



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
and Building Survey of
The Riverside, Station Road, Oundle,
Northamptonshire

September 2008



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September 2008

Report 08/147

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Building Survey of The Riverside, Station Road, Oundle, Northamptonshire, September 2008	
	Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological desk-based assessment and building survey at the Railway Hotel, Station Road, Oundle in September 2008. The site lies on the western side of the Roman town in the parish of Ashton, extensive remains of which have been previously investigated. Initial work began in 1974-5 that identified three Roman buildings, ditches, road surfaces and a well. Further work was done in 1982-4 extending along the building frontage, encountering further structures, densely concentrated enclosures and a large inhumation cemetery. It is possible that the cemetery extended partially into the proposed development during antiquity. A substantial Roman pottery kiln was also excavated in 1992, to the north of the site. No previous excavation has been conducted on the proposed development site and it is unscheduled. The Extensive Urban Survey of Ashton considers it likely to hold archaeological remains of national importance and indicates the study of palaeo-environmental evidence between the town and the river as its third research priority. The Historic Environment Record (HER) suggests that medieval or post-medieval remains for a Chapel and a Toll Gate may exist at one of either ends of North Bridge. Map regression indicates that an unidentified earthwork extended into the north-west part of the site in 1886 but has not been depicted since. The present buildings lie at the north-east corner of the plot, most recently named The Riverside public house. There is a main building and a separate barn built shortly after the construction of the railway station, 1845-1851. The hotel provided refreshment and accommodation for passengers using the Blisworth to Peterborough line of the London and North Western Railway. The buildings are not listed.	
Project type	Desk-based assessment and building survey	
Site status	Unscheduled site of national importance	
Previous work	Ashton and Oundle Extensive Urban Surveys (Taylor 2002; Foard and Ballinger 2002)	
Current Land use	Derelict	
Future work	Yes	
Monument type/ period	Possible buried Roman archaeology, post-medieval building	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Riverside Hotel, Station Road, Oundle, PE8 4DE	
Study area	c1.5 ha	
OS Easting and Northing	5046 2889	
Height OD	c20m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originators	Dan Windwood, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Joe Prentice, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Joe Prentice, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	OHL Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	September 2008	
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Physical		None
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND BUILDING SURVEY OF
THE RIVERSIDE, STATION ROAD, OUNDLE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

SEPTEMBER 2008

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological desk-based assessment and building survey at the Railway Hotel, Station Road, Oundle in September 2008. The site lies on the western side of the Roman town in the parish of Ashton, extensive remains of which have been previously investigated. Initial work began in 1974-5 that identified three Roman buildings, ditches, road surfaces and a well. Further work was done in 1982-4 extending along the building frontage, encountering further structures, densely concentrated enclosures and a large inhumation cemetery. It is possible that the cemetery extended partially into the proposed development during antiquity. A substantial Roman pottery kiln was also excavated in 1992, to the north of the site. No previous excavation has been conducted on the proposed development site and it is unscheduled. The Extensive Urban Survey of Ashton considers it likely to hold archaeological remains of national importance and indicates the study of palaeo-environmental evidence between the town and the river as its third research priority.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) suggests that medieval or post-medieval remains for a Chapel and a Toll Gate may exist at one of either ends of North Bridge. Map regression indicates that an unidentified earthwork extended into the north-west part of the site in 1886 but has not been depicted since.

The present buildings lie at the north-east corner of the plot, most recently named The Riverside public house. There is a main building and a separate barn built shortly after the construction of the railway station, 1845-1851. The hotel provided refreshment and accommodation for passengers using the Blisworth to Peterborough line of the London and North Western Railway. The buildings are not listed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned in September 2008 by OHL Ltd to conduct a desk-based assessment and building survey of the Railway Hotel, Station Road, Oundle (Fig 1; NGR 5046 2889). This report has been prepared to meet the requirements of the *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*, issued by Northamptonshire County Council, in order to inform decisions on planning consent (Windwood 2008).

The present report has considered the evidence of the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with relevant published and archived documentary and cartographic sources held within Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO) and the Northampton Local Studies Library. It includes general information on the excavations at the Roman town in the parish of Ashton drawn from the Extensive Urban Survey of Ashton (Foard and Ballinger 2002) and the archive notes and illustrations of the 1982-4 works conducted by Northamptonshire Archaeology. A site visit and assessment of the standing structure was also undertaken.

The desk-based assessment places the location of the proposed development within its archaeological and historical contexts in the immediate vicinity, using information within a 200m search radius of the Railway Hotel to support its conclusions. This work has been undertaken in

accordance with *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1994, revised 2001).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The site fronts the south side of Station Road, east of the River Nene, at the junction between the A427 and A605 (Fig 1). It lies within the historic parish of Ashton, the boundary with Oundle being defined by the River Nene. It occupies an area of c1.5 ha. The site is bounded on the north by the A427, on the east by the A605 and on the south and west by the River Nene. The standing buildings are together in the north-east corner of the site with an area of tarmac providing parking space off the road. A former railway embankment divides the site in half from north-east to south-west. Along the banks of the river the ground is low lying at c20m above Ordnance Datum and prone to flooding. The whole of the site to the south-west of the former public house is covered with dense foliage and trees.

The underlying geology comprises superficial First Terrace River Gravel and alluvial deposits overlying Jurassic Upper Lias, Great Oolite and Inferior Oolite sedimentary beds of clay and limestone (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex/index.htm>).

2.2 Planning background

In considering any proposed development, the local planning authority will be aware of and guided by national and local legislation overseeing planning guidance. *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment* and *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16): Archaeology and Planning* provide national guidance on the preservation and investigation of the historic and built environment. Archaeological remains are defined by PPG16 as a finite and non-renewable resource where appropriate management is essential. In short the guidance provides a framework for the protection of nationally important monuments (both Scheduled Ancient Monuments and un-scheduled monuments) and their settings. Where nationally important archaeological remains are affected by development then there should be a presumption in favour for their physical preservation *in situ*. In many cases sites of lesser archaeological importance may be preserved by record, that is, excavated and published.

The Extensive Urban Survey of Ashton considers the site likely to hold archaeological remains of national importance and indicates the study of paleoenvironmental evidence between the town and the river as its third research priority (Taylor 2002, 19, fig 8). It states that unscheduled remains of national importance may be suggested for statutory protection in some cases, whilst recording action may be the appropriate response to threats in others (Taylor 2002, 18). The Growth Management Team at Northamptonshire County Council advised that proposed development of the site may affect important remains but that the precise impact of proposals cannot be determined on the basis of currently available information (Windwood 2008).

A condition has been placed on the planning application requiring a full evaluation of the site to establish the extent and nature of remains that may exist. Proposals are required to consider preservation *in situ*, and where this cannot be achieved, secure a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the local planning authority to undertake preservation by record (Planning application EN/02/00432/RWL).

