Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

EXCAVATION OF
A MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE AT
BURY MOUNT, TOWCESTER
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

July – September 2007

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Report 07/193

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Excavation of a motte and bailey castle at Bury Mount, Towcester, Northamptonshire, July-September 2007	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Excavation revealed Roman remains upon which a late 11th century stone building was established. The Norman motte was built upon the building and subsequently modified in later periods during the English Civil War and the 19th century.	
Project type	Area excavation and trial trenching	
Site status	Scheduled Ancient Monument (County No 13623)	
Previous work	NA Trial trench evaluation (Audouy 1984; Woodfield 1992)	
Current Land use	Public Open Space, river margin	
Future work	NA Trial trench evaluation to the north of the site (Foard-Colby forthcoming)	
Monument type/ period	Multi-period: Roman, Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval	
Significant finds	Pottery and roof tile	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Moat Lane, Towcester, Northants, NN12 6AD	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	1.7 ha	
OS Easting and Northing	SP 6928 4888	
Height OD	88.5m above OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Scope agreed in conjunction with English Heritage	
Project Design originator	Iain Soden, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Iain Soden, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	South Northamptonshire Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	July 2007	
End date	September 2007	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)**
Physical	Northamptonshire Arch. pending deposition at Towcester Museum	Pottery, tile, metal finds, sample residues and clay tobacco pipes
Paper		Site context record, plans, section drawings, photographic record and finds drawings
Digital		Mapinfo digital plans and report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Excavation of a motte and bailey castle at Bury Mount, Towcester	
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EXCAVATION OF A MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE AT

BURY MOUNT, TOWCESTER, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

July-September 2007

Bury Mount is the site of a Norman motte and bailey castle which has been the subject of enquiry into the town's Roman and (particularly) its medieval past. The earliest features and deposits preserved beneath Bury Mount are probably of Roman origin. Two substantial pits were excavated which were sealed by buried soils. These began a sequence of deposits which continued through the post-Roman period. They were continually disturbed whilst accumulating new material. New interventions comprised ditches which were allowed to silt naturally during their period of use, being redefined on at least one occasion. They were deliberately backfilled in the late 11th century.

Following this a stone building was constructed on top of the soil accumulation. It was probably short-lived since a Norman motte was constructed soon after the Conquest, by mounding up a circular ring of embanked earth which formed the base. The motte was raised using sandy clay and gravels excavated partly from an encircling defensive ditch and other material from further afield. It was tipped onto the ring of earth, raising its height and allowed to spread down into the centre to create a gigantic cone. This was then capped.

By the later medieval period the motte was probably disused and it is likely that it remained so until modified during the Civil War. During the 19th century the Mount was planted with trees. Two cottages were cut into the south side and widespread horticulture was in evidence well into the 20th century. The surrounding ditch survived as a 19th-century watercourse which was intermittently maintained through the 20th century. The cottages were abandoned and demolished soon after.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned in July 2007, by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC), to conduct an archaeological excavation of the motte and bailey castle at Bury Mount, Towcester (NGR: SP 6856 4915; Fig 1). SNC is preparing plans for the consolidation, enhancement and public presentation of Bury Mount as part of the regeneration of the Moat Lane area of Towcester. Bury Mount and its immediate environs comprise a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County No 13623). Therefore, in accordance with the scheduled status of the monument and the requirements of the 1979 Scheduled Monuments Act, all progress was in consultation with English Heritage as advisors to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). A programme of archaeological investigation was discussed in consultation with SNC, English Heritage and Northamptonshire Archaeology. It was decided by English Heritage that the work did not require Scheduled Monument Consent in its own right, but could be carried out under the terms of a previous consent. The work was designed to provide information on the construction, occupation and demise of Bury Mount to inform planning advice regarding the scope of design works necessary or desirable to conserve the earthwork, whilst halting the present worrying rate of erosion.

The archaeological works comprised area excavation of two broad trenches, located at the summit and to the south of the Mount, with a third slit trench across the north side of the moat. The first two trenches investigated the origin and construction of the motte itself with its subsequent modifications. The third trench investigated the relationship between the motte slope, the moat and the deposits revealed by the forerunning evaluation at the back of the Wayside Garage site on Northampton Road (Foard-Colby, forthcoming).

The archive will be prepared according to the guidelines of Appendix 3 of the English heritage procedural document, *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991). It will be retained by Northamptonshire Archaeology in temporary storage until such a time as a suitable repository is available with the Towcester Museum where it will then be transferred for long term storage.

The team at Northamptonshire Archaeology wish to thank Towcester Historical Society for their interest, support and contributions to the project.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Historical and archaeological background

The motte and bailey castle site lies on the north-east side of the present town centre close to both the Parish Church and the medieval market place (Fig 1). The north-east of the site is bounded by the modern line of the mill stream, a later medieval watercourse that may have earlier origins. It served the 19th-century watermill and has been maintained to the present although the mill is now converted to other uses. To the north-west the site opens onto derelict wasteland, the subject of trial trench evaluation in 1984 and 2006 (Audouy 1984; Foard-Colby forthcoming). This area of ground purportedly contained the disturbed remnants of defences belonging to the Roman town of *Lactodorum*. To the west the site is bounded by modern cottages and a modern workshop housing a light engineering firm; all front onto Moat Lane. The south of the site is bounded by Moat Lane itself, although the immediate area was formerly occupied by two cottages which lay within the current excavation. To the south-east is a warehouse, presently used for the storage of vintage motor vehicles and constructed astride the circuit of an old watercourse. The east of the site backs onto a small car park serving the facilities housed in the buildings opposite the watermill. The Mount is also believed by some to be situated close to (or even astride) a postulated early defensive circuit of the town wall, the origins of which lie in the Roman fortification of the town (Woodfield 1992; 1995).

A pre-Roman settlement existed in the sharply angled bend of the River Tove on the north-east side of the town. Remains of this settlement typified by dark "Belgic" style pottery were identified during excavations near Bury Mount (Audouy 1984, 25). It is likely that the town may have begun as a *Vicus*, a small civilian settlement, and became a point in need of defence when it became a focus for Roman political and economic activity. It has been suggested that it was the stage for significant disturbances which were part of widespread conflagrations in the area during second part of the 2nd century AD (Woodfield 1995, 140-143). The burgeoning Roman town of *Lactodurum* (Towcester) was located on the Watling Street (A5), a major Roman military route built between London and the legionary fortress at Wroxeter, near Shrewsbury. It may have been used as a staging post during periods of military activity and a likely target for localised insurrection.

There is a significant lack of published work for the archaeology of the town in all post-Roman periods. Although a large number of sites have been investigated in the town

and its hinterland over the last 30 years, little evidence has come to light that might elucidate the nature of Saxon, Norman and later medieval settlement. Far from their being ignored by archaeologists, in most extensive excavations in the town, medieval horizons have been largely absent. Consequently medieval Towcester is poorly understood.

Although residual late Saxon and medieval pottery has been found, previous enquiry has concentrated on pure speculation as to the form of the documented Saxon refortification of the town as a Saxon *burh* (Audouy 1984, 27). Evidence, however, has been insubstantial. The motte was previously mentioned as a short-lived structure attributed to the early phase of post-Conquest castle building (Audouy 1984, 29).

A wall of possible late medieval date was identified at Meeting Lane during an evaluation, but on the whole evidence has suggested that most medieval activity had been confined to a limited area along the Watling Street frontage (Steadman and Shaw 1991, 7-8, 10; Atkins and Woodfield 1999, 32). This view was supported by the evaluation at 163-165 Watling Street where, despite a reasonable assemblage of residual medieval pottery, only one pit was identified to that period (Prentice 2001, 13). This fragmentary picture of evidence has been mirrored elsewhere with some consistency.

The town history becomes increasingly easier to identify into the present as the dearth of artefactual and documentary evidence is replaced with a greater number of post-medieval finds and records. Most prominent amongst these is the interest in the town's rôle during the English Civil War (1642-9) when it was garrisoned for the Royalists. Although the vernacular buildings are rather less well represented, several attempts have been made to identify points at which the town was specifically fortified during the Civil War. This includes evidence from the former cinema site, Sponne school and the former filling station, currently Harley Davidson motors (Jackson 1983; Audouy 1984; Woodfield 1992).

The Bury Mount site

The site has been mapped a number of times as follows:

1801	Earl of Pomfret Estate Map (NRO 2923 and 2967)
1811-16	Ordnance Survey, Surveyor's map sheet 53SE
1844	Towcester Tithe Map (NRO T7)
1848-55	Rating map (NRO 4473)
1885	Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25", Sheet LVI.6
1900	Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25"

All of these plans show Bury Mount with very little detail, other than to confirm its location. They all show a surrounding watercourse some way out which appears to be the same one on all, depicted best in NRO Map 4473 of 1848-55. This is reproduced and scaled up on Figure 3 (a) of the present report.

All of the above maps have previously appeared (Shotliffe et al, 1999) and it is not considered necessary to re-present them here. Of note however is another topographical drawing which was published in *The Builder* in 1875, which shows the Mount in a much different light, depicting the by then much clogged channels of the watercourse, which also identifies a surrounding defensive ditch (Fig 2; My thanks to Brian Giggins for making the existence of this article known to me). The article makes the mistake however, of identifying the Mount with the Saxon *burgh*, fortified by Edward the Elder

against the Danes in 917. Its particular value is in its identification of the partly-wet ditch as being much closer to the Mount that the mapped open channel of the other depictions, such that they do seem to be different channels. In addition a cross-section of the Mount appears to show that the flat top was surmounted by a one-foot high earthwork bank around its rim, perhaps for a palisade. However the accompanying article does not mention this. No other depiction shows this, nor is there any trace of this on the ground today. Since the illustrator of 1875 chose to mark its height independently on his cross-section, we must infer that he genuinely believed in what he was looking at. However, it is too much to rely on the depiction as infallible since it does not show the cottages cut into the south-western quadrant. They are certainly known to have existed at this time.

The mapped and documentary history of the castle, although it comprises precious little, has previously been set out by Courtney (in Shotliffe et al 1999, 11-17).

There are no records of the castle in the early medieval period.

The documentary record suggests that the land plot in the late medieval period was waste, later put into use as a garden and orchard. It was mentioned in a survey in 1391-2, where it was described as '*One moat and within the moat there is one mound tower*'; later the *motehyll* was described as being in decay, paying no rent, in the Valor roll of 1467-8 (NRO DL43/14/3; Woodfield 1992, 66-68; Shotliffe et al 1999, 12). Records from 1549 and 1551 indicated that much of the site was a garden called *Berrymonthyll* and a close called *Beryorchard* (NRO Fermor-Hesketh: MTD/B/28/8, MTD/D/28/13). It was described in 1610 as a garden "planted on every side with cherie trees". Courtney (Shotliffe et al 1999) was unable to view a 1606 rental of the fields of Towcester, since it was unavailable due to conservation at the time he wrote. This has now been viewed for the purposes of the present report and it can be stated that Bury Mount is not included, the rental being wholly concerned with the open fields around the town (NRO: Fermor-Hesketh: Box A, bundle 1)

Nothing new can be added to Courtney's historical appraisal (Shotliffe et al 1999) other than to point out that the association of Bury Mount with the Civil War emplacement is actually an *assumption* and such a conflation may be the basis of grave error. The references (from the diary of Sir John Luke published by Philip (1947) simply note:

4 August 1643 Skirmish at Towcester began the activity around the town (Philip 1947, 136)

2 Nov 1643 'there are 10 000 horse and foote in about Toster, and seven pieces of ordnance and they intend to fortifie the towne, and to plante their ordnance upon Hunsbury Hill a mile from Northampton' (ibid 187-9)

11 Nov 1643 Prince Rupert has 1000 cavalry as a guard at Toster. Stabling was poor and the conditions were very muddy, horses standing in mud up to their fetlocks.(ibid 191-3)

14 Nov 1643 'as soon as they have finished works at Toster, they resolve to go north leaving a garrison' (ibid 195-7)

19 Nov 1643 Two reports arrived 'Toster is entrenched round but not fortified. There are 12 pieces of Ordnance' and 'they have intrenched Toster round but have not yet finished their works' (ibid 195-7)

5 Dec 1643 'they have intrenched Toster around, but have not as yet finished there works; there bee many labourers there working daily…. they are making a mount on the farther side of the towne to plant ordnance upon' (ibid 206)

6 Dec 1643 'the town is intrenched round about' (ibid 207)

18 Dec 1643 'Eight pieces of ordnance in Toster, six in the Markett Place and two planted upon on a hill towards Northampton. That the works are all made upp, but are stronger at the end towards London'. Two similar reports (ibid 219)

Since these diary entries were made by a Parliamentarian based in Northampton gathering intelligence, he would take great interest in the strengthening of Towcester for the King. We must be clear that very few of the works were observed by him in person, but are the reports of paid scouts as they go out and return some days later, some coming in two or three at a time, not always with the same report.

Luke seems clear about the use of Hunsbury Hill for a gun emplacement to cover Northampton. It is unfortunate then that the second mention of the construction of a mount gives no specific location, other than to say that it lies on the farther side of the town. The word 'farther' is ambiguous since it requires us knowing:
a) if the word is Luke's and relates to the location relative to his base of operations (Northampton), or
b) if it is the wording of his scout relative to the direction from which he approached and made his notes.

However, if the existing Bury Mount was the place in question it is unclear why its construction was implied, not its modification, since Bury Mount already existed. It is possible that the 'Hill' mentioned as the emplacement on 18 December, is neither Bury Mount nor Hunsbury but another high-point in the landscape with a view of the road from Towcester to Northampton anywhere over a distance of some miles. Such a location outside Towcester would give early warning of an enemy approach, whereas a presence on Bury Mount would add little height and visual advantage. The elevation might add only 250 metres to the range of cannon.

Related documents for the supply of the ordnance and powder, shot etc to Towcester during this time suggests that a concerted defence might have been difficult if the Parliamentary forces had been able to attack. While small-arms and horse equipment was constantly ferried in and out, the amount of shot made available, split between numerous pieces of ordnance, was strictly limited and it is doubtful whether any more than a brief defensive barrage would ever have been possible before the guns fell silent (Roy 1975).

Without firm archaeological evidence, the documentation regarding the Civil War preparations is, at best, ambiguous.

In 1823/4 record was made of a subterranean passage found within the motte, 15 yards (45 ft or c13m) in length, under what circumstances is not clear (Pigot's Directory). This has never been substantiated and its nature has formed the basis of much speculation, particularly in respect to the style of construction of the motte, possibly following a retained, South-Mimms type of earthwork construction with an entrance passageway and internal stair to a keep above (Platt 1978, 12-13).

Subsequent documented works at Bury Mount comprise the planting of Scots Pines on the summit of the motte by the Earl of Pomfret. Unfortunately we have no idea of what earthmoving took place to accompany this. None of the later maps show the planting, although the anonymous author of the *Builder* article of 1875 was aware of them. They

were noted once more in the Northampton Mercury in 1886-7 when the Mount was said to be covered in domestic gardens (NRO: NRS Pamphlet 1592, Answer to Question 96, p31). They were mature by the time early photographic postcards were produced c1910 (when scores were clearly standing). The gardens were resplendent with serried ranks of vegetables at the time. A very few rather spindly successor pines survive on the motte today, but perhaps less that ten per cent of what was once there.

