

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

MOAT HOUSE, CHURCH LANE, ALDERTON,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NGR SP 74037 46964

On behalf of

Brian Patton

OCTOBER 2014

REPORT FOR Brian Patton
Moat House
Church Lane
Alderton
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services undertook an archaeological evaluation of this site on the 21st October 2014. Two archaeological evaluation trenches were machine excavated revealing the remains a medieval wall along with deep medieval soils relating to potential inter-cutting features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located at Moat House, on the north side of Church Lane, Alderton. An extension is to be located at the eastern end of the existing house, extending 4.00m north of the present north wall. Topographically the site is reasonably level and situated above the height of Church Lane itself. It lies at an approximate height of 102m OD and is centred on grid ref SP 74037 46964. The geology maps indicate that the site contains Blisworth Formation Limestone.

1.2 Planning Background

South Northamptonshire Council granted planning consent for an extension to the existing dwelling (S/2014/0365/FUL). The Assistant Archaeological Advisor of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) prepared a *Brief* for a programme of archaeological investigation. The first stage was an archaeological field evaluation and this report details the results from the work.

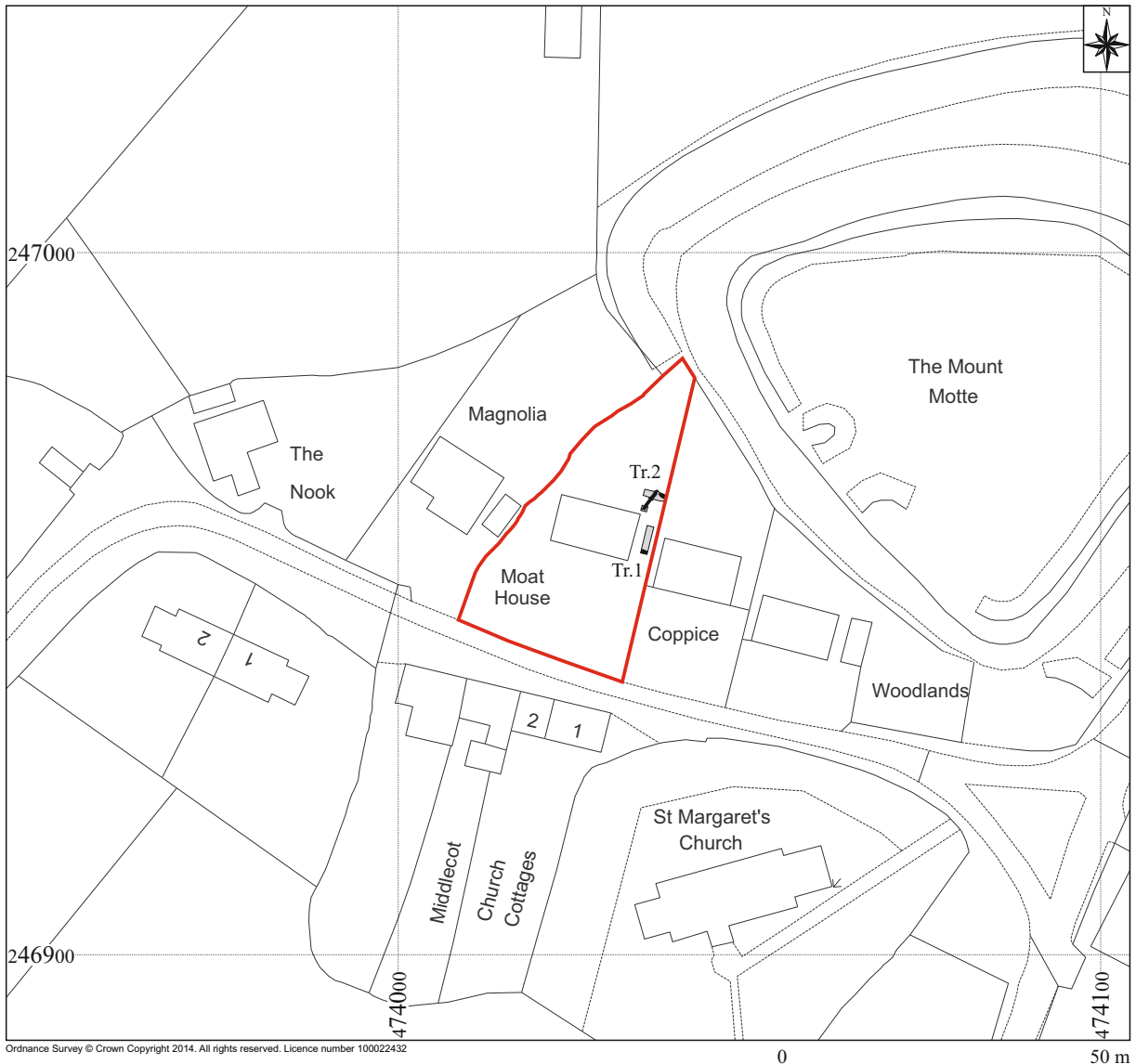
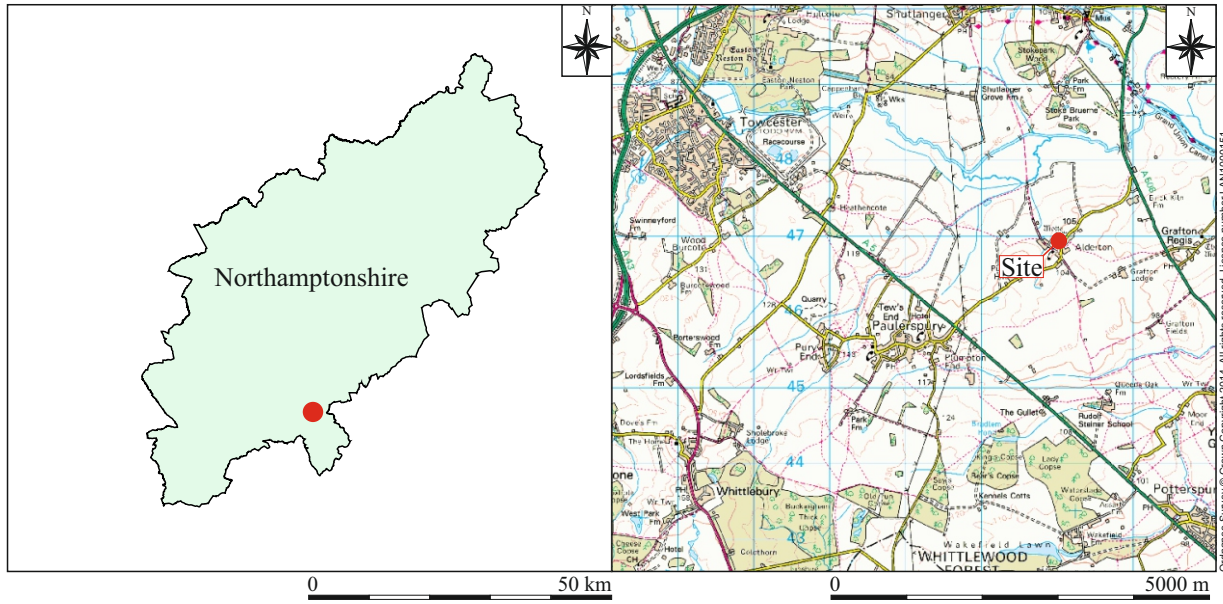
1.3 Archaeological Background

The remains of two undated sites have been located in the immediate vicinity of Alderton. The first of these is a series of ditches and banks noted on aerial photographs (EH 373368: SP 749 462). The second is a prehistoric or Roman irregular enclosure that also show up on aerial photographs (EH 93370: SP 750 462).

An event at New Cottage in Alderton identified the remains of an inhumation, which was undated (SP 74050 46930).

The site lies within the historic settlement of Alderton. Early Medieval pottery has been recovered from the vicinity of the village (ENN6548: SP 742 480).