The general objectives of the overall evaluation are set out in the brief (Windwood 2008), thus:

- Provide consistent detailed information on the presence or absence, extent, degree of survival and depth of burial of archaeological deposits or features throughout the entire site.

- Provide sufficient information on the site's surviving archaeology to allow a full assessment of the implications of the proposed development and to inform decisions on the effective mitigation of the impact.

Specific objectives of the brief are to:

- Identify the extent of Roman deposits related to the adjacent Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 169).
- Identify the importance of existing historic buildings.
- Identify the paleo-environmental potential of the site.

The brief requires that the evaluation apply the following six recognised procedures for achieving these goals where it is practical to so, these have been combined into three convenient parts which form the basis of the conventional process of investigation:

- Part 1: Desk-based assessment and architectural survey
- Part 2: Geophysical survey
- Part 3: Trial trench evaluation, artefact assessment and environmental assessment

This report covers the first part of the overall requirement for evaluation. The practicalities of the latter two stages are not certain at the present time. The two key obstacles facing Parts 2 and 3 are the density of vegetation on the site and the high water table. In the site's current state these cannot be conducted effectively. Clearing the majority of vegetation would facilitate geophysical survey. Conducting fieldwork at an appropriate time of the year, in suitable weather conditions, would perhaps limit the risk of trial excavations flooding immediately, or machinery becoming mired and damaging the potential underlying deposits.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The Roman town in the parish of Ashton

We are fortunate that the archaeological record for the immediate vicinity of the site is very informative. Extensive work has been conducted within the 200m of the Railway Hotel that provides a firm basis from which to draw comparable information.

In 1974-5 amateur rescue excavations began to the east of the present site following notification of a bypass proposal for the A605 at Oundle. The team identified three Roman buildings, ditches, road surfaces and a well belonging to what was apparently a much wider settlement (Hadman and Upex 1977). In response to the increased public awareness and the demonstrable value of the site to research, the Northamptonshire County Surveyor allocated funds for a full investigation prior to commencement of the contractors works (Dix 1984). The commercial contract to dig the site was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 1982-4. Work extended investigation over an area of 1.5ha taking in approximately one seventh of the Roman town (Parry 1996). It pursued the apparent building frontage, encountering further structures, densely concentrated enclosures and a large inhumation cemetery (Dix 1983; Parry 1996; Taylor 2002). The wealth of finds, the character, style and layout of the site confirmed earlier investigations that the settlement was part of a Roman small town, one that had not previously been identified and appeared to be unmentioned in the documentary record of Roman Britain.

Evidence for prehistoric occupation at Ashton is relatively sparse, although two Bronze age burials and other, unidentified features of a similar date were found in the excavations (Dix forthcoming). Iron Age pottery and coin find spots have been identified in the vicinity, but are not located within 200m of the proposed development. The study of Iron Age coin distributions in the county of Northamptonshire has highlighted a small concentration in the area of Oundle, further comment upon the reasons for this are problematic at best (Curteis 1996). The closest identified Iron Age settlement evidence to date is that excavated by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Glapthorn Road, Oundle (Maull and Masters 2000; 2004; 2005). The site lies west of the river and is located over 750m south-west of the Railway Hotel. It was occupied from the late Bronze Age and continued to develop as a focus of activity through the Iron Age and into the Roman period, with later Saxon burials.

The Roman town at Ashton is roughly midway between the Roman towns at *Durobrivae* (Water Newton) and Titchmarsh. It is estimated to have covered an area of around c15ha. It has been suggested that it owed its existence to the strategic network of roads and river routes that encouraged a flourishing agricultural and industrial town to emerge. Whilst its location was indeed well positioned to exploit the transit of resources from the ironworking centres in Rockingham Forest and the pottery centres near Castor, there has been no evidence to date supporting any claim for a military involvement in the settlement growth. The excavated evidence has demonstrated a network of surfaced roads formed a D-shape, perhaps representing a main street and back lane. Included amongst the research questions regarding the nature of the road network, is establishing the pursuit of the trackway where it extended towards the railway embankment and whether there was a river crossing at a point to the south of the proposed development (Taylor 2002, 17).

Recent studies of the hydrological developments of the River Nene suggest that it was not navigable in the Roman period for anything more substantial than small flat-bottomed craft (Meadows forthcoming). Excavations over a number of years in the valley have continued to demonstrate that the River Nene was characterised by an anastomosed form, comprising many small shallow braided channels, often not even reaching a depth of 1m. In addition to this it has continued to change its course radically over the years and former channels at this point are likely to have lain anywhere between the Saxon core of Oundle and the excavated site of the Roman town. It is perhaps worth noting that the Railway Station building stands upon a rise of the gravel terrace and the Railway Hotel is likely to do the same (Webster and Parry 1992). The buildings are situated away from the river and perhaps deliberately avoid the alluvial geology, suggesting that the area further to the west was unsuitable for the railway's purposes. It was not until the Navigation Act of 1725 that a route from Peterborough to Oundle, and later to Thrapston, was established through dredging a deep watercourse. The argument for river-borne travel is therefore somewhat flawed and would imply that the prospect of finding Roman wharfage space or landings close to the present channel, as for example with the proposed development, would be slim.

Much of what is known about the Roman town at Ashton is drawn from the meticulous records of the 1982-4 excavations which have yet to be fully disseminated into a publishable state beyond the current draft form (Fig 3). In summary the road and surrounding enclosures appeared to have been established in the mid-1st century AD. This acquired a number of buildings of uncertain function fronting onto the road by the later 1st to early 2nd centuries. Stone founded strip buildings gradually agglomerated along the frontage during the course of the 2nd century and continued into the 3rd century, these were associated with 21 infant burials (Parry 1996, 9). A total of 58 inhumations were also located in the agricultural and other enclosures. The practical functions of the structures appeared to have included shops, workshops and dwellings with a strong emphasis around the iron smithing trade. Smaller agricultural plots extended towards the south of the site, providing evidence of cultivation and stock rearing. A formal cemetery with 170 graves was located immediately to the east of the proposed development site, within the south of the Roman town (Parry 1996, 9). Its western extent may have lain within a part of the development area, although this portion is known to have been disturbed by post-medieval quarrying activity. The burial group of the entire site including chanel indicated 315 individuals including two beaker

burials and a single cremation (Parry 1996, 9). It has been highlighted as potentially one of the most important groups for research into later Roman burial practice in Britain (Taylor 2002, 10). Burials were also noted during the construction of the Railway Station (Harteshorne 1847). A lead water tank inscribed with a *chi-rho* monogram retrieved from the well in 1974-5 may indicate that the town was home to a significant Christian community in the 4th century (Hadman and Upex 1977, 8; Guy 1977, 10-11; Taylor 2002, 6). Evidence for continued occupation of the town into the late 4th century and possibly the early 5th century was apparent from the excavations which produced Arcadius and Honorius coins dated AD383-408 and AD393-423 respectively. Settlement relocated to the west of the River Nene, forming the core of modern Oundle, after this date. There was no occupation material within the excavated areas for later periods.

