

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: LAND NORTH OF DELAPRE ABBEY RANSOME ROAD NORTHAMPTON

on behalf of Mencap Northampton



Nigel Wilson HND AIFA

November 2004

ASC: 600/NDA/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	NDA	<i>Project no:</i>	600
<i>County:</i>	Northamptonshire		
<i>District:</i>	Northampton Borough		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Hardingstone		
<i>Parish:</i>	Hardingstone CP		
<i>NGR:</i>	SP 75900 59300		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 1ha		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Disused		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of new day centre		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	N/2004/157		
<i>Client:</i>	Mencap C/o Hancock Associates Clock House Weston Underwood Olney Bucks MK46 5JZ		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Tom Hancock		
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Internal Quality Check

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CONTENTS

Summary	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Aims & Methods	8
3. Results.	9
4. Conclusions	12
5. Acknowledgements	13
6. Archive	13
7. References	14

Appendices:

1. Trench Summary Tables.....	
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Figures:

1. General location	3
2. Site plan.....	6
3. Plan of the proposed development	7
4. Trench location plan	10

Plates:

Cover: General view of the site

1. Posthole 106 and Wall 108.....	11
2. Pit 404.....	11

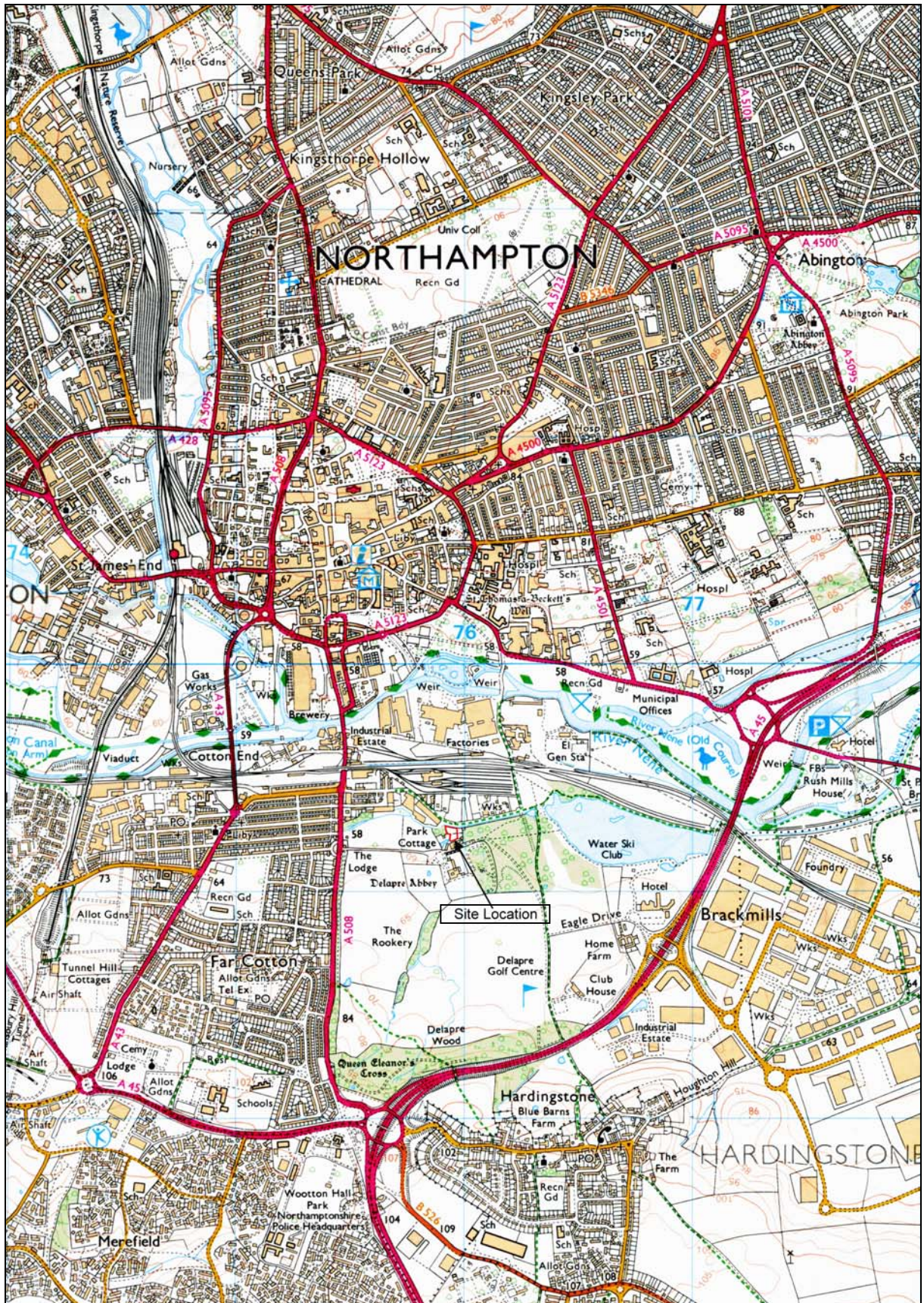


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During October 2004, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on a parcel of land to the north of Delapre Abbey, Northampton. The work was required to fulfil a PPG16 planning condition imposed by Northampton Borough Council.

An initial desk-based assessment concluded that no known sites lay within the confines of the site. However a number of possible Prehistoric and Roman sites have been recorded on the Northamptonshire SMR in the vicinity of Delapre Abbey. An aerial photograph taken during the 1940's shows a cropmark interpreted as a early cruciform church to the north of the site.

The evaluation comprised four trenches. With the exception of a late 18th or early 19th century stone wall aligned east to west and shown on the 1st edition large scale Ordnance Survey plan the trenches were archaeologically sterile.

1 Introduction

1.1 During October 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an archaeological evaluation on a plot of land to the north of Delapre Abbey, Northampton (NGR SP 75900 59300: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Hancock Associates on behalf of Mencap, and was carried out according to a brief (Flitcroft 2004) prepared by the Historic Environment Team, Northamptonshire County Council (HET), and a project design prepared by ASC (Griffiths & Fell 2004).

1.2 Reason for Work

Under current planning legislation archaeology can be considered as a material factor in determining the outcome of planning decisions, specific guidance is given in Planning Guidance Note 16 (PPG16).

