sand and gravel, occasional lumps of broken brick, land drain and modern cement concrete. Finds from this layer include white-glazed and transfer-printed pottery, fragments of Midland Black pancheons, bottle glass and modern plastic rubbish. This material all dates to the 19th and 20th century.

Across the entrance to the churchyard, the ditch fill was cut by an 0.6m deep trench [10] with steeply sloping (70°) sides and a flat base extending 9m wide along the edge of Washdyke Road (Fig 2). This was filled with a 300mm deep solid layer of ironstone and limestone (11) up to 200mm in length packed in coarse gritty orange sand, gravel and white lime mortar and containing modern brick and broken field drain. This lay beneath a thin 0.3m thick layer of dirty grey/black sandy clay loam (12) containing organic roots and debris, occasional fragments of ironstone and limestone and occasional rounded pebbles. This was overlain by a 200mm deep layer of orange/brown coarse gritty sand and lime mortar (13) containing modern frogged red brick, and fragments of ironstone and limestone up to 200mm long.

To the east of the church entrance, the natural and sub soil was cut by a more 'U' shaped ditch [06] up to 1.3m wide and exposed 0.85m deep in sondage. It was aligned parallel to Washdyke Road and about 1m from the edge of the modern carriageway. It was filled with soft black sandy silt clay (07), very organic with frequent decayed wood and plant material. It contained thin layers of fines silty sands and clays interspersed with coarser gritty sands and decayed plant material. This layer varied between 100-150mm deep where exposed. It was sealed below a 400mm deep layer of stiff sticky orange/brown sandy clay (08) containing an abundance of broken concrete, red brick and decayed plaster and mortar. This was overlain by a 100mm deep layer of grey/brown sandy clay (09) containing frequent coarse gritty shale and gravel up to 10mm. Finds from these fills included white-glazed pottery and transfer-printed wares, modern bottle glass, frogged modern brick and fragments of steel reinforced cement concrete. These all date to the 19th and 20th century.

Further east, the trench followed the curve of the road at the junction of Washdyke Road and Main Street, curving south along the base of the high grassy bank at this junction. The fill of ditch [06] at this location was dark grey/brown sandy clay (68) containing mixed silty and sandy soils, clumps of humic topsoil (03) and frequent fragments of limestone and ironstone up to 200mm long. There were thin layers and pockets of gritty sand and

aggregate and patches of proprietary roadstone and fine shale top dressing from road repairs. This layer was up to 0.4m deep in section.

The trench extended across Main Street to the grass verge to the east of the road. The lowest exposed layer of the carriageway was an 0.4m deep layer of yellow-orange/brown sandy clay (44) packed with large lumps of ironstone and limestone up to 250mm. This was mixed with coarse gritty sand and lime mortar and contained occasional fragments of broken brick, field drain and rounded river pebbles up to 100mm. This was sealed below a layer of yellow/orange coarse sand and gravel lime mortar (41) varying between 0.1-0.15m deep across the width of the road. This was overlain by a layer of modern cement and aggregate concrete (67) up to 0.1m deep supporting the modern tarmac road surface (23) up to 0.25m thick.

In the grass verge to the east of Main Street, the trench cut a service trench [36], 0.35m wide and 0.6m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with dark brown sandy clay re-deposited up-cast (37) from the excavation of the trench. It contained a 2" cast iron water pipe laid parallel to Main Street. This was covered with a layer of grey/red gritty shale proprietary stone (38) up to 6mm in size and up to 0.1m deep extending for about 3m along the length of the trench. This pipe trench continued the length of Main Street and was cut through by a series of later pipe and cable trenches. All of the soil along the eastern verge of Main Street was heavily mixed and disturbed by underground services.

About 8m south of the road crossing, a service trench [39] cut water pipe trench [36] at right angles. The trench was 0.35m wide and 0.4m deep with vertical sides. It contained a 4" modern plastic drainpipe packed in a fill of grey mixed limestone (40) containing particles from 40mm to dust (Proprietary Type 1 Roadstone – Ministry of Transport approved, when compacted it forms a solid base for roads and buildings).