The Mount (a scheduled monument) has undergone a series of evaluations which show that the site may have originated as an early medieval site, which has been termed a burh (DNN2098, SP 74082 46981). These evaluations also interpreted the site as a ringwork with moat, ditch, gate and building with postholes. The site is considered to be a castle mound with dated references to 1154-1204 and 1226 (EH 343046: SP 7408 4697) and lies NNE of the proposal site. A possible forerunner to this is another scheduled site, motte NW of parish church, a small motte *c.* 100ft in diameter with a ditch 25ft across (DNN5332, SP73910 46977) lying to the west of the proposal site. The church of Saint Margaret is a grade II* listed building which was constructed in the later perpendicular period (DNN1598, EH 1342519: SP 74048



Key Site boundary Evaluation trenches Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

46909). The village of Alderton contains the remains of a shrunken medieval village in earthwork form (EH 343061: SP 740 468). The remains of an open field system of a medieval date exist (ENN6547: SP 7355 4756) along with the site of a hollow way of a probable medieval date (ENN6862: SP 739 467). The remains of an undated wall have been uncovered (ENN101772: SP 7408 4693). Presumably this has to be medieval or post-medieval.

The manor house at Alderton was built in 1582 (HE 343045: SP 7387 4696). The manor house was not shown on a map of 1726 and it is considered that it was demolished at that time. The current house is of the 19th century. There are indications of medieval platforms, fishponds and later formal gardens (ENN6540/6542).

The village contains a number of listed buildings, which includes the church and a number of domestic dwellings. The Round House is a 17th century listed structure (DNN1621, EH 1190772: SP 74058 46860), as are the row of 1, 2, 3 and 4 Spring Lane (DNN1626: SP 7402 4673). The Manor Farmhouse was constructed in 1695 and contains 19th century alterations (DNN1608, HE 1293645: SP 74063 46761). Alterations were carried out on these structures in the 19th century. Orchard Cottage is a grade II listed structure of the late 17th to early 18th centuries (DNN1606, HE 1040822: SP 74083 46827). The building at 4 Church Lane is a listed building of a similar date (DNN1600, HE 1040821: SP 74005 46937). Bekenpenn is the location of an early to mid-18th century listed building (DNN4447, HE 1293656: SP 73820 46829). Longcroft is the site of a grade II listed structure of the mid-18th century (DNN4450, EH 1040824: SP 73778 46900). The farm buildings at the Manor Farmhouse are dated to the early to mid-19th century and are also grade II listed (DNN1614, EH 1040823: SP 74115 46786).

The remains of a village smithy have been identified (ENN13642: SP 7404 4695).

Investigation at the Coppice in Church Lane produced negative results (SP 74040 46950).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- In particular to determine whether remains related to Castle Mount or the medieval settlement of Alderton extend onto the development site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

The evaluation comprised the mechanical excavation of two trenches, one 4.00m long and one 3.00m long (see Fig. 1). Excavation was by a 0.5 tonne excavator equipped with a 1.00 m ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was used to remove topsoil and overburden to the uppermost archaeological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material. The resulting surfaces were cleaned and excavated by hand where appropriate to achieve the objectives of the investigation.

Liz Mordue, planning archaeologist from NCC, monitored the work.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cuts and the fills for walls, possible pit and a large spread of medieval soils, all of which were excavated by hand. Context numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

Trench 1

The natural geological deposit in this area was not identified within this trench. The machine excavation of this trench removed an upper layer of disturbed topsoil (1/01) which contained at the surface abundant broken concrete, building rubble, old metal and modern glass and which consisted of a compact grey silt-clay soil to a depth of approximately 0.45m from present ground surface. Removal of it revealed two features of archaeological interest.

The topsoil was shown to be overlying a large spread of compacted dark grey silt-clay with frequent small stone inclusions and moderate amounts of small charcoal fragments (1/02). A small intervention was dug into this spread, to a depth of 0.80m from the present ground surface. No feature sides or base could be seen and the



Plate 1 – View to south along Trench 1

intervention confirmed that this spread was at least 0.35m thick and probably much thicker. A considerable amount of medieval pottery was recovered along with four fragments of animal bone from this context and a soil sample of 40 litres was taken for analysis.



Plate 2 – Intervention into Medieval soil

Additionally, at the southernmost end of the trench, removal of topsoil uncovered a rubble layer consisting of a large amount of broken limestone blocks of various sizes within a soil matrix of grey silt-clay with occasional lime mortar pieces (1/03). This layer of rubble was at least 0.20m thick and it is considered to be the demolition deposit for a possible medieval wall not uncovered in this investigation.