It is unusual that such a prominent landmark as Bury Mount has been so widely covered over the years, to reveal so few documents. Without archaeological investigation a 1995 book on the history of Towcester presents the sum total of documentary understanding of the mount (Sunderland and Webb 1995, 64-8).

2.2 Topography and geology

Bury Mount lies within a regeneration area comprising 1.7ha on level ground at approximately 88.5m OD. The site lies in the north-east of the town core. Northampton Road is to the north, Watling Street is to the west and the mill leat is to the north-east.

The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bury Mount lies at the south-east end of the area. Currently, the land is largely open with hardstanding tarmac at the edge of wider, rough areas of grass. These merge with other scrub and grassland of the scheduled area. The Mount is a flat-topped motte earthwork surmounted by a number of feature trees, currently under a Tree Preservation Order. Other undergrowth which formerly covered the area has been cut down and the action of wind and rain in formerly overgrown areas is causing some rapid erosion of the Mount sides which have already slumped over a long period of time

The geology is mapped by the British Geological Survey as Alluvium (British Geological Survey Sheet 202, 1969). However, excavation has demonstrated that it is overlain in part by River Terrace Gravels which form a low plateau on the flood plain.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The general criteria of the archaeological works described in the project design were as follows:

- To provide consistent detailed information on the presence or absence, the extent, degree of survival and the depth of burial of archaeological remains across the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- To provide sufficient information on the site's surviving archaeology to allow a proper assessment to be made of the implications for a range of possible conservation works on the Mount and its immediate environs.
- To analyse and disseminate the information within the field of castle studies and regional research on the medieval period.
- To involve and promote public interest in the site as a centrepiece of public open space within the wider regeneration plan for Towcester town centre.

Particular attention was directed towards the following:

- Establish the method of construction of the motte and examine the extent, survival and process of its destruction, characterising any surviving occupation remains at the summit.

- Link the archaeology of the motte to the known bailey ditch found in the foregoing evaluation of the north bailey.
- Determine the extent of the motte ditch, now located by previous evaluation, while assessing its ongoing potential to preserve archaeological remains within it.

3.2 Methodology

As an, albeit unwitting, precursor to the present works trial excavation was carried out in the open area to the north of Bury Mount in 2006. This lay in the area beyond the Scheduled Ancient Monument. These works remain incomplete due to tenancy issues but part of the first phase on site included a series of radial core-samples being cut by Royal Holloway College, London. These were designed to locate the motte ditch and to investigate the depth of its burial and its likely width. The locations of the cores can be seen in Figure 4. The probable extent of the motte ditch (as indicated by the cores) is there compared to the watercourse mapped through the 19th century.

At the start of the current excavations, staff on site were familiarised with a previous conservation management plan for Bury Mount by Shotliffe et al (1999), the work by Higham and Barker published in their book *Timber Castles* (2004), and the place of castle studies within the recent East Midlands archaeological frameworks document (Lewis 2006).

Excavation took place in two broad open areas and one more limited, narrower trial trench. The two open area trenches were located on the south side of the Mount and on part of the summit (Fig 3, Trenches 1 and 2). The narrower trench was located on the north side of the Mount (Fig 3, Trench 3).

The first area chosen for open-area investigation was the south-west quadrant of the Mount, formerly occupied by a pair of thatched cottages, known from photographs of *c*1910 (Plates 1-5). These have been demolished and traces of the walls and floors are still present in the Mount side. Investigation of this portion of the Mount, which once supported buildings, was designed to minimise intervention into undisturbed motte deposits. However, since it was expected that such deposits would be damaged by the buildings, the slit trench was placed on the north side of the Mount to include a comparison with the open area results.

Excavation commenced using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under continual archaeological supervision. The machine operated from the base of the motte sides at all times. The topsoil, non-structural garden soils and slump deposits were removed to reveal the surface of the significant archaeological remains. These were previously defined as remains from the English Civil War, or from the medieval, Anglo-Saxon or Roman periods. Excavation of these deposits was continued by hand, except at the Mount summit where all work was conducted by hand. Where archaeological depoists were absent the natural substrate was exposed. Care was taken that roots belonging to standing existing trees were not exposed. Root systems known to belong to felled trees or recently cleared undergrowth was removed where they lay fully within the excavation area. Spoil was stored at the side of the trench at 1m distance away from the edges. It was scanned by eye and with a metal detector to assist in the recovery of diagnostic or dateable finds.

The area excavated comprised the south-west quarter; a roughly-rectangular area of the Mount that incorporated about one quarter of the surviving motte summit, about one eighth of the slopes and a section to expose the moat on the south-east side. As the excavations descended, the works were appropriately stepped to ensure work continued

in safety. The archaeology exposed in each step was fully recorded to compile composite section records showing uninterrupted stratigraphic sequences.

At the summit, investigation removed the topsoil, seeking to expose any surviving medieval or Civil War features. The search for artillery gabions, emplacements and breastworks or the remains of a stone or timber medieval *donjon* or tower was fruitless, all evidence having been removed in the landscaping works of the Earl of Pomfret during the 1840s. Subsequent layers were therefore examined by hand excavation of a 9.8m long and 2.6m deep trench in the centre of the excavated area to provide an understanding of the motte construction deposits from the top downwards.

Garden soils and slump material were removed on the slope within the quadrant to expose the same motte construction material at the side and base of the earthwork. A working hypothesis that this may once have included a revetment of stone or timber (much like the method of construction encountered at South Mimms castle, Hertfordshire) was tested by searching for the remains of a wall burst outwards or a row of large, possibly contiguous, postholes of a corduroy revetment. In the absence of these the investigation concentrated upon establishing the method of construction that was used to form the motte whilst continuing to be aware of the possibility of a tunnel entrance, also akin to that found at South Mimms.

Previous core-sampling by Royal Holloway College, London, had defined the likely extent of a buried motte ditch (Fig 3). This ditch was now exposed at the edge of Trench 2 and the inner shoulder was hand-excavated to reveal the last accumulation which was deposited while it was still an earthwork. No evidence for a causeway was encountered. The ditch fill was sampled to assess the environmental potential for future work which included macroscopic samples taken by means of a hand dug section. Samples were not taken for pollen analysis since the reporting timescale was unusually short and since foregoing map-analysis suggested that infilling of the ditch (12^{th}-20^{th} centuries) was a very long-term accumulation, making the environment under comment too changeable and therefore imprecise.

Trench 3 was excavated from the northern slope of the Mount to try to link it to one of the previous 2006 evaluation trenches in the putative north bailey. It was excavated by machine using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under continual archaeological supervision. The topsoil and other non-structural garden soils forming modern slump deposits were removed to reveal significant archaeological remains and where these were absent, the natural substrate (actually alluvium hereabouts). The trench did not extend all the way up the Mount slope, but reached far enough to confirm and compare the sequence noted in the area excavations, acting as a control to those areas where modern disturbance was suspected to have taken place. Spoil was stored at the side of the trench which was stepped successively down the Mount slope (and outwards at the ditch) to achieve the necessary depth. Topsoil and other excavated spoil was scanned by eye and with a metal detector to assist in the recovery of diagnostic or dateable finds. Where the trench cut post-medieval deposits these were removed from the defensive ditch to a depth of 3.4m in an attempt to expose the last medieval fill of the ditch. Conclusive dating evidence of this was absent and therefore environmental sampling was not conducted in this trench.

The excavation areas were cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features. These were planned at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 as appropriate and features were sampled by hand to determine their date and character. The section profiles through features and trench stratification were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and related to Ordnance Datum.

All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during the course of excavation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire procedures. Each deposit was given a separate context number and described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

A photographic record was kept of the excavation, primarily comprising digital media, but backed up by a selection of black and white negatives and related prints and colour slides. The field data has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

Environmental samples were taken from selected deposits. These were taken on the advice of Karen Deighton, Environment Officer, Northamptonshire Archaeology in concert with the Project Manager.

On completion of the work the excavations were left open to meet the requirements of SNC and English Heritage whilst remaining fully fenced off. All work was carried out according to the IFA Code of Conduct and the *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Evaluation* (IFA 1995, revised 2003). Backfilling took place a little later, following local vandalism.

The strategy of fieldwork and post-excavation was designed to fulfil the overall aims and objectives listed above, with particular attention to the medieval motte and bailey castle. Earlier, particularly Roman, material was expected and residual finds were recovered with a few features identified as Roman in origin. These were recorded as part of the excavation, but were not specifically targeted or accorded the same level of attention and were summarised for archive purposes. Roman bulk finds were not fully analysed and only a commentary on their composition was made. The vast majority are known to be residual in later contexts.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 Summary of Chronology

The sequence of deposits that were examined at the site demonstrated a clear series of chronological episodes in the history of Bury Mount (Figs 3-9):

Phase 1: *Roman remains*, comprising two stone-filled pits and numerous residual finds scattered throughout later layers.

Phase 2: A *Saxon ditch*, a re-cut ditch which post-dates the Roman demolition and abandonment deposits.

Phase 3: *Saxo-Norman ditches, pits and buried soils*, with distinct evidence for a long build up of material and continual movement of the soils interrupted by a period of ditch and pit digging.

Phase 4: *A Norman wall*, considered initially to be a fragment of the refortified town wall of 917AD, but based on the pottery evidence, subsequently interpreted as part of a stone building of late 11th century date (Plate 6).

Phase 5: *The Norman fortification*, comprising the motte and the cut of the surrounding motte defensive ditch (Plate 2).

Phase 6: *From the late medieval to the English Civil War*, the natural silting of the defensive ditch was indicative of late medieval abandonment. The defensive ditch, successively silted and filled in, gave way to a smaller watercourse following an enlarged, and partly unrelated circuit. The two courses can be compared in Fig 4.

Phase 7: *Landscaping and tree planting*, an event that remodelled the Norman motte on a massive scale by cutting into the sides and truncating the summit to make way for tree planting. The watercourse may have been cleaned out during this period.

Phase 8: *The Bury Mount cottages*, comprising two small vernacular dwellings together with their associated gardens and outhouses (Plate 1). The watercourse was filled at the end of this period.

All of the areas were excavated concurrently. The most extensive and informative evidence from the site was discovered in Trench 1, on the south side of the Mount (Fig 4). Here the method of construction was most clearly demonstrated by cleaning the scarp section and relating it to the excavations within Trench 1 (Fig 5, Plate 2). Deposits encountered in Trenches 2 and 3 served to further elucidate and corroborate this evidence. The following detailed descriptions are a synthesis of the results from all three trenches which form a section across the site (Fig 6). The stratification as a whole can be seen in the sections of the individual trenches (Figs 7-9).

4.2 Phase 1: Roman remains

A cultivable orangey-brown sandy soil had accumulated 300-400mm thick over the natural orange gravels (1078). This was crossed by later features which cut it into separate portions (1076 and 1100). However, it contained no finds and appeared to comprise the natural silty infill of undulations in the gravel, disturbed only by worm sorting that had enriched it as a soil. It predates all other deposits excavated in Trench 1 (Figs 5 and 6).

Two pits or post holes, [1111] and [1152], were discovered cut into the natural orange gravel. Both measured 700-800mm across and had near vertical sides and flat bases. Both were limestone-packed. They were set 2m apart and it is possible that they are post-holes, related to a Roman building of unknown size.

Overlying these features to a thickness of 250mm at the north end of the trench was a dark brownish-grey buried soil (1150) containing large amounts of broken roof tile, redolent of a demolition deposit. A second, similar layer, 160mm thick, overlay it (1149). They produced similar finds of Roman origin (Hylton, Meadows - below). They blended together and merged to the south with another, similar deposit (1102). Together they all represent demolition material and subsequent accumulation during the sub-Roman period. It is suggested that they took up to six centuries to form following the Roman period.

No remains of this phase were present in either Trenches 2 or 3.

4.3 Phase 2: A Saxon ditch

Cutting the buried soils was a 750mm-wide x 450mm-deep u-shaped ditch, aligned from west to east across Trench 1 ([1107]; Figs 5 and 6). The south side had subsequently been modified by an off-centre re-cutting on a slightly wider and deeper arrangement [1104]. Fills were similar, being basically firm dark orange-brown clay

silts (1105, 1108). There was fragmented limestone squashed into the top and residual Roman pottery trampled into the base. This appears to have been natural silting of the ditch with the pottery probably deposited soon after digging. The upper fill of [1104] (1106), comprised loose dark greyish-brown silty loam with white flecks, limestone fragments and root intrusions. It may have been deliberately backfilled. This re-cut ditch was noted passing eastwards beneath wall [1050] (see below) although the original, parallel course of [1107] was not visible at this point.

No remains of this phase were present in either Trenches 2 or 3.

4.4 Phase 3: Saxo-Norman ditches, pits and buried soils

Sealing the top of the Phase 2 ditches was a 300-400mm-thick black silty loam, a buried soil (1101; Fig 7). Notably this deposit contained a rim sherd from a Stamford ware (F205) jar, a fabric which was manufactured up until the late 11th century (Blinkhorn, this report). There was no evidence of root intrusion but worm castes were present (Fig 7, Plate 2). Other patches of this material survived to either side of later pits and ditches. One patch contained two sherds of F316 Calcareous ironstone coarseware which is a relatively newly recognised pottery type, in production from the late 11th century, shortly after the Norman Conquest (Blinkhorn, this report).

Cutting the buried soil deposits was ditch [1096], aligned from west to east across Trench 1 and a pit, [1079] (Fig 1). Ditch [1096] measured 1.4m wide x 500mm deep and was a gentle v-shape in profile, the dark blackish-brown silty loam (1097) fill merging imperceptibly with the layer above.

Pit [1079] was difficult to define in plan, but appeared to have a large rounded irregular shape c2.7m long x 2.2m wide x 560mm deep, cutting right down into the natural gravel. The fill comprised friable mid-brownish-green sandy clay loam (1075) with very diffuse edges, perhaps suggestive of cess-like material, perhaps fluid at the time of deposition as it had blended with the surrounding deposits. This horizon was overlain by patches of a discontinuous soil up to 290mm thick (1013 and 1089; Figs 5 and 6) which contained large amounts of residual Roman pottery.

No remains known to be of this phase were present in Trenches 2 or 3.

4.5 Phase 4: A Norman wall

Laid onto the surface of buried soil (1089) was the stone foundation of a north- to south -aligned wall [1050], which measured 6.9m long by 0.45m high by 1.2m wide (Fig 5, Plates 6-7). The northern end extended beneath the later, motte earthwork, whilst the southern end was truncated, its eventual southern terminal apparently lost. The masonry comprised blocks of limestone and occasionally Northamptonshire Sand with Ironstone, with the occasional Roman tile fragment used to fill smaller gaps. The block sizes varied considerably, but were generally large faced blocks with the largest as much as 600mm long by 400mm thick towards the base. Most were crudely shaped and the coursing was irregular. There were six courses at its highest-surviving point, but four for the most part. These had been laid dry, but interlocked so that no use of rubble fill was necessary. At the base of the wall was an aperture 260mm wide by 180mm deep which was set beneath the stonework, seemingly where a single stone had been lost in antiquity (1153).