At the intersection with the northern edge of the drive to 4 Palmer Cottages, a BT cable trench [45] cut across water trench [36] from the road carriageway to the base of an overhead pole at this location (Fig 2). The trench was 0.35m wide and 0.3m deep. It was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (46) and contained a 4" grey plastic duct containing modern BT telecommunications cable.

About 5m to the south, a service trench [47] containing a modern 4" plastic drain pipe cut at an angle across the early water pipe. The trench was 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep and was filled with a mix of Type 1 stone and re-deposited upcast from the excavation (48). At 8m further south, a service trench [51] cut the water trench at right angles. The trench was 0.3m wide and 0.55m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with grey Type 1 stone (52) containing a 4" plastic drainpipe. Half a meter further south, another service trench [53]

cut the water trench at right angles. It was 0.35m wide and 0.5m deep. It contained a modern ¾" copper water pipe packed in cement concrete and the re-deposited upcast from the excavation of the trench (54).

Immediately south of the driveway to Palmer Cottages, the line of the water trench was lost in the cut of a service trench [55]. This was 0.4m wide and 0.6m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (56) and contained a low voltage (LV) electric cable. Exposed within the base of this trench was a linear foundation trench [57] for the edging around the driveway entrances to Palmer Cottages. It was filled with modern cement concrete (58) supporting brick pavior edgings along the side of the roadway and the driveway into the cottages.

The trench terminated 7m to the south where it cut another service trench [59]. This was 0.4m wide and 0.7m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with Type 1 stone (60) containing a 4" plastic drainpipe.

An extension to Trench 1 was excavated from the south-east corner of Hill Close Farm, across Main Street to join with the main part of the trench halfway between the Washdyke Road junction and the driveway to Palmer Cottages (Fig 2).

The lowest exposed layer beneath the carriageway was a layer of dirty grey brown-black sandy clay (66) containing flecks of charcoal and occasional fragments of limestone and rounded pebbles up to 100mm. It was only visible 0.15m deep in section. It was sealed below an 0.6m deep layer of yellow-orange/brown sandy clay (44) packed with large lumps of ironstone and limestone up to 250mm.

These were mixed with coarse gritty sand and lime mortar and contained occasional fragments of broken brick, field drain and rounded river pebbles up to 100mm.

To the west of the carriageway, immediately adjacent to the south wall of Hill Close Farm, this layer was cut by a linear trench [61] aligned parallel to Main Street. It was exposed 0.3m wide in section and 0.5m deep. It was filled with of the compacted re-deposited upcast from its excavation (62) and contained a substantial limestone boundary wall (63).

The wall was 0.7m wide and 2.4m high, built of a mix of weathered ashlar limestone and roughly faced ironstone blocks bonded with hard grey lime mortar.

On the carriageway, this was overlaid by the modern tarmac road surface (23) up to 0.25m thick. To the west of the carriageway it was overlaid by grey sandy clay (64) containing rounded river cobbles up to 150mm and bedded in orange gritty sand and white lime mortar. This formed a compact regular layer filling the gap between the edge of the carriageway and

the boundary wall (63) to the west. It was covered with a 30mm layer of clean multi-coloured pea gravel (65) forming a decorative finish along the frontage and boundary of Hill Close Farm.

### 3.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located on the west side of Main Street and extended from immediately north of the entrance to the yard at the north of Manor Farm, south along the footpath to a point opposite Cox's Lane. It then turned east across Main Street terminating in the grass verge at the junction of Main Street and Cox's Lane (Fig 2).

In the footpath, the natural was compact orange/brown sandy clay (01) containing sub-rounded coarse grit and gravel up to 40mm. It was sealed below a surface of rounded river cobbles (22) up to 150mm and packed in orange/yellow sandy lime mortar.

Both layers were cut through by service trench [20] aligned along the length of the footpath and Main Street. It was 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, the eastern side was vertical, the west sloped at 60° to a flat base only 0.3m wide. It was filled with grey Type 1 stone (21) containing a low voltage electric cable and an empty 4" rigid plastic cable duct. Two metres to the south, the cable trench had cut through a foundation trench [26] the full width of the yard entrance. It had shallow sloping sides 0.4m deep and an irregular flat base 8m wide. It was filled with compact orange brown sandy gravel (27) containing large lumps of modern cement concrete up to 300mm, broken brick and occasional fragments of ironstone up to 200mm.

