

Hanson Aggregates

Corney Land, Stanwick Pit, Northamptonshire

NGR SP 957 707

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. EN90/74C

Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 1999

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Planning Ref. No. EN90/74C

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Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 1999

Summary

Between 1994 and 1997 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Corney Land, Stanwick Pit, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 957 707). One palaeochannel and several irregular features filled with a dark brown peaty material were observed. This material was sampled and is thought likely to be of earlier Pleistocene date (c. 20-40 000 BC). Otherwise no significant archaeological deposits were noted.

1 Introduction

The development proposal (planning application no. EN90/74C) comprised gravel extraction. An archaeological watching brief was required by Northants Heritage as the extraction area lay within an area of proven archaeological potential. The watching brief was commissioned by Hanson Aggregates (formerly ARC). It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Services.

2 Background (Fig. 1)

Archaeological evaluation has already been conducted within the application area by the OAU, finding two areas of archaeological interest. The first, OAU Site L, is an area of prehistoric occupation (OAU March 1989; July 1991). The second is an extension to the Roman Villa Site H (OAU March 1989; June 1992) was located in a further evaluation (Archaeological Assessment Report Irthlingborough North East – Planning Application EN90 74C Extension of Gravel Extraction).

Additionally a round barrow is known to be located adjacent to the existing plant. One further barrow, which was located within the application area, was fully excavated in the 1980s by English Heritage.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record. A further aim was clearly to delineate OAU Sites H and L and the round barrow in the plant area in order to ensure their future survival.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits. Topsoil stripping was undertaken using a D8 and a boxscraper. Particular attention was paid to the possibility of palaeochannels on the site, especially in the vicinities of Sites H and L. Additionally the remaining barrow, with a surrounding zone extending 10 m from the outside of its contemporary enclosing quarry ditch, was excluded from the extraction programme. The prehistoric occupation site (OAU Site L) was also excluded from the extraction programme; the edge of this area was lined with clay

during the extraction process and water was pumped onto the site to maintain water levels in order to secure the preservation of any waterlogged remains present. An area 60 m long adjacent to the Roman Villa site (OAU Site H) and a minimum of 10 m wide also was excluded from the extraction programme. An intensive watching brief was undertaken during stripping of the overburden in the vicinity of Site L; no works were undertaken in close proximity to either Site H or the round barrow.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded.

5 Results (Fig. 1)

Topsoil and the removal of superficial upper sandy deposits took place using a D8 and boxscraper, to a depth of c. 1.5 m; extraction then commenced using a 360° tracked excavator and dump trucks, starting at the north end of the site and proceeding south. Gravel was then removed down to the Oxford clay. The watching brief was maintained both on the stripped surface prior to extraction and the quarry face during extraction. With the exception of a number of irregular pockets of dark brown peaty material, seen in the north corner of the excavation, and one palaeochannel, no archaeological features were seen in any part of the extraction area.

The dark peaty features were only visible at the very bottom level of the gravel, and appeared to project slightly into the Oxford clay beneath. The tops of these features were at least 2.5 m below present ground surface. Where they were seen in section in the advancing quarry face, it was evident that they had been sealed beneath most of the gravel, and this was later confirmed by the plant operator. It was not possible to plan these features with any degree of accuracy, as a great deal of contaminated gravel had been dumped on top of them, however their approximate extent was mapped (see Fig. 2). None appeared to be any larger than 1.5 m across, and while several may have been interlinked they clearly did not form a linear feature. Two small samples were removed from two different features. A further bulk sample was taken at a later date following consultation with Sandy Kidd of Northamptonshire Heritage. As extraction proceeded south it was noted that these features did not extend any further south than had previously been recorded. One palaeochannel was also seen here which appeared to run southwards from a meander in the course of the tributary. It was not visible on the surface but appeared as a feature in section, filled with grey and black silts, which appeared to be partly organic. This feature was heavily damaged by the D8's operations and there was only time for the most cursory examination; no finds were retrieved from it, but some small unworked twigs were seen within the fills. It was proposed to cut a clean section across the channel using the excavator and then take some samples, however due to time constraints this proved not to be possible.

