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Archaeological Field Unit

**Medieval Remains at Well House Meadow,
Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Rob Atkins

August 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 814

Commissioned by *Haslingfield Bakehouse Project*



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**Medieval Remains at Well House Meadow, Haslingfield,
Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief
(TL 40427 52260)**

Rob Atkins

August 2005

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Report No. 814

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on 27th July 2005 by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC AFU) on land at Well House Meadow, Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire (TL 40427 52260). The work was undertaken in advance of the transplanted of a local bakehouse and toilet (dating to c.1800) and construction of toilet as part of a Local Heritage Initiative scheme (The Haslingfield Bakehouse Project).

The new foundation trenches to accommodate the bakehouse covered an area measuring 6.5m by 4m adjacent to the present Broad Lane (former Vicarage Lane). Watching brief observations comprised an 11th- or 12th-century boundary ditch as well as five 13th- to early 14th-century pits. The boundary ditch ran perpendicular to Broad Lane, possibly implying that the adjacent road dates from this period. Moderate amounts of domestic waste were recovered from most of the features indicating that the site was probably within a backplot close to occupation. This suggestion is supported by evidence from a soil sample taken from the boundary ditch which showed that the site once lay within damp grassland.

The area was abandoned in the middle 14th century and given over to ploughing with all earlier features sealed by a 0.55m thick layer. Documentary and map evidence records that the site became part of the parkland of Haslingfield Hall by 1541 and in recent times this land has become a publicly-owned meadow.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

Limit of Excavation	-----
Cut	—————
Cut-Conjectured	-----
Soil Horizon	-----
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	-----
Intrusion/Truncation	-----
Top of Natural	—————
Top Surface	—————
Break in Section	-----
Cut Number	118
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m ODN X

Plans

Limit of Excavation	—————
Deposit - Conjectured	-----
Natural Features	-----
Intrusion/Truncation	-----
Sondages/Machine Strip	-----
Illustrated Section	S.14 —————
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Cut Number	118

**Medieval Remains at Well House Meadow, Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Watching Brief
(TL 40427 52260)**

1 INTRODUCTION

An Archaeological watching brief was carried out at Well House Meadow, Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire (TL 40427 52260) consisting of excavation of new foundation trenches in advance of the relocation of a local bakehouse dating to c.1800 and associated toilet facilities.