Mencap Northampton have been granted planning permission (N/2004/157) to construct a multi-purpose Day Centre on land north of Delapre Abbey. As the area is of considerable archaeological and historical interest the HET advised Northampton Borough Council (NBC) that there was insufficient information available to allow the proposals' impact on this part of the Borough's historic environment to be assessed, and that additional information from an archaeological evaluation would be required. A condition to this effect was placed on the development by NBC in line with the guidance given in PPG16.

1.3 Setting

1.3.1 Location, description and extent

The site is situated in Northampton. It lies to the south of the town centre, c.500m south of the river Nene in an open area east of the A508 London Road (Fig. 1). It comprises a subrectangular plot of land to the north of Delapre Abbey and covers an area of c.1 hectare (Fig. 2).

1.3.2 Geology and topography

The site is in an essentially urban area and the natural soil has not been mapped. It lies on a gravel terrace of the river Nene. In adjacent areas, the soils in these locations comprise the Fladbury 1 Association, namely stoneless clayey soil over alluvium (Soil Survey 1983, 813b). The site is essentially flat and lies at an elevation of *c.*60m OD.

1.3.3 *Historical background*

Prehistoric and Roman remains are not currently known from the site, but the site may contain remains from the Saxon and later periods.

A cruciform cropmark interpreted as a Saxon/early medieval church has been located to the north of the site (section 3.4.3, above). The church may have been part of an early monastic complex, which may have extended into the site.

Delapre Abbey was founded *c.*1145 and was probably centred to the south of the site. The abbey was one of only two Cluniac nunneries in England and is of considerable historical significance. Parts of the monastic buildings, including the cloister and church are thought to have been incorporated into the later 18th century house constructed to the south of the site. A number of fishponds, possibly serving the nunnery are situated adjacent to the site and remains of the monastic complex may be present within the site. The site is situated between the monastic complex and the cruciform cropmark, and therefore has the potential to add to understanding of both these monuments.

The site is situated on, or close to, the site of the Battle of Northampton (1460). This was a significant event during the Wars of the Roses and a subject of considerable local and national interest. Battle field sites are considered worthy of archaeological and historical study and the site offers the potential to reveal such remains.

A mansion was constructed on the site of the main monastic buildings during the 18th century and the surrounding area was probably converted into a park. The site falls within the grounds of the mansion and is shown on 18th century maps as part of an enclosure, possibly an orchard. A variety of garden features are shown within the site on 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey maps and the site may have been converted into a kitchen garden.



Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:1250)

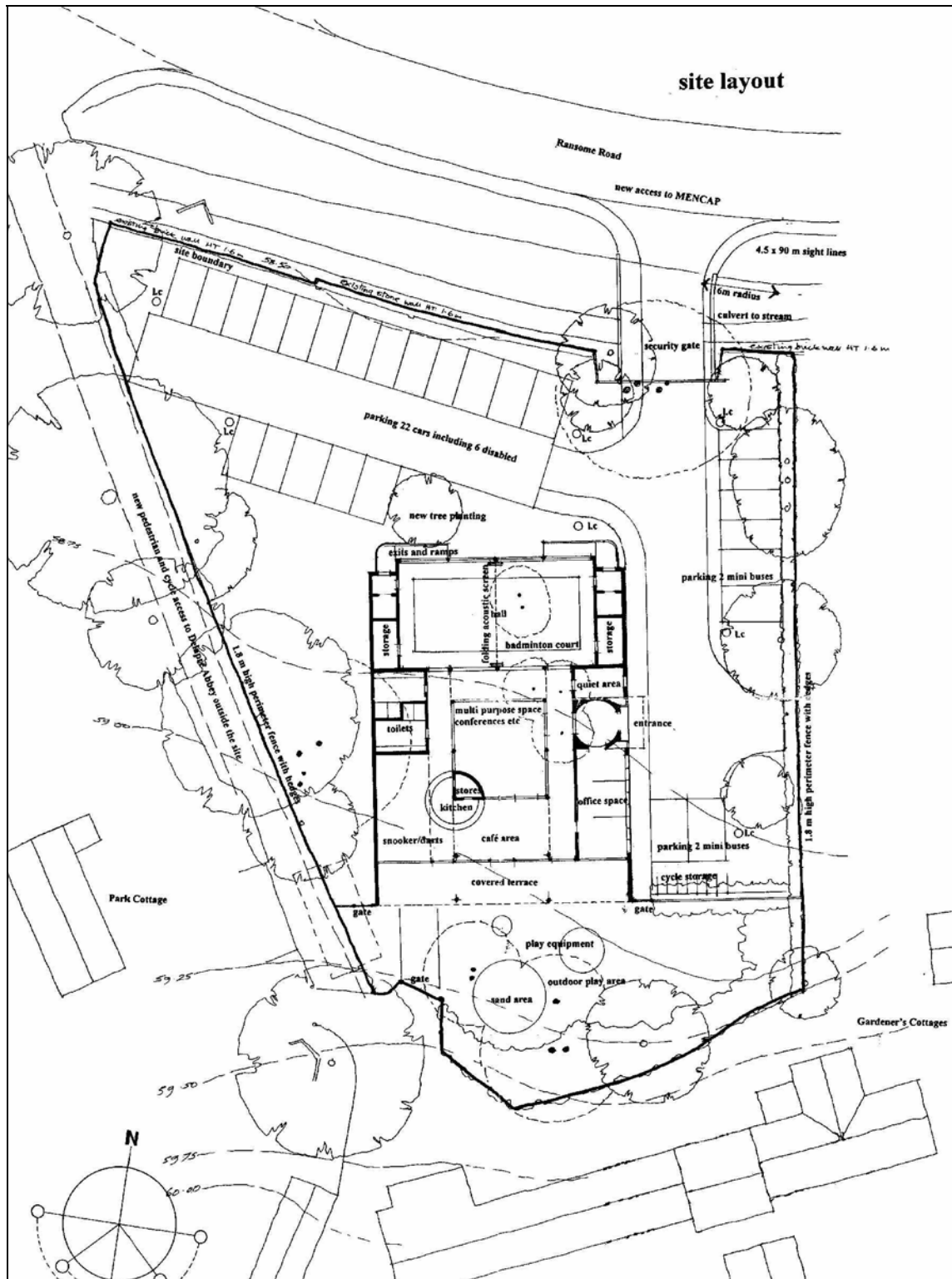


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development (*not to scale*)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 2), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To carry out preliminary trial works to determine the degree to which buried remains and visible earthworks survived and their extent
- To provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision on the need for additional archaeological recording
- If necessary to undertake further archaeological investigation in order to record significant remains threatened by the development
- To ensure that a permanent record of the work was created

2.2 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 3), which required:

- A desk-based study
- Archaeological trial trenching
- A report detailing the results of the evaluation (this document)

The brief also required:

- An earthwork survey
- A geophysical survey

Due to the overgrown nature of the site and services it was agreed with the HET that the latter surveys were impractical, and they were thus dropped from the requirements.