Topsoil stripping and extraction continued to the south, with approximately 1 m of alluvium being either scraped or pushed off at the southern end of the area. With the single exception of several possibly burnt stones, neither features nor finds were recorded here.

The second objective of the watching brief was to define and protect areas of significant archaeology identified in previous exercises. This was achieved by pegging

out the agreed boundaries of Sites L and H. Site L, around the oxbow in the narrow tributary, was marked out with white wooden pegs at 20 m intervals as per the instructions in the Written Scheme of Investigation (see Appendix 1). Site H was inaccessible due to heavy undergrowth; this had to be cleared before pegging out could take place. This boundary was later reinforced by tracking the D8 along the pegged boundary to form a soil bund.

The round barrow in the plant area was separated from the plant itself by means of a soil bund and a deep steep-sided drainage ditch running the entire length of the preserved strip of land surrounding the barrow. A visit was made to this site following completion of this phase of extraction. The area had become heavily overgrown with the barrow only being visible as a rise under a covering of thick vegetation.

6 Finds

No finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief, with the exception of one small fragment of a mammoth tusk, which was handed to the attending archaeologist by a machine driver. The provenance of this piece remains unknown at this time, and it has been included in the OAU teaching collection.

7 Environmental results

A bulk sample was taken from one of the small, irregular peaty features. This was not processed as, following a discussion with Dr Mark Robinson of Oxford University, it was decided that they were likely to be of earlier Pleistocene date (c. 20 - 40 000 BP). They were probably small marshy pools created by frost effect during a period of intense cold, and it is unlikely that they are of any archaeological or environmental significance.

8 Discussion

The watching brief did not locate any unknown archaeology of significance. Areas of significant archaeology located through previous exercises were defined and protected in agreement with Hanson Aggregates, and have been preserved.