At about 5m further south, a construction trench [28] extended at right angles from a Manor Farm outbuilding to the west, across the footpath and under the road. It was 0.5m wide and 0.65m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a brick built drain or culvert (29) forming a brick box with the base and top formed of bricks laid at right angles to the trench and two rows of bricks, two courses high forming a long 3" void or channel down the centre. The bricks were bonded with hard white lime mortar. The void was filled with orange/grey fine sand and clay (30).

Two metres south, a service trench [31] extended at an angle to the north from the same building and across the footpath and under the road. It was 0.3m wide and 0.7m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with a mix of Type 1 stone and the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (32). It contained a modern insulated hot water service from a boiler in the outbuilding to the modern barn conversion at the Old Byre on the opposite side of Main Street (Fig 2).

At the south end of the outbuilding, the trench was diverted to the east cutting across Main Street to the grass verge to the south of the junction with Cox's Lane. Below the carriageway, the natural was sealed by an 0.4m deep layer of coarse gritty sand and lime mortar (33) containing lumps of ironstone and limestone up to 220mm, occasional rounded river pebbles up to 150mm and clods of stiff sticky orange red clay. This was sealed below a disturbed and truncated remnant of the cobble layer (22) observed under the tarmac path. Two metres from the eastern edge of the carriageway, these layers were cut through by a service trench [34] aligned along the length of Main Street. It was 0.5m deep and 0.5m wide with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with a mix of compacted re-deposited upcast from its excavation (35) and topped with a 200mm layer of grey Type 1 stone.

On the grass verge, the natural was sealed by a layer of mixed re-deposited sandy clay topsoil and sub soil (14) forming a distinct layer up to 250mm deep across all the exposed area. It was cut through by a construction trench [18] with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. It was exposed 0.4m wide and 0.6m deep and contained mixed re-deposited upcast (19) from its excavation packed around concrete haunching for pre-cast concrete kerbstones at the edge of the carriageway at Main Street and Cox's Lane.

At about two metres into the verge, the natural and sub surface layer (14) were cut by service trench [15] aligned parallel to Main Street. It was 0.45m wide and 0.6m deep with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with a layer of orange/grey washed sand (16) up to 0.4m deep and containing a low voltage and a high voltage triple phase electric cable. This was sealed below the compacted re-deposited upcast of the excavation (17).

An extension to Trench 2 was excavated on the east side of Main Street directly opposite the northern terminus of the trench. An open trench was excavated from the east edge of the carriageway, across the raised bank at the side of the road and through the vehicle access to the west wall of the Old Byre (Fig 2).

The natural was sealed below a 0.7m deep layer of orange/brown to grey/brown sandy clay (75) containing lumps of ironstone and limestone up to 200mm and occasional rounded cobbles up to 150mm.

This was cut through by service trench [69] abutting the eastern edge of the carriageway in Main Street. It was 0.4m wide and 0.65m deep and filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (70) and contained a 4" salt glaze sewer pipe. At about 0.6m to the east, service trench [71] 0.3m wide and 0.4m deep was cut parallel to Main Street in the slope of the bank adjacent to the road. It had vertical sides with a flat base and was filled with the re-deposited upcast from its excavation (72) and contained a low voltage electric cable. A further 0.6m east and further up the slope, service trench [73] was 0.3m wide and 0.4m deep



with vertical sides and a flat base. It was filled with the re-deposited upcast (74) from its excavation and contained a BT telecommunications cable.

Where they could be observed, the sub surface layers were sealed either by modern tarmac path or road surface (23) or a topsoil of firm dark grey/brown sandy clay loam (03) containing sub-rounded grit and gravel up to 15mm, occasional fragments of ironstone and limestone up to 100mm. The depth of topsoil varied between 150mm-450mm being deepest on the slopes of the high bank to the east of Main Street.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Owston has a long history and was a substantial holding at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. The presence of pottery from Pre-historic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods indicate good potential for activity and/or occupation at Owston over many hundreds of years.