2.3 *Standards*

The work conforms to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

3 Results

- 3.1 Four trenches (Fig 4) were mechanically excavated using a wheeled excavator fitted with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket.
- 3.2 Natural strata was reached in each trench and comprised yellowish alluvial deposits dipping northwards towards the river. In Trench 4 the top of the natural Ironstone was exposed, dipping to the southeast.
- 3.3 Above the natural a similar sequence was observed in each trench. Above the natural there was a 0.2m thick layer of mixed dark organic soil with frequent clinker and charcoal fragments. Above this layer there was a 0.5m thick deposit of mid to light brown silt sand with occasional fragments of sandstone. The most recent deposit was a layer of topsoil up to 0.5m in depth.
- 3.4 The only features of any archaeological significance were discovered in Trench 1. A shallow gully (0.6 wide x 0.1 deep), orientated northwest to southeast was cut into the natural. The clean silty fill and depth below the modern ground surface suggest that this feature was formed by natural water action along the flood plain of the river. Several foundation courses of an east to west sandstone wall survived towards the southern end of the trench. This wall is not depicted on the 1767 Enclosure or Bouvrie Estate maps. By 1887 when the 1st edition large scale Ordnance Survey plan was produced it is shown, with a brick structure immediately to the south. The footings for this brick structure were also noted during the evaluation. On the 2nd edition OS plan of 1901 the wall is still shown but the brick structure has been removed. Sometime after 1947 the stonewall was also removed. The only other feature was a small posthole probably modern cut from the base of the topsoil.
- 3.5 The only dateable finds from the site were a few fragments of 19th or 20th century transfer printed ceramics. At the northern end of Trench 4 a small pit c.1.0m in diameter, was identified cut from just below the topsoil. Within the pit was a quantity of broken pan tiles, which could date from any time from the late medieval period onwards.