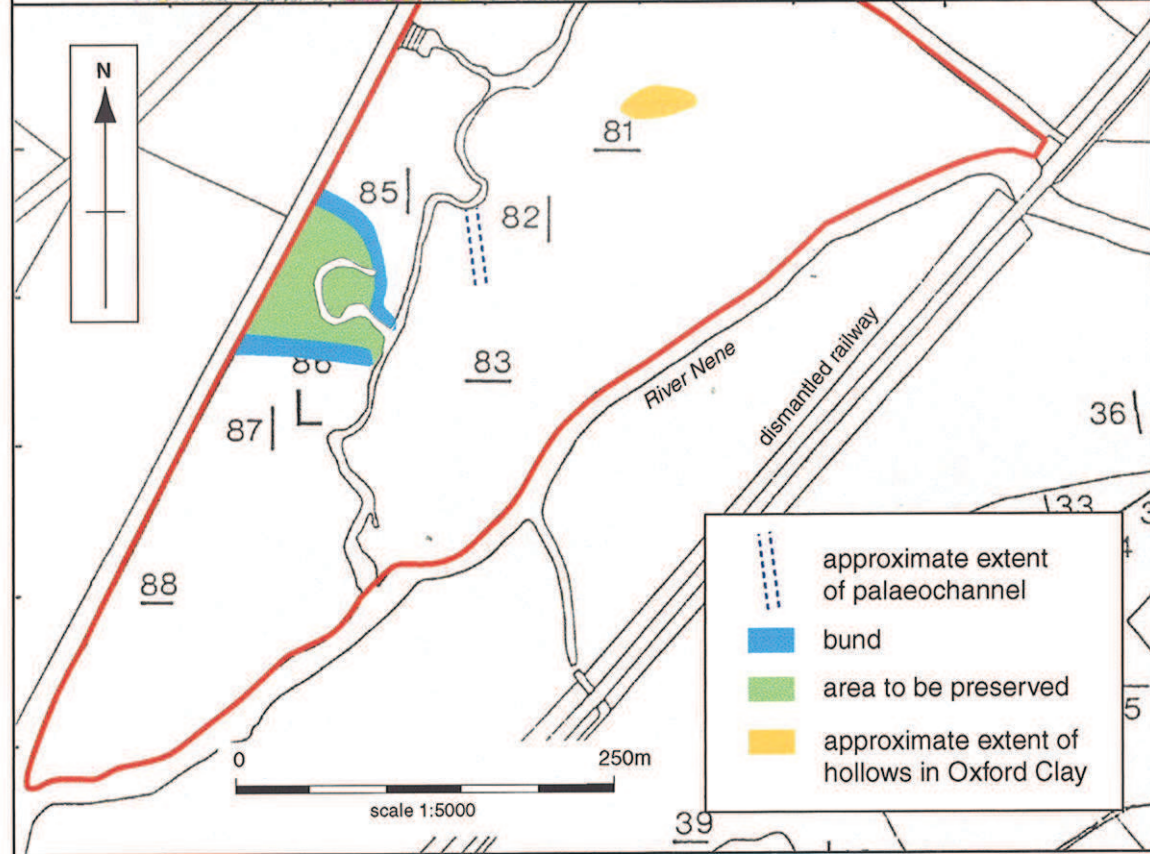
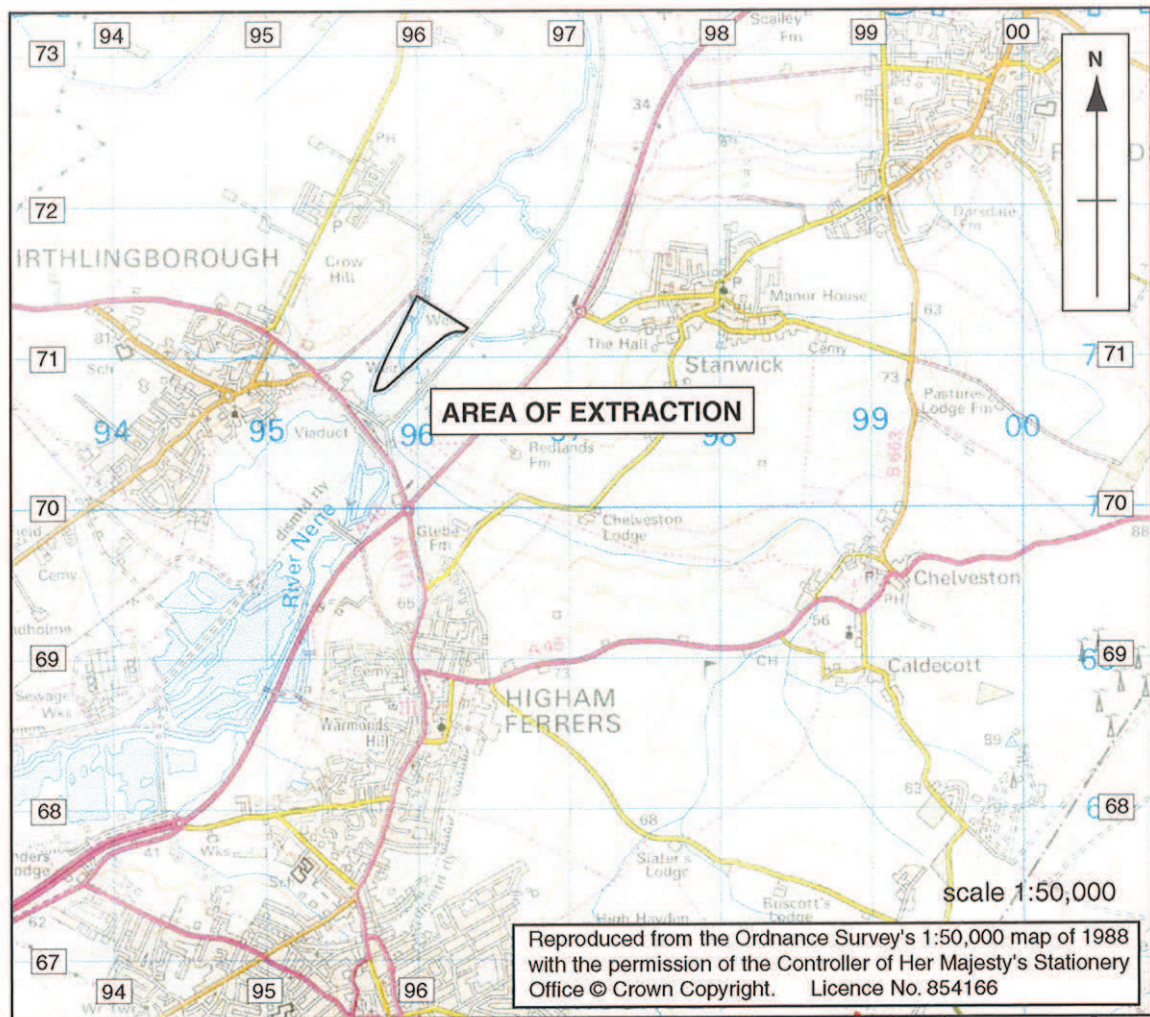
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OAU March 1989 Stanwick, Northants – Archaeological Assessment.