The major medieval structures associated with the Augustinian Abbey have been largely lost with only the church of St Andrew remaining to indicate the richness of the monastic heritage of the site. It would have been expected that at least some of the main religious buildings, chapter house, dormitories (dorters), kitchen, dining hall (refectory) and cloisters, together with the Abbot's lodgings, guest houses, infirmary, store rooms and other monastic buildings would have been clustered around the church.

The land immediately to the west of the church dips sharply into a shallow valley where the earthwork remains of the fish ponds are visible. The earthworks relating to ancillary buildings, the grange and the fish ponds all lie to the south and west of this valley. It seems unlikely that the buildings would lie adjacent to the church at this location.

To the north of the church the graveyard slopes downhill to the Washdyke Road. The earliest visible gravestones are dated to the early 17th century. There is a break of slope about half way across the churchyard and this may indicate that there had been a terrace at that location.

This remains a possibility for the site of at least some of the lost monastic buildings. The boundary along the north edge of the graveyard is at least a metre above the grass verge adjacent to the roadway. It is planted with a row of mature trees several hundred years old. It is possible these were planted in response to a requirement to fix the boundaries issued in 1794 (VCH Vol 5, 1964 270-275).

To the east of the church, the house known as the Priory is built of reclaimed stone from the abbey buildings, two carved 15th century doorframes are incorporated into its structure,

there are several mullioned windows and a much weathered sundial. At least part of the garden is located over the monastic graveyard. The stone boundary wall dividing the churchyard and the Priory grounds from the yard at Manor Farm contains several worked stones and some carved architectural fragments, no doubt from the lost monastic buildings. It remains a strong probability that some at least of the monastic buildings lie beneath the present house and gardens.

In 1730, Samuel Buck engraved a view of the abbey showing a very fine gatehouse with a small house attached that still survived to the south-west of the church. The gatehouse was demolished in 1793 and the area planted with trees. In 1794 a visitation by the Archdeacon ordered enquiries to establish the limits of the churchyard, perhaps because of the loss of the boundary following the destruction of the gatehouse. It is probable that the orchard marked to the south of the churchyard on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map reflects the agreed boundary and the tree planting recorded. This whole area now lies under the hard standing, barns and storage sheds of Manor Farm.

Without wholesale clearance of the site, it is impossible to assess the potential for survival of archaeology in this area.

There was no evidence in the trench along the length of Washdyke Road of any surviving structural evidence for the abbey at that location. It was clear that there had been a ditch parallel to the road along the length of the trench excavation. This showed evidence for general silting before the eastern section was deliberately filled with modern demolition rubble and stone. This appears to have been done to allow vehicles to park along the verge adjacent to the churchyard of St Andrew's church.

At the access to St Andrews churchyard, an effort had clearly been made to provide hardstanding for vehicle access to the churchyard. The bedding layers contained late 19th and 20th century brick and pottery. This had clearly become overgrown and covered in clay. A late 20th century layer of brick, hardcore and aggregate had been laid over this to provide a more secure access to the church. That too is now covered in a layer of topsoil and weeds.

To the west of the church access, the ditch had again been filled in, there was evidence of tip lines and clear demarcations between dumps of sand and gravel or layers of stone or hardcore in the exposed ditch fill. It is probable that at least some of this work was done to widen the road to provide for two-way traffic when the road was resurfaced in the 1990s (Mr Harvey, Manor Farm pers comm)

Main Street appears to have been the principal access to the village from earliest times. There are no obvious surviving tracks, paths or roadways to provide alternate access to the village. It is clear from the topography that the continued use of this roadway had resulted in

the road being cut down into the underlying soil creating a sunken road with a substantial earth bank on the east, rising to almost 2m in places.

The effect of these steeply banked sides has been to force all modern services and cables into the footpath to the west of the road or into the margins of the grass bank to the east. As these were the locations for the present excavations, they encountered mainly ground disturbed by the insertion of earlier services and cables.