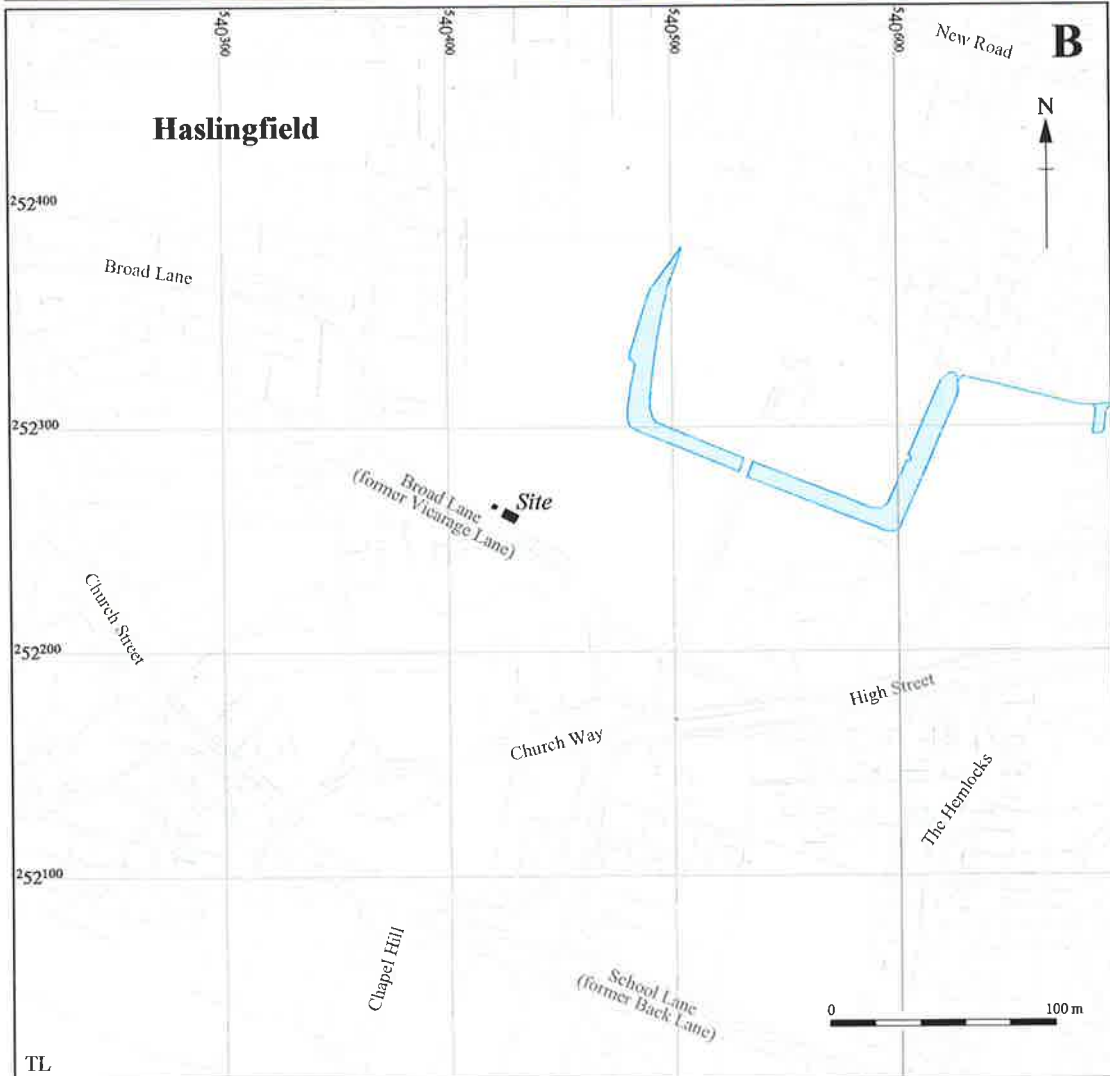
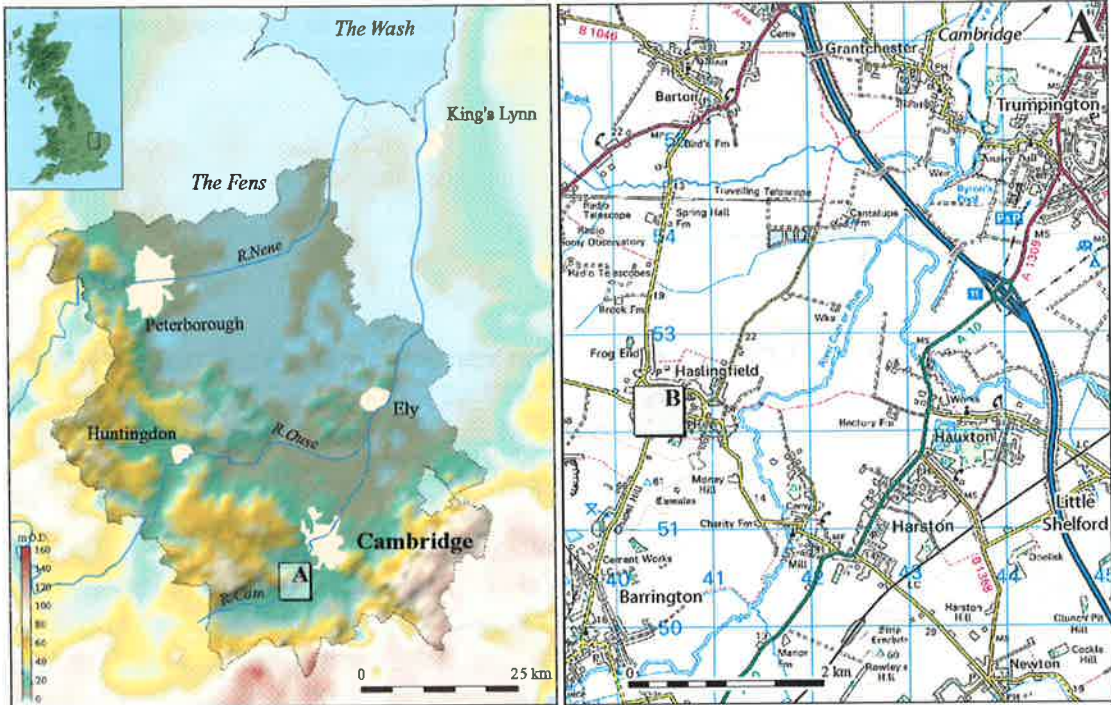
The watching brief was carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) on 27th July 2005 on behalf of The Haslingfield Bakehouse Project. This project is being substantially funded by grants from the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) and South Cambridgeshire District Council but the project also involves some fund-raising by the local community.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The settlement lies in the centre of historic medieval Haslingfield, in a publicly owned open grassed meadow adjacent to the north of Broad Lane (Fig. 1). The natural geology is Melbourn Rock (Lower Chalk) which overlies Gault Clay (BGS 2005). The site is on fairly flat land at about 20m OD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Archaeological and historical sources at the archives of CCC AFU and Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER; formerly Sites and Monuments Record) have recorded previous archaeological work, any archaeological finds reported and historic documentation for the area. Although no archaeological remains are recorded from the site itself, a considerable amount of archaeology is known from the surrounding area (Fig. 2).



