



Northamptonshire
County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

A programme of archaeological works
during play equipment replacement work at Brackley
Park Playground,
Brackley, Northamptonshire
May 2008



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June 2008

Report 08/154

Northamptonshire Archaeology

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Steve Parry		
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Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	A programme of archaeological works during play equipment replacement work at Brackley Park Playground, Brackley, Northamptonshire.	
Short description	A programme of archaeological works was undertaken at Brackley Park Playground, Brackley Northamptonshire by Northamptonshire Archaeology on behalf of The National Trust during May 2008. The work comprised the archaeological excavation of a single pit for a new trampoline. This was followed by an archaeological watching brief during the replacement of the remaining playground equipment. A truncated natural substratum was present across all of the development area. No archaeological deposits were present and no artefacts were recovered.	
Project type	Excavation of a single pit and watching Brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Public playground	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Brackley Park Playground, Brackley, Northamptonshire	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 587 373	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	The National Trust Territory Archaeologist (North)	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	David J. Leigh	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Brackley Town Council	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	May 2008	
End date	May 2008	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper	The National Trust	Watching brief forms (3) Colour slides (18) black and white contact prints (18) Digital photographs (6) pottery sherds (3)
Digital		Report text and figures

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**A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS DURING PLAY EQUIPMENT
REPLACEMENT WORK AT BRACKLEY PARK PLAYGROUND,
BRACKLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
MAY 2008**

Abstract

A programme of archaeological works was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in May 2008 during play equipment replacement work at Brackley Park Playground, Brackley, Northamptonshire. A truncated natural substratum was present across all of the development area. No archaeological deposits were present and small quantity of medieval pottery was recovered from an unstratified context.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in May 2008 during play equipment replacement work at Brackley Park Playground, Brackley, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 587 373: Fig 1; Plate 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Brackley Town Council following a specification submitted to the National Trust Territory Archaeologist (North) by Northamptonshire Archaeology on the 22nd April 2008 (Leigh 2008).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography

Brackley Park Playground is located at the southern end of Brackley Park, which is itself situated on the east of Brackley Park High Street at the northern end of the town. Whilst the park is under the management of Brackley Town Council the land is owned by the National Trust

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising Till.

2.2 Historical Background

The development area lies at the northern end of the present town of Brackley which is located in the south-west of Northamptonshire. In 1086 Brackley was an agricultural village with two Manorial holdings which appear to have comprised an estate and ecclesiastical centre. Within a century of the conquest the new town was created and the original village was thereafter known as *The Old Town*. Subsequently Brackley profited from the wool trade, becoming the second wealthiest town in the country by the 14th century.

However by the late medieval period, at which time a change in the wool trade saw a concentration on the Cotswold wool towns, Brackleys commercial base collapsed. The town went into rapid decline, falling back on its lesser function as a purely local market centre, a role which continues to the present day.

The development area lies within an area of archaeological interest close to Brackley Manor House, and within the former garden of the house. In this respect, remains associated with the former garden or medieval tenements, that are known to have existed on the site, may be present within the park.

Previous archaeological work within the development area has comprised a basic desk-based assessment, which was conducted in 1987. Some archaeological works were undertaken during the installation of playground equipment in the 1980s, however the exact nature of the works and the results are not presently available.

Up to the present the park has comprised a grassed recreation area, open to the public, along with an area of hard-standing at the southern end of the park which contains children's play equipment. The present works have been undertaken in order to enhance this facility, and to comply with current health and safety requirements.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the archaeological programme of works was to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the installation of the new playground equipment and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered.
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts.
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The fieldwork comprised the archaeological excavation of a single pit for a new trampoline, followed by archaeological observation during groundworks for the installation of playground equipment. The trampoline pit measured 1.25m square with a maximum depth of 0.50m. All the groundworks were carried out using hand tools.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The archaeological work was carried out following

Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures for archaeological work, and in accordance with the National Trust document *General Requirements and Conditions for Countryside and Garden Work (V 9/96)*. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 2000).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The trampoline pit

The pit for the new trampoline base was archaeologically excavated by hand, and was 1.25m square with a maximum depth of 0.50m.

The stratigraphic sequence comprised natural pale grey/brown compact clay, this was encountered at a depth of 0.50m below present ground surface. This was sealed by mid grey/brown silt loam, up to 0.38m thick, containing numerous limestone fragments (un-worked). Three small, un-diagnostic sherds of medieval pottery and small fragments of modern ceramic building material were recovered from this deposit. The modern material was not retained. Overlying this was dark grey/brown silt loam topsoil/turf, up to 0.11m thick, containing occasional irregular stones.