Built into the fabric of wall [1050] was an alteration or repair, (Plate 6; [1031]). This was distinctly different in character to the preceding stonework. As a distinctive part of the larger wall, it measured 3.2m long by 800mm high by 1m wide, aligned north to

south but with a noticeable adjustment in alignment. The stone-colour was lighter, their size generally smaller and the wall was offset from the original so that the facing was not flush, incorporating a slight deviation eastwards at the northern end (Fig 5, Plate 7). The larger blocks were 400mm long by 250mm thick, these were crudely shaped and the coursing was more irregular than the other portion of the wall. There were ten courses at its northern end, thinning to five courses at the southern end where it joined with the stonework of wall [1050]. These were laid dry (un-bonded) but, whereas the previous wall had interlocked fairly well, this was crude with stone little more than stacked and the core of the wall comprising merely rubble fill.

It is clear from the pottery dating preceding buried soils beneath the wall and the motte earthwork built above the wall, that its origin fits into late 11th century (Blinkhorn, below). This date is too late for it to have been any element of the Edwardian Burgh town defences (probably short-lived and built 1014) and it seems probable that the wall is a fragment of a very late Saxon or early Norman stone building, possibly a manorial building, buried beneath the motte.

No remains known to be of this phase were present in Trenches 2 or 3.

4.6 Phase 5: The Norman fortification

To the west of the wall, and abutting its western side, was a series of embanked sand-and-gravel deposits, sealing the Saxo-Norman buried soil (Fig 6 and Field Section 11 in archive; 1064/1061, 1063, 1062, 1060, 1068, 1067 and 1053). These had effectively buried the western face of the wall, preserving up to 750mm of masonry at its northern end and 450mm at its southern end. The crest of the bank lay closest to the wall, sloping gently down to the west suggesting they were tipped from on top of the wall. One layer, (1064), contained one sherd of St. Neots ware (F200) and one sherd of Calcareous ironstone coarseware (F316), placing its deposition in the late 11th century at earliest (Blinkhorn, this report). Context 1064 is recorded on Field Section 11 in archive but is the equivalent of 1061 on Figure 6, below.

One peculiarity which was evident from the section of the deposit was that the area 3.1m to 4.4m to the west of the wall was extensively rutted (cutting into layer 1060), perhaps the effects of wheels (Fig 6). Another few layers were also seen in plan forming the arcs of equally distinctive bands (1003, 1012, 1112-5), but these mostly lay beyond the cutting planes of the recorded sections and cannot closely be related to them.

Although only a small fragment of the wall was exposed, it was clear that its demolition was swiftly succeeded by its swift burial beneath further embanked layers (1070, 1069, 1030, 1023). All of these hereabouts constituted the basal layers of the Norman motte construction (Fig 5, Plate 7). Successive dumps of material were built up layer by layer to raise the overall height of the earthwork by 6m between the surface of the buried soil (1061, above) and the highest point of the 12th century construction level (1124 in Trench 1 and 2006 in Trench 2). This constituted the surviving summit of the Norman motte but appears not to have been flat. Either due to massive scale medieval robbing or (just conceivably) because the motte may never been finished, the central area of the motte contained a hollow which was subsequently filled (or re-filled) in the 17th century (Figs 6 and 8). The height of the motte to the base of this hollow was 4.5m.

In Trench 3 a similar sequence of deliberate embankment was recorded, the lowest layer of which was (3045; Fig 7). It then followed exactly the same process as that observed in Trenches 1 and 2.

Pottery from the lowest motte layer (1064/1061) secured a mid-12th century date for the construction deposits at the base of the motte, a date corroborated elsewhere by pottery from layers (2006, 2013, 2014 and 2015), close to the summit and layers (3034, 3035; Fig 7), on the north-west side (Blinkhorn, below).

An embankment of soils at the edge of the earthwork (1093) marked the deliberate edge of the motte, within which the next few dumps were laid, forming a soft 'kerb' to what became the motte base. Within this a ring or 'doughnut' shape, soil could then be mounded, each successive layer being shovelled along and sideways over the growing bank towards the centre. It had a tendency to create a funnelled shape, but the successive embankment of layers constituted a retaining kerb for the next, giving lateral stability as the motte grew higher. The distinct tipping lines sloping downwards towards the centre of the motte would have had the effect of channelling rainwater to the centre of the mound, preventing it drying out and either spreading or cracking. It would also have the effect of channelling such water to a point where many mottes would have a well placed, in the centre.

This is a key element of construction visible along both recorded transects and was in evidence in all of the trenches (Figs 5-7). The pattern between Trench 1, to the south of the motte, and Trench 2, at its summit, indicates the approximate centre of the original structure. The suggested radius of the base of the motte from this point is *c*30m which is fully consistent with a mapped maximum summit diameter of 30m. It also demonstrates the considerable amount of material that was removed from the south side of the site by later activity.

Within Trench 1 the successive early layers of motte construction which were recorded in plan can be seen to have edges which arc towards the earlier wall. At first glance this seems to be an arc in the wrong direction. However, it may signify that the excavations of Trench 1 lie close to the point of the very first deposits, perhaps even beginning at the wall itself. After all the construction of the ring had to begin somewhere and the method would produce the effect of an apparent terminal.

According to the excavated evidence in Trench 1, for the west slope of the motte, and in Trench 3, for the north slope of the motte, the median angle of elevation is in the region of 30-35° from the horizontal plane (Figs 6 and 7). The steeper slopes visible elsewhere are accounted for by the evidence of later modifications and subsequent erosion. Given that both slopes were proportional it is likely that the final product of motte construction was intended to be a fairly symmetrical mound.

Another element of the construction that was observed from the material used to form the sequential layers was based upon its constituents (Figs 6 and 7). Excavation identified forty-two different blends of material comprising motte construction deposits in Trench 1 alone and many contained residual Roman material implying that it had been brought from within the town. The majority of the deposits that lay towards the base of the motte formed thinner bands and tended to comprise orange sandy gravels or orange brown sandy clays with gravel inclusions (Plate 8). These were interspersed with occasional bands of silty clay containing midden waste material. On the whole the gravels compacted well to form a solid mass. It is probable that the material intended to form the top of the motte would have been similar.

Surrounding the motte was the arc of a contemporary defensive ditch. A portion of this ditch was identified at the south-east end of Trench 1, forming the inner shoulder (1085). The ditch section that was investigated in Trench 3 did not identify a precise equivalent but was confused by modern disturbance and a potential change in geology and ground conditions. The inner portion of the ditch was excavated in Trench 1 as far as was reasonably practicable to a depth of 1.9m below ground level. The section

investigated a sequence of deposits forming the uppermost layers of ditch fill (1081, 1080, 1021, 1008 and 1014). The basal material of the excavation (1081) was notably waterlogged and was sampled for environmental purposes. They contained quantities of twigs and leaves. The formation of the deposits imply a gradual process of silting, a process going on through the 13th-14th centuries (Blinkhorn, this report). The top fill was dark greyish brown clay silt (1008) which contained clear evidence of intrusive root activity from post-medieval dumping above (Blinkhorn, this report). Three lead artefacts were recovered from this deposit that included two wool bale seals of early 18th- century date (Hylton, this report; Plates 11-12).

4.7 Phase 6: From the late medieval to the English Civil War

Since the motte ditch was allowed to gradually silt up, it is likely that for much of the late medieval period the site lay in a state of comparative disuse. The final silting deposits of the defensive ditch indicated that the process was already well advanced in the 13th-14th centuries. Excavated evidence produced no other undisturbed deposits for the period. This is likely to indicate the loss of late medieval top-soil to subsequent horticulture or other disturbance.

Examination of the pottery highlighted a number of fabrics being manufactured during the period 1450-1700 (Blinkhorn, this report). It is likely that the earliest of these, comprising two sherds of Bourne 'D' ware, from *c*1450 to post-1600, were residual in the motte-top deposits (2009) and (2011). The remainder of fabrics were all available during the Civil War period (1642-9) which was a significant event in the history of Bury Mount and a period highly likely to account for some form of modifications to the motte.

Only a few layers outside the ditch belong to this period. Dated from pottery, they comprised layers such as 1014 and 1088, thin spreads up to 200mm thick of mixed dark grey silty clays and clay-laced gravel (Fig 6). They were associated with some cutting back of the south side of Bury Mount, a process which resulted in the mixing and spreading of existing material underfoot. Such a cutting might have produced a steep scarp towards Chantry Lane, the former road into Northampton. There are three possible reasons for this, two which may be associated with the Civil War and one which is not. Firstly Bury Mount may have been cut back to create a gun emplacement with a sloped glacis below, or secondly was similarly altered to slight it after the Civil War and thus deter re-use. Thirdly the modification may have come soon after the Civil War for nothing more poetic than gravel extraction for construction purposes elsewhere. The evidence is equivocal.

A large 3.5m-long sub-rectangular pit of 17th century date was fully excavated at the centre of Trench 1 where it had cut through the potential Civil War layers into the underlying Medieval and Roman (Fig 4, Plates 2-5). Its three fills (1047-9) were silty clays which contained numerous stone, tile, brick and pottery, which comprised Cistercian ware (F404), Midland Yellow ware (F406) and English tin-glazed earthenware (F410) (Blinkhorn, this report). The original purpose of the pit is unknown.

In Trench 2 on the summit of Bury Mount a series of uneven mixed bluish clay layers were added above the 12th century formation layer (2006) to level up the ground and fill the hollow left, either by settlement or robbing (Fig 7). These layers comprised mainly orangey sand and gravel (2011, 2007), but noticeably incorporated layers of blue-grey clay, whether in lumps or spreads and with water-worn cobbles in them (2010 and the uppermost 2003). On top of this deposit lay two small but concentrated scatters of limestone fragments, (2008) and (2009). In both cases substantial pine tree stumps were located above the stones, perhaps suggesting that if they had once been more

extensive, later horticulture had removed the stone except where the presence of the trees had prevented access. The stone was generally unshaped, although some of the pieces had finished edges and one was a cut block of masonry measuring 340mm by 220mm by 110mm in size. The sizes were variable throughout, with the majority comprising small fragmented pieces. The pottery from between the stones was a mixture of post-medieval and Roman residual sherds which indicates that the stone had probably been robbed from a Roman site and deliberately brought to the summit of the Mount. The latest datable sherd, a small piece of a Cologne/Westerwald (F420) jug, was of the 17th or 18th centuries (Blinkhorn, this report).

It is possible that the once-defensible ditch was altered in this period since maps show that a watercourse followed a similar line throughout the 19th century. However, all of the deposits encountered were of just broadly-19th- to 20th-century date and evidence for both the Civil War fortification and subsequent use of the motte remains elusive. Given the size and long period of silting in the motte ditch where found on the south side, a similar period of longevity and gradual infilling may be postulated on the north. The results of the 2006 coring to locate and delineate the motte ditch over much of its circuit can be seen in Figure 4.

4.8 Phase 7: Landscaping and tree planting

The boundary of the Easton Neston estate is the mill stream that forms the north-east boundary of the castle site. This being the case Bury Mount lies outside the estate core, although it was the property of the Earl of Pomfret within the town. It was planted with Scots Pine during the 19th century which has been attributed to the deliberate economic utilisation of waste ground by the earl rather than in improving the vista from the hall (Shotliffe et al 1999, 14). The estate was not visible from the Mount, so that any use as a prospect mound seems very doubtful. Conversely Bury Mount is invisible from the hall and does not form part of the landscape vista since it lies been behind the trees lining the bank of the mill stream and has done so since at least *c*1719 when Peter Tillemans mapped the town (Bailey 1996, no 254). Only the very top of the pine canopy can be seen from the house, adding a final dark shade of green before the skyline, an effect which is aesthetically underwhelming.

The *Archaeological Journal* makes mention of the Mount stating that the summit had been flattened by landscape gardening (Simms 1953, 212). This appears to be false with the levelling up of the summit predating the so-called 'landscape gardening' - in fact nothing more than domestic horticulture. Excavation at the summit revealed garden soils only. Pottery indicated that only layer (2002) dates from the period of the tree-planting, sealing the above-mentioned horizon of the mixed blue clay with its stone scatters. Layer (2002), about 250mm thick, comprised loose dark silty loam much mixed with gravel and clay, and very disturbed by animal burrows and roots.

Trench 3 revealed considerable modification to the north side of the motte. Wrapped around the north slopes is a current spiral path, seemingly impromptu and opportunist, enabling relatively easy access to the summit. However, closer inspection suggests it is not as haphazard as it first seems, since it spirals in such a way that the foot lies on the north-east side of the Mount and the top lies directly opposite on the west side of the motte, rising anti-clockwise. Examining the walkway in the section of Trench 3, it was clear that a large quantity of construction material had been cut from the side of the embankment and cast down the slope (Fig 9). Part of the ditch on the north-west side was filled in prior to the work taking place as the process created overburden at the base of the slope. The downcast material overlay the ditch at the motte foot and comprised mixed orange brown gravel clays (3039, 3040; Fig 7). Datable pottery was absent so the exact origin of the walkway is not certain.

The spiral walkway forms, whether deliberately or inadvertently, a gently-rising terrace upon which a line of trees were planted while a second, near-concentric ring of trees was planted below it. Considering the poor argument for the site as a prospect mound, its position beyond the Easton Neston estate and the likelihood that the walkway already existed, it was a convenient access to facilitate planting. On the summit there is no specific pattern to the planting, probably because many of the current trees are not original. The presence of invasive species (eg sycamore) as well as plantation-types (eg Scots pine) suggests that the spiral path has always continued to be a natural trap for seeds which lodge and germinate, adding to and diluting any earlier deliberate planting.

The watercourse was partially cleaned out on the north side of the Mount, part of a sequence of regular maintenance throughout the late post-medieval period and into the early part of the 20th century. The ditch was 14m wide in Trench 3 and was examined to a depth of 3.6m. Due to continual problems with flooding, and despite running a water pump daily throughout the excavation, it proved dangerous to excavate the deposits by hand in detail. Sufficient investigation was conducted to define their relationships, general constituents and date. All of the deposits within were of the 19th to 20th centuries, including a major channel filled with oil-soaked, garage-derived debris (3046, 3051 and other fills above).

4.9 Phase 8: The Bury Mount cottages

During the 19th century the south slope of the Bury Mount (Trench 1) was cut back further [1042] and a large quantity of material was removed (Fig 5, cover plate). The material was originally part of the motte earthwork construction and to judge by the remaining quarried scarp it would have comprised largely sands and gravels that make up the base of Bury Mount. This process created a series of gravel spreads carrying material of 19th century date, most notably 1003, the base for subsequent foundations and floors. The overall distribution of these gravel spreads was uneven and they sloped downwards towards the south, mirroring the slope of the land and descending towards the edge of the old motte ditch, now lost except as the course of a much smaller successor-stream. It is likely that this process was responsible for removing any evidence of late medieval and early post-medieval activity within Trench 1.

According to the map evidence, a single cottage was built on the southern side of Bury Mount during the mid-19th century, *c*1844-1855. Initially the configuration comprised one cottage and a small ancillary building, probably a wash house. The ancillary building was approximately one third of the size of the cottage and aligned eccentric to it in the yard space. By 1884 this arrangement had changed and the ancillary building had been replaced with a second cottage. A photograph of the cottages, *c*1910, shows the first cottage on the left, Cottage A, and the second on the right, Cottage B (Plate 1). Both cottages remained standing until the mid- 20th century, when the earlier of the two collapsed under duress and was cleared. The author (Jim Brown) recalls that the second cottage survived until the late 1980s when it succumbed to fire and was also demolished.