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Figure 1 Site location showing position of trenches (black)

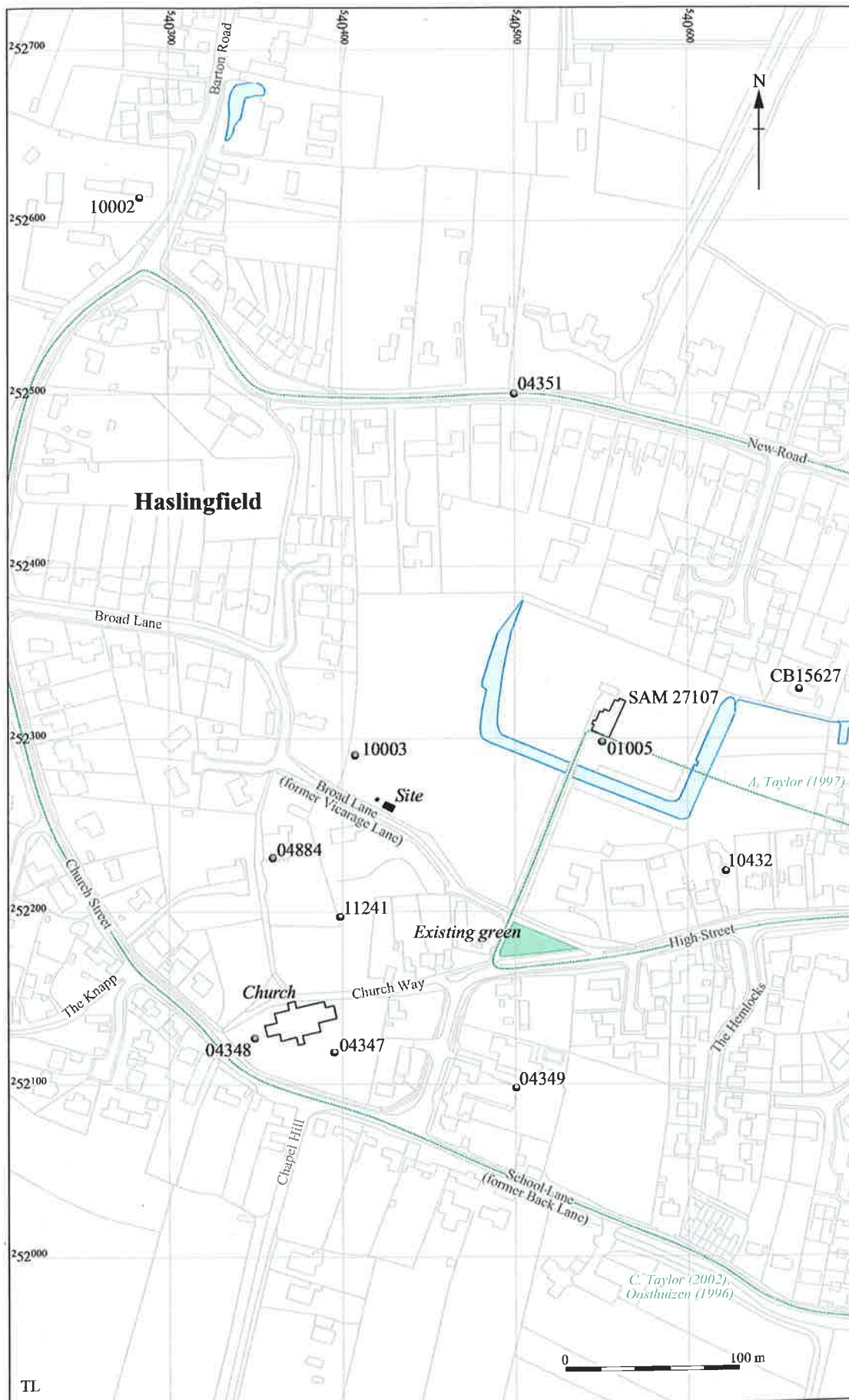


Figure 2 Trenches in relation to HER information

3.1 Prehistoric and Roman

Prehistoric activity in the area is represented by two finds, a Mesolithic tranchet axe (HER 04351) 250m to the north of the site and a Bronze Age arrowhead (HER 04347) 150m to the south suggesting the possibility of more widespread remains. Nearby possible Roman remains are attested by four coins and two spindlewhorls found between 150m to 175m to the south-east, south and south-west of the site (HER 04347, 04348 and 04349), as well as Roman pottery found in topsoil layers during an archaeological evaluation 250m to the north-east of the site (HER CB15627; Roberts 2000).