In 1992 the opportunity to investigate a further part of the Roman town to the north of the present site came about with the redevelopment of the former railway yard, now occupied by Laxton Drive (Webster and Parry 1992). The excavations demonstrated that the Roman town extended within the area during antiquity, postholes for timber framed buildings, ditches, gullies and road surfaces were all identified at the southern end of the site. A substantial Roman pottery kiln was excavated on its western side. The majority of the remaining area had been severely affected by post-medieval gravel extraction and whilst the Roman town probably extended throughout the area of Laxton Drive, much of it was truncated or had been quarried away, leaving only residual artefacts amongst the backfill deposits.

3.2 The Historic Environment Record (HER)

The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted for documented sites and monuments within the proposed development area and a 200m radius surrounding the Railway Hotel. The site lies within an unscheduled area of national archaeological importance (Taylor 2002, fig 8). The evidence indicates that the site lies within the Roman town of Ashton, the Latin name of which is not known (Taylor 2002, 12). Extensive excavations have been conducted in the immediate vicinity to the north and east of the site during the A605 improvements and work at the former railway station yard, now Laxton Drive (Hadman and Upex 1977; Webster and Parry 1992; Taylor 2002). For the most part the inventory of data relates to these three groups of site works and is very poorly plotted by the HER database, indicating the vicinity rather than the exact position, fortunately Northamptonshire Archaeology retains the original archives and is able to construct a more informative visual layout.

Figure 2 combines elements of the archived illustrations with selected HER data:

Table 1: Summary of HER data

Reference number (MNN)	Type of record	Short description
2065	Monument	Industrial site, late medieval to post-medieval, AD1500-1749
2429	Monument	Industrial site, late medieval to post-medieval, AD1500-1749
2845	Monument	Oundle to Peterborough road, medieval to modern, AD1066-2000
4704	Monument	Funerary site, prehistoric, 500000BC to AD42
4713	Monument	Road alignment, Roman, AD43-409
14333	Monument	Oundle to Peterborough road (pre-turnpike), medieval to post-medieval, AD1066-1749
16529	Monument	Cemetery, Roman, AD43-409
17637	Monument	Cemetery, Bronze Age, 2350-701BC
21872	Monument	Building, Roman, AD43-409
21877	Monument	Road, Roman, AD43-409
21878	Monument	Ironworking site, Roman, AD43-409
21881	Monument	Inhumations, Roman, AD43-409
21883	Monument	Flint arrowheads, blade, core, flake and scraper, prehistoric, 500000BC to AD42

21884	Monument	Pit containing pottery finds, Iron Age, 800-401BC
21907	Monument	Possible stone causeway aligned with Roman road, Roman, AD43-409
27371	Monument	Building, Roman, AD43-409
27372	Monument	Agricultural enclosures, Roman, AD43-409
28435	Monument	Quarry, late medieval to post-medieval, AD1500-1749
29046	Monument	Pottery kiln, Roman, AD43-409
29047	Monument	Road, Roman, AD43-409
29048	Monument	Building, Roman, AD43-409
29049	Monument	Road, Roman, AD43-409
29349	Monument	Quarry, late medieval to post-medieval, AD1500-1749
30997	Monument	Railway Station, modern, AD1750-2000
31979	Monument	Arrowhead, medieval, AD1066-1539
32003	Monument	Inhumations, two beaker burials, prehistoric, 500000BC to AD409
32005	Monument	Boundary of cemetery, Roman, AD43-409
36443	Monument	Oundle Station Yard, modern, AD1750-2000
36444	Monument	Disused service lines, modern, AD1750-2000
36445	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36446	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36447	Monument	Linear, Roman, AD43-409
36448	Monument	Linear, Roman, AD43-409
36449	Monument	Linear, Roman, AD43-409
36450	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36451	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36452	Monument	Posthole, Roman, AD43-409
36453	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36454	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36455	Monument	Pit, Roman, AD43-409
36456	Monument	Linear, undated
36457	Monument	Stone wall, undated
36458	Monument	Ditch and stone scatter, undated
36459	Monument	Stone construction material, undated
36460	Monument	Stonework, undated, possibly post-Roman
36461	Monument	Stone scatter, undated
36462	Monument	Stone scatter, undated
36927	Monument	Inhumations, Bronze Age, 2350-701BC
37081	Monument	Ashton bloomery ironworks, Roman, AD43-409
101495	Monument	Railway Hotel public house, modern, AD1850-1999
101517	Monument	Oundle Railway Station, modern, AD1843-1999
101518	Monument	Railway Station Goods Yard, modern, AD1843-1999
101520	Monument	Railway Goods Shed, modern, AD1843-1999
101526	Monument	Toll Gate on North Bridge, Oundle, post-medieval, AD1753
103212	Find spot	Sword, medieval, AD1300-1350
107413	Building	North Bridge/Ashton Bridge, medieval to modern, AD1066-1999
107882	Building	Oundle Railway Station (disused), modern, AD1830-1870
115345	Monument	Cemetery, Roman, AD43-409
115595	Monument	Ring ditch, Late Iron Age to Early Roman, AD0-100
115596	Monument	Ring ditch, Late Iron Age to Early Roman, AD0-100
115597	Monument	Rectangular silled timber building, Late Iron Age to Early Roman, AD0-200
115598	Monument	Post-built structure, Late Iron Age to Early Roman, AD0-200
115614	Monument	Corn drying oven, Roman, AD43-409
115615	Monument	Enclosure/Yard, Roman, AD0-50
115621	Monument	Chapel, Oundle, medieval to late medieval, AD1300-1539

Prehistoric remains

Two crouched beaker burials of probable Bronze Age date were recovered during the A605 excavations (HER 32003). The database records them as part of a cemetery, but this seems a little presumptuous (HER 17637). A number of flint artefacts were also recovered including two arrowheads, a blade, a core, a scraper and a flake (HER 21883).

The only feature to produce exclusively early Iron Age pottery at Ashton has been a single isolated pit (HER 21884).

Roman cemetery

The Roman cemetery with the larger portion of 170 burials discovered during the A605 excavations is mentioned, stating that no other cemeteries have been identified (HER 115345; 16529). The ditch on the western limit of the cemetery is recorded (HER 32005). There were many other burials that lay outside the cemetery, mostly associated either with enclosure boundaries or buildings (HER 21881).

Roman buildings, roads and enclosures

Two ring ditches are mentioned by the database and are associated with roundhouse structures (HER 115595; 115596). Whilst these are typically of the Iron Age tradition, it has been demonstrated frequently in recent years that in more rural areas of the Roman province the native tradition of roundhouse structures continued in use well into the early 2nd century AD. Finds from Ashton indicated that they were of likely Roman date, rather than late Iron Age (S. Parry pers comm).