The initial excavation of Trench 1 was undertaken within the footprint of both cottages and investigated them as part of the late post-medieval archaeology. The cut of a building footprint was visible for Cottage A in the side of the main trench section (Fig 7). It was cut through the topsoil and subsoil to reach a gravel surface below. The footprint was 0.54m deep and stepped up slightly towards the scarp. It was filled with firm dark silty gravel (1003) which provided bedding for a stone wall [1002], aligned north-west to south-east. This was only one of the four sides of a building which measured 7.5m x 3.5m in plan, encompassing a floor of red brick (1001). At the south-east end of the building was a small path of water-worn pebbles and flint set into a bed of clay and gravel. The north-west limestone (gable) end of the building, which still

stood to a height of 1.3m and retained interior lime-plaster, was deliberately dug into the motte side, to which it acted as a retainer (Plate 9). The side walls, much reduced by comparison, were of red brick.

Map evidence showed a small ancillary structure present predating the construction of Cottage B. One or two shallow post-holes may derive from this structure but little else survived (Fig 2). Cottage B was built in brick above the main area of Trench 1. The footings were extremely shallow and were built directly onto the first (motte-construction) gravel horizon they encountered which lay less than 200mm below the contemporary ground level. The brick-built gable end survived to a height of 17 courses at the north-west end, acting as a retaining wall against the motte, like its stone-built neighbour in Cottage A. However, unlike its stone-built neighbour, it appeared not to have been built as a deliberate retainer since a large quantity of topsoil had accumulated in a narrow space behind the wall between Cottage B and Bury Mount itself implying that it was originally possible to pass along the space between the two cottages and turn around behind the gable. This material contained modern pottery. For reasons of Health and Safety this material was not further excavated.

According to the photographic evidence there was a small lean-to extension on the north-east side of the building (Plate 1). In the approximate position of this extension was discovered a 'T'-shaped stone- and brick-built kiln pit [1032] (Plate 10). The pit measured 2.5m long by 2m wide, including the make-up of its walls. The walls were irregularly built, *c*250-300mm thick down to a mortar base, 0.45m deep. The face of the wall was roughly finished and was vitrified from intense heat within the short length of the 'T'. At the time of machining it was observed that the bricks at the junction of the 'T' that made up the corners arose into a low arch. The fill material (1033) comprised friable dark black brown sandy loam with frequent white lime dust, occasional tile, 20th century pottery, clay tobacco pipes, plastic coated metal bed springs, a flower pot and several lumps of coal. The purpose of the kiln remains unknown. That very little scorching was observed might suggest that it was not fired much before it was abandoned.

5 THE FINDS

5.1 Later prehistoric pottery by Jane Timby

A single bodysherd from a handmade vessel decorated with two finger depressions came from layer (1149). The sherd is black in colour and tempered with sparse fragments of coarse limestone. A second bodysherd in a black grog and limestone-tempered fabric came from (1086). This piece was decorated with a defined chevron infilled with impressed dots in a style similar to the decorated wares from Chinnor (Richardson 1951, fig. 7). Both pieces could be early Iron Age in date but are both residual.

5.2 A summary of the Roman pottery by Jane Timby

Excavation resulted in the recovery of 1510 sherds of Roman pottery weighing *c*21 kg. With the exception of a small group of 10 sherds from pit [1152] the entire Roman assemblage was redeposited in post-Roman contexts. Despite this the sherds are in relatively good condition with good surface preservation and relatively unabraded edges. The assemblage was sorted into fabrics and quantified by sherd weight and count. Named or traded wares were identified using the National Roman fabric reference codes (Tomber and Dore 1998). Other wares were treated more generically and coded according to firing colour and the size and type of inclusions. The data was

entered into an MS Excel spreadsheet a copy of which is deposited with the site archive. A summary is provided in Table 1.

The assemblage is chronologically diverse ranging from the 1st to later 4th century with a clear bias towards the later Roman period. Continental imports were limited to samian tableware, Spanish (Baetican) olive oil and Gaulish wine amphorae and North Gaulish mortaria. Samian accounted for 7.4% of the total assemblage by count, typical of a more urban group. Both plain and decorated wares are present.

Regional imports are well represented with products from Dorset, the Lower Nene Valley, Oxfordshire, Hadham and Verulamium region. The Oxfordshire wares, mainly colour-coated wares but with some whiteware and white-slipped ware, include examples of Young (2000) forms C45, C48, C51, C77, C81, C84, C99, C100, M22 and WC7 all typical of the later 3rd-4th centuries. Dorset black burnished ware is mainly confined to examples of jars, plain-rimmed dishes, grooved rim and conical flanged rim bowls. The Lower Nene Valley colour-coated wares form the second largest group at 17.7% by count of the assemblage with beakers, bowls, dishes and jars. Of note amongst these is a dish bearing a post-firing graffiti from (2011). The Verulamium wares include a large rim from an amphora imitating a Gallic type and two mortaria, one stamped.

Of the local wares and those with no defined provenance, the grey sandy wares account for 22.5% of the group, pink grogged ware for 7.3% and shelly wares form 14.7%. The latter group includes a number of late Roman forms dating to the last quarter of the 4th century.

Several of the vessels show evidence of use with sooting or the formation of calcareous deposits. Two vessels have holes drilled through the walls after firing and one of the Samian vessels has a rivet repair hole.

Table 1: Summary of fabric weight and sherd count

	Fabric	**Description**	**Weight (g)**	**Sherds**
unknown	BW	black sandy ware	105	9
	BWF	fine black ware	86	6
	CC	miscellaneous colour-coated ware	3	1
	GREY	grey sandy wares	4074	339
	GROG	grog-tempered ware	197	13
	GRSA	hard sandy ware with grog	1675	55
	GYF	fine grey ware	43	8
	GYLIME	grey ware with limestone	54	3
	LIME	limestone-tempered	36	4
	MORT	miscellaneous mortaria	62	1
	OXID	oxidised sandy ware	1193	108
	OXIDF	fine oxidised ware	77	8
	OXIDGR	grog-tempered oxidised ware	31	2
	OXIDLI	limestone-tempered oxidised ware	54	2
	PNK GT	pink grog tempered ware	2795	110
	SALI	sandy with limestone	21	3
	SHELL	shell ware including ROB SH	3115	222
	WSOXID	white-slipped oxidised ware	72	29
	WSOXLI	white-slipped oxid. Limestone ware	11	1
	WW	miscellaneous white sandy ware	143	5
	WWGR	grog-tempered whiteware	104	3

TOTAL			**21165**	**1510**

Pit [1152]

The small group of 10 sherds from pit [1152] comprised two mortaria, one from North Gaul, the other from the Verulamium region, two sherds of grey sandy ware and three sherds of grog-tempered whiteware. The Verulamium mortarium had part of a potter's stamp comprising at least two lines but damaged and difficult to interpret. A date in the first half of the 2nd century is likely for this group. The post-Roman layers sealing the Roman features (1149, 1150, 1099 and 1102) contained a mixture of 1st to late 3rd/4th century sherds but no definite late 4th-century pieces.

The assemblage recovered from Bury Mount, although almost all residual, provides a typical cross section of the range of wares already documented from other sites in and around Towcester. Indeed nearly all the wares can be paralleled in the large published assemblage from the Alchester Road suburb to the southwest of the town, which neatly demonstrates the typical pottery profile throughout the Roman period for Towcester (Brown *et al*. 1983).

5.3 The Saxon, medieval and later pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 82 sherds with a total weight of 1,944g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 0.61. It comprised a range of ceramic types which suggests that there was activity at the site from the late Saxon period onwards.

The assemblage is most notable for a pottery type which has previously been virtually unknown in the county (CTS fabric F316). From the results of this excavation, and another near to Towcester, it appears that it is an early medieval coarseware which was manufactured in or close to the town. The assemblage is somewhat scattered and fragmentary. There was just a single sherd of pottery which may date to the late Saxon period.

Analytical Methodology

The pottery was initially bulk-sorted and recorded on a computer using DBase IV software. The material from each context was recorded by number and weight of sherds per fabric type, with featureless body sherds of the same fabric counted, weighed and recorded as one database entry. Feature sherds such as rims, bases and lugs were recorded, with individual codes used for the various types. Decorated sherds were similarly treated. In the case of the rimsherds, the form, diameter in millimetres and the percentage remaining of the original complete circumference were all recorded. The resultant figure was totalled for each fabric type to obtain the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE).

The terminology used is that defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms (MPRG 1998). It was conducted to the minimum standards laid out in the Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG2001). All the statistical analyses were carried out using a Dbase package written by the author, which interrogated the original or subsidiary databases, with some of the final calculations made with an electronic calculator. All statistical analyses were carried out to the minimum standards suggested by Orton (1998-9, 135-7).

Fabric

The late Saxon and medieval pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots ware, AD1000-1200. 3 sherds, 14g, EVE = 0.02.
F205: Stamford ware, AD850-1150. 1 sherd, 9g, EVE = 0.06.
F330: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 6 sherds, 82g, EVE= 0.11.
F316: Calcareous Ironstone Coarseware., ?AD1100-1400. 11 sherds, 351g, EVE = 0.25.
F329: Potterspury ware, AD1275-1600. 2 sherds, 85g, EVE = 0.17.
F346: Bourne 'D' ware, *c*. AD1450-1637. 2 sherds, 88g, EVE = 0.
F401: Late Medieval Oxidized ware, ?AD1450-?1550. 1 sherd, 14g, EVE = 0.
F404: Cistercian ware, AD1470-1700. 5 sherds, 21g, EVE = 0.
F406: Midland Yellow wares, AD1550-1700. 1 sherd, 17g.
F407: Red Earthenwares, AD1550+. 5 sherds, 151g.
F410: English tin-glazed earthenwares, 17th-18th centuries. 5 sherds, 278g.
F411: Midland Blackware, 1550-1700. 2 sherds, 80g.
F413: Staffs. Manganese Glazed wares, late 17th-18th centuries. 3 sherds, 79g.
F420: Cologne/Westerweald ware, 17th-18th centuries. 1 sherd, 12g.
F429: White Salt-glazed Stoneware, AD1720-1780. 1 sherd, 68g.
F1000: Misc. 19th century wares. 33 sherds, 596g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The bulk of the assemblage comprises fabric types which are typical of sites of the period in this area of the county, although some of the medieval pottery is a little unusual. The two sherds of late medieval Bourne 'D' ware, a type common in southern Lincolnshire, west Norfolk and north Cambridgeshire, are very rare in the county, and are previously unknown from central Northamptonshire.

Perhaps the most interesting trait, for a purely ceramic aspect, is the presence of relatively large quantities of fabric F316, the Calcareous Ironstone Coarseware. Previous excavations in the county have produced extremely small amounts of this material. The County type-series notes just a single find from Brackley. Here, it is the dominant early medieval ware type, being even more common than Shelly Coarseware (F330), which is usually the most common early medieval pottery type at early medieval sites in the central and eastern area of Northamptonshire. There is little doubt that the fabric is broadly contemporary with Shelly Coarseware, as it occurs in deposits which produced both pottery types and no later material. From a purely typological point of view, the jar with the thumb-frilled rim is absolutely typical of early medieval pottery (Fig 8, BY1). In addition, a single strap handle with stabbed and slashed decoration is very similar to those found on the Shelly Coarseware jugs of the 12th century (Fig 8, BY3). The technology of manufacture also parallels the production of Shelly Coarseware. The rims and upper areas of the body have turning grooves on the inner surface, whilst sherds from the lower body and base do not, showing that the vessels were almost certainly coil-built and then finished on a turntable, or 'slow-wheel'. This is a typical early medieval production technique. The petrology of the ware, containing quartz sand with variable quantities of limestone and ironstone is a reflection of the geology of the region, and a combination seen in a number of different early medieval coarsewares from Brackley (CTS fabrics F303, F304), and also in pottery produced nearby in Silverstone.

Recent excavations at Sewardsley Priory (Showsley), a few kilometres to the north of Towcester, have also produced a small assemblage of this material from 12th century contexts, along with Shelly Coarsewares (Blinkhorn 2007). The fact that it occurs in quantity at this site, and at Showsley, with no others represented in the county suggests

strongly that it is of local origin and was produced in or near Towcester. Further finds of the material and evidence of production in the town itself, will enhance the understanding of the ware, but it is potentially an important addition to the picture of ceramic production and use in early medieval Northamptonshire.

Chronology and Discussion

Each context-specific group was given a seriated phase date, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

The post-Roman pottery assemblage is somewhat meagre, comprising just 29 sherds, and of these, just one dates to the late Saxon period. The sherd in question is a Stamford ware jar rim from the buried soil (1101) (Fig 8, BY4). The rim in question is fairly typical of the earlier products of the Stamford ware industry, being virtually identical to Kilmurry's vessel form 3, no.2 (Kilmurry 1980, fig 49). It is a long-lived form, being common from the late 9th to the late 11th century (ibid. fig 29). It is possible therefore that the sherd could date to any time between the establishment of the *burh* at Towcester (AD 1014) to the reorganisation of the site in advance of the construction of the motte.

The bulk of the assemblage (20 sherds) dates to the 12th century and represents the main period of medieval activity at the site. It is unremarkable, other than the fabric types present. All the rims were from jars, with the only evidence of any other vessel type being the jug handle (Fig 8, BY3). This pattern of vessel occurrence is typical of the 12th century in the region.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the entire post-conquest pottery assemblage is the complete lack of glazed jugs, a staple of the high medieval period. Only two sherds of pottery represent the period 1200-1450, both Potterspury ware (F329) bowl rims from (1071), the uppermost layer of the motte ditch.

Very little pottery dates to around the period of the Civil War and none can be said with certainty to date to the second half of the 17th century due to the broad period of production. Two sherds of pottery can possibly be dated more specifically to the 17th century, a large fragment of a candlestick in English tin-glazed earthenware (F410) from context (1047), and a small piece of a Cologne/Westerwald (F420) jug from context (2008). In the case of the former, it is entirely undecorated, suggesting that it is more likely to be of 18th century date. The latter could have been made at any point in the 17th or 18th centuries.

Table 2: RSP phases and major defining wares for the post-Roman ceramics of Northamptonshire, cAD850-1550

RSP Phase	Defining Wares	Chronology
LS1	T1(4) St. Neots ware	*c*AD850-900
LS2	T1(3) St. Neots ware, Stamford ware, Northampton ware	*c*AD900-975
LS3	Cotswolds-type Oolitic ware	*c*AD975-1000
LS4	T1(2) St. Neots ware	*c*AD1000-1100
Ph0	Shelly coarsewares, Sandy coarsewares	*c*AD1100-1150
Ph1	Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware	*c*AD1150-1225
Ph2/0	Lyveden/Stanion 'B', Brill/Boarstall ware	*c*AD1225-1250

RSP Phase	Defining Wares	Chronology
Ph2/2	Potterspury ware	*c*AD1250-1300
Ph3/2	Raunds-type reduced ware	*c*AD1300-1400
Ph4	Lyveden/Stanion 'D' ware	*c*AD1400-1450
Ph5	Late medieval oxidized ware	*c*AD1450-1500

Table 3: Pottery occurrence per ceramic phase, all post-Roman fabrics

Phase	Number of sherds	Wieght of sherds	EVE
LS1	0	0	0
LS2	1	9	0.06
LS3	0	0	0
LS4	0	0	0
Ph0	20	447	0.38
Ph1	0	0	0
Ph2/0	0	0	0
Ph2/2	2	85	0.17
Ph3/2	0	0	0
Ph4	0	0	0
Ph5	6	94	3
Total	29	635	3.61

Illustrations (Fig 8)

1: F316 Rimsherd from a large jar with thumb-frilled rim. Greyish buff fabric with a grey core with light sooting on the shoulder. Context (2014), motte construction layer.