3.2 Saxon and Medieval

The site is within the medieval village which was first recorded historically in the Domesday Book (in 1086) as *Haslingefeld*. The name probably means 'people of *Haesel*' where *Haesel* is an old English personal name (Reaney 1943). Oosthuizen has suggested that the '-ing' part of Haslingfield refers to a tribal or political group, the *Haeslingas* (Oosthuizen 1996, 14). There were at least two pagan Saxon finds spots, to the east of the village and up to a kilometre to the north-east (Oosthuizen 1996, map 2).

No Middle Saxon or pre-11th century occupation or artefacts have been recovered relating to the settlement(s) of Haslingfield. Saxo-Norman and medieval features have been found 100m to the north-east of the site (Mackay 2003) but overall relatively little archaeological work has taken place in the parish. Combined with the fact that there are few medieval documents this means that the layout of the later Saxon and medieval settlements is conjectural.

On the basis of the ovoid arrangement of its streets it has been suggested that Haslingfield grew up around a large green (Fig. 2). Several similar greens have been suggested for other parishes in the area (Taylor 2002), perhaps suggesting centralised planning in this part of South Cambridgeshire. At Haslingfield, there are references to a 'great Green' from the 14th century (Wright 1973, 229), although its size has been extensively debated (RCHM 1968; Oosthuizen 1996; Taylor 1997; Taylor 2002). Christopher Taylor and Sarah Oosthuizen have suggested that the whole ovoid area (a 48ha site) may have been a very large ill-drained former meadow (Oosthuizen 1996; Taylor 2002, 62). The green may have been almost obliterated by later encroachment that had already begun by the 12th century, including the parish church and the present nucleated High Street. The latter lies obliquely across the suggested oval green, with the church at its western end: small triangular greens may have existed at both ends (RCHM 1968, 136-7).

Conversely, Alison Taylor argues against the theory that Haslingfield grew up around a large green and suggests a more complicated settlement arrangement (Taylor 1997, 67). She proposes that there was probably a smaller green with the present triangular green on the High Street extended to the Hall with the church on its south-west corner (see Fig. 2). This area may have been the

centre of the main village, which was one of several linked hamlets. The routeways which joined the different hamlets may largely survive in the modern layout of the village with the main road running east from Harlton and Haslingfield where it was divided into three roughly parallel tracks: New Road, High Street and Back Lane (Taylor 1997, 67).

Documentary evidence gives some indication of population size within the parish. Domesday Book (1086) shows that Haslingfield was already well established by the late 11th century and was the largest village in the area (Taylor 1997, 68). The Domesday survey records 81 registered people, although this simply notes the number of heads of households: a true figure for the population would be four or five times this number. Other records show that Haslingfield grew to 140 tenants (as many as 700 people) in 1279 but the population was down to 271 adults in 1377, dropping to 53 families in 1563.

3.3 Post-medieval

The watching brief site was within parkland established by Haslingfield Hall by at least 1541, and it was one of 99 pre-1760 parks in Cambridgeshire (Way 1997). The site is within 2m of the southern boundary of the parkland, demarked by a brick wall directly to the north of Vicarage Lane. This wall is partly of 16th-century red brick and is contemporary to Haslingfield Hall, established when the Wendys became lords of the manor (RCHM 1968, 137). The parkland area has been recorded in a recent survey (Way 1997, 269; fig 22.75).

The Wendy family built their brick moated manor site less than 100m to the north-east of the subject site (HER 1005; Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 27107). Since the original Scales' manor house may have also been sited here (there are 13th- and 14th-century references to a manor run by the Scales family in Haslingfield) an area of private grounds or park may already have existed. There are no substantial village earthworks in the immediate area which would indicate this second manor (Way 1997, 269). A recent archaeological evaluation within the moated site lends credence to the theory that there was an earlier manor on the Haslingfield Hall site since thick deposits of high status medieval domestic occupation dating from the 12th century were encountered below the Elizabethan manor (Mackay 2003). If this was not the location of the pre-1541 manor a possible alternative location may be a former moated site 350m to the north-west of the watching brief (HER 10002).

An unpublished earthwork survey report lodged with the HER recorded a ridge just to the north of the watching brief site, running in an arc from near the south-west corner of the moat of the hall to the south-west but it is uncertain what the ridge signifies (Edwards 1991; HER 10003). Cartographic evidence shows no occupation in this area of the parkland with peripheral manorial buildings such as a 17th-century dovecote built within the eastern side of the park land (HER 10432) and a large pond 75m to the north of the site (1810 Inclosure map).