4.2 The watching brief

A watching brief was conducted across the area of the playground subject to groundworks for the installation of the new equipment. Three post-pads were cut into the top of the turf, these did not penetrate through the turf layer and no stratigraphic evidence was obtained.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	3
Colour slides	18
Black and white contacts and negatives	18
Digital photographs	6
Pottery sherds	3

6 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation of the trampoline pit revealed the natural substratum overlain by modern material which contained three small un-diagnostic pottery sherds of medieval date along with small fragments of modern ceramic building material. It is probable, although it cannot be stated with certainty that this material was laid across the area as a sub-base for the hard-standing of the new playground. In this respect it may be that the area contained within the confines of the playground has been subject to considerable modern disturbance.

Whether this has removed all evidence of earlier activity in this area is not clear, and thus the development area retains potential for archaeological investigation.

The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

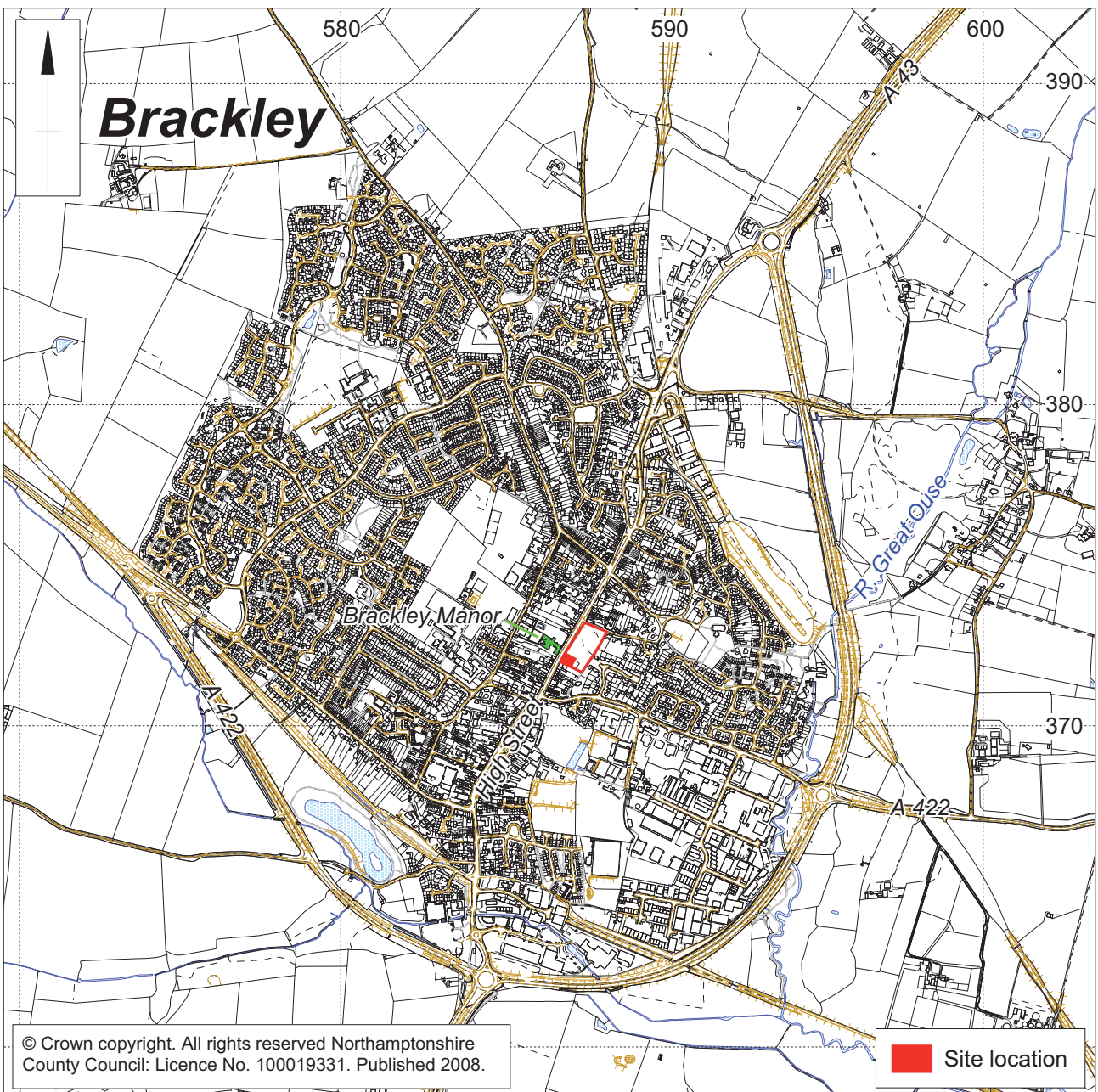
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IFA 2000 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

Leigh, D J 2008 Specification for archaeological works during play equipment replacement work at Brackley Park Playground, Brackley, Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire Archaeology
a service of Northamptonshire County Council

1st October 2008



Scale 1:20,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:500

Location of archaeological works Fig 2



Plate 1: Brackley Park Playground prior to the start of groundworks



Plate 2: The playground, groundworks in progress



Plate 3: The area of the new trampoline pit after removal of the topsoil (Scale 0.5m)



Plate 4: The trampoline pit after excavation (Scale 0.5m)