2: F316 Jar rim. Reddish-orange fabric with a grey core. Patches of sooting on the edge of the rim bead. Context (1073), buried soil layer.

3: F316 Jug handle. Reddish-orange fabric with a grey core, slashed edges and stabbing in the centre of the thumb-groove. Context (1073), buried soil layer.

4: F205 Jar rim. Brownish-grey fabric with a dark grey core. Extensively sooted. Context (1101), buried soil layer.

5.4 The ceramic building materials by Pat Chapman

This assemblage of 298 tile fragments weighs 26.673kg. About a third of the tiles have specific characteristics which can be dated to the Roman or medieval periods, while the remaining two thirds comprise body sherds that are probably from Roman *tegulae* roof tile and *pilae* or medieval bricks. As the Roman and medieval tilers were using the same local resources the body sherds of what could be called brick, are difficult to date to either period. The assemblage is very fragmented and abraded, with many surfaces missing. As the Roman tiles are residual within the medieval castle mound their report is presented as a brief description.

Roman tile

There are 64 identifiable Roman fragments, nearly a quarter of the assemblage. The fragments comprise 36 *tegulae,* 10 *imbrices*, 16 flue tile and two definite *pilae* bricks. Nineteen of the *tegulae* and one *imbrex* have a maroon wash over the upper surface, two *tegulae* have a black wash. One brick-type tile has black slip on one surface. This is a typical feature of Roman roof tile in this area, such as those from the villas at Wootton,

Piddington and Croughton (Chapman et al 2005; Ward 1999; Dawson forthcoming). A few of the *tegulae* flange fragments have remnants of the cutaway that links the tiles together. A few tile body sherds are made in a shelly ware fabric, another characteristic of the area, otherwise the tiles are in a range of mainly sandy or softer, finer fabrics, fired to varying degrees.

Medieval roof tile

There are 32 fragments of tile, weighing 1.348kg, which can be reasonably dated to the medieval period. The main characteristic is the thickness of the tile, which varies between 10mm to 19mm, but is typically 15mm.

There are a variety of fabrics ranging from fine and slightly sandy with fine crushed shell to coarse and sandy with some larger inclusions of grog (re-cycled fired clay) or gravel and fired to brown, pale red brown, red brown or dark red and one, from fill (1049), is a buff colour.

Three tile fragments, from fill (1049), have distinctive features. One fragment, in an orange-brown coarse sandy fabric, is a corner with the remains of a peghole. Two other fragments have green glaze, one very dark green almost black, the other overfired, both in a sandy red fabric.

Table 4: Quantification of medieval roof tile

Context/feature	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
1013	5	155	
1023	2	81	
1049	9	482	2 glazed, 1 peghole fragment, 1 pale buff
1071	2	54	
1101	9	289	
1147	1	47	
1149	1	89	
2012	1	31	
2014	1	83	
2018	1	37	
Totals	**32**	**1348**	

Brick

The thicker fragments are between 25mm and 45mm thick, but usually between 35mm and 40mm. It is most likely that most of these are Roman, some are inconclusive.

From layer (1013) there are three fragments made from a pale pink-brown fabric with creamy streaks and grog inclusions, not well mixed, at least 50mm thick, but with no complete thickness to measure. One fragment from layer (1101) was made from an orange red medium sandy fabric 35mm thick. Two fragments come from layer (2003), one 35mm thick in a dark red coarse sandy fabric and the other 40mm thick in a coarse red brown fabric with a grey reduced core. A large brick remnant, minimum measurements 190mm by 105mm and 30-50mm thick from edge to inside, was black and partially vitrified but with white to buff surfaces, partially covered with white mortar/cement. The thickness of these fragments suggests a Roman origin, but it is not conclusive.

Conclusion

The majority of this tile assemblage is Roman, but residual, and a small proportion may be of much later origin.

5.5 The other finds

by Tora Hylton

Introduction

The excavations produced a small group of 56 individually recorded small finds dating from the Roman to the post-medieval period. The largest number of finds (47) was recovered from Trench 1, while much smaller numbers (9) were located in Trenches 2 and 3. The assemblage is represented by residual Roman material and a small group of post-medieval finds which reflect dress, trade, and the Mount's later use as a garden. In addition there is a small group of clay-tobacco-pipes.

The Roman Finds

Twenty-two small finds date to the Roman period. All were recovered from Trench 1 and they include three coins and nineteen small fragments of glass. While a small number of finds were recovered from post-medieval deposits, the majority of the finds identified as Roman were recovered from the accumulated material of the sub-Roman period (1102, 1149) and Saxo-Norman soil horizons (1013, 1101).

The coins (identified by Ian Meadows)

The coins date to the 4th century. All are residual in later contexts.

1013: AD c364-75, AE issue of SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE type. Obverse: illegible. Reverse: preserves part of the mint mark of Arles Officina II indicating this coin was issued for either Valens or Valentinian I

1013: ADc367-75, AE3 issue of Valens with a SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE reverse. This coin was minted at Lugdunum by the second officina (mint mark LVGP)

1071: c3rd/4th century, AE3/4 flan. Obverse: illegible. Reverse: illegible

Glass

There are 27 individually or group recorded fragments of Roman glass, much of it recovered from deposits overlying the Roman features. The assemblage comprises mainly small body sherds, exhibiting few diagnostic features and measuring no more than 45 x 20mm. A range of colours is represented and includes, two undiagnostic sherds of coloured glass, dark blue and yellow/brown, which date to the 1st and 2nd centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 15); seventeen sherds of blue/green glass and eight sherds of colourless glass, which was in use from the 1st -4th centuries (Ibid 15). Diagnostic forms in blue/green glass include two unguent vessels, one with an uneven sheared rim and probably dating to the c. 1st century and one with an out-turned rim, and part of a tubular rim, probably representing a bowl or similar type vessel.

Medieval and Post-medieval finds

The only find of medieval date is a residual copper alloy lace chape, recovered from the upper fill of the defensive ditch (1071). The chape is tapered with an edge-to-edge seam and a vestige of the small circular perforation, which would have attached the chape to the lace, is just visible. It may be paralleled by Oakleys Type 1 from St Peter's Street, Northampton (1979, 254, 281).

Finds of post-medieval date are represented by personal items which may have been casually lost, there are costume fittings, jewellery, two lead seals, a small group of clay tobacco-pipes.

Finds associated with dress include, a trapezoid buckle chape with internal double spike and pitchfork tongue, exclusively for use with shoes in the mid 18th century (1720-1770), a Victorian two-piece livery button, marked with the letters G P surmounted by a crown, which probably originated from a Post Office uniform; and a possible ?cufflink. In addition an annular finger ring with a plain narrow band and D-shaped cross-section was recovered from Trench 2.

Of interest is the presence of two complete lead seals. Both are examples of four disc seals which came into use at the end of the 16th century. They were recovered from the upper fill of the defensive ditch (1008). The seals have been cleaned by David Parish, Conservator for Buckinghamshire County Museum Service and are now in the process of being reported on by Dr Geoff Egan from the Museum of London. Such seals often referred to as wool bale seals, they are generally related to the textile trade and these particular examples would have been attached officially to the merchandise after excise duties had been paid. Each seal is stamped with the portrait of the reigning monarch and the excise duty paid.

Seal one (Plate 11)
Outer disc 1 - Plain
Inner disc 2 - Bust of George 1st within a milled ring
Inner disc 3 - Lion rampant flanked by 2 and a 1/2 within a milled ring.
Outer disc 4 - GR with crown above

Seal 2 (Plate12)
Outer disc 1 - Plain
Inner disc 2 - Bust of Anne with legend: FIDEY DENFEN (Defender of the Faith) within a milled ring
Inner disc 3 - Crown with number 1 to the left within a milled ring
Outer disc 4 - Initials AR (linked) with crown above.

Finally two handles from glass domes provide evidence for the use of garden glassware during the latter stages of post-medieval occupation. Such glass domes or bell glasses were used to protect fragile plants and seedlings. They are manufactured from green glass, similar to that used for 18th century wine bottles. The handles are distinctive; they are crudely manufactured, heavy, sub-circular knobs, which have been created by trailing molten glass to form a raised circular knob with centrally placed recess, resembling a doughnut; for a discussion see Noel Hume 1991 (225- 226).

Clay tobacco-pipes

A total of 24 clay tobacco-pipe fragments were recovered, comprising nine pipe-bowls and fifteen stem fragments, which together span the period c.1640- c. mid 19th century. Eight bowls are sufficiently complete to enable dating, following the simplified typology using bowl and foot/spur forms (Oswald 1975, 37-41).

Chronologically the earliest datable bowls are represented by Type G17, which date to c.1640-1670; a rouletted example was recovered from the upper fill of the defensive ditch (1008) and a very abraded example was recovered from the summit of Bury Mount (2003).

Five bowls are decorated; all are examples of well made Type G24 bowls which date to c. 1810-1840. All are ornamented with relief-moulded decoration in a form of repeating leaves along the joining seams of the bowl, a motif in use throughout the country and occurring on bowls dated to 1820-60 (Mann 1977, 23). One bowl combines the foliate motif with vertical fluting. Four of the bowls were recovered from the fill of a T-shaped

stone and brick lined kiln pit (1033). One other bowl is in the form of a hand holding a vessel.

Three bowls and one spur fragment preserve makers marks in relief on the spur, although in some cases the moulding is poor, it is possible to determine that they are all are marked with the initials 'J H'. Although it has not been possible to identify the name of the maker, Robert Moore has recorded that seven other examples marked with the same initials have been recovered from the Towcester area (1980, 30), suggesting that manufacture was based in the area.

6 THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

6.1 Seeds from the motte ditch and buried soils by Wallis Lord and Karen Deighton

Five samples were taken from the motte for processing in order to identify macroscopic plant remains. Three of these were bulk soil samples, (samples 1, 2, and 3) and two were column samples taken in Kubiena boxes (samples 4 and 5). The column samples were subsequently discarded due to the context from which they derived becoming known to have accumulated over 600 years and to contain large quantities of residual Roman material. Sample 1 was of 20 litres and seeds within were preserved by water-logging. Samples 2 and 3 were each of 40 litres and seeds were preserved by burning.

Methods

Sample 1, outwardly showing no signs of water-logging, was at first sieved using standard techniques (see below), only then demonstrating that it was in fact waterlogged. Therefore the collected flot was immediately placed in plastic bags to prevent drying out. Then a sub-sample of c.1l was analyzed under a binocular microscope. The sorted seeds were then identified using a variety of published sources.

Samples 2 and 3 were processed by placing the soil onto a 500 micron flot sieve in a modified siraf tank, and then were agitated with water. Any environmental fraction floated off into a 500 micron mesh. This fraction was then dried and sorted under a binocular microscope with a magnification of up to x 20.

Results

The seeds recovered in Sample 1 were well preserved by water-logging, with no fragmentation. Both samples 2 and 3 had large numbers and a variety of charred seeds of cultivated and wild species within them, but amongst which numerous cereal grains were very fragmented, making clear identification impossible. No chaff was present in any of the samples.

All of the wild plant species were classifiable and a proportion of the cereal grains were identified, as follows:

Table 5: Seeds by context and taxa

Sample Number	**1**	**2**	**3**
Context	(1081)	(1013)	(1101)
Context Type	Motte ditch fill	Buried soil	Buried soil
Volume	20	40	40
Barley *Hordeum vulgare*		8	1
Einkorn *Triticum monococcum*		1	3
Emmer *Triciticum dicoccon Schrank*		1	1
Possible Emmer *cf triticum dicoccon Schrank*			2
Oat		7	

Avena sativa			
Oat/Rye *Avena/Secale*		4	
Rye *Secale cereale*		1	
Spelt *Tricticum spelta*		1	
Bread Wheat *Triticum aestivum*		13	3
Wheat/Barley *Triticum/Hordeum*			1
Cereal Indet. *Cerealea*		187	39
Total Cereal	**0**	**223**	**50**
Common Pea *Pisum setivum*		2	
Vicia sp. Vetch indet.		4	
Wild Turnip Family brassica sp.		1	2
Fat Hen *Chenopodium album*		1	1
Stinking Mayweed *Anthemis cotula*		19	10
Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*		1	
Possible Rush cf Juncus sp.			9
Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*			1
Chess *Bromus secalinus*		3	
Poa sp. Grass indet			1
Buttercup Ranunculus sp.	20		1
Sheep Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*	4	33	2
Bramble Rubus fruticosus	20		
Elder *Sambucus nigra*		2	
Possible Foxglove *cf Digitalis Purperea*			1
Total Number of Seeds	**44**	**289**	**78**
Total Seeds per Litre	2.2	7.2	1.8

Discussion

In Sample 1, the presence of buttercup demonstrates damp/marshy ground. Since other sources indicate a wet motte ditch, this is in full accord.

Pottery from the context from which Sample 2 derives includes residual Roman material so may include similarly residual seeds from the Roman landscape mixed with the Saxo-Norman. Therefore this context is contaminated, making any environmental data collected from this layer comparatively less informative.

By contrast Sample 3 was from a context which accumulated predominantly in the Saxo-Norman period without much disturbance.

The larger numbers of the wild plants, Bramble and Stinking Mayweed, may give some indication of the type of landscape close by, perhaps involving waste ground or hedgerow. The relatively small numbers involved makes further speculation inadvisable.

It was not possible to determine a dominant cereal type due to the poor preservation. Barley and bread-wheat seem the most common cereal type found. An absence of chaff

in the samples indicates that no cereal-processing is represented here. The wild species are almost all derived from cultivated land.

Interpretation

Sample 1 is most likely demonstrative of material from the local environment blown or washed into a ditch, which was already or became water-logged, thus preserving the seeds.

Sample 3's environmental data demonstrates that the seeds are most likely refuse of preparations for storage or consumption of cereals. The seeds recovered have been burnt; how they were burnt is not clear. They may be refuse from bread-making – it is useful to remember there was formerly a water-mill nearby so it is likely that the grinding of fully winnowed grain would have been carried out in bulk close to the site. The lack of chaff suggests the wheat is not derived from burning of animal bedding or waste from thatching.

6.2 Wood from the motte ditch

by Rowena Gale

Introduction

A sample containing numerous short fragments of twigs and narrow round-wood was received for species identification. The fragments were pieces of desiccated wood.

Methods

The fragments measured less than 10mm in diameter and had undergone considerable structural collapse. These were prepared using standard methods (Gale and Cutler 2000). Anatomical structures were examined using incident light on a Nikon Labophot-2 compound microscope at magnifications of up to x400 and matched to prepared reference slides of modern wood. When possible, the maturity of the wood was assessed (ie heartwood/sapwood) and stem diameters recorded.

Results

(Context 1081; sample 1)

32 fragments - *cf*. willow (*Salix* sp.) or poplar (*Populus* sp). Owing to its poor condition the wood structure was difficult to examine and it is not possible to provide a positive identification.