A rectangular sill beamed building measuring 11m long by 10m wide was dated to the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD (HER 115597). There was also a post-built structure of similar date (HER 115598). The most substantial and significant structures were those fronting onto the Roman road, seemingly forming a row of stone built strip buildings with their own property boundaries and enclosures (HER 27371). In 1992 postholes for structures fronting the north side of the Roman road were also identified (HER 29048). These were associated with various pits and “linear” fragments which are not further described in detail by the database but seem to relate to ditches in the Roman town (HER 36445-62). Roman occupation was extensive and produced many finds of Roman pottery including Samian and colour-coated wares, roof tile and bronze clippings (HER 21872).

Parts of the complex road network of the settlement have been identified and the extent of the full layout has yet to be determined but is thought to be similar to that at Irchester and Titchmarsh (HER 21877). The primary route was a straight axial road aligned towards the river, seemingly the main road between *Durobrivae* and Titchmarsh. It appeared to have been defined by roadside ditches, had a cambered metalled surface and formed the central axis for a number of side streets and trackways (HER 29047; 29049). A river crossing has not been positively identified, although stonework has been found in the river bank at the suggested crossing point (HER 21907).

Enclosures and yards laid out towards the southern limit of the A605 excavations may have been used for either stock management or intensive cultivation; a specialised function has not presently been demonstrated (HER 115615; 27372).

Roman industrial features

The only evidence for crop processing recovered from the A605 excavations at Ashton was indicated by the presence of a single corn drier (HER 115614).

There was much wider evidence for secondary ironworking on the site which appeared to be a major contribution to economic activities in the town (HER 21878).

A pottery kiln that was 1.3m in diameter and constructed from limestone blocks lined with mortar was excavated in 1992; it was dated to the early 2nd century AD and survived on a pinnacle of gravel cut on all sides by post-medieval quarries (HER 29046).

Medieval find spots

A medieval sword was recovered from the River Nene downstream of a medieval ford near Oundle and sold as Lot 50 at Christie's auction house on the 22nd November 1965 (HER 103212). A medieval arrowhead was found in a nearby field (HER 31979).

Medieval buildings and roads

Originally the river was forded at a crossing close to Ashton Mill. A bridge was recorded over the River Nene at Oundle in 1329 by the Abbot of Peterborough and was mentioned again in 1360 on the road towards Peterborough, the town street of which was already built up by 1214-22 (HER 107413). The bridge was built by the abbey to improve the route between Peterborough and the town of Oundle (HER 2845; 14333), with the Abbot maintaining the rights to collect tolls on the bridge and hence the presence also of a chapel. William de Sylkeby was the chaplain at Ashton Bridge in 1300 and collected alms for maintaining the bridge (HER 115621). In 1565 there was a chapel on the bridge on the west side of the river, on the north-west side of the bridge which was probably destroyed in 1570. During its reconstruction in 1835 a date stone was recovered bearing the inscription:

“IN THE YERE OF OVRE LORD 1570 THES ARCHES WER BORNE DOVNE BY THE WATERS
EXTERMYTIE. IN THE YERE OF OVRE LORD 1571 THEY WER BULDED AGAYN WITH LYME
AND STONNE THANKS BE TO GOD”

It was again rebuilt and widened in 1912 and the stone preserved in the parapet.

Medieval and post-medieval quarrying

During the excavations at Ashton, both in 1982-4 and in 1992, there was extensive evidence in specific areas of large scale quarry extraction for gravels, little further detail is given (HER 2065; 2429; 28435; 29349).

Post-medieval buildings and roads

The Railway Hotel is mentioned as a public house that is now derelict with an architectural design similar to the railway station and cites a photographic reference (HER 101495). A Toll Gate was located at one end of North Bridge serving the Peterborough to Wellingborough turnpike road, it is not mentioned which side of the river this was on (HER 101526)

19th-century railway buildings and features

The Oundle Railway Station lay on the Peterborough branch of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), two miles outside of the town of Oundle (HER 101517; 30997). A brief architectural description is held in the database (HER 107882). It is now disused and made into a private residence. Other railway buildings included; the goods yard (HER 101518) and sheds (HER 101520), which were all demolished before the Laxton Drive development. The western side of the railway yard was covered by a thick pad of cinder and hardcore in the area of the former sidings (HER 36443).

3.3 Historic Maps

The map evidence demonstrates the gradual development of the site and elucidates on the nature and location of earlier buildings and boundaries. The most significant developments are illustrated in Figures 4-6. Because the site lies in the parish of Ashton, it does not appear on the map evidence

for Oundle and lies beyond the bounds of the Austell Survey 1565 (NRO map ML116) and the sewage installation map of 1850 (NRO map 5949).

Inclosure map of Ashton, 1810 (Fig 4; NRO Map 2858)

This photostat depicts the site divided into four parts prior to the railway embankment being constructed. A minor watercourse divides the site from north-west to south-east and is connected to the river on the north side of North Bridge; it meanders slightly as it crosses to the bend of the River Nene, south of the site. To the west of this channel is the largest of the four minor enclosures measuring 4 acres, 2 roods and 27 perches. The east side is split into three parts: one forming a vacant corner property upon which the Railway Hotel was later built; a slightly larger area to the south-east of it measuring 1 acre, 1 rood and 23 perches; and the south-east corner of the site, forming an extension of the much larger meadow along the river to the south-east called Mill Marsh. The two enclosures for which area measurements are marked are also labelled as the property of William Walcot Esquire.

OS Surveyors plan, 1810

The site is depicted as water meadow with very little detail. A small sinuous waterway divides the site into two parts from north-west to south-east as it is shown on the more detailed Inclosure map of Ashton of the same date.

Walcot's estate map of Ashton, 1811 (NRO Map 3703)

A photostat of the Walcot estate map depicts the parish of Ashton and shows the site much as it is depicted on the map of Inclosure. The minor watercourse and small enclosures are visible in the same layout. There are no buildings present and a large quarry is depicted on the east side of the junction.

Map accompanying the particulars of sale for the estates of Ashton, 1860 (NRO ZB706/24)

This map is fairly detailed and shows the railway embankment crossing the site for the first time, adding a further subdivision to the area. Three principal fields are numbered 13, 14 and 15; they relate to the auction index which denotes them as parts of Flag Meadow (13 and 14) and the Osier Bed (15). The two parts of Flag Meadow are either side of the railway embankment and appear open. The Osier Bed lies at the far south-east corner of the site and is depicted with tree cover. The minor watercourse shown on the Inclosure map of 1810 and Walcot's estate map of 1811 is present between the east side of the embankment and the river, but no longer extends to the north of the site. It is broken in two places, providing crossing points between Flag Meadow (14), the area of Flag Meadow to the south by the river (unnumbered) and the Osier Beds (15). The small enclosure depicted at the corner junction of the roads on Walcot's estate map contains two buildings that match the present buildings, which were then the Railway Hotel.