OAU July 1991 Redlands Farm, Stanwick, Northants Site L An Evaluation of the Extent of Archaeological Remains.

OAU June 1992 Redlands Farm, Stanwick, Northants – Recording Action: Major Excavations 1989-1990, Site Narrative.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).



Location of Site

Figure 1



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Hillview Cottages Canons Ashby Northamptonshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

7th December 2001



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Signed..... *R Williams*

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Hillview Cottage, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In November 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hillview cottage, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 5757 5067). The work was commissioned by The National Trust in advance of the construction of a new garden store building. The watching brief revealed the site had been undisturbed until the construction of farm cottages and poultry farm in the 19th and 20th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In November 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hillview Cottage, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire (Fig. 1). This was situated within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (Northamptonshire 154, National Monument No 13643), which includes the House, park and gardens, the remains of a monastery, and a castle (Fig. 1 & 2). The work was commissioned by The National Trust in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new garden store building.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by conditions of the Scheduled Monument Consent (Ref. HSD9/2/2472 (pt8)).

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies at 100 m OD and the underlying geology is clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for a previous watching brief carried out in August 2000 monitoring the construction of Tearooms at Canons Ashby House by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU, 2000).

1.3.2 Canons Ashby derives its name from the 12th-century priory of Augustinian canons, whose medieval church still survives in truncated form 100 m to the south of Canons Ashby House. In the early medieval period the settlement originated along a trackway that ran up hill from south-west to north-east. This central part of the village was located in the vicinity of Canons Ashby House, and later extended to the north-west towards the motte and bailey castle, and to the south-east towards the monastery. A group of ponds were created to the west of the settlement to power a number of water mills during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