8 fragments – *Prunus* sp. In mature wood differences between the ray cells usually enable *P. avium* (cherry) to be distinguished from blackthorn (*P. spinosa*), but with juvenile wood (as in this instance) these features can be unreliable. Thus, although the structure tends to be more consistent with that of cherry, it is not possible to rule out *P. spinosa* (blackthorn).

7 CONCLUSIONS AND SOME PARAMETERS FOR FUTURE WORK

The excavations have indicated that the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bury Mount is not just a medieval motte from a motte-and-bailey castle. It is one part of the long-lived occupation of this plot which comprises a number of distinct phases.

Roman

The plot contains widespread but (on the basis of these excavations) indistinct Roman occupation. No buildings of this date were located although a couple of structural features were partly exposed at the base of the excavations. Almost all Roman pottery

and finds were residual in later contexts and so it is likely that only small islands of such dated material lies undisturbed in the vicinity.

Early to middle- Saxon and late Saxon to early Norman
This period is marked by the continuous build-up of cultivable soils, into which were dug some substantial trenches or ditches. Their use is not known. Proximity to wet, low-lying ground (but presumably before the mill-stream) may suggest they enjoyed a drainage function. Alternatively they could have been cultivation trenches. Although the soils were intensely compacted by later construction work on the site, they were of notable thickness and do suggest a very long period of accumulation. The very small number of features and the scarcity of finds over this period, as much as 600 years, do suggest that any occupation here was very sparse. It may have been marginal to a settlement which had contracted considerably at the end of the Roman period.

Early Norman
Soon after the Norman Conquest a substantial stone structure was erected on the site. It appears to have been standing long enough to warrant (for whatever reason) alteration in its alignment and construction. At its northern end it remained beyond excavation, while its southern end was truncated by a subsequent ditch. It is predicted to survive wherever it lies beneath the later motte. No floors were identified in the excavation but the interior of the structure is likely to be on the eastern, unexcavated side. It is possible that it represents part of an immediately post-Conquest manor house.

Later Norman
During the 12th century a motte was constructed which comprised successive dumps of soils and gravels, probably dug from very close by (likely to be from within Towcester) which were embanked in a distinctive 'doughnut-shaped' ring, each deposit tipping in towards the centre. The centre, resembling a solid funnel, was filled in using similar materials, but noticeably richer in clay-content. The tip lines were clearly distinguished in every section cut and the full extent of the motte plan can be reconstructed on the ground from the basal layers which survived throughout the excavation. These layers had abutted and covered over the earlier Norman structure. The motte had an original base diameter of *c60*m. The surviving summit diameter is 30m.

It is now certain that the motte belongs to the predominant, layered construction-type which is famously, albeit schematically, depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry. It does not belong to the much rarer revetment-type as excavated at South Mimms.

Pottery suggests a construction date for the motte in the mid-12th century. The best candidate for this therefore is the period known as The Anarchy, between c1135 and 1154, most likely in the late 1130s or early 1140s. It is just possible (though much less likely) that it might date as late as 1173 and the short civil war of that year, known as The War of Earl Hugh (Hugh Kevelioc, 4th Earl of Chester).

There was no contemporary or later occupation of the motte-top.

Around the base of the motte lay a substantial defensive ditch. Its digging has truncated earlier deposits and features (such as the early Norman wall) where they extend out from under the motte footprint. No basal silts were identified in the ditch, as excavation was not possible across or down to its full extent. Thus its base and its outer edge are unclear.

In the foregoing 2006 excavations an outlying 4m-wide ditch was located north of the motte within the area now open ground. It contained an almost complete pottery vessel of St Neot's-type ware, in circulation c1000-1200. The ditch was relatively shallow and flat bottomed (boreholes 7, 33, 34). The series of radial cores also suggest that it is

discontinuous since further borehole on its projected eastward line did not locate it. The 2006 evaluation trench in which this ditch was located has in the present works been physically linked to the current Trench 3. Since the 2006 evaluation is as yet incomplete, the data is not presented here but will be incorporated in an eventual report for publication.

Later medieval and early post-medieval

No occupation of this date was present in the excavations but this period is represented in the gradual silting and deliberate infilling of the motte ditch, exposed in two places. In neither place was the ditch bottomed since it was so wet as to make excavation within the current remit unsafe. Restricted sampling has confirmed that for some time at the end of the medieval period and early post-medieval period, the motte, called in 1549 Bery-orchard, was surrounded by cherry trees, the archaeology confirming the documentation of 1610.

The motte ditch is relatively deeply buried and continues to be exceedingly wet.

The coring work done by Archaeoscape from Royal Holloway college for the 2006 works, indicates that the original motte ditch was more extensive than the mapped 19th-century watercourse would suggest. In fact it was probably a full, encircling ditch and was found right around the eastern side of the motte in the boreholes where the organic sediments filling it were as distinctive as where the 2007 works uncovered them to the south and north.

Later post-medieval and modern

During the Civil War (1642-9) Bury Mount may have been occupied for the Royalists, as documents have been purported to suggest (although the identification of a mount as a gun emplacement with [Bury] Mount is not beyond doubt). It is clear, however, that although (as yet incomplete) fieldwork north of the mount in 2006, did recover some lead musket-balls and a contemporary Civil War coin, there is no archaeological evidence of the motte itself being utilised in the way previously suggested. There are no remains present associated with a gun emplacement or any other contemporary occupation.

In the 19th century the site became associated with a cottage and a barn which, with alterations, stood until recent memory; they were latterly the home of a local smallholder and character, Tommy Roscoe, whose neat and tidy gardens all over the motte were a notable part of the townscape. They are known from a photograph of about 1910. The excavations have shown that although the cottages were benched into the slope of the motte on its south-west quarter, they did not cause damage down to the motte

During the same century the Earl of Pomfret carried out a programme of tree-planting on top of the motte (Scots Pines). He may have modified the top of the motte in preparation for this but this is not certain. It is clear, however, that an absence of archaeological evidence for earlier occupation of the motte-top (whether medieval or Civil-War), may be closely related to any preparatory earth-moving carried out before the planting of the trees. Some of these trees still stand, or at least seeded successors, but they are very few compared with the many which were depicted in the photograph of c1910, in which perhaps 40 separate trunks can be discerned. In connection with this work there appears to have been a path cut, winding up to the motte top from the east to the west.

Some motte material, probably at this period, has been dug away from the east side of Bury Mount, probably for the value of its gravel content.

Future works to the motte
In future works the following details will be pertinent:

The former footprint of the motte is now known to a considerable extent. Within this sub-circular, 60m-diameter footprint, a considerable thickness of motte construction deposits survive intact as the base of the earthwork. They have been laid down over the pre-existing ground surface which lies above an apparently intact Roman to early Norman sequence of archaeological deposits. The Scheduled Ancient Monument can thus be said to be truly mult-period.

The up-standing earthwork of the Norman motte is today surmounted by modern soil-cover, suggested by excavation to be of little or no archaeological significance including:

- Thickness of soil-cover over significant archaeology on the motte-top: 600mm
- Thickness of soil cover on the unmodified motte sides/slopes (north, west and south): 200mm
- Thickness of soil cover on the motte side (east): Modifed by extraction. Likely to vary greatly according to gradient.

These figures show the evaluated thicknesses of non-significant, mainly 19th-century and recent deposits which overlie the buried archaeology on and around the majority of the motte earthwork. On the motte top and motte sides these are relatively consistent. Around the edges at the foot of the motte, thicknesses may vary more, although they are likely to be thickest where the slope is steepest, the gradient having been instrumental in the amount of hill-wash and other accumulation toward the foot of the motte. Where the slippage of the motte sides has been greatest (seemingly around the north and north-east of the motte), the motte side seems to have actually overflowed and masked the inner edge of the former motte ditch. The situation in relation to the motte and ditch to the north-west, closest to Moat Lane, is unknown since it lies outside the scope of the current works.

Forming a concentric arc around the tail of the motte earthwork lies the buried motte ditch. This survived in part through the 19th-century when it was partly (but only partly) reused as a minor watercourse which became increasingly choked. Nothing is visible of the ditch as an earthwork. A short length of the successor-watercourse can be discerned to the south of the motte. Coring has identified the ditch at numerous places around the motte, its identification confirmed in excavation. It benefits from the coverage of former motte-slump material and deliberate modern infilling, covering it with material of little archaeological significance.

- Thickness of soil cover over the motte ditch (north): 1.7m (known from excavation)
- Thickness of soil cover over the motte ditch (east): 1.6m (known from cores)
- Thickness of soil cover over the motte ditch (south): 0.9m (known from excavation)
- Thickness of soil cover over the motte ditch (west): Untested

The motte ditch itself represents a major, environmentally rich set of Norman, later medieval and early post-medieval castle deposits. Within that ditch are likely to be sealed, anaerobically-preserved and environmentally-rich deposits which relate to the land cleared in the 12th century to construct the castle, occupation debris related to the castle, its decline and the greater, longer-term stability of the documented manor to the south which replaced the castle, which itself fell into decay from the later 14th century. Its artefact-content is unknown, but may well include rubbish from the castle occupation

and may include remnants of a bridge from the castle baileys, to either south or north. The exact line of the ditch on the motte's western side is unknown.

- Motte ditch, buried dimensions (north): 10m+ wide x 2.6m deep (coring)
  (east): 10m+ wide x 2.8m deep (coring)
  (south): 10m+ wide x 2.0m deep (coring)
  (west): Untested

The ditch location, suggested by coring in 2006, was confirmed in excavation to North and south of the motte.

From combining the figures above, it can be seen that the base of the ditch is buried up to 4.4m below the modern ground surface. Constant water ingress in volumes a proprietary petrol-driven pump could barely cope with was encountered (in August) at little more than 1m below the modern turf. Any archaeological excavation within this ditch would be a major engineering exercise.

Publication

It is proposed to place a summary of this report in the county journal 'Northamptonshire Archaeology', also incorporating the results of the 2006 evaluation when the remaining trenches there have been dug. The article will concentrate upon the castle.

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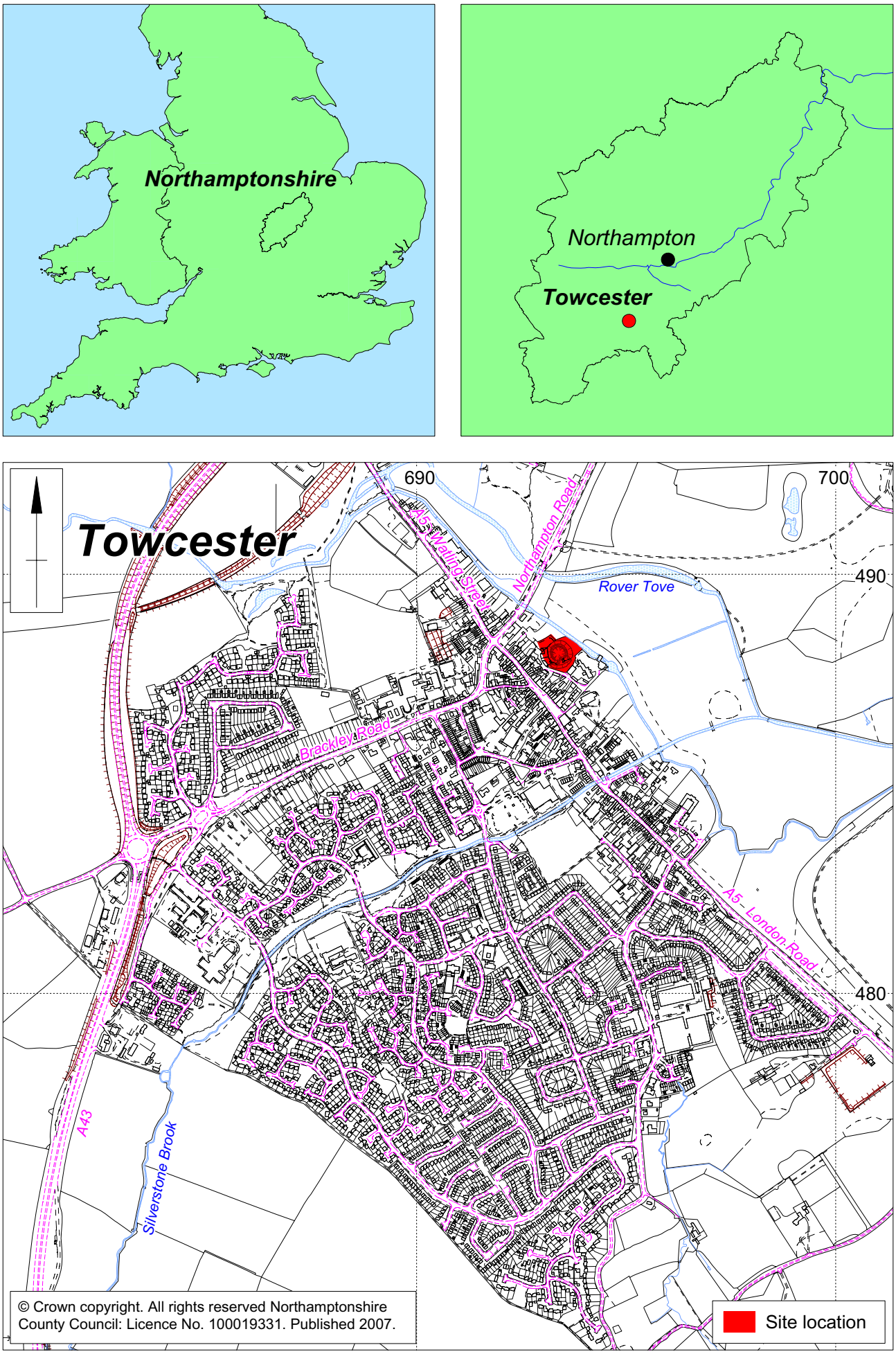