The park itself was reduced in size to 21 acres in 1810 and at the same time parts of the hall were removed and the materials reused in Cantelupe Farm and out of the parish, at Bourn Hall. Both the 1810 Inclosure Map and the 1814 plan of Haslingfield show that the watching brief area was within open grass land with trees spaced out along the exterior border of the park adjacent to the brick wall and possibly within the site itself.

Broad Lane is shown as a straight (but unnamed) road on the 1810 map although the later 1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows that, to the east of the site, the road has been realigned to give the hall more land. Both the 1890 map and the 1937 Third Edition OS show the site still within open parkland. The lane is named for the first time in the 1937 map, as Vicarage Lane. This name may be recent as it seems to have been called after the present vicarage on the south side of the road which only dates to the 18th century (HER 04884). There are references, however, to a vicarage from the 13th century (Wright 1973). Within the garden of this vicarage is a steep earthwork scarp which runs to the churchyard but its significance remains unknown (HER 11241). In recent times, Vicarage lane has been renamed as Broad Lane.

4 METHODOLOGY

A mechanical excavator with a 0.60m wide bucket was used to excavate foundation trenches under archaeological supervision. The new foundations for the bakehouse were within a plot 6.5m in length and 4m wide with the machine-dug trenches measuring 1.70m by 4m wide on the east side and the remainder 0.60m wide around the exterior of the plot (Fig. 3). The wider footings in the eastern area of the plot were to provide additional support for a baking oven *etc.* to be positioned on this side. The footings were between 1.10m and 1.30m deep and cut extensively into the natural chalk subsoil. To the west of the bakehouse footings, the new toilet foundations covered an area measuring 2m², with 0.60m wide foundation trenches to the north and south sides, 1m deep.

Archaeological features were encountered in the bake house area but not in the toilet area. When features were seen cutting the natural chalk subsoil, machining was temporarily stopped: each feature was hand excavated. A 1:50 plan and sections were drawn of the bakehouse area (Fig. 3) and digital photographs taken of the site.