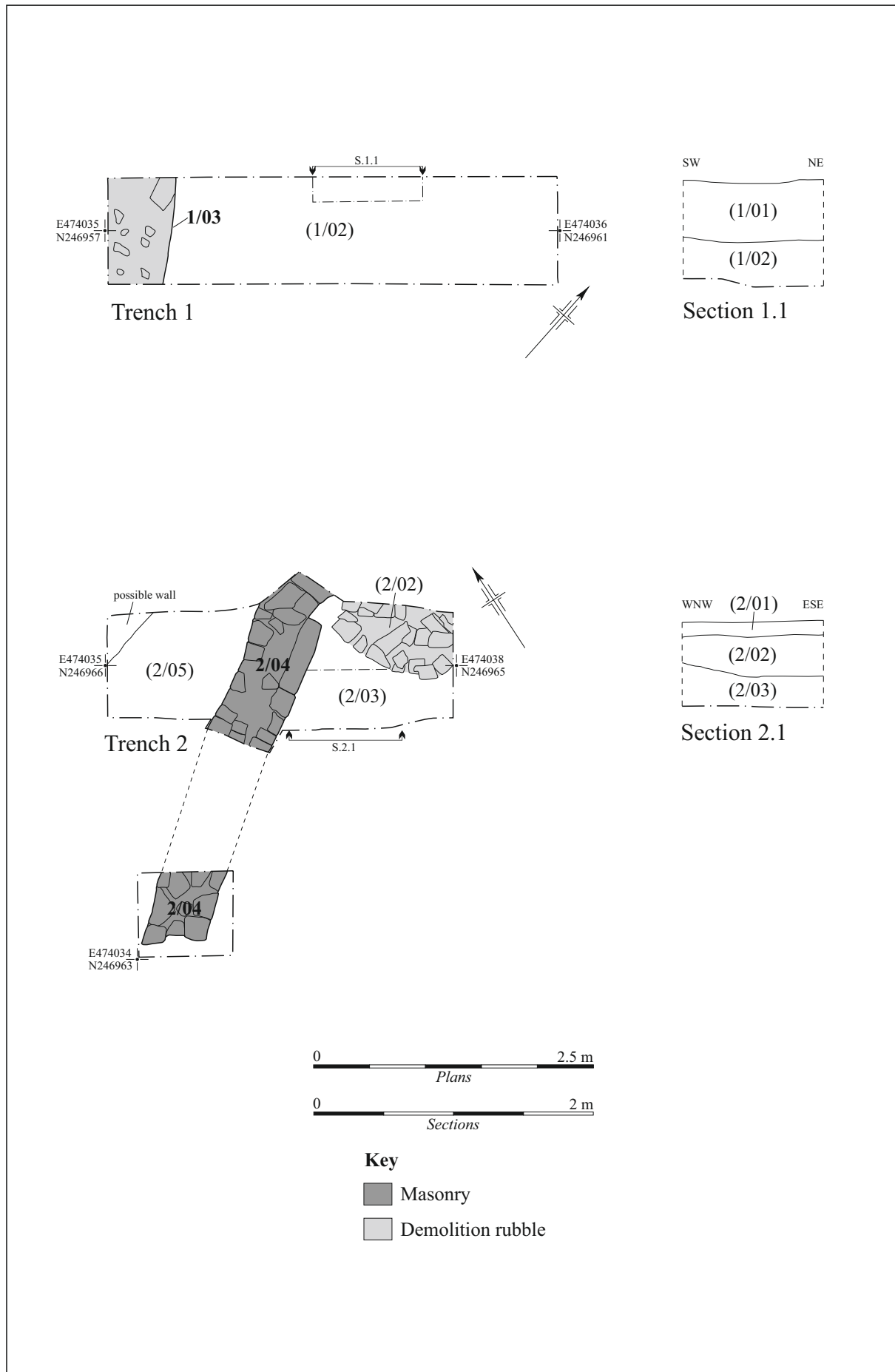


Figure 2: Trenches 1 and 2 - plans and sections



Plate 3 – Limestone Rubble in south of Trench



Plate 4 – View to west across rubble deposit

Trench 2

The natural geological deposit in this trench was a light blue-grey clay with rare limestone/chalk inclusions (2/05), overlain by a mixed garden soil of friable dark grey silt-clay (2/01). This trench contained two significant archaeological features.