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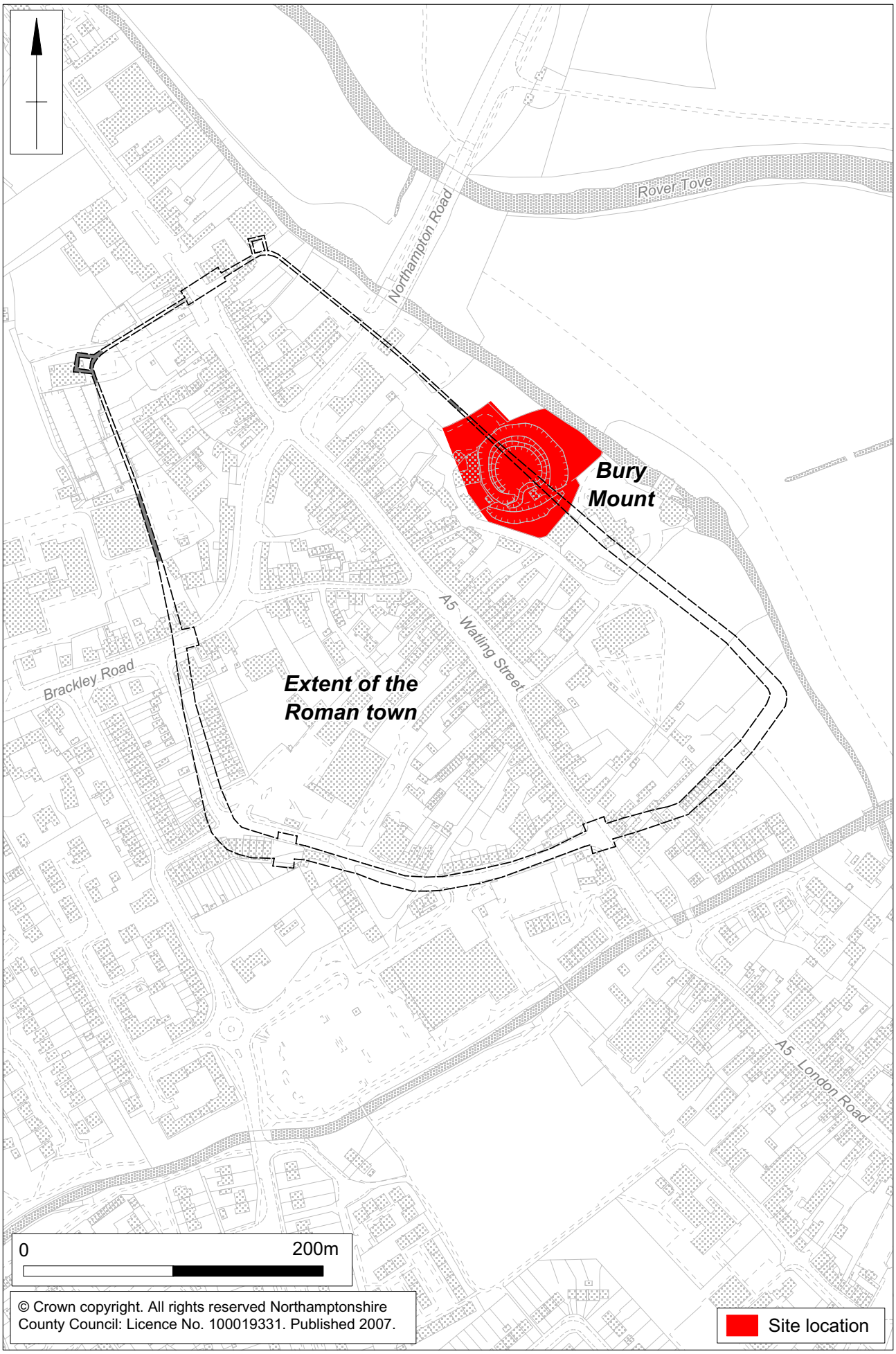
Site location Fig 1



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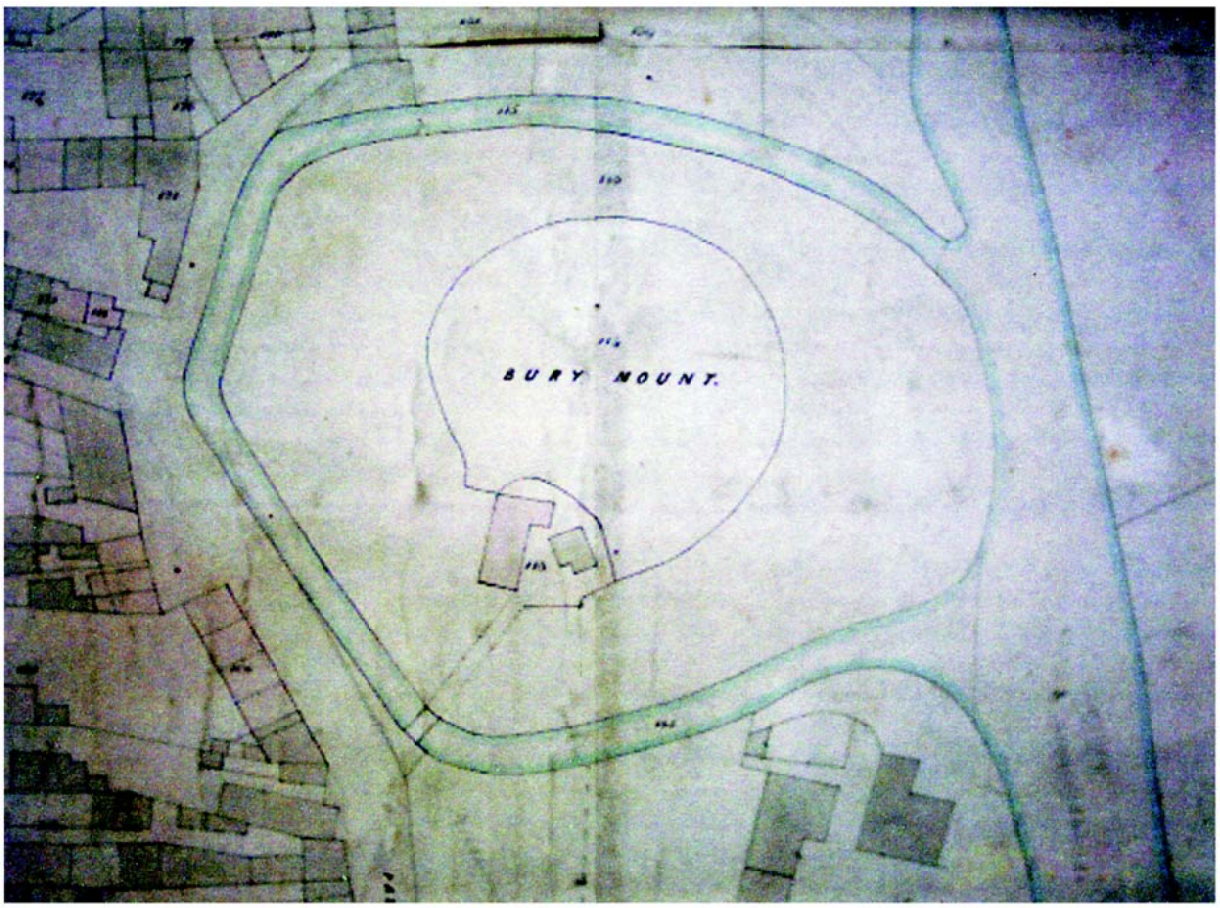
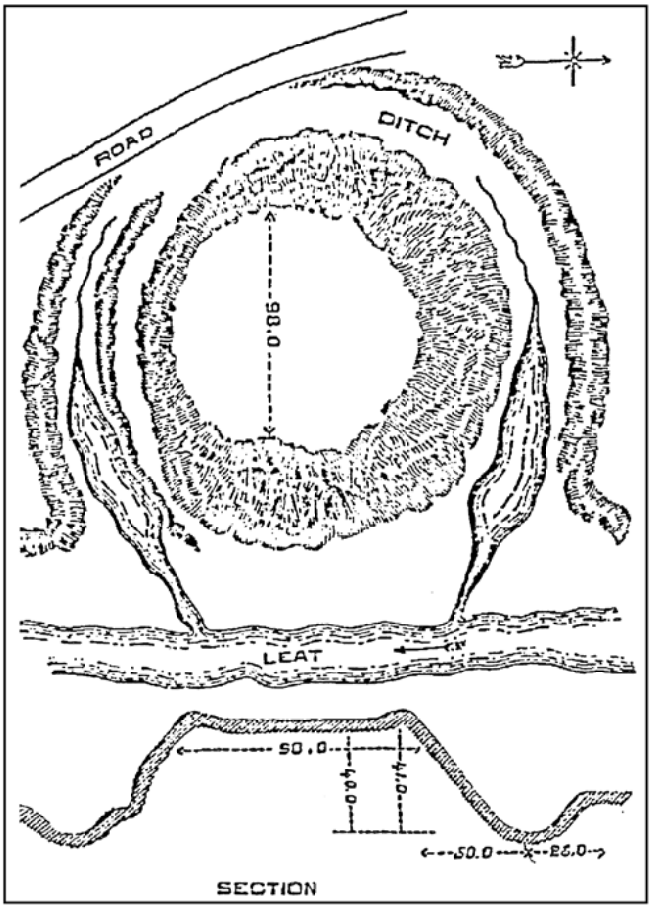
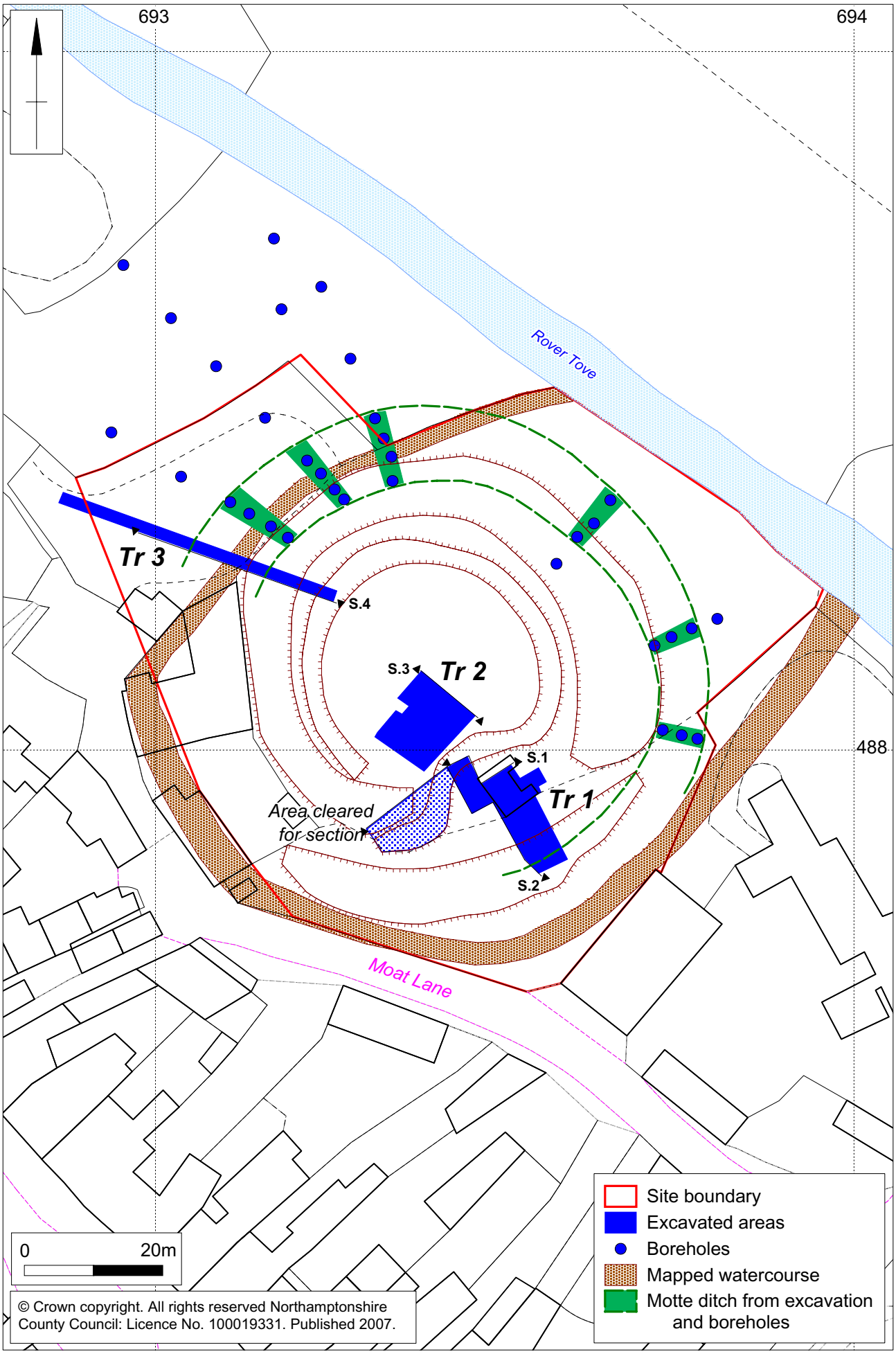
Bury Mount and the Roman town Fig 2



a) : Map showing the motte and final watercourse, 1855 (Shotliffe *et al*, 1999).



b) : Drawing of Towcester earthworks, (taken from '*The Builder*', 13 March 1875).