At the junction of Main Street and Cox's Lane, the high bank at this corner was reduced in the 1990s during road surfacing and improvements to allow clear visibility for vehicles accessing the junction. The existing grass verge is 1.2m below the original ground level to the east (Mr Harvey, pers comm).

No excavations were made inside the grounds of Hill Close Farm, the new cable being inserted under the boundary wall at the south-east corner of the house and the cable being taken up the side of the wall to the existing electrical junction box.

At Manor Farm, the cable was sub-surface bored below Main Street from the grass verge to the east of Main Street to the gateway at the front of the house.

A small trench was opened in the footpath to receive the bore and cable at that location. Two further small trenches to facilitate the boring were opened, one 2m from the front door of the house and the other at the north-east corner of the house. No archaeological features were revealed in these trenches.

The cable to the Old Byre cut across the roadside bank opposite the entrance to the yard at Manor Farm. To the east of the bank, the land had been built up to provide a hard surface for vehicle access to the farm buildings to the north-east of Palmer Cottages. The cable trench exposed only modern hardcore and compacted aggregate at this location.

The 19th century Palmer Cottages shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Maps of the area were demolished in the late 1980s and four modern brick built houses with slate roofs and uPVC windows now occupy the same relative location. The roadside bank has been graded and levelled so that the modern brick pavior driveways slope from the house frontages to road level.

The excavations clearly indicate that most modern services, drainage and cables are laid in the road and grass verges. There is no evidence for disturbed or truncated archaeology and this may indicate good potential for survival of archaeology elsewhere in the village.

The only feature of note was the remnant of a cobblestone surface below the modern tarmac surface of Main Street observed in the two open trenches cut across the road at the junction of Washdyke Road and outside Hill Close Farm. The presence of similar rounded river cobbles in the fills along Washdyke Road and beside Main Street would indicate that this earlier cobbled road may survive at least in places below the modern tarmac road surfaces.

There was a scattering of medieval pottery sherds in the various trench fills but as all were in disturbed deposits, they have limited value in assessing the site potential. The majority of finds were dated from the late 18th through to the 20th century.

As no archaeological features were observed, section drawings have not been included with this report, but have been retained with the archive.

## 5 ARCHIVE

*Table 1: Summary of site records*

	<b>Contexts</b>	<b>Plans</b>	<b>Sections</b>	<b>Photos</b>	<b>Slides</b>	<b>Digital</b>
<b>Trenches</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>80</b>

A single plan marks the location of the trenches (Fig 2). All finds were retained from the excavations. 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 (1991).

An Activity and Source Submission Form will be sent to the Leicestershire SMR.

The archive together with a copy of the monitoring report will be deposited at the Leicestershire County Museum Service, Leicester. Deposition of the archive will conform to the guidelines of the receiving museum.