Plate 5 – General View of Trench 2 Investigation Area

Running NE-SW across the centre of the trench were the remains of a wall 2/04. This was 0.56m wide x 0.50m in height with the uppermost course only 0.08m below the present ground surface. 1.60m of the wall's length was uncovered in this trench. It had been constructed with varying sizes of roughly hewn limestone blocks laid flat in a yellow-brown lime mortar and consisted in places of at least 4-5 courses. Some of the building material had dressed faces on the exposed outer edges of the wall.



Plate 6 – *Wall Foundation 2/04*

To the east of the wall remains was a further large collection of limestone blocks, loose and poorly sorted within a mixed soil matrix of friable grey silt-clay with occasional patches of the same lime mortar (2/02). This was clearly evidence of collapse or demolition of the existing wall foundation (2/04), but there was the possibility that perhaps this may have been part of a second wall either abutting wall 2/04 or being the return to run in a SE-NW direction. As this layer was left *in-situ* this question could neither be confirmed or denied during this investigation.



Plate 7 – *Demolition Deposit 2/02*



Plate 8 – *Close up of Demolition Deposit 2/02*

An additional small test hole 0.90m x 0.70m was excavated close to the NE corner of the existing house that confirmed that the wall 2/04 extended 2.00m SW from trench 2 whereby it had been truncated by the building of the modern Moat House.



Plate 9 – Test Hole showing Wall 2/04

Additionally, at the very western end of this trench a small amount of broken limestone was seen in the northern corner. This was not fully investigated at this time as it was considered best practice to leave *in situ* until new proposals for the construction of the extension could be agreed, but it is likely that this material was more rubble relating to the medieval foundation.

Both the wall and the demolition deposit within this trench overlay a layer of compact dark grey silt-clay with a moderate amount of small chalk/limestone pieces and abundant charcoal flecked inclusions (2/03), very similar to that seen in Trench 1 (1/02) and later cut by a modern drainage pipe. A small intervention hand dug into this layer showed it to be at least 0.26m thick and a few pieces of medieval pottery (unfortunately left on site) were recovered from this fill. No feature sides or base were identified.



Plate 10 – Layer 2/03 below Topsoil and Demolition rubble

Observations of the area immediately south of trench 2 also showed that there was the remains of a small tiled surface, lain directly onto the topsoil. This consisted of orange and yellow tiles and was interpreted as a probable post-medieval garden path or patio (2/07).



Plate 11 – *Post-Medieval Tiled Surface 2/07*

4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques

The work was conducted in blustery and occasionally wet, overcast conditions, but this did not hamper the work in any way so it is felt the reliability of the results and techniques employed were very good.

5 FINDS

5.1 Medieval pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 28 sherds with a total weight of 661g. It all occurred in a single context (1/02), and is 12th century in date. It was recorded using the conventions of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware, AD1000-1200. 1 sherd, 15g

F330: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 26 sherds, 623g

F1001: Romano-British. 1 sherd, 23g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region (e.g. McCarthy 1979), and suggests very strongly that the assemblage dates to the 12th century. Certainly, common early-mid 13th century wares such as Brill/Boarstall Ware (fabric F324) and Potterspury Ware (fabric F329) are entirely absent.

The sherds are all generally fairly large and in good condition, and appear reliably stratified. Most are from jars, along with a few fragments of bowls, which is again typical of 12th century assemblages in the region.

5.2 Animal bone

Four fragments of animal bone, probably sheep/goat, were present in context (1/02)

5.3 Environmental Remains *by John Moore*

The environmental sample from (1/02) was closely examined and only charcoal fragments were visible, no seeds were apparent.

6 DISCUSSION

Both trial trenches have uncovered very well preserved archaeological remains relating to the medieval period and the features within them are considered to be significant to the medieval village of Alderton and the 11th century ringwork.

The wall foundation is later than the dark soils.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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McCarthy, M, 1979 The Pottery in JH Williams *St Peter's St, Northampton. Excavations 1973-76* Northampton Development Corporation Monog Ser **2**, 151-242