- 1.3.3 The core of the present house was built in the 1550s, and probably incorporated parts of an earlier farm on the site. The H-shaped red brick house of the 1550's consisted of a great hall range, built with a kitchen at one end and a tower at the other. The house was extended in the 1590s, when the courtyard was enclosed for the first time.
- 1.3.4 The last major alterations were made to the house in 1708-1710 when the southern front was almost entirely faced in stone. The gardens were also given their present appearance at about this time, with descending terraces, flights of stairs and stone walls set with vases. The parkland surrounding the house and gardens contains the well preserved earthwork remains of the castle, settlement, and ridge and furrow cultivation.
- 1.3.5 After the Dissolution the church and the rest of the priory estate passed to the Cope family, and through marriage to the Drydens, who remained at Canons Ashby thereafter. The Copes and the Drydens have been responsible both for the upkeep of St Mary's Church and for appointing and paying the incumbent. In the last fifty years the church had fallen into disuse and decay and was boarded up, due to increasing vandalism. A major programme of restoration was begun in 1981 by The National Trust (having taken over care of the house, gardens and church in 1980), with large-scale repairs to the roof and to the stonework being undertaken throughout the building. A redundant quarry at Stow-Nine-Churches was reopened especially for this purpose.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A mini excavator equipped with a 0.6 m wide toothed bucket excavated the foundation trenches for the building. The south and east facing trenches were dug in one go, while the north and west were excavated in sections due to the close proximity of a high boundary wall and possibility of undermining its foundations (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The earliest deposit on the site consisted of a subsoil (2) of dark reddish brown silty clay loam with sandstone fragments. This was overlying a natural (1) of bright yellowish brown silty clay loam with sandstone fragments. Overlying these was a loose dark brown silty clay loam (3) with patches of gravel and ash, charcoal flecks, fragments of mortar, brick, ceramic pipe and window glass which was a mixture of present topsoil and ground surface from the 1920s poultry farm on the site. This was partly covered by the present gravel drive way (Figs 3 & 4).
- 3.1.2 In the south west corner of the building footprint was a small modern rubbish pit (4) with vertical sides and concave base. It measured 0.7 x 0.2 x 0.75 m and cut through subsoil (2) into natural (1). It was filled by a mid brown silty clay loam (5) with sandstone fragments, 20th century pottery and bone which was sealed below topsoil (3) (Fig. 3).
- 3.1.3 In the centre of the northern foundation trench a disused modern drain (7) (Fig. 3) built of concrete blocks with a flush finish (0.8 x 0.7 x 0.7 m). Had been constructed within a 0.9 m square vertical sided cut (6) through the topsoil, subsoil and into the natural.
- 3.1.4 Within the topsoil was a patch of light reddish brown sandy clay loam (8) (Fig. 3) with sandstone rubble (40%), bricks (20%), slate tile (5%) and glass (1%).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Three pieces of animal bone were recovered and two pieces of late 20th century pottery.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 It would appear that this area of land was untouched by the activities of the priory, lying just outside the south boundary wall and was part of the pastureland surrounding the priory. The land was then disturbed for access in the form of a courtyard and trackway relating to the cottages and later poultry farm (1920's) to the east of the site.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer				Natural	
2	Layer				Subsoil	
3	Layer				Topsoil	None
4	Cut	0.75 m	0.2 m	0.7 m	Rubbish pit	
5	Fill				Fill of pit	Pot, Bone
6	Cut	0.7 m	0.9 m	0.9 m	Cut for drain	
7	Structure	0.7 m	0.7 m	0.8 m	Modern Drain	
8	Deposit		1.05 m	1.7 m	In fill in topsoil	None

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Steane J 1974 *The Northamptonshire Landscape* Hodder and Stoughton.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992).

OAU 1999, *Hillview Farm, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire* Archaeological Watching Brief Report

OAU 2001, *Canons Ashby House, Northamptonshire* Archaeological Watching Brief Report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Hillview Cottage, Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire

Site code: CACOT 01

Grid reference: NGR SP 5757 5067

Type of watching brief: Excavation of footings for new garden outbuilding

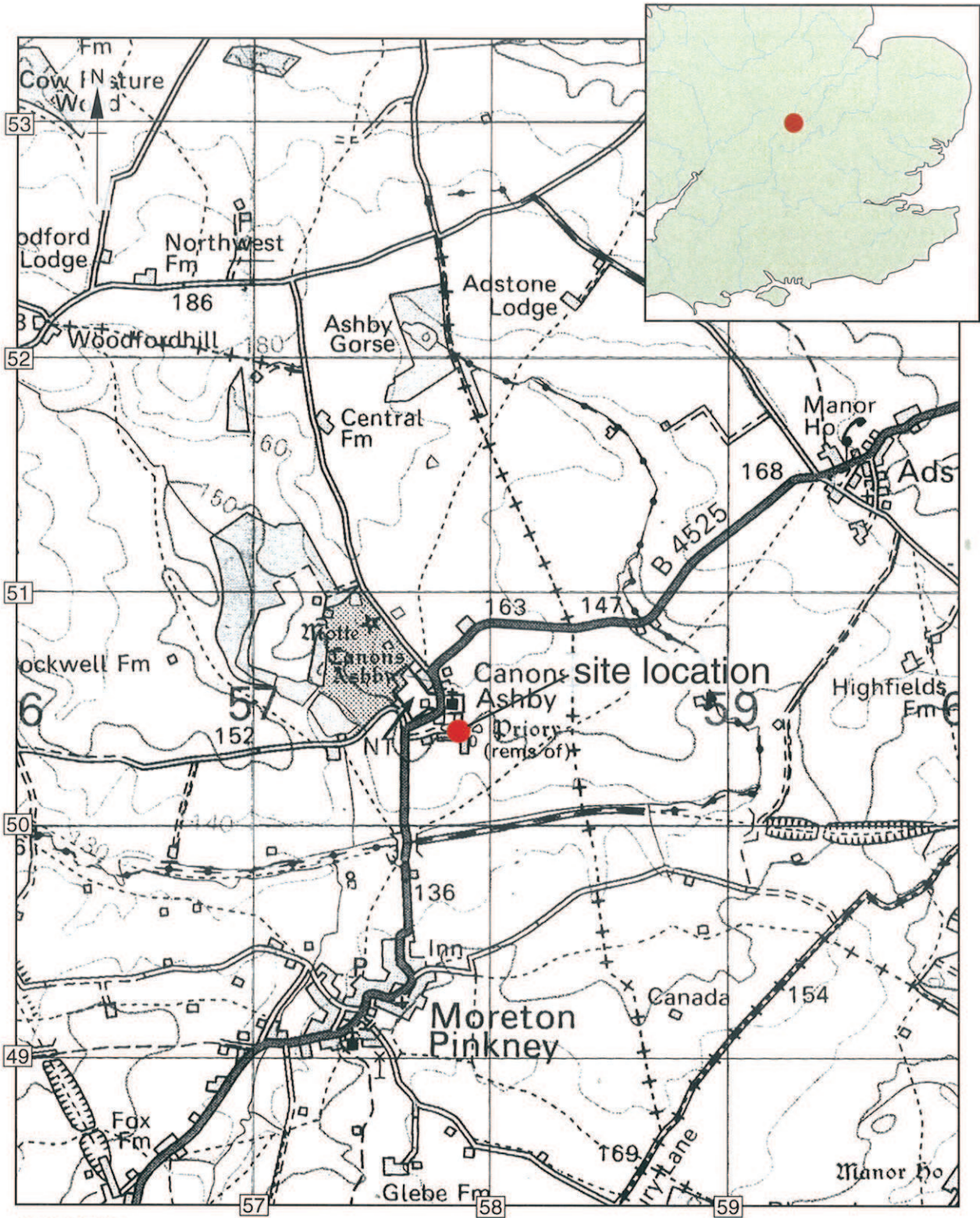
Date and duration of project: A total of five site visits were carried out from the 13th November to the 13th December 2001

Area of site: 13 m by 10.5 m

Summary of results: The site had been undisturbed until the construction of farm cottages and poultry farm in the 19th and 20th century.