1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1886, Sheet XIX.1, 25" scale (Fig 5; NRO Map 1533)

This depiction is a more accurate survey, but contains much of the same information as for 1860 in terms of the general layout. The minor waterway originally shown in 1810 is now little more than a short section of water-filled ditch across part of the east side of the site which is no longer meets the base of the railway embankment and is no longer connected to the river to the south. The boundary partition with the Osier Beds remains and the area is depicted with trees. Along the west side of the railway embankment is a wide drainage ditch filled with water. In the north-west corner of the site is a small hachured earthwork aligned north-west to south-east and clearly shown as part of a small, raised terrace or building platform, the larger part of which lies on the north side of Station Road adjacent to North Bridge. In consultation with the HER evidence this may relate to the site of the former post-medieval Toll Gate on North Bridge (HER 101526). The present buildings of the former Railway Hotel are shown with two minor boundaries extending between the south-west corners of each range to meet with the railway embankment.

Ordnance Survey, 1888, Sheet XIII.SW, 6" scale

Very similar to the 1886 1st edition map, the only variation is that the earthwork in the north-west of the site is not shown and the potential building platform north of Station Road has been dug out to form a small still-water mooring location. This means that any potential remains of the Toll Gate (it is not known which side of the bridge it lay upon) were destroyed in the process and that if even the smallest part remains in the north-west of the site it may be the only opportunity to confirm its location.

Ordnance Survey, revised 1900, Sheet XIX.1, 25" scale (Fig 6; NRO Map 1539)

Much of the detail from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey has been lost. The whole of the site is now depicted as low-lying marsh and no trees are marked. The only boundaries remaining are the railway embankment with its western drainage channel, the property boundaries of the Railway Hotel, the road and river boundaries and the short length of the minor watercourse. The earthwork in the north-west of the site is no longer depicted and the mooring on the north side of Station Road has been developed into a boat house.

Ordnance Survey, revised 1968, Sheet TL0488, 1:25000 scale

The 1927 and 1958 maps are not dissimilar to that of 1900. The next major change is on the revision of 1968 where some of the original detail of the 1888 map has been returned. The short section of the minor waterway is still in evidence and the land is still largely depicted as low-lying marsh with scrub. The railway embankment is now shown as derelict on the south side of Oundle Station, although the north section of the line toward Peterborough appears to still be operating. A short strip of woodland lies to the south of the Railway Hotel alongside the Ashton Road; there is no map evidence to corroborate the idea that this was where the sewage beds were located. It is believed that there were shallow beds located to the south of the present barn (S. Jackson pers comm).

3.4 Other sources***Trade Directories***

Pigot's and Kelly's Trade Directories for Northamptonshire were consulted for the period 1830-1940 (NRO Library collections). The section in which the Railway Hotel frequently appears is for the district of Oundle in the commercial listings for Ashton. It is not known if they were tenant landlords or freeholders as the trade directories do not identify inns and taverns by brewery, however, the short periods of residence do imply that a tenancy agreement existed. The following names were identified as managing the establishment:

1830-1854	No references, it is likely the Railway Hotel was not built at this time
1869-1890	Mrs Eliza Rhimes
1894-1903	Mr Richard Walter Ellis
1910	Mrs Susan Elizabeth Ellis
1914	Mr John Bossingham
1920-1924	Mrs Elizabeth L Bossingham
1928-1931	Mr John T Robinson
1936-1940	Mr John Henry Adams

Published literature on the railways of Northamptonshire

The Blisworth to Peterborough branch of the London and Birmingham Railway, later purchased by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), was authorised on 4th July 1843 (Dane 1978, 44-45). On the 31st May 1845 a train comprising 15 1st class carriages carrying the whole of the LNWR board of directors and their guests stopped at Oundle Station to inspect the building works

(Dane 1978, 8). An image of Oundle Station accompanies the text. The station was opened for passenger trains on 2nd June 1845 and continued to be managed by LNWR until the nationalisation of the railways on the 1st January 1948. There is a published photograph taken on the 10th April 1964 of the splendid black Stanier 8F Class 2-8-0 No. 48555 freight train as she surges majestically out of Oundle Station under a billowing veil of smoke and steam (Coleman and Rajczonek 1993, plate 149). The accompanying text indicates that she had been waiting in the station whilst the 9.45am passenger train from Peterborough to Northampton passed through, unfortunately the station and other buildings are not shown. The Peterborough to Northampton line continued to operate a passenger service until 2nd May 1964, when the section south of Oundle was closed to regular services. There were no references or images of the Railway Hotel that could be sourced.

4 BUILDING ASSESSMENT by Joe Prentice

The buildings which lie at the north-east corner of the plot were most recently named The Riverside and were run as a public house and restaurant, with presumably the barn used as an ancillary service building (Figs 1-3). The main building comprises a four square stone structure of two storeys with a single storey wing on the south side. A separate barn of three open bays with a two storey attached range lies to the south. All were apparently built at the same date, shortly after the construction of the station, between 1845 and 1851 (RCHME 1984). It appears to have been built as a hotel to provide refreshment and accommodation for passengers using the railway station across the road and is labelled Railway Hotel on the 1887 Ordnance Survey map. The station was built in 1845 by W Livock in the Old English style with Elizabethan elements, whilst the Riverside is more 17th-century in style, seen most obviously in the paired square chimney stacks (Pevsner and Cherry 1985). The railway was on the Blisworth to Peterborough line of the London and North Western Railway. The buildings are not statutorily listed.

4.1 The Railway Hotel exterior

The north and east façades both face onto roads, the northern onto Station Road, the eastern onto the former A605, now re-positioned slightly to the east. Both are symmetrical and each has a central doorway. The east façade comprises two gable ends, each with a six light mullioned and transomed window on the ground floor with a doorway between and two, two light mullioned windows on the first floor (Plate 1). The windows and door all have drip moulds which, like the window and door surrounds, are cut from oolitic limestone as are the sills which comprise stepped slopes. The wall is constructed from coursed, dressed limestone of a slightly darker and coarser limestone with ashlar quoins, coping and kneelers. An original cast iron downpipe and hopper services the valley between the two gables, and immediately to its south a smaller version apparently served an internal bathroom, though this is clearly later. All of the window and door openings are boarded over for security reasons, but they have been seen from the interior (Plate 2). All are wood and appear to be modern replacements, although closer inspection with better light might suggest otherwise. The door frame appears to be original and has a curved lintel profile with two overdoor lights above. The roof is of blue Welsh slate with lead flashings, the chimneys comprise four paired stacks, two to each ridge.