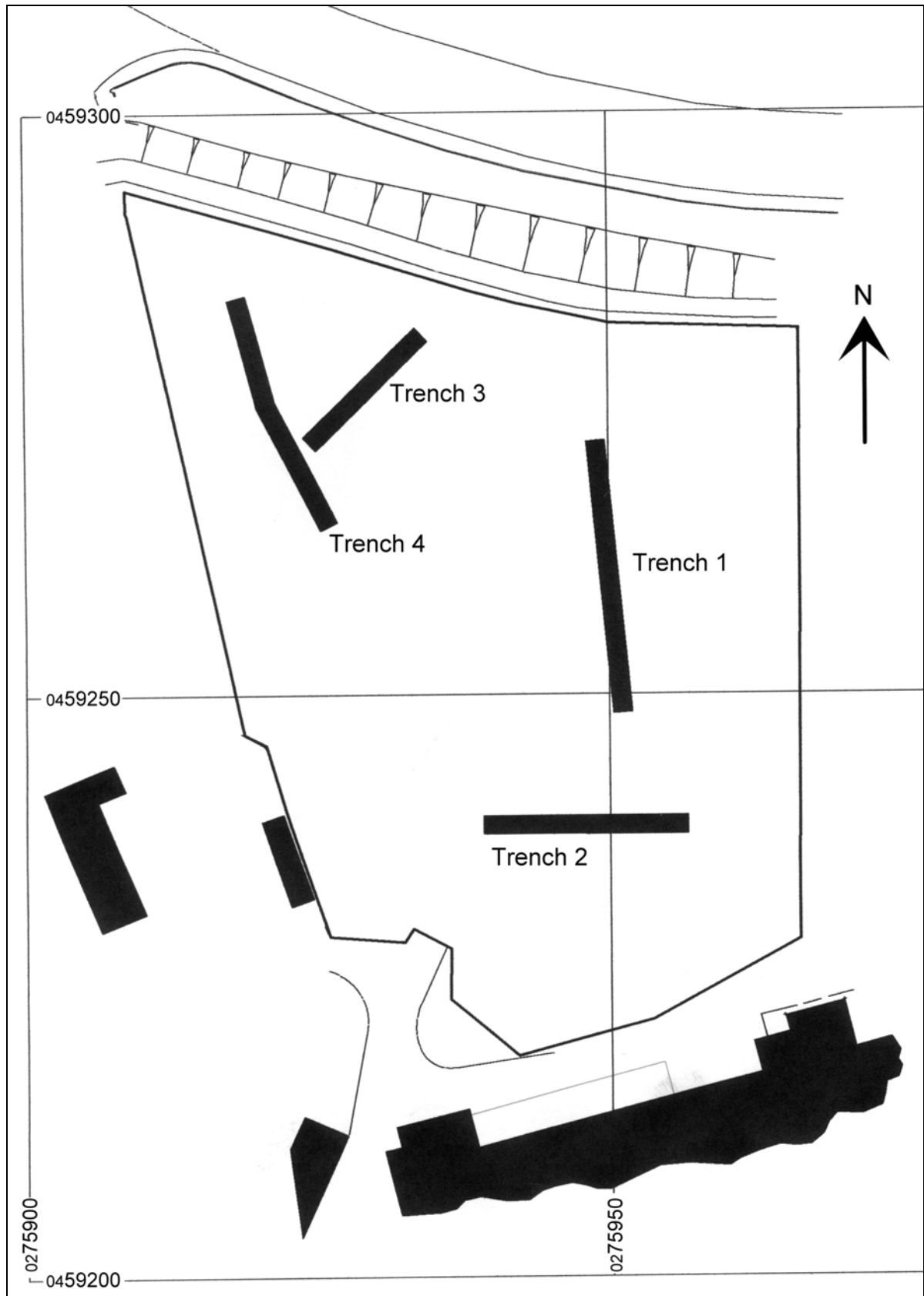


Figure 4: Trench location plan (*scale 1:500*)



Plate 1: Posthole 106 and Wall 108



Plate 2: Pit 404

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The HET had requested the work at Delapre to be able to inform NBC the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment of the site. The desk-based assessment had revealed that no archaeological sites or monuments were known on the site prior to the opening of the evaluation trenches.
- 4.2 The excavation of the evaluation trenches demonstrates that the site lies on the flood plain of the River Nene. It also confirms that the site had not been developed until the late 18th or early 19th century. At this time the site appears to have been laid out as part of the gardens (kitchen garden?) associated with Delapre Abbey.
- 4.3 In the light of the desk-based assessment and evaluation it seems unlikely that the development is going to impact on any significant archaeological remains, though a number of small post medieval features may be disturbed during the groundworks.
- 4.4 The work was carried out under good lighting conditions by a team experienced in this type of work. The results can thus be given a high confidence rating.

5. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Hancock Associates, for commissioning ASC Ltd to undertake the evaluation on behalf of their client Mencap Northampton. Myk Flitcroft at the HET prepared the brief and monitored the fieldwork. We would also like to acknowledge all the staff at the Northampton SMR and Record Office for their assistance during the project. The project was undertaken under the overall management of Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA, and the fieldwork was undertaken by Nigel Wilson and Nick Crank.

6. Archive

6.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site records
6. List of photographs/slides
7. Colour slides
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

6.2 The archive will be deposited with Northampton Museum.

7. Bibliography

EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).


Griffiths G. & Fell D. 2004 *Land North of Delapre Abbey, Ransome Road, Northampton*. Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation (ASC Ltd, ref 600/NDA/1r)

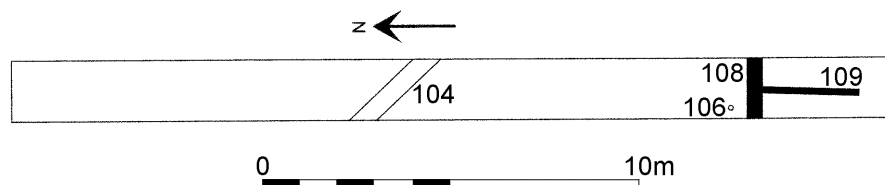
IFA 2000 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.


Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).


Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables


Trench 1							
		Max Dimensions (m)					
		Length	23.39	Width	1.6m	Depth	1.2
		Levels					
		Trench top north		58.61m OD			
		Trench base north		57.89m OD			
		Trench base south		58.57m OD			
		Trench top south		58.68m OD			
		NGR Co-ordinates					
		E	75951.13		N	59248.43	
		E	75948.86		N	59271.71	
Orientation		N-S					
Reason for Trench		Test eastern side of site					
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
101	Layer	Dark grey/ brown silty loam (topsoil)			1600	500	0
102	Layer	Mid to light brown silty sand, fragments of limestone, and charcoal clinker. Root disturbance			1600	500	500
103	Layer	Light brown/ yellow silty sand, natural			1600	n/a	1000
104	Cut	Gully orientation NW-SE, very shallow, most likely formed by water action rather than cut.					
105	Fill	Yellowish brown sandy silt.					
106	Cut	Posthole, cut from topsoil level, modern					
107	Fill	Dark yellowish brown sandy silt					
108	Wall	Foundation courses of E-W sandstone wall C18th/ 19th					
109	Wall	Brick wall to south of Wall108					



Plan of Trench 1 (scale 1:200)

Trench 2							
		Max Dimensions (m)					
		Length	17.54	Width	1.6	Depth	0.75
		Levels					
		Trench top east		58.79m OD			
		Trench base east		m O58.30D			
		Trench base west		58.50m OD			
		Trench top west		59.11m OD			
		NGR Co-ordinates					
		E	75956.66		N	59238.81	
		E	75939.11		N	59238.86	
		Orientation		E-W			
		Reason for Trench		Test southern end of site			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
201	Layer	Dark grey/ brown silty loam (topsoil)		1600	500	0	
202	Layer	Mid to light brown silty sand, fragments of limestone, and charcoal clinker some areas with higher concentration of clinker. Root disturbance		1600	150	500	
203	Layer	Light brown/ yellow silty sand, natural		1600	n/a	650	

Trench 3							
	Max Dimensions (m)						
	Length	13.5	Width	1.6	Depth	0.8	
	Levels						
	Trench top northeast			58.65m OD			
	Trench base northeast			58.10m OD			
	Trench base southwest			58.10m OD			
	Trench top southwest			58.72m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates						
	E	75933.90		N	59280.95		
	E	75924.19		N	59271.56		
	Orientation			NE-SW			
	Reason for Trench			Test northern end of site			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
301	Layer	Dark grey/ brown silty loam (topsoil)			1600	500	0
302	Layer	Light brown/ yellow silty sand			1600	n/a	500

Trench 4							
		Max Dimensions					
		Length	21.17	Width	1.6	Depth	1.1
		Levels					
		Trench top northwest		58.61m OD			
		Trench base northwest		57.95m OD			
		Trench base southeast		57.96m OD			
		Trench top southeast		58.62m OD			
		NGR Co-ordinates					
		N	75918.03		E	59284.14	
		N	75925.88		E	59264.48	
		Orientation		NW-SE			
		Reason for Trench		Test eastern area of the site			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation		Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
401	Layer	Dark grey/ brown silty loam (topsoil)		1600	400	0	
402	Layer	Mid to light brown silty sand, fragments of limestone, and charcoal clinker. Root disturbance		1600	300	400	
403		Light brown/ yellow silty sand		1600			
404	Cut	Circular pit (modern)		1000	300	400	
405	Fill	Yellowish brown silty sand, frequent broken pan tiles		1000	300	400	

SMR Summary

SMR Record Number	Parish Hardingstone	Site Name Land north of Delapre Abbey
Date of Fieldwork 29 th October 2004	Grid ref. SP 75900 59300	Fieldworker Nigel Willson
Sponsor Hancock Associates	Activity Evaluation	
Landowner name/address: Mencap Northampton		
Finds location N/a	Finds Destination N/a	
Records location ASC Ltd	Records Destination Northampton museum	
Finds Quantity N/a	Records Quantity	
Summary of Results		
<p><i>During October 2004, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on a parcel of land to the north of Delapre Abbey, Northampton. The work was required to fulfil a PPG16 planning condition imposed by Northampton Borough Council.</i></p> <p><i>An initial Desk-base Assessment concluded that no known sites lay within the confines of the site. However a number of possible Prehistoric and Roman sites have been recorded on the Northamptonshire SMR in the vicinity of Dleapre Abbey. An aerial photograph taken during the 1940's shows a cropmark interpreted as a early cruciform church to the north of the site.</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation comprised four trenches. With the exception of a late 18th or early 19th century stonewall aligned east to west and shown on the 1st edition large scale ordnace survey plan the trenches were archaeologically sterile.</i></p>		