

Witham Archaeology

A Report to Mr Tony Williamson
January 2011



LAND TO THE REAR OF NO. 252 THORPE ROAD, PETERBOROUGH

Archaeological Watching Brief

R Trimble

LAND TO THE REAR OF NO. 252 THORPE ROAD, PETERBOROUGH

Site Code: TRLO10
Planning Application No.: 10/00252/FUL
NGR: TL 166 985

Archaeological Watching Brief

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LAND TO THE REAR OF NO. 252 THORPE ROAD, PETERBOROUGH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Witham Archaeology during groundwork relating to the construction of a detached, two-story, four bedroom, house with integrated garages at No. 252 Thorpe road, Peterborough. The work was commissioned by Mr Tony Williamson in response to a condition of planning permission issued by Peterborough City Council. Fieldwork was carried out on the 15th and 16th July 2010.

The site lies between the historic hamlet of Longthorpe to the southwest, and the Grade I listed, seventeenth century house, Thorpe Hall, to the east. Antiquarian sources record the discovery of Romano-British remains at Thorpe Hall, during construction work in 1720. The remains, including a mosaic pavement and building foundations, are indicative of a villa site.

The only feature of note discovered during the course of the watching brief was a ditch, which yielded a small assemblage of pottery date as 17th to 18th century. The ditch aligns closely with a southeast-northwest boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1886.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Witham Archaeology during groundwork relating to the construction of a detached two-storey, four-bedroom house with integrated garages at No. 252 Thorpe Road, Peterborough. The work was commissioned by Mr Tony Williamson in response to a condition of planning permission issued by Peterborough City Council. Fieldwork was carried out on 15th and 16th July 2010.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (see Figs. 1)

The site, at No. 252 Thorpe Road (NGR TL 166 985), is located between the historic hamlet, later parish, of Longthorpe to the southwest and Thorpe Hall to the east, at a distance of c. 3km west of Peterborough city centre. It is situated within gardens to the rear of No. 252, bounded by residential properties to the northeast and northwest, and a local access road (Harewood Gardens) to the southwest. Prior to redevelopment, a large fishpond extended into the part of the site closest to the existing house, while the north-western part of the site was occupied by an area of raised ground, formed from material excavated from the pond.

The site is located on the boundary between geology of the Blisworth Limestone Formation and the Blisworth Clay Formation (British Geological Survey: www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/digimap50wms.html - 1:50 000 map).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There is no record of archaeologically significant remains from within the boundaries of the site.

Antiquarian sources mention the discovery of Romano-British remains to the east of the site, at Thorpe Hall, during construction work in 1720. The remains, including a mosaic pavement and the foundations of a building, may indicate the site of a villa complex (HER refs. 50391 and 01410e). A series of cropmarks (HER ref. 50397), possibly representing pits or stone rubble, have been identified in grounds surrounding the hall; these may relate to the putative villa. A bronze figure of Jupiter (HER ref. 01385) was found on land 400m west of the current development.

A possible Anglo-Saxon wayside cross (HER ref. 01657) lies *c.* 200m southwest of the development site, in the garden of a modern bungalow. The feature comprises a shaft and socket stone, and might originally have formed part of the village stocks or a whipping post. It appears to have been moved from its original position elsewhere in the village (HER ref. 01662).

St Botolph's church (HER ref. 01927) was built in the late thirteenth century, replacing an earlier chapel belonging to Peterborough Abbey. Until 1850, the building served as chapel of ease to St John the Baptist. A watching brief in the grounds of the church (HER ref. 51300) identified two phases of chancel foundation.

Longthorpe Tower (HER ref. 01709) in Longthorpe is a Scheduled Monument (No. 27108, formerly 194) and Grade I Listed Building (Wilson and Hurst 1969, 273). The tower and a surviving range are believed to have formed part of a medieval fortified manor house of probable 13th/14th century date. The first floor of the tower contains a remarkable set of wall paintings depicting biblical, moral and secular subjects. Discovered in 1945, the paintings form the most complete and elaborate scheme of 13th/14th century domestic and mural decoration surviving in England. A watching brief near the tower in 2005 (HER ref. 51321) located some undated features and unstratified medieval pottery.

Cropmarks indicative of a medieval ridge and furrow field system have been located at a distance of *c.* 300m south-east of the development site.

Archaeological excavations at Holy Well in Longthorpe (HER ref. 04454) revealed evidence of late Saxon or early medieval building remains. The excavations also revealed an eighteenth century water garden and a distillery for essences and oils, dating mainly to the 19th century.