The north façade (which faces the station to the north) has a central door and four light windows on either side on the ground floor with a single two light window above the door beneath the central gable (Plate 3). The constructional details are the same as on the east front, though here the downpipes and other rainwater goods appear to be replacements. The south façade faces onto the service yard between the former hotel and barn (Plate 4). The south wall has two windows on the ground floor with a now blocked doorway placed asymmetrically between. On the first floor there is a cross-eaves dormer window of two lights. The west façade is currently largely obscured by foliage but contains two windows and a door on the ground floor, though unlike the east façade, the door lies in the south range (Plate 5). On the first floor there are three windows, perhaps taking

advantage of the fine westwards views across the river to the town (before the recent growth of weed trees obscured it) although it must be remembered that in the immediate foreground was the new railway line. Given that this was a recent innovation, was it the railway line and not the view that was the attraction? Constructional details and materials are as on the other facades.

Single storey service range

The single storey range on the south side of the main hotel building appears to have been partly a service range, but the presence of a bay window on the west side suggests that it might also have been incorporated into the public areas, perhaps being used as a lounge or eating area, again taking advantage of the river and railway views. To the south of the bay are two further windows, here set beneath simple oak lintels with simple flat sills; the frames were not seen. The east façade of the single storey range originally had four doorways; the one at the western end is now blocked and the one adjacent to it has been crudely altered into a window (Plate 6). There are two, two light windows of the same construction as those in the main hotel. There is a single chimney stack, the upper part of which has been re-built in yellow brick, above a Welsh slate roof. The cast iron down pipe and hopper appear to be original and are of the same design as on the east front.

The barn

The barn to the south comprises two sections; at the eastern end are three bays with the north side open, probably used as a cart hovel, perhaps for carriers bringing or collecting goods to and from the station, and a two storey range at the west end (Plate 7). The three bay hovel comprises stone walls on the east, south and west sides, the southern gable end being decorated with kneelers and coping as used on the main hotel. A broad window in the gable end may be a later insertion as it appears to sit beneath a concrete lintel, though this might be a replacement of an original timber one. The eaves of the open north side is supported on wooden posts, the top part of each opening has an apron which is vertically boarded, presumably to afford some shelter from driving rain. Each bay is devoid of any features although the two southern ones have had their walls painted white at some stage. In the west wall there is a hayloft door, the base of which is level with the bottom of the timber apron along the north open side (Plate 8). The jambs of this hayloft door are finished with bull nosed red brick, the sill appears to be of oak. The roof of Welsh slate is supported on a simple frame of tie beams above each post supporting a queen post truss. All of the timberwork appears to be pine. The western end of the barn comprises two storeys with two doors and two windows in the northern façade on the ground floor and a hayloft door at first floor level. The door at the eastern end of the two storey section sits directly beneath the hayloft door which is positioned within a cross-eaves dormer. The door and two small windows at the western end of this façade are all modern with concrete lintels.

4.2 The Railway Hotel interior

The former hotel was accessed through the doorway in the eastern façade which leads into a corridor lying east-west across the length of the building (Plate 9). The suspended timber floor has been removed as has much of the wall plaster, doors and door frames, skirting boards and some of the ceilings. This removal of the majority of surface detail has exposed that the structural elements of the building are of stone on the exterior walls with brick dressings at door and window openings, and all internal walls are constructed of brick alone. There is evidence of blocking of original door openings internally by the use of breeze blocks, and new openings have been made. These are apparent by the chopped edges of bricks and the use of concrete lintels inserted above these new openings. What remains of interior structural fittings appears to be largely modern; much of the timberwork supporting the first floor appeared to be of modern pine with the floor surface made of chipboard sheets. Some small areas of lath over plaster remains, suggesting isolated areas of original flooring. No evidence of cellaring was seen.

The staircase, located on the north side of the east-west corridor, may be original (Plate 10). The balusters are plain square section bars, the newel post is turned and the banister rail is of

mahogany. At the top of the stairs above the landing, which is aligned the same as the ground floor corridor, there is an octagonal skylight, now unglazed allowing water ingress. This skylight appears to be a modern insertion but may replace an earlier version. Only one of the upper rooms was accessed due to Health and Safety considerations because of the uncertainty of the condition of the floor. This was the room on the south side of the building lit by the cross-eaves dormer (Plate 11). It retains most of the wall plaster and skirting board of a standard 19th-century design. The timber window frames appears to be a replacement, but this is not certain; as on the ground floor all of the windows are boarded and there was almost no natural light. The roof was plastered over split timber laths, exposed where rainwater has penetrated and caused localised collapse. None of the other first floor rooms were investigated.

The single storey range

No access was possible into this building although it is thought that access can be gained from the interior of the main hotel. It is not clear whether most internal wall coverings and fittings have been removed here too, but it is thought to be the case.

The Barn

No access was available to the interior of this building and its condition is not known.

4.3 Summary

The former Railway Hotel, latterly The Riverside, was built between 1845 and 1851 to serve the railway station located across the road to the north. It was probably built by the same architect as it bears very close similarities to it, with minor changes to external decorative elements. It does not appear to have undergone any major external changes apart from perhaps the renewal of the window frames, the addition of signage and some rainwater goods. The two storey range has undergone some structural changes externally with one door being completely, and another partially, blocked. The separate barn has undergone similar small scale changes with the insertion of a new door and two small windows. It is not clear if the barn has undergone any interior alterations. The ground plan outline has not changed since the buildings first appear on the Ordnance Survey map in 1887.

Internally the main building has effectively been gutted and the only nearly complete feature appears to be the staircase. Most of the accessible rooms on the ground floor have been either completely stripped down to the bare stone or brick, or have had most of their fixtures and fittings removed. On the first floor more detail survives, but a full investigation of all of the room has not been undertaken. Many alterations have been carried out during the modern period, with new openings being made, and others closed-up with breeze blocks. No fixtures or fittings dating to the period of the construction of the building were seen.

5 CONCLUSION

There is very little potential for further architectural recording of the building. It is not listed and much of its original interior fixtures, fittings and decor have been stripped out, leaving a bare shell that in itself is neither spectacular nor unusual for a building of its era. No evidence could be identified for the location of the sewage beds, although a small strip of woodland on the later Ordnance Survey maps may have concealed small private facilities.

Figure 2 is designed to identify the location of the known buried archaeological resource as currently understood. Whilst the whole of the proposed development site lies within an area designated as an unscheduled monument of national importance (Taylor 2002, fig 8). The potential for archaeological remains within the site is likely to be low to moderate, with some palaeo-environmental potential.

The railway embankment was constructed principally because the site was low-lying marsh and remains prone to flooding. Oundle Station and Railway Hotel are located at points that are noticeably away from the riverside on the raised river gravel terrace. This means that the ground directly to the west of the Railway Hotel is very probably overlying the alluvial floodplain instead of the river gravel terrace. In real terms this ground would have been an unsuitable location for a continuation of the Roman town found to the east. Whilst the proposed development is immediately adjacent to extensive remains excavated in 1982-4, it is in a peripheral location on the edge of the Roman town.