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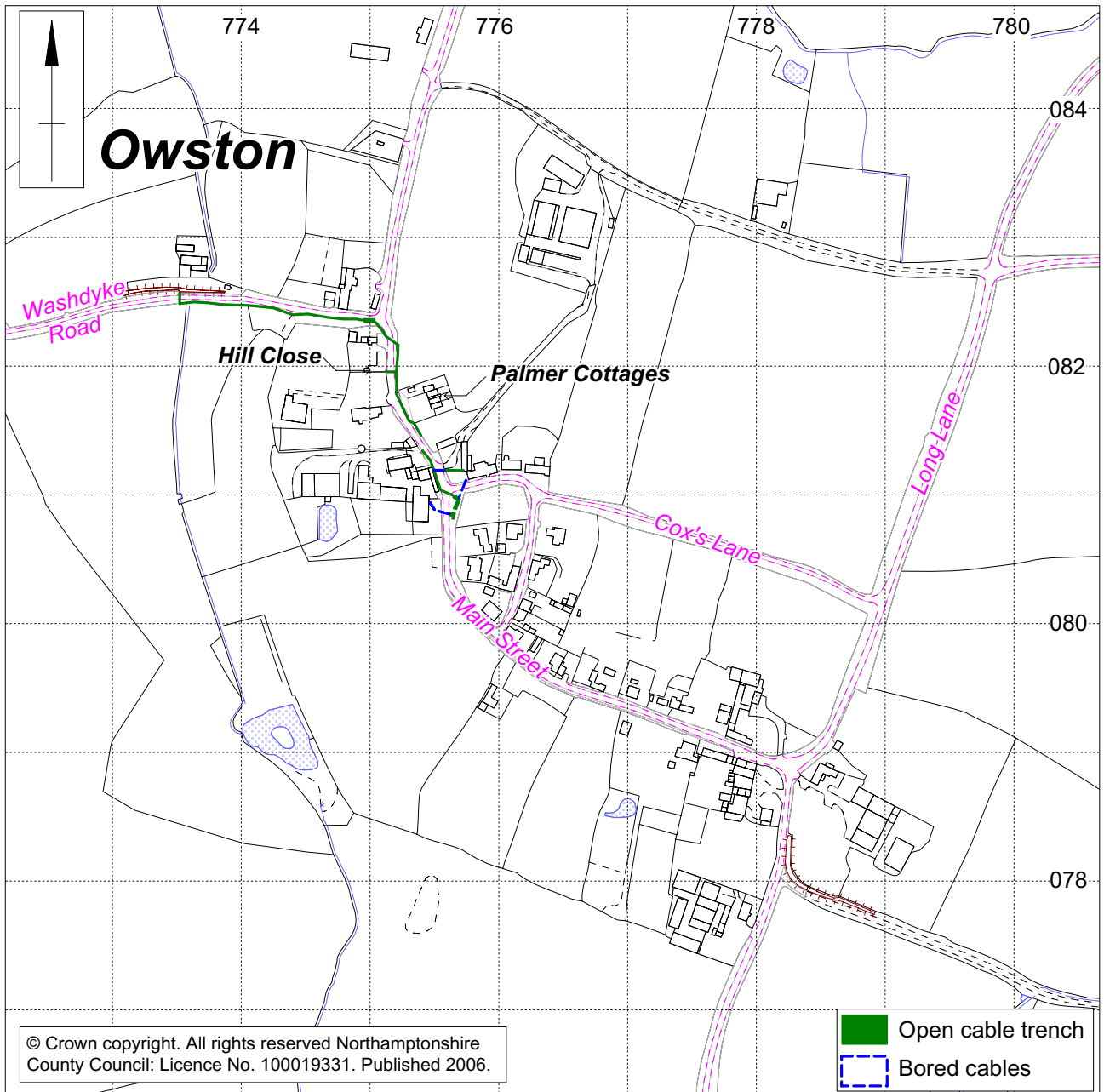
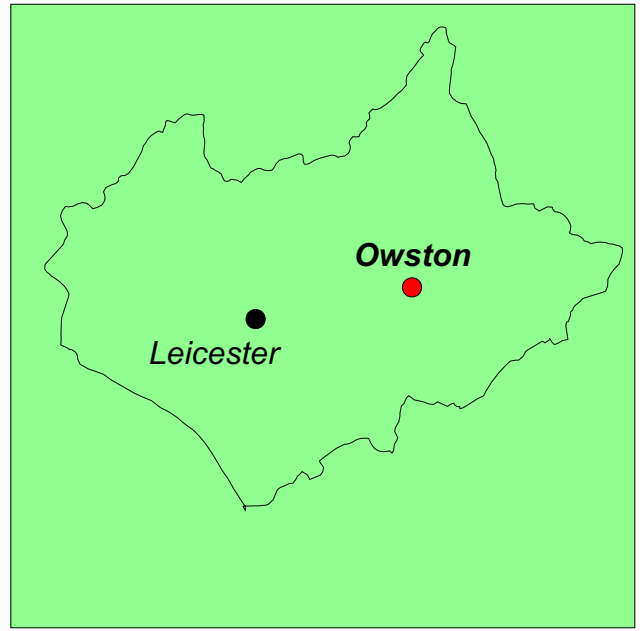
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Scale 1: 5000

Cable trench location Fig 1