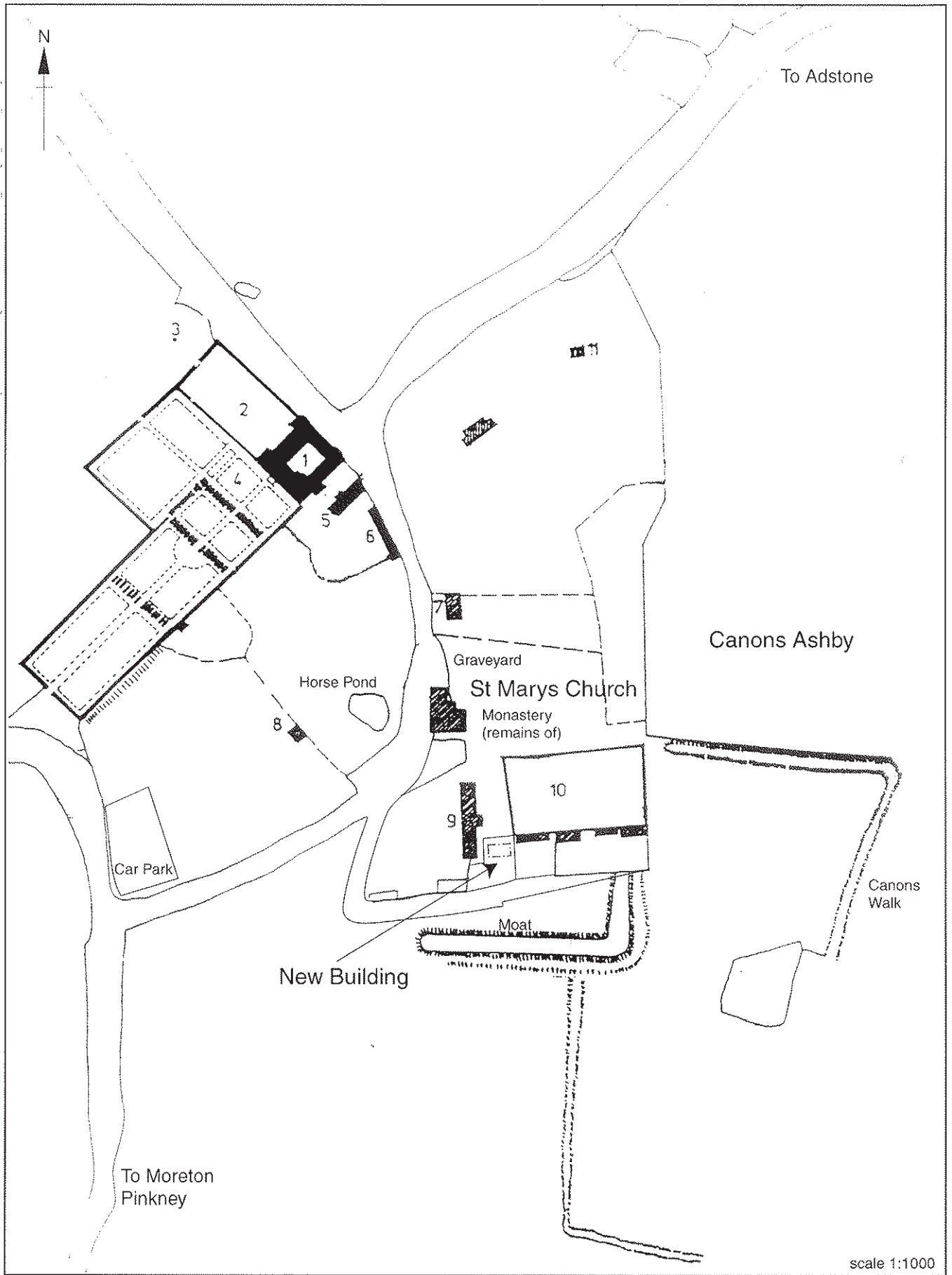
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with The National Trust, East Midlands Office, Clumber Park Stableyard, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 3BE in due course.

Server (W):\outputs\1\All drawings\CACOTWB\Hillview_Cottages_Ashby_RMS\03.12.01



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Figure 1: Site location.