The larger part of the site has not previously been developed in documented history, other than for the construction of the railway embankment. Neither has the land been under the plough, being used as water meadow. No evidence of medieval cultivation in the form of ridge and furrow is recorded. The causeway will have preserved archaeological remains beneath it, rather than truncating them. Alluvial sediment is likely to be thick overlying the natural gravels. Given the soft nature of the ground, it is possible that delicate remains, if they exist, may have been damaged by compaction from the weight of the railway embankment and alluvium, but on the whole the preservation conditions should be fairly good. Known remains which might exist are largely related to Roman settlement in the form of buildings, roads and related enclosures. A post-medieval Toll Gate may have been located at the east end of North Bridge to the north-west of the site, and could have been associated with an earthwork mapped within the site in 1886, but largely destroyed on the north side of Station Road during construction of a boat house prior to 1900.

The Roman town indicates the possibility for human burials. The bulk of the burials discovered in 1982-4 were excavated from within a cemetery that may have partially extended into the eastern edge of the present proposed development site during antiquity but has had some level of post-medieval quarry disturbance since that period. Many burials were recovered from beyond the limits of the cemetery and these have often been associated with other settlement features such as buildings or enclosures. To date they have not been identified extending upon the alluvial flood plain; settlement evidence, where it exists, may be limited to the east side of the site. It has been demonstrated with some degree of strength that the likelihood for Roman riverside wharves is slim at best since the river could not have been navigated. Waterside settlement for subsistence activities such as farming reeds or constructing fish traps and the possibility of a crossing point should still be considered, but are likely to be hard to identify. It is not known where the Roman river channel lay. It may have lain some distance west of its present location in which case medieval alluvial deposits may conceal Roman buried remains. The opposite may also be true and the river edge could have passed directly through the present development site, in which case anastomosing, alluvium filled palaeo-channels will remain along with hydrological features.

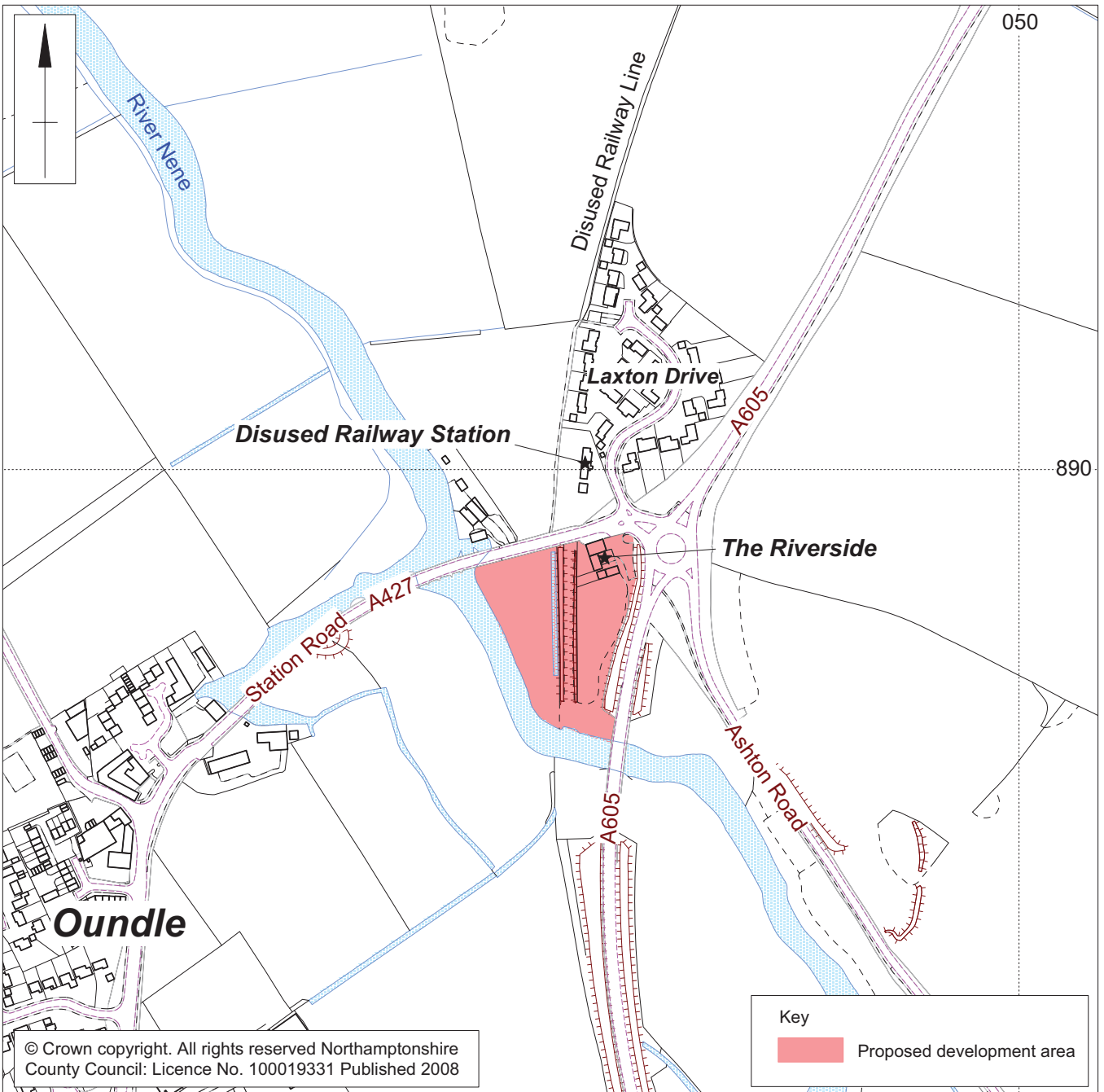
The alluvium may preserve environmental evidence that can provide information about the historic land use. The difficulty is that any attempt to gather such information must be secured from datable samples and it must be clear if the alluvium is of Roman or medieval origin. The preliminary assessment of materials gathered from the neighbouring excavations were described by Dr Mark Robinson as exceptional in terms of the variety of exotic species of both macroscopic plant remains and insect assemblages (Parry 1996, 15). Artefactual assemblages and human remains were generally considered to be of high quality with excellent potential for further research (Parry 1996, 12-15). Given the unfinished state of the Ashton research programme, the full environmental potential of the site is rather less well understood than would be desirable. The matter of environmental investigation and that of identifying a crossing point of the river are both research priorities for the Roman town of Ashton (Taylor 2002, 16-19).

There is also the slight possibility of other Roman features such as pottery kilns or even the presence of earlier Bronze Age burials located on the ridge of gravel overlooking the river. However, it is uncertain if any such remains, if they were ever present, have been damaged by the construction of the railway and former hotel.