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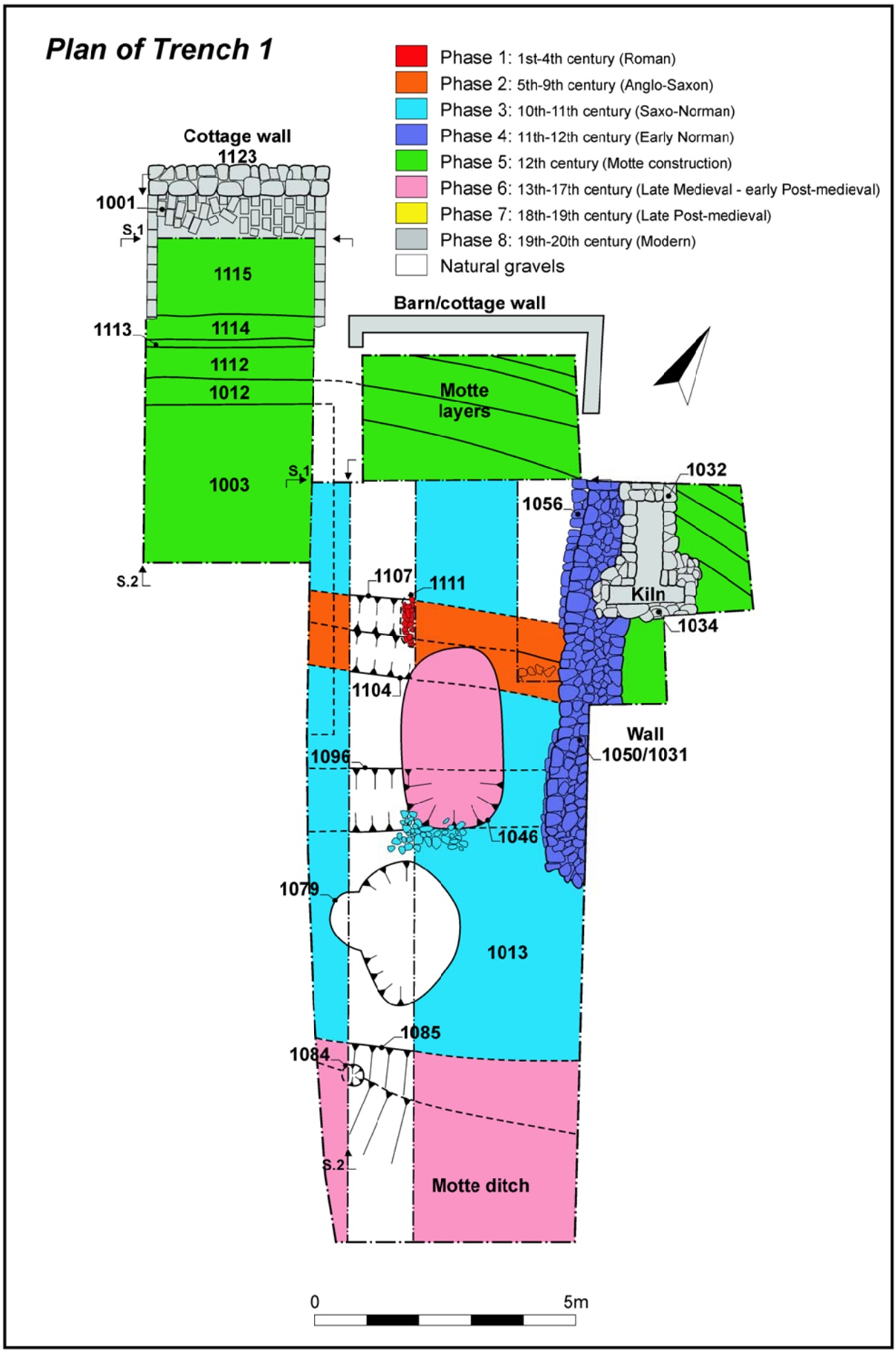
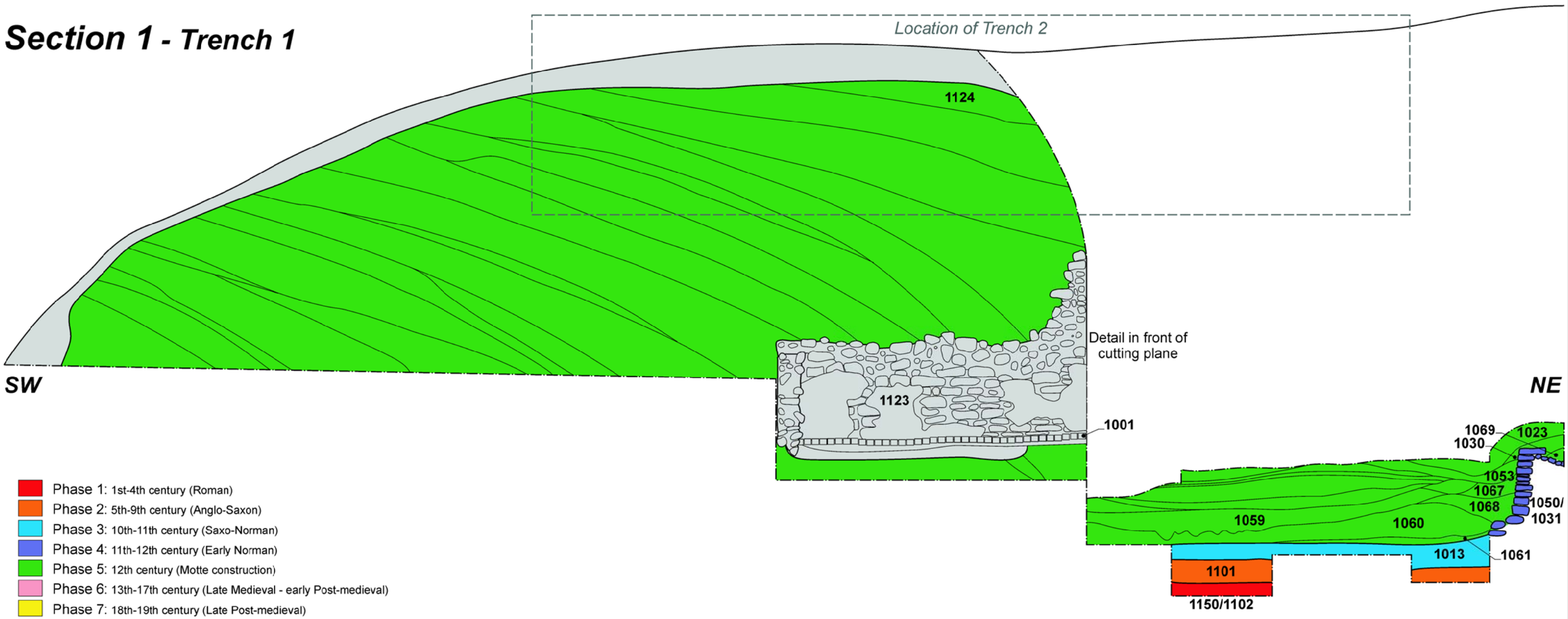
Trench locations Fig 4



Detailed plan of features within Trench 1 Fig 5

Section 1 - Trench 1



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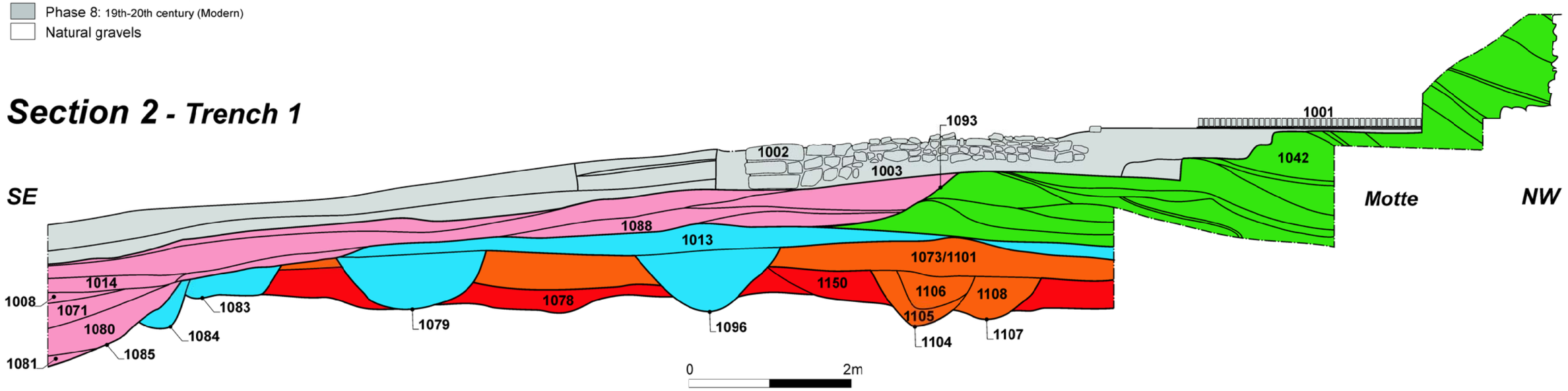
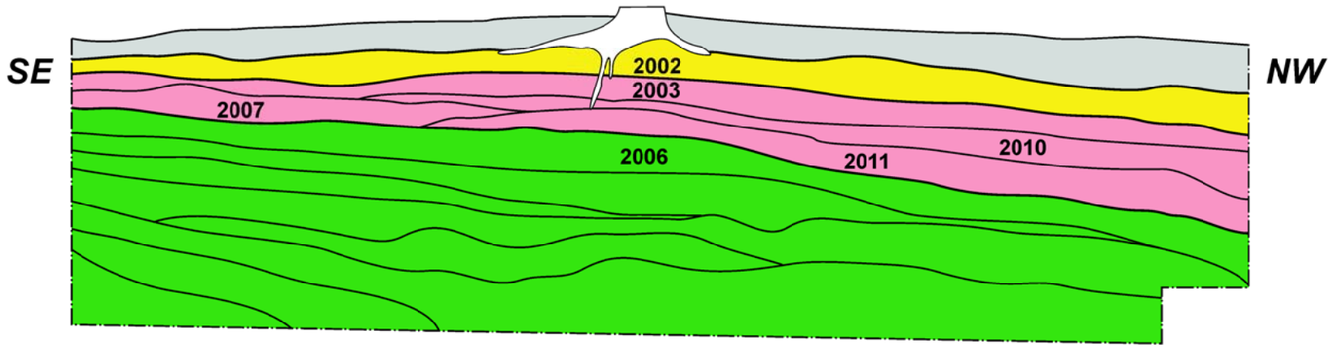
Phase 2: 5th-9th century (Anglo-Saxon)
Phase 3: 10th-11th century (Saxo-Norman)
Phase 4: 11th-12th century (Early Norman)
Phase 5: 12th century (Motte construction)
Phase 6: 13th-17th century (Late Medieval - early Post-medieval)
Phase 7: 18th-19th century (Late Post-medieval)
Phase 8: 19th-20th century (Modern)
Natural gravels

Section 2 - Trench 1



Sections 1 and 2 Fig 6

Section 3 - Trench 2



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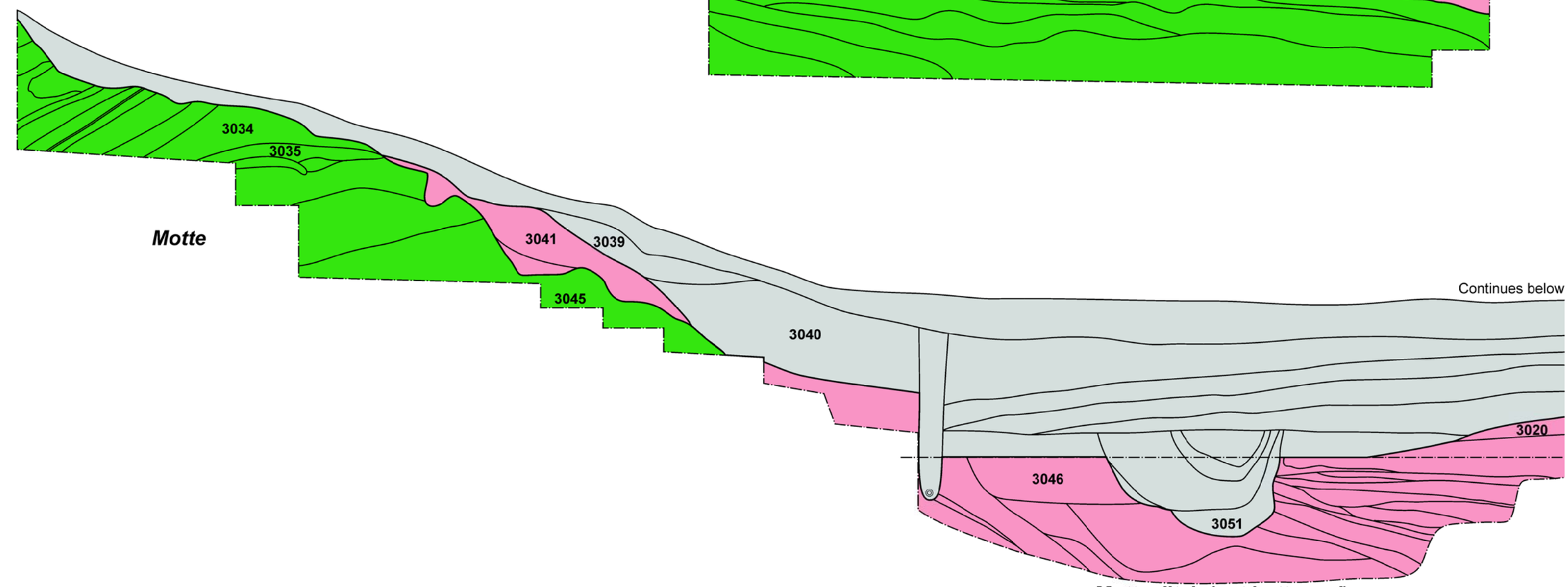

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Phase 7: 18th-19th century (Late Post-medieval)
Phase 8: 19th-20th century (Modern)
Natural gravels

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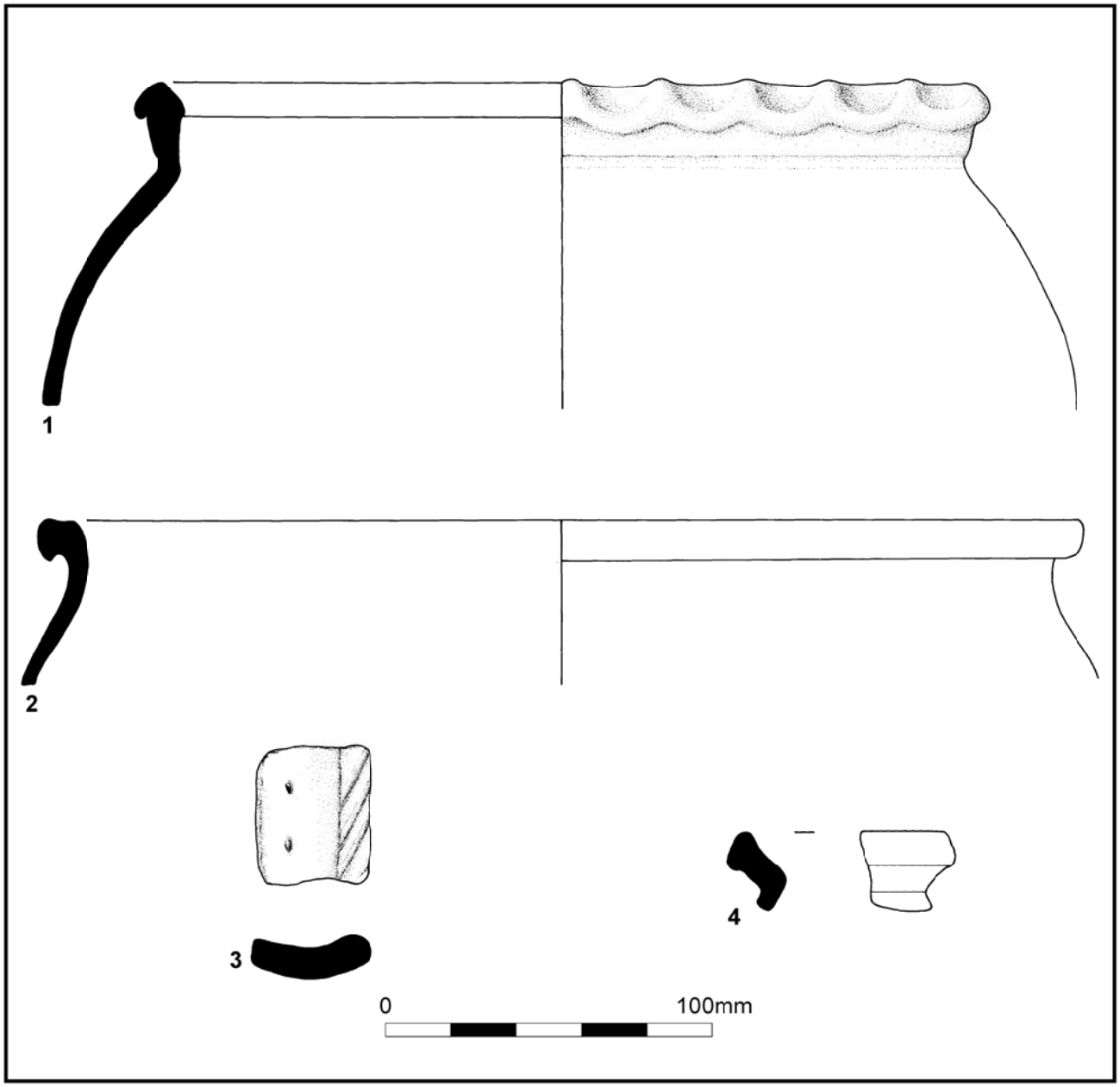
Sections 3 and 4 Fig 7



Pottery Fig 8

Plate 1: The Bury Mount cottages *c*1910.

Plate 2: Trench 1, including the Norman defensive ditch in the foreground.

Plate 3: Trench 1, perspective view from the motte summit.

Plate 4: Trench 1, view from the base of the motte, facing south.

Plate 5: Trench 1, view from the defensive ditch, facing north.

Plate 6: The Norman walls [1050] and [1031].

Plate 7: The Norman walls overlain by motte construction material.

Plate 8: Motte construction tipping lines overlying dark buried soil (1089) in the foreground.

Plate 9: The gable end of Cottage A built into the side of the motte.

Plate 10: A stone and brick built kiln [1032] of late 19th century date.

Plate 11: Wool bale seal (SF6) from layer (1008) (Conservator's record photo).

Plate 12: Wool bale seal (SF7) from layer (1008) (Conservator's record photo).