Thorpe Hall (HER ref. 01410), built in 1653-56, is a Grade I listed house with contemporary stables and outbuildings; the house is regarded as an important landmark in the transition from Elizabethan to classical architecture. The gardens, which are included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, contain a number of Grade II listed structures: a three part archway, the gate from the garden to the stables, an ice house, a summerhouse and a lodge (the latter both 19th century in date). The Hall is now a residential hospital.

The village core has been subjected to a number of watching briefs (HER refs. 51290, 51428, 51237, 51632) producing largely negative results.

4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification of 24th June 2010, were to:

- *allow the preservation by record of any surviving archaeological deposits and artefacts exposed by the development groundwork within the constraints imposed by the contractor's working methods, programme and development design.*
- *produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum together with a client report.*
- *provide information for accession to the City's Historic Environment Record.*

5.0 METHODOLOGY

Initial groundwork operations involved the levelling of the fishpond (where it extended into the plot) and adjacent areas of high ground (see Section 2.0 above). Ground level was subsequently reduced by

approximately 300mm across the footprint of the new house and garage, while foundation trenches across the majority of the site were excavated to a depth of approximately 1m below existing ground level. To mitigate the potential for disturbance by adjacent fruit trees, foundations on the south-western side of the site were excavated to a greater depth of around 1.8m below existing ground level.

All of the excavations for foundations were intensively monitored for evidence of archaeologically significant features and/or deposits. Where clear evidence was encountered, of features of archaeological origin, more intensive investigations were carried out, involving hand cleaning of the trench sides and the production of section drawings and context records. A representative cross-section of the site stratigraphy was recorded in the northwest facing side of the foundation trench nearest to the existing house (Trench 1 – see below).

A series of colour photographs (35mm print) details the recorded stratigraphy, as well as the progress of groundwork operations. The section drawing was produced at scale 1:50, while written context descriptions on *pro forma* context sheets were made for each unit of stratigraphy.

6.0 RESULTS (Fig. 2)

The geology in Trench 1 comprised a stiff, light yellowish brown clay (010) containing pockets of limestone brash which became more prevalent at lower levels in the trench. At the north-eastern end of Trench 1 the clay was overlain by a layer of compact, yellowish and orange brown sand and gravel (009), which was also interpreted as being geological in origin. A more complete sequence of geological deposits was observed at the northern corner of the development, where limestone brash (top at 950mm below existing ground level) was overlain by mid grey clay (350mm thick), limestone brash (50mm), yellow-brown clay (250mm), and finally topsoil (300mm).

Geological deposits at the south-western end of Trench 1 were cut by a linear feature, [008], interpreted as a probable ditch. The ditch ran southeast to northwest, having dimensions of at least 2.5m wide (revealed only on its north-eastern side) by 1.5m deep. The north-eastern side, which sloped at an angle of around 45° (becoming more gradual at its lower levels), was overlain by sandy clay (007) mixed with limestone, followed by mid brown sandy clay (006), mid brown clayey sand (005), and finally mid to dark greyish brown sandy clay (004). A small quantity of pottery (001) dated as 17th or 18th century was recovered from the fills of [008].

Feature [008] was sealed by a deposit of light yellowish brown sandy clay (003), which may have derived from landscaping associated with the construction of the existing house. Even more recent deposits extended throughout the remainder of Trench 1, overlying geological deposit (010). The latter material (002), which incorporated deposits of clay, gravel and loam, as well as fragments of plastic sheeting and concrete, included recent backfill into the fishpond and upcast from other landscaping activities. A breezeblock wall located towards the north-eastern end of Trench 1 would appear to have retained the south-western edge of an island within the fishpond.

7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The ditch [008] correlates closely with a boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1886, running southeast to northwest from the line of Thorpe Road. The boundary is no longer visible on the Ordnance Survey map of 1958, having been replaced by a new boundary set further to the northeast. The assemblage of pottery from [008] provides tenuous evidence that the feature may (to a certain depth at least) have become permanently silted at some point in the seventeenth or, more likely, the eighteenth century. Accordingly, the feature might be regarded as belonging to a phase of enclosure predating the nineteenth century. There was no evidence of significant archaeological activity over the remainder of the site.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this report would like to thank Mr Tony Williamson for his interest and assistance in ensuring the successful completion of the project. Thanks are also due to Rebecca Casa-Hatton, Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service, for assistance in locating relevant information on the site and Anne Boyle for spot dating of the finds.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wilson D, & Hurst, G 1969 'Medieval Britain in 1968' in *Medieval Archaeology*, 13, 1969

10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS

10.1 Project Details

SITE CODE: TRLO10

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: 10/00252/FUL

FIELD OFFICER: R Trimble

NGR: TL 166 985

CIVIL PARISH: Peterborough

SMR No.:

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 15 – 16th July 2010

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Watching Brief

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Mr Tony Williamson

10.2 Archive Details

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, 65 Grantham Road, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7NG

FINAL LOCATION: Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery

ACCESSION DATE: - January 2011

The Site Archive Comprises:

Context Records	10
Plans at Scale 1:50	-
Section Drawings at Scale 1:50	1
Colour Print Photographs	1 x 36 exp film
Digital photographs	47
Set of Site Notes	1

It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.