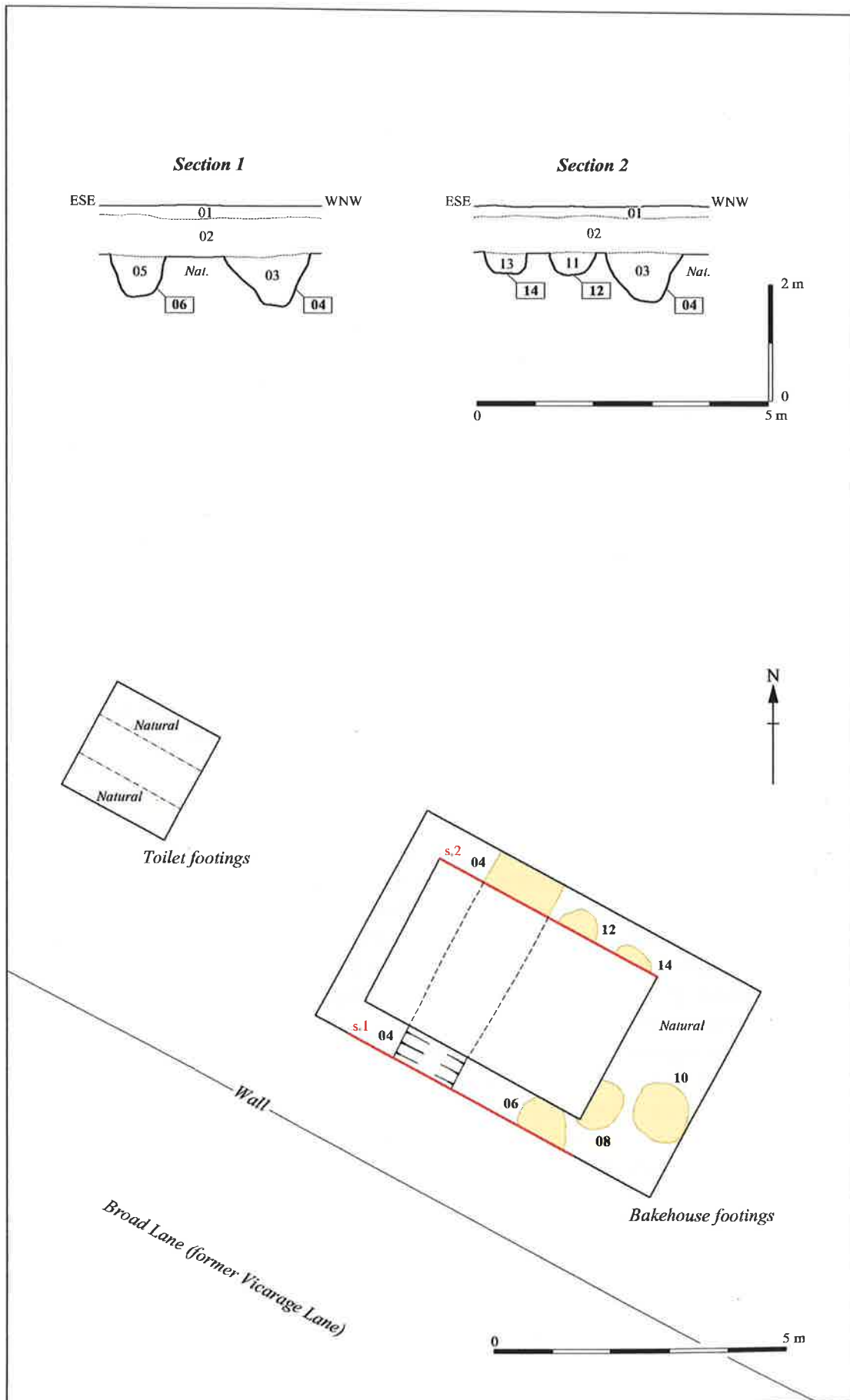


Figure 3 Trench plan and sections

5 RESULTS

The watching brief found six Saxo-Norman and medieval features cutting the natural chalk subsoil, comprising a boundary ditch and five pits. There were probably two phases of occupation with the boundary ditch possibly dating from the 11th century and continuing to the 12th century before being backfilled. Five adjacent pits date to the 13th to probably the mid 14th centuries. The ditch (04) was found in two of the foundation trenches (Fig. 3). It ran roughly north to south, perpendicular to Vicarage Lane. It survived as a flat bottomed V-shaped ditch, 1.40m wide and 0.85m deep and was filled with a mid to dark grey brown silt with a very little clay (03).

In the southern section the basal 0.30m of the fill contained moderate to frequent charcoal flecks and a few burnt clay fragments. A soil sample of this lower part of the fill produced a large amount of charred seeds as well as species of snails which inhabit damp grassland (Appendices 3 & 4). The charred grain consisted of several types of cereals and weed species implying several separate burning episodes. There was also a moderate amount of unabraded pottery within both ditch section deposits, largely consisting of St Neots ware (Appendix 1) as well as a little animal bone and a mussel shell.

The five pits (06, 08, 10, 12 and 14) were all very similar being between 0.85m and 1m in diameter, with steep or very steep edges and a flat base and they survived between 0.35m and 0.65m deep (Fig. 3). They all contained similar backfills comprising mid to dark grey brown silt with a little clay. Three pits produced moderate amounts of pottery, a little animal bone and mussel/oyster shells, while the remaining two pits produced at least one sherd of pottery each (Appendix 1, Table 1).

A probable former plough soil layer, 0.55m thick, consisting of a dark brown loam (2) sealed all the archaeological features. This layer was machined off but a moderate quantity of artefacts was collected from the spoil heaps. Due to possible contamination with the topsoil layer above, all the artefacts were considered unstratified, the animal bone being later discarded due to uncertainty of its age. Overlying this plough soil layer was a 0.2m thick modern topsoil and grassed deposit (1).

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

No prehistoric or definite Roman features or artefacts (excepting one possible sherd) were found in the watching brief area. A single residual sherd of Roman pottery came from the evaluation at the post-medieval manor site 100m to the north-east (Mackay 2003). The possible Roman settlement signified by other finds in the vicinity may not, therefore, have extended into

this part of Haslingfield. The watching brief also found no Middle Saxon or 10th-century remains.

The watching brief found evidence for settlement commencing in this part of Haslingfield in the 11th or 12th century. This date is contemporary with the possible origin of occupation at the site of the present 16th-century manor 100m to the north-east (Mackay 2003). This Saxo-Norman dating for the start of occupation at both sites does not contradict Oosthuizen's (1996) or Taylor's (2002) theory of a large former Saxon meadow green which was encroached upon in the Saxo-Norman period (*e.g.* Taylor 2002, 62).

The Saxo-Norman boundary ditch ran perpendicular to Broad Lane, implying contemporaneity. It is possible that the ditch represents a plot boundary fronting onto Broad Lane, although there is no evidence for structural remains of this period and the molluscan evidence from a soil sample from the primary fill of the ditch shows that the area was within damp grassland. Moderate amounts of domestic waste was backfilled in this ditch, while the later pits also imply the site was part of a back plot to a settlement.