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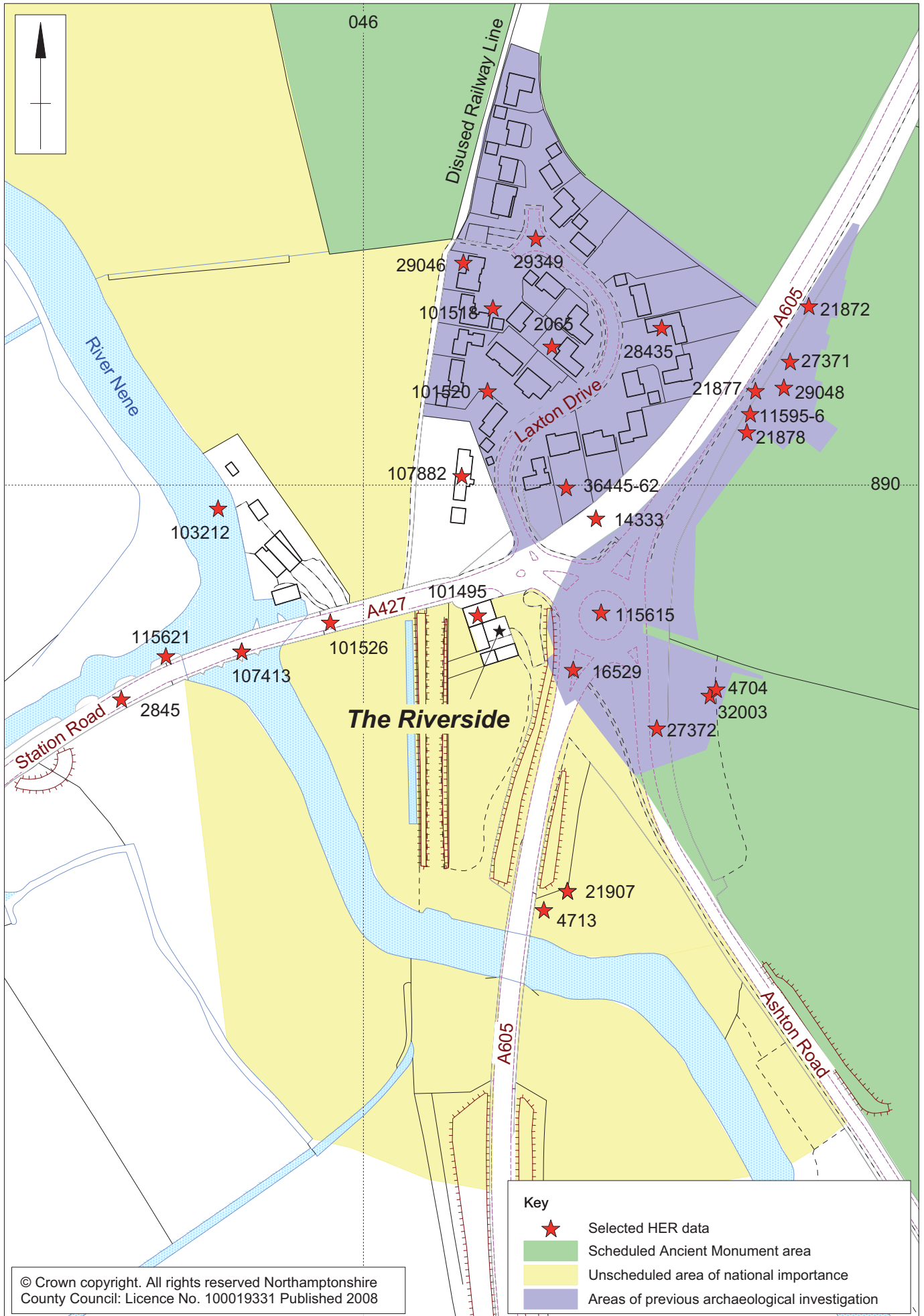
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Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:2500

Areas of archaeological sensitivity Fig 2

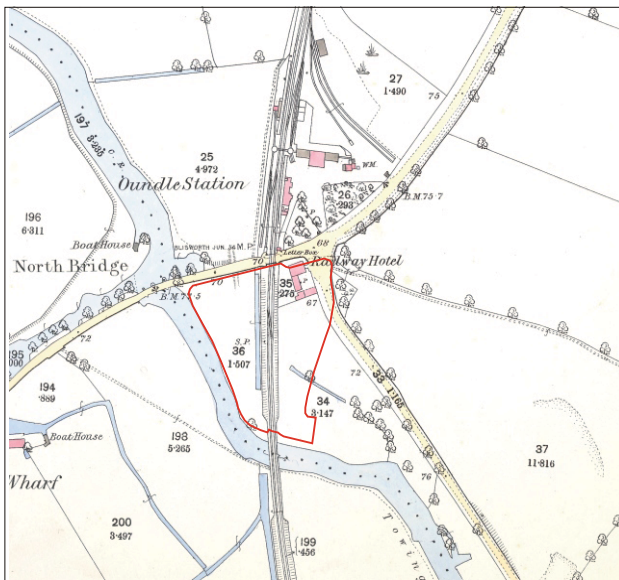


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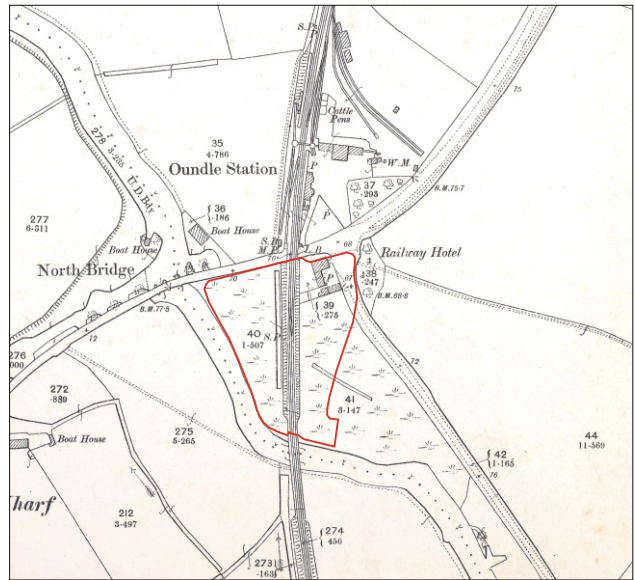
Excavation of Ashton Roman town Fig 3



Inclosure map of Ashton, 1810 (NRO Map 2858) Fig 4



1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1886, Sheet XIX.1 (NRO Map 1533) Fig 5



Ordnance Survey, revised 1900, Sheet XIX.1 (NRO Map 1539) Fig 6

Proposed development area



Plate 1: East facade looking west



Plate 2 Window of room on east front showing window frame



Plate 3 North facade looking south



Plate 4 South facade looking north



Plate 5: West facade looking east



Plate 6: East side of single storey range looking west



Plate 7 Barn looking south - cart hovel eastern end and hayloft door to first floor towards western end



Plate 8 Roof structure of barn looking west showing roof truss and hayloft door from two-storey western section



Plate 9 Central corridor of hotel looking west from door in east facade



Plate 10 Staircase from ground floor



Plate 11 Bedroom on south side of building with cross-eaves window looking south