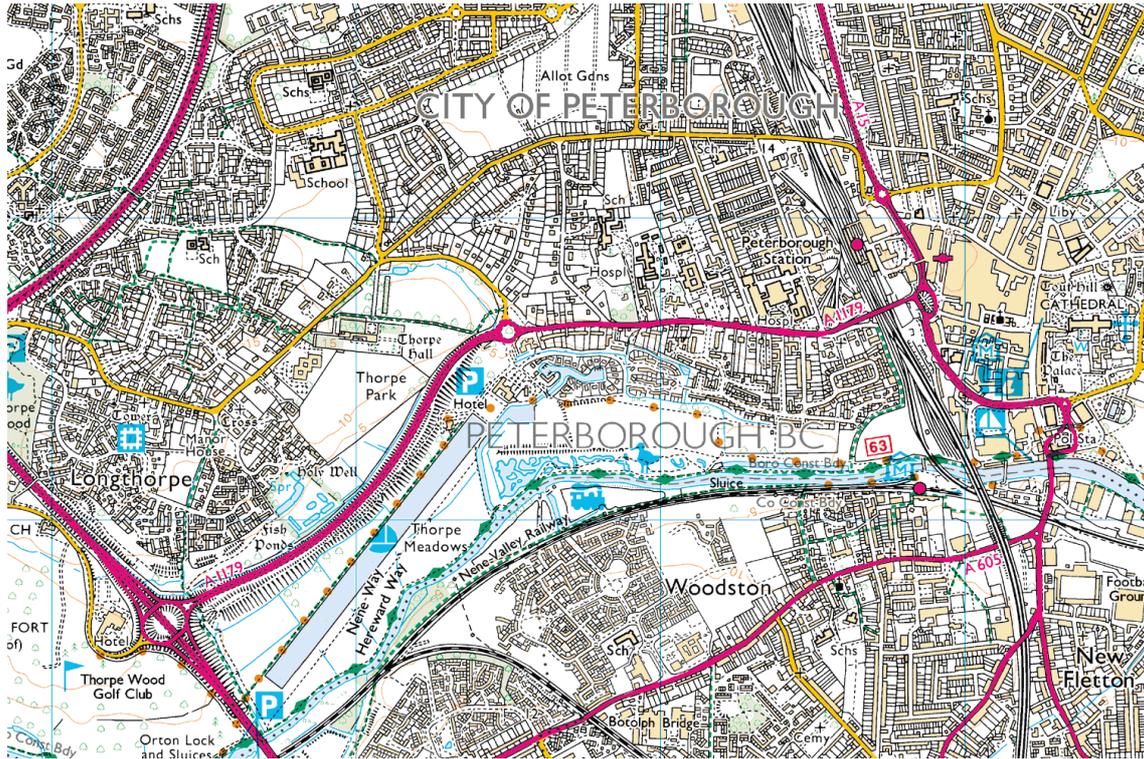
COLOUR PLATES



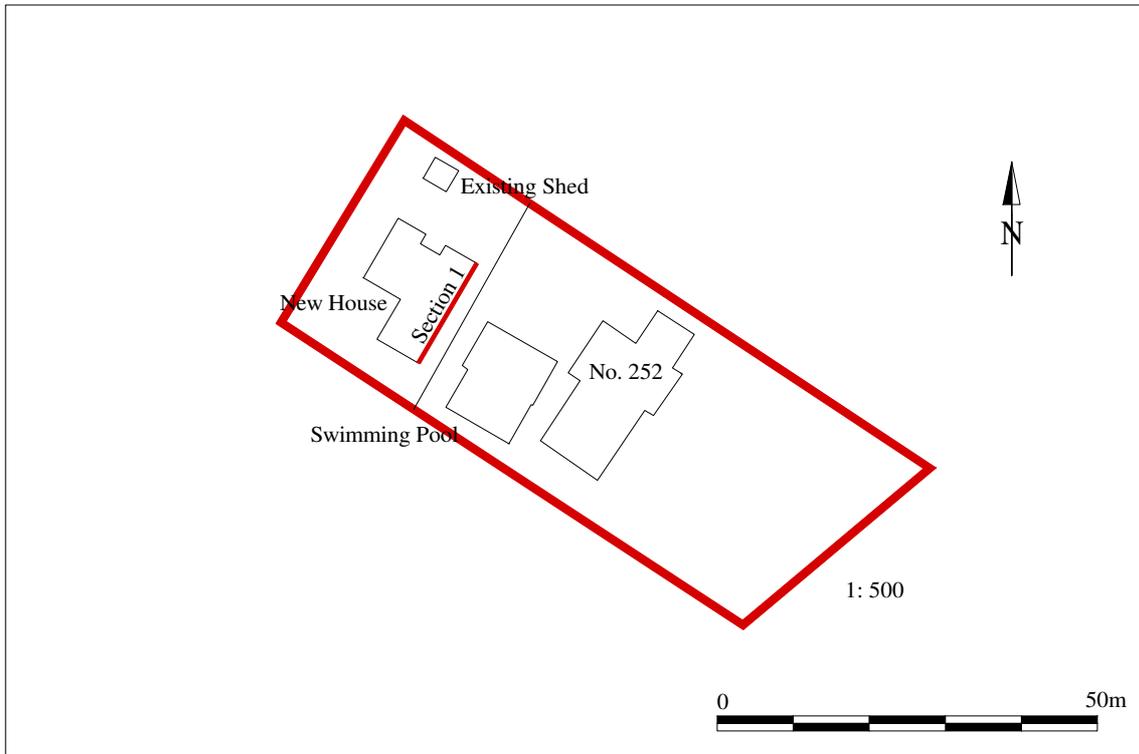
Plate 1 – Ditch [008], looking south, 1m scale

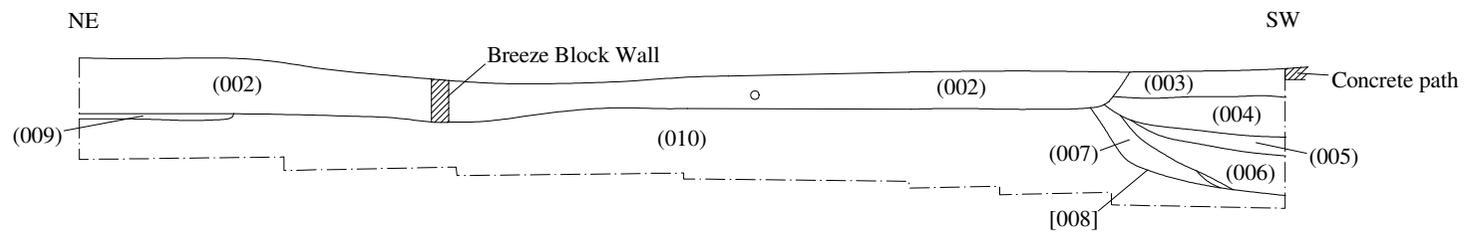


Plate 2 – General view, looking south towards No. 252 Thorpe Road.



Produced from the Explorer 1:25 000 Ordnance Survey map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright
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APPENDIX A - CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Context</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
001	Finds	Finds from [008] – context uncertain
002	Layer	Mixed modern deposits including clay, gravel and loam, containing plastic sheeting, concrete etc.
003	Layer	Compact, light yellowish brown sandy clay
004	Fill of [008]	Moderately compact to compact, slightly friable mid to dark greyish brown sandy clay (30/70)
005	Fill of [008]	Moderately compact/friable mid yellowish brown clayey sand containing occasional gravel to 5mm and very occasional stone to 15mm
006	Fill of [008]	Moderately compact to compact, slightly friable, mid brown sandy clay (20/80)
007	Fill of [008]	Mixed deposit of mid greyish brown sandy clay (50%) and limestone fragments (50%)
008	Ditch	Aligned SE-NW, at least 2.5m wide by 1.5m deep; NE side only, remainder extending beyond the limit of excavation; visible side slopes at 45°, becoming gradual at lower levels
009	Natural	Compact, yellowish and orange brown sand and gravel
010	Natural	Stiff, light yellowish brown clay with pockets of limestone 'brash' especially at SW end becoming more predominant with depth.

APPENDIX B – POTTERY ARCHIVE

<i>Cxt</i>	<i>Cname</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>NoS</i>	<i>NoV</i>	<i>W(g)</i>	<i>Part</i>	<i>Comm</i>	<i>Date</i>
001	GRE	Glazed Red Earthenware	Jar/ bowl	1	1	32	Base	Soot	17th to 18th
001	BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	Jar/ bowl	1	1	19	Base		17th to 18th
001	BL	Black-glazed wares	Jar/ chamber	1	1	8	BS	GRE type	Late 16th to 18th

Key to Abbreviations:

<i>Cxt</i>	Context
<i>Comm</i>	Comments
<i>Cname</i>	Code name
<i>NoS</i>	Number of sherds
<i>NoV</i>	Number of vessels

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