Ceramic dating evidence implies that at least three of the rubbish pits date slightly later than the ditch. Moderate amounts of 13th- and possibly early 14th-century pottery were recovered from the pits. The date of cessation of pitting may be significant as it coincides with the period of famines, wars and plagues which devastated the population of the country in the first half the 14th century when the population halved. Haslingfield may therefore provide an example of previously settled areas being abandoned.

The thick layer sealing the archaeological features but below the modern topsoil signifies a probable plough soil layer during the period in which the site was used for agriculture after the middle of the 14th century. This happened at several sites in the nearby area including Eltisley where later ridge and furrow directly overlaid early medieval remains (Atkins 2003). At the Haslingfield site, the relatively large quantities of artefacts within this medieval plough layer imply that ploughing cut into earlier features and that archaeological survival in this area may only consist of larger negative features.

Documentary and cartographic evidence indicates that the site became part of a park of the middle 16th-century moated manor, although the park itself may have originated earlier. The paucity of later medieval and pre-modern artefacts confirms that the site was not occupied in this period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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On the request of Harold Stringer of the Haslingfield Bakehouse Project, the artefacts recovered from the watching brief have been retained for display within the bakehouse. They will also be used as an educational resource when the building is used by local organizations, including the school.

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APPENDIX 1: POTTERY

by Carole Fletcher and Richard Mortimer

A total of 69 sherds of pottery weighing 0.949kg was recovered from the watching brief. Apart from two early post-medieval pottery found unstratified, the pottery comprised medieval sherds dating from the 11th or 12th to the mid 14th century. The assemblage indicates a domestic assemblage typical of this part of the county with Saxo-Norman pottery from St Neots and Thetford (although none from Stamford) and medieval pottery largely from nearby Colne, with a few sherds from Essex. St Neots and St Neots-type comprised more than 26% of the assemblage by number and 22% by weight, indicating that 12th-century occupation of the site may have been significant. Overall the pottery was moderately unabraded implying that there was some secondary deposition.

The pottery from the watching brief differs significantly from the evaluation at Haslingfield Hall 100m to the north-east (Hall 2003). Here the pottery consisted predominantly of high status fine wares from Essex, Hertfordshire and a single Medieval Surrey fine ware whereas only two Essex sherds were found in the watching brief.

Feature	Context	No. of Sherds	Weight (kg)	Comments
Ditch 04	3	6	0.132	St Neots type c. 1000-1150. At least two bowls and a jar including one large (99g) unabraded sherd with inverted rim.
		2	0.010	Sandy ware c.1000-1200 12th century date for this group
Pit 06	5	1	0.013	Colne type c. 1200-1350
Pit 08	7	6	0.039	St Neots type c.1000-1150 including one thick walled early St. Neots
		1	0.006	Med unglazed greyware
		6	0.143	Colne type c.1200-1350 but the dating for the group include late types so 14th century date. Includes bowl with complete profile, one comb decorated and two groved decorated. Sooting on three.
Pit 10	9	3	0.014	St Neots type c. 1000-1150
		1	0.007	Thetford grey ware c.1000-1150
		1	0.003	Essex mica c.1200-1300
		1	0.014	Coarse sandy ware (rim)
		13	0.231	Colne type c. 1200-1350 includes base from jug which has been used to heat water and has internal limescale deposits. There are jars, jugs and bowls. Sooting on five sherds
Pit 12	11	1	0.005	St Neots type c.1000-1150
		1	0.006	Roman grey ware or Thetford ware?
Pit 14	13	1	0.002	St Neots type c.1000-1150
N/A	U/S	2	0.017	St Neots type c. 1000-1150
		1	0.005	Essex Glazed
		2	0.028	Medieval unglazed greyware
		3	0.029	Coarse sandy ware
		1	0.004	Thetford grey ware c.1000-1150
		12	0.105	Colne type including bowl
		2	0.136	Early post-med comprising basket handle c.1600 and jug handle c. 1500+?
Total		67	0.949	

Table 1: Pottery

APPENDIX 2: ANIMAL BONE

by Judith Roberts

Eight fragments of animal bone weighing 0.115kg were recovered from stratified contexts (unstratified bone was not kept) comprising parts of dog, sheep/goat and cow.

Feature	Context	No. of fragments	Weight (kg)	comments
Ditch 04	3	2	0.010	Tooth (dog) and astragalus (ankle bone) of sheep/goat
Pit 06	5	2	0.014	Rib ? sheep/goat and shaft ?cow
Pit 08	7	1	0.008	Rib ?sheep/goat
Pit 10	9	2	0.079	Scapular (cow) and radius (sheep/goat)
Pit 12	11	1	0.004	Shaft (medium size mammal)
Total		8	0.115	

Table 2: Animal bone

APPENDIX 3: MOLLUSCA

by Rachel Fosberry

Several species of snails were present in the sample from ditch 04, including some that have been burnt. Tentative identifications include *Discus rotundatus*, *Vertigo* sp., *Cochlicopa* sp. and *Punctum pygmaeum*. The species indicate a number of habitats, predominantly damp environments and grassland.