scale 1:1000

Figure 2: Site location

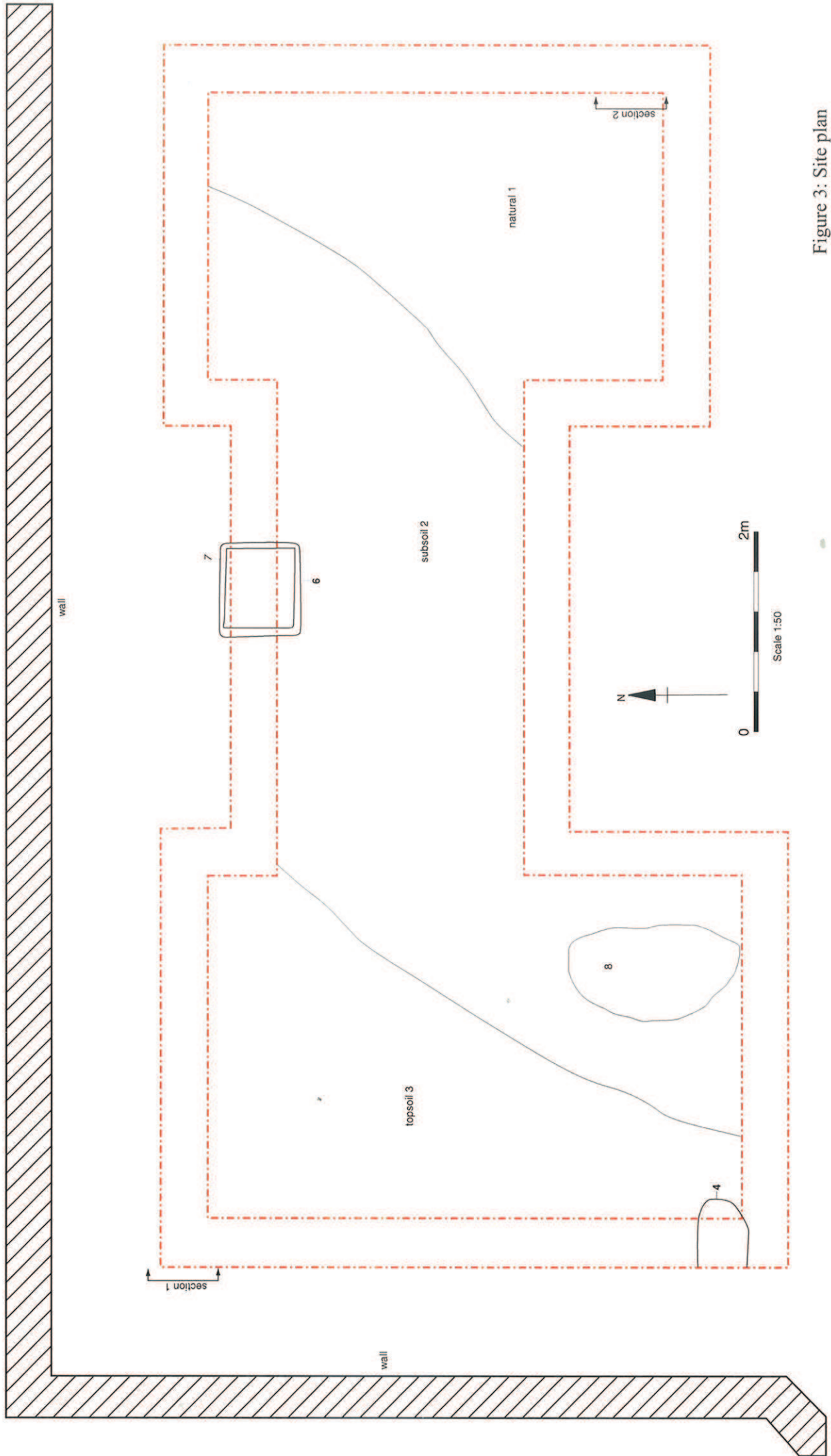
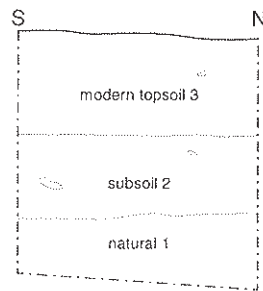


Figure 3: Site plan

Section 1



Section 2

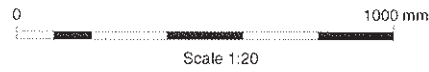
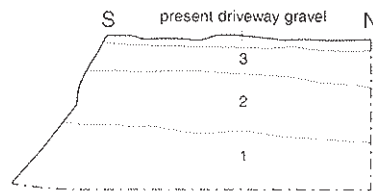


Figure 4: Sections.



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