In addition, four other mollusc shells were recovered from three contexts in the watching brief comprising a mussel shell (ditch fill 3), a mussel and two oyster shells (pit fills 7 and 9).

APPENDIX 4: PLANT MACROFOSSILS

by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

A single 10 litre bulk sample was taken from the bottom fill (03) of the boundary ditch and was processed by bucket flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual/ecofactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other finds is noted in the following table.

2 Results

Flot contents	Quantity
Cereals	
<i>Secale cereale</i> (Rye)	++
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> (barley)	++
<i>Triticum aestaeum</i> (wheat)	++
<i>Avena sativa</i> (oat)	+
Chaff	
Wheat rachis	+
Barley rachis	+
Weed seeds	
<i>Gallium aparine</i> (cleavers)	++
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i> (corn gromwell)	+
<i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i> (Shepherd's needle)	+
<i>Rumex</i> sp (docks)	++
<i>Trifolium</i> sp (clovers)	++
<i>Medicago</i> sp (medicks)	++
<i>Anthemis cotula</i> (Stinking chamomile)	++
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i> (corn chamomile)	++
<i>Brassica nigra</i> (black mustard)	+
<i>Vicia</i> sp (vetches)	++
<i>Lathyrus</i> sp	+
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> (wild radish)	+
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> (knotgrass)	+
<i>Urtica dioica</i> (nettle)	+
<i>Poacea</i> sp (grasses)	++
<i>Phleum pratense</i> (timothy)	+
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp (fat hen)	++
<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> (flax)	+
Charcoal <2mm	++
Charcoal >2mm	+
Molluscs	++(b)
Modern seeds	
<i>Urtica dioica</i> (nettle)	+
Faunal remains	
small rodent bones	+

Table 3: Environmental sample from ditch 04

+ = 1 – 10 specimens ++ = 10 – 100 specimens +++ = 100+ specimens b = burnt

Preservation is by charring and is generally good. The flot (volume 30ml) contains a substantial quantity of charred cereal grains. The most predominant are rye and wheat with a moderate amount of barley and a few grains of oat. Only five chaff elements were recovered.

A moderate amount of weed seeds are present, the majority in small quantities of 3 – 15 seeds. Substantial quantities (approximately 70 seeds) of *Anthemis* sp. (chamomile) seeds were recovered.

The residue contains snails (see Appendix 3), two small sherds of pottery along with a few fragments of animal bone and a single amphibian bone.

3 Conclusions

This is an informative sample that contains a reasonable amount of fairly well-preserved remains. Charred cultivated seeds are deposited in archaeological deposits from direct and indirect sources as a result of accidental or intentional burning and provide information on agricultural practices. In this case, very few chaff elements were recovered, suggesting that the cereals were imported to the site as a cleaned product. The presence of large amounts of cereal grain with no chaff demonstrates a typical early medieval assemblage as described by Grieg (1991).

The predominant cereals are rye and wheat however the rye grains are better preserved than the wheat grains which were puffed and abraded. This suggests that they may have originated from a separate burning event prior to being disposed of in this feature. The third main cereal is barley. There is no evidence for germination of grains which could have indicated use in brewing. The barley was therefore probably used for fodder. The quantity of oats in the sample is too low to indicate whether it was a cultivated crop and it is highly likely to have been a contaminant of the other cereals.

Another potential food plant is flax, although this plant was more often grown for its fibres and its significance in the watching brief assemblage is unclear. The numerous weed seeds present in this sample are predominantly common segetal and grassland weeds. *Anthemis cotula* is a plant that is generally indicative of crops being cultivated on heavy clay soils. It is commonly harvested with a crop and then removed at the fine-sieving stage of processing. Significant quantities are present in this assemblage and it is therefore possible that early stages of crop processing were taking place on site, prior to storage of the grain in a semi-cleaned state. Archaeobotanical evidence from the manor site concluded that cleaned grain was being imported onto the site (Mackay 2003). Further comparisons between the two sites is not helpful as very few weed seeds were recovered from the manor site samples, which were predominantly waterlogged.

In conclusion, the plant remains recovered from the watching brief sample may have derived from separate burning and depositional events. While a single sample can only provide limited information, it indicates the variety of crops being cultivated and consumed, suggesting a relatively dry grassland habitat.



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